

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back and I'm the director of the Holocaust Resource Center in Buffalo. This evening, our guest is Marianne Goldstein. Marianne was born in Germany. And she's going to tell us her story. But Marianne, when did you get to the United States?

We arrived in the United States on August 16, 1939. Imagine, that's just two weeks before the invasion by Germany of Poland. And really, that was most fortunate for us because we couldn't have arrived any later. We could have only arrived earlier. But we didn't have the wisdom or the foresight that things would come to such a state.

How did you manage to get out?

Well, that's a long story.

Well, let's hear your story.

First, I'll tell you a little bit about my family and what my father did. We lived in Pirmasens, which is in the Palatinate region. That's western Germany, near the Saarland, actually, not too far from the French border. I was the youngest of four children. I have three brothers. We're all about a year and a half--

Apart.

--difference in age. And so in 1939, I was a young girl of 12 and a half. My oldest brother was 16. We really never thought much about leaving Germany.

You were comfortable there?

Well, we thought it would pass. But my father was a rabbi in the city of Pirmasens.

We have a picture of him. Perhaps, you could tell us exactly what he did.

He was the rabbi of a congregation, about 300 people in the congregation.

Oh, there is the picture.

And he was the rabbi of that city and also of a district surrounding that city. So that encompassed a great many smaller towns where he went for ritual, and ceremonies, and holiday visits.

You had a comfortable home, obviously.

So we lived in a nice, big apartment. And until '35 or '36, when the racial laws came out, my mom always had a housekeeper, a household help with her four children. And really, my father worried about what would happen to us because even in 1934, there were possibilities to consider sending one or the other of your children into another country in order to establish a foothold there.

That was the first time they had Aliyah to Palestine, too, in 1934.

In those years, yes, because a stepbrother of my mother actually did make Aliyah in '36. We visited him in Israel since then. But when the first thoughts came up about sending a child to the United States or anywhere in 1934, just a year after Hitler came to power, my father thought of one of my brothers, the middle brother, by the name of Gerhard. And all the relatives got all excited. Why are you sending a 10-year-old child away? How can you do such a cruel thing? And all this will blow over.

Were conditions so bad that your father thought it was wise to send your brother?

Well, the conditions in '34 were such that already, schoolchildren were being thrown stones at. And there were street fights with the children. There was a lot of antisemitism. And it seemed to be the wisdom. And it turned out to be a wise thing. My father let himself be convinced that he was too young. And so my brother didn't go in '34. But he was sent to the United States in a children's transport in 1936. Maybe I'm getting a little ahead of my story. So maybe others-- he went over in 1936. And I'll come back to that.

Fine.

But we'll come back to the fact that my father was a rabbi and that we didn't really think about leaving the country again until November 9th, Crystal Night and the morning after.

1938.

1938, November 1938.

We have a picture of this. This is your father's synagogue?

Right. This is my father's synagogue.

What happened to it?

And on the morning after the Crystal Night, my father, and my younger brother, and I walked up there and found that it was totally destroyed.

Totally destroyed.

The roof was gone. And the windows were broken. And there had been a conflagration there. And my father was able to go inside and pull out the Torah. I don't remember what condition it was in. But he brought it home. And we were back with him. By the time he got home, he was arrested. And shortly after that, in the afternoon, all his books and the Torah, ritual objects, were confiscated. And then we realized that other men, most other Jewish men and teenage boys, had also been arrested.

Now, fortunately for my youngest brother, who was then 14, he was downstairs in the basement. And I think my mother had just sent us to play there because she wanted us out of the way. She worried about us. And this whole group of men and teenagers were taken to Dachau. They had to walk four miles until they got to a railroad station. And then they were transported to Dachau, where most of them stayed for some six to eight weeks.

How long was your father incarcerated?

My father was there about six weeks. And the only reason-- you see, the Final Solution hadn't been planned. The Final Solution really was planned around '41, '42. So at this time, they really weren't quite-- it was like a warning, get out, Jews.

