

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Gilbert
Forename:	Ursula
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	14 September 1923
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	29 January 2007
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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**REFUGEE VOICES
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTOMY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 145

DATE: 29 JANUARY 2007

NAME: URSULA GILBERT

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minute 10 seconds

BL: Today is the 29th of January 2007. We are conducting an interview with Mrs Ursula Gilbert. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.

BL: Today is the 29th of January 2007. We are conducting an interview with Mrs Ursula Gilbert. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.

BL: Can you please tell me your name?

UG: Ursula Gilbert.

BL: And what was your name at birth?

UG: Brann, B-R-A-doubleN. Brann.

BL: Ursula Brann?

UG: Ursula Brann. Yes. Those are all the names I've got.

BL: And when were you born please?

UG: September, 14th September '23.

BL: And how old are you?

UG: Now, I'm 83.

BL: And where were you born please?

UG: In Berlin Burggrafenstraße 3.

BL: Mrs Gilbert, thank you very much for having agreed to do this interview for us for Refugee Voices. Can you please tell me about your family background?

UG: My family background. I was born. My parents were Rosa Marie Brann, my father was Ferdinand. My mother was born Warschauer and I had one sister who was only ten and a half months older than I was. She was Stefanie Klara. Do you want me to carry on and just what I remember?

BL: Yes tell us something about your grandparents for example.

UG: The grandparent that I remember was my grandmother. She played a large part in my life and my family life. And I had a grandfather who at the time was 87 when he died. I remember that as a child that was something very special and very different. Now I better start with what I remember. I remember quite a lot from my early youth. My parents perhaps you might say had a very comfortable background. My father's family – for 3 years they owned a bank, 'Bankhaus', in Berlin and my father was the one who carried it on. I think my great grandparents and my grandparents the men were in this bank business but that came to an end in 1928-29 when the Wall Street crash came.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 42 seconds

I do have quite a lot of memories of my early childhood because I think my parents lived in rather a grand style. Perhaps not quite so much as my grandmother... She was called 'die Fürstin' [the princess]. She had, you know, I think there was quite a lot of money and they had very large flats. And my parents had a flat in Burggrafenstraße which was a good part - a very good part in Berlin at that time. And I remember very happy birthdays and families and my father actually originally had two other brothers but only 1 brother that I remember. And he played a big part in my life later on. But I'll talk about my uncle as time goes on. I went to a little school; I think a local school the first 'Volkschule' [primary school]. But there were very happy family occasions - birthdays and Christmases before Hitler came to power – I must admit there were Christmases and there were big celebrations. I remember obviously my sister – she was very close in age and we did everything together. My parents, I think they made a special point of it; there was so little age difference. We did things together and when we were naughty and had to be punished my father always said, 'It doesn't matter who did it. You did it both together.' And as I said my sister played a big part in my life although her interests and my interests later on were very different. I was greatly interested in music because my mother was musical. My mother played very well and very often and as I said I went to concerts and music was... We had a large grand piano which played a big part in my life. I can't really remember a lot before we went to school but I do remember I went to a very sought after school in Berlin first in Bismarck Schule. And I still have one particular girlfriend I correspond with who used to live in America and has now gone back to Berlin.

Tape 1: 5 minutes 11 seconds

We did everything together. We went to concerts together which was, I think quiet unusual. As I said playing the piano, music was a great part of my life. My father's interest was not in music at all. He was a man of culture and reading and history and

he used to read a lot. We had to sit...And I remember when I think about my father reading to us, I had to fold my hands and keep still but I listened to him. And he used to - he liked poetry - and he used to make up poems. I think he had a great impact on my behaviour and my thinking and he was a man of a lot of words and people used to come to him for advice. And he was interested in politics and in history and he used to talk to us a lot. It wasn't a question of 'You go to school. You have your own interests.' Everything was done together. The family played a big, big part in our life. And my grandmother also played a big part but I think it was later on after the Wall Street Crash because that changed my parents' background and family living and their way of life a lot. They changed flats. They didn't live in Burggrafenstraße any more. I think it must have been about '29 or '30 and that was round about when my mother's mother, in other words my grandmother died, and they moved into a smaller flat in Rankestraße which was also large but my grandfather came to live with us. And I do remember the Wall Street Crash only that we were told whatever we could understand, things have changed. We used to have a maid, a cook, a chauffeur and somebody who looked after us kinds and all this came to an end because...We were told in our way money is not as flush as it used to be. And my father tried to find something else. I think the bank was closed, under what circumstances I don't know. We were not told details we were only told you know, things, our way of life changed. And we accepted it! Our way of life was still very nice but not so grand any more.

Tape 1: 7 minutes 52 seconds

BL: What was the name of the Bankhaus?

UG: Siegfried Brann Bankhaus. I've only got one little book there where it says it in print so I remember it. It wasn't something that I imagined. It was definitely so. And I think my father, my parents, my father particularly always said 'It'll be different but it's still nice and we can talk about things. He always used to find something good in everything. And he always used to say 'You've got to accommodate your ideals and your wants and life is still... You've got us.' Family, as I said before, was always very important to him and his mother also played a great part. My grandmother I mean my parents phoned her everyday and my parents used to go.

BL: What was her name?

UG: Hedwig, Hedwig Brann. And we use to have you know we had Aktien [shares] in the Berlin Zoo and we used to go there every day. My mother always used to say, 'Fresh air and exercise is good for you' and we used to go there after school. I met my friends there on the Spielplatz [playground], and that was our life. That was in the summer and perhaps in the winter we used to go skating and tobogganing. And Sundays my father very often went with us to museums. And I remember my father always used to read to us and talk to us and explain to us. My father always used to say 'Things are not so bad. We get through it.' You know he was a great - how can I say - things are not as bad as they seem. And until the very, very last day that was his motto. And when I left in 1939, in March '39 to come to England my father, after the 9th of November, he worked voluntarily for the children's transport in the Ulandstraße.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 6 seconds

That's where they started out Kindertransport. And I remember going there some times and he used to come home and tell us about things what happened there. And I – he made it possible – I don't know whether I could have gone earlier but I came in March '39. But I came without my sister because he always said, and I thought that until very recently that Kindertransport could only take children up to the age of 16. But apparently, as I've now found out, some children perhaps in different circumstances were older still. My sister had the opportunity I think it must have been in '37 or '38, to go to the States because we had some relatives in the States. At the last moment she didn't want to. She was a little bit different to me. I was always you know, the one... I had ideas and 'You'll be all right, you know. I can manage'. But she was more timid. For her, reading played a big part. She used to come home from school and sat in the corner and read and you know my mother perhaps asked her to do so and so, she said, 'No I'm reading. I sit here. Ulla can do it.' They called me 'Ulla' – my parents said Ulla to me. And I remember that my family had a good sort [relationship?] with my grandmother and my aunt and uncle - they used to visit a lot and used to see [each other?] a lot. But things became more difficult after...during Hitler time. And my father was trying to find.... I don't know whether he was trying to find or to get involved in other things. And I know he tried to work for Phoenix, the insurance company because I had a relative who was in there and he tried to get him in. And I think my father also must have done something. But he was not a fellow who could sell insurance. That was not his forte. But in... I should go back to things that my father told me. During the First World War he was a young man. And I don't know whether he was conscripted or he volunteered to go into the service and he went and fought in the cavalry in Russia. And he told us he got the Iron Cross. I remember the only time when he boasted with it and he talked about it because I went to a gymnasium and only children – after '33 - whose fathers were Front Kämpfer [front-line soldiers] could go to this particular gymnasium and that's how I knew that, you know, he was there.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 50 seconds

But he talked to us about being a prisoner of war in Russia and why he got the Iron Cross. Now I only know what he told us. Whether it's true or not he said he was sent out to find out something about the enemy. And he fell into a potato cellar, and he couldn't get out of the potato cellar. And the Russians came and that's how he got his Iron Cross for whatever he did then. Now when I look back on this I don't know whether that could possibly be true or not but that's what he said. And then we asked him 'Well how did you get home after the war?' Because for 4 years he was a prisoner of war in Russia. And I've got a photo and a postcard that he sent to somebody - I think it's dated 1914 - and he told us at the time that he walked back to Berlin. How could you walk? He said it was quite easy 'I walked along the railway lines from Tashkent – he told us he was in Tashkent – and he spent 4 years in Russia. Now I mention this because after he didn't make a go of it obviously with the Phoenix Company I think my grandmother helped, but he bought a shop – a delicatessen shop – in Berlin. It was called Teruss [?] and it was all Russian specialities. And he had a lot of White Russian friends, and he could speak Russian. And he thought that's something that he could do. And he bought this shop. And I remember that I helped

him. I helped a lot in this shop and I think I couldn't have been older than 13 at the time. But I was interested and I enjoyed it and whenever You know, they had 2 or 3 employees I think two who helped in the shop and somebody else who did the deliveries. He wouldn't do anything himself. He said you know, if somebody wanted something practical he used to ring up and say 'Ulla can you come and help me?' And I used to go and help him and I enjoyed helping in the shop. Perhaps I enjoyed it more because my sister said, 'No, no. I wouldn't help.' And she wasn't interested, but I was. And these are the little things I remember.

Tape 1: 15 minutes 9 seconds

BL: Where was the shop?

UG: Hohenstauffenstraße in Berlin im Bayrischen Viertel. It was around the corner. By that time we had moved from the Rankestraße into Mommsenstraße because that was ..., no we couldn't have had the shop then. But it was somehow different. It was also a flat – a 6 room flat and my mother's father moved in with us. And this grandfather died. I remember he was 87 - I mentioned that before.

BL: What was his name?

UG: Julius, Julius Warschauer.

BL: So this was your mother's father?

UG: My mother's father, yes.

BL: What was his profession?

UG: I'm not quite sure. He had something to do with clothing I think. But he wasn't working at the time. He was a tall, very good looking man. And he had quite a sense of humour. We were quite fond of him. He must have died I think '35 or '36. I wasn't very old – there were certain things I remember about him.

BL: What do you remember – you said you... You were probably not allowed to go to the funeral?

UG: The funeral - I remember the first and only time I saw my mother with a veil, with a black veil coming back after the funeral and it quite frightened me. There were little thing my parents used to do. My father played Skat [a card game] and I don't know when my mother learned bridge, they played bridge together. And they were very friendly with a couple. I think my mother and the lady grew up together somehow they were friends. And his name was Moritz Henschel. He was the last head of the German Jewish community in Berlin, and they were very, very close friends of my parents, so much so that ... My parents were under 50 when I left, before they were sent to Auschwitz, and I do know that the older people were sent to Theresienstadt and the younger people to Auschwitz, unfortunately. The little things I remember. My father sometimes talked about the children who were desperate to come to England on the children's transport. But I was more interested you know... I wanted to get a way quickly, because I realised then how serious conditions were in

Berlin. But I think I haven't talked about the school – my school life is somehow what I remember. And I divide it between the school that I went to because my father had been a prisoner and had the...

BL: The gymnasium?

UG: The Iron Cross. I went to the Gymnasium [grammar school] there. And when I started, it was in a district in Berlin where a lot of Jewish families lived. And I befriended a lot of Jewish girls and I remember one of the girls was a girl who later on made it possible for me to go to Belsize Square. She was the one who interestingly...and I also met her on the children's transport when we assembled to go to England. But I wanted to talk about the school first.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 36 seconds

BL: What was her name?

UG: Her name? Helga Waldstein, and she was a member of the congregation. But the school – I divide my memories of school first in the Bismarck Schule - a lot of Jewish children until I think it was '37 or '38 at Easter time. People always changed their classes and were sent up one class. And we were told all the Jewish children had to sit in the one...I think near the window instead of wherever we wanted to or we sat before. The Jewish children had to be separate. And we were told we couldn't mix in the school yard because the Jewish children had to stand there. We weren't allowed to have any, to buy any second-hand books because 'No, you can afford to pay for the new ones'. And my friend Helga Waldstein had a Christian friend and I remember they were both very upset at the time when they were told they couldn't be friends any more and it came to an end. Lots of little pin pricks. We weren't allowed to do this, or that and the other. And my parents...my father...my father was the one who always said, 'In the Jewish School you don't learn as much and this is a particularly good school. You stay there.' And after Easter '37, must have been '37, I said to my father 'I'm not going to school anymore'. So then he decided perhaps I really mean it. And at that time a new Jewish school was opened in Berlin – the only school which was from the Jüdischen Gemeinde nach der Oberschule [the only Jewish Community high school] – it had a different Pensum [curriculum]. And he considered this school had a different curriculum and it was a better school than these private schools in Berlin. You know, they were all right and Jewish children could go there but they didn't learn enough there. And I went there. If I'm honest, it was the only time I was happy at school, and that only lasted 17 or 18 months. And I made some friends there. It was a very small school – Wilsnacker Straße in Berlin. And in all the many Jews and refugees I've met since then I've only met one man who also went to Wilsnacker Straße. It was a very small and select school and...

BL: What was the name of the school?

Tape 1: 21 minutes 2 seconds

UG: Wilsnacker-Straße Schule. And well, I went to Wilsnacker Straße and of course that only... for me it came to an end at about it must have been September, October because at that time everybody emigrated and left Berlin and it was

considered that you had to be practical and learn something and, being sort of learned etc wouldn't do you any good. 'Be Practical'. My grandmother s lived in a 'Pension', a boarding house which was rather posh and nice, and they decided perhaps so that I could go there and learn cooking a little bit. I was always interested in cooking and I remember watching in the kitchen when we had a cook, I used to see how cooking was done. So it was a good idea because I did learn something. I didn't learn how to make a scrambled egg but the more advanced and fancy dishes I learned there.

BL: So you stopped going to school?

