

REALTIME FILE

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
FIRST PERSON: CONVERSATIONS WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
FIRST PERSON SUSAN WARSINGER
MAY 9, 2018

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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 Mrs. Susan Warsinger, 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.

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each 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.

Susan will share with us her "First Person" account of her experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Susan a few questions. If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our online 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 livestreamed on 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. Tomorrow's program will also be livestreamed. Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.

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

We begin with this photo of Susan born in Germany, the eldest of three children. Here we see Susan's family from left to right, her brother Joseph, mother Ani, brother Ernest in her lap, her father, Israel, and Susan is with her arm around her father. And here we see Susan with her brother, Joseph.

On November 9 through 10, on the night of Kristallnacht or Night of Broken Glass, Nazi thugs smashed the windows and furnishings. Months later Susan and Joseph were smuggled to France.

In May 1940 the German army invaded France. Susan and Joseph were evacuated from a children's home in Paris to Versailles, where they were temporarily housed in Louis XIV's palace. Soon German soldiers arrived and the children fled with their guardians to the unoccupied part of the country under the Vichy government. The arrows indicate their movement southward.

With the help of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Susan and Joseph received permission to immigrate to the United States. Information written on this tag that Susan wore identifies her name and states she is sailing for the United States on the SS Serpa Pinto.

After crossing the Pyrenees to Spain, the two children sailed from Lisbon, Portugal and arrived in New York in September 1941. Susan and Joseph are circled on this photo that appeared in a New York newspaper.

Susan lives here in the Washington, D.C. area. She has three very accomplished daughters and, as she notes, nine wonderful grandchildren. She spent 29 years as an educator in the public school system.

Susan's volunteer work at the museum includes being a member of the Museum's Speakers' Bureau, for whom she speaks at venues locally and across the country about her experiences during the Holocaust. Susan is a tour guide leading law enforcement officers, including FBI agents and law enforcement officers from all over the United States and from throughout the world, through the museum's Permanent Exhibit. She also gives tours to special groups such as college-aged leaders and individuals to the museum's special exhibits.

Susan is a contributor to the museum's writing project which produces editions of *Echoes of Memory*, a collection of writings by survivors associated with this museum. You can read some of her writings online on the Museum website. Following today's program, Susan will be available to sign copies of *Echoes of Memory*.

Accompanying Susan today are her friends June Kajioka, Jim Enloe and Cathie Gray. We welcome you here today.

With that I would like you to join me in Welcoming our First Person, Mrs. Susan Warsinger.

[Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Susan, thank you so much for joining us and being willing to be our First Person today. We have so much to share so we're going to start right away. [Mic is off]

[CAPTIONS PAUSED -- No audio]

[Captions resumed with delayed audio from YouTube]

>> Susan Warsinger: In the schoolhouse the teacher had to teach us everything. All the way to the 10th grade. He and this man had to teach us all the subjects, science, and reading and writing, but I was happy because nobody [Inaudible].

>> Bill Benson: So that time was a very happy time for you.

>> Suzy Snyder: [Inaudible: off mic]

>> Bill Benson: Would you -- you shared with me your mother sent you to the store and to get to the store you had to pass through a park. Can you tell us about that?

>> Suzy Snyder: I was telling you before that people weren't allowed to go through parks. Jewish people weren't allowed to be in sports events.

How many of you went to the Permanent Exhibition already, raise your hand. How many are going to go to the Permanent Exhibition?

>> Bill Benson: Almost everybody.

>> Suzy Snyder: When you first get up there, you're going to go around the corner, 1933, and that's when my story starts. You see an SS man standing, boycotting the store. That's exactly what happened with my father. You can see where the kids are reading a book, "Der Giftpilz." So look for that when you go. And then there's also a lady sitting. By the body language you can tell she's Jewish. And because the Jews weren't allowed to sit on the same bench as the Aryans. That's what the Nazis called themselves.

So is it ok if I tell you a story about the park? Anyway, my mom used to give me pfennige and put it in my hand. Go to the grocery store to buy her a loaf of bread.

So the park, you can imagine [Inaudible: off mic] Is it ok if I stand up?

>> Bill Benson: Please. Absolutely.

>> Suzy Snyder: Here I am this little girl. I'll tell from you a child's point of view. There were some steps here. And in order for me to get to the grocery store, which was right up there, I could just walk down the steps. And they had this aisle, you could walk here. And you could walk through the aisle to get to the grocery store.

