

Frank Shurman

Frank Shurman was born Fritz Shürmann on January 8, 1915, in Hildesheim, [Germany](#), to Willy and Alma Schürmann. He had two sisters, Edith and Hanne-Lore. His father owned a men's fashion business. In 1921, Frank started school in a two-room Jewish primary school. Before the [Nazis](#) came to power, Frank experienced enough [antisemitism](#) that he joined a boxing club to learn self-defense. Frank later attended the Gymnasium, a European secondary school to prepare students for the university. In 1932, as heir apparent to his father's company, Frank became an apprentice tailor.

On April 1, 1933, on the day of the Nazi-organized nationwide [boycott](#) of Jewish-owned businesses, Frank traveled to the European Fashion Academy in Dresden, Germany, to complete his tailor training. That same year, Willy, a proud German Jew, won a prestigious fashion design award in [Berlin](#), contributing to his belief that Nazism wouldn't last. In contrast, many of Frank's Zionist friends were leaving Germany for Palestine or South America.

In August 1934, Frank was hired as a tailor in [Hamburg](#). Frank's father continued his tailoring business until May 1938 when the [Gestapo](#) forced its liquidation. While Willy continued to operate a small-scale business from home, Frank explored emigration opportunities. In Berlin, he met with an American customer of Willy's, Mrs. Augusta Hamilton, who agreed to sponsor Frank's family once she returned to the [United States](#). However, on November 9, 1938, the Gestapo arrested Frank and his father during the [Kristallnacht Pogrom](#). After suffering abuse and public



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humiliation, they were sent to [Buchenwald](#) concentration camp with thousands of other Jewish men.

Amid abysmal conditions, Frank maintained hope that through aid from Mrs. Hamilton, he and his father would be freed. After several months, first Willy and then Frank were released after signing papers stating they had been well treated and wouldn't speak of their imprisonment. In June 1939, while awaiting an emigration visa, Frank, with help from the [British](#) government, immigrated to England. In spring 1940, Frank immigrated to the United States. While living in New Jersey with an old friend from Hamburg, Frank quickly found a job as a tailor and soon thereafter obtained a loan from Mrs. Hamilton to pay for his family's passage to America, forging a lifelong friendship between the two families.

While pursuing U.S. citizenship so he could join the army, Frank worked at a department store where he met his future wife, Margery. Frank completed basic training around November 11, 1942, keenly aware that five years earlier he had arrived at Buchenwald. Frank first was stationed at a [POW](#) camp and was later trained as an interrogator.

In the post-war years, Frank helped to financially support some non-Jewish German friends who had earlier risked their own safety to help him and his family. At the time of Frank's interview in 1996, he and Margery lived in Deerfield, Illinois, and had two children, Beverly and Daniel, and three grandchildren: Adam, Deborah, and Amanda.