

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Sex:	Female
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Interviewee POB:	Nuremberg, Germany

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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV199
NAME: Eva Schapira
DATE: 2nd February 2017
LOCATION: Newcastle
INTERVIEWER: Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 2nd of February 2017. We are conducting an interview with Mrs. Eva Schapira. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in Newcastle. [audio pause]

[0:01:28]

What is your name, please?

Eva Ellen Schapira

And when were you born?

27. 12. 1930.

And where were you born?

In Nürnberg [Nuremberg].

Thank you very much, Mrs. Schapira, for having agreed to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Project. Can you please tell me something about your family background?

I'm an only child of... my parents. Seeing my mother had a- a stillbirth a year after she was married, and then I came the following year. And...

Yeah? And maybe tell us something about your- your grandparents. What were their professions?

All my family seemed to be in the shoe business. My paternal grandfather was in the slipper business. And my maternal... grandfather was ...[coughs] in the shoe business. Mostly sandals and cheap shoes.

So did the grandparents know each other?

Yes, they did. But my Würzburg grandparents, the paternal ones, were very religious, whereas my maternal grandparents were not.

And was that a problem, or, they managed...?

[0:03:43]

A little bit of a problem. They didn't want the marriage to take place in Bamberg, so the parents were married in Würzburg. And I remember when my grandmother came on a visit, that the food had to be brought in from a kosher restaurant...

[sound break]

Yes, you were saying about the religious difference and that they had to bring in the food...

Yes, I...

The kosher food.

Later on I was most embarrassed about it. I thought they could have tried a bit harder at the time. It wasn't for me to say.

And when did your parents get married?

They got married in 1928, I think it was.

And where did they settle?

In Bamberg.

And was your father working with your grandfather?

Yes, he was.

In the shoe factory?

Yes.

And what was it called please?

Gebrüder Neuburger... Can I sneeze? [both laugh]

Yes, you can. You can sneeze. You can sneeze.

[Sneezes].

So there was another brother involved, or who was the- who was the Gebrüder Neuburger?

[0:05:28]

My Opa. Opa Philipp.

Yes?

And he had brothers and they were in other parts of Germany, selling shoes.

And how long had they been in Bamberg? For how many generations, or...?

I'm not quite sure. But I know mother and I once visited a little *Dorf* [village], where two brothers married two sisters. And that's where I fell out of the cot and bit my lip. And my lip was swollen. And when we got back to Bamberg, my dad was very annoyed with my mother. I remember that.

And what are your earliest memories of growing up in Bamberg?

That they tried to make me eat all the time, and I wasn't hungry! And my grandmother bribed me with salami if I would have some bread. And then I had to go and eat next door with Lili Loble, which was a cousin of my first husband. She was the only girl in the Loble family. And my father-in-law always liked to see her because he liked seeing little girls. And Lili, she told me the facts of life when I was about five. And my grandmother was shocked to the core! I- I don't think it was... the real thing, but anyway, she told me. [laughs]

And you were very close to your grandmother?

Yes, I was. Very close. She was- she and my dad were my favourites. And because I didn't see much of my mother I- I sort of thought she was lovely, because she was a lovely-looking woman, but I didn't see much of her.

What was she doing? Did she work as well in the shoe fac...?

No.

Or was she socially engaged?

[0:08:12]

Yes.

What- what was...?

Coming for a... lunch lady. And it wasn't till she got to England that she started painting. Here... Two of her paintings, the Orchestra. She was very good. And she, she played the piano. And... very well. And my father played the violin, very badly. [laughs] But they had musical evenings and parties. And I remember one party, they always said they mustn't overdress. So my parents were in their swimsuits. And all their guests came dressed to kill. And that sort of thing they did.

And what sort of friends did they have? What sort of circles did they mix with? Your parents?

Mostly Jewish people... I think.

But did they have non-Jewish friends as well?

Not till they came to England. And my mother had a lot of non-Jewish friends.

And how- can you tell us how- the Jewish community in Bamberg. How big was it? How many- I don't know whether you know this...

I'm not quite sure. It was- for a little town, it was quite big. I should think my brother-in-law could tell you more about that.

And do you remember going to synagogue in Bamberg?

Yes, with my grandmother.

Yes? Can you tell us about the synagogue? What do you remember?

Well of course we went upstairs and then I got bored and ...Oma would take me out. She would feed me with sweets while we were there. And... I liked the Friday nights. My dad did that. And...the food was always very good.

What did you eat for Friday nights? Do you remember?

[0:10:40]

Well chicken soup and chicken. But I didn't eat much. They had to bribe me. And my father had a good singing voice...

Yes?

... and my mother did the Friday nights under duress, I think.

She didn't want to.

Not really. Wasn't her... thing.

And you also said that your grandparents had a dog. You remember they had a dog?

Oh, yes. Waldi. Grandma- he was very intelligent. The first thing though he did was when he was left alone as a puppy, that he went to the windows and pulled all the net curtains down. Which was not very pleasurable for my grandmother. But he was so intelligent. He was really Opa's dog. And the town knew him. And he used to go on the tram, get out, outside Bamberg where the factory was situated. Walk to the factory, bark, and he was let in. He was just a lovely dog. Unfortunately, I was holding him when he was pulling, and he managed to get run over. But they got another Waldi.

So you played with him?

Oh, yes, I loved him.

And can you tell us- where did you live?

We lived in Hainstraße which was- at the end of which was a park. And a lot of the Jewish people lived there. We had an flat- upstairs flat. I think we had... two bedrooms and a, a very large sitting room and an even bigger dining room. Kitchen and balconies. And a big hall in which that... desk was situated.

