

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
FIRST PERSON SERIES  
FIRST PERSON HENRY KAHN  
Thursday, June 23, 2016  
11:00-12:00 p.m. ET

### 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. We are in our 17th year of the First Person program.

Our First Person today is Mr. Henry Kahn, whom we 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. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

I'd like to acknowledge that Mr. Louis Smith is with us right here in the front row.

[Applause]

First Person is a series of conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand 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 until mid-August. The museum's website, which is [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org), provides information about each of our First Person guests and the program you received today has the museum's web address on that as well.

Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the Museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in your program or speak with a museum representative at the back of the theater. In doing so, you will receive an electronic copy of Henry Kahn's biography so that you can remember and share his testimony after you leave here today.

Henry will share his "First Person" account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows we will have an opportunity for you to ask Henry questions.

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

Henry Kahn was born Heinz Kahn on January 18, 1923 in Boblingen, Germany.

This photo shows Henry in 1946 prior to his induction in the United States Army.

The arrow on this map points to the town of Boblingen where Henry was born. Here we see Henry's mother Hedwig and His father Adolf, who was a cattle dealer and fought for Germany in World War I.

Later, Henry's father became president of a cattle dealers' association.

On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis unleashed a violent series of attacks on Jewish-owned businesses and synagogues throughout Germany known as Kristallnacht, or the "Night of Broken Glass." Henry's father was arrested and sent to Dachau concentration camp.

This photograph shows Germans passing the broken window of a Jewish-owned business that was destroyed during Kristallnacht. Henry's father returned home a month later. Shortly after this, Henry left Germany through a Kindertransport, a rescue effort that brought thousands of Jewish children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany between 1938 and 1939. Henry arrived in England in February 1939.

When World War II began September 1, 1939, British authorities required Henry to register as an "enemy alien."

He was sent by ship to Australia which is highlighted in red on this map of the world. After just one night in an internment camp there, Henry and 12 other men were selected to return to England, only to end up in Bombay, India.

The arrow on this map points to India.

In 1946 Henry moved to the United States.

After the war, Henry learned Nazi authorities had deported his parents to the Lodz ghetto in 1941.

They were later murdered.

We close with this photograph of Henry and Doreen Raymond on their wedding day in 1948.

He met Doreen in Bombay in 1943.

Just a few months after Henry's arrival in New York in 1946 he was Drafted into the United States Army.

With the end of the draft he was honorably discharged in the spring of 1947. Henry's sweetheart from Bombay, Doreen Raymond, arrived in the U.S. on June 9, 1948. They were married 18 days later on June 27, 1948.

After working in the export-import business, Henry went into the scrap metal business. While working full-time and raising a family he enrolled in Baruch College at the City University of New York as an evening student in 1956 earning his degree in Industrial Management in 1966.

Doreen attended Queens College getting a degree as a paralegal and worked as a paralegal in the Empire State Building.

Henry remained in the scrap metal business until his 65th birthday in 1988.

He then became a real estate agent. Following a diagnosis of lung cancer in 1992 Henry retired from his real estate work.

Henry and Doreen raised two sons, Ralph Ansel and Roy David, and gave them two grandsons and a granddaughter.

To be closer to their family Henry and Doreen moved from New York to Bethesda, Maryland, in 2000.

Doreen passed away in November 2012. Henry said to me, "We were very much in love right up to the end."

Henry continues to volunteer at the Montgomery County Thrift Shop where Doreen and he contributed their time together.

Following the loss of Doreen, Henry became involved with this museum as a volunteer. Henry speaks to small groups at the museum. He also speaks about his Holocaust experience at local high schools and colleges.

Henry is fluent in English and German and walks regularly and said he is now increasing his exercise. He reads a lot and spends time with family and friends, and I'm pleased to say that Henry today is joined by both sons, Ralph and Roy and their wives, Lana and Judy, their grandson and granddaughter -- grandson Sasha and granddaughter Alena are with us. I believe Sasha just graduated from high school this past week. I would like to ask you to welcome our First Person, Mr. Henry Kahn.

[Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Henry, thank you so much for joining us and your willingness to be our First Person today. We're really honored to have you with us today.

>> Henry Kahn: Thank you very much.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, before we begin our conversation today, you asked that we start by noting to our audience that there are a broad range of ways that people survive the Holocaust depending on the time, place and circumstances that they were living under. Some survived concentration camps. For example, you shared with me that your friend, Jean --

>> Henry Kahn: I can't hear.

