https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON JILL PAULY
Wednesday, July 6, 2016
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Remote CART Captioning

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.
This transcript is being provided in rough-draft format.

HOME TEAM CAPTIONS
www.hometeamcaptions.com

>> 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 and our First Person today is Mrs. Jill Pauly, 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 am pleased to let you know that Mr. Louis Smith is here with us today.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: *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 a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue twice-weekly through mid-August. The museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming First Person guests. The address is also in your program.

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 Jill Pauly's biography so that you can remember and share her testimony after you leave here today.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

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

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

Jill Pauly was born Gisella Renate Berg on May 1, 1933, in Cologne, Germany. The arrow on the map points to the city of Cologne. Jill and her family lived in Lechenich, a small town outside of Cologne.

In this photo, Jill, who is on the right, and her older sister, Inge, picnic in the Eifel Mountains in 1937, with their mother, Clara, and their aunt and uncle. The Nazis came to power shortly before Jill was born in 1933.

On November 9, through November 10, 1938, the Nazis carried out a nationwide Pogrom against Germany's Jews, known as Kristallnacht, Night of Broken Glass. Alerted to the danger, Jill and her family fled to Cologne.

Jill's family decided to emigrate from Germany and in May of 1939, they left for Kenya. In this photo we see Jill, who is on the right, and Inge while on the German ship that took them on a two-week journey from Genoa, Italy, to Mombasa, Kenya.

Jill and her family lived in Kenya for the next seven years. Pictured here is a group portrait of Jill's extended family on their farm in Kenya. Jill Is in the middle surrounded by her mother and father in the upper right-hand corner, her grandparents to either side of her, her uncle, and her sister, Inge, who is just behind Jill.

Jill and her husband have lived in the Washington, D.C. area since 1974 but will soon be moving to Long Island to be closer to her children. Curt will be joining us this morning here with Jill. Jill and Curt have two children, four grandchildren, and have added just another great grandchildren for a total of two great grandchildren.

Jill enjoyed a successful career in real estate. She volunteers at the museum's Donors Desk Monday mornings where Jill says she meets "Such lovely people which makes it so rewarding."

With that, I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Mrs. Jill Pauly.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Jill. Thank you so much for joining us and for being willing to be our First Person today. We have just an hour and you have a great deal to share with us so we are going to start right away.

>> Jill Pauly: Ok.

>> Bill Benson: You told me, Jill, that Kristallnacht, Night of Broken Glass, was the catalyst for the directions and decisions that your family's life took for the balance of the Holocaust and the war. You were very young at that time, just 5 years of age. Let’s begin with you telling us about your family and the events and your family's life leading up to Kristallnacht and that catalytic event for you and your family.

>> Jill Pauly: Actually, I was thinking about it this morning or last night, about the generations of my family going back in the area near Cologne, one hour by car from Holland. I personally have genealogy that go back to the early 1700s in that area.

>> Bill Benson: Some 300 years' worth of family.

>> Jill Pauly: Yes. And my father's mother, my grandmother, who lived with us until she passed away, we lived together, told the family that she believed her ancestors escaped the Inquisition in Spain and the family moved -- we don't know where to but landed up in a city Crefeld, also about 45 minutes from Holland. Now, they might not have settled there right away. I have a feeling that a lot of the Jews that came up through Spain and upward went to The Netherlands.

>> Bill Benson: Ok.

>> Jill Pauly: And then wandered over. That's one side. The other side I don't know. Been there forever.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about your parents. What was your father's occupation?

>> Jill Pauly: My father was a cattle dealer. Going back to the 1600s there were two professions that the churches permitted the Jews to go into: one was horse training; the other was cattle dealing. These people were small farmers, land keepers, Orthodox Jews, in my case. They had small businesses. I read some stuff on it. They had to go to court because somebody did something to their cow. It was little tiny business.

By the time my late father was married, they had a big cattle business. There were four partners in it, family. They had land. They had houses. They had money. They did well.

My father really was a very creative person and superbly talented with animals. So much so, when he came to the United States and settled in New Jersey -- what do you call a doctor -- the veterinarian. The veterinarian in the area would pick him up at 4:00, 5:00 in the morning, which disturbed everybody. Where did you go at 4:00, 5:00 in the morning? He would come back and say, “Well, he had a very serious case and I tried to help him save the animal.”