And since they apparently didn't have any intention of keeping the Jews in Dachau that they had rounded up forever, at that point, they dismissed the men who had been in World War II, some who had earned the Iron Cross. My father had been a chaplain, a Jewish chaplain in World War I. And so they were dismissed. The youngsters of 15-16 were the last to be dismissed. And it just-- it was December. This is November, December and very cold.

Did you hear from your father?

And yes, we did hear from him. He wrote cards home.

Oh, we have a picture, I think--

I think, yes, we have a--

--of one of the cards.

--postcard.

So perhaps you could tell us what the card-- oh, it says, Dachau.

You see, so it says, concentration camp Dachau. And underneath, there's the conditions under which my mother could write a postcard. If she received a postcard from my father or if he wrote a letter, then she would be permitted to send him a letter and that she could also send him 15 marks a week, which according to my father, really came in very handy to bribe the guards a little bit. But it was a--

The camp.

--very hard life there They were made to stand in the cold and in the snow in December at 5:00-6:00 in the morning for hours on time.

Oh, for the roll call.

The roll call. And some of the young people who were dismissed last came with frozen toes. So they lost their toe.

Oh, dear. So how did your father return? He was all right?

Well, they had to wear prison garb. And there was a picture of him in prison garb. And he was shorn. He was emaciated, but he was all right.

So that was quite a warning.

Yeah, that's-- from concentration camp, then, he wrote to my mother to do everything possible to get us a visa to leave Germany. And that takes me back to my brother, whom my parents decided in '36 that this was the 12-year-old who was most appealing, and most self-sufficient, and getting into the most street fights with the--

With the German children.

--from deutsche Juden, the German children.

Oh, there's a picture of your brother.

And so that was my brother just before he left Germany.

What's his name?

That's my brother, Gerhard. And he was 12. And just before he left, he had a bar mitzvah in Germany. And then after he came here, he had another bar mitzvah with this new family.

That was very courageous of a little boy to leave his family. Do you ever talk about his feelings?

And that was also very traumatic for the parents.

And for the parents, too, to send the child away.

In fact, it's amazing to think that because of the difficulties of getting even the non-quota visas to let children leave Germany and Central Europe. There were only 397 children who were actually admitted to the United States.

In the year?

'34 and '39.

Oh, in five years. I thought that was each year.

In five years. No, in five years.

Only 397.

There came a German Jewish Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, the umbrella organization for German Jewry, made arrangements to contact the Jewish federations in the United States. And there was a German Jewish Children's Aid Society of social workers that found families. And there were thousands of families who were willing and that--

More families than children.

--would have been willing to take in one or two children. And so a German Jewish social worker would go on the boat with these children in groups of 12 to 14 children.

From then Germany to the United States.

From Germany. And most of the children were under 14 and 15. There were very few older ones. On the boat, they would teach them a little English and how to understand American life, if you will, and get along with their new families. And then they arrived in New York. He arrived in New York on July 31, 1936.

He'll always remember that, I'm sure.

Yes. And on August 1st, he and three other children were picked up by a family from Indiana. And he was to be taken to Chicago. One of the other children was to be dropped off in Baltimore. And two children-- maybe there were five children-- two children were to go with the family that they had signed up for.

Now, as it turned out, one of the children was very Orthodox and wanted to go with an Orthodox family. My brother had come over without having been spoken for. They were going to find him a family after he got here. And as it turned out, the family by the name of Bloomberg, Benjamin Bloomberg from Terre Haute, Indiana, dropped my brother off in Chicago, where he stayed at a sort of a sheltering, maybe the HIAS sheltering, an orphanage, something like that. And they found a home for the very Orthodox child. And then they came back and picked up my brother because they really got to like him.

And he liked them?

So he found them. And he liked them.

And were there children in the house?

There were four children already. This was a very well-to-do family, very involved with the Jewish community.

His age, Gerhard's?

