- 00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,340 This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust
- 2 00:00:02,340 --> 00:00:07,740 Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Marlies Plotnick.
- 3 00:00:07,740 --> 00:00:14,400 I told you that I tried to work, and I did work every summer
- 4 00:00:14,400 --> 00:00:19,230 between high school and collage, and certainly during college,
- 5 00:00:19,230 --> 00:00:23,880 to make enough money for my wardrobe, which was so
- 6 00:00:23,880 --> 00:00:25,440 important to us in those days.
- 7 00:00:25,440 --> 00:00:27,000 We dressed well.
- 8 00:00:27,000 --> 00:00:29,440 Everybody dressed well in college.
- 9 00:00:29,440 --> 00:00:31,800 People were not sloppy at all.
- 10 00:00:31,800 --> 00:00:33,840 You wear high heels and suits.
- 11 00:00:33,840 --> 00:00:41,940 And at any rate, one of my jobs was as the English editor
- 12 00:00:41,940 --> 00:00:43,420

of the Aufbau.

13 00:00:43,420 --> 00:00:48,090 This was incredible because the only reason I got the job--

14 00:00:48,090 --> 00:00:56,310 and I guess it was my senior year, between my junior

15 00:00:56,310 --> 00:00:58,380 and senior year--

16 00:00:58,380 --> 00:01:02,070 the English editor was going to go to Europe.

17 00:01:02,070 --> 00:01:06,000 In those days, people were beginning again to travel.

18 00:01:06,000 --> 00:01:08,370 And she was going to be gone all summer.

19 00:01:08,370 --> 00:01:10,500 So they hired me and they paid me guild

20 00:01:10,500 --> 00:01:13,680 wages, which was enormous.

21 00:01:13,680 --> 00:01:20,160 And what my main job was, they got out a newsletter every week

22 00:01:20,160 --> 00:01:23,610 as to what was going to appear in that weeks Aufbau.

23 00:01:23,610 --> 00:01:24,810 Tell us about the Aufbau.

00:01:24,810 --> 00:01:27,030 Yes, the Aufbau was a publication

25

00:01:27,030 --> 00:01:30,870 that was in German and went all over the globe

26

00:01:30,870 --> 00:01:33,010 and was sort of the connection.

27

00:01:33,010 --> 00:01:35,400 That's how people could reconnect

28

00:01:35,400 --> 00:01:38,460 if they were in China, or if they were in Australia,

29

00:01:38,460 --> 00:01:40,140 you read.

30

00:01:40,140 --> 00:01:43,680 For instance, my parents put my marriage announcement

31

00:01:43,680 --> 00:01:46,020 into the Aufbau.

32

00:01:46,020 --> 00:01:48,510 And unfortunately, when my grandmother

33

00:01:48,510 --> 00:01:50,920 died, when my father died, we put it into the Aufbau

34

00:01:50,920 --> 00:01:54,120 to let the rest of the world know.

33

00:01:54,120 --> 00:01:56,940

Well, they hired me as English editor.

36 00:01:56,940 --> 00:02:01,040 It was enormously impressive because--

37 00:02:01,040 --> 00:02:03,840 oh, they hired me because I had written to them.

38 00:02:03,840 --> 00:02:07,210 Because it dawned on me, the Aufbau was all in German.

39 00:02:07,210 --> 00:02:11,370 And I said to myself, they are losing my generation

40 00:02:11,370 --> 00:02:13,710 because there was nothing there in English.

41 00:02:13,710 --> 00:02:16,200 The English editor there had been there simply

42 00:02:16,200 --> 00:02:18,270 for this newsletter.

43 00:02:18,270 --> 00:02:22,710 So I proposed to them that there should be an English page.

44 00:02:22,710 --> 00:02:26,250 And lo and behold, they went for it.

45 00:02:26,250 --> 00:02:33,700 And I suggested that it have a quiz because I wanted to--

46 00:02:33,700 --> 00:02:36,270 I thought that would be a lot of fun for me to do,

47 00:02:36,270 --> 00:02:41,580 and that it should have a jobs column to interest

48 00:02:41,580 --> 00:02:44,160 young people who read English.