>> Bill Benson: Is that better?

>> Henry Kahn: Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: Okay, you shared with me that your friend, Jean, survived Auschwitz, but Jean's eight family members did not. There are others who survived in hiding, and then others like you who were rescued and found safety in countries not occupied by the Nazi regime, and that's a way to remind us that your account of what you experienced is one individual account, and before we continue, I know you can't see this, but Henry brought this with us to put up front, and it says "No wicked person will succeed if the good people don't accede."

We will remind ourselves with that right there.

Henry, you have so much to tell us. We have a little time, so we're going to start.

You were ten years old when Hitler and the Nazis came to power in 1933. Before we turn to the war and the Holocaust and the earliest years of the Hitler regime, tell us about your family and you in the years before 1933.

>> Henry Kahn: Well, we lived in a small town, which in the meantime became a suburb of Stuttgart, but at the time it was a town, an independent town, and my father had to travel every morning by train to get to work. On the 18th of January, 1923, when I was born, my mother was in the hospital and next to her or close to her was another lady who had a daughter. She was Mrs. Kinsler and she and my wife and mother became good friends as did their respected families.

He was the owner of a toy factory, which was benefit to myself and my brother.

My brother, unfortunately, passed away in 1932 at seven years of age, but we were very good friends and my parents went skiing with them and played tennis and my father and him, they met on Sunday mornings at a guest house and they were good friends. After the Nazis had come, he didn't want to join the Nazi party, but my father suggested to them that it might be a good idea that he should join, because it would be an outcast if you didn't. Talk about outcasts, Hitler did his best to eventually destroy the Jews. My father was of the opinion that he had been in the first world war and earned the Eye of the Cross, and a veteran, obviously, and nothing could happen to him. However, after the 9th of November, Kristallnacht, he was arrested and sent to the concentration camp. And when he came back, very haggard and no hair, all shaved off, he told me and my mother, if ever I get back there, I'll never come out alive. By then he had changed his opinion, and unfortunately it was too late.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, before we continue about Kristallnacht, let me ask

another question. I think when you were about seven, 1930, your family moved to Stuttgart so you could attend the original Waldorf School.

>> Henry Kahn: I was getting to that. When I was seven years old, my father, who had to commute every morning, after he had been elected president of the association, he -- we decided -- or the parents decided to move to Stuttgart, and we moved very close to the Waldorf School. The Waldorf School was a unique school, and the owner of a factory which was called Waldorf Astoria factory, he requested a philosopher from Austria, Rudolph Steiner to guide the school, and his philosophy was very modern, modern even today. In the meantime, the school was founded. They were very unique, and in the meantime, the schools exist all over the world, including over here.

So I went to the Waldorf School. His philosophy, of course, did not agree with the Nazis or rather the Nazis didn't agree with the Waldorf School philosophy, and consequently, 1938, the school was closed and the teachers were dismissed and they had to look for jobs.

I had a class teacher who was teaching the class from the first to the fifth grade. I was there until the fourth grade when we moved to Cologne.

Well, as I mentioned, in 1938, after the Kristallnacht, we received a telegram from my cousin in England, who was working in the factory, and he was friendly with a girl whose father was the owner, part owner of a clothing factory. And he persuaded them to sponsor me, because kids who came to England through the Kindertransport, they had to be responsible for somebody. That is how I was fortunate to get to England on the Kindertransport.

>> Bill Benson: Before we talk about the Kindertransport, can I ask you a couple more questions before we get there? Shortly after Hitler came to power in 1933, I think your father lost his business. Tell us about his losing his business and how he made ends meet for his family.

>> Henry Kahn: Well, unfortunately, it was very simple. After '33, after Hitler came to power, my father was the president, pretty large, and, of course, there were Nazis amongst the members, and one day one of the Nazis in his uniform came into the office and told my father he should get out, he had no right to be there anymore. My father threw the keys on the floor and walked out and that was it.

So there was no argument. He couldn't call the police or anything like this, because the Nazis were in power. And they had a lot of power, because he couldn't argue with them. The police, they couldn't do anything either. Anyway, getting back to --

>> Bill Benson: One more question. Before 1938, did your family consider emigrating? Did they think about leaving Germany?

