

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV287
NAME: Marianne Summerfield
DATE: 8 November 2023
LOCATION: London
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[00:00:00]

Today is the eighth of November 2023. We're conducting an interview with Mrs Marianne Summerfield. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. What is your name, please?

Marianne Summerfield.

And your name at birth?

Marianne Dorothea Grabowski.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in Breslau in Germany, which is now Poland, on July the ninth, 1938.

Thank you, Marianne. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive and for your patience in waiting for us to come. Can you tell us a little bit about your family background, please?

I was born in Breslau, as I've just said, in 1938 in, it was then Germany. My parents were middle class, Liberal Jews. They were a family that had lived for generations in Germany.

And they really believed they were German; they'd always lived in Germany and they thought it would go on forever. It never occurred to them that there will be such atrocities. My parents both went to school. My mother was particularly clever and she – both of them studied law, which was unusual in those days for a woman to study. But in 1933, when Hitler came to power with 37% of the vote, everything changed. [00:02:04] Within a few weeks of Hitler coming to power, their lives were in danger. Both my parents studied law, my mother qualified, got the *Abitur*. And they met when they were very young.

How did they meet?

On a train. My mother, they both belonged to *Kameraden* [German Jewish Youth Organisation], which was a youth group. But they were separate, they were separate and they met on a train. And as soon as my father saw my mother, he fell in love with her. My mother had blonde hair, blue eyes, very Aryan looking and he was quite smitten. And he said to one of his friends, 'This is the girl I'm going to marry.' My mother was quite feisty. And she said, she phoned him up and she said, 'I'm going to marry whom I want. Did you say that you're going to marry me?' And he said, 'No', he got scared, he denied it. And then he said, 'Well, by the way, can I help you with anything?' And in the end, Monday, he was taking her swimming and Tuesday, to play a musical instrument, Wednesday, something else. And he said, 'On Saturday, I do go out with her' and the family were fooled by this. I must tell you that my father was twenty and my mother was the tender age of thirteen, which wouldn't be allowed today. [00:04:05] And they thought their lives like this would go on forever. And they were very, very much in love.

That was in Breslau?

That was in Breslau.

And tell us a bit, Marianne, about the grandparents. Who were their parents? What were their backgrounds? Do you know anything about the grandparents?

One of the grandparents owned property, slum property. And my mother used to go with her to the properties. My mother loved it and she always came back with lice. But she thoroughly enjoyed it. And I know another grandparent, my mother was – they thought my mother was a pain. They thought that the grandmother was a pain and they'd send them out together. And they would go to the *Konditorei* [confectionery] and my mother wouldn't allow her grandmother to come into the *Konditorei*. She was three. She had to have the money herself and go and choose the cake itself. It was quite difficult on my mother. The one who owned property was widowed.

What was her name? Do you remember it?

Do you know, if I had known before, I would have looked it up.

Don't worry about it. Was it your mother's or father's mother.

Well, my mother always spoke obviously more about, one was called Anna and the other was called Margarete. Margarete was the grandmother of my mother. My mother was very close to her mother. And every afternoon after she'd finished studying, she would always go and see her. That was considered – and my mother doesn't like cooking particularly. [00:06:00] And the maid of my uncle always brought her mother up. No, brought... I didn't know who she brought up.

She – the maid who worked for your uncle?

Yes.

So, your mother would study and then meet her own mother afterwards?

Yes, yes.

In the afternoon?

Yes.

Mother liked to travel. And even in those days, she went on a cruise with her mother-in-law. And it was a grand affair when she was called in to the office to choose her trip around Mallorca. And she got on very well, as well with Anna.

Anna was the mother-in-law?

Yes. My father always says he wasn't very nice to his mother when he was younger. I'm just trying to fit all this in. He wasn't very nice to her, but...

Yeah. Yes, we were talking about your parents, and also how they met. You were going to tell us that then your mother during her studies went to Austria?

Yes.

Tell us a bit about that.

She went to Austria, because her – I think her father came from Austria. And she had never met the relatives in Austria, they were very nice to her. And she had to clarify in her own mind, you know, whether my father was the right one. But what was interesting was the fact that- she found that no one was interested in her because she was Jewish. [00:08:14] And they thought, no, I've got this wrong.

[Peter] That was wrong, do it again. Because she was blonde and blue eyed –

So, because she was blonde and blue eyed, they thought she was Christian?

Yes.

And therefore, the Jewish fellas weren't interested in her, because of course, they weren't allowed to associate with a Jewish girl.

That was in Germany?

No, that was in Austria.

Okay.

In Germany, everybody knew who she was, it was a small town. And when she apparently appeared with one of the relatives, then they said that, 'We couldn't ask you out, because we thought that you were German, or Christian or ...' So, there was no question of it.

So, did she go to – was it a part of her studies? Did she go to Vienna University?

Well, she wanted to. She went for one term, so she could get away from my father, because he wouldn't let go of her.

Ah ha. And what did she find? What did she find in Austria? What was the situation when she arrived?

Well, she just, I didn't really know much about that. She never spoke much about that.

Did she encounter any antisemitism in Vienna?

Yes, but she didn't talk about it. She was more worried – when she came back to Germany, she was relieved to come back to Germany because it was much easier. And there wasn't, as far as she was concerned, there wasn't so much antisemitism.

In Germany?

In Germany at that point,

So, she had more experience of more antisemitism in Austria?

In Austria. And she always said to me, 'Marianne, the Austrians are very antisemitic.'

[00:10:03] *Do you know what happened to her? Did she – was she ever more specific?*

Well, I was with her once but this was in Germany. My mother and I went – she got – my mother got restitution and she used the money. She went to Austria, to Bad Reichenhall in Germany for treatment because she had very bad asthma, which was brought on by all the upset. And she went to this hotel year in year out.

In Bad Reichenhall?

In Bad Reichenhall and she was well treated. But I really felt the antisemitism there. This was after the war, of course, now, I really felt the antisemitism. And my mother was taken ill and collapsed. And the owner didn't want my mother to go to hospital. It didn't look good, my mother going to hospital, because she was Jewish. And I really felt as well, the antisemitism in the hotel. It was very, very marked. And this is after the war.

Yeah, when was that? In the fifties, sixties?

Yes, yes, yes. And I came out to Germany because my mother was very ill. It was – the hospital was run very efficiently, but it was as cold as ice. And then one day, the owner of the – he never sent a card to my mother or anything. And one day he was driving, the owner was driving his car. And all of a sudden, he went into a tree and died. And I thought serve him right. But...

Anyway, that was later?

[00:12:00] That was later.

But let's just come back to your mother. So, when she came back, did she decide she wanted to marry your father?

Well, then he decided that he didn't want to get involved, because she was so much younger. I only found that out recently, because Peter videoed my mother and she came out with it. Do you remember, Peter?

So, which year? When did they get married?

1934.

In Breslau?

In Breslau, very simple wedding. Couldn't – my mother couldn't understand, the weddings were more elaborate here. It was very simple.

In the synagogue, did they marry?

In the synagogue, yes, and hardly any flowers and yeah.

In the Liberale synagogue?

In the Liberale synagogue.

I would ask you, but you were only born in '38. Do you have any memories at all of...?

My earliest memories are when I was two, and they were early memories. But before that- I remember very much when we went to the air raid shelters. That is, the first one we went to was a public shelter and it was muddy. And I didn't like it, it was damp. I didn't like the sound of the sirens. I still don't like the sound of sirens, it gives me the creeps.

That was in London?

That was in London. And then, we had – we went to the next-door neighbour, a Mrs Crockett, and we went into her air raid shelter. And I remember at ten o'clock or whatever time it was, they gave me a sweet. That was my reward for being good. I remember, and then my parents had an air raid shelter. And that was the Anderson one, that was outside. Then the next one was, which I loved, was the Morrison one and that was inside. [00:14:02] And I thought this was absolutely fantastic, wonderful, because I was suspended like a hammock and my parents slept underneath. And the bombs were so bad. We lived in – near Sunny Hill Park, it was so bad that my parents decided to send me away to be evacuated.

Okay, well, before we go to talk about your evacuation, let's just go back to your parents. They got married. It was already after Hitler had come to power. So first of all, how did 1933 affect them? Because they were still at university in 1933.

No, they'd qualified, they'd qualified.

Okay, but you said –

But they were thrown out in 1933.

Thrown out of what?

The university and their job.

So, you've got documents?

They were dismissed, yes.

From Breslau University?

No, I didn't know where it was from, the university. But they were documents to say they were instantly dismissed, because they couldn't prove their Aryan descent.

Yeah, so was their qualification sort of cancelled? Or –

Well, they couldn't practice law, they were thrown out from one moment to the next. My mother was very upset, of course. What I didn't understand is why at that point, if you're thrown out, then you've got to leave the country. It's the judges and law, the allegiance was to Hitler, it shouldn't be like that. And I never understood why they didn't get out. But they thought it would pass over, as most of them thought.

So, do you know, what did they do? Could they continue somehow to work in the law? Or what did your father, for example...?

[00:16:00] My father went to work for his uncle, who had a starch factory. And he learned all the things about starch, which we used for collars on people's shirts to stiffen them, as was the fashion. He went to work for his uncle. And my mother went to English classes to learn English, because she knew at some point, she would have to learn English. And then my mother started to give private lessons, to teach children who weren't very good at their work.

That's already in England?

That was in England. But I haven't got memories under the age of two, because I was a baby.

Yes, yes. So, in Germany, so he worked for – and the starch factory was in Breslau as well?

Yes.

And that was his, you said his uncle?

His uncle who brought him up because his father had died very young. His father died because he had fought in the First World War. Funny how it's coming back to me. Fought in the First World War and he died very young. He got some infection and died very young. So, there were only the two mothers.

Okay, that's why you said he was brought up by the uncle and the nanny.

Yes, yes.

That's what you – the maid of...?

Emma was her name.

Okay, and he had the starch factory?

He had the starch factory, and he had a person working there called Radek, and Radek was an employee. And, when my father was arrested, he helped my mother. Well, grandmother.

[00:18:02] *So, I know you can't remember all these things, but you know what happened to them. So, when did things change for your parents? And so, they got married in...?*

'34.

'34.

