

## **Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series**

**Susan Berman interview**

**Conducted by Adina Langer**

**October 31, 2019**

**Transcribed by Adina Langer**

Born in Brooklyn in 1948, Susan Berman is the daughter of German Holocaust survivors. Her mother Ruth took the Kindertransport to England in 1939, a few months before other members of her family boarded the ill-fated ship, the St. Louis. Berman's father Manfred was arrested on Kristallnacht, but after his release he fled Germany and immigrated to the United States, where he served in the U.S. Army.

### **Full Transcript**

Interviewer: Today is Thursday, October 31, 2019, and I'm here at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University with Susan Berman. We will be recording a Legacy Series interview focused on Susan's mother's family. Could you please state your full name?

Berman: Susan Heinemann Berman

Interviewer: And do you agree to this interview?

Berman: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: Great. Could you please tell me when, and where, you were born?

Berman: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1948.

Interviewer: And before we talk about your childhood, we're going to go back a bit and talk about your mother's family. Could you please tell me your mother's name?

Berman: Ruth Simon Heinemann.

Interviewer: And when and where was your mother born?

Berman: She was born in Cloppenburg<sup>1</sup>, Germany, in 1925.

Interviewer: And could you please tell me your mother's parents' names?

Berman: My grandfather was Carl, and my grandmother was Selma.

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<sup>1</sup>Cloppenburg is a town in Lower Saxony, Germany, capital of Cloppenburg District and part of Oldenburg Münsterland. It lies 38 km south-south-west of Oldenburg in the Weser-Ems region between Bremen and the Dutch border. Cloppenburg is home to an open-air museum of local history which was established in 1934. Museumsdorf Cloppenburg is the oldest open-air museum in Germany. <https://www.niedersachsen-tourism.com/destinations/regions-of-lower-saxony/oldenburger-muensterland/the-niedersachsen-open-air-museum>

Interviewer: And what was her maiden name?

Berman: Her maiden name was Katz, and their last name was Simon.

Interviewer: And so can you tell me a little more about her family? She had sisters, and when were they born?

Berman: Yes. She was the eldest of seven children. She had three sisters and three brothers.

Interviewer: And this was Selma Katz?

Berman: Yes.

Interviewer: Uh huh. And how did she and Carl meet each other?

Berman: Well, they both came from fairly prominent families. And the Jewish community was rather small. I'm not exactly sure how they first met, but I guess they made a good pair. I never met them.

Interviewer: What brought their family to Cloppenburg?

Berman: My grandfather—his family was in the cattle business. And he wanted to, I guess, have his own sort of area to operate his business in. And they may have done some research, but they decided Cloppenburg would be a good place. It wasn't too far from their families, but they wanted to start their family anew.

Interviewer: And do I understand correctly that your grandfather also bred horses?

Berman: Yes. Yes, and he supplied the principality with the horses that they needed for the town. And he was very, very well-admired and well-respected.

Interviewer: What was their neighborhood like? (02:50)

Berman: Well, we went back in 2007 and again in 2010. They lived in the center of town. There were about 15,000 people in the town. There were nine Jewish families. And they had a synagogue. They had a cemetery as well behind the synagogue. They were upper-middle class, and they went to a parochial school – my mother and her sisters. They were taught by nuns—about a ten-minute walk from their house. And they were just like any other citizens. They were German, they were Jewish, and they had a good relationship with their neighbors. And they lived a very comfortable life.

Interviewer: So, tell me a little bit more about your mother's sisters. Where did she fit into the family?

Berman: OK. Well, my Aunt Edie, Edith, was the oldest. She was born in 1922. And then my mother came along three years later—Ruth—in 1925. And then the next youngest was my Aunt Hiddie – Hilde—and she was 15 months younger than my mother. So, they

were almost like twins. And then the youngest was Ilse, and she was ten. Sorry—she was born in 1928.

Interviewer: And did your grandmother—and your grandmother, did she keep house? Did she work outside the home?

Berman: No, she didn't work outside the home. She directed the operations, so to speak, of the house. I believe they had a cook, and I know they had a nursemaid. And she ran the household. She ordered the food—maybe somebody else went to get it. They kept kosher. And they followed all the Jewish holidays. The girls went to Hebrew School. They weren't required to study religion at the parochial school, but they had their secular studies there.

Interviewer: And what did your mother tell you about her childhood? Was she close with her sisters?

Berman: Yeah. There was a bit of rivalry between her and Aunt Hiddie, because they were so close in age. And my mother was a bit of a sickly child. And she had trouble with her eyes, and other ailments at times, and so my grandmother would take her to an adjacent town to be seen by the physicians. And often they would go shopping afterward. And my grandmother would look for some very attractive dresses. And then she would look for the material so that she could have a seamstress come and make them for the rest of the children. And she told me that the seamstress was treated very well. She was there for one or two weeks, and she was given a lot of treats that the girls weren't able to obtain, and she was treated like gold!

Interviewer: And I remember you telling me a story about carriage rides they would take sometimes after Shabbat.

Berman: Yes. My grandfather and my grandmother would take the girls to synagogue on Saturday morning, and then they would come home for a bit of a nap, and then my grandfather would often take the girls for a carriage ride, and they would go to get ice cream, or candy, or visit somebody—either a relative or friends in the town. And my grandmother—my mother, Ruth, one time—she thinks she had permission, but she wasn't sure—she took the carriage and decided that she would visit some of her friends herself. And I believe when she got home, she was instructed that was not the proper thing to do, and she may have been punished for it. (07:30) But she said she had a wonderful time! [chuckles]

Interviewer: So, was she very comfortable with horses then?

Berman: Yes. They had their own horse named Faust. I think it was F-a-u-s-t. And there are pictures of them on the horse, and she speaks very fondly of that horse. She really loved it.

Interviewer: So, how did the family feel about the rise of Nazism?

Berman: Well, according to my mother, when Hitler was elected as President, and then became Chancellor and Commander in Chief in 1933 and so forth, her parents were very concerned about the rise of this man who didn't seem [coughs—excuse me] qualified to be the leader of Germany, but was very antisemitic, and very biased in his race prejudices. And they were concerned about what this would lead to, and rightfully so because of what happened after.

Interviewer: Did they ever think at that time that they would want to leave Germany?

