

**Interview with Inge Katzenstein  
October 17, 2001**

**Beginning Tape One, Side A**

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Inge Katzenstein**, conducted by **Esther Finder** on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in **Silver Spring, Maryland**. This interview is part of the museum's project to interview Holocaust survivors and witnesses who are also volunteers with the museum. This is tape number one, side **A**. When were you born?

Answer: I was born on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

Q: And where?

A: In **Cologne, Germany**.

Q: What was your father's name?

A: **Josef Berg**.

Q: And what did he do for a living?

A: He was a cattle dealer.

Q: What was your mother's name?

A: **Clara Berg**.

Q: What work did she do?

A: She was a housewife.

Q: Do you have any siblings?

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A: Yes, one sister, **Jill Pauly**.

Q: She older or younger?

A: Younger.

Q: Was your family religiously observant?

A: Yes, very. Yes, they were. We observed all the Jewish laws. My grandfather was very, very Orthodox.

Q: Did you have a favorite holiday?

A: Yes, it was **Sukkot**. We -- I vividly remember that we had a wonderful **sukkah** built in the backyard and as children we loved to go there. And there's a real big connection with us because when we went back to **Germany** in 1996 or seven, we were able to go into the backyard of a home where in -- into the -- our old home, and the present owner said, look, there's a platform, a cement platform that you used for some kind of Jewish holiday. So after all these years, the cement platform of our **Sukkot -- sukkah**, was still there. And as a matter of fact, we went back this past summer to show it to my oldest son, and there it still was.

Q: Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

A: We lived in a small town outside of **Cologne** that had many Jewish families, but they were interspersed in the town. There was no such thing as quote, Jewish neighborhood.

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Q: And what was the name of the town?

A: At that time it was called **Lechenich**, but today it is called **Erfstadt**. And it is part of a huge county. There was -- there's **Erfstadt-Lechenich, Ernstadt**, all these little towns are now under **Erfstadt, E-r-f-s-t-a-d-t**.

Q: Do you have any memories of life before **Hitler** came to power?

A: No.

Q: What are some of your earliest memories?

A: Basically they start with when I had to go to school. In the town that we lived in there was no Jewish day school. And I started school in 1935, and for the first year, the first six months I would say, I went to the public school. And then the edict came down that Jewish children were not allowed to go to school any more, and I had to go to school in the town where my grandmother lived, and I had to go and live with my grandmother. Couldn't live at home any more. In order to go to school, I moved there and went to school there.

Q: And the name of that town?

A: That town is called **Linnich, L-i-n-n-i-c-h**. And it was a -- maybe 45 minutes or an hour's ride away. And I don't think I was a happy camper, but being with my grandmother and not at home, it was all right. And I went to school there for a -- for a year. And then my -- my aunt and uncle also lived with my grandmother and they

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emigrated to **Holland**. And my grandmother went to live with another daughter and I had to go home and I then went to school in **Cologne**, which was a half hour, 45 minute train ride or bus ride from where we lived. So I commuted every day as a eight, nine year old, by train or bus to **Cologne** to school, on my own.

Q: What kinds of things did you study?

A: I was in a Jewish day school. I had -- we had all Jewish studies and also all secular studies. And I went there through what you would call here, maybe fourth or fifth grade.

Q: When you were a child going to school, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A: I really didn't know, but I was always playing around with the thought of being a pediatrician, but it never went any further than that. But I do have to backtrack and tell you that I was a feisty little girl, and coming off the bus one day there was this snotty little kid that called me dirty Jew. And I went after him and beat him to pulp. And after I had done that I got scared and I ran. And between the bus stop and where we lived, one of my father's cousins lived. So I ran to his house to hide. But he got his dues for calling me dirty Jew. He never called me dirty Jew again. And I must have been eight or nine years old.

Q: Do you remember other episodes of anti-Semitism?

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A: Yes, very vividly after **Kristallnacht** in 1938, we had to leave our home and we moved into an apartment in the city of **Cologne** where three uncles and an aunt, brothers and sisters, all of whom were unmarried, lived. And it was like a two or three bedroom apartment and I don't know how -- remember how many people piled in there. But now I was supposed to walk to school. And I think most days I did, but the teachers thought my Hebrew education was sadly lack-lacking, and suggested that I have some extra lessons. And my mother arranged for me to have them after school. Inevitably the teacher would call and ask where I was. And my mother said, well isn't she there? And no, she's not here. I was roaming the city of **Cologne** and there were all these stores that had the signs in the window, **Juden [indecipherable]**, meaning Jews not wanted. And that's the line I would stand on, and they were selling coffee with an eighth of a pound. And my grandmother, my mother's mother, was very ill. She had cancer, and her only joy was a cup of coffee. So many afternoons I would come -- I would have stood on five, six lines and I would have come home with a pound of coffee. That's where I was, standing on line somewhere or taking the streetcar and going to a bakery and pick up a piece of cake for my grandmother. But I never told anybody where I was going. I was just roaming the city and I -- I always got back home.

