UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
“FIRST PERSON” SERIES – FANNY AIZENBERG
Wednesday, March 16, 2016
11:00 a.m. – 11:56 a.m.

Remote CART Captioning

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>> Bill Benson: good morning and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson, I am the host of the museum's public program "First Person." Thank you for joining us today for the start of our 2016-year -- season of "First Person."

Our first "First Person" of 2016 is Mrs. Fanny Aizenberg, whom you shall meet shortly. This 2016 season of "First Person" is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation, and the Helena Rubinstein Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

"First Person" is a series of conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their first-hand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our "First Person" guests serves as volunteers here at this museum. Our program will continue twice weekly through mid August. The museum's website at www.ushmm.org provides information about each of our upcoming "First Person" guests.

Fanny will share with you her "First Person" account of her experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Fanny a few questions at the end of the program.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Fanny is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with her introduction.

And we begin with this portrait of Fanny and her daughter Josiane taken in 1942. Fanny was born December 3rd, 1916 in Lodz, Poland. That means Fanny will turn 100 years old later this year. She was the second of three daughters born to Benjamin Orenbach and Rivke Leah Aspis Orenbach. After her sister Rose's birth in 1921, the Orenbachs moved with their daughters, Terese, Fanny and Rose, to Brussels, Belgium. On this map, Belgium points to Brussels. Fanny graduated from college where she studied dress making and design. While working as a dressmaker for the royal has, Fanny met Jacques Aizenberg. On May 19, 1938 Fanny and Jacques were married. Here we see their wedding portrait.

One year later on March 21, 1939, Fanny gave birth to Josiane. The following year on May 10th, 1940, Germany invaded Belgium. This picture of Jacques, Fanny and Josiane

was taken in 1941.

In 1942, Germany began the roundup of Belgium Jews. Fanny arranged to hide Josiane in a Carmelite Convent. For security reasons, Fanny was not told where her daughter was hidden. This photo of Josiane was taken inspect 1941.

In Brussels, Fanny worked for the underground. In 1943 she was denounced and sent to the Malines transit camp in Belgium and then on to Auschwitz. The arrow on this map points to Auschwitz.

Here we see a document recently uncovered in the International Tracing Service archive listing Fanny on the transport list from Malines to Auschwitz. She's Number 119 which I know you can't see the numbers. But Fanny is Number 119, and her profession of seamstress is listed in French on the right-hand side. Here we see Fanny's daughter Josiane being recognized for Fanny's work in the Belgian resistance. This photo was taken in the fall of 1944 after Belgium was liberated but before Fanny was liberated. Fanny lives in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. She and her husband Jacques moved here in 1983 after 25 years in Atlantic City. Jacques passed away in 1988. Fanny's daughter, Josiane, lives here her and is retired from her work as a social worker for abused children. Josiane and her husband, Alfred Traum, are also Holocaust survivors. I'm just delighted to tell you that Josiane and Freddy are right here in the front row.

(applause).

Thank you. Thank you. On Sundays, you will find Fanny at the museum's donor's desk answering questions. Fanny's volunteer work at this museum has included translating documents from French to English. For example, she translated a book about the deportation of Belgian Jews written by a non-Jewish teacher from the Holocaust. Fanny has spoken at several seminars about the Holocaust, including this museum's event to commemorate the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. She has also been with us here at "First Person" several times. Fanny was last with us in 2014. Because of illness, Fanny couldn't join us in 2015, but we are thrilled she is here with us today.

For 30 years, Fanny has been an active member of the Yiddish club at a senior citizens center that meets twice weekly. And she is also a sculptor. With that, I would like to ask you to join me in welcoming our "First Person" Mrs. Fanny Aizenberg.

(applause).

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Hello. Thank you all for coming.

>> Bill Benson: You have so much to share with us that we'll just get started right away. Is that okay?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Okay.

>> Bill Benson: Okay. Although, Fanny, you were born in Poland and your family moved to Brussels, Belgium when you were a young child. You told me you had a wonderful childhood. Let's begin with you telling us a little bit about that childhood, about your years before the war, your family.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Another thing which is very different, learning a new language. I'm very lucky. I volunteer here on Sunday. And it's wonderful that the majority of people come, want to listen to us and hopefully that they are going to have a much, much better likelihood.

