

Shelly Kiser: How can you meet people who lived through the Holocaust, face to face? On this episode of the Thought Provoking podcast, we'll hear stories of Holocaust survivors, and those who lived through World War II through oral histories gathered by history researchers. Find out how researchers use these histories to help young people understand the history as meaning and relevance today.

This is your host Shelly Kiser, communications manager for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, and I'm talking with Adina Langer, curator of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education and part-time instructor of history here at KSU, and James Newberry, curator of outreach and special projects for KSU Museums, Archives, and Rare Books. James and Edina, welcome! Thanks for coming on the podcast.

James Newberry: Thanks for having us.

Adina Langer: Thank you so much.

Kiser: So, both of you work with the Museum of History and Holocaust Education, here at Kennesaw State. Tell me a little bit about the purpose of the museum.

Langer: The museum has been here since 2003. And it started out as a Holocaust Education Center. Then, beginning in about 2006, we broadened our role to talk about World War II in addition to Holocaust history, in order to spark dialogue about the past and significance today.

Kiser: Okay, Adina, thanks. If I came to visit your museum, what kind of things am I going to see there?

Langer: Our museum has a motto which is meet history face to face.

Kiser: I read that, and I thought that was interesting. I was going to ask you what that means.

Langer: We feel that people connect with history the best when they connect with the stories of people, people who lived through these significant moments in the past. So, if you come to our museum you're going to encounter a lot of stories, and you'll do that through a number of different media panels that are human scale. You literally are looking at photographs of people and reading their stories and seeing quotations from oral histories that they've done. We also have artifact cases where we have items on display that relate to people's experiences during World War II or the Holocaust, or to their process of immigrating to the United States from other places. We have multimedia – a lot of opportunities for people to watch curated video or encounter touch screens where they can go take a deeper dive into people's stories. We have living rooms, where you can – under normal circumstances, unfortunately, COVID has put a bit of a damper on a lot of our tactile interactives – but, normally, you can read scrapbooks, listen to radio broadcasts from the 1940s and touch reproductions of newspapers from that era. Really just thinking about all the ways that people can access this history.

Kiser: That's great. I love that it's interactive, I love that you use stories of people to tell it, because I think that really has an impact. I'd love to hear that, as opposed to some history that may be a little dry. It's so exciting to hear about what people lived, those stories. If somebody wants to visit your museum, how do they go about doing that? Can they visit in the world of COVID right now?

Langer: Yes, we are open. You can also visit us virtually. We have virtual tours on our website, including a lot of digital interactive, that you can use to access curated content of various kinds.

Kiser: So, for some of our listeners that are all the way on the other side of the world, they can still come and see your museum. I will put a link to your museum in the episode description, so people who want to go and visit can do that. One of the things you do as part of your research here at the museum is collect oral histories. Can you tell us, what exactly is an oral history?

Newberry: Sure, I'll take that one. We've actually been recording oral history since about 2013, and we can go into a little more depth about that in just a bit. But oral history, for us, is recording the past through the accounts of people who experienced it firsthand. We want to know what people went through, what their experiences were like, because no two experiences were the same. Oral history as a primary source from the past gives us additional meaning that you might not necessarily get from a newspaper article printed during World War II or during the Holocaust. Even a journal which has so many personal feelings, doesn't have the time that has passed since the event for a person to reflect on what their experience has meant to them and how it impacted their lives. So, that's what oral history means to us. It's a historical methodology, a practice to use for research and to contribute to our understandings of the past, but it's also a very human practice between two people sitting in a room and one person asking the questions, and one person answering.

Kiser: And you don't just do audio, you have a video too. I think that that really brings it to life. You get to see the person talking about it, see the emotion in the face, hear their emotion. And it gives you a sense of what happens.

Newberry: Right, absolutely. That's one of the strengths I think of our oral history program. We let young people, fifth through twelfth grade primarily, look at these videos online. We have our educators here at the museum use them in museum presentations, classroom activities, and school presentations, and they really enrich both the general standards that teachers are teaching, but also people's interaction with history. They understand that it's alive and that it has meaning and relevance today.

Kiser: Speaking about meaning and relevance, I really liked one of the oral histories that I want to play here. It's from Andrew Kassler. Am I saying that right? He is a Holocaust survivor, and I thought his video was very impactful. So I want to play the audio and hear something he said.

