This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer Collection interview with Jill Pauly, conducted by Margaret Garrett on February 27, 1998, in Silver Spring, Maryland. This is a follow-up interview that will focus on Jill Pauly's post-Holocaust experiences.

In preparation for this interview, I observed the video interview that Jill Pauly conducted with the Shoah Foundation on February 20, 1997. I will not ask you to repeat everything you said in that interview. Instead, I will use this interview as an opportunity to follow-up on that interview and focus on your post-Holocaust experiences. This is tape number 1, side A.

What was your name at birth?

Gisela Renate Berg.

And your date of birth?

May 1, 1933.

And your place of birth?

Cologne, Germany

Suppose we start this interview-- this post-Holocaust interview-- with an overview of your experiences in Kenya, where you were during the war.

Fine. We came to Kenya, we arrived probably end of June, 1939, to the port city of Mombasa. The family on the ship consisted of about 10 family members, including my grandparents, my sister, and my mother. My late father, his brother, and his first cousin were already in Mombasa and met us at the ship. They had been in prison in Holland and were released to go to Kenya, luckily, and it was a great reunion.

I remember very vividly how hot it was in Mombasa, but I was happy. And we stayed somewhere in Mombasa overnight. I don't remember where. And we got on a train, which is still riding today. The Mombasa-Nairobi train is a very famous train. It goes through the Serengeti. And it's a wonderful, wonderful trip, especially for children. Because the animals are all wild, and you see them from the train windows.

In those days, in 1939, it was an overnight trip for Mombasa-- at least an overnight trip from Mombasa to Nairobi. In Nairobi, there must've been some Jewish committees that my father had contacted that helped us, that had helped my father rent a big house.

How would you characterize your family?

My family-- my family were German-Jewish country people for hundreds of years. That does not mean that they had never been in a big city. They were very acclimated to city life. They only lived 20 minutes from Cologne and Krefeld, which was a big city. My grandmother on my father's side was from Krefeld and had a huge, enormous family.

It's just that my family, in general, were not intellectuals or college-educated individuals. They all went-- some went to whatever level of education, I don't know. But I know my father's brother finished gymnasium. I think my father went into high school. And then they went into business.

And were they successful in business?

Extremely, Extremely. They were very wealthy people. We did not really understand how wealthy because it never really affected us after we were small children.

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So your family lived comfortably and you had all you needed and more.

Oh, we had enough for our family and supporting other families. And they were just very wealthy. I would say, by today's standards, they were millionaires. But then there's millions and there's millions. I wouldn't say they had a hundred million dollars on today's level, but they were millionaires on today's level.

How did that affect your leaving Germany, the family wealth?

It really didn't affect our leaving Germany. What it did was they were very, very clever people. And what they had decided to do-- on the day I was born, on the 1st of May, 1933-- they smuggled a large amount of their money out of Germany, into Holland.

There were three brothers and two brothers that were partners. So there were five men in the-- four men in the business plus my grandfather. There were five men in the business. They pooled their money and took a large block of it and had it smuggled out. That is probably the money that saved us.

Now that was in 1933.

The 1st of May, 1933.

So in 1933, they knew that it would be good to have money--

Yes.

--out of Germany.

Mm-hmm. I think I had a brilliant grandmother. To say bright would be an underestimate.

This is your mother's mother?

My father's mother.

You father's mother. And what was her name?

Her name was Klara Dawitz-Berg. She came from Krefeld. She was 12 years old when her father died. She was a very poor child and became a milkmaid. She was very industrious and carried out milk at 4 o'clock in the morning before she went to school, for years. And saved up a dowry so that she could marry well. And she did marry well. She married my grandfather who, by then, already was comfortable.

So when your family was in Kenya, was your family able to retrieve the money?

No. No, that wasn't-- no, that wasn't an issue. The issue was that my grandmother was so clever that she never put any of the family's savings in a bank after 1930.

1930?

All the family money that was taxed, they banked. Everything else, my grandmother kept on her person. The money was hidden.

And what happened to the money that was smuggled out of the country in '33?

It went to Holland. My mother's brother and my mother's sister's husband, they all left from Germany to Holland in 1937. My mother's brother was also a very clever fellow-- very little education but really a very savvy man. And he made all the arrangements, from Holland, to get 17 people into Kenya, with that money.

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And why Kenya? Why was Kenya the destination?

It was the only option. It was an out. They tried to get out from Germany for years, and they had no place they could get in.

So Kenya would take you and no other place would.

At that time, Kenya would take us because we had a family contact there. He had studied law in England. And this man was sent by the British government to practice law in Kenya. So he had a connection.

Now, he was a Jew?

He was a relative. His name was Hermann Strauss, and he was a cousin of someone my cousin was married to-- my mother's cousin was married to. And he was able to get the 17 passports.

And he lived in Kenya?

He was in Kenya.

And he was able to help you get to Kenya.

Yes.

OK.

