

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON SUSAN WARSINGER

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>> Kyra Schuster: Good morning. Welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Kyra Schuster. I will be your hostesses of this morning's *First Person* program. Thank you all for joining us today. We are in our 17th year of the *First Person* program. And our *First Person* today is Susan Warsinger, who you will meet shortly.

The 2016 season of *First Person* is made possible through the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation and the Helena Rubinstein Foundation and we are very grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a weekly -- is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our *First Person* guests serve as a volunteer here at the museum. Our program will continue through mid-August.

The museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests. Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in your program, which you should have received. I'm sorry I don't have an example of it. You can complete this card or speak with one of our museum representatives at the back of the theater at the conclusion of the program today. In doing so, you will also receive an electronic copy of Susan's biography so that you can remember and share her testimony after you leave here today.

Susan will share with us her *First Person* account of her experiences during the Holocaust and as a Holocaust survivor for about 45 minutes. And if we have time at the end of the program, we will have an opportunity to take questions. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help introduce her.

Susan Hilsenrath was born in Bad Kreuznach, Germany. Here is her family, her brother Joseph, her mother, Ani, with her baby brother, Earnest, in her lap, her father, Israel, and Susan is standing with her arm around her father.

Here we see Susan with her brother Joseph, sitting on the steps of her home.

In November 1938, it was known as Kristallnacht, Night of Broken Glass, when Nazi thugs smashed the windows and furnishings of the family home. Months later Susan and Joseph were then smuggled to France.

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

With the help of Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, also known as HIAS, Susan and Joseph received permission to emigrate to the United States. Information written on this tag worn by Susan indicates her name and states that she's sailing for the United States on board the SS Serpa Pinto. After crossing to Spain, the two children sailed from Portugal and arrived in New York in September 1941. And Susan and Joseph are circled here and this photograph appeared in a New York newspaper.

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

Susan's volunteer work here at the museum includes being a member of our Speakers Bureau for whom she speaks both locally and throughout the country about her experiences in the Holocaust. Susan is also a tour guide, leading law enforcement officers, including FBI agents and law enforcement officials from around the United States and internationally, through the museum's Permanent Exhibition. She also leads tours to special groups including college leaders, as well as the visually and hearing impaired individuals. And she also leads tours through the museum's exhibit "Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration and Complicity in the Holocaust."

Susan is also a contributor to the writing project which produces editions of "Echoes of Memory," a collection of writings by survivors associated with this museum. And you can read some of her writing on the museum's website. And following this program Susan will be available outside to sign copies of "Echoes of Memory."

We'd also like to welcome two of her special friends, Kathy Irwin, a friend and colleague of Susan's from her days as an educator, and her dear friend Donato. Thank you for joining us as well.

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

>> [Applause]

>> Kyra Schuster: So, as I mentioned, your early years were in Bad Kreuznach, in Germany. But before we get to the war years, can you tell us a little bit about what your family life was like before the war?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. Well, Hitler came into power in 1933 and I was 4 years old at the time. My father had a very thriving store. He had a linen store. He made a very nice living. We lived in a very nice house. But all of a sudden he didn't have his store anymore.

>> Kyra Schuster: Why was that?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, at that particular time there was the law in Germany. It wasn't really a law yet but what happened is the Nazis said boycott the Jewish stores and then they won't be able to make a living anymore. And so this is what happened to my father. Most of the people in Bad Kreuznach didn't shop in his store anymore and eventually he lost his business. And this was really happening later on, I found out, happening to a lot of Jews that were living in Germany. Whatever business they were in, they were boycotted.

I was just going to ask the audience -- how many of you have been in the P.E. already?

>> Kyra Schuster: The Permanent Exhibition upstairs. Raise your hand.

>> Susan Warsinger: Oh. Well, how many are going to go afterwards? Oh, good.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: Anyway, so what I'd like for you to look for when you first get up on the fourth floor, there's an exhibit with the S.A. soldier standing in front of a store and he's boycotting the store. In that particular exhibit, it's talking exactly what happened to my father's store.

>> Kyra Schuster: How did your father support the family if his business was closed? What did you do for food or for money to pay for things?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, I think he went to a farmer and he bought strawberries and raspberries from him. I remember he had these baskets this size. He carried the baskets. He sold them to the Jewish people that were in our town. So that's how he made his living, selling berries.

>> Kyra Schuster: So there was an incident you told me about when you were little about your mother sent you to the store to buy bread for the family. Can you tell us about that?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. I was feeling very important because I was just a little kid. I think I was maybe 5 years old. And she used to put the [Indiscernible] in my hand.

>> Kyra Schuster: The currency.

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly. I had to go through a park. It was similar -- say this is my house, this stage is my house, and all in the audience here is a park in Bad Kreuznach. And on the other side where the clock is and where everybody came in, where the stores were. So in order for me to get to the grocery store, there were some steps and I could just walk through the park, get to the other side, and go to the store and come back.

>> Kyra Schuster: A shortcut.