Andrea Kassler: When I started to speak, I always said that I lost 80% of my family in these camps and I really had no idea what 80% of my family was. It sounded like a good number. My mother was down here, visiting from New York, and HBO was showing the Simon Wiesenthal story, "The Murderer Amongst Us." And in that movie, Simon Wiesenthal's daughter asks him, why they don't we have a lot of family? Why during holidays, bar mitzvahs, things like that, don't we have aunts, uncles, grandparents and so on? And he explains to her that they lost over 70 members of their family during the Holocaust. And I glanced over at my mother and she's no longer watching the movie. I said, "Mama, what are you doing?" She says, "I'm counting." I said, "What in heaven's name are you counting?" She said, "Well, I can only remember 120." And that's when it came into full realization for me that 80% was 120 of my family members who were murdered in these camps. They don't have a voice anymore. They have no one to speak for them. So, that's why I go speak. I've become their voice. Unfortunately, there's a lot of Holocaust denial going on, as people are saying that there was no such thing as the Holocaust, that this is all a Zionist Jewish fabrication. Unfortunately, it's not. We are losing our survivors. Our survivors are getting old. At 73, I am one of the youngest survivors from the Breman. We're getting second generation and third generation involved now, as speakers. It is important that the Holocaust not be forgotten.

Kiser: So, that is a real powerful thing. It just touched me when he said the part about being the voice of the dead. Is that what you mean when you talk about oral histories?

Langer: For people who are telling their own stories there is this opportunity, like James was saying, to reflect on the significance of this lived experience for the rest of their lives. When we're doing interviews, although we do go through the primary time period that we're focusing on, we always give our interviewees an opportunity to kind of sum up at the end why they think that students should learn about this history. So is their chance to just talk about the importance of their own story and how it fits into these bigger stories.

Kiser: This is Shelly Kiser, I'm the host of the Thought Provoking podcast and communications manager for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, just outside Atlanta. Kennesaw State is the second largest university in the state, with over 41,000 students. It's a Carnegie-designated R2 doctoral research institution, placing us among an elite group of only 6% of U.S. colleges and universities with an R1 or R2 status. The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is the largest college at KSU with over 400 faculty members and over 8,000 students. It houses 11 departments and schools with more than 80 programs of study. Our show features the amazing researchers in our college, and they're amazing, and thought-provoking research.

Langer: You were talking about emotion before. One of the big challenges when interviewing people is knowing when to be quiet and let them really think through something that might have been particularly impactful or even painful and not try to fill the silence. Let them get through that emotion. And that often produces these really resonant moments for people who are viewing those oral histories later.

Newberry: And I would just add to what Edina is saying that that's one of the distinctions that really helps to clarify oral history as a practice. It's not journalism. It's not, just the facts. It's about asking a person to reflect on things and letting them talk about it and letting them speak about it and having it recorded. That's the central thrust of oral history.

Langer: One other thought: You were asking specifically about Andre and that conception of being the voice of the past. For us as oral historians, as historians and museum curators and educators, we are very much aware of the age of many of those whom we want to interview about this period of World War II and the Holocaust, and that this moment is kind of passing. So we feel this responsibility for being that voice for the stewardship of these stories is in some ways passing from the individuals who can give testimony to those of us who are holding that testimony and sharing it with the public. So, it's a really big responsibility that I think we all feel.

Kiser: I like that idea of stewardship of these stories because when you listen to these stories, they're very impactful. And these people are older. They've been through a lifetime with rich experiences, and it also must be somewhat painful for them to talk about these very traumatic experiences. But they're going out of their comfort zone to speak about things because it has meaning for people.

Newberry: Absolutely. And just in a practical way, sometimes for those survivor speakers that we've worked with in past, some may not be comfortable sharing their stories in front all groups on a daily basis. We certainly have some people who want to talk to everybody and love talking to students. But for those who don't, the videos allow us to share their story much more widely without compromising their emotional

connection to those past events, which are quite real for them. That's something that the oral history program has allowed for.