So anyone who has any questions, please feel free to ask. And I want to thank you all for coming.

>> Bill Benson: So, Fanny, first I want you to tell us, tell us about your parents. Tell us about

your parents and when you were a kid.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It's all difficult because it was so many years ago. And life all together was different, not only in America which we didn't know but in Belgium. I have to tell you something in Belgium which hasn't happened in any country in the world. During the war, regardless of the pain and the worry we had, food was available, people were stopped on the street. We were told we're going to work but didn't know it was work in concentration camp.

The main thing I have to tell you -- and I would love to share with you, Belgium is the only country in the whole Europe that the churches, believe it or not, food was rationed and they have been able to save 4,000 Jews children who are alive today thanks to the dedication of those few people. At the Holocaust Museum, right here on the fourth floor, there's a documentary of those people. They have been asked: What made you sacrifice so much and help other people? The only thing they said that's the only thing we could do and share with one another. I'm very, very lucky to have the job here as a volunteer and talking to mostly young people.

We cannot love each other if we don't respect one another. And there's a lot to give and to take.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, I'm going to ask you just a few questions about those early years. You went to college. You became a dressmaker. You landed a job with the royal family. That was a really big deal.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It's not because it was such a big deal. In Belgium, if you were a good student to the fifth grade, the rest of your education is free of charge. My parents would never be able to afford a scholarship.
>> Bill Benson: You got married in 1938. Tell us a little bit about your husband Jacques who you married in 1938.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Well, Belgium is a very small country. And it's not as big as America. And people live much closer with one another. You have neighborhoods like you have many small towns today.

Again, I have to tell you, Belgium is still the only country when you think how dangerous it was to help somebody, when I help somebody, just to have somebody stay overnight with you or share a sandwich with you. It's so beautiful, the documentary, those people from the churches. They said that's the only thing we could have done and has been done.

And I have to be very, very grateful. Thanks to the churches, I have my child who is alive today and, of course, she is an old lady like I am.

(laughter).
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, I'm going to have you tell us a few more things about that time during the Holocaust with Josiane in hiding.

One of the stories you told me about Jacques that I would like to share with the audience is that he was a trained violinist and he performed in movie theaters, right?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: That's how many young people who graduated musical school got jobs.
>> Bill Benson: And they performed music --
>> Fanny Aizenberg: That's a way of making a living. Every movie house had four or five according to the size of the movie house.
>> Bill Benson: And that was because they were silent movies, right?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Right.

>> Bill Benson: Yep.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: And then, of course, once the talking came in, it completely stopped. And just like in America, people had to look for jobs.
>> Bill Benson: You had Josiane until 1938. Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland in September 1939 to begin the war. Germany attacked Belgium in May 1940. When the Germans came into Belgium, what happened to you and your family?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: A big scare because Belgium and Holland -- we have a map that you can see the two countries. According to the law, that's the Germany. There was no such thing as law. They made the law. And Belgium was supposed to remain free country. But that didn't happen. The Germans occupied Belgium. And right away, it had been such a way of getting organized either hiding somebody or helping somebody with food.
>> Bill Benson: Soon after the Germans came into Belgium, what did your husband decide to do? What did Jacques do?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Also, at that particular time, there was lots we didn't know. And you mainly were in the underground, Jews and non-Jews were together. There was no difference between the two people. This is another thing that helped many, many people to be alive today because of the Jews and non-Jews working together.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, as I remember you telling me, Jacques answered the call from the British to join the Royal Air Force and he left to go to England to join the British Army, Air Force, you were alone with Josiane in Belgium.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes, because we didn't know what hell -- that's the only word I could use -- is waiting for us. The Germans took small dogs and went around all the neighborhoods. If we're not going to listen to the orders, we're going to be punished. And the biggest punishment the Germans started to do -- don't forget we lived together in a neighborhood, Jews and non-Jews. There was no difference of schools or any education because Belgium had two languages at that time, French and Flemish. At that time, many people didn't know what we were going to do.

