

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Erica Kanter
October 15, 2010
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PREFACE

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ERICA KANTER

October 15, 2010

Question: This is an interview with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Today is the 15th of October, 2010. I'm here with **Erica Kanter**, and I am **Ann Erling**. So, let's start. Let's start from the very beginning. Could we get your full name, the name, if it was different at birth, and your birthdate and where you born, please?

Answer: Yes. The name is **Erica Kanter**. The maiden name was **Hecht, h-e-c-h-t**. I was born in **Stuttgart, Germany** in April 19th, 1929.

Q: Okay, and then just tell me about your childhood; your home and your family, and what – what life was like?

A: I lived in **Stuttgart**. My father was a physician. My father was Jewish, my mother was Catholic, but neither of them really practiced their religion. My father was a very successful physician, so we had a very nice, privileged life. We lived in **Stuttgart**, which was a very modern city at the time. They had buildings by **Gropius**, and I had a very privileged childhood. We had live-in helpers who were like family and so my childhood was a very happy childhood.

Q: Do you have any siblings?

A: Yes, I have a sister who's five years older than I, her name is – was **Lisalotte**(ph), and now is **Lisa**. And my brother, who's three years older than I,

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his name is **Karl Theodore**, and is now **Ted**. My sister lives in **Los Angeles**, my brother lives in **Ann Arbor, Michigan**.

Q: Okay, did you – you attended school in **Stuttgart**?

A: Yes, I went to elementary school, and – for four years, and my teacher, whom I adored, was Fraulein **Gruninger**(ph). And I went to the **Wagenborg**(ph) **schule** and had a very happy early education.

Q: Were there both Jewish and non-Jewish children at this school?

A: Yes, there were all kinds of children, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant. And I have a friendship book in which some of them signed and had their pictures, and they're of all religions.

Q: Okay, so a lot of your friends were both Jewish and non-Jewish?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: Okay. What are some of your earliest childhood memories?

A: Well, I have a lot of them, and many of them are in a memoir which I wrote, and was published last year. We were very close to my parents and we did the usual amusements and entertainments for Germans of the time. We went walking a lot, and we went to the puppet theater, and we visited my grandparents, who lived in **Ulm**. And in the summer, we went to **Czechoslovakia**, where my maternal grandparents had an estate, which was a castle. And so for the first seven

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or eight years of my life, I went to **Czechoslovakia** every summer to spend time at the castle. So –

Q: That's so cool.

A: – I had a very privileged childhood. Nothing but happy childhood.

Q: That's so good. So you said that your family didn't really practice religion. Did you do any – prac – do any – I guess, recognize any Jewish holidays or Christian holidays?

A: Not really. I-I think even my grandparents, my paternal grandparents, who were Jewish, I don't think they practiced their religion either, which was not unusual for a lot of German Jews. But I did go to Sunday school. I went to German Lutheran Sunday school, and I think I just, you know, went once a week and it was just part of my growing up, I guess. And then when I came to the **United States** in 1940, I became a member of the congregational church, which apparently is not too dissimilar from the German Lutheran church.

Q: Mm-hm. Remind me again what year you were born?

A: I was born in 1929.

Q: Okay. So, did you experience any anti-Semitism when you were growing up?

A: Not really. It seems that **Stuttgart** was rather late in having anti-Semitism visible. I did know that – I think in 1938 perhaps, I was no longer allowed to go to

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the swimming pool. But I stayed in school, I think until early in 1939. However, in 1938, my father lost his medical license, and on **Kristallnacht** he was arrested and he was sent to **Dachau**. Now, in those days, apparently, you could still get out after a fo – short period. And he was there for a month, and the requirements for leaving at that time, as far as I know, were that you had already applied for a visa to leave **Germany**, and that you had served in the German army in World War I. And my father was in the German army as a medic in World War I, but he was sent to **Dachau**. And then, we're not a hundred percent sure if the story is true, but I was told that the police chief in **Stuttgart** had a six year old son, and my father was the family doctor, and they say that my father saved the child's life. And that when this police chief heard that my father was in **Dachau**, and had already applied for a visa and had served in the army in World War I, he also helped him. So my father got out of **Dachau** after a month, after he had to have surgery which was caused by his stay in **Dachau**, where they ruined his sinuses. He left through **Switzerland** and then went to **England**. And he came to **England** in September of 1939. My brother, my sister and I were sent to **England** in, I think April of 1939, on the **Kindertransport**.