Well, it was a gradual process as it happened. It wasn't.... They were very upset in 1935 with the Nuremberg laws, for example. They were very upset that they were no longer regarded as German, they were stateless, they were – and that upset my parents very much. My mother always said that if you live in a country, you've got to have a citizenship. Always said it, drummed it in.

Did they have personally experience, bad experiences in those years? I mean, if you – from today's – it's a long time from '33, you know, onwards.

They were afraid. And they suddenly, my father couldn't go to the swimming pool. He liked – he was a good swimmer, he couldn't... My mother couldn't play tennis. They couldn't go to

the theatre. They couldn't go to the opera, cinema. So, it was a gradual process where it was getting worse. They were forbidden and that was it.

What about friends? Did they have non-Jewish friends at all? Did they?

No, they were mainly Jewish friends. But Radek, this person Radek, who later helped the grandmothers, he was friendly with him. He was anti-Nazi.

Right, he worked in the factory?

He worked in the factory and later on, he helped the grandmothers.

And what happened? Was the factory Aryanised? Or was – how long could they keep the factory, do you know?

[00:20:00] Well, in 1938, the factory was closed down. But my father had a letter to say he had a job in England, because they did work with England. So, that's why it was easy for my father to get a job in England, or relatively easy.

He had a contact to a British firm?

Yes, yes.

And did they work – they worked with a British firm? They exported some of the materials?

Yes, yes, because you could only – you had to have a job in order to come to England.

So, he did secure job?

Yes.

At what point, do you know? In '38?

Yes, but the problem was the letter that he needed for the visa went astray. So, that's why my father was arrested and sent to a concentration camp. They were asked to report to go to concentration camp. And my father stupidly, although my mother denies him – told him not to, he just walked into it, into the concentration camp.

And was that after Kristallnacht?

That was Kristallnacht.

On Kristallnacht?

On Kristallnacht.

Say it, Peter. On Kristallnacht? Yeah. Of course, you were just a few months old on Kristallnacht.

Yes.

So, your mother –

My mother lost her milk immediately. She was feeding me and immediately she lost her milk. The shock.

Yeah, what happened on Kristallnacht?

She had to get a *Hebamme* to feed me, otherwise I wouldn't be here [laughs].

She told you later that she...?

Yes.

And did she say, what was the shock? I mean, in Breslau, I think I've seen pictures.

[00:22:00] Well, when my father was sent to concentration – went to concentration camp. And my mother got very bad asthma, and my mother thinks, my mother's convinced that it happened because of the upset with Kristallnacht and everything that was going on.

And here we are now, a day before the 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht.

Yes.

So, what did they ever talk about? What they experienced, what they saw, what your mother saw on Kristallnacht?

My father had terrible nightmares for years and years afterwards. But when my daughter was born on the ninth of November, the nightmares stopped, never had them again. It was as though it wiped the slate clean. And my mother became – was always very anxious. Always- 'die Wände haben Ohren', you know, you mustn't say anything as somebody might be listening. That carried on with her.

And do you think that was started there at Kristallnacht, the experiences?

Yes, yes, yes. I mean, my father wasn't – my father had to write a letter to say that he was treated all right in concentration camp. But he's – because Hitler didn't want the world to know what was going on. But my father signed the letter to my mother, *osser* [ph]. Your son, *osser*, which is quite significant.

Your son, osser?

Osser. Osser means not true, it's Yiddish [Hebrew/ Yiddish אסור forbidden]. But my mother understood it immediately.

Yeah, it was a code word?

That was a code word, yes.

I don't know that word.

Osser, osser, yeah. How do you spell it, Peter?

[00:24:04] *Osser, okay.*

Not true.

[Peter] That was Buchenwald. You haven't mentioned Buchenwald.

Well, concentration camp. So, it was called Buchenwald, the concentration camp.

Yes. So, he was arrested?

Yes, and he was told to report to the office or whatever it was, Nazi headquarters. My mother begged him not to go. 'Don't, hide' but he didn't listen.

So, that was probably on the tenth of November?

It was the tenth of November.

And I know in Breslau, the synagogues, they were destroyed. There are famous pictures, actually, of the –

Yes, how many concentration camps were there?

Well, I think Kristallnacht, the men were mostly sent to Dachau and Buchenwald, as far as I know. So, he was sent to Buchenwald-

How many – but how many? Do you know how many in total?

In total? There were many concentration camps, but I think those early ones, I mean, I think Dachau was started in 1933 already.

It was the first one, I think.

Yeah, yeah. So, did she have any – did your mother have any correspondence? Was she in touch with your father in Buchenwald?

She didn't know where he was. She had no idea whatsoever and she was petrified.

Yeah. What about her mother and her – the older generation? Where were they at the time?

Well, they were in Breslau and – they were in Breslau. Can you repeat it?

Where were the grandmothers? The older generation, were they still...?

There were in Breslau. And when my father was arrested, because at that point, the women weren't arrested...

What about the uncle, for example?

Well, they went to concentration camp and they both died. [00:26:02] And my father was given permission to look to see, to find them. But he never recognised his uncle at all. He went mad, and he obviously died. I've got somewhere a photograph of my father being – a photograph being taken with my father in concentration camp with a few other men. And my mother couldn't recognise him at all anymore.

This was in Buchenwald?

That was in Buchenwald.

And so, the uncle was also sent to Buchenwald?

Yes, yes.

And didn't survive?

No, none of them survived. And I only recently found out that my mother had quite a lot of relatives in Austria and they all perished in concentration camp. She had brothers, nieces or nephews. And that's why she went to Vienna.

So, it must have been difficult for your mother to have a small child in this situation.

Very difficult, it was very difficult. And she wasn't very domesticated. My parents had to get rid of their maid, they had a maid called Emma and they had to get rid of her. Also, they had a pet, a cat, and they had to get rid of the cat, because Jews were not allowed to have pets and it had to be put down. So, they were trying so hard to get out. The letter that my mother needed for the job that had been offered, went astray.

And they were waiting for this letter to arrive from Britain?

Yes.

And it didn't get there?

It didn't get – no, it wasn't from Britain. They first of all had to have a letter in Breslau, which then they could apply for the visa to go to England.

But the letter from who?

[00:28:00] The letter would have come from the government. Everyone had to have permission to go, you couldn't just go. And they had to get a visa. I've never thought about these things until this minute.

Yeah, how they actually did it.

And so, my mother was very brave. And she dressed up and she went to the Gestapo headquarters, and she flirted, and she was lucky. She was allowed in, because she was blonde and blue eyed, so they didn't think that she was Jewish. That saved her life, my life, my father's life. And she went, and the Nazi official was very rude and shouted us and said, 'I'm not interested in you and your problems.' My mother said, 'Well, I'll wait until you've finished.' And when he had finished, it took five hours, he changed and he said, 'I'll help you now.' And he helped find the missing papers. And so, my father then came out of concentration camp. And they gave him the fare money to go home, because he had no money anymore.

So, she pushed his release?

Yes.

So, she went to Buchenwald? Or where did she go?

Well, I don't know where she went. But she went to try to get him out, that's all she was – as I said, she was very singular in what she wanted to do.

And he had an offer, a job offer in England?

So, but now the letter had gone astray. But now she needed that letter. And with that letter, she then could go with that letter to get the visa, or whatever it was she needed.

[00:30:00] *So, for how long was your father in the concentration camp?*

He was probably, well, about seven or eight weeks from when he was arrested. Didn't speak about it. And his skin was always unsteady, always has skin cancer, my father. And again, and he had huge boils when he came out of concentration camp, he had huge boils. And I'm convinced that the skin was unsteady because of his treatment. He never went into the sun; we didn't understand skin cancer. But it had a very marked effect upon my father, he lost his ambition.

After that?

After that, and he was happy with very little. As long as he had his little house, and his wife and his child, that's all he really wanted. But my mother wanted a bit more. And they were very – they got money from restitution law.

Yeah. So, that had a big impact of them, Kristallnacht and...?

It did. And my mother had, well later my – which I'll tell you, I'll tell you that later because it comes later.

And where did they live? Where did your mother live?

When she came to England –

No, where you were born in Breslau.

I don't know the address.

No, did they live in a flat, in a house?

They lived in a flat.

In the centre of Breslau?

Yes, the centre of Breslau. They were very happy there. They didn't –

How many – do you know how many Jews lived in Breslau? Just, I don't know, in case you know.

Well, I know that there were 500,000 Jews in Germany, Jews, and 100,000 fought in the First World War. That I do know. And I think on Kristallnacht, I think about 30,000 were arrested.

[00:32:04] *Yeah, in the whole of Germany?*

Yeah.

So, your father was one of them?

He was one of them.

So, tell us a bit about that your father was released.

He came out.

He came – did he come back home?

Yes, he went home. And he had to leave within five days, because his passport expired. And so, he left for England to start the new life after about five days. My mother hardly recognised him. He was so emaciated, in a terrible state. My mother heard Hitler speak once, this was early on. She went to a rally and she heard him speak, because she looked so Aryan. And I never understood again, why they didn't get out. Why, you know, they didn't, because that time it wasn't as difficult to get out.

They could have left a bit earlier?

They could have left earlier. And I've always asked people, 'What year did you get out? Why did you leave earlier?' But they had – my mother had the responsibility to get – you know, she didn't want to leave her mother or mother-in-law, and that was part of the problem.

So, your father came to Britain?

Into Britain.

So, are –

And he lived with my aunt and uncle, my mother's sister. And my mother desperately tried to get her mother out. But as I've told you, she failed to do so.

She couldn't get a visa for her mother?

[00:34:02] And in the meanwhile, my mother – Radek, this person, Radek, he got food for my – the mother and mother-in-law, because they needed food and took it to them. And he hid a Jewish person. He was a Christian, then he himself was arrested and thrown into concentration camp. But he survived, the Russians liberated him. And before my mother left for England, my grandmother had a silver dish, that little dish, there were two dishes. And she gave him the two dishes as payment for looking after, and feeding and helping, feeding and looking after them. But after the war, when I got married the first time, we invited him to the wedding. We kept in contact with him, we invited him to the wedding. And in his speech, he only spoke in German. He said, 'I was given these two dishes, there were two of them, that don't belong to me, they belong in your family.' And that's why I got that one dish, and a larger dish that I got as well, which I've given to one of my daughters. It's very moving actually. And the grandmother wrote a letter as well, when I was one year old. [00:36:00] And she wanted me to have – she knew that she had never seen me again. And she knew that she wanted me to have some memory of her. So, she wrote this letter, which I've got a copy of.