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly. So I did it. And one day when I was doing it, the gatekeeper -- there was a gatekeeper in this park. He started screaming at me. And he said, "You can't walk through this park anymore." He said also -- called me all kinds of names. I was this little kid. I didn't understand what was happening. And he also said, "You can't walk through this park anymore. Don't you dare." So I rushed home to my mother and I told her. And she said, well, don't walk through the park anymore. They always tried to protect us. They didn't tell my brother and me the prejudice and hatred that was going on because we didn't really understand it.

So the next time she told me to go to the store I got to the steps of the park and I said to myself -- I was really very tired. Guess what I did.

>> Kyra Schuster: You cut through the park.

>> Susan Warsinger: That's right. I started walking down. I didn't get through the park but I started walking down the staircase. As soon as I start walking down the staircase, the gatekeeper came and not only did he say awful things about Jewish people but he started to throw rocks at me, the rocks that were on the ground. But the worst part of it was he had a daughter who was just a little bit older than me, maybe, I don't know, maybe as old as these two kids are sitting over there. And she saw what her father was doing and she said, well, he's my father, he's my role model, and so she started to call me the same names that he had called me and started to throw rocks at me. And here this little girl was learning how to hate and have prejudice against people. So I never walked through the park again.

>> Kyra Schuster: So you were the oldest of three.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Kyra Schuster: Can you tell us about the birth of your baby brother? You were going to be a big sister again. And your mother delivered the baby at home.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes, she did.

>> Kyra Schuster: Why didn't she just go to the hospital?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, my brother and I -- in the one picture you saw my brother and me sitting on the steps. We were sitting outside of our house. At that time we had to move from one house to another because we couldn't afford the house that we lived in. So the one that you saw in the picture before was one of the last houses where we were living.

>> Kyra Schuster: Still in Bad Kreuznach.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. It was always in Bad Kreuznach, yes. She couldn't -- we had to sit outside. She couldn't go to the hospital to have the baby because there was a law in Bad Kreuznach that Jewish people weren't allowed to go to the hospital.

>> Kyra Schuster: So if anything went wrong, she was at home. Was there anyone assisting her?

>> Susan Warsinger: She didn't have a doctor and she didn't have a midwife but there was somebody I don't remember. I was a little girl, but I don't remember what happened.

>> Kyra Schuster: When was your brother born?

>> Susan Warsinger: The baby? Oh, he's like nine years younger than I. I was born in 1938.

>> Kyra Schuster: Ok. So that brings us to Kristallnacht, which I mentioned before, which is known as the Night of Broken Glass, which took place over November 9 to the 10, 1938. As I mentioned before, your family's windows were broken, your home was looted. Can you tell us in more detail about that night and what happened to your family?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. My brother and I -- not the baby. The baby was like 18 months, maybe. A baby, a newborn baby. So my brother and I, the older one, but a year younger than I am.

>> Kyra Schuster: Joseph.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah, Joseph. He and I were sleeping in my bedroom and we were really excited because the next day was going to be my mother's birthday. It was November 9. So we weren't quite sleeping. I think it might have been, like, 11:00. All of a sudden some bricks and rocks were being thrown through the window. I was really scared. I covered myself up with a blanket.

By the way, I'm telling you all of this from a child's point of view because that's how I remember it.

>> Kyra Schuster: You were a child.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. So I was really frightened. I covered myself up with a blanket. But he was always braver than me, always. So anyway, he went to the window. He pulled himself up and he looked outside. And he said to me, "Susi, it is our neighbors" that are throwing the bricks and rocks through the window. And there was a policeman, the civil policeman. He was standing like this at the edge of the crowd. He was holding his arms like this. And he wasn't doing anything to stop it.

>> Kyra Schuster: Not telling them to stop. Was he encouraging them? He just was doing nothing.

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, he was doing nothing.

>> Kyra Schuster: Which encouraged them.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah, yeah. Exactly. So we were really frightened.

So we started to run across the hall to our parents' bedroom where the baby was sleeping with our parents. And just then at that very moment, some of those people had uprooted a telephone pole and smashed it through our front door. They looted some of the things in our house but their main objective was to get to the rabbi's apartment.

Can I tell you --

>> Kyra Schuster: Please.

>> Susan Warsinger: About the building. We lived on the first floor. And then the rabbi of the town, one rabbi, lived on the second floor. And on the third floor there was a non-Jewish family. And on the fourth floor was an attic.

>> Kyra Schuster: Ok.

>> Susan Warsinger: So my father said, let's go and hide up in the attic. In the meantime, all of the people that were going through our front door and through our hallway, their objective was to get to the second floor to get into the rabbi's apartment and to loot his apartment and do away with some of his artifacts that he had. After they got his apartment -- finally we got to the attic. The family, the rabbi's family, was already up there but the rabbi wasn't there. And in the attic there was this little window. And I looked through the little window and I saw the rabbi was standing on his veranda. The two SS officers -- people, you will see them up on that fourth floor. They are wearing this beige uniform; they had arm bands with the swastika. They were holding him. One of them came and cut off his beard. Later on I found out that they hauled him off to jail. And later on I found out that they put everybody in jail, all the men, put them in jail that night for the simple reason that they were Jewish.