Q: Okay. Well, let's – let's back up a little fur – a little bit before we talk about the **Kindertransport**. Do you remember – you said you remember not being able to

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go to the swimming pool any more. Do you remember anything else happening at – you know, your father losing his practice, but I mean, did children treat you differently at school?

A: No, no. No one treated me differently while I was still in school. My teacher didn't, my friends didn't. So it really didn't affect me too much. And I was probably doing something very silly, I – my mother did let me have English lessons for a short while. And I remember going on the street and practicing my little English sayings, which of course was not very smart, because if anyone had heard me, there might have been a problem, but fortunately no one ever heard me or paid attention.

Q: So you attended school up until you left?

A: Yes. I think I probably was taken out of school few weeks or months, I really don't remember how long. But I know that my mother had lots of clothes made for me to take to **England**, and I did have these English lessons, but I don't remember how long I was out of school.

Q: Did your family at home, did your parents talk about the Nazi rise to power?

A: No, no.

Q: It wasn't a concern?

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A: No, the only thing I remember is that the night my father was arrested, my mother woke me up and I remember having to say goodbye to my father, but that's –

Q: How long – sorry to interrupt –

A: That's all –

Q: – how long was he in **Dachau**?

A: About a month, I think.

Q: Okay, so when did your parents talk to you about the **Kindertransport**? When did you know that decision had been made?

A: I don't really remember. I don't remember whether my mother ever explained it to me. It was through my mother that we were able to get out, because she did all this while my father was in **Dachau**.

Q: So this was in April or May of '39?

A: I think we left in April 1939.

Q: Okay. And then what – what went into the preparation? Like you said your mother had clothes –

A: My mother had lots of clothes made, and I had a ba – brand new quilt for my bed, and she packed all my things, and I had some of my favorite books. One was about three **Teddy** bears, another one was about **Kaspalay**(ph), which is a puppet.

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And I also had family photo albums that she gave me. And – but I really don't remember being scared or traumatized. I-I just didn't really know what was going on, I was nine years old.

Q: What about – and your brother and your sister were – went as well?

A: Yes, we all three left together. Now, I'm sure that my sister, who was 14, and my brother, who was 12, have more memories of it than I did. My brother, for example, remembers my mother saying goodbye to us at the railroad station. And I've read recently that Nazis did not want parents on the station – on the platform, but apparently my mother did go, and my brother remembers that. I don't remember that at all.

Q: So you don't – you don't recall the days leading up – whether or not – how you were feeling –

A: No, not really.

Q: Okay. Do you recall the – the journey to **England** at all?

A: A little bit. I played the violin at that time, and I know they made me play the violin on the train, because many Jewish families bought expensive musical instruments to give to their children to take out, so that they could be sold for money later. And so the Nazis wanted to make sure that I could play the violin,

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and I did, and I remember I played “**Ach du lieber Augustine**,” which was a famous song at the time for children. But that’s all I really remember.

Q: Okay, did you know if you went by train to – to **Holland**?

A: I think so, and then by whatever to **England**, and we went to **London** where the three English families that were taking us, met us. And my sister went to **Buxton**, my brother went to **Harrow**, and I went to **Marple**, which is outside **Manchester**.

Q: Okay. So what was the family like who you lived with?

A: My foster father was professor of engineering at the University of **Manchester**, and his wife **Edith**. And they had twin daughters who were about six months older than I, **Joyce** and **Kathleen**. And the day that I arrived, and we went to **Marple**, my English family had a high tea in my honor. And I was very surprised, because I thought my foster mother spoke fluent German, I thought this is very easy to understand. And then when it was bedtime, the woman I thought was my foster mother disappeared. Turns out that my foster parents had invited the German teacher from the high school to come for the day and make my transition less traumatic. But from then on, I was on my own. But they were wonderful. And I am still in touch with them, and in 2008 I went to **England** for the twins 80th birthday. And we correspond, we send each other letters with pictures of our

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grandchildren, and we're still very close. The only one in the family who is that way with the English family is I. My brother and sister did not keep in touch with theirs until a few years later.

Q: Okay. Wa – were there a lot of English customs that you had to adjust to, that was different from home?