>> Henry Kahn: Unfortunately, my mother certainly did. She did all sorts of things to prepare for emigration, however, my father, he was so convinced that nothing could happen to him, and he didn't change his mind until he came back from the concentration camp. So consequently, and at that time, we didn't have as much power -- women didn't have as much power as they have these days, and consequently, that was questioned. So they moved to Cologne, where my father took over a plywood dealership, and he worked there and there was -- I don't know how successful, unsuccessful at most, but he was working there until 1938.

>> Bill Benson: As you told us already, your father was arrested as part of Kristallnacht.

>> Henry Kahn: I said, yes, I told you, when he came out from the concentration camp, he had changed his mind, but then it was too late. But 18 days after my 16th birthday I -- my parents and I went to the railroad station and they said goodbye to me, because I was supposed to go on the Kindertransport to England. I got

into the car, and I knew I was going to see them again. I mean, I just knew it. I can't tell you how, but, however, the train was delayed by half an hour. My parents, who had left the platform found out about it and came back. The moment I saw them coming back, I knew this is the last time I see them, and the last time I talk to them. And this is exactly how it worked out. You can't imagine my condition when I noticed that. It was a feeling. I can't explain it to you, but this is the way it was.

Well, when we crossed the border -- after we had crossed the border into Holland, the train left, and after we crossed the border into Holland, a girl -- I was one of the oldest ones, because the age limit for the Kindertransport was from 3 to 17. I was 16, so I just made it.

After we had crossed the border and everybody was sure that the Nazis weren't there anymore, a little girl took a newspaper with Hitler's picture on it and tore it into a thousand pieces. So this gives you the atmosphere. We had left that.

When we finally got to England, the ferry took us across the channel, and we got in, and since I had learned a little English -- excuse me ---in the Waldorf School we learned English and heard English -- English and French from the first grade on, and boys and girls were -- getting back to that, girls and boys were in the same class, and in the third grade everybody had some -- we learned how to sew in the first grade and girls were able to go into a workshop and you learn how to use tools, just to give you an idea about the Waldorf School. So now we were in England, and we were in a big hall, and people walked in and looked for children who had been assigned to them, and I knew a little bit of English, so a nice lady walked in in a nice fur coat and I figured I'd see if I could help her, and I asked if I could help her, and she pulled out a paper with Heinz Kahn. So I had my sponsor. Her name was Mrs. London, and my cousin came and we drove to their home, which was in Hampstead Garden suburb, a nice home. For a very short time, Mr. London asked me if I would like to go to school or if I would like to work. Well, I had in mind to get to United States, and I knew going to school wouldn't teach me very much to make a living, so I decided I wanted to get a job and learn how to -- and once more, I had no money anyway. So I decided I wanted to go to work, to learn something so I could earn a living when I get to the States to save up some money.

Well, it took a few -- a couple of weeks before Mr. London could get the permit for me, but every morning and every evening I was taken by car to work, which was wonderful except it was a glorified prison, because where they lived was very excluded. There was no public transportation. It wasn't easy walking distance. So I was stuck over there. As I said, it was a glorified prison. I had lunch at the -- with the staff in the factory, but I was assigned to go to the packing room. There I learned how to make knots and how to protect from pins, but that wasn't much of a profession. So I asked Mr. London to let me work in the machine shop, learn how to sew, but that was inappropriate at the time, so the owner to work with girls, so he said "no."

I got a salary of 1 pound, 30 shillings a week. I told Mr. London, you don't have to give me that much money because, after all, I live with you. And he said, well, that's okay. Well, I saved it. I couldn't spend it, which was okay. And, well, that went on for a while, and I couldn't get into the machine shop. However, this was the beginning of April of '39, and as you know, the war broke out in September. The moment the war broke out, Mr. London told me that he and his family are going to evacuate, but since I'm working, I should go and look for a place to stay.

Well, now I look for a place to stay and then I ask him, "I'd like to have more money." He told me, "You can't have anymore."

It was a little difficult. I still had lunch at the factory, but, I mean, that wasn't much food, because I had to pay 14 shillings and 6 pence, which is equivalent to \$40 out of 20. And I had to pay that for breakfast and bed -- bed and breakfast,

basically.

I took my bicycle. I don't know where I got the bicycle, I can't remember how I got it, but I had a German bicycle with me, and every morning I rode to work.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, I want to interrupt for a second. During this time, were you able to hear from your parents? Did you have contact with your parents?

>> Henry Kahn: No, I didn't.

>> Bill Benson: No, okay.