What did she write?

She wrote, 'I'm a modern – I want you to know that I'm a modern grandma. And I don't wear – I wear a shorter skirt, short skirts, not short by our standards. And she described herself as liking – being fun, and she would have loved me and kissed me and hugged me, and taken me out to see places.' It's a very moving letter.

And what happened to the grandmothers?

1941 or '42, they were both arrested and taken by train to Lithuania, travelled for about five days. And made – can you imagine how it must have been? And they got out of the – I know this because I've got – Harry, my grandson, has got the information. And got out of the truck, driven to a pit. And there they were, had to dig their grave and then they were shot. I think on that occasion about five – about 5000 people were killed. Every one of them was murdered.

[Peter] The Ninth Fort.

What, Peter?

[Peter] The Ninth Fort in Lithuania.

That's right, The Ninth Fort in Lithuania. My mother always blames herself that she didn't get them out, the mother and mother-in-law. But there was no way, they didn't – no one would sponsor them.

[00:38:02] *She was – felt guilty?*

She felt guilty. But she was – some of the restitution money she got. She took the money that was her grandmother's, they got blood money. And she took the money and she went home. And she adopted a person or two people, and with that blood money she bought them a television and things, and kept in contact with them. And she – because a lot of their friends said, 'We don't want to accept any blood money.' My mother said, 'No, take the money and use it for something useful.'

So, she adopted somebody here, in England?

Yes.

Yeah, yeah. But your father, so he had to travel? He came, he had the job offer, so he got the visa?

And Radek, then took over the factory and became very rich, a very rich man. And he wanted my father to go into business with him, because he didn't trust anyone else. But my father couldn't go back to Germany, they would have been afraid I ever met – maybe that person might not have been a Nazi. But someone in the family would have been bound to be.

This was post-war? Post-war?

What do you call it?

After the war?

Yes, after the war.

So, your father would have come, let's say, beginning of January '39 or end of December?

Well, it would have been later. Would have been a bit later he came.

January? So, he travelled by himself to England?

Yes.

And what about you and your mother?

My father came first. Yes, you're right, it would have been about January.

[00:40:01] *And then, how did your mother managed to leave?*

How did she manage to leave?

Yeah.

She had a carry cot made for me, because they didn't transport babies at that time. It was very difficult for her. And she arrived in England, and she lived – and my father, we lived with him in their house, her house. My uncle had a job in England, he had come earlier. He was an engineer and England wanted engineers. So, that's why he was able to come over.

That was your mother's sister?

Yes, they were very close. My mother always felt she owed her life to her sister and brother-in-law. And the husband, I called him *Vati* because we lived there. I was very attached to him because I didn't have any grandparents. And I always felt it growing up as a single child, that I didn't have any grandparents or brothers and sisters.

You were with all the adults?

Except that when I was evacuated, I had a wonderful time. I loved it, they were lovely Christian family. We went to church every Sunday. And then, we'd have – my – many people who were evacuated had very bad experiences. But this was great. There were children to play with, there were four children. I never was able to trace who they were, where they went. They gave me a bedroom. They gave me toys to play with. And then, we had lunch and we had roast chicken or something. And to this day, I always like a Sunday lunch. It goes back to that, I know.

How old were you when you were evacuated?

Well, I would have been about four. [00:42:01] I know I had my fourth birthday there, because they made a cake. But they didn't have a cake with decorations. One of the daughters was twenty-one, so they put the twenty-one around the cake. That's how I know I was four.

So, you were very young?

I was very young.

So, you had about two years in London before you came as a – you came at the age of one?
Yeah.

To England. And you lived for, what, two years in Hendon?

Well, then I was evacuated from Hendon to Cheltenham. And then, out to Bath and then I went to Cheltenham.

But you said you remember as a young child, you remember the air raids?

Oh, I remember them very vividly. And in fact, a bomb fell. But my mother was a pesterer and she pestered so much, they had enough money to go on holiday. So, we went to somewhere, I can't remember where it was. And we went to this place, the bomb fell where our air raid shelter would have been. So, we were incredibly lucky, incredibly lucky. And I know where that spot is, it's in the Sunny Hill Park. And the soil there was rotten, poisoned and poisonous. And for many, many, many years, only weeds grew there where the bomb had fallen.

In the middle of the park somewhere?

Yes, in the middle of the park.

And that was where the air raid shelter was?

Yes.

So, they had to run to the air raid shelter from their flat?

Well, no, it was – the last one was in their home and that's where the air raid shelter was in there. [00:44:00] So, they were very lucky that they weren't killed, because they went away earlier, because it destroyed the bomb shelter.

Understood. Just to go back a little, so did you travel by train with your mother, do you know? How did you travel with her?

Well, from Breslau I went to Berlin and I suppose I travelled, I flew. As I said, my mother got to a carry cot for me.

So, you came on a plane?

Yes.

From where?

We landed in Croydon. Was there an airfield there?

Yeah, there was in Croydon, yeah. But did you fly from Berlin or- from Berlin?

Yes, it was from Berlin.

And probably your father picked you up? I don't know, but yeah.

I've got no –

You can't remember it.

I don't remember.

You were too young.

I was too young.

Yeah.

But coming back to where I was evacuated, it was lovely there in Cheltenham and Bath. And I forgot all about my parents. I was – you know, my parents' friends, they only mixed really with *Yekkes* [Jew of German-speaking origin]. They –

How did they find...? So, first of all, do you know the decision to you know, let you go and that age, what led to that decision? And then, how did they choose the family you went to, or how was that organised?

Somebody knew somebody, that I do know. And they were a very religious Christian family and wanted to help Jewish people. But I was ha – and I didn't go to school there, which was terrible because I came back one year, no schooling. And I felt really behind, because I hadn't learned anything for a year and I couldn't catch up. And the teacher was horrible, a Miss Sparks. And if you didn't behave, or even if you did behave and couldn't do it, she rapped you on the knuckles. [00:46:03] I'd say now.

That was in Bath or in Cheltenham?

No, that was when I was then back in London.

Okay, so just about the –

In Sunnyfields.

So, about the evacuation, so you were evacuated two different families?

Two different – one family, all I knew is that I went mushroom picking. And the person who looked after me wouldn't let me eat the mushrooms, because they could have been poisonous [laughs]. And I was very upset about it. But I completely forgot about my parents and I cried when I had to go back to my parents, which is not what most people talk about.

And where were you longer, in Bath or in Cheltenham?

I think it was longer in Cheltenham. But the family that were really nice to me, were the ones in Bath.

And why did you have to change or...?

I don't know. I think because the person in Cheltenham, my mother knew the person or somebody, there was a connection there.

And what were their names, the families who took you in?

All I know is one of the children in Bath was called June and she was twenty-one, because she had her twenty-first birthday. That's all I know.

But you said they wanted to help Jewish families?

They wanted to help people. But I didn't know I was Jewish. I had no idea I was Jewish. Why would I? My parents weren't religious and my mother had no – neither of them had any particular interest in Judaism. But they knew they wanted me to marry a Jewish person. That was very important to my father. And I have a grandson who knows a lot about this.

[00:48:02] And he's engaged now, he's engaged to a non-Jewish girl who's become Jewish. She wanted to become Jewish before she even met her fiancé, my grandson. And my father would have wanted so much to have a great-grandchild. I knew that and my grandson won't oblige. He's quite happy just being engaged.

Yeah. So, your – for your parents their religion wasn't important, but being Jewish was?

Being Jewish. Yes, it was being Jewish, very important.

So, you – and when you evacuated, you went to church and you participated?

Yes.

You were like a family member?

Yes, I couldn't go to synagogue because it didn't know.

And probably, you learned English?

Yeah, well, yes. I would have learned English.

Because before, you didn't go to school, you were with your parents?

I was very behind, I really was. And then one day, my mother realised, we were talking about taking the eleven-plus and I was – there were 100 people in that year. And the school doesn't exist anymore when I came back. And I was about ninety-nine out of 100. And I was dismal. And my mother realised suddenly that, you know, I needed to have an education. And so, she taught me and every wrong answer I got, I got a smack [laughs]. I learned ever so quickly. Anyway, so I passed to go to Copthall. I was only a very mediocre student at Copthall, I wasn't good student.

In Hendon?

In Hendon.

But Marianne, just one second, what about internment? Were your parents...?

[00:50:00] My father was interned.

Tell us about it, please.

He wrote a letter to my mother to say, please, send me – I've got that copy of the letter. Please, send me some fruit and blankets. I'm cold and you know I don't like the cold.

Where was he interned, do you know?

Yeah, if you mention one or two places.

Well, probably on the Isle of Man.

Peter, oh, he's listening, where did my father...?

[Peter] Isle of Man.

Isle of Man.

Isle of Man?

Yes.

Do you know which camp?

No.

I mean, it must have been really difficult for somebody who had survived – who'd come out of a concentration camp –

Yes, it was –

-to be interned again.

It was, because although it wasn't a concentration camp, he'd lost his freedom again. He was hungry and he lost his ambition, as I said before. He was happy with very little. And the restitution made a big difference to their lives, really. And they did it very well.

Yeah, that's afterwards. But did he talk about this internment at all? Was it – or were you – by then you were already evacuated? Or was it at the same time?

I was evacuated then. I didn't understand what a daddy was, because we met some people down the street and they said their puppy had died. And they were a little bit upset, but not very upset. And because they didn't understand, *Papi* [sounds like puppy] is German for daddy. [00:52:00] And my father, apparently, I never called my father again *Papi*. Then it became Daddy.

So, who told who that their puppy had died?

Some people we knew down the street. I thought – and I thought it was their father had died, their father. I wasn't really aware. I mean, I remember the end of the war in 19 – May 1945 that everybody went out into the street. And they took a piano out and everyone was singing and dancing. And I was I was puzzled why. I could see everybody was happy, but I didn't know why they were happy. Because I wasn't aware, my parents had shielded me from it.

They didn't talk about the war?

