

August 7th, 2019

"First Person"

Jill Pauly

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 20thth year of the "First Person" program, so thank you for joining us.

Person today is Mrs. Jill Pauly, whom you shall meet shortly.

This 2019 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 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 2019 program closes tomorrow when our *First Person* will be Jill's husband, Kurt Pauly.

Jill will share 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 Jill 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 to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises. You can ask your question and tag

the Museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and the hashtag #Askwhy.

A recording of this program will be made available on the Museum's YouTube page. Please visit the *First Person* website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.

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

Jill Pauly was born Gisella Renate Berg on May 1st, 1933 in Cologne, Germany, the arrow on the map points to the location of Cologne. Jill and her family lived in Lechenich, a small town, outside of Cologne. The Nazis came to power, shortly before Jill was born, in 1933. In this photo, Jill, the child in

the front; and her older sister, Inge, picnicked in the Eiffel mountains in 1937 with her mother Clara and her aunt and uncle.

On November 9th, 1938, the Nazis carried out a nationwide pogrom, against Germans -- Germany's Jews known as Kristallnacht, or the night of broken glass, alerted to the danger, jill and her family fled to cologne, this is an historical photograph of Germans passing by, vandalized store of a Jewish shopkeeper.

jill's family decided to leave Germany and in June of 1939, they left for Kenya.

In this photo, we see jill, who is on the right, and Inge while on the germ took them on a two week trip to Mombassa. They lived in Kenya for the next seven years, pictured here is a group portrait of jill's extended family on their farm in Kenya, jill is in the middle between

her grandparents, in the back row, from the left to right are jill's uncle sister, and mother and father. In 1947, the Bergs came to the United States, and settled in New Jersey.

Jill and her -- her husband, Kurt who is also a Holocaust survivor, had lived in the Washington, D.C. area since 1974, but in 2016, moved to Long Island, to be closer to their children.

Jill and Kurt have two children, four grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren, who are 11 and three years of age.

One of their grandsons is currently serving, on board a U.S. naval ship.

Jill enjoyed a very successful career in real estate, she became active as a volunteer with this museum in 1992, before it opened.

She was at the museum's donor's desk, weekly until she and Kurt moved to Long Island. Since moving

to New York, she has spoken publicly on behalf of the museum several times, including at the United Nations, for the opening of the museum's traveling exhibit, on propaganda.

Accompanying jill today are her husband Kurt and their son David, who are seated in the front row right here. Please join me in welcoming our "First Person", Mrs. Jill Pauly!

[APPLAUSE]

BILL BENSON: Jill, thank you so much for joining us and your willingness to make the trip from Long Island to be here with us today, so we're really grateful for that, and for Kurt being willing to do that for us, tomorrow as well. We're going to start, because we have, you know, really a limited amount of time with you just an hour, jill.

You told me that Kristallnacht, that took place in November, 1938, was catalyst, for the decision and direction your family's life took, during the Holocaust, and the war. You were very young at the time. Just five years of age.

Before we talk about Kristallnacht, and the events that followed, and moving to Kenya, tell us, first, a little bit about your family's life, before Kristallnacht. Before those early years, when Hitler came to power what your family's life was like.

>>JILL: They had a very happy life. My parents got married. 1926, I think.

Is that possible? Yeah, I think so.

[LAUGHTER]

BILL BENSON: Uh-huh

>>JILL: And they lived in a small town, outside of Cologne.

Where my grandfather and my father and his brother, grandmother, lived.

My mother moved to Lechenich, to be with them.

And... things were fine.

They had a very happy life.

They were close to cologne. If they wanted to go out, they went to cologne.

And they had very good relationships with nonJewish people. A lot of them.

And they were very well-liked. The family goes back to that area. I saw one genealogy that I don't have, but I saw, the first name of a family member... was in the 1600s. And all it says is his name, CAIN. which is a biblical name.

And there were many, many relatives. My grandmother, came from eight children.

So --

BILL BENSON: So a huge extended family, a huge --

>>JILL: Yes, I didn't know how huge it was until someone showed me a I



mean genealogy, maybe ten years ago, it was just huge.

And on that genealogy, there was, like, a line... of people missing.

After the war

BILL BENSON: After the war

>>JILL: Very few people left

BILL BENSON: And as you said, the family went back, centuries, so the roots in the community, were just very, very --

>>JILL: Very deep, and their reputation was really quite excellent. And there were a group of nonJewish people, who ran an underground, to help our parents. And I believe it must have started in '36, or '37, but then when Kristallnacht came, that was all --

BILL BENSON: Before we turn to Kristallnacht, tell us about your father, what was your father's occupation

>>JILL: He was a cattle dealer

BILL BENSON: A cattle dealer and

you told me that you saw some documents that showed that after the -- after the Nazis came to power, you could actually see the decline in their revenue. That really affected their business, even before Kristallnacht.

>>JILL: I had, in my possession, which I've lost somehow -- two postcards. The first one came from the Nazi regime, in 1937.

That he was -- they were to do no more business. And... no, it was something else. Something relating to something forbidden, I can't remember exactly, but the second card, stated, "You should now -- everything that you own, officially now belongs to the reisch. That included farmlands, housing whatever people owned belonged to the Nazis.