>> Kyra Schuster: Was your father arrested?

>> Susan Warsinger: No -- my father was arrested, but he came back the next day. Why he came back the next day my brother and I never really found out. We should have asked my father more but we think -- my father used to play chess with the mayor of the town. And he also was Polish. He was born in Poland.

>> Kyra Schuster: Your father.

>> Susan Warsinger: My father, yes. So we thought maybe he was saved because the mayor liked him and he was his friend or maybe they didn't arrest that night the people that were not German Jews. So he came back.

I found out that on that night, on the night of my mother's birthday, they didn't only come to our house and break our windows and loot our apartments but they did it to every family that was a Jewish family in Bad Kreuznach. And not only did they do that but they went into all of -- if there were any

stores left that were belonging to Jews -- and, of course, they weren't doing well because not so many people bought but there were some stores left because some Jews did shop. And some of the people that were non-Jewish, they could have shopped. They wouldn't have gotten arrested. They could have gone there but they didn't.

>> Kyra Schuster: Were the stores marked as being owned by Jews? Is that how people knew to boycott them? In your town. I know in other towns they were but.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. That's a very good question. But I was this little kid. I didn't understand all of it. Now I understand it.

Anyway so they looted all of the Jewish ones left. We had one synagogue and they burnt down the synagogue. And then I found out that they not only did that to the people in Bad Kreuznach but they did it in every town where Jewish people lived in Germany. And because so much glass was broken, they called it Night of Broken Glass.

How many of you heard about it? Oh, wow. You learn about it in school? Yeah?

Anyway, Kristallnacht, which means Night of Broken Glass.

>> Kyra Schuster: How long were you and your family and then the family of the rabbi, the wife and children, how long were all of you in the attic for?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah, you know, people ask me that. I really don't remember. Maybe it was like four or five days. I think it was like that.

The non-Jewish people that lived on the third floor, well, they were bystanders. They didn't do anything. They didn't denounce us and tell the Nazis we were hiding in the attic, but they didn't do anything to save us either. So they just were on-lookers and they didn't do anything.

After the Night of Broken Glass, my father who had wanted to stay in Germany, because he thought maybe the whole thing was going to blow over --

>> Kyra Schuster: Which a lot of people did.

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly. Exactly. My mother always wanted to come to the United States.

>> Kyra Schuster: Why the United States? Did she have family here?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, we had heard so many wonderful things about the United States. My father did have a relative here but, you know, in Germany everybody knew that the United States was the land of milk and honey and land of democracy, where there was no prejudice against Jews and where you could live freely without having all of this anti-Semitism.

>> Kyra Schuster: So your mother wanted to leave. Your father was initially resistant.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah.

>> Kyra Schuster: So was it Kristallnacht that pushed him to change his mind?

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly.

>> Kyra Schuster: What did they do then? How did they make arrangements to get out at that point?

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly. This was going on in many homes in Germany. Kristallnacht was the thing that told all the Jews things are not going to get better. Before everybody thought, well, maybe Hitler's not going to be in power anymore, things will change. But the Night of Broken Glass all the Jews wanted to leave.

>> Kyra Schuster: How did they make arrangements to get out once they decided that's what they were going to do?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. My father wanted to come to the United States but, you know, there was a quota. There was a quota for all the countries in the world because they were so worried that the Jews would mess up their economic system; that they were going to take away the jobs of the people of the country. So it was very difficult to get a visa.

>> Kyra Schuster: So each country that people wanted to go to had a limited number of visas that they would issue depending on the country you were born in. So you and your siblings and your mother would fall under the German quota, but your father would fall under the Polish quota, I think. So it depended -- you had to have connections to get the right papers in order to get out, whether that be to the United States or to any other country that was open to accepting refugees.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. Yeah. Anyway, so we couldn't -- they let scientists come to the United States and movie stars and big directors. But my father was just this shopkeeper, so he was like on the bottom of the list.

So anyway, what he wanted to do was he wanted to make sure that his children were safe. So he found out about this lady that was transporting children across the border into France. Bad Kreuznach is near Frankfurt. If you go straight west, you will get to Paris. It's not really that far.

Anyway, this lady, for a lot of money -- all the money that my father had saved and that I used to carry around in my underwear -- because he couldn't put his money in the bank anymore. So he took all of the money that he had left and he gave it to this lady who pretended we were her children. She was a French lady who pretended we were her children and she took us across the border.

>> Kyra Schuster: Just you and Joseph. The baby stayed with your parents.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. He was a baby, really little. Yeah.

>> Kyra Schuster: So she smuggled you by train. You went with her to France. And where did she take you initially once you crossed the border?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, we went to Paris. Yeah.

