UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
Frank Liebermann
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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. We are in our 19th year of the First Person program. Thank you for joining us. Our First Person today is Mr. Kurt Pauly, whom you shall meet shortly.

This 2018 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.And I am pleased to let you know that Mr. Louis Smith is with us here today in the front row.

(Applause)

First Person is a series of twice-weekly 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 through mid-August. The museum's website, at www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming First Person guests.

Kurt will share with us 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 Kurt a few questions. If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our on-line conversation: Never Stop Asking Why. The conversation aims to inspire individuals and new generations to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises, and what this history means for societies today. To join the Never Stop Asking Why conversation, you can ask your question and tag the Museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and the hashtag #AskWhy. You can find the hashtag on the back of your program, as well.

Today's program will be live streamed on the Internet via the museum's website. This means people will be joining the program via a link from the museum's website and watching with us today from across the country and around the world. A recording of this program will be made available on the Museum's YouTube page. And we invite those of you who are here in the audience today to also join us on the web for the rest of our programs in April as they will also be live streamed. Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.

What you are about to hear from Kurt is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction.

Kurt Pauly was born to Jewish parents on March 26, 1930 in the city of Aachen, Germany. His mother's family had resided in Aachen since the 18th century. Here we see a picture of Kurt at age 6 in Germany. And this picture has particular significance for Kurt that we may hear more about later.

Kurt's mother Selma was the first cousin of Anne Frank's grandfather, pictured here with some of Kurt's other relatives at a Bar Mitzvah in 1912 in Germany. He is the man second to the left.

This photo is from the wedding of Kurt's parents, Selma Herz and Hugo Pauly, in 1927.

Kurt's father Hugo, who is pictured here, trained as a chef and worked as a butcher and also managed several stores for his father-in-law. Kurt, his parents, and his grandfather lived over one of those shops in a suburb of Aachen called Eilendorf. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, the situation drastically changed for the Paulys. Worsening conditions forced the family to close its shops. In 1936 the Paulys emigrated to Palestine, where Kurt's father had a trucking business.

Here is a photo of Kurt's family in 1936 in Palestine. We see his mother on the left, in the center behind Kurt is his cousin Walter, and his father is on the right.

In 1938 the family immigrated to the United States. This photo shows Kurt and his classmates in Cincinnati and Kurt is circled in this photograph.

They lived in Cincinnati until we moved to Vineland New Jersey in 1948. In 1938 Kurt was drafted into the United States Army. He was severely injured during artillery training and hospitalized for a lengthy period. After his discharge in November of 1953, Kurt attended the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business graduating with high honors and become ago Certified Public Accountant. While at university Kurt met Jill, who is also a Holocaust survivor and they were married in 1957. Kurt went on to a successful career as a CPA with several major national corporations retiring in 1992. Kurt and Jill had lived in Washington, DC area since 1974 but in 2016 moved to Long Island to be closer to their children. They have two children, four grandchildren,

and two great grandchildren who are 10 and 2 years old. I am pleased to let you know that Jill is here with Kurt today and she was our first person yesterday. Upon Kurt's retirement both he and Jill became active as part of the first group of volunteers with this museum in 1992, before it opened. Kurt was a volunteer with Visitor Services. Although Kurt was interviewed about his Holocaust experience by the Steven Spielberg founded Shoah Foundation, Kurt spoke here at first person last year for the first time publicly about what he and his family went through during the Holocaust. With that I would like you to join me in welcoming our *First Person*, Kurt Pauly.

(Applause)

Kurt, thank you so much for joining us and being willing to join us again on a *First Person* program. We're glad to have you back this year

Kurt Pauly: It's a pleasure.

Bill Benson: You have a great deal to share with us so we'll jump right in, if that's okay with you.

Kurt Pauly: Sure.

Bill Benson: Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. You were 6 years of age when you left Germany with your parents in 1936. Before we turn to your parents' decision to leave Germany and what that meant for you and your family, tell us what you can about your family and their lives prior to Hitler and the Nazi party taking control of Germany, those very early years.

Kurt Pauly: Well, as you indicated my mother's family had lived in Eilendorf for so many generations which made it very difficult for her to think even of leaving. I always think that people we have to thank for changing my mother's mind actually included the Nazis because they frightened her so with their activities that she realized

that my father's decision to leave Germany was probably the right one.

Bill Benson: And she eventually obviously agreed with that.

Kurt Pauly: Yes, she did.

Bill Benson: Tell us a little bit about your parents.

Kurt Pauly: Well, my father, as you indicated was a chef. His father, my grandfather, had a small hotel in the city called Lotsbourg (phonetic). A college town. And it just so happens that sometime after I met Jill I met a man who actually knew my grandfather and had eaten in his dining room in that hotel while he was going to medical school.

Bill Benson: You met him many years later.

