

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,400

2
00:00:02,400 --> 00:00:05,640
This is a United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3
00:00:05,640 --> 00:00:16,290
interview with Beatrice Trixie,
Westheimer Lewy Muchman,

4
00:00:16,290 --> 00:00:19,870
and Renate Westheimer

5
00:00:19,870 --> 00:00:20,520
Windmuller.

6
00:00:20,520 --> 00:00:23,190
Windmuller Wasserman.

7
00:00:23,190 --> 00:00:23,970
Right.

8
00:00:23,970 --> 00:00:25,320
Thank you, ladies.

9
00:00:25,320 --> 00:00:29,850
On September 27, 2016.

10
00:00:29,850 --> 00:00:36,000
And part of our story today
is a contemporary story,

11
00:00:36,000 --> 00:00:39,390
not the story of the
past, but of the present,

12
00:00:39,390 --> 00:00:44,970
in particular the year 2016
and how you come to meet.

13

00:00:44,970 --> 00:00:48,630

So I'll start with a few
introductory questions,

14

00:00:48,630 --> 00:00:50,340

and then we'll talk about that.

15

00:00:50,340 --> 00:00:53,880

Trixie, could you tell
me your date of birth

16

00:00:53,880 --> 00:00:55,830

and where you were born?

17

00:00:55,830 --> 00:00:57,930

June 5-- excuse my voice.

18

00:00:57,930 --> 00:01:00,400

I'm froggy today--

19

00:01:00,400 --> 00:01:05,940

June 5, 1933 in Berlin, Germany.

20

00:01:05,940 --> 00:01:08,070

And Renate can you tell
me when you were born?

21

00:01:08,070 --> 00:01:12,720

October 27, 1933,
in Berlin, Germany.

22

00:01:12,720 --> 00:01:14,280

Both of you from
Berlin, Germany.

23

00:01:14,280 --> 00:01:15,080

Yes.

24

00:01:15,080 --> 00:01:17,340

OK.

25

00:01:17,340 --> 00:01:19,680
Did you know of one
another's existence

26
00:01:19,680 --> 00:01:21,210
when you were in Berlin?

27
00:01:21,210 --> 00:01:22,290
Not at all.

28
00:01:22,290 --> 00:01:24,420
No, absolutely not.

29
00:01:24,420 --> 00:01:27,510
And did you know
of your existence

30
00:01:27,510 --> 00:01:30,960
once you came to
the United States?

31
00:01:30,960 --> 00:01:31,610
No.

32
00:01:31,610 --> 00:01:39,120
Not, strangely, because when
I came to the United States,

33
00:01:39,120 --> 00:01:39,840
we lived--

34
00:01:39,840 --> 00:01:42,900
and we did a nostalgic--

35
00:01:42,900 --> 00:01:43,400
Excuse me.

36
00:01:43,400 --> 00:01:48,040

37
00:01:48,040 --> 00:01:48,540
The door.

38
00:01:48,540 --> 00:01:49,915
We're going to
have to cut, yeah.

39
00:01:49,915 --> 00:01:51,310
Sorry.

40
00:01:51,310 --> 00:01:52,990
You have to slam it.

41
00:01:52,990 --> 00:01:54,588
Slam it.

42
00:01:54,588 --> 00:01:55,630
And rolling and speeding.

43
00:01:55,630 --> 00:01:56,200
OK.

44
00:01:56,200 --> 00:01:59,440
So to repeat the question,
did you know of one another's

45
00:01:59,440 --> 00:02:01,420
existence in the United States?

46
00:02:01,420 --> 00:02:02,770
Not at all.

47
00:02:02,770 --> 00:02:03,790
OK.

48
00:02:03,790 --> 00:02:08,350
And where did you, Trixie,
come to when you left Germany?

49
00:02:08,350 --> 00:02:12,370
When you left Europe
after the war,

50

00:02:12,370 --> 00:02:16,360
what was your route westwards?

51
00:02:16,360 --> 00:02:19,510
I landed in New York.

52
00:02:19,510 --> 00:02:22,990
And actually, someone by
the name of Joe Westheimer

53
00:02:22,990 --> 00:02:25,850
came to greet the ship.

54
00:02:25,850 --> 00:02:28,960
He was 19 and I was 13.

55
00:02:28,960 --> 00:02:30,550
And I knew there
was a relationship,

56
00:02:30,550 --> 00:02:34,570
but somehow we just
never connected again.

57
00:02:34,570 --> 00:02:36,580
And he was from
which side of your--

58
00:02:36,580 --> 00:02:40,060
My father's side, Westheimer.

59
00:02:40,060 --> 00:02:44,270
And so he would have
been a second cousin.

60
00:02:44,270 --> 00:02:47,790
Did I realize exactly any
of these things at the time?

61
00:02:47,790 --> 00:02:52,770
I think in the chaos
and the excitement, not.

62

00:02:52,770 --> 00:02:57,350
And obviously my grandmother,
nor later, my adoptive parents,

63

00:02:57,350 --> 00:03:00,350
must not have
realized it, either.

64

00:03:00,350 --> 00:03:04,040
So then, from New York,
I moved to Chicago

65

00:03:04,040 --> 00:03:07,210
where my adoptive parents lived.

66

00:03:07,210 --> 00:03:10,870
And I found out yesterday
when Renate-- well, we

67

00:03:10,870 --> 00:03:11,850
had talked about it.

68

00:03:11,850 --> 00:03:18,520
But when Renate and I were
revisiting Hyde Park where

69

00:03:18,520 --> 00:03:24,422
we both lived, we realized that
we not only lived about, what?

70

00:03:24,422 --> 00:03:25,630
Half a block from each other.

71

00:03:25,630 --> 00:03:28,210
Half a block from each other.

72

00:03:28,210 --> 00:03:29,657
We went to the same high school.

73

00:03:29,657 --> 00:03:30,990
We went to the same high school.

74
00:03:30,990 --> 00:03:32,940
Hyde Park High School.

75
00:03:32,940 --> 00:03:36,390
We eventually went to the
University of Illinois.

76
00:03:36,390 --> 00:03:40,530
All this, like, six
degrees of separation.

77
00:03:40,530 --> 00:03:42,230
But you didn't
know of each other.

78
00:03:42,230 --> 00:03:42,820
Well, yes.

79
00:03:42,820 --> 00:03:43,690
I knew--

80
00:03:43,690 --> 00:03:44,607
Oh, excuse me.

81
00:03:44,607 --> 00:03:45,190
Oh, I'm sorry.

82
00:03:45,190 --> 00:03:46,930
I'm interrupting you.

83
00:03:46,930 --> 00:03:47,430
It's OK.

84
00:03:47,430 --> 00:03:48,650
So I remember Trixie.

85
00:03:48,650 --> 00:03:51,280
As soon as we sort
of reconnected,

86
00:03:51,280 --> 00:04:00,440

and her daughter Wendy sent
my daughter Sherry a letter--

87
00:04:00,440 --> 00:04:04,910
an email I think it was-- and
I heard about it, like, June 8.

88
00:04:04,910 --> 00:04:07,560
And June 6 I had had
total knee replacement.

89
00:04:07,560 --> 00:04:10,610
So when I heard about
this, I was like in a fog

90
00:04:10,610 --> 00:04:12,850
because I was on
heavy duty drugs.

91
00:04:12,850 --> 00:04:15,920
By the time I finally came out
of it and focused in on it,

92
00:04:15,920 --> 00:04:18,079
and I said, I don't
remember anybody named

93
00:04:18,079 --> 00:04:19,350
Beatrice from high school.

94
00:04:19,350 --> 00:04:21,380
But as soon as I
heard the word Trixie,

95
00:04:21,380 --> 00:04:22,640
I knew exactly who she was.

96
00:04:22,640 --> 00:04:24,560
I had a picture
of her in my head.

97
00:04:24,560 --> 00:04:27,560
I had remembered this

smiling beautiful person.

98
00:04:27,560 --> 00:04:30,920
But for some reason,
we knew each other,

99
00:04:30,920 --> 00:04:32,240
but we were not friends.

100
00:04:32,240 --> 00:04:35,060
We never-- I mean, we were
sort of in the same circles.

101
00:04:35,060 --> 00:04:38,690
We have some mutual
people we know, or knew.

102
00:04:38,690 --> 00:04:41,420
But I never visited her house.