>> Kyra Schuster: Who did you stay with?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. That's a very good question. [Laughter]

My father had a third cousin who lived in Paris. And he was a young guy. I don't know if he was in his 20s. He was in heaven, a little apartment in Place de la Vendome. So my father must have made arrangements for him to take us into his apartment.

>> Kyra Schuster: How old were you and your brother at this time?

>> Susan Warsinger: I was 7 and he was 8, something. Yeah. No. The other way around. Erase. He's 7 and I'm 8.

>> Kyra Schuster: And now you're staying with this third cousin in it his young bachelor, 20s, in Paris who had never taken care of children before.

>> Susan Warsinger: Right.

>> Kyra Schuster: So how did he take care of you? How did you adjust to this living arrangement?

>> Susan Warsinger: For a while he went to work. And for a while he used to tell us to stay in the apartment until he came back from work.

>> Kyra Schuster: How did that work out?

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, my brother was always curious about life. I was always a goody, goody. I did everything everybody told me to do. So he used to -- 7 years old?

How old are they? How old are you? How old?

>> Kyra Schuster: 6.

>> Susan Warsinger: 6? Yeah?

He snuck out of the apartment and he went on the Metro. And that was a long time ago. Paris was one of the few cities in the world that had a Metro and was called a Metro. He used to sneak under the style in the Metro, go all over Paris. And then he knew when my third cousin was coming back. And he came back just in time.

>> [Laughter]

>> Kyra Schuster: Kids don't do that. Right? [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: So anyway, this cousin really could not --

>> Kyra Schuster: Not equipped to take care of two children.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. So he found some organization.

And all the money that many of you give to organizations, especially to children's organizations, they really did a lot of good. In those days there was a place called the HIAS, the OCE, and the Quakers. I don't know which one but the Quakers were really trying to help kids that were lost and so they placed us in like a foster home in a little town around Paris. And evidently the Quakers must have paid for it. So we went to school and we learned how to speak French.

>> Kyra Schuster: How long were you in that foster home?

>> Susan Warsinger: Ok, so, this is the first foster home. We were in one first. We didn't like it. Then we were in another one. So it was another foster home. So we were there until, like, June 1940. So I bet the audience already knows what happened in June 1940.

>> Kyra Schuster: Do you guys know? Anyone? Ok, that's a lot of mumbling. Yes, sir?

>> [Inaudible]

>> Kyra Schuster: The Germans invaded France? That's right.

>> Susan Warsinger: That's right. He wasn't only prejudiced against the Jews. He said he's going to conquer all over Europe. He's gone into Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria, of course. And just like he said, in June 1940.

We used to sleep in our bedroom. This was on the outskirts of Paris. We used to sleep in a bedroom and we used to hear the planes fly over, the German planes fly over. They were dropping bombs not on to Paris but where we were. It looked like the Fourth of July sometimes with all of these explosions up in the sky.

So it was 1940. Then, I don't know how we got to Paris when we got to Paris. Everybody in Paris were really scared because the SS gentlemen over there said -- they came marching in. And the people, not only Jews in Paris were frightened, everybody wanted to get out of Paris. And so they started to leave Paris. And most of the people wanted to either go down to the southern part and a lot of people wanted to go to Versailles.

Now, Versailles is like 15 miles or something like that from Paris. So I don't know, some nuns must have taken us. I don't know who. We were walking. We were going on the car. Other people were riding on bicycles. People were going on trains. Some people were going in carts.

>> Kyra Schuster: This mass exodus from the city out to the countryside, outside the city limits where people thought they would be safer.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. And we ended up in Versailles.

>> Kyra Schuster: Not a bad place to end up. Kind of fancy. Right?

>> Susan Warsinger: It has a big palace there.

>> Kyra Schuster: I've heard of it. Where did they place you once you got to Versailles? Were you in another foster home or?

>> Susan Warsinger: No, they didn't put us in the foster home because we were -- these were not only Jews.

>> Kyra Schuster: Everybody.

>> Susan Warsinger: So everybody went to the palace. And so here was the mayor of the town. And he really didn't know what to do with all of us. so we had to have a place to sleep. There was this big hay stack -- there was this beautiful garden. Someplace at the edge of the garden there was this big pile, as high as the ceiling, of hay. So they gave us all a burlap bag and we filled it up with the hay. And then they gave us a little string. And we put the string out and we had a mattress.

So then -- so where were we going to go with all of these mattresses? Which is the largest room in Versailles?

>> Kyra Schuster: I do. The Hall of Mirrors?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. The Hall of Mirrors.

>> Kyra Schuster: The most famous ballroom I think in the palace.

>> Susan Warsinger: How many of you have been? Do you remember the Hall of Mirrors?

Anyway, we lined our mattresses up all along the walls, all along the walls. So we slept in the Hall of Mirrors. But it wasn't only Jews.

>> Kyra Schuster: It was everybody who fled. So did the Germans eventually make their way to Versailles?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Kyra Schuster: What happened when they encounters all of these people in the palace?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. So anyway, they did come to Versailles. We heard them. We heard them marching. They have these heavy boots and tanks. They came marching into Versailles. People were frightened.