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Q: Before **Kristallnacht**, did you experience any other anti-Semitic verbal or physical attacks on you?

A: N-No. There was a lot of discussion at home between the adults, but they tried to shield the children from it, so really, no.

Q: When you say they tried to shield you, how did they shield you?

A: By not talking about any of their problems in front of us. It was always hush hush. And that's why I have so few memories.

Q: Were you aware that something was wrong?

A: Yes, we always lived in fear. We didn't have a normal life. We didn't go on vacations, we didn't go on picnics, we didn't go to the movies. It was not a normal life as you would know it here.

Q: Did your family ever think of leaving **Germany**, even if -- I'm talking about before **Kristallnacht**.

A: Yes, my father very much wanted to leave **Germany** and he did have a visa application number y -- that everybody had to have, a quota number. But the quota numbers were very, very high for Germans at that time, and there was very little hope for us. We were working on it, but it didn't go as fast as you think it would.

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Q: In the time before **Kristallnacht**, do you remember any book burnings, or do you remember any of the -- w -- you're shaking your head, I can't -- I can't pick that up on the microphone.

A: Sorry. No, no, not at all. No. I was a little girl. No. We li -- we were sheltered. My parents sheltered us. My sister's memories are so different. She remembers that she was never allowed out. She was younger and they kept her hidden, they kept her indoors. I just went out on my own.

Q: Is there anything else that comes to your mind about the period of time before **Kristallnacht**?

A: Very vague, small things that I really can't put together to make any sense.

Q: Were you able to see or hear anything on **Kristallnacht**?

A: Oh yes, definitely. I -- my parents, living outside **Cologne**, and I don't think radios were very much in use at that time, sent me to school that day. And I went to school the way I usually did and when I got to the school, the -- the Gestapo or police, I don't remember, I ca -- I still can't tell the difference between one and the other, were standing in front of the school with German Shepherds. And they told us, children there is no school today, go home. And the school was right next door to a beautiful synagogue, and we could see that the roof of the synagogue was burnt out. And we went home -- we got on the train, went home, and when I got home my

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mother said, well, what are you doing here? And I said, well, th-they sent us home. They said there was no school today. It must have been 11 - 12 o'clock in the morning. That time my uncle had a very good school friend who came to the house and said to my family, whatever you see or hear today, do not leave your home. Just don't leave the house. In other words, he must have known what was going to happen and he told my uncle not to leave. So, around three, four o'clock in the afternoon we hear that the synagogue is burning, the fire engines ran. We saw the smoke from the home. My cr -- grandfather had been president of the synagogue for over 20 years and th -- his natural thing was to run to the synagogue to save the books, to save the Torahs. But my father and uncle would not let him leave. And we saw all this and we decided -- my grandmother at that time had a broken ankle, so her leg was in a cast. So my parents decided it was time to get out. Every other Jewish male in the little town that we lived in, ran to the synagogue. They were all picked up and put in concentration camp. My parents and my uncle and three cousins who lived in the next town over, all decided to go to **Cologne**. These are all the people that filed into this apartment. And a non-Jewish man drove us, my grandparents, my sister and I, drove us to **Cologne**. We had to sit on the floor of the car, and we were sitting on my grandmother's cast. We were not allowed to look out the window. And he drove us to **Cologne** and that's how we left, my parents,



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uncle, went to the next town over to pick up another aunt and uncle and my grandmother, who was very ill. And we also came -- they also came to **Cologne**. And when the man that drove us came back to the town where we lived, he was severely beaten for having driven us to **Cologne**. In that way there were many people that were very close to us. My grandfather was a very well-respected man. He did business in -- all over. He helped many people, he loaned them money, he set them up in business, Jews and non-Jews, and he was very well respected. As a matter of fact, when we went back this past summer, we went to a castle, and I think the lady that lives in the castle now is the granddaughter of the man that ran my parent's business from 1933 to '39. He was, of course, a non-Jew. Jews weren't allowed to do business, and turned over all the funds to my family. And this lady invited us for coffee, and she also has these vague memories of things that -- my grandparents never spoke about it, a -- because my family's grazing lands abutted the castle's property, and they must have been very, very good friends. Was trying to remember, there was something I wanted to say before and I forgot it of course.

Q: What kind of business was your grandfather in?

A: Same business. What -- what -- the business consisted of my uncle and his -- my father and his brother, my uncle; and three cousins that were also brothers, had the same bus -- were in business together where my uncle would go to east **Prussia** to

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buy cattle, have it transported by train to the **Cologne** area, put it in this pastureland or in the stables, and then sell the 1 -- cattle to the dealers -- to the farmers in the area. S -- and my grandfather had that business and my father and uncles took it over. And the three brothers and the two brothers, were always in business together. [coughing]. Sorry.

Q: After **Kristallnacht**, what was next for you and your family?