And what I read two years ago at the United States Holocaust Museum, from a man who's written his history, who went from Vienna to Kenya, the British government required a 50 pound stipend to be paid in Kenya for each immigrant. Well, that, the family could handle 17 times 50. But when the war broke out and the British government realized that so many people wanted to come in, that's stipend went up to 250 pounds a person. That was a fortune.

We all got in. And whether the last group that came from Holland that came in 1941-- I doubt that they paid 50 pounds. I'm sure they had to pay the 250.

So the relatives from Holland joined the family who had come from Germany, in Kenya.

Yes. And by the time everyone got there, there was very little-- I mean, there was some money left, but nothing to write home to mother about, you know.

So most of it went just to get to Kenya.

Right.

OK.

Don't forget, all properties and moneys that had been in banks or purchased or anything, that was all left behind. And each Jew was allowed to take 10 Mark out of Germany. So what our family had done was buy enormous amounts of things, had them stored in lifts, and shipped to Kenya. I mean enormous-- antiques and China and--

So this was a way of using the money, which you could not take out. You could to take things, but not money.

And they also left quite a bit of money for the families that stayed behind, that they were worried about. But they knew money wouldn't help them that-- but they left them money. They had money of their own. It was just stolen from them. My great-uncles and aunts were retired in Cologne and had a fortune, in 1938, of 200,000 Mark saved up. That's a

fortune. Went to the-- went somewhere, we don't know where.

So it's not that they-- they had money. And if we had tried to get out of Germany in '38, '39, '37, with money, you couldn't get out, because nobody would take you in. It wasn't a matter of having money. It was a matter of being able to get in somewhere.

So having this relative in Kenya saved your lives.

Yes. Oh yes, oh yes.

On the videotape that I mentioned, from the Shoah Foundation, you give a lot of detail about your life in Kenya. But could you sum up--

I can, yes.

--that experience?

The Kenya experience was a very, very high-level experience, really, for people who came from Germany, from a different culture, into a very strange land-- who only spoke German-- and the languages of the country were English and Swahili-- who had little money left, who have to take a mortgage to start over again and build up a business.

Now how could you get a mortgage, if you did not have many assets of your own?

Who knows. I don't know. They must have had some money left. And they bought a big farm-- a big farm, a 300-acre farm with two big houses on them. And then they bought another farm of 100 acres which had to be farmed in order to make a living. There were five families to support on one farm.

So you, essentially, acquired a business through the mortgage.

Right. And my grandfather, being 80 years old at the time, was extremely concerned that they would go bankrupt because they took out a mortgage. He was used to paying cash for things, by that time. But they had to. They had to make a new beginning.

And the first three months in Kenya were tough. They didn't know the languages. They were trying to apply the European methods of cattle raising and animal husbandry and farming to Africa. It didn't work. The animals died. The prize bull died. He had to be immediately replaced.

Which was expensive?

Ach, he cost 1500 pounds. And he had to be imported. And there was some very nice Englishman, the Lord Napier, who worked with the men, and explained to them that they have to make a very quick adjustment or they would lose everything. So when you're up against the wall, you change.

And they did change. And they changed their methodology. My father was an expert in untrained veterinary medicine.

Well, who helped them learn the Kenyan methods?

This Lord Napier.

So he--

He came over and just--

--he hands-on helped. He didn't just tell them you have to change. He helped them.

No, he saw that they were very competent. And that my father really was an A-number 1 expert in animals.

But he helped to teach them what they needed to know.

Yes, and he also impressed on them that the first thing they had to do was learn the language so that they could deal with the black people who ran the farms. It was a little different than Europe.

Was Lord Napier Jewish?

No, no, no, And it worked. If God wants something to work, it works. That's all I can tell you. It worked.

So they learned, and God helped and--

They set up an orthodox kibbutz on a farm high up in the highlands. The big problem for my parents were our schooling, the cultural changes of the demands of education and how it worked. But with much stress, as I explained in the other film, it was worked out. It was worked out.

A big problem in Kenya was medical changes, health changes-- different climate, different diseases, understanding them, not being able to get the right physicians to treat the diseases.

You mean of the cattle or of people?

People.

Of your family?

Of family. Cattle was less of a problem. But I would say the first three months were extremely difficult. They thought they would lose it all. But then it started coming together, somehow, like a miracle. And it all worked. And it started to produce and it started to make money. And they started to make a fabulous living again. And they really, really recouped and they didn't know what was going on in Europe.

Their only contact with Europe was a battery-operated radio, a high-- 7,200 feet up in the mountains-- that's all we had. We had no electricity for eight years. We had a generator in one house, but we lived with Petromax lamps in the other house.

And which house did you live in?

With the Petromax lamps.

So you didn't have electricity.

No, it was fine. Fine. You could see very well with them. And my parents had a lot of help. We had a tremendous social life, absolutely tremendous social life.

With who?

Every Jewish person that came to Nairobi landed up on our farm because my parents were strictly kosher, and they were fabulous cooks and loved people. And very few weekends went by, the whole eight years, that we didn't have guests. And my mother and father turned it into more or less of a bed and breakfast, which paid for our private school education. Because that had to be earned outside of what my father was earning on the farm.