Berman: Well, initially, my grandfather told his family that as long as he had a piece of bread, that he was staying. He was a German. One of his brothers had been in the army serving in World War I, and he was subjected to shrapnel and later died at an early age, and then another brother also fought for Germany. And they felt that they were Germans, they were law-abiding citizens, and that this was their home. And then things began to change. Slowly-but-surely there were edicts and laws that were passed that brought attention to the Jews, but negative attention. And they were restricted from going to the parks, and libraries, and public places. They had to wear—they weren't wearing the stars yet—that came later. They had to have documents with them, and they were stamped with a big J. They weren't allowed to hold any civic positions, and many of them were fired from other professions. Then the populace was encouraged not to frequent Jewish businesses, and that affected them economically.

Interviewer: And did that affect your mother's family directly? Did your grandfather's business suffer at this time?

Berman: Yes, it did. Because, I think maybe surreptitiously he did meet with some of his non-Jewish clients, but he had such a fine reputation, and people enjoyed dealing with him, and he wanted to serve the community, but eventually it got harder and harder to do. (11:16) And there was a point in 1936 when the girls were not allowed to attend the parochial school anymore. My Aunt Edie, who was the oldest, was almost through with school there, so I think they made an exception. My mother, and Aunt Hiddie, and Ilse, had to go to another school in Oldenberg.

Interviewer: And what was that like for them? I know they had to commute.

Berman: Well, they had to get up, my mother tells me, at 6:00 a.m. in the morning. They took their bicycles to the train station, which was a few blocks away from their house. And then they would take a train for about an hour to this community. Once they got there, they had to walk another maybe mile or so to get to the synagogue where the school was located. And Aunt Hiddie and my mother were in the same grade, because I think my mother was held back one year because of her illnesses, so they rode together. And then Ilse would have her class at 9:00, so she could leave a little bit later.

Interviewer: And how did the family receive information at this time? Did they have newspapers, radio—?

- Berman: Well, the press was taken over by the government. They squashed freedom of speech and expression. They weren't allowed to assemble to protest anything. They heard somewhat through the grapevine—of course all the newspapers were portraying the Jews, the Gypsies, the Slavs, the Communists, as enemies of the state, and the economy was very, very bad. And a lot of the Jewish people owned businesses. They were professionals. And it stirred up a lot of anti-Semitism in the community. They had a phone, and they kept in very close contact with other members of the family in other towns.
- Interviewer: And did they have family elsewhere in the world at this point in time too?
- Berman: My mother—my grandmother's sister—we called her Tanta Elsa. Her name was Elsa Meierhoff—her married name. She had immigrated in 1933 to Florida with her husband and two children. And I think that she was the only one except for a cousin that lived in town—in Cloppenburg as well—with his wife, that went to Cuba maybe a couple of months before my grandparents tried to go.
- Interviewer: So, we'll get into that in a little bit, but first I want to talk about *Kristallnacht*. What did your mother tell you about her experiences on that day?
- Berman: Well, on November 10, 1938, she got up to go to school in Oldenberg, and her sister wasn't feeling well, so she ended up having to take the train and go through the process of getting to Oldenberg herself, and she didn't notice anything unusual when she was on the train, but when she started to approach the synagogue, it was in flames. And she was in shock. She said the building was almost burnt down, and then she heard the fire engines coming, so I believe they were told not to intervene until the buildings were almost gone. And she didn't know what to do. She looked around. She didn't see anybody she knew, so she decided to go to the place where the rabbi had had his home, not too far from the synagogue, and she knocked on the door. A woman answered. She didn't recognize who she was, but she thought it must be the rabbi's housekeeper. And the woman looked at her like incredulously—you know—what are you doing here? And she said, "well, I've come to go to school?" And she said, "Don't you know what's going on? Come in and we'll talk about it." Well, my mother was 13 at the time, and of course this was just totally out of the ordinary. So the housekeeper asked her if she knew of anybody in her neighborhood in Cloppenburg that she could call that was not Jewish—because they had cut a lot of the telephone lines to the Jewish people—that she could find out if everything was all right at her house. So, my mother did comply, and she called the neighbor, and the woman answered, and she said, "Your mother is home" and hung up the phone. And at the time it didn't seem like anything unusual, because her father would have been at work, and the housekeeper was satisfied and sent her aback home, telling her, you know, to be very careful. While she was on the train, she noticed a lot of the Gestapo—the S.S.—the police there were bragging about things they had done. They had broken into a total of 7,500 businesses throughout Germany, and crashed the glass, and that's why it was called the "night of broken glass," and they had looted the stores, and placed swastikas, and you know, symbols and slogans against the Jewish people—don't patronize them—and so forth. They had arrested the men throughout the German community from—I believe—around 16 or 17 up, and of course she wanted to

be very meek and fade into the seat. She got home, and the first thing she noticed—there were swastikas all over her house. And it had been a beautiful home, and it was prominently centered in the middle of town, and then she noticed that all the shades were drawn. And this was very unusual for this time of the day. And she walked in, and the first thing she heard were the sobs of her mothers and her sisters. They told her that shortly after she had left to go on her journey, there was a knock at the door, and the Gestapo had said they wanted to see my grandfather. I believe he was still in bed. Well, they followed my grandmother into their bedchambers, and he got dressed hastily. He (sic) said he had to come with them. (I mean they said he had to come with them). And they didn't even give him time to put his shoes on. Now this man was 54 at the time. And I don't know about his health exactly, but, you know, at that age to be treated that way—so he was shoved in the back of a black car and taken away. And they were all in shock. And my mother had come home to tell them what had happened to her, and she could hardly get the words out. (20:07) So they were very, very distraught. And that's the story of the arrest.

Interviewer: So, when were they reunited?

Berman: Well, my mother never saw her father again. And what happened was my grandmother got wind of a project that had been started by the English government that was called the *Kindertransport*. And they were sending trains to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and so forth, to save children from one to 17 years old. And I believe my grandmother had to make the decision that she could only send two of her children. And she had four daughters. My grandfather had already been arrested, so she had to make the decision herself. And it reminded me of *Sophie's Choice*. Her name was Selma. And I can't imagine how she made the decision. She was ten years younger than my grandfather. So, she was 44 at the time. And so she prepared the children as best she could. I guess she felt that since the two girls—the middle ones—were so close—were the same age—and they had shown a lot of responsibility in the past, and they had good manners, and she felt that they had the best likelihood to go on this journey, and—

Interviewer: And so Ruth and her sister Hilde—

Berman: Hilde, right.

Interviewer: —were prepared to go on this journey. And this is only a few days after *Kristallnacht*?

Berman: They left on December 2. And this happened on November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

Interviewer: So, what did your mother tell you about that experience?