>> Bill Benson: So he knew his business.

>> Jill Pauly: He knew his business.

>> Bill Benson: The Nazis came to power in 1933, five years before Kristallnacht. Right away restrictions on Jews began. One of the things you had told me, that keeping kosher was forbidden by the Nazis and yet at considerable risk your family continued to do so. Tell us how they managed that.

>> Jill Pauly: It was a form of resistance. They were very courageous. They decided -- they had been forbidden slaughtering, forbidden to do business in 1937. You know, they were hemmed in. There were families in the area, thank God, where we lived that were very anti-Nazi that eventually helped them a lot. But they went on our own with this kosher slaughtering. Just wouldn't give it up. I guess 99% of the people did. They were the 1% that wouldn't. They took risks. They were raided. Our house was raided. I don't remember that. I must have been there. And my uncle had hiding places for these special knives. He strapped them to the inside of the chimney. They didn't get them. And they continued doing it.

I had one uncle -- I went back in 2012. I went to his house where they lived. And I tried to see if my memory -- nothing kicked in. But I saw a retaining wall on one side of the yard that had hooks built into it. And I asked the woman who took me there, I said, "What are those for, those round things?" She said, "They used to tie up the cattle there."

>> Bill Benson: In the wall.

>> Jill Pauly: He had an abattoir. He was a kosher slaughterer. He was the one in the family that produced and sold the meat. He decided to continue doing it. And what he did -- he had a Nazi right next door who watched every step they took. He did the kosher killing. He had a man help him that he trusted. And then he took a gun and shot to the severed head so the neighbor next door would think they shot the animal and had no way of proving he didn't. They were really defiant.

According to Jewish law, when you're under that kind of pressure, you don't have to keep these laws. But they also didn't know how long it would last because their non-Jewish friends told them this is ridiculous; this can't last.

>> Bill Benson: This guy Hitler is not going to last.

>> Jill Pauly: No! They thought he was crazy. That was a small percentage.

>> Bill Benson: Right. Jill, you are four years younger than your sister, Inge. So at that time you were not in school but Inge was in school. Tell us a little bit, from what you know from Inge, what her school experience was like.

>> Jill Pauly: It was really sad, really. This is an example of what Jewish children had to go through. They sent her to -- by the way, schooling was compulsory. So they sent her to the community public school. She was 6. She was beaten by a boy. She turned around and hit him. She hit him on the nose, I think. She just struck out and he was bleeding. And my parents became very frightened. They took her out of the school. So at the age of 6 she was sent away from home. This goes for many, many of the German Jewish children. They could not stay at home to go to school because there were no Jewish schools in villages and they were too young to commute to the big cities. So the children had to be

moved. Luckily there was a schoolhouse where my grandmother lived, in another city, another town. She lived with my grandmother and an aunt. It was very sad.

There was a school teacher there who was really well-known. His name was Lara Gottlieb. He had from first grade to eight grade in one room. He taught Hebrew, Hebrew reading. It was Jewish. And at the same time, they also had secular studies. He was outstanding. I mean, what my sister had by the age of 9 was unbelievable. And I read his history, his story. He would not leave town where he was. He said he had never done anything to anyone. He wasn't political. He wasn't into anything detrimental. Nobody had any issues with him, so he felt people wouldn't do anything to him. They picked him up. They sent him to the camps. I can't remember which one but he was murdered in a camp. He was really a very innocent man.

>> Bill Benson: Jill, of course, five years after Hitler came to power, the night of November 9 through 10, 1938 is what we call Kristallnacht or Night of Broken Glass. Tell us what you recall and what you know about the events of that terrible night and what happened that night for your family.

>> Jill Pauly: Kristallnacht happened in the morning, November 9, 1939. I was 5 1/2. For some reason, my grandparents and I were sitting in the living room, where we never sat. We usually were in the kitchen but we were in the living room because there was a little stove in there. I think it was cold that November night. There was a knock on the door at 9:00 in the morning by a righteous gentile, a friend. He told my father not to go near the synagogue that day. My father was dressed to go. I remember he was wearing a white shirt. It was 9:00. My father said, “Why?” He said, "Don't ask me why. If I tell you not to go. Don't go." He says, "But I don't know what you're talking about. What's happening?" The guy said, "It's something bad." And he left.

