We're ready.

OK, rolling.

Good morning.

Good morning.

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Marianne Salomon Berg on July 15, 2015 in Monroe Township, New Jersey. Thank you so much, Mrs. Berg for agreeing to meet us today.

It's my pleasure.

Thank you. To share your story, and also, maybe, to tell us a little bit about your husband's story because there are parallels and there are differences, too. And he's no longer here to be able to say it directly. And through you, we'd like to also memorialize his story. But we'll start with yours, OK?

OK.

And as all of the interviews, we'll start at the very beginning. I'd like you to tell me the date you were born, the place you were born, and what was your name at birth?

All right, I hate to say it, but I was born on August 26, 1932 in Frankfurt, Germany. And according to my mother, I was a 10 month pregnancy, and she was very unhappy that it took so long, but here I am.

Yes. Your name at birth was?

My last name was Salomon, S-A-L-O-M-O-N. My first name is Marianne. And I was named after an aunt, my father's favorite sister, who had passed away shortly before I was born.

OK, and do you have any brothers and sisters?

No.

You were an only child?

I'm an only child.

All right, and tell me a little bit about your mother and your father, starting with their names. And if you remember at least the date, the year of their births, that would be helpful.

Yeah, OK. My father was born in 1887, December. Christmas day, December 25, 1887. And my mother was born in 1899, May 31, 1899. They were 12 years apart in age. And so my father was not a young father. He was 39 when he got married. He was 45 years old when I was born, and my mother was 33.

Which is also unusual for that time.

For that time, for that time, yeah. Well, she was married. She was 27 when she got married, but she had many miscarriages. And-- but--

And so you were the success one.

But I was the successful one, and then Hitler came into power shortly after I was born, and they didn't want more

children.

Is that so?

Yeah.

It was because of this?

It was because of this, aside from their age. But it was because of this. I think they already started to think about leaving Europe, leaving Germany.

That's pretty early--

Yeah, well--

--to have those thoughts.

They saw the handwriting on the wall, I think, yes.

So many people didn't. They thought they'd be able to wait it out.

Yeah, well, my father always said-- and I mean, I heard this later on. But he said, nobody will believe this maniac. He'll go away. You know? But--

Yeah. Tell me a little bit about his background in the sense of what was his-- what kind of family did he come from? Were you an old Frankfurt family?

No.

Were they from another part of Germany? Let's talk about that.

OK, my father was born in Wiesbaden--

Oh yeah, pretty.

--which is near Frankfurt. And he came from a family of nine children.

Wow.

And yeah, nine children. And the early years of his life-- he was the second to the youngest. And the early years of his life, he remembers being raised by his grandmother, his father's mother, who lived with the family and helped with the children.

[PHONE RINGS]

OK, we can cut. So you were talking about your father's--

My father. And so he had all these siblings. There were five boys and four girls. And I understand all of my grandmother's children survived. She never lost the baby.

Wow.

And my father was born in 1907. It was the second to the youngest, so yeah.

And that [GERMAN] is how you say it in German. That century, it was unusual.

Right. That's why I'm saying it. And yes, but of all of these children, we were very few cousins. So for various reasons, I guess they didn't--

They didn't actually have children of--

Proliferate. Yeah. I have two surviving first cousins who were born in the United States. My father's younger brother came here as a very young man and practiced medicine in Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. And therefore, was able to bring-- he got married here, stayed here, and was able to bring his siblings, and cousins, and nieces, and nephews, and everyone. Sponsor us all.

What a wonderful--

Yeah.

What a wonderful thing to have yes that became so necessary at that time.

Yeah, yeah.

What was your father's name again?

Joseph.

Joseph.

Joseph Salomon.

And was there was the family then from Wiesbaden for generations?

I think, yes. I think so. I don't know how far back. Someone did a family tree of his mother's family. I even have a book, and original book. It's a man who happens to live in this area. And so I have a little of that information. I don't know anything about my grandfather's family, but they're from that area. I think both of my parents were in Germany for generations.

OK.

Yeah.

How did your father's family support themselves?

I think they had a butcher business and I know they had chickens because my father had an aversion to chicken, to poultry.

Did he really?

He did because he used to see the chickens running around without their heads. And my mother was never allowed to cook poultry. He didn't want to smell it. He didn't want to see it, and it stemmed from That

From the early childhood?

From the early childhood, yeah.

And when your father then came into his own and married rather late, and then had you rather late, how was he earning

a living?

All right, he was in business. He was a World War I soldier, a German soldier. I have an Iron Cross. I have all this stuff.

Do you really?

I really do. And at that time, they were Germans. It was a different world and different expectations. Although he came from an observant family, a kosher orthodox Jewish family. And he and his older brother were in the German Army. And the younger-- some of the other brothers who were already in the United States came here early and didn't serve at all. And also, his brother Gustav, the one who brought us over, was also in the German Army at that time. And the parents had already passed away. I think both of them were gone by World War I, so I never knew them.

So you never knew them?

I never knew them at all. But they were butchers, actually, I guess. Made sausages and things like that.

Well, what about your father when he finished his service?

He had an uncle-- my grandmother is his mother's brother-- who was very successful in the soap manufacturing business in Frankfurt. And his sons were younger than my father and my uncle, and he took them into the business. My father and my uncle became outside salesmen. And the other, the sons, they were more educated at that point and made the soap. Manufactured the soap. Commercial soap. They sold it to institutions.

Do you know the name of what the company was?

Yes.

What was it?

Edelmuth and Oppenheim.

Edelmuth?

Edelmuth was my grandmother's maiden name.

Edelmuth?

E-D-E-L-M-U-T-H. OK? And that was the business that the uncle-- and that's how they referred to him, as the uncle, had. And took in, as I said, his two nephews and later, his two sons.

And did you know this uncle? Did you know the sons at all?

I knew the sons. They were my father's first cousins, and they came to America. And I knew them, absolutely. But in fact, one of them married my mother's first cousin. My parents introduced them, but I didn't know the young-- maybe I knew him, but I don't even think so. I think he passed away before I was born.

Let's turn now to your mother's family.

OK.

What was her first name?

Hildegard.

Hildegard.

And she called herself Hilda, but her name was Hildegard.

And what was her maiden name?

Grunewald.

Grunewald?

Yeah, like the section of Berlin, which is a lovely section of the city.

Oh, really? Yeah.

A lot of well-to-do Jewish families live there. So Grunewald. And was she from Frankfurt?

She was from Westphalia, from Bielefeld.

Oh, bielefeld.

Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. And what do you know about her side of the family?

Well, I knew her mother. That was the one grandmother I knew who did not survive the war, sadly.

Oh really?

Really, yeah.

Tell me a little bit about the circumstances of her family and then a little bit about your grandmother then.

OK, I really don't know much about her father, who had passed away. But my grandmother's family, I'm in contact with some of the second cousins. Their last name is Pless, P-L-E-S-S. And I just found out that there's actually a city called Pless that's on the Berlin-Poland border.

No kidding.

And we had a maintenance man here who used to go to Poland on vacation every year. And I once asked him, have you ever heard of a city called Pless? Sometimes it was Germany and sometimes it was Poland. And he said, my uncle lives there. I vacation there every year.

Isn't that interesting?

So I thought that was interesting. Yeah, but they lived in, as I said--

Westphalia.

--my grandparents lived in Westphalia in Bielefeld. My mother has two brothers, had two brothers, one younger, one older. And the older one changed his name from Grunewald to Greenwood--

Of course.

--here in the United States.

It's a translation.

The younger one had a very interesting story. Well, he ended up in Palestine, the underground, sort of, until it became Israel. And he--

Oh, interesting

--lived there for all of his life, the rest of his life.

When did he emigrate to Palestine?

In the 1930s from Italy. He lived in Italy and had to leave Italy when the fascists came. And he and his then-girlfriend got a Greek ship captain for whatever they paid him to take them to Palestine because all this was underground at the time. And he told her, if we get there alive, I'll marry you. And this was my mother's younger brother, and they did, and they were married. And they lived there, and he was a Zionist. I know that's not such a great word now. But at the time, it was very important. And that saved his life, actually.

It saved his life?

Yeah, yeah.

It did.

He was a very interesting man, yeah.

And you knew him as well?

I knew him because we were there once, and he was here a few times later, many years later.

How did your mother's family--

[PHONE RINGS]

Let's stop there. Let's cut there.

OK.

It really does.

OK.

