

Good afternoon. And welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson and I am the host of the museum's public program First Person.

Thank you for joining us. We are in our 10th year of the First Person program. Our First Person today is Mrs. Inge Katzenstein, whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2009 season of First Person is made possible through the generosity of the Louis and Dora Smith Foundation, to whom we are grateful for, again, sponsoring First Person. First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each First Person guest serves as a volunteer here at the museum.

With few exceptions, we will have a First Person program each Wednesday through August 26. We also will have First Person programs each Tuesday until the end of July. The museum's website at www.ushmm.org, that's www.ushmm.org provides a list of the upcoming First Person guests.

This year we are offering a new feature associated with First Person. Excerpts from our conversations with survivors will be available as podcasts on the museum's website. Several are already posted for this year. Inge's should be available within the next several weeks.

The First Person podcast joined two other museum podcast series, also available on the website, Voices on Anti-Semitism and Voices on Genocide Prevention. The podcasts are also available through iTunes.

Inge Katzenstein will share with us her first person account of her experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 40 minutes. We hope to follow that, if time allows, for an opportunity for you to ask Inge a few questions.

Before you are introduced to her, I have a couple of requests of you and a couple of announcements. First, if it's possible, please stay seated with us throughout the one hour program. That way we minimize any disruptions for Inge as she speaks.

If we do have time for question and answers towards the end of our program and you have a question, we ask that you make your question as brief as you can. I will repeat the question so everyone in the room hears it. And then Inge will respond to it.

If you have a cell phone or a pager that has not yet been turned off, we ask that you do that now. If you have passes to the permanent exhibition today, please know they are good for the entire afternoon so that you can stay comfortably with us through our one hour program.

The Holocaust was a state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims. 6 million were murdered. Roma and Sinti, or Gypsies, people with mental and physical disabilities and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners-of-war, and political dissidents also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

More than 60 years after the Holocaust, hatred, anti-Semitism, and genocide still threaten our world. The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades and remind us of the constant need to be vigilant citizens and to stop injustice, prejudice, and hatred wherever and whenever they occur.

What you are about to hear from Inge Katzenstein is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with Inge's introduction. And we begin with this portrait, taken in 1939, of Inge Katzenstein, born Inge Berg, with her cousin Egon Berg and her sister, Gisela, who is now Jill Pauly, Inge is on the left.

Inge was born in March 1929 in Cologne, Germany. The arrow on this map of Germany points to the city of Cologne. The family lived in Lechenich, a small town outside of Cologne.

The Nazis came to power in 1933. And life changed for Inge. In 1935, she was no longer allowed to attend German schools.

On November 9, 1938, the Nazis carried out a nationwide pogrom against Germany's Jews known as Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass. Alerted to the danger, Inge and her family fled to Cologne during the pogrom. Pictured in this photo are Inge on the left and her sister, Gisela.

Inga's family decided to leave Germany. And in May of 1939, they left for Kenya in this photo, we see Inge in the center with her sister Gisela and her mother, aboard the Usambara, sailing to Kenya. Inge and her family lived in Kenya for the next seven years. Here we see Inge standing outside of her family's farmhouse in Limuru, Kenya.

Here we have a group photo of members of the extended Berg family on their farm in Kenya. Inge is the second from the left in the back row. Also pictured here are her sister, Jill, in the front, of course, her paternal grandparents, sitting, and then her Uncle George on the left-hand side and her parents on the right-hand side. Inge pointed out to me that the building behind is the outhouse.

In 1947, the Bergs came to the United States, first to New York City, then they settled in New Jersey. We close with this contemporary photo of Inge.

After the Berg family's arrival in the United States from Kenya in 1947, they lived in New York City. After a few weeks, Inge's father found her a furnished room, gave her \$100, and she was living independently. Inge found work in Manhattan and went to night school in Queens.

She later met her future husband Werner. And they became engaged in 1950, married in 1951, then settled in Vineland, New Jersey, where Werner worked in sales and Inge would have a long and successful career in real estate. Inge and Werner moved to the United States area from New Jersey in 1998. They have three children, Michael, a behavioral health consultant, David, an attorney, and Deborah, who is in financial services. Inge and Werner have nine grandchildren and a two-year-old great-grandchild and a second great-grandchild due in June.