Oh, the children-- well, they took in two children. It wasn't really formal adoption. They took in two children. And they had four of their own.

It was very, very hospitable, very magnanimous.

Yes, right.

Two children at the same time?

At the same time.

So he had a playmate who spoke German in the beginning.

Yes, and who came with the same group.

And how many years did he actually stay? Oh, until you came.

Now, he was there-- no, well, he was there from '36 to '39. And we came in '39. But in the fall of '39, he was already admitted to Harvard University. It's amazing how quickly he did.

How quickly he got acclimatized.

He was 16. He was young. And he won a scholarship to Harvard. And so he did very well.

Did he write to you? Did you get mail from him?

Yes, all the time. We had always some--

And it was a good experience for him?

--pictures, and he was happy. And the family was a very lovely family.

Is he still in touch with In touch with them?

Very much so.

And you've met them too?

I've met them. They've come to a wedding of a niece, the son who lives in New York.

That's a happy story. Tell us about the rest of the family back in Germany while he's here.

I say, it was fortunate for us that we did send him, then, in '36 because the very next day, as I said, my father and all the other Jewish men were taken to concentration camp. And they wrote immediately to their wives, saying that we have to get out of Germany. Now, Hitler at that time had no interest in keeping Jews there. He only had interest in getting rid of them, making the country Judenrein, and keeping the property and possessions.

So the very next day, my mother cabled to the United States to the Bloomberg family in Terre Haute, Indiana. And Mr. Bloomberg set all the wheels in motion to try to get us out. And he learned, really, that under the circumstances, a quota number would have been meaningless, because it was much too late. And the quotas were all exhausted. So that he found out, however, that ministers, rabbis could, if they had a sponsor and a congregational sponsor, that they could come here.

In other words, a job waiting for them.

A job waiting for them as a minister because they needed a rabbi. So that job-- the congregation made out an affidavit to bring my father over here.

So did he find the congregation from his city, from Terre Haute?

From Terre Haute, Indiana. He was to be the assistant rabbi there.

And he manipulated that. He managed it.

But looking over some of the documents just recently, I had never realized, because I did-- I mean, my father passed away in '81. And I brought some of the documentation that he had kept home with me. I first found out how many letters he wrote to Washington, and to congressmen, and senators--

Before he--

--and people-- this Mr. Bloomberg--

Oh, Mr. Bloomberg.

--to pressure them to make the United States Immigration Naturalization Services extend the visa and send it to the American consul in Germany so that we would get the visa properly.

How long did it actually take from that time?

It took from the November 9th, if you were when my mother first [INAUDIBLE]--

1938.

--until August 1939. And the end of July of '39, we actually got our passports to leave.

Oh, we have a picture of your Reisepass that permitted you to leave. And in the passport-- this is your mother's, if you'll tell us about that.

And if you can-- if you look closely, you see that her first name is [? Minne. ?] But then in the middle, her middle name after Kristallnacht became Sara. And her maiden-- our family name was [? Nollhaus. ?] So it's [? Minne ?] Sara [? Nollhaus, ?] although women had to register again in their respective cities after Kristallnacht to receive this middle identifying name.

So every woman, every Jewish woman from Germany was Sara. What happened to the men?

Right. And all the men became Israel.

Israel. So they lost-- this is the first hint of loss of identity before they actually lose it in the camps.

And absolute command to appear at the city clerk's and register as a Jew.

Were you already wearing yellow stars?

No.

No, that didn't-- that wasn't mandated.

That started probably after the invasion of Poland and the ghetto systems.

Now, what do you remember of those years, specifically? Oh, yes, what happened to your schooling during this time?

Well, in '38, at the time of the Kristallnacht, actually, I was attending a girls' Latin school--

Public school?

--a gymnasium, a lyceum.

A high school.

Yes. And in the European system, means that you go to public school for four years. And then you take an exam. And you can go to a high school. And from that day on, Jewish children couldn't attend public schools anymore, or German schools.