OK? So how did your mother's family support themselves?

My grandparents?

Mm-hmm.

Yeah, I think I mentioned, I'm really not sure of what my grandfather did. I think it also had to do with cattle and meat, something like that. A lot of the Jews in Germany at that time were cattle dealers and were in that field, I guess. Yeah.

How did your parents meet?

OK, my father's sisters, the two older sisters, were what we would say spinsters and had a corset business in Bielefeld. I

don't know exactly what brought them there, but that's where. The oldest sister was 20 years older than the youngest brother, so they were older, and they had a business. And my grandmother, my mother's mother, was close in age to my father's older sister. And they became friendly because my grandmother bought her undergarments there, corsets and whatever, and because everything was custom made in those days.

And my mother? I don't know. My grandmother wanted to find someone from my mother, or my aunt wanted to introduce her brother Joseph to somebody. Somehow, they got them together.

It came through family connections then?

Yes, yeah. I think they said they used to see my mother ride her bicycle. She was very pretty. My mother was a very pretty girl, and yeah. And that's how they met, actually.

And that's how they met, through the course of business that his sisters had--

Correct.

--in Gielefeld.

And my grandmother, who shopped there, yeah.

What are your earliest memories from Frankfurt? Do you have any?

Very, very few. Very, very few. I vaguely remember my grandmother visiting. And it probably was my sixth birthday because we came here two months later, or not even two months later.

[DOORBELL RINGS]

OK, let's cut. OK. Oh.

Ready.

OK, so before the break, we were talking about your mother's family.

Yes, correct.

And how your parents met and that they got married.

And my uncles, my uncle who went to Palestine and Israel.

And things about her side.

Right.

So when you were born, can you tell me about the home that you were born into in Frankfurt? Do you have memories of what it looked like?

Strangely enough, I do have memories of my room, even of the layout, a little, of some of the apartment because it was an apartment. We had a terrace. And when you walked in, it was maybe like an octagon or a hexagon hallway, and the rooms were off of this hallway. It wasn't narrow. It was--

Centraled.

--shaped in some way. And I had my own room, and my wallpaper was baby blue with white polka dots. And I had a

dollhouse that had that wallpaper.

Oh, how pretty.

And we actually were in Munich once in our travels, my husband and I. And there was a toy museum or a doll museum. And I said, maybe I'll find my dollhouse. It was confiscated. All of my parents' belongings, they were confiscated. They got nothing here, which is a whole other story. But I sort of looked for my dollhouse. It was a very strange thing and stupid, but--

No, but--

--I did.

You wanted to see.

Yeah, and so I just vaguely remember that. That's what I remember of the room.

OK, what about the apartment itself? Was it a large place?

Probably. I mean, my parents had a bedroom with the bathroom off of the bedroom. And there was also a bathroom off of this end--

Entry hallway.

Entrance way. And I remember the toilets flushed with a chain. And that's what I remember, pulling the chain to flush.

Did your mother have any help at home? Oh, they always had help. And my father said, as poor as they were when he was growing up, they had help. And the help lived upstairs someplace. The help probably wasn't even paid except for room and board.

But my mother-- what happened when I was small is that Jews were not allowed to have any help under a certain age. I think any women who worked for a Jewish family had to be over the age of 50, possibly. 45, something like that. And the woman who was sort of our housekeeper and took care of me, my nanny, was actually the woman who my father had a rented room before he was married, my father and my uncle.

And the couple's name they rented from with were Mr. And Mrs. Martin. And I called her Tanta Martin. I didn't know her first name until many years later, that my mother referred to as Elsa. But she came and lived and worked. I don't know if she lived with us. Probably. I'm not sure, but she was my nanny, and she took--

Do you have memories of what kind of person she was?

Yeah, I loved her. I don't really have too many memories. But I know once she took me to play with her nephews, and we were playing with these toy tin trains. And I fell and I cut my--

Lip?

--self, and I have a scar currently from that. And she was very upset and rushed me to a doctor. And I had a bandage, and I had to drink through a sippy cup. And this must all have been that last--

That last year?

--season in Germany, but yeah.

Now, I take it at home, the language was German?

Only German at home.

Only German.

And even in the United States, only at home, it was German. As soon as my parents left the house, it was English.

Interesting, interesting. Now, did your parents speak German to one another until they died?

Well, my father-- my mother lived many years longer. Yeah, until my--

When did he die?

1963.

OK, so he went very early.

He was almost 76. He was 75 years old. My mother lived until she was 87, and when my father died, I think she was 63. She lived for many--

Many years after.

Many years, yeah.

And when they spoke of you in the United States at home, what language did you speak?

German.

Really? Yeah.

But when my mother and I-- my children never learned German. So we spoke English, really, and with my mother. They picked up a few German words. And my mother, very late in her life, when she wasn't well and she was in her late 80s, she sort of reverted back to more German.

German?

Mm-hmm. And I think that's very common.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah.

But they spoke well. I have letters that my mother wrote. My parents wrote a letter to me when I was in camp, and it was really only a few years after they came to the United States, and their English was very good. They took lessons immediately.

OK, so it was that they did their best to acclimatize, and adjust, and so on?

Absolutely. They went to work. They went to business, yeah.

But nevertheless, part of this is the language that one is born with, the one grows up with, that one has-- your father was 45 when you were born.

That's right.

So you can say--

He was 50 when he came to the United States. He was over 50.

So his life is in this language. And I'm wondering, how does that change when you've-- it's more than just, you've moved to a new country. It is that you were no longer wanted in your old country.

Right, right.

And how do you incorporate that in your new life? And can you? And do you?

Oh, yeah, yeah. Some of their past stayed with them because you can't become another person. And on the other hand, I think they were proud to be Americans. They became citizens as soon as possible. I have my own citizenship papers because my parents wanted to make sure, even though I automatically became a citizen through them, they wanted to make sure I had my papers.

And yeah, and they spoke English, and they went to work. And at that time, they loved President Roosevelt because they felt that he was our savior. And I mean, a few things have changed in opinions about that since then, but that was the way it was at that time.

And yeah, and one of the reasons also was because we lived in Iowa. My father was not able to find a job when we came to the-- because he was already older, and the language wasn't good, and he had been a salesman in this particular business. And even though he had relatives here, it was still Depression times, and no one had a job waiting for him.

And he went to one of the Jewish organizations, and I don't know which one. And said, I have to work, and I'll go anywhere within the United States because I have a young child. My wife has to stay home with her, and we'll go. And that's where they found a job for him, in Des Moines, Iowa.

What was the job?

He worked at the largest department store there, Younker Brothers. And he was, I think, in shipping and receiving. I think he did some bookkeeping for them. And that's what he did. We were there for five years.

Yeah, how did he feel about this? Did he have difficulties psychologically with it?

I don't really know because I didn't think about things like that.

Of course.

I was happy. I can't say I was happy, but I was content. I had a good childhood there. I followed them. I had my parents. I always had food. I always had love, I guess, and family. And the people were very nice to us. I did not encounter bad behavior, or anti-Semitism, or anything. And people are surprised to hear that.

Yeah?

Yeah.

Pardon?

I said, people are surprised to hear that because it was Iowa. It was the Midwest. It was--

Well, here in the United States, we all have stereotypes about each other in different parts of the country.

Exactly.

And those are what they are. They're stereotypes.

Exactly. To some extent.

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah, yeah.

And so, again, as we were speaking off camera, every person's story is unique. And so these are the experiences that individual people had, and it's very nice to hear.

Yeah, yeah, that's why I did want to mention that they were very nice to me and my teachers. I have a letter that a teacher wrote, and that I have a little autograph book that they signed. And I had friends, and I loved school.

So this is where you started school? It was in Iowa?

Yeah, I went to school for about three, four months in New York City. That really doesn't count. They put me back into kindergarten. We sang little songs and played games. And I was really beyond that. I had started to read.

And when we moved to Des Moines, I went to a small town. We were 11 children in the class. And I think because of that, I was the best reader in the class, and I was already a step ahead of--

The other kids.

--some of the kids. And I think I learned English immediately.

Well, how interesting because here you are, a child from a different language. And usually, kids adjusted because they're kids, but they do struggle in the beginning. And you didn't have that?

I don't remember that. Really, I don't. Not at all. Not at all. I made friends, and I had my girlfriends. There was one Jewish family on our street, only one. And the others were probably white Protestant WASPs, I guess. Yeah.