Kiser: That's a very good point, yeah. You have as part of this oral history the Legacy series which Andre Kessler's story is a part of, and he's a Holocaust survivor. Why did you decide to research the Holocaust and Holocaust survivors and people that knew them?

Newberry: Sure, that's a great question, and that really goes back to the origins of the program back in November 2013. That's when I was tasked with recording some of those survivor speakers that we were working with at that time for the reasons that Edina spoke about – many of them were advancing in age. And to be very honest since I started this program, my fellow staff members and I have experienced the passing of some of these really special people. As we got to know them over the years and were working with many of them, we said, "We need to record these stories." A few of them had recorded with some other local institutions but we felt that it was a benefit to re-record in some cases and then to find new individuals that we could record and preserve permanently in the Kennesaw State University Archives. So, starting in November 2013, I sat down with four gentlemen Holocaust survivors including Andre, Murray Lynn, Norbert Friedman, and Herbert Cohen – men who had told their stories for years and who were fairly comfortable. We got those stories recorded, and that really set the ball rolling. Since then – I know Edina can speak to this – we've recorded north of 70 individuals for the Legacy series. It very quickly took shape around three groups of individuals: Holocaust survivors, WWII veterans and homefront workers. We felt that through telling the stories of those three groups of individuals, we could get at the complexity of the Holocaust and WWII experience, the breadth of it with no two experiences being the same and help 5th through 12th grade educators supplement their units on these huge global cataclysms that are hard for kids to get their minds around.

Kiser: Definitely. Can you tell us what type of experiences or what type of stories you collect? Is it just people that have been in the camps? Can you tell us a little bit more about the different types of stories?

Langer: Absolutely. The definition of a Holocaust survivor, I would say, has evolved over time. It depends on who you talk to and how internal to the community of people who experienced this moment in time, how inside they are versus a little bit further out. Our institution takes a slightly broader definition than some. We include children who were hidden. For example, Andre Kessler was hidden by his mother in their family apartment with help from the superintendent, and they didn't know that he was actually also hiding another family. It was very well taken care of. He went through that period, experienced hardship, ate nothing but what he calls **mamaliga**, which is like a cornmeal mush, and made it out the other side. But he did not go to a camp. He did not have that experience, although his father did. We also include someone like Herschel Greenblatt, who was another child survivor, whose family was involved with partisans in caves underneath the Ukraine. He was born in a cave in the Ukraine, but his childhood really happened, primarily in displaced persons camps. That's where his memory of the experience starts to be the strongest. But we record even grandchildren of survivors, people who are interested in being the memory keeper for their family. I think that that's given us the opportunity to get very rich family stories. One of the more recent ones we've recorded was with a woman named Susan Hyneman Bowman, whose mother was placed on a Kindertransport to England, right after Kristallnacht, along with one of her sisters. Her other two sisters and parents ended up on the M.S. St. Louis, which

is a story that we actually tell in an exhibit that just opened in in spring of 2020. It's these multi-generational stories that lend our program a particular richness. They touch on other topics, too, like immigration, for example. We actually started a spin-off project in 2018 called Immigrant Stories, in part because there were so many of these Holocaust survivors' stories, and to some extent, post-war stories of women who had married American servicemen and came to United States. These are immigrant stories, too, and they have a lot in common with immigration stories across time. So, this became an opportunity to expand into a slightly broader theme for the museum.

Kiser: How have some COVID-19 graphs misrepresented data, and how does the quality of those graphics and information impact our view of the information and our behavior? We'll find out next month as I talk with Dr Sarah Doan, assistant professor of technical communication here at Kennesaw State University. We'll learn how visualizations, like charts, graphs and maps, helped birth the modern practice of epidemiology, which is the study of disease in different populations. And we'll examine what technical communication is and its application to many of today's biggest issues.

Speaking of that, I know a series of videos that I really enjoyed was Rachelle Lawrence, and she is a not what we think of as a traditional Holocaust survivor. But they did experience a lot of problems in Poland where they lived, and I want to play a little snippet of what she had to say.

