

Rolling This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Dorothea Fingerhood on April 27, 2017, in Manhattan, New York City. Thank you very, very much for agreeing to speak with us today and for agreeing to share your story and experiences. We are going to start the interview with the most basic questions and build our story from there.

So the very first question I have for you is, can you tell me, what was your name at birth?

Dorothea Hilda Cohen.

Dorothea Hilda Cohen.

Right.

And what was your date of birth?

2/10/1928.

Does that mean February 10, 1928?

Yes.

OK, and where were you born?

I was born in Hamelin, where the Pied Piper comes from. [CHUCKLES] But we moved to Berlin by the time I was a year old.

So you have no memories of Hamelin?

None, absolutely none.

Do you have memories of Berlin?

I do.

Do you remember what part of Berlin your family moved to?

Well, we lived in what is actually now East Berlin. But it was called [? Bierstich Gardner Strasse. ?]

[? Bierstich Gardner Strasse, ?] OK.

And my sister and I went back and tried to retrace our steps. And it was a drugstore. But there was basically nothing there anymore.

This is where-- did you live near the drugstore?

Yes.

OK, and how is the drugstore figure in your story?

Well, my parents had-- they were both chemists or druggists, whatever you call them.

Pharmacists.

Pharmacists, and they had three stores. And one of my mother's brothers took care of one. And I guess they took care of the other two. And interestingly enough, my father was a very assimilated German Jew. He was not taken to a concentration camp, like, the only person that I know. And in a way, I think if he had been, my mother would have gotten him out.

We'll come to that part of your story later. Right now, what I'm trying to get a sense of is what was life like in prewar Germany. In your childhood, who are the people-- I'll ask these questions in turn. But the purpose is to paint a picture with words of what was the environment in which you grew up.

So since we're talking about pharmacies, tell me, did both of your parents go to higher education?

Yes.

OK, which places? You don't know?

I don't know.

That's OK.

I think my father came-- I'm pretty sure it was an arranged marriage. And I think my father was the pharmacist. And when they married, my mother got her training.

Are both of your parents from Hamelin originally?

No.

Where were they from?

My mother came from a place called Fulda.

I've been there, yes, Fulda, mm-hmm.

And she came from a very large family. And my father had two brothers and came from a much more elevated background. And he-- when I visited his mother, it was in Breslau, B-E-R-S-L-A-U.

So that would be in the eastern part of Germany near Poland. And Breslau, I believed--

I don't know.

OK, what were your parents' names, first names?

Leo was my father's name. And my mother was Rosetta.

And her maiden name?

Lump, L-U-M-P.

Lump, when you say that they came from different social strata, what do you mean specifically, in the sense of what did her parents do to support their family? What did his parents do?

I don't know what my father's parents did. But as a kid, I mean, I was 11 when I left. So I just have vague memories. They, to me, seemed to live quite elegantly.

Also, in Berlin?

I think it was Breslau where we visited. And my grandfather was a cow dealer.

A lot of people dealt in cattle.

In Fulda, and, to me, he was very forbidding. I mean, he was very Jewish. He had a long beard. He was-- I think I was always a little afraid of him.

His wife was a wonderful woman. My grandmother, she had cancer. She lived-- they lived very modestly. But I remember, and I used to visit a lot.

Of course, I think my parents were always working. And she sort of lived in her bed in their living room. But she was very wise. And I remember really loving her.

Was she the person who you could run to, for example, if you had a problem, or--

Well, I don't know that I actually did that. But I just was aware of her being very brave, and old, and kind of wonderful. But my mother came from 11 children.

That's a lot.

That's a lot.

That's a lot.

So when I used to visit in Fulda, there were a lot of siblings. And I always remember having good times there. We did very simple things like pick blueberries. [LAUGHS] You know, but I loved visiting. And I'm told that we visit-- I have a sister-- that we visited a lot because my parents were working a lot.

Well, when you have a store, it's almost like it's more than a full-time job. You can't leave the store.

And they both worked. But we did have somebody in the house, which I don't really remember. There was some kind of help, but not meaningful to me.

When you visited your grandparents, did you go by train? Did you go by car? Do you remember?

I don't remember. That's OK.

I don't remember.

It's just that Fulda is not very close to Berlin, you know?

I know.

It's a bit of a hike, you know?

I know. But I don't remember.

OK. You say your grandfather looked forbidding, on your maternal side. Was he somebody who was a very religious person?

Yes, very.

Was he orthodox?

Yes.

OK, had they come from some part of Germany, or from Poland, or something? No.

I'm sorry. I don't know.

That's OK. I ask these, but if it's OK if you don't know. It's perfectly fine. I'm trying to get a sense of what was the background, what were the roots, you know? And sometimes people know about these things, and sometimes they don't.

I don't have any memory of the family, my grandfather and grandmother, really being together. I don't think I ever saw them together. I remember her being in the bed and my aunts and uncles being there. And they were-- we did things together. But I really don't remember any family dinners or anything like that with all these children.

Do you remember the names of your aunts and uncles?

Yes.

Could you tell me?

I hope I remember them.

That's OK.

Well, they were-- my mother was the second oldest. The first one was Tilly, then my mother Rosie, then Berte who was - she's the one who brought my sister and I here. And they were like parents and absolutely couldn't have been more wonderful in every way. They were really-- I think they allowed me to grow to be happy and successful.

That's huge. That's huge.

They were totally wonderful. Then I have a photo of all of them in that file. Now, I have to think who came next. Selma is another one. Then the youngest were twins. And their name was Henny and Hannah.

These all are girls.

All girls.

Oh, my goodness.

There were three men. Leopold was the essence of the family. He was-- Steven, do I have that right? Was it Leopold?

I think so.

And he was a lawyer. And he took care of his sisters. Like, he got my aunt Berte who became a legal secretary or something. But he was like the head of the family. He took care of everyone.

[NON-ENGLISH]

Yes, and a part of the family went to Shanghai, including him.

Oh, that's an interesting aspect.

That was the only place left open at the point.

We'll talk about that. We'll talk about--

So he went to Shanghai. Then there was a black sheep whose name I can't remember. And nobody ever hears of him.

Julius.

[? How ?] [? much? ?]

Julius.

No.

Julius?

No, Julius was another one. I can't remember the black sheep. But his name ever came up. And then there was, oh, the one who went to Cincinnati. I should remember his name.

That's OK.

It's not coming to me.

That's OK. You didn't live there. You visited there. And there were many of them.

And there were a lot.

[LAUGHTER]

So there was-- I think there were four sons.

OK, so we have Leopold, Julius, the black sheep, and the one who went to Cincinnati.

Right.

OK, I'm up to nine children. Did all survive, that is, birth?

No, and one who took care of one of the drugstores got killed trying to leave Germany through Switzerland. And he--
--didn't make it.

--was-- he didn't make it.

His name was what? Do you remember?

It may come to you later if you don't remember.

It may. I'm so sorry I can't remember the names.

Don't worry.

But my niece, if it's important, I can get them for you.

It's OK.

Because my nieces are good about that.

OK, we can, yes.

We can fill in. I can get you all the names. Sorry, it's just not coming.

That's OK. Did your father have brothers and sisters?

My father had two brothers. One was an attorney. And he was like very German. I mean he wore spats and the cane. And he looked like (LAUGHING) he stepped out of one of those original elegant Germans. And the other I think maybe was a pharmacist too. And his name was Edward.

Edward.

And he went to Shanghai.

As well?

As well. And he discouraged-- from the letter, I remember, because I was only 11 when I left-- he-- and I do remember vaguely this conversation-- said to my parents, don't come to Shanghai. People are dying in the streets here. And that was the only place that was open to Jews at that point.

So my aunt Berta, that was so good to us, she and her husband went to Shanghai. Came here and brought me here.

They were from opposite sides of the family, however, yes?

Yes, they're from my--

Father's side?

Mother's side.

That's right, Berta is. But the uncle who went to Shanghai was from--

From my father's side.

Did they have contact with each other? These two sides of the family?

I'm not so sure. But I can tell you is the one that-- you know, the fancy one?

The one with the spats?

The one with the spats. I just remember these spats. And was one of the first people to go to Israel, and hated it. It was too rough for him. So he came back. I think he went with Herzl.

Wow. What a way to go.

And he came back. And he had one wife and one son, and they were killed. And he was in England and we visited him. And from this elegant man, he was totally broken. I mean, it was really-- he was broken is all I can say.

Now, the other one, interestingly enough, who went to Shanghai, came from Shanghai, worked for my uncle-- Hans is Berta's husband's name-- he was incredible. He used to meet the boats and take anyone who came to work for him. And he-- is it side-tracking to go to his story?

A little bit.

Do you want to come to that later?

Yeah, I would-- thank you.

Because that's an interesting story. Anyhow, the bottom line is, he came to America, worked for my uncle, was offered restitution, or whatever. He and his wife went back to Germany. My sister and I could not understand how he could possibly do that. But he was offered whatever reparation, or he was offered a better life there.

And they went back to Germany, and left us a little money-- his two nieces. Because they didn't have any children.

This is your father's brother?

Second brother.

And when you say Breslau, to me, that sounds like it was in what became East Germany.

I think it's--

I think it is, because it has a Polish version, as well.

I think so. Did it then come under Germany?

Well, I'm a little bit foggy on the geography. But I do know that these cities changed--

They did.

You know, the borders changed.

Exactly.

The cities stayed where they were, but sometimes they were Germany, and sometimes they were Polish.

And that's what happened here.

Yeah. When they went-- just a side note again-- when they went back to Germany, did they go back to--

No, they went to Berlin.

--West Germany? Berlin, they went to Berlin. OK. And you say that your parents-- you lived with them in what was East Berlin at one time, on a street called Berchtesgadener Strasse?

Right.

OK, and can you tell me what it looked like? What the place that you lived-- the house that you lived in-- was it an apartment?

It was an apartment.

OK.

And I don't think it was very large, but you know, it sort of had a Deco feel. And there were two portraits in the living room-- one of my sister and one of me. Sort of distinctly remember it, you know, these two paintings. And I think there's even a photo of the family.

Do you remember how many rooms there were?

I'd be guessing.

OK, guess.

I'm not sure if we shared a bedroom or not. It was pretty attractive. I mean, it had a living room, had a dining room, and of course, my parents' bedroom, and my sister's and my bedroom.

So at least four.

So at least four.

And a kitchen?