Inge volunteers for the museum by spending about 40 hours a month doing translations of documents from German to English. She is able to do this from home on a computer. She has been translating a voluminous series of letters from a Jewish mother in Vienna to her son in England who left Vienna as a young child on a Kindertransport in 1939 to flee the Nazis. The letters span seven years.

Werner helps with the translations when Inge encounters technical and legal terms. Werner and his family came to the United States in 1939. He joined the US Army and was a GI fighting in Germany and France during World War II. He would later serve as a translator for the American Occupational Forces in Europe.

Inge has been a first person guest in the past. But on those occasions, she was here with her younger sister, Jill. This is Inge's first time by herself on the First Person program. And with that, I ask you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Mrs. Inge Katzenstein.

[APPLAUSE]

Inge, thank you so much for joining us and for your willingness to be our First Person today. We've got a lot to cover, so we should just start. You described to me that Kristallnacht was the catalyst for the decisions and direction that your family's life took during the balance of the Holocaust and the war.

You were very young at the time. You were nine years old. Let's begin with you telling us a bit about your early life the years before Kristallnacht and before the war, what life was like for you, your family, your community.

I remember very, very little about my life prior to age five, six. But I do remember that I started school in 1935. And after six months, Hitler had made a rule that Jewish children could not attend German schools anymore.

There was no Jewish school in the little area where we lived. So I had to go and live with my grandmother, who lived about an hour, and a hour and a half away, to be able to go to school. I lived with them for about a year, year and a half, when my grandmother, aunt, and uncle moved to Holland. And I had to go back home.

But I also had to go to school. So I daily had to go, either by train or bus, to Cologne to the Jewish school. And I did that for about a year and a half.

And I also did this in November of 1938. That was the day of Kristallnacht.

Before we go to Kristallnacht, let me ask you just a couple more questions--

OK.

--if I might. Tell us a little bit about your parents.

My parents lived in a large, large brick house that had three stories and 17 rooms. My father was a cattle dealer. And attached to the house, the barns were attached to the house. And we had a huge backyard that was fenced in.

And my grandparents lived on the third floor, in an apartment on the third floor. And we were a family of two, four-- well, of seven all the time. I never knew it to be any different.

When I went to school, the day in November, it was a Thursday, I remember very well I had gone by train that day. And then I had to walk from the train station to the school. And there were not Brown shirts, and I don't know whether they were Nazis, SS, or whatever they were, they wore the brownshirt uniform standing in front of the school.

And on either side of them were German shepherds that were wearing muzzles. And I was horrendously afraid of German shepherds. In front of the school, I could see, through the gates, that the synagogue that was next to the school had burned out. And I could see where the roof had burned.

And the guards in front of the school said there is no school today. You better go home. Living in a small town with no television and very little information coming in out of the big cities, my parents did not know what had happened in the bigger cities. Except that during the day-- and I came home on the train. And the train passed our house.

And my mother saw me on the train. And I waved to her. And she was really wondering what is that child doing home now? And when I told her, things had gotten very busy in the house, too, because a school friend of my uncle had come out and said to him whatever you see and hear today, do not leave your house.

In other words, they were warned. Because even at that time, not all the Germans were bad. At about 3, 4 o'clock in the afternoon, we heard the fire engines. And we looked.

And we could see that the synagogue was burning. And the thing is, when a synagogue burns, everybody would run to it to try and rescue what's possible. And this man had told my parents not to go. So my father and uncle and did not go. And my grandmother said we have to leave here right away.

So my father hired a car for us with a driver and put us, my grandparents-- my grandmother's leg was in a cast, she had a broken ankle, and my sister and I into one car to go to Cologne. And our grandparents did not want us to see what was going on. So they put us on the bottom of the car. And I remember my grandmother kept her cast leg on me so I wouldn't perk up to look.

Kept you pinned down?

