

Marianne Salmon Berg

July 15, 2015

RG-50.030*0820

Abstract

This interview is about Marianne Berg and her husband, Alfred (Freddy) Berg who passed away September 16, 2013. Marianne Salmon Berg was born August 26, 1932 in Frankfurt, Germany and was an only child. Her father worked as an outside salesman for the family soap manufacturing business. Marianne remembers her apartment where all the rooms were off the hexagon-shaped hallway and the wallpaper in her room was baby blue with white polka dots with a matching dollhouse. They had a housekeeper and a nanny. They spoke German at home in Germany and later in the US. Her father's younger brother was a physician at Mt. Sinai in New York and sponsored Marianne and her parents to immigrate to the US. They were unable to get her mother's mother out of Germany so she died in Auschwitz. They left by ship shortly after Marianne's 6th birthday. She recalled crying while holding her favorite doll (which she shows at the end of the interview). They had packed up all their belongings plus merchandise they bought to sell in the US but the shipment never arrived so relatives gave them some items. Her father was unable to find a job in New York so a Jewish organization sent them to Des Moines, Iowa where Marianne had a happy childhood. Marianne had a childhood friend in Germany, Ersula, who she corresponded with and met periodically in New York and Vienna. Marianne's mother missed her relatives in New York so they moved to Washington Heights in Manhattan when Marianne was eleven. It took a year for Marianne to get accustomed to the new children, new games and classrooms with more pupils. She started college and worked for an attorney who asked her to work for him so she did so and took classes to prepare her for the work. Her parents were too angry with Germany to return but Marianne and Freddy took a tour about 15 years ago to Austria, Germany and Switzerland. She would not visit Frankfurt as was not formally invited.

Alfred (Freddy) Berg was born October 16, 1924 in Vienna. His parents moved to Vienna from Poland and were married in 1923. His sister, Charlotte, was born after Freddy. His father, who was a tailor, was taken to the Police Precinct on Kristallnacht but, luckily, knew a policeman who had him released. He was 14 when he arrived in the US with a group of 25 boys and 25 girls including his sister, Charlotte. After attending camp to learn English, Freddy was sent to a family in Brighton Beach and Charlotte to Jersey City and every Sunday he was driven to see his sister. His parents arrived in '39. After serving in the Navy, he was 26 and met Marianne through mutual friends when she was 19 and they married on June 7, 1953. Marianne shows a baby photo of Freddy and one of him when he was 19 or 20 in the Navy. After they married, Freddy took classes and applied for a job as stockbroker and got licensed and that became his profession. Mr. and Mrs. Krauss had gathered the 50 children from Europe and later their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Louie Levin helped the children and their families. The Krauses organized

a reunion for the children and their families in 2003 for a reunion in Philadelphia which Marianne and Freddy attended. Steve Pressman did a documentary and wrote a book about the children and completed interviews about them. Freddy could not be interviewed as he had a stroke.

Summary

00:00 The interview is about Marianne and her husband. There are similarities and differences between the two. He passed away so Marianne is doing this interview in his memory. She was born August 26, 1932 in Frankfurt, Germany as Marianne Salmon and was named after her father's sister who passed before she was born. Marianne was an only child. Her father was born December 25, 1887 and her mother was born May 31, 1899 so they were 12 years apart. Her father was 39 when he married and 45 when Marianne was born and her mother was 33 which was old for that time. Her mother was 27 at marriage and had many miscarriages. Hitler came into power shortly after Marianne's birth so they did not want more children. They thought of leaving Germany as they saw the handwriting on the wall. Her father said that no one would believe the maniac; that he would go away. Her father was born in Wiesbaden near Frankfurt in a family of nine children and he was the second youngest. In his early years he was raised by his father's mother who lived with the family and helped with the children. There were five boys and four girls as all survived. There were few cousins as only two survived; one came to the US. It was the father's youngest brother who practiced medicine at Mt. Sinai in New York.