And that's kind of a message, either you get out, or they couldn't possibly imagine the Holocaust. But

they -- they wouldn't know -- wouldn't have been able to survive, without being able to make a living, for long

BILL BENSON: Absolutely, absolutely

>>JILL: And they were quite wealthy by the time. It wasn't just my parents. It was a family business of four or five men. And, it was just impossible, an impossible situation.

So, very early on, my father, when they closed him down in 37, he spent the whole year traveling around, trying to get out of Germany, finding openings, finding ways of getting into a country.

And it wasn't possible.

We had no friends or relatives in the United States.

BILL BENSON: So this was not an option for you

>>JILL: It wasn't an option. They wanted to come to the United States. And... one of his cousins, who was

not in the business, married a woman, from a very, very brilliant, intellectual family.

They had a son. She had a brother, or cousin -- it was either a cousin or a brother. Who went to the university of Munich.

And it was 1922, I believe. Very early.

He saw Hitler, on the street, giving a speech.

Very early, not '22, but very early.

And he decided, right, that day that he was not going to stay in Germany.

And he got in touch with his family, and he told them, that the day he graduates, the next day, he's

leaving. And he went to England.

And.... he was a wonderful person,

he spent his -- his hobby was

helping Jews getting out of Germany,

and we lucked out with that family relationship.

>> You're going to tell us more about that a little bit

>>JILL: Yes

BILL BENSON: Jill, one of the many restrictions besides taking away your businesses and your ability to have a livelihood, all kinds of restrictions were being imposed by the Nazis, one of them was that you were forbidden to keep kosher, yet your family, at considerable risk continued to do that. You shared with me how they did that. would you mind saying a little bit about that

>>JILL: They did it defiantly. That's how they did it. They had guts, I mean.... two or three of my uncles were kosher slaughterers. That was forbidden. They continued doing it. They hid calves in the attic. And they -- one of the uncles, who was actually the butcher, decided he was going to kill the animals, and he... had a very trusting worker, who helped him.

And they went -- he couldn't -- he shot, he did the kosher slaughtering, and then shot into the head so that his Nazi neighbors could hear that he kill --

BILL BENSON: Killed it by gunshot

>>JILL: Of course, this was terribly risky. They didn't realize really how risky it was until what happened on Kristallnacht.

BILL BENSON: In fact, you told me that they would hide the -- the knives hide them up in the chimney

>>JILL: In our house, my uncle strapped them inside the chimney; and they did two raids in our house. Because people knew. And Nazis came in, and they opened the drawers.. For the cutlery. But they didn't find them.

BILL BENSON: So jill, November 9th through 10th, 1938, the night that we call the night of broken glass, or Kristallnacht, what do you remember of that night? And know

about that night as -- as how it affected your family? what happened that night?

>>JILL: It affected me to the point, where eight years later -- 81 years later, I -- I remember it clearly, you know, you forget a lot of things in life; but --

BILL BENSON: Not something like this?

>>JILL: No, no. Nobody knew anything at all, no one.

They did not announce that this was going to take place.

Even to the nonJewish world.

So at about 9:00 in the morning my sister had gone by train to school in cologne.

The train came back to cologne, and my mother saw her, out the window, she was on the train.

She couldn't figure out why she was coming back, no idea.

And a little bit later on, somebody knocked on the door.

And it was a friend of the family.  
And he told my father, do not go to  
the synagogue today.  
And he was about to turn around and  
leave and my father said, "why?"  
He said, "Just listen to what I told  
you: Do not go there." And he took  
off. He had some managerial job in  
a -- a town -- town government.  
And, then the phone started ringing.  
And relatives in other parts of  
the -- spread out a far area, called  
and told him what was happening.  
And they started screaming and  
yelling and shouting -- they didn't  
know what to do. They were just...  
one of my uncles, went outside, he  
wanted to close the shutters.  
And my grandmother said, "It's too  
late to close shutters, you can  
leave them open, we're running away.  
we're leaving! Leave everything!  
we're running".  
And how do you run? You know, you  
had to have vehicles to run with, so



there was a family car.

I don't know why we couldn't use that -- I guess they were afraid to use that. Oh, I know now.

BILL BENSON: Uh-huh

>>JILL: The men in the family, got into that car.

And drove around the area for 24 hours.

And at night, they went into the woods, they hid themselves.

So my father had to get other drivers to get us to cologne.

And... he hired a man that he -- who was willing to do it, you know, you had to have the right connections.

They were getting smaller and smaller.

And this man did do it. I suppose my father paid him well.

And... my -- my sister and I came out the front door. We smelled smoke, and we -- we saw stuff flying around, in the air.

And it was probably the synagogue burning. And -- and we saw flames, and we started screaming. We were terrified.

So my grandmother grabbed us and put us in -- in the car, and put us on the... what do you call that? Right on the bottom of the car, with our faces

BILL BENSON: On the floor, on the floor of the car

>>JILL: Put us on the floor of the car with our faces down, and we stopped screaming. But we had to stay that way until we got to the outskirts of cologne, when we were quiet she let us get out. But I remember seeing flames, fire, not close, but far, all around the horizon of the car. It was dusty, but you saw the flames.