So your family was able to create a new life.

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Tremendously well.

So at the end of the war, why did your family leave Kenya?

Only for one reason. And that was because they were orthodox Jews. They had no orthodox communal life. They created it. And they wanted to go back into a traditional orthodox community. And they wanted my sister and I to be able to marry on the same level as the family. That's what they wanted. That's what they envisioned.

Of course, things didn't all work out the way they envisioned. They made a tremendous mistake. And that was due to the lack of their formal education and worldliness. They made one tremendous mistake. Actually, you're going to balance it out with the fact that they didn't make a mistake, it turns out.

But let's just say they made a terrible mistake. Two of the men should have come to the United States. And they should have looked around to see where best we would have fit in. And there were areas in the United States where we would have fit in beautifully and had less of a stressful life.

Like where?

In the East. They would have fit in beautifully in California because of the weather. Cattle farming was good. Climatically, they would have been happier. They were. But I am not sure whether the orthodox community, at that point, would have been satisfactory to them. My father did travel after he came here to the Northeast-- to Vermont, to New Hampshire, to Maine-- because he loved the mountains. Kenya is very mountainous.

Where you lived in Germany, was it mountainous?

It was beautiful, but not as mountainous as Kenya. But he loved the mountains and he wanted to resettle in the mountains. And he picked Vermont. We loved it. There was nothing, as far as Jewish life, absolutely zilch, nothing, zero.

Now, I don't understand. Did your whole family come to America together, or did your father come first?

They came within three months. Everybody came within three months.

So who came first?

I don't remember. One other family, but they only were here a month when we came.

So your family was not the first family.

No, we were in the middle.

Actually, I'm ahead of myself. Why did you come to America?

Oh, because of orthodoxy-- as we say, Yiddishkeit. My family wanted a traditional orthodox communal life that they had lived before the war.

And your family thought they would be able to find that in America.

Yes, with synagogues in walking distance, with schools for the children, with kosher food in the stores. They wanted a Jewish environment. They wanted an orthodox environment.

And why America?

The goldene land. There's gold in the streets. Haven't you heard? My father-- there were some psychological reasons.

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My father was a-- the happiest eight years of his life were in Kenya. He loved the black people. He thought they were the most kind, wonderful human beings. He bonded with them.

He saw that they were being miserably mistreated, that they had no future but killing each other and eating each other and being destroyed, and being hit and enslaved. He hated that. And his choices were Palestine-- there was no Israel. The state hadn't been declared yet. South Africa, which was great for many things.

For a Jewish community?

Yes. Or the United States. He did not pick Palestine because his brother was so much against it.

And why was his brother against it?

He says that he didn't want-- I don't know. It was rocky. The state hadn't been declared. They didn't know-- they didn't want to go into another very unsettled situation. It was before the war, before the '48 war. They should have-- most of the Jews from Kenya did go to Palestine instead.

South Africa-- my father would not go. He said it's jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Things are going to change with these black people. They're not going to be downtrodden forever. This is not a future for my children. So he came to America.

OK. Now, you said that another family came first and then your family came very shortly after that.

We all came.

And where did you come to, in America?

Unfortunately-- unfortunately-- here these Kenya people landed up in New York City.

Why New York City?

Because that's where the relatives were that brought us over.

And these were relatives--

Cousins of my mother's.

OK.

Close-- my mother's uncle, who survived, who was in the States with his two sons. They're the ones that sent us all the visas.

So they helped you come to America.

Helped us come to America--

Did you have money to come to America?

Oh yes, by then they had money again.

So you had money.

Everybody had money.

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But what you needed help with the visas and getting established.

Yes. They could help us with the visas. Getting established was beyond them.

But they lived in New York, so you came to New York.

They lived in New York. The aunt and uncle were old by then. They had a 1 bedroom apartment. And they were very generous and gracious to everybody, but they couldn't put anybody up. My aunt was still working. She was 62 years old. She was working full-time. My uncle was a very old man. His son had a restaurant in Manhattan. He couldn't employ them because they were all Sabbath observers, and he was not, nor was his business.

And then the tremendous, tremendous, unbelievable culture change for my family. They were German Jews. German Jews tended to be very insular and very critical of Polish Jews and Russian Jews and Czech Jews. For some reason, they could not integrate with them well. They were very-- is the word insular? Whatever you want to call it.

And this was a tremendous problem for them. Wherever they went, the orthodox synagogues, if it wasn't a totally German synagogue, they didn't feel comfortable. If the Jews prayed in a different manner, they came from different backgrounds, they felt they weren't well-behaved. They felt they were weren't-- they had so many problems. They were so unadaptable in this country. Whereas in Kenya, they didn't have those problems.

Were there German Jews in Kenya who were orthodox?

No, they integrated beautifully with all of the Jews in Kenya. Yes, they realized they were a little different, but they were happy together.

Why do you think it was so much harder for them in New York?

Because they were fish out of water. They couldn't do anything in New York. They were country people. They were farmers. And my father was offered a job. The only job my father could get in New York was flicking chickens. He was 52 years old. He didn't want to flick chickens. And he was allergic to feathers.