When we were speaking off camera, you did mention that you still had friends also in Germany before you left.

One. One little girl because our parents brought us together.

Tell me about her.

I mean, her name is Ursula. As far as I know, she's alive and well. I haven't been in touch with her in about a year or a year and a half now. But our parents brought us together. Her father actually worked for my father at the business that they were in. And I have a picture of us together as children. And after the war, the men were in touch because of the business dealings and reparations.

And what were they doing-- yeah.

Yeah. And Ursula was smaller than I was, and she was learning a little English from the servicemen, the American soldiers. So we wrote in English. And my parents sent her some clothing that I had outgrown because at that time, it was right after the war in Germany. Lost the war, and they were in need. And that's how strongly my father-- the relationship was between these two--

Families.

--families at the time, or the men at any rate.

Well, tell me. Why were they in correspondence about the business? Can you explain that for me?

Yes. Because my father and his family, who owned the business, actually, had to give it up because Jews were not allowed to sell their businesses. And they had to give up the business and come here, and had no gain for it whatsoever. And the business, apparently, was still intact after the war.

Edelhuth and Oppenheim.

Edelmuth.

Edelmuth and Oppenheim.

Edelmuth. Correct, correct. But that was the name of the business. And I think it changed later. They may have sold it, whatever happened. And I think they even asked if my father and my uncle-- and I'm sure the cousins who were really the primary owners because they were the scientists who manufactured the soap.

I think they even asked if they wanted to come back and run the business again. And of course, they wouldn't go back. I mean, my parents would never have gone back. And I can't speak for the others, but they would never have gone back. But that was basically the contact after the war.

And Ursula and I continued as pen pals after.

That's quite amazing, for very few people really maintain relationships with someone they knew when they were six years old or younger throughout their lives.

But it was only because through our fathers that the relationship continued. And we did meet a few times. And as I told you, Freddy, my late husband and I, were in Vienna. And, well, it doesn't seem that long ago, but it was 15, 16 years ago. And I did contact Ursula, that we were going to be in Vienna, and she and her friend came and spend a few days there to meet with us. Yes.

When you were growing up-- well, no, let me go back to the question I had.

OK.

Which is, when you met 15, 16 years ago, that would have been late 1990s, early 2000s in Vienna.

Correct. That is correct.

And you had maintained a contact with Ursula through all those years.

Mm-hmm.

Did you ever discuss the difficult topics with her?

No, no. No. In fact, when she came in the-- well, it was when Herb Alpert was popular. I don't remember. And his Tijuana band. I don't remember what. It was in the 1960s.

So she had come to the States?

And she came alone. I picked her up at that time at JFK Airport. We lived in upper Manhattan at that time. We lived in

the city. My children were born in New York City. And we still lived there. And she came, and she spent a few days with us.

And at that time, I took her to my mother's apartment. My mother was on vacation. But I took her to the apartment because I checked on it. And she saw some little tchotchkes, I would say, and figurines or something in my mother's living room. And she said, "Oh." She said, "I thought your mother lost all her belongings from Germany?"

And I was taken aback that she would even pay attention to that. And I said, "My parents lost everything." I said, "People, friends and relatives gave them items but we came here."

And that was the extent?

And that was the end of it, but it gave me food for thought, that this is what she still-- there was something there that--

So she had done her thinking about it, and you've done your thinking about it, but that's something that comes out?

Mm.

But then there's no elaboration on it?

No, no. I didn't want to-- and she didn't say anything more. But that was the only thing, that there was any even what I would consider political thought or anything like that.

Yeah.

Yeah.

OK, so let's go back to your childhood there in Frankfurt. You're a little child.

Correct.

And the question I'm going to ask now is, in some ways, not fair, but I want to ask it anyway. As a little child, some children will feel what's in the atmosphere. Usually they're a little older, that they know that there are things going on outside of the house that are maybe not so great. I wonder whether or not you did?

No.

You picked up on any kind of tension?

No.

Any nervousness?

No. No. I knew. I was with my parents, and they spoke above me and around me, not to me. I didn't hear anything like that. So I really didn't. I was not aware. And I always say this. Even in the United States, I really wasn't aware. I was very naive. Maybe I was naive, maybe I was just young.

Or protected?

And very protected. And I know that when we moved to Des Moines, the first apartment they took us, the people from the synagogue or from the organization, it wasn't really an apartment. It was a house in a Jewish neighborhood. And we had a room, a bedroom. And my mother was supposed to share the kitchen with the woman who owned the house. And for one thing, that was not for her, to share a kitchen.

And secondly, they had chickens running into the house, out, in and out of the house. And they contacted the organization, and my father-- and it was the first time I saw my mother cry.

Really?

She did. This really was like, she couldn't deal with this, living this way. And my father called and said, we can't stay here. The people are very nice, but we can't live this way. And it's the first time I remember actually seeing my mother cry.

So up until that point, you hadn't seen any signs that she was paying a psychological price--

Correct.

--for all of these changes?

Correct, correct.

Yeah. You said you were born just about when Hitler came to power.

1932, right.

Just before.

Just before, I think '33 was-- yeah.

And we talked earlier that your parents saw the writing on the wall very early on. From what they told you later, can you describe how they were thinking, and the plans they were making, and how it is that you left?

OK, I believe my mother was the first one to say we have to leave. This is hearsay because I don't remember it. I know it from what they have said. My father said, no one will believe this man. He's crazy. No one will believe him. He's a maniac. Who would listen to this? And who would--

So he didn't feel any danger?

Not at the beginning. Not at first. And then gradually, as Jews weren't allowed here, or there, or anywhere, you know, the Nazi flags. I have a picture of myself as a small child with my mother, and you can see a flag from a balcony in the background. And all these things happened. And then my father's brother, younger brother, was a physician in Manhattan.

Right. You mentioned him.

I mentioned him. And he had gotten a job in Mount Sinai Hospital in the late 1920s already and felt Germany was not the place for him to stay, that he had no future there. Well, I guess they had this inflation. They had problems that actually led to the Nazi power.

Right. Economic problems.

Correct, correct. So my uncle Gustav came to America and married an American girl, worked as a doctor at Mount Sinai Hospital, and moved to upper Manhattan. He started out as a pediatrician and then worked as a general practitioner as well because of the Depression and the need. And so he was instrumental. They contacted him, I guess. And he was instrumental in bringing his siblings. I mean, some were already in America. My one uncle came and worked for the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

Wow.

But that's how he got the--

Well, I've had discussions with other people who left Germany in the '30s, and not everyone had a relative to sponsor them.

That's correct.

And when they didn't have a relative to sponsor them, then they had great difficulties.

That's correct. And also, my mother had many cousins. They had family-- the diaspora. They went all over the world. South America, Africa, South Africa.

So there would have been people had it not been for your uncle, your father's brother?

Correct.

There would have been other people that they would have approached, too, in time.

Either people they would have-- now, my grandmother, my mother's mother, was not able to leave Germany.

Why not?

Because she had a brother who was very well-to-do who lived in New York City. But by the time that he realized the importance of trying to help his siblings, they were given numbers. He sponsored them, but they had numbers, and their number had not been reached. And my grandmother and her sister were two of those people. He got his brothers out, but he hadn't been able-- they just never made it.

And my uncle, my mother's older brother, who was in America, had even paid someone to try to get his mother to Cuba because a number of refugees were able to go to Cuba at that time. And the man absconded with the money. I mean, my uncle-- I'm sure, a lot of things like that happened. And so my grandmother tried. She waited on lines. I have letters that she wrote, and I had them translated, in fact. And she didn't get out. And--

What happened to her?

She perished. She was in Thereisenstadt. And from there, they loaded some of the older people onto the death trains. And I think her sister and brother-in-law, they were together, her sister, who was a year older than she was. And she didn't want her sister to go without her. I don't think she was one, and went with her thinking they were going to-- I don't know where, and that was the end.

So they took them to Auschwitz, as far as you know?

As far as I know. And I think this is hearsay. They never even made it to Auschwitz. They didn't survive the trains. They packed them.

Yeah, there were many elderly people who--

Yeah.

Yeah.

So it's a very sad ending for these people.

Yeah, and for your mom.

And for my mom. And I have a letter that I wrote to my grandmother saying, Dear [NON-ENGLISH], I hope I see you soon, something to that effect. And because some of her belongings were sent back to us-- she lived in Berlin at the end of her life in Germany, she, and her sister, and brother-in-law, and my aunt who had converted to Judaism who had not been Jewish, her mother lived in Berlin, her parents.