Anyway, I remember what happened. In the front of the caravan there was a car. A Nazi officer came out. I don't know whether he was a general or a major or a colonel. I don't know. So anyway, he came out and he wanted to speak to the mayor. And, of course, the German general -- I'll just call him an officer. The German officer did not know how to speak any French. The mayor, they called him the mayor of the town, he came. The mayor of the town did not know how to speak any German.

>> Kyra Schuster: They needed a translator.

>> Susan Warsinger: They needed a translator. And somebody said, "Oh, there's this little girl in the palace; she knows how to speak German".

>> Kyra Schuster: So were you recruited, became the translator for this officer and the town mayor?

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly.

>> Kyra Schuster: And you were 8 years old.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah.

>> Kyra Schuster: Did that work out ok?

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: Well, anyway -- No. By this time I'm 10.

>> Kyra Schuster: Still.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. So what happened was here was this little girl. I don't know what they talked about. I just don't remember. It's been a long time. And so what happened was after the conversation, evidently I must have done all right. The Nazi officer stood in front of me. He was tall. All I could see were his boots. I was a little kid. I was really very frightened. So he said to me, "Little girl, how come you know how to speak German so well?"

>> Kyra Schuster: Really put you on the spot. What did you say?

>> Susan Warsinger: I said to him I go to the French schools and they are very good and I learned how to speak German in the French schools.

>> Kyra Schuster: Very quick for you. [Laughter]

So how long were new Versailles? Did you eventually evacuate Versailles and they moved you further south, keep going south?

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly. That's what happened. The Nazis took over not all of France. They took the northern part and then the western part and just the inside in the southern part. They said that was going to be the unoccupied zone of France.

>> Kyra Schuster: Which we now refer to as Vichy France.

>> Susan Warsinger: That's right.

>> Kyra Schuster: So you were in a home in that zone.

>> Susan Warsinger: So what happened, one of the OCE, [Speaking Non-English Language], they made sure that the Jewish children, by that time many Jewish children were lost all over Europe and all over France. They all sent those children to the chateau in a little town. We were there. We went to school there. They had a public school. And what happened was they wanted the children to go to the village to the public school. And the sad part of it was the people there in the village, they didn't want to mix -- and these were all farmers' kids. They didn't want their children to mix with the Jewish children. I guess they were looking down on us because we were refugees. So what they did is they gave us a French teacher. We had a one-room schoolhouse and there the teacher taught all of us to speak French and all the grades.

>> Kyra Schuster: So you're in a new children's home. You've been moved all over, Paris, south, south, south. And this whole time you haven't had any contact with your parents, you and your brother haven't heard from them. You're obviously thinking about them.

>> Susan Warsinger: All the time. All the time.

>> Kyra Schuster: You had no idea what was happening with them and your brother at that point.

>> Susan Warsinger: No.

>> Kyra Schuster: Did you eventually find out? Were you able to get in touch with them or they in touch with you? No.

>> Susan Warsinger: We wrote to them all the time. Every day -- we had this part of the day where you could write to your parents. But the letters -- we never heard a reply.

>> Kyra Schuster: So you were writing to them at your home in Bad Kreuznach assuming they were still there but you didn't know for sure.

>> Susan Warsinger: Right.

>> Kyra Schuster: One day you get called into the principal's office. The Director of the home calls into your office. What did she tell you?

>> Kyra Schuster: She said, "Susi, you're going to go to the United States."

>> Kyra Schuster: Just like that.

>> Susan Warsinger: Just like that. I couldn't believe my ears. What was I going to do in the United States?

So what had happened was my father -- remember, I told you at the beginning he had a cousin who had a pickle factory. Maybe I didn't tell you. Did I?

>> Kyra Schuster: I think you mentioned it. I knew that. They may not have known.

>> Susan Warsinger: He had a pickle factory in Brooklyn. This cousin, they went to the State Department, to the HIAS, all kinds of organizations and they promised the United States that my father would never be a burden to the United States and that they would take care economically. So finally he got affidavits to come to the United States. But it wasn't enough for my baby brother and my mother. So my father came to the United States. So then he worked real hard. He was really good at selling things door-to-door. And what he did is he went to the farmer and he got eggs from the farmer and then he took the eggs home and candled them, which meant he had this little box with a light inside.

>> Kyra Schuster: Inspect the eggs?

>> Susan Warsinger: Exactly right. Yes. So then he put them in boxes. And he sold them to all the neighbors and all the Jewish families that were in Washington, D.C.

>> Kyra Schuster: Made sure they were kosher so he could sell them to the Jewish customers.

>> Susan Warsinger: Right.

>> Kyra Schuster: So he worked hard here in the states.

>> Susan Warsinger: He got enough backing from the cousin, owner of the pickle factory, he got my mother and the baby here also.