Well, that really -- until then the phones hadn't rung. They hadn't heard anything. It was not in the newspaper. It wasn't announced, of course. And started screaming. They were so terrified. Didn't know where to go, what to do. I guess there were a lot of recriminations about not having left when they should have left.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

My grandmother had a broken leg. Her leg was in a cast. She was a very heavy woman. She jumped out of that chair and she said, "Call a driver. We're leaving." We're leaving, you know. Leaving where? Doing what? Where are you going? She decided to get the driver, who was a non-Jewish man, a friend, but he did it for money, it was his business, and he took my sister and I and the grandparents.

And my God when we came out --

>> Bill Benson: Separately from your parents?

>> Jill Pauly: Separately. They removed us from the parents. And when we came out the front door, my sister started to scream. When I saw her so terrorized, I suppose I started screaming, too. And what was going on is we were smelling smoke. We were seeing flakes fly through the air. It was gray. It was the synagogue burning. It was just a block and a half up the street.

They stuffed us in the car. My grandmother said, "Get down on the floor. Put your face down." We did. And she put her feet on one of us and my grandfather put his feet on the other one. It really helped it quieted us down. We were not allowed to get up until we were close to Cologne. Then she let us look out the window. And I remember seeing fires. Something dusky.

I remember seeing the Nazi flags for first time. They really kept me under wraps. I wasn't out of the house without an adult ever. I couldn't play in our own backyard because my mother was afraid of being overlooked by neighbors' teenaged children who might be in the Nazi Party. So to me this was like, they were beautiful, those flags. The colors were pretty.

The guy drove us to a street. We got out. And we went into an apartment where four uncle and aunts lived together in retirement. It was a two-bedroom apartment. I don't even remember that. I spoke to my sister last night. She said, "You know, that was a two-bedroom apartment and we were 12 people in there." What I do remember very much is the instructions the adults gave us. That frightened me to the point, I guess, of depression. I was unhappy in that apartment with all of these adults, some of them older no children -- you know, I never had children to play with. It was just awful. I reacted very badly. I had a personality change overnight.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

At home in the country, in the house where we lived, my grandmother was very good at keeping me occupied but once I was in that apartment she wasn't there and my grandfather wasn't there. And my mother was -- she had a sick mother in the apartment who was dying of cancer, nobody had room for anything. There were no beds for us. We didn't sleep in a bed, my sister and I, for 18 months, until we were settled.

>> Bill Benson: Was your father in the house with you?

>> Jill Pauly: No.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about your father.

>> Jill Pauly: No. The men ran away. They took the family cars and kept driving.

>> Bill Benson: Because the Jewish men were being rounded up.

>> Jill Pauly: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: 30,000 in total, I believe.

>> Jill Pauly: Yes. But they didn't know that then. They just knew they were going to be picked up. So they got in cars and they drove. They eventually end up in the woods, overnight. They heard, the next morning, that it was called off. That doesn't mean they weren't picking people up anymore but that the looting, the beating, and the destruction was called off.

I have to tell you 40 years later what happened. I went back to Germany the first time in 1982. A woman came to visit me. She wanted to meet me. I never met her before. I didn't know who she was. And she asked me -- she said, "I have a particular question. What was your father and his brothers doing at the gas station in Lechenich on Kristallnacht?"

>> Bill Benson: 40 years later she asked you this question?

>> Jill Pauly: Yeah. 1982. I said, "Well, I would presume they were getting gasoline. Why are you asking me?" She said, "Because I was there. I saw them." Luck. 10 years old it would have been very easy for this little girl to report that the Jews were at the gas station just now.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

I came back to New York, to the states, and I asked my mother about this because I was curious. And she said, "Yes. That was a gas station that was willing to sell gas to the Jews and not report them." So it was luck.

Kristallnacht was on a Thursday. On a Friday afternoon the men came into Cologne for the Sabbath. And on Sunday morning -- no it must have been immediate because they left. Saturday night we went upstairs into the building where the apartment was, where we were gathered. And my father was going to go into hiding with us in the attic, like others did. And thank God -- Inge screamed at night. She had nightmares. So he knew they couldn't stay there. So on Sunday they all got in a car, three men, and drove into Holland without permission. They were caught. They were put in prison. And that's a whole different part of the story, the Dutch part.

>> Bill Benson: Why don't you continue with that part of it.

>> Jill Pauly: Ok.