>> Henry Kahn: No, not even during this time, because the war had already -- well, I didn't get to write a letter anyway. I tried to find somebody to sponsor my parents, but I wasn't successful.

Anyway, I was told not to ask too many questions of people, to ask for favors, and that was a bad mistake. You should be more aggressive as far as your children are concerned. Well, nowadays they teach them that.

[chuckles]

>> Bill Benson: So, Henry, September 1st, 19 --

>> Henry Kahn: September 1st, the war broke out, and almost immediately the sirens started blowing up, but it was a false alarm, fortunately. But now, since I had to -- since I lived by myself, as I said, I found a place in the north of London, which was more -- not quite as exclusive in the suburb, and first of all, there was the County School walking distance from where I lived, and I took advantage of this and took a course in bookkeeping, which had nothing to do with packing or sewing, but it came in handy eventually. Also there was a synagogue, and I went there, and I had a friend who lived across the street from me. So I had a social life. It was quite something in comparison to what I had in Stuttgart.

I went to school and now I asked Mr. London to let me work in the sewing machine room, because he couldn't say "no" anymore, because now I was on my own, and he let me do it. Very shortly after I started, I was efficient enough at it so that I asked to go on piece work. You get paid for each piece you work. I was able to make 30 shillings, which was more than I would have gotten before, and that was helpful.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, I want to ask you about something. Right after the war began in September 1939, you were called before a tribunal and a notation was put in your record that said -- I'm going to read this -- "The holder of this certificate is to be exempted from further order from internment and from the special restrictions applicable to enemy aliens under the aliens order."

And then later in December your record was added to it with the words "you are a refugee from Nazi oppression."

What did that mean?

>> Henry Kahn: I'll tell you what happened. First it was okay. I went to work every day and I went to school at night and I had a little social life, which was great. But then in 1940, in May 1940, the Germans -- in the meantime the Germans send an expeditionary force and in May 1940, the Nazis invaded Holland and the south of France and the British expeditionary force was cut off and 300,000 of the British soldiers, French and others, were able to escape top England, but all the equipment was lost. So they got scared. They got panicky. They panicked, and once they panic, they decided to intern the lot, in other words, intern everyone who came from Germany, because they really didn't know what to do anymore. And they did stupid things and that was one of them. And the people who really would have helped them, they shut up. Well, we were interned on the 3rd of June -- July. On the 3rd of July -- oh, before I was interned, I noticed and I found out that several of my acquaintances were interned. So before I was interned, I took all the money which I had saved up and took it to the Bloomsbury House, the agency that is the sponsor for the kids from the Kindertransport.

And I gave the money and I said, get me out as fast as possible so I can get to the United States and buy me a ticket. They said, well, the money isn't quite enough, but we'll make up the difference, which was great.

I appreciated that, but things never work out the way you think.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, just to make sure our audience understands, what you've told us is that even though England welcomed you on the Kindertransport, even though you were Jewish and a refugee from the Nazis, in their panic, because you were German and from Germany, they forced you to be interned?

>> Henry Kahn: Of course, that's what I said. They were panicked. They panicked.

>> Bill Benson: I just want to make sure everybody understands.

>> Henry Kahn: They didn't know what they were doing.

>> Bill Benson: What did they do to you?

>> Henry Kahn: Well, as I said, I took my money over there. On the 3rd of July, on the 2nd of July, when I came home, I was told that I have to report to police, take all my stuff and go to the police station. I went there and was promptly interned. On the 3rd to the 4th, we were taken to a race course outside of London, and the next day we got a big piece of cheese and that was our provision for the day. We were taken by train, all the internees were taken by train to live on the West Coast of England. It's a port. And there we were put into a camp, which looked like a Nazi camp. It was a tent camp.

We were told that Liverpool had been bombed the week before and the ship that had taken to Canada has been sunk and many people drowned. So now we were asked, who wants to volunteer to be sent to an overseas dominion? I didn't know what a dominion was, but I figured they could have said so. So I decided that I would take a chance with a torpedo rather than bombs and machine guns and, God forbid, the Nazis take over and caught by the Nazis again.

Well, on the 10th we were taken aboard the ship and all our luggage was piled on top of the top deck and I was assigned to the bottom deck in the front of the ship. There were hooks on the ceiling, and I figured there were hammocks, and I eventually I got a hammock and then I was sleeping there, which was good.

Anyway, the very night the ship left the pier, and it was rolling. I couldn't tell what the weather was like.