We drove into the city.

And it was dark.

And we went into a -- an apartment that was occupied by four of my

mother's great -- my great aunts and uncles.

My mother's mother's aunts and uncles, and all of a sudden we became 12 in that apartment. The men didn't show up, kept going, until, Friday -- Kristallnacht, I think was on a Thursday.

Friday, around noon, they showed up in Cologne. And I remember, eating, in the dining room.

And then the men, planning, where to hide, in in case there's a knock at the door, I found that very

interesting, you know, I remember --

BILL BENSON: You remember that, yeah,

>>JILL: I -- I remember them planning, to stay in the apartment, and hide.

But nothing happened during the meal. Nobody knocked.

And then, the next day, my father finds out that there's an empty apartment in -- in the top floor of

that building.

And he took us up there.

He was going to rent that.

To hide.

And G-D was with us that time. My sister had a screaming nightmare.

Afraid after all -- she was older, she understood more than I did

BILL BENSON: She was four years older than you

>>JILL: Yes, and so he said, well, I can't stay here either. So, this -- this was, like, from Saturday, to Sunday.

So on Sunday, three of the men decided that they needed the family car for -- they drove into Holland. We lived one hour from Holland.

And they were caught.

And they were put in prison,

BILL BENSON: Once they got to Holland they were caught, right? Over the border and -- yeah.

>>JILL: Yeah, I believe because there were about 30,000 Nazis in

Holland.

So they were stuck.

But I had two uncles, who had left Germany, early. Two uncles and an aunt, who moved to Holland, because they couldn't make a living in Germany anymore. Couldn't make a living in Holland either.

Very hard.

And one of these uncles, was a young man, at that time, he was about 26 or 27. And he was a Dutch partisan. That's what he was.

BILL BENSON: Uh-huh

>>JILL: And he helped people escape Germany.

Bring them over. He was very daring. They swam over.

And he would sit at the beach, and he had papers -- newspapers, with him, and raincoats.

And he would hardly speak to them, just hand them a raincoat, the paper and say sit down here and read. And he would leave. And then they would

disperse. And this uncle was also -- the family also had a good connection with the Jewish man, who met one of my uncles, on vacations in the mountains. I don't know if they were German mountains, or Swiss mountains; but they met on vacation. And he's the man, who advised the family to get their money out of Germany, early.

And my grandmother agreed with him.

BILL BENSON: This was even before Kristallnacht, right?

>>JILL: Yes, oh, way before, when I was born -- the day I was born, may 1, 33, Hitler came to power and on that day, the family hired a smuggler, who took their money -- it was a lot of money.

Into -- into Holland.

And this gentleman, that I'm speaking about, this friend, took care of the money, he was very honest.

And... it helped. You know, it helped us --

BILL BENSON: Hugely, right,

>>JILL: Get out. Yes

BILL BENSON: Jill, for our audience, I just might say Kristallnacht was a series of vicious attacks against Jews all over Germany and Austria, on that night, more than 300 synagogues were burned including yours; more than 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up arrested and essentially given the choice of staying incarcerated or leave the country.

If they paid some money.

It was a horrific night. Jewish businesses were destroyed everywhere. So your -- your father and a couple of uncles are now in Holland. They had been arrested. You are --

>>JILL: We were stuck

BILL BENSON: You were stuck

>>JILL: We were stuck in Cologne

BILL BENSON: And those events, though, propelled the family, immediately, into saying, "We are going to get out of Germany,

>>JILL: Whenever they could go,

BILL BENSON: So tell us what happened then to be able to make the arrangements to leave Germany

>>JILL: The arrangements to leave Germany, we found out, were already in process.

But in 1939 who would think of going to Africa? Not many people.

But, this lady, who married into the family, the brother of that courageous guy, who heard Hitler speak.

Graduated, law school in England.

And he sent his brother, to Kenya.

He had a connection, in Kenya.

And they hired his brother, he got him a job.

BILL BENSON: In Kenya

>>JILL: In Kenya. And that became,



BILL BENSON: Is this your uncle Herman in England? Was that uncle Herman who was in England

>>JILL: No

BILL BENSON: Okay,

>>JILL: He was in Holland

BILL BENSON: He was in Holland.

Okay

>>JILL: Herman was in Holland, yes, and where was I?

BILL BENSON: About the -- the family member who's now, practicing law in Kenya

>>JILL: Yeah.

So there was some -- a lot of movement there, because, this relative was adamant, this woman, Rose, to get out of Germany, with her baby. Her husband didn't want to go, he wasn't afraid.

You had a lot of people like that.

He wasn't in a hurry.

Kristallnacht changed his mind.

But by then, the -- the efforts were being made already.

And that helped the men in Holland. They were incarcerated for nine months.

And the papers came through, and by the permission of the Queen, they were allowed to leave.