They couldn't get an apartment. There were no apartments to be gotten unless you paid under the table. We had to live together in two rooms, the four of us-- rented rooms.

Did you also not have enough money to get a larger apartment or--

Well, no, by then my father became very, very insecure and frightened, and saw how expensive everything was that he needed to hold him and his money because he needed to settle his family again. Multiply this times seven families.

And they all initially lived in New York?

Initially, we all landed in New York.

And lived there for a time.

For a short-- some of us only for six weeks or two months. Some of them as much as a year. Unfortunately, the ones with the least money had to stay for a year because they eventually would get an apartment somewhere. And my uncle got a job in the restaurant and he couldn't keep his Sabbath. My aunt was heartbroken.

The other aunt and uncle had a disastrous experience. They were the wealthiest ones in Germany and also in Kenya. They had no children. They had a lot of money. My uncle came to America feeling rich. Now, there's something very destructive about being very well-to-do-- and a lot of German Jews had this problem-- and not knowing how not to be very well-to-do.

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It's a hard lesson to learn at 57. Came to America at 57, my aunt was 46, whatever. And he had money. When I say money, instead of $20,000, maybe he had $30,000. That was a lot of money in 1947. I don't know what it equates to now, but it was an awful lot of money.

He decided to go into business with a man that he knew from Germany. They were going to go into warehousing. The man came with a contract, took his $10,000. They bought warehouses, and they were going to start stacking these warehouses. And for some reason, one of the families said, let's go out to Bayonne and look at your new warehouse. When they got there, there was nothing. He was robbed.

So he had a little bit of money left. I don't know how much. They had to take an apartment. And my aunt, who was a very fancy lady in Germany-- she wasn't fancy because she wanted to be fancy. She was fancy because he spoiled her. She went to work for a jeweler in Manhattan. And today, I still do business with his son. It's a tradition of 50some years. She worked for him. She earned enough to put bread on the table. They did that for a year.

And then they borrowed money from the family-- my uncle and my father, who had already bought a farm in Vineland, New Jersey. And they bought a little farm. It never went well for them.

Now, back to your father, if you were living in a two-room apartment, your family of four.

2 rooms.

Two rooms, a 2-room apartment.

And after six weeks, one of my uncles, when we first arrived, got a job as a farm manager in Elmer, New Jersey. And he got a big house for his wife and son while he managed the farm. And they asked the landlord if he would permit us-- my family-- to move in with them until we've settled. So we went back to the country. We went to New Jersey.

So you went to the house in Elmer, New Jersey.

Right. And we were sent to New Jersey by the HIAS. That was an organization that was helping people resettle.

Now what do you mean, you were sent to New Jersey?

To look, by the HIAS. They said go into poultry farming.

But your uncle already had the farm.

No, he was a manager. He had a job.

Oh, he was a manager. So it was after that the HIAS sent your family?

Suggested that they go and look at poultry farms.

So their role with your father was as a counselor, an advisor?

At the best. But my father, after six weeks of being in New York, made a decision that we had to get out.

So he was in touch with HIAS and they said, look at poultry farming.

HIAS was in touch with all the immigrants, tried to help them. And they considered sending him on the chicken farms being helpful.

Did they have specific farms to send him to, or just said, go to this area and look around?

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Just go to area. Go to Lakewood, go to Vineland, and see what you can find.

Did they offer financial help or--

No. My family wouldn't have considered financial help.

So they were-- the idea was that they were helping to direct your family and where they thought they would be--

They directed hundreds of thousands of immigrants to these chicken farms, which was not a good idea.

So they advised your father to go to that area to look at chicken farms, and it just happened that your uncle was already there managing a farm.

Yes.

And so you moved in?

He took us in.

With him, OK.

And for me it was a trauma, terrible trauma.

To leave New York and go to--

No, no, no. I enjoyed-- I didn't like school in New York because I had a teacher that didn't understand me, and I didn't understand her, verbally.

Now you were how old?

13, going on 14.

And you didn't understand her English or--

That's right. You might as well have put me in a Chinese class.

And in Kenya, what language was your schooling?

British English.

British English?

So this lady was from the South.

So you couldn't understand southern American English?

No, not a word.

But you-- even though you were in New York for six weeks, you were in school.

Every day, and I never adapted to her language. Maybe she had a speech defect.

What about the other children. How did you get along with them?

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I wasn't there long enough to integrate. I found it a little strange. I came from a very elite school system. The schools in Kenya were topflight.

Now, I don't remember from the previous tape what your last school in Kenya was. Was it a private school?

They were all private.

Was it a private Jewish school or private English--

No, English.

Private English school.

My sister had matriculated. She had been accepted at Oxford and at Cambridge. And I was just about to go into high school when we left.

OK, so now you're in New York City. You're 14, and you went into what grade?

(LAUGHING) I don't remember. I think eighth.

Eighth. So the other children were probably younger.

I don't remember those children. I don't remember being unhappy there.