49 00:02:44,160 --> 00:02:46,620 And they went for it, and then they hired me.

50 00:02:46,620 --> 00:02:51,870 First of all, they ran my stuff, which I still have.

51 00:02:51,870 --> 00:02:57,030 And when I worked there for the summer,

52 00:02:57,030 --> 00:02:59,490 I met these very high powered men

53 00:02:59,490 --> 00:03:03,120 who had been very important newspaper

54 00:03:03,120 --> 00:03:09,030 men in the Frankfurter Zeitung, which was a top, top newspaper.

55 00:03:09,030 --> 00:03:12,510 And they were all on their high horse

56 00:03:12,510 --> 00:03:16,380 because they'd all been these very famous people.

57 00:03:16,380 --> 00:03:19,660 Manfred George was the editor.

58 00:03:19,660 --> 00:03:24,900 And what I went through with that newsletter,

59 00:03:24,900 --> 00:03:27,670 they let-- my English stuff, they left alone.

60 00:03:27,670 --> 00:03:30,720 But they would hand me what they thought

61 00:03:30,720 --> 00:03:36,570 was important in that week's news,

62 00:03:36,570 --> 00:03:38,970 and then I wrote it up in English.

63 00:03:38,970 --> 00:03:41,310 They nitpicked every word.

64 00:03:41,310 --> 00:03:43,020 Everything was challenged because they

65 00:03:43,020 --> 00:03:45,240 were all these prima donnas.

66 00:03:45,240 --> 00:03:51,240 But it was fascinating because they were all super intelligent

67 00:03:51,240 --> 00:03:54,240 and just terrific people.

68 00:03:54,240 --> 00:03:58,920 But for me, it was very painful, except that it was also

00:03:58,920 --> 00:04:03,930 a very good thing to have on my resume.

70 00:04:03,930 --> 00:04:05,820 And I was paid guild wages.

71 00:04:05,820 --> 00:04:10,530 I was never paid anything like that again for quite a while.

72 00:04:10,530 --> 00:04:14,130 But they were very impressive people.

73 00:04:14,130 --> 00:04:19,560 And the Aufbau still exists, but I think it's entirely different

74 00:04:19,560 --> 00:04:24,210 and it's not run by German Jews at all.

75 00:04:24,210 --> 00:04:25,380 And I have no idea--

76 00:04:25,380 --> 00:04:31,350 I did hear that it does still exist, but--

77 00:04:31,350 --> 00:04:36,060 Were you ever in contact with an organization called Selfhelp?

78 00:04:36,060 --> 00:04:37,710 I only heard about it.

79 00:04:37,710 --> 00:04:42,570 One of my mother's cousins was active in it.

80 00:04:42,570 --> 00:04:49,230 That did-- I think that was very helpful for German Jews.

81 00:04:49,230 --> 00:04:51,360 And by the way, there is something now

82 00:04:51,360 --> 00:04:57,452 about feeding very old German Jews, The Blue Card,

83 00:04:57,452 --> 00:04:58,410 or something like that.

84 00:04:58,410 --> 00:05:03,200 I contribute to this because it makes sense.

85 00:05:03,200 --> 00:05:07,640 And unfortunately, some people are in dire straits

86 00:05:07,640 --> 00:05:11,420 because they didn't have social security here

87 00:05:11,420 --> 00:05:18,170 and didn't have time to amass a decent retirement money.

88 00:05:18,170 --> 00:05:22,280

89 00:05:22,280 --> 00:05:25,880 Your father came over and he was no longer a lawyer.

90 00:05:25,880 --> 00:05:27,237 Yes, and--

91 00:05:27,237 --> 00:05:28,820 And could you elaborate on that a bit? 92 00:05:28,820 --> 00:05:30,190 Yes.

93 00:05:30,190 --> 00:05:33,320 I mentioned before that he went in

94 00:05:33,320 --> 00:05:34,700 through the jewelry business.