A: Well, we piled into this apartment and my father, his brother and one of the cousins were terrified about being picked up and put into concentration camps. So for three or four nights they would sleep during the day and drive through **Cologne** at night in order not to be picked up. The only thing they did was stop for gas. They did this for -- well, **Kristallnacht** was on a Thursday, they did it Friday during the day, Friday night was **Shabbat** and they stayed home shab -- and they were hiding, because the m -- there were very few men around of their age. And they started doing this again Sunday, and I think Monday and Tuesday. And then they tried to go across the border into **Holland**, illegally. And of course they were caught and sent back. And tried -- a day or so later they tried again and they managed to get across the border, but were picked up by Dutch police that were friendly to the Nazis. And they informed the Nazis and they put them in prison. They were imprisoned. And as I said earlier, my uncle and aunt had gone to **Holland** already.

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And with the assistance of highly prominent people in **Holland**, that had connections to the queen, etcetera, they were able to arrange that they were not being sent -- that they would not be sent back. So -- and they were put into a camp, which was kind of like restricted. They were not allowed out, but they were not in prison. And they were there from November '38 to May 1939. We did not see my father in all that time, we had no contact with him. And my mother then handled -- my mother and my aunts handled all the emigration things because after **Kristallnacht**, they m -- the Jews were told that they had to go and clean up the mess. And my mother went back and she looked at it and she said, I'll never do that. The Persian carpets were on the manure heap. The prayer books were full of eggs. We still have some of them -- show you. And it was very, very difficult, but many -- not many, but several of the non-Jewish families came to her aid and helped her. And of course, food was very difficult to obtain at that time, and the people from the land would come with baskets to **Cologne** to bring us food. As a matter of fact, they knew we would only eat kosher chickens, one woman came every week with a live chicken on the bus, to **Cologne**. And two of my uncles were **Shochten**, they had learned that, so that way we had our kosher chickens. You see, we -- we weren't -- we really did not any -- have any deprivations in that way, because people helped us.

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Q: You said your mother handled the emigration work, what kind of work was she doing at this point?

A: Well, she didn't do it alone, there was her sister, the cu -- and two cousins, and one of my unc -- two of ma -- of the cousin -- two of the three brothers that were cousins were still in **Germany**, so they all had -- worked on it together. But you have to remember, we had a 17 room house. It was fully furnished, that you could find on the street. Linens, clothing, everything in that house was smashed. There wasn't a single piece that was left together. And at that time my mother went and bought a complete ha -- n-new furniture, dishes, pots, pans, housewares, linens. She bought everything new. She knew she was not allowed to take out any money when she left **Germany**. And everything she bought had to be paid to the store, had to be documented, and the same amount of money had to be paid to the German government for export tax. And I would say 75 percent of the stuff that she bought was on a boat to come to **Africa** when the British bombed it in the -- in the port of **Hamburg**. And I think if you look at the bottom, you'll still find it there. So I would say 75 percent of the stuff she bought never -- never got to us.

Q: Why **Africa**?

A: It's a long story. **America** wouldn't let us in and my -- one of the cousins was married to a woman who had a cousin who had, I think studied law in **England**.

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And he was hired by the **Kenya** government as an attorney in **Kenya**. And he -- and it was still relatively easy to get into **Kenya**. And he sent affidavit for 17 people. At the time, I think you had to deposit 50 pounds per person as an entry fee. And after the war started -- we arrived in **Kenya** on June first, the war started September first. After the war started that fee was up to 250 pounds. But we were lucky, we got in. My father and uncles went -- got there four weeks earlier. They went from **Holland** to **England** to **Kenya**. We went from **Germany** by train via **Switzerland** to **Italy**, and then we went to **Kenya**, on a German ship that served us kosher food. Talk about being ironic.

Q: What were you personally able to take with you when you left?

A: My clothes. That's about it. Clothing.

Q: No books or toys?

A: No, they were all gone in **Kristallnacht**.

Q: Were you able to say goodbye?

A: Yes. That was one of the saddest days of -- the saddest things that I remember, because a -- all the aunts and the uncles and any relatives and friends all came to the station in **Cologne**, the railroad station, to say goodbye. And we didn't know that we wouldn't see them again, but it was a very, very sad parting. Very sad. Cousins, uncles, aunts. It was really very traumatic. And of course, we never saw any of

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them again, except my uncle and aunt that lived in **Holland**. They were living in **Holland** and they got permission to come to **Kenya**, my parents worked on that. My parents arrived in 1939 and they wi -- got onto a boat in **Holland** the day that **Hitler** walked into **Holland**. They were on a boat and they were able to come to **Africa** in 1940.

Q: Do you have any other memories of your life in **Germany**? Now that you're about to leave **Germany**, anything else that comes to mind?

A: No. I n -- you asked me if I was t -- able to take books or toys, I don't even remember having them. Not because they weren't available, but I just -- I don't remember playing.

Q: Going to pause and I want to flip the tape.