Yeah. And my mother had-- my parents and uncles, they all followed later. When the driver of the car that my father had hired came back, the Nazis beat him up severely because he had taken us away.

And my parents and uncles and various aunts from other small towns all piled into this apartment in Cologne where my mother's old uncle and aunts lived. It was a two bedroom apartment. In the end, it must have been 15 people. And of course, my sister could not go out at all because they were afraid that she would talk. She was 4, 5 years old. And they were afraid to even let her see daylight.

And I, having gone to Cologne on the bus every day, was allowed to go to school. And I went to school. And most of the time, I stayed out of the apartment. I roamed the city of Cologne alone.

At the time, coffee was rationed. And my grandmother liked to drink coffee. At that time, it was being sold with an 1/8 of a pound. And there were lines in front of the stores for people to buy coffee.

But in all the windows on the stores it said, "Juden unerwünscht," "Jews not wanted." And those are the lines I stood on. And I brought home a pound of coffee.

Your sister told us one time that you were very defiant and that you would go and do exactly what you said, get in lines that said no Jews wanted. And you would get in line and get coffee.

Yes.

Tell us some more about your behavior.

About what?

About your behavior, your defiant behavior.

I was a brat.

[LAUGHTER]

Well, I was forced to be independent at age eight. I went to Cologne alone. I came back home. And it was part of my life.

Right. During that time, and after Kristallnacht, and just for the audience, this pogrom, this assault on Jews, assaults on their businesses, the violence against them occurred all over Germany. Many, many synagogues were burned all on the same night. And of course, as you said, not having television, you probably didn't know the scope of what was happening everywhere in the country.

No. We did have a telephone. And that started to ring. But still, the communications were not the way they used to be that they are now, of course.

Right.

And the other one thing that really stands out in my mind is Kristallnacht was Wednesday to Thursday, Thursday night it was kind of quiet. And we went to Cologne.

And there were so many of us that someone invited us to come over to dinner for Friday night. And there must have been 10, 12 people. And it was an upstairs apartment. And the doorbell rings.

And everybody got as white as a sheet. Because the Gestapo was going from house to house picking up the Jewish men. And from that table, the men disappeared. Didn't see them. We don't know where and we don't know where they went.

And the lady of the house went to answer the door. And thank God, it was just-- it was not the Gestapo. And after that night, I did not see my father again until we got to Kenya.

So where did your father go?

My father and uncle and a cousin got in the car and drove around Cologne all night. The only thing they stopped for was to get gas. And they did this for two or three days, just driving.

And then went across the border to Holland. And when they got to the Dutch border, they were picked up by Dutch Nazis. And they wanted to send them back.

And my uncle had to go up very high in the Dutch government to find out that they were not allowed to send men back unless they had written orders. And they didn't have those. So my father was then interned in Holland till June '39.

At some point, even the Royal House of the Netherlands intervened--

Yes.

--to protect your father from being sent back.

Yes.

Is that right? Yes. Why did they go to Holland? Why Holland?

It was close. It was close. And we were fortunate that in 1933, my family had smuggled out money to Holland.

In anticipation of what they thought would lie ahead?

Yeah. Of Hitler coming to power. And there they had money.

Was your father able to send any money back?

No?

No, no, no. There was plenty of money. We were not a poor family. There was plenty of money. And my mother had all the access to it. But we had to leave it all behind.

Because when we left, each one was allowed to take out 10 mark. And that's all. So all the rest stayed in Germany.

So with your father and other male members of the family, some of them in Holland, it's your mother, your grandparents, and you and your sister at home still. What was the decision-making then that led to the decision that the family decided they really did need to leave Germany?

Well, my parents wanted to leave Germany even prior to this and had applied for American quota numbers, which from Germany were extremely high. And they had no hope of getting there. So they were thinking of South America. They even thought of Cuba. But it was just all these countries were not taking people anymore.

In fact, Inge quipped to me that she said I think our quota number might be coming up about now, just to kind of put it in perspective in a sense. So those doors were closed.

All doors were closed. There was very little that was left open.

OK.

And that's why we ended up in Kenya.

