

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
First Person: Conversations with Holocaust Survivors  
First Person Kurt Pauly  
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>> Bill Benson: Good morning, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson. I am the host of the museum's public program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us today. We are in our 18th year of *First Person*. Our First Person today is Mr. Kurt Pauly, whom you shall meet shortly.

This 2017 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 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 serve as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue twice-weekly through mid-August. The museum's website, at [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org), provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

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

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

Kurt Pauly was born to Jewish parents on March 26, 1930, in the city of Aachen, Germany. His mother's family had resided in Aachen since the 18th Century. Here we see a picture of Kurt at age 6 in Germany.

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

This photo is from the wedding of Kurt's parents, Selma Herz and Hugo Pauly, in 1927. Kurt's father, Hugo, who is pictured here, trained as a chef and worked as a butcher and also managed several stores for his father-in-law. Kurt, his parents, and his grandfather lived over one of those shops in a suburb of Aachen called Eilendorf.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, the situation drastically changed for the Paulys. Worsening conditions forced the family to close its shops. In 1936, the Paulys immigrated to Palestine, where Kurt's father had a trucking business.

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

In 1938, the family immigrated to the United States.

This photo shows Kurt and his classmates in Palestine. Kurt is circled in this photo. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1938, Kurt and his parents moved to Cincinnati where they lived until moving to Vineland, New Jersey in 1948.

In 1951 Kurt was drafted in the U.S. Army. He was severely injured during artillery training and was hospitalized for a lengthy period. After his discharge in November of 1953, Kurt attended the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, graduating with high honors and becoming a Certified Public Accountant. While at university Kurt met Jill, who is also a Holocaust survivor, and they were married in 1957. Kurt went on to a successful career as a CPA with several major national corporations, retiring in 1992.

Kurt and Jill had lived in the Washington, DC, area since 1974 but just last August moved to Long Island to be closer to their children. They have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren who are 9 and 1 years old.

I am pleased to let you know that Jill is here with Kurt today, She was our First Person yesterday.

Upon Kurt's retirement both he and Jill became active as part of the first group of volunteers with this Museum in 1992, before it opened. Kurt was a volunteer with Visitor Services. Although Kurt was interviewed about his Holocaust experience by the Steven Spielberg-founded Shoah Foundation, today is Kurt's first time publicly speaking about what he and his family went through during the Holocaust.

With that I would like you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Kurt Pauly.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Hello, Kurt. Kurt, thank you so much for joining us today and being willing to not only be our First Person today but being willing to do this for your first time. So thank you.

>> Kurt Pauly: I'm very pleased to do it.

>> Bill Benson: We are honored to have you. We have a very large crowd, so this is terrific. You have so much to share with us.

Adolph Hitler came to power when you were just 6 years of age when you left Germany with your parents in 1936. Before you turn to your parents' decision to leave Germany and what that meant for you and your family, tell us what you can about your family and their lives prior to Hitler and the Nazi Party taking control of Germany.

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, both of my parents lived for quite some time in Germany, my mother in the Aachen area, my father in the southern parts of Germany, Bavaria. And his father had a small hotel in a university town. Then when he married my mother, he went to his new father-in-law's business which was a butcher. He tried to expand that business. This was shortly before the Nazis came in. And then when the Nazis came in, they forced him to close some of the businesses and eventually he thought it was best to leave.

>> Bill Benson: Before we go there, Kurt, a couple of other things for you to share with us. When did your father become a chef?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, he became a chef actually before the First World War. He was in the First

World War. Since he came from Bavaria and he was a cook, a chef, he was assigned to the staff of the king of Bavaria. At that time there was still a king of Bavaria. He was on the staff there as a cook. I suppose that was better than being on front lines. He said at least they were never hungry.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us a little bit before your mother.

>> Kurt Pauly: My mother's family, of course, lived in the Aachen area for a long time. Had many relatives there, including the one you just referred to. Mrs. Frank's maiden name was Hollander. And they had also lived in Aachen for quite some time. It was a small Jewish community, so the people were very close. Even second cousins were pretty close.

>> Bill Benson: Speaking of second cousins, how large of an extended family did you have?

>> Kurt Pauly: I really -- I don't know. My mother had three siblings. My mother was a twin. Her twin sister died in one of the flu epidemics after the First World War. The older sister married and was also living in the Aachen area. She had a brother, my Uncle Alfred, whose son, my first cousin, is still living in Israel.

>> Bill Benson: Ok.