[0:13:18]

The desk you have here?

Yes.

Yes?

My grandfather bought that from Würzburg Castle.

Did anyone live with you in the flat, or was it your parents and yourself?

And the, and we had a cook and the... *Kindermädchen*[nanny] who had a...a- bedrooms up in the attic, where they also dried the clothes and- they only washed every month, I- looking back on that I think that was very peculiar seeing I wash every day.

And what- can you describe maybe the town of Bamberg? What do you remember?

Oh it- it is a beautiful town. The architecture is absolutely lovely. There's a- the Regnitz river runs through it. It has the Altenburg which was their café. You had to walk up there, up the hill. And friends of ours and the Lobles, they live there now, and my daughter, Susie, went there for- to learn German. And she came back speaking *bayerisch* [Bavarian dialect].

Yes- of course...

And I said to her, "What time is it Susie?" "*Halbe Neune!*" [half past eight] And it really was a lovely town and so was- the synagogue was lovely. Such a shame to burn that lovely building down. And the *Hain* [Luisenhain] was lovely. The river ran through the park. And my father and I used to go there on a Sunday morning...I remember. And sometimes my mother would come along with her high heels. And we had to walk slowly. What else? And the *Rathaus* [city hall] was lovely. And the *Dom* [cathedral]! Bamberg is well-known for the *Dom* and the *Domreiter* [equestrian statue in the cathedral]! Which was... an...anonymous. They don't know who sculpted it. And there's also a figure in the Dom called- it's

“*Synagoge*” [name of the statue of a female]. It’s a- a lady with a- with- blindfolded. ...Café, nice shops. And the people were very nice... till, the *Kristallnacht*. And then everything changed.

What changed at Kristallnacht?

[0:16:42]

Well the, the *Juden* were *unerwünscht* [not welcome]. But I can’t remember them daubing the- the windows. That... I can’t remember that. I can only remember... sitting on the windowsill and seeing the Gestapo go into the Jewish GP, Doctor Bauchwitz, and bringing him out, and beating him up with a rod- iron rod. And him being covered in blood.

What did you feel, when you saw that?

I was horrified. All I wanted to do as a little girl of seven was to get out of Bamberg and never see it again. And I did it! I went to Switzerland again.

But tell us, you’d been to Switzerland before...

Yes.

When was that? What happened to you?

I had, what they thought, TB. But in Newcastle they diagnosed this as polio. But anyway, they sent me to Davos to a *Kinderklinik* [paediatric clinic] and I was there for a month.

By yourself?

By myself. And looked after by all the nurses and a special nurse called Schwester Emmy, who later visited us in Bamberg for a week.

So how old were you when you were sent to Davos?

Six.

And you- how- what was it like to be separated from your family at that...?

I didn't mind there, but I- I had been to other *Kinderheims* [children's home] before. I don't know- I was always a puny little kid.

For health reasons?

Yes.

And you said you- because you were ill, you only went to the school for a very short time?

Yes, to the *Judenschule* in the synagogue. I didn't learn much.

What- what do you remember about the school? How many were there- how many children were there?

I only remember one girl. Thekla...now what was her name? I've forgotten her name. She went swimming with us.... I can't remember her name. But I remember walking with my- with Lili Loble who was a year older than me, and being ...stoned by Nazi youth groups.

The two of you?

[0:19:56]

Yes.

What does it mean? They were throwing stones at you?

Yes, "*Juden!*" – Little... kids!

And you...

[phone rings- audio break]

You said there was an incident also where your parents... so, tell us about that.

Yes, when we were in the car the parents were talking about anti-Semitism and the Nazis and how awful it was and... what's going to happen. And there was a couple walking along with a pram with a child inside. And there was I, getting out of the car and... spitting at the child. And my father was horrified. He... gave me a good smack on my bottom. And took me away. He was scared I was going to be shot or taken prisoner. ...It wasn't a healthy place to be in.

No. But at that point you were not scared just... to do that?

No, not at the time.

Yeah.

But after I saw the doctor being treated as he was, then I was scared.

Yeah...yeah. Because in a way you were at an age where you just- your memories are mostly of Bamberg which was already- of Germany under Nazi rule.

Yes. Yes. But I, I- I wasn't aware of it really till they started talking in front of me. And of course we had to let the cook go, because they weren't allowed to have more than one person in their house. So they left Dora looking after me, which wasn't too good, because she was quite severe. And I know when I was a bit naughty, she came with a *Kochlöffel* [wooden spoon] and gave me a good smack.

Was she- was she Jewish or not Jewish?

No. Nor was the cook.

No, but they could still- she could still work for you?

Yes, but not too long. Then I went.

So when did you go to Davos for the- for the second time?

Just after Kristallnacht. I'm not quite sure when it was. But I think it was during the winter. And I remember my- the train went through Würzburg. And my paternal grandparents were there to say goodbye and that was the last time I saw them. My grandfather died a natural death. And my grandmother went then to Hamburg. I don't know how she died, but she died on her birthday. That's all I know.

In Hamburg, or...was she...?

[0:23:36]

In Hamburg.

So you saw them for the last time on your way, probably late 1938...

Yes.

... the winter.

Or beginning of ... '39. I'm not sure.

So we were talking about your leaving... and taking the train to Switzerland.

Yes.

Can you describe that journey please?

I was relieved on going, and sad to say goodbye to my grandparents, who I thought it was very good to come to say goodbye to a little kid. And... that's all I can remember, really.

And did you think that this was your sort of last time in Germany? Did you think that was ... a final journey?