And she tried to help my grandmother. She would bring them some potatoes and whatever she could get into her pocketbook. And also, took some belongings and hid them so that some of those things came back to my family.

So this aunt was who to you? And what relationship?

My Aunt Hertha who converted to Judaism, whose mother was there? That was my uncle, my mother's older brother, Frederick.

His wife?

Greenwood. His wife.

I see.

His wife. They had one daughter, my cousin Ruth, who I adored, was about five years older than I was. Yeah.

And what happened to him, your uncle Greenwood?

Greenwood lived in New York City. They had come. He was the one who tried to get my mother into Cuba, but couldn't.

Your mother your grandmother?

My grandmother. My mother's mother. Yeah, it's getting a little bit-- that was my uncle.

And his wife stayed in Germany?

No, no, no. Her mother.

His wife's mother stayed in Germany?

Right.

And he tried to write.

Correct. She helped. My mother had two brothers, and the older one lived in New York City.

OK, with his German wife?

With his German wife--

Who had converted.

--who had converted and came with him. And there were several members of the family who had were intermarried not racially, as far as religion was concerned. And the wives all came with them. The wives all stayed with their--

Husbands.

Husbands.

OK.

Mm-hmm.

And the mother of your uncle's wife is the one who helped your grandmother--

Correct.

--in Berlin.

Correct.

And then after the war, whatever few belongings that were, sent them to you.

Yeah, well, she had, I think, died during the war but sent, somehow-- I think there was another daughter. My Aunt Hertha had a sister who was in Germany and survived the war and had some belongings, and sent them not to us but to her sister, to my Aunt Hertha. And then Aunt Hertha gave whatever was from my mother.

Do you do you recall when your mother found out about her own mother?

Yeah, it was very disturbing. Yeah.

Were you in Iowa then?

No, we were back in New York City.

How did she find out?

Through a friend of my grandmother's who survived the camps and the war, who went back to Bielefeld. And that bothered my mother terribly, that some of her friends, my grandmother's friends, survived and went back. And they went back to Germany because they had no place else to go at that time. And there was contact between my mother, and my uncle, and my two uncles. Yeah. And they had the information.

I see, I see. That must have been tough.

And we always thought my grandmother would come after the war, and this is what I was told. When she comes, she'll live with us. It was always that optimism because--

You had no contact, but you didn't know what had happened?

Exactly. I was just going to say that. Nobody was aware. I mean, nobody here was aware of the camps and what was going on. Europeans were aware. The people around there, but--

Yeah. So your father's brother is able to sponsor you.

Correct.

How did your parents leave? Do you remember leaving Germany itself?

Mm-hmm, I do.

Tell me what happened.

They said I cried and screamed on the ship when I waved goodbye to my uncle, to whoever was still down there. And people thought I was leaving my-- I was with my parents, and people who were around said, are those her parents down there? Are you taking her away from her parents? Yeah, so I think that frightened me, maybe. Yeah.

But you don't remember, let's say, the last time you were in the apartment and as you leave the apartment, and get to the get to ship, and so on?

No, I just remember that. And I also remember my parents finding out that Kristallnacht-- we were already in the United States. And neighbors if someone wrote to my parents that the Nazis came for my father because their records weren't quite up to date because it was only a few weeks after we left. And they broke in, and the apartment was empty.

Now, you mentioned earlier that your parents had left-- lost all of their items, everything.

Everything, everything.

Some people that I've talked to would say to me, surprisingly, when we were leaving Germany, as difficult as the Nazi authorities made it for us to leave, they allowed us to ship our goods. They allowed us to ship our goods to the United States.

That's true. Our goods were supposed to be shipped. I have the packing slips. They never came.

Really?

Mm-hmm.

So they were supposed to leave after you did, the goods?

I think even before.

I have pages and pages on onionskin paper, typed pages of all their belongings. Furniture, Persian rugs, crystals, artwork, books, everything.

An inventory?

An inventory. It was packed. It was taken. My mother bought a lot of new things because they thought they could sell them here so that they would have something to live on. And it never came, and my mother waited.

And when we were in Des Moines, they waited, and they came back. And then they were informed after the war that they were destroyed by the American bombers or something. Well, that's nonsense because they should have been sent long before that, so that was--

OK, so it was all lost?

It was all lost, everything. And everything my parents had, linens, furniture, dishes, everything was given to them by relatives, and even the pictures, the photographs because my parents were so happy that they had a baby. And they sent pictures to everybody--

Of you?

Right. And they were returned.

When you were in the United States?

Yes.

That's how you kind of of reconstituted a family history?

Correct. That's correct.

And did you take any toys with you on the boat when you came over?

Ah, the doll. Yes, I did. I had very little, but I had a favorite doll, a beautiful doll.

Did she have a name?

Well, I gave her a name later, but the manufacturer was Kathe Kruse, they called it, and they still make dolls. It's a business in Germany. And I guess a woman named Kathe Kruse started with these dolls. And I called her Dorothy, and it might have been after I saw The Wizard of Oz. I don't remember. But my daughter has the doll. And I did take pictures of her and the gentleman who came from the museum a couple of months ago took pictures of the doll. I had her here, but I didn't want to donate her yet.

I understand that. I understand that, but tell me about the significance of the doll to you. How come she, rather than any other toy, came with you?

Well, first of all, I love dolls. If you see pictures of me, they're always with dolls and doll carriages. It was as though I was born to be a mother. That's the way I was brought up, a wife and a mother, you know?

Right.

And then this doll-- also, my aunt Hertha, the aunt I spoke about, was a wonderful seamstress and made clothing for the doll, and made the same clothing for me, so that I have pictures of myself wearing almost the identical dress made of the same fabric as the doll.

And this is when you were already in the United States because she was in the United States.

No, no.

No, this was still in Germany?

Mm-hm.

Before she left for the US?

Correct. My aunt, and uncle, and cousin came to the United States when we were living in Iowa.

Oh, they came after.

They came after we did, and so did some of my other parents' siblings, and this is one of the reasons my parents wanted to move back to New York City. They missed their family. Nobody wanted to come to the Midwest. It was like the corn and the wheat fields. And although we had a nice life there, they missed their family and siblings, and they wanted me to have family if anything happened to them. There was no one there.

And during World War II, the young men went into the service, and jobs became available in--

--in New York.

--in New York. And apartments became available, and so the family found an apartment for us in Washington Heights

that was called Frankfurt on the Hudson, the area. I don't know if you've ever heard that expression. And so they were with their own people and their family. My father was very attached to his siblings.

So he must have been quite happy to move back?

Me? No.

No, no, no, your father.

Oh, my father, yes, absolutely. My parents were very happy to move back because they felt that was where they belonged.

Yeah. And why not you?

I was very unhappy. It took me about a year to adjust because life was so different. And I had friends that I loved, my school, and I loved my friends. And I was content.

How old were you when you moved?

11.

Ah, you had already spent half of your life almost in Des Moines.

Correct, and we lived in a private house. We had an upstairs little apartment, but it was a private house. We had flowers, and trees, and grass, and we lived near Drake University.

In Des Moines?

In Des Moines. And I took piano lessons at Drake University. My parents couldn't buy a piano, but I went there once a week because I thought I could-- I really couldn't. I had no talent, but I insisted I could play piano.

And it was just a comfortable, nice life and nice for a child to grow up that way. And when we moved to New York City, I was suddenly in this huge class of maybe 35 children and a teacher who never pronounced my name correctly. And it was just concrete, and brick, and an apartment house and the different-- children played differently.

It takes a while to adjust to-- Des Moines might be a city, but it's not the same scale as New York City, and that makes a difference.

And at that time, it was a much smaller city than it is now, I'm sure, yeah.

We've jumped around chronologically a little bit. Do you remember the name of the ship that you came to the United States on?

The New York.

Do you remember what it looked like?

Not really. I had pictures. I donated them to the museum already, so I know it looked like a large ship. I don't really--

Do you remember anything about landing here?

Yes.

Tell me about that.

I remember looking out of the porthole, and I wasn't allowed-- people ran to see the Statue of Liberty, but for some reason my parents said I had to stay in the room until we had to go out. And then I remember standing, looking down at the people waiting for us downstairs, and my father pointed and said, that's your uncle, because I didn't know my uncle. And I remember he was wearing a felt hat, fedora, I guess, and a long overcoat, and he was standing there. And I think he had a taxi waiting to take us up to his apartment.