UG: I stopped going to school I think in...I can't remember when ...October, yes I think I left October '38 – that's right.

BL: How old were you then?

UG: October...I was just 14. I was just 14. And at that time in Berlin, from the Jewish community they built a Jewish school – not a school so much, it was a domestic science school. It was in a place called Lehnitz – you might have heard of it, Lehnitz outside Berlin - where they had a children's home and I think also people could go for holiday there and it was a school and a domestic science school as it were. Well I went there in October '38 and I remember I wasn't happy at all because all the things that I learned. We were doing some... were looking after children and doing gardening and I hated it. Well I was there 6 weeks exactly until the 9th of November. I was at that school. That was outside Berlin. I didn't live at home any more. It was on the Stadtbahn [suburban railway], it was, well I don't know how many stations. It was outside Berlin. Now, I go and... might as well talk about the 9th of November.

Tape 1: 23 minutes 33 seconds

BL: Can we just...because I have a few questions before we go on to Kristallnacht.

UG: Yes.

BL: You said you were – the Jewish children were told to be separate on the playground...

UG: Yes, yes.

BL: When was that? Which year?

UG: Must have been Easter '37 probably.

BL: So how did it affect you when Hitler came to power in 1933? Did that affect you?

UG: Well the only memory I've got, you'll probably laugh about it but, I remember the arguments my parents had - they never had arguments - after the Reichstag was burning. And my father said 'I must go and see that'. And he said 'You know this is something that you will never again see it'. And he wanted to take us with him and

my mother said 'You can't take the children. No, no they don't come.' And my father said 'Yes, I'm going.' And I remember I went to see it. And I only remember it because my parents had a difference of opinion and that was so rare – it never happened before. And I went to see that and that was my only memory I've got from 1933. And, how can I say, in that respect perhaps my father had the upper hand. He said, 'I'm going to see it and it will never come again' and my - well I suppose I saw it - yes I remember it but what I saw and how I got there – but I remember I saw it.

BL: What did you see?

UG: It burning! But since then I also saw other things burning so I suppose I saw it burning and I remember the discussion my parents had. Not so much I saw it burning - it was frightening, but the discussion about it and that it happened, but not what my feelings were at the time. And over the years I think I must have got used to things getting more difficult and harder for my family. And it came about with the Wall Street crash that conditions were more difficult - then Hitler. And somehow when you are young – I don't want to say - you take it in your stride. You get used to it and at the school, you know, sort of the pin pricks going and getting from bad to worse. And I think I came home and my father always found the right words, 'It's not as bad and you'll be all right.' And one of his little sayings always was...He said, 'Think you go to a theatre. You put your coats into the...' You know, where you hang your coats up. 'You were the one who was cautious. You know you never wanted to get in the hustle and bustle of pushing and shoving later on - so you wait till it's all over.'

Tape 1: 26 minutes 26 seconds

We weren't lucky for once, or we didn't go when the first people came and then, 'we put the coats there before it started. You don't want to hustle, you don't want to push and shove so you wait till it's all finished.' And that's how he said 'That's what I'm going to do now where it's not going to be so bad.' And somehow we lived well and we...obviously there were no money problems. And somehow he found the right words 'Its not going to be so bad.' Now, I was talking about the 9th of November.

BL: Just one moment. Did he, in 1933 did he have his shop, this Russian delicatessen?

UG: No, much later.

BL: Much later...

UG: 1935 or '36. He was trying, for 2 or 3 days he was trying to get another job or to get something else and that's why the Phönix came in. And he didn't make a success of it.

BL: Something else I wanted to ask you...What about your religious upbringing? What was your family's orientation?

UG: My father was - I don't want to say very knowledgeable – quite knowledgeable. And he was a very, very - a person who believed in god and said the goodness of everybody. And we used to go to synagogue we used to go to the

Oranienburgerstraße. They had very nice posh seats, I always said my father. They were all boys in the family. My father I think it was, they helped the congregation in Oranienburgerstraße with money when he was a young boy. And they had very good seats at the bottom. I don't know if you realise how big that synagogue used to be. It was a very big one. And we used to sit upstairs I remember, with my grandmother and my mother. And we didn't have seats my sister and I. We had to sit on the stairs by the side there. Yes, we used to go for the High Holydays but not Friday nights. In the latter years we used to go to the local..., to the Prinzregentenstraße. My father was very conscious and very god fearing, very believing in god and the goodness of people. For him it was very important that... he always used to say – there's a saying in German I don't know whether it's right now, 'Why quarrel?' My sister and I, 'you don't get anything out of it, it's silly really, don't argue about it.' Words were very important. He used to always find the right words. And even the last... Perhaps I should mention that I have a lot of letters from my parents because they were very late...they were only sent to Auschwitz in 1943 – no? – '43.

Tape 1: 29 minutes 19 seconds

And he sent a telegram to my uncle – this uncle I want to talk about – who was then living in Sweden in Uppsala. And he said the number of that transport and when it was. And as it happened that my sister, she was 17 - no she was 18 at the time - she met a boy and they got married. They got married on special permission. I think it must have had something to do with these very close friends, Henschel. And he had special permission. And he sent a telegram to Uppsala 'I'm going' I think it was 'on the 9th transport' I've got the dates upstairs, in 1943 in March. And that was the last I ever heard from my parents. Life is strange! Now, my father always talked about somebody who worked with him in the children's transport. What was his name? Wollheim. And one day I was watching television – you probably don't remember 'This is My Life' – a program 'This is My Life'. And this man Mr Wollheim was on television because he... I think a soldier during the war met up with Mr Wollheim and as a special concession, he said, 'I want all the people who helped me in wartime'. And he was on television there – somebody who was in Auschwitz. And he survived it. And when I saw the name Wollheim I thought, 'Well that's the man!' And I rang television and I rang them and they said 'Well you can't talk to him but I'll give you his address.' And I wrote to him and he said 'Yes, Ulla, I remember your father and I remember your circumstances.' And I thought well, life is strange at times.

BL: Were you a member of any youth clubs in Berlin? Did you go to any youth clubs?

Tape 1: 31 minutes 39 seconds

UG: No I didn't. Somehow, I don't know, we had a lot of sport in the Jewish school and somehow I don't really know the reason why I didn't go to any youth club - no. I think my interest was for music and I had piano lessons but not youth club. Whereas I think my sister did afterwards. When I left, my sister was with my parents all the time. As it happens my husband knew the man that she married - the boy. They were in the same... what was the name of the youth...? 'Die Werkleute', die Werkleute in Berlin. We were never – we didn't go to any clubs.

BL: You said you went to concerts. Do you remember? What did you see?

UG: Oh I remember that. And as it happened this school friend who I went with, she kept all the programs. And she said, 'I've got these programs.' And she's gone back to Berlin because she met a lot of musicians in Germany. We had a season ticket to Furtwängler. I know people don't believe that but she said 'I've got proof of it. Yes, and I remember.' We went to the Bachsaal and the Philharmonie and I remember I had a season ticket one year. I don't know what year that was and that was every Monday evening we went. That was a special present for me once for birthday or so. She influenced me in that respect and my mother and she played the piano. And we had a beautiful...we had a large – I don't suppose other people have that - where all the sheet music was. And playing the music and the grand piano... I remember my friends and I we played 'music shop' and we played with the gramophone there, with the records. That's what we did. But my sister didn't go to any concert. She went to the theatre. She was more serious. She read a lot. I didn't read so much. No, no, no I didn't do that but other things... I was more practical than she was. She was very quiet and... We had friends together and it was a very happy childhood I think.

BL: What sort of friends did you have? Was it mostly Jewish, not Jewish?

UG: All Jewish - all Jewish. I had only Jewish friends. I can't remember that...my parents I think had other friends. I remember my father had a White Russian friend - Mr Levine. And he...Well they were all Jewish friends really that my parents had together. But he learnt to read and to speak Russian and the Russian shop – he liked that. And that was the last...it was only 2 years. I think we only had it for 3 years. We bought that shop, I remember, from Mr Plotkin. He went to Israel and my father bought the shop.

BL: So it was mostly Jewish circles despite the fact that your father didn't want to send you to Jewish school?

Tape 1: 34 minutes 52 seconds

UG: Well he didn't think much of these private schools. That wasn't - I don't know whether 'good enough' is the word. He didn't think we would learn enough there. And I wasn't very keen on learning all together. I didn't...at school my sister was always the one who did very well, you know 'Why can't you do the same?' And I found that was very unfortunate really, you know. It was unfair.

BL: You said you went to the Oranienburger Synagogue – or 'Liberale' synagogues?

UG: Liberale, yes. Yes.

BL: Can you tell us a bit about your memories of this 'Liberale'...?

UG: Yes, we went there. I remember seeing my father with his great big Zylinderhut [top hat], and it was a very... I'm not sure how we got there really. We must have got there by car or by train or by bus. That I don't remember. I remember the last sermon from Nussbaum, Rabbi Nussbaum. I don't know whether that means

anything to you. But he was a very great orator and I remember he was talking about a Jewish mother and children. And I remember all the women around me started crying. You know, somehow it was a very moving...He was a very good orator and the music I mean that's why I went to Belsize Square because there the atmosphere and the music...that brought memories to me and it still does. I mean whenever I go there, that's how I remember the services. The sermon and the music and we know so many people there. It...it gives me...It's a nice feeling to go there.

BL: Did you ever meet...Who was the cantor?

UG: Yes, Kokotek.

BL: I meant in the Oranienburgerstraße?

UG: No, I didn't meet him. No.

BL: Did you have religious classes?

UG: Yes. Yes we went to the Prinzregentenstraße, we had Religionsstunden [religious classes]. But I don't know when that came to an end. It must have only been when we went to Prinzregentenstraße, the services there. I don't remember going a lot on Friday night or Saturday, no. It was really the High Holydays and any special occasions. And something else that played a part in my father's and my grandmother's life is, well not played a part but they used to go to Weißensee a lot, because my father had two brothers and his grandfather, and their graves are there. And that's also...You know, if it was somebody's birthday my grandmother always had a picture in front of her. And that was something that she remembered. My father lost one of his brothers in very tragic circumstances.

Tape 1: 37 minutes 58 seconds

They were younger than he was and he...This younger brother went with his girl friend who later on became his wife, to the Dolomites. And they were walking – they loved walking along in the mountains - and he missed his path or so and he lost his life there. And I think they always said that a few weeks after this happened my grandfather died. So they not only lost one brother and then a grandfather. I think that must have been – I think that was 1928 so I mean I don't remember much. But these dates they played a big part in my grandmother's life.

BL: You didn't mention - How did your parents meet? Do you know?

UG: I think at Tanzstunden [dancing classes], my mother always used to say. You know in those days boy and girl... It may have been Tanzstunde. I think so. I don't know. She didn't talk much about this. My mother didn't have any brothers and sisters. She had rather elderly parents. I think her mother was in her 40s and her father was over 50. That's why my grandfather was 87 when I was 18 or something. She was very quiet and she used to do knitting a lot. And she loved plants. And she helped in the shop a lot but she was rather... You know the shop, it was a food shop and it was cold and everybody...I mean I remember we used to go into the shop and say she does there and she goes there...You know, it was quite a comedown for her but she

overcame it, that was not so bad. And she helped. But my husband sometimes asks me who did the cooking at home. I don't remember her cooking ever. I remember the cook. She must have cooked because of that letter that I'm referring to. She baked a cake until the last; you know '42 or '43. You know you had somebody's birthday - she managed to bake a cake which was quite an achievement I suppose in those days. And the letters also showed me that they had a flat. You know the flat that they had had 3 or 4 rooms. But they had to vacate that and go to one room or a flat there that was divided with so many other strange people and they had to share everything, a kitchen and so. And he used to say how marvellous she was and she overcame all the difficulties and the shortcomings. She was in the background a little bit, yet not a person you could always... She loved knitting and she was very... I don't know I keep talking about my father when I remember Berlin because he was the one who talked a lot. He said what we do and he used to have the..., he was the family, I suppose you know, guide.

Tape 1: 41 minutes 13 seconds

BL: What about holidays? Where did you spend your holidays?

UG: Well not .the seaside. I think you know this picture that I've got there must have been when we were very small. But later on you know my father.... We used to go to Teplice a couple of times in Czechoslovakia and to Bavaria. We used to go to Oberammergau and Berschtesgaden and all these places. In the last years we went to Teplice which is not very far from Prague. I'm not quite sure where it is. It must have been '36, '37. After that I don't think we went on holidays any more. All my relatives, a lot of the relatives went to America. And we didn't have any more holidays going to the countryside or so. My father didn't like it I don't think.

BL: Do you remember discussions about emigration?

UG: Oh yes, oh yes a lot. I remember not only with my parents, other friends, you know, 'Where can I go?' People going to the Hilfsverein [Jewish Aid Association], not that my parents went there, I think that was a different. My father always used to say 'Kindertransport' - all the children who didn't have a proper home. Now I went to this Jewish school and one of my friends, there is a friend who came from Cottbus. Her father was a doctor in Cottbus and I forget now when it was. The father couldn't work any more and that's when they sent their daughter to Berlin to a Jewish school. And she was very orthodox and these - I can't remember exactly when the father had to give up his position in Cottbus. And they were the kind of children who my father said, the Kindertransport - the children where parents, perhaps the father, was taken to concentration camp, who the Jewish community had to help in the first instance. And I think that was right you know, father was taken to concentration camp - well that didn't apply to my...