>> Kurt Pauly: They fled Germany right after Kristallnacht when my uncle was arrested and put in jail. The way he got out of jail was that you could show that you were going to leave the country. This was when the policy of the German government was just to get the Jews out of Germany. This was before -- later, of course, they ran into the problem of the final solution.

>> Bill Benson: Would you say, Kurt, that in the time before Hitler came to power that your family enjoyed a relatively comfortable life?

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. Yes. Yes. They were integrated well into German society. They felt very much at home. Although there were always some elements of anti-Semitism underlying, you know, but they were not so disturbing and not as violent as what happened later when Hitler came to power.

>> Bill Benson: And once Hitler did come to power, soon after that your parents made a huge decision to leave Germany. What can you tell us about those circumstances that compelled them to want to leave?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, my father was, as I said before, was in the First World War, was very much concerned about where to go. He came to the conclusion that it was not enough to leave Germany, that we had to leave Europe. As he said in a more colorful language, we have to go across the waters. He had an older brother who had come to the states before the First World War. My father had visited him several times after the First World War, before he was married.

>> Bill Benson: In the United States?

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. He lived in New York, actually. And he had a butcher store in Manhattan. But sometime between -- so my father had been exposed to the United States. He thought it was a place he might want to go if he had to leave Germany. Unfortunately sometime between last seeing his brother and the time Hitler came into power, Uncle Max had died. So my parents had no other contacts in the United States.

>> Bill Benson: So that option was closed.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. Fortunately my mother had relatives in Palestine. They had been Zionists. Had nothing to do with Adolph Hitler. They had gone there before Hitler ever came to power. She had two sets of aunts and uncles, a handful of cousins there. And they informed my parents of an agreement that had been negotiated by the Jewish agency in Palestine with the British and with the German governments to allow German Jews to emigrate to Palestine under more favorable conditions than if they went other places at that time.

At the age of 6, of course, I knew nothing about that. I learned about that, actually, in more detail when I became a volunteer here in the museum. And in one of our history courses the volunteers took, one of the historians was talking to me on a break and asked me how I got here and I explained it to him and he said, "Oh, you went under the agreement." So that's when I researched that.

Actually, about 10,000 German Jews got to Palestine under that agreement. What happened was there was a lot of objections from the Arab population in the area about all of these Jews coming in. And the British cut off the immigration. One of the other benefits was you would actually become a citizen of Palestine after two years under this agreement. Since the Jews had lost their citizenship in Germany, that seemed to be a plus, of at least you would belong someplace.

>> Bill Benson: And it will turn out later -- you will talk more about that.

Kurt, a couple of things about your period in your early years before you went to Palestine. Do you have memories of that time living in Germany before you left?

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes, I have some. Of course, when we started -- when my father started to think about leaving and then when he decided to go -- that he would go to Palestine, he tried to convince many other members of our family to emigrate also because he felt it was getting more dangerous in Germany. However, they were not really prepared for it yet. They didn't think it would be so bad. Many of them were optimistic that Hitler would, perhaps, be voted out again or whatever.

The older people -- my father's mother was living and my mother's father, so those were my two living grandparents when I was born, they felt they were too old to do that and perhaps they might join us later once we got acclimated to a new country. But at that time they said, well, we're old and retired, what are they going to do to us. Little did they know. Nobody suspected anything like that. I'm sure.

So the only other person -- well, actually two members of our family ended up in Palestine. One was this cousin Walter who had preceded us by about a year or era and a half in Palestine. He was more like an uncle to me because he was so much older. I was 6 years old. He was getting ready to get married. As you saw in the picture, he was an adult.

And then my mother's brother, my Uncle Alfred, who was a teacher in Germany, was arrested during Kristallnacht and ended up in jail. The only way that he would get out was if he could show that they would leave Germany. That I was very common thing that the Nazis did at that time.

>> Bill Benson: Imprison you and then say if we let you out, you have to leave the country.

>> Kurt Pauly: That's right. And my aunt, his wife, started wondering where they could go. She had some relatives in Palestine as well from her family's side. And what they did was they went to the British consulate in their area and just convinced them to give them visitor visas to go to Palestine. And these visas were good for -- I don't remember exactly but it was less than a year period. But they got to Palestine as visitors.

And then when the visa started expiring and the British started looking for them to have them leave, they had gone into hiding. And the British couldn't find them. And then the war broke out and they were in Palestine. And that's what saved them.

>> Bill Benson: Kurt, you had a nanny in Germany. Can you tell us a little about her?