And this is, of course, this is almost eight months before the war has actually broken out in September of 1939.

Right.

So tell us about how they got to the place of going to Kenya. One of my cousin's wife had a cousin who went to London and had a British education and got a job in Kenya as an attorney. And he worked for a law firm. And he and the firm vouched for us to come to Kenya.

And they were able to send out 21 visas for the family to come out. And 17 of us were able to leave. And the other four could not leave right then and there. And they perished.

Obtaining those visas, however, those permits, was not an easy matter.

No.

Tell us a little about that. That was quite an ordeal.

It was a big ordeal. Because a lot of information had to be passed on by telephone. The telephones in the house we were afraid were tapped. So this cousin went daily to the railroad station to use a public phone to give all the information that was needed.

And it took from November, December '39 to about, I would say, April till everything was in order. And don't forget, during Kristallnacht, the Nazis destroyed the entire house. My parents, my mother found everything in the yard on the compost heap, books, carpets, well, glass was broken.

And afterwards, the Nazis made the Jewish families clean up. And my mother had to go there alone to do this. And they kept asking her where my father was. And she kept saying, I don't know. I don't know.

And they cleaned it up. And my father was gone. And my mother had to take care of everything. And she bought all things new. And anything you bought, because you were emigrating, had to be-- there was a double tax. Whatever it cost the store, the German tax doubled.

If you were going to emigrate and leave the country?

If you were going to emigrate and take it with you. And she did all that. She bought clothes for us until we were adult, for my sister and myself.

But none of it arrived. The war broke out. It was either bombed in the harbor or it was stolen.

Right.

None of it came.

And on top of that, obtaining these permits, she had to pay for those.

Yes.

And they were very expensive, weren't they?

Yes.

Yeah. And the charge was from the British?

The charges from the British were 50 pounds per person. And after they realized that a lot of Jews wanted to come to

Kenya, they upped that to \$250 per person.

50 pounds.

Pounds.

Pounds, which was a huge amount of money in those days. So your mother-- didn't your grandparents play an important role in the decision-making?

No.

No?

No. But my grandmother was a very determined lady. And she said, we can't stay here. We have to leave. But they said wherever you go, we will go.

My mother's mother was very ill. And she said, if I have to die on the train, I'm coming with you. And she was carried onto the train. And she came with us to Kenya and lived another 9, 10 months.

In Kenya?

In Kenya.

I want to come back to the description that your sister gave of you of being defiant. And she told us that at one point you actually got into an altercation with a kid.

Oh, yeah.

Tell us that.

That was when I was going to school on the bus. And every morning there was this little boy that would come to the bus in the afternoon and would call me a dirty Jew. And that went on for two or three days. And I got fed up. So I gave him a bloody nose.

[LAUGHTER]

But after I saw what I did, I got scared. And I ran.

He probably didn't call you that, again, though.

No, I never saw him again.

So the decision now is to go to Kenya. Everything's been put into motion. The permits have been obtained.

Your mother has bought supplies and clothing to last a long time. It's been packed. You think it's going to go to you at Kenya. Tell us now about beginning the journey to Kenya.

We left Cologne by train. And went via Switzerland to Genoa, Italy. It was a wonderful trip except that we were not allowed to talk one word on the train, not a thing. They separated my sister and me.

So you wouldn't chatter with each other?

--would chatter or fight. And as long as we were in Germany, we were not allowed to open our mouth.

And that was out of fear of drawing attention to yourselves?

Yes, fear of drawing attention or they are wanting to see what we had or didn't have. We had to be quiet. And once we crossed the border into Switzerland, my mother said now you can talk.

And we traveled from the afternoon through the night to Italy. And we stayed there a day or two. And then boarded a German ship to go to Kenya. And the trip took two weeks.

And it was a German ship?

It was a German ship that served kosher food in 1939. And the trip was Italy through the Mediterranean Gibraltar through the Red Sea around the corner of Africa and down the coast of Africa to Mombasa. I've been down the coast of Africa from up Gibraltar way all the way down to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Because when we continued to come here, we boarded the boat in Kenya in Mombasa and then came down. And it was a cargo boat. Took seven weeks to get here.