Kurt Pauly: And I met him, yes, here in Manhattan is where I met the man. It was amazing because I never knew my grandfather. I knew my other grandfather, my mother's father, because he was still living in Eilendorf and so -- but his wife, my grandmother, Jill's mother, had died sometime -- before that of natural causes and she was no longer living when the Nazi activities began.

Bill Benson: When they came to power. Your father was a veteran of the first world war, wasn't he?

Kurt Pauly: Yes, he was.

Bill Benson: What do you know about his service?

Kurt Pauly: Well, he was very fortunate. He came from the area of Bavaria and the first world war there was still a king of Bavaria. And my father, as a -- as a chef -- as a cook, had -- cook had been assigned to the entourage of the king of Bavaria.

Bill Benson: He was a chef to the king.

Not only for the king but also a lot of other people who were involved with the

king and the war. And he said at least being in that position he said he was never hungry during the war.

Bill Benson: Right. Not the usual circumstances. How large of an extended family did you have?

Kurt Pauly: It's hard to remember everything but my mother had quite a few cousins living in the area of Eilendorf as well. My father, of course, his relatives were further south. I can't -- having left the age of 6, it's hard for me to remember many of them really graphically. So some of my knowledge comes through my parents. But my mother had two sisters, one of whom died right after the first world war in one of those flu epidemics. I think it was called the Spanish Flu at that time.

Bill Benson: 1917.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. She was not married at that point but mother had another sister who had three children and also lived in the area and he was married. And she had three children, so they were -- I saw them a great deal because they lived in that area. But it was interesting that one of our trips back to Germany when we returned to the United States, we had a letter from someone in Eilendorf who said she had seen our picture in the local newspaper and she wanted to know her -- us to know that she had been a good friend of one of my cousins, the daughter of my mother's sister I was talking about that had the three children.

Bill Benson: So this is many years after the war.

Kurt Pauly: Yes, this is many years after the war and she included a class picture which included my cousin Ilsa. It was a very sad story. They had been very close friends and when this business of segregating the Jews came about ills is a was forced to leave the school. But they were close friends and they would meet

clandestinely in the park periodically. She said maybe for some -- I guess it was over a year that they met clandestinely, and then she said one day she never showed up again. And we don't know what happened to that particular family. The records don't show us, but obviously all of them perished because there was no --

Bill Benson: No trace.

Kurt Pauly: No trace of them. And this was really one of the few times that I met someone who actually knew my cousin.

Bill Benson: And when she wrote to you, did she inform you about all of that?

Kurt Pauly: Yes, yes.

Bill Benson: Kurt, it was, as you started to tell us about your mother agreeing that she was frightened by the Nazis, it was time to go, it wasn't really long after Hitler and the Nazis came to power that your parents did make the decision to leave Germany. Tell us what the circumstances were like, what caused them to leave.

Kurt Pauly: Well, my father's initial choice had been the United States because he had a brother here who lived in New York, had left Germany shortly before the first world war and my father had visited him several times after the first world war but before he was married, Uncle Max who lived in Manhattan. And he was also in the meat business. And my father was very impressed by the United States and kind of thought if anything ever happened, that's where he would go.

Well, unfortunately sometime between the last visit of my father to the United States and Hitler coming to power in 1933, Uncle Max died. And Uncle Max was the only contact. So at that point my father had no more contacts in the United States.

Bill Benson: So that option just closed off.

Kurt Pauly: It did close off. Now my mother, however, had quite a few relatives

that had gone to Palestine. They were ardent Zionists, and had gone there. Nothing to do with Adolf Hitler. Before Hitler's name was anywhere recognizable they had already gone to Palestine. So she had two sets of aunts and uncles in Palestine and a handful of brother -- cousins. And they informed my parents that an agreement had been negotiated by the Jewish agency in Palestine which kind of acted as the intermediary between the Jews in Palestine and the British government in -- which was governing Palestine after the first world war when the Ottoman Empire was broken up and these various parts of the Empire were given supervision by European nations. The British, among other places, got Palestine to govern.

Bill Benson: So they controlled Palestine.

Kurt Pauly: Exactly. And the agreement that the Jewish agency had been able to negotiate was that the British would allow more emigration from Germany for the Jews who would want to come to Palestine and they would get some benefit that they would not otherwise have gotten, which included citizenship as Palestinians after two years of living in the area. And so when my father heard that, he looked into this possibility of going. And about 10,000 German Jews actually went to Palestine under this agreement, including the three Paulys.

Bill Benson: Right, right. And so you finally were able to go to Palestine in 1936.

Kurt Pauly: Yes.

Bill Benson: So you lived under Hitler and the Nazi regime for three years.

Yes.

Bill Benson: What do you know about what that period of life was like for your family?

Kurt Pauly: Well, of course my parents at that page were able to shield me from

a lot of exposure to that. But I do know from later conversations that we had, my mother was very frightened as a result of that. First of all, my father was forced to close one of the newest stores that they had -- had opened shortly before Hitler came into power and shortly after that they forced him to close that store in Aachen. It was a very new and bright store and it was going to be, you know, a big factor in their business and they were forced to close it.