I didn't think about that at all. I just didn't want to go back. ...And I couldn't have been happier arriving in England.

And how many years did you have in Switzerland?

A few months.

Oh, just a few months.

Yes.

And did you go to Switzerland? Did you go to the same...?

[0:25:12]

Same clinic.

Yes?

With Schwester Emmy. And then my mother came and collected me. And we went to London, where actually... my aunty, who's a cousin of my mother, married... somebody they called 'Uncle Bim Bam Boo', because he was married and he took this aunty out. And they were afraid I'd spill the beans. And this uncle vouched for my mother, my father- cause they had to vouch fifty pounds per person - in case - it was needed. But it wasn't. Cause my father had this job as manager of a slipper factory in Great Yarmouth.

So you were saying you were guaranteed, what about your grandfather? Did he come as well?

No.

No. So your father...

Just my- both my grandparents stayed in Germany. And my grandfather... on my father's side died a, a natural death. And my grandmother then was taken by my aunt, my father's sister, to Hamburg. And they were going to go to the States. But she died on her birthday. It was- because she knew that they were coming for her the next day.

Meaning... she committed suicide?

We don't know. She was too *frum* to do that. I don't know.

And what about the other grandparents? What happened to them?

The Opa Philipp he died a natural death. And my Oma Minna, they took all the Jews to this "Weiße Taube" which was a, a- a restaurant. And they lived there. But they had no... ration card. So my grandmother's maid came and fed her. She was fantastic.

The non-Jewish maid?

Yes.

What was she called?

Elise Teufel. She was a- I've got a photograph of her.

Yes. Then what happened?

[0:28:28]

Then in 1942 they took Oma to Theresienstadt. And my mother kept in touch with the Red Cross. And the last letter we got, which I've got, saying, "Unfortunately, your mother was *verschleppt* [deported] to the East." And I've tried to find out where she was killed. Either in Sobibor or some other place. But the Yad Vashem or Theresienstadt couldn't give me any information. So it's problematic.

What was her name?

Minna Neuburger, *geborene* [née] Stein.

Did anyone else- you said, so your father emigrated. Did anyone else of the uncles or aunts or the other family, did they emigrate, or...?

The aunties emigrated. My father's sister, to America. She was very *frum*. And my younger aunty, my favourite, went to Israel. And we visited her. My uncle, who she married, he instituted this old age home, which were sort of flats in a home. And you could have your meals if you wanted to. And of course he wasn't paid or anything. He said the only thing he wished when he died, that they would take Auntie Käthe. So they did. She was a lovely woman. Always content, and very happy there.

So she lived in Israel?

Yes. And I think there were some relations of my grandfather called Freudenbergers but I don't know what happened to them.

And when you were in Switzerland, did you know you were going to go to England? Or what did you think?

Yes.

You did.

Yes. And I loved England from the very moment I stepped out. And I learnt- I had a lot of friends. And I had to learn English of course. My father always joked he wanted to come to England, because he had a slight lisp and he could manage to say 'the'. [laughs]

[0:31:34]

It was a perfect language for him... [repeating] It was a good language for him?

Yes. Yes. But they both had an accent that could cut a knife.

Yes. What were your first impressions of England?

Oh, I loved it cause we were at the seaside. Great Yarmouth. And it was a lovely summer, and lovely beaches. I thought it was fantastic!

So you- you arrived with your mother?

Yes.

And where did you- by ferry, or how did you...?

...Hook of Holland and Harwich and then London. And we visited this aunty who was.... They were well off...[coughs].. I was staggered that she had two maids. And all I wanted to do is to go in the kitchen with the two maids. And then we went to- to ...Great Yarmouth for a while. Till the war broke out. And then of course my father was taken to the Isle of Man as an enemy alien. And my mother- we had no money! We came with five pounds! And she didn't work. I was under the impression she should, but... that was my idea. And ...then while we were in London, I was dying for a baby doll. And of course we couldn't afford it. So the Salvation Army stepped in and I got this lovely doll. I remember it. And then my father... volunteered to go to the Pioneer Corps. And it was during that time it seemed that my mother had this liaison with Uncle Ernest. And as a little girl, I went up to this uncle and told him off, "What are you doing to my Daddy? It's terrible...", and so on. I'll never forget that. My mother was pretty shocked, I think. Anyway, my father then had me in this convent -Benedictine convent, St. Mary's Priory Princethorpe, near Rugby and Coventry. And we were in the shelter nearly every night with our siren suits on. And they really wanted to convert me. And I was- I wanted a white dress like the others. But my father came on leave and said, "No way." And that was that. And then in 1945 he was demobbed. Got a job in Blackburn, Lancashire in a slipper factory. And I came at fourteen and kept house for him. And as I told you, I... failed all my subjects the first year. And then- after two years school certificate, which is O-levels, I was top of the class with two distinctions, two credits, two

passes and a fail - in maths. And my father was... he was a very good tutor, except when he got very cross when I didn't like the maths. And he threw the books at me.

[0:36:45]

Can you tell me, when your father was interned, did he correspond with you? Could he correspond...?

Yes. Yes...

Can you tell us, what did he say about his internment?

I don't think he had any...thing bad to say about it, but he wasn't the type that liked being shut up. So...

Where was he, on the Isle of Man?

Isle of- Douglas, yes.

But your mother was not interned?

No. No, and we- we lived in this attic in London.

Where?

Suffolk Gardens? In a... And I didn't go to school much cause of the air raids. And then we moved to Leicester. And the first time we were there, we were bombed out! So we were in a big hall. And then- then I was sent to school.