95 00:05:34,700 --> 00:05:42,680 And this was-- he, I think, was very disappointed and found

96 00:05:42,680 --> 00:05:48,710 everything humiliating because he had been--

97 00:05:48,710 --> 00:05:52,640 by the way, I should mentionand I'm conscious that I'm not

98 00:05:52,640 --> 00:05:53,990 finishing sentences--

99 00:05:53,990 --> 00:05:56,600

100 00:05:56,600 --> 00:06:01,610 right after the war, the Germans made several offers

101 00:06:01,610 --> 00:06:04,340 that he should return.

102 00:06:04,340 --> 00:06:08,270 They would make him all kinds of big wheels,

103 00:06:08,270 --> 00:06:12,770 and he turned everything down

## because he had no intention

104

00:06:12,770 --> 00:06:15,670 of going back to Germany.

105

00:06:15,670 --> 00:06:19,460 I have to mention that in the Wiedergutmachong

106

00:06:19,460 --> 00:06:22,670 he set it all up.

107

00:06:22,670 --> 00:06:28,730 I said it was a substantial firm that they were in, in Germany.

108

00:06:28,730 --> 00:06:31,610 He had two-- and in Germany, you clerked

109

00:06:31,610 --> 00:06:36,430 in some kind of an office.

110

00:06:36,430 --> 00:06:41,600 Bretano, who was an Aussenminister or something

111

00:06:41,600 --> 00:06:46,340 like that, was one of the people who had clerked.

112

00:06:46,340 --> 00:06:49,460 And another man, Willy Barend, who became--

113

00:06:49,460 --> 00:06:51,290 do you know these names?

114

00:06:51,290 --> 00:06:53,510 Barend was in Wiesbaden.

115

00:06:53,510 --> 00:06:59,050

These gentlemen helped with the Wiedergutmachong.

116 00:06:59,050 --> 00:07:05,030 When Brentano came here with Adenauer and I got

117 00:07:05,030 --> 00:07:09,680 on the phone, and when everybody said to me, this is nonsense,

118 00:07:09,680 --> 00:07:13,700 he's not going to talk to you, when I mentioned who I was

119 00:07:13,700 --> 00:07:18,400 and whose daughter-- my father was dead already--

120 00:07:18,400 --> 00:07:20,750 his name, Brentano got on the phone

121 00:07:20,750 --> 00:07:23,850 immediately and said, how can I help?

122 00:07:23,850 --> 00:07:24,800 What can I do?

123 00:07:24,800 --> 00:07:28,940 And when I mentioned that Willy Barend was taking care of it.

124 00:07:28,940 --> 00:07:30,690 He said, you are in very good hands,

125 00:07:30,690 --> 00:07:37,400 but if you need anything contact me in Berlin.

126 00:07:37,400 --> 00:07:38,810 This was very nice.

127

00:07:38,810 --> 00:07:39,860

When was this?

128

00:07:39,860 --> 00:07:44,060

In-- well, this must have been--

129

00:07:44,060 --> 00:07:46,340

when was this?

130

00:07:46,340 --> 00:07:50,810

When could Adenauer have come

here because he also-- we

131

00:07:50,810 --> 00:07:54,110

lived on Central Park West.

132

00:07:54,110 --> 00:07:56,930

And the Adenauer

car was in front

133

00:07:56,930 --> 00:08:01,580

of the house with

the little flags.

134

00:08:01,580 --> 00:08:04,040

I'm going to take a guess.

135

00:08:04,040 --> 00:08:12,240

My father died in 1952.

136

00:08:12,240 --> 00:08:17,760

So it must have been

something like '56 maybe.

137

00:08:17,760 --> 00:08:19,560

I don't know.

138

 $00:08:19,560 \longrightarrow 00:08:21,750$ 

Maybe '55, I don't know.

00:08:21,750 --> 00:08:26,295 The Wiedergutmachong came-- my mother got a--

140

00:08:26,295 --> 00:08:29,160

141

00:08:29,160 --> 00:08:35,700 for my father's practice, she was paid a monthly amount.

142

00:08:35,700 --> 00:08:40,870 And I was paid something because I went to Barnard.

143

00:08:40,870 --> 00:08:44,550 I was paid-- excuse me-- more than my sister and my brother

144

00:08:44,550 --> 00:08:48,050 because they did not go to schools that cost money.

145

00:08:48,050 --> 00:08:49,410 It was idiotic.