Also, in hiding, anybody that could help or sign up because we didn't know how bad the Nazis and the Germans are going to be in Belgium.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, can you tell us some of the things that the Nazis began doing to the Jews in Brussels and other places in Belgium? You had -- had some point you had to wear a Yellow Star.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: This is another sad thing. We had all had to wear a Yellow Star. That's only because it's yellow or any other color, but it was to make us different. The kids were growing up together, playing together like one same population. And another thing in Belgium -- and I don't know if any other companies. It gives a special place that they had physicians to check your child and give that child free of charge food and being checked by a physician and make sure everything is okay. Once the Germans came in, somebody else knew to prevent them to go there. But besides all that, the people in the churches, namely, have organized and we didn't know who was hiding who and who was who.

Like I say again -- and I cannot say it again -- thanks to those caring -- today there has never been a difference between Jews and non-Jews. And it shows you, it didn't take money. It was just a way of caring. And this is why I'm very fortunate. I volunteer here on Sunday because Sunday we have a very, very large audience. And that helps me talk, as you can tell.

(laughter).

And it's so amazing how much people go back home and be different kind of people, not they are better or not so better but how much we have to offer one another in how much we could share with one another. And don't forget, food was rationed. And people were willing to deprive themselves, even if it was only a sandwich in order to give that sandwich to someone who didn't have any.

>> Bill Benson: As you were telling us a couple of moments ago, you could go to these clinics for healthcare for Josiane --

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Everybody was entitled to that. All free of charge.

>> Bill Benson: And the Nazis said Jews could no longer go.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Of course not.

>> Bill Benson: So you couldn't get healthcare anymore.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: And, again, the people in charge of those clinics were also willing to help at night to risk their own lives.

>> Bill Benson: Fanny, you told me, in 1942, the deportations began to deport Jews out of Brussels, out of Belgium.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Just to pick them up wherever they were.

>> Bill Benson: In 1943, things had gotten so bad that you made this extraordinary decision to take your young child, Josi, and put her into hiding. Tell us what you remember what that was like for you.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Number one, there's no words. Anybody who has a child or a brother, you could just imagine how the parents would feel with the child not being with you anymore. Another thing, we didn't know what's going to happen and the irony of not knowing what's going to happen to the children.

And besides that, the parents were helped by putting the child in hiding. We weren't allowed to know where they were going to be because in case we would be called, they would think then we would be deported, too. That was also -- it was not working. There were gas chambers and selections.

>> Bill Benson: Fanny, once you made that decision and Josiane went into hiding, you didn't know where she was. Then you had to go into hiding, too.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yeah, absolutely. Because, otherwise, they would know immediately where we went.

>> Bill Benson: Where did you go into hiding?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: In many different places in one night. There was not such a secure place. Unless you were lucky, you were able to live with the nuns.

>> Bill Benson: With the nuns.

And one of the extraordinary things you did, Fanny, is you worked for the Belgium Resistance, the underground.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Everybody did.

>> Bill Benson: Everybody did.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Everybody did. You had 5-year-old kids and they were exchanging newsletters because we couldn't get the newsletters just to show you the combination of the people of helping.

>> Bill Benson: How dangerous was that to do work?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Very dangerous. Very dangerous. You have 5-year-old kids and they

were the biggest mail delivery.
>> Bill Benson: If I remember right, one of the things you would do is go out at night and pass out.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: That was the only way we could do something.
Five people had five keys so one could come with one person.
>> Bill Benson: At that time, Fanny, you were still with your mother.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: And also in 1943, you and your mother would be denounced by somebody. What does that mean?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: That they care or willing to help others. Or if they can't, they don't. On the other hand, you had people who were working with the Nazis.
>> Bill Benson: And they denounced you.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: And they helped denounce not only us but many other people.
>> Bill Benson: When they denounced you and your mother, what happened to you then?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: First of all, in order to get the people together they had one place where many people could get together and live together. People were there about ten days also working. And then we would send 160 people in a train. By the time we all arrive in Auschwitz, which none of us ever heard that name in our lifetime, 40 people came out alive. All the rest were dead. So 160 people.

And once the 40 came out alive, they had a selection. And that's how when my mother went in one side and we went to another side. That was the last time I saw my mother ever.

Afterwards, we have learned the horrors committed to all of us. The selection of people -- and now also a kind of surgery to babies and young women after the war helping women to conceive.
>> Bill Benson: I might ask you more about that in a couple of minutes.