[0:37:57]

And when did your parents separate?

During that time. And of course my father only agreed to the divorce if he could have the custody of myself. And I was only- I was a child under ten and I think I made history. Cause usually they don't give a child under ten to a father.

Did anyone ask you what you wanted?

No. But I would have chosen that.

So you were happy with that?

Oh, very! Had a lovely time. The only time I didn't like was when my dad went out... and I was left alone. I know he had... friends. Female and male. Friends. And he said, "You're all right." But he never brought a lady to the house, ever. So he was very respectful.

And in your time in the convent school and later in the- in the grammar school, did you ever have any bad experiences as a German refugee?

No. Never. Never. Except once we were going to go to Manchester from the grammar school, and one girl, who didn't know I was Jewish, said, "Keep your hands on your purses, there are a lot of Jews in Manchester." And I looked and I said, "I'm Jewish." That's all.

And did you see your mother regularly? What- where did your mother settle?

My mother stayed in Leicester. And my father - they were friends. And my father told me I, I had to go to Leicester in the holidays. And I made one excuse after another. I had to... spring clean, or do this or do that. So I didn't have to stay too long in Leicester.

You didn't want to go? [repeating] You didn't want to go?

Not really. My mother was a moody person and my father wasn't. So it was much easier living with my father.

And did your mother re-marry?

[0:40:54]

Yes, she married the man. Only three years and then he died. He was in his fifties. And then we went on holiday, all three of us in different rooms. [laughs] But- and I thought when, when this uncle died, whether they would come together, but they didn't. They got on well, but they didn't want to live together. And they neither of them got married again.

And you said your father started in the sandal factory – his work – in a- in a shoe factory?

Yes.

And then what happened to his career? What...?

He then, after the war, he got resituation of our factory. And he sold the factory. And some people in America, who owned IKAS in Frankfurt, asked him to go in there and stay there till that was sold. To be the liaison, so to speak. But the German director of it asked him to stay! So he did!

So when did he go to- to Frankfurt?

Frankfurt?

When did he go to Frankfurt? When did he go?

After being in Bamberg he just... went off on the train back to Frankfurt.

But I mean, how soon after the war? When- when did he return to Germany?

Must have been '48, '49.

And what about you, at that point?

I used to go and visit.

[0:43:15]

And did you want to go to Germany?

No... not likely. And he said to me, "If... if- when I retire I'll come to Newcast..." Oh, I'm getting rather ahead of myself. And I said- he said, "Will you come and live in Frankfurt?" I said, "No way." So he said, "Well, I'll have to come to England. Back to you." So I said, "Yes." And... And I was at college. And a year after college I... I married Ronnie. And we were married twelve years. Susan arrived the following year. And Stevie then came four years later. But by then he was quite ill. And we didn't know what was wrong with him for a long time. I don't know whether the Lobles knew or not. But they- they wanted me to go to the doctor to see that I was well, and they were going to do something- I always had trouble with my tummy... [coughs]

[audio break]

Yes...

He liked to be the one in power. And that's what happened. But then gradually he did get money because he sold the factory. But... he divided the money between my mother, himself and me! And my mother thought that was a funny thing to do because... they were still alive. But anyway, that's- he said, "She's had a rotten deal." And... that's what he wanted.

What do you mean? What did she- what did she want to do, or...?

She wanted it divided between the two of them.

Aha. So tell us, your father was asked to be representing the....

IKAS.

Yes, what is IKAS? Tell us what does it mean?

It's a... slipper factory-

[To Eva's daughter, Susan:] Say it- you can say it...

In England, he was asked to form a British- the British Shoe Corporation.

OK.

IKAS was the factory in Frankfurt.

[0:46:41]

So he was asked to represent the British Shoe association?

Mn-hnn. And he didn't have the money at the time. But- I think when he sold the factory he did. And then the people in America asked him to be the liaison... between him and the- the directorate. And they sold the factory. And the German directors asked him to stay on and he did.

And did he want to go back to Germany, do you think?

Yes, I think he was... quite pleased. The career was... very important to him.

And do you think he couldn't have had the same career in England?

No he couldn't have.

Why? Or why did he think that?

Well, he was getting on a bit. And he thought he might as well have something that was already planned. So he did.

And was it difficult for him to go- it must have been- to Bamberg and to Frankfurt? How did he...?

No, he was... quite happy. He had a housekeeper and he worked very hard. And he wasn't a socialite. So he worked and he went- ate a lot. He got quite... big. And... then he died rather early. He was only sixty-two. He had gallstones. And the hospital in Frankfurt, not only did the gallstones but they took his appendix out and something else. And it- it was just too much for him and he passed away. I, I was ready to go on holiday with him; he had booked it already. But it wasn't to be.

[0:49:16]

And you said you visited him quite a lot.

Yes.

So what was it like for you to return to Germany? Just even for a visit?

Oh, OK. I went shopping. I took Susie along, and... we had a nice time.

Do you still speak German?

Yes, I still do.

And you spoke German to your father, or how...?

Yes, and my mother.

So you maintained your German?

Yes. Yes. And of course I took school certificate German. So... It- it wasn't only verbal but I've done the written work as well.

And what was it like to go back to Bamberg?

I thought it was such a beautiful place, but I was a bit wary of the people. We had a chauffeur, and he said to my mother, "If Hitler says I should kill Dr.- Mr.- Herr Neuburger or

Herr Buxbaum, [he] would do it.” And then he came begging to my father. And my father said, “But you wanted to get rid of us.” And he didn’t help him.

But was there a family who helped you?

