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**AJR**

**Winston House, 2 Dollis Park**

**London N3 1HF**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Ref. no:</b>	77

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Ottman
<b>Forename:</b>	Harvey
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	28 January 1927
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Gladbeck, Germany

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<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Rosalyn Livshin
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	3 hours 17 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

**INTERVIEW: 77**

**NAME: HARVEY OTTMAN**

**DATE: 17 OCTOBER 2004**

**LOCATION: LEEDS, YORKSHIRE**

**INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN**

**TAPE 1**

**Tape 1: 0 minute 14 seconds**

RL: I am interviewing Harvey Ottman and today's date is Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2004. The interview is taking place in Leeds, Yorkshire, England and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

So if you can tell me first your name.

HO: My name is Harvey Ottman.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

HO: Isadore Herman. There is a reason for that, because at the time of my birth all Jewish children had to have an identifying Jewish sounding name and consequently the Isadore was added to the front of my name but it appears only on my birth certificate.

RL: And the surname stayed the same?

HO: The surname is the same, Ottman.

RL: And when were you born?

HO: The 28<sup>th</sup> January 1927.

RL: And where were you born?

HO: Gladbeck in Westphalia, a small town near Essen.

RL: Now if you tell me your parent's names and where they were born.

**Tape 1: 1 minute 36 seconds**

HO: My father's name is Solomon Ottman and he was born in Samisov, Poland, a little difficult to spell but I am sure you can find that out somewhere.

And my mother's name was Esther; she was born in Hodorov, Poland, both Poland.

RL: And how did they come to Germany with them both starting off in Poland.

HO: Well they travelled through Austria and followed the route that my late uncles took who settled, also from the Hodorov area, settled in Gladbeck, and that is the town they settled in, the exact route I don't know.

RL: Why did they come there?

HO: Well, my father was a very religious man, he taught Hebrew as a language, even in the thirties when it was quite unknown to speak Ivrit. He was a scholar, studied at the Plemisol Yeshiva, and he wanted to come somewhere where he could practice and teach, his aim was mainly to teach the living Hebrew language, so my uncle already lived in Gladbeck, so he said, "Well, if you come here you will work for me as a bookkeeper and continue giving lessons, teaching Hebrew books and also the Hebrew language." And that is what he actually did when he settled.

RL: Was that his brother?

HO: No, no, that was the brother in law, my mother that is to say, her sister settled in Gladbeck some time before that date marrying a fellow, Shmuel Kauffman his name was.

RL: Tell me a little bit more about your father's background, first of all his parents, your grandparents, if you knew them tell me a little bit about them.

HO: Well, there was always a mystery about this because none of us ever knew his parents or his grandparents or mother, father, any of his relations at all, because he spent all his time in this little town learning at the ??? Yeshiva. There is a very well known town for that, learning and teaching, that is all we really knew about his background. We never knew anything about his mother or father. They lived there, in that town, but we could never trace their roots anywhere on my father's side.

RL: Did you have any idea what his father did for a living?

**Tape 1: 5 minutes 1 second**

HO: His father also what they used to call in those days a Talmid Chochom. He was just studying and learning, that was all, they didn't do anything for a living. They sat and learned all day and my father followed his sort of example, and that was it.

RL: Did you father have brothers and sisters?

HO: We never knew of any relations on my father's side, no.

RL: Do you know your grandparents names?

HO: No.

RL: Do you know if you were named after anybody?

HO: No, I don't know that. No.

RL: Did your father, did he have to serve in the First World War.

HO: No, he didn't serve because of his status, he was regarded to be stateless and consequently he didn't serve in any army and because he was given as a student and teacher and that was his profession as such over the years prior to the outbreak of war.

RL: How about your mother's family? Can you tell me something of her family background?

HO: Well, my mother's family is a record of not, just one parent, that is seen in one of the photographs that I have, that is her mother. But of the rest of the family, excuse me, we don't have any record of the rest of her family other than her, that she has sisters, who are also, one of the sisters is on the photograph. And she also had a brother who later on lived with us in the same house, so on my mother's side there is, one, two, three sisters and a brother, all of whom are deceased now.

RL: Do you know what her father did for a living?

HO: No, no I don't know that, no. Also a mystery.

RL: Where did, you said where she was born, in Poland. Do you know where her sisters and brother went to live? What they did?

**Tape 1: 7 minutes 31 seconds**

HO: Well perhaps I ought to say here that my mother was married before she married my father, her first husband died with whom she had three children, and shortly afterwards in the allotted period of time, a shidduch was found and she married my father. That is how they came together.

RL: Was that in Poland?

HO: That was in Poland.

RL: Right. So, yes ... we will come onto her first husband in a minute. But just tell me a bit more about her siblings and where they went to live and what happened to them.

HO: Well, in my family, that is to say my mother's sister.

RL: Yes

HO: Who is in the photograph, she in turn had five children, and my mother had all told seven children, three by the first and four by the second marriage.

RL: What was her sister's married name? What was her name?

HO: Kauffman. She married a gentleman also who was a general Jewish expression, called a "Shtutt Ballabus". He was the man who sort of ran the small, very small Jewish community in Gladbeck. And he was the sort of fellow who if anyone came into town who didn't know the area at all, they would always make for his house and he took in anybody off the road who wanted food and shelter, he was taken in this big house that we lived in and he had a trimming store at the bottom of the house that we lived in, and any Jewish travellers that were passing through would always call in and always welcomed to a meal.

RL: Now was this the sister and brother in law who had come first to Gladbeck?

HO: That's right.

RL: Do you know why they decided to move there from Poland?

HO: I don't know, no, I never knew that. All our sort of, my and my brother, our childhood memories are just placed there, and they don't go very far other than there.

RL: What about your other sister? What happened to her?

**Tape 1: 10 minutes 15 seconds**

HO: Well, they, along with my mother, during the war, escaped to Holland.

RL: Was she married?

HO: Yes, yes, her and my mother's sister, the one who that escaped to Holland together with my mother, escaped to Holland, her and her husband, both of whom died in Holland, but my mother was in hiding in Holland, hidden by some non-Jewish friends for the duration of the war.

RL: Did your mother's sister have a family?

HO: Yes, she has a large family and at the moment there is just one sister remaining living in Israel. She is one of the founders of Kibbutz Be'erot Yitzchak. An extremely religious kibbutz which was founded just near the airport, Ben Gurion, and has been moved a little bit further away, but she still lives on that kibbutz. I spoke to her just a few days ago actually, and her husband unfortunately died but she has an extremely, extremely large family, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren.

RL: What was her name?

HO: Mechna.

RL: Her first name?

HO: Excuse me, I just spoke to her, Selma.

RL: This was the sister of your mother?

HO: No, no. The daughter of my mother's sister.

RL: Right, yes.

HO: My mother had this sister that went to Holland. She had also a sister who lived in Essen, nearby where we lived. Essen was the sort of munitions town near Gladbeck, the nearest town, and my mother's sister lived there and she in turn had also three children but the whole of the family died in the camps, all but one daughter survived, she lived in London for some time. I had some photographs of her. She now lives in New York with her family.

RL: The sister who lived in Essen, what was her married name?

HO: Her, I don't know, it will come to be later in conversation probably, Krieger, yes that's it, Krieger.

**Tape 1: 13 minutes 2 seconds**

RL: And her first name?

HO: I can't remember her first name just now. There is a little bit of a story attached to that if you want me to relate that story now.

Well, you may, you probably don't know, but shechita was forbidden in Germany, and there was a time in this very big house that we lived, it was extremely big and it had a large area of land behind, during which we more or less grew everything that you could mention, all vegetables, fruit were grown, we were virtually self sufficient in that, and we also kept chickens there and the shochet, there was no shochet in Gladbeck, he used to come from Essen as and when he was required. And then there was a time when even

that was forbidden so we, in order to have any meat, because as I say my parents were extremely religious, the chickens were kept in an attic in the very big house that we lived in, and the children used to run up there and pick up the eggs. And then from time to time a shochet used to come from Essen, and he used to hide his “chalef”, in the, that is his knife, in his suspender belts and his long trousers, pants that they wore, he used to have to hide it there at a very, as it was dangerous to himself and to others. So, he used to come and kill the chicken or geese or whatever the thing happened to be and he used to go into the attic to do it. He used to have to wait for the traffic so that there wasn't any extreme noise heard outside. But even that stopped.

Essen was a town not very far away from Gladbeck, excuse me. Roughly about 20/30 minutes by tram. The trams used to run that way. And when we couldn't get any chickens killed there, my older brother, the one that is next to me, because we went in steps, and myself, we were given the job of carrying a chicken to Essen to be killed. So, they put this chicken in a little carrier bag, and they thought that if an adult took that, it would be extremely troublesome, so we took this chicken and we went to my uncle's house, and the shochet agreed to come into their cellar to kill it for us, and we sort of were on this tram shaking and hoping that the chicken wouldn't make a noise. Anyway we got there. We got back all in one piece. That is the story of the chicken.

RL: How many times did you do this?

HO: No, only once, because my uncle, in Essen, he was too afraid after that, he didn't want even then that it should happen, but it did happen, and, but we only did it the once, and it is something that sticks in your memory for a long, long time.

Back to the story so far, where were we then?

**Tape 1: 16 minutes 52 seconds**

RL: Have you told me yet about your mother's brother?

HO: No, they were all sisters.

RL: There was no brothers. They were brother in laws.

HO: There was a sister who lived in Essen, the one that we visited on that occasion. And there was that sister. And there was a third sister who lived in a town, I just can't remember, who we had very little contact with.

RL: Do you know what happened to her or her family?

HO: Yes, her family, they went to live in Israel. And from time to time we have bumped into them in Israel because we have visited there quite a lot. We had intended to live there at one time but it didn't work out, so we spent many months there at a time, and they, we attended weddings, but otherwise we had no contact.



RL: Do you know whereabouts in Israel they are?

HO: It will come to me but I just can't remember at the moment.

RL: You say that your mother had been married before. Can you tell me something about her first husband and what happened?

HO: We never really knew her first husband. All I know is that his name was Span, S P A N, but we never really knew what he did, what his profession was or anything at all about him. Of course, my sister, two sisters and my brother, the three children of that marriage, their name was Span, but we knew nothing about Mr Span. The only thing we ever remember, to this day I remember seeing pictures of my late mother and sister visiting the grave. He is buried in Düsseldorf, Germany.

RL: Did he die ... was it because he died that ...

HO: He died naturally there.

RL: Right. You don't know what happened there?

HO: No, no.

RL: Right, but she had three children. What are their names?

**Tape 1: 19 minutes 8 seconds**

HO: Dov, who is also dead now. Yehudit, also dead. Well they are all dead, and Susie.

RL: And then your mother remarried. Do you know when she married?

HO: No I don't, I don't know the date.

RL: Or the year, approximate year.

HO: Well, my oldest brother, Solly, who is 80 next week, and my parents being very religious, I assume that they wouldn't have been married very much before that date.

RL: So about 1923?

HO: I would think something like that.

RL: Right. And did they move away from Poland soon after marriage? Of did they live in Poland for a while?

HO: No, they didn't live in Poland. They married after they left Poland, they married when they lived in Germany, in Gladbeck I think.

RL: So your mother had already moved with her first husband?

HO: No, no, her first husband died in Düsseldorf and she moved because my uncle, her sister that is to say, lived in Gladbeck and she moved to be near her sister.

RL: So how did she meet your father?

HO: Well, I can only say that they lived in very closed religious circles so I will have to put it at that. That is all I know.

RL: What children did your mother have to the second marriage?

HO: Four children, my three brothers and myself.

RL: And what are they called?

HO: Solly, the oldest. Jack, who is deceased. Myself, Harvey. Then the youngest Maurice.

RL: So it was four boys.

**Tape 1: 21 minutes 30 seconds**

HO: Four boys.

RL: Ok. And you were born in Gladbeck.

HO: That's right.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

HO: My childhood memories are sort of bitter sweet as you might say. I remember quite clearly playing in what was sort of a heaven because we had such a huge piece of land behind where we lived, which was tended by, we had gardeners tending and so on. And my earliest memories are quite happily playing and I have very distinct memories of, you see the Shul was at the bottom, the synagogue was at the bottom of this house, on the ground floor, at the rear of the house was the synagogue, and my father was what you would call head cook and bottle washer. He was everything you see. He lehned, davened, my father and my uncle, they did everything in the little synagogue there.