So here I am with my money in my hand. And what happens is starting to walk down the steps to get into the park. And the gatekeeper came to me and he said all kinds of horrible things about Jewish people. And he said to me, "Don't you ever walk through the park again." So I ran and told my mom. And, of course, she told me not to walk through the park again.

So what happened next [Inaudible: off mic] go through this door to buy milk. She put the pfennige in my hand. I walk out of my house. And I get over here to the path. And I say to myself, Hmm, if I have to go to that store and have to walk all the way around and then walk all the way around this way and then walk all the way around this way, it would take me a long time. I was really very tired. So guess what I did.

I walked through the park. Absolutely right. So I started to walk down the steps. And, of course, the gatekeeper came and he saw me. Now, this time he didn't just tell me all of these horrible things about Jewish people but he also started to throw bricks and rocks at me. So I was really upset. But the worst part of it was he had a daughter who was just a little bit, a little bit, older than me. She saw her father, who was her role model, throwing bricks and rocks and calling me these awful names. And she said, well, if my father's doing it, I guess I will, too.

So here was this young girl and she was learning from her father.

>> Bill Benson: I'm glad you shared that, thank you. You mentioned your father lost his store. What did he do then to earn a living?

>> Susan Warsinger: What I remember is he went to the farm and bought strawberries and cherries and all kinds of berries. He had baskets. And then he went to people in town and sold them.

>> Bill Benson: I remember you told me one time that as a little girl, you remember that when he came home and he was smiling, you knew that he had been able to sell some of the food.

>> Susan Warsinger: [Inaudible: off mic]

>> Bill Benson: Let's turn now to Kristallnacht, the events of Kristallnacht, November 9 through 10, 1938 or what we call the Night of Broken Glass. As a result of that night, your parents made the profound decision to get out of Germany. Tell us about Kristallnacht and what happened to your family that night and then from there.

>> Susan Warsinger: My brother and I -- the older one, not the baby. We were sleeping in our bedroom. It was the eve of my mother's birthday and we were really very excited. [Inaudible: off mic] the rocks were being thrown through our window. I was very scared.

My brother was the brave one. I covered myself up with a blanket. He went over to the window and pulled himself up and he looked out the window and he said to me, "Susi" -- that was my name -- "usi, it's our neighbors" that were throwing the bricks and rocks through the window.

And those people who are going to go up to the Permanent Exhibition, you're going to see two policemen. One is an SS and another one is the civil policeman and they have the dog in between them. And the civil policeman was wearing his uniform. He was standing at the edge of the crowd like this. And he didn't do anything to stop them from throwing bricks and rocks through the window.

So we became very frightened. We crossed the hall and went to our parents' bedroom. We were trying to figure out [Inaudible: off mic] they carried it on their shoulder. They walked to our front door and they smashed the front door. Beautiful glass, blue, green, purple. The glass was strewn all over the floor. They loitered some of our belongings. Then they went to the second floor where the rabbi was. They had keys to the apartment. Went up to the second floor. I don't know what they did to his apartment but I think they looted all of his artifacts that he had.

So my father said we need to hide someplace. So we went on the third floor with a non-Jewish family. There were on the third floor with an attic. So my father said let's hide in the attic until this blows over. So that's what we did. We were hiding up there.

The rabbi's family [Inaudible].

>> Bill Benson: In the attic with you.

>> Susan Warsinger: The rabbi wasn't there. I looked through this little window in the attic and I saw him standing on his veranda. He was the rabbi of the town. The only one with a veranda in the building. So he was standing on the veranda and two SS men were holding him, one with each arm like this, another one came along and cut off his beard.

>> Bill Benson: You remember seeing that.

>> Susan Warsinger: That I saw. I did. But I didn't see them hauling him off to jail. But that's what they did. They took him and put him in jail for the simple reason that he was Jewish. Then later on I found out that they did this in every Jewish family. They burned down our synagogue and they arrested all of the men, the Jewish men, and put them in jail for the simple

reason that they were Jewish.

>> Bill Benson: Was your father arrested?

>> Susan Warsinger: That's an interesting story. He was arrested but he came back like the next night. And my brother and I -- I wanted to give this advice to all of you. We should have asked my father more questions. Why did he come back and all the other people did not come back? So what happened, my brother and I discussed it, and my father used to play chess with the mayor of the town and maybe because they were friends the mayor let him go. Or the other thing is at that time he was born in Poland and he was a Polish citizen. And at that time, Poland -- the Nazis decided to invade Poland.