05:00 He married and brought his siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews which he sponsored. Marianne's father was Joseph Salmon. There is a book of the family tree of the mother's family in Wiesbaden. Both parents' families had lived in Germany for generations. Her father's family was in the butcher business. They had chickens which caused him to have an aversion to chickens. Chickens would run around his house without their heads. He would not let Marianne's mother cook poultry as he did not want to smell it. Her father served in the German Army during World War I and was awarded the Iron Cross. He came from a kosher orthodox Jewish family. His older brother was also in the Army. His younger brothers came to the US early so did not serve. The brother who brought them over was in the German Army. His parents passed away so Marianne never knew them. They were butchers and made sausages. Her father's uncle (grandma's brother) had a successful soap manufacturing business in Frankfurt. Her father and his brother were taken into the business as outside salesmen. The uncle's two sons were more educated and manufactured the soap for institutions. The company was called, "Edelmuth and Oppenheim." She knew the sons as they came to America. One cousin married her mother's first cousin. Her mother's name was Hildegard Gruenwald and called herself, "Hilda." She was from Bielefeld in Westphalia. Marianne knew her mother's mother but she did not survive the war.

- 10:00 Her grandfather had passed way. She is in contact with her two cousins. Marianne's maintenance man goes to Pyrzyce (?), Poland (which is on the German/Polish border) every year and visits his uncle there. Marianne's mother has two brothers in Bielefeld. They changed their name from Gruenwald to Greenwald. The younger brother was in the Underground in Palestine and has remained there. In the 30s he emigrated from Italy as the Fascists were active. He and his girlfriend boarded a Greek ship to Palestine and he said he would marry her when they arrived and so they did. He was a Zionist which saved his life. Marianne visited him once and he visited her many times. Marianne's mother's family were in the cattle business like many other German Jews. Her father's two older sisters were spinsters and had a corset business in Bielefeld. The older sister was 20 years older than the oldest brother. Her grandmother was close in age to her father's sister. Her grandma bought her corsets there and saw Marianne's mother riding her bicycle. She was pretty so made the match of Marianne with her son. Therefore, Marianne's parents met through the corset business. Marianne has few memories of Frankfurt. Her grandma visited her on her sixth birthday.
- 15:00 They came to the US two months later. Marianne remembers her room and the layout of the apartment in Frankfurt. They had a terrace. You walked into the hexagon shaped hallway and the rooms were off of it. The wallpaper in her room was baby blue with white polka dots and she had a dollhouse decorated with the wallpaper. When she and her husband visited the Doll Museum in Munich, Marianne looked for her dollhouse as all their belongings were confiscated. Her parents had a bedroom with a bathroom and there was a bathroom off the entryway. The toilets flushed with a chain. They had help at home. Her father said he was poor when growing up and the help lived upstairs. When Marianne was young, Jews could not have help under a certain age; they had to be over the age of 50 or 45. There was a housekeeper and her nanny. Her family had rooms to rent. One was for Mr. and Mrs. Martin and she called Mrs. Martin, "Tante Martin." She did not know until later that she was her nanny. Her mother called Mrs. Martin, "Else." She loved her nanny who took her to play with her nephews. They played with a tiny tin train and she fell and cut her lip and still has the scar. They rushed her to the doctor and she was bandaged so had to use a sippy cup. The family spoke German at home in Germany and in the US. Her father died at 75 when her mother was 63 and her mother lived until 87 in 1963. Marianne's children only picked up a few German words.
- 20:00 When her mother was in her late 80s, she spoke German again. Her parents wrote to her in camp a few years after their arrival and their English was very good. They took lessons and were proud to be Americans. They became citizens as soon as possible. Marianne has her own citizenship papers although she automatically became a citizen through her parents. They wanted her to have her own papers. They spoke English and went to work. They thought FDR was their savior. They lived in Iowa as her father could not find a job in NY. He was older, his language was not so good and had been a

salesman. Although they had relatives here, it was the Depression and no one had a job waiting for them. He went to a Jewish organization and said he had to work and would go anywhere in the US. They sent the family to Des Moines, Iowa and he found a job for Yaakov (?) Brothers in shipping and receiving and did bookkeeping. They were there over five years. She does not know if her father had problems but she was content and had a good childhood. She had parents, love, food, family and people were nice to her. There was no bad behavior or anti-Semitism. People were surprised to hear that the people in Iowa, the Midwest were so nice. Her teachers were nice to her. She has an autograph book they signed. She had friends and loved school.