Do you remember any discrimination or antisemitism?

No, nothing. No, not for those six weeks, nothing. It was in Jackson Heights. It was just a very cold, very uncomfortable environment. And I wasn't learning a thing.

So it wasn't overtly hostile to you. It just was not helpful and was cold and not very caring.

I wasn't adjusting well in Jackson Heights. And then we came--

We have to stop here to turn over the tape.

OK.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer collection interview with Jill Pauly, tape number 1, side B. Mrs. Pauly, you were talking about living in New York for six weeks, the difficulty of the school. And then you moved to Elmer, which you had described.

We couldn't stay in Elmer. That was a temporary haven for this uncle and his wife. This uncle, Ernest, couldn't get a job in New York. He was a trained butcher. But we were Orthodox. And he could not get a job where he could observe his Sabbath and his holidays. So he took a job on a farm where he could be his own time manager.

And on this farm, there was a gentleman who had the job before him, who hadn't left yet, who was supposed to train my uncle. Unfortunately, he was a very, very sick individual who had horrendous epilepsy attacks. I was 14 and my cousin's little boy was five. We were all living in one house. And when these epileptic attacks took place, we children became so absolutely mortified. We didn't know what to do. Our mothers were as mortified as we were.

My father was wonderful. He would run in there and help this man. And it was, for me, a very traumatic terrible experience. I couldn't deal with it. I was so afraid of him because I was afraid he was out of control, and it would happen in front of me and I wouldn't know what to do with him. Well it landed up my not going to the bathroom alone without someone standing in front of the door for six weeks. It was a difficult six weeks.

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But during that time, my parents did make progress. They went to look for a home and for farms. They decided to go back to the land. The mistake was that they went into chicken farming when their expertise was cattle farming. Everybody was being advised to buy chicken farms.

My father bought one. My mother got a very nice house. We moved in. It was a mile's walk from the synagogue. The social environment was very poor because we were 12 miles out of town. We were rural. But there were other refugee families there, and I found some girls. And--

These were also--

Refugees, immigrants.

Were they German Jewish?

Not all of them. Most of them. And after a while, we became friends. I was demoted in school for a year.

To what grade?

Eighth grade. I should have been in ninth. It was stupid. Of course, I was an honors student for that year. That wasn't so bad. I went to this little country school.

Now, where were you living? What was the town?

It was called Vineland, New Jersey. We lived in the area called Brotmanville. And I went to school, to the Elmer's school, for one year. It was socially, for my father, a nightmare to have girls from an elite British school system go into an American country school where things were going on that did not go on in British schools.

Like what?

Running around with boys at a very young age. The teacher taking girls and boys out once a week for skating lessons.

You mean, away from academic studies for skating?

There was very little academics, a lot of social life, and into the sexual behavior of young teenagers. And he was very, very, very mortified that-- not that I would go astray, but that something would happen that I wouldn't understand.

And how was it for you?

Strange. But it was freer. It was something very nice for me about going to school without having all these very difficult teachers putting pressure on me. It was an opportunity for me to blossom a little and develop my own thoughts and feelings. And get into a curriculum that was different, that I was enjoying.

I might not have been in an elitist school and I might not have been getting top grades there, but I was really enjoying the freedom of the way this teacher was dealing with the classroom. I sat mixed with black kids, which I had never done. And I liked them. There were Jewish children in my class. There were non-Jewish children. There was one very bad little anti-Semitic girl. But I handled her. I had no problem handling her.

How did you handle her?

I chased her. (LAUGHING) I hit her. I took care of her. It wasn't a problem in America.

And did she stop after you hit her?

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I chased her long enough. Yes, Tootsie stopped eventually because she ran out of steam, you know, didn't go anywhere. She was told to stop by the teacher. Tootsie was a bad girl. I had some really bad, bad, bad kids in the class there, in this little country school. And it was an education. I learned-- you know, we didn't have to wear uniforms, which was nice for me. I went to school by bus. I liked the socialization on the bus. It was freer. It was-- I didn't mind it.

Now, how was it for you, enjoying this more relaxed social atmosphere, and your father worried and disapproving?

Oh, we had tremendous difficulties at home.

Like what?

He wouldn't allow me to participate in most of the things that were going on. And he was absolutely right not to let me.

You mean in activities or--

In activities, social activities.

He would not let you participate.

No, he would not.

And so how did you take that?

I didn't take it well. I fought with him

But you think, looking back on it, that he was right?

Oh, he was absolutely right. And it was so foreign to him. He couldn't adapt to that. He felt that we had been demoted, you know. And he was so concerned of our educational level. He was so mixed up. He had so many problems at that time. He was so confused.

Did he think this was discrimination against you?

No, not at all. Discrimination wasn't the problem at the time, no. Discrimination we had in Kenya but not in the United States. Nothing that had any value. It was just not academic enough. That year was bad, actually-- academically bad-- for me. The school was not good enough for what I had had and what they felt I needed. But in all honesty, I had the opportunity to develop more as a little person. And I enjoyed that.