BILL BENSON: And there's a little story there, tell us

>>JILL: Yeah,

BILL BENSON: How they got the queen of Holland, to --

>>JILL: The same man that met my -- my uncle in the mountains --

BILL BENSON: Uh-huh

>>JILL: He was the Court Jew to the queen of Holland. That meant he was the only Jewish person that was allowed to go into the Court and meet with the queen, and he got her to sign the papers

BILL BENSON: That released --

>>JILL: To release them from prison, let them be in the camp, and then after nine months in the camp,

the papers came through.

So my -- my father and his brother, and a cousin, were in Kenya, ahead of us.

And... the separation was a terrible thing for my father. I found out many years later, that he had a nervous breakdown, in the camp. Everything he had was in Germany. And... then in Germany, the nine months in Germany, I remember quite a bit of that

BILL BENSON: Those nine months you were forced to live there without your father

>>JILL: Uh-huh yes

BILL BENSON: Tell us a little bit about that before we move on

>>JILL: Well, my sister and I, first of all, never had a bed. We slept on the floor, we slept in chairs.

For nine months, we didn't have a place to sleep, which makes children cranky.

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: My sister went to school, but she didn't really go to school. She was very independent. She was on the subway. She would take --

BILL BENSON: In fact, you said she was outright defiant towards the Nazis

>>JILL: Very! She took the money from my mother for the car fare, and she lined up, wherever there were signs that said Jews not wanted -- and it was dangerous, there was no way of stopping her, I didn't know where she was. She was smart.

And that's what happens when you send children away from home early. They get very independent.

BILL BENSON: Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: And she -- she would take the money, from the car fare, she didn't go to school. And with that money, she lined up, to buy coffee,

and chocolate for my grandmother, who was dying of cancer. Who was in the apartment with us.

And nothing could stop her from taking care of her grandmother. So she did it. And my -- and then we also had several, several trips that we had to make, to the Gestapo, which was so deathly dangerous, because, and I remember, the Gestapo, one trip that we had to take, we were lined up, she was holding, our hands, both of us. And she needed papers. I don't know if they were papeers for Kenya. Probably.

And... we're standing there, and -- at the corner, out of my eye, on the right-hand side, was the Nazi guard.

With the -- uniform with everything. And I hadn't seen those things ever upfront.

BILL BENSON: Uh-huh

>>JILL: Started screaming all Jews

out.

She needed the papers.

So we turned around, and we shuffled out.

And at the door, she turns around and she sees that -- that two Nazis were changing guard. One was leaving, the one that screamed at us; and another one was coming on. So she turned us around, and she walked back.

She didn't go out.

And we got the papers

BILL BENSON: You got the papers this time?

>>JILL: Yeah

BILL BENSON: The papers -- including your -- your visas that you needed to be able to leave Germany to go to Kenya -- they had to be purchased, and they were fairly pricey, to be able to purchase those individual visas

>>JILL: Oh, everything was -- everything we took out of the

country that they bought, they had money left, and they went shopping -- and they bought 7 lifts of stuff

BILL BENSON: To take to Kenya

>>JILL: There were a lot of people, there were 18 of us, a lot of stuff. They didn't know if there were stoves in Kenya or whether there were going to be ovens, they didn't know anything, so they bought a lot of stuff. Everything they bought had to be paid double. Everything Jews bought had to be paid double.

BILL BENSON: You had to pay, as I understand it, part of that was you had to pay 100% tax, on every single thing that you hoped to take out of the country?

>>JILL: Uh-huh

BILL BENSON: 100% tax on it.

>>JILL: And we didn't find out -- I had to be taken to school when I turned six. It was a nightmare. It was just two blocks away from

where we lived. But my mother was terrified, and I think the fear was that she would come to school and I wouldn't be there.

So I only went to school for two weeks. That's why I'm rather... poorly-educated. Two weeks of German studies, I can't read German. And... she -- so she decided, she's not going to take me anymore.

So that was May 14th. And it was a dangerous decision, if someone found out. She would be badly-punished. But she took the chance, and two weeks or so after my birthday, the papers came in for Kenya.

So she felt safer. You know,.

So -- and we left by the middle of June, 1939.

BILL BENSON: So as you said, that was about nine months after Kristallnacht, and those were really tough nine months but now you're ready to leave. As you said your



family had purchased a lot of goods because you could still do that.

Pay a heavy tax on it at that time.

In order to -- in order to leave for Kenya.

Describe for us, what you can, about what it was, like, then, to leave, and as you noted earlier, by this time your father and I think a couple of uncles had made their way to Kenya from Holland

>>JILL: Uh-huh

BILL BENSON: So they were there a little bit ahead of you

>>JILL: It was a disaster! The separation of the family, was a huge family.... they were about 60 people at the train, seeing us off; and that was --

BILL BENSON: Other family members?

>>JILL: Yeah, but that was just a fraction, how many cousins and uncles -- my father didn't even know any second cousins, they were far removed. To me a second cousin is,

like, a real cousin.

And I remember the sadness, and the crying at the train, because my mother had this feeling that she -- she would never see them again.

And also, going on the train, was -- trains were very dangerous. Because you were on there, you had the papers. But the papers could change overnight and then they would examine your passports every five minutes, and they say you're off. So that was a very, very big responsibility, and -- and frightening thing. I remember the train...

We went from Cologne, to Genoa.