A: Well, the one that I remember – and at – at this time, you could still write to **Germany** from **England**. My English foster mother always gave me tea, like everyone else in the family, but I refused to have milk in it, and she thought that that might not be good for me, so she wrote to my mother and asked whether it was all right for me to have tea without milk in it. And my mother said, oh yes, she has tea at home all the time. Well, what my mother didn't realize is that English tea is very strong and very dark, whereas in **Germany** tea is fairly weak. And so my mother said no, it's fine. So I learned to drink English tea, but was not very fond of it. And I wasn't too fond of mutton either, although I did like Shepherd's pie, which is ground mutton with mashed potatoes and gravy.

Q: I like that as well.

A: And high tea, I liked high tea. And I had never had **Jell-O**, and very often my English foster mother made a dessert with different colors of **Jell-O** that was all chopped up and very pretty. And she also made lemon curd, which I'd never had

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before. And she always told me when I met them later in 1980, that I would come to the kitchen and I would try to help, and I would say, I will make – meaning that I would help her. And I remember squeezing lots of lemons for lemon curd.

Q: So did – you said that you had taken some English lessons, but did it take you a while to learn the la – the – your new language?

A: I guess so, although I really don't remember.

Q: Did you attend school when you were in **England**?

A: Yes, I went to school a week after I got there. I went to **Manchester** High School for girls, which was an elementary school in **Manchester**, so we commuted from **Marple** to **Manchester**, and the twins went with me. I think they were probably a year ahead of me in school. And I remember loving my school. And then when the war started in September, after a while, when bombing started in **Manchester**, like many other British children, we were evacuated to the countryside. So I had another English family, a Mrs. **Emerson** and her daughter, who was in her 20s. She was the – the – Mrs. **Emerson** was a widow. And I went to the **Cheadle Hulme** school, which was an affiliate of the school in **Manchester**.

Q: Did the two twins go with you when you went –

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A: No, the twins went to boarding school. And the school I went to was a boarding school, but I went as a day student.

Q: Where were your brother and sister at this time?

A: My brother was in **Harrow** with his English family, and my sister was in **Buxton** with hers. My brother's family had a daughter who was a little bit older than my brother, and my sister's family I think had four children. And I saw them once while I was in **England**, we all got together in **Harrow**.

Q: Did you return to **Marple** after being evacuated to the countryside, or did you –

A: I went there I think on weekends, or whatever. I just didn't go to school in **Manchester** any more.

Q: Did you experience any air raids, did you –

A: No, I didn't.

Q: So what – do you recall ha – what your knowledge was of the war during this time? Did you read about it, or hear about what was going on?

A: Not really. I knew that there was a war. The one thing I do remember is that Princess **Elizabeth** and Princess **Margaret Rose**, spoke on the radio every week to the children of **Great Britain** to keep our courage up. And that's about all I remember.

Q: How long were you there?

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A: I was there for about a year.

Q: Okay. So, do – and you – you wrote to your mother. How long did you – were you able to keep in contact with your family?

A: I really don't remember, but I know in the beginning. Now, my mother stayed in **Germany** because she didn't have a German visa, she was born in – in **Prague**, so she had a Czech visa. And there – it wasn't quite as rapid. And she eventually, she tried to pack up our – all our house, and our paintings, our – all our belongings to send to the **United States**, and of course nothing was ever delivered. My parents lost everything. But she left to go to **Italy** where my maternal grandparents had a house, which she inherited. So she went to **Italy** on the pretense of going to sell that house, and she never left **Italy**. And she then went through **Portugal** in September of 1940 and came directly to the **United States**. So I hadn't seen her for a year and a half.

Q: Where was your father? I know he said – you – he got a visa. Did he – where did he leave to?

A: He left, and came through **Switzerland** to **Harrow**. He lived in a boarding house in **Harrow**, so he and my brother did see each other while they were there.

Q: Did you – did – you didn't see your father though, at all?