And we had very happy times playing, playing around, and I don't know why Tisha B'Av seems to be something that sticks in your mind, because actually we used to think it very funny to see all the pews and everything turned over on its side. And throwing these

things, I have forgotten what they are called, that stick to your, they come from the garden, it is something that sticks to you when you have **fallen??**. It is something that grew there, very, you know, that sort of thing. That springs to mind. And then the general living, you know as children do, running around, and what I found very funny that the ladies used to have to, obviously, downstairs, but being a large house, they had a sort of chute at the top where the food was pulled up by pulley from the basement to the top floor and this was always opened on the holidays, Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur, particularly on any holiday where Yizkor was said so that the ladies who were on the first floor and they could hear the Yizkor taking part and take part themselves. That is a memory that sticks in my mind.

Then of course I was very agile, and I was climbing hear there and everywhere. There was the time I climbed right up a pear tree. We had a huge pear tree, and needless to say I got stuck and they had to get the fire engines to get me down from there. That was one of the memories.

And then there are the memories that all connected with holidays. Sukkot. You see on this large first floor, they had a very large balcony which seated, by those standards was quite a lot of people, about 30 people, and we used that at Sukkot

### **Tape 1: 25 minutes 10 seconds**

because they built it all up and in the garden we also had a field that grew corn on the cob, you see, and once the corn was picked, which was always around that time of the year we had fun carrying it, bundling it and then carrying it up to the first floor balcony, it was hauled up, somebody would be standing up there with a rope pulling up and putting the covering, schach on the sukkah. And downstairs, below where it was being passed over there used to have a slate table, which we used to use to play table tennis on. It was used for table tennis. Needless to say it was me who climbed up onto the balcony, pulled up and went flying down and I fell onto the slate table. I was only concussed, no damage done, but it is something that sticks in your mind.

Well, other than that, of course there is a general, home childhood was extremely happy, but schooling was something quite different. You see, we used to regularly, we had to walk to school, obviously, and when the anti-Semitism grew fiercer and fiercer and when the teachers themselves used to come in uniform at times the Jewish pupils, there were two in my class, they were separated and no longer had to take part in any lessons. We were sat on our own two rows behind all the others. And you just sat there and listened. You weren't obliged to do any work and the teacher was a particularly anti-Semitic teacher who spouted the line of the party you see, which was of course extremely uncomfortable, but I had to endure that.

RL: Did you have any non-Jewish friends?

HO: No. It was not possible. Because when we were children playing out, we played generally at the back of the house, but the, we had in front of the house was a large

pavement leading down the road and at the edge near the road there was a cycle track, and this is something silly that sticks in your mind, we were very keen on cycling and roller skating and all that sort of thing and the, on one occasion, my brother Jack was cycling and two boys, one on either side of the track, he didn't see them, and as he came cycling up they pulled a tight rope across and he went flying over the front of the handle bar and he was injured, very, very badly injured and it took him many months to recover from that. So we never really played with any non-Jewish children or had any non-Jewish friends at all there.

RL: And in school had you become friendly at all with any of the class?

HO: No, they were afraid to speak to you. Because they used to spout the Nazi propaganda about what the Jews were and how we mistreat them as lepers and we, on the way to and from school the famous paper called Der Sturmer was well posted so that you couldn't miss it. And of course it sort of had a shrinking effect on us, when we heard all these things and we would go home and say, "Are they

**Tape 1: 29 minutes 55 seconds**

true?" But of course we know it not to be so and we just lived with it until the, until 1938 when I came to England.

RL: Just saying, before that time, your uncle, did he, was there some kind of store that you said there was?

HO: There was a trimming store, at the bottom of the ground floor there was a trimming store. The first floor was occupied by my uncle and his family and then we were in steps and stairs, then there was us, then there was another uncle. I can't remember, it was about five storeys high. And then the regular guests, travellers that needed housing somewhere. The store was a trimming store and he had also travellers who would travel the road selling bits and pieces for him and that was owned by my late uncle.

RL: Was the store affected by the ...

HO: Well of course, as the years progressed there was no business there at all. Eventually, I can't remember, but I am fairly sure he went bankrupt in the sort of 35 ish time, 36, and there was nothing there.

RL: What did he do after that?

HO: Nothing at all. They, again they used to just sit and learn all day. And the women used to sit and wail. The children played outside as they could and life was sort of, I don't know, unreal shall we say, until, say 1938 when we left.

RL: Did your mother have any help in the house?

HO: Yes, she did have, it is perhaps untrue to say that perhaps everybody was anti-Semitic because we did have help. Being a big house obviously, having a big family, all the families on each floor as we lived all had non-Jewish helpers, well of course they were very friendly towards us.

RL: Did there come a time when that stopped?

HO: That stopped altogether in approximately 1937 onwards. Somewhere like that.

RL: How big a Jewish community lived in Gladbeck?

HO: Approximately 20 families, 20/25 families.

RL: What type of trade were they involved in?

**Tape 1: 33 minutes 11 seconds**

HO: Well I do remember one, he had a very thriving Shoe shop, but generally in cloths, clothing, all that sort of thing.

RL: And did they live in the area that you lived in or were they spread out.

HO: They were spread out, yes.

RL: You say you lived in this multi story building, was it attached to other buildings?

HO: No, it was a building entirely on its own. On the one side there was a sort of a small passageway with another building, not quite as tall, none of the buildings were as tall as this one. There were on the one side was an electrical shop, selling light fittings etc. On the other side there was a large open area, and then there were shops, and there was a public house, barber shop and some other shops and provision shops across the road.

RL: Was it mainly a commercial area this?

HO: No, mixed area. Mixed area actually, but we sort of lived enclosed in this, you could call it a small ghetto of a house, shall we say, because we were self sufficient in fruits and vegetables, bread, challah my parents used to bake regularly. And that was something to watch as well. Particularly when it came to the holidays, Purim it had to have a special one. Every holiday in the Jewish calendar has to have a special challah which they used to bake. But they used to bake their own every Friday.

RL: What were the different challahs for the holidays?

HO: There is what they call a Purim Coiledge [?] Don't ask me where the word came from because I don't know, it sounds very Polish to me, and the wives used to vie with each other as to who would make the nicest in the small community.

Then there was Sukkoth when they used to bring in, the wives used to bring their own challot in for their own men folk, only for the men folk, for Sukkoth, and as I say somehow or other my memory tells me there has to be one, was one for every holiday that was slightly different. One had to have mon, one had to be like a twisted loaf, one had to be a round one and of course they always had to be, lechem mishna, two. And these were divided of course; each sukkah was not only for our family, for any visitors who wanted to come. And everybody bought their own and the wives supplied the food for their own families.

**Tape 1: 36 minutes 48 seconds**

RL: On your floor of the house, how many rooms did that have? Your family lived on, what was it?

HO: The second.

RL: How big a floor was that?

HO: Well, it had three bedrooms, kitchen, one combined bathroom and toilet and then one study for my father. He had a, my father had a very big collection of Hebrew books. He collected them from all over the world and he would study all the time.

RL: Who taught you your Hebrew lessons?

HO: My father.

RL: And what do you remember?

HO: My father and Rabbi Balkind, Reverend Balkind in Manchester.

RL: What did your father teach you? What did you learn with him?

HO: Everything, Chumash, Rashi, everything. We were taught from a very early age. It must be obvious from what I have been telling you. We were taught from a very early age, we could do and speak, you see my father was very advanced, he spoke Ivrit as a spoken language, which was frowned upon very much in those days. He used to teach Ivrit in all the little towns, Borchon, Botrob, all the little towns near where we lived, he would not only teach the Chumash and Rashi but he would also teach Hebrew as a living language because, and he was fluent in both. He could quote, his knowledge of torah was such that if you gave him, opened a Chumash and gave him three sentences together he would tell you exactly from which psalm? it was coming from because he knew it all exactly by heart.

RL: Did he belong to any Zionist society?

HO: This is one of the ways and one of the reasons how we managed and how he managed to get out of Germany, whereas a lot of others didn't. He was an extremely keen Zionist, from as far as we can remember, and he used to follow Theodore Herzl around the country whenever he spoke and I have a collection of, in my house, and that is a very famous print now, of Theodore Herzl standing on a bridge in Switzerland, I think it was in Basle actually, at the congress that my father attended, when he said that Israel has got to be a homeland. Because there was a lot of talk at that time that Russia was going to supply some

**Tape 1: 40 minutes 20 seconds**

wilderness where all the Jews would be sent to. That was when, the famous speech that, he said that Israel will be the homeland. So my father was a very firm Zionist.

RL: Did he belong to any particular organisation?

HO: To the Zionist organisation. And this is how we managed to, I don't know how, but we managed to get on the first Kinder Transport out in 1938. Whereas the others followed on and went on right up to the war. And he managed also to get an exit visa for himself and my mother, but the German authorities being as they were at the time they split everything up so that he got his visa and my mother's didn't arrive when it should have arrived. Consequently he had to leave on his own because he left on the very last, I don't know how he came, probably train, and he went on the very last train crossing the border to go to the Hook of Holland I suppose. And he managed to leave Germany and my mother's visa arrived the day after he left, so she was left behind with my sister.

RL: We will come back to that story in a minute. I am just thinking about the Zionist activity. Did you as children belong to any Zionist group?

HO: No. We were too young at that time.

RL: What about your older brothers?

HO: My oldest brother was 13. 13, 12, 11 I was. No, we couldn't belong to any organisation. We didn't move in any other field at all except for staying at home, up to the time when we did attend school, but that's very, very ...

RL: There were no youth groups or ...

HO: No, no.

RL: Nothing that you went to?

HO: No. Not where I was.

RL: Nothing in the town. What about holiday time? Did you used to go anywhere during school holidays or summer holidays?

HO: Prior, I only have the memory of one occasion, going with the school on a school holiday. That was very, very early on, but after that there were no holiday periods as such.

RL: As a family you didn't take a holiday?

**Tape 1: 43 minutes 10 seconds**

HO: No, no ... we well, for many reasons probably. We couldn't move and then we couldn't really afford it

RL: Did the family have a radio?

HO: No.

RL: Did they get newspapers?

HO: No. I suppose they might have done but I have no knowledge of that. None at all.

RL: Did you know your neighbours at all? The neighbours that lived next door either way?

HO: No, because they were all party members and had all the symbols on the doors so we lived a very isolated life for the period.

RL: What did your mother ... she had a very large family ... so she must have spent a lot of her time ...

HO: She looked after the family. Doing the everything that is required. Sewing repairs and making things and that sort of thing.

RL: Were you still in Germany during Kristallnacht?

HO: Yes.

RL: What do you remember of that period?

HO: That period, October/November, just before we left we were in prison twice actually. Once prior to that for, overnight, and then during Kristallnacht we were taken to prison. The men were separated from the women. We the children, were with the women. Of course I remember distinctly the wailing that went on. We were in one, just the whole, all the town women who were still there were in one huge room, shall we say



in this prison, with a little pot in the corner. I remember us having to use that, all the children and the women. We were in prison there in Gladbeck.

RL: So you were actually in prison before Kristallnacht ?

HO: No, on Kristallnacht. They came to, during the night, they came to, again I have quite vivid memories, of them coming to the house and battering the doors down, breaking everything. We pleaded with them and the fellow said, "Well, I've

**Tape 1: 45 minutes 52 seconds**

got to do my duty, I've got to wreck the building." This was during the night actually. My mother was only partially dressed. A slip and she didn't even have time to put her dressing gown on. I remember seeing them being pushed down the stairs, she fell down the stairs, there were so many of us being herded down the stairs that she sort of fell on the people in front of her. We were in prison there, and when we got back, the whole, everything was in ruin, pots, pans, everything was broken and we walked on eggshells as it were, we walked amongst the broken rubble. My father had a very great collection of Hebrew text books which were torn, pages here, there and everywhere, and well we had to go about, when I say we I mean primarily the adults, I mean we couldn't do very much and clear up. We cleaned up, to my knowledge as much as we possibly could, and I can't remember, I think somebody did bring us a mug of something to drink, so that we could have something to drink, the food was all spoilt, and I just can't remember if somebody did bring some bread or something for us. But I don't remember what happened then beyond that until we sort of, everybody helped to sort things out. The Shul, the synagogue, was wrecked, that was on the ground floor. The Sifrei Torah were burned and that is about it. It is very difficult to talk about that.