As it turned out, they tried to avoid torpedoes, and sure enough, the torpedo hit the ship and made a dent but did not explode. 22 years later -- that was '62 or '63, my wife and two sons met my former teacher from the Waldorf School, and he told us that after they were dismissed from the school, he had to find a job. And he told me -- he told us he worked in the torpedo factory, and once in a while he sabotaged a torpedo by putting sand in the mechanism.

[chuckles]

And for all I know, he was the one who saved my life and a lot of others.

Getting back to the ship, it took us about a month, and we went around the Cape of Good Hope. It was a very slow ship. And we finally arrived in Sydney, Australia.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, I know there's much more for you to tell us. Just a couple of things about that trip.

Tell us a little bit about how you were treated, what the guards were like and what happened to your personal belongings.

>> Henry Kahn: Well, it's a long story, but...

>> Bill Benson: Do a short version, if you can.

>> Henry Kahn: Well, the ship was a troop ship and providing for 1500 troops.

Now, there were 2500 -- more than 2500 aboard, so you can imagine how crowded it was, and many of the people had to sleep on the floor. They slept on the floor. They preferred it. They didn't know how to go into a hammock, which I happened to know. I was lucky I got myself a hammock and slept very comfortably.

They didn't have enough of anything. It was rather scarce. There were showers, yes, but there was seawater, and you couldn't do much with seawater as far as cleaning yourself is concerned. So the mess got pretty bad. And people got seasick, so I decided I'd do something about it. I got myself a few young guys together like myself and we asked for buckets and brooms and we chased half the deck to one side of the deck and cleaned up, and then we went back and cleaned the rest of it. Well, this activity gave us some benefits, which was very good. Because instead of having to run around the deck every morning for half an hour or so, machine guns pointing at us in either direction, the few of us who cleaned the deck, we were able to go to the top of the deck and enjoy the fresh air, which was quite something. It was very valuable at the time, I can assure you. Well, anyway, after we got to --

>> Bill Benson: Here is what I wanted you to tell me. You described in the beginning you put your luggage on top.

>> Henry Kahn: Oh, yes, another story. We had to put all our luggage in a big pile and they put a big canvas over it. I got on top of the deck, I noticed that the top had been taken off of the luggage, and the troops, not the cream of the crop, as far as the British Army was concerned, there were one eyed and limping, and they helped themselves. They opened up the luggage, and threw stuff overboard.

Well, this was a criminal offense, of course, but nobody cared about that at the time.

However, it occurred to our benefit, because another that had followed us, the captain was curious what they had thrown overboard, and he picked it up, and he noticed there were German letters. So he realized there were Germans aboard and he didn't shoot the torpedoes, one way we were also saved. I found that out visiting Germany after the war, Stuttgart.

>> Bill Benson: I want to thank you for telling us that. Now you've made it to Australia after a very long trip. Now you're in Australia.

>> Henry Kahn: I know. It took us over a month. It took us over a month to get there. And we finally landed in Sydney, Australia. We were taken off the ship. We were taken aboard the train. It took 18 hours into the interior. We got there and it was Hay, a small village in the desert, basically. The sand was blowing -- the wind was blowing and the sand was hitting us like sandblasting. We got into that camp and we had something to eat and went to sleep. The Australian soldiers were very nice and very kind. There was no problem at all.

And I tell you something else, while on the Dunera, one of the soldiers, one of the cream of the crop of the British Army, they got so drunk that they dropped their rifle. One of them picked up the rifle and took him to the sick bay so he could be rejuvenated.

Anyway, getting back to Australia...

Getting back to Australia, we got into that camp and the very next morning, out of 2500 people, 13 names were called out. Thirteen. As far as I'm concerned, it's a very fortunate number. Thirteen names were called out. I was the first one on the list. And one of our 13 overheard the soldiers say, "Well, these chaps are going back to England."

Well, we weren't asked and we didn't know what was going on. Anyway, the 13 were taken back to the ship, but there was no room, so we were taken to the bunker, and we were locked up. That is the first time I really got scared, because I was locked up,



and I knew the ship was -- there was no chance for me surviving at all. However, we got something to eat and that made me feel better.

After a while, we were taken out. They had to find someplace to put us, so they took us up to Malabar Hill, Sydney. One section had been cordoned off with barbwire and I was in internment camp. And there was one that got the paper every morning, and in it we saw that where I used to work went up in flames. And you can imagine how I felt about that.