Fanny, the last time you saw your mom, when your mother went to the other side, what happened to you then?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Well, I saw my mother there and I didn't know what it means. It would be easier to be together to help one another.
>> Bill Benson: Of course.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: The Nazis would beat you up, you were bleeding. And they would accept it, if that's where they put you, you would stay.
>> Bill Benson: Before long, they made you do very hard labor.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: That's what we all did.
>> Bill Benson: What did do you? What was your --
>> Fanny Aizenberg: The majority of people who have been in the concentration camps, any city in Germany, the main thing they had to do is manufacture ammunition. We had to make small bombs. And the bombs had to be cleaned, which we did.

We were 20 hours a day and food only for one hour. That's when many people just collapsed by the fumes.
>> Bill Benson: The fumes from making the ammunition.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: And also people just had a hard time to remain as human beings and they could not son receive anymore. There was a community, and that's where more and more schools had been helping the people. And I think that's when it started, that people

could go to school if they qualified, any trade. If somebody was not qualified to get a higher education, then they went to a paid school. You had to go -- you had to have a background.
>> Bill Benson: Right.

Fanny, when you went to Auschwitz, you received a tattoo. You were tattooed two times.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: The reason why some of us have two tattoos, because we were not human beings anymore. We just were numbers. And when they check somebody with the same number twice, then they took us apart and they burn out. That's why I have too numbers. The majority of young women also have two numbers.
>> Bill Benson: Two numbers.

Fanny, when we first met, you told me that the Nazis tried to literally strip from you every -- every bit of dignity you had.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Of course. Starting mentally. And this is why at the end of the war in '45 when the Russians were getting closer, as a matter of fact thanks to the Russians, we became free because the last battle was won by the Russians.

And because of that -- which was a very -- when you go to school, you become a community. But that was the last war between the Russians and the Germans. And that makes them win the war. They were marching on the horses. And the Russian people were the first ones to get the honor to be declared a free country.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, I'm going to ask you a couple more questions later about your liberation by the Russians.

But in -- you mentioned the medical experiments so when you were at Auschwitz, medical experiments were performed on you, weren't they?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Everybody. There was one experiment, they called him the crazy physician. His biggest -- I don't know what they call -- evil was to manipulate young babies and try to make them pregnant.
>> Bill Benson: And, Fanny, as a result of that, you were never able to have another baby.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: That's correct.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, in January 1945, as the Allies, the Russians and the Allies began advancing, the Germans forced you and the others who were still alive at Auschwitz --
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: -- they forced you out and they sent you on what we call a death march.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes. I don't know if you learned in history the word of death march. That means people are marching for months and it was heavy snow. So each time that's why it was called the death march because too many people had died on that particular march.
>> Bill Benson: No, no, go ahead. Please.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Also, we were very lucky because it was the end of the war. And the Russians almost won the war and at night, they were looking to find Nazis hiding so they could catch them. Luckily, because we were six women together, we didn't have families, so we became families because the only hope is that we would find our family or our children, as we had.
>> Bill Benson: You told me in the past, Fanny, that you think that one of the reasons that you were able to survive Auschwitz and the death march was thinking about your daughter Josiane.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Just hoping.

>> Bill Benson: That's all you had was hope.

And then there were several other inmates with you at Auschwitz that you were very close to.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes. That's why I say, we didn't have families so we became like families.

>> Bill Benson: On that death march, as you marched for several months they took you to Ravensbruck. Tell us about Ravensbruck.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Ravensbruck was a much smaller concentration camp than Auschwitz. Auschwitz was the biggest combination of experiment these would make on people. Physicians from all different countries came there to study how fast they could find ways of killing people.

It's difficult, for me anyway, it's so difficult to imagine that such a civilization which the Germans are known to be, their schooling and everything, and they could take a baby and just tear it in two without any remorse. And we were lucky that the Russians were looking for Germans. And that's where they find out. We all had typhus. Typhus was such a contagious thing that very few young women had survived it.

>> Bill Benson: Fanny, when the Russians found you and your five fellows --

>> Fanny Aizenberg: We were lucky because that particular group of Russians, they didn't have food and we didn't have food. So every day they went to a farm and they stole cows and they shared that with us. And that's what kept us alive. Because many young people who had been liberated by the British or by the Americans died right away because their body wasn't used to have normal food, what they call normal food today in order to digest.