>> Kyra Schuster: So it wasn't enough that your parents had the right papers to travel to the United States with the visa, but everybody needed to have someone sponsoring them who lived here in the United States, was an American citizen of good standings, who said we will be financially responsible to that the state or federal government would not be responsible for the payment, life expenses, of these refugees coming in. So your father was then able to earn enough -- or your cousin, also, to sponsor your mother and brother.

>> Susan Warsinger: Right.

>> Kyra Schuster: So now they're all here but you and Joseph are in the South of France. And then you find out, surprise, you're going to America.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah.

>> Kyra Schuster: How did you get from this home in southern France, to your parents?

>> Susan Warsinger: So what happened was Eleanor Roosevelt, she also worked very hard to get children to come to the United States. So there was this group of 50 kids that were going on the Serpa Pinto. We all wore that tag that you saw at the beginning. We joined that group of children that she sponsored to come to the United States.

So we went from Paris to Marseille and then we took the train from Marseille across the Pyrenees to Spain. Then we got on a ship with the 50 children. So it was a cruise ship but it was not like the cruise ships we have today. It was much smaller. And the kids were not allowed to mix with the people that were on the cruise. We had a special area at the front of the ship, in the hull. And all 50 of us slept in this one room. We had double-decker, triple --

>> Kyra Schuster: Bunk beds?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes, bunk beds. We were very excited.

Do I have time to tell you another story?

>> Kyra Schuster: About your brother?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. Because it's relevant.

>> Kyra Schuster: My brother -- we weren't supposed to mix with the people on the boat but, of course, he went all over the ship. He found a closet where they had stored pineapple. The United States -- I don't know where they were getting the pineapple from. He was so eating the pineapple constantly. We had never eaten any pineapple.

>> Kyra Schuster: An exotic fruit. Yeah.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. So in the meantime, he was so excited. He used to wet his bed in the bunk beds. So between the pineapple and the acid and the boat going, 14 days on this ocean, going like this, he used to throw up a lot inside, over the boat. However, at night he used to urinate in his bed and he had all of this acid on him, so he got this big rash.

>> Kyra Schuster: So what happened when you finally docked, arrived?

>> Susan Warsinger: I have to tell you one more story before we arrived.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: It's really important. The photographer was here. He just did a little thing about this. Anyway, you can get it online, I understand.

Anyway, what happened was they told us at 6:00 in the morning we were going to pass the Statue of Liberty. When we got upstairs, you know, on deck, before 6:00, there was a big fog. The fog was so heavy that you could not see in front of your face. We used to hold our hand like this and we couldn't see it in front of our face. So we were really upset that we weren't going to see the Statue of Liberty. But at exactly 6:00 -- and I'm not making this up. This is actually what happened. Every time I think about it, I get goose pimples. You know when you go to the theater, the curtain rises and it goes up and then there is the show? Well, anyway, the fog went up like this. It lifted up like that and just then the whole statue.

>> Kyra Schuster: There she was. Beautiful.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yeah. It was -- it was -- it was a sign for us that it was going to be a reunion with our parents, most of all. And then also we knew we were coming to a democratic society where we were going to be free and there was not going to be any anti-Semitism and the kids weren't going to bully us anymore. We were so excited to be there.

>> Kyra Schuster: Were your parents waiting for you on the dock?

>> Susan Warsinger: My mother stayed with the baby because he was a baby.

So we got to New York City. Everybody was getting off the boat but the 50 kids didn't get off the boat because they wanted to have the doctors check them out to make sure that they didn't have any infectious diseases.

>> Kyra Schuster: Standard procedure for all new immigrants and refugees coming into the country.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes, yes, yes. So they got to my brother. And he had this rash.

>> [Laughter]

>> Kyra Schuster: From the pineapple.

>> Susan Warsinger: So I tried to explain to them what had happened but they didn't believe this little girl. I don't know what language I was talking.

>> Kyra Schuster: You didn't speak English, only French and German.

>> Susan Warsinger: No. Yeah.

So anyway, you people know what happens to people if they won't let you come into the United States? Huh?

>> Kyra Schuster: Quarantine. Someone said quarantine.

>> Susan Warsinger: The person who said quarantine is really right. Now, where are you going to quarantine these people?

>> Kyra Schuster: Say it again?

>> [Inaudible]

>> Kyra Schuster: Ellis Island.

>> Susan Warsinger: Ellis Island. Thank you. Yeah, exactly. He has to go to Ellis Island. He can't come to the United States. So I went with him because I didn't want him to go by himself. So when we got to Ellis Island, they had doctors. He was better.

But I wanted to tell you I learned all about the United States on Ellis Island.

>> Kyra Schuster: What did you learn?

>> Susan Warsinger: A lot of stuff. We sat at these long tables. They had this white bread on plates. It was white. We had never seen white bread. So we took a piece of bread and we could mash it up and make a little ball out of it. And they said it was Wonder Bread. We were so excited.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: And then the other thing we learned -- my brother was sitting next to a sailor. People from all over were there.