**End of Tape One, Side A**

**Beginning Tape One, Side B**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Inge Katzenstein**. This is tape number one, side **B**, and we have you now leaving **Germany**.

A: Right.

Q: What were your -- what were your expectations about your new destination?

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A: As a nine year old, I don't think I had any. I was happy that we would be together with my father again, and I think I was happy that we would be free to speak and run around again. But other -- other than that, I personally had no expectations.

Q: Did you have any regrets about leaving **Germany**?

A: Oh no, none. None whatsoever.

Q: What were your first impressions of your new home?

A: Lovely. Strange, of course, with all the flowers and greenery all year round. Different people. Africans and their living quarters and habits. Having to speak English, which we didn't know a word about. Not being able to understand a single word. But that was very quickly rectified. I think after being there two days, we were in English schools. And that was very traumatic. New country, new school, no language. I was in fourth or fifth grade and I had to start again in first grade. And -- but it went -- and that was very upsetting to me to be put back with the small children. But we learned English very rapidly. It wasn't English as a second language. We were pushed into it, we learned. And every two weeks I was put up until I was with my grade level. And I remember that the first, second day, having to come home to learn a poem by heart. And not only couldn't -- I could -- didn't I **understate** it, couldn't read it. And my 70 year old grandmother said, come child, I

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will learn it with you. She couldn't read it. But between the two of us, we learned it by heart and by the time I got to school, I knew it by heart, but I couldn't -- I couldn't say it because I couldn't -- I didn't know how to pronounce it. I could read it. I knew it by heart, but I could -- couldn't pronounce it. But that -- those things were very quickly rectified and we were very happy in school. The children all wore uniforms so it was all -- we were all the same. And it worked out very well.

Q: What was your family's legal status?

A: We were enemy aliens. It was really ironic. We had left **Germany** -- I have to think a minute. We had left **Germany** as stateless. Jews were no longer considered Germans, so we were stateless. And we arrived in **Kenya**, which at that time was a British colony, and I don't know under what quota, under what auspices, but the day war broke out, we were considered enemy aliens. And it was rather strange, but that's what we were and we were enemy alien -- we were stateless until we came to **America** in 1947, when we came under the German quota. Again we were put -- at that point considered Germans.

Q: What did it mean for you, for your family, to be enemy aliens?

A: They laughed about it because it was so iro -- ironic. The -- the thing that it real -  
- that it meant physically was, my parents bought a very, very large farm in -- a ranch in **Kenya**. And what it came down to was we were interned on the property.



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We were not allowed to leave the property without permission. Any time we wanted to go to town -- every week we had to go to **Nairobi**, which was 20 miles away. We lived in the highlands in **Limuru**, we had to go buy groceries. We had to go to the police department and get permission to go to **Nairobi** and buy groceries. And -- but otherwise it was not a problem. But in the beginning, when we -- when war broke out, everybody was very upset and we were then declared enemy aliens and the British came with the A-African soldiers to arrest my -- all the men that had now come to freedom in **Kenya**, were arrested, including my 80 year old grandfather. And they were taken to a place of internment for security. And my grandmother at that point said to the British whoever he was, police officer, she said, now I want you to know something. We fled **Germany** to safety, to come here. I have been married to this man for 45 years and where he goes, I go. So if you're going to take my 80 year old husband, I'm going to go with him, he's not going to be alone. He looked at my grandmother, he says, okay, we'll leave him here. And the men were there one or two nights and they came back. They realized what was going on and looked into their background and they were released. We were, at that time, still living in a ho -- in a house that my father had rented in **Nairobi**, and that was before we had purchased the ranch. Afterwards, they made it

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mandatory that the men help the war effort, and manage the ranches of the British that had gone to war. My uncle became a manager of a farm.

Q: For you as a young person, what kind of social life did you have in your new home?

A: None. None whatsoever. First we lived on the farm, and my parents realized we needed to be educated, so they hired tutors for us. The tutors lived in, but we were much too rambunctious to stay with tutors. We did not -- it did not work out. And another thing that happened was in **Africa** we grew pyrethrum, which -- of which **DDT** is made. And that was a big business at that time because it was sold -- it was needed for the war effort, because **America** used to get its **DDT** from **Japan**, and they couldn't get it any more. And my mother was terribly, terribly allergic to it. Her face would break out and her skin would break. It was just awful. So she could not live on the farm, and the tutor business didn't work out. So my mother and my sister and I moved to **Nairobi** to town so we -- we could go to school. The first semester or so we moved to another place in **Limuru**, and we had to walk down a hill, cross the little river and up a hill to go to school. But we didn't stay there too long. And my father, uncle and grandparents -- on the ranch that we bought there were two large homes. The three brothers and families lived in one and my father and uncle and grandparents, and we lived in the other. That had been the quarter --

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the -- the laborers quarters before we bought the farm, and it was very, very dirty and it had no inside plumbing. And well, cleaned it up, and we moved in. And -- but after awhile my mother couldn't live there, and we moved away. My father would come to us on weekends. And we went to school. First we went to **Limuru** girls' school as day students, which was one of the most exclusive boarding schools there was. Don't forget, we were in a British colony, and they all had boarding schools. Then we went to **Nairobi** and we went to school there. We went to the **Nairobi** girls' high school. Again, very exclusive school. [coughs] Excuse me. And we stayed there until we gra -- graduated from high school. And my father stayed on the farm and worked the farms and came to see us on weekends. In addition to that, money was not plentiful, so we had rented a home in **Nairobi** and my mother rented out rooms to augment her income. And that's what we did for many, many years.