Let me backtrack a little bit. While you were in the public school, did you experience anything negative because you were Jewish?

Well, one of the most awkward times for me always were when I would sit in the hall while the other children would have religious instruction. It wasn't even a choice of sitting in on the non-Jewish religion.

You just couldn't go.

It was almost like, sit out there so that we can all recognize you and separate as a Jew. And then, of course, at recess time, when we'd go down into the yard to play, I very often found myself alone. And the children would throw stones.

So you were discriminated against?

Yes. I would say, for the children. In my brother's school, my brother went to a gymnasium, my brother, Gerhard, particularly. They were always fighting with him. And he came home with bloody noses. And he was an aggressive and energetic.

And he stood up for his rights.

He stood up for himself so that my father-- I think that's why my parents decided that was the son that was going to be the pioneer to a new land.

Now, what about the teachers? Were they fair to the Jewish students?

I don't remember that I really experienced a lot of antisemitism from the teacher. I do remember one occasion when a teacher asked me to mail a letter for her. And this was already in '37, '38. And this was on a Friday. And I realized on Sunday night that I hadn't mailed the letter yet. And I spent such a terribly sleepless night wondering all kinds of terrible things that were going to happen to me because we started to do this.

But you never told her that it wasn't mailed?

I never told her.

And mailed it.

I just mailed it. But when you're small, you worry about these things.

Sure. Everything takes different proportions. So you had to leave that school. What kind of school did you go to afterwards? You said.

OK. Then there was Kristallnacht. And in the first four years of schooling, then, before you would enter gymnasium, all the Jewish children had been instructed by one teacher, a Jewish teacher in the public school, but in a separate room, this teacher had from first to eighth grade in one little classroom, you see. And he was taken to concentration camp also.

And when he came back, he gave instruction in his own house. And by that time, there were fewer children still, maybe just about 20 children that were left. And in between, my mother, until he came back, and even the summer before, my mother had sent me to a Catholic sister sewing school.

Oh, so you learned a new skill?

And even that was an interesting experience because the Catholic sisters were not so sure of their position in the Nazi system. And there were periodic visits by the SS.

Did that affect you personally?

Not personally, but you were affected because I knew I was from the time the Hitler came to power in '33, when I was six years old already, until we left when I was 12, I was aware at all times from conversations and from seeing the SS and SA parading up and down the street. I remember distinctly their singing, especially on Friday night, Erev Shabbos. I think they purposely walked down the street in front of our house and sang--

Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

--very familiar, when the Jewish blood spurs from the knife.

Oh, dear.

No, because the city was-- there were only 300 Jewish families. And there was only this one synagogue.

And of course, you have images of their boots, everyone to have boots.

Of their boots and that we lived in an apartment in a house where there are several other apartments. And upstairs from us, there was a family with a son in the SS and Hitler's personal guard and a daughter, who also regularly had attend the Jewish-- the Nazi--

The Nazi groups.

And the parents always saying, well, we don't know anything about that. Our son has to do this. And of course, you could never quite trust them, though.

So you were apprehensive.

I would visit there sometimes because the parents always let me visit. But it became-- as I became 10 years old in '37, '38, I stopped going up there. My parents didn't--

You yourself realized--

--yeah, I was very uncomfortable.

--that it wasn't for you.

Very uncomfortable with that. Right.

Now, this school teacher, did that teacher survive, the teacher who taught?

I don't know. And what about grandparents, and uncles, and aunts?

I didn't know whether he survived. Some of the young people that were in that concentration camp are now in the United States, and just when my father passed away, and there was an announcement in the German Jewish Aufbau in



New York an announcement of a death notice. Then I received letters from--

Oh, from the people that were in Dachau with your father?

--the people that were in Dachau with my father and families from Pirmasens, where he was the rabbi. And you asked about survivors. It was a small family. My father had a brother, who in '34, when my father first thought of sending a child over to the United States, threw up his hands and said, I wouldn't do that. I have a daughter. I'm not going to send her away. She's the same age. How can you be so cruel? And what kind of a parent are you? And things are going to blow over.