103
00:04:41,420 --> 00:04:42,830
She never visited my house.

104
00:04:42,830 --> 00:04:44,163
It just was one of those things.

105
00:04:44,163 --> 00:04:45,997
It wasn't because we
didn't like each other.

106
00:04:45,997 --> 00:04:47,810
We just didn't know
each other, I think.

107
00:04:47,810 --> 00:04:51,410
So tell me, Renate, what
was your journey westwards

108
00:04:51,410 --> 00:04:52,130
from Europe?

109
00:04:52,130 --> 00:04:54,980

Did you also go via
New York, or did you

110
00:04:54,980 --> 00:04:56,560
come straight to Chicago?

111
00:04:56,560 --> 00:04:57,060
No.

112
00:04:57,060 --> 00:05:01,970
Well, I came-- actually,
1933, the year I was born,

113
00:05:01,970 --> 00:05:04,010
was the year Hitler
came to power.

114
00:05:04,010 --> 00:05:07,430
And within six months or a
little more or a little less,

115
00:05:07,430 --> 00:05:12,470
my parents, who were managing
my grandfather Max Westheimer's

116
00:05:12,470 --> 00:05:15,832
butcher shop and meat store,
whatever you call it then,

117
00:05:15,832 --> 00:05:16,790
I could no longer work.

118
00:05:16,790 --> 00:05:19,280
They closed the stores.

119
00:05:19,280 --> 00:05:21,898
So my parents ended
up going to Bulgaria

120
00:05:21,898 --> 00:05:23,690
because apparently they
had some connection

121

00:05:23,690 --> 00:05:24,773
and they could work there.

122

00:05:24,773 --> 00:05:28,370
And I stayed in
Berlin until 1937.

123

00:05:28,370 --> 00:05:29,350
Excuse me, can we cut?

124

00:05:29,350 --> 00:05:32,277

125

00:05:32,277 --> 00:05:33,860
So where do you want
me to start here?

126

00:05:33,860 --> 00:05:37,810
So your grandparents had
a butcher shop in Berlin.

127

00:05:37,810 --> 00:05:40,115
Within how long was it
that they left and came

128

00:05:40,115 --> 00:05:40,990
to the United States?

129

00:05:40,990 --> 00:05:43,615
Well, my grandparents stayed in
Berlin, and I stayed in Berlin,

130

00:05:43,615 --> 00:05:47,320
and my parents went
to Bulgaria in, maybe.

131

00:05:47,320 --> 00:05:50,200
'34 so they could work.

132

00:05:50,200 --> 00:05:52,390
And they worked in a
similar establishment there.

133
00:05:52,390 --> 00:05:54,200
And I stayed in Berlin.

134
00:05:54,200 --> 00:05:55,240
I was a baby.

135
00:05:55,240 --> 00:06:01,450
And in 1937 or late '36, my
grandmother took me to Bulgaria

136
00:06:01,450 --> 00:06:03,610
to reunite me with my parents.

137
00:06:03,610 --> 00:06:06,640
And my father came
to this country

138
00:06:06,640 --> 00:06:07,960
maybe six months before we did.

139
00:06:07,960 --> 00:06:11,710
My mother and I, I think,
came in, like, April of '37.

140
00:06:11,710 --> 00:06:16,630
And my father met us in New
York, put me on his shoulders.

141
00:06:16,630 --> 00:06:20,050
And we lived in New York
among many other relatives

142
00:06:20,050 --> 00:06:24,430
who had been able to come over
on the Upper West Side, Dyckman

143
00:06:24,430 --> 00:06:26,590
Street area, until
my father found

144
00:06:26,590 --> 00:06:29,320

a better paying job in Chicago.

145

00:06:29,320 --> 00:06:34,260

And then we moved to Chicago,
and I went all through school

146

00:06:34,260 --> 00:06:34,760

in Chicago.

147

00:06:34,760 --> 00:06:36,593

What year is this that
you moved to Chicago?

148

00:06:36,593 --> 00:06:37,940

1940.

149

00:06:37,940 --> 00:06:39,520

1940.

150

00:06:39,520 --> 00:06:41,830

So I went to elementary
school in Chicago.

151

00:06:41,830 --> 00:06:48,520

And then we lived in a
very small apartment hotel

152

00:06:48,520 --> 00:06:52,300

in a very small little
place, no bedroom.

153

00:06:52,300 --> 00:06:55,990

And after the war, my parents
were able to buy the furniture

154

00:06:55,990 --> 00:06:58,570

and get an apartment on
Hyde Park Boulevard, which

155

00:06:58,570 --> 00:07:00,520

turned out to be
half a block away

156

00:07:00,520 --> 00:07:03,880
from where Trixie ended up.

157

00:07:03,880 --> 00:07:06,460
And you ended up in
Chicago what year?

158

00:07:06,460 --> 00:07:08,350
1946.

159

00:07:08,350 --> 00:07:09,680
So six years Renate.

160

00:07:09,680 --> 00:07:12,130
Actually June, right.

161

00:07:12,130 --> 00:07:16,240
And you know, I had
survived the Holocaust.

162

00:07:16,240 --> 00:07:20,800
And then, through letters--

163

00:07:20,800 --> 00:07:23,710
there were four
sisters, and one sister

164

00:07:23,710 --> 00:07:26,890
was going to be the one
that was going to raise me.

165

00:07:26,890 --> 00:07:30,130
And she happened to
live on 5503 Hyde Park

166

00:07:30,130 --> 00:07:34,150
Boulevard, which was really
a half a block from Renate.

167

00:07:34,150 --> 00:07:38,080
But the Windmullers
and the Lewys

168
00:07:38,080 --> 00:07:43,810
somehow had immigrant,
really, friends.

169
00:07:43,810 --> 00:07:47,000
But each were from
a different group.

170
00:07:47,000 --> 00:07:50,420
And the people who
lived downstairs of us

171
00:07:50,420 --> 00:07:54,500
were the very closest
friends of Renate's family.

172
00:07:54,500 --> 00:07:55,520
Right.

173
00:07:55,520 --> 00:07:57,690
So that even she
was called aunt.

174
00:07:57,690 --> 00:07:58,190
She was.

175
00:07:58,190 --> 00:07:59,510
My kids--

176
00:07:59,510 --> 00:08:03,650
So you had things
to connect you.

177
00:08:03,650 --> 00:08:05,390
You just didn't connect.

178
00:08:05,390 --> 00:08:08,905
Well, it couldn't-- no.

179
00:08:08,905 --> 00:08:11,030
The people who owned-- it

was called Lotta's Candy.

180
00:08:11,030 --> 00:08:11,940
It was a candy store.

181
00:08:11,940 --> 00:08:13,523
It was in the basement
of the building

182
00:08:13,523 --> 00:08:14,940
that Trixie was living in.

183
00:08:14,940 --> 00:08:18,470
And I'm not sure
how my mother became

184
00:08:18,470 --> 00:08:19,850
acquainted with Lotta and Kurt.

185
00:08:19,850 --> 00:08:22,040
But probably she
went into the store

186
00:08:22,040 --> 00:08:23,600
and they found
common connections.

187
00:08:23,600 --> 00:08:25,640
They were my parents'
best friends.

188
00:08:25,640 --> 00:08:31,220
And Kurtie died first,
but Lutchen was--

189
00:08:31,220 --> 00:08:33,289
my kids knew her
afterwards as Aunt Lutchen.

190
00:08:33,289 --> 00:08:35,400
They didn't even know
she wasn't family.

191

00:08:35,400 --> 00:08:40,169

And all the years my mother
would tell Lutchen about me.

192

00:08:40,169 --> 00:08:42,030

And Lutchen had a niece
who went to Israel.

193

00:08:42,030 --> 00:08:45,150

194

00:08:45,150 --> 00:08:47,310

Lutchen's brother's family
emigrated to Israel,

195

00:08:47,310 --> 00:08:49,560

and Evelyn would hear about me.

196

00:08:49,560 --> 00:08:51,840

And so we had really
close connections.

197

00:08:51,840 --> 00:08:54,380

And I met Evelyn in 1933.

198

00:08:54,380 --> 00:08:58,380

1972, the first time I
went to Israel with Sherry

199

00:08:58,380 --> 00:08:59,910

after her bat mitzvah.

200

00:08:59,910 --> 00:09:02,100

And we have like family.