And my aunt, Roslyn, had lunch for us, and I didn't like what we ate. I know that. It was something I wasn't accustomed to eating. And my cousins-- I met my cousins for the first time, Carol, who's a year younger than I am, and Alice was a baby. And I don't remember ever seeing a baby before that.

So in some ways, it's such a momentous journey at such a political time and sort of getting out by the skin of your teeth because it's so soon before Kristallnacht. And yet when you're describing it it sounds like, well, we come. Our relatives met us, and we had lunch.

Well, this is from my perspective, yes, yes. I'm sure, had I been older, it would have been very different, but--

--this is what stays.

--as a little girl, I remember having a book on the ship with English with pictures. I remember I loved-- it's very unusual, maybe, for a young child, but I loved cauliflower. I know. And I remember seeing the word, the picture and the word.

How do you say it in German, cauliflower?

Blumenkohl, blumenkohl.

Blumenkohl-- by the way, do you still speak German today?

A little, yeah.

Have you ever used it in your adult life?

In Germany. We were in Germany for a few days. We were in Vienna, and of course, my mother lived long enough for me to speak to her. But I think I've lost some of it. I looked something up recently. I googled something recently because I was with friends who were also born in Germany, and none of us could think of the word for corned beef. So I said, I'll find it, and when I went home, I googled it, corned beef in German.

And what is it?

PÃ¶kelfleisch

PÃ¶kelfleisch?

PÃ¶kelfleisch.

And I called them up.

I would never have known known.

No, I had no idea. And I called them up, and they answered the phone. My friend said, hello, and I said, PÃ¶kelfleisch.

And she knew who it was and what it was about?

Yeah, yeah.

When did you become conscious of what had really happened and why it had happened, that you had moved from this nice area apartment in Frankfurt where you had a polka-dot blue room and a lovely doll house to a new country, which was very nice in Des Moines-- but it was so different. It was half a world away. When did that sink in as far as the circumstances of all this.

First of all, let me say, after I lived in New York City again, after the first year, living in Washington Heights as a teenager was very nice because then I began to learn the culture of New York and things that I probably wouldn't have had in the Midwest. So my life did--

--get better.

--did get better, and my attitude and all that got better, yes. And I think as a teenager and when I read The Diary of Anne Frank, that had an impact on me, that I said, oh, my God, that could have been me, it could have been us, just becoming more aware and educated and reading, yeah.

And did your parents ever, then, when you became older, start talking more openly with you about what had gone on in the 30s when you were such a little kid?

No. I don't know why, but no.

So they never really talked--

They went on with their lives, no, no. My mother talked about the wonderful childhood she had, no.

Did they every talk about what they felt--

They were angry. They were-- but they went on with their lives. No, they really didn't.

How did their anger get expressed?

Well, they wouldn't go back to Germany. They didn't want any part of it. They didn't want to see it. They didn't want to go back, and yet they were in touch with people, Gentiles, who they had known from before. They did have contact. They did write.

I know that the woman who was my nanny did not survive the war, and they were very upset. She was very kind and very caring, and they had a good relationship with her.

Did she die naturally or as a--

I don't know. She died during the war. I can't tell you. I don't know. But no, they--

Did they ever go back for a visit?

No, no, no. They felt, I think, it would be too emotional, and they didn't. But they really didn't talk to me. They didn't talk to me about anything of substance ever.

That could be hard.

My mother with very much, children should be seen and not heard, and she was very old-fashioned. She was modern in some ways but old-fashioned in others, that she wanted to raise me the way she had been raised, and we were in a new world, in a different place.

And that does it, yeah. You have to adjust to a new generation.

You do, and as I said, I was a little rebellious because I had my own ideas and my own thoughts and was really anxious to earn my own money so that I could be on my own. Well, I was never really on my own because I got married, but yeah.

But you had your own vision of your life and what it could be and should be that was different from your mother's?

Yes, and I fulfilled some of it. I didn't fulfill everything, but that's, I think, the case with most people.

Yes, yes. I can't imagine any child who wouldn't have a vision of their own life, that it would be unhealthy otherwise. You mentioned, again, off-camera that you yourself had certain feelings towards Germany, and can you tell me what they are and how it is that you decided to go back, to visit, to see things that were there?

Well, I really never went back to visit. We took a tour. My husband wanted to go back to Vienna. He was older when he came. He was 14 when he came, and he, too-- although he had some bad memories, he also had some very good childhood memories and wanted-- he needed closure, and he wanted to see his school and his neighborhood.

And so we took-- as long as Waldheim was president-- I think it was president-- of Austria, I said I won't go to Austria. And once he, I think, retired and someone else was present, I said, now we can go to Austria. And we took a tour that was Austria, Germany, and one of the other countries. I don't remember at the moment. --and Switzerland, Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. So part of this tour was spending, I think, a night in Heidelberg, maybe, and a night in Munich. It was passing through-- and the Black Forrest.

So you never went back to Frankfurt?

No, because I wasn't invited, which is also something I was very angry about because everybody was invited, and my mother was invited and wouldn't go. She didn't want any part of it, but I wrote to them, and requested an invitation, and said I was born there, I lived there for the first six years of my life, and so on and so forth.

By the time-- they said I was too young. I can't be invited yet. I was too young at the time I requested it. They were taking people over 80. Frankfurt had a very large Jewish community, and people were scattered all over the world. And the letter I got was that they weren't up to whatever my age was at the time. Maybe I was 70 at the time. I don't know.

And unless my husband had lived two years or more in Frankfurt-- and my husband never lived in Germany, so that was that. And then suddenly they started to invite me. He was too sick. I couldn't leave him, and I couldn't take him. So I wrote to them, I would love to come, but I can't. Three years in a row I was sent this invitation, and three years in a row I was unable to come.

The year 2013, right after he passed away, I wrote. I said, I would appreciate an invitation to Germany. I'm ready to come. They invited-- they wined and dined the people. They were invited for two weeks. Frankfurt did two weeks. I got a letter back, we have stopped all invitations. And that was the end of it, so I said, I'm not going to pay to go back to a city that-- they wouldn't invite me when I-- and when I requested it, I said my husband isn't that well. I'd like to bring him. I'd like to go.

And really, I think Berlin would be more interesting to see, and I would have gone back to my mother's hometown. And I would have gone to my family graves. I would have seen other things, but at that time, I was angry with them.

Let's take a break so you can have a sip.

So I was under the impression that when you had gone to Europe you had gone everywhere, including where your family was from and so on, and that wasn't the case.

No, never went.

Never went. What do you feel today about Germany?

About current Germany or Germany in the past?

I'd say current Germany.

Current-- I think they have tried very hard to do restitution or give restitution. I think some people just don't approve of that because they think-- they can never make up for what was lost. They just can't. It's a different generation. What was done was done. They can't change it.

And unfortunately I think the whole world has become more anti-Semitic again I don't think Germany-- I don't think the government has, but the people-- it's something that's just spreading, and it's not only Germany. And obviously it's all over, but yeah, I resent what happened in the past, what happened to my family, what happened to millions of others. And when I went-- when I did go by bus through parts of Germany, I said, this is such a beautiful country. How can people be so evil who grew up in these surroundings?

What would you want people to know-- we talked about this before throughout the interview that you can't really become another person when you leave a country and have to adapt to a new environment. You take something of who you were with you. And we were speaking about your parents, and about your father being 50 years old, and how he had to find a job, and the language they spoke with one another, and so on.

What would you want people to know in Germany, today's generation, what it's like to be unwanted and thrown out, let's say, or unwanted and then eventually exterminated for those who didn't make it? But I'm really after the first process of, you are part of this country, you see yourself as part of this country, and then you see you're not wanted, and you have to leave. And what about that is-- how do you describe that to somebody who stays behind, who will never have been exposed to this process?

It's hard. I think it's even hard to conceive. I've tried to explain to Americans who have no understanding of that. How would you feel today at this age, like middle-aged, older Americans, if you suddenly had to move to South America? You didn't know Spanish. You didn't know the customs. You didn't know anyone. Do you ever think of that? You would lose all your comforts and everything you had. How would you adjust, and how would you feel about it? I think I've had that thought.

And I don't think-- I don't think anyone can feel someone else's hurt or feelings and know what they're thinking. And I know it was very hard for my parents, but they forged ahead. And they were proud to be Americans. They considered themselves Americans. And as I said, I wasn't fully aware of what happened until much later because I was very protected as a child, and so I come from a different place.