And a kitchen. And it was above the store.

So the drugstore was underneath, the pharmacy was underneath? So you literally lived above the shop.

Right.

OK.

As I recall.

And what was the name of the pharmacy? Was it Cohens Apotheker? Or something like that?

No, but I think there's a photo. So we can look.

OK, we'll look later. We'll look later. Did your parents have any household help?

Yes, we had somebody. But she didn't make a big impression on me.

OK, was this a nanny? Or was this a maid, do you know?

Probably both.

OK.

My mother worked a lot.

Tell me about what they both did, your parents, in their work-- as much as you know.

All I know is that they were in the drugstore.

OK, and did you visit them a lot down there? It's, you know, one flight down.

I don't think so. I don't remember going there much.

But you did go there sometimes?

Yeah, I think we must have. But I don't have a memory of it.

That was my question-- do you have a memory of what it looked like, the drugstore?

Not really, sorry.

That's OK, that's OK. Was the apartment in an apartment house that had several stories? Or was it just the two stories? The ground floor and the second?

I don't remember other floors there.

OK, do you remember neighbors?

So I think it was a small building.

Yeah, was it a residential part of Berlin, or in the city center?

It was actually a little outside of Berlin, like almost a suburb, I think.

Did the neighborhood have a name?

That's OK.

I think it was in Berlin, but just a little out.

OK, so certainly not city center.

No.

OK, were there trams which went by? Or what was the transportation like?

That's a good question. I don't know. I don't know how I got to school. We must have walked.

Yeah, did you go to the Berlin city center much?

No. I mean, special occasions, my father would take us to--

Did he have a car?

No.

OK, did you have electricity in your home?

Yes.

Did you have telephone? It's OK, that's OK. Did you have a radio?

We must have, but I don't remember it.

OK. And now some questions that sound a little bit strange for Germany-- when I ask them about Poland, maybe not so strange-- but did you have indoor plumbing?

Yes.

All right, and how did you heat the home? Was it cold?

It was warm, so there must have been some kind of central heating.

Do you remember coal ovens? The kind that have tiles on them? Was it a fairly modern building, then?

I think so.

And was it in a neighborhood where there were other Jewish people?

You know, I don't think there were too many Jewish people in our neighborhood. Which, I think, is part of the reason my father didn't go to a concentration camp. I think he had a good relationship with--

All of his neighbors--

--with the Germans there. It's very unusual that he wasn't taken to a concentration camp. He's the only one I know.

We'll come to that. We'll come to that part. So when he did take you on the rare occasions to Berlin city center, you know, whether this was Unter den Linden, or someplace else--

Right, it was a treat.

It was a treat? Do you remember any particular instances that stay in your memory?

I think we went to the zoo.

Oh, yeah? Yeah?

And we must have gone to some cultural events, because I do remember, you know, there'd be treats like we'd go out. And then there were family outings with my mother, as well, when we went to-- I think we went to-- was it Martin Luther King's--

It was Martin Luther.

Martin Luther, to--

Wurzburg? That was in what became East Germany, where he wrote his-- I think it was his theses against the Catholic church.

We went to that.

Oh, Wartburg-- Wartburg, it's a castle on a hill.

I don't know why I remember that, but we went there. And then we must have gone-- because I have photos-- little picnics.

But do you remember the picnics, or only because you have the photos?

Only because I have the photo.

Tell me a little bit about their personalities, as much as you remember them.

My mother is what I've been told, and it's what I remember, was the principal character. She was very dynamic-- I mean, she got her degree in pharmacy. She was friends with the rabbi who got us out. I remember her as being much more active-- and I think my father was more sedentary.

She was an extrovert?

I would think. She was much more dynamic.

And what about your father?

I think he sat a lot. But he was very loving. Not in a super-demonstrative way, but you just felt that he was a kind, loving person. But he didn't have a strong influence.

That's interesting.

On me, anyway.

But your mother did?

Yes.

In what way?

I just felt she was very active. She was always doing something.

Was she very involved in your life, and in your sister's life?

I didn't think she was that involved. I had the impression she was more involved in business. I think she made things happen. It was a terrible time for them.

Of course, of course. We'll talk about that.

And I think-- my memory, as I told you, I've denied a lot, and I don't know what I'm remembering-- but she was quite dynamic. She was doing-- she took care of my grandfather.

In Fulda?

He came to live with us.

The imposing one?

Yes.

Had his wife died by that point?

Yes.

Ah, OK. And I think she was much more involved with her sisters and brothers, because they'd come to visit us.

So it wasn't that you went to Fulda, it was also that Fulda came to you, you know, in Berlin?

Yes, and then there was this one sister, Berta, the one who was so good to us. We spent a lot of time there, too. So we were farmed out to my grandparents and to Berta.

Tell me a little bit about your sister. We haven't talked about her, yet. What was her name?

Her name was Hannah.

Hannah, was she younger?

We were 15 months apart. And we were very different, also. But we were separated a lot in England. So while I loved her dearly, and we were very close, we weren't close in terms of having the same interests. She was much more--

I became very American. I mean, the minute I set foot at my aunt and uncle, and other aunt and uncles met us on the boat, I knew this was for me. And I feel like I have German friends who are much more German than I am. I'm totally American. I mean, you know--

And that's true, some people--

That's exactly how I feel. Hannah stayed much more with the German background. She married a man who came from Vienna, and she didn't feel as American as I do.

Was she older or younger?

15 months younger.

Oh, she was younger even than you? So you're the older one of the two of you? Were your parents religious? Your grandfather was, but--

My mother was, my father not at all. My mother made the connections with the rabbi who got us to England. And you know, I think she absorbed her background a lot more. My father was very assimilated. I mean he was the kind of German that thought Hitler, from my memory-- and I think it's accurate-- he thought Hitler was a temporary madman.

Many people did.

And you know, he had a comfortable life. And when I think about it, there was a 10-year difference. And when I think about it now, to pick up and go totally to an unknown place must have been almost impossible.

For many people, it was terrifying.

My mother would have done it.

Did your father ever tell you about his World War I experiences?

He was in the German army, and I think he was very proud to be there.

Did he tell you about his experiences in it? No. When I asked about religious affiliation, did that mean that you and your sister also practiced? Did you go to synagogue? Did you keep kosher at home?

No, it was more me. My sister-- at one point, because of the influence of the rabbi who brought us to England, I was really quite religious. But my sister wasn't.

But when you were still in Berlin with your parents?

I don't really remember going to temple.

Were there Jews in your part of Berlin that you associated with?

Not really.

Who were your friends? Your friends as children? You didn't have any?

I don't-- I guess kids at school.

OK, but when I say that--

But I didn't have a close friend.

You didn't have someone who stays in your memory? That's the thing. And at what age did you start going to school?

I think six.

OK, so at age six Hitler has already come to power. And did that make itself felt in the classroom?

You know, I think I was pretty oblivious. But I remember-- because I looked more German than anything else. Coming home from school, and you know, they were passing out German flags, or something, to give to me.

Oh, so you would get flags with swastikas on them?

Right. But it was meaningless to me.

Well, what about school, itself? I mean, you were a little girl. So I don't know how teachers would have--

I don't really have much of a memory, but I can tell you when we got to England, I was much advanced from going to school in Germany to England, which was very surprising to me.

Yeah, so you learned--

So it must have been pretty good.

Yeah, yeah.

Because I had no trouble switching.

So how long did you go to school in Berlin? You started at age six?

Till I was 11.

So you never were thrown out of school?

I don't think so. I don't remember being thrown out. It's kind of vague, I have to say. But I don't remember being thrown out.

OK, and did your sister Hannah have a similar experience?

Hannah had more friends. And I don't remember her talking about it.

OK, that's what-- I mean, in some instances, school made an impression?

Right.

And others, it didn't.

Well, like when you see Kurt's book, I mean, he remembers every detail. I don't. I remember funny things, like this uncle who used to come and visit, he had a car.

The one with the spats?

No, this is my mother's--

OK, the lawyer?

The one who Berta married, Hans, who was a real character. And I hid in his car and didn't go to school, because I wanted to go with him. That was like a daring-- you know, I remember funny things like that.

Yeah, it is.

So those were my adventures.

At home, did you have the sense that your home was a happy home? Or a cold home? How would you describe it?

You know, I mean, it's a very good question. But I wasn't unhappy. I just don't remember it being much of a family home.

Well, the reason I asked this is you say that you thought your parents had an arranged marriage.

Yes.

And I wondered where that comes from.

I think that's what they were doing in those days.

Because they do come from different parts of the country, you know Breslau and Fulda are not close to each other.

And their backgrounds were very different.

OK, your grandfather who came to visit you-- live with you after your grandmother died, how long did he stay with you?

Well, we left. And I remember my mother saying she couldn't leave him, that's why they weren't leaving Germany.

I see.

But we were already in England.

So tell me a little bit-- you mentioned also earlier that they had real difficulties in the pharmacy. That she had a lot on her mind, you know, before. What did that involve? What do you know of?

Well, Kristallnacht was in '33.

No.

Wasn't it?

'38, '39, I think. We could look it up, but you would have been already--

It's '39.

'39, yeah.

Because then they didn't have anything. I mean, because the store was gone.

Were you there during Kristallnacht?

Yes.

What do you remember of it?

Just a lot of shattered windows.

Were you in the apartment above when it was happening?

I don't remember that night.

Do you remember the next day, and what you saw the next day?

I just remember coverage in the papers, and seeing these broken stores. But I don't know how it affected us I just don't know.

So you didn't see your parents' own pharmacy?

You mean shattered?

Yeah.

I don't think so. I don't know why, but I think I'm blocking a lot.

Could be.

Because otherwise, I'd have a clearer memory.

Did your mother and father talk much at home about Hitler, about Brownshirts, about--

No. What we did do is, at that point, I think there were a lot of schemes to get people out of the country. And I know, as a family, we were-- they were supposed to go to South America, and we were taking language classes together. And I think that money, you know, was just a scheme.

So we went through several-- they were going through several efforts to try to get us out.

To get all of you out?

Right, and I think they must have paid money to what were really schemes. Because the one thing we did together was take language classes together in preparation for leaving.

By language, do you mean Spanish?

Yes. But nothing ever happened. So I think they were trying, I think, at that point. But it was all too late.

Did you understand it in those years, that A, you were Jewish, and that B, that was a dangerous thing to be in Berlin? Did you feel the danger?