Berman: Well, it was very traumatic. She and my aunt were very homesick. They had a hard time leaving their family, their country. They had taken some English lessons prior to that, because eventually my grandfather came to the decision that they would need to leave. And they had applied for passage to the United States, but they had a quota number, and they had to wait. And in the interim, my aunt—my Tante Elsa—who was already in Florida, she heard about what happened on *Kristallnacht*, and she swore in her heart that

she would try and do everything she could to help the remaining members of her family. But particularly the eldest one of each of her brothers' and sisters' children. So, they were fortunate to have her as an ally. But my grandfather was eventually released from the prison, and when he came home, he decided that they needed to leave immediately. (23:41)

Interviewer: So, which prison was he in?

Berman: I believe he was in Saschenhausen, near Berlin. But getting back to the girls, they had a very harrowing experience. They could only take one suitcase a piece, and very few belongings. And they wore numbers on their coats to identify them as *kinder*. They left on December 2 from Hamburg. My Aunt Edie went with them on the train. But when the train stopped in Cloppenburg, she got off, and they didn't know if they'd see her again. And then they went on with 1,000 children on that transport. And they got to the border of Holland and Germany. And the soldiers there—the German soldiers—they boarded the train. And they harassed the children. Some of them taunted them and opened some of their suitcases and took whatever they pleased. It was a very tense time. (24:56) And my mother tells me that they were both so homesick that one would cry, and the other would console that one, and then she would stop, and she would cry, and the other would console her. So, once they passed the German border, they got into Holland—to the Netherlands—and eventually the train stopped, and there were thousands of people at the station, and they were wanting to give the children a little support. And they brought cookies, and candy, and sandwiches, and passed them through the window of the train. And my mother said this was the first time she'd experienced any kindness in so long, and it really touched their hearts. They eventually got to the hook of Holland, in Rotterdam, and they boarded a ship that took them across the English Channel and on to Dovercourt, England, and that was a summer camp with cabins, but they weren't heated. And the crossing itself was quite terrorizing because the seas were so rough, and she said the sailors were getting sick! And then they were homesick and seasick, but they were just sick. [Shakes head]

Interviewer: So, once they got to Dovercourt, what was life like for them? (26:36)

Berman: Well, they were assigned to a cabin, and like I said, there were 1,000 children on this transport. There were already children that were there from other countries. And what they were told to do was to make themselves as much at home as they could, and that people would come from other parts of England to take them back to their communities. And the most important thing to my mother and Aunt Hiddie were that they stay together, because they had lost so much already. And a few days went by, and eventually a group of compassionate Jewish citizens from the town of Harrogate, which is in the northeast corner of England came, and they were willing to take 25-30 young Jewish girls—religious girls—back to their community with them. And so, because they wanted to stay together, and they had a very strong faith, they decided that these were the people that they would put their trust in.

Interviewer: So, they went with them to—.

Berman: They went with them. Right.

Interviewer: So, meanwhile back in Cloppenburg, your grandfather had come back from Saschenhausen and had made the determination that they had to leave.

Berman: Exactly.

Interviewer: What did they do next?

Berman: Well, they found out about a ship, a special ship that was going to be sailing to Cuba. (29:24) It was through the Hamburg lines. Can I take a break? I need some water—

[takes brief break - drinks water.]

Berman: So how are we doing so far?

Interviewer: You're doing great. Yeah! So, we can start back in Cloppenburg.

Berman: OK. Well, my grandfather was released. I'm not sure exactly how long he was in the concentration camp, but he went—they heard about this ship that was going to be sailing from Hamburg to Cuba. It was leaving in May of 1939. And they did everything they could to book passage on it. Apparently the passages—the tickets—were sold out almost immediately. Because I read several books about the *St. Louis*. They had to pay an exorbitant amount of money. And they needed so many documents. But the main thing was the money. And they had to get landing certificates. And they had to go to the Cuban Minister of Immigration. And apparently this man was not a very ethical person because he had been charging a good bit of money and had been taking bribes under the table for some time. And the Cuban president got wind of it and decided that he would invalidate a lot of the documents that this man had issued. So—but the passengers didn't know about that at the time. Not only did they have to buy passage on the boat one way, but they had to buy a round trip ticket. And there was a rally that took place in Havana a week before the boat sailed, and there were many speeches about how the immigrants were not welcome in Cuba because of the economy. And they told 40,000 spectators, and many more that were listening to it on the radio, that they needed to fight the Jews until all of them had left. (31:29) So Hitler knew about this, along with the U.S. Consulate, and they let the boat sail anyway. I guess he must have thought, "Well, I'm gracious enough to let the boat sail with 900 and some Jewish passengers and they reject them, people will know that nobody wants the Jews, and they'll understand how my government is trying to get rid of them, and why."

Interviewer: And did your grandfather and the other passengers, did they know about this rally, or was that kind of kept from them?

Berman: No, it was kept from them, and they went about their business organizing so that they could leave. And I have pictures of them boarding the boat. So, it was the four of them: my aunt Edie, my aunt Ilse, and my grandparents. And by this time, Edie was 16, and Ilse was 11, I believe, and they were just so relieved to be on that boat, thinking that they



were finally out of the clutches of the Nazis, and that they were going to freedom. And of course, my mother's—my grandfather's cousin Julius Frank—whom we called Uncle Julius, because he was much older than normal cousins were—was already in Cuba. So, they were looking forward to being reunited with them, and then eventually they hoped the girls that were in England would come to the United States, and then they would be reunited with them. (33:14) And it didn't work out quite that way.

Interviewer: They were applying to wait in Cuba for U.S. visas, right?

Berman: Right. Uh huh.

Interviewer: So, what did your—what did you learn from your aunt about what life was like on the boat?

Berman: Well, she said there were a lot of young people, and she said that they had parties every night. This was a luxury liner. And it was taken over by the Nazis, so they flew the Nazi flag. They had a big picture of Hitler in the dining room, but the captain was a very compassionate man. He was German, but he wasn't necessarily on board with the administration, and he told the crew after they sailed that he wanted them to treat these passengers with dignity, and to be honorable to them, and to treat them as if they were any other passengers—they weren't Jews, refugees—and that's what they did. And they took down the Nazi flag, and I understand on Shabbat, which was Friday night dinners, they covered the picture of Hitler up. And my youngest aunt apparently had a good time also, because just recently I found a picture of her with several young children that was taken on the boat, and she looked very happy. And it gave me satisfaction to see that, even if I knew that later on it was going to be heartbreaking.