Q: Did you have to get special permission to -- to -- to move there and have your father come visit?

A: This was after the war.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Wait a minute. That's not true. No, this was during the war. I'm sure they did. I'm sure they did, but I don't think it became a -- any trouble.

Q: Did anybody there ask you about your life in **Germany**?

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A: Yes, many in the Jewish community. There was a nice Jewish community in **Nairobi** and people that had been there 20 - 30 years, and yes they did ask us. But we were absorbed into the community, it was really -- living in **Nairobi** was very, very pleasant.

Q: Did you experience any anti-Semitism there?

A: No, not to my knowledge or memory.

Q: Did you expect to stay there indefinitely?

A: Not really. I don't think my parents had that intention because there was basically no **Yiddishkeit**. There were no -- there were no -- I don't think there were any other Orthodox Jews, except one or two families that had also come as immigrants. And again, it was very difficult to keep any of the observance. So after the war my father was anxious to leave, so that we -- that the children could at least be integrated into an Orthodox community.

Q: So the Jewish community that was there -- you said it was a -- it was a lovely Jewish community, where were those people from and what kinds of traditions did they follow?

A: Their traditions today would be con -- considered Conservative Judaism. Where were they from? From **Poland**, from **England**, from all over the world. From **Somalia**, from all over the world. Some were refugees like we were, others were

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older residents that -- I don't know where they came from, but they had been there for years and years; they were well established. But most of them had Polish backgrounds, so I as -- assumption at this stage loo -- in retrospect is, maybe their parents left under the pogroms and settled wherever they could. That's retrospect.

Q: How carefully did you follow what was going on in **Germany** and in **Europe**?

A: My parents and uncle did as much as they could. While we were on the farm, we had no electricity, but we did have a radio that was battery run. It was only allowed to be used for the news, and my uncle and parents followed that very, very closely. They were very concerned about the people they had left behind. We did get some mail from them through the Red Cross. They did receive some packages that we had sent, but then after awhile all correspondence stopped, and they were very, very concerned, but there was nothing we could do.

Q: Did you have any idea what was happening to the Jews in **Europe**?

A: We had an inkling that things were very, very bad, but really exactly what was going on, no. At least -- as teenagers, we were off in another world. But my parents and uncles had ideas, but really didn't know what was going on.

Q: Why don't we pause until these sirens pass. **[tape break]** Okay, I think they've -  
- I think they've passed.

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A: My parents had ideas, possibly were able to read through the lines what was going on, but actually no, we did not know until after the war, what was going on.

Q: So when did you find out?

A: What I remember -- I think I was either 16 or 17 -- the war was over in '45, so I was 16, and at that time -- and came here when I was 17, so when we left **Kenya**, someone gave my father a book of pictures of the camps. It was a very new book and it was horrendous. It was a horrendous book, he wouldn't let us look at it. And I remember he stood on the end of the ship, he threw it overboard. He could not see it, he could not live with those pictures.

Q: Before I have you leaving **Africa**, are there any other memories that you have that stand out, or any other experiences that you'd like to share?

A: Well, we became much happier, we went to the movies. We met other young people of our age. It was a -- it was a happier time, but cannot be compared to American teenagers life. And I had just graduated high school, my sister was still in school, and that's about the time we left.

Q: And why did you leave at -- at that moment, that time?

A: We got -- at that time we had received our visas and it was time to go. Trip was very long, it was seven weeks on a cargo boat, and was a long trip. We stopped -- we stopped in every port from **Mombassa**, which was **Kenya**, down to **Cape**

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**Town.** It was a cargo boat that took on -- was a very interesting trip for us. We went ashore. Actually, I've been into every port from **Cairo** to **Cape Town**. Coming -- coming from **Germany** we stopped in -- up there, and went through the **Daman Isle**, and round -- around **Aden**, we stopped in **Aden** and then came down, stopped in **Somalia** at that time, and then down to **Kenya**. And then seven years later we continued from **Kenya** to all the small ports. Port **Elizabeth**, **Durbin**, and then **Cape Town**, and then -- that took four weeks. The trip fr-from -- that -- because they stopped so much. And then it was three weeks up the **Atlantic** without a stop, to **Boston**. And at the end of that trip there was such a horrendous storm, that we were walking on the walls of the boat. Wasn't a dish left in the kitchen that was whole. The storm was so bad outside of **Boston**, that a-although our tickets were for **New York**, they wouldn't take us to **New York**, they said you have to leave in **Boston**, and we took a train to **New York**. And for -- for my sister and myself it was a wonderful trip. We did everything on that boat. From keeping the logs, from steering the ship, from swabbing the decks. We did everything. We had a wonderful time. And no food. No kosher food. And we had taken some food along, and the funniest thing is, after the first day or two my mother refused to eat the bread. Why? The baker of the boat had a monkey that he dipped in the water every day and then

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rolled him on the deck like bread. It was a toy -- i-it was a pet. When my mother saw that, she got so disgusted she wouldn't eat the bread.