Rachelle Lawrence: One night, my father and I took a walk. We walked from our house, which was a corner house, down the street to the monastery, which was just about two blocks away. While we were walking in front of the monastery, some kids started throwing stones at us. I was not hurt, that I recall, but my father was hurt. He was hit in the head. We came home, and he was bleeding. When my mother saw this she was horrified. And my father said, "This is not a place for Jews." That's the only thing I remember. And six weeks later, we left. You couldn't take anything worthwhile out of Poland. We were only allowed to take our bedding – pillows and blankets. My mother was able to take just the head of the sewing machine. And when she was packing up, she wrapped our candelabras in blankets, and we still have them. My daughter has them. My grandchildren will share them. And the clothes on our backs, and that was basically all we could take.

Kiser: So, this person did not actually live in a camp but they had to flee because of the things they were experiencing. Are those some of the immigrant type stories you're talking about?

Newberry: Yeah, and I can speak to that. Rochelle, or as we know her, Shelley...

Kiser: Wow, she has a good name.

Newberry: A lovely person who I interviewed, I believe it was last summer. She was born in Poland, like so many of the survivors that we've worked with, but what's interesting about her story and maybe sets it apart a bit is that we get a focus on pre-war Jewish life. And at that time her family was among thousands in Europe, especially Eastern Europe, who were interested in Zionism and were interested in what was going on in Palestine. Her father immigrated there, and then fairly soon, she and her mother and sibling immigrated there. And this is well before 1939, well before the start of the Second World War. So, this was her family, looking for a place where maybe they could build the life away from some of the pogroms and other

anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish communities around where they lived in around that region. Of course, she left family behind – extended family members, grandparents, cousins, many of whom she did not hear from through 1945 or 1946. After the war, and only then, did she know the cost of the Holocaust for her family in particular. Her family was there in Palestine for about two years before they made the decision that they needed to go on to the States, and it was only because they had relatives here that they were able to come. So, there are all of these random things that people's lives hang on. And in Shelley's case, she considers herself lucky to have made it here and to have settled on Long Island, and then later moved down to Georgia. Now she lives here with her daughter, and she's 92 and wonderful.

Kiser:

Very interesting,

Langer:

I think bringing that up really speaks to the diversity even within the group of people that we've interviewed. Thinking of people that were born in Poland, you mentioned Norbert Friedman before. His story is maybe more what you think of as a traditional Holocaust survivor story. He was in ghettos, and then he was in 11 different concentration camps. Then he worked for the US Army after the war and eventually was able to come to the United States. So his story follows that kind of a trajectory. Tosha Schneider is another woman who was born in Poland. She felt that she had experienced very little anti-Semitism before the rise in tensions, right around 1939, just one instance of an anti-Semitic vandalism experienced on her home, and that was it. Her childhood had been very carefree, and then she experienced this as just being very quick and painful. She went through two different ghettos, ended up in a labor camp, lost her entire family, and ended up meeting her husband. He was her English teacher, Fred Schneider, and they both ended up in United States, and came back together and eventually settled here in Atlanta. So, just even within this one arc, there's a lot of diversity in these stories.

Kiser:

I know you also collect other stories from WWII, and I know one of them is Homefront workers. I liked this audio from Lee Foringer. I'm gonna play a little bit of her talking about her experience.

Lee Foringer:

I worked on what they call the fuselage and the jigs. You put on different parts of the plane; they call them gigs. After they were ready to place on the plane, we would get inside. I say we – my friend and I – they let us work together. I loved riveting and she loved the bucking. They had what they call a big bar, a bucking. You'd put that up or down as the rivet went through and that would flatten the rivet. Of course we had inspectors that came by every day before we got off from work to make sure everything was right.. And so, it was fun. I enjoyed it.

Kiser:

So, you have a real-life Rosie the Riveter in your collection. Is she the only one, or what are these home front worker stories like?

Newberry:

Well, there are many, and that's one of the categories where even early on, we were seeing a lot of opportunity to gather stories from people who had never shared their stories before, who had never even thought of their stories as worthwhile or worthy of sharing. At least, that's how they were saying when I would initially reach out to them. And we've been very lucky, especially with Homefront workers with Rosies. In some cases with men who worked in factories, with kids who contributed in some way on the home front. There are a lot of informal networks. I'll just point to one. You spoke about Ms. Foringer, but another home front worker that we've worked with is Jane Tucker. When she was over 80, she started a chapter of the American Rosie the Riveter Association in her community of Rome, Georgia. It was one of only three or four chapters in our state. She recruited members, people that she had known, other new people. One of my

favorite stories of working with her and recruiting people – because she would call me on weekly basis to say she had found somebody to help me and I had to come to them right away. One of those was a woman that she was standing in the line with at the bank. It was a woman who just happened to have worked as a janitor at the Bell bomber plant which is now Lockheed here in Marietta and Cobb County. This woman certainly didn't think that she had a story worthy of telling. And it was a process to warm her up to the idea, because you don't want to ever pressure someone. That's not what it's about. But she did ultimately come around and we were thrilled with the interview and we've incorporated her story into exhibits here at the museum. I think at the time, nobody in her family really knew about it. She was a 92-year-old living on her own. She was fine. She could handle the whole thing. But then after she passed away a couple of years ago, we got a call from one of her granddaughters. They had found her interview online in the archives. And at that point the views of the video just shot up. It was all of her extended family finding this video for the first time, I think, and really connecting with their grandmother/great-grandmother in a new way. It was a fulfilling moment for all of us to see it live on in that way.

Kiser: That's awesome. So you are not only educating the general public but giving something special to the families of these people. How are these stories used after you record them? What do you do with them? How are they making an impact?

Langer: These stories have multiple lives. In the most traditional archival aspect, they are all stored at the KSU archives in their complete video format. We create transcripts, so that the videos are accessible to people who might prefer to read, rather than listen for a variety of reasons. That also helps with research. Having those written transcripts that have timestamps associated with them can help someone from, another institution who might be looking at airplane manufacturer and women's experiences, and we have a lot of stories that might support that. But we are a museum with an educational mission. So, one of the things that we do with these interviews is create clips that we share through our website that relate to a variety of themes that are of interest to educators, and that meet standards in social studies. We actually worked with educators to come up with exactly what themes we should be focusing on in order to be of most use to them and their students. That's another access point. Then for me as the curator, I'm always interested in how these stories can support exhibitions and public programs at the museum. So, when I first came on board back in 2015, it was the Legacy series that I was most excited about in terms of being able to incorporate it into exhibitions. The first exhibit that I worked on with James was Georgia Journeys, which is really the heart of that, the story of veterans, home front workers and Holocaust survivors who all recorded Legacy series oral histories, and who eventually came to call Georgia their home. You get this linkage for them, but also this tremendous diversity among their experiences.

Kiser: When you talk about students, why is it so important that students, in particular, learn about this time period and hear these stories?

Newberry: Well that's a great question, and I think it's the thing that motivates us on a day-to-day basis. There are practical requirements of the Georgia Standards of Excellence here in our wonderful public schools, for students, especially in the fifth and sixth grade who are first learning about some of these big topics, if they weren't interested in already reading about it at home. But aside from that, the way to connect with the past obviously is to meet history face-to-face, what we say here at

the museum. And through these oral history interviews, especially in video form, we feel that students can make that human connection to events that are overwhelming – WWII and the Holocaust. If you think about the Holocaust that's 1933 to 1945 – those are the dates that many academic institutions and scholars use – that's longer than the life of a fifth grader. So, if they were living at that time, that's just what they would know. It's not something that is inevitable. It's not something that's preordained. It's something that was happening on a day-to-day basis with the choices of individuals and governments.

Langer:

We often talk about how people shape history, even as the circumstances that they live in shaped their lives. It affects the decisions that they can make, the opportunities that are available to them, the external forces that they have to respond to. Understanding those very human processes of decision-making and response, that's really hard to get from looking at a battle map or even hearing famous speeches by people like Roosevelt or Churchill. It comes through when you learn about a young child, let's say who grew up on a farm in Georgia, whose parents are sharecroppers. Would that person have ever thought that they would end up fighting on tiny islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? Or if you grew up in a segregated community would you ever have thought that you would be interacting on a professional basis with someone who was not the same race as you and meeting people who are different religions? This juxtaposition that happens, really comes through in these personal interviews, and it can make it a lot easier for students to relate to the past and to also understand that they might live through momentous moments. We don't necessarily know what they're going to be, although I have joked with my own children, "They're going to ask you what it was like to live during COVID."

Kiser:

That's right; we've got the pandemic. They're going to be doing oral histories when they're 99 about the pandemic."