>> Bill Benson: That was a few months off.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. So we thought, well, maybe they didn't arrest him because he was Polish. But I've talked to some people at the museum and they said they didn't think that probably was the reason.

But the story, if you're young and you need to ask your parents everything, because after they pass away, you can't find out all of the small details.

>> Bill Benson: You stayed in the attic for several days. What do you remember about that?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, I was a child. I'm telling you all of these things from a child's point of view because that's the only way I remember it. And I remember that we were scared but we were with our parents. The rabbi's children were up there. There were these piles of apples in the attic. Because it was November, and we had gathered them for the winter so they were up there. So we ate them. We played with them. We made toys out of them. A child knows how to take an experience that is really a horrific experience and make the best out of it. So that's what we did.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us also the story about your parents had a little bit of money and they knew they would need it.

>> Susan Warsinger: I wish you hadn't asked me this. I haven't told this story in a long time. Well, anyway, my father had saved -- you want me to tell it?

>> Bill Benson: Mm-hmm. You have to now. Right?

>> Susan Warsinger: My father had saved some money. It was hidden under the mattress. When we went up to the attic, he took the money out and he figured if he was arrested, he couldn't -- it would be safest with me. So he told me to take the money and put it in my underwear. He figured if the Nazis came and robbed us, they wouldn't look in a little girl's underwear. So I kept --

>> Bill Benson: You kept the money.

>> Susan Warsinger: In my underwear. And I just wanted to tell you that there were no bathroom facilities and that money got plenty wet up in that attic.

>> Bill Benson: But you had to use it later.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: So your parents now knew that they wanted to get you and your brother to safety. Tell us what they did and what happened to you from there.

>> Susan Warsinger: After Night of Broken Glass -- I just wanted to tell the people. You know, in Germany, at that time, before the Night of Broken Glass a lot of the Jewish people said, well, maybe Hitler's going to blow over, maybe everything is going to be all right. My mother always wanted to come to the United States because she had heard it was the best country in the world. And so here I had it in my family, you know, that we -- should we go or should we not go. A lot of German Jews didn't want to go because their families were there, everything they

owned was there.

>> Bill Benson: For centuries your family had lived there.

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly, on my mother's side, yes.

So after Night of Broken Glass everybody wanted to leave. They knew that this was a forewarning of horrible things to come. So there was a quota in the whole world. Every country had a quota. So you had to be on that quota in order to come to the United States. And my father had some relatives here in the United States but they didn't have enough money to tell him that he could come to the United States.

So anyway, so he wanted my brother and me to be safe. So he found this French lady who smuggled children across the border into France. This was before the Nazis -- by that time had invaded Poland. They had gone into Czechoslovakia. They had gone into Austria. So things were -- because at that time Hitler said I'm going to conquer all of Europe.

So my father wanted his two children to get out. This lady had two children of her own. She had these passports. Somehow I think she put our picture instead of her children's picture. And she took us on the train and pretended that we were her children. My father gave her all the money we had and sent us away.

This is the part that I feel so terrible for my mother. Because can you imagine what it was like to send your children away, not knowing if you would ever see them again?

But I was a kid. I didn't really understand it. I thought maybe they would come in two weeks and everything was going to be all right.

So this lady smuggled us into Paris.

>> Bill Benson: Where did you go once you got to Paris?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, we had a third cousin. We called him Uncle Herman. He had this nice little apartment in Place de la Vendome. So here he got these two children. He really didn't know what to do with these two children. So he told us to stay in the apartment while he was going to work. And, of course, my brother who was always curious didn't listen. At that time they had a Metro in Paris. He used to sneak out and go under the styles and go in the Metro and look all around and then come back before Uncle Herman found out.

So anyway, he couldn't keep us. So there were some organizations, OCE. They helped us find a foster home -- in a small town near Paris.

>> Bill Benson: And that was not a happy experience.

>> Susan Warsinger: The foster home where we first stayed, no. The woman was not nice to us. She made us -- I don't want to get into details.

>> Bill Benson: Share a little bit. Here you are these two little children. This woman is supposed to take care of you but she made you sleep on the floor.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. Yes, she did. She had a house and she didn't want us in the house. The only time we could go into the house was at night to go in and sleep on the floor.

>> Bill Benson: So all day long you were supposed to be outside.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. They had this temporary building. We ate there. If we wanted to do anything, we were in in this little house that was made out of wood. So we couldn't go to her bathroom. So we complained to Uncle Herman a lot. So finally he got us to another place where there were two ladies who were taking in children. And they weren't only Jewish children. They were just children that were lost. And they took good care of us. They sent us to school. And we learned how to speak French.