Tape 1: 43 minutes 22 seconds

I didn't tell you about the 9th of November, how that happened in Lehnitz. I know it was on a Friday night, the 9th of November. We went to a service in the basement, it had a synagogue and we had to go and take part in the service there. And all of a sudden somebody said, 'Go, go on and get a little case, something. There is an attack

planned on the school in Lehnitz and we have to flee. We have to go and leave immediately.' And we had to take – I don't know something quickly. And Lehnitz was outside Berlin and we had to go and run through a forest, go quick, quick, quick and the police was after us. And in the end we got to the police station. I forget what time of night it was – 10 or 11 o'clock and we sat there all night long. And the person who ran this school she said, 'Oh your father tried to ring you all day long and say don't go home, don't go home.' And I knew immediately what he meant because as I said, this uncle of mine who lived in Wannsee which is outside Berlin. So, 'Don't go home, don't go home.' meant go to this uncle because his wife was not Jewish. So I went there and for a fortnight I slept with them and I heard afterwards my father changed where he slept for a fortnight with Christian people who he said gave him shelter. So my father was never taken to concentration camp.

BL: And your mother stayed in the flat with your sister?

UG: I don't know what happened to them. I suppose...I really don't know. Over the years you know, sometimes this uncle played a big part in my life later on because he was very, very good to me. You know I left Berlin and I went on a children's transport. So my parents were left in Berlin and this uncle of mine was in Uppsala. He was a very successful patent attorney in Uppsala. And he – very family minded. And my grandmother...I think my father wrote in a round about way that he helped when my grandmother died because he didn't want her to go anywhere, you know being taken to concentration camp. And they corresponded with my uncle in Sweden. And this uncle of mine sent my father's letters to me in England because you know it was international.

BL: When did your uncle emigrate to Sweden?

UG: In '39 – '39. Well for him he had international business. He had international business with different companies and to these companies it didn't matter where he lived - whether he lived in Berlin or had his offices in Uppsala.

Tape 1: 46 minutes 35 seconds

BL: You said your father was involved in the Kindertransport in the organisation?

UG: Very much – very much so.

BL: Do you know how did he get involved? Was he involved in the community beforehand?

UG: Yes, in a way he was and I as a little girl – there was the Jüdische Winterhilfe [Jewish Winter Aid] and I use to go into blocks of flats and go and knock on people's doors and say, 'Can you give anything for the Jüdische Winterhilfe?' And...what did you ask me just now? I forgot.

BL: Whether your father was involved in the community.

UG: Yes, he helped...he helped the Jewish community. He was a man...you know I think his job later on after I left was going round to people to pacify and talk to

them. You know – helped them in any possible way and he worked, I don't think he worked - I don't think he got paid for what he did at the Kindertransport. But he took a great, great part in doing this. Even when I came to this country here he used to say Kindertransport is coming to England again. Mr so and so is going to give you a parcel or he's going to give you some greetings from your parents. And he was a community minded person who could sort of smooth things over with words a lot. And I don't know whether he worked for anybody else. Some of the papers that I've got now when I went back to Berlin – that he helped, he did all queer sort of things which don't mean something to me but he helped in any way he could.

BL: What about his own emigration? Did your parents try to emigrate?

UG: I think it's partly to do...you know he said, for him to go as a domestic, my mother as a domestic, that didn't appeal to him. And he couldn't do it. He was not practical at all. He said he wanted a glass of water he wouldn't get up and get it himself. Either somebody else, or my sister, or I got it. He was rather... I don't want to say spoiled; he wasn't used to doing anything at all in the house and practically. I think his words must have helped a lot of people in very difficult times later on you know when they came. And I think his job also was to tell people they've got to get ready for...for such and such transport. I'm not quite sure you know. The letters that I've got are in a flowery language and some of it I could make out. You know that he always said, things aren't as bad as they seem. You can always find an excuse and find something else good in people. He always used to go and quote Hiob [Job] you know the man who never complained and its something... depends how you look at it. Is the glass half empty or half full? I suppose it made things easier for him that you know they didn't find it so difficult.

Tape 1: 49 minutes 50 seconds

BL: You said when Kristallnacht happened you were in the school?

UG: Yes.

BL: Tell me again, it was a vocational school?

UG: Yes.

BL: And you were learning something or you were helping other people?

UG: I was supposed to learn something. It was a compromise between an ordinary school and domestic science. You know they all realised, people in Germany realised soon we're going to stand on our own two feet. You've got to do something practical and something you can earn some money with. And it's something we got, even as children 'One of these days you've got to stand on your own two feet.' and it proved good to me because it helped me afterwards when I came here by myself. Things were quite, quite different but the motto was 'You'll get through it and you'll find ways and means of doing it.'

BL: So what happened? Was the school attacked during Kristallnacht?

UG: Yes, I think so.

BL: Did you go back?

UG: No I didn't go back to that school at all. I don't know whether it got destroyed or... No- no, we fled from the school and that was the end. I didn't like the school either. So then after I came back it must have been in November or so - end of November until March '39 - yes until March '39 when I came away on the children's transport.

BL: Did you want to leave or did your parents suggest...?

UG: Well I was the one who wanted to leave. 'That's no good' and 'I'll manage' and 'you'll get me out'. And I had a family that I corresponded with here and who I came and stayed with. My sister had the opportunity in '37 or '38 to go to the States and she didn't. I don't think she felt...I remember my parents going and she bought me a few clothes and all that sort of thing what she had to do. And in the end she said she couldn't go and she wouldn't go and she didn't go. And that's why she stayed behind because she was too old to go with the children's transport. And there was no other way for her. And unfortunately I say this and I'm rather ashamed of that really that the relatives in America they all felt that my father was too spoiled and he couldn't do this and he's not practical and, 'What could you do with him?' And he didn't volunteer and then it was too late.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 17 seconds

It was very difficult for someone to come out and say...And he didn't have the opportunity and my mother nor us... My mother, she just didn't want to go by herself. If the circumstances are so that you can still manage and stay behind in those days...It's difficult for other people to understand now. I mean if I think about the difficult times and what I saw - the Nazis and the marching and you know all this sort of... as children I suppose you get used to it. You see it, I suppose you know that the Jews are hated and it's no good. But it's there and you know you don't think that you could perhaps change it. And my father always said, 'What do I do with myself? I can't earn a living. I haven't got the money.' I heard that all the different taxes and the monies they paid to the German state. I mean I realised they didn't have a lot of money but enough money still to keep body and soul together. If the intention... And you feel it's not so necessary, and you can still make do - you stay put.

BL: What sort of marches was it you said you saw?

UG: In the streets and you know the...the SS and SR and you saw - I mean ever since I remember I saw Hitler - Hitler and with all the... And I realised that the conditions in Germany got worse and worse you know. We couldn't go and sit down on the benches any more and we weren't allowed to do this and that. But I suppose as a teenager and a young person, 'Well that is so' and you don't know any different do you? And if your parents and your environment make it so that you can endure it and you feel it's not as bad. Even now sometimes I think now perhaps it wasn't so bad for me as a child. Everything was always cushioned and it wasn't as bad. I mean I hear

from my husband – as a child he had a different background, different memories really.

BL: But nevertheless you were determined that you wanted to leave?

UG: Yes, yes, because I was quite... I'm a person I feel I can manage and I can get through it and look after myself. I'm quite confident. And I've proved it to myself. I had very difficult times when I came here to England and somehow or other, I managed it – because of having to.

BL: You said you had a family you corresponded with.

UG: Yes.

BL: How?

Tape 1: 55 minutes 7 seconds

UG: A cousin of my mother came early to England here. And they were well established and the kids went to boarding school. And in that boarding school – I think it was a Jewish boarding school - there came a contact with a Jewish family who under the circumstances in '38, '39 said 'We want to take a Jewish child'. But they wanted to take a child obviously they'd heard about or knew about. And the kids at school I suppose got in touch with these relatives - Bentheim was their name. And they made it possible. They wrote to the family. I don't know how it came, whether the relatives wrote to my parents or the family wrote to me. And I started a correspondence with these people – the Lipmans. They had 2 children. The daughter was my age. She was a month older than I was. And the boy was 2 or 3 years younger. And I learned English at school and I'd private lessons also when my father realised that I can come to England with the children's transport and so I had English lessons. So I started...

BL: Who gave you the English lessons?

UG: Miss Petrie. That was her name. I don't know who she was. I remember she was a nice and good looking young lady and she came I think once or twice a week. I can't remember. I learned English from her. And so I wrote to this family Lipmans and we corresponded and it was all very well and very nice. And I arrived with the children's transport. Now children's transport was on the 15th of March and on the platform I met one of my friends from the school – from the Christian school – not from the Jewish school. I met her on the platform. And she was the one Helga Waldstein who got me interested in the synagogue here. And she said 'Ulla I'm so pleased to see her [you?!]' She was also a bit not sure of herself, not sure what's going to happen. And I said, 'Don't worry we will come over to England' and we did come over to England. And we were on the transport together.

BL: You said you corresponded with this family. So was that between November and March?

UG: Yes, yes. It was, yes. Well I haven't got much to say about this Jewish family because I was very unhappy there. I didn't like it. Do you want me to talk about it?

BL: We have to change tapes so I think we'll have a little break.

UG: Yes. Yes.

TAPE 1 - 57 minutes, 49 seconds

End of Tape One

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minutes 5 seconds

BL: This is Tape Two and we are conducting an interview with Mrs Ursula Gilbert. Let's just come back, before we get to England, just briefly back to Berlin if you could tell me the name of the school you went to outside Berlin please.

UG: It was Lehnitz. Lehnitz was one station before Oranienburg that was outside Germany...

BL: Outside Berlin.

UG: Outside Berlin, yes. This school was the only – as far as I know – the only German Jewish school that wasn't really for learning purposes but practical purposes because we all realised that sooner or later we'd have to leave Germany and stand on our own two feet and so we were equipped with some sort of occupation, some profession that we can earn our living with. And from that point of view I suppose it was important and not only that. In those days also I think Hitler brought in the law that the kids who leave school have to have – the girls had to have a domestic year, and the boys had to have something practical you know that they could say that they've learned. And Lehnitz, I don't know what I've said in the previous tape, but it was something that was thrust upon me. I wasn't very happy there. I didn't know anybody and I was there as it happened only for 6 weeks and the only duty that I had I remember was doing gardening. And I wasn't very happy at doing gardening. All together I think it was something there for the time being for a purpose. And unfortunately we had this bad experience on the 9th of November, and for that I remember it.

BL: How many girls were there?

UG: That I don't know. I have no idea.

BL: In your class?

UG: I don't really remember that as a class. I only remember that there was one girl, while we were all sitting at the police station all very worried, she said 'Ulla, don't go home without me. I want to go with you.' So we were very scared and we were very, very, very nervous because we didn't realise what went on that there was

an attack planned for our school and that was something that we didn't hear ever 5 minutes.

BL: And who was the head teacher or the person in charge?

Tape 2: 2 minutes 30 seconds

UG: Well Mrs Glücksman. Now I met up again with Mrs Glücksman later on in England here in Belsize square when I was in the hostel here. And again, my memories of Mrs Glücksman are not very favourable and very good because I think you know... I'm talking about the hostel in England here. She was all, you know, what she could get out of the girls and not really their own comfort and, you know, pleasant. I don't really remember anything about Lehnitz as such. I only remember the event afterwards. I remember it was a Friday. I think I said that before that this attack was planned and it all happened very, very quickly. But the after effect of what happened to us really was what stays in my mind, and that my father desperately tried to get hold of me. And I didn't go home but he said 'Don't go home, don't go home.' And I realised immediately what he meant by that – not to a Jewish home but to somewhere where nobody knew that my father would be, and that's what I remember Lehnitz for. The only person I ever met afterwards was somebody in our congregation, Renate Stern, and she liked to talk to me about it. I think she was older than I was and her memories obviously go back further than mine. For me Lehnitz was something that I could have easily done without. I didn't like it very much.

BL: And you wanted to say something else about your parents?

UG: Oh yes. One thing that I did forget when we were talking about how times were difficult in German and gradually got worse and worse; for instance, we used to go to Olivaer Platz in Berlin and my grandmother lived near there. There were benches everywhere you couldn't sit down on. And we weren't allowed to do this and that and the other. Although perhaps my father really didn't want to go to America but he realised something's got to be done. And he did have cousins and relatives there. And these relatives perhaps thought you know, 'Here's somebody coming. How is he going to earn his living?' But he had a number and that number for the whole family should have come up in June or July '42. And he never lived to see that. So if he would have registered before or done something more urgently then perhaps he would have got out. But he didn't. So I only remember the times, how I was at home with my parents and how family life was.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 18 seconds

BL: And you said your parents had these friends the Henshaws?

UG: The Henschels.

BL: Henschels – how do you spell that?

UG: H-E-N-S-C-H-E-L – Moritz Henschel. And he was the last person in charge of the Jewish Community and he was also I think a Vorstand in Fasanenstraße in the synagogue. And the families were very close. The Henschels also had 2 daughters; we

were round about in the same age group. And the Henschels - as I said they were close friends to my parents and not only that. When my uncle could get to Sweden and he realised - I don't know how it was possible - he knew that the Henschels were sent to Theresienstadt. I don't know when that was when he left Berlin - that he sent parcels on a regular basis to Mr and Mrs Henschel. Now I've got some record of what Mr Henschel did in Theresienstadt. He was in charge of the post in Berlin. He had a daughter, who... we were friendly. They all went to Israel afterwards and unfortunately - I think family Henschel was rescued from Theresienstadt and survived - he died within weeks or days. I think it was a few weeks after he arrived. Whereas his wife she lived for many, many more years afterwards and she was drawn in as a witness in the Eichmann trial. So obviously I've got records and they wrote to my uncle in the last few years in Berlin, what they had to endure. And at the time I remember I was going to show them to people and they said they've heard about it or something. I've got records of how their opinion was and what happened in Theresienstadt.

BL: So did they stay close to your parents throughout the time in...?

UG: I don't...Yes!