Bill Benson: Forced to close it.

Kurt Pauly: So that was a clue that things were not going to go too well under the Nazis. And my father had also always been very interested in the political situations, wherever he lived. And he always followed the various political activities that took place and he realized that if the Nazis ever came into power based on their philosophy, it was not going to be good for the Jews and that turned out to be the case. And so he was very disappointed he couldn't come to the States, but when this other business came up with going to Palestine, he felt that this was an opportunity not to be missed.

Bill Benson: But when you were in Germany, you had a nanny.

Kurt Pauly: Yes.

Bill Benson: Tell -- tell us a little bit about her, but also, go fast forward a couple of years when you met her many years later. What did she tell you?

Kurt Pauly: After the war, the historical society of Eilendorf invited Jill and I to come and visit.

Bill Benson: This was in the 1980s, right?

Kurt Pauly: The 1980s. And --

Bill Benson: I'm sorry, 1960s.

Kurt Pauly: Oh, yeah, I'm sorry.

Bill Benson: 1960s.

Kurt Pauly: 1960s. And we accepted and we went. Very interesting experience. They took very good care of us. They showed us a lot of the area and where my mother's family and activity took place and the Jewish cemetery. There's a small Jewish cemetery in Eilendorf where my mother's ancestors and mine are buried. In fact my great, great, great grandfather was the oldest -- one of the oldest stones in that cemetery and we found it. They had cleaned up the cemetery, which had been somewhat disturbed by the Nazis, and restored it, and it looked quite good. And the other surprise was, they had been able to find the nanny that I had -- my mother worked in the business so she needed a nanny for me. And they found her. She was still there. She was single. She never married and we had a reunion. Of course, I -- I mean, I wouldn't have recognized her obviously.

Bill Benson: It was more than 30 years later.

Kurt Pauly: And she wouldn't have recognized me. But we were -- yes, we were both very happy to have that reunion.

Bill Benson: And she -- she had some memory that is she shared with you.

Kurt Pauly: Yes, and she had pictures that we didn't have and we have some of those that we got copies of.

Bill Benson: If I remember correctly, she told you she had memories of Nazi brown shirts standing outside the family business telling people to not buy here, to not go here.

Kurt Pauly: Yes, yes. Which was common.

Bill Benson: This was common.

Kurt Pauly: Nothing unusual.

Bill Benson: During that period, because you were -- you were 6 when you left for Palestine, you started school. What do you remember what that was like for you?

Kurt Pauly: Well, fortunately there was a Jewish school in Aachen. I didn't have to go to the public school. Children who did have to go to the public school frequently had very unfortunate things happening to them. They were taunted by the other children and so fortunately I was able to go to the school. But I had to take the trolley to go to the school.

Bill Benson: Six years old, you had to get on the trolley.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. Which made my father a little bit nervous that I was going all by myself to Aachen every morning on the trolley and sometimes he would follow the trolley to see that nothing happened untoward. And nothing ever did. I have no memory of anything untoward ever happening on that trip, but it was very good that we had that school available. The funny thing is the Nazis insisted that children go to school, Jewish children as well, even after they came into power, and you had to go to school.

Bill Benson: So fortunately, as you said, you had to go to.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. And then of course in the summer we left and --

Bill Benson: Tell us, Kurt, about leaving Germany. Tell us what you remember what that was like for you. You've said that it was very difficult for you to leave and you had to say goodbye to your grandparents.

Kurt Pauly: Right. The picture that you saw before --

Suzy Snyder: With you in front of that fountain.

Kurt Pauly: With me in front of the fountain was on one of the trips we went to

say goodbye to my mother's -- father's, sorry, father's mother, my grandmother.

Bill Benson: Your grandmother.

Kurt Pauly: My paternal grandmother. And my father had tried to get more members of the family to go with us to Palestine. In the meantime, he had a nephew, as you saw in that picture where we were in Palestine, who had gone one year earlier.

Bill Benson: Walter.

Kurt Pauly: Walter, yeah, my cousin Walter who was much more like an uncle to me because he was so much older than I was. So we went several times to see my grandmother and of course we were living in Eilendorf where my mother's father was living and we tried also to get him to come with us and their belief was they were old people that were retired. They said what are the Nazis going to do to us? We're not in business anymore. They had no idea, of course, of what would happen. And neither did we, for that matter. But my father felt that it wouldn't be a happy event for 99 to remain to remain in Germany.

Bill Benson: But the grandparents' generation --

Kurt Pauly: But even the younger generations weren't willing to go. My mother's sister with her three children, they feel things, you know, perhaps wouldn't be as bad as we feared and that was not unusual in that period. Of course later --

Bill Benson: Somehow Nazism would blow over eventually.