My parents were very connected in Holland because it was an hour away by car. My father did a lot of business there, and my uncles. And two of my uncles and an aunt left Germany in 1937 to go to Holland because you couldn't make a living in Germany any longer. The uncles used to work for a company, the two uncles. And the company was closed down by the Nazis. In 1937 they got a card, a little postcard from the government, that they were no longer allowed to do business.

So my family was not functioning, the business wasn't functioning, so this family had to go to Holland. And when they got to Holland, they weren't allowed to work because they came in and Holland had already been occupied by maybe 30,000 German Jews and the Dutch were having economic problems so they forbid them to work. If they had money to live on, fine. If they didn't, that was tough.

But they were connected there. And through the connection in Holland -- one of my uncles was a partisan. He used to take newspapers to the river, to the water, whatever water there was, I don't know, and used to sit there and read newspapers. And Jews swam over from Germany.

>> Bill Benson: Across the border.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

>> Jill Pauly: Mm-hmm. They swam. And he had coats with him and newspapers and handed them coats and newspapers. And they disappeared into Holland. He was gutsy. He was in his 20s. He was fluent in Dutch. He was born on the Dutch border.

He came to see the men in the prison.

>> Bill Benson: Where your father was.

>> Jill Pauly: Where the three men, my father and my two uncles. He said to the prison guard, "What are you going to do with these people?" "I'm sending them back to Germany tomorrow morning." He was a Nazi. And my uncle said, "You can't do that. It's against the law." "You have to have written permission from The Hague." He had called an attorney before. "And you can't send them back without that written permission." So the guy said, "You bet I will if I don't have that piece of paper." He got him that piece of paper. And believe it or not, they were connected to a man who was the court Jew to the queen.

>> Bill Benson: The queen of the Netherlands?

>> Jill Pauly: The queen of the Netherlands wrote a permission for these three men to stay interned in Holland in a camp, until they could leave. She saved their lives. They were in an internment camp for nine months. It wasn't a concentration camp but they suffered terribly from being cut off from everybody. They couldn't communicate.

My uncle told me that my father was desperate in that camp. Everything he had in his life was in Germany.

>> Bill Benson: Including the rest of his family.

>> Jill Pauly: Right.

>> Bill Benson: So, Jill, here's your father and your two uncles interned in Holland. They can't get out of there. And now the rest of the family really springs into action. Your family makes a decision that we must leave Germany. And you were able to accomplish that by June, I believe it was, 1939, about seven months after Kristallnacht.

>> Jill Pauly: Yes.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

>> Bill Benson: Tell us how that came about, what the family went through in order for you to leave Germany knowing that they felt they had to get out of there.

>> Jill Pauly: They knew that before. I think it was on the table from 1935.

>> Bill Benson: Mm-hmm.

>> Jill Pauly: But my father was the kind of man who didn't want to go to a country where he couldn't make a living. He had seven people to support. My mother said he spent a whole year of 1937 looking for a way out. He couldn't work at home.

By the way, I really need to bring this up. A postcard telling people as of this day you may not continue making a living. So that had to be obeyed.

>> Bill Benson: Your career, your livelihood is over, that postcard.

>> Jill Pauly: One month later I saw the postcard. I don't know what happened to it. I have it in my papers somewhere. 1st of January 1938, telling my father and the family that everything they own now belongs to the state. So making a decision to leave the country was not that difficult. The difficulty was there were no countries letting people in. Half of the Jews of Germany left before Kristallnacht but most of them went to surrounding countries and they were caught up in the war. So it was possible to get out. We just couldn't get in anywhere.

The woman that married into the family came from a very educated family. She had a cousin who saw Hitler speak on the street in Munich in the `20s. He had made a decision that as soon as he got finished with his university he was leaving and he went to England. And he and his partner started a chemical factory. This man had a sideline. He helped Jews get out of Germany into somewhere.

>> Bill Benson: From his place in England.

>> Jill Pauly: From his place in England. He had brought over his brother, out of Germany, put him through law school. This brother got a job with a company in Nairobi, Kenya, a law firm. So in 1937, his brother went to Nairobi.

Three or four years ago we got letters that passed between the families. This man -- his name was Herman Strauss, was in this company in Nairobi where there was a man who had very good

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

relations with the British government. I believe he was Jewish. And through that connection, and the money that my grandmother sent out of the country the day I was born -- she sent the business money into Holland. She wouldn't allow it to stay in Germany in any bank. So with that money she was able to facilitate a getting out.