BL: In Berlin?

Tape 2: 7 minutes 31 seconds

UG: In Berlin. Oh yes, very close, yes.

BL: And you think through him your father got involved with the Kindertransport... with the community more?

UG: I would imagine. I mean I don't know. I mean my father with the Kindertransport that was after the 9th of November. But as a young child I remember going for the Jüdische Winterhilfe in Berlin. That was to collect money and I was never shy, so I remember I had a list of people to visit, to go and see, knock on their door and say 'Do you want something?' or whatever. And I remember I used to do that whereas my sister, no, no, she couldn't, she wouldn't and she wasn't interested. I was quite proud of myself. And I also remember something in those days I think it was a law by which once a week or once a month people had Jüdische Winterhilfe. You know they would cook a special meal or something less elaborate. So my parents did this. It's a day when special meals were served.

BL: So when did you find out that you had a space on one of the Kindertransports?

UG: Well that I don't know. I remember going to Uhlandstraße which was the office where they worked. And my father always came home and told little stories about what happened, about the children, what happened at either parties perhaps Christmas or birthdays. And my father was good at making up little poems, the little things, the good things he felt were important to sort of emphasise also. I don't know I made enquiries how soon could I come to England because we had relatives. My mother had a cousin and her family left Berlin I think early 1933. And her husband was in the metal business and I think they were also quite well heeled. And they kept

in touch and every now and again they came back to Berlin. And they found this family who were willing to take in a child - somebody who they knew a little bit about. And I corresponded with the girl who was my age and I came over. I came over with the children's transport in March, on the 15th of March. And I came to... I arrived in England and my aunt was there and this lady, Mrs Lipman.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 7 seconds

And I came back to their house, and they had a nice house in Brondesbury in London. And...oh, I mean they meant very, very well but somehow their background or how they were and what they did and they were orthodox. I knew that and I knew a lot about the Jewish religion and I was quite aware that they were sort of very orthodox. But it happened that on many occasions he came down and he criticised me and I've never forgotten one morning he said to me 'You are like an animal - like a horse' he said, 'you know who sits down and eats breakfast and doesn't say a prayer and you don't ever pray, etc.' And there were little things I did wrong in his eyes. And they didn't have another book. Only a prayer book and a cookery book and there was nothing there where we found common ground, we could discuss. I remember they had an Irish maid and very often I used to sit and talk to the Irish maid because I felt she was more interested in me and she had more to tell me than this family. And the two children - I don't know whether they were empty or they had something against me. I remember once they chased me around the dining room table 'I hate you, I hate you'. And the next minute she came and kissed me, the daughter. It was a very difficult. I just couldn't understand the behaviour of the children. And I had nothing really to get me sort of you know, closer to the family. And it must have been either May or June - I'm not quite sure - I wrote to my father. I think he must have known that I wasn't happy there. And I said, 'Well either you find me another family or I shall do it myself. I'll find somewhere else'. I'm not quite sure how it came about but soon after then I was taken to a hostel in Willesden Lane. And as far as I remember this hostel in Willesden Lane was run by B'nai Brith. Because when war broke out

Tape 2: 12 minutes 30 seconds

And these committee ladies got us all together and said 'War has broken out and we've got to economise and we haven't got this any more, for instance they couldn't afford any kosher meat, so we eat vegetables and a lot of things we can't afford any more. And we've got to sort of act accordingly.' But I was quite happy. At least we had a very, very nice matron. We had a woman who was called Mrs Gehner. She used to run a Kinderheim in - I'm not sure whether in Marienbad or Karlsbad. And she was a great, great friend to us, to all of us. She was interested and she wrote to my parents. And even later on, when the boys were little - our sons - she used to invite us and she was interested in what happened to me. She was an extremely nice person. This was all very well until we were bombed out. And I think we were bombed out in '40...'41? And it was...well rather bad. You know we were bombed out and we had the door... I think the cellar door was smashed in and we had to wait until the air raid warden came and dug us out and we were taken to the station where there were a lot of injured soldiers. And we were all got together and we were told 'Anyone who's got relatives here they've got to go and get in touch with their relatives - and go to their relatives.' So I went to the same relatives who made it possible for me to come to England and I stayed there for a week or two weeks - I can't remember - until another

hostel was found for me. So I went to this Glücksman's hostel. Well I didn't dislike the hostel but I disliked the way it was run and I made some nice friends. All together I mean my hostel time wasn't an unhappy one. There were a lot of girls and I found nice girls and the other ones I could leave and the ones I made friends with I was quite happy with. And that went on – Yes, it went on until March until I was 16. And when you were 16 during the war you had to go before a tribunal and the tribunal would decide whether you were a friendly or an enemy alien. Well it happened at that particular point of time when my date came up I had chicken pox and I couldn't go. So I missed my date and it must have been quite a long time sitting in the hostel waiting for a new date and what to do so I had to do different jobs in the hostel. I didn't dislike doing the hostel but there were a number of girls who worked like a Trojan for Mrs Glücksman because she ran the British Restaurant, and there was something else I think where she made money. Girls worked for her.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 33 seconds

She used their effort and their labour and I wasn't very happy. And shortly before that time I had a friend I went to school with. She went to Manchester and she wrote to me. She said, 'Ulla, I'm unhappy. I'm not staying there. I come to London and I'll stay in your hostel. Can you make it possible?' And I made it possible for her to come to London and by that time I must have found a job. Just before the war, about 6 weeks, or even less than 6 weeks, I had a trainee permit to learn millinery. Millinery was something considered by my parents and I - I could use my hands and perhaps it's a nice job to have. You try and learn millinery. And I had a trainee permit now and I stayed there until war broke out on the 3rd of September – that was on a Sunday. On the Monday morning all the people who worked for this particular company got together in the workroom. And the manageress came and talked to us and said, 'War has broken out as you know. And the long and the short of it is we've got one German person here amongst us and that is Ursula over there, and she has to go'. And I was dismissed on the spot. That was Monday morning. Because Ursula was German and as far as they were concerned... So I came back cap in hand to the hostel and I stayed in the hostel – I forget now how long – before I found a job. Perhaps it must have coincided because I fell ill in 1940 -41 – I'm not quite sure about the dates. I was very ill. I had glandular fever and I landed in hospital and for 3 months I wasn't allowed to do anything. And then I wasn't allowed to do any work where I came into contact with dirty conditions or factory work and all that. So from that time onwards I started working in an office. Now, I don't know whether I was quick or whether I liked it there. I did war work. And I don't quite know in what succession it was but I had one job for a long time being a progress chaser.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 8 seconds

And I had...people that worked there, they were supposed to do quickly and they were on piece work and I supplied them with work and I was quite happy there. But I did different jobs – many different jobs for a little while. Perhaps I found somewhere else where I could earn more money, or it was better, so I had a lot of different jobs. I had a lot of different rooms and accommodation and always one step up - it was better and different until, I could say, until 1948. 1948 I met my husband who I'd know before. We went to the same youth club which was opposite the hostel in Belsize Park. I met him before he went into the forces and he went and did his service until

1948. And he came back again and I met him again, and we got friendly until 1949 and we got married. So when people talk about jobs or what you learn or what you did it's really only the last couple of years perhaps I could say I found a job in an advertising agency. That's the only job I ever had that I ever liked. It was very varied and very interesting and it introduced me to market research. Market research is something that you go out and you talk to people and you interview them and I enjoyed that very much and I did that for 20 years or so until the boys were really teenagers. I had a quota and I did it quickly so I could always be back in time for them when they came home from school. So that's really my career to say. But in 1975, I did some studying. I've always gone to classes and I went to the City Lit, where I got in touch and had a lecturer. And she was interested in me and she was interested to help people. It was called Fresh Horizons the course and at the end of this year she said to me 'Ursula you live in Edgware don't you? Well there is a college nearby where there is a special course for married women for adult people who've got children, where the mothers don't have any proper qualifications. Would you be interested to go in for studying and get a degree?' –Which I took up in '75 and I graduated in 1980, so I did this for 5 years and I found it the most interesting 5 years. I learnt a lot and I met nice people and it really opened up my horizons. Because as I said, up to that time I'd never gone in for any examinations or studying or doing anything serious. And I enjoyed the subject matter. It was on European studies and I enjoyed it very much.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 36 seconds

BL: Let's just go back to when you came to England.

UG: Yes.

BL: Do you remember, what were your first impressions?

UG: Of coming to London? Very dirty...

BL: Can you describe the journey a bit more?

UG: The journey. I was terribly seasick and I remember I went with this friend from school and I remember she said she was so pleased to see me and I wasn't all that interested because I was very seasick. But I remember getting on the train and my father coming to the train and the train went a little bit parallel to the Stadtbahn [urban railway] and every now and again I used to see him. I suppose it was heartbreaking but somehow I was looking forward to different... I'd never gone to England, I'd never been on a boat like that before and I was looking forward – it was more like an adventure really. And I always felt that 1942 would come around and I'd meet my parents again. I'd go to America and I'll see them and it seemed something new and I wasn't scared of it really. I arrived in Liverpool Street Station and you know this aunt there who..., Bentheim – she was there with Mrs Lipman and Mrs Lipman was not one of the most beautiful ladies. She was very big and I remember she had very thin hair and it was a little bit all very strange and different. They had a house in Brondesbury the house was very nice. But it was very different to a flat and I'm used to a lot of books and you know conversation. He was a very orthodox Jew and it was a very orthodox family and, you know, keeping kosher and all that. Which I was

prepared for but it was the way it was given to me was something a little bit strange. And also you know the accusations, 'You are like an animal' and the children chasing me around the table...It didn't really make me any closer to liking them.

BL: What was expected of you? Were you supposed to work?

UG: Well I don't know!

BL: You were 16. Did you go to school?

UG: Well I went to the Walm Lane Synagogue. They started classes for refugees and children and I went to the classes there. No, I didn't do anything else but going to the classes. How often, I don't know.

BL: What sort of classes were they?

Tape 2: 24 minutes 6 seconds

UG: To learn English. To learn English and I remember going to the synagogue classes every Saturday morning going traipsing down to Walm Lane from Sidmouth Road to go there. And, how can I say? You know the family and the background and the interest were very different. But that didn't make any difference really, you know somehow the way their behaviour and how their attitude was to me was so strange. For instance if I can say it, the toilet was half way up the stairs in these bigger houses – old fashioned. It wasn't an old fashioned house but different and the toilet was halfway up the stairs. And I remember that they had two lots of toilet paper and I took the wrong toilet paper and tore it off. And he managed to go past it and, 'You've done a terrible thing. You've torn the paper on the Shabbat. How could you? The other paper is there.' You know little things you'd get probably a long lecture about it and I felt it's all very strange and very different. And I didn't like it so I did something about it. And I suppose it's...

BL: How long did you stay there?

UG: Until the summer. I'm not quite sure when I changed. I didn't quite say it right, now. I went till the summer and it happened in the summer there was – I don't know whether my father or I got it. I went to Brighton. And there was a family who wanted - obviously somebody must have paid for me – to take a child. And it turned out it was the music teacher from the Jewish school in Wilsnackerstraße and it was very, very nice and I was very happy there. And then my aunt from London arrived and she said 'I've got a trainee permit for you to go and start working.' And she found this job for 10 shillings a week for me. And I came back to London and I went to a hostel – probably the Belsize Park hostel – and that's where my working life started.

Tape 2: 26 minutes 22 seconds

BL: But you said, just to coming back to the first family –

UG: Yes?

BL: Why did they want you? Why did they take you in, I mean they wanted to help...?

UG: They wanted to help children, the children's transport, and they heard about it. And they heard from their friends who were in the Jewish school. In those days probably everybody heard about it - 10,000 children coming over from Germany and I think their request was, it's better to get somebody with a little bit the same background than to get somebody completely strange. And their intention was very good and very nice, yes.

BL: But it sounds as if they didn't have an understanding of where you were coming from at all?

UG: Yes, yes, yes. And I think the 2 families were very, very different and I don't want to make any judgment. They lived differently, they thought differently and I suppose I thought at that time it's not going to get any better, I've got to do something about it and make it so that I like it better. And that happened. I made it so and I mean conditions in the hostel weren't very nice. Little things I remember about the hostel. There was one hostel - the room was called the Danzig Girls'. They lived in that hostel, there were 4 Danzig girls and one extra bed and that was taken for me. Now why did I go in there? Mrs Glücksman remembered from Berlin and perhaps she knew my parents personally and she knew about me. She said 'Ulla is coming over'. And you know the Danzig girls were particularly..., you know they worked like Trojans. They helped in the kitchen and the British restaurant so it was a special treatment as it were. I didn't like the hostel. All right the hostel was a hostel and times were very difficult. And the only thing I remember about the hostel, the girls who had a job, the better - I used to say - the better they told a lie, the more money they kept. And that was true. If they said they earned 10 pounds let's say, 8 pounds had to go to the hostel. If you say you only got 5 pounds you only gave 5 pounds away and that sort of thing. You know, money was very important to Mrs Glücksman and the food was terrible! And all together she was after her own flesh.

BL: How did you support yourself? Where did you get the money?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 48 seconds

UG: Well I think it must...I'm not quite sure about that but now looking back over the years it must have been the Lodge. Although I don't remember that my parents ever talked about the Lodge but it must have been that they went. Because later on when war broke out, in the hostel you know, 'Times are hard and we've got to economise and we can't afford this and that.' They got the money from America; that I do remember. But we were always told, 'You can't afford this.' I think we only got sixpence or less than sixpence pocket money. I got a little bit of extra money because my uncle sent me some money from Sweden occasionally so I was not quite so hard up about money and pocket money. But the others I don't know how they did it. They got their food and their lodging in the hostel and some of the girls were older than I and they worked. They had a proper job whereas with me it was... it was different.