>> Bill Benson: And then, of course then the Germans invade France in May 1940.

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly.

>> Bill Benson: There you are in Paris. Tell us what happened from there.

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, I don't know how my brother and I -- why we were in Paris when they came marching in. We could hear them. And all the people were extremely frightened. They called the Army the Boche. Everybody wanted to get out of Paris.

>> Bill Benson: You told me you remembered the bombing and the shelling that was taking place by the Germans as they were getting close to Paris.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. That was in the foster home. Yeah. It looked like the Fourth of July when the bombs were coming -- the bombs didn't fall on Paris. They fell in the environments of Paris.

So anyway, when the Boche came into Paris, everybody wanted to get out. Some people collaborated with the Nazis but many, most people, wanted to get out. So there was this exodus.

So you saw on the map -- you see Paris. And then if you go west a little bit -- but you told the people already. There's a town maybe 40 miles away from Paris. It is a big palace.

Anybody know what that town is?

I heard it. Somebody said Versailles. The person who said that, you're right.

Absolutely.

So a lot of people wanted to go --

>> Bill Benson: I want to interrupt for just a second. I was just reading that at that point, at that exact time that you were leaving, there were three million people living in Paris and the estimate is after the exodus there were 800,000 still there. So you were one of more than two million people fleeing Paris.

>> Susan Warsinger: I didn't know those statistics. Thank you for telling me.

>> Bill Benson: So there you are in the midst of this sea of humanity. You make it to Versailles.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. So in Versailles, the biggest building in Versailles is the palace. There is a beautiful palace, garden. So we get there and the mayor of the town just didn't know what to do with us. So he said, well, I guess I will house you in the palace.

So we didn't have anything to sleep on so they gave us these burlap bags, what you put potatoes in. There was a big pile of hay in one of the gardens so we went and filled our bags with the hay. And then we tied it with a rope. And then we had this nice little mattress. So maybe like, I don't know, maybe 400 people or something like that, we all carried our mattresses. He took us back into the palace.

And you know what the biggest room is in the palace?

>> [Inaudible]

>> Susan Warsinger: Ahh. I heard it. The person who said Hall of Mirrors, raise your hand. There she is. Ok. You're absolutely right. It was the Hall of Mirrors. And that hall is probably as big as this but it's flat. And it has chandeliers. It has crystal chandeliers, mirrors all over the place. So we went and we put our mattresses all over, all over. All of these people were sleeping in the palace.

>> Bill Benson: I think you had gotten separated from the adults that were with you when you went to Versailles.

>> Susan Warsinger: This is the part I don't even remember how we got there. We got there, I don't know.

>> Bill Benson: Just you and your brother.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: So you spend the night. They're sleeping on this mattress. Tell us what

happened the next morning.

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, maybe it was two or three days. I don't remember. Maybe it was the next morning. But, you know, the Boche, the German Army, did not stay only in Paris. Guess where they went.

You all have guessed. They went to Versailles. And so we heard them coming. And the marching. We could hear the boots and the caravans with the jeeps and, I don't know, maybe horses. I don't remember. But it was very loud. And I remember the sound. And finally there was a car in the front of that Caravan. So a man came out of his car and he wanted to talk to the mayor. Now, this German officer did not know how to speak any French. The mayor of the town didn't know how to speak any German. They wanted to speak to each other. So somebody in the crowd said, there's a little girl up in the palace, she knows how to speak German.

So I guess the audience can figure out who that little girl was.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: So, they called me. And I'm telling you, I was really very frightened. This man to me looked as high as the ceiling over here. So they started talking. And I translated all right. But I don't remember what it was all about. And at the end of the conversation the officer turned to me and he said to me, "Little girl, how come you know how to speak German so well?" So I said to him, "Oh, the French schools are very good and I learned how to speak German in the French schools". So he clicked his heels and he shook my hand. And I said, my God, if he only knew that I was Jewish.

>> Bill Benson: That was quick, quick thinking.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah, thank you.

>> Bill Benson: So from there you would move on to yet another place.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. We couldn't stay. We couldn't stay. Because first of all, Versailles was in the occupant zone of France. When you saw that map, you saw a white line like in the middle of France. Inside of that white line that you saw before on the slide was the unoccupied zone. So a lot of people went to the unoccupied zone. So I'm not sure how it happened but I think two nuns took us to the unoccupied zone. We ended up in a little town called Brout-Vernet. It was near Vichy. And there was an old, old castle and in that castle were Jewish children that were lost, from all over. We were there.