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A: I saw him once, the one time that I went to **Harrow**. And then in April or May of 1940, my brother, my sister, I and my father all came over by boat on the **Britannic** to the **United States**. And my father had a research fellowship in **Ypsilanti, Michigan**, because he couldn't practice medicine yet. And then a year later he passed the medical exam and then he moved to **Massachusetts** with us. And the reason we went to **Massachusetts** is there were very few states where you could practice medicine without being a citizen, and **Massachusetts** was one of them. So we moved to **Braintree, Massachusetts**, which is just outside **Boston**, and he started his practice again, and after a beginning struggle, he became very successful and eventually taught at **Tufts Medical School**, and put all three of us through college.

Q: That's fabulous.

A: Yeah.

Q: So what year was it that you immigrated to the U.S.?

A: '39.

Q: '39, okay.

A: No, 1940 we emigrated. We left **Germany** in '39, left **England** in 1940.

Q: That's wonderful. Okay, so what about – did you still have grandparents who were –

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A: Yes, my maternal grandparents had died early in the 30s, but my paternal grandparents, my grandfather was also a physician, they lived in **Ulm**. And it wasn't until 1942 that they were sent out of **Ulm**. They were told they were going to a Jewish retirement settlement, they couldn't pack very much. And they were sent to **Theresienstadt**, and they died in **Theresienstadt** within a week of each other in January of 1943. Now, my parents didn't know that until after the war. My parents tried to get them out of **Germany** and couldn't. And so it wasn't until after war that my father found out that my grandparents had died.

Q: So, your – your brothers and sis – your brother and sister, did they have a positive experience when they were in **England**?

A: Yes, they did. My brother in **Harrow**, his family was as wonderful, and in fact, his foster mother eventually came to the **United States**, because his – their daughter eventually married an American serviceman, and then brought her mother over to the **United States**. My sister's family also was very nice to her, except in the beginning. My sister at that time was 14, and they sort of treated her as a au pair, a household helper. And it – that didn't stop until a cousin of my father's from **India** came to visit and explained to them that, you know, she had been brought up in a very privileged household, and that she shouldn't be treated like a servant. And everything was fine from then on, and you know, she was quite

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happy, I'm sure. Although, she was 14, and that's not a – an easy age to, you know, uproot. But one of the children of that family did visit us in **Massachusetts** when I was in college. I remember he came – **Aubrey** came to visit. But my sister hasn't kept in touch with them, and my brother really didn't keep in touch with his either.

Q: So before we move on, I want to talk about your life in the **U.S.** You had a photograph of a fr – a friend of yours, **Ursula**. Was that someone you knew in **England**?

A: Yes, my best friend from **Germany**

Q: Oh, okay.

A: – was named **Ursula Meyer**. And I did visit her in **England** once. I don't know where, all I know is it was near the ocean somewhere because there is a photograph of the two of us on the beach in bathing suits. And I don't know what ever happened to her, we lost touch when I came to the **United States**. And I was just curious to see whether she was still alive, and whether she had stayed in **England**, or whether she got married, or what, I had no idea. And I first got in touch with the **Kindertransport Association**, to find out whether they could find her on a list anywhere. And they did find an **Ursula Meyer**, but it was a m – a married name, not her m – her maiden name.

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Q: Oh, okay. So how old were you when – when you immigrated to the U.S.?

A: I was nine.

Q: Nine, okay, so did you s-start attending American school right away?

A: Oh, when I was s – came to the **United States**, I was 10. Yes, I – I first went to school in **New York City** for a few weeks, until my father got the research fellowship in **Michigan**. And then I went to elementary school in **Michigan** for a year. And then I – we moved to **Braintree**, and I skipped a grade, because they said I'd had so much education in **Germany** and **England** that I was ready for the eighth grade, I should really have been in seventh. And then I stayed, I went all through high school in **Braintree**.

Q: So, was it difficult adjusting to, I mean, a new lifestyle, after being in eng – **Germany** and then **England** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – then **America**.