Q: When did you arrive in the **States**?

A: In February, 1948. Snow over the houses. No winter coats. Having lived in the tropics for seven years. Oh, it was cold. Very cold.

Q: Did you have any expectations about the **United States**?

A: Not really. Not really, because you know, we just took it day by day. Whatever we had to do, we did. I started school.

Q: Where?

A: **Queen's Plaza**, went to stenography school to become a secretary, and after a few weeks I decided I knew enough and I wanted a job and the only job I wanted was on **Fifth** Avenue. And I took the "**New York Times**" and went from -- and anything that was **Fifth** Avenue, I went in and applied for a job. I started way downtown and walked my way up. I think the first one I got was at **23<sup>rd</sup>** Street, but I was so inexperienced, I didn't last longer than a week there. So, took the "**New York Times**" again and started from **23<sup>rd</sup>** Street up to **43<sup>rd</sup>** Street. And finally found -- was hired in an attorney's office, where there were two attorneys and an accountant. I knew nothing. Finally, one of the men that hired me -- they must have felt sorry for me, said, do us a favor, go back to school, and learn. And I did. I went



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to night school in **Queens**, worked in **Manhattan** and lived in **Brooklyn**. I could have switched schools, but I didn't. I was too -- too scared. I could have gone to college, because with the British education that we had, it was qui -- equivalent to the junior year in college. Didn't do it. I had to work. We -- and I had that job for a long time and I told them I observe the Sabbath, and the one attorney said -- would come to me every aftern -- Friday afternoon, an hour before sunset and say, it's time for you to go home. Which I thou -- you know, it enabled me to be home before sunset. I -- finally I did learn shorthand and stenography and I was able to type. And I used to do spreadsheets for the accountant, who was terribly fussy. He would hold my work up to the light and say, you erased, do it over. I learned to erase, he couldn't tell any more. I worked there -- how long did I work there? A year, year and a half? Not -- yeah, til 1950, two years m -- year and a half, maybe. And by then my parents had bought a chicken farm in **Vineland, New Jersey**. And I was living with an aunt and uncle in **Brooklyn**. And we belonged to an -- or -- or to a congregation there, and I made friends there and met a lot of young people. And didn't want to come -- move to **Vineland**. And I somehow managed financially. I was on my own. When my parents left for **New Jersey**, my father -- I was renting a room somewhere on the **West Side, 96<sup>th</sup> Street**, and my aunt and uncle had moved to **Brooklyn**. And my father left me with a hundred dollars and he said, when that's

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finished, it's yours. And from that day on, I was independent. I got a job, I paid my room and board. Subway was a nickel one way, so all you need is a dollar a week for subway, and I was on my own until 1950, when I -- '50? Yeah, end of 1950. I had met my husband in the fall of 1950 and moved -- and then moved to **Vineland** and became engaged in January of '51. And then I st-started to work in **Vineland** for an attorney who came to my parents' house and said, I hear you're a legal secretary, can you come to work for me? And I did. And I worked for him til my first child was born.

Q: Before I let you go any further, I have a few questions that I wanted to go back to. When you came to this country, did anybody help you? Any of the Jewish agencies or anything like that?

A: To my knowledge, we went to **HIAS** to fill out citizen papers, period. We had an uncle that lived here and a cousin who owned a restaurant on **49<sup>th</sup>** Street, his name was **John Schwartz**. He owned **Headquarters** restaurant. He was **Eisenhower's** mess sergeant in World War II. He did the **Berlin** conference for **Eisenhower** and he was with **Eisenhower** through the entire campaign. And when he came back, he opened a restaurant in -- on **49<sup>th</sup>** Street in **New York City**. So we had a lot of help from -- from the cousins.

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Q: When you came here, did anybody ask you about your experiences in **Germany**?

A: No. No. People didn't want to talk at that time, they didn't want to know.

Q: And how did you meet your husband?

A: It was a blind date in **Brooklyn**. He lived in -- on the farm in **New Jersey**, and he would come ou -- he had vacation, and somebody gave me father-in-law my telephone number and he gave it to **Werner** and he called me and we went out and we enjoyed it, and he -- he was only in **New York** for a week, and he had just come out of the service. And he asked me for lunch the next day. Must have liked me, right? I went to lunch with him because to me it was a free lunch. I didn't -- and from then on he kept writing, he kept coming to **New York**. And by the -- by the end of the year, the aunt and uncle that I lived with had also moved to **Vineland**, so I went to **Vineland**. And that's when we be -- got engaged.