And this brother, and his wife, and the daughter I just referred to, in '41, just in the nick of time, at the latest possible moment, were able to buy tickets to get to Italy. And then from Italy, they were able to get passage to Shanghai.

They were just very lucky, very fortunate.

So he was one of those about 800 families or so that were in Shanghai until '47, '48, at which time, we were then able to bring them over here. And if they had sent the daughter to America like your brother, they would have gotten a sponsor like you did.

Not necessarily.

Oh, no, because your father was the rabbi.

Because by '38, '39, I mean, if there-- I think in '35, '36, there was enough of a quota for Germans-- actually not for Jews, but for Germans to come to the United States. But by '38, '39, it was totally exhausted. So they came over.

What about your mother?

My mother, the only grandparent that was alive at the time we were, in '39 before we left Germany, was my mother's mother. And she was sickly. And she had been living in a home for the elderly, a nondenominational home. And in '41, we received a Red Cross notice that she was no longer alive, which is a little suspicious.

So she was spared.

It's suspicious because why would the Red Cross have informed us rather than the home?

Oh, I see. I see. That's why you were.

So my mother was always suspicious of that. My mother also had a brother living in Berlin. And he was married. They had no children. And I remember that in '39, shortly after we arrived here, they wrote that they were leaving Germany because they were going to work in a labor camp.

Oh. Did they survive?

They didn't survive, no.

Do you have any information about them?

No information whatsoever.

So obviously, they died there.

And then she had a younger brother, who was a youngster of 14-15 in 1936. And he made Aliyah to Israel.

Oh, that was the stepbrother that you referred to?

Yes, that was the stepbrother, right. My oldest brother, at the time that my father was taken to Dachau, if he had been home, would have probably been [INAUDIBLE] and taken with them. But at the same time that my brother [? Gerhard ?] was sent to the United States, my father made a decision for the oldest brother, who was 14 then, to send him to a horticultural school to prepare him for Aliyah to Israel.

Is that where he went?

And then he was in Hanover in Ahlem. That was the name of the school in Hanover then at the time that Kristallnacht occurred. And that saved his life, possibly. Certainly saved him frozen toes.

What happened to your brother, ultimately?

And when we got permission to leave Germany, he was included.

Oh, I see. So he went with you.

So we were three children. There were three of us came with our parents. And he came with us. And he really was the first one to get a job here.

Oh, because he was older already.

Actually, what happened is not only did my father have an offer of a job in Terre Haute, Indiana-- let's say whether it was partially a fictional or not isn't really important-- but a second job offer was also available to him in Haverhill, Massachusetts. So when we came off the boat, we thought we were going to meet Mr. Bloomberg and be taken to Terre Haute, Indiana. And instead, we were met by a Mr. [? Engel ?] from Haverhill, Massachusetts, who explained to my father that he was a friend of Mr. Bloomberg and had been delegated to receive us and to take us to Haverhill, Massachusetts.

And that's where you went?

And that's where we went because each one of us-- that brings me to an interesting point. There was no choice to make a decision, well, let's stay in New York for a while, since the German government took all your property away, all your savings, all your insurance.

Did you come with anything?

They left you with nothing, except enough money that was deposited into a bank to pay for the tickets and 10 marks per person, which was approximately \$5. So my father had \$25 total for the three of us and the two of them.

Did he manage to take any jewelry?

And I was thinking about that. Presumably, for \$25 in '39, you could have maybe stayed overnight a few nights and gotten in touch with the HIAS, or the National Council, or another Jewish organization. But he didn't protest. And we were met by a very nice gentleman with a big car that was just amazing to us to be traveling in such a big car. And he took us to Haverhill. You asked?

Oh, whether your father could bring anything like jewelry with him.

No, you couldn't. You were not allowed. And that brings up another interesting story before we went on boat.