25:00 They moved to New York City where she was first placed in kindergarten for three or four months. She was beyond that as had started to read. There were eleven children in the class in Des Moines where she was the best reader and ahead of some of the children. She had learned English immediately. She did not struggle. There was one Jewish family on their street in Des Moines. The others were Protestant, WASPS. Marianne had a girlfriend back in Germany who she met through their parents. Her name was Ersula. She thinks Ersula is alive and well but has not been in touch for a year. Ersula's father worked for her father's business. She has a picture of her and Ersula from when they were children. After the war their fathers were in touch. Ersula was smaller than Marianne and learned English from an American serviceman. Marianne and Ersula wrote to each other and Marianne's parents sent Ersula her outgrown clothes. The men had a strong friendship. They corresponded about the business. Marianne's father's family had to give up their business as Jews could not own it. Ersula's father came here after the war. The business might have been sold. The owners asked Marianne's father and cousins to return but they refused. Marianne and Ersula continued as pen pals. Their fathers' relationship continued and they saw each other a few times. She and Freddy, her late husband, visited Vienna about 15 or 16 years ago in the late 90s. They contacted Ersula and her friend and they paid them a visit in Vienna

30:00 Marianne never discussed difficult topics with Ersula. Ersula came in the 60s to see the Herb Albert Tijuana Brass Band so she picked her up at JFK airport. She was living in New York City and her children were born there. Ersula came and spent a few days with then and she took her to her mother's apartment. Her mother was on vacation. Ersula saw the tchotchkes in her mother's living room and questioned her as though all was lost. Marianne explained that people gave her the items. During her childhood in Frankfurt, Marianne did not feel tense. Her parents spoke above or around her so she was not aware of stress nor in the US. Perhaps she is naïve and was protected. They moved to Des Moines where the Jewish organization placed them in a bedroom in a Jewish home with a shared kitchen. Her mother did not like the arrangement as chickens ran in and out of the house and she cried. Her father called the organization as they could not live there. Her mother wanted to leave Germany and her father said that Hitler is crazy

and no one will listen to him. He thought him a maniac but gradually Jews were prohibited and Nazi flags were displayed. Her father's younger brother became a physician in the late 20s at Mt. Sinai in Manhattan as though there was no future for him in Germany.

35:00 Inflation led to Nazi problems. The brother got married and moved to upper Manhattan. He went from pediatrics to being a general practitioner as that was needed during the Depression. He was instrumental in bringing relatives to the US. One worked for the St. Louis World Fair in 1934. Marianne's mother had relatives in the Diaspora – in South America and South Africa. Her mother's mother could not leave Germany as the well-to-do brother in New York City sponsored the siblings and their numbers were reached but not the mother's. Her mother's oldest brother paid someone to get his mother to Cuba and the man absconded with the money. The grandmother wrote that she waited on lines and was deported to Theresienstadt where her older sister and brother-in-law were loaded on a death train. She did not want her sister to go without her so she went with them to Auschwitz on the packed train and perished. It was a sad ending. They wrote a letter to the grandmother hoping to see her soon. Some of her belongings were returned. The grandmother lived in Berlin and a non-Jewish aunt tried to help her. Some pots and belongings were returned. Aunt Hertha, Uncle Frederick Greenwood's wife, converted to Judaism. They had a daughter, Cousin Ruth, who Marianne adored. Ruth was five years older than her. Uncle Frederick lived in New York City and tried to get the grandmother to Cuba. His wife's mother in Germany helped. Marianne's mother had two brothers – one in New York City who helped them

40:00 Her grandmother died during the war and another aunt sent her belongings to Aunt Hertha. It was very disturbing when they found out that she died. Their friend returned to Germany and contacted the mother and two uncles. They always thought the grandmother would come after the war to live with them. No one in America was aware of camps and what was happening; only Europeans knew. Her father's brother sponsored them. Marianne cried and screamed on the ship to America and waving to the uncle as she thought she was leaving her parents. That frightened her. Her parents found out about Kristallnacht when they were in the US. The Nazis came for her father as records were not up-to-date and broke into their apartment and found it empty. Their goods were supposed to be shipped. They have the packing slips but they never arrived. She has pages of onion skin recording the inventory of their belongings.