146

00:08:49,410 --> 00:08:53,700 So I shared my larger amount with them

147

00:08:53,700 --> 00:08:57,570 because I thought it was so totally unfair.

148

00:08:57,570 --> 00:09:02,070 This is idiotic thinking because they

149

00:09:02,070 --> 00:09:05,900 were replacing because my father paid for school for me.

150

00:09:05,900 --> 00:09:10,080 I mean, that's-- instead of paying people who were in real

151 00:09:10,080 --> 00:09:12,630 need when you couldn't afford to go to school,

152 00:09:12,630 --> 00:09:14,310 they deserved more.

153 00:09:14,310 --> 00:09:25,110 But this business that my father felt

154 00:09:25,110 --> 00:09:30,450 humiliated by the kind of work he had to do here was there.

155 00:09:30,450 --> 00:09:37,920 Yes, and also, I have to admit, for my life,

156 00:09:37,920 --> 00:09:40,440 there was this shadow all the time.

157 00:09:40,440 --> 00:09:42,690 Everything was quite good here.

158 00:09:42,690 --> 00:09:44,460 I had this wonderful husband.

159 00:09:44,460 --> 00:09:46,740 I had these adorable children.

160 00:09:46,740 --> 00:09:49,200 And I always had the fear that it was always--

161 00:09:49,200 --> 00:09:52,080 that it could all be taken away from me. 162 00:09:52,080 --> 00:09:56,250 And this has haunted me.

163 00:09:56,250 --> 00:10:00,600 My sister had something of it, but not the same.

164 00:10:00,600 --> 00:10:04,150 I think it was the age difference,

165 00:10:04,150 --> 00:10:09,240 and also that I was in Darmstadt and saw all this business

166 00:10:09,240 --> 00:10:11,880 that she didn't witness.

167 00:10:11,880 --> 00:10:16,530 It was frightening enough for her not to be at home

168 00:10:16,530 --> 00:10:18,820 when all of it was happening.

169 00:10:18,820 --> 00:10:22,410 But I think this business that I felt

170 00:10:22,410 --> 00:10:28,530 that I was in a certainly well functioning family

171 00:10:28,530 --> 00:10:35,820 but in a very dysfunctional society left its mark.

172 00:10:35,820 --> 00:10:40,440 And to this day, I have a fear of abandonment 00:10:40,440 --> 00:10:43,590 because I think that can be traced directly

174

00:10:43,590 --> 00:10:46,230 to this business that I was afraid my parents would not

175

00:10:46,230 --> 00:10:49,290 come home.

176

00:10:49,290 --> 00:10:51,240 But who knows?

177

00:10:51,240 --> 00:10:54,090 We were spared a great deal--

178

00:10:54,090 --> 00:10:57,960 the fact that I wasn't in a concentration camp,

179

00:10:57,960 --> 00:11:02,610 that we never experienced that, that we were out of Germany

180

00:11:02,610 --> 00:11:05,880 when the worst was happening.

181

00:11:05,880 --> 00:11:11,220 We were not there through the Final--

182

00:11:11,220 --> 00:11:12,295 what was it called?

183

00:11:12,295 --> 00:11:12,795 The Final--

184

00:11:12,795 --> 00:11:13,587 The Final Solution.

185

00:11:13,587 --> 00:11:15,720

The Final Solution.

186 00:11:15,720 --> 00:11:20,820 I will say, just before we left Germany, my mother

187

00:11:20,820 --> 00:11:25,200 and my sister and I went to visit to say

188

00:11:25,200 --> 00:11:27,300 goodbye to people in Berlin.

189

00:11:27,300 --> 00:11:30,960 My father had to

stay for some reason.

190

00:11:30,960 --> 00:11:32,880 We were no longer in the house.

191

00:11:32,880 --> 00:11:41,670 He was in the one villa that some woman ran--

192

00:11:41,670 --> 00:11:47,730 gave rooms to people for the few days that we were in Berlin.

193

00:11:47,730 --> 00:11:50,910

That trip was

heartbreaking, which

194

00:11:50,910 --> 00:11:56,130 also, I think, marred my life, because we were saying goodbye

195

00:11:56,130 --> 00:11:59,645 to people whom we knew we would never see again

196

00:11:59,645 --> 00:12:02,880

and my mother's family in Berlin.