Were you searched?

In Bremerhaven, that's where we entered the boat, we were not searched very carefully. But they took my mother in and made her undress completely. And she had lovely hair that she wore in an upsweep. And they made her put her hair down. And they examined her inside out, top to bottom. And really, the whistle had already blown. And she was the last person to get on board. And it was a terribly upsetting experience. It was certainly one that she never forgot. She really had gone through a great deal. So then we came here and settled in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Was your father real like a rabbi?

My father's English left something to be desired. So what they had decided to do is-- Mr. [? Bloomberg ?] and Mr. [? Engel-- ?] that he should go for some brush-up work on his English and some courses on how to deal with American congregations, if you will, to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. My father had been a Liberal Conservative rabbi in Germany. And he did go there for a few weeks.

So he was separated from the family?

Yes.

And who took care of your mother and you during that time?

Well, Mr. [? Engel ?] found a little apartment for us. And a friend of his owned a hardware store. And my oldest brother, who was then 16, started working in the hardware store. And he was really the provider.

And did you go to school right away?

Yeah, I started school right away. My brother, [? Martin, ?] went to school.

Was that hard for you? Do you remember?

Well, all I remember is that we both were put into first grade.

Oh, that must have been shocking.

Yeah, well, both of us had had a little English, for about six months before we came because in Germany, in every community, there was some English being taught for immigration.

But you were already 12 years old or so. And now, you were with the little ones.

So we were with the little ones. And the teachers were just wonderful. They spent time after school. It's the children who weren't wonderful because you stood in line for the doors to open to go to school. And they would say, where do you come from? And you'd say, Germany. And then they'd say, oh, you're a German?

And believe it or not, in '39, there was a great deal of respect for Germans. They weren't thought of as Nazis. They were thought of as people pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. Anyway, it was better. And during that period, it was almost better, when you came to the United States, to say you're German than a Jew. But when you said, but I'm Jewish, oh, you're Jewish?

Were there any other Jews in this little town? Oh, there must been. Mr. Engel was there.

Yes. Yes, there were two or three shuls.

I keep thinking about your mother. It must have been so difficult to manage.

Difficult for her to. And she had little English. But my brother and I jumped from first to seventh grade in the same year.

In the same year.

Very precocious. And from then on, it was smooth sailing.

And then your father came back?

And my father accepted a-- came back and had opportunities to become a rabbi for German Jewish congregations in New Jersey and New York. Because by that time, there were several thousand immigrants who had established their own little societies and congregations.

I think there was one near Barnum.

But he really, somehow, didn't want to do that. So we lived in Haverhill. And he worked in the Plymouth Rubber Company. I remember the owner, a man by the name of Walter [? Beringer, ?] who did a great many wonderful things for immigrants, he worked there, and folded cartons, and worked very hard at it.

I got a job one summer and stitched sheets. They made sheets and rubber sheets for babies. And in fact, my father would go into Boston because Haverhill was only about an hour and a half by train from Boston. And he got in touch with the National Council of Jewish Women and the vocational services and became acquainted with some of the rabbis. And so when he was offered a job as a bar mitzvah teacher in Temple Kehillath Israel in Brookline--

In Brookline? So you moved to Brookline, then?

And we moved to Roxbury.

Oh, so you had had a more normal kind of life there.

And in Boston, my parents felt much more comfortable because there were German Jewish families. And there was a rather large immigrant mutual aid society. My father conducted their services. And he officiated at weddings.

How many years were you in Haverhill?

So we lived in Haverhill from '39 to '42. And then we moved to Boston. Then he became an assistant librarian at the Hebrew Teachers College. Maybe that's why I got to be a librarian.

Oh, it may be. Maybe it was that wonderful positive influence.

But he worked very hard. Things were very hard. The \$10-12 you earned in 1939, we all worked hard. My brother got a corner with newspapers right after we got here in '39. I babysat. I babysat the rabbi's children. At that time, you babysat a week for \$0.40 an afternoon and \$0.50 an evening.