Newberry:

I would just add to that when I was learning about this I certainly had an interest in history, but I associated wars with battles. If I was eight years old and the History Channel was on it, it was about the battles in WWII. That's what you saw. But what really drew me in, especially as I got older, as I started researching and as I did interviews in this in this job in particular, I was moved by the social change that was brought about by WWII. More than anything, that's what people talk about, or at least that's what their experiences reflect – the major social change brought about by this war. It's a defining moment. Even though it was playing out over years, it's a defining moment in U.S. and world history.

Kiser:

Yeah, and I like the fact that you have so many different perspectives on this, so that the kids can see how it impacted everyone and changed lives across the United States, across the whole world. How do you find the people that you interview? You were telling us about your really go-getter recruiter that you have that's one of your stories, but how else do you go about getting stories from people?

Newberry:

Well, I can speak to starting out with the program. It was people like Jane Tucker and others who knew folks and who felt that it was important that their stories were told who helped us overcome that initial hurdle of, "Well, does it even matter? What can I add, or what do I have to tell? It's the soldiers in the battles that most important." We had individuals like Jane who recruited for us who already had working groups of home front workers. We also made connections with other institutions that had veterans roundtables, and if they didn't have the capacity to do the interviews in audio or video we would take on that because we had the capacity to do so and to preserve the interviews permanently. So in some cases

someone would call or I might go give a presentation Kiwanis Club or another local group and tell them about what we were doing and get some names. Or I'd get a call later on. It was piecemeal at the start, but that was a moderate pace that we could handle as we were doing the other work of education at the museum. That's how it started.

Adina: People have also been, in some ways, inspired by just coming into the museum and seeing what we do with the oral histories. There can be a certain amount of skepticism, like "I don't know that I want my story recorded for posterity." But when they see, hopefully that kind of sensitivity and nuance, where we honor people's lives, but we also provide context for where they fit. We've had people decide to share their larger family stories with us. And, to that end, I will also note that we launched one of our traveling exhibits last year called WWII: The War That Changed the World. It is specifically geared toward older adults. So that's an exhibit that will be going on display at community centers or assisted living communities. We're hoping to use that as an additional kind of recruitment tool to try to gather as many of these stories that we can.

Kiser: But that's very interesting. I like all the ways you go about it, in many different ways that sounds like it. So, if somebody is listening to our podcast and they think, Oh, I have a story I think that would be good for this, what can they do?

Adina: First thing they can do is email me or call the museum.

Kiser: Call the museum, and they can put you put them in touch with you?

Adina: Yes.

Kiser: Now I know you get some of our KSU students here involved through internships. So what do interns, what would our students do to help you guys out? And what do they learn from it?

Newberry: Well, they do a variety of things in the internships. We try to craft internships with students' long-term goals in mind. So, we have a number of different internships available including educational internships where they can do tours and write tours scripts and work with students here at the museum, or virtually now. We also have curatorial internships, which, of course, Adina can speak more to. We have oral history internships in which they might transcribe an interview, sort of get some of the nitty gritty part of oral history work under their belt. But also maybe take a person's story and create an online exhibit out of it or an onsite exhibit here. So, there are a lot of different internship opportunities for history majors, but also education majors, anthropology majors, foreign Language majors, if we're translating certain interviews, if we have those folks that we've interviewed for whom English is not their first language, which is many of them. Sometimes we need to translate some portions of the interview, so a lot of different ways for a lot of different students and majors to work with us.

Langer: And we also, just to note, have special projects internships. James' role has evolved. Our museum is part of Museums, Archives and Rare Books, which does work in the KSU community and also in wider communities. So, there are many opportunities.

We're also very interested in accessibility. We've been attempting to try to make our offerings available to people who prefer to listen, let's say, rather than read. And that's another opportunity, where students can work with us to create audio guides, for example, of all of our exhibit materials.

Kiser: Oh wow! A lot of ways for them to get involved in and really learn hands on, which we love here in the college. We love hands-on learning, experiential learning. It sounds like there's a lot of that going on there.

Newberry: Absolutely. I think our hope is that every single project, that what every single intern works on will be the consumable for the public or for students in some way.