00:12:02,880 --> 00:12:05,370 You know that there

were many children--

198

00:12:05,370 --> 00:12:11,760 there were many people who were waiting to go someplace.

199

00:12:11,760 --> 00:12:14,040 One family was going to China.

200

00:12:14,040 --> 00:12:19,470 One family was going to

South America, my mother's

201

00:12:19,470 --> 00:12:20,880 favorite cousin.

iavorite cousin

202

00:12:20,880 --> 00:12:25,020 To say goodbye to these people was heartbreaking.

203

00:12:25,020 --> 00:12:31,680 And that trip, even though I loved going--

204

00:12:31,680 --> 00:12:37,260 traveling at night in these very opulent sleeping cars and all

205

00:12:37,260 --> 00:12:41,760 this, but I describe in my memoir,

206

00:12:41,760 --> 00:12:45,810 and I see it so clearly still, as the train

207

00:12:45,810 --> 00:12:53,100 would go through small towns, you'd hear the clanking of--

00:12:53,100 --> 00:12:59,790 and you'd pass street lights that were naked bulbs.

209

00:12:59,790 --> 00:13:01,920 In Germany, you never saw a naked bulb.

210

00:13:01,920 --> 00:13:04,620 It was-- you just didn't.

211

00:13:04,620 --> 00:13:08,730 Here, we have many occasions to have naked bulbs.

212

00:13:08,730 --> 00:13:12,540 Many of our light fixtures are done this way.

213

00:13:12,540 --> 00:13:16,130 So these were naked bulbs and with this clanging

214

00:13:16,130 --> 00:13:19,850 of the train.

215

00:13:19,850 --> 00:13:25,220 I remember also, somehow, the train already

216

00:13:25,220 --> 00:13:27,110 represented something because I'd

217

00:13:27,110 --> 00:13:30,620 heard the stories of the people in cattle cars being

218

00:13:30,620 --> 00:13:33,180 taken to Buchenwald.

219

00:13:33,180 --> 00:13:37,550

My father's partner talked about this.

220

00:13:37,550 --> 00:13:41,190 And maybe I should relay the story,

221

00:13:41,190 --> 00:13:42,590 it's not a very pretty story.

222

00:13:42,590 --> 00:13:47,960 He said, there were no bathroom facilities.

223

00:13:47,960 --> 00:13:54,350 So the people did their thing in somebody's hat,

224

00:13:54,350 --> 00:13:58,320 and then they threw the hat out of the window.

225

00:13:58,320 --> 00:14:03,170 That story alone, and that they were packed like sardines

226

00:14:03,170 --> 00:14:08,510 standing up when they were taken,

227

00:14:08,510 --> 00:14:12,650 are vivid memories, even though I wasn't there,

228

00:14:12,650 --> 00:14:16,490 just hearing about it and that it was possible

229

00:14:16,490 --> 00:14:18,590 and that it could happen again.

230

00:14:18,590 --> 00:14:20,690 And somehow, there were books here that said,

231

00:14:20,690 --> 00:14:22,070 it can happen here.

232

00:14:22,070 --> 00:14:24,650 There was a very famous book that came out--

233

00:14:24,650 --> 00:14:25,430 [DOORBELL RINGS]

234

00:14:25,430 --> 00:14:26,692 Oh.

235

00:14:26,692 --> 00:14:29,668 [DOORBELL RINGS]

236

00:14:29,668 --> 00:14:32,650

237

00:14:32,650 --> 00:14:35,770 This is a continuation of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum

238

00:14:35,770 --> 00:14:37,252 interview with Mrs. Plotnick.

239

00:14:37,252 --> 00:14:40,210

240

00:14:40,210 --> 00:14:44,770 I do have to say that, yes, there was this shadow that

241

00:14:44,770 --> 00:14:49,060 has hung over my whole life, even though I've really

242

00:14:49,060 --> 00:14:51,790 had a very good life and I have to be so grateful

243 00:14:51,790 --> 00:14:54,820 that we didn't go through the really bad stuff.