>> Kyra Schuster: Got to watch out for sailors.

>> Susan Warsinger: He was drinking this brown drink. It had bubbles in it. He said to my brother, "Taste it." My brother looked at me. I said, "Well, taste it." He said, "Oh, it's pretty good." And then he found out that it was Coca-Cola.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: And the other thing we learned, which was very important to children in those days, the kids in the United States could take candy and keep it in their mouth for a whole day.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: And then we found out that it was chewing gum. Anyway. We were very well prepared.

>> Kyra Schuster: You were?

>> Susan Warsinger: After my brother's rash went away, we went back to the pier and my father picked us up. We came to Washington.

>> Kyra Schuster: So you settled in Washington, D.C. Resumed your education.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Kyra Schuster: For everyone's perspective, the time, this was 1940. Right?

>> Susan Warsinger: No, no. 1941 now. Remember, the Nazis came into France in 1940. Then we went to the south. We were there for a year in that children's home. Since 1941. It's September -- I remember the date, September 24, 1941, just before Pearl Harbor.

>> Kyra Schuster: So U.S. wasn't engaged in World War II yet.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes.

>> Kyra Schuster: And what about the family that was left behind in Germany, the extended family? Do you know anything that happened to them?

>> Susan Warsinger: You mean my grandparents?

>> Kyra Schuster: Or any aunts, cousins.

>> Susan Warsinger: This is the sad part. I'm so lucky because I have my brothers, my mother and father, but everybody else -- my father's parents -- well, I'm sure you learned what happened to the Polish -- people in the audience know what happened to the Polish Jews. They didn't even go to the concentration camps. What happened when the Nazis came to the villages --

>> Kyra Schuster: Rounded everybody up.

>> Susan Warsinger: Rounded everybody up. Then they made them go into the woods, dig their graves, and then they shot them. So my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, everybody. Nobody. And I don't have any on my mother's side either because they were in the concentration camps in Germany. And they all died. Except I have one cousin who is living in Israel that was my father's sister but she went to Israel before Hitler came into power. So she has a family. So I do have that one family.

>> Kyra Schuster: And you have your family now.

>> Susan Warsinger: Oh, I'm very happy. I have three wonderful daughters. I have nine grandchildren. They all are doing really well.

>> Kyra Schuster: We know you're very proud of them.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes, I am.

>> Kyra Schuster: So we have a couple of minutes to ask some questions from the audience if that's ok with you.

I would ask, for those of you who have questions, we have two microphones, one on each aisle. I ask that you wait until you have access to a microphone so that everyone can hear your question. I may repeat your question as well just so I can make sure Susan and everyone else can hear it as well. So if anyone has a question.

Yes, in the back, in the red.

>> Hi. Have you been back to Versailles or Bad Kreuznach since?

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. Can I tell about Germany first? I wanted to show my three daughters when they were teenagers -- when was it? Like in the '70s. I wanted to show them the town where I was born. So we made arrangements to go there. But in the 1970s, the people in Germany, nobody wanted to talk about it. The survivors didn't want to talk about it. They put it in the back of their heads. And the museum wasn't here. People hadn't started to write books about the Holocaust. And they certainly didn't learn about it in school because when I went to the university here, there was nothing mentioned, the Second World War but nothing about the Holocaust was there.

So anyway, I got to Bad Kreuznach and we didn't know how to communicate with the people and everybody felt uncomfortable. The people in Bad Kreuznach felt uncomfortable and I felt uncomfortable. So we got out of there and went to Paris.

But the next time I went -- you know the baby, my brother Ernest? He's a physicist, a very big physicist. Some of his experiments went up in the space program. But he went numerous times, goes all over the world to conferences on ozone. So one day in the '90s, 1998, he went to Germany in Dusseldorf to go to a meeting to discuss the ozone. So he told me. And I said, "Can I go with you?" And he said, "Sure." So I went with him. So in 1998, while he was at his meetings, I went to Frankfurt. I walked around and sat in cafes. Some people I met. And I told them, you know, who I was. And they were open to talk about it. But there was nothing really public. The people weren't ready to talk about it.

However, like three years ago I went again. I went to Berlin because I had never been in Berlin before. Things have changed tremendously. Berlin's got museums, Holocaust museums, monuments, laws -- we met the mayor of the town. Nobody was supposed to say anything derogatory against Jewish people. You can go to jail if you start talking about Jewish people. So everybody's come out of the closet and everybody's talking about it.

Now, this is a really good question because it leads to why did all of this happen. Why are all of the survivors coming out of the closet and why are the German people talking about it. Well, the reason for it is we don't want this to happen ever again. That's why the museum is here. So we wanted to make sure that when we see injustice going on in the world we have to do something about it.

>> Kyra Schuster: Don't be a bystander.

>> Susan Warsinger: Right.

>> Kyra Schuster: Is there another question? There's a young man in the back I think.

>> Where is your brother today?

>> Susan Warsinger: My brother? Well, you know, the one that's so curious?