BL: Did you have any contact with Bloomsbury House, or with any other refugee organizations?

UG: I didn't personally. There were what we called the Komitedamen. They lived around the corner, had very nice flats and houses and they lived very well. And I remember one day one of the ladies said, 'We also have to economise I can't use my bath salt any more'. And that's how she economised. And we couldn't afford this and that, and I remember when we said we needed shoes soled, the answer was, 'If you didn't walk down to number 8 Kilburn High Road every day, you know you wouldn't walk off your heels so quickly. You've got to economise. You can't afford this. You can't afford that.' All right it's only words and I suppose it was true. Everybody economised and the hardship...I think the difference was that everybody was...You don't remember the war but everybody economised and didn't have any money and didn't have very good food. That she used it in different ways is a different matter. But there was a purpose there. We had to fight the Germans and war went on; there was rationing and times were difficult - yes. We were all in the same boat.

Tape 2: 31 minutes 9 seconds

BL: So what were the names of the hostels you stayed in? First it was...

UG: Willesden Lane Hostel - Mrs Gehner, she was the...

BL: Yes - till it was bombed.

UG: Till it was bombed, that's right. And then Belsize Park Hostel - it was only Mrs Glücksman. She had two, one double house I think in number 46 Belsize Park and 27, and 27 was also used as the British Restaurant, where these girls helped cooking and people came and had a good meal. And my husband sometimes told me when he was on leave he went and ate there. And it was continental cooking and the cooking was a lot better than Mrs Glücksman's cooking.

BL: So a lot of refugees came there?

UG: Oh...came there - a lot. I mean British Restaurant in Belsize Park...Ask a lot of people like our...our generation who remember that.

BL: What did they make? Do you remember?

UG: What....That I don't remember - that I don't - continental food. I'm sure it was continental food. But in those days also you weren't allowed to spend more than £5 on your... on a meal at a time. So in other words, you couldn't go and order...You had money you ordered more food than the others - no, that wasn't possible.

BL: Did you ever eat there?

UG: Oh yes.

BL: In the British Restaurant?

UG: Well not in the British Restaurant. No, I couldn't afford it. I didn't have any money. The hostel didn't pay me any money at all I don't think. No.

BL: So what at that point when you didn't work... What was the...Can you describe a sort of normal day in a hostel?

UG: Well a normal day in a hostel, in the first hostel we all had duties – the washing and the ironing and the cooking and that was again in Mrs Gehner's hostel. That was all very nice and very friendly and organised. You know that was no hardship at all. The Glücksman's hostel was a much larger hostel, it was a dirtier hostel, it wasn't so friendly, and it wasn't so nice. Mrs Glücksman, she didn't care about the girls much. Her interest...She had 2 children – she had 2 sons and a daughter – and they lived with her upstairs, it was a different world where she lived. It was a very great difference and you've probably never lived with girls together like that. It's amazing when they're all together they do things together. And at that time they had a lot of Spaniards in Belsize Park and all that. She was all concerned, 'Don't go out with the Spaniards', and don't do this and don't do that. And you were not allowed to do this. It wasn't a very happy time but somehow you know...

BL: Were there house rules? House rules?

Tape 2: 33 minutes 55 seconds

UG: I suppose there must have been yes. I can't remember. I didn't go out late at night. I can't remember very much. My only interest was really to earn enough money so that I can move out of the hostel and I did find this with a friend who was in Manchester and came to the hostel. And when we both earned enough money we went to a boarding house in Belsize Avenue where we had our evening meal and weekend meals. I can't remember now how much it was. We shared a room and that was the beginning of moving out and earning my own living. I don't know how I earned a living. I didn't make hats, I worked... And later on after that I was ill and then I can't really remember all the different, I had a lot of different jobs and I earned enough money to keep body and soul together.

BL: So when was the mill...

UG: Millinery?

BL: Millinery training? When was that?

UG: Well that started about 6 weeks before the war and I didn't really learn any millinery – any hat making - at all. The people in the millinery shops, they were short of material and I think it was difficult. I forget now – a couple of years or so. I was more you know, doing different things. I learned how to make hats. But my husband always says I'm not artistic. I learned to sew there. Yes I did. The sewing was something that I learned.

BL: What was the company? What was it called? Where was it?

UG: Madame Vernier in George Street. She was very nice. She came from Poland and there were one or two other continental... It was very nice and very friendly but I don't think I learned to make hats. I'm not artistic, I can sew but I didn't have the flair

for it. It was a necessary evil, and then later on I took a job that was something that kept me going that was something that was well paid - scarves. I rolled scarves and I got paid so much per scarf and since I was quick and I could sew, that was something that was quite lucrative. I had different jobs and I was doing war work as well...

BL: What does it mean you rolled scarves?

UG: The surrounding, you know the surrounding. The edges – you roll it and you sew it so it's not a raw edge. And that was paid...I don't know how much I got paid but it was quite lucrative if you were quick. That was somewhere in the West End. I had to bring them there and collect them. It was something that you know, that I could do that since I was fast in doing it. It was quite well paid. That's what I earned and I think probably I had a job during the day as well.

Tape 2: 36 minutes 47 seconds

BL: So were you upset when you had to leave the millinery?

UG: I was never upset, no. No I wasn't upset because I realised it was something that I took up because I felt perhaps I could do it. But I couldn't. I think other people had more artistic feeling for it.

BL: But were you upset that people called you the German?

UG: Oh yes! I was very upset about that, but...I suppose it's true you know she was so ignorant she didn't know the difference that I was Jewish and the others were not and she just knew we're fighting the Germans. And anybody German in her place, you know, 'Out you go!' – So...

BL: You started telling us that you had to go to a tribunal. You didn't tell us actually what happened at the Tribunal...?

UG: I didn't... I never went to the Tribunal.

BL: Oh you said you had chicken pox?

UG: I can't remember that I ever went to the tribunal. I don't know if they ever asked me to go even later or how long it takes...And as it happened, my husband also had chicken pox round about that same time but he was far, far away from that.

BL: So you never classified as A, B, C – you never got a letter?

UG: Well, I did because I remember we had to report to the police station every time we changed our occupation. We changed our ...you know...where we lived so that they keep check on us. I mean for instance, I've got some friends who were by the seaside and they weren't allowed to stay there. But they checked; the police station knew exactly where I was working, where I was staying and they knew all about me.

BL: So you must have been classified at some point as an enemy alien?

UG: Yes, yes. I suppose so. Whether after that time they realised the youngsters who were in a hostel... I don't quite know how it... I've never been to a tribunal. That's all I do know. Why, I've no idea.

BL: So you were not interned?

UG: Oh no, definitely not interned.

BL: Were any of your friends interned?

UG: No. I think it was a question of age. We were all under 16 I think, I don't know. My husband knows more about that, he went through all that. No, no. I can't remember anybody of my friends being interned. Some of my friends went to school, the ones from Germany who perhaps had some relatives here who paid them to go. And I was not the kind of person who pushed myself to go to school. That wasn't what I wanted to do – no.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 16 seconds

BL: What did you want to do; do you remember what you wanted to do at the time?

UG: No. I don't remember ever thinking 'I want to do so and so' because in Germany it was always a question of you know, going to stand on your own two feet, earning your living. You know, you've got to come to another country; you've got to start from... And learning was not my greatest... what I wanted to do. Not my greatest interest.

BL: So what other hostel...? You were in Belsize Park Hostel?

UG: Yes.

BL: Any other hostels before you went to the boarding house?

UG: No, the hostel I was happy in was the one in Willesden Lane after I left the Lipmans. I think I didn't... No, I went to Brighton first – that was all before. The hostel in Belsize Park was for a couple of years or even longer I think, until I earned enough money to support myself, to move out with my friend.

BL: So from when to when did you live in the Belsize Park Hostel?

UG: I can't even remember that. Two years? Two years.

BL: That's quite long.

UG: Yes, it was – it was long but I endured that better than you know – the family. That went against my... all together. There were lots of things I didn't like about the hostel but I could live there because nobody cared about me really whether I kept my meals and was there on time... If I wasn't on time I didn't get any food. If I was there

I got the food and nobody cared about me, so it didn't matter. I had friends there. I wasn't only depending on them, really. It was more - go after your own interest and whatever you want to do and nobody cared really.

BL: Was there a sort of community among the girls?

UG: Yes, I think there was yes. Well, to a certain extent. There were some girls - the Danzig girls - and some other girls yes. And there were a lot of girls from Vienna I didn't quite...I don't know why. It showed up already in the hostel in Belsize...in Willesden Green the Viennese girls kept together and the Berlin and the German ones - I don't know whether it's a coincidence or not but that's how it was. And there were enough girls there - I don't know how many - 30, 40 girls. You picked the ones you wanted to get on with and you were friendly with and it didn't worry me.

BL: Did you go - when you lived in that hostel - did you go to any other youth clubs?

Tape 2: 41 minutes 45 seconds

UG: Yes I went across the road to Belsize, it was also Belsize Park, yes, the FD or Free German Youth - you've heard of that? That's where I met my husband. There were a lot of people there also from the hostels who went over there. The atmosphere and all that, it was more to my liking although I never belonged to them. I didn't really join them as it were but it was second... you know I went across the road there and they came over for dances and all that. It was a much nicer understanding.

BL: Can you tell us about the Free German Youth? What sort of activities were there?

UG: Oh they had a lot of outings and excursions and concerts and... political also. You know they had sort of interest and a lot of them went back to Germany afterwards. But I didn't take part in that really; I took more the social part of it. They were much older - some of them much older and some of the girls from the hostels went over there and sort of made friends. And well, it was a sort of a half way house. It wasn't a hostel; it wasn't really to my liking. There were certain things there that I could take up and the social side of it was nice and I met my husband there. There were a lot of boys there who went also like he did, you know. They were in the forces and they came back again afterwards. I think if you make friends when you're young and if they are really friends you stick to them, it's not a come and go one. And if you haven't got any family or anybody else, you're sort of closer in your relationships.

BL: Speaking of family, did you stay in touch with your family? What was the news you heard from them?

Tape 2: 43 minutes 38 seconds

UG: Well the news that I heard... I had regular letters. The letters were always very cheerful and very sort of belittling 'it's not so bad' and you know sort of very flowery language. And somehow I could understand that some of the things they didn't talk about - the actual things that happened. But you know, talked like for instance...I'm

not quite sure, no my parents got deported in '43, perhaps it could have been only '42 when they were taken out. They had a 3 room flat, a 4-room flat in Viktoria-Luise-Platz, and after that I forget. During the war some time they were forced to vacate the large flat. And they were all taken into one room and one kitchen and you know it...As it happened my husband told me that he knows of some relatives who were also taken into that same house, so that was probably the house where the Jews were allowed to be, cramped together, and to stay there.

BL: But what do you remember, I mean your parents must have been worried about you. What sort of advice did they give you?

UG: Well they tried to give advice but the advice coming from Berlin under Hitler's Germany what I could do...It was only what my mother was concerned, you know, cleanliness and tidiness and you know, 'You're a good girl' and, 'What are you doing?' and, 'There are some people here'. My grandmother had some friends who lived here, 'Have you been to visit them?' and that sort of advice. And I think she must have realised that I was quite sensible and I could look after myself. Also I'm handy with...if anything needs doing I didn't sort of neglect it. Well I was perhaps a little bit domesticated. Even now if I look around other people you know they say, 'Well it's not really necessary is it.' But I seem to do it. I remember when I moved out from my friend. Every Saturday afternoon was the time when I cleaned my room and I did all the things that I had to do. You know, it was something that I had to do once a week and I did do it.

BL: What about your sister? Did you stay in touch with your sister? Did she write letters to you?

Tape 2: 45 minutes 59 seconds

UG: She did write letters to me, oh yes. But she didn't write very much. She was...I forget now when she got to know her future husband. But there weren't very many youngsters in Berlin left but they got together and I think she wrote about you know, there were happy times, perhaps. And they were dancing perhaps in the flats you know and they had records - my parents had records. I don't know whether they were still allowed to have radios, I'm not sure. But you know youngsters together, obviously they met. And when I was in Berlin she never had a boyfriend and then she was talking about some boys. And in the end this particular boy, he wrote to me once and he said sort of in language - I've got one of the letters there - to say, 'You know, it's funny that we are the first ones to get married'. So they expected me to get married. And that was the day before they were deported. They got married on a special permit to get married. I don't know whether Henschels or who made it possible that she got married. Because now all the papers that I've got: Stefanie Belger - that's the man she married, and...

BL: Did they get married because they thought it would be useful for the deportation?

UG: Yes. Yes my father wrote and said it was better if they all go together - his parents and my parents. I think my parents didn't have to go then, but perhaps my father realised you know it's only a question of time, but he made it possible that they

all went together. But I don't know what happened. I know through this Mr Wollheim that I met before; he said to me that he got separated from my father and he didn't know. He only knew that he went to...what was the name of the factory? In, in...in Buna, the Buna factory outside Auschwitz. My father went there.

BL: So they were deported together.

UG: They were deported together.

BL: By then, were there still any surviving grandparents?

Tape 2: 48 minutes 10 seconds

UG: Well I think, my father didn't actually say so, but I think my uncle in Sweden told me that they made it possible that she... I don't know whether she took tablets or what happened to her. She was never deported. Because what I know about my grandmother and the lifestyle and all that – you know he did her a favour, as it were. Perhaps my father with his good..., always thinking it's not going to be as bad as everybody thinks – it happened like that. But in a way I feel if he felt like that and he was very convinced that, you know, everything's going to end in a happy way. And you know that feeling, he made it possible for my mother really not to be so frightened and perhaps also for my sister –it made their life more pleasant and more bearable. And I think that was part of the things he had to do. I went to I forget now what organisation we went to in Berlin and I made some enquiries. And they said that his job perhaps was to go and inform people that they had to go on such and such a date and report. And what's to be done and what they take, and perhaps that's what he was doing the last few years and all that. And I spoke to Mrs Henschel – you know the lady who...were very close with my parents - and she also said you know that he did some work for the Jewish organisation. But whether he actually got paid for that in the end I don't know. But I think it suited him. He was you know...He is a person who...He could talk, and he could convince you and you could find always the good side of things.