Q: I'm going to pause now to change tape. [inaudible]

A: Am I talking too much?

**End of Tape One, Side B**

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**Beginning Tape Two, Side A**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Inge Katzenstein**. This is tape number two, side

**A.** And you were talking about your husband courting you, but while I was flipping the tape you remembered something that you wanted to add, with respect to your experience in **Africa**.

A: I just wanted to say that in general we were very fortunate to be alive, because we left **Germany** before World War II, in June of '39, and we were able to leave **Kenya** right before the **Mau Mau** uprising, be -- because had we stayed in **Kenya** we would have been right in the center of **Mau Mau** territory, and we -- the ranch that my parents had bought was not sold at the time, it took several years to be able to sell it, and for us to be able to transfer the funds from **Kenya** to here.

Q: While you're talking about the -- the ranch and the funds, how was your family able to afford to buy a ranch in **Kenya**?

A: Again, my family was very fortunate. On May 1, 1933, one of my uncles took large sums of money to **Holland** and banked them in **Holland**, because after that it was more difficult to get money out. And that's how we had funds in **Holland**, which were then transferred to **Africa**.

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Q: As we finished the last tape, you were telling me about your husband courting you, and can you tell me a little bit about his background? Is -- was he born and raised in the **United States**?

A: No, he was born in **Germany**, and he -- he and his family [coughs] also left **Germany** in 1937 and lived in **Holland** until 1939, and were then able to come to **America**. He will tell it in his story. And they purchased a farm outside of **Camden, New Jersey**, and he will elaborate on that. And in 19 -- w-war broke out in 1942 for **America**, right? '41 - '42. He was inducted into the army in 1944, again, as an enemy alien and became a citizen in the army and then was sent back overseas to **Germany**, first as an infantry soldier. He was wounded, and after the war ended he went into mini -- military government as an interpreter. And I think he was discharged 40 -- in 1946, I'm not sure.

Q: Just tell me his full name.

A: **Werner Katzenstein**.

Q: When did the two of you decide to get married?

A: We became engaged in February of 1951.

Q: And when did you get married?

A: September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951.

Q: And you have children?

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A: Yes, we have three children. Our son **Michael** is a hospital administrator and lives in **Beverly, Massachusetts**, which is the outskirts of **Boston**. Our second son, **David** is an attorney and lives in **Highland Park, New Jersey**. His offices are in **Princeton, New Jersey**, and he's the proud father of five children. **Michael** has two children. Our daughter, **Debbie** is a venture capitalist banker in **Pittsburgh**, working for **PNC**, and she has two children. So we have nine grandchildren of which we are very proud.

Q: While you were raising them, did you also work outside the home?

A: Oh yes. I worked as a legal secretary until **David** was born. My mother helped me take care of **Michael**. After that, I didn't work for about 10 years and had another child, third child, **Debbie**. And when she was four years old I started to work to sell real estate. And for 32 years I sold real estate for, first **[indecipherable] O'Reilly** in **Vineland, New Jersey** which then later became **Coldwell Banker**.

Q: I wanted to ask you about some of the historical events that, you know, in the course of your late teens an-and -- and adulthood. After the war, did you follow the **Nuremberg** trials?

A: Not really, no.

Q: Did you follow the partition debates in the **U.N.** regarding **Palestine**?

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A: Vaguely, but not -- not -- not to an extent that I should have.

Q: Did you follow the **Eichmann** trial?

A: Yes, yes, I think I did.

Q: What was your reaction, if you can remember, your reaction to the way it was presented to the people in the **United States**?

A: I can't comment on that because I don't remember enough.

Q: Did you feel that justice was done?

A: Yes, definitely.

Q: You were in the **United States** during some of -- some very dramatic changes here. What were your thoughts about the Civil Rights movement?

A: I think everybody should have civil rights and have the freedom to do and work in a manner that **America** was envisioned. And this should be freedom for everyone, regardless of color, creed or nationality. But it has to be a safe freedom. It has to be the people that -- just as a comparison that -- what I can say now is that pre-World War II and during World War II, **America** would not let any immigrants in -- or Jewish immigrants into the country. And looking at it today, which is ninety - oh, 2001, after the terrorist attacks, God knows who's running through **America**, and nobody checked. But a few harmless Jews were not allowed in, and I don't know what to say any more.

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Q: When did you move to **Washington**?

A: 19 -- January 1998.

Q: Why? Why did you come here?

A: My sister has lived in this area for 25 years. We were ready to retire. In addition to that, our mother was in a nursing home in **Atlantic City**, about which we were not too happy, and we were able to have her transferred to the Hebrew Home of Greater **Washington**. And it was quite a long trip to visit her. The trip from **Vineland** to **Washington** is about three hours. And we were retired, there was no reason for us to live in **Vineland**. Was more and more difficult to be observant Jews in **Vineland**, because the observant synagogues were closing. And this is what my husband and I wanted in our life, to have community that observes and be together with my sister and be able to see my mother, who died a year ago.