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: I'm glad you asked me about him. He became a cardiologist. He went to medical school. He became a very good cardiologist in New York. He saved a lot of people's lives. He had a nice house. He had four children. He has like 10 grandchildren. His children are all grown up now. His wife passed away some time ago. But it was fine. So he sold his house and he decided to live back in New York City. And guess where in New York City he decided to buy himself this beautiful apartment. Guess where it is.

>> Trump Tower.

>> Susan Warsinger: No.

>> [Laughter]

>> Susan Warsinger: Good guess, but the thing is, there is this place called Battery Park in New York, at the point, where you can look out of your window and see the Statue of Liberty, and you can see Ellis

Island. This is a hotel, the Ritz Carlton. And on top they have these beautiful apartments. And his apartment he has a lot of rooms in his apartment. And every room guess what it looks -- what you can look out on to? You look out on to the Atlantic ocean. You can see the boats come in. You see the Statue of Liberty. You see Ellis Island. So that's where he's living now. He's retired. He has a lot of grandchildren and a lot of children. You know, Hitler didn't accomplish what he set out to do with my family.

And you heard about my other brother, the physicist. He has two kids and five grandchildren. So we have a big family.

>> Kyra Schuster: On that note, I'm going to turn back to you to close out our program. But before I do that, I want to thank everybody for joining us today. We hope that you can come back for some of our other *First Person* programs. If you didn't get a chance to ask your question, you will have that opportunity outside afterwards.

We do our *First Person* program every Wednesday and Thursday through the middle of August. And it is our tradition here at *First Person* that we let our First Person have the final word. But before she speaks I want to tell you two quick things.

As I mentioned, you'll have the opportunity to ask a question outside. Susan will be signing copies of the "Echoes of Memory" book. And you don't have to purchase a book to ask a question but she will be there signing books and answering questions as well. You can just say hello. You can shake her hand. You can have your picture taken and all of that.

And I'm also going to ask that you all stay in your seats at the end of the program so that we can get Susan to the back of the theater as quickly as possible. Also, you may have noticed our photographer, Joel, has been running around taking pictures of everything throughout the program. He's going to take a picture of Susan with all of you in the background so it's a nice memory for Susan to have of our time together this morning.

With all of that, Susan, I leave it to you to give us your last words of the morning.

>> Susan Warsinger: Yes. But before I do that, I just wanted to make sure. I had so many hands raised, that are still going to the Permanent Exhibition. And since time a tour guide, I want to make sure that you don't miss out on anything. So when you get up on that elevator, you're going to be on the fourth floor. You're going to be in 1945, you know, when the whole story of the Holocaust is over. Then you're going to go walking around the corner and it will be 1933. And that's when my story starts.

So one of the first things that you're going to see is you're going to see these two policemen with a dog. And one of them is a civil policeman. He's wearing a blue uniform with a funny hat. Remember I was telling you about the civil policeman that was in Bad Kreuznach who didn't do anything? There's one of them standing in the picture. He's walking along with the SS men, with the people for the Nazis. They're walking together. So make sure you read that. It's called -- no. I forgot the name of it. Anyway.

Then next to that exhibit is the guy standing in front of a store boycotting the store. And then next to that I would like for you to take a look. There's some kids reading a book. They are reading a book called "Der Giftpilz." An elementary school teacher was reading it to them. My teacher read it to them. They were telling kids "Jews are poisoned mushrooms." So make sure to see that exhibit.

Then you keep on going and you see a park. And then there are all of these signs "Jews are not wanted." This is very similar to my story. And then you're going to go a little bit further on, there's a whole exhibit on Kristallnacht.

>> Kyra Schuster: Those are all on the top floor, first floor you're going to go through in the exhibition.

>> Susan Warsinger: And then you're going to come to a story about a boat, the St. Louis. I didn't come on the St. Louis. But the ship, they have pictures of the ship. Looks exactly like the Serpa Pinto.

So I hope that you have a wonderful learning experience up there. Most of the things that happened to me were all on the fourth floor. Then when you go to the third floor, you know, you're going to learn about the concentration camps. Make sure you leave yourself some time for the second floor which deals with the liberator -- with rescuers and people who were not bystanders, people who

did something. And if the whole world had stood up to Hitler or had done something at the very beginning, maybe the whole Holocaust would never have happened.

Anyway. I'm taking up too much time. I just wanted you to be looking for these things.

Anyway --

>> Kyra Schuster: Always an educator. Never stop teaching.

>> Susan Warsinger: I hope you don't mind if I read this. I wrote this out some time ago.

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

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

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

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

Never again do we want to stand by and do nothing.

I want to thank you, Kyra Schuster, for helping me tell my story.

>> Kyra Schuster: My pleasure.

>> Susan Warsinger: And I want to thank the audience for coming to our museum and being witnesses to the story of the Holocaust and for listening to my story. I want you to have a wonderful learning experience when you get upstairs to our permanent exhibit.

Thank you for listening.

>> [Applause]