RL: Did you have any idea that this was going to happen?

HO: No. We knew obviously that there was pent up feeling of hatred which was sort of implied by the newspapers and things of that nature but, and you didn't dare go out of the house because you know, they would point to you and say, "Yude." And so, you know you lived a sort of hermit type of existence during that period after Kristallnacht and virtually until the time we got the first train out, well my parents got us on to this. We had a little bag and a tag with your name on it, on the first train to the Hook of Holland, Harwich.

RL: Do you know how they managed to get you onto that?

HO: No, I don't know the details of it. Probably I was too small to really appreciate it. I don't know how they did it. But, you know I remember seeing a lot of others, but how it was achieved, I really don't know that. The curious thing was that there were only three of us that got onto it. My youngest brother somehow or other did not manage to get onto that train and he got on, he got on another transport a little bit later.

RL: So who were the three that went?

HO: My brother Solly, Jack and myself. The three older ones and the younger one was left behind.

**Tape 1: 49 minutes 53 seconds**

RL: And what about your other siblings? Your half siblings?

HO: They, my brother managed to, he was working in Holland at the time actually, and for some reason or other, I still don't know even to this day, but in order to, he wasn't married, but in order to get another woman who couldn't get out, if they got married, they could get them out, the organisation. So he got a quick registry office marriage and he managed to get to Israel. My youngest sister, my other sister, stayed with my mother, and the youngest one, she was smuggled out somewhere, and she got, she of course was very involved with Habonim and she went on Hachshara a number of times, and she was smuggled onto the boat that landed, you can see to this day there is a plaque to the rear of the Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv where a boat docked, but they wouldn't let them land, and they jumped ship and illegally landed in Tel Aviv.

The older sister, with my mother she managed to pay their way to smuggle into Holland. They and my uncle and aunt smuggled into Holland and they lived in hiding. My uncle and aunt, and the other uncle who lived on the very top floor, they died in Holland, and my mother and before the war, and my mother and sister were hidden by some non-Jewish friends in Holland, in Amsterdam, during the war.

RL: And they were in hiding for the whole war?

HO: They were in hiding for the whole of war, in an attic room somewhere, but my sister spoke fluent Dutch so she, when she worked in the commercial office she was that much older, she worked in a commercial office and she was pretty good in a few languages. English, obviously German and she spoke fluent Dutch. So much so that you couldn't tell, well the locals couldn't tell anyway, she fooled them, and she did go out into the streets.

Well at first they smuggled across there and I did have a photograph to show you but unfortunately I haven't got them now where my mother and sister were walking in Holland with a star on. The Jews in Holland had to wear a star, the Jews were rounded up after that and taken to the camps. One of my nieces and her younger boy was also smuggled across but they were soon rounded up and taken to the camps and died in the camp. But my sister and my mother, they managed to hide somewhere, among non-Jewish people and they lived the war out in Holland.

RL: So did your sister continue to go out, even during that period?

HO: She did, yes, not with the star, obviously. She didn't go out socially or anything, but she just went out for shopping and things of that nature.

**Tape 1: 53 minutes 55 seconds**

RL: So she wasn't working.

HO: No. She wasn't working at that time. They were kept by these very nice Dutch people.

RL: Do you know the names of the Dutch family?

HO: I had pictures of them, but I don't know their names. I had pictures of the whole family after the war, but no, I don't know.

RL: You mentioned in the beginning that your family were in prison twice.

HO: Yes.

RL: What was the second?

HO: I don't know. The first time, that was prior to Kristallnacht, we were in prison overnight because they wanted to sort the men out to go to labour camps. So, the women were sent home and we children were sort of sent home with the women the following day and then the men were sorted out. Those who were going to the camps deported, but they allowed my father to go home because he was classified as a teacher. Because he was a teacher they let him stay and he came home.

RL: Were any members of the family deported?

HO: Well, not from there, from those who tried to escape to Holland were. My niece and her little son.

RL: I was thinking of this first imprisonment.

HO: No, not then, no.

RL: So then Kristallnacht was the second imprisonment. Right.

How long were you actually in Germany after Kristallnacht?

HO: Probably about four weeks. That was November and we came to England early December on the, what was then up to that date the coldest winter on record. I say that because I remember it so clearly. We had to sleep three in a bed. We were taken from the quarry to an ex army barrack in Lowestoft and we slept three in a bed.

**Tape 1: 56 minutes 27 seconds**

RL: First of all, how did the family manage in those first few weeks after Kristallnacht, you know that you were still there?

HO: Extremely difficult, extremely difficult. You had very few pots and pans because everything was broken and you didn't have the means with which to buy anything. But, we existed as I said before on this very large garden behind, you can't really call it a garden, all the produce that was produced there, and we existed on that, and bread that they always baked at home.

RL: And then what were you allowed to take with you when you were getting ready to leave? What were you allowed to take?

HO: I am sure you must have seen and heard about the famous statue in a suitcase that is now at Liverpool, just that. A very small satchel with, I can't just remember with what. Nothing as you might say, probably a bun or something, I don't know, nothing really to speak of.

RL: Do you remember what was in the satchel? What was in the case?

HO: No, I haven't any idea. I think there were some bits and pieces of toys to amuse us and there was a Siddur, yes.

RL: This film is just about to end so we will just stop here.

HO: Thank you.

**TAPE 2**

RL: This is the interview with Harvey Ottman and it is tape 2.

I was just asking if there were any other memories from your childhood that you want to tell us about before we move onto the next stage.

HO: The childhood memories are linked up to something that happened at the next stage but it is worthwhile mentioning it at this stage because once we, I have to just skip a few days and so on, once we were placed in a home in England, in Welwyn Garden City, I will come to that in a moment, the teaching there was such that all the children obviously were traumatised, and they were of varying ages. The teacher there said that you must at all costs, if you were going to live a normal life blot out these memories and speak only the language that you are going to speak now. Hence, I don't speak German, I won't speak German, I don't speak it. And he said, the only time that you are going to settle, and know that you are going to settle in England is when you think and you count in English and when you lay back and close your eyes all you think of is English.

**Tape 2: 1 minute 28 seconds**

Consequently a lot of memories are blotted out by those early experiences in Welwyn Garden City.

RL: There is one question that I hadn't asked, and that is if you ever went anywhere for entertainment, of if you ever went to the cinema or anywhere like that?

HO: In Germany? No, no.

RL: No.

HO: For many reasons, first of all there were religious reasons and second of all that you weren't allowed to, because you were segregated wherever you went, so rather than having the embarrassment that takes place we just didn't go anywhere. We made up our own games amongst ourselves.

RL: Ok. So we had got to the point of you packing your suitcase.

HO: Well they were packed for us.

RL: ... to leave home. Do you remember the day of departure and how you were feeling at the time?

HO: I can't remember the exact date of the departure and how I was feeling, but when we landed I felt very lonely, alone. Although we were very lucky in that respect, there were three of us together. And everybody that we came into contact with rather envied the fact that there were three of us and that we were so close together, which we had been all our lives. And we played together all that time, and we were known as the Ottman boys.

RL: Do you remember the journey at all?

HO: No, all I ever remember from that is the landing. And I did speak a moment ago of the fact that it was so cold. It was extremely cold and the accommodation that we were given in old army huts, it was an army barracks, extremely sparse and there wasn't enough accommodation, sleeping accommodation for everybody so three of us slept in one bed, top and tail.

RL: And how long were you there?

HO: Somewhere between three and four weeks because this particular, I beg your pardon, I will just move back a moment. In the Lowestoft camp where we were for two weeks, that is all. But then we were placed in this disused home, it wasn't a home, it was a private residence actually, a place called Sheriden,

**Tape 2: 4 minutes 38 seconds**

which was purchased by a group of London businessmen to house refugees from Germany and other countries. They, I am not quite sure if they rented this, it was empty, and they rented it for that particular purpose, engaged staff to help the children get over the initial shock, and a very good gentlemen, by the name of Dr Lewin, his name sticks in my mind, he became our teacher and mentor. But, then someone else took care of sports and entertainment of some sort. I was always a very keen sportsman, very agile in most things, many years ago.

RL: Where was this home?

HO: Welwyn Garden City.

RL: That was in Welwyn Garden City.

And how many children were there?

HO: Probably in the region of 30 to 40. Of all nationalities, not just from Germany, because we used to have international football matches between German, Austria and all the outlying countries, where the Jews were hounded out. I played for England, not for Germany, I played for England.

RL: For how long were you in this home?

HO: About a month.

RL: So you were in the Lowestoft camp first for two weeks. Can you just tell me a little bit more about your stay there? Did you continue to sleep three to a bed for the whole time?

HO: The whole time, yes.

RL: What were the living conditions like there?

HO: Very sparse. The food was just about enough to keep you going, and it was extremely, the only thing that I can remember about that time is that it was extremely cold. We slept in our clothes, completely clothed, just took our shoes off, that was all, otherwise we kept our day clothes on. And there is no memory of that time other than that we were freezing cold all the time and in later years it was referred to as the coldest winter in history.

RL: And the home in Welwyn Garden City, what can you tell me about that?

**Tape 2: 7 minutes 25 seconds**

HO: Well, there, we all had individual beds, it was one of those grand old homes, but it was just furnished in a way to accommodate the maximum amount of people, and all we really did was to learn English, this gentleman, this Dr Lewin, he taught English, day and night as it were, we just had a crash course, and also we did have less Hebrew lessons.

RL: Was this the man who told you to forget German?

HO: That's right. I think in later years he became a Rabbi in a London synagogue, but I don't know where.

RL: What was the age range of the children there?

HO: From I should think 7 to 8 until 14, I think 14, probably 15 the maximum.

RL: And what about the food there?

HO: The food was adequate, yes there were, I have no sorts of memories of being short of any food. Again, clothing was supplied. There was a group of London gentlemen, I did know the name, I can't remember the name, there was a group of gentlemen who got together and they formed a sort of a committee, I can't remember what it was called, it wasn't all that so many years ago that it was disbanded because they all kept together. They would visit, perhaps once a week they would visit, "Are you happy?" It was a very sort of happy time, yes.

RL: So besides learning English and a little bit of Hebrew, what else did you do with yourselves?

HO: Played sports mainly, sports of every description, because we were in large grounds so you could have every sport that was available or that you wanted to do, or you could just sit around and read, I was mainly playing about.

RL: What about Shabbos? Were there any special arrangements?

HO: The arrangements were, no there weren't any special arrangements, the only arrangements were that there were the prayers led by a Dr, Dr Lewin, and after that you were free to do what you wanted in between meals.

RL: What happened when you left that particularly home?

HO: Can I just say, I do remember one trip, and one trip only, a day trip we made to Welwyn Garden City and this was in a year, well obviously, and I, my first vision of television, through the window of a department store. Just a little aside. Yes.

**Tape 2: 10 minutes 44 seconds**

RL: What did you think of England at that point?

HO: Well, I didn't know very much of England. All we knew was the home that we were in there and that we were transported from another land to be there. And we thought that surely they can't all be as bad as Lowestoft, and naturally they weren't.

RL: So how did you come to move from that home?

HO: Well it is difficult to say, well I say difficult, I don't know what went on behind the scenes, but there were moves afoot right across the country to take in German refugees, or refugees, not necessarily German, refugees that arrived on the Kinder Transport. Most of the big cities, and country towns and villages, you had volunteers and the volunteers that you took up, that I myself went to a house in Bignor Street, a family called Davidson who became my foster parents until after the war.

RL: So were you separated from your brothers?

HO: Yes, we were all separated. I was placed with Davidson, my middle brother was placed in a house by Mr and Mrs Beer, they lived in Cedar Street, which is no longer there, and my oldest brother, Solly, was in a house with Mr and Mrs Rich, both of whom are deceased.

RL: Where did they live?

HO: Somewhere off Water Road, I just can't remember the exact address.

RL: So you all went to Manchester?

HO: Yes, we all went to Manchester.

RL: What happened to the other children?