>> Bill Benson: So he was able to purchase affidavits or visas that allowed you to travel to Kenya?

>> Jill Pauly: They allowed us to come in. And when they found out that the family had money, they became very interested, according to the letters. And they didn't quite know how to get ahold of that money. [Laughter] So they charged a lot of -- a lot of money per head, per person, to come in.

Obviously, I saw the list three, four years ago, of the people who applied, her side of the family, the parents applied, and they were rejected. And many years later her family, members of her family that survived, disowned her because she saved our side -- her husband's side but she did not save her side. And we never knew why. Well, her son found out, by chance, by calling England three, four years ago. He spoke to the daughter of the man who saved us. She said the reason she could not bring her parents out was because the sister was an epileptic and they would not accept the sister so the parents decided to stay with the sister. This woman suffered. She saved 19 people and she suffered for the rest of her life. She was on drugs to keep her going. She was so depressed. And she never knew that this happened because of her sister's illness.

>> Bill Benson: But she was able to get your family along with your relative in England --

>> Jill Pauly: We got into Kenya. June -- no. July 1939. My father and the three men who were imprisoned in Holland were already in Kenya. They had gotten us places to stay.

It was terribly difficult on my mother.

>> Bill Benson: How many of you in total left Germany?

>> Jill Pauly: Germany, 12 of us were on the train. In Holland, they came later. The men, the three men that were interned, left first.

>> Bill Benson: Got there before you.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

>> Jill Pauly: Then we left. Then the others -- there was a family of four in Holland, went on the boat the day Hitler walked in.

>> Bill Benson: Into Holland. Mm-hmm.

So, your mother, particularly, and grandparents, which were I think crucial to making the decisions, they made all the arrangements in Germany, working with the folks in England. They were able to pack up a lot of stuff to move, which, of course, never made it. Right?

>> Jill Pauly: Right. They had money in the bank. [Laughter] That's funny. And the women went out and decided to buy -- I mean, they were going to Africa in 1939. They didn't really know where they were going and what this was like or where they would be living. So they bought all sorts of things. With all the money that was left in the banks, they gave some to the relatives that needed it and the rest they went out shopping. And each family had a lift. A lift is like a 9-by-10 room full of boxes.

>> Bill Benson: Stuff to go to Kenya.

>> Jill Pauly: Mm-hmm. And these were sent to Hamburg, to the port. I think it was seven lifts. Only three or four arrived. The rest didn't.

>> Bill Benson: If I remember from something you told me, at that time you were allowed to leave and take goods with you but you had to pay 100% tax on anything you took out of the country.

>> Jill Pauly: You had to pay double the tax on everything.

>> Bill Benson: To get out.

>> Jill Pauly: On tickets, on anything that you took out of the country, for Jews it was double.

>> Bill Benson: Yet the majority of it did not make it.

>> Jill Pauly: A lot of it.

>> Bill Benson: One of the ironies you shared with me, when you finally made your way to leave Germany, you made your way to Italy to board a German ship. A German ship was taking you to Kenya.

>> Jill Pauly: First, the trip from Cologne to Genoa was so dangerous. And the danger was that we would get separated. A big thing for the Germans separating families and they it well. So my mother sat

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

us down, as little as we were. I was 6. She said she got -- she got across that this was not for children; this was an adult thing. We were not to move on that train. We were not to ask for food, not to go to the bathroom, nothing. We were to sit still from Cologne until we were out of the country. And, again, I wanted to know why. I then started to understand that we could be separated. And I was terrified. So I was very good. We didn't move.

My very sick grandmother was in the compartment with us. When we went over the border from Germany into Switzerland, I can promise you I had never, ever seen my mother smile from the day I was born. Her face was in a constant state of pain until we crossed that line out of Germany.

>> Bill Benson: Into Switzerland, a neutral country.

>> Jill Pauly: Into Switzerland. Of course, she knew when we got to Genoa, we were getting back on a German ship, which was a Nazi ship, and she had the two children, my grandparents, and they were old. We got on that ship and she hears that all the Jews will be on the lower deck and the rest of humanity on the upper decks. And she really got furious. She was so angry. But she had to put up with it.

We were on the ship. And to me it was heaven. You know why? I was sun deprived. I needed the energy of the sun. I was a child that was inside all the time.