Kurt Pauly: Eventually, yeah. But of course that did not happen and we have no idea what happened to my mother's sister and her family. The records don't show if they were -- we do know what happened to my grandparents. Both my grandparents were sent to Theresienstadt. For some reason some were sent to Aachen where there was an old aged home for Jews and she was at the same place my grandfather went.

Later when we went to Aachen we went to the house that -- where we had lived which my grandfather had sold to his former apprentice and there were -- that family was still in the house and their son was now running a butcher shop out of that house.

Bill Benson: On a trip back I think, this one was in the 1980s.

Kurt Pauly: That's right.

Bill Benson: They're still living in the house that they bought from your parents.

Kurt Pauly: And I remember the first night we went through and he showed us the house again, I had some memories of the house. The room that I lived in, I would look into the garden next door which was always very lovely. And later when we sat down and talked to the people, he looked at me and he said I saw when you were in the kitchen, I saw that you noticed what we did and what happened was one of my earliest memories is -- we had a second kitchen in that house. It was two steps down and I took a fall from the step and fell flat on my face, just like this. And bled like bleeding just terribly. And that -- that's one of my earliest memories. And when I walked into that kitchen --

Bill Benson: It came back to you?

Kurt Pauly: No. Yeah -- yeah, I looked for that. The kitchen wasn't sunken at all. And I thought why do I have this ancient memory. And this man said to me, he said I saw the look on your face. You saw that we had leveled out the kitchen and it was no longer sunken, which was -- felt better after that because that was a true memory. One of the earliest memories I had. But they were -- they were not -- how do you say they were surprised that we came back but I think they were a little shocked and they were a little prepared sort of when we came back they were quick to point out, they said oh, they were not Nazis.

Bill Benson: They made a point in telling you that?

Kurt Pauly: Yes. And had been an apprentice to my grandfather originally and now his son is --

Bill Benson: Has your family home.

Kurt Pauly: Yeah. But -- and my father -- my grandfather had sold them the house. I don't know how valid that sale was in a sense whether there was any force used to have them sell it to them. May not have been because -- but that was kind of difficult memory.

Bill Benson: So Kurt --

Kurt Pauly: Difficult trip back. And my cousin from Israel whose father was my uncle, he was my mother's brother, came with us because he at that time was working in the Israeli embassy and he -- this was also where his father grew up and he went with us. And that was very difficult.

Bill Benson: I bet. And Kurt, now after you had to go say goodbye to your grandparents, do you -- do you recall the move -- you're 6 years old, the move to Palestine where you stayed for two years? What was that time like for you and your family?

Kurt Pauly: Well, for me, of course, children adapt very quickly. It was difficult for my parents. First of all, they didn't speak the language. Secondly, leaving all these people behind was difficult, the family. And it was not long after we got to Palestine, I think, that my parents, you know, said that their concerns were valid. Things seemed to be going from bad to worse after 1936. But nothing we were able to do about it. It got to be too late for them to leave.

Bill Benson: The rest of the family to leave.

Kurt Pauly: Yes, because when the British cut off the emigration from Germany after that, 10,000 German Jews had gotten to Palestine under that agreement.

Bill Benson: But the British -- British closed it so you -- other family members couldn't come.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. They got a lot of objections from the Arab population, letting all of these Jews into Palestine, and so they closed it off.

Bill Benson: What did -- so as you said, it's difficult for your parents, they moved to Palestine, they don't speak the language.

Halina Peabody: It was difficult for my parents to make a living there because --

Bill Benson: How did they do that?

Kurt Pauly: Because the shipping business, the trucking business turned out not to be so great for two families to live on because the economic situation in Palestine, there was a worldwide depression that affected Palestine as well and my father always said he could, you know, figure almost to the day when he would spend his last piastra (phonetic) in Palestine. So he was very concerned. So they had a hard time in Palestine.

Bill Benson: And you shared with me that you took in borders to have a little income.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. They would cook dinners for people and serve them and make some money that way and what happened while we were in Palestine, another brother of my father's, my Uncle Theodore got to the US through his wife's family who lived in Cincinnati. My -- and my Aunt Julia had this brother who had come as a very young man to America and when the Nazis came in, he realized very quickly that his three sisters in Germany were -- could be in trouble if they stayed there. And the guy was

able to bring them over, all three of those families came to Cincinnati. And those people were willing to sponsor us as well. They were a very nice family, and they realized things for Jews in Germany were not getting better.

Bill Benson: He was able to bring his sisters from Germany in the 1930s as well.

Kurt Pauly: Yes, he brought them in and we came in from Palestine. That sounds like a round way, but had we not gone to Palestine, had we stayed in Germany and wanted to come over to the United States, it would have been more difficult than it was coming from Palestine. Because the demand for people to come was so great from Germany and the wait was so long because of the quotas that we never would have gotten out.

Bill Benson: In fact, the waits were years for --

Kurt Pauly: Absolutely.