45:00 They packed their belongings and the new things they had bought to sell in America. They were told everything was destroyed by American bombers but it should have been shipped earlier. Relatives in America gave them linens, furniture, dishes and photos which her parents sent them when she was born. Marianne took her favorite doll on the ship and later named her "Dorothy." It was German-made and now her daughter owns it. A gentleman from the Holocaust Museum took a picture of her and the doll but she is not

ready to donate it. She loved dolls. She was photographed with dolls and doll carriages. Marianne was brought up to be a mother. Her Aunt Hertha was a wonderful seamstress and made matching clothing for her and her doll when she lived in Germany. The aunt, her husband and child came to the US when Marianne lived in Iowa. Also her father's relatives arrived at that time. That is one reason why her mother wanted to return to NY. They had a nice life in Iowa but missed their family. If anything happened to the parents, they wanted Marianne to have family. As men were drafted, apartments became available and they got one in Washington Heights, nicknamed, "Frankfurt on the Hudson." Her parents were happy to return to New York as felt they belonged there. Marianne was unhappy in New York and took a year to adjust. She loved her friends in Iowa. She was eleven when they moved. They lived in a private house in Iowa with flowers, trees and grass near Drake University where she took piano lessons. It was a comfortable life for a child.

50:00 In New York City, Marianne was in a huge class of 35 children and the teacher did not pronounce her name correctly. The children played differently in New York City. Des Moines was a smaller city than it is now. They came to America on the "New York." She donated a photo of the ship to the Museum. It was a large ship. She looked out of a port hole as was not allowed to go on top to see the Statue of Liberty. She was required to remain in her cabin. She looked down at the people waiting for her and saw her uncle wearing a felt hat, a fedora, and a large overcoat and had a cab waiting. Her aunt had lunch waiting for them and Marianne did not like the unfamiliar food. She saw her cousins, Carol and Alice; the latter was the first baby she ever saw. She saw things from her perspective which might have been different if she was older. She had an English book on the boat with pictures. She loved cauliflower or "bluemkorf" (?). She still speaks German. She spoke it in Vienna and to her mother but lost some of her ability as googled, "corn beef" and she and her friends could not remember the German for it. She called up a friend and they said, "Purkofleish" (?).

55:00 After living in New York City again as a teenager in Washington Heights, it was nice to learn the culture of New York which she would not have learned in Des Moines. Life got better and she read, the "Diary of Anne Frank" which she felt could have been her. Her parents never spoke of their experiences in the 30s and went on with their lives. Her mother never talked of her wonderful childhood. Her parents were angry and would not return to Germany as they did not want to see it. They kept in touch with gentiles they knew there. They were upset the nanny did not survive the war. They felt it would be too emotional to return. Her parents did not talk anything of substance. Her mother thought that children should be seen and not heard. She was old-fashioned as wanted to raise Marianne as she had been raised even though they were in a new world. Marianne was rebellious and had her own ideas and wanted to earn her own money and be on her own. She had feelings toward Germany and wanted to return. She only took a tour with

her husband who wanted to return to Vienna. He was 14 when he came to America and had both good and bad memories. He needed closure. He wanted to see his school and his neighbors in Vienna. Marianne would not go to Austria while Waldheim was President. Later she took a tour of Austria, Germany and Switzerland. They spent a night in Heidelberg and saw Munich and the Black Forest but not Frankfurt as did not wish to go until invited. Her mother was invited but she refused to go. Marianne wrote and requested an invitation but was told that she was too young as you had to be over 80 at the time of request. Frankfurt had a large community so limited invitations. Her husband had never lived there and was two years too young.

60:00 She was invited three years in a row when her husband was too sick to travel. Marianne requested an invitation in 2013 after her husband passed away as knew they wine and dined people for two weeks. Frankfurt's response was that they stopped all invitations so Marianne decided not to go. Marianne thought that Berlin would have been interesting to see and also to see her mother's hometown and cemeteries so was angry with Frankfurt. She thought that Germany tried hard to give restitution. Some people did not approve of it as you can never make up for what was lost. She feels the whole world has become more anti-Semitic—not the governments but the people and not just Germany but all over. Marianne resents what happened in the past. She saw parts of Germany and it was beautiful. She cannot understand how the people were so evil in such surroundings.