>> Bill Benson: This was at the chateau --

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: So what was Château de La Moralière like?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, the people were good to us. We went to school. What happened is -- this village, they had a school. So the directress from our place, she wanted us to go to school with the children, the farmers' children. And the people of the town didn't want us to go to school with them.

It is such a shame because here we were kids from all kinds of urban, from different cultures, from different ideas and here were these farmers and they didn't want to have anything to do with us. And if we had sort of gotten together, maybe they would have found out that they had something to learn from us and we certainly could have learned from them about farming. But it was such a shame because we could have gotten together as young kids and realized that we need to talk to each other. But that didn't happen.

>> Bill Benson: So they opened the school for the Jewish kids inside the chateau.

>> Susan Warsinger: No. They gave us a room in the village, in the village. They had a French

teacher. And we learned how to speak French and how to write French. I still have my [speaking French] at home.

>> Bill Benson: You remember the teacher you had.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. He was very good. And later on, as I became an adult, I learned that he became the mayor of the town nearby. So I was happy for him.

>> Bill Benson: While you were there, you shared with me just a wonderful story of kids. This is war. War is going on. Food is scarce. I don't know what your eating circumstances were like but you had no treats, no goodies but yet you would celebrate each other's birthdays and special occasions.

>> Susan Warsinger: I told you that story?

>> Bill Benson: You did. I want you to tell them that story.

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, you know, we didn't have that much to give to a person for their birthday. And every once a week we got dessert, maybe a little cookie or maybe a little piece of cake. If somebody -- if we knew who was a good friend, my brother, a relative, a friend, we saved -- we didn't eat our dessert. We had these lockers up in the attic. So we borrowed a tray from the kitchen. And everybody was a friend of the birthday child used to save their dessert and put it up in the locker on that tray. So by the time the birthday came along, you know, the tray was filled with goodies.

So what we did, the night before we went into the garden and picked flowers. And one time somebody found a doily and they put the doily on the tray and the cookies on the tray. So what we did is in the morning, before the person woke up, we carried the tray, put it on their bed and we sang to them.

>> Bill Benson: I just love that, when you shared that with me.

Susan, during that time, going to Paris, the exodus from Paris to Versailles, and then to the chateau, during that time did you have any contact with your parents?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, I'm glad you asked me that. It sounds like I was happy. I mean, we were kids and we were doing ok. But our main objective was to be reunited with our parents. My brother and I wrote to our parents every day, every day. And the post went out. And I don't know what happened to our letters. We didn't hear from our parents. We didn't know what had happened to them. All we wanted to be was reunited.

We saw some of the children that were in the chateau, they got out of the chateau and somehow their parents found them and they came to the United States or went to other places. And so we wanted to find our parents.

>> Bill Benson: So here you are in this children's home in southern France, had no contact with your parents, as you said, you don't know what's happened to them. And then one day you learn that your parents are, in fact, trying to get to you and trying to get you out of there. So tell us what happened from there.

>> Susan Warsinger: I told you about the directress, the head lady of the children's home. She called me. She called me up to her office. She said to me "Susi, you are going to go to the United States." And I was really shocked. I didn't know anything. And so she said your parents are in the United States and they have been looking for you all over.

They had these organizations called the HIAS, and the Quakers. They had written to each other letters. They had been to the State Department. They had gotten enough affidavits from my parents to come to the United States. And as soon as they came here, they looked for us and they found us.

>> Bill Benson: And for our audience, this was, of course, before the United States got into the

war so it was still possible for some children to leave.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: So your parents located you and made plans to get you out of there. So tell us about leaving the chateau and making your way to the United States.

>> Susan Warsinger: Ok. You can imagine how excited we were. Somebody asked me later on how my parents got here, I'll be glad to tell.

>> Bill Benson: We have to hear that for sure.

>> Susan Warsinger: But for time's sake. We were really excited to come to the United States. So what I learned later on is that Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of Roosevelt -- Franklin Roosevelt, she had been to the head of some agency that helped children come to the United States. So 50 kids went from Marseille, which is on the southern part of France, and went across the Pyrenees through Spain and then on to Lisbon and on this boat. You were telling people about the Serpa Pinto. So when we got there --

>> Bill Benson: You and your brother are two of those 50 children.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. Yes. And so we went to the boat.