Not so consciously. I know it's strange, but not so consciously.

Well, it could also be that your parents tried to protect you.

Probably.

You know, if when they tried to often shelter children from what was fully going on.

Right. And I think they did that.

And there were no incidents on the streets that you, yourself, experienced?

No. Other than being handed German literature.

Nazi literature?

Right.

Yeah. Did you ever hear Hitler?

No.

So over the radio, you never heard him? Did your parents read newspapers?

They must've. I mean, they must've.

And did you ever see any young people that were part of the Hitler Jugend, of any men who would be Brownshirts, with swastikas on their arms?

I saw them on the street.

You did.

But I wasn't fearful. I mean, I just--

And did you see them do things? Or did you just see them walk by?

I didn't see any physical hurt that they imposed on anyone.

And when your uncles and aunts would be visiting from Fulda to Berlin with you, what was the talk? Do you remember, were they also-- because you mentioned so many of them left.

Yes.

You know, was this the discussion that was going on? That was my question.

You see, I--

You don't know.

I don't know. I mean, we didn't sit around and there were no open discussions. In talking to you, I realize my parents must've really, really not wanted us exposed. I mean, that's what I'm getting from this conversation.

But otherwise, I'd know more, wouldn't I?

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. So their job to try and protect you worked. You know? As much as possible.

I mean, the only conversations I remember are when I overheard the one about, don't come to Shanghai.

Yeah. What about your paternal grandparents? Do you know what their fate was?

You're talking about my mother's?

Your father's.

No, I don't know what happened to them. I assume they died of old age. Because my father was 10 years older than my mother.

You said that your mother became friends with a rabbi.

Yes.

And yet, you didn't belong to a temple, or weren't really part of a Jewish community?

That seemed to be her connection. My father was not involved in that, but she was very close to this rabbi who brought us to England. So that was her doing.

And did this rabbi-- was he from the neighborhood? Or did he come to your home at any time?

I don't remember him coming to our house, but he must've.

Do you remember his name? But I know it was my mother's thing. Definitely not my father's.

Do you remember meeting him?

Yes.

What did he look like?

Like a typical rabbi. I don't know how to describe him.

Well, you see, you described your grandfather as very religious, and having a long beard, and so on, and being orthodox. Now, was the rabbi, did he have an assimilated look?

No, he looked more like a rabbi-rabbi.

OK, also orthodox?

Yes, because he-- for a while, I mean, I was doing the prayers in the morning, and I wore a handkerchief. I didn't carry anything-- I was influenced.

This is when you're in England?

Yes.

All right, but when you're still in Berlin, did you meet him when you were still in Berlin?

We must have, but I don't remember.

So bring me up to the point where-- when you were discussing things earlier, it sounds like it was as a family that you were-- everyone was trying to find a way to get out.

Yes. All right, how did things progress that it ended up being just the two of you, the two girls?

As I recall, totally my mother's doing, because I thought we were the last children's transport. But I've since learned we were the one before. But my mother did that with the rabbi. And he met us when we got to England. And we were put in what they called a hostel, but what it was that they had these homes where usually a couple, which is where we stayed, they took in.

We'll come to that, excuse me. I'm thinking more of before your leaving, at what point did the decision come that it will just be the two of you, and not your mother and father together?

Because they couldn't get out.

And was your father OK with you and your sister leaving?

I guess. Because we did.

Do you remember when you said goodbye to them? Did you remember?

Very vividly.

Tell me about that.

I mean it's just so unbelievable. You know, it all happened-- I think it all happened pretty quickly, actually. and they took us to the train station, we got on the train. And at the time, we were hoping we would meet them again.

Because there was a plan that they were supposed to come to England, meet us, and then come to America. There was such a plan. And when war broke out, of course, a month later, I mean, everything stopped.

Then it means-- excuse me, I'm going to step back a bit-- you're right, war broke out September 1st, 1939, which means Kristallnacht was November '38. I keep getting mixed up with those two dates.

So when did you leave Berlin? At what point was this? Was this still '39?

Yes.

OK, so it must have been--

August.

August of '39.

It was August of '39, it was right before the war.

Right before the war, so yes, you were there during Kristallnacht. And then it must have been all of the efforts to try to get you out.

Quickly.

Yeah, quickly. And then they would come, and of course, if war breaks out September 1st--

That was the end of that.

Did you have letters back and forth with them?

I have a couple of letters, and the last one is in the papers that I have for you from the Red Cross.

OK, how long did the letters-- and what were the final dates of those letters?

We'd have to look.

We'll look later. We'll look later. I mean, when I ask for things like dates, I know that most of the time one wouldn't remember. But I ask anyway. Those are the hardest things to remember.

When there is one other, I think, important element, which is my parents were in hiding. And they survived till-- I think it was '45, wasn't it?

'44, I think.

'44.

Your parents survived until 1944?

They did. That's what's so tragic. they almost made it. And they were in hiding by non-Jews.

Do you know who?

No. And another Jew told about their hiding place, hoping it would save his life. And they were all taken, including the people who hid them.

So the tragedy is, they almost made it. I mean, they survived.

Yeah, yeah. So when you were saying that your father was never sent to a concentration camp, it was that he went into hiding. So that--

We just learned that, first, when Kurt--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--and saw them last, they took my father to work for the war effort in a factory.

Because he was a chemist, he ended up working in some chemical company that was considered part of the war effort.

So your father-- OK, let's repeat that so that we hear it on tape-- is that your father was actually not only not deported, but taken to work as a chemist?

Right.

And was your mother in hiding when he was doing that?

Well, my mother was still living in the apartment when Kurt went to visit them.

So tell us now about Kurt Roberg and how his story intersects with your parents. Who is Kurt Roberg?

Kurt Roberg was a close friend of my aunt's and his mother. They lived in this relatively small town, Celle.

Celle?

And they were very close.

Which aunt?

Berta-- the one who was the most important person in my life. And they remained friends, and he, his mother, and my aunt Berta were very close. And their lives kind of intersected.

And Kurt, then, how did he come to be in Berlin to visit your parents?

Because they were friends. And he was leaving from Holland-- he left after the war.

So he did-- oh, he left after the war started?

So he was in Holland, and then tried to get to America. And en route, he was in Berlin. And that's what we were reading about yesterday, and you can read it in there.

Tell us about what it was that he writes, so that we'll have it on camera.

Steven, do you mind doing that?

I think they want to hear it from you.

Yeah, yeah.

My reading is--

Do you remember the details of it?

Only what he wrote.

Only what he wrote, OK. So let's do that, at least.

OK, I hate to tell you my eyes aren't that great.

Well, as much as you can.

OK.

Shall I go with-- the news from Amsterdam about our transit visas was not very encouraging.

Let's cut for a second.

Yeah, I think I won't--

OK, during?

My first weeks in Berlin, when we had already become-- when it had already become clear that I would not leave according to my original schedule, I planned to visit the sister of Berta Salomon, Rosie Cohen, my mother, who lived in Berlin. Remembered how helpful the Cohens had been to my father when he and Hans Salomon--

Many siblings were married to Leo Cohen, my father. And a pharmacist, the Cohens had two little girls, Doris and Hannah, whom they had managed to send to England with the last Kindertransport in August 1939, days before the outbreak of the war. Rosie and Leo Cohen, unable to leave, remained in Berlin.

And so now that I was here, I planned to visit. My mother had stayed in contact with Hans and Berta, who, like my release from K2-- whatever that is-- the only place open to them was Shanghai. And through the Suez Canal to China, I had gotten their address from my mother before she left for America.

You never knew where you would end up. So it was good to have contacts and keep up connections with [GERMAN].

Yeah, people from your country.

Fellow countrymen, [? overmen. ?] So one afternoon, I made my way to Berlin, Berchtesgadener Strasse, and the pharmacy was, of course, no longer owned by Leo Cohen. It had been Aryvanized after Kristallnacht.

So when I came to their apartment, only Rosie was at home. She was surprised to see me, because I had come unexpected. But had brought along some tea that-- oh, his mother, I guess-- had sent me, remembering my mother always reminded me never to come empty handed. And--

I am sorry, my eyes are not so good with this.

When our respective family histories, Rosie was happy to hear that my parents and brother were already in America. And that I was on my way, as well.

Of her 10 brothers and sisters, Rosie was the only one who had not been able to immigrate. Her husband, Leo, a trained pharmacist, was now working in a chemical factory that was making raw materials. I understand that as such, he would never get a permit to leave.

He was now a member of the war essential workforce, assigned to work far beneath his qualifications, at wages set arbitrarily by the Nazis. Since the war had started in September 1939, Rosie had heard only sporadically about their two girls, Doris and Hannah, since they had left for England.

Direct communication between England and Germany was no longer possible. And it would come directly through friends or relatives in neutral places like America or Shanghai, or some South American countries. I had met Doris about five years earlier when she was visiting her aunt Berta in Celle, and I was happy that she and Hannah were safely in England.

I was also glad to have made this visit to her mother, because she and her husband had helped my father.

So this is the last witness report about your parents--

Exactly.

--from Kurt? OK, and then after that you learn that-- you learn after the war that they went into hiding?

Yes, my father had a friend who worked for the American government. And it was really much later that he was able to go to Germany before a lot of the history was discovered. And he's the one-- but we were already here, and it was much later-- he's the one who found out what happened. And let my aunt know, and us know.

So it was years later. Did he ever tell you the name of the-- there is a German term for the Jews-- and there were some very famous ones in Berlin-- who, in trying to save their own lives, would betray other Jews in hiding, whether it was [GERMAN] or some sort of a term for them. Did you ever find out the name of the person who betrayed them?

No.

As well as, you never knew the names of the people who had saved them?

No.

And then, do you know what happened to your parents, in the sense of how they died?

Then, years later, my sister, her husband and I, we went to Berlin. And we tried to find the records. And we learned that they were sent to Auschwitz. And we have the dates-- that's in the papers there. My sister found that out.

And then that was pretty late?

That was late. And I have that for you in the papers.

Thank you. It takes such a long time to piece just these few fragments of details.

I know.

I can't imagine what it was like for you not to know.

Well, you know, a couple of things happened when we went to England. Because war broke out, they evacuated the entire school. So all the English kids who were in our school were in exactly the same position as we were, so it wasn't as traumatic.

It wasn't like we were the only ones who were separated from our parents. Because they put the school on a train, they sent you to these remote places where mostly really poor people had volunteered to take the children, and they got some money. So you get off the train, they walk you down the street, knock on the door, here are two kids, here are two kids.