Inge, it was a German ship. So it had German officers on it.

Mhm.

Did they know that you were a Jewish family?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Not only did it have German officers on it, it also had carrier pigeons on it that Germans were taking to Tanganyika. And it was right before the war. God knows what they were used for. But they were using them.

Do you remember the trip yourself?

Vaguely, vaguely, a 10-year-old.

Right. Right.

And it was nice. It was a boat trip.

There was one incident that you and Jill had talked to me about where your sister, I believe, was overheard singing.

Oh, yeah.

Tell us this.

My sister had a good voice. And she was overheard singing. And the captain asked her to come and sing to them.

And my mother was absolutely petrified that they were Nazis and that my sister would say something. She was five years, 4, 5 years old. And she didn't know the difference between a good or a bad person. So my mother lived in fear every time they called her to sing. But she did it.

And she was worried about what she might even sing.

Sing, yes.

But you pulled that off. She pulled that off. You made the journey. And you get to Kenya.

Kenya.

Before we talk about Kenya, I want to just go back to something you told us a little bit earlier. As it turned out, all those

goods that you thought would go with you didn't go. And I think you mentioned that you had 10 marks per person?

Yes.

How much roughly would 10 marks be?

I would say, at that time, I don't know what-- it would buy as much as 10 shillings-- \$10 would buy. That was all the money people were allowed to take out of Europe.

So a teeny amount of money to accompany you.

It's nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Yes. Nothing. So you get to Kenya. And you're free from Germany. You've gotten out. And now you're in Kenya. But new challenges begin.

Yes.

Tell us about life in Kenya.

First, my father and uncles had gotten there maybe two or three weeks before us because they left from Holland. And my father rented a very, very large house in the highland-- in the mountains just north of Nairobi. And 17 of us moved into this house.

The 17 that had gotten the permits to go.

Yes.

All 17 of you.

Together with my father.

By the time we had all congregated, it was 17. And the house was very large. And each family had a bedroom. And they had a kitchen, there was one kitchen that everybody used.

And we got there in June of '39. War broke out on September 1. And at that time, we were declared enemy aliens.

By the British.

By the British. We had left Germany stateless. We arrived in Kenya stateless. And then were declared enemy aliens. By the way, we came to America stateless.

The day that war broke out, the British came with a big truck and soldiers to intern all the men as enemy aliens.

Before you go on, the irony of you are Jews that have escaped the Nazis, you get to a British colony, and they declare you, because you're German, to be illegal alien--

Enemy aliens.

--enemy aliens.

And they took all the men. And they wanted to take my grandfather. And my grandmother, who was little, stood in front of this British officer and said, we've been married 48 years. And we've never been apart. And if you take him, you're going to take me.

So they looked at each other. And they took my grandfather, but they brought him back.

[LAUGHTER]

And I mean, he was not a spy. And they kept the men for a short while. I think after a week they came back. And by then, the British had decided that the men would be used as managers of the farms that the colonials had so that the British colonials could join the army and go fight. And all the men had to manage the farms.

And since we were going to buy our own farm, we were interned on our own farm. We could not leave it without getting permission from the district officer. Even my sister and I couldn't leave without first getting permission.

And so we all moved onto the farm. You saw the house. My sister calls it the villa.

It was made of cinder blocks and corrugated roof. The corrugated roof was really a savior for us because it collected rainwater. And that's the only water we had to drink.

The other water, we built a big cistern and collected water. Because it only rained twice a year in Kenya, in March and September.

And that was your source of water.

That was our source of water. Electricity we didn't have. We didn't have a radio. We didn't have a television.

Really, we did have a radio. I have to say that. It was operated by car battery. And we could only use it to listen to the news. Otherwise, we would have been cut off from the world.

And the house had cement floors, no electricity, no running water. There was a fireplace for heat. And because we lived in Africa-- we lived 7,000 feet above sea level.

It was gloriously beautiful country. You looked out the window in the morning on a clear day, you could see Mount Kilimanjaro. The weather was cold at night, never more than 70 to 75 during the day because it was high up.