A: Not for me, I – I – you know, I remember my childhood as being a very happy childhood and I guess I was always happy from the time I was young, and I don't remember really, any traumatic incidences at all, except for one in **England**, which I considered traumatic. My mother, when she was still able to send me packages from **Germany** had sent me a box of cherries from our **Bing** cherry tree

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in **Stuttgart**. And one night we were to take a bath, and it was my turn to take a bath first. And the bathroom was quite chilly, but there was a nice little cabinet or closet where the hot water heater was, and it was quite warm in there, and you usually dried yourself in there. And I was in there drying myself when I heard one of the twins come up for her bath. And I thought that it was **Kathleen**, who was the very outgoing twin, and I thought, now wouldn't it be fun to close the cabinet door and then open it and suddenly say boo. Well, I had made a mistake and it was not **Kathleen**, it was **Joyce**, who was a little more nervous. And of course, she cried and shrieked and Uncle **Cornish**(ph), my foster father, sent me to my room for what I considered just fun, but apparently he was concerned because one of the twins was crying. So I remember sitting on my bed on my beautiful new quilt, opening my box of cherries, and I ate every cherry one by one and I kept muttering to myself, and you won't have any, I will eat them all by myself. And then in 1980, when I went back to **England** for my foster mother's 80th birthday, I told him the story and he couldn't remember it at all. But that's about the only traumatic experience I had. And the only other one was in **New York**, when I was in school for a few weeks. I remember standing up at my desk to answer a question, and the little boy behind me was measuring the length of my dress with a ruler. And apparently my German dresses had gotten a little short as I got a year

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older, and I remember him measuring the length of my skirt. But that's about the only traumatic experiences.

Q: Did you exchange a lot of letters and packaged with your mother when you were in **England** and she was in **Germany**?

A: No, I really don't remember. I mean, she packed everything in my trunk, you know, that she thought I might want to have, like my **Teddy** bear and my books, and I don't remember too many other letters from her.

Q: Were your parents able to get anything out of **Germany** when – when they left?

A: No, no, nothing, nothing.

Q: Do you remember hearing about the war ending when you were in the **U.S.**?

A: Oh yes, and I – I distinctly remember **Roosevelt's** death, because that came over the radio and I remember how shocked my parents were when they heard that. I was actually on – on **Cape Cod** when World War II ended, and I heard over the radio, and we all celebrated.

Q: That's wonderful. So, let's see, what else we have to talk about. Have – have you ever done an interview like this before?

A: No.

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Q: Have you ever – do you talk to your – have you talked to your children – how many children do you have?

A: I have two daughters, and I have five grandchildren.

Q: Okay, whe-when did you get married?

A: I got married what at that time was considered late in life. I was 27 and my husband was 31 and in those days, in 1956 that was considered over the hill. Most of my college friends were already mothers. But I got married in 1956 and I got married at the **Harvard** chapel, which solved all of the religious problems – my husband was Jewish. And anyone who went to **Harvard**, which I did, and he went to the **Harvard** Business School, was able to get married at the **Harvard** chapel, so that's where we got married and it solved all the problems of who was going to marry us, and how, and what, and everybody was happy.

Q: That's good. Okay, so I guess we – we should back up. So you went – you went to **Harvard**.

A: Yes.

Q: What did you study?

A: I majored in English and American literature.

Q: Cool, and your – and did you meet your husband at **Harvard**?

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A: No, no. He actually went to the business school after I graduated. He worked for a few years before he went to graduate school. So I graduated in 1950, and this year was my 60th reunion.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you attend it?

A: Yes, it was wonderful.

Q: That's wonderful.

A: It was a great reunion.

Q: So, and you have two daughters and five grandchildren, and d – have you ever talked to them about your experiences?

A: Well, I've talked to my d – my daughters, you know, about it, and a little bit to my grandchildren. But that's really why I wrote my memoir, so that they would know. And you know, what they know about the Holocaust they read in – in their history textbooks, and they know what happened politically, but I don't think they ever fully realized how it affects individuals. And I thought they should know how it affected my family, and what happened to me when I was nine years old. And that's really why I wrote the memoir. And my husband kept insisting that I should write that and – for the grandchildren, primarily.

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Q: I think it's important.

A: Yeah.

Q: So it's good that you did that.

A: Yeah.

Q: And it's also good that you're sharing your story with us today, so thank you.

A: Well, thank you, thank you.

Q: Do you think that your experiences with the **Kindertransport** affected maybe especially the way that you raised your children?

A: I don't think so. I mean, they've always known what it was like fo – you know, when I was a child from what I told them, but I don't think it really affected them. As I said, my husband was Jewish, but he also did not practice his religion really, after he was in his 20s. And so we did a little bit of everything, you know. We practiced some Jewish holidays because his side of the family did practice them. But we also practiced Christmas, which is what my side of the family did, and so I think I've tried to make them non-prejudiced, and – and, you know, have respect for all religions and all races. But other than that, I don't think it really influenced my raising my children in any way.