>> Bill Benson: You had been so completely protected.

>> Jill Pauly: Mm-hmm. And when I was happy, I sang. I was singing.

>> Bill Benson: And there's a story there. You have to share that.

>> Jill Pauly: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

I was off by myself singing. I don't know what I played with, maybe a doll. I was overheard by the Nazi captain. I don't know who. He called my mother up and said he wanted to know if she would give permission for me to sing for the crew on the ship. What was she going to say?

There were problems. I had learned the whole Passover history, the Haggadah, which we read and sing once a year at the Sadr. My uncles had gorgeous voices. One of them was an opera singer. And to keep me busy, they taught me the whole Haggadah music. And I sang German folk

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

songs. Who knows what I was singing. I don't know. And the women got so frightened because they didn't want me to sing Hebrew songs.

>> Bill Benson: To the Nazi the company and his crew.

>> Jill Pauly: Yeah. When I was 6 years old. They had me up in the cabin, my two grandmothers and a couple of the aunts, singing with they what I should sing and what I shouldn't sing. I guess I made it. I thought I did it once. But a lady that's still living, who is 98, always told me, no, you did it every day for two weeks.

It made them happy, I guess. And they left us alone. They really didn't bother us on the ship. But for my mother it was a terrible stress because she didn't know if the ship was going to take us to Kenya. What did they know?

When we got to the harbor in Mombasa there was a man in European clothes and a European hat and that was my father.

>> Bill Benson: Waiting for you in Mombasa.

>> Jill Pauly: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

We had a little experience with my mother. He had rented a room somewhere. I don't know what it was, a hotel, I don't know, for us to stay the first night and then continue traveling by train. I was sleeping on something called a camp bed, at the foot of the bed. I hear screaming. It was dark out. My mother was screaming. And we didn't know why. There was a black man in a long white gown and a hat serving tea before daybreak. And he frightened my mother. She made it a condition -- I remember her saying "As long as I'm in country I don't want to be woken up at 6:00 in the morning for tea." Cultural.

>> Bill Benson: If I remember correctly, one of your grandfathers or grandparents would not leave the ship for a while because it was the Shabbat. Wasn't it?

>> Jill Pauly: No, no.

>> Bill Benson: No?

>> Jill Pauly: No. He wouldn't go to Kenya unless he knew there was kosher food on the ship.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

>> Bill Benson: And he was able to get it. Right?

>> Jill Pauly: The women called Berlin. There was some kind of organization that brought the food to the ship. And according to Jewish law, he didn't have to do that either. I mean, they didn't know what laid ahead. They could have done anything. They just didn't know. Nobody knew what the final solution would be.

>> Bill Benson: When you arrived in Kenya, I believe it was 1939, of course, July, the war began just a couple of months later. In fact, just over a month later, September 1, when Germany and Russia invaded Poland, the start of World War II. By that time you're in Kenya. So now you're in a completely different world. What was that like for the family?

>> Jill Pauly: Difficult. Difficult in a different way. The persecution continued. My sister and I, we were under persecution for 12 years. The family was under persecution for 12 years. In Kenya there were laws pertaining to Germans, of course, but German Jews, we were German Jews. We always felt they didn't understand. Why were they doing this? We came there to be liberated from fear. And the reason they didn't understand it is because we didn't know that there were Nazis stealing Jewish identities and sneaking into allied countries. So they had no way of knowing who was who. So when the war broke out, they came around and they picked up all the men in the family and put them in camps. And we were left -- my grandmother told them if they took the grandfather, she would have to come along. So they didn’t take him. They left him.

>> Bill Benson: So in the eyes of the British, because you were first and foremost in their eyes German therefore you were considered enemy aliens.

>> Jill Pauly: We were enemy aliens.

>> Bill Benson: Even though you escaped there to get away from the Nazis.

>> Jill Pauly: Right. And we remained enemy aliens until the end of the war. So the family had enough money left for a downpayment on a farm. Nothing else. They couldn't go for haircuts after that. Nothing. All the money you had was spent on saving us. There we were on a farm. They locked us up. We were interned on the farm. We could not leave without permission. Whenever they left the farm, they had to

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

send a black man on a bicycle to a place called Kiambu, where the commissioner was, and sign a statement that they could leave the farm to go shopping. They didn't go every week. They went every two, three weeks to Nairobi to shop.