It rained. Rainy season, it rained daily in March and September. But then April, it stopped. October, it stopped.

And you had all the household help that you would want. The African they were called boys, the men. Each house had at least three boys, a cook, a cleaner, a gardener, whatever, and they worked.

And they were wonderful people. They were warm. They were intelligent. They just were not educated.

And you learned to speak Swahili?

Oh, yeah. We had to.

We had to.

We had to. They didn't speak English. Nor did we.

Nor did you, exactly. Which was the official language of Kenya at that time. You're 10 years old. You would end up staying in Kenya until you're almost 18, 17. One, that must have been a profound cultural shock to move to Kenya. But

you also had to then, in a country where you didn't speak the English language, you had to then get educated, go to school yourself. Tell us about that.

We went to school. My parents thought highly of education. After two days there, we had to go to school.

And we went to a British school where we were hated. And being 10 years old, I had to start in first grade because I didn't speak English. But I learned very quickly. Within three to four months, I was at grade level sufficiently and went through the British school system, which was very good.

It was British government schools run under the auspices of Oxford or Cambridge. And during the war, after high school, the colonials would send their children to England for college. They couldn't do that during the war. So they added a year or two onto high school, which gave you the equivalent of a junior year in college.

So we had a good education after we learned English. But the schools were all boarding schools. And my parents did not want us to go to a boarding school.

So when we first moved to the farm, they decided to hire a tutor for us. That tutor lasted three, four weeks. We terrorized her, both of us. She left.

And my parents didn't know what to do about this. So eventually, first we went to one of the private girls' schools, which was also in Limuru. But in order to do that, we had to move away from the farm. And we did that for one or two terms. And that didn't work.

So then my mother moved to Nairobi with us.

Leaving your father still at the farm?

My father stayed on the farm because he was interned on the farm. And he also had to manage somebody else's farm.

One of the British soldiers who was off fighting in the war.

Yeah. And my father commuted by bicycle in Africa. And we moved to Nairobi. My father stayed on the farm with his parents. And weekends, he either came in or we went out. And then we went to school that way.

So in Nairobi, you were living with your mother while you were going to boarding school, or going to school.

Yes. Oh, no. First, they tried to find homes in Nairobi for us where we could live. But that was not very successful. So after two terms, my mother said this doesn't work. I have to take care of my own children. And that's what they did.

During that time, until the war's end, Inge, did the family know much about what was going on with the war? And particularly, did they know what was happening to Jews in Europe? And did you have any contact that you know of with, maybe, extended family members still in Germany?

We did not know what was going on in the camps. Don't forget, we had no newspaper. Only thing we had was radio.

We had no idea what was going on. Except that my grandmother had a brother and wife who was still in Germany. And we got a Red Cross letter, a letter from them through the Red Cross, telling us-- I'm not quite sure whether they told us they were going to Theresienstadt start or whether someone else. I don't remember.

And they perished. And we had absolutely no idea until after the war. And I remember someone gave my parents a book of pictures of what had gone on in the concentration camps. And my father took one, opened it up.

And I remember when we got on the boat to come here, the first thing he did was throw it overboard. He couldn't see it. He was devastated.

Because we lost-- my father, my grandmother was one of eight. My father had approximately 100 living cousins and only one or two survived. So he could not look at those things.

Inge, tell us, when the war ended in 1945, the British colonial men who had been off fighting the war returned to their farms, what happened then? Because your father had been managing one of the farms for them. Now war is over, what's life like now for you in Kenya?

It didn't change much it didn't change much. We still had the farm. We still lived in Nairobi. And we still went to school. I graduated high school from there.

And life didn't change much. But my father didn't want to stay. And we tried again quota numbers. And the ironic thing is that we came to America in 1947 on the German quota because no Germans were coming then. But we were stateless. And became citizens-- I became a citizen through Werner. He was a citizen.

Once you became married.

Once I was married.

Once you're married, yeah. Tell us, when you left Kenya, you were also motivated in part because things were not tranquil in Kenya--

No.

--at that time. Say a little bit about that.