>> Bill Benson: How did you get from southern France to over the Pyrenees? Do you remember that at all?

>> Susan Warsinger: I remember it vaguely. That route, a lot of refugees took to escape and get out of France and go over the Pyrenees. Some people at one time they walked over the Pyrenees and just tried to get out, to be safe in Lisbon and Portugal. We went on the train. I don't remember who took us and how we got on the train.

>> Bill Benson: So you made it to Lisbon.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. We made it to Lisbon. And we got on the ship. We stayed in the hull of that ship, at the very front of the ship. And 50 kids were not allowed to mingle with the passengers of this ship. But my brother, of course, did not follow these directions.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: He looked all over the ship and he found this stash of pineapple. It was loaded on someplace when we had stopped somewhere. We had never eaten any pineapple in our life. So he ate the pineapple constantly. He filled himself up with pineapple. I guess his stomach got to be filled with the pineapple and many times he was standing at the railing of the ship and the insides of his body fell into the Atlantic ocean.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: And then on top of it -- he used to wet his bed. And -- I'm telling this to you for a reason. He got a big rash over this part of his body. Now, he tells the story differently but this is what I remember.

>> Bill Benson: This is your story.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. So anyway, you know, people remember certain things. And sometimes it's a little bit different. It doesn't mean it didn't happen. It's just this is the way I remember it and he doesn't want to tell anybody that he wet his bed so he remembers it a different way.

So anyway, it's 14 days that we had been on the ship. They told us -- and the ship is rolling. They told us that the next morning we were going to be able to see the Statue of Liberty. We were all very excited, all the children got up very early. I think my brother got up an hour early. He was up there waiting for the 6:00 to come. And when we got up there, there was really a deep fog and you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. So all the children were very disappointed.

But this is the most exciting part that I will never, never forget. At exactly 6:00, it was like a curtain. You know, like when you were in the theater and the curtain opens up like this but sometimes the curtain goes like this. And the fog lifted, like in front of our eyes. And very slowly that lady appeared like this right in front of us.

>> Bill Benson: And you remember that very vividly.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes, I do. I remember. I still get goose bumps thinking about it. We were really excited because it meant that we were going to be reunited with our parents, of course, that we were going to go to a country where there was democracy and where we would be free and where there was no hatred of Jewish people, no injustice going on. So we were very excited.

So we got to the pier in New York. And all the people got off the boat. But the children had to be checked out to see if they had some kind of an infectious disease. So all the children passed except my brother. And I told them the rash was because he was eating all of that pineapple and they wouldn't believe me. So they said you can't come into the United States.

I'm going to ask the audience if they can figure out what happened to us. Anybody can figure this out what they did to my brother and me?

If you don't know, I'll tell you.

[No Audible Response]

Ok. So what happened is -- they didn't send us back. Usually people say, well, you have to go back. No, that wasn't it. But they had a way of quarantining people. And maybe when I give you the word quarantine you might know where did they quarantine the people that they wouldn't let come into the United States.

Anybody want to take a guess?

>> Bill Benson: Ellis Island. They said it. Ellis Island.

>> Susan Warsinger: Somebody said it. Ok. So I'm going to repeat it because the audience didn't hear it. It was Ellis Island.

So we went to Ellis Island. And there my brother was healed very soon. They gave him creams and powder. But we learned everything about then what we needed to know about the United States in Ellis Island.

>> Bill Benson: In Ellis Island.

>> Susan Warsinger: Can I tell you the things we learned?

>> Bill Benson: Yes. I was going to ask anyways the wonderful things you learned about the United States.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. So on the tables they had white bread. We had never seen white bread in our entire life. And you could take a slice and then you could take the slice and you could squeeze it like that in your hand and then you could eat it and it was called Wonder Bread.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: And then my brother was sitting next to a sailor and he was drinking this brown drink. And it had bubbles in it. And the sailor told him to taste it. So my brother looked at me and said should I do this and I said, yeah, go do it. So he said, oh, this tastes really good and it tickles my nose when I drink it. And the sailor told him it was Coca-Cola. So now we know about what you eat and what you drink.

And then we found out that the kids in the United States -- remember, I was 11 and my brother was 9. The kids in the United States all could put candy in their mouth and you

could keep it in your mouth all day long and it wouldn't melt. And so somebody told us it was chewing gum. So we were ready to come to the United States.