BL: When did you hear last from your parents?

UG: The telegram on 9th of March, '43 when he sent that telegram to my uncle. I didn't hear anything later than that.

BL: And did your uncle immediately then forward it, or did he then immediately send it on to you?

UG: Yes, I don't know how. I think yes, he did. Yes, he did. My uncle played a very big part in our life in England. He helped us in a lot of ways and we saw a lot of them. He invited us a lot in Sweden and we travelled together. He was very fond of our sons and was very fond of my husband. And well, I suppose he also felt he had the misfortune that he lost a son and he only has the one daughter. She is 9 years younger than I. I'm in contact with her now. She's the only relative I really have now. She's the only cousin. And I think he was fond of me you know, fond of my husband and the boys. And he could help us in a way. For instance he gave us the money to

repay back so we bought a house to start with. And we saw each other a lot. And I think you know he liked us as a family.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 39 seconds

BL: And he settled in Sweden with his non-Jewish wife?

UG: Non-Jewish wife, yes. They were very, very good to us. How can I say it? I considered him..., you know, I didn't have my parents. I was the first one – I don't know anybody else - in '47 I went to Sweden on a stateless passport. I had a German passport. We had to have a passport to come to England and I think well, we had to hand it over in the children's transport. They took the passports and we went on a combined passport to England. And I was always under the impression that my passport was left in Germany. I knew my number was 3702 or something I think. I knew the number that I had to come to England. But 5 years ago, 7 years ago, I get a letter from somebody in Belsize Park from, what's her name, Lily...Lily..., it'll come to me in a minute. She said, 'Ursula, I've got your papers and your passport here.' So I said 'What do you mean?' She said they had a letter or a notification from the Home Office that all the children's passports who came by children's transport were taken by the Home Office and kept for 25, 35, I don't know how many years, and they now wanted to get rid of them. So they didn't know how to get rid of...and they must have tried organisations. And this organisation heard about Ursula Brann – the Home office, and they must have said... Or perhaps the other way around, Belsize Square Synagogue because this woman works in...

BL: World Jewish Relief.

UG: World Jewish Relief. She said, 'What do you want me to do with your passports?' So I said 'Well, can you send it to me?' She sent it to me. I've got this passport now so I've got a German passport. I've got my stateless passport upstairs and I've got a British passport. And with that stateless passport I went...that's the only one I could use at the time in 1947. And my uncle invited me and he wanted me to come to Sweden. He wanted me to stay in Sweden. I stayed there for 3 weeks. In Sweden also a permit, I forget now what permit, children...to look after children...or domestic permit. I couldn't do anything else. So I said 'Well if I can't do anything else I might as well go back to England. Why do I have to stay in Sweden?' So I stayed there for 3 months in the summer and then I came back to England. It was very nice for me but I didn't stay there.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 38 seconds

BL: Did you think of going anywhere else after the war?

UG: After the war, what can I say? Well, no, I didn't want to go to America now because I mean my parents – I wouldn't see my parents there. Not really. Either America or England, and America really without my parents – I might as well stay here. And when you're a young person you don't think like that I don't think, you know you..., no, I didn't. I don't know why exactly.

BL: When did you find out what happened to your parents? I mean you knew they were deported.

UG: I don't know when...I know that my uncle sent parcels to Theresienstadt. My The Henschels couldn't tell me anything about it because they knew even...I mean they were deported and that was the last they heard from them. No, it was a question of staying here and making a living. I mean I wasn't married then, so until '49 it was something that I can't remember. I can't remember what feelings.... I never wanted to go anywhere else here. That I do know.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 0 second

BL: But at the end of the war were you still in the Belsize Park Hostel?

UG: Yes. Wait a minute, '40...I know that everybody came and you know - VE day - with something. Everybody was so happy and so you know...That was the unhappiest days of my life perhaps because then I heard... Up till now I could hope and think you know perhaps one day I'll see them again. If I haven't heard by then, I won't hear any more - That's the end of it, the end of hoping. Now you come to terms eventually, and you know this is the present. No. I think you know when you are - how can I put it? - I was 15, 16 until early 20s and then you know I earned a living and I had friends here and I made friends. And I'd come...I'd been adjusted to living by myself and I didn't have any family then. The people who helped me to come over, the Bentheims, I mean they were sort of... but I didn't really gel with me. They were nice to me and they helped me, yes. Now for instance, I went there every Shabbas - they were orthodox. Every Shabbas, because I knew I didn't have any meat. They invited me for a meat meal, but their ways of living were different again. They were quite well off and their children went to boarding school. And you know again it wasn't my type of life that I was leading.

BL: You kept in touch with them?

UG: Oh yes, oh yes, very much yes. After I was bombed out I was there for a fortnight but they're you know...she played bridge and she...they were living a different lifestyle. I was again I was used to doing the things I wanted to do. I wasn't used to being in a family surrounding, and not living at home is something different again.

BL: Mrs Gilbert the tape is running out. We have to take a break.

UG: Take a break? Oh, I see.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 17 seconds

End of Tape Two

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 0 minutes 5 seconds

BL: This is Tape Three. We are conducting an interview with Mrs Ursula Gilbert.

Let me just come back to your time in the hostels and the boarding house. So you stayed in the hostel?

UG: Which hostel do you mean now?

BL: I mean in general - all the hostels.

UG: Yes.

BL: Till when?

UG: I really can't tell you. I can't remember exactly when – Until I moved out to earn my own living and support myself.

BL: So when you moved out of the last hostel you lived in...

UG: Yes?

BL: Which hostel was it, the last one you lived in?

UG: The last hostel - Mrs Glücksman's 27 Belsize...

BL: The last one?

UG: Yes. That was the last hostel. And I had my friend and until we earned enough money to pay for living in a boarding house where we got our evening meal and Saturday and Sunday one main meal and breakfast.

BL: So can you maybe just tell us because not everyone will know, what is the difference between a boarding house and a hostel?

UG: Well boarding house, in German you would say 'Pension'. A boarding house you pay for. We paid I think it was 28 shillings a week and we got our meal at the weekend. And a hostel was run by some sort of Jewish organisation in those days and they looked after us. We were children and now we were grown up and we had enough money to support ourselves.

BL: Thank you. And who ran the boarding house you went to?

UG: A private person, somebody who owns the boarding house. That I can't remember at all. We had to pay 28 shillings a week.

BL: And you shared the room with your friend?

UG: We shared the room with my friend yes. And then we moved out of that boarding house because she got married. She got married very young, during the war. She got married to an Indian doctor. Not a doctor but he had 2 degrees. He had a degree from Oxford and Manchester and Calcutta. He's a very nice, very educated, a very nice Indian gentleman and they moved out and she had something that perhaps you don't know about, they lived in a pre-fab, which was a prefabricated house. And

she had her two children very young during the war and it was very difficult for her and she moved into this pre-fab. And it was a beautiful house specialty built for people who, you know – 2 young children, a young couple. And her husband – at that time her husband went back to India to Calcutta to see whether he could take his family to India. But he decided, I don't know for whatever reason, he wanted to come back to England, and he had a very good job at ICI. So that was my girlfriend. Unfortunately she died very young. But she had 2 children and I'm still friendly with her children and grandchildren.

Tape 3: 2 minutes 42 seconds

BL: So where did you move on to?

UG: Well do not ask me because I had digs in Belsize Avenue. I had digs in Howard Road. I lived in Lancaster Grove...one or two others...Adelaide Road. I can't remember how many different digs. And then it was a question always if you find a nicer place, something more suitable or so then you moved. And I moved and I lived by myself every time.

BL: Did you share rooms or you always were on your own?

UG: No, not after I moved out from my friend Bubi. And her parents – actually it was quite interesting. Her parents went from Germany to Chile, and he was a doctor. He was the doctor in Cottbus. And when she had her children, no before she had her children, she wanted to get married because she was expecting one child. And her parents didn't give permission because they were an orthodox family. He was an Indian doctor so she had to go before a tribunal and she got permission to get married and to have the children. So that was very important to her, to the parents and in the end all went well in the end. But I mean that's...but she didn't get permission right away.

BL: Was she under 18?

UG: She was under 18, my school friend, yes. I had quite a number of school friends and I still have school friends even now I had this musician – this musician friend who went back to Berlin. I keep sort of friendships for a long time.

BL: This is from which school?

UG: The one who married - that's from the Jewish school. The other one who went to Belsize Square she went to this Christian school and she had a Christian friend and she was my friend who went on the children's transport with me.

BL: Can you tell us a bit about the Belsize Square Synagogue?

UG: Yes. Now this particular friend from the non-Jewish school, I met her – I mean I was friendly with her but not really that close – but we met again when we went on the children's transport, on the transport. And she was very, very happy to see me. I think she has a different temperament to me. She was a little bit you know, 'Ulla, what are you doing?' and somehow I was the leading light. And she was lucky she

didn't have to go into a hostel. She had an aunt and uncle here who...actually her... cousin is active in Belsize Square Synagogue as well – Morgenthau. Now this friend of mine – I don't know I've forgotten what I wanted to say about her...

Tape 3: 5 minutes 30 seconds

BL: Belsize Square Synagogue.

UG: Belsize Square Synagogue. And she said, 'Ulla you must come. You know there is a synagogue there and you'll like the service. Why don't you go?' And she really pulled me to Belsize Square Synagogue. In those days I went practically nearly always at the High Holydays and I went to – I don't know – all the different cinemas and to Euston Road and different places. They had to find somewhere where they could go and get the services. And she, she belongs to, she's one of the founder members I think, Helga Waldstein. And I got to like the synagogue, I got to like it, it reminded me of Oranienburgerstraße. In Belsize Square there's also the stone from Oranienburgerstraße and it reminded me of the service at home. And I liked the music and I liked the warmth of people who go there. And I got my husband also interested and my mother in law at the time. And we've taken to Belsize Square although we don't go very often but when we do go there are a lot of people that we know and we feel at home there.

BL: What were your first impressions of Belsize Square?

UG: It reminded me of Oranienburgerstraße - very much so.

BL: Where did you go when you went first? Where was it? Where?

UG: I can't remember whether it was Swiss Cottage – whether Buckland Crescent or...was it in... I can't remember now...I can't remember. It will come back to me.

Tape 3: 7 minutes 14 seconds

BL: What sort of people did you meet there? Did you meet anyone you knew from Berlin?

UG: Yes, also another girl from school, Meta Kochman. I don't know whether the name rings a bell – Meta Kochman. And who else did I know from Germany? Also Renate Stern started to talk to us, because she also went to Lehnitz. Who else? Martin Laurence – you've probably heard of Martin – we were very great friends of Martin and Trudi Laurence. And Heinz Holmes and a lot of people we really know. A similar background and sort of what happened to people you know. And as we grew older, you know, friendships, and the couples...Who else do we know? I can't remember who else do we know from Belsize Square Synagogue? It's somehow you know a little bit of memory of Berlin - for me.

BL: When you got married did you get married in Belsize Square Synagogue?

UG: No. No, we didn't. These relatives of my mother's, the Bentheims, who made it possible for me to come over, they were very orthodox and they were members of

the Munck Shul in Golders Green and - they made it possible. We had 25 guests and we had the chuppah in their house. And I think my husband had a little bit of – not a set- to but he was rather upset when he wanted to go to Woburn house I think and you didn't get the...you didn't have the...that was when Raymond wanted to get married...Oh, I see I'm sorry I'm jumping the gun when my son wanted to get married and he had difficulty because he didn't have any proof- am I Jewish or not Jewish. And in the end he said, 'Well, isn't it enough I came on the children's transport and you know what happened to my family.' I'm sorry I got it muddled up.

BL: So you got married at your relatives'...?

UG: Yes, in the house. We had a chuppah in the house and we've got the Ketubah, yes. We got that.

BL: But so to Belsize you would go on Friday nights?

UG: Friday nights yes. We went on Friday nights with my friend Helga. She was very good to me. I was rather ill in Howitt Road and I went to New End Hospital and I was out of action. I couldn't work for 3 months and she looked after me and made sure that everything was all right for me. And that was a great help. She really proved a great friend.

BL: Who was the rabbi at the time...in Belsize?

Tape 3: 10 minutes 6 seconds

UG: Kokotek, I suppose. Kokotek. I didn't have...I didn't know anybody else before. There wasn't anybody else. Kokotek started it didn't he? No? Oh, I can't remember. No, Kokotek as far as I'm concerned.

BL: Did you have any other contact with the Chazzan Magnus Davidsohn?

UG: Well no I think he... I think I heard him in Fasanenstraße – was it Fasanenstraße in Berlin? I didn't have any contact with him, no dealings – I personally I mean, as a schoolgirl I wouldn't, no.

BL: Did you go to any... I think they organised Sunday concerts, the Synagogue. Did you go to any...?

UG: Sunday concerts...No,' I've never been to a concert in Belsize Square Synagogue - no.

BL: So what happened to your life? Where did you set up your home together with your husband?