I don't know if anyone here knows the history of Kenya. But in the mid-'40s the Mau Mau were uprising. The uprising of the Mau Maus was the Africans wanted their lands back.

And particularly in the highlands where we lived, there were bands of Mau Mau who went around stealing and killing all the Europeans. They didn't care whether they were-- as long as you were white, they were going to kill you. Because they wanted their property back.

Don't forget, the British had just taken over their land. Without buying it from them or anything, it became theirs. And the Africans by then had begun to be educated and realized that they were being oppressed.

And just around where we were living, that was the biggest uprising. And we left about three months before. So not only did we survive Hitler, we survived a second time from the Mau Maus. Because we certainly would have been killed.

When I was a kid, I remember my father had on his book collection a book called Uhuru about the Mau Mau uprising. I remember that.

So in light of all that, you make it to the United States. You're stateless. You arrive here. And as we said at the beginning, no sooner that you're here than you're living independently.

Mhm.

How did you get started with a new life?

My father found a room for me. And I was what, 17, 18? And being very green, I said the only job I want is on Fifth Avenue. I don't care what it is, it's going to be Fifth Avenue.

And I had gone to school in Kenya taking shorthand. And when I got here, I first went to continue taking some courses

in Queens, New York. And when I moved here, I armed myself with The New York Times and read the want ads. And anything that was on Fifth Avenue, I marked with a pencil. I started on--

No matter what it was?

Doesn't matter what it was. I started on 23rd Street to work my way up. I got a job in the 20s, something. But I only lasted there a week. I was green.

So back to the newspaper, back to Fifth Avenue. And I found a job as an assistant to the secretary in an attorney's office. So they hired me. And it was OK.

And after a week or two, the man said to me-- he was from Brooklyn-- no, no. He wasn't. The teacher was.

The man said to me, Miss Berg, do us a favor. Go back to school and learn something. But they kept me.

So I went to night school. And I took shorthand and typing again. And the teacher always said "Miss Boig." He was from Brooklyn. So by then, I worked in Manhattan, went to school in Queens, and lived in Brooklyn. I used the entire subway system of New York. And I stayed with that office until I got married.

And Inge, your father had been a cattle man, a cattle dealer in Germany. In Kenya, he's a farmer. Now he's in New York City. What did he do when you first arrived?

Oh, he was miserable. He was miserable. And everybody advised new immigrants at that time to go and get a poultry farm. Because they didn't have to talk English to the chickens. And my father listened.

And then he said it was the biggest mistake in his life. Because chickens, if you know, on poultry farms, they keep dying. They don't lay eggs. They die. And the feed costs more than human feed.

And after a while, my father converted his chicken coops into a dairy farm. And then he was OK.

In New Jersey?

In New Jersey.

In New Jersey, yeah. And was able to get back on his feet After that?

Yes, yes.

Inge, why don't we do this? Why don't we turn to our audience and see if they have some questions of you? If not, I'll ask some more. But we see one hand up already. Yes, sir?

You know when you watch shows about the Nazis and what they did, or if you hear accounts about it, sometimes maybe hate kind of wells up within your heart. And it's a natural thing. What would you say to somebody who might feel that way toward the Nazis maybe back then or even maybe they still feel that way now toward Germany, or anybody that would do something like that to another person?

If I could somewhat paraphrase the question, in light of what the Nazis did, how do you feel-- how would you deal with the feelings of hate, or what thoughts would you have for people who feel hatred in light of what they suffered or others suffered?

I would feel horror. And I think, with my quick temper, I would give him my opinion. But I don't think that's right today. I think today people should be educated and that hate is an illness.

You don't have to be-- you're not born hating. You have to be taught to hate. And the only way it can be taught is with

love and understanding, not to hate. And that all people are humans, and they all have feelings, and they just have to be taught and channeled in the right way.

OK. Lady in the back with a blonde? Yes.

Did you live a Jewish life in terms of your Jewish practices? And if so, how has that changed at different parts, the different times in your life when you were living in different places?

The question is, did you live, I guess, a religious Jewish life earlier and how did that change in the different places, if it's changed, Kenya, and then the United States?