201

00:09:02,100 --> 00:09:04,525

I mean, it's not blood family,
but we are family in Israel

202

00:09:04,525 --> 00:09:05,400

through these people.

203

00:09:05,400 --> 00:09:08,388

And yet somehow, the
groups of friends

204

00:09:08,388 --> 00:09:10,680

my parents were friendly with
and the groups of friends

205

00:09:10,680 --> 00:09:12,055

the Lewys were
friendly with, all

206

00:09:12,055 --> 00:09:15,240

of them being German Jews
who had come to this country.

207

00:09:15,240 --> 00:09:18,230

And all of them-- in both
cases, Trixie's family

208

00:09:18,230 --> 00:09:20,670

was the only one who
had kids, and my parents

209

00:09:20,670 --> 00:09:22,400

were the only one
who had a daughter.

210

00:09:22,400 --> 00:09:23,932

Nobody else had children.

211

00:09:23,932 --> 00:09:25,390

But they were two
different groups,

212

00:09:25,390 --> 00:09:26,820

and they never connected.

213

00:09:26,820 --> 00:09:29,060

And my name was Windmuller
and her name was Lewy,

214

00:09:29,060 --> 00:09:32,410
so who would think there
would be a connection there?

215
00:09:32,410 --> 00:09:37,870
So now I want to go to Trixie
because part of the mystery,

216
00:09:37,870 --> 00:09:45,110
it sounds to me, stems
from the lack of knowledge

217
00:09:45,110 --> 00:09:48,020
that you had on your
father's side of the family.

218
00:09:48,020 --> 00:09:50,180
Tell me a little bit
about what your assumption

219
00:09:50,180 --> 00:09:56,210
was about your dad and his
background and his relatives.

220
00:09:56,210 --> 00:09:59,120
Well, you won't believe
what we found out

221
00:09:59,120 --> 00:10:01,370
while you were setting up here.

222
00:10:01,370 --> 00:10:07,160
But my knowledge, up
until moments ago,

223
00:10:07,160 --> 00:10:09,200
was that my father
was an orphan, which

224
00:10:09,200 --> 00:10:11,720
I do believe he was.

225
00:10:11,720 --> 00:10:19,580

And my adoptive mother wrote
a letter to a Max Westheimer

226
00:10:19,580 --> 00:10:24,770
in Houston, who answered
rather brusquely.

227
00:10:24,770 --> 00:10:26,080
The letter is in my book.

228
00:10:26,080 --> 00:10:28,480
As a matter of fact,
I had the letter.

229
00:10:28,480 --> 00:10:30,680
Now the museum has the letter.

230
00:10:30,680 --> 00:10:33,075
And he said, well, I don't
feel very well right now.

231
00:10:33,075 --> 00:10:33,950
I can't deal with it.

232
00:10:33,950 --> 00:10:36,380
I will forward
this to my nephew.

233
00:10:36,380 --> 00:10:38,830
And nothing happened.

234
00:10:38,830 --> 00:10:42,760
And so now she was writing
from the United States.

235
00:10:42,760 --> 00:10:44,170
In what year?

236
00:10:44,170 --> 00:10:47,770
This was in 1941, right?

237
00:10:47,770 --> 00:10:48,280

'41, right.

238

00:10:48,280 --> 00:10:51,220

And what was the point of her writing to a Max Westheimer?

239

00:10:51,220 --> 00:10:54,490

Well, what people did is they went through phone books

240

00:10:54,490 --> 00:10:55,910

and found Westheimer.

241

00:10:55,910 --> 00:10:57,130

But why would she do that?

242

00:10:57,130 --> 00:10:58,710

Why would she be looking through a phone book?

243

00:10:58,710 --> 00:11:00,280

Because she was looking for someone

244

00:11:00,280 --> 00:11:06,700

to save my father to get the Westheimers out of Berlin.

245

00:11:06,700 --> 00:11:10,900

In 1941, the situation was already so grave--

246

00:11:10,900 --> 00:11:12,770

Is that when you left Berlin, in 1941?

247

00:11:12,770 --> 00:11:17,830

No, we left Berlin in 1939 after Kristallnacht

248

00:11:17,830 --> 00:11:21,400

to come to Brussels, where other family lived.

249
00:11:21,400 --> 00:11:26,090
And the chaos and the
confusion led everyone

250
00:11:26,090 --> 00:11:27,980
in the United States--

251
00:11:27,980 --> 00:11:29,160
there was no television.

252
00:11:29,160 --> 00:11:30,560
There was no internet.

253
00:11:30,560 --> 00:11:32,930
People were getting
letters late.

254
00:11:32,930 --> 00:11:35,150
So the only thing they
could think of doing

255
00:11:35,150 --> 00:11:39,290
was scrolling the phone
book in the United States,

256
00:11:39,290 --> 00:11:40,970
finding Westheimers.

257
00:11:40,970 --> 00:11:43,910
And Houston was
full of Westheimers.

258
00:11:43,910 --> 00:11:47,570
So and behold, they
found Max Westheimer.

259
00:11:47,570 --> 00:11:49,970
And Renate is going to tell
you the rest of the story

260
00:11:49,970 --> 00:11:52,430

that we just found out
while you were setting up

261
00:11:52,430 --> 00:11:54,420
in the bedroom about the letter.

262
00:11:54,420 --> 00:11:54,950
OK.

263
00:11:54,950 --> 00:11:56,180
Hang on just a second.

264
00:11:56,180 --> 00:12:00,500
But I want to reiterate here
that your father's name was

265
00:12:00,500 --> 00:12:02,840
Julius Westheimer.

266
00:12:02,840 --> 00:12:05,180
And you were looking
for his relatives

267
00:12:05,180 --> 00:12:08,660
even though you thought
he was an orphan.

268
00:12:08,660 --> 00:12:11,460
It was your understanding and
assumption he was an orphan.

269
00:12:11,460 --> 00:12:13,400
Much later.

270
00:12:13,400 --> 00:12:17,690
I mean, I was a visibly
hidden child in Belgium,

271
00:12:17,690 --> 00:12:22,920
totally separated from my
parents, who both perished.

272

00:12:22,920 --> 00:12:26,850
So I wasn't really
looking for anyone

273
00:12:26,850 --> 00:12:32,050
until much later in my life
when my daughter found letters.

274
00:12:32,050 --> 00:12:35,970
And I never really
understood what this--

275
00:12:35,970 --> 00:12:39,272
when I found the letter,
the mystery started.

276
00:12:39,272 --> 00:12:40,980
I always thought my
father was an orphan.

277
00:12:40,980 --> 00:12:42,510
There was nobody.

278
00:12:42,510 --> 00:12:45,090
I didn't know about the letter.

279
00:12:45,090 --> 00:12:45,810
OK.

280
00:12:45,810 --> 00:12:46,530
So Renate--

281
00:12:46,530 --> 00:12:49,770
We don't know, Trixie,
whether Margot Lewy

282
00:12:49,770 --> 00:13:01,010
knew that Max Westheimer's
was your father's father.

283
00:13:01,010 --> 00:13:03,120
Right, that's it.

284

00:13:03,120 --> 00:13:04,930

But she was looking
for a Max Westheimer.

285

00:13:04,930 --> 00:13:07,730

It turns out that the Max
Westheimer who was her

286

00:13:07,730 --> 00:13:08,810

father's--

287

00:13:08,810 --> 00:13:11,060

Uncle, actually.

288

00:13:11,060 --> 00:13:13,750

Max Westheimier was
his father's uncle.

289

00:13:13,750 --> 00:13:15,420

Your grandfather
and my grandfather

290

00:13:15,420 --> 00:13:17,370

were actually brothers.

291

00:13:17,370 --> 00:13:18,930

They were brothers.

292

00:13:18,930 --> 00:13:21,870

This is what was
discovered much later when

293

00:13:21,870 --> 00:13:23,100

we found the family tree.

294

00:13:23,100 --> 00:13:28,190

But they were looking for
a Max Westheimer who was--

295

00:13:28,190 --> 00:13:30,700

I can't get the
genealogy straight here--

296

00:13:30,700 --> 00:13:34,677

who was the brother of
your father's father.

297

00:13:34,677 --> 00:13:36,010

Brother of your father's father.

298

00:13:36,010 --> 00:13:39,310

So the real Max Westheimer
was my grandfather.