No, they didn't want to upset me. But it changed their lives. I mean, you know, neither of them could practice law in England. They didn't have the money to re-study. My mother's health wasn't so good, but they were happy with each other.

And while you were evacuated, did they come and see you at all? Did they visit you?

No, no. No letters, no nothing. Anyway, I couldn't read [laughs].

So, how long was the entire time of your evacuation? Two years? Or one or two years, or...?

I don't know how long it was. It was quite a long time and I had to come back to London, because I had toothache and I had to go to the dentist in London to extract my tooth, which was horrible. But I was a very happy child. You know, happy go lucky. [00:54:00] I never thought about anything very seriously. But I was always close to my mother. As I say, she was difficult. But I have lovely memories of my mother and I used to take a day off work every two or three weeks, we'd go out for the day. And she loved the mountains. It all goes back to Germany.

So, when you came back after being evacuated, did you recognise your parents? Or did you have to sort of...

Not – I don't think so. I don't remember particularly. I know that my father sent my mother for a treatment for her asthma. And my father was going to look after me for the weekend. And my father said, 'Do you miss Mummy?' And I said, 'It's so horrible. Don't talk to me about her and I don't want to think about it.' But it had a great impact on my parents. But I find it interesting that my father had terrible nightmares.

Yeah, when did he have those nightmares? At that time or later?

No, until my daughter was born sixty-eight years ago. And then, the nightmares stopped. They said it had wiped the slate clean.

And in that time while you were evacuated, did your father, did your mother, did they work? How did they support themselves?

Well, my father, after the war, you're talking about?

No, still in the war.

After – in the war?

In the war.

In the war –

So, after he came back from internment.

Well, he worked for this Mr Risner with the starch.

That was the company which had invited him to come?

Yes. My mother –

That was a company dealing with starch in the UK?

[00:56:00] Yes.

And the owner was called Mr Risner?

Yes.

Yeah, and he worked there?

My father worked there, but he wasn't very successful. But he didn't seem to care, didn't worry him. Whereas my mother worked much harder. She got a job teaching, she started teaching German. She always wanted to teach law. So, teaching German wasn't so different for her. She said to me it was, and she taught – she never had a failure. She was very successful, but it's not what she really wanted to do. But it was a compromise.

She couldn't practice law here?

They couldn't afford it, to re-study.

She couldn't re-study?

She couldn't. But she loved going to Switzerland, anything to do with the mountains. And so do I, actually.

And how did they stay together? Did she live with her sister? Did they stay together? Or did your parents move elsewhere, or...?

Well, they stayed together with them for quite a while. And then, her sister was very bossy and they had different points of view. And so, they rented a house in the same street, Southfields. Of course, they saw each other.

So, is that where you grew up in that house?

Well, it was rented. Yes, until the bomb destroyed the house. And then, my father bought a house where I lived until I got married. A house in Sunny Gardens, Sunny – Sunny Hill. He lived in this house and he then was able to buy a house in this – it was the same road. And he would buy it, and he bought this house. [00:58:00] When we bought the house, there were chickens that were nearly dead. So, the man sold the house with the chickens in it. And so, we had to learn to look after the chickens. And we fed the chickens with – and every Saturday, we'd go to the chicken club to learn. There weren't any Jewish people there. And we'd feed the chickens and I'd wash the – I'd wash and clean the chicken hutch. And I liked – I'd always liked animals and pets. And I desperately wanted to have a brother or sister, but I couldn't. My mother, thank God, the doctor advised my mother against it. But she was too ill in any case.

With asthma?

With the asthma. But when Intal and Ventolin came onto the market, it changed her life. So, at sixty she became young and wanted to make up – because she was very feisty, and to make

up for everything she'd missed out on in life. And she was a very good teacher. But she would ask the same question ten times until she got the answer she wanted, until you got fed up with it.

And were your parents involved in the – with other refugees?

Yeah.

Did they join like the AJR or other...?

I think they joined the AJR, but they weren't really active in anything.

Did they join a synagogue?

Yes, a big mistake. They joined the Hendon United. They thought they must immediately join but of course, it wasn't suitable for them. You know, they would have been much happier in Belsize Park. [01:00:02] But they always talked about having bought the burial rights, so they wouldn't change or they couldn't change. But they mixed – their friends were nearly all German Jews. And most of them had no children and nearly all of that was an exception, because it wasn't the time to bring children into the world.

Yeah, that was – was it a particular generation, they were...?

Yeah.

Where they didn't have children in Germany and then difficult here?

They couldn't afford.

Yeah, which is interesting.

I had wonderful clothes. And my mother realised that they'd have no money in England and so she bought clothes in Germany. I mean, they had to pay taxes and I had clothes, even down to toothbrushes, up to the age of about five. So, I had lovely clothes, beautiful clothes.

Which she brought when you travelled?

Which she brought, yes.

Both of you brought them?

Yes, when we came together. I never knew I'd remember so much until this minute.

Yeah, yeah. So, she had clothes from – she brought clothes for five years, so to speak?

Yes.

I mean size wise.

Yeah. And I went into teaching. My mother said it'd be a good idea if you became a teacher. And again, I didn't think very deeply about it. I thought, oh, yeah, that's a good idea. I was very happy go lucky. And so, I became a teacher.

And Marianne, while you were at school were you aware that you were different from other children? I mean, you had refugee parents, refugee friends, you lived –

I confronted antisemitism, but it didn't upset me so much.

What sort of antisemitism did you encounter?

Well, one of the schools I taught at, I taught at three schools, one the teacher – the headmistress was very antisemitic, very. [01:02:02] But I just stood up for it. And I mean, I was annoyed, but it didn't really upset me that much, which it should have done. But my

disposition was, well, it'll be all right in the end. She was very antisemitic. She really had it in for the Jewish children. And one – yeah.

Yeah, go on, sorry.

Well, I shouldn't really say. One day, she asked me if I wanted to leave the school. And I said I wasn't ready for it. And I stayed there, and then she was very nice to me.

I was going to ask you; do you have any – did your parents experience...?

Pardon?

Did you parents experience any sort of discrimination being German Jewish? I mean, did they have any contact with English Jews, for example? You said they joined the synagogue, was there...?

I don't think they got on that well with the English Jews, because they were so different. And on one occasion, when there was an air raid shelter, an air raid or something, and they asked some Jewish people if they could come into their shelter, these English Jews refused. And that put my parents off Jewish people.

On what grounds did they refuse?

They were – I don't know, but they weren't very nice people. But on the other hand, on one occasion, I remember opposite there were some people and they were very antisemitic. And they had a little baby and the baby sort of fell in the pram, but it was upside down. And I remember thinking to myself, and I was quite little, you know, should I go and knock on the door? Even though I knew they were antisemitic. Or should I just walk by and not notice anything? And I decided it wasn't the fault of the baby, and that I would go knock on the door and say the baby was very uncomfortable.

[01:04:06] *And you did, you told them?*

I told them, yes. It wasn't the fault of the baby. But I was aware of that. But I think I would have been aware of anyone who was Jewish or not Jewish. I don't think it would have made much difference to me. It just was inhumane. I was very, always very aware of that.

And Marianne, were you aware – I mean, you as you said before, you didn't have a lot of family around, so were you aware that you're missing grandparents or grandmothers?

The friends became a family. And the friends, because they had no children, were always particularly nice to them. I was aware of – nice to me. I was very aware of that.

The other refugees?

Of course, the other refugees.

Any names? Do you remember any one from your parents' friends?

Werner was one, Werner. My mother made a show with this couple. He'd lost his wife in a concentration camp. The other one had lost the wife and my mother introduced them to each other. And they were – and they got married. We didn't hear from them for a few days, to say thank you, you know, for inviting us. Because he said he liked her and asked for her phone number. And five days later, they phoned up to say they were getting married. And they were very nice to me, because they had no children. It was always – and when my parents would go to Switzerland every year to the mountains, you know, Rosa, the Jews will sit together for coffee, the first question they always asked, 'How did you escape?' [01:06:02] That I remember quite clearly.

They would meet and talk?

Pardon?

They would meet for coffee?

Yeah, and some of the ways they – there was one fella, I think it was a Munich, he'd been a cook. Well, he became a cook to one of the top Nazis. And he learned to cook and one day the cook said to him, the boss said to him, 'You bake bread like a Jewish person.' And he said, 'No, I don't.' But he knew that he was Jewish, but he kept – he made such good bread, that he knew that he was Jewish, but he kept him. And I think they opened a *Konditorei* in Munich, he told us.

Marianne, what about becoming British? When? At what point?

Oh, yes, as soon as they could, because all their friends tried to become British citizens. That was very important.

And when did they become British, do you know? Or you?

It was 1947 or '48. I can't remember which year it was.

And that was very important for your parents?

Very important.

You said your mother thought it's important to have a passport?

Yes, but I've still got the passports they had in Germany. We've given things to the Berlin Museum, but that, the passports we've kept with the "J" on it.

[01:08:00] *What did you give to the museum?*

Oh, things from the grandmother. For example, the letter my grandmother had written.

She wrote. And when did your mother find out what happened to her mother and mother-in-law?

After the war. Of course, very upset and she's always blamed herself for it. She could have done more. 'I didn't try hard enough.' And I suppose it was quite usual, was it?

Yeah, I think so.

But I didn't understand. I mean, it was a Pogrom but they didn't realise it was a Pogrom.

So, do you think by the end of the war, your mother had hoped that they would still be alive?

Yes, of course she did. She hoped beyond all hope.

Yeah. Marianne, so we continue after a little break. We were talking about the post-war years already. Let's maybe, tell us a little bit about your career and your plans after you finished school.