Q: Did you ever speak to your parents about maybe what they were going through when they –

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A: Not really. My father, for example, never talked about **Dachau** and we never asked him. And it wasn't until he wrote a very small autobiography in 1972 that I learned a little bit about his experiences in **Dachau**. And I know he told me in that autobiography that two other people from **Stuttgart** that were sent to **Dachau** with him, died. One, because he was a diabetic and was not given insulin, and the other from some kind of intestinal infection. And as I said, my father suffered from some kind of sinus problems which had to have surgery once he got out of the hospital – I mean, out of **Dachau** and he went to the hospital in **Stuttgart**, before he went to **Switzerland**.

Q: Does your mother ever talk about when she was in **Germany** alone, about what she was experiencing?

A: Not really. We really didn't talk very much about it. And it was just there, you know, we knew that that's what we had gone through. And the only thing – you asked whether my parents were able to save anything. The only thing that they were able to save – and this is a – a rather unique story, a good friend of theirs was **Emma Goering**, who was a distant cousin of **Goering's**, who was, of course, one of the biggest Nazis. She was very anti-Nazi, and very outspoken, but they never arrested her or bothered her, I guess because she was related to him. But she was a good friend of my parents. And when my mother was getting everything ready,

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packed to go to the **United States**, you were not supposed to take any jewelry or silver, you had to declare that and give it to the government. Well, my mother didn't want to do that. And **Emma Goering** suggested that she – my mother give it to her and she would bury it in her garden, in a box, which she did. And during the war, my brother was in the army for four years, and toward the end he was on a leave, and he went to visit **Emma Goering**, to see if she was still al-alive. And **Emma Goering** said to him, I have something that belongs to your mother. And they went into her garden, dug up the box, and because he was already a **U.S.** citizen and a serviceman, he was allowed to send it to the **United States**. So my mother got back all of the jewelry that she had inherited from her grandmother and great-grandmother, her German silverware. And then several years later **Emma Goering** visited my husband and me in **New York City**, and she was a charming, charming lady. And so that's the only thing my parents did save, and it was because of her.

Q: That's an incredible story.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, your brother was in the army during World War II?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, so when you –

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A: He was in **Patton's** army for four years.

Q: Oh, so when you immigrated, he must have joined the army right away, or –

A: Well, he – no, he – he was – when we immigrated, he was 13 – 14 –

Q: Okay.

A: He went to high school in **Michigan**. And then he had started the University of **Michigan** when he was drafted, and then he went in the army, and he was in the army for four years.

Q: Wow. That's incredible. That's great that sh-he – she was able to save –

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: That's amazing.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, is there anything else that you – you would like to add? Any other –

A: Well, it's just that I – I guess I was a – a very, very lucky child, because my English foster family was just – just wonderful. And as I said, I saw them again in 1980 for my foster mother's 80th birthday. And then I went back to **England** in 2008 for the twins' 80th birthday party. And they were just so compassionate and loving, and so was Mrs. **Emerson**. And it taught me a good lesson, that compassion and friendliness and love and just being good people is important, and I've tried to teach that to my children.

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Q: So you've returned to **England** twice?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you ever been back to **Germany**?

A: Yes, I went back to **Germany** first in 1951 with my sister, we went to **Europe** for three months. And we visited our house in **Stuttgart**, and then I went back again in 1982, to visit my German cousins on my mother's side of the family, whom I hadn't seen until the mid-30s. And we've become very close friends and so we've gone back to **Europe** two or three times for birthdays and travel, and – with them. And so I've been back, yes. And when I went back in 1982, we went to **Stuttgart**, and the people who owned my parents' house took my husband and me through it, to show us what it was like.

Q: Was it different?

A: And then – not really. Apparently it was damaged a little bit during the war, but not badly. And the interesting thing is, as we were leaving, a woman next door leaned over the fence and said, **Erica**, what are you doing here? In German. And it turns out that she was my sister's friend. She was my sister's age, and for some reason she recognized me after all those years. And so I explained to her what happened to us. And so we did see the house in 1982.

Q: Did you speak German at home with your family after the war?