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes, yes. But my wife as you -- I mean, my mother, as you noted, was also in the business. And, of course, she was busy during the day. She hired a young woman to look after me.

One time we were invited back to Germany, to the Aachen area.

>> Bill Benson: 1996 I think?

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. We were invited by the Historical Society of Eilendorf. We went there. And they had found my nanny. She was still in the area. We had a reunion. I mean, I hardly remembered her that well.

>> Bill Benson: Right.

>> Kurt Pauly: Because I was so young then. But she remembered me very well and actually gave me some pictures that we didn't have of our family that she had.

>> Bill Benson: And she also shared with you some things about what happened to the family. Right?

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Anyway, we ended up --

>> Bill Benson: On the nanny, when you went back in 1996, she told you about seeing the brown shirts. Tell us about that.

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, of course, my mother was not as anxious to leave as my father at first but when one of the brown shirts appeared outside the store in Eilendorf, discouraging people from buying from a Jewish store, she decided that maybe things were really getting worse than she had thought. And it convinced her to go along with my father's plans of leaving Germany.

His experience of the First World War was that he saw the German Army occupying the surrounding countries very quickly. Although the First World War the Dutch had been able to maintain independence and were not pulled into the war. But my father was concerned that another war might break out and if you went to one of these surrounding countries, you would find yourself under Nazi domination again.

And this is what happened, of course, to many people, including the Franks, Anne Frank's parents who went to Holland for just that reason, didn't consider that, didn't come to the same conclusion as my father.

>> Bill Benson: Before you left for Palestine, you started school. What do you remember about your school experience?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, that was a funny thing. Although we already had our papers and everything had been arranged for the trip to Palestine, the law was at the age of 6 you had to go into school. At that time, if I'm not mistaken, the school year started after Easter. So when I -- so in March, when I became 6, I had to go to school. Fortunately there was a Jewish school in Aachen. So I didn't have to go to a public school whereas some of the children at that time, Jewish children were already beginning to have problems. But I had to take the trolley into Aachen to go to the school from Eilendorf. And my father was sometimes concerned. You know, a little boy --

>> Bill Benson: On the trolley.

>> Kurt Pauly: On the trolley all the way to Aachen. Although nothing ever happened, but he was very concerned. And he would sometimes follow the trolley on a bicycle to make sure that everything went smoothly.

>> Bill Benson: Why do you think he didn't ride the trolley with you as opposed to following you on the bike?

>> Kurt Pauly: I think because he didn't want to frighten me, I suppose, partly.

So I went to that school. I didn't remember the school. I had some pictures in my mind about that school. I remember the first day, I walked into the classroom and there was a picture on the board that someone had drawn in colored chalk of a little boy coming to school

on his first day.

>> Bill Benson: You remember that.

>> Kurt Pauly: I remember that. I also remember that the urinals were in the courtyard outside. And if it was raining and you had to go to one of the urinals, you'd get wet.

>> [Laughter]

>> Kurt Pauly: I got wet several times. [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: Kurt, even -- although you were just 6 when you left Germany for Palestine, you recall leaving and that it was difficult for you. Tell us what you can about leaving and saying goodbye to your family members and then going to Palestine.

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, once we had decided and a date was set -- my fraternal grandmother -- paternal grandmother was not in the Aachen area, so we had to go to Wurzburg, where she was still living. And the picture you saw before, me in front of the fountain, was taken on one of those trips. She lived on the square. And in the center of the square was the fountain. That's where that was taken.

As I said before, neither she nor my grandfather, my mother's father, felt -- would go with us at that time. And, of course, what happened was they were caught up in the war. We know what happened to them. They were both caught up in Jews sent to Theresienstadt. My grandmother died there, according to the records. My grandfather was sent on to Mauthausen, one of the killing camps and of course was killed on arrival. We know that happened.

And then my mother's elder sister, Rose, who had three children, two girls and a boy who was about my age, the youngest -- we found nothing in the records of what happened to them. Those records were perhaps destroyed. Who knows?

The Germans were very good at recordkeeping. There was nothing found on them. Except this trip that we took to Eilendorf I just discussed before, the local historical society invited us, when we got home we received a letter from Germany and it was from a woman who wrote to us that she had been a friend of my cousin Ilse, who was the oldest girl in my aunt's family. And they had been at school together. And she wanted -- she thought perhaps I would like a picture of her. She had a class picture which included my cousin. And she sent that to us. And she said when the Jews were segregated, these two girls, who were very close apparently, would clandestinely meet in a public park and they would set a date for the next meeting. That way they kept in touch. And she said one time, the last time that they had set a meeting, she went to the park and my cousin never showed up. And she never knew what happened to her. Probably, of course, they were picked up in some aktion. To this day we don't know anything that happened to them specifically.