Bill Benson: And so people could not get out. But because you were --

Kurt Pauly: These families came out because the brother had come out and he was able to provide his sisters with an affidavit very quickly. So they got out safely. Had they put it out too long the wait might have been too long and the war would have broken out and of course many people were just exactly in that -- in that trouble.

Bill Benson: But your circumstances that you were describing and there was -- there weren't that many people in Palestine trying to get to the US so you could come.

Kurt Pauly: There were quotas for most every country and there was a small quota from Palestine which was undersubscribed. People weren't leaving Palestine to come to the United States.

Bill Benson: That worked tremendously to your advantage.

Kurt Pauly: And in the end, of course one of the problems was we had to pay for

our trip from Palestine to the United States. We didn't want to use these people and we didn't have enough money for the fare. What had happened was when my parents first came to Palestine they had gotten involved with a co-op who said they would be able to find them jobs. And my father, in addition to what my father was doing there, with the trucking business he was seeing if we could perhaps get a job in addition to that and maybe Walter could handle -- my cousin Walter could handle the trucking business. So they wanted -- and the co-op had not been able to do anything for my parents along that and it was a considerable amount of money in terms of them.

Bill Benson: To bring three people to the United States.

Halina Peabody: Well, we only needed to bring three because we had enough money for two.

Bill Benson: Okay.

Kurt Pauly: So my parents went down, my mother was the one who went down, she asked for the money back, and they turned her down. So she came the next day and she asked for the money the next day and they turned her down again. So my mother sat down and started crying and she cried. My mother was very good at crying. And she did that for over a week.

Bill Benson: Every day.

Kurt Pauly: Every day. And they finally couldn't take it anymore and gave her the money back. Because we had to take a boat to Marseille, to France. And we had to take a train up north to catch a British liner which came into northern France and from there we would come to New York. Queen Mary was the name of the ship we came in. It was a very well-known ship. It is now a hotel, by the way, in California. On one of my trips to California I actually stayed in the --

Bill Benson: In Queen Mary.

Kurt Pauly: In the Queen Mary and as we were walking to our rooms which had been the first class cabins on the ship -- we didn't travel in the first class cabins, obviously, the bellman asked me whether I had ever stayed with them before. And I said well actually, I did. I had come across this ship to the United States. He looked at me like I was Julius Caesar. He couldn't imagine that anybody was old enough to have come across on this ship.

Bill Benson: When it was not a hotel.

Kurt Pauly: Which was now a hotel. He was a bit taken aback. He was quite impressed.

Bill Benson: Do you remember that ship?

Kurt Pauly: I do remember. It was December. The Atlantic is kind of rough in December. My parents got terribly seasick. And fortunately I didn't get very seasick as a boy. And I ran -- it was a wonderful ship for little boys to run around on. And they were very kind to little boys. They gave us toys and we had places where we could play. They provided us facilities and supervision. And so it was a very happy time for me on the boat.

Bill Benson: I remember you telling me, I think, that that was the first time you ever had a Brussels sprout.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. The British are very big on Brussels sprouts and I had never eaten Brussels sprouts before.

Bill Benson: You arrive in the United States, you were in New York City but you wouldn't stay there long. What happened?

Kurt Pauly: No, we didn't stay there long. We stayed two nights in a boarding

house and took the train to Cincinnati, Ohio, where we spent the years until I graduated from high school.

Bill Benson: And that's where your father's brother was, in Cincinnati.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. Well, all of three -- yes, my father's brother and the other two sisters and their family as well and we lived in the same -- we lived in an apartment house. Now, my father had a little trouble getting a job because of the depression. The depression was on in the United States.

Bill Benson: This was 1938 in Cincinnati.

Kurt Pauly: It was 1938, December of '38, almost '39. And he started looking for a job and had great difficulty. And finally got a job preparing vegetables for a very large cafeteria type operation and all he did is prepare. He didn't do any cooking. All he did all day was prepare the kitchens for the kitchen.

Bill Benson: Essentially peel potatoes.

Kurt Pauly: Peel potatoes, peel onions, do whatever, shredded them and whatever was called for, which didn't pay too much money. It was very difficult for him. He said the only -- really advantage of a job was he always had a trolley seat to himself because nobody sat next to him he smelled so of onions.

(Laughter)

But one day he was going to this job and somebody called his name on the street, Hugo. And he was just, you know, flabbergasted. Who knows -- I mean, he's in Cincinnati how long, a few months. And he didn't know he knew anybody. He didn't know anybody in Cincinnati. And he -- he turned around and there was a man there who had studied with him in Switzerland when he learned his trade.

Bill Benson: As a chef.

Kurt Pauly: As a chef. And this man was now a chef in one of the large downtown hotels in Cincinnati. He says Hugo, what are you doing here? And my father told him his tale of woe, he left Germany and so forth. This man was not a German. And he said, and you're doing what? He said peeling vegetables? Preparing vegetables? That's a terrible waste of talent. He said meet me in the Union Hall next Tuesday. He said, I will see that you get a job. And he did.