Q: When did you start working at the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum?

A: I think it was April of '98. My brother-in-law and sister have volunteered at the museum from before it opened, and they thought that would be a good place for us to spend some time. So we went down and we do translations now.

Q: What special insights do you bring to your work?

A: Insights. We were -- we feel very good about being able to translate the letters, which are heart-wrenching at times. They are the gifts to the museum of mostly



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grandchildren of people that have perished because they were not able to get out.

And these -- and this correspondence is the grandparents writing to the parents. And the parents saved these letters, and the grandchildren can't read them any more.

Some of them are in German script that both my husband and I can still read. Some of them are very difficult to decipher and terribly heart-wrenching to read.

Q: Have you had any unusual or dramatic experiences at the museum?

A: No, not really, because we work behind the scenes. We don't see the public. We go into the **Ross** building, have our little cubicle and spend our day there and go home.

Q: Do you ever speak publicly about your experiences?

A: I used to speak to schoolchildren in -- in **New Jersey**, and I have done it once here because one of the teachers asked me to come to a class. Now, I've not done no s -- I have not done any s -- public speaking.

Q: Have you ever return -- well, you mentioned you returned to **Germany** since the war.

A: Yeah. The first time we returned to **Germany** was at my sister's urging because the city of **Cologne** invited us as their guests for a week. I did not want to go but my sister said, come on, let's go. And we did. It was a good week, it was a structured week. It was planned by the city. We were treated royally. But I kept looking over

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my shoulder to see who was following me. If I saw a German Shepherd, I ran. I was not a happy camper. This time we were in **Europe** for three weeks and we just spent four days in **Germany** because our son wanted to see, quote unquote, his roots. And he was able to fly over for four days, rent a car and we went to the town that my father was born in. We went to the town that my mother was born in, and we went to the town where our great-grandmother was buried. And after that we really had enough of the **autobahn** and we went on to **Holland** and he went home.

Q: On your second trip, the one that was not structured, ho-how did you -- how were you treated by the people that you met?

A: The only people that we really met in **Germany** were hotel personnel, and we hadn't -- th -- and then of course we were treated ex -- like royalty by the people that had the castle. We were also treated extremely well by the daughter of my aunt's maid, who treated us like royalty. Very sweet, very nice and -- extremely nice, but these people were nice to us before. We didn't meet any new ones. I had a -- I had an experience on the first trip which really shocked me. We were at a dinner planned by the city, with teachers, because at that time we had gone over and we spoke to classes in **Germany**. And one of the teachers sitting next to me, she says, I have to admit to you, my mother is a Nazi to this day. I was speechless. So anybody I saw that was my age or older, I considered to be a Nazi.

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Q: I have to ask you about a Torah scroll. You have not mentioned it, but I would like you to tell me about it.

A: Oh, okay. The two cousins that stayed behind to the very end were able to purchase a -- that -- a Torah scroll that was saved from one of the synagogues and they brought it to **Kenya**. In **Kenya** we used it because we had services on the holidays. The family had five adult males and during the war my mother ha-had many, many Jewish soldiers, from **England**, from **Africa**, from -- from **South Africa**, from **America**, that would come for rest and recuperation to our farm. And so for the holidays they always kept -- if they were still in **Kenya**, we'd always come back. And the Torah scroll was used in **Kenya** all the time. When we came to **America**, a Torah scroll was used in a small country synagogue outside of **Vineland**, called **Brockmanville**. And when we left the area, we took the Torah scroll with us again. It is not kosher any more, it cannot be used as a s -- Torah scroll. So not knowing what to do with it, not wanting to bury it, we donated it as a gift to **KMS** synagogue in **Silver Spring**, who gratefully accepted it and built a beautiful **orann** for it, and it s-stands in their **bet-hamek** in the small synagogue, and it is taken out once a year on **Simchas** Torah, when everybody dances with it. And I feel that is a beautiful place for it because it's still being used for what it was intended for.

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Q: Is there anything that we have not covered that you would like to add before we conclude today?

A: Yes. I have to say I don't -- did I say it before about not being survivors?

Q: Say whatever you'd like, it's okay.

A: I may have mentioned this before, that we wi -- feel very fortunate to be alive and to be able to live in freedom in **America**, to raise our children to be Orthodox Jews, and to be able to spend our later years of -- being to some advantage to the museum of being able to do the translations, even though they are very, very difficult at times to do. And some Mondays we come home quite depressed. But then life goes on and things get better.

Q: Well, I'd like to thank you very much for speaking with me today and this concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Inge Katzenstein**. Thank you.

A: Think I mentioned -- I think I was -- I repeated myself.

**End of Tape Two, Side A**

**Conclusion of Interview**