>> Bill Benson: Kurt, your family, before they left Germany for Palestine, sold the family butcher business and sold it, I think, to your father or grandfather's apprentice.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. Well, they sold the business in Eilendorf. Because it was in the house that they owned. The other shops were rented. By that time there was nothing else to sell. It was sold to the apprentice.

When we returned to that home, many years later, my cousin, who was the son of my mother's father, Uncle Alfred, was in Germany with the Israeli Foreign Service. That was his career. He ended up in the Israeli Foreign Service. And at that time Germany was still split between east and west and the temporary capital for west Germany was Bonn, which was not too far from Aachen. And that's where he was. We got together on one of our first trips to Europe after the war. We actually made arrangements to go to that house. It was a bit of an experience.

Jill was along with us on that trip, of course. We led Jill -- we thought maybe it would be easier when we knocked if there was a woman there to talk to, to the people who were living in my house who were descendants of this apprentice.

>> Bill Benson: So the same family in the house.

>> Kurt Pauly: The apprentice was not living anymore, of course. But his daughter and her husband were living in the house and the son, their son, was running the butcher business. We knocked on the door and Jill explained who we were. They invited us in. Jill always says, when she starts to speak to the woman, the woman replied -- said it was like a recording that she had in her mind as to what to do if this ever happened. Because she just seemed to let it all come out, the history that she knew about. And we spent some time with that family.

>> Bill Benson: And they were able to tell you things about you and your family.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. They told us something about what happened to our grandfather. They said when Mr. Herz, you know -- they took the old people and put them in what had been an old-aged home for Jewish citizens in the city of Aachen. And he was sent there. Unfortunately, of course, they didn't get very sufficient food when the war broke out and she said he used to come the back way and they would give him food because, of course, they felt sorry, which was a great risk on their part as well. Because if they had been spotted, they could have gotten into considerable trouble.

>> Bill Benson: That must have been very powerful for you to be there.

>> Kurt Pauly: It was.

>> Bill Benson: Having this man who had been a child who now lived in what had been your family's home telling you what happened to your grandfather.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes, yes. It was very disturbing, of course. When we left the house, all of us were quite disturbed.

I had remembered the house somewhat. I had some memories of a bedroom and looking out the window. There was a garden next door which I could look into. When we went to the house, I saw that garden as well. And then when we got back, after we had gone to the house and were talking with this family, the man turned to me and said -- he said, I saw you when you came to the kitchen -- you saw what change we made there. And the story there is, one of my earliest memories was of my running in the house and the kitchen was sunken. It was a sunken kitchen. It was down a step from the rest of the house. And I fell down that step. I was a little boy and fell flat on my face. And I bled like a stuck pig, as they say. And when I walked through the kitchen, it wasn't sunken.

I must have -- I remember thinking -- I said, Where did that memory come from? Somehow I remembered. And he said he saw me react. He said, "You saw what we did in the kitchen. We evened out the floor." So it was the right kitchen as it turned out.

But we left very disturbed, all three of us, when we left that house.

>> Bill Benson: Kurt, tell us about going to Palestine. First, how did you get there? And what was it like?

>> Kurt Pauly: For a 6-year-old, it was very exciting. We were going to go on a big ship. And, of course, we had all of these trips back to my father's mother several times. And my father still tried to get them, convince them to go, but no success.

Finally it was time to leave. It was summer time, about middle of the year, when we left. We sailed from France on a ship to Haifa. We ended up living in Haifa for a time.

My father also -- besides my mother's relatives, I said there was my cousin Walter. And that's how he got into the trucking business. He had been in communication with his

nephew, Walter, and said, you know, What can I do in Palestine? We're not going to have enough money to open a restaurant. And Walter said, well, we could go into the trucking business because this is a burgeoning economy and maybe we can make a living on that. So my father sent a truck -- bought a truck and had it sent to Palestine. You could do this under this agreement.

>> Bill Benson: You could buy a truck in Germany.

>> Kurt Pauly: You could buy things in Germany and ship them. Even as late as when Jill's family left Germany, which was much later, Jews could still buy things if they had funds, stove, some, and ship them to where they were going.

>> Bill Benson: So used a German truck to start his trucking business.