Yes, the Krauss family. George [Loble] probably tell you about him- them.

You can also tell me. What- what did they...?

I didn’t really know them till I got married to Ronnie. And Anneliese came to- to learn English and help me out with Susan, when she was a tiny baby.

But they helped- they helped the family or they...?

Yes, they were very nice people.

And you kept in touch with them?

Yes, still do.

[0:51:30]

And your first husband, he was also from Bamberg?

Yes, he was.

Did you know each other in Bamberg?

Well... I was seven. He was eight years older. So really, not. I was just a little kid.

But the families knew each other?

Yes, they didn’t socialise... cause my mother and father were much younger than the Lobles.

So how did you meet your husband here?

I met him in- in Bamberg, actually. They were coming for restitution, and... so were we! And that's how I met him.

Where did you stay when you came to Bamberg?

A hotel – yeah.

And do you think- was that important for you that he came from Bamberg? Was that...?

Yeah, it was nice. As my father said in his wedding speech, “So Ronnie’s marrying the girl next door.” You know. The eight years didn’t seem to be eight years then.

Did you speak German to him, or English?

English. Occasionally when we didn’t want the children to hear, we’d speak German. Same with Kurt.

[0:53:11]

But you said he was very ill?

Very ill.

What did he- what did he have?

MS - Multiple sclerosis. And he got worse every few months. And I went on several journeys with him for- people said they could cure it, but they couldn’t. And it was my second husband who did his thesis on MS. And Ronnie was one of his patients. And he invited Kurt , but Kurt said, he doesn’t usually come to- to his patients’ houses. But eventually he did come. And ...from then onwards... we were friends. But... the- Ronnie said to Kurt, “Eva doesn’t get out much. Would you like to take her to the pictures?” And I was embarrassed. And I wouldn’t go. I said, “You can’t do that.” But anyway, when he died... Kurt came and

called Susie a ‘poppet’ and she was eleven, and... Stephen was seven. And we married after the stone setting. And Kurt insisted on taking them on our honeymoon. So we went to Switzerland, Pontresina. And every Christmas for many years we went to Pontresina ‘*mit Kind und Kegel*’ [with the whole family].

And what was Kurt’s background?

Kurt’s... mother died when he was seven. And he went to Kaddish every day at the age of seven. They had a maid and he has a sister. And... his father was picked up from the street! And taken to Dachau. And so Kurt went to one of his mother’s sisters, and so did Nellie to another one, and he was- then father came out. He was given- he went first of all from Dachau to the other...

Buchenwald?

Buchenwald. And he had a week to get out of the country. And he went to England, because somebody vouched for him. And then he went round, finding two people who would vouch for his two children. And Kurt came first on the Kindertransport. And then Nellie came and they... went to Stamford Hill. No bathroom. Father got a sort of menial job. And Kurt went to Hasmorean I think, and they were transferred to Sheffield. I’ve forgotten the name of...

[0:57:55]

Schonfeld? By Rabbi Schonfeld?

Yes. Rabbi Schonfeld and Doctor Spitzer. And that’s where he was, till later he went to Bedford to a school.

By himself? He wasn’t together with his father?

No. And... from the school he then tried to get into medical school, although the school frowned about- they wanted him to be a rabbi of course. And he said, “Maimonides!” And they shouted him down: “How can you compare yourself with Maimonides [Jewish philosopher]?” Anyway, he eventually got to Newcastle. Most of the universities were taking

in... Army people and he was a, a - a schoolboy. So the headmaster knew somebody here and that's how he got to Newcastle.

And he got a place – at a university?

Yes.

And how did he finance it or how- where did he get help?

He got scholarships! He's- he was very bright. Yes, he had scholarships and in those days the government gave you help. I- my father didn't have to pay much for my tuition either... except pocket money and so on.

So he, and what, what- he became a doctor?

Yes.

Specialising in...?

Neu- neurology. And seeing that you couldn't help much in neurology, he turned to psychiatry which was really his forte. He thought about being a child doctor, but... when he was working for a colleague who was a paediatrician and the child died, he couldn't bear it. So that's why he turned to neurology and psychiatry.

Did he work in a hospital, or privately?

He worked in hospital for thirty or forty years. And when Mrs. Thatcher allowed, he did ten percent of private work. And when he retired, he kept his private work for a while. And he also lectured at the university in psychiatry. And he was the one- the students were asked to give marks to their lecturers and he always got the best. He- he was full of fun and told a lot of risqué jokes. So they all liked him very much. And I quite liked him myself.

[1:01:48]

And you had another- another child?

Yes. We had Martin... a year after we got married. Susan treated him as a doll, but occasionally she would tie him to a- a pole. And he was rather a naughty boy occasionally. So he was always the apple of his father's eye. Cause Kurt loved children. He was marvellous with Susan and Steven. But he'd never had one from a baby, so he was rather indulged - to put it mildly.

Tell us a bit about your studies. So when you finished school, you- what did you want to do?

Well, I wanted to work. So I went to the what is now Northumbria University and did social studies. But Kurt said, "Work is out. You have three children. And I'd rather you spent the time with them. If it is necessary financially to go, then you can go, but at the moment it's ok." Because also my father had died and left me nicely provided for. And that's how I managed to send Susan and Steven to private schools.

But you'd studied domestic science before?

Yes.

Yeah... That was much earlier.

Yes, much earlier. I did do a... a term with kids, but didn't like it. And, and then I taught mature people and I did like that cause they liked to learn. The kids didn't; they would say, "Please M'am. Me mum goes to the corner shop. We don't need to make brown stew." So that was the end of that.