And it took a long time, we went through Switzerland.

But one thing I remember...

I had never seen my mother smile.

And when the train got into Switzerland, she broke out in a -- such a beautiful smile, I have

never forgotten it.

We were out!

BILL BENSON: Into a neutral country

>>JILL: Right. And once we got to Genoa, we had to get back on a Nazi ship.

And she, by then, was -- she was a little recovered, I think, from all the fear. And...

BILL BENSON: On this trip, Jill, there were a number of you, it included, I think, three of your grandparents

>>JILL: Yes

BILL BENSON: And one of them was --

>>JILL: Was dying

BILL BENSON: She was dying

>>JILL: And she saved our lives, because, before we -- she was a very religious woman.

Before we left Cologne, my mother said when we got the tickets, my mother said to her, mom, you're so sick, and it's such hot trip to Africa.

Do you think you can make it? She said, "I don't care, if I don't make it. I'm not dying here. I'm leaving".

If she had said, yes, you're right. She would have had to stay to take care of her. And we would have all lost our lives.

BILL BENSON: Just a mention for the audience: This was June ninth, 1939, and on September 1st, 1939, Germany invaded Poland.

And World War II began at that point. So this was just in the immediate run-up to the start of the war.

So you have to board a German ship. You had to take a German ship, you were not allowed to take any money with you. You're on the ship. Now you're sailing to Africa.

There's a lot you -- you won't have time to tell us, but... of course, the -- the commander of the ship, the captain of the ship is a German

officer.

And he hears you saying -- you have to tell us this.

>>JILL: Oh. When I got out of -- when I got out of the -- Germany and we were on the boat, that was the first time in my life, that I had sunshine. They kept me in the house so much, I was sun-deprived. And I was so happy to be out in the air, I was sitting on some thing on the boat there and I was singing.

What was I singing? I was singing German -- little German nursery rhyme songs, and I was singing Hebrew songs.

And the Hebrew that I was singing, was taught to me by my great-uncle in Cologne, to keep me busy. He learned with me, and he sang with me, and he was an operatic he had an operatic voice, he sang at the opera.

So here, I was, singing.

By myself, I wasn't singing to anyone else.

And I was overheard.

And the captain called my mother, in.

And said to her, "would you mind if your little girl would sing for the crew?"

Oh, God!

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: They took us -- our cabins were, you know, below the deck.

They -- and my mother was angry at that. And... there were the aunts, and my grandmothers and my mother, and they're teaching me, overnight, to separate the Hebrew songs, from the German songs.

[LAUGHTER]

BILL BENSON: Right.

>>JILL: I think I did pretty well.

BILL BENSON: Singing the German folk songs?

>>JILL: Yes, I didn't sing any Hebrew songs, I must have

understand, but I was 6, I was mature,

BILL BENSON: And then they invited you back several times

>>JILL: Oh, every day for two weeks!

And my aunts, who were on the boat, were terribly concerned. That something would happen to me. And they would stand guard. I didn't know what they expected to do.

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: I only remember doing it once.

But my auntelsey, you know, she passed away two years ago, she was 100

BILL BENSON: Wow

>>JILL: She said, no dear, you did it -- you did it the whole time.

BILL BENSON: So after singing your way on this cruise... a long two-week cruise you make it to Mombassa, there you are in Kenya

>>JILL: Uh-huh

BILL BENSON: Tell us about arriving there.

>>JILL: I sort of remembered my father, of course, and my mother -- we were so excited about seeing him.

And it was so easy to pick him out. He was standing by the ship, and there were hundreds of people there, but he was the only one, wearing European clothes.

A suit and hat.

And a white shirt. There wasn't anybody else. That was my father. But he soon changed that. And happily.

And... from there, life in Kenya began.

BILL BENSON: One more thing before you tell us about that

>>JILL: Yes

BILL BENSON: One of your grandfathers, despite the fact that



you were on this German ship, he insisted on keeping kosher on the ship.

>>JILL: Yes, yes,

BILL BENSON: And then you arrived on the Sabbath I believe, and he didn't want to get off the ship. So --

>>JILL: We got him off the ship!

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: We got him off the ship. I don't quite remember, but with the eating... he wouldn't -- he told -- he told the aunts, and my mother, in Germany, that if he didn't get kosher food on the ship, he wasn't going.

Crazy, the Jewish -- he knew the Jewish law. He was -- this wasn't connecting properly and so one of my aunts called Berlin. And they delivered kosher food for all of us, for two weeks, to the boat. To a Nazi ship.

[LAUGHTER]

BILL BENSON: Another --

>>JILL: We had to get my grandfather out.

BILL BENSON: In sort of those bizarre ironies that happen sometimes in these circumstances like that, you arrive in Kenya, it's really, at that time, it's a British colony.

So you were instantly labeled enemy aliens by the British government

>>JILL: Right. I was one

BILL BENSON: Explain that

>>JILL: Of course, we didn't understand that. I didn't, and Inge didn't, but our parents had to.

BILL BENSON: Right

>>JILL: We were limited -- they bought a farm, right away.

350-acre farm, they didn't have the money for the whole farm, they took out a mortgage, my grandfather said, this will never work. You're going to lose the farm. But it didn't -- it was fine.