Even though you couldn't go to a lot of the activities, you still feel that--

We were always restrained because we were Sabbath observant, we were Orthodox, and they didn't want certain exposures for us.

Did you have lunch at school?

I took my own lunch. Everybody did.

So that wasn't a problem.

Right. The integration problem began-- really painful integration problem began-- the following year when I went to Vineland High School, where there were lots of Jewish kids, and I felt very happy with that. And there were Jewish organizations. And my uncles took me. They were very encouraging. The problems were that there were no orthodox organizations. Everything was done on Friday nights and Saturdays.

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The general was that the kids got jobs on weekends in high school. All the kids worked. I couldn't work because I couldn't work on Saturdays. So the only thing I could do was babysit. But I had a few orthodox friends who were in the same position. It wasn't a bad experience. My experience wasn't so terrible, but my family's experience was a disaster.

They could not make a go of those chicken farms. They couldn't make a living. They had a hard time getting the $20 to buy the food for the week. They were poor in Vineland.

And what was the problem with the chicken farms? It was hard for them to learn chicken farming or the industry was just in trouble?

The industry was in trouble, always. There was an overproduction of chicken farms. One season the chickens would grow beautifully and they'd lay eggs like crazy. But then the prices were low. The following season the chickens didn't lay eggs. It wasn't a good crop. The prices were high.

So it wasn't just your father it was--

Everybody. People on chicken farms really-- let's put it from small to medium chicken farms-- they could hardly get food on the table and pay their bills. A lot of them had debts. But my family, being as conservative as they were, because they were always well-to-do, debts was not something that one lived with. So one had nothing-- paid all the debts and had nothing.

And I virtually grew up, those four years in high school, with nothing. If I had two skirts to see me through the school year, and a pair of shoes, I was lucky.

How did you take that?

I was a kid.

Did you want more, like some of the other girls had?

I was very-- no. I always managed-- my parents tried hard. If I needed-- if they allowed me to go-- I'm talking about a couple of years later, when I was 17. If they allowed me to go to a dance-- they'd allow me to go to B'nai B'rith girls' dances or whatever-- and I needed a dress, I got the dress. It was a hardship, but I got it. And then they'd buy me a pretty one.

What I was very envious about, and I had real problems with, was that I was such a very serious-minded girl. And I understood so much of what was going on in my parents' lives that it had an emotional effect on me that I really did not do as well in high school as I should. The emotional problems of the family had a very bad effect on me.

And I was so envious of all the other Jewish kids that had been born and bred in the United States, rich poor or indifferent. They didn't have those problems. They were happy. Their whole lives were made up of doing good school work and having a good time. And that was it. They had no responsibilities.

They didn't have to keep Shabbos. They didn't have to keep Kashrut. They didn't have those problems. They didn't have to stay out on Jewish holidays. And we would always have to make it up or flunk. You know, we had pressures. The American kids were so lucky to have that freedom of not having had that background we had, of growing up at five-and-a-half. I was never a kid.

And you just have to multiply that. I mean all the immigrant kids that I grew up with in Vineland were all alike. Some were better students. Some were able to hold it together, like my husband, who was able to focus and do very well in school. Others were not. Others were like me.

And then there was always the emphasis, where my father's confusion came in, which I think hurt my sister and I both very much. He was confused as to our role in life. He said, you don't have to go to college. It's ridiculous. You're going

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to get married. And I would be in this confusing situation of seeing my friends taking-- they all took college preparatory courses. Nobody pressured me into doing-- I took whatever I wanted. Because they were going to go to college. They had to go to college.

And my father was saying, we can't afford it. And then my reaction was, well, why should I do it? What am I going to take college preparatory courses for when I'm going to end up in a secretarial school? Or what am I going to become? Where am I going to go? He did the same thing with both of us. He made an enormous mistake. Both parents realized they made an enormous mistake.

Now your sister is older than you by 4 years. And what was happening with her that was the mistake of your parents?

She had even-- her misguidance was dreadful. My sister was ready to go to Columbia when she got off the boat.

When you say ready to go, you mean she was prepared.

She had matriculated--

Oh, she had matriculated at Columbia.

--at Oxford and Cambridge. All she would have had to do was apply and she would have gotten a scholarship. But no, he couldn't afford it. She had to go out work and earn her $20 a week.

So he didn't understand how it worked.

He was too troubled and worried, and didn't realize the damage he was causing. Later on, he did, before he died.

So what was your sister's path? What did she do?

It was much worse than mine. It was much more difficult. She didn't go to Vineland with us, to the farm. She had to stay in New York and go to business school for a year.

Had to-- you mean your father said she had to?

And she became a secretary.

In New York?

In New York. She lived with my aunt and uncle. My parents paid her a little bit, whatever they had, to my aunt. But she had to work.

How is that for your family to be separated, to have your sister in New York and you all were in Vineland?

Oh, that wasn't a problem. She was 17 by then. That wasn't a problem.

But after all you had been through--

No, that didn't-- but nothing bothered them. They were so confused, they didn't know what bothered them. They were just so troubled trying to make it.