Interviewer: So, when they arrived in Cuba, what happened to them? (35:18)

Berman: Well, according to this Henry Gallant, whose book I was reading, He said they got the passengers up early. They got there on the 29<sup>th</sup>, I believe, of May. And everybody was very excited. They packed their suitcases. They had brought them on the deck, and they were awaiting permission to leave to go to the land. And just 24, or maybe 48, hours prior to that, the passengers had learned that there was trouble in Cuba. They might not be able to disembark. So, Henry describes the air as being very humid, tropical, and very different from Germany, and they were waiting on deck for hours upon hours. And it was getting very hot and stifling there. And not everybody, I imagine, knew about it initially, but there was a committee formed by some of the passengers, and they reached out to the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee through Cuba and the United States, and they dispatched two individuals that came to try to negotiate with the Cuban government. And the Cuban government was not all that ethical, and they made many demands, and at one point the individuals thought they had reached an understanding, but then the terms of the agreement were changed, and time ran out. They also told the ship's captain through communication—telegrams and so-forth—they did not want to negotiate while the ship was in the Cuban harbor. So slowly, but surely, they pulled up their anchor. They were headed for Florida, because they were hoping the United States would be more compassionate. When they got to the coast of Florida, or close to it, they could see

the lights of Miami, and they were so excited again. But they sent a telegram—the captain did—to President Roosevelt, and there was no reply. And then eventually they heard from the State Department that despite the fact that all of these people had some documents to the United States, they hadn't met all of the immigration requirements. They would have to be sent back to their respective countries until their quota number was available, and that the United States had accepted all of the refugees from Germany for that year. By the way, my Uncle Julius<sup>2</sup>—his name is Julius but the Y with a J—he rented a boat, and he went out to the ship to try to see if he could see his relatives there, and from my Aunt Edie's account, Ilse was running up and down the ship to get his attention, but it was to no avail. So, then they even appealed to Canada (39:10), and they were told pretty much a similar situation was happening there. The United States had been through the Great Depression. They were very anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, and they were afraid for their own livelihood—that these educated people might be coming to take their jobs at maybe a less amount of pay than they had, and they didn't even take the children.

Interviewer: So, they knew they had to go back to Europe. When did they find out where they were assigned?

Berman: Well, at first they were running out of food and water. And there was one man that jumped overboard while they were still close to Cuba. He slit his wrists and jumped overboard, and the Cuban government sent somebody out there to rescue him, and they took him to a hospital in Havana, but these people were very desperate, and they were so distraught. So, the captain knew that if you took them back to Germany, their fate would be sealed. And he made a worldwide appeal. Finally, four countries relented—that was France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Belgium. Right. And there were 28 people that were allowed to disembark in Havana, because they had the documents. Twenty-two of them were Jewish, but the rest were not. So they had to fill out documents when they found out these four countries would split them, and they had to detail who they had in various countries that they might not become dependent on the country's welfare system, because they didn't have much money left at all. And my mother—it was my grandfather—that had a cousin that had gone to Holland, so they put that down. They wanted to go to England to be with their children, of course, but everybody wanted to go there. It seemed like the safest place. So eventually Holland took 181 passengers, including my two aunts and my grandparents. And they went to Antwerp, and then on to Arnham, which is where this cousin lived, and they lived with them for some time.

Interviewer: And once they were back in Holland, were they able to communicate with your mother, and Aunt Hiddie and let them know what had happened? (42:37)

Berman: Yes, they were. And there were several letters that went back and forth. But at one point them stopped coming, and my mother and Aunt Hiddie feared the worst.

Interviewer: And at this point, had Hitler launched his campaign, and invaded—

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2 Pronounced "Yulius"

Berman: Yes, he had invaded many countries in western Europe, and including the Netherlands in 1940, and slowly, but surely, he instituted all of the same rules. So, it was harder and harder for Jews to live there as well. My Aunt Edie, fortunately, was in touch with friends of theirs who had immigrated to England prior to them becoming passengers on the *St. Louis*. They had offered her the opportunity to become their house daughter and travel with them to England, and they were willing to sponsor her. And so she got in touch with them and explained what had happened on the *St. Louis* and that she was in Holland, and they asked her if she still wanted to come and live with them, and she said, “yes.” And so her paperwork did come through, and she was able to leave to go to England. And she took the last *kindertransport* to England from Holland. And she did get to see my mother and her sister again. That must have been a wonderful reunion. And she stayed in Coventry for a while, and then, eventually, her papers came through to the United States, because my Tante Elsa in Jacksonville made that opportunity come to pass.

Interviewer: So, what ultimately did your family learn had happened to your grandparents and your Aunt Ilse? (45:03)

Berman: Well, as it turns out, the Nazis were eradicating Jews at that point in all their occupied countries, as well as in Germany. And in 1943—I believe it was May 18—they were arrested, and they were sent to Westerbork, which was a concentration camp and also a transit camp to other concentration camps, and I believe they only were there a night or two before they were sent to Poland, to Sobibor concentration camp. And on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, they were asphyxiated. And my mother and her sisters did not find out officially that this had happened until the early 1950s, when they received a letter from the Red Cross that confirmed their suspicions.

Interviewer: So, then they had gotten, already then, their last letter from the family.

Berman: Yes.

Interviewer: So, after your Aunt Edie had immigrated, did they hear from their mother and their father and their sister?

Berman: Yes, they did. They did correspond with them quite a bit, and the last letter – I have a copy of it—it told the girls in England that they had a lot of faith in God, that the girls—Edie and Ruth—shouldn’t worry about them, that they would be fine, that they should be strong and work very efficiently, and that their family loved them very much. Then there was a postscript from my Aunt Ilse—15 by then—saying how much she enjoyed hearing from the girls, and that she was as tall as her mother by that time, and she wanted them to send her a picture of them in England, and asked my Aunt Hilde, who had graduated from the schooling that the hostel had provided, and sent her on to become a beautician, how long her training was. And she signed it, “Love and kisses, Ilse,” and that was the last time they heard from them.

Interviewer: So, tell me a little bit about your mother and Aunt Hilde’s schooling, and what they did in England. (47:59)

Berman: Sure.