Bill Benson: And he did.

Kurt Pauly: And my father got a job as a cook in a hotel -- I mean, in a restaurant run by two Jewish brothers, sort of a businessman's restaurant in downtown Cincinnati. And they hired him as a cook and very quickly became the chef because being a chef is much more than cooking. That's important, but also what's very important is buying. And they noticed that my father seemed to know something about that. If you don't buy -- first, if you don't buy the right things, of course you have a problem. But you could buy the right problems and buy too much.

Bill Benson: Right, right.

Kurt Pauly: You're in trouble again. And my father had a very good handle on purchasing. And so he very quickly became the chef there until later he set up himself with an acquaintance and they opened a bakery.

Bill Benson: In Cincinnati.

Kurt Pauly: Together, in Cincinnati. Actually across from the apartment house where we lived.

Bill Benson: Tell me about you, though. So you arrive in Cincinnati, you're 8 years old.

Kurt Pauly: I'm 8 years old. I speak no -- no German -- no English, of course. I

speak German, speak modern Hebrew, no German. And it's December so in the middle of the school year.

Bill Benson: Middle of the school year.

Kurt Pauly: What do they do with me? They put me in the first grade to learn English.

Bill Benson: But you're sitting in a classroom with first graders.

Kurt Pauly: Yes and there was a little boy in that class who spoke German as well. He came from a family where a German was -- a lot of German was spoken in the home as well and I said -- I think earlier German heritage was quite common in Cincinnati. They had had a lot of immigration for various reasons over the years and they had bier gardens and they still have them in Cincinnati. And this little boy came from a home, was able to speak to me. He was my translator.

Bill Benson: And he was a legitimate first grader.

Kurt Pauly: Oh, yes, he was a legitimate first grader. But he thought it was great fun. And he was very helpful. And I very quickly learned English. At that age you do learn a language pretty quickly. And by the end of the year I was in the second grade.

Bill Benson: And advancing from there.

Kurt Pauly: Yes, and I made up even one more year when I graduated from high school. Still graduated from high school at 18.

Bill Benson: At 18. How about your mom, how was her adjustment?

Kurt Pauly: Well, my father had told her about what a wonderful country America was from his visits. He said oh, you don't have to worry. You'll do fine there and all the hard work in Germany -- in the United States is done by the black people so, you know, you don't have to worry about cleaning your apartment. You'll have a great time. Which

I guess was true really, to some degree. But the depression was on and we didn't -- didn't have any spare money to have people come in and clean the apartment. So my mother ended up having to make -- earn some money herself. And she went out to clean apartments.

Bill Benson: So she became a domestic worker.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. She always used to poke fun at my father because he had convinced her how wonderful -- how easy she'd have it in the United States. But after the war started, of course positions economically got better.

Bill Benson: Right. So the war. So when you got to Cincinnati, 1938, the war began in 1939 but we didn't enter until December '41 with Pearl Harbor.

Kurt Pauly: '41, that's when things changed. In fact, I remember Pearl Harbor day very clearly because the restaurant that my father worked at was going to open an additional restaurant in the suburbs near where we lived. And on December 7, my father wanted to go out to check out how the kitchen was coming along. Just another Sunday.

Bill Benson: Another Sunday.

Kurt Pauly: He wanted to see how the kitchen was getting along. And he took me with him. And we walked because it wasn't that far. And the kitchen and he was very happy, everything was coming along very well, and we started walking back and people are all over the streets and they're talking to each other and it was very unusual. The hubbub. And finally we learn from someone on the street that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and my father said well things are going to change if we're at war. But it did have a big effect economically on us and my parents were make ago much better living after the war started.

Bill Benson: Kurt, when you first left Germany and went to Palestine, then later to the United States, for how long were your parents able to remain in touch with family in Germany, stay in touch with grandparents?

Kurt Pauly: Well, yes. Well, until we came here still.

Bill Benson: 1938.

Kurt Pauly: In '38 they were still in touch. But it -- but the -- the letters were begin to change tone with my parents apparently. I was too small really to --

Bill Benson: Right.

Kurt Pauly: -- catch it first but I noticed my parents seemed to be more worried about the people they had left behind in Germany.

Bill Benson: And at some point --

Kurt Pauly: And then they lost contact. And we now know, at least some -- what happened to some of these people because the Germans were very careful about keeping records, and in fact I checked through the museum I checked some of the records and another thing that happened was when we left Palestine, my mother's brother, Uncle Alfred who had been picked up and thrown into jail and the only way to get out of jail was to show he would leave Germany, and so his wife decided well, she would have to look around and see where they could go. They started to make the rounds of the German consulate in her area with no success. And finally the only place she hadn't gone to was the British consulate in the area. And she thought, that's a waste of time. I'm going maybe another day. That day she was very down and then she changed her mind. Oh, well, I'm here already. And my aunt was a very attractive woman. And she gets to the British consulate and she tells them that they would like to immigrate to England. And wanted to know what the story was, why she wanted to go

to England. He looked at her and said madam, I can't get anybody to England right now from Germany. He said but you're Jewish, aren't you? And she figured, that's the end of that. She said wouldn't you be interested in going to Palestine, considerable interest of Jewish people with your history. And she already had people there, people in Palestine she knew, including her sister. But they had not gone when they could have when we went.