An afternoon.

And you did the diapers and the one.

And the dishes besides.

It was a difficult time.

But you all pitched in. And you raised--

But everybody pitched in. And we were very grateful to be here.

And you were together family.

And we couldn't realize how-- you couldn't sometimes-- you couldn't even begin to realize that you had made a trip over this vast ocean that put you--

Into another culture.

--into another world, into freedom. It was unbelievable. You could never really believe it

Did you know what was--

Sometimes even now, I don't believe it.

Did you know what was going on back in Europe?

Not really any more than the papers showed.

Anybody else, right. So it was quite a shock for you in '45.

Because we really, after '40, we really didn't hear from anyone, except for these brief message from Red Cross on a postcard written by my uncle that they were going into a labor camp.

And did your brother, Gerhard, come to join you?

My brother, Gerhard, in '39, it was time for him to enter college. And he went to Harvard. But he had interesting experiences. I'm just reminded that he told me that just last year, a young man by the name of Peter Bloch he was the Orthodox child that I talked about that didn't want to go with the family, but he took it upon himself to try to gather the 14 kids.

Oh, had a reunion? Did he? Did he manage?

And he was able, through the US immigration service, to get a list of the children that came that year. And he identified the children. And he got a great many of them together.

Did your brother go?

My brother didn't go. But one of the brothers of the sons of the family that he lived with between '36 and '39-- because there was another young man, a young man by the name of [? Heinz, ?] who had gone to the-- he decided to go so that he would meet some of the children--

Oh, so went to see him.

--that he had met coming off the boat.

That's wonderful that that was managed.

Very interesting. And I think my brother was very fond of that family. They took good care of him. It's just a shame that we couldn't have-- that the United States couldn't have allowed more children.

No, I always thought that number was for five years.

400 children, then in '38, the Wagner-- in '39, actually, after Crystal Night, there was the Wagner Bill by Senator Wagner to try to get 20,000 German Jewish children, although it was phrased German children, to come to this country so that it wouldn't just be Jewish children. But all-- any children, they come to a haven.

So how many actually came?

And none, the bill never came through. So after '39, there was just--

What a pity.

--there were no more. Yeah.

There could have been.

Yeah. And There was an organization called the German Jewish Children's Aid Society, made up of social workers from this country, who, under the umbrella of the Jewish Federations, followed up how well the children were doing--

Oh, they did?

--and if they were taken care of, and if they were happy. And they reported. And Wagner also used that as proof that it was a good thing to do. They reported that the children were all doing fine, and that they were not disturbed particularly by the separation from the family, and that two or three who had come when they were close to working age were already working and able to earn their own living.

So if that had gone through, so many would have been saved.

It would have saved many children.

And it took several years until they were brought, I think there were some 900 who were brought to Oswego, but only 900.

When was that, do you think?

I believe that was 1944.

1944.

1943-- but a very small number.

I don't know whether I mentioned it, that the social worker from Germany, a Jewish social worker accompanied the children on board.

Yes, yes, you did.

I mentioned that, yeah.

So that part of your life is behind you. And since then you've been to Russia. Perhaps you could tell us a little bit about that.

Well, I feel-- when I went to Russia, I happened to have the opportunity to go on a study seminar for six weeks. And even though I didn't have any addresses, I wanted to meet some Russian Jews. And I went to the synagogues, and particularly, in Moscow, I went to the synagogue and met an elderly lady there, who whispered into my ear that after she found out I was from Buffalo. And we tried to converse in a little Yiddish, but very unobtrusively because on my right sat this Jewish KGB lady.

How did you know that she was KGB?

I could tell because she came to another section of the women's gallery to bring me to this section. Because that's where she wanted me to-- she wanted all the visitors to sit there. There was a Canadian rabbi's wife there.

She wanted to snoop.