HO: I don't know, the only contact that we ever had was one boy, who after coming to England went to Canada and there was an odd occasion when he surfaced in Manchester and he became very friendly with my brother Jack, and we actually made contact with him, but I have no idea where any of the other children are.

RL: What was his name?

HO: Steurman, S-T-E-U-R-M-A-N. Walter Steurman, that's right.

**Tape 2: 13 minutes 32 seconds**

RL: Do you remember the names of any of the other children that you knew?

HO: No, no.



RL: And you don't remember what happened to any of them?

HO: No, I don't know what happened to them, no. They went all over the country.

RL: Tell me about your arrival in Manchester and your meeting with the family.

HO: Well, I really don't remember much, but the son of this family, they were a large family themselves, there were four sons and two daughters in that family. Not all at home at that time, the son, one of them, met me at the station, and they used to always like to tell me about the fact that it was my fault that they missed a very important wrestling match. Wrestling was very popular at Belview in Manchester and they used to love wrestling, and they said it's your fault that they missed a very big bout, and I remember that quite clearly. But the family themselves, they lived in Bignor Street and they were a very, very generous family, in that, at the time they took me they still had, one, two, three, four, two sons and two daughters at home, and when I came there, and they were very kind to me. Mr Davidson was very much involved with local Shul affairs. He was the president of the Bishop Street Synagogue at the time. And I think, that was a long time ago, and the whole, if I can say, High Town scene, was all so new to me, and yet there are certain memories that sort of stick in my mind, like the corner Siroto chemist, the old chemist, Titanics, the genuine Titanic survivors who had their shop called Titanic on Waterloo Road, and the memories that I have of the whole community of High Town was a sort of vibrant Jewish community, but it wasn't totally Jewish, in that the Jewish people didn't dislike, at the time, the non-Jewish people, and vice versa, everybody was friendly, and they lived very, very happily with their neighbours, and of course I remember quite clearly during that period it was leading up to my Bar Mitzvah, in which, during that time I had a short period that I went to school, very short schooling. My schooling is negligible. It all came through learning later on in life, and my only school is life. I went for a short while to the Jewish school in Derby Street and my only claim to fame was that when Jack Rosenthal wrote *The Evacuees*, because I was evacuated from there, I was one of the group that he writes about in his book and film. So I went to, had a short while at Derby Street School and then from there, after that of course we were evacuated. I didn't have a very long time, I went to Rebbe Balkind's Cheder, and he also taught me there and he taught me at the school for a short period of time.

RL: How long were you at the school?

**Tape 2: 18 minutes 2 seconds**

HO: Well, not very long, because I was evacuated then, probably no more than maybe a year.

RL: And how was your English?

HO: By that time I was fairly fluent, of course with an accent, which some people can still trace today and others that can't believe that is so. It just depends who you speak to. It was pretty good by that time, I could speak fairly fluently.

RL: Were you the only refugee in your class?

HO: Yes.

RL: And how were you received by the others?

HO: Very well, very well. I was very good at blending in with the scenery and needless to say my best subject was Hebrew, so I was always top of the class, but other than that I managed. I still have friends up to this that I sat next to in school, living in Manchester. So, yes, I think for the short period of time that I spent there I did quite well.

RL: What did you think of Manchester at that point?

HO: Well, it was a huge city, it was a huge city, completely, that sort of life was completely unknown to me and I was in Manchester at the Davidsons during the time of the blitz and I have vivid memories of sheltering under the stairs in the cellar. The houses in Bignor Street all had stone staircases leading to a cellar and during the blitz we sheltered in the cellar there. And I remember quite clearly the day after, walking, of course we did a lot of walking in those days, we didn't have any money to ride, we would walk to town, and saw the whole city ablaze, I remember Debenhams Store, Miller Street and all that area being razed to the ground at that time, but that of course is a little bit further on.

RL: Further on ... You were saying about the Davidson family. What did Mr Davidson do?

HO: Mr Davidson was the manager in a clothing factory, Holstein and Portnoy, and that was my first job. I left school at 13 actually, so I didn't have much time in between. You see at that particular time school leaving age was 14, but I left at 13, because you could only leave school in those days to earn time. You can't just leave when you came of age. My birthday being in January, I wanted to leave before the next holiday, so, which would have meant waiting until the end of August when the next holiday break came along, so, but the headmaster, a gentleman called Harry Cohen, I have got my leaving certificate still, somewhere

**Tape 2: 21 minutes 35 seconds**

in my papers. I pleaded with him, well he knew my case, and I said I have to work because I have to earn some money, I have to get some money from somewhere, I didn't want to be beholden to the family that was looking after me for so long. So, he agreed, after much begging, that he would allow me to leave and I left on the Friday and on the Monday started to work at Olstin and Portnoy where Mr Davidson was a manager.

RL: Was this after the evacuation?

HO: After, yes.

RL: Tell me about the evacuation.

HO: Oh, I was evacuated to Blackpool. I lived with a family called Leeson, he was an optician. Now, they had never met any Jewish people in their lives, they knew nothing about the Jewish religion, they thought I had come from the moon, because of my funny habits and the things I wouldn't eat. They just couldn't understand why I wouldn't go to church with them on Sunday. They were church, God fearing people, very nice people, but they just hadn't met, they didn't know what Jewish people, believed the Jewish people had horns, that sort of thing. They could very well have lived on the moon you would have thought. So when I sort of told them my background they just were astounded, and rather than not eat I would go to bed because I wouldn't eat the food, you see. The only food I ate, was, I went to school there for a short period of time, I actually hadn't started school in Blackpool, and at that time there were also two Austrian boys there, who had come from Austria, and they couldn't speak any English, but at that time I was so integrated that I was their interpreter. You see, when the school master needed something translating for them he turned to me and this sort of life was getting a bit difficult and I used to cry a lot at night, I used to go to the room and just cry, because they didn't know, I wanted to keep Shabbat and they didn't know what that was all about, and then to ease the pain they thought they would buy me a pair of roller skates, and if you have seen the film *The Evacuees* and you see the boy on the roller skates, that's me, in the story. I used to live on those roller skates, I used to go to school on them, come home on them, but of course that couldn't go on, that wasn't a life. Eventually I pleaded with ... and I went back to Davidson.

RL: How long were you there?

HO: It lasted about a month, six weeks I was there, and then I went back there. And then, as I said before, we now went to Davidsons and one of their boys was called up, Pete Davidson, he went to Burma, and they were all in sort jobs and not fit, except for two of them, the other boys were all away, one in the air force, one decided to emigrate to Australia but they were all in the armed forces bar

**Tape 2: 25 minutes 34 seconds**

two. One had a weak heart, a heart condition, and the other had very, very bad eye sight. And all the Davidsons, I must say, I keep in touch them, there are just two, the youngest daughter and the son who was 92, he lives in Gan Eden in Manchester. And we are regularly in touch with them. This carried, as I say we worked at Austin and Portnoy while I was at Davidsons. And then, this went on until the end of the war.

RL: Can we just take it step by step. The evacuation, let's go back to that. Did other children have similar problems to yourself. How did the others manage?

HO: I don't think they were observant to the extent that my family were. I think you can appreciate when you come from a family who observes every tiniest bit of the Jewish commandments, it is very, very difficult to suddenly break off. I am bound to say that over the years it does happen, but not as suddenly as that, on a child who was impressed to say his prayers three times a day and had the fear of God drummed into him at such an early age it was very difficult.

RL: In a way you found it harder than the others?

HO: Yes, because they came from a different background. I think I was the only one who came from this sort of rigid, austere religious background.

RL: Were your brothers evacuated?

HO: Yes, yes.

RL: To the same place?

HO: No, no, I beg your pardon. My brother, the two brothers stayed in Manchester. No. Possibly being the youngest, that is why.

RL: And you say the family that you were staying with were astounded at what they had been given. How did they cope with this?

HO: Well, I must say very, very well. In that they tried to meet all my curious religious demands which gradually they sort of weaned me off if you like. I settled in there very well. They were all absolutely very happy to do whatever I wanted and to relieve my requirements I remember I used to go to Balkind's Cheder at the time, and I was still at the stage when I wouldn't even carry a key on Shabbat, so they all wanted to go out in the evening and I had no means after Shabbat was out, to get back in. They said, "Oh, nobody will notice, but the key in the turn ups of your trousers." Which I did. I put the key in the turn ups of my trousers and I was shaking and so unhappy about this and I sat there singing, as one does on a Shabbat and going home, I found that it started to rain, I started

**Tape 2: 29 minutes 19 seconds**

running, and when I got home, needless to say the key, I had lost the key, and I was sat on the doorstep in the pouring rain. They didn't have porches in those days, until somebody came home, but I carried a key after that, I am going to tell you.

RL: You say the family tried to accommodate your religious needs. In what way did they?

HO: Are you referring to the Davidsons?

RL: No, in Blackpool.

HO: In Blackpool. Well they thought that if they didn't buy pork I would be all right. So I said, "What about the other things that you eat?" When you come from a religious background there are many, many things that you can't eat. I wouldn't eat off the same dishes, you see. Well they couldn't understand that, they had been washed. They couldn't understand that, or sausages, well all right if you don't eat pork, you can have a pork sausage, but you can't. That sort of thing you see, or lobsters or oysters or goodness knows what. All the foods were ... he was an optician, they lived very well. Their sons went to the best schools and they just couldn't understand. I think they were happy that they realised they couldn't possibly bend towards my way of thinking. I just, must have been a stage when I couldn't possibly change, I thought there was no other way.

RL: What did you eat?

HO: I can't remember. Probably bread. I can't remember. But certainly I didn't eat any vegetables yes but no other food of any kind. Eggs, yes I did have eggs.

RL: As you say you were only there about six weeks.

HO: Yes, only a short time.

RL: The Davidsons, how religious a family were they?

HO: They were what I would say like a lot of families today are. He was the president of, Mr Davidson was president of the Bishop Street Synagogue, they observed Kashrut, they observed the holidays, in as much that they didn't work, but they did other things which one doesn't do, that is accepted. Other than that they were very much like a lot of Jewish families are today. They were observant in a sort of adherence to certain things that were handed down, maybe because of habit. I don't think that they had learned a great deal in depth, like by that time I had. So, my life was like any other Jewish people today. They behaved in that

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 28 seconds**

manner as they did. They went out when they wanted on a Saturday, but otherwise mainly they observed the basic commandments.

RL: And how did you find it there?

HO: At first they used to make fun of me, because of course I wouldn't do certain things. But, the food was no problem, obviously, but I wouldn't carry a key. But, eventually, I don't know, when you go out to work, obviously I went to work as I say at the age of 14,

you go out into the wider world and you see things that are happening and gradually you assimilate. In most things in life, that is more or less the same.

RL: In what ways did you start to assimilate?

HO: Well, I would say bit by bit, I suppose I would carry on Shabbat, and maybe even have money in my pocket and that sort of thing, but it is difficult to say. Other things I did, I observe the Jewish holidays, which they didn't do at first, but for my sake they did a lot of things. I mean, people used to come home and make Kiddush for the family and all that but they would still go out and enjoy themselves by bus, car, well they didn't have car in those days. We did that sort of thing.

RL: Did they work at all on a Saturday?

HO: No, Saturday wasn't a working day in those days. Saturday and Sunday were not working days. But on holidays you had to work. It all depends you see, there were Jewish factories that didn't, they closed on the Jewish holidays.

RL: So did you have to work on some of the Jewish holidays?

HO: No, I was allowed, no I didn't. Well they closed on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur with it being a Jewish a factory but on the other holidays I didn't have to work, no.

RL: And how did you get on at work with the other workers.

HO: Lovely, because I think they sort of looked at me as an oddity. How come you can speak English? They couldn't understand how I could speak English and they couldn't speak German. I said, it's the other way round, I can't speak German now, I can only speak English, you see. By that time I have to say that my brother Jack was also at the same factory, he was also employed a year later, no a year before me actually, he was employed there, so we worked at the same place. No, I think we got on very well. Eventually we blended in.

**Tape 2: 35 minutes 39 seconds**

RL: Did you have any difficulty at the beginning in blending in?

HO: No, no. I have always had the ability to mix with people and by that time as I say there were only certain words sort of eluded me, the locals used to make fun of me, maybe the way I used to pronounce a certain word, but I was very happy.

RL: Was this a mixed work force of Jewish and non-Jewish?