[1:04:34]

Was it about cooking you taught or, what- what did you teach?

Cookery!

Cookery...

I wasn't much good at needlework. I had to work very hard and get some of my friends to help me.

And in terms of food at that point. Did you still eat some German foods or was it more English food or...?

No. We were still rationed!

You were rationed. Exactly.

And I- and we had a house, where we were housekeeper one whole month. And you had a family – three other girls, and a mistress. And I ran out of margarine, so I rang my dad and said, "Please, please send me some margarine, any way you can!" So the margarine came.

And what were you cooking? What sort of food?

All sorts. But economical and things that were ...good for children to do. And financially economical too.

And when did you become naturalised?

In 1948. I have the naturalisation paper with me.

And was that important to you?

No, not really.

To become British?

I felt British anyway, and I had the lovely name of 'Buxton', so... just an added bonus.

So your father changed his name from...

Buxbaum to Buxton.

In- when did he change it? When he was in the Pioneer Corps?

Yes. Cause he was due to be sent abroad. And they all had to change their names.

So, you also changed your name?

Yes, of course. I much preferred Eva Buxton. But they- at college they always called me 'Eva B'.

So could you get away- did people think you were English, or British, or...?

No. They always said I had an accent... which annoyed me rather, cause I thought I was 'typically English'. [laughs]

And what did they say? What did they ask you? Where you from?

"Where you from?" I said, "Blackburn!" "And before that?" So, I had to come clean.

[1:07:36]

And today, how would you define yourself in terms of your identity?

I would say I'm thoroughly British. ...And I'm grateful to the country that took me in! And in the- Kurt's letters, when he died... the letters I got from colleagues and friends - ninety! They all said that he really... became... a British national treasure. And as a refugee, from Vienna, to a- a doctor of psychiatry and also a teacher he did more than most people. So... that was very nice to hear. That was from non-Jewish people.

And do you feel it was easier, or more difficult as a- in terms of gender, whether as a refugee you were a man or woman, or girl or boy? Do you feel that's- was it important?

I don't think so. Depends who you were. So...

You for example, you wanted to study something and your father said, "No, you should do..."

Domestic science. And my mother. He said, "You'll get married." And I said, "How do you know?" He said, "It's a waste of time doing history, and all the kings and queens." He knew that I was good at history and I enjoyed it.

Yes...

But he said, "You might as well do something which will help you out later." So I did. You didn't argue with your parents in those days - which cannot be said for time now. Full stop.

You didn't say what happened to your mother. Your father went back to Germany. And what happened to your mother?

She stayed in Leicester and she had a a - a knicker factory! But not for long. And she was a very good artist. She exhibited. Those two are her paintings. And... she was very interested and she made a lot of friends through her art.

[1:11:04]

And did you stay close to her or did you- how did you?

I saw her from time to time. But... my in-laws did not approve of her.

On what grounds?

My first in-laws.

Yes.

Because of the divorce, et cetera, et cetera. So, and- but she stayed in Leicester. She had a lot of friends. She did a lot. She was in the Red Cross and... she did a lot of work like- her voluntary work. And... and her painting took up a lot of time. And then... she was ill with ...

dialysis and stuff and... at eighty-four she died. But at eighty, we had a party. And all the children came. And Oliver fell out of his cot. ...I remember that. That was the only remarkable thing about her eightieth birthday.

Did she change her name? Your mother? What was her name?

Tilde Stein.

Tilde Stein.

She took the uncle's name – yeah.

So the paintings are in the name of 'Tilde Stein'?

TS, she's – yeah.

And she also- she became British as well?

Oh, yes. Yes.

[1:13:06]

And did she ever go back to Germany?

Oh, yes. Quite a lot. And she enjoyed it. ...So. I went out with a German... A German German. And she encouraged it. And my father discouraged it. In the end, I thought...no. And that's where the Lobles came in.

And you say you feel very British. What part of your German or your continental identity is important for you? Or of your background?

No, I- I can speak German and... but, no, not really. And my- Kurt hated them. So... In fact we were on holiday somewhere in the... Lake Garda. And he said to me, "Look over there. Two Nazis. Terrible. Spoils my holiday." And then the Picks, who were friends of ours,

introduced us, “This is Mollie and Alan from Wimbledon.” And he was most taken aback. I said, “See?” They were very nice. We saw them each time we went to Garda. They- they were in their eighties and they motored down from Wimbledon. They said they must get back because they must get back to their Wimbledon tennis.

And Eva what do you think would have happened to your life if you hadn't been forced to emigrate? If Hitler hadn't come?

Well, would have gone on in Bamberg. It was a lovely town. But I rather think it was a one-horse-town. And it would have been slightly boring. As it is, I had more experiences... and I enjoyed those.

But do you think your parents, the divorce, do you think it has to do with emigration or no...?

No.

No it wasn't related to that.

No. They were both not good married people. That's why I'm a bit of a prude. I reckoned whatever happens, if I had children, I would never divorce. And living with my first husband wasn't easy. He was very ill. And when I married Kurt, it was like the end of a nightmare. Unfortunately, after fifty years it started again. But then I was used to it because... having lived to be over eighty you expect illness and death, et cetera.

[1:17:08]

And Kurt just passed away.

Well, ten weeks in hospital.

Yeah.