299

00:13:39,310 --> 00:13:43,930

And just a few minutes ago
while we were waiting for you,

300

00:13:43,930 --> 00:13:45,460

I was looking
through the material

301

00:13:45,460 --> 00:13:48,310

that Trixie had given
to the Holocaust Museum.

302

00:13:48,310 --> 00:13:51,790

I'm getting-- and I look
at the date of the letter

303

00:13:51,790 --> 00:13:56,080

that this Margot Lewy wrote to
this Max Westheimer in Houston.

304

00:13:56,080 --> 00:14:01,870

My grandfather was in New York.

305

00:14:01,870 --> 00:14:07,880

I should back up and
say that my family, all

306

00:14:07,880 --> 00:14:11,420

of my family except my
husband's grandparents

307

00:14:11,420 --> 00:14:12,930

were able to come
to this country.

308

00:14:12,930 --> 00:14:17,660

And most of them came to
this country because--

309

00:14:17,660 --> 00:14:20,190

I'm getting chills even
thinking about this thing.

310

00:14:20,190 --> 00:14:23,870

So my grandmother,
who was married

311

00:14:23,870 --> 00:14:26,090

to Max Westheimer,
Bertha Westheimer,

312

00:14:26,090 --> 00:14:29,150

was one of 11 children of a
family named Hamburger that

313

00:14:29,150 --> 00:14:30,920

lived in Mannheim, Germany.

314

00:14:30,920 --> 00:14:34,280

The youngest son, Herman
Hamburger, came to this country

315

00:14:34,280 --> 00:14:35,630

in the '20s.

316

00:14:35,630 --> 00:14:37,130

And he did very
well for himself.

317

00:14:37,130 --> 00:14:39,480

He was in the diamond
business in New York.

318

00:14:39,480 --> 00:14:42,140
He had a company called
H Hamburger and Company.

319
00:14:42,140 --> 00:14:44,630
And when the war broke out--

320
00:14:44,630 --> 00:14:47,450
before the war broke out, and
the situation became dire,

321
00:14:47,450 --> 00:14:50,720
he provided visas for
every one of his siblings

322
00:14:50,720 --> 00:14:51,782
and all of their family.

323
00:14:51,782 --> 00:14:53,240
So you can imagine
how many people.

324
00:14:53,240 --> 00:14:55,550
There were 11 brothers and
sisters, and all of them

325
00:14:55,550 --> 00:14:57,480
had kids.

326
00:14:57,480 --> 00:14:59,870
And so that's how we
came to this country.

327
00:14:59,870 --> 00:15:02,710
So most of the Westheimers
were able to make it out.

328
00:15:02,710 --> 00:15:05,360
Well, I don't know about
the other Westheimers

329
00:15:05,360 --> 00:15:07,850
because this was a Hamburger.

330
00:15:07,850 --> 00:15:08,920
He was a Hamburger

331
00:15:08,920 --> 00:15:09,570
You're right.

332
00:15:09,570 --> 00:15:10,070
Hamburger.

333
00:15:10,070 --> 00:15:13,730
So I'm looking at this book
while we're waiting for you.

334
00:15:13,730 --> 00:15:15,590
And I look at the
date of the letter

335
00:15:15,590 --> 00:15:18,710
that Margo Lewy wrote to
this Max Westheimer, which

336
00:15:18,710 --> 00:15:21,980
was May 27, 1941.

337
00:15:21,980 --> 00:15:26,030
My grandfather, Max
Westheimer died in New York

338
00:15:26,030 --> 00:15:28,280
on May 16, 1941.

339
00:15:28,280 --> 00:15:29,360
The real Max Westheimer.

340
00:15:29,360 --> 00:15:30,860
The real Max Westheimer.

341
00:15:30,860 --> 00:15:32,740
So all of a sudden,
all I could think of

342

00:15:32,740 --> 00:15:36,380
is that if that letter, which--

343

00:15:36,380 --> 00:15:39,140
that was his reply, so the
letter from Margot Lewy

344

00:15:39,140 --> 00:15:39,800
came earlier.

345

00:15:39,800 --> 00:15:42,230
If it had gone to the
right Max Westheimer,

346

00:15:42,230 --> 00:15:44,260
whether he was alive
or dead, it would

347

00:15:44,260 --> 00:15:47,660
have gone to his wife, my
grandmother, and my mother's

348

00:15:47,660 --> 00:15:49,190
sister, whom she
was living with.

349

00:15:49,190 --> 00:15:51,950
And it would have gotten
to my Uncle Herman.

350

00:15:51,950 --> 00:15:52,670
Hamburger.

351

00:15:52,670 --> 00:15:53,870
Hamburger, right.

352

00:15:53,870 --> 00:15:55,640
And I'm thinking if
it had gotten there,

353

00:15:55,640 --> 00:15:58,520
I'm sure that this family

would be in this country.

354
00:15:58,520 --> 00:16:01,100
And I'm just like--

355
00:16:01,100 --> 00:16:03,125
That was now, an hour ago.

356
00:16:03,125 --> 00:16:05,660

357
00:16:05,660 --> 00:16:07,520
I mean, I read Trixie's
book, but somehow

358
00:16:07,520 --> 00:16:09,888
I just didn't make the
connection until just now.

359
00:16:09,888 --> 00:16:10,930
Until you saw the letter.

360
00:16:10,930 --> 00:16:12,140
I saw the actual letter.

361
00:16:12,140 --> 00:16:13,010
It's at the museum.

362
00:16:13,010 --> 00:16:19,160
And so now the story has
a whole other twist to it.

363
00:16:19,160 --> 00:16:22,110
I mean, we loved each other
the minute we met each other.

364
00:16:22,110 --> 00:16:24,690
And we would have loved
each other way back when.

365
00:16:24,690 --> 00:16:27,980
But when Renate

just told me this,

366
00:16:27,980 --> 00:16:32,750
I've tried through the
museum, through Ancestry,

367
00:16:32,750 --> 00:16:35,960
through my own records of
these hundreds of letters,

368
00:16:35,960 --> 00:16:41,690
to find an answer to who was
this Westheimer in Houston

369
00:16:41,690 --> 00:16:43,040
that so rudely--

370
00:16:43,040 --> 00:16:46,010
well, no wonder he
answered the way he did.

371
00:16:46,010 --> 00:16:49,630
He wasn't a relative.

372
00:16:49,630 --> 00:16:50,840
And he also--

373
00:16:50,840 --> 00:16:53,390
I found this out-- he also
died shortly thereafter.

374
00:16:53,390 --> 00:16:57,020
But he was a wealthy--

375
00:16:57,020 --> 00:16:58,580
I've been to Houston--

376
00:16:58,580 --> 00:17:02,750
he was a wealthy
insurance owner person.

377
00:17:02,750 --> 00:17:06,650

And I think he might have
extended a visa had he lived.

378
00:17:06,650 --> 00:17:09,630
But he didn't know who
he was extending it to.

379
00:17:09,630 --> 00:17:15,050
So this just got clarified
after all these years.

380
00:17:15,050 --> 00:17:17,700
It is amazing.

381
00:17:17,700 --> 00:17:22,270
I mean, meeting Renate
is amazing enough.

382
00:17:22,270 --> 00:17:26,990
But then just-- you
were here setting up.

383
00:17:26,990 --> 00:17:29,120
So Max would have
known this connection.

384
00:17:29,120 --> 00:17:31,070
His wife, my grandmother,
would have known

385
00:17:31,070 --> 00:17:33,020
this connection, obviously.

386
00:17:33,020 --> 00:17:36,140
And everybody's life would
have been very different.

387
00:17:36,140 --> 00:17:39,020
So it's just like--

388
00:17:39,020 --> 00:17:44,990
And you have found out about
your relation to one another

389

00:17:44,990 --> 00:17:47,330

since June, is that correct?

390

00:17:47,330 --> 00:17:50,910

It's June of this year,

which is three months ago,

391

00:17:50,910 --> 00:17:52,710

four months ago?

392

00:17:52,710 --> 00:17:53,210

Yeah.

393

00:17:53,210 --> 00:17:54,710

It took a little bit of doing.

394

00:17:54,710 --> 00:17:58,360

But maybe in June.

395

00:17:58,360 --> 00:18:02,390

June is when the email

went from Wendy to Sherry.

396

00:18:02,390 --> 00:18:03,920

OK.