>> Kurt Pauly: Right. And I can remember going on that truck. Sometimes when I wasn't in school or vacation time or whatever and they went out. They sometimes took me along. A lot of their business was soft drinks. They would transport soft drinks from Haifa to surrounding areas. I would get one of those drinks. [Laughter] I can remember that.

>> Bill Benson: Despite starting the trucking business, it wasn't enough business for them to do it alone. Right?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, it turned out that it wasn't quite enough to support two families. And then my father thought maybe he should leave Palestine. My father was not an ardent Zionist. He had nothing against Zionists. And he was very happy to be in Palestine and not in Germany at that time. But he saw that it was getting very different.

>> Bill Benson: He tried other things as well, right? To earn a living. He took --

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, yes, but it was not sufficient. What happened was, in the time that we were in Palestine, another brother of my father's, my Uncle Theodore, got to the United States through his wife's family. My Aunt Julia's brother had come to the United States long before the war, as a very, very young man, had gone into business and married. He married a woman also of German extraction. Their parents, whom I still met, were quite elderly at the time, had come to Cincinnati as little children from Germany. And they were living in the United States. Now, these people were not Jewish but they, of course -- but this was family for them. Not us but the three sisters. This man had three sisters and he thought it was time to get them out of Germany and brought them in. And these people were then willing to sponsor us as well. They were very nice people.

>> Bill Benson: Sponsor you coming into the United States.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Before we talk further about that, just a couple of other questions about your time in Palestine. You went to school. What was it like for you now in the school?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, initially, of course, I didn't understand a word of Hebrew. So I was a little concerned. My mother always told me I'd come home crying from school, complaining, "I don't even understand the teacher." But at that age you learn languages very quickly.

>> Bill Benson: Was language a problem for your parents in Palestine?

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes, yes it was. They were much older, of course. They were not fluent in modern Hebrew. So I guess I was really the only one who spoke it very well, with my cousin Walter.

In fact, we were in touch with his children. As a little aside, somehow I think my family and Walter lost contact for some time. I don't know what happened. I was too young, I guess to know about it. But there must have been some kind of little conflict and they were sort of separated. Oh, I was already a volunteer at the museum. I got a phone call from the



museum somebody is inquiring about me. What happened was, the children, the two sons, were trying to do a genealogy on their father's family.

>> Bill Benson: Walter's son?

>> Kurt Pauly: Walter's family, Walter's sons. I didn't know them. We hadn't met Walter -- we had met Walter, Jill and I, but he didn't talk to us much about that and we didn't meet his sons. So something had happened there.

Anyway, I got the call from the museum someone is asking whether we know about you. And now what happened was, the museum has a lot of things that we had contributed, including a lot of pictures of what happened to our family. And they were in the archives, including the picture that you showed about my parents' wedding. They were looking for Paulys. And with computers today they ended up on the museum's site. They put in Pauly. And pictures came up, including the picture -- and they said, well, it was Aachen. You know, their father came from southern Germany, as my father did. Thought it must be the wrong Paulys. So for a long time they didn't call. But they couldn't make no other contacts. They couldn't find anybody else. So they decided to call. And they called the museum, of course. Because our name and numbers is not on the site. And the museum called us and we said, well, yes.

>> Bill Benson: That's us.

>> Kurt Pauly: That's us. It's ok to give out our number. And one day I get a phone call and this is my cousin -- he explains who he is. He's now living in California. One of them is living in California. The other is living in Israel. And this is how we contacted -- just recently we got another communication --

>> Bill Benson: Yesterday.

>> Kurt Pauly: From this cousin. Yes. So they had come to our house to gather information for the genealogy, visited us some years ago now. So at least there's some contact. And, of course, I'm in contact with my cousin that I talked about before, Uncle Alfred's son. We have been in touch for a long time. In fact, his last visit was this spring. He came to visit us again when they go to Europe, he and his wife go to Europe, and he decided to come early. He visits his cousin -- he has another cousin here from his mother's side. So he has visited us many times. And we have visited him in Israel. We were in touch.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about coming to the United States. So your father now has I think another brother in the United States who is willing to sponsor you.

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, these Americans --

>> Bill Benson: The American side. So they're willing to sponsor you. This is 1938. So the war has not yet happened or started. And you came under not a German quota, under a Palestinian quota. Am I right about that?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, I don't know which quota we came under, really. But I do know that on the pictures -- I mean, on our naturalization papers where it says previous nationality it's Palestinian.

>> Bill Benson: Because as you said, you lost injure German citizenship, went to Palestine.

>> Kurt Pauly: And we recovered that German citizenship, later. But that's another matter. I really don't know the details. I was too young to be interested. And now it's a little late. I guess I could research that and find out. But I didn't have the urge to do it.