You've talked about your father. What was your mother experiencing?

My mother, bless her, she was wonderful, very sanguine. She's still living, in the Rockville home. This is she.

You have a picture album here that we're going talking to talk about later.

Yes. My mother was a lovely, sanguine homemaker. And don't forget, in those days, everything was done by hand, everything was manual. My mother had difficulties with my father. She wasn't as tough as I was. She was different. What should have happened was that my mother should have gone out to get a job-- I don't know what-- and paid someone to clean her house. And the family would have gotten established much more quickly.

Do you think that occurred to your mother or your father, that your mother would do that?

They felt so inconstant. This is a woman that the only thing she had ever done was housework. And it would have meant becoming a cook or a homemaker for someone. And that was something my father absolutely was heartbroken about. He didn't want that for my mother.

So he would have felt it as demeaning for his wife to have to work. Not really demeaning, but--

Reflection on him is a provider?

No. He felt it would have been terrible for my mother to have to do that. Not for himself. My father was not a macho kind of-- not too much of a macho kind of a person. He was very encouraging. And he helped in the house and he cooked and he wasn't that kind of a person. He just didn't-- he loved my mother very much and he knew she loved to be home. And he felt it was too much for her to go out and get a job and come home and do her own.

He always felt richer than that, (CHUCKLING) which was a mistake. You know, feeling rich and comfortable doesn't always have to do with money. It's a mindset. But I think their mindset was confused and construed. I think the people who came from Europe straightaway and didn't have those eight years somewhere else where it was softer and economically easy, had an easier time adapting to America. And the age-- the ages they were when they came here.

Your father was how old?

He was 50.

And your mother?

42 It was hard. It wasn't "young," quote unquote, for America, to start over. It wasn't only the first start over. It was two starting overs. And it was devastating. My parents really didn't recuperate until, believe it or not, a hurricane came in 1952. We came in 1947. In 1952, a hurricane came.

That's five years later.

Yeah, Hazel. Blew away the chickens and the chicken coop. And they were insured. Well, everybody was. And they all they had left was a house.

You said they were or were not?

They were.

They were insured.

Mm-hmm. And my father told his brother, who he was in business with, were not going to go back into the chicken business were not buying another single chicken. And he bought a cow. And he went back into trading. And from 1952 until 1964, my father and uncle built up a big cattle business again.

On the same property.

They had two properties next to each other. They hired help and they established a big cattle business. By the time he

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sold out, he must have had over 100 head of cattle. He traded, he milked, and he turned the two chicken farms into a cattle business. He made a living. It wasn't-- you couldn't retire on it, but at least they had-- you know, those first five years were overcome by that. It was hard work.

And then my father got sick. And--

While he was still farming?

Yes.

How old was he when he got sick?

62. And then later on-- three years later, I believe-- he got his pension. They got money from Germany. The whole family got restitution for their properties. They were cheated like hell. But then, who wasn't? But at least it was money to live on and back pay. And that gave them a very, very-- would have given them a very nice retirement They sold the farms in 1965 and they bought a house in town, in Vineland.

And my father died from the house. He had leukemia and he passed away a year and a half after he got his pension. But those first-- my goodness, those first whatever years in America were a nightmare.

So backing up, after the cattle business got underway, did his state of mind improve? And did his adjustment otherwise improve?

Yes, somewhat. Yes. Let me think about that. He became much happier. First of all, both of us got married.

How did he feel about that?

Wonderful, because is he adored his son-in-laws. And he had grandchildren. Some of them were on-- my brother-in-law and sister lived across the street from my parents. Made a lot of mistakes with my sister and brother-in-law. You know, they were older. You know, my sister's turn to get married and all this, he was still very much an immigrant and doing things the European way because that's the only way they know how. And they were not adaptable to this country.

Now, did they find a synagogue that they felt comfortable in?

No, but they found a synagogue they could walk to, to pray in. And my father's brother, George, had a magnificent singing voice, magnificent voice. And he re-established the little country synagogue near the house where we lived, so that for about 15 years they had big services. People came from far and wide to hear him.

And so, that was better for him to have that synagogue than where he had previously attended?

No, once they bought the farm, they were always in the same synagogue.

Oh, I thought--

It was a country synagogue.

Oh, I see, that was the same one. It wasn't a different one.

Yeah. It wasn't ideal. My sister and I didn't have the kind of-- obviously-- the kind of Jewish education that we gave our children. Our children went to Jewish schools. Our children learned Hebrew. Our children got what we didn't get. They haven't-- and they're not putting-- some of them are not putting it to use, but they have it.

So what religious training did you have?

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Very little, very little. My religious training is-- in Kenya, I had a few teachers who couldn't even teach me the Alefbet.

And what is that?

The alphabet. I couldn't even do that. I had got most of my religious training at home, on the farm, living Judaism from A to Z. And then when I came to Vineland, I did go for religious training for a few years. But that--

Where did you go for the religious training in Vineland?