244

00:14:54,820 --> 00:14:57,640

245

00:14:57,640 --> 00:15:03,160 And I wrote the memoir because I feel-- and I I'm

246

00:15:03,160 --> 00:15:05,890 talking here because I feel that anybody

247

00:15:05,890 --> 00:15:09,610 who had anything to do with it has to speak up

248

00:15:09,610 --> 00:15:11,620 because of the deniers.

249

00:15:11,620 --> 00:15:15,170 And the denying seems to be growing.

250

00:15:15,170 --> 00:15:20,630 And the Mel Gibson type of denial is just lovely.

251

00:15:20,630 --> 00:15:23,110 And I think anti-Semitism is growing.

2.52

00:15:23,110 --> 00:15:29,440 It was so refreshing that it was unfashionable to be

253

00:15:29,440 --> 00:15:33,100 anti-Semitic for a long time here.

00:15:33,100 --> 00:15:37,720 And unfortunately now-- and it's very understandable

255

00:15:37,720 --> 00:15:41,470 because people think that the trouble with the Muslims

256

00:15:41,470 --> 00:15:48,280 is because of the Jewish problem with Israel.

257

00:15:48,280 --> 00:15:53,770 It's complicated and so sad that it is growing again

258

00:15:53,770 --> 00:15:56,890 and that maybe my grandchildren have to worry about this.

259

00:15:56,890 --> 00:16:00,490

260

00:16:00,490 --> 00:16:05,320 So I feel that I'm doing my little part here as I can.

261

00:16:05,320 --> 00:16:10,150 And I hope that my memoir, which was really

262

00:16:10,150 --> 00:16:13,480 written for the children so that they know where they come from,

263

00:16:13,480 --> 00:16:16,630 but mainly, I must admit, because I

264

00:16:16,630 --> 00:16:21,130 wanted to say what I went--

265

00:16:21,130 --> 00:16:26,710 whatever touched our family, that it is known

266

00:16:26,710 --> 00:16:30,910 and I did not exaggerate one word.

267

00:16:30,910 --> 00:16:35,260 Because there is this theory that everybody,

268

00:16:35,260 --> 00:16:38,650 they used to joke about this, that in Germany--

269

00:16:38,650 --> 00:16:41,410 here, I'm a dachshund.

270

00:16:41,410 --> 00:16:46,930 In Germany, I was a huge--

271

00:16:46,930 --> 00:16:49,120 what's the largest dog we can-

272

00:16:49,120 --> 00:16:50,470 Bernhardiner was--

273

00:16:50,470 --> 00:16:54,670 A doberman or a Saint Bernard.

274

00:16:54,670 --> 00:16:56,560 Yes, a Saint Bernard.

275

00:16:56,560 --> 00:16:59,770 The [GERMAN] had a Great Dane, which was

276

00:16:59,770 --> 00:17:03,370 a beautiful, beautiful animal.

277

00:17:03,370 --> 00:17:08,290

Well, at any rate, basically, I have had a very good life.

278

00:17:08,290 --> 00:17:10,869 I'm 82 years old.

279

00:17:10,869 --> 00:17:14,589 I'm terribly sorry that I lost my husband

280

00:17:14,589 --> 00:17:18,130 who would have chimed in here, and who

281

00:17:18,130 --> 00:17:23,319 would have been very supportive, and who was very supportive

282

00:17:23,319 --> 00:17:25,780 when I started the memoir.

283

00:17:25,780 --> 00:17:31,960 And well, at any rate, I am grateful for this opportunity

284

00:17:31,960 --> 00:17:35,600 to say something more so that it's on the map.

285

00:17:35,600 --> 00:17:37,090 So I thank you very much.

286

00:17:37,090 --> 00:17:40,790 Well, I thank you for letting us interview you today.

287

00:17:40,790 --> 00:17:43,750 And this is a conclude--

288

00:17:43,750 --> 00:17:46,150 this is the conclusion of the United States Holocaust

00:17:46,150 --> 00:17:50,320 Memorial Museum interview on August 19, 2010

290 00:17:50,320 --> 00:17:54,370 with Ms. Marlies Plotnick.

291 00:17:54,370 --> 00:17:56,400 Thank you again.