>> Bill Benson: Fanny, when you were liberated by the Russians and you were able to get a little bit of food, where did you go then? What did you do?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: We didn't go. We stayed in the hospital. When we were inspected by American and British Red Cross. And most of us had the typhus which was very contagious at that particular time because bodies were not functioning like normal bodes.

Today, you know, just a combination of evil and how this was able to destroy us. There is so many, many years ago. This is with me forever even though I try to forget or make believe it hasn't happened.

This is why I volunteer here on Sunday because they have a large group of people, students coming some day and asking many questions. The only thing we could do peacefully is not having a war and respecting one another.

>> Bill Benson: Fanny, after you recovered, were cared for by the Red Cross, you --

>> Fanny Aizenberg: I was in four hospitals in Belgium.

>> Bill Benson: How did you get back to Belgium?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Because of the Red Cross.

>> Bill Benson: They got you to Belgium?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: And also, we took with us two other people who didn't have a home.

>> Bill Benson: Okay.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Their parents were deported.

>> Bill Benson: And when you got back to Brussels, when you got back there, eventually you found Josiane. Can you tell us how you were reunited with Josiane?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Well, I had a sister who has remained alive during the war in Belgium. Got her apartment back, not decorated. She had many of those cots. And they were quite a

few. And my daughter had one and I had one. And at night, to be with me, she would attach her nightgown to mine so I would not go away anymore.
>> Bill Benson: Do you remember what it was like when you first saw Josiane?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It was like heaven or like something -- you read something in the Bible and you believe it.
>> Bill Benson: And you mentioned your sister. You had two sisters. And they both had been in hiding during the war, right?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Both of them by the nuns.
>> Bill Benson: By the nuns.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: They were wearing the habit at whole time.
>> Bill Benson: One of your sisters was the first to get to Josiane.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Right. Mm-hmm.
>> Bill Benson: So once you were back reunited --
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Because she had a big job in the underground.
And the churches again had given them space and that's where they were able to exchange ammunition, health, food, like bandages and vitamins which people didn't have anymore.
>> Bill Benson: If I remember right, one of your sisters also had three children. They were also hidden.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: And three boys.
>> Bill Benson: And they all survived, too.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: Josi was 8 years old when you saw her again. Now you are back with Josiane. Your sisters have been found. You are together. But your husband you hadn't seen since 19---
>> Fanny Aizenberg: No, because when he was in England like many other people, one of his corpsmen, whatever you call it, had been badly damaged and he was for two years in the hospital, which he never recovered.
>> Bill Benson: Before you tell me a little bit more about that, did you know at any point after he left, did you know if he was alive or dead?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: We didn't for simple reason that so many young men got together in time to get to England. Two ships had blown up and nobody was alive from them. But we didn't know who died and who was alive because the radios were taken away. And without the radios, the only thing we had -- this is before -- it's almost like -- honestly, you can't believe how important a radio was to a family. And they had a radio. That was the first gift we got was a radio because of the news and your life becomes normal with other people.
>> Bill Benson: So because you didn't have a radio and you didn't know and it was war and Jacques had gone to a country that was an Ally and an enemy of Germany, you had no knowledge. When did you find out about Jacques?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Much after the war. Much after. The Red Cross collected all the names of the men who had signed up.
>> Bill Benson: But eventually Jacques came home.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes, after a long, long time.
>> Bill Benson: After a long time. What was that like?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Very damaged, very hurt. Don't forget, there was five years separation