UG: Well, we set up...He came home from being in the Army, and in those days it was very difficult to get furnished accommodation. I remember he made it possible for me to find a room in Belsize Park in the area with also one or two other friends. You know, you ask somebody 'Do you know anywhere?' And I think I lived in...I can't remember where I lived before we got married. But when we got married we

lived in Belsize Park. I lived at number 20 – 24. The hospital was number 27 and 46. I can't remember which numbers but we moved in there and we didn't...I don't know how long we stayed there in that furnished room. And then we had, my husband had a friend in the Army, and he was going back to his parents' home in Cardiff but he had a flat before and he said 'Harry are you interested in a flat?' And this flat was two furnished rooms and a kitchen with combined use of a bathroom in Earls Court Road over a greengrocer's shop. And we thought heaven had opened for us. We had two rooms, a sitting room and a bedroom.

Tape 3: 12 minutes 27 seconds

We moved in there and then our first son was born. And Raymond yelled day and night practically - he didn't get enough to eat. And the woman banged on the ceiling and shouted you know sort of 'Quiet, quiet!' I said to her one day 'Well I wouldn't live here if you could find somewhere else for me to go! I'd go very happily!' And believe it or not she did find another home for me. She found a flat for us in Earls Court Road which was a very nice...not Earls Court - Courtfield Gardens – a very nice road in South Kensington. And we let one room and made it possible to live there. And then until son number two arrived, then we found the flat perhaps wasn't big enough. And then with the help of my uncle we looked for a flat - for a house. And there were one or two houses that we were interested in. One house my husband found he wanted to move to West Finchley. But I think it was £200 or £400 that were missing so we couldn't have that house in West Finchley. And then the house came on the market in Manor Park Crescent, Edgware. And we took that house and the house was an older house – a large house and the upstairs had 4 bedrooms and we let 2 rooms – one large room a sitting room and a small little room that we turned into a kitchen for them. They were a very nice husband and wife – a very nice couple who worked on the buses and they didn't have any children. I don't know whether they couldn't have any or didn't want any. And they were only too pleased to do babysitting for us. So it was a very happy and very nice combination that we had. They were very nice people. Until my husband managed to get enough... After 4 or 5 years he managed to get enough money together and we bought a better house and this is the house we moved in to in '59. Our youngest son was just 4 years old and we've been here ever since! And we've had this house extended and we like it. This is where we are.

BL: Was it difficult for you to move from Belsize Park where there were quite a lot of refugees, to this area, or...?

UG: It wasn't difficult, no, no. We didn't know anybody in Edgware but it wasn't difficult. I don't know, when you started you'd got your car – we had a car - and then I was working. I did market research and I had been driving and had my own car so it was not a question of you know...Edgware. And since then a lot of our friends a lot of people moved into the neighbourhood, and this is very Jewish now and a lot of our friends are around here now.

Tape 3: 15 minutes 24 seconds

BL: Do you remember some of the sort of...atmosphere around Swiss Cottage?

UG: Yes, oh yes. I mean it was a highlight to go to the Glasshouse – to go and have a cup of coffee there. We couldn't afford anything else. I mean there were a lot of nice pastry places where you can go and sit and all that but we couldn't afford that. But you know we weren't the only ones! The Glasshouse was a snack bar where we all met and as I said we could all go and have a cup of coffee...

BL: Where was that?

UG: In Swiss Cottage. It was also in Swiss Cottage and it was a tiny little place where you could have a coffee – where you could go and have a coffee perhaps. But that's as far as it would stretch – no more. We couldn't go out and eat anything or do anything. We didn't need to and we didn't have to. You know we had a lot of friends and that's how everybody else lived. We weren't the only ones.

BL: Did you have mostly friends who also had a sort of German Jewish refugee background?

UG: Yes I think so. I think so. I don't think I had anybody else. The only friend I've got who was married to the Indian, they were the only sort of not... Well she was Jewish. She had very nice, very orthodox relatives and they were very nice to me and otherwise no, they were all English. There were perhaps Austrians – not all German people – Austrian or Czech but not English, no. I've got English friends now. We've got two lots of English friends that I made at Hatfield when I studied. Two very nice ladies and we're still in contact with them. And we've joined the lodge now, the Shlomo Argov Lodge. I don't know if you know anything about that lodge. And Harry used to be treasurer for many years and I help with the catering and I help generally. And they're very nice people, and believe it or not we started becoming members in our 65-70s, and we made some very good friends there really. It's a very nice atmosphere there and we're happy there and we still go every other weekend. And we had friends here last night from the Lodge.

BL: Was it important for you that your husband had a sort of similar background or was from Berlin or...?

Tape 3: 17 minutes 40 seconds

UG: I don't know. I would turn it the other way around perhaps. Nobody else would... you know that was the one who suited me. Yes, but I mixed with a lot of refugees. I didn't have any non-German Jewish friends, that's quite true. The only time I really started to mix is when I... even at the City Lit, I mean I went to classes there. But I started to mix at this course in Hatfield. That was a very special course. That was a one-off really for housewives, for women who had young children where the mother didn't finish her education. So therefore they were very interested in me and they were very nice to me. Because I remember one of the friends I met, she said, 'Ursula you are the first person I've met who is Jewish'. She didn't know anything about Jewry. The other one... I went to Nice on a course, on a special course, a French course for 3 months and she and I we came together and we went from Hatfield. They're the two real friends that I made. All the others were very nice to me. It was a course of 25 children [students?] but you know somebody that you studied with – that's all.

BL: What sort of identity did you want to transmit to your children when you raised your children?

UG: Well that is difficult to say. I noticed the difference of the background or the environment or the kind of family life that obviously I had. That I couldn't give them because I had nobody. I depended on Harry's mother and brother and he has more family here than I have because most of my family really, went to America. And as I said my father lost his brothers. My mother didn't have any brothers or sisters. So the close family I didn't have in Germany. But we had a lot of family and they left for America and a lot of friends in Germany. I mean it's not so unusual that people don't have any siblings but you know aunts and uncles and so on and they went all over the world really.

BL: Yes, so what sort of identity did you want to? I mean in terms of...?

Tape 3: 20 minutes 5 seconds

UG: I didn't want to change my identity I don't think. I wanted to become British, and as soon as I got married obviously things changed for me. I had different interests, you know the studying. And I dropped the music really because I couldn't – I didn't have a piano. I couldn't play a piano. I went to concerts but not to the same extent. One thing perhaps I haven't said is that we did a lot - our activity was taking part in the Anne Frank...the Anne Frank House. You know they come over here and they ask people who've got similar backgrounds to Anne Frank you know to talk to children – to school children and tell them what happened you know the Holocaust and how it affected us personally. And we talked to children. My husband is very good at this. I mean I can only talk about the background at school and my family but his interest is also – you know he can talk to children about the army - what happened to him. And we also met a lot of people that way.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 15 seconds

BL: Did you talk to your children about the past?

UG: I talk to them and they're not always terribly interested. I mean the latest is that they've learned at school, they've gone beyond that. They're now included in their history. The youngest granddaughter, she's 17 now, she learned at school. Whereas the eldest one – she's 24 - I don't think it was part of the curriculum. And yes well, I suppose they heard so much already. And they got to know my uncle and they heard me talk about my parents and, you know, they heard about it. 'Well that's enough now, we don't want to know any more.' But they're not terribly interested. My son is the only one really who said out of the blue about two years ago he said, 'I'm going to go to Auschwitz and I'm going to see where you lived in Berlin and what happened.' But the others, no.

BL: Have you been back to Berlin?

UG: Yes, I went back. The first time I went back when I had an invitation the first time. I can't remember when that was. And then we went another time. And then the

last time when we went is because our youngest son wanted to go. So I said, 'Right Stephen. We're going to take you to Berlin but we're not going to Auschwitz.' So he took himself off and he went by himself for two days to Auschwitz. Another activity that we've got now, my husband and I, is really about... After I've been studying... and got my degree my husband retired. And then we decided there are good classes at the U3A and in Hampstead. It's easy to get to Belsize Park and we started taking classes. And my husband worked as treasurer over 10 years. And the lectures are very, very interesting and very high standard. I've tried to keep up my French – well I try to keep up what I've learned. And as I said my husband was treasurer and we used to go at least once or twice a week. Now, after 15 years or so at least as far as I'm concerned it's worn a little bit thin. And I don't go as often as I should and as I wanted to. It's a very, very good organisation and it's very stimulating and I like it a lot. But like everything else if you go for 15 years somehow you know...It's not the same as when you first joined it.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 2 seconds

BL: You said you went with your son to Berlin?

UG: Yes.

BL: But you also said you went before that, to Berlin?

UG: Yes, we went twice before. The first time we were invited, and the second time I think we went under our own steam. The third time is because Stephen said he wanted to go so we said, 'Right we will go.' And we did go for a week. And I think he found it very interesting and an eye opener and somehow things that he heard about. And obviously we took him to the places of interest and places, you know, personal ones that he ought to know about.

BL: What was it like for you, for the first time to go back to Berlin?

UG: Very different - it didn't...I wouldn't say it didn't touch me - that's quite wrong. But you know wherever we lived, it looked different. It either was demolished...Now I remember I always heard, 'Where were you born?' 'Burggrafenstraße 3.' The whole street didn't exist any more – there was that Tauentzienstraße. And so we saw many buildings. Now the last place that we lived in before I left, Viktoria-Luise Platz, was all re-built. There were very big houses, re-built. And TEROS [?] - it doesn't exist any more that shop as such. I remember seeing it after the 9th of November with the white lettering you know the shops had to have on their shop windows, who the owners are and you could tell immediately the Jewish owners. It didn't exist any more. And somehow all the roads that I looked at, the whole street..., the streets looked different, at least those that I looked at. So it didn't, it didn't touch me, I don't think, to the same extent. I can't remember exactly my feelings but it was an interesting... Of course it brought back memories like for instance the zoo. I mean the zoo was a second home for me and I used to go there every afternoon. I think I mentioned that before. And the zoo! I think the size of the zoo, the expanse of the zoo is half of what it used to be. And somehow over so many years in a city like Berlin, Gedächtniskirche and Tauentzien, all these places are not the same any more.

BL: How would you define yourself in terms of your identity today?

UG: Whether I'm British or not – is that what you mean? Definitely, definitely. No German. No. I've got nothing to be proud of. I mean Germany is Hitler Germany and that's no good thank you very much. And you know the family is a different matter and I've lived here since I was 15 so it's no question about that.

BL: When did you become naturalised?

Tape 3: 27 minutes 0 second

UG: Perhaps 1950, 51 - I can't remember exactly but we got married and then we both, I got naturalised under my own steam. I felt this is something I wanted to do in my own name, not really as Mrs Gilbert, although my husband he was... I only met him... ,no I met him that's not true when we met in this club, he was Horst Giesner – now he's Harry Gilbert, so that's during the war. And Harry had his mother here and we were very close to his mother. She lived in Gilling Court for many, many years and she lived I think in West Hampstead also many years before. I only got to know her when she lived in Hampstead and I think we got her interested in Belsize Square Synagogue. And she belonged to Belsize Square Synagogue also. I don't know when she joined but she found also a lot of friends there and she used to go regularly or often or not as often. She used to go to the High Holydays with us - always.

BL: What impact do you think did it have on your life to be sent on the Kindertransport, to become a refugee?

UG: Well the only way I can explain it perhaps you know...My happy family life was interrupted and I lost my parents and my sister. And I tried to work myself up to a sort of a useful and nice enough human being. I found my own family and I managed to study so I've got something I can say I can be proud of. I'm happy and I've got no regrets really. I mean all the things that happened to me in war time and being a refugee I can only make Mr Hitler responsible for it – nobody else. And that's how it is and I had to come to terms with that. It's no good saying I resent it in any way because that's how it is.

BL: Do you think your life would have been very different if you hadn't been forced to leave Germany?

UG: In what way would you say different, perhaps money wise or family wise? Yes. But there are other things that you know...I've got a very happy family life with my husband and children. Sometimes they annoy me but I mean that is only normal. And I've got no regrets. No. I can say I'm happy with what happened and I think people say, 'Jolly good what you've achieved.' And I'm thankful!

BL: What is the most important aspect of your German Jewish heritage?

Tape 3: 29 minutes 59 seconds

UG: Perhaps I've learned to love certain things that I find, although I say it myself that perhaps my children don't have. You know sort of the love of... intellectually perhaps. I mean I'm no great wizard or intellectual myself but somehow the love of sort of reading and enjoying nicer things. Perhaps they'll come away from their childhood and family later than I did and so it will perhaps come with time. I think it's something, maturity. But I think that goes for the whole sort of ... At the moment people and youngsters, they think money is all important and you have a lot of gadgets. Perhaps you go to the best schools and have a lot of I don't know - clothes and jewellery. All these things - different things - are important to them. For instance I found out that my granddaughters, when I said something about a washing machine, 'Can't you do it by hand?' They looked at me as if 'nobody washes by hand - it's not possible!' And how many television sets they have and all these things are very important. To me it isn't important. It's nice if you can use them. Now for instance with the television and email - I can't use these things but perhaps I'm not the only one at my age who's not interested and who can't. So that's how it is. Different things you know are priority and I don't think it's so important.

BL: Do you feel at home in England, in London?

UG: Yes, definitely, definitely. I can't imagine living anywhere else, no. It's something that again is so many years. And in so many years if you haven't adjusted and you haven't come to pick up the things that you do like I think your life must be very miserable. And I think it probably does help that my husband's got the same background and the same interests and it's a little bit different to how the younger generation thinks.

BL: Did you speak German to your husband when you met?

UG: Yes and we still speak German sometimes. You know all of a sudden we want to say something and there's a very good saying in German. And I'm going to stop and think - you know - what is it in English? What would you say? There are some things that you can express better in German. Perhaps it is because it is our mother tongue I don't know.

BL: What about the children, did you speak German to them?