Now, I don't know if my sister and I needed anything because we had to go to school. They didn't interfere in that.

>> Bill Benson: And you had to go to English school.

>> Jill Pauly: British schools. We went to British boarding schools. We did not board in the schools because my mother wouldn't let us go where there was no kosher food. So we lived with families that were close to the schools. They were very difficult schools, very, very difficult schools. The British education was tough. And the teachers were mean, very mean.

I learned later that those teachers were placed there against their will. They really didn't do this voluntarily. They were placed there by the government and they didn't like it. So they had to let it out somewhere. What? A little Jewish girl? You can pick on her anytime.

>> Bill Benson: I was struck when you told me that almost right away there you are in English-speaking school, of course you don't speak English, and they're demanding that you sing "God Save the King."

>> Jill Pauly: Mm-hmm.

>> Bill Benson: And you learned Wordsworth, "The Daffodils," and had to recite that. Your education had to come very quickly.

>> Jill Pauly: Very quickly. We lived in a big house in Nairobi for six weeks. My father put us into school the first day we got there. The tradition was that the black young men would carry our lunch boxes and walk us to school. Now, this is with a mother coming out of Nazi Germany, ok? We had to go to school. So these two young men took us. It was about a 25, 20, 25-minute walk through the woods, over a water, you know, where you had to take your shoes and socks off to cross over it, the school. We didn't know any language. We didn't know Swahili. We didn't know English. They certainly didn't know German. Within six weeks we understand the language. We understood the Swahili. We

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

were speaking with them. English was a little longer, three months. The teachers were merciless, absolutely merciless.

>> Bill Benson: And during that time, Jill, of course the British that were there, the men were, of course, going off to fight, joining the Army, having to leave their enterprises, their farms and ranches that they had been running. So that's when they turned to the interned men. Tell us what happened to the men.

>> Jill Pauly: The men came out of internment a week after they were put in because we had the farm, because we had put a downpayment on the farm. Other men couldn't leave until they had jobs. They placed them far away from Nairobi. We were 20 miles from Nairobi, which wasn't so far.

I'm losing my track. Where was I?

>> Bill Benson: Describing that the men now had to manage the Jewish farms.

>> Jill Pauly: Yeah. The men, the refugees, were assigned responsibilities to go to British farms and help the women run those farms as their jobs as secondary jobs. And my father did that for the duration of the war, and several of the other men did it. It worked out because these people needed us and they were close by. That was it.

>> Bill Benson: You were here with us a couple of years ago with your sister, Inge, and I think Inge might have mentioned this. You had a clandestined radio at your house. Tell us about that.

>> Jill Pauly: We had a -- it wasn't clandestine. It was just a radio. It ran on batteries. And my uncles didn't want those batteries used because you couldn't get new ones so quickly.

>> Bill Benson: And you only listened to what was going on in the war at that time.

>> Jill Pauly: Yes. And we were really living in the most primitive conditions you can imagine. They found a cinderblock house with windows that had frames but no glass. It was just very primitive. But it was cinderblock with a tin roof. They worked on it for about a month, with a lot of help, and it was a nice home. We called it home.

>> Bill Benson: I know we're moving forward because of time, Jill. Of course, you would go through one more major upheaval, I think, in 1947, just before the uprising.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

>> Jill Pauly: No. We left.

>> Bill Benson: I was going to say, you left right before. What prompted you to leave Kenya and how did you make it to the United States?

>> Bill Benson: My father was not happy with the political behavior of the British. They were very cruel to the indigenous black people. And my father always told us, according to the Torah, that that was forbidden; you can't do that. He said, “I don't want my daughters growing up in this society. I'm getting out. We're leaving the day the war is over.” Well, we couldn't get out the day the war was over because we didn't have people in the United States who could sponsor us. That took another couple of years. We left in `47 in `52 they lost the farm. They still had the farm. Financially they lost the farm, again. Because of the Mau Mau. And, well, life just went on. You had to work hard and try to make a good beginning in a country.

>> Bill Benson: So you started all over again.

>> Jill Pauly: All over again, the third time. It was difficult.

>> Bill Benson: You were 14 when you arrived.

>> Jill Pauly: Right.

>> Bill Benson: What was it like for you? You now at least speak English. So you knew the language.