between us.
>> Bill Benson: For many years.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: I don't think we could ever say that we are normal people. I don't think I am.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, when you were all back together united, Josiane, your husband Jacques, you, your sisters, it would take another four years before you would come to the United States.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: Were you able to get your life back in order somewhat and get work? What would you do?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It wasn't all there -- you couldn't say you start where you left off.
>> Bill Benson: Of course.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: First of all, we all were very young and too many unfortunate things which had no power and no choice of having. So you made the best of what you could.
>> Bill Benson: Were you able to find work eventually in Belgium?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: I had no problem finding work. But the kind of work I was doing, lucky to have learned to do, was qualified, not only qualified but highly qualified. Don't forget today, you go to a store, you buy clothes. But at that time, if you had one dress, it was made for you. And that didn't change very soon because everybody liked having things made.
>> Bill Benson: What made you decide you wanted to go to the United States?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Well, I could see that I could have a similar job than I had and that was a possibility because we didn't know -- there was the question of a union and you couldn't have work.
>> Bill Benson: And it would take four years to get here. Why did it take so long?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: I'm sorry?
>> Bill Benson: Why did it take so long to get to the United States?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Because of the union and too many people were without work, especially the war veterans. Many had been damaged. And they only did physical help. There were too many people who needed help. And it depends what you call, sometimes you could work overnight.
>> Bill Benson: Finally in 1949, the three of you came to the United States.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Right.
>> Bill Benson: Where did you go and what did you do?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Well, we stayed with my husband's brother and I stayed with an aunt of mine. Don't forget, we were not allowed to use the word "Auschwitz." We were not allowed to use the word "camps."
>> Bill Benson: Why?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Because that would make them feel bad.
>> Bill Benson: That would make them feel bad.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Even today there's many nice people who come to the museum here and it's not to a high degree can you explain that we could live peacefully. But we could make -- people worked together. It's not perfect. But it's a small moment.
>> Bill Benson: When you came here, you were in New Jersey. You were able to find work when you got here?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Not as qualified as I felt I had deserved.

>> Bill Benson: You had been a dressmaker from the royal family.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Right, not called dressmaker because I was already highly qualified. Don't forget about how the young women would work for one person. That made it available for many people to make a living. What you call a living.

Some people need more for have a life and some much less.

>> Bill Benson: Fanny, after all that you had gone through going to Auschwitz, the medical experimentation, the tortures that you went through, typhus which you mentioned a couple of times, when you got to the United States, what was your health like?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Well, I was twice in the hospital because I had inside germs. That was another reason why we could not conceive.
>> Bill Benson: And how about Jacques, how was Jacques doing?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: He was broke until he decide.
>> Bill Benson: Tell us a little bit about your sister, what did he do?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: My sister had a little store. That was the only thing they could do?
>> Bill Benson: In Belgium.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: And also because they had been involved with a certain specified underground people who did much more. They were exchanging ammunitions. They were able to change it and get others to continue. They why they got a small, small pension, because of that.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, when did you -- when did you learn for certain what happened to your mother?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Because right after we were separated and sent to different jobs and we were checked, that's how we met Hitler. He came to the factory. And because we didn't make our quota, he said, you know, that's where we were sure that our loved ones was not alive anymore.
>> Bill Benson: That's when you knew --
>> Fanny Aizenberg: And the bodies the Nazis make experimentation. Little by little, we find out to what extent it was even after the war, what the Nazis had done.
>> Bill Benson: If you don't mind, Fanny, tell us what it was like for Josiane who was so little when she came to the United States. What was it like for her?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: She had a very hard time, number one, language. That's very difficult, you may not realize. But it's very difficult to learn English. And we have to know English because -- to apply for American citizenship, you had to know English. Now you don't have to do a lot of things. But at that time, we had to do a lot of things.

(laughter).

>> Bill Benson: So eventually everybody learned English and Josiane did very well in school over time.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Always.
>> Bill Benson: Always.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: But don't forget we taught her to do better.
>> Bill Benson: I know you worked very, very hard once you came.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: We did. We did. But we have appreciate the hope. That's another reason why I have chosen to talk here had he Holocaust Museum to teenagers. They listen to you better. (laughter).
>> Bill Benson: You know, Fanny, I think we have -- we have some time to ask our audience if

they would like to ask you a few questions.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: I hope I could answer them because the young people are so smart.
(laughter).
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, here's what we're going to do. I think we have some microphones that are available. When somebody asks a question, I'm going to repeat it so that you hear it and everybody in the room hears it. And then if you want to answer it, you answer it, okay?