It worked.

And....

BILL BENSON: Just talking about the fact that the British --

>>JILL: Oh, we -- yes, the first -- we hadn't even gotten to the farm. We were all in Kenya, maybe a month, and living in this big house, boarding. And a van drove up, and picked up all the men, and put them in a camp.

Enemy aliens!

BILL BENSON: Because they were German nationals, in the British eyes,

>>JILL: But we found out in the museum why we were angry for 50 years at the British for that. They had nonJews, steal Jewish identities, and sneak into countries.

And they had to make sure that we weren't those people.

BILL BENSON: And they were worried about spies and those kinds of

things

>>JILL: Yes, yes,

BILL BENSON: So now, of course, many of the English, that are living in Kenya, they are -- because the war is on, they're now in -- having to sign up for the Army. So they're leaving the farm; so -- so your family and other Jews in Kenya, were, then, forced, essentially, to take over and run --

>>JILL: Yes yes

BILL BENSON: Take care of the farms

>>JILL: The Jewish farmers had to take over -- the nonJewish farms, because the women were left on the farms alone, and they had to help them.

And my father had a farm between where we lived, and where he had another field, which was -- I don't know -- 8 miles away. And every day, from -- back from work, he bicycled. He would go to this other farm and make sure that everything

was running normally. My uncle, his brother, had one where he could walk. To the next farm. And take care of that property. So that went on for the duration of the war

BILL BENSON: And tell us about your education. I mean, it's time for you to go to school. You're in a new country, a new culture.

Tell us about that.

>>JILL: For a child that came out of Germany, that had never been inside a school, or a... or not even outside of the house, a whole lot -- going to school, was really quite -- quite -- like, a terror experience, you know,?

And in Kenya... this is so meaningful to me... we were there -- we weren't there, maybe two weeks. My father -- mother and father were very concerned that we weren't getting education.

We went to a school, in Nairobi, but from where we lived, we had to go

through the woods, take off our shoes and socks, walk over a creek, and then go to school.

And... I was only 6, and the guides that took us were young, black men. We didn't speak their language, they didn't speak ours.

And my parents trusted them.

And they were wonderful.

They took us to school. They spoke to us, in Swahili, all the way to school and then when they picked us up, they spoke Swahili to us all the way back, and this went on for six weeks.

And we were fluent in Swahili.

Children learned that language very easily, but then we had problems with the adults, they didn't -- but they learned also

BILL BENSON: They learned too. And on top of it you had -- you were in the English school system so you had to learn English on top of that

>>JILL: And the teachers were

vicious!

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: Very anti-Semitic, and vicious, because children coming into your classroom, that don't speak a word of the languages spoken there, are double the work for them. But we weren't there very long, because things changed. We went to the farm, and then we went into another school and that didn't work out.

It was too expensive.

And then we went to school in Nairobi, to the primary Nairobi government school. They were excellent schools.

And.... we were boarded with other families, because my parents didn't want us to be boarding in the schools.

And it worked. It was fine. The schools were strict.

Inge, my sister, graduated from their high school and matriculated

and was accepted in England by  
Oxford and Cambridge, and she was 17

BILL BENSON: Wow

>>JILL: I was nothing like that.

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: I had other plans, I don't  
know what they were --

BILL BENSON: Speaking of Inge, we  
had Jill, and Inge together here a  
few years ago and Inge had some  
different memories because she was  
four years older and one of the  
things that she shared is the time  
you were there in Kenya on the farm,  
you had a single -- during the war,  
you had a single battery-operated  
radio.

And that was really significant.

>>JILL: Yes

BILL BENSON: Tell us about that

>>JILL: It was not to be used for  
anything other than the news, from  
England, in the evenings.

Because they couldn't keep it going.  
It was not easy to keep that -- that



radio going.

And every evening, we heard the news from Europe.

And... that's the only -- that's the only radio we had. And we had a phone, you know, the kind that --

BILL BENSON: During that time you were in Kenya, during the war years, because you left after the war, were you able to -- for any period of time to have news or contact with family members back in Germany

>>JILL: Yes, yes, there were some letters, and they stopped in the 1940s

BILL BENSON: That was the end of it?

>>JILL: And one thing that I am grateful to g-D for is that my first grandmother died in Kenya, six months after we got there.

And my second grandmother died, in 1945.

In -- I think, in February, or March. Because had she found out

that everybody in her family was murdered, it -- it would have been a -- a disaster. This way, we had the peace of knowing that she -- she cried for them in her sleep, and thank goodness, she didn't know.

BILL BENSON: During that time, did you -- did you know what was happening to Jews in Europe at that time?

>>JILL: Well, we heard about it. But, you know, hearing about it, when I was -- how old was I? The war was over, I was 12 when the war was over.

And I thought it was awful, but I didn't really understand it properly. I started to understand it on the ship coming here

BILL BENSON: Coming to the U.S.?

>>JILL: Yes.

Somebody brought my father a book of pictures from the concentration camps.

As a gift.

And both my parents, started to cry and I wanted to see what was in the book and they said, "No, you're not to open it".

But I did... and... I became enraged.