Well, we were in that internment camp on Malabar Hill, and we were taken back to the ship and the ship lifted anchor, and lo and behold, they lifted anchor and we took off. It took a month to get to Sydney, but after two weeks, the ship stopped and the 13 of us were taken off. The first thing I noticed was that there were all dark-skinned people and red spots on the floor. And eventually I got an explanation for all of it. So we were taken to the police station and 13 of us were interviewed by individuals, and the officer who interviewed me asked all sorts of silly questions, and he said to me, where do you live? I said, well, I don't even know where I am and you ask me where I live?

So he had to find out. So he came back and he told me. You live in a Jewish Relief Association Home in Bombay, India.

Uh-huh.

[chuckles]

So that's the first time I found out where I was. So I was in India.

We were taken to the Jewish Relief Association Home, and we were told, we have to report twice a week to the police station, otherwise we could walk around and do what we wanted. I was not interned anymore. I was free to move around in Bombay. I couldn't leave the island of Bombay without permission, but that was it. So voila, I was free!

>> Bill Benson: Why did they live you in Bombay when you were supposed to go back to England?

>> Henry Kahn: Well, I wasn't supposed to. The guy didn't know.

>> Bill Benson: Okay.

>> Henry Kahn: He assumed it. And the reason we were taken off is because, as I mentioned before, it was a troop ship, which carried -- which was able to carry 1500 troops, and the ship was scheduled to take British troops to the Middle East to fight. So I was with the other 12 in Bombay, and the troop ship took the soldiers to the Middle East.

>> Bill Benson: And you would stay in India for the duration -- you stayed in India for the rest of the war?

>> Henry Kahn: Well, I'll tell you about that.

>> Bill Benson: Okay.

>> Henry Kahn: So now I could have asked to be send back to prison, but I had no taste for that. There was no reason for me to go back to England. I wanted to get to United States eventually. Which eventually I did, but it took quite a few years before that. Anyway, I was in Bombay now and I wanted to get -- learn something, something that would help. A gentleman from the Jewish Relief Association took interest in the 13 of us and invited six of us at one time and seven of us -- the other seven at another time, and we had a big meal at his house. He had a beautiful home, and I became friendly with him, and I ask him to see if I could get a job learning something. Well, he knew somebody in the mechanic business, and I could work there for a while, but the owner wouldn't allow me to do anything at all. And the assistant, he showed me a few things, but basically I couldn't learn anything. I didn't get any money to speak of. I didn't even get enough money to pay for the fare, so that was no good. I said, you have

to give me more money or teach me something or I can't afford to work for you anymore. So I turned things around. He affording me or I affording him.

So now, since I had some knowledge in bookkeeping, as I told you, I had a chance to go to work as a bookkeeper. A bookkeeper in a small office of a gentleman who had an consulting engineer office. He was a consulting engineer, quote, unquote, and he was trying to sell some stuff. So I worked for him and I got 35 rupees, which was an improvement from what I got from the last, but enough to get out of the home. I wanted to get out of there.

Well, I bought myself a little bookkeeping for 12 dollars and 6 cents. I quickly read it and lo and behold I was a bookkeeper.

So now I worked for him for a while. Then an opening came at the Indian Tool Company, and it was owned at the time by a Czech gentleman, and he offered me a job to supervise the night shift. Well, I was 17 years old -- or 18 years old by then, and I was supposed to supervise the night shift.

Well, the qualification I had was...

You understand?

[chuckles]

So I went there at 5:00 in the afternoon after the people left, the workers left. I waited until about 8:00 when the night shift started. There were a few people, about ten of them. They worked on the lathe. This was a tool company that made spits for making holes. They were small, eighth of an inch to two inches. And there were machines that hardened. It was interesting.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, I'm going to jump in for a minute. There's some things I still want you to tell us about in the remaining time. One of them is... tell us about the friend of yours from Germany who wrote a letter to your parents. You had a friend, Eric.

>> Henry Kahn: That's months later, you know. Well, not months later, that's not true. While I was -- I had been in Madras and came back and a very good friend of mine, whom I met in Kinder in Germany, and constant contact, and I met him in England also. He had gotten to the United States. He was in the United States Army and assigned to the corps, and he came to Bombay, and he met somebody who knew that I had come back from Madras, and he called me up and I met him for three days. And he -- that's not right. It's a little different. He took me to the PX, which was very impressive, and on the second day he found out that his mother passed away in New York, and the third day he left. I didn't see him again until I got to the United States in '46. But after I got to Bombay, a gentleman left for America, and he -- and I asked him to see that friend of mine who lived in New York, the same guy. And when he -- he immediately wrote to my parents to say that I am safe in India and my parents were extremely grateful. They wrote a very nice letter to my friend, who in turn gave it to me eventually, and to thank him, because they didn't know what had happened to me, because there was no news at all.