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: I want to ask you one more question related to that but before I do, do you recall your reunion with your parents? Do you remember that specifically?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. It was very exciting moment in our life. Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: And you ended up coming to Washington, D.C.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. The reason because the rabbi in town, somehow or other --

>> Bill Benson: That was in the house?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. He somehow escaped the concentration camps and the ghettos and he came to the United States and he came to Washington. And my father figured, well, if Washington was good enough for our rabbi, that was a good place to settle. So we lived here all that time.

>> Bill Benson: And tell us what you know about how your parents were able to get out of Germany with their newborn and make it here before you got here. How did they do that?

>> Susan Warsinger: Ok. So my father had a cousin who lived in the Bronx. She had a pickle factory with her husband and her family. And evidently they were well-to-do. They helped the HIAS and the Quakers write to the State Department. Because you had to prove to the State Department in those days that you would not be a burden to the United States. So she said she wouldn't be a burden. So they checked her out. And what happened was they had some money but the money that she said that she had was only enough to take care of one person. So by this time my father, baby brother, and mother were still in Bad Kreuznach. So they decided that my father should come here.

So he worked hard. He was selling eggs. He was -- the Jewish community was good to him and so he made enough money and he could prove that he would take care of his wife and his one baby. So as soon as they came, that's when they started looking for us.

>> Bill Benson: That's when they started looking for you.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: There's so much more I'd like to ask you about and have you share with us but I think we have a little time to turn to our audience for some questions. Should we do that?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: We're going to take a few questions. We don't have time for have many. But if you have a question, and we hope that you will, please go to one of the two microphones.

There's one in each aisle. And if you will make your question as brief as you can, please do so and then I'll repeat the question just to be sure that we hear it before Susan responds to it. So if you have a question, and if you don't, I got many more.

All right. We have two people right away.

It should be on.

>> I'll try and talk loud. Can you hear me?

>> Bill Benson: I think it's coming on now. There you go.

>> Thank you very much for that presentation. It was fabulous. This may be too personal of a question but I'm interested in what you feel your experiences left you with and your brother on a long-term basis.

>> Bill Benson: The question -- she prefaced it by saying this may be too personal for you. But for you, from what you went through, what you shared and what you went through, what do you think has been the long-term impact on you and your brother, if you have some thoughts

about that?

>> Susan Warsinger: Oh, thank you very much for asking that question. I think it's a very important question.

Just remember that I was a child. And when I came here, I wanted to be an American girl. I wanted to be just like all 11-year-old American girls. I wanted to forget everything that happened. I felt guilty that I was the one that was saved. And I felt guilty as a child but I knew that I had to make the best of everything. So I decided I was going to work very hard and become an American citizen and be like all the Americans, and be very patriotic.

I talk about this experience because I want you, the audience, to understand that when you see injustice taking place, you know, that you have to do something about it. But for me, the experiences given to me is that I need to go and talk to people and tell people that we can't be bystanders.

But as far as the experience is concerned, I think all the immigrants that come here - - the Uber driver that took me here, he came and worked hard and he wants his children to go to school. My father did the same thing. They work hard and they contribute to our society. And I think I ingrained my children that they needed to be good citizens and they need to be understanding of other people. And they have. And they have been contributing a lot to the culture of the United States, my children and my grandchildren and my brother's children -- both of my brothers' children and grandchildren. They have worked hard to give back to the United States what they gave to us.

So I'm very happy that I'm here but the experience -- remembering this and having it affect my life in a negative way, no, I'm very happy. I'm not sad. And most of the survivors here, you know, they've tried to make the best of the experience that they had.

Thank you for asking that. Nobody's asked me that in a long time.

>> Bill Benson: Here and then over here and that will be our questions.

>> Thank you so much for sharing your story. I just wondered, have you been back to Germany or back to France?

>> Susan Warsinger: I'm glad you asked.

>> Bill Benson: Yeah, been back to France or to Germany. Yeah.

>> Susan Warsinger: I tell you, I went back to Germany. I'm going to do this very fast. I went back to Germany with my three daughters. They were teenagers. They were in high school. And I wanted to show them my town of Bad Kreuznach. And in the 70's, nobody had come out. The German people didn't want to talk about it because they didn't want to remember what their parents and grandparents had done. The survivors didn't want to talk about it because they wanted to be Americans and they wanted to be happy and forget all of the horrible things that happened. So when I went to Germany, it was very uncomfortable. The people -- having any communication was really very uncomfortable.