Interviewer: – to try to make a life for themselves. (48:02)

Berman: Exactly. Well, at first they didn't know much English, and they were sent to school, but they caught on quite quickly. And they had been put in grades that were below what they had been in in Germany, but I believe they were advanced and were put in the appropriate grades once they became more proficient in the language. They lived in a home that was like an orphanage. They had a house mother, and she was quite strict. She made sure that the girls took care of themselves in their rooms, and so forth, but she wasn't ugly about it. And they went to synagogue on Saturdays. And eventually—sometimes, because they dressed alike, and they were so cute, people would invite them back to their homes for Shabbas meals, and sometimes they even got to go away. One time my mother said that during the week of Passover, they were off from school. And that's when the dietary laws are even stricter than normal. They're not allowed to eat bread, or anything with any yeast or anything in them. There was a boarding house that was outside of Harrogate that was quite beautiful and well-preserved. And they invited the girls to be their guests for a week. And they went there, and they had a wonderful time. I believe they may have been the only children. Many wealthy people from other parts of England had come, because during Passover you have to change your dishes, and so-forth. And they would often just go away for that week, and not worry about it. And so, eventually, as the trip was coming to an end, the patrons of that boarding house took up a collection for the girls, and they gave them several hundred pounds. And my mother and my aunt were thrilled. They thought they could put that in a bank account, and they would—they were saving anyway to come to America, and that would be a very big contribution. But when they got back to the boarding house, the house mother asked them if these people had given them any money, and my mother said, "Yes." And she said, "Well, where is it?" So, she handed it over to the house mother, and she said, "That money was not for you. That was for all of us, because we have expenses, and they wanted to help sustain." So, they were a little disappointed. And then my mother had a tonsillectomy while she was in England. It was about a year after they got there in December of '39. And since it was so close to Christmas, and the nurses took a shine to her, they kept her in the hospital a little bit longer than she needed to be. And apparently there was this Princess Mary who was Georgie V's daughter that lived somewhere in the area, and she had brought a number of special gifts for children that were in the hospital during the holidays, and she asked the nurses to choose the people that she felt were the most deserving, and they decided that my mother was one of those children. And she got a beautiful, large gingham sewing basket. And my mother loved to sew, as she became a seamstress and a milliner—a hat maker—so this was a very special gift, but she had to leave it behind in England, because when she eventually came to America she couldn't carry it along with her.

Interviewer: Did your family ever find out what happened to the basket? (52:42)

Berman: She probably left it in the hospital, and it was used by other people.

Interviewer: So, after all of this education, your mother was a seamstress and a milliner, and your aunt was a beautician—how did they eventually make their way to the United States?

Berman: Well, when they graduated from the school, they were assigned to becoming apprentices in various businesses, and Harrogate was a very popular location for tourists. They had spas and very fancy salons there. So, my aunt became very proficient in her beautician work, and my mother worked in a very fine store as well. My Aunt Edie immigrated; I believe in nineteen-forty—I'm not sure exactly when—to America. And by then, my Uncle Julius, who had been in Cuba, and his son and his wife had made a home for themselves in Illinois—in Forreston, Illinois, near Rockford, Illinois. And so my aunt went to live with them, and she continued to ply her trade. She went to school for a beautician as well—Aunt Edie this is—and she saved her money so she could afford to bring her sisters over. And Tante Elsa, who was in Jacksonville, appealed to the synagogue, to tell them about her nieces and nephews who were in Germany, and then eventually in England, and she asked for anyone's help who would be willing to sponsor them. She was not a citizen herself. And a very generous, philanthropic family named the Mizrahis volunteered because they were very fond of my Tante Elsa, who had become a caterer. And she was the only kosher caterer in Jacksonville, Florida, for 35 years. And they said that they'd be willing to sponsor them. And so my mother and Aunt Hiddie in England, when they first got to England in 1938, wrote a letter to these Mizrahis and said that they were so appreciative, that they were looking forward to being reunited with their parents, because at the time their parents were still alive, and that they would be in touch. But then the war eventually broke out in England, and they weren't able to leave. And then in 1944, my mother wrote a second letter to them, because they were still willing to sponsor them. And at that point, they suspected that their parents were already gone. And they were still very much in gratitude that these people who didn't know them personally were willing to bring about their immigration. So, they left in December of 1944, and they were in a convoy of five ships—five battleships—and two of them were destroyed by enemy fire. Fortunately, theirs was not. (56:29) And they immigrated to Nova Scotia, Canada, to Halifax. And they arrived in January of 1945. Then they went through Vermont, and they got all the stamps—they had all of the immigration papers. Then they eventually went to New York where my Aunt Edie was living temporarily, because she had met my Uncle Ruby who was a musician in the U.S.O. And she had gone to a dance, once, in Rockford, Illinois. And she was a beautiful woman, with blonde hair and blue eyes. And he saw this woman, and he didn't have to play that night, so he asked her to dance, and he fell in love with her almost immediately. And he was from Brooklyn, New York, but he was in the Army, so he went overseas, and he actually saw my Aunt Hiddie and my mother at one point. He'd already become engaged to Aunt Hiddie—to Aunt Edie—but, you know, he brought them stockings, and some of his rations, and they liked him immediately, of course. But they were met in New York by Aunt Edie, and her soon-to-be mother-in-law Mrs. Babitch. And Mrs. Babitch was from Russia. She had immigrated herself some years prior to that with her sisters, and they owned a coat factory. So, she made sure that the girls—my mother and her sister—had coats, and purses, and she gave them home-cooked meals, and was very gracious to them. And then they went off to Illinois to see Uncle Julius as well. And they lived there for a while.

Interviewer: Wonderful. Do you want to take another break?

Berman: Yeah. [reaches for water]

Interviewer: And after that, we can talk about how your mother met your father.

Berman: Do you also want to know how my Aunt Hiddie met her husband?

Interviewer: Let's stick to your mom's story right now.

Berman: Ok—because it was—.

Interviewer: Tell me what life was like for them in America.