And we were all-- the English kids were in exactly the same position.

So it's a shared experience.

And so it wasn't like we were the only non-English speaking German sad little girls, because all the other kids were in the same position. And then we still had hope that my parents, we were going to get together.

Yes, that's early on.

It was early on, and there was hope that we would meet and all come to America together. And I think that kind of saved the total shock.

The other thing that happened is-- of course, we didn't speak the language. So there were a few German kids, and they sent us to whatever the local school was. I practically had no education.

You're talking about in the countryside?

In the countryside. So the German kids stuck together. And then the teacher separated us so that we would speak English. And the funniest thing happened, because one of the German kids, somebody said to her, where did you get your accent from? She picked up my accent.

So you know, it's really funny because she sounded more German than--

Than you did.

--than I did. And of course, we had to learn English.

Of course, of course.

And then it was a crazy time. Because I don't know whether you've watched any of this-- all this German stuff coming

back now. We spent half our time in air raid shelters. I mean, we basically had no education.

Let's loop back a little bit, then, to the very beginning of your time in Britain. You went by train?

By boat and then by train. So we went to Le Havre, isn't it?

That could be. And so you went by train to Le Havre, and then by boat?

Right.

And then do you remember the train journey? Were you accompanied by anybody?

There were just a bunch of--

Children?

Children. There must have been--

An adult.

Right. HIAS, I think, is what brought us here.

For those who don't know, please tell them, what is HIAS?

HIAS is an organization that handled refugees.

What did HIAS stand for?

I give them money, I should know. Do you know, Steven?

I do.

Hebrew association?

Let's cut the camera for a second.

So before the break--

Is it better with or without?

You can keep it either way. If you're more comfortable with glasses, then let's do it with glasses, yeah. Before the break, we were talking about your journey from Berlin to England, and your first impressions there. Before we continue with the bulk of our story in England, I want to step back a little bit and revisit some of the questions I asked about your childhood in Berlin.

OK.

One of them was that, off camera, your son told me that your interactions with Brownshirts on the street sometimes went even beyond just being handed a flag. That sometimes they would talk to you.

I think he's making that up.

OK.

I'm not sure. They assumed that I was German, because I looked that way.

OK, so you were blonde and blue-eyed? Is that it?

Yeah.

So you don't remember any more than just being handed a flag and sometimes some propaganda literature?

Right.

All right. Then the next point is at the Berlin train station, is that where your parents said, we'll see you again? Was it at that point, or was it before?

I think we were all optimistic we'd see each other again.

And did you think so, too?

Yes. It never occurred to me that I was saying goodbye. It just never occurred to me.

So you said that when you arrived in Britain, after you had the train and a boat and another train--

We came to this house, which was called a hostel.

And where was it? Was it in London?

It was in London. And it had a matron and her husband who was sort of taking care. The rabbi arranged for all of that. And he must've met us, cause I saw him at some point. And it was like a little boarding house, I guess is what-- we had our meals there, I shared a room with my sister, and there might have been a couple more beds. I don't really remember.

And then we were enrolled in school.

Were all of the children in the hostel from Germany?

No, there were sent from Vienna.

But they were all Kindertransport?

They were all Kindertransport.

And then we were enrolled in school. And we were there very briefly, because war broke out. And the next thing I knew is that they literally took the whole school and paired us off, sent us to the country, and knocked on doors and shoved--

Children.

--and shoved children in.

So where did you end up? Where did you land? In whose lap did you land?

The first one was in Bishop's Sortford. And they were a young couple. I don't think we were there that long. And then we were transferred to this older couple. And it was very primitive-- it had an outhouse.

Still in the same place?

The same place. I don't know how they arranged, you know, what they did. And they were an older couple, they had one

son who might have been marginally disabled, I know he was a little strange.

But they were so wonderful to us. They gave-- it was my sister and I-- they gave us part of their rations. I mean, that's how generous they were.

And we didn't do much. We went to school, such as it was, and we'd take walks.

What did the countryside look like?

I think it was quite beautiful. Very simple, rural, little houses, with a front parlor. My then-husband-- we went back and visited these people. And it was very dear.

What was their name?

Waterman.

Waterman.

And for many years, my sister and I would send them Christmas packages. But we did go back once to visit with my then-husband. And they couldn't-- I have to say, they couldn't have been lovelier-- for very simple. But you know, we felt quite comfortable.

Did you speak any English by that point?

I was beginning to. And at first, not at all.

Can you describe their home? You said there was an outhouse, it was primitive.

There was an outhouse.

Was it a single cottage?

It was like they had a front parlor, which you hardly ever used. That was very English, I think. And a living room, kitchen, and we must have had our own bedroom, because I don't remember anyone else being there. And them-- that was it.

Did they have a farm?

No, I think they were old already. I don't remember him working.

So did you stay there for the duration?

No, we stayed there-- now I'm a little foggy about how long we stayed there, but then we moved. My parents had a friend who came from Germany and lived in England. And then we went to live with her, and this was in Staines, Middlesex. We moved. And we stayed with them for a while.

And what was that circumstance like?

She was younger, married to somebody who I can't really remember. And I do remember that was when there used to be air raids, and there was this big metal sort of cage in their living room where we slept in case of bombings.

In the middle of the living room?

In the middle of the living room.

How odd. It must have looked really odd.

It was very odd. You climb into that thing. And you know, it had-- it was a metal cage.

A metal cage.

In the living room. And then, my sister went off to a trade school-- I don't know how she got there.

The younger sister?

Yes. And she was a cook.

But for heaven's sake, she was a girl still.

Of course. Well, we had no education. I mean, really. And I met, when I was living in Staines, at school, a friend. I went to live with her parents and her. I don't know how that happened, but I moved.

So it was on your own?

On my own, and then left the friend of my parents'.

Do remember the friend's name? It's OK, it's just OK.

I actually don't remember.

That's OK, that's OK. She didn't have children. I have the feeling she didn't have a happy marriage. I mean, it was not a home environment. I think that's why this friend I met at school took me in to her parents.

And I lived with them until I came to America.

Wow. So what was their name?

That's OK. And was she sort of like your best friend at school?

She was a good friend. And I think it was probably very generous of her parents to take me in. I think they felt my environment with this woman wasn't very good. I have a feeling it wasn't-- I mean, he wasn't there much, and she was hardly a motherly type.

Well, a child needs adults. There's just-- you're a child.

And when I moved in with this-- it was a family, you know.

And about how old were you, when you moved in there?

Well, I was 16 when I came here. Probably 13 or 14.

So you arrived--

When I was 11.

And 11, so it was two years of in-between.

In Bishop's Stortford. That's about the right age. I think I was two years in Staines.

And did you say that you didn't go to school, or you did, but there was no real education?

We went to school, but it wasn't really-- I mean, we learned English.

Only that's something.

And we must have learned something. But there were a lot of air raids, so you spent a lot of time going to the shelters.

What do you remember from--

We were bombed once.

Really?

Yes.

In Staines?

Uh-huh, but then they put the house back together.

So the house was a direct hit?

Yes, or at least it was part of it. We couldn't go in for a few days.

Did you see British soldiers? Was this a part of Britain that had a lot of military presence?

Not really. Was very remote, you know?

Did you have homesickness?

I'm sure I did, but I denied it. I think I always had this optimism that I would see my parents again. You know, if I had felt I was never going to see them again, I think my life would have been entirely different when I was in England. But I absolutely had the feeling that we were going to see each other again.

And you were getting letters?

Did you see a couple of the letters?

Yes, yes.

What was it, '45 I think was the last one?

Let me see. Can we cut just for a second?

You and Stan went back to visit, did you visit them?

No, we visited an older couple who is so dear.

OK, so you were talking with your son right now about the same things we were just discussing-- about the woman who wasn't very motherly, who was from Germany but married a British man. And also this family that you lived with.

Right. And they were more normal, because it was a family.

Besides the girl, were there any other children?

I don't think so. I was trying to remember that.

OK, well I looked in your file, and the last message that you get is from your parents on March 10, 1943. And it looks like it's delivered on April 5th, 1943-- so almost a month later.

Right.

Which is pretty fast, considering it's war time.

I think so.

You know? I don't if you can read it out, but I would love it if you could read this part-- it's written from your parents to you and your sister. It would be very touching to hear that in German.

You see, that's the problem-- that is what is translated. This is the translation.

Could you read the German part?

No.

No, then read the translation.

Kurt did that. Because he's the only one who could read it. So you want me to just go from Leo Cohen, Berlin, Germany? And parent to child, Hannah Cohen in England.

Loving dolls-- I am happy to have received your answer to letter from September. Something main thing is-- the main thing is you're well. Do you still go to school? Regards to all conglations -- I don't know?

Congratulations?

Yeah, I guess. And Hannah, my dearest something is to be together again-- my dearest wish is to be together again with you all. The best kisses, and remember us. March 10th, 1943. Father and mother.

And that's the last time you get some word of them.

And then there is the most wonderful translation, which is this-- did you read that? That was so touching.

Please read it. What is this?

They must have given that to us when we left in 1939.

And it was written in German, and Kurt translated it to English. And it says, our Jewishness-- of being a Jew. This is the Torah, this is the word that God gave us, that we retain on and on, and bear it all through life. My beloved little Hannah-- now I'm going to cry-- learn suffering without complaining. Your mutti loves you very much.

And then, Berlin 31-7, '39. Live for your parents' joy, and never cause them sorrow. then God's blessing will also rest-- oh, dear, this is so sad-- on you at all times, dedicated by your vati dad in Berlin.

As a Jew, you were born, as a Jew, you shall die. Jews are never lost, and Jews shall become free. As a hearty remembrance of you and your sister.

Thank you.

And that is-- I will take it back. It's very poignant, isn't it?

Very poignant, very poignant. And these are written on March 3, 1939.

That's what they must have given us.

March 4th and July 31st, '39.

So that's as we were leaving.

Yeah. Thank you, thank you.

When you were with this family in Staines, that had more children, and you stayed there for the duration of the war, can you describe what a typical day was like for you? What would you do?

Not much. We went to school, cause I was going to school with their daughter. And I think we used to have dinner together, which was nice. I mean, because I hadn't really been doing that. And then we just, I think, walked, maybe rode a bicycle. Didn't do much.

And so how was Hannah, who is younger than you, taken to work to be a cook?