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A: Not really, no. I think once we came to the **United States** and my father decided we were now going to be Americans, and you know, we really didn't speak much German. But I can still speak it, and I speak it with a strong **[indecipherable]** accent, and I can understand most German. I can't understand legal German or technical German, but I can read German.

Q: Mm-hm, that's wonderful. So, if – if there's anything else that you would like to add?

A: No, I'm just, you know, as I said, I was very lucky, I had a wonderful English family. I know not everyone was as lucky as I was. And we've stayed very close friends, and I've just recognized how – what a big sacrifice it was for these people, because they didn't know whether they were going to have us for a month or a year or forever. I know there are some **Kindertransport** children who've been there, you know, were there for seven, eight, nine years. And I was only there for a year. But both families were just wonderful to us, really.

Q: That's good.

A: And they – be – ma – my English foster family remained friends with my parents and came to visit them in the **United States**. And then my parents visited them in **England**, too.

Q: That's wonderful.

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A: So, it was a nice relationship.

Q: Before we wrap things up, I'm curious, are the photos that you brought, are they pictures from – from your childhood?

A: Yes.

Q: Maybe let's look at them real quick and we'll kind of talk about them together.

A: Yes, sure, yeah, come and sit.

Q: I'll come sit next to you.

A: Well, in the beginning, I have pictures of my father and my uncle and my aunt, and those have interesting stories. My uncle, who was an entomologist, left **Germany** in 1933, went first to **Palestine** for a few years, then to **Venezuela**, and eventually ended up in **Mexico City**, where he became a professor at University of **Mexico**, as an entomologist. My aunt, whose husband had factories that manufactured felt for printing in both **Germany** and **Italy**, left in 1936 and moved to **Italy**, and a farmer hid him as a farm helper during the war. And my aunt and my three cousins were saved by Italian nuns, who took them to a nunnery. So anyway, these are pictures of my father, and these are pictures of my mother in her childhood.

Q: Oh wow, that's a wonderful photo.

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A: Yeah, and she, you know, really grew up sort of like a debutante. And then, these are the pictures of my grandparents, Dr. **Ludwig**, and **[indecipherable]** **Hecht**. And they are the ones who died in **Theresienstadt** in 1943. And the reason I know that they didn't go there until 1942, late in the year was that there's a letter from them to my cousin in **Italy**, saying that they were going to have to leave in August of 1942. And then it wasn't til after the war that we found out that they had died, but here's a picture of them.

Q: Did they s – did they stay in **Ulm** until this?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Oh wow.

A: Yes, they stayed in **Ulm** until then. And these are my maternal grandparents, who died early in the 30s. And they're the ones who had the – the estate in **Czechoslovakia** where I st-stayed every summer until I was probably seven or eight. And here, this is pictures of **Stuttgart**, where I grew up. And this is our house and there are my brother and sister. That's me at the age of three. And there are my brother and I with our **Steiff Teddy** bears, who had a webbing.

Q: Oh, that's precious.

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A: And then here's me learning to ski at four, and learning gymnastics. And here are our nannies or au pairs, or whatever they were called. And here – when I was little. And here my school friends, and here's **Ursula Meyer**, my best friend.

Q: Oh wow, look how long her pigtails are.

A: Yes, oh, she had lo – and big, blue eyes, she was very, very pretty. And then, this is the castle that my grandparents had in –

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: – in **Czechoslovakia**, where I went every summer. And there I am, and here I'm learning how to ride a bike. And here's my grandfather taking a nap after lunch. And this was our cook in **Germany**, who used to come with us in the summer to help. And here's our nanny, or au pair. And these are relatives who were visiting. And here we are outdoor bowling. And this is all in – in **Czechoslovakia**. And this place is also a religious shrine, so this is – this was how it fell apart in the 90s, and this is how it's now renovated.

Q: Wow.