397

00:18:03,920 --> 00:18:06,230

Let's back up a little bit.

398

00:18:06,230 --> 00:18:09,110

When I was speaking

with Wendy, she

399

00:18:09,110 --> 00:18:14,090

talked about newfound relatives

on your late husband's side

400

00:18:14,090 --> 00:18:19,580

of the family who were

genealogy experts.

401

00:18:19,580 --> 00:18:24,820

And how is it that they
started researching something

402

00:18:24,820 --> 00:18:27,010

on your family?

403

00:18:27,010 --> 00:18:27,760

OK.

404

00:18:27,760 --> 00:18:32,470

It started with the Muchmans
and a phone call to Wendy about

405

00:18:32,470 --> 00:18:34,570

my late husband's--

406

00:18:34,570 --> 00:18:37,840

she would have been
my daughter's cousin.

407

00:18:37,840 --> 00:18:40,400

And there aren't many Muchmans.

408

00:18:40,400 --> 00:18:44,680

So we connected and
we became friends.

409

00:18:44,680 --> 00:18:47,380

And when they read the
book and heard the story,

410

00:18:47,380 --> 00:18:51,430

because they just loved
genealogy, and obviously felt

411

00:18:51,430 --> 00:18:53,560

some connection to us--

412

00:18:53,560 --> 00:18:55,240

The book being
your book called--

413
00:18:55,240 --> 00:18:57,490
Never To Be Forgotten, right.

414
00:18:57,490 --> 00:19:00,270
And so they decided,
OK, we're going

415
00:19:00,270 --> 00:19:02,290
to look into the
Westheimer family.

416
00:19:02,290 --> 00:19:03,520
So they did it on their own.

417
00:19:03,520 --> 00:19:05,500
They did it
completely-- believe me,

418
00:19:05,500 --> 00:19:07,870
I do not understand Ancestry.

419
00:19:07,870 --> 00:19:11,180
The Laurie's did this
totally on their own.

420
00:19:11,180 --> 00:19:14,750
And this is well-researched.

421
00:19:14,750 --> 00:19:18,110
This is not just taken
out of someone's hat.

422
00:19:18,110 --> 00:19:20,640
There are grave sites that
are visited in Germany.

423
00:19:20,640 --> 00:19:26,120
And you know, Ancestry does
a very good job at this.

424
00:19:26,120 --> 00:19:29,440

The museum couldn't answer
any of these questions.

425
00:19:29,440 --> 00:19:33,430
But they somehow
found Renate and then

426
00:19:33,430 --> 00:19:40,270
Sherry and the entire
family tree of Westheimers.

427
00:19:40,270 --> 00:19:43,690
This family tree from a
father whom you thought

428
00:19:43,690 --> 00:19:47,950
was orphaned and didn't
have that many relatives.

429
00:19:47,950 --> 00:19:49,150
Exactly.

430
00:19:49,150 --> 00:19:55,090
But the chances are that
my father was orphaned.

431
00:19:55,090 --> 00:19:56,860
That doesn't change.

432
00:19:56,860 --> 00:20:00,400
I think that his father died
when he was six years old.

433
00:20:00,400 --> 00:20:04,290
And his mother was Rosa Epstein.

434
00:20:04,290 --> 00:20:09,020
And as Ancestry shows it,
she gave up this child.

435
00:20:09,020 --> 00:20:12,780
Maybe widows in 1905
couldn't raise children.

436
00:20:12,780 --> 00:20:14,190
I don't know.

437
00:20:14,190 --> 00:20:20,620
But whatever the reason was,
he was raised by someone else.

438
00:20:20,620 --> 00:20:22,790
Which adds another
layer of unknowability.

439
00:20:22,790 --> 00:20:25,110
That is-- yes.

440
00:20:25,110 --> 00:20:28,630
And since my father
didn't ever discuss it,

441
00:20:28,630 --> 00:20:34,840
or it just stayed
that he was an orphan.

442
00:20:34,840 --> 00:20:39,690
And I don't imagine he had
a wonderful time growing up.

443
00:20:39,690 --> 00:20:42,900
But I don't know anything
because my father wasn't even

444
00:20:42,900 --> 00:20:45,990
40 when he died.

445
00:20:45,990 --> 00:20:53,380
And I didn't see him again since
I was about seven years old.

446
00:20:53,380 --> 00:20:58,500
What does this mean, your
discovering one another?

447

00:20:58,500 --> 00:21:01,680
Oh, Renate can answer
that really well.

448
00:21:01,680 --> 00:21:06,300
Well, first of all, when
we moved to Chicago,

449
00:21:06,300 --> 00:21:08,550
we left our whole
family in New York,

450
00:21:08,550 --> 00:21:10,530
both my mother's side
and my father's side.

451
00:21:10,530 --> 00:21:13,680
We were kind of in
Chicago without relatives.

452
00:21:13,680 --> 00:21:17,940
And as soon as I heard this
story and made this connection,

453
00:21:17,940 --> 00:21:20,010
all I could think
of was how my mother

454
00:21:20,010 --> 00:21:25,300
would have cherished to
have Trixie so close by

455
00:21:25,300 --> 00:21:27,800
and family there because
we kind of felt--

456
00:21:27,800 --> 00:21:29,550
I mean, we had friends,
but we were alone.

457
00:21:29,550 --> 00:21:33,590
And that was my
first reaction when

458

00:21:33,590 --> 00:21:34,840

I heard about this connection.

459

00:21:34,840 --> 00:21:36,690

And the second one was, I
knew exactly who she was.

460

00:21:36,690 --> 00:21:38,250

She was this beautiful,
smiling woman

461

00:21:38,250 --> 00:21:39,458

whom I knew from high school.

462

00:21:39,458 --> 00:21:42,630

But for some reason,
we just never related.

463

00:21:42,630 --> 00:21:44,717

How would we relate?

464

00:21:44,717 --> 00:21:46,800

In high school you not
talking about your mother's

465

00:21:46,800 --> 00:21:47,510

maiden name.

466

00:21:47,510 --> 00:21:48,260

No, of course not.

467

00:21:48,260 --> 00:21:50,570

You're talking about boys.

468

00:21:50,570 --> 00:21:53,700

So that's what it meant to me.

469

00:21:53,700 --> 00:21:58,350

And now that we've actually
met again and become

470

00:21:58,350 --> 00:22:00,330
so fond of each other,
and our kids have met.

471
00:22:00,330 --> 00:22:02,490
My three children were here.

472
00:22:02,490 --> 00:22:06,240
And as Wendy said, we're so
happy we discovered each other,

473
00:22:06,240 --> 00:22:07,690
we actually love each other.

474
00:22:07,690 --> 00:22:09,270
We're relatives.

475
00:22:09,270 --> 00:22:10,920
We want to know
each other, and we

476
00:22:10,920 --> 00:22:12,700
want to know each other better.

477
00:22:12,700 --> 00:22:17,670
And interesting enough, my
cousin Evelyn, my first cousin

478
00:22:17,670 --> 00:22:20,820
Evelyn, who is my mother's
sister's only daughter,

479
00:22:20,820 --> 00:22:24,030
who was not able to be
here, but her granddaughter

480
00:22:24,030 --> 00:22:24,810
is in Chicago.

481
00:22:24,810 --> 00:22:25,590
So she was here.

482

00:22:25,590 --> 00:22:29,650
So they've actually met someone
from my cousin's family.

483
00:22:29,650 --> 00:22:32,460
So she was here Sunday.

484
00:22:32,460 --> 00:22:35,160
And that cousin would
be my cousin, too.

485
00:22:35,160 --> 00:22:37,290
We would all be second cousins.

486
00:22:37,290 --> 00:22:38,910
So you are second cousins.

487
00:22:38,910 --> 00:22:40,360
We are second cousins, indeed.

488
00:22:40,360 --> 00:22:40,860
Yes.

489
00:22:40,860 --> 00:22:43,750
Her father and my mother
would have been first cousins.

490
00:22:43,750 --> 00:22:44,790
Correct.

491
00:22:44,790 --> 00:22:46,035
Their fathers were brothers.

492
00:22:46,035 --> 00:22:49,760

493
00:22:49,760 --> 00:22:53,080
But my first talk with Renate--

494
00:22:53,080 --> 00:22:56,640
I Facebooked, and I saw Renate.