We always lived an Orthodox Jewish life. The reason my parents didn't send us to boarding school is because there was no kosher food available. And we've always been observant to this day. We're still Orthodox.

One of the things that we weren't able to get into, Inge and Jill have told me that they had always kept a kosher home. And of course, after the Nazis took power, they outlawed that. They made it impossible. Yet you still managed, at great risk, in those years while you were still in Germany after '33 to maintain-- how did you do that?

Two of my uncles were shochtim, which were ritual slaughterers. And one cousin had a butcher store. And they would secretly do the slaughtering at night. And at the same time that they slaughtered the animal, they would shoot off a gun so that people would believe that they had shot the animal. And they did that for years.

And during the Nazi time, after Kristallnacht already, when we lived in Cologne, meat was not available.

Right.

And I had this very, very ill grandmother. And there was a lady in the town where we lived who would bring a live chicken on the bus to Cologne so that one of my uncles could slaughter it for my grandmother. And if she had been caught--

So hidden, basically.

No. To keep a chicken quiet, you--

Can't imagine.

Yeah, you take it snack and put it under the wing. Put his head under the wing and it can't cackle.

[LAUGHTER]

I have just really learned something here. We had another question. Yes, sir?

In regards to all the memories that you had, did you take opportunity to journal, to write down? There's so many, as we see-- read the history of. How many personal memoirs and journals do you yet have? And have you incorporated that in sharing with your family and passing that down to them?

The question is, in light of all you experienced, did you take up keeping a journal or recording or writing about all that you and your family experienced?

Yes and no. Some of the things are written down. But we have spoken so much of it and so continuously, our children grew up with it. And they know it. Now our grandchildren are learning.

As a matter of fact, one of our grandsons who lives in Pittsburgh asked us to come and speak to his German class because he was taking German two years ago. And last year he asked us to come again to speak to his history class

because they were doing the German history of that period. And I said Matthew, why do you want us to come again? It's the same children. You're in the same class.

He says no. It's different children. I want you to come again. And we talk as much as we can.

But I think my sister's writing. I'm not.

OK. Folks, I think I'm going to have to stop the questions there. When we close up the program in just a couple of moments, Jill is going to be available, step down off the stage here. And so please come up and ask her another question, meet her, whatever you'd like to do. So Jill will make-- I mean, Inge will make herself available in just a couple of minutes.

OK.

But we're not quite done yet. I might mention that Inge told me that there is a film, and I remember it being out, I didn't see it several years ago, Somewhere in Africa, that was widely received, plus a book. And Inge said it really does mirror their experience in Kenya. It's about Jewish refugees from Germany in Kenya during the war. And so it's a movie that you certainly would recommend--

Yes,

--as being very representative--

Also book.

--and also book, and also book. So I want to thank all of you for being with us today. I certainly want to thank Inge for giving us what really is only a glimpse.

[APPLAUSE]

--into all that she and her family experienced both during the war and post-war.

I want to remind you that we do a First Person program each Wednesday until the end of August and also on Tuesdays through July. Our next First Person program will be next Tuesday, which is March the 12th, when our First Person will be Mrs. Nessie Godin, who is from Poland. Mrs. Godin survived a ghetto, slave labor, several concentration camps, and a death march before she was liberated.

So please, if you can, come back to another First Person program. Also just to remind you that we do have excerpts as podcasts on the museum's website or available through iTunes if you want to hear an excerpt from today or any of our other First Person guests.

It's our tradition at First Person that our First Person gets the last word. And so with that, I'd like to turn back to Inge to close our program. And then she'll step down off the stage.

My last word. We're volunteers at the museum here. And one of the reasons we volunteer is to tell the world that this should never happen again. People's inhumanity to people is something that is abhorrent to me. How can one person just be so bad, have so little conscience, and live with themselves by hurting other human beings?

And that's the main reason we are fortunate enough to be able to volunteer here. My husband and I personally don't spend too much time in the building because we work from home. But I think it's very, very important that children are taught not to hate. Hate is an awful word. And it should be eliminated from the language.

[APPLAUSE]

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