Bill Benson: With you.

Kurt Pauly: They were no -- that had been shut. So she said oh, yes, we'll go. We'll take the visitor's Visa. And February -- we left December. In February they were due to come to Palestine and they did.

Bill Benson: And they did.

Kurt Pauly: And they did. When their Visa was up, they went into hiding.

Bill Benson: In Palestine.

Kurt Pauly: In Palestine. So British couldn't find them. And she had people in Palestine they knew that helped them, helped them casually, and then of course the war broke out shortly -- in August. And the British weren't sending anybody back to Germany after that so they could come out of hiding. So they were okay. My parents -- my mother had her brother in Palestine with her family and with my cousin, he had one son and my cousin and I are very close and he's visited us several times. In fact, already one we were back to New York he visited us and he is the one who went with us to my grandfather's and mother's parents old home in Eilendorf because that was also where his father had grown up.

Bill Benson: When the war ended in 1945, when did your parents and you, but your parents, when did they learn what happened to all of the family that remained.

Kurt Pauly: I don't know exactly but it was shortly after the war and they tried to make contact with people, write to people and my brother wrote to people, non-Jews, that they used to know in Eilendorf and so forth. But very quickly they learned what had happened. My mother always had hope that maybe one of her nieces or nephews would have -- might have survived even if the parents didn't survive, but there was no indication of anything very much. Never heard about her sister again. Even here at the museum I was not able to find anything and the story was that some documents were lost or destroyed in the war and perhaps this is what happened. Because there was never any contact. They knew where we were to some degree, you know, in Cincinnati.

Bill Benson: So to this day you know what -- how some of your family members perished but others you have no idea.

Kurt Pauly: Yeah. And we had -- we had a second cousin her mother had hidden her in a convent in Belgium, which is not totally unusual either, and had a great deal of trouble getting her to come back with her. Her father had died, he had been caught up, but the mother had survived and she came back for her child and it was difficult for her to convince the child to go with her. But eventually she did and she came to the States and married another survivor.

Bill Benson: Kurt, if you don't mind, I think we have a few minutes to turn to our audience before we close the program, see if they have some questions they'd like to ask you. How does that sound?

Kurt Pauly: Okay.

Bill Benson: We have a few minutes for some questions. We have two microphones, one on each aisle. If you have a question, could you go to the microphone, try to make your question as brief as you can and I'll repeat it just to make

sure that we hear it properly and Kurt can answer it. I'm going to ask that you hopefully will stay with us through the short question period because I'm going to turn back to Kurt in a few minutes to close the program and we would love to have you be here for that. So anybody brave enough to go to the microphone and ask a question? And if not, I'll ask a couple more.

Kurt Pauly: I promise not to bite anyone.

Bill Benson: While we're -- oh, yes we have one right here. Great.

>> This kind of relates to your life in the United States. So after you moved here, how was your life?

Bill Benson: After you moved here, how was your life?

>> I just want to know did you have a good life here?

Kurt Pauly: I adapted very quickly to the States because children adapt. And they meet other children and you learn the language very quickly. And my parents adapted, too, but it was much harder for them obviously than me. And of course I consider myself an American, which I am, and just a small point, by the way, we should talk about, I became an American citizen through my parents. I was a minor. And they became American citizens -- after five years you could become an American citizen at that time. And one of the reasons we were not enemy aliens when we came here was we were Palestinians.

>> Right.

Kurt Pauly: If you look at my -- because after two years you became a Palestinian under the agreement that the -- this Jewish agency had negotiated. So after five years here, we became citizens and if you look at my citizenship papers where it says previous nationality, it says Palestinian. No indication that I was ever a German.

Bill Benson: So had you come directly here from Germany during the war you might have been considered an enemy alien.

Kurt Pauly: Well, yes. The other problem was as I said before it was difficult to get a Visa to the United States from Germany. It was oversubscribed. People had numbers, they were assigned numbers. These numbers would have carried well after -- you know, would not have been usable until after the war.

Bill Benson: After the war. I think we have one more question. Thank you very much. We have time for I think one more question here.

>> Thank you for sharing your story with us today. I'm wondering, what was it like to grow up as a child knowing World War II in Cincinnati, how did the war affect you? Did you anticipate in scrap drives or anything like that that a lot of other young people did.

Bill Benson: Good question. What was it like for you to be a child in Cincinnati during the war years? Do you remember participating in scrap drives or rationing or any of that kind of thing?