So let's see if anybody would like to ask Fanny a question. We will have mics, as I said. Please wait until you have the microphone in your hand. That will help awful us, including Fanny, hear your questions. If you have any questions -- I believe we have one back here. Yes, in the very back.
>> Hi. Thank you for sharing your story. It was very inspiring. My question is: After the four-year period after the war ended and before -- when you left to America -- how did the non-Jewish people who had originally disposed you and had persecuted you emotionally and physically, how did they treat you after the war, after you had been liberated?
>> Bill Benson: After you were liberated -- I want to make sure I get the question right. After you were liberated how did the non-Jewish people who persecuted you, how did they treat you after the war?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It all depends. In Belgium, we were seen like people. And that goes for churches and other organizations. It's not I have more than you have or you have more than I had. That anger, that pain had not continued and with the people who felt like they were in your life and their families not touched.
>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Fanny. Thank you for that question.

Do we have another one? I think we've got one right there in the middle.
>> Again, thank you for sharing today. I'm a physician in Texas. And your comments about the atrocities that you experienced under the hands of people who, I'll say, call themselves physicians. It's just unimaginable.

So my question for you, after experiencing that and coming back to the world outside of that experience, was it hard for you to trust again, to trust someone who say "I am a physician," which I hope is a very trusted profession or any other profession for that matter, just trusting people? Thank you.
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, the gentleman asked the question is a physician from Texas. He asks if after the war, after what you went through with the Nazi doctors, after the war, was it -- were you able to trust physicians afterwards when you came to the United States? Were you able --
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It was very difficult.
>> Bill Benson: It was difficult.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: The decency which we had -- and I'm 99 years old. It's with you and it stays with you your life. I'm glad you asked that question because it's so human, and we all go through that.
>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Fanny. Thank you.

Right here. Here comes the mic for you. Thank you, Brook.
>> Hi. I'm a teacher and I have a pretty loud voice anyway.

Part of our curriculum has us teaching our children about the Holocaust. And I want to know what you feel is the very most important things that we make sure our young people understand because I teach resilience. But what else is important that our children need to understand?

>> Bill Benson: As a teacher, she's asking what do you think is the most important thing about the Holocaust to teach children today? What is most important?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: The most important thing is just to show one another that we could live peacefully. You don't have to love each other, but it's so much easier because we each have something more to offer somebody. Even here at the museum where they have so many special rooms and so much to learn, they have one room which shows you what one person could do just to help somebody nice, even yourself. Sometimes you help a teacher who's down or someone is in the family. So there's so many ways.
>> Bill Benson: Sometimes that's a tough lesson, but it's the right lesson, right?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: But you can. We did.
>> Bill Benson: You did.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: We weren't crazy in the streets. (laughter).
>> Bill Benson: We have another question right here. Brook, we have two here.
>> Okay, I'll try. Can you hear me? I mean, I know that you were a young lady at the time. But you did see an invasion of your country. Do you have any thoughts or does your daughter have any thoughts as to how to resist that as citizens of the United States?
>> Bill Benson: I think the question is: Belgium was invaded. What could Belgium have done to resist that? Could they have resisted that invasion?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Well, don't forget Belgium is a very small country compared to Germany. At the time, Germany had been equipped and maneuvered on what they're going to do because Belgium and Holland were supposed to remain free countries which they never had.

Meanwhile, they were able to steal a lot of things to help them to keep the war going which no other country had an opportunity to exchange merchandise.

Once in the city, it was the only city where every citizen was making a living by working in business. The whole city, they were making a living.
>> Bill Benson: We have one back here. I think we have another hand over here. We have several. Okay. We'll come to you.
>> Hi. Can you say a little bit about the culture among prisoners in Auschwitz?
>> Bill Benson: Say that one more time.
>> I'm just curious about the culture among prisoners in Auschwitz and how you interacted with each other while you were under such harsh conditions.
>> Bill Benson: What was it like for you with your other fellow inmates and the other prisoners at Auschwitz. You said you got very close to them. How were you able to do that under such hard circumstances?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It was a matter of saving our lives. I don't know if you know, there's one Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur. And that in itself had made us like sisters and brothers or just somebody you could pray together.
>> Bill Benson: You could pray together.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Which otherwise you don't have. And it's amazing how many things have become so important like people in our lives. Like myself.
>> Bill Benson: One of the things that Fanny shared with me, part of coming here on Sundays where there are a lot of younger volunteers, just the relationships and the friendships that you've developed.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: That's another friend of mine.
>> Bill Benson: That's one in the front row, right here, one of our security persons. Yes.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Another person who is a volunteer. It's interesting that we have so many wonderful young people volunteering in so many ways at the museum. They are not all Jewish.
>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Fanny.