A: And it's still a – considered a religious shrine. These are paintings that my brother did when he was little. Then here's another picture – oh, here's my English foster family, **Raun(ph)** and **Edith Cornish(ph)**. And this is their house in **Marple**. And this is the one time that I visited my brother in **Harrow**. And here I

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am in **Wales**, the summer of 1939, we went camping in **Wales**, in **Saint David's**. And here I am, here's my school blazer. You see we're not wearing our blazers. Black, with yellow trim. And here's **Ursula Meyer**, my best friend. And here's my other English foster family, Mrs. **Emerson** and her daughter. And this is my favorite teacher, she was my English teacher, Miss **Andrew**. And this is **Cheadle Hulme**, the school I went to when the war started in – in **England**. And then all the other photographs – oh, this is the – the boat we came over on in 1940. And here's our first apartment in **Michigan**, very tiny apartment. And here's **Eloise Hospital** in **Ypsilanti**, where my father got his research grant for the first year. And here's me in an evening gown because I played the violin with the **Detroit Symphony [indecipherable]**. Here's my eighth grade high s – eighth grade graduation picture, my sister and our dog and my brother on a furlough before he was sent overseas. And then the rest are all just pictures of me growing up, high school, college. And then when we moved to massachu – to **New Jersey**, and I worked in **Manhattan**. Here's our wedding at the **Harvard** chapel.

Q: That is a wonderful wedding dress.

A: And here's me helping to decorate – the club let me finish decorating my wedding cake. And then these are our wedding pictures, our honeymoon and there's our first daughter.

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Q: What was your husband's name?

A: **Milton Kanter.**

Q: Oh, precious.

A: There, with a copy of Dr. **Spock**. And this was our wonderful, loyal **Willie**, who took care of my daughters the – the day I went to the office. I had special permission to come to the office only one day a week and work at home the rest of the time –

Q: Oh, nice.

A: – which was very unusual in the late 50s, early 60s. But I did that for 13 years, until the children were 13 and 11, then I went back to work full time.

Q: Where were you working?

A: At **Harcourt Brace**, which was the – one of the largest textbook publishers in the **United States**, and I was editor-in-chief there from 1980 to 1990. This was our house in **New Jersey**, and here's daughter number two, and here they are, and then their growing up years and then their college and then our trips to **Europe** and **Japan** on –

Q: Wow, **Japan**.

A: – the husb – my husband had to go there on business and I was invited to go. And family birthdays and all kinds of pictures like this, and then, at the back of the

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book, I have pictures of my five grandchildren, to whom this book is dedicated and let's see where they are. Here. This is the oldest, he's now 21, from the time he was little until now. And here's the next one, who's 20, and now. And here's the next one, who is just turned 18, and now. And this is my granddaughter, who is the gymnast, she became a junior Olympian last year, she's amazing, and now. And the youngest, who's 14, then and now.

Q: Four boys and one girl.

A: Yes, four boys and one girl. And this is a picture of my husband –

Q: Wonderful.

A: – without whom this book would not have been possible. He's the one who kept insisting I write it and then many, many of these photographs are photographs that he took, he was a very good photographer. Anyway, that's what this book is.

Q: Well, it's wonderful.

A: And it's called, "**The Road I've Traveled: Its Ruts and Rainbows.**" And that's me at the age of three.

Q: Oh, that is a wonderful photograph.

A: And this is my 1939 passport photograph.

Q: Oh adorable, that's wonderful.

A: And this is a picture of my husband in his usual pose with his camera.

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Q: With the camera up to his eye.

A: Yeah, always with that **Nikon** around his neck. Anyway, that's what this book is, and these are the pages on which the grandparents who died, and my English families are. So that's what it is.

Q: It's wonderful that you know, you would be able to capture so many memories in photograph, but also to be able to write that all down in a book.

A: Yeah, well, I put in all the photographs because first – first of all, in a sense, all these photographs are my husband's legacy to his grandchildren. And also because I knew that the grandsons probably wouldn't read it for a while, but I wanted them to be able to see it, as well as read about it, and experience my life in, you know, a different way than just reading about it.

Q: Well, I'm sure it's something that they will cherish, so –

A: Yeah, I hope so.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add before we –

A: No, I'm really looking forward to this meeting because I've never gone to a convention –

Q: Oh, you never – okay.

A: No, I didn't know about it until this year, and so I'm really looking forward to it.

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Q: Well, thank you so much for talking to us today –

A: Well, thank you.

Q: – this has been wonderful.

A: Thank you.

Q: I'm so glad we were able to look at your book and share your story with us.

A: Very good. Good.

Q: Thank you so much, Mrs. **Kanter**.

A: You're very, very welcome.

Q: And this ends our interview with **Erica Kanter** on the 15th of October, 2010,
and that's it.

Conclusion of Interview