495

00:22:56,640 --> 00:22:58,360

And of course,
we've all changed.

496

00:22:58,360 --> 00:23:01,800

And Renate-- the hair,
I think, has changed.

497

00:23:01,800 --> 00:23:05,240

You had short hair, right,
when you were very young?

498

00:23:05,240 --> 00:23:06,223

I had different hair.

499

00:23:06,223 --> 00:23:07,390

I had hair and I had braids.

500

00:23:07,390 --> 00:23:08,610

I don't remember what
I had in high school.

501

00:23:08,610 --> 00:23:09,818

I saw your yearbook pictures.

502

00:23:09,818 --> 00:23:11,050

You were both beautiful.

503

00:23:11,050 --> 00:23:12,758

You were both stunning
and you still are.

504

00:23:12,758 --> 00:23:15,930

No, Renate was beautiful
and accomplished.

505

00:23:15,930 --> 00:23:20,100

But when we first connected,
we both decided the same thing.

506

00:23:20,100 --> 00:23:21,360

What's important?

507
00:23:21,360 --> 00:23:24,720
I don't know about all
the ancestors from 1780.

508
00:23:24,720 --> 00:23:27,240
And it does go way back.

509
00:23:27,240 --> 00:23:30,420
The Westheimer
line goes way back.

510
00:23:30,420 --> 00:23:32,490
But we didn't care
about any of that.

511
00:23:32,490 --> 00:23:37,530
We cared that we were going
to live to know each other.

512
00:23:37,530 --> 00:23:39,930
And I knew I was
going to like Renate

513
00:23:39,930 --> 00:23:43,470
from the very few things
we said to each other

514
00:23:43,470 --> 00:23:47,700
because some things are just
about today and the moment.

515
00:23:47,700 --> 00:23:52,330
And man, if you don't grab
it, it doesn't come back.

516
00:23:52,330 --> 00:23:55,480
And we both felt
exactly the same way.

517
00:23:55,480 --> 00:23:55,980
Totally.

518

00:23:55,980 --> 00:23:56,790

Absolutely.

519

00:23:56,790 --> 00:23:57,400

Absolutely.

520

00:23:57,400 --> 00:23:58,330

It was just--

521

00:23:58,330 --> 00:24:00,300

And I think our kids are just--

522

00:24:00,300 --> 00:24:02,700

I don't know whether
they really grasp.

523

00:24:02,700 --> 00:24:04,322

I think they do.

524

00:24:04,322 --> 00:24:05,030

I think they did.

525

00:24:05,030 --> 00:24:07,210

And they're connected.

526

00:24:07,210 --> 00:24:08,810

They have the same kind of work.

527

00:24:08,810 --> 00:24:11,580

They connect.

528

00:24:11,580 --> 00:24:13,350

Sometimes I can sound normal.

529

00:24:13,350 --> 00:24:14,940

Today I can't.

530

00:24:14,940 --> 00:24:16,490

It was very important.

531

00:24:16,490 --> 00:24:19,110
My son flew in from New York.

532
00:24:19,110 --> 00:24:20,460
Lauren came in from Pittsburgh.

533
00:24:20,460 --> 00:24:23,100
Everybody said they want
to be here for this.

534
00:24:23,100 --> 00:24:25,613
And Sherry, of course,
was coming all along.

535
00:24:25,613 --> 00:24:27,780
She and I had decided we
were going to go to Chicago

536
00:24:27,780 --> 00:24:28,820
and reconnect.

537
00:24:28,820 --> 00:24:31,410
And she gave me a date
when she was available.

538
00:24:31,410 --> 00:24:33,320
We said, OK, this
is what we're doing.

539
00:24:33,320 --> 00:24:37,000
And it was just like something--

540
00:24:37,000 --> 00:24:38,700
it was very important to me.

541
00:24:38,700 --> 00:24:40,440
My husband died a
year and a half ago,

542
00:24:40,440 --> 00:24:42,120
which you probably know.

543

00:24:42,120 --> 00:24:44,370
And then I had this
knee surgery thing.

544
00:24:44,370 --> 00:24:48,240
And I was like, this was
an awful year and a half.

545
00:24:48,240 --> 00:24:50,850
But this is the best part.

546
00:24:50,850 --> 00:24:52,110
So it's a present.

547
00:24:52,110 --> 00:24:53,103
It's a big present.

548
00:24:53,103 --> 00:24:53,770
It is a present.

549
00:24:53,770 --> 00:24:54,300
It's a present.

550
00:24:54,300 --> 00:24:55,092
It's a big present.

551
00:24:55,092 --> 00:24:57,120
It really is about
the here and now.

552
00:24:57,120 --> 00:24:59,940
And we will make that count.

553
00:24:59,940 --> 00:25:01,540
That's amazing.

554
00:25:01,540 --> 00:25:03,145
You know, I'm also
thinking that this

555
00:25:03,145 --> 00:25:05,520
is the first time you've had

relatives from your father's

556

00:25:05,520 --> 00:25:07,270

side of the family.

557

00:25:07,270 --> 00:25:11,090

Aside from the gentleman who
was 19 years old who met you

558

00:25:11,090 --> 00:25:12,930

in New York, this is it.

559

00:25:12,930 --> 00:25:17,550

I have reconnected because
of this family tree.

560

00:25:17,550 --> 00:25:22,110

And I have asked him, how
is it that you came alone,

561

00:25:22,110 --> 00:25:23,640

and where were your parents?

562

00:25:23,640 --> 00:25:27,260

And he sort of like you need
to leave the past behind.

563

00:25:27,260 --> 00:25:30,420

He was really not
answering these questions.

564

00:25:30,420 --> 00:25:33,450

But there are several
cousins, second cousins,

565

00:25:33,450 --> 00:25:37,710

one of them being
Jerry Belfer, who

566

00:25:37,710 --> 00:25:42,400

has a very interesting,
very sad life, too.

567

00:25:42,400 --> 00:25:45,260

But Renate is it.

568

00:25:45,260 --> 00:25:45,940

She counts.

569

00:25:45,940 --> 00:25:49,550

570

00:25:49,550 --> 00:25:51,550

And Renate, you talked--

571

00:25:51,550 --> 00:25:54,460

like how wonderful it would
have been for your mother

572

00:25:54,460 --> 00:25:57,020

to know that there was Trixie.

573

00:25:57,020 --> 00:26:01,730

What was the impact
for you when you first

574

00:26:01,730 --> 00:26:03,470

even learned that
there was somebody

575

00:26:03,470 --> 00:26:05,630

who was your second cousin?

576

00:26:05,630 --> 00:26:09,740

Well it was totally that we
lived our lives so parallel

577

00:26:09,740 --> 00:26:14,742

and didn't know that we
were related was just like--

578

00:26:14,742 --> 00:26:16,450

I said, I have to know
this woman better.

579

00:26:16,450 --> 00:26:19,390

I have to know who she is.

580

00:26:19,390 --> 00:26:22,630

I remembered who she was, but I didn't really

581

00:26:22,630 --> 00:26:25,470

know Trixie at that time, and she didn't know me.

582

00:26:25,470 --> 00:26:27,550

And it's just one of those crazy things

583

00:26:27,550 --> 00:26:29,770

that people work in kind of different directions.

584

00:26:29,770 --> 00:26:31,460

We had a lot of friends in common.

585

00:26:31,460 --> 00:26:33,460

She showed me pictures from her high school,

586

00:26:33,460 --> 00:26:35,440

and I recognized this person, and I was very friendly

587

00:26:35,440 --> 00:26:36,148

with this person.

588

00:26:36,148 --> 00:26:37,390

But she and I--

589

00:26:37,390 --> 00:26:38,292

I don't know.

590

00:26:38,292 --> 00:26:39,750

It's just the way

life is, I guess.

591

00:26:39,750 --> 00:26:42,213

So I said, well, I don't
want to let this go.

592

00:26:42,213 --> 00:26:43,630

I want to know who
this person is.

593

00:26:43,630 --> 00:26:46,455

I want to see this family.

594

00:26:46,455 --> 00:26:47,830

I don't have a
lot of Westheimer.

595

00:26:47,830 --> 00:26:50,446

I have a huge Windmuller.

596

00:26:50,446 --> 00:26:55,360

Windmuller family probably
have a Facebook page.

597

00:26:55,360 --> 00:26:56,193

They have a website.