HO: Mixed work force, yes.

RL: Did you find anything about life in this country strange or different to what you were used to?

HO: Well, it was obviously strange and different, but at the same time my impression of life then as it is now, is all a process of growing up and learning. The learning curve never stops as far as I am concerned, and that sort of life that I lived then is very much opposed to the life I live now. It is just part of life. I just regret, if I have any regrets, is the period of time before the war, you know, and the need for all that, but other than that everything that followed on from then would have been different. But that is life.

RL: What did you find strange? What was different here to what you were used to there?

HO: I have to come back again to the same thing. Religion played such a big part. It is very difficult for someone who is non-religious to explain that. If you were brought up on such a tight religious ... string ... if you like, that everything else when you gradually come to life outside that circle is something that when it is so strange to you, you say to yourself, how come I am still alive but I am doing these things that I was taught I would never have to do, or should never do. I should never pick up a coin on Shabbat and yet I haven't been struck down by lightning. That sort of thing, I just accept life now as it comes and I don't want at this moment to speak about my personal life, but when one has an illness and you lie in bed and when your whole life runs before you, as it did in my case, you say, there is nothing you could do differently, because it is not dictated by what we do. It is outside and other forces.

RL: When war broke out you say that your father had managed to leave Germany. Where did he go?

HO: He came to Manchester. And he worked for a time in a waterproofer factory. Satinoff, that was the name. He worked there for a short time.

RL: Where was he living?

**Tape 2: 39 minutes 47 seconds**

HO: He was living in digs somewhere. I can't remember. Stockport, that is right, he lived somewhere in Stockport for a while, until he came to Manchester. You see my father, being so extremely religious, then became very friendly with Dayan Golditch and of course Dayan Golditch, he, as you know, was a Dayan, I respected him very much, he was under my Chuppah. And, when my father spoke to him and he realised my father was virtually at his level so to speak, they would love nothing better to do than sit all day and learn, and study some kind of text, and so he said to him, "Well you know, the City of Manchester, it is time that we cleaned up the Kashrut in Manchester. At that time a gentleman by the name of Ziegmund Margolis was the secretary of the Shechita Board, but they only had one or two supervisors, so between Mr Margolis and Dayan Golditch they said, "Well look, you are going to be our chief supervisor." So they appointed my father as the chief supervisor of the kashrut in Manchester, and the, of course there were

many objections, but he was a very amiable sort of fellow and he appreciated the other people's point of view, they were not all going to keep as they used to say, the bakers and butchers shouldn't ride a car on Shabbat, but you know, there are so many laws and customs. One thing that always sticks in my mind, and so very few people know this, that in the early days when my father first became a supervisor and eventually he became chief of the supervisors and staff there. When he was a supervisor, it is a known fact that when a butcher has meat in his fridge for more than three days he has to water the meat, the meat has to be watered in the refrigerator if it hasn't cooked after three days and the supervisor's that he had, he had two or three, they wouldn't want to go out to do it, and the butchers didn't live near their butcher shop, and they said, "Well, I am not going out to work on Sunday just because its Yom Tov." I am going on the Monday or when I come in. So he would always be disappearing you see, if it is three days Yom Tov or Shabbat, so he would go round all the butchers, and get the keys, and he would water the meat, and that is a memory that sticks in my mind, that when you couldn't carry, you have to go around watering the meat. Of course none of this is now known, because a lot of the butchers, obviously he was very friendly with them. A lot of the butchers are now dead of course people, the staff at the shechita board don't know, I don't think they know the name anyway. Gabriel Brodie knows me and our family background, very, very well. We were good friends.

RL: Where was your father living when he became supervisor?

HO: By that time we were living together in Elizabeth Street. I have jumped a little in time.

RL: Right. When was this? When did he get that position and move to Elizabeth Street.

**Tape 2: 44 minutes 7 seconds**

HO: I can't give you the exact time, but we moved to Elizabeth Street after the end of the war, when we sort of gathered the clan. My mother came to England.

RL: Right, so that is jumping a bit. But during the war what was your father doing?

HO: Well, again, as I say, he worked in the factory during the war, until just before the end of the war when he got involved with Dayan Golditch.

RL: Right. So during the war he was working in the waterproofing factory.

HO: Yes, Yes.

RL: Right and you were living at the Davidsons.

HO: That's right.



RL: What were your brothers doing? You say one brother came to work in the same factory

HO: And the other went to work in another factory, a clothing factory.

RL: And is that what they did the whole way through the war?

HO: That's right, yes.

RL: Did you know what was happening to your mother?

HO: Through the British Red Cross, they were in hiding my mother and my sister, but through the British Red Cross they used to be able to get a short worded letter, say about 25 to 30 words, that this non-Jewish family would take to the embassy somewhere in Amsterdam and through the British Red Cross they would send it to England and we would pick up the message from the Red Cross in Braisewell Street, there used to be a branch of the British Red Cross, International Red Cross, and we would get a message there. So we always knew that they were still alive.

RL: This was from the non-Jewish family.

HO: Yes, yes.

RL: And did you used to write back.

HO: No, there wasn't the facility for that.

**Tape 2: 46 minutes 6 seconds**

RL: Did you used to get together with your father and your brothers during the war?

HO: Well yes, of course, we did meet here and there, in one of the houses, yes.

RL: How frequently?

HO: Not very frequently, no.

RL: Did you go to any youth groups or any clubs? What did you do in your spare time?

HO: Well, I was at one time involved with a youth club on Middleton Road, the Holmbury Club, which was sponsored by two business gentlemen, Mr Bartle and Mr Samuels, and immediately across the road was the Maccabi and I was involved with running that and with them.

RL: This Holmbury Club, what was that?

HO: Just a youth club.

RL: Was it a Jewish youth club?

HO: Yes, it was a Jewish youth club set up for teenage or, you known, young Jewish boys and girls. It was in a sort of competition I suppose in a way to the Maccabi across the road, so eventually that had to close because the Maccabi insisted on playing tennis on Shabbat and our members, well, it was me and Mr Bartle and Mr Samuels, sort of pleaded with them, that while they are entitled to play they shouldn't come with the cars, but it was unsuccessful, so eventually all our members decided that they would go and join the Maccabi so that club closed down.

RL: Was this still during the war?

HO: Yes, yes.

RL: How long had it been going?

HO: About maybe a couple of years.

RL: Did you join Maccabi after that?

HO: No, I didn't, I only played cricket for them. I was a keen sportsman and I played every sport, cricket, tennis, football, I was very keen.

**Tape 2: 48 minutes 32 seconds**

RL: So after the club closed down where did you play these sports?

HO: I didn't. By that time we had thoughts of opening a factory in our own right, because although we didn't have the money to do anything of that nature we decided to, we borrowed some money, by this time, this was after the war incidentally, just immediately after the war. So we borrowed some money and we bought three sewing machines on hire purchase which we put up in the attic in Elizabeth Street and we took outwork, we went round different factories to say well would you give us some work to make some outdoor, so we can work in our own house, which we did, for some years.

RL: During the war, can you tell me a little bit more about life in Manchester during the war and how you got on?

HO: Well, life in Manchester, was, I think, during the war, I don't think that Manchester was affected terribly hard, except for of course the bombing, the blitz, particularly. But commercial life in the Jewish area that I mixed and the company that I mixed in was more or less as usual. There were no great festivities obviously, for instance it was my bar mitzvah during that period of time when I was with the Davidsons and we didn't have any lavish functions, and they tried really hard time, and in one room at the back of their

house Rebbe Balkind came up and he sat with us and we did the usual, we had a little bit of herring and drinking and a pilpul and that sort of thing. Life for a teenager, as I saw it then, coming from an outside sort of environment was quite, well, it was not bad at all, not bad at all, better than some. I was very thankful for it.

RL: What about rationing or food? How did you get on?

HO: I don't know, we never believed in any of this black market sort of stuff that was going on at the time and I would never have condoned it anyway. Whatever was given to us, we managed on it. People lived through it, we may not have had lavish meals, as I said before, for my Bar Mitzvah we had a bit of herring and a piece of challah and that was it, and that was quite nice. But, I think most Jewish people at that particular time realised the war situation and I think they were just happy with whatever they got, and they were just happy with it, there was no sort of fighting for food or anything of that nature.

RL: How aware were you of what was going on in Europe, with the Jews during the war?

HO: Very much so, very much so because a number, I had relatives who perished there. My uncle, my aunt, cousins, with the exception of the immediate Ottman family there were very many of our family that died.

**Tape 2: 52 minutes 53 seconds**

RL: When did you find that out? Was that after the war?

HO: After the war. Where is uncle so and so or auntie so and so?

RL: During the war did you know what was going on? How much were you aware of what was happening.

HO: Only as much as one saw in the papers. That is all. Obviously you felt for anybody that wasn't in the position that you were in, I think we probably said it more often than not, "There but for the grace of God."

RL: And do you remember the day that war ended?

HO: Clearly, yes.

RL: Can you describe what happened.

HO: How can you describe it? I don't know. There was dancing in the streets, no body could believe that it actually happened, and then of course we realised that the war in Japan was not yet finished, particularly the Davidson family, because their son was in Japan. I am happy to say that he came home. No, I think much like everybody else, we were relieved and looking forward to the future, to see what the future holds. We

realised, I think everybody did, we lived through a very bad time and just hoped for the best.

RL: How soon after the war were you in contact with your mother and sister?

HO: Virtually, within a week, they had a sort of celebration with the families that hid them, and they had photographs of them, I haven't any of those just now. My mother and sister had most of them. I think very soon after the war when we began the move to try and, there were what we called quotas still in existence at the time and we had to make out a good case for you to be able to bring people in to England, that they wouldn't be a burden on the state and so on and so forth. Anyway, we met all the criteria and then my mother came over to England, my sister and her husband, they stayed in Holland. They were happy to stay in Holland anyway.

RL: When did your mother come over?

HO: Well, the war ended in 1945, well it probably would have been probably the end of '45.

RL: And was it at that point your father moved to Elizabeth Street?

### **Tape 2: 55 minutes 50 seconds**

HO: Yes, at that point we all moved in together, yes. Four sons and mother and father.

RL: I thought you said three of you had come over.

HO: Yes, well I did mention earlier on, my youngest brother Morris came on a little bit later and he was actually placed in a home in, in the war years, in a home with a family called Jacobs in Shirley Road in Manchester. So we were all in Manchester. Just as a footnote he married the daughter.

RL: Right. And how was your mother after her experience in hiding? How did she ...

HO: Very traumatised, very traumatised. She didn't sleep well at all. It took her a long, long time to settle in. And it took her a long time to realise that she didn't have to bake for Shabbos. It took her a long time, all the little bits and things, she couldn't understand that it could be bought over the counter and it could be just as good as she would make it. It was difficult for her but she did in the end.

RL: This tape is about to end so we will just stop here.

### **TAPE 3**

This is the interview with Harvey Ottman and it is Tape 3.

At the end of the last tape we were just talking about your mum, your mother, and how she found it when she came over to this country. If you can tell me a bit more about how you managed to settle back into family life having lived away from your parents for a number of years. How difficult was it to settle back?

HO: At first I would say it was quite difficult. Remember that I came from a very religious household and my mother wouldn't have been aware of the changes in our circumstances and general thinking. Consequently things that we might be doing would displease her, so in order to make sure that we had a sort of harmony, we used to do a lot of things initially that we used to do rather than the things that we were doing today, and eventually she came round to the thinking that as far as she and my father were concerned they were still living the same strictly orthodox life but it was not one, the type of life that we were now living and got used to. Once having accepted that she used an old Yiddishe phrase, and that still sticks in my mind today actually, and that is, "Sol Sein Shabbos In Shtieb." In other words, "Let there be Shabbat in the House." Translated. So, having said that, and that applied to Yom Tov, Shabbat and any of the holidays except of course the major holidays which we still very much observed, but she

**Tape 3: 2 minutes 18 seconds**

gradually got, made one or two friends nearby, and she tried very hard to speak English as much as she could and to the end of her time when she died she was able to converse and otherwise she would revert back to Yiddish, again not German.

RL: When did she die?

HO: She died 1958, about 12 months before we were married.

RL: And was your father still alive?

HO: Yes, my father was still alive.

RL: How had he settled into the Manchester community? How did he find it here?