>> Bill Benson: So your parents make a second big decision to move to yet another continent, come to the United States. What was that like for you to pick up stakes and move?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, a couple of things. First of all, we talked about my father wasn't making too much money. He had enough money for two tickets.

>> Bill Benson: Two tickets?

>> Kurt Pauly: Two tickets across the Atlantic. He didn't really want to ask these people, if he could avoid it, to pay for our tickets as well. They were already doing quite a bit. Then they remembered, my parents remembered, when they came to Palestine, they had gone to some cooperative that said they could get a job for my father. But they had to make a small payment to them, to the coop, for them to do that. Well, it turned out that they never got any job for my father and my parents said maybe we'll get that money back that would help us. So they went to the offices of the coop, who were not at all receptive to paying them the money back.

So what to do? My mother came back the next day and she was crying to get the money back and they still wouldn't do it. Well, she came day after day. And they just got a little tired of this lady coming in and crying in their offices and they gave her the money back and now we had enough for three tickets.

>> Bill Benson: So you could come.

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, I don't know who they would have left.

>> [Laughter]

>> Kurt Pauly: But we came. I remember the trip very well. I was 8 years old. Almost 9, in fact. We came in the wintertime, December. We went by ship from Haifa to Marseille, the reverse of what we had done earlier, crossed France by train, had to spend a few days in Paris waiting for the ship to come. The ship was the Queen Mary. That was a big ship for an 8-year-old.

>> Bill Benson: In fact, once the war began, it became a troop transport ship.

>> Kurt Pauly: And now it's a hotel in Long Beach, California. And one of my business trips to California I said, I'm going to stay at the Queen Mary hotel. It was close to Long Beach.

>> Bill Benson: And you remembered that trip?

>> Kurt Pauly: Oh, I remember. As a little boy, I ran through that ship. I had a wonderful time. My parents were very seasick. It was December. And even on the Queen Mary, ooh, it was really rocking. [Laughter] But I didn't get seasick. I remember that ship very well.

So I'm walking down to the rooms in the hotel with the bellman --

>> Bill Benson: In Long Beach?

>> Kurt Pauly: In Long Beach, a young man. And he turns -- and the first class cabins are the hotel rooms. And he says to me, "Have you ever stayed with us before?"

>> [Laughter]

>> Kurt Pauly: And I said, "Well," I said, "I was on this ship one of the times when it was crossing the Atlantic." And he looked at me like I was Julius Caesar, ancient history, I didn't know anybody was alive.

>> [Laughter]

>> Kurt Pauly: He was just speechless after that. He took me to this very lovely cabin.

>> Bill Benson: Probably not the cabin you came over in.

>> Kurt Pauly: Not at all. I was very impressed by the cabin. It a wonderful bathtub. You could get sea water or fresh water depending on what kind of bath you wanted. That was quite a memory.

>> Bill Benson: You shared with me earlier the first time you ever had a Brussel sprout I think.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes, that's right.

>> Bill Benson: But you got to the United States, stayed in New York City a short period, and then went to Cincinnati.

>> Kurt Pauly: Very short, just a few days. And then we took the train to Cincinnati.

>> Bill Benson: What was it like to adjust to yet another country, culture, language?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, you saw me in class in the first picture we saw. Of course I spoke no English. I always tell people I'm an expert in first grade education because I've been to first grade in three countries with three different languages.

>> Bill Benson: At different ages. [Laughter]

>> Kurt Pauly: Different ages. And here I arrive in December. By the time school starts again it was really January. The teacher didn't speak Hebrew or English -- I mean Hebrew or German. And fortunately in the class there was a little boy who came from -- a little boy, little first grader, who came from a home that also spoke German, which in Cincinnati it's not that unusual because they have a long history of German immigration. He spoke German. He was my translator. I very quickly learned English.

>> Bill Benson: Then you got to get out of the first grade.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes. By the time the year was over, I was in second grade, still one grade behind but I caught up with that eventually.

>> Bill Benson: How difficult was it for your parents to re-establish themselves and earn a living?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, it was difficult. The economic conditions in the states at this time were deteriorating a little bit and Depression came along quickly. My father tried to get a job and finally got a job in a large cafeteria operation, not cooking but just preparing vegetables. But it was a job. You know, he got paid something, so he took it. And he said the job had one great advantage, he always had a seat for himself on the trolley going home because he smelled so of onions nobody would sit next to him.