First of all, I went to the grammar school, Copthall Grammar School. And then, I went to a teachers' training college in Brighton. I didn't like the course, I was stupid and that I wanted to be with my friends, I did the same course as them. [01:10:04] I changed to be on the same course, but it was not suitable for me. I didn't like the lecturers, I didn't think they were – related life to reality. But I joined, I began to be aware that I was interested in people. And I went to school in Harlesden, which was really a very tough area and they came from very poor backgrounds. The kids were quite violent, many of them had flick knives, and one even beat up a master with knuckle dusters. And I felt I could help these children. And I was allowed two periods a week where I could do anything I wanted. And I did things that they couldn't learn from home, like opening a bank account, relationships, and treating somebody with respect. And I found I could do quite well with this. But unfortunately, one of the boys, he hit a master with the knuckle dusters and the teacher landed up in hospital. And they had a very bad publicity, and they closed the school down and I was very sorry about it. So, the next school I went to, was a school where the headmistress was antisemitic. And on one occasion, she asked me to help her, which I refused to do. I was risking my job with it, that I

really thought she was unkind to the children. Jewish children, of course, and she was a social climber. And so, I then one day decided I'd like to get away from the school. And so, I went to a boy's school where I was the only female. Again, that was a totally different experience. [01:12:00] Again, I felt I could help them and the headmaster liked me helping the boys. They'd come to me in the break time or after school, and I felt I was drawn to this side. Also, we started making fluffy balls and toys for children who were in deprived homes. And we made in the end, about 1000 toys and they would distribute them. And I liked that very much. And it was, these toys were given to the children when they arrived in the first centre, when they'd been taken away from the parents. But then unfortunately, or fortunately, actually, I should say, my marriage broke. And I had enough money to support my two children. And so, I just thought long and hard and decided, the best thing for me would be a course, to a course on nursery education and then open a nursery. But I was cautious. I opened the first nursery in my home and I took – I had it for about five or six years or longer, can't remember. And they will all very bright, nearly all Jewish children, very bright. In fact, some of them were quite distinguished, Lord Finkelstein, he was in my school. And from the moment he came, all he wanted to do was to learn. And he insisted he wanted homework, and so I gave him homework. And he could learn to read like a six-year-old. And every day, when I was pressed by the Jewish mothers to teach the children for five minutes, he would stay the whole hour and watch all the other children. So, he learned to read and write at a very early age. [01:14:01] And one day his mother, well, his mother complained to me because he couldn't do his homework. And it was not me that put the pressure on him, it came from within him. But there was – all the children were different. But there were three boys, they were friends from the age of three, and I met one of them the other day and they're still friends. Best of friends. And I really, really enjoyed it. But then I decided that my marriage had broken, I really need to earn more money to live well, because teaching didn't pay enough for me.

What was the name of your nursery?

Elliot Nurseries. It was in Elliot Road, it was in my house.

Elliot Nurseries?

Yeah. And they were so different, the children. I mean, there was one boy and he was a peacemaker. He sorted everything out with the children, very bright. There was another one, when I met the mother fifteen years later and I said, 'What did he study in maths?' And she said, 'How do you know?' Because I could see at the age of three, that he already had an aptitude in that way. And then, I decided I must expand a little bit more. And so, I built a second nursery, and then a third nursery. And in the end, I had ten nurseries. And then, I met Peter's son, I taught him. He was always breaking the toys, because he couldn't fix them together. And he came to stay with us in London last week, from Australia, he is now. And it was interesting that he was still – I had something broken and I gave it to him. [01:16:02] And this time, of course, he could fix it. And I was – I liked this contact with the children and then I built up ten. And David, his son, said, 'This is where my teacher lives' and pointed to it. And one day, Peter knocked on my door and I knew Peter, of course. And that's how we started to go out together. So, I had three careers really, the three schools and also the nursery schools. And then, I married Peter, became very, very busy and helped him with his career. We had to go to a lot of functions, meet people, it was very social, which I liked. And Peter, my mother said to me, 'Don't get involved with a lawyer.' But she liked Peter from the beginning, because he's really a very good – he's asleep now. He's a very good husband. And those were my careers. I also taught swimming when I was at the [] School, which was good for them. They sent me on the course and then I learned to teach swimming. And I also got a bronze medal for lifesaving. So, I had a full career but I felt really, that I wanted to help people. I felt although I was earning money, I was in a career where I could help people and I liked that aspect of it.

And Marianne, do you think that impulse was shaped by your own experience somehow?

Yes, I do, very much so. And –

[01:18:08] *In which way?*

It made me feel that I was more respectful, kinder and could help people. And I liked – I was not an introvert, I was an extrovert. And I felt I was doing something useful, as I do with the

HET. I'm giving a talk, I'm doing something useful. I'm trying to influence people in a good way. The world has enough difficulties at the moment.

Yeah. So, when did you start giving talks? So, through HET.

Well, it started first of all, George, my brother-in-law, he was asked if there were any – anyone who had any contribution or documents from Holocaust, to hand them in, which he did. Then they asked George if he would talk, so he talked for several years. And then they asked him again, and he couldn't. So, he said, 'Well, my twin brother can do it.' And then, Peter did it. And then, I thought, well, if Peter can do it, I can do it. And then, we saw something for the HET, thought well, we can do this. And that's how Peter and I got involved in it.

And when I was that roughly, in the...?

Oh, it must be a good ten, eleven years ago that we've been doing it. Then we go to – we used to work together. We used to go to Florida, and we were there always about four weeks. And I felt I didn't want to be idle for four weeks. And so, we started talking in schools.

In Florida?

In Florida. In fact, on one occasion, we had 500 in the morning, 500 in the afternoon and a PTA luncheon. And then, we – it was quite a lot and we stayed overnight.

[01:20:01] *Amazing.*

We had a lot of energy, and then we came back and went to a party. But again, the American attitude was slightly different, because the war was not so close to them. Here the war was closer.

Yeah, how different was it to teach or to tell your story in England and in America?

Well, for both of them you could hear a pin drop. But they didn't know anything about the Second World War, so it was even more important. And we felt in here, in England, I felt that it was very important. And we didn't do many Jewish schools. But I still think we ought to have done a few, because this generation don't really know much about it, and they're on a cushy number. But this has probably woken them all up with a shock, what's happening now. Then Peter was getting very busy and wanted me to help him with various things. And so, I sold the school. And – but after a year, I got bored. So, I decided that I would open a school teaching English to foreigners, but I didn't start in my home. And that went very well, actually, all different nationalities. But I'd still got the same feeling that I could help them, as well as teaching them.

What was that called? The English school?

No, it was called Kingsley School of English, because now I lived in Kingsley Way.

Oh, so you are the founder of Kingsley School of English?

Yes.

Ah, very interesting.

I mean, what I used to do with them, if they were beginners, I'd find someone who lived near them who only spoke their language. But if, for example, they were intermediate or first – it wasn't called the First Certificate. [01:22:07] If they were proficiency level, whatever, then I made sure that they only met – I introduced them sometimes to someone who was – where they could speak English together, but not their common language. So, they'd learn English.

And the school is still going?

This – it was sold to a guy. And then, he has now recently sold it again to some Japanese, but not as an English school. And I felt I wanted to succeed. Anyway, I had to when I was on my own, because I had to succeed. There was no question about it. I felt that quite strongly. But

again, the same thing with the nursery school, I'd find someone who lived near the mothers, so they'd have someone to walk to school with. So that they'd have company, because a lot of them were very lonely. And lonely mothers are not such good mothers, you know, that it's better to have a mother who's happy. So, that was my theme that I wanted.

And so, the nurseries, even if you had ten, it was called Elliot Nurseries? You kept the name of the nurseries?

Well, I don't know what's happened now, it's so long ago.

Well, but then, when you had the ten nurseries, was it called Elliot Nurseries?

Yes, yes. [Laughs] It was a long time ago.

Yeah.

But I felt – and I had bad luck, but I learned how to use my bad luck and turn it into good luck. But I worked hard. And Peter and I, we met when we were quite –

[Inaudible background conversation]

Yes.

[01:24:00] I liked the little children and the adults, because they both had one thing in common. The little ones were like sponges and they wanted to learn. And adults, they wanted to learn. German I taught, they wanted to learn. It was because there was reason. That's my career, more or less.

And how old were you when you – for your first, when you first got married?

About twenty-two. But he's okay, but he was the wrong person for me. And he didn't want me and Peter didn't – Peter, his first wife didn't want him. So, we were rejects and we're quite well suited. Although I haven't been well, so it's been a bit difficult. But I'm okay.

But it was – must have been difficult, you know, at that time to –

Be on your own?

Yes, to be alone with the children.

Oh, yes, within two years, within two minutes, you know, this got around that I was – my marriage had broken up. And some of the mothers were quite nasty. And one of them even said to me, 'Well, now you're on your own, men will only want you for one thing.' And I actually threw my heart and soul into teaching, because it took my mind off things. And I employed quite a few staff.

And were your parents supportive? What did they think or...?

They were so happy he'd left; they were delighted that he left. And so, they went off to Israel to celebrate and left me on my own, which was not the thing to do. They were quite- on the one occasion, quite generous with money, and gave me money to get started. [01:26:01] But I didn't want to be dependent on them. And I used 250 pounds and gave the rest back to them. I just didn't want it. I wanted my independence. A bit like my mother.

But you said before that restitution was important for them, for their lives? Restitution?

Oh, yes, yes. My mother wasn't very good with children, but that's okay. She did the best she could.

You felt she wasn't a good mother to you as a child, or...?

My father was my mother, because my mother was so ill that my father looked after me. But when she got better, then we went out a lot together. I mean, I had to assume responsibility at quite an early age. But that was all right. I've always been very family minded; the family is very important to me. And all – and we've got – he's got three, I've got two. We've got twelve grandchildren between us. His unfortunately, are in Australia and we've got four great-grandchildren.

So, you've got a big family?

Yes, and they're all so very different and different personalities. His have married out, they had no chance because although his wife was Jewish and from Germany, she didn't bring the children up to be Jewish. But it's only recently that his children have become interested. And in fact, David, who came over last week from Australia, he wanted a Friday evening. Not that he wants to become Jewish, but what he meant was, it's the family life together. **[01:28:00]** And I think that's very important, and why do I do this work with HET? I haven't done it for a while now, for about seven months. Why do I do it? Because I feel like I owe it to my grandmothers who were murdered. I want to give them something to say that we haven't forgotten. You heard one of my – Peter just said that it was my father's birthday, so we remember.

You remember him?

Mm.

That's your motivation for doing the Holocaust work?

Yeah, and I was quite motivated. Now it's different but Peter's carrying on. He's a very good speaker, as you probably know.

Yeah. But you also, you became members of Belsize Square Synagogue?

Oh, yes.

Tell us about that, please. About Belsize Square.