Tape 3: 32 minutes 37 seconds

UG: I don't know. Probably not because both the boys - Raymond was born in '52 and the other one was born in '54 and in those days when they went to school nobody wanted to know that their background is from Germany - definitely not, you know, it was swept under the carpet. I don't know if it was swept under the carpet but somehow of no importance. And the only time when they heard a lot of German was when my uncle came. And then of course you know, in the end they said they liked going. You know we travelled a lot with them to Switzerland and to Sweden with them. And you know then they heard a lot of German but perhaps it was necessary. But here in England it isn't. I remember when we went to Greece once and I think he realised that he couldn't converse with the people. All of a sudden he wanted to hire a motorbike. He couldn't get the man to understand what he wanted and all that and they found mutual...the man heard a lot of German and Steven heard a lot of German

and all of a sudden they conversed and got themselves understood with the German language. I remember one of the first holidays we had was in Italy. And I remember there were only German, German, Germans there and Stephen said to me, 'I thought we were going to Italy not Germany' as there were so many Germans. They don't want to hear that. Times have changed.

BL: Is there anything we haven't discussed or I haven't asked you which you would like to add?

UG: Not really, I mean I haven't got very many pictures of my parents, unfortunately. I brought two photos of my parents and the one of my father got some ink spilt on it and the one of my mother unfortunately got lost. And I had one or two other pictures. I had different people who asked us about our background and then we showed them and then perhaps we don't collect them back again. So I don't know. I haven't got very many but I've got a few here from my father as a soldier and they're quite interesting from his war time. So they are the ones and that's all, really, and one or two of my sister.

BL: Before going on to the pictures is there any message you might have for anyone who might watch this interview based on your experiences?

UG: Well I mean my grandchildren probably know how I feel and that I've got good memories of my family you know my parents. No, I mean they know that if they want to find out anything about Germany... They've heard a lot. Now the younger ones learn about it at school. And they know about these letters, so I can't do any more now. I think if they don't want to know then that's how it is.

BL: Mrs Gilbert, thank you very much for this interview. We're going to look at the photos now.

UG: Ok.

Tape 3: 35 minutes 42 seconds

End of interview

Photographs

Tape 3: 36 minutes 0 second

Picture 1

OBL: What is this picture?

UG: This is my grandmother Hedwig Brann, geborene Schönheimer. I don't remember where it was taken She used to travel a lot and she looks quite sprightly there and I think she must have been 60s – early 60s probably. I don't remember where it was taken. She used to travel a lot and ...I think she lived a reasonably good life.

Picture 2

UG: This is my father Ferdinand Brann – everybody used to call him Ferri. I think that was even before he went into war – into the First World War as a young man. I can't really tell you anything more. He was the eldest son of my grandfather who was Hermann Brann. And he had 3 younger brothers 2 of them died. I think one of them died as a young child – the youngest one when he was 4, the next one met with a very sad exit in the mountains in Italy in Molveno. And the other brother we got very, very close to. He was very good to me and he was a very, very nice uncle. He was very happy and also very friendly towards my kids and my husband and we had a great relationship.

BL: When was this picture taken?

UG: 1908.

Picture 3

UG: That was taken of my father Ferdinand Brann, 1914. Obviously you know soon after the First World War broke out and he, as far as I know, he was in the cavalry. I did have at one time also a picture of him on a horse but I don't seem to be able to put my hand on it now. And that was in his ordinary soldier's uniform – German soldier's uniform.

Picture 4

UG: This is another one of my father Ferdinand Brann obviously in his you know sort of - all glory you know – First World War uniform. He was always proud of the way that he went with the cavalry. And that was probably his going out uniform as it were.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 59 seconds

UG: That's a family picture of Ferdinand Brann, Rosa Marie Brann and their 2 children. One was my sister Stefanie and the other was myself Ursula. I can't remember where it was taken. I assume it was either Heringsdorf or Norderney or somewhere because as I grew older we never went to the seaside again. We always went to the mountains so we must have, really, when we were young children, very young children, they must have taken us to the seaside. I imagine it was either Norderney or Heringsdorf – I can't remember.

Picture 6

UG: That's a picture of my sister Stefanie Klara and myself, Ursula Brann. I can't remember where it was. My sister and I we were 10 and a half months difference. She was older. I'm on the left of the picture and it was obviously taken somewhere in the woods or on an excursion. I can't remember when that was taken.

Picture 7

UG: This is me again, Ursula Gilbert. I think it must have been taken soon after I arrived in this country because I remember what I'm wearing and that's what I went on the children's transport in March '39.

Picture 8

UG: This is our wedding photo. Harry , Horst Giesner , turned into Harry Gilbert and myself. That was taken in October '59 – '49, '49! What am I talking about; October '49, when we got married.

BL: And where?

UG: At the Town Hall – Hampstead Town Hall on the steps of the Town Hall.

Tape 3: 40 minutes 59 seconds

Picture 9

UG: This is our wedding photo taken on 26th of October 1949. I start from the right looking at it now. First of all comes my uncle Lutz who is the uncle I'm always talking about who did go to Sweden and who died in Sweden. Then my friend Renate, one of my hostel friends... Then next to her Bertie Sklartz, the one I moved into the boarding house with and we shared our room for quite a long time. Then comes, at the back there which is not very clear, my friend Helga Waldstein who used to be at Belsize Square, also a member of Belsize Square and her husband. Then Harry there in the foreground next to his mother and 3 little children – Ronan, the 2 Indian children – Ronan and Nila.

Picture 10

UG: This is a picture of myself again - myself with our two sons. The oldest one Raymond is probably 2 and a half there on the right and on the left is Stephen probably just a few months old. He was born in July '54 and Raymond was born in May, '52.

Picture 11

UG: A picture of my aunt and uncle Lutz on holiday together with Harry, myself and our oldest son Raymond. My aunt's name is Lotte and my uncle's name was Ludwig Brann.

Picture 12

UG: This is a picture of my eldest son Raymond's Bar Mitzvah. On the picture is my husband Harry, myself, Raymond on the right when he was 13, in May 1965 and our younger son Stephen who was then 2 years younger.

Tape 3: 43 minutes 39 seconds

Picture 13

UG: This is a picture of my family's grave in Weißensee. This is part of it where my grandmother's name was engraved and there was room left, and I felt it was more than fitting that I should put down that my parents were ermordet [murdered] in Auschwitz. Ferdinand Brann who was 51 years old, Rosa Marie Brann who was 43 years old and Stefanie Klara Brann (Berger) because she got married on special permission a day before her deportation, and she was then 21 years old. That's the family grave in Weißensee.

Picture 14

UG: This is a picture of my family taken in America for my nephew's Bar Mitzvah. I start with the right one, with the youngest granddaughter who is Fiona. She was at the time 13. Then comes our eldest son Raymond, his wife Gloria then my husband Harry, myself, and in the corner Vanessa, she was then 14 – no she was 15 or 16.

Picture 15

UG: This is a picture of my 3 grandsons. I start from the right is Daniel who was 10 probably – I'm not quite sure of the date now. He holds Oliver on his knee. Oliver was born '98, and Alex who was then probably 10. I can't remember.

Picture 16

UG: This is a picture of our eldest granddaughter Melanie. She was at that time I think going to a ball or somewhere and she must have been 20 or 21.

Picture 17

UG: This is a picture taken from the prayer book that my father gave me on the day when I left Berlin to come to England. It's a book where he's put 10 guidelines of your father – how to behave – how to conduct yourself in life.

Tape 3: 46 minutes 34 seconds

BL: What else were you allowed to take?

UG: What else was I allowed to take? One case that we, as children could carry by yourself; and I kept this case for a long, long time. It wasn't particular... a medium sized case, blue with beige corners and I carried probably the most necessary because over... probably only over the next few months every time somebody came across, for instance anybody on the children's transport, brought me something that my parents sent me. So it wasn't a lot of clothes. It was the things that I considered necessary and I wanted with me and that's all I really do remember that I had, nothing else but that one case in order to carry it myself.

Picture 18

UG: This is a prayer book that my father Ferdinand Brann gave to me when I left Berlin to come to England. I read it in German. It says:

Tape 3: 47 minutes 42 seconds

Gebetbuch der Israeliten
Siebente Auflage

Mit 10 Leitsätzen Deines Vaters.

- 1) Vergiss nie, dass Du Jüdin bist, dass Du für das Judentum gelitten hast und dass Du es aber trotzdem oder deshalb gerade lieben musst.
- 2) Vergiss nie, dass nur Gottesfürchtigkeit die Welt in Ordnung halten kann.
- 3) Achte jedes Menschen Überzeugung, jede Religionsanschauung, übe Toleranz und denke, wie sehr wir selbst unter Intoleranz gelitten.

- 4) Vergiss trotz allem niemals Deutschland und die deutsche Sprache. Denke, dass es die Heimat Deiner Ahnen war. Beteilige dich an keiner feindseligen Handlung gegen dieses Land, es schadet letztlich nur uns Juden.
- 5) Vergiss nie Dein Elternhaus. Denke an Deine Eltern und Deine Schwester immer, und lasse dies den Leitfaden Deines Handelns sein, Deiner Familie zu helfen.
- 6) Sei stets voll Dankbarkeit gegen die Regierung des Landes in das Du kommst, weil es Dir Zuflucht gewährt. Sei dankbar gegen jeden, der Dir Deine Heimat selbst öffnet. Bleibe bescheiden, züchtig, fleißig, anständig im Denken und ehrlich.
- 7) Denke an meinen alten Spruch: Wozu denn kränken, wenn es Dir nichts nützt?
- 8) Denke daran, dass jeder Streit Hass hervorbringt, der Unfrieden bedeutet und Unfrieden das größte Unglück ist.
- 9) Wenn es noch so schwer im Leben, denke daran, dass nur Hoffen und Glauben die Menschheit und jeden Einzelnen vorwärts bringt, und dass auch Dir bis jetzt immer schließlich die Sonne des Glückes geleuchtet, und Du nun in eine neue Heimat kommst.

Berlin, März 1939

Seiner lieben Ulla zur Auswanderung

TAPE 3 - 50 minutes 40 seconds

Picture 19

UG: This is one of the very many letters I received from my parents when I left Berlin in March '39 when I left Berlin on the children's transport to come to England. And I don't think it's an exaggeration that I had at least 3 or 4 letters per week if not in the beginning before the war more often. They wrote very long and very detailed letters and one of the letters I'm going to read now. This was written on the 23rd of May.

Ich lese jetzt einen der vielen Briefe, den ich von meinem Vater aus Berlin erhalten habe, wie ich nach England gekommen bin. Dieser Brief ist datiert Berlin, 23. Mai '39..

[Reads from the letter in German, occasionally commenting].

“ Liebes Ullakind,

Deine liebe Karte haben wir erhalten und sind sehr gespannt, weiteres über Deine Tätigkeit zu hören. Falls es ein Geschäft mit Chefs gibt, schreibe mir bitte die ganze Firma mit Adresse, und ich werde dann als Vater ein paar nette Worte hinzuschreiben”

(Ich möchte dazu sagen, dass er meinte, eventuell in einer Firma, wo ich als Chef arbeiten könnte; dass ich dort angestellt werden würde.)

“Was das amerikanische Konsulat angeht, so hat Dir ja Mutti bereits darüber geschrieben; ob allerdings ganz richtig, können wir hier nicht beurteilen. Hier ging durch das jüdische Blatt auch eine Notiz, dass man sich registrieren lassen müsse, wenn man in England sei.“

(Das stell' ich mir vor, das kommt nicht in dem Brief vor, dass meine Eltern... [BL asks UG to speak in English.] My comment is that my parents had to register; they wanted to go to America and they had to register for a number. Ich will das nochmal

sagen: wir haben hier nicht beherrschen {sic! feststellen?) können, ob man sich registrieren muss oder nicht.)

[UG repeats the last sentence from the letter.] “Hier ging durch das jüdische Blatt auch eine Notiz, dass man sich registrieren lassen müsse, wenn man in England sei. Ob sich das auf Fälle bezieht, die bereits in Berlin registriert sind, weiß ich nicht. Erkundig’ Dich bitte darüber, eventuell schreibst Du, dass Du in Berlin unter der Nummer 85105 registriert seist, das Affidavit ebenfalls dort eingereicht worden ist. Dazu gib die alte Adresse in Berlin und die neue, mit dem Bedenken, dass Du im Rahmen der Kinderverschickung in England seist. Schaden kann das doch keinesfalls, aber englisch musst du es schreiben. Was machen Deine Moneten, wie gross ist Dein Kassenbestand? Berichte einmal darüber! An Shavuot wünsch’ ich Dir alles Gute. Auch bei uns ist Feiertag, ich habe zwei Tage frei”

(Ich gebe dazu, dass er eventuell für die jüdische Kinderabschickung nach England, für Kindertransport.., dass er meint, er hat dort gearbeitet, und dass er deshalb zwei Tage frei gehabt hat. Ich lese jetzt weiter.)

“Auch am zweiten” (das ist wahrscheinlich am zweiten Feiertag von Shavuot) “will ich mit Stepha” (das war meine Schwester) “in die Oranienburger Strasse, die immer jetzt in Betrieb ist, zum Gottesdienst gehen. Es spricht der immer noch beliebte Nussbaum,” (das ist der Rabbiner Nussbaum, der sehr viel Erfolg hatte und beliebt war in Berlin) “das weiß ich auch. Was Mutti über englische Stunden schreibt, ist durchaus wichtig. Es besteht nämlich sonst die Gefahr, dass Du in einer Art Waschfrauen-Englisch sprichst und nie einen englischen Brief schreiben kannst.”

BL: Mrs Gilbert, thank you very much for this interview again.

UG: Right. What do I say? It’s a pleasure?

Tape 3: 55 minutes 44 seconds

End of Tape Three