Kurt Pauly: Yes, yes, scrap drives and rationing. We didn't have a car so we didn't have to worry about getting gasoline, which was very strenuously rationed. And children adapt very quickly and treated me like I was another child. I made friends, some of them who were also people that had come to the United States from somewhere else, immigrants. Mostly German immigrants because my parents also had friends who had children and so forth. And in school I felt very much at home fortunately. So in 19 -- at 18, in 1948 when my parents left, that was a little difficult because I had planned on going to the University of Cincinnati because as a Cincinnatian you paid very little to the University of Cincinnati and now my parents had

decided to move to New Jersey and that was all new for me and what I decided was I would get a job and earn some money to help me eventually get to some university. And that's when the draft caught me. But as you indicated before, I had an accident which kept me from going out of the country.

Bill Benson: During the Korean War.

Kurt Pauly: Yes. During the Korean War -- I had signed up for OCS, officer candidate's school. And my class didn't start for something like seven weeks after the completion of my training.

Bill Benson: Basic training.

Kurt Pauly: Basic training. Which had been in the artillery as well. And they said oh, well, good, we know just what to do with you while you're waiting. We're sending you to leadership school. Leadership school was for people that were non-commissioned officers. They said it would be very good for you. And it was. I became -- I lost all the excess weight I had gained in basic, believe it or not, and we double-timed everywhere we went and so forth and so on, and in the sixth week I had an accident. We were setting up a light artillery battery, Howitzer battery, and you're supposed to have six people to move a Howitzer, we had five. They said no problem, you can do it with five. We were doing it with five and when we moved the second one, I tripped over some stones and fell flat on my face and of course I -- I let go of the trails. Left two people on the trails which was kind of tough and the guy in back of me was being pulled by the Howitzer over me and he let go of the trail. Well, the poor guy that was left with the trails in his hand couldn't hold them anyway and they dropped on my foot.

Bill Benson: And that turned out to be a very serious injury.

Kurt Pauly: I of course passed out immediately from pain and the next thing I knew I was in an ambulance going to the base hospital. And some sergeant, they told me, some Master Sergeant who had seen all of this came over and he happened to have a bayonet with him and he cut off my boot, which was very smart because my foot was blowing up. And this way it was easier to get my boot off. And when I came to the hospital, the admitting doctor said to me, he said you always had that deformity on your foot, son? I said no, sir. He says well, I think you're going to have to have an operation. So he said but don't worry. He said we're pretty good around here. It turned out that the hospital was the orthopedic center for the southwestern United States during the Korean War because a lot of -- they wanted -- they set up these centers because people coming back from that area could go then to the center for that work and they weren't in some hospital that was in -- they lived in the southwestern United States and weren't in some hospital in Maine, let's say. This way it was -- they could get visitors, they might be able to go on leave to their home. So they had spread these various hospitals around, from base to base. And this particular hospital was an orthopedic center and they fixed me up.

Bill Benson: Your good fortune there.

Kurt Pauly: That was very good fortune. And took a long time to heal. By the time I healed, I didn't have enough time to be sent overseas because you needed a year to be -- to be sent overseas. So I stayed in -- I fought the battle of Arkansas fulfilling my time, and that was it.

Bill Benson: That was it. I'm going to turn back to Kurt in just a moment to close our program. I want to thank all of you for being with us. Remind you that we have programs each Wednesday and Thursday through the middle of August. All of our

programs in April will be live streamed and all of our programs will be on the museum's YouTube channel so you can see other programs that we have this year with other survivors.

When Kurt is finished, he will remain on the stage here so if you want to come up here and ask a question because you didn't get a chance to ask it or just say hi to him or get your picture taken with him, please feel free to do that. Just come on up on the stage.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our *First Person* gets the last word. And so with that, I'd like to turn it back to Kurt to close our program.

Kurt Pauly: Well, I guess the last word is I feel very American and in addition to having not gone to Korea as a result of this accident, I was a disabled veteran as a result of this accident and was discharged. I decided that I would need a sitting job probably because of this. Because at that time it was still, you know, bothering me a little bit and I had -- you know, I couldn't walk as far and as quickly as I might have otherwise. So I decided to become an accountant and I thought because accountants sit at their desk a great deal of the time. So I thought that was a good idea. And I signed up. We lived in south jersey and I was fortunate enough to be able to get admitted to the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. And as a disabled veteran, they paid for everything. And I -- not that I didn't work for it. I worked very hard for it, and did graduate which made it easier to get a job of course.

Bill Benson: Thank goodness for the GI Bill.

Kurt Pauly: The GI bill. I always tell people my rich uncle paid for my education. Most people their father has to pay for their education or they have to pay for it but this way my rich uncle paid for my education. I think he got it back. Made it possible for me

to probably pay more taxes than I would otherwise have.

(Laughter)

Bill Benson: Well thank you, Kurt. Thank you very much.

(Applause).

Take a photo. Please feel free to do that.