I feel at home there. We're not very active. Peter was on the board and executive, and he has a very busy practice. But we go to functions there, we're not great synagogue goers. But of course, we celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And I think it was, I can't remember if it was one of the festivals, Peter was given an honour to open the Torah. And he said to the cantor, Paul Heller, 'It's very nice that they've called me up.' And the cantor said to him, 'Well, it was – it's for the oldest and you're the oldest who's here.' [01:30:00] I could have been more active in the synagogue. But you can't do everything and you choose what you really want. And it didn't appeal to me to go to shul on Saturday. I think we probably go about once every six weeks for synagogue. But of course, with my not being well...

What do you mean you feel at home there? Can you explain that a bit?

I feel I belong there. I never felt that I belonged in the United Synagogue at all, I didn't like it. And we went recently now, from here, Rosh Hashana, to the West London Synagogue. Again, that was quite different and I quite enjoyed it. I don't like it with that Rabbi now, because on Yom Kippur war, for example, he played – after it was over, he played the guitar and I really didn't like that. But that wouldn't stop me belonging, I wouldn't dream of changing synagogues. I'm Jewish and I feel, I can't explain it. I feel it's the synagogue I belong to. Although I've noticed that there are younger people now and I don't know the younger people.

Did you get married in Belsize Square?

Yes, I did. I think there's a photograph of me. Yes, it never occurred to either of us – anyway, we were both members. And what happened was, on one occasion, something annoyed me, I can't remember what it was. And I decided, oh, yes, I went to the United Synagogue. It's probably a bit boring for you.

Go on.

I went to the United Synagogue and I – when I was on my own the first time, I plucked up courage to go to the synagogue on my own. [01:32:02] And I went, and the *shammos* came up to me and said, ‘You're not wearing a hat.’ I said, ‘I'm sorry, I haven't got a hat.’ If she would have said, ‘Here, here's a scarf, wear a scarf’, I would have worn the scarf. And she said, ‘Well, you can't come here, you've got to go home and get a hat.’ And it was a bit difficult when my first husband left me. It was very difficult. And so, I said to her, ‘Well, okay, I'm going but I'm never coming back to the shul.’ And the *shammos* felt guilty and said, ‘No, it's okay. You can come.’ I said, ‘No’ to my children, Rosh Hashanah, and we went home. And I then decided what shul shall I join? It was either Alyth Gardens or Belsize, and I chose Belsize.

Because of its history as well? Because of...?

Yes, I always wanted my parents to join, but they didn't. They stayed with United, which was really not for them.

But you also said, you told me before that religion wasn't that important for your mother.

But then when she came, you told me a story that she went to a church.

That's right.

Tell us a little bit.

Well, she wanted to pray to God and thank God that he spared my father. But she didn't know where to go, she didn't speak any English. And so, she went to the church up the road, St Mary's Church, which is very near them, and she prayed. And she said it didn't matter to her, which church it was. But she just felt she wanted to go there and pray, and say thank you to God for sparing her, and that she was sorry that her mother and mother-in-law had died. We weren't a religious family, but we've always been a very Jewish family. [01:34:00] And I feel that my – the world, if I had a chance again, I wouldn't be born Jewish. But whatever

happens, I could change my religion. I'm Jewish. The world regards me as Jewish, so I might as well accept it and get on with it.

Yeah. And how do you feel about being Jewish just now, today, when there is a difficult situation?

Well, I'm Jewish and I must support Judaism. My father, to my annoyance, every Rosh Hashanah, sorry, was it Yom Kippur? He would eat apple cake. And I'd say, 'Dad, don't eat apple cake, it's Yom Kippur.' And he'd say, 'I fasted enough at synagogue- I fasted enough in the concentration camp. I don't need to fast now, I'm going to eat.' And my kids were forbidden to eat cake [laughs] on Yom Kippur. But I couldn't stop him because he suffered enough.

Yeah. And Marianne, did your parents ever go back to Breslau? Did they...?

My mother wanted to go, she really did. But my father didn't want to, it was another life. We've been to Breslau and in fact, we knocked on the door where my parents lived. We found out the address. And in the beginning, the woman didn't want to let us, because we didn't speak the same common language. But then she did and they were very nice. And what was interesting was the way they had furnished the flat. It was just the way my parents had furnished it.

And what did you feel like going back to Breslau? Obviously, you didn't have any memories. But what was it like for you to...?

I was very excited, very excited to go back. [01:36:01] And of course, we've been to Auschwitz. You know, I feel that we were one of the few lucky ones who escaped. It was good luck.

Well, in fact, they're not so many people of your generation, probably born in Germany, you know, in 1938.

That's right.

I mean, I didn't do any research but...

That's right. But I haven't got the memories that Peter's got and I wasn't on the Kindertransport. But I feel very strongly that when people deny their heritage and pretend that they were not Jewish... I was teaching this woman, her subject was history as well, good teacher, better than me. And we had – I was going to be away for Rosh Hashanah, and she was going to take my class. But she pretended she didn't know she was born in Vienna, or her family were born in Vienna. She was a little bit younger. And I remember having a row with her and saying to her, 'It doesn't matter how many times you've converted, to me, you were born Jewish and you'll always stay Jewish.' And that's when we became friends, it was the start of friendship.

And so, you said being Jewish is important to you? How would you define yourself today in terms of your identity?

Well, I always self that I don't belong anywhere. I always felt that, but now I feel I'm Jewish and that's it. And I like the family life of being Jewish. [01:38:00] But I liked the family life with this religious Christian family.

Did you stay in touch with the family at all after your evacuation finished?

You know, I was very little still and my parents didn't, and I don't know anything about them. All I know is they were really, very kind to me and very nice to me. And I felt that there were good people as well in the world, and that was very important. And that I should be good, and I should pass the message on, and everyone can try. My daughter had a friend, she was an illegitimate girl, that made no difference. And she – they played together very nicely at Copthall. And one day, this girl came and said, 'You know, my mother has said that we mustn't play together, because you're Jewish and I'm not Jewish.' She came from one of the Mosley family. And my daughter thought I would report this to the headmistress, and Peter and I thought long and hard about it. And we decided we would handle it differently. And so,

we invited the mother for tea, and the only thing she could do was refuse. So, we thought, well, we'll try. And, to my surprise, she accepted the invitation and she came for tea. Peter came home early from work, which never happened, and we spoke about things. And then, he had a legal problem and that was wonderful to have a legal problem, because Peter soon sorted that out. And so, she always, that woman, always sent her regards to me. They remained as friends. And when she died, Jeanette, my daughter wrote a condolence letter and she said, 'For one who changed her mind.' [01:40:02] And to me that was wonderful, because that's what we had achieved. And I always think that's what everyone can do, is if I do something that's good and someone says, 'That's really good', I will always bring into the conversation that I'm Jewish. Because I want, we need support from people. But if we do things wrongly, it's very easy to have a bad reputation.

And what sort of identity did you want to transmit to your children?

To be decent and respectful. I had in one of my classes, when it was very young children, a boy drew picture, a teacher as being crippled. And the girl came in and saw a picture of herself being totally crippled. And she was very upset and cried, and I was very angry with the boy. Rubbed it off the blackboard immediately and insisted on inviting the girl for tea, although I didn't like her, but insisted that it was only right. So, I was very aware that you should be kind to people, and I think I always brought that in my career,

And what message do you give to the children in one of your Holocaust educational talks?

Well, we've got letters, I've thrown most of them away now, which say how much it's influenced them. And yeah, how much that talk, how much it's influenced them. We've had letters. But you know, how long does that stay with the children? We've been told it stays a long time to make them think.

Yeah, but what do you want to stress when you give your talk? What is the main message you want...?

[01:42:01] The message is to be decent people. Peace, not to fight, to be kind and not hateful and jealous. That's what I want to transmit. Well, that goes for anything really, doesn't it? I mean, this fellow Radek, he was kind, he was a bit ruthless but he was kind. Even if you give sometimes the person a smile. I remember once I was very young, I was in hospital and a rabbi came to see me. And I said to him, 'Don't talk to me, I have visitors. Talk to that lady opposite, she's got no one.' Yeah.

To be kind, yeah.

To be kind, thoughtful, caring. But the world has become cruel. My daughter and her friends, they're all a bit worried what's going to happen in the future.

Yeah. Are you worried? Are you worried?

Well, I am worried. Not for myself, because, you know, our days are numbered. But yes, I am worried, what's going to happen to our children and great-grandchildren? What sort of world are they going to grow up into? They're so innocent now. What's going to change? Aren't you worried?

Yeah, I'm worried, yeah.

And a lot of them are more tense, I'm told, nervous breakdowns, mentally prob – are worried what the – and then, you've got the global warming as well. [01:44:07] We're destroying our world.

I just want to come back. You said you always thought you didn't belong, which is interesting, because you came here as such a young child.

I've always felt that, I didn't know why. Now, I'm beginning to feel a bit more that I belong. But I always felt I don't belong, always. Probably because I thought I was a bit different.

And do you sometimes think what would have happened to your life if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

Well, I – you mean had I stayed in Germany and we'd lived? Or do you mean had we...?

Yeah, let's say without Hitler, if –

Well, I probably would have gone into a profession, dealing maybe with people, married a professional. Wouldn't have married Peter though, would I?

Well, Peter would have stayed in Germany as well [laughs].

But would we have met? [Laughs]

I mean, do you – as you said, also, you don't have memories, or Peter has memories. Do you feel – do you ever have any sort of nostalgia towards Germany? Or what are your feelings? Or what were your feelings on how – has it changed?

Towards the Germans, I feel if I meet someone who is of the Nazi age, which is a few now, I don't want to know. I don't want to talk to them, I don't want to know. If it's the younger generation, I can't blame them for what happened, it's not their fault. [01:46:04] In fact, very often in the talks, they would say they would be ashamed of themselves and couldn't believe how the grandparents had behaved. It was quite common.

Because you gave talks in Germany as well?

Yes. Very much I felt that in Germany, that many were ashamed. And very often, if we say we're going to German – the Jewish Museum, the taxi – and we said we're going there, the taxi drivers afterwards, it's happened many times, would shake our hands. It's really to say they were sorry this has happened and to shake our hands. But when I was in Germany, in Bad Reichenhall with my mother when she was taken ill, I really felt the antisemitism there.