HO: Well, he settled in after the period that he got involved with the Beth Din, that suited him greatly because he could always escape, he didn't have all his books around him like he did when we were younger, but he could always escape to his books, his room, or in some way he knew that he had to accommodate the different situation.

RL: Did they maintain their religious lives in exactly the same way as in the past?

HO: More or less as in the past. As much as was possible. It can never be quite the same, there are always some things that have to be changed.

RL: And which Shul did they belong to?

HO: My father was a believer that once you joined a Shul you never left it. Consequently, he not only belonged, he belonged to the Rumanian, Rumanische Shul, in Vine Street, he belonged to The Holy Law, and he belonged to two Shuls in Israel, he travelled to Israel and he would never, he said once you joined you never leave. And he has a window in the Synagogue in Ramat Gan where he stayed frequently when he went to Israel dedicated to my mother, Alova Shalom ask Neville how to spell this!!! And we have a window in Holy Law dedicated to my parents.

RL: Which Shul did he join first?

HO: The Rumanische, Vine Street, and we went there quite a lot.

RL: Why did he pick that one?

**Tape 3: 4 minutes 56 seconds**

HO: I think probably because it was nearest to his beliefs I think. My mind for a moment, I can't think of the Rabbi who was there at the time, I mean he was very friendly with the Chazzan Gross who was also under our Chuppah, he was very friendly with him and the people there were more sort of akin to his kind of Jewish upbringing.

RL: Before you came to Elizabeth Street which Shul did you attend?

HO: I went with the Davidsons to Bishop Street.

RL: When did that fold up?

HO: Post war some time. Well of course there were so many Shuls. I went to Bishop Street and Central Shul, because I had a lot of young friends. We went primarily I suppose to Central Shul also to hear Chazzan Price. There is a story, and it is a true fact, that you were told if you came late on Yom Toy, the night before to the evening service some of the men would have to sit in the lady's gallery because the Shul was full up, because they all flocked to hear Moshe Price and Mr Segal was then the Chazzan Shani.

RL: Did you father get involved in any Shul in like a ...

HO: No, he never got involved in any executive positions in any of the Shuls. He used to learn, take shiurim at Vine Street or in the other Shuls that he belonged to but he never took any executive posts.

RL: Did you join any organisations?

HO: Are you referring to Shuls or organisations?

RL: Jewish organisations, Shuls or any Jewish organisations.

HO: Well yes, I was a member at Stenecourt for probably something like 25 years, then we moved to Whitefield and I still am a member at Whitefield, a council member, I have done a lot of work, founded a lot of fundraising activities there, participated in them, I eventually became a life council member which I still am. I was Chatan Torah some years ago, probably something like ten years ago, so I have had a lot of honours bestowed upon me in one way or another, but I have never wanted to go on any of the executive positions.

RL: Coming back to your father, when did he pass away? How long did he live after your mother?

HO: About six years afterwards.

**Tape 3: 8 minutes 5 seconds**

RL: Did he continue to live in Elizabeth Street?

HO: No, no. After that, we lived actually, we didn't live in Elizabeth Street all the time, we moved to Cavendish Road, when my mother was still alive, we lived in Cavendish Road, opposite Sidney Hamburger, Portnoy and your late father in law, diagonally, Bookbinders, all that little group, amongst those, we lived there, and it was from that address that my mother died and eventually, when we got married in 1959 we lived there for a short while but then we moved out and then my father went to live with my other brother.

RL: Now, you were telling me how you started your own factory, your own business, in the house in Elizabeth Street. Can you tell me a bit about that and how it developed.

HO: Well, I went over the fact that you know we borrowed the money because we couldn't lay out the money for three machines and from there on we used to take outdoor work from different people. When we found out that we could expand a little and we had paid for the machinery, we bought, we rented, we didn't buy, we rented a factory in, no, I beg your pardon, we were approached by a gentlemen that we took work from, we took outdoor work from Kindler, Harry Kindler and he said, rather than have an outlay of rents and rates and lighting, he said, I will give you an area within the floor of my factory, which was derelict at that time, and we will clean it all up and will set up a bench and you can engage and fire your own labour and you will work just as though you worked outdoor. And you will get your pay and your lighting and fuel bills will all be paid. So this is what we did for some time, that was alright, it suited us for a while, but of course it meant that we were tied to taking work from one person, so we couldn't really compete, so then we decided that we would hire premises elsewhere. We moved to some premises in Oldham Road, from a firm called Lighthill, there were two brothers who lived in South Manchester who owned a lot of property in that area. We stayed there for a while and then we grew gradually and we wanted to expand, we then expanded and took a building in Mount Pleasant, that is off Bury New Road, there was always a landmark, the landmark was a horse trough at the bottom of the road. If you ask anybody

where was the last horse trough, it was at the bottom of Mount Pleasant, it was flanked by the horse trough at the bottom and the Lapidus factory at the top end, where they used to do lemonade and bake matzah at Pesach, and we were in the middle between those two. It was a former dye works, and we took that factory.

RL: How big were you at that point?

HO: We had employed about 20 people then. And when that became too small we took a building, we bought a building on Great Clewes Street, number eight, eight Clewes Street, which now you will pass regularly if you go into the city

**Tape 3: 12 minutes 7 seconds**

centre, which is now an aquarium. It has been sold on three times since we had a factory there. That was the last factory that we had. We were there for many years, until one of my brothers, the middle one, Jack, he one day, we always went to visit, erev yom tov, we always went to visit the graves of our father and mother who were dead then. He just stepped off the side of the, the sort of edge, onto the path and he was suddenly stopped in his tracks. He couldn't understand, he couldn't breath for a moment, and after a while it was diagnosed that he had heart problems. And then he had another slight heart attack and it was decided then that they would, it was suggested that the only way was that he had bypass surgery. Well that was in its infancy then, it was in Wythenshawe Hospital, and they had only done two, and he was the third, unfortunately he never recovered, he never regained consciousness after the operation, he died in the hospital there.

RL: When was this?

HO: In terms of years it would take me quite a while to think it out. Somewhere along the road of life, I haven't got all these points pinpointed with dates, but this is the way things happen. I am just sort of following through, following through the fact that that left two of us, and the two of us struggled along, but then we decided that we would call it a day and we retired from business.

RL: Do you remember when you retired?

HO: Probably about 15 years ago.

RL: Ok.

HO: These dates are approximate.

RL: Yeah.

HO: And then there is my other brother, there were two of us left here in Manchester. And then we have a history of heart problems and then my other brother had to have



bypass surgery, he has had bypass surgery and he lived, and he is still living, for a while he was alright, but within about a year he started having more problems. He is not a very well man but he is still around today and fighting and hoping to have his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday next week. And then my younger brother, they always used to say the clever one. He went to university, perhaps it is now time to say that he was greatly helped by his brothers in paying his fees, and he married, eventually, he got his degree and he got a job in Shell.

RL: What was his degree in?

**Tape 3: 15 minutes 32 seconds**

HO: Chemical engineering. And he got a job with Shell Company. He worked his way up in the company until he ran the Manchester Depot and then he ran the one in Liverpool and then he went to the big building in London. And then he became very, very big in the field, so that they used to send him out to other parts of the world and he would enquire and study the possibility of Shell doing a takeover bid for whatever company and they would target. He would go away for an overnight stay in Buenos Aires and come back in the morning having had a meeting there. So he has gone along the road very, very well and in a very high salaried job in Shell until he had a heart attack, so he retired, and, but he has been very, very well up to the last month or so. He is not all that well now but he is struggling.

RL: Does he still live in London?

HO: He still lives in London. He lives in Pinner now. But he doesn't work.

RL: Right. The factory that you had. What were you manufacturing?

HO: Rainwear, men's rainwear. We had it split up into three different sorts of departments. My brother Solly, that is the older one, he did the selling and buying. I did the design and pattern construction and my other brother did the factory. In all of these things, I have to say, we were all self taught, I haven't been to any design school.

RL: How did you know what to do?

HO: Well, we worked in a factory for so many years, you get to know what the, sort of, how a garment is constructed, and then you learn to draw it out, and when you have drawn it you begin to split it up into pieces, and when you have got all the pieces you begin to fit them together, and when you fit one together then you learn how to grade it into all different sizes and to suit all different figures. When you have done that you hand it over to be made, and when that is done you hand it over to be sold and that's how the cycle goes. That hasn't changed even today, except they are much more highly paid today.

RL: Did you have a label or a name?

HO: Yes, Allwear, A-L-L-W-E-A-R. I can show you a label, it is in my coat.

RL: Who would you sell to?

HO: We sold to all the major retailers, the 50 shilling tailors, ??? which they were in those days. All the major retailers, they never made their own raincoats, we did primarily raincoats and casual wear and then we sold to all the retailers,

**Tape 3: 18 minutes 58 seconds**

many of the well-known tailor/retailers or Greenwoods or stores of that nature. One of the major reasons that we stopped work was that we were supplying Greenwoods, I am going to mention the names now, for casual wear for a long time, still until they decided they would take one of our garments to Hong Kong, they took it apart, copied it, but then couldn't grade it into the right size ratios, and they told us this, and they came back to us, but after a year went by, by that time they had perfected that end of it as well and then all the business went to Hong Kong, so that is one of the reasons why we closed down.

RL: Was the rainwear waterproof?

HO: Not waterproof. People generally mix this waterproof and rainproof. Waterproof is what it said, waterproof, but rainwear just fends off the rain, it rolls off, but they are two different fields actually, rainwear and waterproof, we were never in the waterproof business, we were just in the rainwear and casual wear.

RL: Coming on to meeting your wife. How did that happen? And where and what?

HO: I know exactly how I met my wife. It was in Birkdale Palace in Southport, we used to go to the dances there, and my wife would also frequent those dances and we met there, and it progressed from there.

RL: Where was your wife from?

HO: Liverpool.

RL: And her name?

HO: Norma.

RL: And surname?

HO: Quest. And she had two brothers.

RL: And what was she doing? Was she working?

HO: She was working at a retailers selling car spares in Liverpool.

RL: And when did you get married?

HO: 1959.

RL: And where?

**Tape 3: 21 minutes 32 seconds**

HO: In Greenbank Drive Synagogue in Liverpool. And I think I previously mentioned, we had under the Chuppah very well known Rabbonim and Chazzonim and we were, an incident to remember is that Norma had a friend that worked for the BBC, and in those days you weren't allowed any photography, so although we had a film of the wedding, it stops at the Shul and nothing was taken in the Shul, and then when they came out again in the hall, but in the Shul itself you were never allowed any radio or film equipment. This friend of hers wired the Chuppah under the carpet, at the side of one of the pillars for the canopy, into the centre piece, where the bouquet of something, where it could be hidden, and we had a complete record, which was old, made of the ceremony, and we were so delighted with it, but within a month of our wedding, we lived in Cavendish Road after we were married, the wedding presents got stored for a while until you sort everything out, and we had a fire, spontaneous combustion fire, it was a glass window, and the sun lit and all the wedding presents were burnt, and amongst it was the record or our wedding, so the album that I showed u before containing all the photographs that were in that room, the initial one was all burnt, we managed to salvage some of the photographs which we reproduced in the photograph album that we have now.

RL: And what happened to the video?

HO: The video we have ...

RL: The cine as it was then.

HO: We still have the video.

RL: You still have that ...

HO: Yes, unfortunately I just can't lay my hands on that.

RL: You came to live in Cavendish Road. Was that with your ...

HO: May I just interrupt you for one moment. It wasn't a video, it was an 8mm film which transferred to video.

RL: So did you come to live with your father?

HO: Yes, yes, when we first got married.

RL: And where did you go after that?

HO: We moved to a house in Carlton Avenue, Prestwich.

**Tape 3: 24 minutes 19 seconds**

RL: And how long were you there?

HO: Probably about ten, fifteen years.

RL: And then where did you go?

HO: We moved to Whitefield.

RL: Whereabouts?

HO: We moved to Ringley Road, number 12.

RL: What made you move further north?

HO: Well, we decided that we wanted to join the Whitefield Community and we wanted a bigger house and more land, so, this was a bigger house, a huge garden and everything. We both enjoy flowers and garden so that is sort of the reason.

RL: And how long did you live in Whitefield?