She got some kind of scholarship, and she lived with a whole other family.

But it sounds like she was working rather than going to school?

She was.

Was she close by?

No.

Do you know where she was? What place she was in?

I have her papers, I could show them to you.

OK, did you ever visit her, or she visit you?

We would see each other through an aunt, who later came to America.

And was this one of your mother's siblings?

Yes.

And which aunt was this?

Henny.

This was Henny. And how did Henny end up in Britain?

I think they, at that point, I believe to leave Germany, they got jobs as maids. But she's the only one who came to England. The rest came here.

To the United States. So was anyone-- was one of your father's brothers in Britain?

He was, but we only saw him once. And he was the guy who was--

Broken.

Totally broken.

Was he living by himself?

Yes.

In London?

I think so. We only saw him once the whole time we were there.

Whatever happened to him after you saw him?

He must have died.

So you didn't have any contact after that?

No.

Well, it could have been that having lost his child, having lost his wife--

And lost his everything.

Everything.

And he couldn't-- I mean, some people could handle it, and some couldn't. He was a person who couldn't.

That happened. That happened quite a bit. Are there any memories that you have of this family that you were with, what their parents did, you know, how they made a living? Did you ever see them at their places of work? Anything you can tell me about the family.

Not really. I don't know what he did. I don't even know if they were Jewish or not.

But your friend, do you remember what she was like? The girl?

Yeah, we were friends, like--

You were friends at home and friends at school.

Right.

Was she Jewish?

I can't remember, Steven. I never thought about it.

Do you remember her name?

And you stayed there, though, about two or three years?

Two years.

Two years. And how is it that you were able to leave Britain?

Well, my aunt and uncle-- particularly this aunt Berta-- she-- I mean, I'm close to her daughter now. They treated me like a third child. Apparently, my end went to-- she did whatever she had to do almost daily. I mean, she was very tenacious, and she got us out of England to America as quickly as possible.

I mean, the war ended what, in '45?

That's right.

And we came in '46. And she arranged for all the papers.

And she, herself, was new.

They went to Shanghai and then to America. And then, when we got to America, at least four of my aunts and uncles met us at the boat. It was very sweet.

Do you remember the boat journey?

We were all very seasick.

Was it a passenger ship, or was it a military one? Do you know?

It wasn't military, but it was very primitive. And it had a first class and a third class. And I just remember being really quite sick, and my sister was even sicker. But there was a man in first class who used to come and visit me-- he came to Brooklyn to pick me up, I guess. You know, so it was just--

By that point, you were 17 years old?

Yes. And so he made the trek to Brooklyn to ask me out. I don't remember much about it.

But my aunts and uncles were very dear. We lived in a two-family house. So I went upstairs with Berta and Hans-- this is in Brooklyn. And my sister went downstairs, with Hannah and Ralph.

And what part of Brooklyn was this?

East 22nd Street.

And is that-- what neighborhood would that be? Is that Bensonhurst, or Flatbush?

Flatbush, I think, isn't it? My geography is not very good. And then, my uncle-- it gets better-- my uncle came-- well, he came from Celle, this is Kurt's--

Relative?

Friend, you know, they all came from Celle. And he was very entrepreneurial. So when they went to Shanghai, he opened a grocery store, feeling that they could eat if it didn't work out.

That makes a lot of sense.

So that's what he did. Then they ended up in Seattle. I mean, this is all before I met them.

Then, now we come to a good story, then he came to New York. And he went from picking up clothes at Klein's-- do

you remember that department store? To going public for \$4 million in the camera business, then. I mean, that was a lot of money. And he lost it all.

Well, explain to me-- how did he make this money? I didn't understand.

Selling camera equipment. He was just a born salesman. So we moved from this two-family house to a very nice one-family house. I stayed with them, and they were just so good to me.

This is Berta's husband?

Yes.

Berta's husband is the born salesman, who first started a grocery store in Shanghai?

Came to America, picked up clothes, went public for \$4 million. And then lost it all.

But in between, Hannah stayed with my aunt Hannah and Ralph, continued to live in this two-family house. And Ralph was also in the camera business, but modest. But Hans became--

And how did he lose it? Who knows, it could have been investments or something.

One story I heard is that he went to Japan and paid cash in advance for a faulty line of cameras. And when it got here it wasn't any good, and--

He lost it.

--he lost it. Now, Kurt worked for Hans for 10 years. It's all very connected. And Hans used to meet, as I said, the boat. Everybody worked for him. Most of my aunts, my uncles worked for him. My father's brother worked for him when he came from Shanghai.

You know what's amazing, in my mind, is how he was able to establish himself so quickly.

He was incredible. He gave me two great weddings. And by the time it came to his own daughters, no money, no weddings. And I had two fantastic weddings.

You know, he was so proud to have made it. And he liked George Laporte, whom I married. And you know, he felt that he had arrived at a really good American family. He was also very generous to the temple in Brooklyn.

Your uncle Hans?

Yes.

Tell me how-- this reminds me of something you said earlier-- you said in the beginning when you were in England, you became religious.

I did.

How did you practice that? How did that manifest itself?

Well, I certainly observed the Sabbath. I didn't carry anything. You know, people walked around with a handkerchief in their pocket. I prayed every morning.

Was there a temple to go to?

No, I did it by myself.

And were there other Jews to do this with?

No, I did all this by myself.

All by yourself. And this was the rabbi's influence?

Yes.

Do you remember how he influenced you in this way?

I think I just observed him.

Because it wasn't even any formal teaching or training or anything?

No, no, no.

And how long? Did this last you for--

Not that long.

Not that long.

But I definitely did it. I mean, I did it by myself. And went through that phase. I think I even learned Hebrew for a while.

Well, your parents, in their note to you, talk about being Jewish.

Yes, I thought that was very touching.

Yes.

That was my mother, though.

And I can imagine that this kind of-- it's a legacy. It's sort of like this is your legacy, this is who you are.

I was so touched. I mean, it was translated by Kurt, because I couldn't read the German script. But I was very touched when I read that. Of course, you know, I didn't feel it that much at the time. But obviously, it was her.

Are you a person who is religious today?

No.

Do you have a belief?

I definitely believe in God, and I'm glad I'm Jewish. But I don't really--

You don't observe the various--

Very loosely.

OK, well many people are-- many people fall in that group. But it spoke to you at the time?

Yes, very much so.

And it probably-- I'm interpreting here, but it probably helped you during these times when you didn't have any parents.

I think so. Because there wasn't much-- you know, wherever we lived in England, they were all non-Jewish. I mean, all the families were not Jewish. I think the only Jewish family is the girl that I lived with in the end. I'm sure they were Jewish.

OK, yeah. But when you get to New York, that changes, when you are--

My aunt was definitely spiritually-- wouldn't you say that Berta was a tremendous influence. I mean, she was religious, but she was a religious human being, you know, in her essence.

Tell me about her personality.

She was bat mitzvahed at 93, that will give you some idea. That's a whole-- that's a whole story.

OK, tell us.

And I have those papers somewhere. And she was tiny. But she kept the entire large family together. And she was never going to go to Germany, hated everything German.

But then she got this offer to go to Fulda, where they were re-creating the Hebrew school that they went to. There weren't any Jews left, but Fulda and the mayor, and you know, that part of the restitution. And a whole lot of us went.

Do you remember about what year that was?

Steven went, my other-- there were a bunch of us. It's in the book.

I know, but do you remember what decade it was? Was this the '70s or the '80s?

We just went through that.

I think we did, but I'd like to ground this chronologically. Was this where you said your daughter was three years old, and now she's--

It was in 1987.

1987, OK.

So that was actually very meaningful for everybody.

We went back in May of 1987.

And was this the first time you were back in Germany?

Yes.

OK, so tell me about that trip.

Well, first of all, it was really interesting because my aunt, who said she'd never go, since it was free, and her family was going-- there were a whole lot of us. A lot of her sisters and brothers, of my family, we were a whole group.

And it was very meaningful to the family as a group, because you know, Steven came, my cousins-- Berta's own

children came. Other children from these 11 offspring came.

And it was very well organized. I mean, we met in the Schloss, which wasn't hurt at all. Fulda is very historic, so it was interesting.

Yes, it's a pretty city.

Because, you know, it wasn't really demolished, I mean, so it had a lot of the original history. And so many people came from Israel, from all over the place.

It's just a small funny aside, and a lot of religious people-- of course, it was-- the mayor and another person who'd come from Israel, I mean, they worked it out. And the people who went to this school were paid for. But all the relatives who came, we all paid for ourselves. So it turned out to be a much bigger group than they were expecting.

Lufthansa catered the kosher food. That, to me, was such an irony, because they were unprepared for the many people that would show up.

Wow.

And I think for Steven--

Your son.

It was really important.

How was it meaningful for you?

For me, it was meaningful because I had refused to speak German. In fact, I never talked it. So when we got the first day, I had a-- Berta, my aunt, had a daughter, who was very interested in keeping in touch with whatever groups they were. Unfortunately, she is not alive anymore. But she had written to Judith Miller.

An author of a book called One by One by One.

Who happened to be in Germany covering the Nuremberg trials, or something. And she showed up the next day, came up to me, and said, can you tell me who Nancy Camp is, my cousin is, and I said, yes, she's over there. So Judith Miller talked to Nancy.

Really liked Steven, because he was young, and not an old refugee, and cottoned onto him. I think you were at Harvard at the time, right? So she held on to me and to Steven. And they started the speeches.

So Steven is saying, what are they saying? And Judith is saying, what are they saying? My German came back. And suddenly, I couldn't read it in the paper the next day, but I was able to translate.

And you hadn't spoken?

And I hadn't spoken it.

Since UK? Since you learned English in the UK.

Exactly, and it just, it came back.

So when you were now living--

Do you remember that? So I was able to translate. But I hadn't talked-- I hadn't talked it. And when I went to-- the paper

was full of it. I mean, we had reams this thick. I couldn't read the German, but I definitely was able to translate.

It's interesting, too, that when you went to live with your relatives once you arrived in Brooklyn, that that means you didn't speak German with each other at home. You must have spoken English.

We did.

And that's a switch, because you had spoken German with each other when you lived in Germany.

Right.

OK, but it didn't feel--

And to this day, I hate speaking it. But I can tell you, I was able-- I was able to translate pretty well, wasn't I?

I was shocked, because I had never heard you speak German.

I know, I couldn't believe it.