That was in the fifties, sixties, you said?

Yeah.

Yeah.

It changes.

Yeah. And how did your parents feel about Germany?

Well, they were – they had – people had been kind of them. Radek was very kind and there were other people that had helped them. So they were, I thought, reasonably tolerant of it. But if they, again, are of the Nazi age, era, they didn't... I went about a couple of years ago to Jersey, was Jersey or Guernsey? And we went on the hovercraft to Jersey, we met this couple. And I realised, after a short while, that they were very antisemitic. And so, I said, I think –

Marianne, can you just look a bit...? Yeah.

And I felt they were very antisemitic. [01:48:04] And I felt that we were – I said, 'I think we'd better part company.' And then that same journey, I met another person and he was the exact opposite. And he was asking, we were talking about the Holocaust and he was asking questions. And suddenly he turned around, and he said, 'You know too much, you've been involved somehow.' And we said, 'Yes.' And he said that he'd been in Jersey during the war. Now, of course, you know that Hitler conquered, I think it was Jersey, isn't it?

Jersey, yeah.

Yeah.

Occupied, wasn't it?

Occupied.

The Channel Islands.

And we went to this museum and they said – Channel Islands, yes. But Hitler would say he has conquered Germany, or part of Germany. He made out he'd conquered part of Germany. Anyway, we went to this museum and it was closing in fifteen minutes. And so, the owner said, 'I'm sorry, it's closing.' And so, we said, well, we were Holocaust survivors. And as soon as he heard we were Holocaust survivors, 'Oh, you can stay 'till eleven o'clock.' And he showed us all the shrapnel as a boy he's picked up. In fact, he got the MBE. And that was quite surprising, it was a strange visit when we went to Jersey and on the hovercraft, all those different experiences in one day.

You received an MBE for your –

The O – no.

OBE? What did you...?

BEM.

BEM, sorry.

Yeah, and Peter did as well. Although we worked independently of each other, we joined in and did some of it together. [01:50:02] But I spoke about how the Holocaust started, and how it started with indifference. You know, when somebody passed and they saw something, they just ignored it. And how it grew from indifference, and then it was prejudice. I actually was going to show you the book, where there's some children were being thrown out of the class. Indifference grew to prejudice, and prejudice grew to bullying. There's a lot of bullying in schools, and it led to violence and murder. And I'm surprised, we didn't have so much bullying when we were younger, that seems to be rife in every school. And when I was

teaching, when we did have it in Halston, I tried to explain to them how they would feel if they were bullied, to make them into decent people.

So, you were happy to receive this, the...?

I was thrilled, yeah.

The merit.

We went to Buckingham Palace. We saw, well, now it was the King we saw and we went to Buckingham Palace. I was very active. I went to schools two or three – I was different than from now. Went two or three times, certainly twice a week we went to universities.

And Marianne, how do you see the future of Holocaust education now? Do you think that now, you know, fewer first generations are able to talk? Do you think it should be second or third generations carrying on or...?

Well, what I feel, whilst they've still got about, I think forty speakers for the HET, they should use them more because it won't be for long. [01:52:10] And it's nothing like it being first-hand, I feel that. For them, it's just a job. I remember when we went to the charity do last year, and it was at the Roundhouse. And you know, we can't stand so much. But they were so busy with their figures, that I thought they – they raised a lot of money, but they're missing the point. It's right on your doorstep to be kind. And there are a lot of lonely people and a lot of the charities are doing a lot of wonderful work. Taking them on outings, taking them out, visiting them, phoning them to try and make their last few years less lonely. And in the care home where we are now, the reason why people join is because one of them has lost a partner and widowed and they're lonely. Well, I mean I knew that if I weren't doing this work, I would be doing some form of charity work. And I think everyone does charity work. But the – my friend is in charge of... [Phone rings] It's Peter's.

One second, Marianne. Yeah.

Very good cook and she does the cooking for hire. [01:54:00] And people, they should do charities that it's something they're good at, that they like doing. If you're going to give a talk, because that's what you're good at.

Hopefully [both laugh]. Marianne, so you said you're now in a home here in Hendon. So, you've come back to where you grew up.

Yeah, I –

Do you feel at home anywhere?

I feel that my mother is here, because it pleases me that she's here. It makes it easier for me, than if I was somewhere I didn't know the area at all. I call this the holiday home.

Because your mother is nearby?

Yes, I do.

Because you can...?

And I often see my mother, it helps me.

Because your flat, you lived very close by?

It's very nice, it's very nice. Of course, I'd rather be at home. But you know, we've had a wonderful time in the house. And it's a different phase in our lives, so it's a different home. That's all right. And I've got Peter and he's very patient with me.

Yeah. Marianne, is there anything else I haven't asked you, which you'd like to add, which we haven't discussed?

Thank you for listening to us, or listening to me. And I hope – what will happen to this now?

This – you will join the other – you know, we have almost 300 interviews of refugees and survivors.

Well, I think it's wonderful what you're doing.

So, it's quite the collection. But Marianne, I was going to ask you, have you got a message for anyone who might watch this interview in the future?

[01:56:05] Never give up. And try for make sure that it never happens again.

Anything else? One thing I haven't asked actually is about speaking German, but you continued to speak German to your parents or...?

Well, I was not very good at school, I told you I was just average. And I began to – they started speaking German and I understood everything. So, my parents sent me to Germany to a family, like an au pair. And I was, you know, I worked all day long in the evening, but that didn't bother me. But I learned to speak German, it was very good. And I came back speaking German. My German wasn't – it was quite good and we spoke in German. But Peter and I are both – and we're both guilty, are lazy because we haven't been to a school in Germany now, I suppose with lockdown.

So, you learnt German through being an au pair? So, when were you and au pair in Germany?

Oh, many, many – I was –

How old were you?

I would have been about fourteen or fifteen. But the point is I learnt German. And the reason why I learnt it and came back speaking German, I was a bit lazy. And I thought, well, if I can speak German- if I can speak German, then I won't have to learn it because it'll be automatic.

And that's exactly what happened. So, and in fact, I even taught German. You know, low level, it's not very high levels.

But it's interesting that your parents sent you to Germany after the war.

[01:58:00] Well, they – yeah, it is surprising. This family were not German, but their worry was that I'd meet a fellow, of course. But I was too young to be interested. So, I must have been about fourteen.

How did they find this family?

I think they met them in Switzerland when they went every year to Arosa. And they definitely were not Nazis and they remained in contact. And but now, Peter and I don't speak German to each other. And we were only saying yesterday, we're being lazy, you know, we should. And Peter used his German for work, it was very important. Then I would meet the wives and speak German, and it was very important because I spoke German. And in fact, I was – they asked me to go away with them, on holiday. I couldn't because I was working too hard with my language school.

So, in fact, when you give a talk in Germany, is it in German? Do you speak in German?

Well, I did speak in German. But I used to say to the children, 'Well, if I make a mistake, it doesn't matter. You can correct me.' And the questions that they ask, usually, what did my grandparents do? You know, and they were ashamed, I think I've mentioned it to you. They were ashamed that their grandparents had behaved this way. But they were brainwashed by Hitler, they really were. And Hitler made them believe that they're doing the country service by killing the Jews. I'm still wary if I meet a German who's very old. [02:00:00] But I can't blame them for what happened, it's another generation. But there's so much hatred in the world. And what can one – I think not only just belonging to the HET, but I think that everyone can do something. It's not standing up and having a fight. It's being showing you're – that you're – like with that, my daughter and her friend, by being kind, thoughtful and caring.

Yeah, you made the choice to reach out, in a way.

That's right, you make a choice what to do.

Okay, Marianne, thank you so much for this interview.

Well, thank you.

I don't know if there's anything else to add. We are going to now look at your photos and some of the documents you brought.

Okay, thank you for your patience.

Thank you in the meantime.

And thank you, Frank. Where is he? He's behind me.

[Pause]

[02:02:03] *Marianne, please, tell us what you're holding in your hand.*

I'm holding a lovely silver dish that belonged to my grandmother, and she used on a Friday evening for Shabbos. And the Jews were not allowed to have any silver. It was confiscated from them for the war effort. And she's kept two pieces, a very large dish and this dish. And she gave it as a thank you to this man called Radek, who helped bring food to her when my parents had escaped from Germany. There were two dishes, the other one was very large and he kept this dish. And after the war, my mother contacted, found out where he was. It took him a year to find his wife. He formed an acting group, and it was easier to get out from the east to the west, in an acting group. And he'd kept this dish and my parents became friends with him. He had worked in the factory, in the starch factory that belonged to my uncle. Of course, it was confiscated by the Germans.

Marianne, just lift your head a bit. Yeah. Yeah, and how did you get it?

My parents kept in contact with him. And then, when I got engaged for the first time, he came to London to my first wedding. And in his speech, he only spoke in German. [02:04:00] They didn't understand him. He said, 'I want to return this dish to your family, because this is where it belongs, in your family and not my family.' And so, he gave this dish to me. And my I was giving a talk at the HET and explaining to the kids about this dish. And my daughter was helping me, and she saw the two dishes and she said, 'Mum, Mum, what happened to the two dishes?' And I said, 'Well, I've got them both.' And she said, 'Can I have one of them?' So, I said, 'Yes, you can' and I gave her the one dish. And the following Friday evening when we went for dinner, we gave her the dish and I was really happy. And every Friday evening when I go there, there is the dish and the candles get on top of that. And I'm really, really happy that she did this. And I've kept the small dish, because I use mine on a Friday evening. And I'll probably give it either to my grandson or to my other daughter. And every time I use it, I think of Radek and he was a good man. And really, he hid a Jewish woman as well. And he was good to my grandmothers. And that's the story of the dish.

And what was the name of your grandmother? Who owned it? Who had it?

Anna.

Anna, and surname?

Well, it would have been Grabowski.

Your father's mother?

My father's mother. They used to make – can I put this down? They used to make good, big for Friday evenings. The two brothers, the two uncles would take it in turns, one one week, and one the other – next week. [02:06:03] And they always made a big Friday evening. And

my mother was invited at quite an early stage in their marriage- in their courtship because they approved of my mother.