HO: Well, we have lived here for, only for 12 months, so, many years.

RL: So you just moved here in 2003.

HO: Yes.

RL: And you were in Whitefield up until then, in the same house?

HO: No, no. We moved from the house in Ringley Road when the children grew up, we have two children, a son and a daughter, when the children grew up and there was just two of us and of course the house was too big, then we moved to a bungalow, not very far from their, in Carlton Avenue, three Carlton Avenue.

RL: So were you living in a street called Carlton Avenue twice, because you said you were living in Carlton Avenue in Prestwich.

HO: No ... I beg your pardon. The Prestwich one was not Carlton Avenue, I have got the addresses wrong.

RL: Right ... right.

**Tape 3: 26 minutes 14 seconds**

HO: The last address was Carlton Avenue. Number three. The address in Prestwich was not Carlton Avenue, I just can't remember that off the top of my head.

RL: Ok. So tell me about your family, what children you had, their names, when they were born.

HO: We have a son and a daughter. The daughter is 40 and the daughter is called Tina, and a son called Simon who is, three years younger.

RL: And which schools did they attend?

HO: They both attended Bury Grammar School. Of course we were living in Manchester obviously. And my daughter went on to go to Oxford University where she got her degree and my son went to live in Leeds and became a doctor and lives in Leeds.

RL: What did your daughter study at university?

HO: English.

RL: And what did she go on to do?

HO: She went on to Israel. She worked in Israel for some years, quite some years, she edited the magazine at the Tel Aviv University, and she generally wrote many articles and she wrote the addresses when they got their famous illuminated addresses that they handed to the dignitaries when they made them honorary degree. So, she wrote those for President Reagan when he was there and we have copies of them somewhere or other. All sorts of dignitaries that were made honorary members of the university, she used to write their illuminated addresses. And she worked for the paper; I am not sure which paper she worked for a short while.

RL: Where does she live now?

HO: Well, she then came back to England and lives in Cambridge, she got married in Manchester and lives in Cambridge. She married an Israeli.

RL: What is his name?

HO: Coby ... Fischman. And although she lives officially, her residence is in Cambridge, but she teaches in Japan, she lectures in Japan at Kyoto University, English and Middle Eastern subjects. She just presented a big paper at a convention there and she is now preparing for another one, so she lectures there

**Tape 3: 29 minutes 42 seconds**

and she does all that work in between on the Middle East studies and so on. She has got one or two things published under her name, I am bound to say I can't understand them, they are too far for me. And then she commutes and comes back to England for a holiday, she has just gone back after the Yom Tovim now.

RL: Where does her husband live?

HO: In Cambridge. And one of the reasons why I can't produce those photographs, is she took them all with her because her husband works in the computer business in Cambridge and he is a very high powered technician there and he can copy and do almost anything with photographs and he was going to scan do things, in the right order, produce some sort of book about it, he is now, the reason I can't do anything about it is that he has gone to Israel for a week, so that is why I can't produce any pictures of the past other than those that I have in my possession.

RL: Did your children belong to any youth groups when they were younger?

HO: Well, I think they both belonged to the Zionist youth organisations, both of them.

RL: Any one in particular?

HO: No, I can't remember which one.

RL: You mentioned Israel. When did you first visit Israel?

HO: Oh, that is many, many years ago. Perhaps you would have to work it out. I think Menachem Begin was the prime minister. A long, long time ago when we first visited, and we had thoughts of moving to Israel, particularly in Netanya, there was a sort of small enclave of Mancunians, Leeds and Liverpudlians, Northerners primarily who settled in Netanya, and they convinced us that we should join them, and we tried very hard on a number of occasions, we lived their for a few months at a time, and finally we actually had come to the time when we were actually buying a property, and we had made all the arrangements, we had got a solicitor and the papers were being drawn up beautifully. But then I got a phone call at the very last minute, our solicitor, who was an American gentleman, so he could speak English fluently, and he knew his way around Israeli and western laws, and he said, well, he suddenly inserted a clause that we should keep one room purely, it was a Canadian that had owned this apartment, he said we

should keep one room locked, purely for his convenience, because he likes to come to Israel once a year, so with that, he said, nothing would give me more pleasure than to tear the contract up in his presence, so I said, well obviously we

**Tape 3: 33 minutes 11 seconds**

couldn't undertake that. We had taken measurements for carpets, curtains, furniture and all that, we were at the final stage, so, and that was our last experience to Israel residence. We have been to Israel many, many times since then, we have visited, we spent a lot of time when we go in the early days going to Eilat, we didn't, all this new development wasn't there then. We stayed a little bit way out, I think it is now a holiday village or something. So we are connected there, and of course my late sister and brother in law lived there, and my mother and my two sisters lived there, but other than that we just visited for a holiday. We gave up our ...

RL: So when was that that you almost purchased a home there?

HO: Probably about 20 years ago.

RL: Were your children grown up by then?

HO: No, no. The children weren't grown up. It would be more than that, because ... I think it's more like 30 years. They weren't grown up.

RL: So you had a young family? And you were thinking then of going to Israel.

HO: Yes. My son spent a year, his gap year on Kibbutz. As I say my daughter lived there for quite a number of years.

RL: Do you have any grandchildren?

HO: Yes, we have, we have four grandchildren, all in Leeds. One of the prime reasons for us moving from Manchester to Leeds is because of the grandchildren. We were seeing very little of them and this gave us the opportunity to see more of our son and grandchildren.

RL: Who did your son marry?

HO: He married the daughter of Chazzan Hillman, Nicky Hillman.

RL: And that is Chazzan Hillman from Manchester.

HO: Chazzan Hillman from Manchester, one and the same.

RL: And what are your grandchildren called? And where are they up to?

HO: Well, the oldest one is six, I think, seven or eight, eight I think, the oldest one is eight and they go down in stages, I don't know, and that is Mia and the next

**Tape 3: 35 minutes 45 seconds**

one is about three years down is Noah, and the next one another couple of years down is Eden, and the last one is just over 12 months, is Guya.

RL: And which school do the older ones attend?

HO: The Bodetsky Jewish school in Leeds.

RL: Where did your son go to university?

HO: In Leeds.

RL: In Leeds, he came to Leeds University.

HO: Yes, in Leeds, and he never came to live in Manchester again.

RL: Yes, so, have you belonged to any non-Jewish organisations or societies.

HO: Well, for many years I was involved with the National Association of Lions Clubs, and that is an international organisation that caters for every race and religion and colour. It doesn't matter where; in every part of the globe where you look you will find that there is a Lions Club. I was involved with the Prestwich end, we raised many thousands of pounds funds for local people, people who find that for some reason or other have dropped out of the system and they can't get any aid, they know that the Lions might be able to help. I was involved with that at the Prestwich Lions Club which I eventually became president, from there on I became further involved into the wider field as opposed to just the local area. And I was made District Governor of the whole of the Lancashire area, Merseyside, Cumberland and the Isle of Mann and all of these areas on the North West.

RL: How did you get involved with it? In the first place?

HO: Well, it is a very curious course of events this, I had a friend, by the name of Rich, Hymie Rich, now this friend was in the Lions Club in Manchester, he belonged to that, and he was continually badgering me that I must spend my time more usefully, my spare time, although I never seemed to have any. So, I eventually agreed to accompany him to the Manchester meeting, Prestwich actually, and I then joined the Prestwich, but I must just give you a very small anecdote about this gentleman, Hymie Rich. He belonged to The Holy Law Synagogue and he used to pay his burial board fees as they do in a lot of organisations, either weekly or monthly, he decided to go and pay his burial board fees, and he parked his car outside the Holy Law Synagogue, went in, paid his fees, went to the



car, had a heart attack and died on the spot. So, he had just paid up, he was a paid up member, and he went. Just as a funny, it is not funny

**Tape 3: 39 minutes 10 seconds**

really, but it is a thing that happens in life. So from then on I must say I went on to become president and governor of the North West. I travelled quite a lot and visited other places. In Israel, I went to the Lions Club, there are a number of Lions Clubs in Israel, and in the position that we were then, you get invited and you meet a lot of other people, Israel, South Africa ... not South Africa, Rhodes, We visited there and of course in America we travelled.

RL: When did the Lions Clubs start?

HO: 1917, after the end of the First World War. They were started by a gentleman there who was also a freemason and decided that the, perhaps the freemasonry was a little more rigid than the Lions Clubs should be, consequently he started that and was a member in both, of which I eventually also was.

RL: So you became a freemason?

HO: Yes.

RL: Where did you join?

HO: Salford.

RL: And how long were you a member there?

HO: About six years.

RL: Did you gain any position in the ...

HO: I was secretary.

RL: And what kind of work ...

HO: I didn't want to do anything there. I just wanted to be an ordinary foot soldier. But eventually I undertook it, but then I gave it up.

RL: So are you no longer a freemason?

HO: Well, like so many other things, you always are all your life. You may not be practicing.

RL: But you don't belong to any ...

HO: No, I don't belong to any of the organisations now.

**Tape 3: 41 minutes 26 seconds**

RL: Right. Is there any other groups that you have belonged to over the years?

HO: Not really, no.

RL: Did you belong to any Zionist organisations?

HO: No, I was never involved in the Zionist organisations. They have had my support for so many years, but I said, at the time when I resigned from both of those organisations, from now on I am not joining any more organisations, I will support them, but I will just be an ordinary foot soldier.

RL: What about hobbies?

HO: Hobbies, well photography has been one of my hobbies for many years. I used to take a lot of still photography, of course I never really got on to the field of the video photography, I did start of the early days of cine photography and 8mm, the ordinary little standard 8mm cine camera, and, oh I made many, recorded many events with that. One of the events that I recorded was the centenary of the Great Synagogue in Manchester. I stood with my late brother, who was also keen, and I stood on the top step and filmed the arrival of all the dignitaries, and one of them that sticks in my mind was the Mayor, Alderman Leslie Lever, he was the Mayor at that particular time. One of the other things we did in cine photography, my brother and myself, we decided that we would make the rounds of all the Manchester synagogues and just film the exterior of the buildings, which we did do, finishing off at the top of Cheetham Hill Road, the last one being built there was just up to the foundation stones there, and that film, I kept for many years, I showed it in company, with Cecil Franks father, George Franks. George Franks was keen in tape recordings, and he got for some reason, somehow or other, managed to borrow or copy a tape recording that the BBC made of the centenary service of the Great Synagogue, when Chazzan Moshe Pearlman, at the time, he got a copy of that at that time, and the BBC were not giving any of their tapes away, so George Franks and I toured many of the Jewish Homes etc, or Jewish organisations that were interested, we played the background music of the service and showed the film of the synagogues that we had taken. The film of course was silent, and I eventually gave that film to the Jewish museum in Manchester, that is where it is today.

RL: Any other events or interesting items that you videoed, or filmed?

HO: No, I think the other items are really personal, family affairs, family holidays, they wouldn't be of any general interest, no.

RL: In terms of nationality, how would you describe yourself?

**Tape 3: 45 minutes 19 seconds**

HO: British.

RL: In terms of identity, how would you describe yourself?

HO: British.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

HO: No. None of the ... perhaps ... this may or may not be relevant. May or may not be of any interest, but I am sure people hear a lot about people coming from the continent and receiving pensions etc. because, and monies, for internments, or monies for lack of education, or not being able to be educated, now, I know, many of the people that I know, that I have mixed with, they are quite surprised and amazed that myself, my brothers and myself, do not receive, or have not received any monies in any shape or form, or any reparation from the German government. Whereas all the people that whom I speak to and mix, when they realise and know, they don't often know that I am, but when I reveal my true identity and when they know, they say, Well, I am sure you must be getting a good pension." So they are quite surprised that I don't receive, or never have received, any pension from the German government, no matter how many people have tried, I had a gentlemen in London by the name of Mr Erred, who tried on our behalf, my brothers and myself, and although he has managed to get pensions for half a dozen or so people, in exactly the same circumstances as we were, somehow or other the people from the town that we came from, Gladbeck, have refused and not allowed the appeals to go forward to the greater authority, consequently, our family is one that has never received any payments from anyone, whatever we have done I have had to do all on my own.

RL: And is there still any appeal going on?

HO: No, we can, but we have abandoned it all. Because we all got a bit fed up, it got to the state where we said well something, somewhere, somebody obviously has put his foot down and we are not one of those that get anything.