>> Bill Benson: Was that the last letter you ever had from your parents?

>> Henry Kahn: That was the last letter I got from my parents.

>> Bill Benson: In the time we have left, Henry, tell us about Doreen. Tell us about...

>> Henry Kahn: Well, after I had come back from Madras, I was there for about three quarters of a year. A friend of mine, he took me to the Maccabi Sports Club, they play Ping-Pong over there and stuff like that. And there was a girl who played Ping-Pong. And I thought I could play Ping-Pong, but she beat me most of the time, so I had to get even with her. What do you think I did? I married her.

[ Laughter ]

But that wasn't right away. Because when I got to the United States in '46, I prepared for that also. But anyway, seven months after I got to the United States, I was captain in the army, and while I was in the army, I went to the state department and spoke to somebody over there and asked them -- let's see -- I asked them whether they could do anything for my sweetheart. I had a conditional engagement with her. In other words, if and when we meet again, and feel the same way about each other as we do now, we get married. We got married for 64 years until she passed away in 2012. And while they didn't do much, but they told me that something could be done. I was in the army. I knew there were three ways of doing things, the right way, the wrong way and the army way. And the army it always works one way.

So her name was Doreen. She worked across the street from the American Embassy, and one day she got a call and asked whether she still wanted to get to the United States. She said yes. So the next day she got another call. And she was told "When do you want to go?"

As simple as that.

After two and a half years and 113 letters that we exchanged, both of us did, we finally -- she finally arrived in New York, and she arrived on the 9th of June, 1948, and on the 27th we became husband and wife... voila!

[Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Henry, if you're okay with this, I want to read something that Doreen wrote that you shared with me.

Henry shared with me that Doreen wrote on her journal new year's day, 1946.

This is while they were still in India.

"Danced every dance with Henry and so ends 1945 with no regrets, the most interesting year I've ever experienced."

What a love story.

So the last thing I have to ask you about, Henry, before we close the program, when did you learn about what happened to your parents?

>> Henry Kahn: About what?

>> Bill Benson: When did you learn about what happened to your parents?

>> Henry Kahn: Well, while my wife was alive, I didn't do anything with the Holocaust because she had no interest in that. We did everything together. I was a member with her of the National Council of Jewish Women. However, after she passed away, I decided I would work in the Holocaust Museum, which I did. And there I found out that my parents had been sent in '41, to Lodz, to the concentration camp over there. My father eventually died in '43, I believe, and my mother survived until '44, and apparently she was in a force march to be sent back to Germany. However, the Nazis, they let them go to the border of Germany in Poland. They were forced to dig their own graves and then they were machine gunned.

So that's the story of my mother. Not everybody was as lucky as I was. In fact, the majority of people were less fortunate than I was. And I was an exceptional exception, I would say. I didn't hear a shot in earnest during the whole war.

>> Bill Benson: I'm going to turn back to Henry in a minute. It's our tradition at First Person that our First Person gets the last word, so Henry will close our program. As you can tell, we could have spent the rest of the afternoon, there were so many details and other stories that Henry could have told us. So we don't get to hear those, and not an opportunity for you to ask him questions from the audience, but Henry is going to stay up here when he finishes and we invite anybody who would like to come up on stage to come up and meet Henry, shake his hand, get your picture taken with him, or ask him a question if you have one, if that's okay with you, Henry.

>> Henry Kahn: Okay, sure.

>> Bill Benson: Before I turn it back to Henry, let me thank you all for being here. Remind you, we'll have a First Person program each Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August and we hope you can join us again this year. If not, in 2017.

So with that I'm going to turn it back to Henry to close today's program.

>> Henry Kahn: If you know somebody whom you hate and you really have a very good reason to hate him, remember, do not generalize and do not assume that everybody in the same category, everybody with the same background is the same. Discriminatory and judicious and make sure that you don't prejudice what you think about the other people. You're justified in hating that one person, but do not ever generalize. That's my suggestion.

[Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Henry.

[Applause]