65:00 It is hard to conceive. Americans have no understanding of having to leave your country. What if you had to go to South America and did not know Spanish, how would you adjust? No one can feel another person's hurt and what they are thinking. Her parents forged ahead and were proud to be American. She was very protected as a child and did not understand what was happening. She is angry because of what happened to her parents. She was shy upon arrival as she was different from the others. She did not know if she should say her thoughts. She was told as a refugee, to be quiet. It took awhile for her to express herself and be herself. She was on her own at marriage and expressed herself. She left college and her parents were upset. She went to work for an attorney but was not prepared so took academic classes. She babysat for the attorney and his wife. The attorney told her to come to work for him and he would teach her the law. She told her parents that she is taking courses in stenography and typing. The attorney asked her to work. She spoke with professionals and used the court calendar which helped her to grow up. Her daughter is bringing her doll. This concludes her interview.

70:00 Now she is retelling her husband's story. He was one of 50 children brought over. Marianne met him just before her 19th birthday when he was 26 and a Navy veteran. She had just started working for the attorney and Freddy was working and they were introduced through mutual friends. Blanche, a girl in her office met him at a dance in Brooklyn and he told her he was from Vienna and was looking for a girl who spoke German and she replied that she knows a girl with strict parents. He graduated from City

College and was leaving for a job in Ohio. Marianne agreed that he could call her and Blanche spoke to Freddy's mother and he called Marianne. He lived near her in Washington Heights. He formerly lived in Brooklyn. They were married on June 7, 1953, one and one-half years later, as Marianne was not ready for marriage when they met. His full name was Alfred Berg and he was born October 16, 1924 in Vienna.

75:00 Marianne shows a baby picture of Freddy standing as someone has their hand on his back to give him support. He looked similar as he aged. Then Marianne shows a photo of Freddy in the Navy before she met him when he was 19 or 20. They were married for 60 years. His parents were born in Poland. When his parents were young, they went to Vienna. His father was a German soldier in World War I and after the war he went to Vienna and met his wife. They got married in 1923 and Freddy was born the next year. His sister, Charlotte, was born later. His aunts and uncles perished. His father was an apprentice tailor. His father's father died young. Freddy's mother's family had a business. On Kristallnacht, they took the Jewish men to the Police Precinct where Freddy's father's head was shaved. One policeman said the father was a good person who does not charge for sewing buttons on his uniform so let him go. Mr. Krause (?) came to rescue children for a wealthy attorney from Philadelphia. He was told to go to Austria to obtain children three to thirteen years old. Freddy was 14 but went with a family to help as he knew a little English. There were 25 boys and 25 girls. His sister, Charlotte was one of the children. Freddy was studying farming to go to Palestine to learn agriculture. One boy became ill and remembered Freddy and went to his parents and asked if they would send him with his sister.

80:00 They agreed and he was called out of his classroom and asked if he would go and he agreed and went on the journey. Most of the parents had affidavits or visas and had their numbers for admittance into the US. Freddy's family had a second cousin to contact to ask if the children could live with them. Mr. and Mrs. Krause took one or two children but most of the children had a place to go. The Vienna parents knew where their children were going. Freddy went to Brighton Beach and Charlotte to Jersey City and every Sunday he was driven to see his sister. His parents arrived in '39. Hitler invaded Vienna and Freddy's mother lost some siblings. The family reunited in America. Marianne knew his niece. His parents did not speak of the Anschluss. His mother had several heart attacks and had to give up her children who she might not see again. Charlotte was very distraught and did not eat so her mother did not recognize her when she arrived. Charlotte did not understand why her mother gave her away; it was like "throwing a child out of a burning building." She died at age 70. Freddy was optimistic. He had friends at Brighton Beach, some are still living. He was happiest with those friends, his teenage friends. Freddy hardly knew Mr. and Mrs. Krause. When he arrived in the US, he was placed in a camp to learn English for the month of June in Pennsylvania. Then families picked them up. His mother's sister in Chicago had no children and he was her favorite.