There was a school in Norma, New Jersey, which is the next little hamlet over. There was a teacher there. I went there for a few years. And I suppose I took some lessons in Vineland in the synagogue. I don't remember. But it was limited.

Did you say in Norman, New Jersey?

Norma.

Norma.

Norma was a very vibrant little country town and had a lot of Judaism.

And so did you go regularly for lessons?

Yes, I did.

Like once a week?

More than once a week. I went for a few years, several times a week. I just wasn't very motivated. I didn't like the teachers and they didn't bring it across very well. But, here and there, I would take courses that I would enjoy. And I read a lot.

And what about in your home?

Oh, my home was Orthodox. Keep strictly kosher home, and I know it-- when you live a living Judaism, like we did, from the roots up-- I mean, in Kenya my parents-- my uncles were the ritual slaughterers, the shochtim. They were trained. So we always had kosher meat. My family knew how to do everything else, including growing their own food, making their own food. They were country people.

Sometimes I think of them when-- there was a wonderful movie out a few years ago. It was called From Water To Chocolate or from bread? Did you see it? Where everything centered around the kitchen. That's how it is in Jewish homes as well. The whole spiritual life-- every holiday, every observance-- is from the kitchen.

And that's how we grew up in Kenya, really. We had Sukkot. We had Passover. We never needed anything for the whole eight years, except matzahs, which came from South Africa. Thank God, every year, they did arrive. Or maybe some oil. But other than that, everything was self-made-- cheeses, everything.

And in Vineland?

Same thing. But in Vineland, it was easier. You could buy things from New York. Philadelphia didn't have such an orthodox community many years ago. But it did have some. You see, my father could have also-- they were very sorry later on. But the economic problems and the emotional problems they had, they could have very easily sent me to a Jewish school in Philadelphia. There were other children in Vineland who commuted for years.

Oh, you mean day school.

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Yes. I have no idea why they chose not to do that. Because-- I think I do know. Because of their background of girls' education being secondary. So there were these confusions there, these--

But in Kenya they went to great lengths to have their girls well educated. It wasn't such a problem there. Things worked. Things didn't interfere to stop them.

But so to send you to a Hebrew school in Philadelphia, it would have been more complicated.

It would have been more expensive. He didn't have the money. And wouldn't have thought of asking for a scholarship, which was foolish.

Do you regret that you didn't have that opportunity?

Oh, and how I regret it. More than that, I regret that I could have gone to University for nothing. If only I wouldn't have had this constant pressure of having to get out and produce $20 a week to live on.

I did get him to send me to business school. And I engineered that. I refused to take business courses in high school. I told him I would not sacrifice my liberal education to learn steno and typing.

Now, why was that important to you?

Because I wanted a liberal education.

And where did that idea come from?

Because I felt it was necessary. I guess my good background in education did that for me.

Do you think that was a carryover from your school in Kenya?

Yes, definitely, definitely. I said, absolutely not. I will not spend half a day, for four years, sitting there learning how to type a typewriter and learn steno when I could be learning a language or at least trying crafts. I was very good in home economics. I loved it. I sew well. But I will not. I will not sacrifice. I wouldn't do it.

So you persisted.

I persisted. It was four years later. It was four years after my sister. And I had a different personality. And I said, OK, buddy, now, if you want me to go out and make my $20 a week, you're going to have to send me to a school.

Did your mother have any part in these decisions or did she express opinions about what she wanted, what she thought should be done about your education? Or was it mostly between you and your father.

She was not-- she was very insistent that we both graduate from high school, I can tell you that. She was not persistent enough about higher education, no. My mother was at fault. My mother was at fault. I could have gone to Glassboro State Teachers College with my eyes closed, for free.

My problem was-- and in those days, that was not only my problem. That was lots of girls problems. That was nothing to do with being an immigrant. The choices were, you became a secretary, a nurse, or a teacher. Well, I wasn't going to become a nurse.

Teaching wasn't the field I wanted to go into. But what I didn't know and I didn't have any guidance, and I needed, was, take the four years of Glassboro and do something else with it. That creative, I wasn't at 17, 18.

And there was no teacher in the school who-- nobody to steer you in that direction.

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No, they were only interested in the honor students. They were very good in helping the honor students and directing them. Now, there may have been some religious problems with going to Glassboro. I don't know.

Like what would the religious problems be?

Holidays, Friday afternoons early-- that might have existed. I don't know.

So are you saying that if you had actually gone there might have been problems, or that your father was not for it because of problems?

No, I myself was observant. I was very firm about that. I would not want to have-- I mean it just didn't-- it wouldn't have been possible for me to go to a school where I had to stay and couldn't get home on time for Sabbath. I wouldn't-- you know, that didn't exist. Still doesn't. But things weren't as flexible then as they are now.

But I don't think that's why I didn't go to Glassboro. I think I didn't go because I had this pressure of having to get out and work.

To help the family with income?

To help the family take care of myself. So I could take care of myself.

And the pressure was coming from your father and from inside you, also.

No, the pressure was coming from-- by then, the pressure inside me had been distorted. I think it was coming from my father.

OK, we have to stop and turn the tape.

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