Now here's a question that's a bit suggestive, and tell me if I'm wrong. But is it also-- is it that you're also angry on behalf of your parents because you were so little, that is, angry with what happened--

--to them.

--to them--

--to them, correct.

--on behalf of them?

I think so. I think so because, in general, I like people, and I think, one-on-one, most people can see eye to eye or get along. But the masses-- I don't know. People can be brainwashed very easily. I see it now with what's going on in the world.

I think you're true. There have even been some psychological studies done that say that when you engage with someone

individually, their behavior is one kind, and you put someone in a crowd, and it's amazing how quickly that person loses their individuality or can lose their individuality.

You're saying it better than I did, but that's my thought. Is there anything else about your experience of coming from Germany to here that we haven't really touched on that you'd want people to know about?

I don't know. There might be something I'll think of tonight when I'm in bed.

That often happens. That often happens.

Yeah, but I really-- right now I don't know. As I said, I came. I think I adjusted pretty well. I think I was very shy for a long time because I was different, and the real me didn't--

--come out.

--come out. I think I had thoughts and opinions and didn't know whether I could say them or should save them, and I was always told to be polite. And we're refugees, and we have to set a good example. And we can't this, and we can't that, and we can't do that. And so that it took me a while to be able to express myself and be myself.

When do you think that happened?

Well, some of it happened after I got married.

Well, that's a very nice compliment to marriage.

Yes, after I was on my own I had to learn, and I went to work very young. And my parents were very upset because I left college, and I didn't continue because I wanted to earn money. And I ended up working for an attorney, and I had gone-- I was not prepared to do secretarial work at all. I had taken academic classes, and I babysat for this family. And I opened up and told them how unhappy I was being at home and living the way I lived, and he said, well, come to work for me. I'll teach you law, and you'll become a legal secretary.

And I came home, and I said to my parents, I'm leaving school. And I'm taking a course in steno and a course in typing. I didn't know any of that, and I did. I did. And he called me one day and said, are you finished with your classes? And I said, no. He said, come in anyway, and so I learned to speak with professional people. And he sent me to court to answer the court calendar and whatever it is that I learned, and that helped me grow up.

It helped you become independent. OK, let's break.

So we heard that your daughter will be bringing the doll that you took with you from Germany for us to be able to see and maybe to film later on. But at this point, I'm going to conclude the interview that we've just had with the words, this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Marianne Solomon Berg on July 15, 2015 in Monroe Township, New Jersey, and we're going to now start with a retelling of your husband's story.

And the first question I will ask-- because he's not here to share it with us himself and because he was one of the 50 children that was brought over, we'd like to learn a little bit about his life from you. So the very--

OK, I'll do my best.

Yeah, so before we even show any pictures of him, just let's talk a little bit about how you met Freddy. How old were you? How old was he? Where did you meet? How did you get to be together?

I was 18, just shortly before my 19th birthday. He was 26. He was eight years older than I was. He was a Navy veteran at the time, and I just started working--

--at this attorney's office?

--at the attorney's office, correct. And he was working at that time as well. I don't remember exactly what he did, but we were introduced, actually. I was working, and one of the girls who was working for an accountant in the office actually met him. And she said that they were at a dance in Brooklyn, but he didn't live in Brooklyn.

And he went with friends, but they went outside because they weren't enjoying themselves. And she was outside with her friend, and he didn't seem interested in her or her friend. And he said he'd really like to meet a girl who spoke German. He was from Vienna, Austria, and he said he'd like to bring a girl home to his parents.

So I had been dating a boy who graduated from City College and had gotten his first job in Ohio and was leaving, and she knew that. So she said, I know a girl, but she's very young. And her parents are very strict, and I don't know whether she would be interested in meeting you. But he gave her his phone number. This girl's name was Blanche, and he gave her his phone number and said, well, let her call me if she's interested. She didn't want to give my number.

And I said, well, you could call the house. I said I'd be interested. If you thought he was nice, I would meet him. And she called and spoke to who became my mother-in-law and said, Freddy gave me this number, and I want to give you the number of someone. He'll know what it's about. And he did call me, and we did get together.

And that's how it was?

That's how it was.

So you met in New York City?

We met in New York City. Well, he lived up in-- not far from me at the time.

Oh, he did? Oh, so he wasn't from Brooklyn. He was from Washington Heights, too?

No, he was. He had lived in Brooklyn before that and had friends there. That's why he went, yeah.

And how long did you date before you married?

Oh, it took a long time, a long time. We were married a year and a half later because I wasn't really ready. I liked dating, yeah.

And what was your-- what's the date of your marriage?

June 7, 1953.

And what's Freddy's full name?

Alfred Berg.

And his date of birth?

It is October 16, 1924.

And he was from Vienna, Austria?

Born in Vienna, Austria. And so why don't we hold up his picture right now?

And this is little baby Freddy.

Can you focus on baby Freddy?

And they held him up. My mother-in-law said he wasn't really steady on his feet, but someone behind him had a hand on his back.

Let me point this.

He's going to try.

OK, nice baby.

And how old was he? Do you know about how old he was when this picture was taken?

Probably about a year or a little more?

But he never changed. People always looked at this picture and said, Freddy looks the same. He never changed.

You got it? OK, let's hold up the next Freddy that you've got. And is this Friday when you got to know him?

Well, it was a little before. He was in the Navy. He was not in the Navy. I met him later. But he was a cute sailor, so I--

And so this is him at about age 20-something?

Maybe 20, maybe 19, 20, and he was 26 when I met him.

So this is-- got it? OK. So let's talk a little bit about Freddy. What was his-- what is his story? So tell us a little bit about Freddy's story.

Now, I know his story pretty well because we were married for 60 years. Excuse me. And well, if you want to start with-- his parents were born in Poland, and my mother-in-law came to Vienna with her mother and siblings when she was a young girl.

And my father-in-law came after World War I. He was also a German soldier during World War I who was an orphan and only had cousins but no immediate family, and his commanding officer said, Berg. You like music. You like to dance. Go to Vienna. There's a large Jewish community. You'll be happy there.

And that's where he met my mother-in-law, and Freddy was born a year after they were married. And I think they were married in '23. He was born in '24. And then he had a younger sister, Charlotte, who was six years younger, and he had, I think, a happy childhood, a lot cousins, aunts, and uncles. Most of them perished.

What was his father's business? How did the father support--

Father was a tailor. He became an apprentice tailor when he was about 12 years old.

Freddy did?

His father.

Oh, his father did.

Oh, Freddy was a child.

Oh, I'm sorry, yes.

Yeah, no, no, no. My father-in-law's father died when my father-in-law was very young, and the mother was not well. And she gave him to a family before his bar mitzvah to learn tailoring, and he was an apprentice tailor. And so when he went to Vienna my mother-in-law's brother had a business, and I think my father-in-law worked with him as a tailor. That's what he did.

And I can tell you an interesting story. This is about my father-in-law. Kristallnacht, they picked up the Jewish men and took them to the police precinct there, and they shaved my father's head. And they had him there, and one of the policemen came in and said to them, why are you holding this man? And they said, well, he's a Jew. We picked him up. And the policeman said, he's a very good man. He doesn't charge me for sewing the buttons on my uniform. Let him go.

So I think that's an interesting piece of information, yeah. And when my mother-in-law heard about a Mr. Kraus who came to rescue the children, the 50 children.

Mr. Kraus was who? So that people will--

Mr. Kraus was-- this is what I wanted to say-- a very wealthy attorney from Philadelphia who wanted to help get children out of Nazi Germany or Austria, and he was advised to go to Austria, that it would be easier to rescue the children from there, from Vienna. And it was amazing. What he was able to do was just amazing.

But my mother-in-law heard about this and registered my sister-in-law. The children had to be between the ages of, I believe, 3 and 13. Freddy was 14, but he went with the family to help. I think he had learned a little English in school and helped with the language, and my sister-in-law, Charlotte, was one of the children. They had 25 boys and 25 girls chosen for this, and Charlotte was one of the girls. And Freddy was learning farming. He was supposed to go to Palestine to learn agriculture.

And one of the little boys who was chosen for this trip to America with Mr and Mrs. Kraus became ill in the last minute. It was shortly before the trip. And for some reason they remembered Freddy, and instead of going back into their records of a few hundred children, they went to my in-laws. And they said, we remember your son. He was a year older than the others, over the age limit. He was 14. And do you think you would send him to American, and would he be willing to go with his little sister?