Berman: Ok. Well, they were living in this small town in Illinois. And they were just so excited to be with family again. Uncle Julius was a wonderful man, and his wife was beautiful, and very compassionate, and they had some other relatives also in that town. And they were just so glad to be away from all that tension and stress that they had felt. Of course they were just so sad that their parents weren't with them, but—My mother went to work for a store in Illinois—I guess as a seamstress—and my two aunts were both by then beauticians, and it must have just felt rather comfortable for them to be reunited, because Uncle Julius lived in the same town as them in Cloppenburg, and they used to walk to his house, so they were not only relatives; they were neighbors, and it was another generation that they could look to. And eventually my aunt wanted to plan her wedding—Aunt Edie—so she moved back to New York, and she asked both my mother and Aunt Hiddie if they'd like to come to be with her. So, they did. They moved to New York, and they found an apartment where they stayed together. My aunt got married in 90—in '45—to my uncle, and they went to a synagogue that was a German refugee synagogue, and there was a man that kept staring at them during the service—and this was my Aunt Hiddie and my mother—and eventually he approached them and asked them if they were the Simon girls from Cloppenburg. And they said, "Yes." And they hadn't recognized him until they got a full view of him. And he was a very good friend of their dad's. He used to also deal in cattle, and he would come with his son, and normally people would just come and deal with them and then go back to their towns, but because they were such good friends, they had stayed actually at their house, and he was so delighted to see them, and they were so surprised. And he had met some other people that were also from Germany, and they had a son that was in the Army. And they wanted this particular man—Solly Gernzheimer—to meet Aunt Hiddie. And he fell in love with her, and they got married eventually. And my dad was the president of the youth group there—the young adult group in the synagogue, and he met my mother—I believe—through the synagogue, and also because my mother had—after my Aunt Hiddie got married—she had to find a place to stay herself. And she found a German family that lived in Brooklyn that had an extra room, and they had a daughter that was about her age, so she rented a room from them. And the daughter, apparently, had a crush on my dad. But when my dad met my mother, he sort of—you know—became overwhelmed by her. And so the daughter wasn't too happy. But eventually they got married.

Interviewer: And what was your father's name?

Berman: Manfred Heinemann. But everybody called him Fred.

Interviewer: So tell me a little bit about your father's life in Germany before he came to the U.S.

Berman: OK. Well he was born in 1922, and he lived in a town called Treuchtlingen<sup>3</sup>, which was in Bavaria. And they lived a very comfortable life. My grandfather sold baking supplies, and eventually his brother was born in 1933—Harry. And my grandmother had studied to be a nurse, and she was helpful during World War I. My grandfather was also in the army in World War I.

Interviewer: And their names were—

Berman: Solly and Sabine. My grandmother's maiden name was Freiman, and their last name was Heinemann. And my father said he was about eleven when Hitler came to power, and he had been enrolled in a school in Treuchtlingen and was studying. And when he was 13 he became a Bar Mitzvah<sup>4</sup>, and then the German government shut down the school that he was attending, and he—the family decided that they needed to be in a place that had more Jews, so they moved to Munich, which was not that far from Treuchtlingen, but it was a major city. And my father graduated from eighth grade, and then there was a special school that was started for older children, and he attended that in ninth grade. It was taught by professors from the university that were Jewish that had been fired. And he tells me—or he told me—that Henry Kissinger's<sup>5</sup> uncle was one of his teachers. And after the ninth grade, he wasn't able to attend school any longer. And so his father knew of a person that owned a restaurant—he wasn't Jewish—in Munich that was very well-thought-of, and he was starting a school for confectionary and baking technicians. And so my father attended that school. And he became very, very proficient in his trade. And then my grandfather said that he needed some practical experience, and he had a friend that was a baker, and he convinced him, even though they wouldn't pay him, that he'd like to get some practical experience for his son. So, my father would get up at 4:00 in the morning and would ride his bicycle to another part of Munich where he would pick up breads, and cakes, and pastry and deliver them to private homes, and to restaurants and hotels and so-forth. And so on *Kristallnacht*, again November 10, 1938, he got up as normal and rode to the bakery, and he didn't notice anything unusual. He picked up the breads, and so-forth, that he was supposed to, and delivered them to the various locations. And he did say that because his route was in another part of Munich, there were no synagogues on that side of town, or any Jewish businesses, so he wasn't aware until he got back home, back to the bakery around 7:00 in the morning, that anything had occurred. But my grandmother had called the baker and said that she wanted my

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3 <https://www.jewishgen.org/communities/community.php?usbgn=-1875795>

4 Bar Mitzvah is the Jewish coming-of-age when young adults are expected to observe the religious commandments. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/bar-and-bat-mitzvah-101/>

5 Henry Kissinger is a noted U.S. foreign policy expert who served as Secretary of State during the Nixon administration as well as holding positions in subsequent presidential administrations. He was born in Feurth, Germany, and immigrated to the United States in 1938. <https://www.henryakissinger.com/>

father to come home as soon as possible when he got back from his route. And she explained to him that several synagogues had been burned, and that the Jewish men were being arrested. So, my father rode back to his house. And when he got there, my grandmother told him that my grandfather had already come home once, and she told him to go back out because they Gestapo had been by looking for him, and they wanted to arrest him. So, my grandfather was wandering the street and eventually came home. And he said he was tired, and he was resigned to the fact that he would be arrested, and my grandmother wouldn't hear of it. She said, "Take Fred with you—they said that they would be back." And so, he did. He took my father with him, and they went back on the street, and my father said that the Gestapo must have been watching the house, because they'd only gone a half a block when a black car pulled up, and they asked if he were Herr Heinemann, and he said he was. And they said, "Well, you'll have to come with us." And they started to arrest my father as well, and he said, "Well, you don't want to take him with you. Let him go home." And they said, "No. He's tall enough and he looks—well—appropriate enough to come with us too." So, my dad was one of the youngest. And they went to Gestapo headquarters, and they were put in jail. Their overcoats were confiscated—all their personal belongings—and they were hungry, since they hadn't eaten since the morning before, and they—I don't know that they gave them any food. And they held them there in the jail until they had enough men to transport the next morning to Dachau, which was one of the first of the concentration camps. And my father filled out some papers for the claims conference to see if he was entitled to any reparations, and he described what had happened at the camp. I'm not sure if my grandfather worked or not, but he said that he didn't do anything except three times a day they were required to assemble in the center of the concentration camp and stand at attention for two to two and a half hours at a time. At that point—when they first got there, their head was shaved, and they were given black and white striped uniforms. They were very thin. And this was, of course, in November. And they were made to stand at attention. They couldn't cough. They couldn't sneeze. They couldn't whisper. He said he was beaten up when he first got to the camp, and he was kicked in the head many times, and some of his teeth were knocked out. And he suffered many years later from several strokes and a brain tumor, and so forth. And we feel that since it occurred usually that time of year that this was trauma from his previous experience. And eventually, my grandmother who—they had applied for immigration, and they had quite a low quota number, but it seemed like people that had higher quota numbers were being called to immigrate, and they weren't. And so they figured out that somebody, again, was taking graft to make it more comfortable for the ones with money to leave. And she went to Stuttgart, to the U.S. consulate, and told them that her husband and son had been arrested, and she had a four-year-old at home, and she was not going to put up with this. She wanted them to assure her that in the next couple of months they would—that their number would be called. And she got the documents that she needed. And eventually my father was released after about three weeks in the prison. And then my grandfather was released about three weeks later than that. And they came to America in July of 1939. And my father wanted to go back to Europe to fight the Nazis. He wasn't a citizen yet, so he had to apply for citizenry, and he got the necessary paperwork done, and he enrolled in the Army. And I have a picture of him in his uniform with his parents shortly after they arrived in Brooklyn, New York.