So I promised over here. Yes and then down here.

>> Yeah, I'm really curious about how afterwards, I think in the introduction it mentioned you worked as social worker. It seems when you worked in resistance, you are very dedicated to giving back. I think that's one of the most beautiful parts of your story, how hopeful you are. I just wanted to know aside from your daughter where that stems from, this need to give back and this hope and trust in humanity and also when you were speaking about everyone needs to not necessarily love each other but still live together. How can people emulate you in that?
>> Bill Benson: I will try to paraphrase that.
>> Yeah, sorry. That was long. (laughter).
>> Bill Benson: She's very impressed -- young lady is very impressed with how you wanted to give back and how you raised Josiane who became a social worker but a social worker with abused children for an entire career. How have you been able to find what it takes to give back?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: It's in you. Either you have it or you don't. And I tell you another thing, because of the situation -- and we had so many in common with somebody else, they would understand what you are saying.
>> Bill Benson: They made it easier to pour your hearts out.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Correct.
>> Bill Benson: Okay.

I have one right here that I promised. Yes, and then we'll come back to you, sir. I know the other hands have gone up as well.

>> Hi, Fanny. What do you think is the main reason that you were able to survive such atrocities that you lived through?
>> Bill Benson: Fanny, what do you think is the main reason that you were able to survive the atrocities, all that you went through?
>> Fanny Aizenberg: I'm not so wise to have an answer. I'm sorry.

But it takes many people and many people caring for you, just showing that they care for you. You would be surprised how much that helps. That's why we say it's so much easier to be friendly to people. Look, we have election people insulting one another. Does it make in any better?

(laughter).

(applause).

>> Fanny Aizenberg: I didn't say who.
>> Bill Benson: Okay.

I think we have time for one more question and then we're going to close our program and we're going to hear one more time from Fanny. So the gentleman right here.

>> I was just wondering how you, like, made meaning out of what happened to you and especially if your faith and Judaism was a part of that.
>> Bill Benson: The question he's asking is how you were able to make meaning out of all you went through and how important has been your faith, your Jewish religion.
>> Fanny Aizenberg: Very hardly. You have to think twice before you can make a statement.

That's why I see anybody, especially seniors and, of course, young people, have so much more to learn here because I feel I'm learning when a group of young of high schoolers, that is helping you. And you might be open and listen to somebody else because everybody has something to offer to somebody else. You would be surprised how many times we are down in the dumps. And you just see you have another soul.

>> Bill Benson: I want to thank all of you for being with us at our first "First Person" program of 2016. We will do this program twice a week, Wednesdays and Thursdays until the middle of August. So we hope you will have the opportunity to come back.

A little later, I think in April, we'll start live streaming programs. So you can listen to it and watch it over the Internet which is very exciting. And I think those will be archived so you will be able to hear them at another time as well. I believe I'm right about that. So we welcome you to either come back live or listen to us over the Internet at some point.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: It doesn't cost you anything.

>> Bill Benson: That's exactly right. Absolutely.

(applause).

>> Bill Benson: It's our tradition at "First Person" that our "First Person" has the last word. So I'm going to turn back to Fanny to close our program in just a moment. And I want to say when Fanny's done, I'm going to ask you to all stand because our photographer Joel is going to come up -- right here in front of me, is going to come up on stage and take a picture, one of which will you as you in the background with Fanny on stage. When Fanny's done, please do that, rise and we'll get some photographs.

Fanny, thank you for being with us. And what are your last thoughts for us today?

>> Fanny Aizenberg: I think -- and I appreciate you have already made such a big step and you open your mind. That's it.

>> Bill Benson: That's it. All right. Thank you, Fanny. You have shared so much.

>> Fanny Aizenberg: Thank you all for coming. I really appreciate that.

(applause).

>> Bill Benson: Let me add that Fanny will stay up here on stage for anybody who has another question or didn't have a chance to ask a question, please feel free to come up on the stage and talk to Fanny or shake her hand or give her a hug, whatever you want to do.