You didn't just translate it, you spoke it, too.

I just couldn't believe it.

So that was 1987. You left in 1939, so '49, '59--

40, almost 50 years.

Almost-- right, because it was 1987, you left in '39. So let's do this.

It's almost 50 years.

Almost 50 years, and suddenly--

It comes back to you.

You were speaking perfectly.

That was astounding.

And so then, did you--

No, then I gave it up.

OK, but you were there in Fulda. And what other parts were meaningful for you?

Well, primarily, I think the rest of my family, you know, they were scattered all over the country. And we had family talks, you know, I don't know how many there were. And there were a number, because my aunts and uncles and some of their children, it was a big group.

And it was very meaningful. Don't you think?

What about connections or contact with the local Germans? Did anything like that happen?

There was a lot of-- more people that were my aunt's vintage. Because, you know, I was really much younger. But the

whole experience was very positive. I mean, the Germans did a great job arranging for these groups.

Oh, then the other thing that was very meaningful was we went-- again, members of my family, including-- we went to my grandparents' house.

Where you used to live? Or where you used to visit?

Where they used to live. And I remember distinctly going into this living room where my grandmother, who had cancer, used to be in bed all the time. And here was this huge cross.

Who owned the house now? Who owned the house then?

Germans.

Did you have any discussion with them?

I think they were quite reluctant to let us in, weren't they?

In fact, [INAUDIBLE] the woman.

She wasn't very happy about us showing up. Right? But I also remember the big cross. They just took over. You know, the Germans-- you know this story-- they took.

And this, you think, is the original people who would have taken over? Not sold since then to somebody else?

No, I think it was the original. Don't you?

Absolutely. Can I--

Of course, Steven.

Do you remember the story about how she turned to you and me and said, well, you're not a Lump. You don't look like Lumps.

I don't remember that.

Because my mom--

Well, why don't you come on camera just for a second.

Yes.

Just come on camera for a minute.

I would like that.

And even though you're not miked up, we might be able to capture it.

OK, so we've brought you on, Steve. You are Dorothea's only child, Steve Fingerhood. Did I say that right?

Yes.

And you were with your mom and your aunts and the large family when they went back for the first time to Germany in 1987.

Yes.

And your mom wanted also to have you share what your experiences were at that point. And particularly, in the home that used to belong to the Lump family, because that was your grandmother's maiden name. OK, so take it from there.

OK, great.

OK, Steve, so tell us, what do you remember from that?

So this was 1987, so how long ago was that?

30 years.

30 years ago. I remember it pretty vividly. There was a large group. And the town and the press really beyond the town, in Germany, I guess this was a time when there was a lot of interest in Germany about Jews coming back to visit.

And I remember getting off the plane when we first arrived in Germany, and departing off the plane with my mother and the whole group, and there were news cameras recording us getting off the plane. And it was a little jarring.

You didn't expect that.

Not at all. And then and then the next day, we looked and the local TV station, and I think even beyond the local TV station, had news reports about the Jews of Fulda coming back. And I must say, it was quite arresting, because I had never really felt so much like the Jews coming back, it was just weird to be--

In a group.

In a group like that. And I guess Fulda had a large Jewish population before, and during the war.

Very Orthodox.

I think when we came back, there were 60,000 people in the town of Fulda, and maybe 30 Jews.

Who were local there and lived there?

Yes, in other words, the population had gone from 1,200 to 30. 1,200 to zero, and then some came back.

So 1,200 pre-war. And to the-- OK. Did you meet any of the local Jews who stayed and lived in Fulda?

No.

I don't remember doing that.

I don't think there were any.

Yeah, I don't think there were--

Any of the 12, for example.

My belief is that there were no Jews that survived in Fulda. That some had come back between the end of the war and 1987. But 30, that's not a huge number.

No, 30 is not a lot.

And the town made a big effort, and the mayor of the town-- who, I think, later had a more prominent political career in modern Germany, had one of his initiatives was to try and rebuild the temple in Fulda as a way of emphasizing a new post-Nazi view.

And I think he was the one behind organizing the Jews of Fulda to return. But it was very intensely personal for my mother and her family and our family. But you couldn't miss the fact that it had this political significance. The way it was covered by the press.

Frankly the security, it was a little eerie, because everywhere we went, it was fairly subtle, but there was-- Coverage.

Well, there was coverage, but we had armed military not just local police, but--

To protect you?

Yes, because there was the belief-- I think Germany felt that there was-- you know, in 1987, there were a variety of--

Antisemitism left, do you think?

I think there was that, I think it was just terrorism. There was a lot of--

There was the Israeli-- I don't know what year that that massacre happened in Munich, but it might have been in the '80s during, I think, the Olympics.

Well, that happened previously. But there was-- it wasn't necessarily German antisemitism. I think there was a fear that--

A lot of unrest, I guess.

Mid-East terrorism.

Exactly. So, and I think Germany felt, and the mayor felt that to invite the Jews back to Fulda, make a big statement about reconciliation, and have a terrorist incident would not be a good thing. But the level of security-- maybe it was necessary, but it added a level of--

Drama.

--drama to something that was already pretty dramatic. But for example, when we went to the--

Castle?

Well, not the-- when we went to the ceremony to dedicate the reopening of the synagogue in Fulda, I don't know if you remember that, there was an open street. And they had-- I don't know if it was buses or cement trucks that they had, they had obstacles closing off the street to make sure that-- if you looked, it was subtle, but if you looked carefully, the level of security--

It was there.

It wasn't just local police, it was way beyond that. And you know, it was just a little unnerving, really. So I remember that.

I remember being shocked, because I thought I knew my mother. How old was I? I was probably in law school at the

time, so in my mid-20s. I had never really heard my mother speak German. I didn't think she spoke German.

And all of a sudden--

All of a sudden, as she said, I--

As Judith saying, what's he saying? Steven, what's he saying?

And my mother started translating. And then people-- we would be going somewhere, we would try and be lost, and my mother would stop and ask someone in German what the directions were. And seemed to converse completely in German.

I know, that was really a shock to me.

It was kind of amazing. So I remember that.

I think it was a little-- I think for a lot of the people in the family, it's almost as if there was this mind shift, where suddenly you felt what it must have been like to be der Juden, and different in this place. And you know, it was touching, but it was just-- I think it affected everyone very deeply, in the way you suddenly started speaking German.

You know, everyone reacted differently. Bata, who my mother was talking about--

Aunt Bertha?

Aunt Bertha.

She was interviewed in the radio.

Oh, was she?

Yes. She was prominent, this Judith Miller covered her.

But she was the one who was so set against going.

Yes, totally.

And when she actually did go and was interviewed, what was it that she said? What was it that she-- did that change? I mean, clearly?

I think the local radio station-- you know, she was one of the people they interviewed about coming back. You know, Bertha was very, as my mother said, very slight, very magnetic, big personality. And she wasn't trying to be a big personality. She just--

She was being herself.

She was being herself, and it was it was magnetic. She wasn't bitter, but she was very straightforward about things. And she didn't sugarcoat it. I don't remember the interview, because it was in German, and I didn't understand that. But I remember very well that we were in a coffee shop.

Listening to her.

We were sitting around a table with her. And it was just a small group. And she was describing a very bad incident, in which--

Her sister was-- not raped, but by a German-- isn't that what it was?

The one I remember is where the Jews in Fulda were being rounded up, and that the local people-- they had had good friends, but the local-- there was a mob that was sort of--

Not sympathetic.

Just sort of cheering on the Nazis, you know.

As they're rounding the people.

Yes. And Bertha was speaking about it, you know, very directly. Pretty angrily. But just matter of fact.

And I remember, it was just jarring, because here we are sitting, listening to her, and there was like a table adjacent to it, with like a German woman, who was of sort of a similar age. And she just had this like stricken look on her face. You know, just sort of horribly upset to be hearing this.

And it was just interesting. Bertha was not aware of this other person who was like overhearing and listening, but it just struck me that Bertha was telling her story, and this woman was-- I couldn't read her mind, but it seemed like some combination of just being horribly upset, but not necessarily sympathetic. Just upset that someone was stirring up the pot. Do you understand?

That you were talking about that.

Yeah, so I remember that. And then the one other memory-- many, but one memory I have-- is that my mother had spoken so much about visiting her grandmother, and in the bed, in that house. And so I remember at some point--

A group of us.

Said, well let's go. I mean, let's see if it's still there. Is it still there?

Do you remember the street it was on? What the name of the street it was on?

You know, it was chronicled in this book, so I'm going to-- I don't know if they have the address. I don't think so.

They may not.

Sp we went there, I think we took a cab there. Maybe--

I know a group of us went.

Might have been even two cabs. And we went out, and we went, and we got out and found it. And it was not-- there was plenty of local press in Fulda about this event, and the mayor inviting the Jews back. So it wasn't--

This, we just did on our own.

But it wouldn't-- you know, it would be very likely that any resident would know that this group had come back, you know.

OK, so it would have been in the news.

Yes, absolutely. TV, news.

But it wasn't.

No, the Jews of Fulda coming back.

Oh, yes, of course.

So we get out of the cab. It's maybe-- I don't remember that. I remember it was a morning.

And what did the house look like?

It was a nice enough house. It was big.

Stucco?

I think it was stucco. But I don't remember it very well. What I remember is there were shutters.

Single family?

Yes.

Garden around?

No. Of course, I think the animals were in the back.

Yeah, I think there was a barn there.

OK, so this is not central Fulda.

Well, it wasn't very big, anyway.

It was not in the center of Fulda, no.

I'm trying to get a picture-- residential area?

Yes.

OK, so you get out?

Residential area.

Single family, two story type of house?

Does that sound right?

Yes, it had stairs.

Yeah, definitely had stairs.

Well, they had 11 children, so it had to be pretty sizable.

Definitely-- I think it was two story, single family. So I remember, we were like looking and peering around. And I remember someone went to the back and said, oh, look, the barn is still there, or something like that. And then the shutters opened a little bit, and someone looks out from the second floor. And then the shutters close again.

And then that happened like two or three times. And I think we rang on the doorbell. No one answered. And then, we

rang the doorbell again, and a woman opened the door.

And she was-- the whole dynamic really suggested that the person there just really didn't want these visitors, and would like them to go away, and didn't want to have anything to do with us. And I don't remember who--

One of my uncles, I think.

Said, hey, we don't want anything. But this used to be a family house, we have a lot of memories from the house. Would it be OK if we just--

She was very reluctant.