598

00:26:56,193 --> 00:26:58,735

You know, there are millions of
Windmullers around the world,

599

00:26:58,735 --> 00:27:00,580

but never heard much
about the Westheimers.

600

00:27:00,580 --> 00:27:02,530

And I knew some of
my husband's family.

601

00:27:02,530 --> 00:27:04,930

So this was a whole
new revelation,

602

00:27:04,930 --> 00:27:08,290

and turned out to be
somebody I actually knew.

603

00:27:08,290 --> 00:27:08,790

Yeah.

604

00:27:08,790 --> 00:27:11,050

That's another connection.

605

00:27:11,050 --> 00:27:13,300

It's not that you
discover someone

606

00:27:13,300 --> 00:27:15,850

who lives in another part
of the world who doesn't

607

00:27:15,850 --> 00:27:17,562

have any common friends.

608

00:27:17,562 --> 00:27:19,270

I really don't have
any interest in that.

609

00:27:19,270 --> 00:27:21,130

I'm not looking for
relatives all over the world

610

00:27:21,130 --> 00:27:22,000

and I don't want to go--

611

00:27:22,000 --> 00:27:24,400

I have cousins who would like
to go dig up relatives and go

612

00:27:24,400 --> 00:27:25,480

visit them wherever they are.

613

00:27:25,480 --> 00:27:26,772

It doesn't really interests me.

614

00:27:26,772 --> 00:27:29,330

But Trixie interested me
very much from the beginning.

615

00:27:29,330 --> 00:27:34,510

It was really six degrees of
separation for the entire time.

616

00:27:34,510 --> 00:27:38,920

And of course, coming here as
an immigrant, that wasn't what

617

00:27:38,920 --> 00:27:40,030

I wanted to talk about.

618

00:27:40,030 --> 00:27:41,270

I wanted to be American.

619

00:27:41,270 --> 00:27:43,990

So no one really
understood the story.

620

00:27:43,990 --> 00:27:47,450

And Renate would not
have understood it.

621

00:27:47,450 --> 00:27:50,420

So why we didn't connect--

622

00:27:50,420 --> 00:27:53,040

well, we'll never know.

623

00:27:53,040 --> 00:27:58,730

But it was always six
degrees of separation

624

00:27:58,730 --> 00:28:00,380

all the way through--

625

00:28:00,380 --> 00:28:00,890

College.

626

00:28:00,890 --> 00:28:02,820

The University of Illinois.

627

00:28:02,820 --> 00:28:04,320

Her husband went
to university, too.

628

00:28:04,320 --> 00:28:05,570

We graduated at the same time.

629

00:28:05,570 --> 00:28:06,410

Together.

630

00:28:06,410 --> 00:28:07,530

Oh my goodness.

631

00:28:07,530 --> 00:28:08,450

Oh my goodness.

632

00:28:08,450 --> 00:28:09,240

Yes.

633

00:28:09,240 --> 00:28:10,940

We didn't know each other there.

634

00:28:10,940 --> 00:28:13,850

I don't remember Trixie
from the university at all.

635

00:28:13,850 --> 00:28:15,920

You know, the other
thought that occurs to me

636

00:28:15,920 --> 00:28:19,250

is some of the
miracles-- and I don't

637

00:28:19,250 --> 00:28:20,920

think they're any
less than that--

638

00:28:20,920 --> 00:28:25,790
that occur as a
result of databases

639
00:28:25,790 --> 00:28:29,960
on the internet or
databases that technology

640
00:28:29,960 --> 00:28:33,680
has allowed us to develop
that wouldn't have been there.

641
00:28:33,680 --> 00:28:36,080
Had there not been
this Ancestry,

642
00:28:36,080 --> 00:28:41,840
who knew that people
would have the power--

643
00:28:41,840 --> 00:28:43,730
your cousins from
the Muchman side,

644
00:28:43,730 --> 00:28:48,080
would have the power once they
gained the knowledge of being

645
00:28:48,080 --> 00:28:52,770
able to find human beings who--

646
00:28:52,770 --> 00:28:59,210
And to find cousins from the
Muchman side who took the time,

647
00:28:59,210 --> 00:29:00,500
because it is involved.

648
00:29:00,500 --> 00:29:02,780
I mean, you have to spend
your life doing this.

649
00:29:02,780 --> 00:29:04,810

It wasn't going to be me.

650
00:29:04,810 --> 00:29:06,800
I didn't even understand it.

651
00:29:06,800 --> 00:29:07,990
But--

652
00:29:07,990 --> 00:29:11,210
[CLOCK CHIMING]

653
00:29:11,210 --> 00:29:13,800
[LAUGHTER]

654
00:29:13,800 --> 00:29:14,580
It'll be fine.

655
00:29:14,580 --> 00:29:15,247
It will be over.

656
00:29:15,247 --> 00:29:17,206
This happened yesterday, too.

657
00:29:17,206 --> 00:29:18,060
Or Sunday.

658
00:29:18,060 --> 00:29:18,570
Sunday.

659
00:29:18,570 --> 00:29:20,600
Happened Sunday, too.

660
00:29:20,600 --> 00:29:22,830
OK.

661
00:29:22,830 --> 00:29:28,990
So you were saying
how involved it is.

662
00:29:28,990 --> 00:29:32,680
On the part of Mindy

and Doug Laurie,

663
00:29:32,680 --> 00:29:36,280
who are the Muchman cousins,
also my second cousins,

664
00:29:36,280 --> 00:29:37,370
Wendy's.

665
00:29:37,370 --> 00:29:41,903
And I would say
without their effort,

666
00:29:41,903 --> 00:29:44,070
this would never have
happened because I didn't even

667
00:29:44,070 --> 00:29:46,740
understand ancestry.com.

668
00:29:46,740 --> 00:29:50,040
I think Renate's daughter,
Sherry, went on it,

669
00:29:50,040 --> 00:29:52,800
but she didn't follow
through too much, either.

670
00:29:52,800 --> 00:29:57,890
You have to dedicate a
lot of hours to digging.

671
00:29:57,890 --> 00:30:02,150
And what came out is worth it.

672
00:30:02,150 --> 00:30:05,530
It's just incredible.

673
00:30:05,530 --> 00:30:11,050
What would you
want other people--

674

00:30:11,050 --> 00:30:13,900
I can understand
that your children--

675
00:30:13,900 --> 00:30:15,820
it's very meaningful
for everybody

676
00:30:15,820 --> 00:30:17,930
who's part of your family.

677
00:30:17,930 --> 00:30:19,780
But what would you want
others to understand

678
00:30:19,780 --> 00:30:21,790
about the essence
of what this means

679
00:30:21,790 --> 00:30:24,770
this connection, because
it's not a reconnection.

680
00:30:24,770 --> 00:30:26,800
You didn't know before.

681
00:30:26,800 --> 00:30:30,250
What does this mean
that others should

682
00:30:30,250 --> 00:30:33,850
realize of its value for you?

683
00:30:33,850 --> 00:30:41,450
Well, to me, personally, it
really speaks to the chaos.

684
00:30:41,450 --> 00:30:44,630
I mean, we don't have to
go very far today, do We

685
00:30:44,630 --> 00:30:48,260
but the chaos that ensued

because of a genocide

686
00:30:48,260 --> 00:30:50,720
like the Holocaust.

687
00:30:50,720 --> 00:30:54,140
And it does profoundly
make me think--

688
00:30:54,140 --> 00:30:56,440
and I know Renate
feels the same way--

689
00:30:56,440 --> 00:31:00,980
of all these orphaned
children who will never

690
00:31:00,980 --> 00:31:04,970
know who their families are.

691
00:31:04,970 --> 00:31:09,080
And so we all need to
know about the Holocaust.

692
00:31:09,080 --> 00:31:13,340
But we need to know the
damage that a Holocaust can

693
00:31:13,340 --> 00:31:19,250
do in the future if
we don't remember.

694
00:31:19,250 --> 00:31:22,080
And it seems that, really,
the world has forgotten this.

695
00:31:22,080 --> 00:31:24,140
And Renate and I are
a perfect example.

696
00:31:24,140 --> 00:31:26,580
Here we led a life
where we could have

697
00:31:26,580 --> 00:31:30,170
been such wonderful friends.

698
00:31:30,170 --> 00:31:33,500
And it took all these
years because of the chaos

699
00:31:33,500 --> 00:31:35,060
that ensued.