And they said, of course, and Freddy remembers that they called him out of his classroom. He was in school. And they said, would you like to go to America with your sister next week or in two weeks, whatever? It happened very quickly. And that's how he ended up on this journey.

And did you know of the details of the process of how children were chosen and what he remembers of that journey, of everything that was going on before he got the spot?

Well, most of them did have-- most of the parent most of the parents did already have affidavits or visas, whatever they needed. They also had-- they all had numbers, and they were all waiting to come to America. And they had-- I know that my in-laws had second cousins, people here, who they could contact and ask if the children could live with them. Very few of the children had nowhere to go and no one to be with. And I know Mr. and Mrs. Kraus took in one or two of the children into their home, but most of them did have someone to go to.

So that meant this news would go to the parents in Austria or in Germany, but in Austria--

No Germany at all. This was Vienna.

Just in Austria? Just Vienna?

Strictly Vienna.

They already knew that when they agreed to send their child that their child was going to go to a particular family--

Correct, that is correct.

--who had been identified?

That is correct. And Freddy went to a family in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Charlotte went to relatives in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn. And the family in Jersey City had a car, and every Sunday they took Freddy to visit his sister. And this happened for about half a year, and fortunately my in-laws were able to come to America in December of that year, 1939. They came in '39.

So their expectation was that they're going to follow their children?

Correct, but their hope was-- it wasn't even an expectation because Hitler had invaded Vienna, and it was very bad. And some people never came, and my mother-in-law lost some of her siblings. My husband's cousins-- some of them never got out of Vienna.

So within a year, however, his parents come to the United States.

And they were reunited, so they were just very fortunate as a family to be together, yeah.

Did you know his mother? Did you get to know--

Oh, yeah, absolutely, yeah.

What did they tell you about their lives in Austria before the Anschluss and after?

They really didn't speak about it that much. My mother-in-law wasn't that well. I think she had several heart attacks. She was not a healthy woman, and I think this was all very hard on her, giving up her children this way and not knowing for sure that she would see them again. And my sister-in-law was so distraught that she couldn't eat. My mother-in-law didn't even recognize her six months later when she saw her. She looked for her in the crowd and said, where's Charlotte? Where's my little one?

And Charlotte always said the people were very nice to her that she lived with, but she missed her mother. And she couldn't understand why her mother gave her away, and she said it wasn't until she was older that she realized it was like throwing a child out of a burning building. Those are my sister-in-law's words. My sister-in-law passed away, unfortunately, quite young, before she was 70.

Oh, really?

Yeah, yeah. And my husband was-- he was always optimistic. He was not bitter. It just wasn't his nature, unless someone did something to him personally, very personally. And he had friends also. He lived in Brighton Beach as a teenager, and he had a lot of friends. And a few of them are still living. His best friend is still living, and he was happiest when he was with those friends. We had a lot of friends over the years, his, mine, and ours, but he was the happiest when he was with his old teenage friends, yeah.

What did he talk about Mr. And Mrs. Kraus? Did he ever have an impression of them?

No, no. He really hardly knew them. He just accepted-- when they came to America, the children were all sent to a camp in Pennsylvania to learn English and to Americanize a little bit. They spent the month of June, I think, in the camp before the campers came in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, and then the families took them, picked them up from there.

And he had one and he was very close with who lived in Chicago, his mother's sister who had come earlier who had no children, and she adored Freddy. Freddy was her favorite. But he really-- I don't know. He worked. He had various jobs after the Navy, and he always took an interest in finance. He was very interested in stocks, and money, and finance, and he always said, that's the way--

--to make money.

--to make money. And he was good in math, and the whole thing interested him, business. And so after we were married he had about $900 that he wanted to invest. His parents really had nothing.

My father-in-law worked for 3G-- it was a factory, made suits, men's suits. And my mother-in-law refused to work. She's the only refugee woman that I know who never had a job outside of the home. She said, I have to take care of Charlotte. I can't work. And they sent Freddy to work. He really helped his parents. But it was what it was.

But he took an interest in finance, and he decided-- he had read about mutual funds. He read the paper a great deal, and he called up-- there was a company called First Investors Corporation, and he called someone up and said, I have a few dollars I'd like to invest. And a young man came to our house at that time, and they spoke. And he invested the money. And then he said, we're opening a new office in Herald Square, and maybe you'd like to work for us part-time.

And Freddy said OK, and he went there, and he learned the business. And so for a number of years he sold funds part-time because he was in the notions and ribbon business, something entirely different. And he got so involved, and they offered him a job-- they were opening another office-- as assistant manager of that office, and we talked about it. And I felt that he would be better off learning the full business and becoming a stockbroker, and he took classes.

And he looked for a job and applied for a job, and it wasn't like today where you needed the degree in finance. And he did it. He became a stockbroker. He got all his licenses, and that's what he did for the rest of his life.

What happened with the first money that was invested in mutual funds?

Oh, it grew.

Did he talk much about Austria when he was with you?

Yes, he had a very-- he wanted to go back to see and see his school and his house, and he showed me where he picnicked and where he swam in the Danube and did the things naughty boys do. And he remembered the-- we went into a shoe store. He said, my mother used to buy shoes for me here, and we bought ice cream there. And it was good for him, and he had a nice young life, actually. Until Hitler came to power, he also had a very nice childhood and life.

So were there any incidents that he would remember from after Hitler coming to power and--

Only one, that some boys beat him up, and ran after him, and called him Jew, and beat him up, and the incidents where his father was--

--arrested.

--arrested. And at one time they tried to hide him, but somehow he always managed to be free. And they were able to come.

Was the significance of being amongst these children, being on that list-- was that ever something that was talked about, what had it been like had there been-- what would have it been had there not been the Krauses?

No, no. This was his life. This is the way it was, and about the Krauses-- now, he didn't have direct contact, apparently, with them, but Mr. Kraus had a friend named Louis Levine, who's also mentioned in the book. And Mr. Levine lived in New York City, Mr. Levine. Mr. And Mrs. Levine came to our wedding. They gave us a $25 bond. I have it in writing. And whenever they needed a larger apartment or needed anything, my mother-in-law would say, Freddy, call Mr. Levine. So Mr. Levine was the branch of the family that took care of the children who needed something in New York or the family.

So it was no just bringing them over.

There was a follow-up.

There was a follow-up, and it was kind of being part of their lives for however long they needed him?

Well, I am under that impression. The family, Mr Kraus' family who-- I met some of them and the grandson-in-law, Steve Pressmen, who brought all this to the public. They didn't seem to know that. They thought that-- when the Krauses came home, they never talked about it again, and that was the end of it.

But my husband kept a diary while he was in the Navy, and I read it recently. After he passed away, I read the diary, and one of the pages said, I was very worried about my parents, that they can manage, that they have enough money, because they always depended on him to help because he was the big son. And Charlotte was the little girl who wasn't--

And then he wrote on one page, everything is good because Kraus-- he didn't like Mr. Kraus. Kraus sent some money to my parents. Now, this was during the war. This was a number of years after this, so somehow, maybe, they contacted Mr. Levine, and he called the Krauses. Maybe they contacted the Krauses directly. I don't know. I don't know.

Tell me a little bit about Freddy's life when he came here and then how it came to be that he was in the military, the US military.

He was drafted. He was drafted. That's all. The boys were drafted, and he became a citizen while he was-- see, once they were in the military they had to be citizens, so they did that very quickly. And he became a citizen, I think, in Ventura, California. He was stationed in California. He loved it. He loved the girls. He had a wonderful time. He was a sailor. He was cute.

Now, I didn't know him because I was really still a child. The eight years made a big difference at that time. If he was 18, I was 10. That made a big difference. And but he was not unhappy.

You mean about his military life?

About anything because I read the diary. He was sent to Okinawa. The war actually ended just before he got there, and he told me-- the one thing he told me about was a hurricane while they were there. They built the Quonset huts, and they were almost blown over. They built the Quonset huts for the Marines because he was in the Seabees, and the Seabees were Construction Battalion. That's what Seabee stood for. And so they built Quonset huts, and they were--

And he said that sometimes they picked on him, some of the, maybe, southern sailors and people who didn't know--

And they picked up on him because--

--Jews.

Oh, because he was a Jew.