And that rage never went away.

And I -- they took the book and they threw it overboard. They couldn't deal with it

BILL BENSON: That was 1947.

Tell us about the decision to leave Kenya, after you gotten yourself established there and moved to the United States, 1947...

>>JILL: Oh, that was easy. They made a decision. They -- they couldn't get into the States.

So they lived in Kenya, and when it became possible, when -- two of my mother's cousins were in the United States, army, that made them citizens, and... right?

BILL BENSON: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

>>JILL: And they were, then, able

to vouch for us, to come in.

Sponsor us.

And... it was very smooth and positive. Everybody wanted to go, and everybody did. Not all on the same ship, on different ships, we came in on cargo boats

BILL BENSON: On cargo boats but the whole family came from Kenya to here, and as you were leaving Africa, you were also leaving behind, pretty dangerous times, because that was the time of the mamau uprising

>>JILL: In 52

BILL BENSON: That came up in 52 so the events were leading up to it

>>JILL: And they did lose all the money that they paid for the farm, because of that.

BILL BENSON: Because of that

>>JILL: Because they hadn't sold it. They didn't sell it because they didn't know if they would permanently stay in the States, that

was a mistake, they made a lot of mistakes but thank God they made good decisions too.

[LAUGHTER]

BILL BENSON: Good decisions. So before we turn to our audience, to see if they have a few questions, so yet again, you picked up stakes and moved to an entire new country. You speak the language because of your English education in Kenya

>>JILL: Yes

BILL BENSON: But your parents were face would the dilemma of how do we earn a living?

>>JILL: Right

BILL BENSON: What did they do?

>>JILL: They bought a chicken farm. And not a good idea, my father was allergic to chickens.

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: It was an organization in New York, that helped immigrant Jews, find a place to be and how to make a living, they suggested it!

And he told them, "But I'm allergic to chickens" they said, "It doesn't matter." And it did matter, he couldn't handle it, he had to hire people to help him. And nobody liked the chicken farm.

[LAUGHTER]

>>JILL: And let me see... how long did it take him?

He couldn't be with the chickens.

And he got very sick when he came to America.

And then, when he healed out a year or two later, he said the heck with this stuff!

He started buying cattle again

BILL BENSON: which is what he knew: Cattle

>>JILL: And he did very, very well

BILL BENSON: Jill, do you think we should take questions from our audience?

>>JILL: Okay

BILL BENSON: We have two microphones, one on each aisle, we

ask if you have a question, you go to the microphone, make your question as brief as you can, and I'll repeat it just to be sure that we hear it; and while we're looking for a brave soul, to come up and be the first person, to ask a question; that didn't take long at all!

[LAUGHTER] >> my name is Trevor, I'm from Vermont and earlier you mentioned being, the -- that g-D was with you in regards to your father renting the apartment. And I'm just wondering through an event like this in your life, how you kept your faith and how -- looking back you keep your faith.

BILL BENSON: Jill, in light of all that you went through, how have you managed to keep your faith?

>> A: (Jill) it got stronger for some reason.

Got much stronger. You have to have something to hold onto in life.

Remember, that movie -- what was the

name, Mary Poppins with the umbrella? That was my mother. She hung onto God.

BILL BENSON: Thank you, yes.

>> Q: Hi, I was wondering if you were -- like, aware of how serious, it was, at the time, since you were so young.

BILL BENSON: Aware of how serious it was?

FROM THE FLOOR: Yeah

BILL BENSON: Good question, were you aware, as a youngster, especially as you're in Germany, preparing to go -- did you understand how serious matters were?

>> A: No. I was depressed. I figured that out very late in life. I really was very -- in Cologne, in an apartment, with old people. Nothing to do.

Couldn't go out on the street, I became depressed. And I -- I had a very light sort of personality and I



became morose. And angry. I remember.

BILL BENSON: You remember that.

Okay, we'll go here, and then over here.

FROM THE FLOOR: >> Q: Bruce from Iowa. After you had already fled anti-Semitism in Germany, did it surprise you, to anti-Semitism at your new school in Kenya, among English-speaking teachers?

BILL BENSON: After having experienced anti-Semitism in Germany to go to Kenya and then experience -- was that a real surprise to you, to experience anti-Semitism

>>JILL: No, of course, thought.

They were used to it. We, as -- I as a child, wasn't used to it. I had plenty of it in school.

But the family -- no, they -- they kept -- there were 16 of them, or 17 of them, and the -- I don't know, count, there were some off the farm

and on -- we were at least 15 people on the farm. That had each other. Two big houses.

And there was a lot of company, my parents were very social.

And... people came to visit, and when they ate my mother's food, they wanted to come back, so my mother and father opened a bed and breakfast. Besides the other work on the farm.

And because they had to pay tuition for us, and it was high.

BILL BENSON: Go ahead, Jill, I'm sorry.