700
00:31:35,060 --> 00:31:37,040
I'm sure my adoptive
mother thought she

701
00:31:37,040 --> 00:31:39,520
was writing the right person.

702
00:31:39,520 --> 00:31:41,740
And I was very angry
at that letter.

703
00:31:41,740 --> 00:31:44,660
I always thought, oh
my goodness, how rude.

704
00:31:44,660 --> 00:31:47,150
And this man didn't
even know who we were.

705
00:31:47,150 --> 00:31:49,390
But this is nothing
compared to the chaos

706
00:31:49,390 --> 00:31:50,530
we're witnessing today.

707
00:31:50,530 --> 00:31:53,780

708
00:31:53,780 --> 00:31:57,740
On a broader spectrum, I

would want that to be known.

709
00:31:57,740 --> 00:32:01,100
And I think about it.

710
00:32:01,100 --> 00:32:01,922
Renate?

711
00:32:01,922 --> 00:32:03,630
Well, I think Trixie
said it beautifully.

712
00:32:03,630 --> 00:32:07,500
We've talked about this, how
unfortunately, the world seems

713
00:32:07,500 --> 00:32:09,450
to always be repeating
itself, and nobody

714
00:32:09,450 --> 00:32:10,780
seems to learn from history.

715
00:32:10,780 --> 00:32:18,490
And knowing Trixie,
knowing who she is and is

716
00:32:18,490 --> 00:32:22,060
how she got to be
where she is today,

717
00:32:22,060 --> 00:32:25,720
has made me realize what a
very charmed life that I led

718
00:32:25,720 --> 00:32:30,730
and what a very difficult
life she has had, and how

719
00:32:30,730 --> 00:32:33,400
wonderfully she has
managed to live her life

720

00:32:33,400 --> 00:32:38,230

and overcome very,
very bad things,

721

00:32:38,230 --> 00:32:40,210

and yet be this beautiful
person that she is

722

00:32:40,210 --> 00:32:43,120

today and with a lovely family.

723

00:32:43,120 --> 00:32:49,390

And I was an immigrant,
and we talk today

724

00:32:49,390 --> 00:32:51,560

about immigrants
coming to this country.

725

00:32:51,560 --> 00:32:53,440

And I know exactly what
that feeling is like.

726

00:32:53,440 --> 00:32:54,490

But I was a little girl.

727

00:32:54,490 --> 00:32:59,530

But my parents experienced
a very uprooted lifestyle

728

00:32:59,530 --> 00:33:04,390

and worked very hard to provide
for me and give me a good life,

729

00:33:04,390 --> 00:33:06,340

and I had all of that.

730

00:33:06,340 --> 00:33:09,500

So I'm grateful for that.

731

00:33:09,500 --> 00:33:14,410

I feel so sad, especially after

what we discovered this morning

732

00:33:14,410 --> 00:33:17,980

about Trixie's life.

733

00:33:17,980 --> 00:33:19,990

And then in the bigger
context of what's

734

00:33:19,990 --> 00:33:22,540

happening in the world today,
it's just like it's history

735

00:33:22,540 --> 00:33:23,873

repeating itself all over again.

736

00:33:23,873 --> 00:33:25,332

And there are all
these poor people

737

00:33:25,332 --> 00:33:26,710

who are going to
be thrown apart,

738

00:33:26,710 --> 00:33:30,190

just the way she
and her family were.

739

00:33:30,190 --> 00:33:34,430

So it just brings it all home.

740

00:33:34,430 --> 00:33:38,390

It makes me more aware of
what needs to be done today,

741

00:33:38,390 --> 00:33:41,070

and what little bit
each individual can do,

742

00:33:41,070 --> 00:33:42,240

which I try to do.

743

00:33:42,240 --> 00:33:48,500
And how, in some
ways, that toxicity

744
00:33:48,500 --> 00:33:55,130
that spread in Europe through
the policies of Hitler,

745
00:33:55,130 --> 00:33:58,310
and how it affected your
family, how up until,

746
00:33:58,310 --> 00:34:01,400
let's say in June, it
had a certain power

747
00:34:01,400 --> 00:34:04,730
to keep you separated
until something else came

748
00:34:04,730 --> 00:34:06,380
in and pushed it away.

749
00:34:06,380 --> 00:34:08,030
I mean, I'm interpreting here.

750
00:34:08,030 --> 00:34:11,458
But in some ways, that was
a result of this policy.

751
00:34:11,458 --> 00:34:13,250
You may not have known
each other had there

752
00:34:13,250 --> 00:34:15,050
been no Hitler, had
there been no fascism,

753
00:34:15,050 --> 00:34:17,210
had there been no genocide.

754
00:34:17,210 --> 00:34:21,620
It could have been other forces

that kept you apart as cousins,

755

00:34:21,620 --> 00:34:24,860

but they would have
been more natural.

756

00:34:24,860 --> 00:34:26,389

They wouldn't have been forced.

757

00:34:26,389 --> 00:34:28,639

They wouldn't have
been on purpose.

758

00:34:28,639 --> 00:34:31,170

They wouldn't have
been directed.

759

00:34:31,170 --> 00:34:33,860

This is a very good
way of putting it

760

00:34:33,860 --> 00:34:37,310

because I think there
might have been,

761

00:34:37,310 --> 00:34:40,480

in Berlin, a disconnect
between the various Westheimer

762

00:34:40,480 --> 00:34:41,840

families.

763

00:34:41,840 --> 00:34:43,730

So of course.

764

00:34:43,730 --> 00:34:51,460

But added to that came
this terrible event.

765

00:34:51,460 --> 00:34:57,480

And of course, this
is unimaginable,

766

00:34:57,480 --> 00:35:00,300

so it's nothing that
we couldn't do anything

767

00:35:00,300 --> 00:35:03,180

about except in our
own little small ways.

768

00:35:03,180 --> 00:35:06,090

And maybe it takes a
lot of little small ways

769

00:35:06,090 --> 00:35:09,470

to make a big thing happen.

770

00:35:09,470 --> 00:35:11,390

Well, you wonder
why people listened.

771

00:35:11,390 --> 00:35:14,390

What is the magic power
of demagogues like Hitler

772

00:35:14,390 --> 00:35:18,620

to get so many people to go
along with these awful words

773

00:35:18,620 --> 00:35:23,210

that he's saying and so
many German citizens being

774

00:35:23,210 --> 00:35:25,800

unknowingly complicit--
is that the word?

775

00:35:25,800 --> 00:35:27,980

Yeah-- in what was going on.

776

00:35:27,980 --> 00:35:31,970

And unfortunately, you see it
repeated over and over again.

777

00:35:31,970 --> 00:35:34,190
And you wonder,
why do these people

778
00:35:34,190 --> 00:35:35,900
listen to people like that?

779
00:35:35,900 --> 00:35:37,850
But somehow they do.

780
00:35:37,850 --> 00:35:41,250

781
00:35:41,250 --> 00:35:43,210
Thank you very much, ladies.

782
00:35:43,210 --> 00:35:46,870
Is there anything else you would
like to add to our conversation

783
00:35:46,870 --> 00:35:47,370
today?

784
00:35:47,370 --> 00:35:49,105
No, I think we're done.

785
00:35:49,105 --> 00:35:50,055
I think we're done.

786
00:35:50,055 --> 00:35:54,420
And really, the Holocaust
Museum in Washington

787
00:35:54,420 --> 00:35:59,030
does a wonderful
job of attempting

788
00:35:59,030 --> 00:36:04,460
to be on top of any beginnings
of any misunderstandings

789
00:36:04,460 --> 00:36:06,350

or any oncoming genocide.

790

00:36:06,350 --> 00:36:08,340

And that's a big job.

791

00:36:08,340 --> 00:36:10,870

It's the world.

792

00:36:10,870 --> 00:36:12,240

Thank you very much.

793

00:36:12,240 --> 00:36:13,030

You're welcome.

794

00:36:13,030 --> 00:36:16,900

And I will say this concludes
the United States Holocaust

795

00:36:16,900 --> 00:36:23,440

Memorial Museum interview with
Renate Wasserman and Beatrice

796

00:36:23,440 --> 00:36:27,430

Trixie Muchman Abrams.

797

00:36:27,430 --> 00:36:29,280

Thank you.