And they were very, very good with him. But he could not eat. Nothing by mouth. And he, from being – when I married him he was sixteen and a half stone. He was just skin and bone

when he died. And not himself at all. He was a jolly fellow. Full of jokes. Talked incessantly. But not at the end. And he was marvellous with the- my two children. And overindulgent with the youngest. But he loved the grandchildren. And he played with them. He was a very good player. And, and, well he didn't get through to the great-grandchildren playing. But he played with Steven's two boys and... we had Oliver often when Susan and Andrew went on holiday they just parked him. In his carrycot. And I came downstairs and I said to Kurt, "Heavens I hope that child is OK." He was- he was a good boy. And... I had him and with some of his pals. And we used to go to Lindisfarne, The Holy Island. He was quite something was our Oliver. He- we had a fair... and he had to go on these rides. And his friend... was sick! I had to reclothe him, and Oliver gave him fifty p and said, "Go on. Have another ride." So he... And if you asked him what he wanted, he'd have the whole shop. Whereas Nicole wouldn't want anything. Only her Mummy. And it was difficult to entertain her, because she was homesick.

What about – you lived in Newcastle, so do you think your experience as a refugee – as a Jewish refugee - in the north, is different from the experience in London, let's say?

Well I don't like London, so I would say yes. And there were lots of people like us. And with being married to Kurt, we had ...fifty-fifty, non-Jewish friends and Jewish friends. Mostly medical and... so on. And they're all very, very nice. Occasionally there was somebody I didn't like, but all in all... very, very nice.

You're happy to be in Newcastle? You like it?

Absolutely.

Do you feel like- what is the word for somebody from Newcastle? A... a... a Geordie?

Yes, I'm an adopted Geordie. I don't speak like they do, and it is a job to- to listen to. But Susan's very good at it. Get her to tell you how she speaks.

What do you like about Newcastle and what do you think is different from London?

It's...it's smaller... it's cheaper. We had a lot of friends. And they unfortunately have gone. Either died or moved. It's easier to go shopping. The people are much, much more helpful and nice than in the south. Lancashire were quite nice too. ...And I've just got used to it. I love it. I wouldn't move for anything!

[1:22:23]

And you didn't tell us about the synagogue. Did you join here a synagogue?

Yes, well Ronnie was the one who formed the Reform synagogue. And I found... an article in the paper and I gave it to him. I thought it would give him something to do, because at the time he was in a wheelchair. So he did that. And when I then got married to Kurt. Kurt didn't like Reform at all. He said, "Reform, they try and do things nobody else- they don't say: You can't do that. They find a way of circumventing laws." And he said, "Even if you don't keep all the laws, at least they should be there." And he liked singing... and he was very good at Hebrew, so no way were... would he be a Reform. So I went with him but not as much. He nearly went every week. But I just went occasionally. When it was *yahrzeit* or something, or somebody had a birthday and a *kiddish* [celebratory meal after synagogue]. Then I would go. Cause the, they... the services are pretty long. Just to say mildly. Especially at Yom Tovim.

The Reform is shorter.

Yes.

The Reform services.

Yeah. And you can drive there.

Yes... Was religion something- Judaism- was that important for you, or...?

Well when I was at the convent I went to mass. And... they wanted to convert me. But my father forbade it. I just wanted a white dress for Holy Communion. And then, when I went to Blackburn Grammar School it was C of E of course. And I got very friendly with the scripture teacher. And we went hiking together, six of us, with her. And I did scripture for

school certificate. And my father nearly fainted, because I got a Distinction in New Testament scripture. [laughs] But it was the synoptic gospels and it was like literature! So. It wasn't actually till I married Kurt, that I really understood Judaism. So... He taught Martin to read Hebrew in three weeks! And he sent me to Gateshead... to learn to read, cause I didn't go to a *cheder* or anything. And then we went to Israel, and he said, "Look. What does that say?" I said, "There are no dots! I can't read it!" So that was the end of my Hebrew.

[1:26:49]

And in terms of identity, what did you want to transmit to your children? How did you want to raise them?

I, I want them to be Jewish, but tolerant... And see other people's points of view, and to be flexible. But we like Pesach and... everything connected. The children liked that. So Kurt did a lot for them. And if anything, I would have thought Steven would be the rebel, but no, he married a *frum* girl. ...Fairly *frum*.

Is there anything you miss from Bamberg?

My grandmother. Otherwise, no. No, I think it's very beautiful, but I, I- I don't think I'd want to live there. It's very narrow.

And when did you go the last time? When have you been?

Well the- oh, ages ago. We've been to Switzerland more.

Yes...

Especially at Christmas time. And it's nice having the children with you when you don't need to work. And we enjoyed that.

So you don't feel the need now to visit Bamberg or Germany, or...?

I don't feel the need to have a holiday at all. I like being at home.

That's very good. Eva, we've discussed many things. Is there anything we haven't discussed which you think or for that matter if you think there is another point or something I haven't asked you?

Anything else? Is there anything else?

I don't think so.

[1:30:04]

Do you have any message for somebody, for anyone who might watch this interview in years to come?

Well, I wish anti-Semitism was over, and people learned from what has happened in the Holocaust, et cetera. I hope it never reoccurs.

Can I just ask a sort of last question- did you talk to your children about your past? About your grandparents? Was it something you talked about?

Only- only when they asked. I didn't really start talking about it.

And were you happy- so Susie for example went to Bamberg, as you said, as an au pair...

Oh, yes.

Were you...?

Oh, I just said to Kurt, "I hope she doesn't... sort of get any anti-Semitic troubles."

So you were a bit worried?

A bit, yes. I'm always worried. Kurt said when I was born, "God stopped worrying because Eva did it all." [both laugh]

And did you speak German to your children at all?

Sometimes. Not often. We sometimes said naughty words in German, you know? I won't say what... [laughs]

I won't ask you.