Interviewer: That's an amazing story too. (1:13:50) So your parents met in Brooklyn.

Berman: Yes.

Interviewer: And they married.

Berman: Mmh hmm. March 23, 1947.

Interviewer: And how soon did you come along?

Berman: A little over a year later. In September of '48. And they lived in a small apartment, and they decided that my dad would try to be a baker on his own. He opened a bakery. They lived above the bakery, but they didn't have much money, and they borrowed about \$500 to get started, and apparently they got an order for some cakes and pastries for a bar mitzvah, and they prepared everything, but then there was a terrible snowstorm, and they couldn't get to make the delivery, so they lost a lot of money. And unfortunately, they closed the store, and my dad went to work for another company called Kosher Bakers, and he worked there for quite a while, and then he decided he wanted to get into sales. And meanwhile, we moved to another apartment. We moved to Queens for a while, and then in 1954 my brother was born. I was six. And he, unfortunately, had Downs Syndrome, and he was very, very severely handicapped, and it was very hard on all of them, but particularly my dad, because this was his son, and he'd been through so much already. So, they made the decision to have him institutionalized, because they couldn't meet his medical needs. And we would go and visit him, and he was a sweet little baby, and it really broke my heart, because I was so looking forward to being a big sister.

Interviewer: Were you—did you have other young family members?

Berman: Yes.

Interviewer: Cousins from your aunts that you were in touch with or played with—

Berman: Rights, My Aunt Edie and her three daughters lived in Brooklyn with my uncle. They lived in the bottom party of a two-story house, and on the top were my uncle's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Babitch. And I would go there quite frequently to visit them, and my middle cousin in that family was about nine months younger than me. And they had Sandy, who was born in '46, and Karen, that was born in '49, and Janice, who I believe was born in '53, and I really enjoyed going there. And also my grandparents, my father's parents, eventually bought a restaurant. It was a little candy store and luncheonette. And of course I was the only grandchild, and they would treat me like a queen, and I loved going there. My grandfather would make homemade ice cream in the basement, and they had a pickle man, and they had a jukebox. And the records—the guy that brought the '45s—he would give me the records after. And I would help them behind the counter, and I have such fond memories of that.

Interviewer: So, did your parents ever talk about what had happened to them (1:18:07) before they came to the U.S.? When did you first learn about the Holocaust?

Berman: Well, not for a long, long time. When I was in high school, there was a miniseries called “The Holocaust” on TV, and I began to get curious, because I knew that they were from Germany, but they never talked really much about their past. So, I began to ask them questions, and eventually the story came out. But my dad, in particular, was very closed about his past. And after we moved to Marietta, and I was in my mid-30s or even early 40s, he sent me a videotape one day, and he said, “You should watch this.” And it was him explaining what happened to him during the Holocaust. He was talking to seventh and eighth grade children that he didn’t know, and he’d had it videotaped, and that was really the first time I’d heard what had happened to him, and he didn’t elaborate too much, because these were young children, but it was sort of like an out-of-body experience, because here was my dad, and he was talking to strangers about it when he’d never talked to me.

Interviewer: So, did you then do more research to find out what had happened to your family?

Berman: Well they eventually became more forthcoming. We had 37 relatives, I believe, who were killed during the Holocaust. So, the great aunts—the aunts of my mothers and their sisters—became so much more important to us. Some lived in Texas. Some lived in Florida. Some lived in Illinois, and so-forth, and we would get-together periodically and celebrate things, and the stories would eventually surface. But not without a lot of pain. Then my Aunt Edie took sick. She got Parkinson’s, I guess in the late ‘80s. And as she deteriorated, it became more and more important for us to get together with family. And my Uncle Ruby is sort of the historian of the family, and he saved a lot of documents. Because my aunt, when she immigrated from Holland, she brought some very precious things with her. Because she was the last one to see my grandparents and my aunt. And also, apparently there was a ship that had left Cuba prior to the *St. Louis* that had a lot of things on it from my grandparents that they had put in storage, and of course they weren’t allowed to retrieve them, but my Uncle Julius paid dearly to have those things come out of storage, and he saved a lot of them. (1:21:39)

Interviewer: So, your family—all of this part of your experience kind of unfolded over time—what about your life? How did you come to Georgia—if you want to sum up—we left you kind of growing up in New York.

Berman: Right. Well, eventually my father took a job as a salesman in a company that was based out of Pittsburgh, so we moved briefly to Pennsylvania while he was in training, and then he was assigned to the New England territory. So, we moved to Massachusetts, and then in 1963, much to my delight, my sister was born. And she was healthy, and she was beautiful, and I was so excited. I was 14 ½ by that time. So eventually they were looking for colleges for me and nursery schools for my sister. And so I came to graduate from Framingham High School—South High School—and then I went to college at Bryant College in Providence, Rhode Island, and I was studying to be a secretary. And the second year that I was there, I was introduced to my husband, Steve Berman, and after