Because of his religion. Because he was a Jew. And he said there were services on Friday nights for the few Jewish sailors who were there, and he would-- they would give them candy and cookies, and he would bring it back and give it to the other sailors. And that's how they came around to treating him well. So I remember that.

It speaks of a particular nature, very good-natured, it sounds like he was.

So that's what he told me, and then things became better in that area. And one of the guys always protected him.

Did you maintain contact with the Krauses as you started your own family and--

We had no contact with the Krauses, none whatsoever.

Or with Mr Levine after your wedding?

I think maybe Freddy. I think maybe his parents wanted to move again and said, call Mr. Levine. I always remember that, call Mr. Levine. But I don't think so. I remember meeting him. I could picture him. But not that I know of, and certainly not with the Kraus family. I really didn't know about the Krauses, except that I saw the few pictures because they were in the newspaper. And now I'm very friendly with one of the "boys" who was on that-- I don't know if you had the name Paul Beller, B-E-L-L-E-R. Paul lives here in this area.

And he was one of the children?

And he was one of the children. And I don't know if this is pertinent, but--

Let's cut the camera a little bit.

We're rolling.

So Paul Beller speaks about his experiences?

Oh, yes, yes. He was one of the 50 children, and he's very vocal, and he likes to speak. And Paul is about a year older than I am, so we're-- and he lives in this area. Sorry.

Yeah. Let's cut it second.

Rolling.

OK, we're rolling.

So you're talking about Mr. Beller. Is that right?

Correct, Mr. Beller.

Who was one of the 50 children?

Correct.

Now, when did he enter your lives?

Oh, he entered my life long before I knew any of this.

Oh, really?

I had a very close friend in Washington Heights named Leila. Leila had a brother named Harold, one year older. Harold had a best friend named Paul. When Freddy showed me-- when I was dating Freddy and he took me to his house for the first time, he showed me the newspaper spread of the 50 children, and I looked at the children. And I said, that looks just like Harold's friend Paul, so that's how far back I go with Paul, since I was about 12, maybe, 11, 12 years old.

And when I spoke to Harold-- meanwhile Harold-- and later, years later, Harold married Evelyn, and I became very close with them as well. And I said to him, was Paul Beller from Vienna? And he said, yes. I said, that's it. That's him.

And the children had a 30th anniversary party for Harold and Evelyn, and the Bellers were invited. And we spoke, and Freddy and Paul were introduced to each other. They didn't know each other because Paul was a younger child, and Freddy was, as I said, 14 and wasn't interested in the little boys.

So in some ways this also tells me that once the-- there was never anything in the group that made it cohesive where they stayed in touch afterwards?

No, he had no contact with the children.

With the other 49 children.

Nor did my sister-in-law. Nor did my sister-in-law.

So when did the 50 children realize that they're one of 50 children? Was it-- excuse me-- when the book was published?

No, no. First of all, he always knew it, but they had a reunion in 2003, maybe, in Philadelphia because the Jewish center, the synagogue that the Krauses belonged to, somehow got this information and started to take an interest in contacting the "children." And they had a reunion, and we went.

I see.

And they showed us Philadelphia, and we stayed in a hotel. And it was lovely. They had a dinner, and the press was there, the local press there. And it was very lovely. But Freddy said it's too little too late. He wasn't that interested anymore. He wasn't that well at the time. I said, let's go.

I see. I see.

And a lot of them were not-- they couldn't contact everyone, and a lot of them also were not interested or couldn't travel that far, didn't want to. But we went, and every so often we were together with the Bellers through the Franks, through our other friends. And they lived in Baltimore at the time, and they moved to this area about six years ago, seven years ago.

So since that Philadelphia meeting-- that sounds like it was the first time that there was any bringing back together of these children.

Correct. That's correct.

Has there been any subsequent such meeting?

No, not until Steve Pressmen--

--wrote the book.

--took an interest. And, well, he did the documentary first, and then he wrote the book, yeah.

And then people were interviewed for it?

Yes, and also, after the documentary-- now, Freddy couldn't be interviewed because he had had a stroke and wasn't well enough, so that's when Steve Pressman asked me, can you answer some questions? And I said, I'll do my best, and that's when they took an interest in me.

And we were invited-- well, first of all, the museum invited people for a showing of the documentary, and Lori and her husband, Bill, my daughter, Lori, and her husband, Bill, ended up going because we couldn't go. And they said, your children can go, and then about a month after my husband passed away there was a reception for one of the Pressman-- one of the Kraus grandsons, Peter Kraus, the museum had, and we were invited to that. And I called up, and I said, my husband just passed away. Can I come and bring my children? And they said yes, of course.

So Lori came and my son, Dan, and we went. That was at the Plaza Hotel. It was lovely. And so we attended that, and it was interesting.

What is there--

But there were only two-- I just want to say, only two of the children were able to come.

Oh, really? To the actual--

To that, to the Plaza, to that dinner, yeah.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add about your husband's story?

Nothing that I can think of, really, but it was really very traumatic leaving your parents, and not knowing whether you'd see them, and having your parents be willing to send you, I think. But he just accepted that as part of his-- that was part of his life, and my sister-in-law didn't speak-- her children-- I have a niece and nephew, and they said they can understand.

They didn't even know that Mr. Kraus existed. Charlotte never spoke about him. She only said they came to America, they went to a camp, then they went to live with Aunt Sophie. It was like, and then the parents came, and they never questioned anything more. And she didn't talk about it.

Could it be-- do they have a reason why? Do they know why she never would have talked?

No, no. They were a little upset. They said, oh, we would have honored-- my father was so active at the synagogue in North Woodmere on Long Island. They would have honored Mr. Kraus. They would have done something. But they didn't even realize. They weren't aware that this was a man who did this.

Well, let's wrap up, then, with the end of Freddy's life. Tell me, when did he pass? Can you give me the--

Yes, September 16, 2013.

So just under two years ago he passed away?

Correct.

So from 1924 to 2013.

Correct. He was-- yeah.

We'll conclude that-- it's not so much an interview as a retelling right now about Alfred Berg. And let's cut the camera for a second.

And we're rolling.

So now we're going back a little bit to the interview we had with you, and you mentioned during it that you took one toy with you on the boat when you left Germany. And that was your doll.

That's the one I-- I don't know if there was anything else. I have no idea, probably not. But this is the doll--

This is the doll.

--that survived.

This is Dorothy.

Dorothy, but at that time, she wasn't a German Dorothy. I don't know if she had a name. I think when I saw The Wizard of Oz I gave her that name. I'm not sure.

And so why is it that she ended up still being here all these years?

Well, first of all, I love dolls. I still like dolls. And I played with dolls a lot, but I think I didn't really play with this one. I think I just liked having her because when I was very small I got a [INAUDIBLE] doll, which was a rubber baby that I could feed, and she would-- yeah. And it seemed more realistic to me, but I just liked having this doll more than playing with her.

And so she lasted. I always kept it. My mother gave a lot of my toys away later on because I didn't give anything-- I would have kept everything forever, and she gave them to relatives with younger children. And somehow this one survived. This baby survived.

And the dress-- is that the dress that your aunt made for her?

Correct, my aunt Hertha, who I spoke of earlier, was a wonderful, wonderful seamstress. I have pillows she made. I have other things that she made as well, and her workmanship was superb, even the snaps, and the lining, and everything she did. And she makes some clothing for me. She made clothing later on in life from my daughter, Lori, and she made this dress. And I had a similar dress made out of the same fabric.

And there there's some--

Probably some other clothing. And this came, probably, with the doll, a little pencil case from Germany.

That looks very much like a European--

It's from Germany, definitely, and the slippers, of course, and I don't know if I can reach.

Let's hold on just a second. I'm going to cross the lens for a second and reach over, and you can show some of these.

That's the skirt.

So these are some of the clothes you had for her?

Yes, and I would change her clothes every so often. This was a skirt. It has some pleats in it. And this is typical of skirts that little girls wore with the straps and this, and then she had an overcoat that the hat goes with.

And this is all stuff that came with her from Germany?

It came all from Germany, made in Germany. They don't do work like this anymore. Look at the buttons and the lining. Everything is there, intact. And the blouse-- this was the blouse.

Oh, that's just darling.

The blouse, beautiful things, and two little aprons because we all wore aprons. I wore an apron when I came home from work. First thing I did was put an apron on.

Well, she's survived a lot.

She survived a lot.

Thank you for sharing Dorothy with us.

You're very welcome. I'm glad I was able to do that.

OK, thanks again.