>> Jill Pauly: First of all, the first year in school I loafed. I didn't do anything. And I became salutatorian. I don't know if I opened a book. I sat on a bench, went home. I was way ahead. But then things started changing when I went to high school.

>> Bill Benson: Because of the British schools you were way ahead.

>> Jill Pauly: Yes. When I went to high school, things got difficult because I had to work. And I had gotten used to not working. And I started making new friends. It was very, very difficult for me. There was one thing in this world that I was jealous of, nothing else, ever, was the comfort level of the kids around me: them growing up together, knowing each other, the way it is in America. It wasn't like that for me. I was removed from family and friends and went to schools with kids who were not particularly

my cup of tea. So I had to start from scratch at 14. They had already had 14 years before me in America. So I had to play catch-up. It took me a while but not too long.

>> Bill Benson: Did your parents make the transition relatively easy or was that difficult for them?

>> Jill Pauly: Very difficult.

>> Bill Benson: Very difficult.

>> Jill Pauly: Very difficult. Because of their age. My father was 52. To start over at 52 is very hard.

>> Bill Benson: He went into the cattle business again.

>> Jill Pauly: Yes, he did eventually. Mm-hmm. And made a success of it again. Then he got sick and he sold out the farm.

We love the United States. I did. I didn't like when I arrived. We didn't see the Statue of Liberty and my father promised us that.

>> [Laughter]

>> Jill Pauly: We arrived in Boston.

>> Bill Benson: Just a couple of last questions before we close. I know we didn't have a chance for you to ask Jill some questions but when Jill finishes, we're -- Jill's going to remain here with us on the stage. So if anybody would like to come up and ask her a question or just, you know, shake her hand or take a photograph, whatever you want to do please feel free to do that when we close.

You mentioned to me that the Fourth of July -- in the past you've mentioned the Fourth of July has special significance for you. Of course, we just celebrated the Fourth. Why is it so special for you?

>> Jill Pauly: Love of country and love of patriotism. I heard a radio program on the Fourth of July where a young man who won the medal of honor spoke. And he spoke about his background and his life. I believe he was from either Iowa or Idaho. I remember clearly him saying that he wasn't a very good student in school but when he was a junior, in chemistry class, 9/11 happened. They had a TV in the room. They saw a plane fly into a building and they thought it was some nut, you know, who lost his way and flew into the building. But then very quickly they saw that it was two huge planes and that it was terrorism. He goes home and he tells his mother that he's found his vocation in life; he wants to

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

join the military right away. And she said, no, you have to finish high school and then you can join the military. He talks about fighting and going into places where you have to shoot back and how he learned that what he was fighting for was not to go out and kill people. You kill people because they attack you. And he was going out to fight to keep what we have. And I was so impressed. And so happy to be living here. It's such a privilege.

>> Bill Benson: It's our tradition that our *First Person* has the last word so I'm going to turn back to Jill to give us her last word. When she's finished, our photograph, Joel, will come up on stage, take a photograph of Jill with you as the backdrop, so I will ask that you all stand at that time. Then as I mentioned, Jill will stay here on the stage so please feel free to come up and chat with her.

I want to thank all of you for being here. I remind you that we will have *First Person* programs each Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August. The museum's website provides information about each upcoming *First Person* guest and, of course, we'll have information about our program in 2017.

So with that Jill, close our program.

>> Jill Pauly: Ok. I think I just closed the program. I spoke about the young man who won the Medal of Honor and what a privilege it is to have people like that all over this country, young men who go off to fight in other countries to try to maintain what we have at home. It is so precious. Maybe you have to be a naturalized citizen and go through the hard times of becoming an American. It's not easy. I don't know anybody who just gets off the boat and becomes an American. It's a process. It's a very, very difficult process; culturally, financially, socially. It's difficult. It takes a long time. But it's all worth it.

We didn't do a thing or have a thing happen to us that hasn't been rewarding. My husband is here. He was in the forces during the Korean conflict. We adopted children in the United States. When I came to this country I was 13, not quite 14, got married at 24. So I was only here 10 years. And within a few years I adopted American babies that needed to be provided for. Otherwise they didn't give you the babies.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

So I don't think that a natural born American can ever understand what they have here. Most of the people that come here, 99%, are running away from something. They are coming to America to live because they want a better life and they fight for this life, to maintain it. So the speech yesterday that I heard really sort of galvanized what I feel.

With that, I thank you for coming and listening.

>> [Applause]