>>JILL: So they sort of had a -- a family -- what do you call it? -- a.... like a kibbutz, those who came from Nairobi, those who didn't like it never came again, but most of them came back, we had visitors as far as from Mogadishu who came up in the farm. The farm was high in the mountain, and on a

clear day, you could see  
Kilimanjaro, from one end of the  
farm, and Mount Kenya from the other

BILL BENSON: In fact, Jill --

>>JILL: It was gorgeous

BILL BENSON: You shared with me  
that British troops, actually came,  
officers came and used your bed and  
breakfast for R & R for them, and  
then later in the war, U.S. troops  
came and --

>>JILL: Yeah, the U.S. -- they were  
too late

BILL BENSON: They were too late

>>JILL: Yeah, they were too late.  
They didn't make it to the farm, but  
the Brits came, and South Africans,  
and -- I don't know, if we had an  
Australian. I don't think so.  
But whoever got into the British  
army, some of them were Jewish.  
Many of them were not.  
They came with the Jews.  
And they loved my mother's cooking.  
I remember fondly, one young man, he

was the driver for a captain or a colonel in the Army, and they came together, and he was scotch.

And he became so attached to my sister and I, and to my mother.

It was -- he was just such a wonderful young man. He always came back. He liked my mother's noodle. And one day he came and said he was being shipped out.

And it was north Africa, you know, the fight in north Africa, and he died and he got killed. And there's something that stuck with me for life

BILL BENSON: We are close to the end so we're going to try to get through your questions as quickly as we can.

>> My name is Julian from Colombia and I work with victims from conflict in my country.

And it's hard, for me to, like, hear your testimony, of how you suffered. And I want to ask you. what would

be your piece of advice for people nowadays who are enduring war in their countries

BILL BENSON: If I'm hearing that correctly, what's your advice, to people, who are currently suffering, through oppression, and the things that you went through, is that --

>> Julian: Yeah

>>JILL: I can only tell you that the right thing to do is -- to get out. If you can.

You just have to find a place, that will take you.

It's always been that way.

It took my father ten years, to get into the United States.

And during those ten years, we were in Africa for 7 -- for seven.

And the other three we were waiting in Germany.

You have to try and get out.

BILL BENSON: Thank you, you then I'll come over to you is that okay,

yes, sir.

>> Q: So during your -- after you left Kenya, did you -- and you went to the United States, did you experience any culture shock, or any experience of, like, hardships?

>> QA: Sure we had some very unhappy culture shock and some funny culture shock

BILL BENSON: Here in the United States

>>JILL: And in Kenya too

BILL BENSON: You had culture shocks here as well. A lot of different cultures, yeah, I'm sure we could probably hear some really good stories out of that. Maybe, let me just mention that, jill's going to stay with us for a while afterwards, and maybe we can get her to talk about some of those to you. Okay.

>> Q: Thank you so much for sharing your story, I was wondering how you met your husband

BILL BENSON: Great question.

>> A: Oh, that was it had nothing to do with the war, and yet it did! Because our backgrounds are very similar. And a friend came to my sister, and she -- he said, there's a really nice guy, I would like to introduce him to your sister, and my sister said well, I don't know if my sister is interested. He said, you know, he's perfect. He never talks, and she never shuts her mouth!

[LAUGHTER] and, we met, and truly that was right. You know, --

[LAUGHTER]

BILL BENSON: And true love.

>> My name is Kyle and I'm from Washington, D.C. and my question is:

Q: More recently, in life, did you start publicly speaking about your family's experiences or periodically, through the years, have you always been pretty open to talking to strangers from all over the country, and the world?

BILL BENSON: The question, is did

you catch that jill? The question is have you always spoken about what you went through or is that something that you have begun to do later in life?

>> A: I don't know, it just sort of -- it morphed, when -- when the museum opened.

We decided to volunteer.

We started in 1992.

And then, I met an awful lot of survivors, and everybody had a different story.

And I was part of the beginning of the speakers bureau, because they wanted to hear -- people wanted to hear the different stories, and that's how it started.

And no, I don't go around -- I live in New York now, been there three years, I've spoken once, and I don't... want to do it.

I just feel comfortable doing it here.



BILL BENSON: And I might just mention that Kurt, who will be here with us tomorrow, Jill's husband only spoke for the first time publicly two years ago, after all those years so different experiences.

I want to thank, all of you, very much for being with us, for great questions, we will close our 2019 program year, tomorrow.

with Kurt. We'll resume again next March. All of our programs are available on the museum's YouTube page, so you can see them.

We hope you'll come back next year, and join us again at some point.

When -- I'm going to turn back to Jill, in just a moment, to close the program, when Jill's finished, she will remain on the stage, Lolita our photographer is going to take a photograph of Jill, with you as the background, we want you to stay, because it's a terrific memento for

jill, and when she's done, she will remain on the stage and invite anybody who would like to come up, and ask her another question, just say Hi, take a photograph with her, please take advantage of that if you would like to do that. That will be after jill's finished. It's our tradition at "First Person", that our "First Person" has the last word and so on that note, I'll I'm going to turn to jill to close our program

>>JILL: I'm awfully happy to be here at my age, a lot of survivors who are my age are passing on, and it's very important for people to listen, to learn.

And we -- and I'm happy, to bear witness. Thank you.

BILL BENSON: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

(Jill Pauly, August 7th, 2019.

12:04:49 p.m.)

[APPLAUSE]

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us on stage.