And she didn't like that idea at all. And she finally allowed, I think, the group to come in, in like stages. And I remember going in with you. And first of all, to me-- I didn't really remember the details of the house. I remember the details of the reaction this woman had. Because you couldn't fail, just based on her age and her reaction, to think that this was the person who--

Who took over.

--who owned the house after.

After you all either were thrown out or left, or whatever.

When it was take somehow.

Everyone had gone to the concentration camp.

And I think that the local Gestapo, or local party, you know, would designate who could take over. So it was often people who were--

Connected.

--friends of the Nazi party.

These are suppositions, but this is what comes through your mind as you see it?

No, I remember someone telling me, because I remember after it, thinking like-- asking, like how is it-- when a house got vacated, who determined who got it? And so someone told me, well, this is how it usually worked. That it was the party would allocate who got it, or it was put up for auction, but the auction was rigged.

So how did this lady react?

So this is the part I remember. And then if it's all right, because this was a while ago, this reporter my mother mentioned did write a book about it. And we found the passage. So I'll tell you what I remember, and then I'll read you what--

The passage was.

Yeah, which hopefully matches up a little bit.

I remember going to the room that my mother had described-- because I would ask her, what's your memory of your grandmother?

Yeah, the one she thought was so-- she would feel so warm to, who was so sickly.

In her bed, exactly.

There's a photo of her in your papers.

Thank you.

So I remember going to that room, the living room, and I remember you kind of reacting very greatly to like this is exactly-- it doesn't look anything like, all the furniture is different, it doesn't look anything, but this is exactly the room. This is the room where I would say--

And this big cross.

Yes, and you told me the one thing that's different is there is this huge cross that would have been like over the bed.

Right.

So I remember that. But the thing that I remember the most is that the group, everyone was aware that this woman didn't have to let us in. We had asked if we could see it, and everyone was trying to-- and it was clear that-- everyone's sense that she had this feeling like, oh, they're going to take it away, they're going to take the house away from me, or something.

So we were trying very hard to be like reassuring, and very appreciative that she was letting us see the house. And the rest of my mother and the relatives were sort of going back, looking through the house.

And she kind of turned to me, and I was kind of more-- I was kind of running interference, I was like talking to her and letting everyone else see the house. And I said, thank you for letting us see the house, it really means a lot. And she said, it's OK.

And then there was this silence. And then she looked at me and she looked down, and she said, you know, these shoes are terrible. These shoes hurt so much. I cannot get a pair of shoes that fit me. And my feet really ache, it's very hard to walk. I'm so uncomfortable-- it's very uncomfortable, terrible, my shoes really hurt.

I don't remember that at all.

And I said, you know, it's a shame. I'm sorry, you know that happens. And she kind of went on, the shoes, It's terrible, these shoes.

But this is significant moment, she realizes who the people are who have come back. And instead of somehow or other acknowledging this significant moment, this is how she is able to handle it, in other words? Or not handle it?

Look, we couldn't read her mind. But I believe she was--

She was asking you to give money for shoes?

No, I don't think that at all.

That thought crossed my mind, too, maybe.

No, I didn't think she asking. I think she was feeling extremely uncomfortable. I took it that she felt-- well, let me go on, and then I'll tell you how I-- I'll just tell you the facts, and then I'll tell you how I took it.

It was very odd for us to be there, and for her to be-- she wasn't saying give me money for a new pair of shoes. She was saying, it's terrible, these shoes, they don't fit, it really hurts. And then, I said, well, it's a shame. Thanks again, it's a very nice house.

And then she said, oh, the house. It's very hard to maintain. There's lots of difficulty. There's always something that has to be fixed.

All this is in German and you understood it?

It was broken, you know, but I understood it. And it must have been in broken English because I didn't speak German, so it must have been English. But the two things she communicated to me was her shoes hurt, she was very uncomfortable, and the house is really a burden. But what can you do?

And I was kind of nodding and kind of saying that, gee, that's a shame. And I was thinking to myself, you seem-- oh, I remember. There was one other thing, I said like, oh, you know, how long have you lived here? And she said, a very long time. And I said, oh, like when-- like since when?

And she said, oh-- she said a long-- you know, I've had it for a long time. And then she said something very vague. And so I combined that with her obvious discomfort, and her saying that the house is a burden, and I thought it was-- I took it to mean that she was dealing with ambivalence and guilt and discomfort at the-- I believe that somehow, some way, she was part of stealing the house, or was complicit with the Nazis. And that now the people who had been the victims of this act were back, and she--

Unexpectedly.

Unexpectedly, and I think she was feeling-- and I think that she realized no one was going to be making a claim against her. This was simply us remembering the place where we had been harmed and exiled, or my family had been. And I don't think she could handle it.

So I think the way she handled it was to say, this is really uncomfortable. These shoes really hurt. Oh, it's terrible.

I don't remember that at all.

And I remember just being floored by it.

Well, as I said, it sounds like a very bizarre kind of statement at the significance-- even if it's not her significance-- the significance to people who have come to her door. And that her mind would not be on why is this significant for them? But on something like this.

You're going to-- and then I remember one more thing she said to me. So my mother mentioned that the Nazis very often thought she was a good Aryan girl. And-- right? When they hand you the flyers?

Right.

And I've had that experience, because I am told I don't look particularly Jewish, whatever that means. And so she did turn to me and said, but you're not a Lump.

That is the--

You're not a Lump, are you?

That is the maiden name of your grandmother. You're not a Lump?

You're not a Lump. No, you're not one of them, right?

So she knew who was the family who lived there before?

Yes.

She knew that it had been the Lumps.

She said, but you're not-- you're just taking them, right? And I said, no, that's my mother. And then she didn't know how to answer that.

So may I read this, would that make sense?

Please read this.

Because I just think it'll add a little color, and then I'll leave you.

So this is from Judith Miller, her book, *One by One by One*. Ahd was the New York Times reporter who came ot report on this.

She wrote the book in 1990, so it came out a little after this. But at the time, in Europe, there was a phrase that a lot of people used called Holocaust amnesia. Because there were in the social discussion and in the politics of Europe at that time, there was amnesia about it.

And so Judith Miller, the premise of this book, was to counteract Holocaust amnesia. She would tell not the large historical story, but specific, detailed stories. That's why it's called *One by One by One*.

And she was covering some trial in Germany, and my cousin had written to her, and that's why she came.

And so a chapter in the book chronicled her accompanying this group to Fulda. So that's kind of the background. And so I'm just reading from it, because it's the same incident, but a little more contemporaneous, I guess.

So it says, "But with the surfacing of good memories came the bad and the ambivalent. One day, for example, some of the Lumps mustered the courage to visit their former home. It had been occupied for years by a woman, now very old, whose husband had probably bought it at auction from the Nazis."

Presumably, the author of this book researched it and got her own information.

"She let us enter in stages, said Doris Fingerhood, Rosie's daughter, who had left Germany for England when she was 11 years old. The house looked physically much as I remembered it, only much smaller. I kept thinking, where did my parents put 11 children? But I had remembered the house as full of character. Now, it was peculiarly devoid of any.

The woman who owned it," this is my mother speaking, "the woman who owned it was 80. She kept saying that she had lived there for 20 years, but knew nothing about how her husband, who was dead, had acquired it. She was crusty and very formal, typically German. I didn't know what to believe, and that made me uncomfortable.

She complained about her health, about the cost of keeping up the house. It was so expensive to maintain that she couldn't travel, Doris said. Finally, she looked at Steven and me, at our blondish hair and blue eyes, and said, you don't look like the Lumps.

There was a final shock awaiting them. Regina's bedroom was virtually unchanged from the day she had died there, with one exception-- over what had been the Lump family's old double bed hung a large wooden cross. I'm glad my mother could not see it, Doris said softly."

And then it goes on to talk about other things.

So that's the history from different voices-- your voice, your voice--

And her voice.

And her voice, and Judith Miller's voice. I mean, one of the things that I'd like to ask both of you-- and this touches-- I mean, your story on this touches on that, and that's that theme of what do contacts with Germans, ethnic Germans, non-Jews, what kind of contacts are there, so many years after the war? And what kind of feelings do they leave you with?

And I'll preface that also with a thought-- I usually try not to be leading, but I get the impression, after talking to so many people, that one of the most difficult aspects in this story is the large story, is the loss of trust, and can trust ever be regained?

And I wonder if that plays a role here. So there's really two questions.

Well, I don't think I can answer that. But I can tell you from my aunts and uncles, like Julius, who was a big football player, and--

Soccer.

Or soccer, or whatever he did. But they met Germans whom they knew. And they made it possible-- they had teas or coffee, or they met that older group with other older groups. And they actually interacted. Now, I wasn't part of that. But they had the opportunity to meet people that they knew when they were younger and growing up.

During this trip to Fulda?

During this trip to Fulda. There were definite meetings when the Germans could meet the people, like my relatives who had lived in Fulda. How it went, I can't really tell you.

You don't remember any comments?

I think some were quite positive.

I think so, too.

And what about your own feeling?

Well, my own feeling was that the mayor, and whoever the powers to be who had arranged this, did a very good job. Because it seemed successful.

That's true, but you're not answering how-- the question is, how did it leave you, in terms of feeling you could trust people or not.

I was just glad I wasn't there anymore. I mean, I didn't like Germany, I didn't like the atmosphere.

Even then, in 1987, in Fulda?

Right. But I was glad I was there, that I could absorb. Like we went to my grandmother's grave, and that was very important to me. I was glad to have the connection more personally. But I wouldn't want to be there.

So in that sense, what was broken couldn't really be repaired.

No.

What about you?

Well, I kind of had to somewhat--

And I'm not just talking about the Fulda trip. But if that is the catalyst, if that's the only time you were there.

No, I've been there since.

But not in that context.

No, not in that context. You know, I think that-- I think two things. I don't think it's nearly as simple as, the Germans did something bad to the Jews. That's certainly true. But it's also true, although it's horrific to say, that there were Gentile friends of Rose and Leo who risked their lives to save, to hide them, until 1944.

And they perished instead of surviving the war because of a fellow Jew, who ratted them out.

So it's very complicated.

I don't think-- if there's an us versus them, it's not Germans versus Jews. But I don't think-- it's one thing to read about horrible things in the paper, or in history books. But when you see it through your own family, or your mother or grandparents, it's very dark.