One day he was walking to this job again, and suddenly he hears a voice calling his name, "Hugo." I mean, here we are, strangers in paradise, in Cincinnati, and he hears somebody calling him. He turns around. And this is a man when he studied to be a cook, studied his trade, he had gone to Switzerland to study his trade and this man had been in the same group learning this trade as he was.

>> Bill Benson: In Switzerland.

>> Kurt Pauly: And he was now a chef in one of the large hotels in Cincinnati. He saw my father. So my father explained, you know, all his problems to this gentleman. He said, "And you're doing what?" Preparing vegetables. He says that's terrible. He says, "Meet me in the Union Hall next week." They made a date. He said, "I'll see that you get a job." And he did. And my father got a job as a cook very quickly.

The restaurant happened to be two Jewish brothers. It was a businessman's restaurant, sort of. They very quickly recognized his talents. And cooking is not the only important thing when you're in the restaurant business. If you're a chef, order is the food, you know. That's very important. If you order too much food, you know, you'll go broke, possibly, or at least you're not going to make much profit. And my father was very good at that, ordering. He knew his field. And he very quickly became the chef in the restaurant.

As late as -- Oh, before we left -- well, he went out of that business and started a bakery with another friend, someone he knew, who was a baker. And, of course, he knew how to bake, my father. In those days when you became a chef, you not only had to cook, you had to learn about baking as well. Then when he retired from that, we moved. When I graduated from high school, that's when we moved to New Jersey.

>> Bill Benson: During that time, before the war began in September 1939, had your parents been able to be in touch with family members in Germany either in Palestine or in the United States?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, Palestine, yes. Of course my mother's brother. I don't know about Walter but I guess they had some contact. There was some communication with Germany until the war started. We were there in December of 1938. Next year, 1939, the war doesn't start until September 1 when Hitler invades Poland. So there was communication.

My father and his brother, Theodore, communicated with the family. Of course they would have been allowed to get out but this time things were really going from bad to worse but there was some communication. And then, of course, that stopped when the war started. With Palestine it was another matter. My mother's brother was there and they were safe now in the war because nobody was going to send them back.

>> Bill Benson: But as far as communication with the family in Germany, as of September 1, 1939 --

>> Kurt Pauly: Pretty much petered out. There was still some communication through the Red Cross and so forth and so on, but we didn't know what happened to the family which was very disturbing to my parents.

>> Bill Benson: When did you learn?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, when the war was over, you know, they began to look for people. It turned out -- of course, we learned about my grandfather and my grandmother very quickly because there were records. And my mother's brother, Uncle Alfred, had gotten information out of those records about what had happened, which I explained to you before.

My mother's sister, who I talked about my oldest cousin and this woman who informed us about her experiences with my cousin Ilsa. My parents hoped against hope that somebody, maybe the oldest girl, would have survived but we found nothing about them. And, of course, we found nothing -- later we had some communication with a second cousin of mine. Her father had been a cousin of my mother. They survived. The father did not survive, but they had fled to Belgium.

And they had this one girl, Margot, and she was hidden in a convent during the Second World War and that's how she survived. And her mother came back after the war to pick her up from school. Of course, now she had grown up in the convent and here comes this woman who is her mother and she was very unhappy about leaving the convent at first. But eventually that worked itself out and they came to the United States. I was in fact, in contact with them. And her husband, who was also a survivor, died very young. He was my best man at our wedding. But there was very little contact.

There was another cousin of my mother's who had been an opera singer. She turned up one day with us. Cincinnati didn't have an opera house, opera company, but in the summer they had what they called the Summer Opera. And singers would come in the summer and she was singing. She was in the choir. And she looked us up and found us, a distant cousin of my mother's.

Otherwise, we found really close relatives -- nothing, really.

>> Bill Benson: What do you know -- I know your father died relatively early. What was the impact on your parents when the full realization of what had happened to family --

>> Kurt Pauly: It was very heartbreaking for them, on both sides, my father's family and my mother's family. This is probably a pretty common experience.

Most of my parents' friends in Cincinnati were also refugees and had come here. So it was not uncommon in the community my parents lived in that these things happened after the war. People would try to find each other. Sometimes it could work, other times. But the odds were against you because the greatest number of Jews, particularly from Germany and

so forth, were dead, were killed.

>> Bill Benson: We have time to turn to our audience for a few questions. Does that sound ok?

>> Kurt Pauly: Ok.

>> Bill Benson: I have many more to ask you but I think I'll give our audience an opportunity to ask you a couple of questions.