But then I went again with my brother, Ernest, the baby. He's a famous physicist who worked in NASA. He had to do with the ozone in the air. He had to go to a meeting in Dusseldorf, which is real close to Bad Kreuznach. So I went in the '90s. At that time the museum was just built and the survivors started to talk about the Holocaust. There were memorials in Germany about the Holocaust. So people had started to come out because it was very important for people to know what had happened and, first of all to remember all of those six million Jews that died. And it was important to know the lesson that we have to be vigilant.

And then I went again in 2015. They have monuments, museums, the kids in elementary school are all learning about what their fathers and grandfathers had done. So it's

a big change between the three times.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.

All right, our final question here.

>> Yes. These questions are from Facebook. They're connected so we'll put them together.

>> Susan Warsinger: From where?

>> Bill Benson: From livestreamed. They are on Facebook.

>> So you described coming in and seeing the Statue of Liberty and having these feelings about what you were leaving behind and what you hoped your future was. So Kristen and Robin are asking whether America lived up to your expectations and whether in fact, you didn't experience any of those same things. Have you never experienced anti-Semitism, for instance, they're asking.

>> Bill Benson: So has your expectations about coming here been met but have you also experienced anti-Semitism here?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. Well, when I first came here everything was wonderful for me. The kids in school didn't discriminate against me because I was Jewish but I felt that I wasn't a part yet of the American society because I was an immigrant. So I felt -- I know what the immigrants feel like when they first come to the United States. It takes a while to become part of this society.

As far as anti-Semitism is concerned, yes, there was anti-Semitism but I really wasn't involved. I know like on the Chesapeake Bay, the beaches said "No Jews Allowed." But that was a very few things. It wasn't anything like in Germany.

But what was bothering me a lot is that the African American children, they didn't go to public school and the African American children had to sit in the back of the balcony at the theater, at the movie house in downtown. And I couldn't understand that because here was this democratic society and they were discriminating against the African Americans but it wasn't anything like -- you can't compare it to what happened in the Holocaust because here this man set about killing, mass murder it wasn't anything that I had seen in Germany.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Susan.

Thank you very much. We're going to close the program in a moment. We're going to close it with some final words from Susan. I want to thank all of you for being with us. We have programs every Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August. So I hope that you can return.

When Susan finishes, she's going to go right up to the top where you came in and she will be available to sign copies of *Echoes of Memory* in which she makes contributions it's also an opportunity for you to ask her another question or just say hi.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word. So with that note, I'm going to turn back to Susan to close our program.

>> Susan Warsinger: It's not that long. [Laughter]

I want my children, my grandchildren, my brothers and their families, my friends, and the visitors here in the audience to rejoice in the fact that we're living in a democratic society and that all of us should make sure that no dictatorship would ever usurp our liberties.

We need to remember the atrocity that happened to families during the Holocaust and pass this information on to our children. We need to learn from this horror in our history. We cannot undo the atrocities of the past. Besides remembering, we have to take action to confront hate. When we see injustice taking place, we have to do something about it. We cannot be onlookers. We have to be sensitive to each other and we have to take care of one

another.

Why do I volunteer in this museum? People ask me: How can you do this over and over? How can I not? Giving tours to our visitors through our Permanent Exhibition, hopefully teaches them what hatred and prejudice can do to people. When touring law enforcement officers and future FBI agents, I hope that they understand their role when encountering atrocities.

We cannot be bystanders and definitely not be collaborators. There are threats of genocide in many parts of the world at the present time. We cannot be indifferent to emerging threats of genocide and mass atrocities. All of us need to be aware about what is happening. And we need to work together and take the necessary actions to prevent people from being murdered for the simple reason that they are different.

Never again do we want to stand by and do nothing. We here at the museum want to inspire citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity.

I want to thank you, Bill Benson, for having me today. And I want to thank the audience for coming.

I saw that many of you raised your hand that you're going to go to our Permanent Exhibition. So there is one exhibit I want you to look for. It's St. Louis. There's a big boat and people are standing on the boat. And there's some pictures of the boat. And the Serpa Pinto looks just like it. And look for the exhibit where the Torahs on the floor, on a blue carpet. And there it talks about Kristallnacht and where they burned all the synagogues all over Germany. You might want to look at that exhibit. And most of the things that you're going to see on the fourth floor is my experience but then when you go to the third floor, this is where you go into the concentration camps I was already here in the United States.

So I wish you have a wonderful learning experience. And thank you very much, again, for coming.

>> [Applause]