She wanted to snoop. And she was very insistent about my staying to the end of the service, that she could show me how to-- show me the mikvah and then how to get to the subway. She really wanted to keep with me, stay with me. And this lady, called [? Fannie, ?] left early. But she whispered a phone number in my ear.

And you remembered it?

And I called her later. And she told me the story that her in-laws, elderly people, lived in Buffalo, and that their only son and wife and family were in Moscow.

And she was the wife?

And this is still '79.

Was she the wife of the--

No, she was the mother-in-law.

Oh, she was the mother-in-law.

Yeah, she was the mother-in-law. And the phone call then set up meetings between us. And to this day, I visit the son's parents here. They're old. The woman, mother is blind. And since '79, they had every expectation that the children would get out at the same time. But we correspond. I write for this elderly couple to congressmen. And I write to Mitterrand. And I sent telegrams to Margaret Thatcher.

Did you get any response from that there?

There are responses. We foot into [INAUDIBLE]-- we fairly were exhausted every entrance. But they respond.

But they answered?

And they say, they'll certainly be put on the list.

But is he refusenik?

Well, the definition of a refusenik is really one that has been refused--

Applied.

--that has applied and has been refused a permit to leave by [INAUDIBLE]. And as far as I know, as far as the elderly parents know, they insist that he's neither dissident nor refusenik because he's never been refused. And he didn't refer to himself as a refusenik.

But has he applied?

But nevertheless, they applied in '79 at the same time that the elderly parents applied.

And what excuse did they get for not being able to?

They just said, we're not ready for you yet. They didn't say no. They said, wait. Until this day, they say, wait. That's as

much of this-- I think that at this point, possibly, he is-- and they talk to each other on the phone. Rather, their parents call him in Moscow. And what his present status is is really hard to judge because I don't think he would ever tell his parents that he's been refused because they live in the hope that it wasn't refusal. And it's just a matter of weeks all the time, some wonderful will happen.

And so they'll wait that--

And that through some list or somebody's good word, somebody going to talk to Raisa, to Gorbachev, especially on the son's behalf.

On their behalf.

And that just-- whether it happens or not, it doesn't do any good. So having been fortunate enough to get out of Germany, and I can feel so much the tragedy of separation.

You can really empathize with them.

There's an elderly couple here who can only think of the child in their 80s and not in physical condition anymore to try to learn English or even in the mood to do such a thing. They can only dream of whom else to write to and when they need to write.

You're there.

I'm there to write them.

Are they despondent and depressed?

Well, they're very bright people. And they read the weekly Russian paper from New York. And they-- we went out together to pick up a television for them, a new one. They didn't have it. But they're very fortunate in that they have each other, please, God, for many years, and that they're able to--

Are they in good health despite the fact the woman is blind?

The woman is blind. And she is not in the best of health. And he also has a heart condition. But they managed somehow.

That's a sad story.

They have each other. And it's a very close family.

And you, you seem to be a good friend, a very good friend.

Yeah, that really makes you, number one, be very grateful to be in this country and also very anxious to try to help somebody else come into such good fortune.

These people are so--

But you never-- I don't think that those of us who came over can ever really forget what we escaped. It's still a miracle.

Everybody says, who survived--

It's still a miracle.

--that if not for that miracle or that lucky happenstance, they would have been in the ovens. Thank goodness that you were able to come here. We have to wind down now. Do you have anything that you want to say in summary?



No, I would just say that when families here have an-- Jewish families, or everybody, anybody who lives in the United States, or in any free country has an opportunity, at any time, to help people get out, or to provide sponsorship, or to write letters, or just to send a greeting to people behind the Iron Curtain, it's a mitzvah. And they should do all they can. Because usually, things, I think, are worse than what's written in the paper. You never get the whole story. Or you get the whole story when it's too late. So when we hear about the tragedy of the Russian Jews, it's something that is really clear.

Certainly relatable to what happened to the German Jews or to the Jews of Europe. Thank you very much, Marianne.

You're welcome.

For his father.