I'm going to ask you, one, if you would stay through the question and answer period because I will turn back to Kurt at the end of the program for him to close the program for us. If you have a question, we ask that you use a microphone. There is a mic coming down either aisle. Try to make your question as brief as you can. I'll do my best to repeat the question so that everybody, including Kurt and I, hear the question.

Anybody have a question they would like to ask Kurt? Otherwise I'll just continue. Is there a brave soul? Not yet. Oh, there we go. Ok.

>> I would like to know how you were received in the United States. How did Americans -- what did they think about what was going on?

>> Bill Benson: The question, What did Americans think when you came here? What did they think was going on and how were you received?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, we were received by people who were some related to us, even distantly. My parents acclimated to the states quickly. They didn't have much choice. But it worked out pretty well. And, of course, at that age I acclimated very quickly.

>> Bill Benson: And you were in a community that had a large population --

>> Kurt Pauly: As I said, most of my parents' friends were people who were like them, immigrants. I went to school, so I was exposed to a broader spectrum of friends. I had friends, some of them were immigrants and some of them weren't.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. Do we have another question?

While we're waiting, I wanted to ask you, Kurt, Jill, your wife, has been with us each year since we began the program in 2000. So many times we've had a conversation with Jill. This is your first time publicly speaking. What motivated you to do this?

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, I've heard Jill speak about her experiences quite a few times and a lot of other people in this museum. And I guess -- I know that a lot of those people who had spoken in the past aren't here anymore. We're all advancing in age very quickly and I decided maybe it was time for me to put this on the record for us, for my family.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you for doing that.

One other question I have for you. You mentioned early, and we saw in the photographs, you're related to Anne Frank. I'm sure our audience would love to hear a little bit more about that.

>> Kurt Pauly: Well, what happened, of course, was, as I said, Mrs. Frank's grandfather, Anne Frank's great grandfather, were married to someone in my mother's family, an aunt of my mother. And it was a small Jewish community, relatively speaking. They were very close, even as cousins. So my mother knew them quite well.

>> Bill Benson: Do you have any recollection?

>> Kurt Pauly: I really don't have any recollection of the family myself. My mother always said that sometimes when they would come back from Holland, I had played with Anne. She was a little bit older than I was. But I can't really say that I remember that. Although she explained a lot about the family to me which we found out was pretty reliable what she told me. We've seen the biographical record on her family. Whatever my mother said seems to be quite accurate.

>> Bill Benson: Before we close, I think probably like everybody in the room, we have to really

sort of grapple, think about the fact that you've pieced together information about what you went through, through different happenstance ways, going back to Germany, seeing your home, and finding out that people that live there could share with you things, coming across the nanny again after all of these years, because of technology, family members being able to find you or at least inquiry are you family. So all of these years later you're still filling in many, many details. It's pretty remarkable, pretty remarkable.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word. So I will turn back to Kurt to close our program. Before I do, I want to thank all of you for being with us. I remind you that we will have a *First Person* program each Wednesday and Thursday through the middle of August. So we hope that you might come back this year or if not, the museum's website will have information about *First Person* for next year.

When Kurt's done, our photographer, Joel, will come up on the stage and he's going to take a photograph of Kurt with you as the backdrop. So please stay with us so that he can get that image taken, if you don't mind.

Kurt?

>> Kurt Pauly: Ok. I guess I, of course, feel -- I'm kind of split. On one side I have this experience of having fled and growing up as an immigrant and so forth. On the other side, we're American and I grew up that way. I went to school here in this country. As you mentioned before, I was drafted during the Korean War. I always tell the world I gave Uncle Sam two years of my life and then he gave me four years of an ivy league school.

>> Bill Benson: G.I. Bill.

>> Kurt Pauly: And being a disabled veteran, fortunately not too disabled but somewhat, it doesn't bother me now but it did when we first got married, still noticeable. A lot of people -- their fathers have to pay their tuition. In my case my rich Uncle Sam paid for my tuition. And I really enjoyed that time will. I took advantage of that.

We feel, Jill and I, we have this mixed thing. Our children are, of course, 100% American. They were born here. But they know about this as well, so I think that kind of broadens their perspective a little bit in the world to know what happened, what their parents went through and their ancestors who are no longer with us. So I think that probably has some effect on the way we live in this country.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.

>> Kurt Pauly: And, of course, the museum has been a wonderful contact for us. We really enjoyed all of these years that we've worked with the museum.

>> Bill Benson: Spent a lot of time here.

>> Kurt Pauly: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you very much.

>> [Applause]