85:00 Freddy had various jobs after the Navy. He was interested in stocks and finance and was good in math. Stocks were a way to make money. After they married, he had \$900 to invest. His father worked in a factory where they made men's suits. His mother refused to work so Freddy worked. He read about Mutual Funds so called an investor and told him he had a few hundred to invest. Freddy was told that he could work part-time in Herald Square so he accepted and learned the business. He sold funds part-time and was also in the notions and ribbons business. Another office was opened where he was offered to be Assistant Manager but Marianne thought he would do better as a stockbroker. Freddy took classes and applied for a job as stockbroker and got licensed and that became his profession. He wanted to see Austria so went to see his school, house and where he picnicked. They went into a shoe store where his mother bought his shoes. He had a nice childhood until Hitler came into power except for one incident when boys ran after him, called him a "Jew" and beat him. His father was arrested and they tried to hide him and he managed to be free. Mr. Krause had no direct control over the children and their families.

90:00 Mr. and Mrs. Louie Levine, friends of the Krauses, lived in New York and came to Marianne and Freddy's wedding and gave them a \$25 bond. When they needed something such as a larger apartment, Freddy's mother would call Mr. Levine. Steve Pressman brought this to public notice. Freddy kept a diary when he was in the Navy where he wrote that he was worried if his parents had enough money as they depended on him. Everything was good as the Krauses sent money to his parents during the war. Freddy was drafted into the Navy and became a citizen in Ventura, California where he was stationed. He loved his experience there and the girls loved dating a sailor. Freddy was 18 when Marianne was 10 so she did not know him. He was sent to Okinawa just after the war ended. They had a hurricane and built Quonset huts for the Marines which almost blew up. He was in the CBs (Construction Battalion) where he was sometimes picked on as he was Jewish. They had Friday night services for the few Jewish sailors where he got candy and cookies and gave it to the others. Then they treated him well. One guy always protected him. He had no contact with the Krauses.

95:00 Freddy's parents might have had contact with Mr. Levine who Marianne met. She did not know the Krauses but saw their picture in the paper. Now she is friendly with Paul Bellers, one of the 50 children, who is a year older than her. He lives nearby and is vocal and likes to speak. She had a close friend, Lyla, in Washington Heights who had a brother Harold whose best friend is Paul. She showed a newspaper spread about the 50 children including Paul. She saw him when he was 11 or 12. Harold married Evelyn and became close to Freddie and Paul Bellers from Vienna and he is the same one! Freddy and Paul met later as Freddy was older so they did not meet before. He always knew he was one of the 50. The Krauses helped to contact children for the 2003 reunion in Philadelphia. Marianne and Freddy attended and toured Philadelphia and stayed at a

hotel and saw the press there. Freddy thought it was too little and too late. He was not interested and not well. They could not contact everyone, some were not interested and some could not come. Paul Bellers lived in Baltimore and moved here six or seven years ago. There was no other meeting until Steve Pressman did the documentary and wrote a book and interviewed people. Freddy could not be interviewed as he had a stroke so Marianne was responsible for him. They were invited by the Museum for the first showing of the documentary. Her daughter, Laurie, came with Bill as she could not attend. Her husband passed away a month later. There was a reception for Peter Krause, the grandson, by the Museum and she was invited to come and bring her daughter, Laurie and her son, Dan. It was held at the Plaza Hotel but only two of the 50 children attended.

100:00 It was traumatic leaving their parents and not knowing whether they would see them again and also traumatic for the parents. Her sister-in-law, Charlotte, never spoke of Mr. Krause as did not know about him. She just said that she went to camp and later her parents arrived. They would have honored Mr. Krause had they known of his involvement. Freddy passed away on September 16, 2013. This is a retelling of Alfred Berg. Marianne shows the doll she took with her on the ship here from Germany which she named, "Dorothy" from "the Wizard of Oz." Marianne loves dolls and played with dolls a lot but never played with this one. When she was young, she was given a rubber doll that you can feed and played with it. She liked owning the doll she shows. Her mother gave relatives her old toys but not this doll. Aunt Hertha made the dress she is wearing and a matching dress for Marianne. It has snaps and a lining showing good workmanship. Her aunt also made clothes for Louie and her.

105:00 Marianne shows the doll's pencil case and slippers from Germany. She would change the doll's clothes from time to time. She owns a skirt with pleats and stripes and an overcoat with buttons and a lining with a matching hat, a blouse and two aprons. Everyone wore aprons. When you came home from work, you put on an apron.

106:00