RL: Have you ever revisited Germany?

HO: No. I say no, but I am going to qualify that, because I vowed never to return there, and I wouldn't, but on one visit that we made to my sister in Holland, the border is not very far away, it is only about 40 minutes, 45 minutes drive, to where we lived, so we did make a short drive, but I spent exactly ten minutes and I said, "That's it." And we got out and I wouldn't go there again.

RL: How did you feel whilst you were there?

**Tape 3: 48 minutes 38 seconds**

HO: I think you will probably recall that I painted a picture of a glorious big house and land behind it. It was nothing like it, because the top had been shaved off, whether, for some reason or other it just looks like any other house now. What you see there now on the picture that I have shown you is not the full one, the steeple is missing because it had a big steeple, and where I said before it was big enough to walk around and keep fowl and all sorts there, that has disappeared so it is just like a flat roofed house, and once I had seen that, I had seen enough and turned round and went. I have no desire to go back and never will do.

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

HO: I don't have any feeling or any thoughts other than, what annoys me more than anything, is that when the current people deny or want to deny past history. When they want to, in some way or other, and I believe there has been a new film made just recently, where they want to paint the Germans in a nice way, that not everybody was like that, but that is completely untrue, they were all like that. They were all during that period of time, during the Hitler period, every one was tarnished with the same brush. You would find maybe one in a million that would have a good word to say about the Jews. And I think if you speak to the youth in Germany of today, only according to what I read in the papers, obviously, I have no other means of knowing it. They think, they still think, that the holocaust is partly a hoax.

RL: Coming back to your identity, I asked you if you felt different to the British in any way, is there anything about your past or background that makes you feel different. I have completely shed that past background, and it would never come up. And my wife and anyone who knows me know that I never talk about it. The things that I have said to you today when this is finished and produced, and my wife or family and friends see it, they will be quite surprised to hear and see what we have just talked about, because I don't talk about it. It is just something that I never speak about, and in that way I don't look at myself as an outsider. The only people who look at me as an outsider are those people who want to differentiate between a local that is born in England as opposed to those who entered when I did.

RL: So you have spoke to your children about your past?

HO: When I have said to you that my children don't know half of it, they may have snippets of it. My daughter is very literary, obviously, as I have mentioned, she has many times begged me to put these things down on paper. I have tried, but I suddenly get so far, but then I think, what is the purpose of it, what is it going to serve actually, if we talk about it, or perhaps when this film is made and when we see this film I think that they will possibly appreciate why I don't talk

**Tape 3: 52 minutes 29 seconds**

about it. But as for the children, little snippets, there are times in life when something happens or an expression is used and it jogs your memory. And I say to my wife, "That's what ... "It just happened recently funnily enough, a certain expression that I used, but those are the odd occasion when you have relapses and your memory goes backwards.

RL: How secure do you feel in this country?

HO: I feel as secure as I would anywhere else. Probably more secure.

RL: Have you ever experienced any anti-Semitism here?

HO: The only time that I have experienced anti-Semitism is during the period before, I just mentioned the Lions Clubs, and this has happened here in Prestwich, by here in Prestwich of course I mean in Prestwich, Manchester where one of the members specifically mentioned this question of the behaviour of Jewish people. That is one of the catalysts that caused me to leave the organisation, because I took that further up the line, right up to the top, and I didn't receive any reply to my requests of enquiry into the behaviour and subsequently the man who could have had that enquiry at the time the incident happened, I received an apology from this gentleman that he acted incorrectly and he should have followed the story as I laid it out to him, and he felt compelled to write this because he was dying of cancer. He wrote to me apologising for his behaviour and the behaviour of the people around him who guided him into making the wrong decision. He died a week later from cancer. A non-Jewish person. But that didn't help the things that had happened.

RL: Do you feel that psychologically you have been affected by your experience, by your refugee experience?

HO: Not really. I don't feel myself any, that I would have been, maybe my judgements at time have been clouded because of my experiences, but that is very difficult to quantify for any, if that is the reason, I don't know, maybe that is the reason, but I couldn't judge that myself.

RL: In terms of religious belief. I know you have described a, slackening of observance, if you like. But in terms of belief have you changed in any way?

HO: I haven't changed in belief. And your phrase of "slackening in observance", yes, but I don't think the core belief, but I have a core belief, that it doesn't make any difference what your religion is, as long as you are a good person, as long as you believe that you and your neighbours should be allowed to live in peace. I do believe in that.

**Tape 3: 56 minutes 32 seconds**

RL: How strong a Jewish identity do you have?

HO: I have a pretty strong Jewish identity. Yes. Again one can't really say, how, in terms of one to ten, but I do have a belief, yes.

RL: And how does that manifest itself?

HO: Purely in your day to day behaviour and your behaviour towards your fellow men.

RL: Is there anything else you would like to add?

HO: Not really.

RL: Any message that you would like to give?

HO: Just a message of hope. Where there is hope, where there is life there is hope.

RL: Ok. Thank you.

HO: Thank you.

#### **TAPE 4**

##### **Tape 4: 0 minute 3 seconds**

RL: And this is the interview with Harvey Ottman and it is tape 4.

Just one thing that had occurred to me at the end of the interview here, is of course you used to be a member of the AJR. If you could just tell me how that came about.

HO: I have been a member of the AJR for a long time. For many years actually. It came about because a friend of my wife's mentioned it on a social occasion, why we aren't members. This was some years ago, and as a result of that conversation I joined AJR and we have attended a number of the meetings held here in Leeds actually, and a number in Manchester, south Manchester primarily, although at the moment I am not, I am behind with my subscriptions, going back to something I said just a short while ago, I was so disappointed in the inaction of the people that I took my case to fight for my rights for compensation, the gentleman who I spoke to, who travels round the country advising, he advised me to go to, I don't know what the source was, I can't remember, and that took months before they acknowledged. That one advised me to go to a solicitor in Germany, Frankfurt I think, some solicitor, who again asked for payment of, I don't know, about three or six hundred pounds up front before they could look at

##### **Tape 4: 1 minute 56 seconds**

any papers, but they then dropped me a line to tell me that they were not particular to take my case on because I think they had found that all the evidence that Mr Erred had put before them, everybody had declined it and I have come to the conclusion that the only

people that would take up the case on behalf of, for the AJR or the others, only when they know they are going to win. When they know they have got a case that has been neglected or refused so many times as our case has, they are not particular to say, well they always start the interview with, have you done this, have you seen him, they always go through the records of what you have done and what applications and where you have made them and they say to themselves, well there is no point in me starting again if they haven't been successful so far, which is an attitude I do not particularly like, but we can't help that. That is one of the reasons why I have not been, although I have been informed of the recent meetings, and the meetings have been popular with the people that were there. I just have to say one thing. I have difficulty identifying with the people because a lot of those people are living where they were fifty, sixty years ago. They haven't really acclimatised or accustomed themselves to the fact that they are no longer living in the little shtetl that they lived, and they feel back for the Haym as it were. They feel more there, in the times that they came from more than the town that they are living in now. And I feel that a lot of the people need to get that attitude changed, which makes me possibly a little different to those people that I meet there. Because, I am not, as you may have gathered, not very fond about talking about these things, but I find that the most people ask you the first thing, I want my history as I have just outlined it to you, but I do come back to that point, that I am very disappointed in that fact, that everyone that was being suggested to me after they have gone for it, say the same sort of story, "If he couldn't do it why should I be able to do it."

RL: Did you have any contact with any refugee organisation, besides obviously that one in the very beginning when you came that looked after you for those first few weeks, but in Manchester did you have any contact with any refugee organisation once you were with the Davidsons or after?

HO: Not really, no, no I didn't have any contact. No.

RL: Were you aware of other refugees in the town?

HO: Well I was probably aware of it because I met up with them on occasions, but I, and that is as far as it goes, I was never sort of bosom pals or friends with any of those who did come, because again, I came to England before a lot of the others did, and that made a big difference, because a lot of the Jewish men and women that came to Manchester came post war as well, not just pre war. Some did come pre war but again there weren't any in Manchester that I related to.

**Tape 4: 5 minutes 45 seconds**

RL: You know how you said that you feel a lot of them still live in the past. Do you think you're unusual in how much you have acclimatised?

HO: Well, am I the right person to ask that question? I think the people that I speak to would probably have to come to a conclusion easier than I would. I don't know, I don't know what is normality. I only know what normality that I am practicing now.

RL: The AJR was the only refugee organisation that you have had contact with.

HO: Yes.

RL: Did you have any contact with the 45 Aid Society, which is really something different again.

HO: That's right. No, no. Again, they are what they are. Although I must say that I supported all their events. When I say all, as much as is humanly possible, whenever they put on a charity event, or I go every year to the service at New Century Hall. We attend all of these things, but the 45 Aid Society, they are what they are. They are people from the post war era and by the time that came round I was virtually anglicised, if you know what I mean.

RL: What about Beth Shalom in Nottingham? Have you visited that?

HO: I have visited that, I have visited Beth Shalom, and we have been to Israel and we have been to the museum.

RL: Until today you have not really told your story?

HO: No, this is the first time, prompted by your good self that has brought out all these answers, and I think I have said before that my wife and my family will be surprised at it.

RL: Ok, thanks very much.

HO: Thank you very much.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

### **Tape 4: 7 minutes 52 seconds**

HO: This is a picture taken approximately 79 years ago in Gladbeck, it was in a street that was called Kaise Strasse, and then it became Herman Goering Strasse, but I believe it has turned back again to the Kaise.

### **Tape 4: 8 minutes 13 seconds**

Identifying some of the people. In the top windows, right hand side, the left, is my mother, next to her is her mother, going further to the left is my aunt and one of her daughters, further to the left is my older brother, Solly. On the front of the building, going from left to right. The first two are travellers. On the bicycle is one of my nieces. The gentleman holding the bicycle with the cigarette in his mouth, he is not holding the



cigarette in his mouth with his bicycle, that gentleman is my nephew, and going along is just a few of the children, and the next, going right to the far end of the front line, standing on the steps and next to the steps, going from right to left this time. On the right is my sister, Susie, next is my niece, Selma, Selma is now in Israel. Behind her immediately is my uncle, Shalom, next to him is my mother's sister, Yitte, next to her on the right is my father. They are the identifiable people. This is a picture taken roughly 78 years ago. It is not complete because the top of the picture has another story and a steeple which is quite high up and was used on various occasions as mentioned in my interview.

RL: And the town?

HO: The town is Gladbeck in Westphalia. A small town, roughly 20 miles from Essen which was very well known for its steel works and ammunition factories during the war.

This is a picture of my sister Susie, taken in Düsseldorf Germany, approx 1936.

This is a picture of my mother taken in Amsterdam at the end of the war, probably, probably the end of 1945.

This is a wedding photograph, taken in 1959, of our wedding in Greenbank Drive Synagogue in Liverpool. From left to right my brother Jack, his wife Lorna. My brother Solly, his wife Sonia with arm resting on the shoulder of her daughter Beverley. The bride and groom, myself and Norma. My father. In front of my father is my niece, Chaya. Next to my father leaning further left to right, my sister Sylvie, my brother Maurice and his wife Hazel. February 9<sup>th</sup> 1959.

This is a picture of the, after the wedding ceremony, of my daughter Tina, at the Salford Masonic Hall. The picture is Harvey and Norma, father and mother of the bride.

RL: Approximately when?

HO: The date, ten years ago, '94.

**Tape 4: 12 minutes 52 seconds**

This is a picture of my daughter, on the left the bride's mother, Norma, the bride, Tina, Ottman, Cobi Fischmann from Israel. The wedding took place at Salford Masonic Hall, in February 1990.

This is a picture of my son and his wife taken approximately 1990, Micky and Simon. Micky Hillman and Simon Ottman.

RL: Where was it taken?

HO: Taken at Salford Masonic Hall at the wedding of my daughter Tina.

This is a picture of our four grandchildren. Reading from left to right. Mia, Noah and baby Gaya and Eden. Gaya is approximately one year old.

RL: Taken?

HO: Taken at the home of my son Simon and his wife Micky.

RL: In ?

HO: In Leeds. This picture was taken in 2003.

**Tape 4: 14 minutes 21 seconds**

**END OF INTERVIEW**