And the idea that neighbors didn't know what was going on, to me, is--

Hard to believe.

Is nonsense. And to me, it was the little things, like the reaction of this woman that just betrayed the fact that there was lots of complicity and bad acts. And so I don't feel like, oh, I can't trust Germans, and I've been to Germany a lot.

Since then?

Yes. And in the modern-- I mean, the interesting thing, by the way, is that one big contingent of visitors on this trip to Fulda were Germans who had emigrated to Israel. And they, you know, Israel and Germany have a very functional relationship right now. And Germany is important to Israel's economy.

And what I found interesting was that the Israelis had gotten over this a long time ago. Israelis did not exhibit a lot of ambivalence or emotional complication. American Jews did. Israeli Jews had other problems.

So that's also interesting.

That's very interesting. I didn't even think about that.

But what I want to say is, I found it scarring. I found the experience scarring, you know, just kind of feeling like I was reliving through my mother, you know, or her relatives, like what had happened. I think was a hugely traumatic thing.

And I think everyone has lived remarkably good lives given such a rip in the entire family support system fabric. And look, that happened to a lot of people in that time. But this was really acute.

One reason that I asked that is that, willy or nilly, we are having this conversation several generations after the events. And the fact that we have it so many years, decades, after the events, when there are several, that influences us. How you speak of something, you don't have different facts, but how you speak of those facts 10 years afterwards, two years afterwards, or 50 years afterwards, changes somewhat, is influenced by things.

And today, there are young Germans who, I've heard, often say-- and it's not the only voice, it's not the only-- but they say, this happened such a long time ago. This has nothing to do with me. Why can't I be taken by who I am, rather than by all this? Why do I have to apologize for something that even not my parents did, but maybe even my grandparents didn't?

And part of why I'm asking these questions is to provide a window to what makes-- if that is the case or not?

Let me take that point and narrow it into a very specific mini example. Because I understand that feeling.

So when we were on this trip, and my mother said this at the beginning, Lufthansa provided transportation, or was part of it. And there was a sizable contingent of people who were kosher, who were orthodox and kosher. And some of the events that someone in Germany catered was, they had to provide kosher food. Well there are 30 Jews in Fulda at the time, and it was a production.

And I don't really know how they did it, because we don't keep kosher. But I think that involved getting food from further away places. And I remember at one of these events, speaking-- not to a dignitary or anything like that, just to some kind of guy who was working-- I forget if he was part of the catering, or part of Lufthansa, but he was one of the people who had to arrange for this food to be provided to the kosher people.

And I was sort of just having casual conversation with him, because it was just interesting to me that this was like a very-- I was part of this visible, the Jews of Fulda, back there. And I said something like, wow, quite an event. And I think he spoke reasonable enough English.

And he said, yes. And he said, you know-- he basically said, it's really very expensive and very difficult to have to get this kosher food. And it's really a big production. And I don't think-- he basically said, we have better things to do.

So it was with this kind of attitude.

And I don't think he was being angry, but it was very interesting because his perception was exactly what you were saying, about why? His whole perception was, look, I am a young person, I'm not responsible for whatever happened in the past. Somehow or another, we have to run all over the place to get this kosher food for this group of people that are visiting. Why do we have to do this?

You know, it's a big burden, it's a big pain. And I don't get it. And so he was not at all, welcome back. I know a bad thing happened, we're making a huge effort.

It was more like, why the hell am I doing this? And I thought to myself, well, if this group hadn't killed or exiled this people, they would have their own thriving community, they could get their own kosher food. So it's really the least you can do to be inconvenienced.

But there are both sides, you know? So I don't know what to say.

So you could see his point of view.

I understand someone saying, we didn't do this. Hell, you Americans-- what are you doing for the Native American Indians? You know, that's your problem.

And so I'm not particularly persuaded by that point of view. I was a little indignant by it. But I can understand it.

Well, I mean, the question that I posed is one that I don't think really has answers.

I don't think so, either.

But they are part of the realities. And they have very deep feelings on both sides, on all sides. There are sometimes more than two sides.

You know, what I'm noticing the most is that the Germans that I've met today, they all say, that wasn't us. I had nothing to do with it.

And what does that do when you hear that?

I don't believe it. Do you have the same reaction?

I do, but I also have to say-- I mean, I do, period. But it makes me wonder what is happening now, under our own noses, that we're not so attuned to enough.

Now, if you speak to Kurt, he has many German connections. And he feels very differently. Really, he's made a lot of-- he's gone back and back and back. He's made many connections, and he treasures the friendships with Germans.

Yes, thank you for bringing that in. Because we're talking individuals. I'm sometimes reflecting something that's in the air that's not individual, but people have their own way of processing that, their own way of responding to it. And it's not a finished story.

No.

I mean, I just would add one more thing-- and I am so removed from it. But my impression is that, Weimar Germany, I guess, was really collapsing, people turned to a strong, authoritarian dictator, because they thought it was the only way to get things done.

And I think once Hitler-- I think Hitler very quickly, you know, empowered the worst, lowest, most brutal, most criminal elements. And I think once that happened, you know, there were lots of decent people who were terrified. And so I'm not too sure-- I'm not excusing it, I'm just explaining it. Because I think people do bad things when they feel--

I think that's true.

Now, I don't-- that doesn't excuse cheering on Nazis when you're rounding people up. But you know, I do think--

Some people have no power who were not direct victims. Some people, like the ones who saved your mother and father for a while, were also very anti-Nazi, but they couldn't show it. And others may not have been that, but they didn't like what they saw. They may not have been anti-Nazi, but they didn't like this or that.

Again, it's individual. It's individual. But we live in a world after that happened, and so we have to find our way through that world.

And it's scary that we're seeing elements again.

I think I'll wrap up this part. Thank you very much, Steven. This, I think, has been really helpful and insightful to talk about going back, and what going back meant, you know, to both of you, and in the different instances, the experiences that you had. So do you want to say something?

No, thank you very much.

Do you need anything else?

OK, before we go back to your story, one last question-- was this the one and only time you went back to Germany, when you were in Fulda in 1987?

No.

When did you go back again?

I went back with Steven and my grandchildren on a cruise. And we went to Berlin. Just to Berlin, though, for a couple

of days.

And that's when you tried to find the old pharmacy?

No, I'm sorry, I'm giving you the wrong information. The only time, when I went to Fulda was with my aunt and that whole group. My sister and her husband did not go. They couldn't afford it, and didn't want to go.

And then, a year or two later, just my sister, her husband, and I, and Hannah arranged for us to also get a little restitution money. So the three of us went alone. And my sister was then very diligent in trying to find what happened to my parents.

And I know we crept up to some small office.

I'm so sorry.

Are we good? OK, so we're going to repeat these questions. After the trip to Fulda, did you ever go back to Germany again?

Only with my sister and her husband. But not to Fulda, just to Berlin.

Just to Berlin, all right. And tell me about that.

And that was to research my parents' history. And it was very hard, because it was almost 50 years later. And if my sister hadn't been so diligent, it wouldn't have happened. But finally, we found an office that was like a hole in the wall, and it was almost 50 years later.

And when we entered, he said, what took you so long? Your papers are going to be gone next year, or something like that.

Oh, my goodness!

And they handed us this-- and I have it-- this little history, on toilet paper, but the Germans were so thorough. The records were there. And that's when my sister must have found out when my parents went to Auschwitz, because it's in your papers.

OK, but what is this on toilet paper? It was somebody who wrote down something?

Yes.

And the office was an official kind of municipal office?

And they were going to be sending the papers away, or throwing them out.

Oh, my gosh, and they had kept it that many years?

And they kept it.

So that was at the point where you learned that your parents were sent to Auschwitz?

Right.

OK, were you able to get restitution for any part of those lost?

Some of my family did. But Hannah and I got practically nothing. I don't quite know why, but we didn't.

Let's go back now to your life in the United States. We left off where you had moved in with Uncle Hans and Aunt Bertha--

And he had his big ups and downs.

That's right. And you lived with them until when?

Well, I came here when I was 16. And I got married when I was 21-- for the first time.

What was your husband's name?

George Laporte.

George Laporte.

And I got divorced when I was 25.

So four years?

Four years.

Then I remarried when I was 28 to Steven's father.

And his name was?

Stanford Fingerhood.

Stanford Fingerhood.

And I've been divorced forever.

And you have how many children?

I have just Steven, and three granddaughters.

And three granddaughters.

That being one.

And the names of your granddaughters?

Mina, over there, Olivia, and Sarah.

And Sarah.

I have photos, if you want to see them.

Yes, I will.

Mina, you know where it is? The one-- it's right of the three of you at Claire's birthday. It's right with the rest.

Later, we'll look at it later. Did you have a profession?

I'm an interior designer.

For how long?

I'm 89-- since I was 21.

Wow-- did you go for school?

I did.

What school was that?

I went at night to Pratt, and to the New York School of Interior Design. And I had quite a happy and good practice. And I love-- I still have very, very little, but business has been really good to me. And I've loved it.

It's a lovely profession.

And I have good publications, and a name. And I love it. And wonderful clients-- ex-clients. Some still.

And you've lived in New York the whole time?

Mostly here.

Mostly here in this apartment?

I lived in Washington very briefly with George Laporte. And then in Stuyvesant Town. And then very briefly in Manhattan. And here, over 50 years.

That's quite a while.

In this apartment.

On the Upper West Side.

On the Upper West Side.

Is there anything we haven't talked about today that you would like to add to our interview?

I feel very fortunate. I think, given my background, I have been very lucky. because I've had a really good life. You know, I love my family, I think they're great. I love my life, until I got sick-- I could do without this.

And you know, I'm a true New Yorker. I have gone to the opera, ballet, symphony. I have friends. I enjoy people. I think I'm very blessed.

A life well lived.

I think so-- really, really lucky. What else can I tell you?

That sounds like a wonderful way to end the interview. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much.

And with that, I'll say this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Dorothea Fingerhood, on April 27th, 2017.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

OK, so Dorothea, tell us, who is standing behind you?

My son is to the left, and that is Steven Fingerhood. And my middle granddaughter is standing next to my right. And her name is Mina.

And what is she studying now?

Mina, you tell them, because it's too complicated.

Science, technology and society, and engineering entrepreneurship.

And have you heard your grandmother's story before?

Yes.

OK.

You haven't.

Some of it.

Some of it, OK. Have you been to Germany?

Yes.

Thank you.