dating for some time we became pinned<sup>6</sup>, and then eventually he asked me to marry him, and we became wed in 1969. We're married for just over fifty years now. And we moved several times. My husband was working for Pepsi Cola. And we first lived in Rockland County, New York, just over the Hudson River. And he worked for Pepsi; I worked for General Foods. And then he went in the Army—six weeks after we were married. He was in the National Guard, and he hadn't gotten his papers yet. It was during Vietnam. And he didn't want to go to Vietnam, so he finally found a unit that would take him in the Bronx. And he left me on August 4, 1969, six weeks after we were married, and I was only 20 years old. And meanwhile, I had changed my name, I had gotten a new job, I had moved to New York—and he was just ten minutes from where he had grown up in Rockland. His mother was a widow, unfortunately, and he had a younger brother, so they were the only ones that I knew, and I was lonely, to say the least. So eventually I decided I was going to go back home. And I put a lock on the door of my apartment, and we kept paying the rent. He went to Fayetteville, North Carolina, and then subsequently was trained at AIT in Fort Lee, Virginia. And he finally got out of the Army in December of 1969, and we were reunited, moved back to New York, [someone talks in the background] and I guess it was about April or so—in 1971—that he decided to pursue a different type of career. He'd been in touch with people in the field in various districts of the country, and one of the gentlemen—he took a liking to Steve—and asked him if he'd ever consider moving out of New York. And Steve said, “For the right opportunity.” And he went for an interview in Cincinnati. And we moved to Cincinnati when he got the job. And we loved it there, and I felt like we were more on an even keel because he wasn't ten minutes away from his parents—his mother. And we felt like we'd made it because the rent was only \$10 more than the apartment we'd had in New York, but we had an extra bedroom, an extra half bath, we had a balcony and a fireplace—it was wonderful. And I got a job. And eventually he got more ambitious and wanted to be promoted to becoming a district manager, and applied for it, and we were transferred to Wisconsin, outside of Wausau, Wisconsin. And we started to think about a family, and things weren't going too well in the fertility corner, so I went to a specialist, and I was put on some special medication for that, but I'd asked my doctor whether we should consider adoption, and he said, “That might not be a bad idea.” So, we also applied for adoption. And eventually we got our son David. And he was almost three when we got him, and we were delighted that we were finally parents. And then, under the care of the doctor, I did get pregnant, and then we were transferred to Buffalo, New York. And we moved there in December of '74, and I gave birth to Dan, our youngest son, on July 4, 1975. And so we were kind of overwhelmed. We had two children within less than a year—or a little bit over a year—and moved. And fortunately, I found a good friend to confide in and to help me. She was a former nurse, and she had children of her own, and she got me through all the tumultuous times. But how did we get to Georgia? From Wisconsin we went to Buffalo. From Buffalo, we were transferred to Connecticut. And then in 1978, Steve said, “How would we like to move to Atlanta?” And by that time, I'd had enough

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6 “Pinning” was a practice in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, whereby a couple exchanged lapel pins, often associated with their college or varsity club, to designate that they were “going steady” and had entered an exclusive, monogamous dating relationship. Shee Gorgosz, Jon E., “The Practice of Pinning and Its Production of Gendered, Idealized Images for Women on College Campus in the 1940s, 50s and 60s” (2014). 2014. Paper 2. [http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/esh\\_2014/2](http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/esh_2014/2) for more details.

of the cold, and I'd heard really good things about Atlanta, so we did get a job in Atlanta, and we moved to Marietta. And we lived there for 26 years. And Steve took—eventually left Pepsi and went to work for several other companies—and I went to school at Kennesaw State University, starting in 1985, and I was working and raising the family, and eventually, in 2004, I graduated with a degree in marketing. So that was a real feather in my cap, I felt. And unfortunately, my father had passed away in 2001. He had, as I said, had three strokes, and a brain tumor, and a pituitary gland tumor. And he was very successful in business. After he got the New England territory for this one company, and worked there for 15 years, he wanted to go out on his own, and so he became a broker for several companies in the baking industry. And one of them was a flavor house outside of Chicago, Illinois. And they were so impressed with his expertise, and his character, because he was a wonderful man—very honest—that they asked him to come to work full time for them. And so he discussed it with my mother—my sister was only eight at the time—and they picked up the roots and planted them again in Dundee, Illinois. And my father was extremely successful. He became the sales manager, and then eventually the executive vice president, but he had to retire early because of medical things, and they would go back and forth to Florida for a while to become “snowbirds” and then eventually to move to Florida.

Interviewer: Your sister- what was her name?

Berman: Her name is Julie, and she is one of my pride and joys. She lives in Raleigh now. She's married to a wonderful man named Richard Pausner, and he is a few years older than her, and they live outside of Raleigh in Cary, North Carolina. And she's a very successful businessperson. She also sells advertising specialties, and we get together as much as we can. And my mother, two years ago, moved to Marietta, and she lives in a retirement community, and she loves it here. She's 94 ½, and we hope that she'll be around for many years, but we're really excited about her celebrating her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. Unfortunately, she lost Aunt Hiddie earlier this year. Aunt Hiddie had a stroke, but they were very close, and she's the last one of her family.

Interviewer: So, your story is epic. It covers a lot of different things. What has your parents story meant for you and for your family?

Berman: Well, we've always been a member of a synagogue. I feel very strongly about my faith, and about the obligation to perpetuate our beliefs. And I got involved at some point with a number of immigrants who were from the Soviet Union in the '70s and the '80s, and we wrote letters to the authorities, and tried to get them to let them out. And we were quite successful. And then once they got to America, we would help them get re-acclimated, and acculturated. I'm very proud of my mother. She is a strong woman. She's been through so much, but she has a lot of character, and she goes to synagogue every week, and her former rabbi is writing a book about her which we hope will come out in the next few months, and we're going to call it *Embracing Faith*. My sons are now 44 and 48. The youngest one is married. He got married to a wonderful woman named Betsy Steed about a year ago. And David is still single. They're both in the entertainment field in New York, and I try to impress upon them both the importance of

keeping the family traditions alive and honoring those that sacrificed their lives so that we could live ours in freedom.

Interviewer: What do you think that students and visitors to our museum should take away from learning about your family's story?

Berman: I hope they'll come to understand that there was a lot of tragedy that the family endured, but they never gave up their belief in God, and my mother has shown me – and my aunts—through their actions and their lives—that we need to be accepting of one another. We need to be tolerant. We need to reach out and embrace our neighbors, our friends—that we shouldn't be prejudiced, that this can lead to catastrophic situations. And to really understand that these many people that were killed for being different, being different than the norm, so to speak—but we all come from the same source. And we need to be very diligent about our personal human rights, and to be suspect when things don't seem right, and to try to correct the wrongs of other people. And we need to explain to people who don't necessarily have the same—that are not on the page, so to speak—that we have a dialogue with them. And we try to work things out the best we can, and communicate, and not shut one another out. And we pray for world peace, and for unity.

Interviewer: What is the story of the *St. Louis* mean in all of this?

[inaudible background discussion]

Berman: I'm sorry, I didn't hear that.

Interviewer: I was just going to ask, within all of this, what does the story of the *St. Louis* mean to you?

Berman: Well, we know that many people have tried to immigrate, especially now on the southern borders, and there are many people suffering from Syria, from many places in the world. And I believe that the *St. Louis* was just so symbolic of what can happen to people who are fleeing from the despots of the world—that have a real concern for their safety—and that we should try to be as compassionate as possible. And if we can't let everyone in, at least increase the quotas so that more people can come, because we are a country of immigrants, and it strengthens us to have different points of view and different ethnicities. So, the *St. Louis* really hits home, much more so than ever before.

Interviewer: That's wonderful. Thank you so much for telling this story and sharing your thoughts with us. We really appreciate it.

Berman: Thank you! And I think you have a wonderful museum here, and I'm very proud to be associated with it.