[1:32:05]

OK, well thank you very, very much for sharing your story with us.

Oh, it's a pleasure.

We're going to take a break and then we will look at your photographs and documents.

OK. Can I go in the kitchen for a bit?

Almost. One moment, and then you can go.

OK.

[1:32:40]

Eva, could you please introduce the person sitting next to you?

This is my daughter, Susan Elizabeth Kaufman.

Thank you. Susie have you got anything- you've listened now to your mum's testimony. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Susan: I have to say I think Mummy did forget that she often would talk to us about things during the war. And she always mentioned that she missed her Oma Minna, her maternal

grandmother. And the fact when she- and the time she saw her paternal grandmother for the last time. Did you talk about that?

Yes I did.

Susan: OK. So you know about that. And she was very open always about that, really. Whereas both my grandmothers – it wasn't talked about. But the only thing I do remember from my paternal grandmother, Else, is that she would never wear brown clothes. And I wondered whether it was because of the Nazi Youth or so. She never wore anything brown. It was usually navy blue, or sometimes lavender. But never brown. And I- I wonder whether it was something to do with that but she- she didn't talk to us about that kind of thing. But Mummy was pretty open about...

So you feel it was something she talked about?

Susan: Yes – yes. And I did feel different because... I took a packed lunch to the school where I went- the convent. And my Grandmother Else would usually make the sandwiches for me. And she would give me continental bread and sausage and all that stuff. And at school, all the kids had white bread and jam, or whatever. And I so wanted to have what they were having. But they actually wanted to have what I had. But I felt different. Because- and my Opa in Frankfurt sent me a- a case which was to put the lunch in. And it was very German and just so different from what the other children had. So I did feel different. And we didn't go out much with other people. The weekends and so on were always with my cousins, Monica and Peter and my brother. And we went to my grandmother. And it was very much being together as a family. It- one didn't go out to restaurants and things like kids do now. It was being with the family. And that was very nice. I loved that.

And do you find- were you interested in your mother's history and your parents' histories?

Susan: Very – very. I'm obsessed with it. Yeah. Yep. I like- I'm very interested in it.

And did it change over time, or did it...?

Susan: No. It stayed. Very- ever more powerful I should think, it became...

And Oliver.

Susan: And- and my son Oliver. Yes, very much so.

And what about your brothers?

Susan: The little one I don't think much. And Steven not that much either, actually. No. I don't think so. They didn't see it like I saw it.

And do you think your mother talked more to you or do you think it's just...?

Susan: Most probably. And maybe because I was interested in it, that she would be able to talk about it. Yeah.

And you've worked in the AJR...?

Susan: I've worked- I've had the privilege of working with refugees and Holocaust survivors. And it's part of my life, and... yeah, it is a- was a privilege. Yes. And we've actually just come back from a trip to Poland. So we've seen a lot of things that I had always wanted to see.

OK. So thank you very much. Is there something else you would like to say to your daughter maybe?

You came back from Poland and missed out Auschwitz because Kurt died... so she had to pack up and leave.

Susan: Auschwitz unfortunately will always be there.

Perhaps you can go again.

Susan: Absolutely.

OK. Susie and Eva, thank you very much again.

Susan: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

[1:36:56]

[1:37:00]

[Photographs and Documents]

Photo 1

Yes please, who is on this photo?

My maternal grandparents, Philipp and Minna Neuburger.

When was it taken?

I have no idea.

And where?

In Bamberg.

Photo 2

My grandmother and myself in the pram. 1932. In Bamberg, in front of the house.

Photo 3

It's in the garden at the back of our house. It's my mother and myself as a baby.

Photo 4

My father and myself also in the garden of Hainstraße *fünfzehn* [15].

Photo 5

My bedroom as a- a young child... in Hainstraße *fünfzehn* [15].

Photo 6

The upstairs of the house on the left was our flat.

We see the living room at the moment...

The living room with piano.

And what happened to the piano?

The piano was taken by the Nazis but somehow returned and sold.

Photo 7

Hainstraße *fünfzehn*, the top flat was ours.

[1:39:08]

Photo 8

And this is in the garden of the flat with Hansi Kahn and myself. The Kahns owned the flat, the house, and we rented the upstairs.

Photo 9

My mother and father and a bear in Davos. Davos. '36.

Photo 10

The Gebrüder Neuburger *Schuhfabrik* [*shoe factory*] with electric door instituted by my grandfather.

Schuhfabrik taken over by a German.

Photo 11

Teaching domestic science in Gloucestershire.

When? When was this?

1950.

And where are you in the picture?

Coming out of the door in the middle.

[1:40:40]

Photo 12

My wedding to Ronnie, March the 29th 1953. [From] left to right, my mother, my father, the bridesmaid, myself, Ronnie, my mother-in-law, father-in-law and George at the back.

Photo 13

That's 32 Deanside Avenue, our first home. From left to right: myself, Stevie, Susie and Ronnie. [Taken] About 1960-61.

Photo 14

Wedding to Ronnie- sorry – wedding to Kurt, December the 19th 1965.

Photo 15

My three children. It was taken for my sixtieth birthday, I think. From left to right, the youngest, Martin, Susie and Steven.

Document 1

It's self-explanatory. Naturalisation paper, 1947.

And is it for all of you?

Just for my father and myself.

Because your mother was divorced?

Yeah. Had another name.

Thank you very much Eva for sharing your story, showing us your photographs and your pictures.

Pleasure... pleasure. Are we finished?

We are finished.

Good. Thank you.

[End of photographs and documents]

[1:43:10]

[End of recording]

[1:43:51]