Kiser: Awesome. So, what's next for you? You've done a lot. You're very busy, but what's in the future for the museum?

Langer: We are current currently working on an exhibit called Anne Frank in Translation, which looks at the reasons why Anne Frank is such a prominent icon. It goes through the lack of inevitability as to why her story is known by everyone. But interestingly, this has also been an opportunity for us to engage our Oral History Program. Right before the start of the pandemic shutdowns, we had the opportunity to interview two different men whose families were from the Netherlands. One who was a small child during the Nazi occupation, and one who was born right after the war. So even though we're creating this exhibit which is about Anne Frank, this very well-known public figure, we are connecting it to local Georgia stories which are also WWII stories.

Kiser: Very interesting. We all learned about Anne Frank in school, right? I'm intrigued to look at your exhibit when it's ready. I remember you telling me something about shipbuilding in Georgia, and you're doing some research on that, also?

Langer: Yeah, we love to partner with other institutions around the state and in some cases across the country. We have the beginnings of a project where we will be working with the Coastal Georgia Historical Society and the National WWII Homefront Museum on St. Simons Island, right outside of Savannah and Brunswick, which was a center for shipbuilding during WWII. Our own Jane Tucker was one of the workers. She worked as a rod welder. We've also made a connection with the National Rosie the Riveter Historical Site, And that's part of the National Park Service in Richmond, California. So, what we're hoping to produce is this bi-coastal exhibit about shipbuilding, and we'll be doing oral histories with some of the people who remember that time, right on the Georgia coast,

Kiser: Oh wow, I didn't even know we were big ship builders here in Georgia, so I've learned something already. Can't wait to see how that turns out. You know as an ending here, I'd love to play something – one of the oral histories from Murray Lynn about why he wants to be remembered. So, let's listen to that.

Murray Lynn: My daughter, my oldest daughter, her name is Roberta. I took my oldest daughter to Auschwitz to give her a feel of where I've been and what we went through, a feel about our history. She was deeply moved. And she said to me, "Dad, how would you like to be remembered? How would your generation like to be remembered?"

And I said to her, "Honey, let's wait until we get home. And I'll drop you a letter. I want to give this some thought. It's a very profound question." So, we got home and I sent her an email. And this is what I said to her, "Remember us not with lavish and brave words. Mourn us not with sorrowful tears, but rather with positive and engaging deeds. Strive for social justice. Work ceaselessly to safeguard our precepts of religious pluralism and diversity. And not least, pay any price to protect the ideals of our nation so it would never belong to a racist ideology that stripped our people of all hope and humanity. Over the centuries, may this message be enshrined in your hearts and your memories as an enduring legacy to future generations.

Kiser: So, I think that sums up what you guys do so well. You help to make sure people are remembered in the way they want to be remembered. Is that what you feel like your work accomplishes?

Newberry: Well, it's what I think we hope it accomplishes. I think back to when I interviewed Murray in November of 2013. He was one of those very first interviews. At the time, I wasn't quite prepared for his interview, because of the events that he experienced – the fact that he entered Auschwitz at 14 and had to lie about his age just to get through the initial selection process and really said goodbye effectively to his mother and three younger siblings at that moment. You're sitting with me at the museum and we're just talking for a video interview. That was a struggle for me to contemplate, and one that help set the tone, at least for me, going forward, in that case, where Murray wanted to share a statement about the past, my job was to let him share that statement and to get it on camera and not try to push him one way or the other or you know, make sure that I had all the things that I needed for education and our programs here. But to let him tell his story, that was the most important thing, and I'm certainly glad that he did.

Langer: I think about the work that we do as public history is really about people, and it's about being a bridge between the past and the present. And when we can make those connections across generations across place, across theme, that's what gives me the strongest sense of satisfaction. If I see a young child talking to their grandparent about something that they may never have talked about before, because they're inspired by something they see in a museum or something they've listened to you, that's the contribution that I feel like public history makes to society.

Kiser: Yeah, very impactful stuff that you're doing there at the museum. And it was so exciting and interesting to hear about that, and I thank you so much for being with me today, both of you.

Langer: Thank you.

Kiser: Thought Provoking is a production of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kennesaw State University. This is Shelly Kiser, and I'll be back next month with another episode. Talk to you then.