Okay, thank you so much.

It is a nice dish, isn't it?

I'm going to take a photo.

The other one –

Marianne, can you please introduce the person sitting next to you?

The person sitting next to me is my loving husband, Peter W. Summerfield.

Thank you. Peter, you obviously know Marianne's story and you've listened here today.

[Peter] Yes.

Do you have anything to add? Or would you like to say something to Marianne?

[Peter] Well, I think she did very well. And she's always been a person who's very conscientious. Whatever she's done in life, she's done to the best of her ability. And I'm sure that today in the interview, she did her very level best to answer all your questions, and to deal with her life. And she's had a very interesting life. Of course, we've had a lovely fifty years together as well.

Which you've just celebrated recently?

[Peter] Yes. And, of course, I've always loved Marianne and I mean, I liked her from the very first. But to begin with I was a bit too, I think, too adult for her. I'd been in the army and I was at university and therefore, it didn't work when we first met. So then, we parted

company. We each had a trial marriage, which didn't work. As Marianne put it so well, we were both rejects. And fortunately, we were both rejected at roughly the same time, otherwise it wouldn't have worked. But...

So, you met before then? You didn't mention that you met when you were younger.

[Peter] Yes, well, I –

Where did you meet?

[Peter] I met Marianne, I went to – seventeen, we went to a dance together, a Jewish dance. Used to look up in the Jewish Chronicle what was going on. [02:08:01] And that's where we met, at the dance. And we went out a few times. But I did invite Marianne up to Oxford, to May ball at Pembroke College, which was quite something. Of course, most people then ended up the evening and the whole affair in a punt and wake up in a punt. But not with Marianne, I had to get a room. So, it was about three o'clock or four o'clock in the morning, she went to her room, which I had organised. And then, we went out a few more times, but she was studying in Brighton. And I wrote to her, I think she wrote me a polite letter saying thank you, but that's about all.

Ah, ha.

[Peter] And so, then I got married a bit later and Marianne got married. And then we just happened to meet later on. How we met was rather interesting really, because I used to give quite a lot of talks. And I was giving a talk on 'till divorce do us part.' And at that time, I thought my marriage would continue. I did not – I had no idea that I would be divorced one day, otherwise, I would not have chosen that particular subject. And but Marianne came to that together with her first husband. She thought she might get a few ideas. She did get a few ideas and she's put them into practice ever since. Marianne's always very careful about her own financial affairs.

Was that the advice you were giving?

[Peter] She took – yeah, she took all my advice very seriously.

Yes, I did.

[Peter] Yeah. But of course, the way that it happened in the end was that I happened to move into Hendon with my first wife, and we had many good years together, my first wife and I. And all my three children, Mark, Mandy and David, were born in a lot of love at that time. I never thought that our marriage would end. And but David, my youngest was going to Marianne's nursery school. [02:10:00] I was told is the very best one in the whole district. So, I went there and I took my youngest son there. But I was actually taking my two children to their school somewhere else. So, my first wife would take David to the nursery school. And I knew roughly where it was because my son, David, had told me one day when we were in a car, 'That's where my nursery is.' Well, I didn't know exactly where that was. So then when my marriage broke up, I was very unhappy for many months. One day, I was going back into the Hendon area to see some friends, but they were away. And on my way back to my one little flat in Hampstead, I thought, I wonder whether Marianne is also alone like I am. So, on the Hendon flyover, I did a U turn. I returned to Elliot Road where the nursery was, I stopped my car. And then I said, well, I didn't know which house it was that Marianne occupied. So, I stopped the car and I walked along, looking into the windows. And there, fortunately, Marianne had not drawn the curtains and I saw that Marianne was in there. And I rang the bell. And that was very fortunate because Marianne, you asked me in, didn't you?

Yes, I asked you in, gave you a coffee. And I knew I didn't want you to leave. I remember that quite clearly.

[Peter] But it took some time before we became serious. We both had marriages that ended unhappily, so we were very careful. But in the end, it worked and now we've been married for fifty years.

Congratulations, what an achievement.

[Peter] Thank you.

And you also spoke together in the Holocaust Education. So, what was it like to do this together?

[Peter] Well, I began doing it. But Marianne thought, well, if I'm doing it, why shouldn't she also do it? Because she has her own story, especially how her mother managed to get her father out of concentration camp by finding that letter, which was absolutely vital to get him out. [02:12:11] And so, we thought it'd be a good idea. We both went to schools and organisations and universities. And so we went, we actually volunteered in a way. We went to the Holocaust Educational Trust and said, 'Look, we've got these stories, would you like to use them?' And they interviewed us and they thought it would be very helpful. And ever since, we've done quite a lot of talking. And what was very nice and I'm very pleased indeed, is that Marianne in her own right was awarded the British Empire Medal. It wasn't because, you know, she and I were doing it together. She was awarded it in our own light. I was also awarded it. So, it was very nice, because that year, I think there was only one or two other couples where both were awarded that particular honour. So, we've done things together, we thought, well, why not? It was very nice. And we went to schools and organisations and we were always very well received as a couple.

Because you have two different perspectives?

[Peter] That's right. Now here, for example, in – where we are at the moment and the Signature Hendon Hall old age care home, I've already given my talk and I'm sure that Marianne will one day give her talk as well. But this was done separately rather than together, which was usual. We always talked separately, but together.

Yeah. And just to finish now, we're – tomorrow is the 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the November Pogrom. Would you like to say something on that occasion?

[Peter] Yes, I must be one of the few people who was in Berlin on the ninth of November of 1938. [02:14:02] And that was the day of Kristallnacht. I still remember it myself, because

my twin brother, George, and I were going to the kindergarten in Berlin, and it was the only Jewish kindergarten still open. And on the way to that kindergarten, we had to pass the synagogue, which George and I had attended with our parents for a harvest festival. And to our surprise, we saw the synagogue burning. We didn't understand why, but we remember very well it was burning. We also saw that people were milling around. They seemed to be having fun because they were – seemed to be quite happy about it. And my brother and I, in our naivety, we were five-and-a-half years at that time, we thought well, no doubt the fire engines will soon extinguish the flames. But we learned later on from my parents that they weren't there for that purpose. They were there just to ensure that no other adjoining buildings would catch fire. But this was deliberate killing and deliberate burning of synagogues as a result of Kristallnacht. And of course, it was then that Marianne's father was incarcerated in Buchenwald, together with about 30,000 other Jewish men. My father escaped that because the caretaker of our building had hidden him in the cellar. He was the father of two children, with whom we were no longer allowed to play. They were lovely kids. And, in fact, the BBC made a film about that, 'Saved by a Stranger', because it was that caretaker who then at the last moment, helped my brother, myself and my parents to get out by lending us money, which enabled us to switch from going by boat, on a – on one day, and leaving four days earlier, which saved us because the boat never left. [02:16:01] We were able, because of the money we were given, we were able to get tickets to go by train through Europe. And that's how we escaped and came to England, but just in the clothes we were standing in. We lost everything, absolutely. Just had the clothes we're standing in, and then had to rely on charity to begin with. But we were safe. So, we –

Yeah, but for – so for both of you, Kristallnacht, for both families had a –

[Peter] Has a very special meaning.

Your father was arrested?

[Peter] Yeah.

Your father was saved?

[Peter] Was saved, yeah, special meaning. And that's tomorrow. Today's the eighth, tomorrow's the ninth.

Yeah. And I mean, it is interesting that when a time where I think a few weeks ago, there was, you know, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at a synagogue in Berlin.

[Peter] Yes. I mean, this whole wretched thing that is all happening again. Because as we say when we go to schools, it wasn't – the Holocaust did not begin with Auschwitz, it ended with Auschwitz. It started very gradually and with small things, like my brother and I not allowed to go to a park. Or even if we did go to a park, we were only allowed to sit on the yellow bench, we weren't allowed to play with our friends. So, that sort of thing started.

So, do you have another – sorry, Peter. Do you have a message for somebody, for anyone for this particular – on this 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht?

[Peter] Yes, we live in a very dangerous period, when antisemitism is again beginning to raise its ugly head. We've always had antisemitism, but it's got worse. And people just don't understand that we're just like everyone else, just happen to have a different God. But in the end, we're all the same really. It doesn't matter what we pray to, one God or another. And that message really is, why can't we all get on together? **[02:18:01]** Life is short, life is precious. Why can't we all be friends? Why can't we all understand and respect each other? That's my message.

Thank you, Peter. Marianne, anything to add to Peter's message on this Kristallnacht anniversary?

I think the hatred is what's killing everybody and the growth of antisemitism. Why? And I feel that we must all individually try. And as I said to you, to be kind, it doesn't cost anything to be kind. And I wish there would be world peace.

Thank you. Thank you both for sharing your thoughts.

[Peter] Well, thank you for asking us.

Thank you.

[Peter] I hope I didn't go on too long.

No, you didn't.

This is a picture of me, probably about 1940 in my aunt's garden, Aunt Vally [ph], sitting in the backyard, smiling at the world. The garden was surrounded by grass and a little fish pool tank. They look very happy there.

Yes, please.

What it is, sorry?

Yes, please.

This is a very small photograph of me, marked ten, marched [ph] ten. That's not really –

Aged ten.

Aged ten. Do that one again.

Yes, please. Now.

[02:20:00] This is my father's mother, Anna.

In Breslau?

In Breslau.

Thank you. Yes, please.

This is the photograph of, Margarete, the mother of my mother and they were very attached to each other. My mother spent a lot of time with her.

This is a family group photograph of the family- taken in Breslau.

Your parents are in there and your grandmother, your father's mother?

My parents are in there and my father's mother.

Yes, please.

This is a wonderful photograph of our wedding in Belsize Square Synagogue with all five children, Mark, Mandy, David, Jeanette and Suzanne. Mark looks very serious and Jean – and Suzanne and Jeanette are as happy as can be.

And when was this?

This was 1973, the fifth of July.

Thank you.

This also has a garden.

Yes.

This is another picture of the garden in Buckingham Palace and we walked through it. The weather was lousy. But we had a wonderful time and really thoroughly enjoyed it.

A few years ago?

This was just after COVID few years ago. And we had our BEM medals given to us separately. Mine was nicer than Peter's, because it had a lovely pink bow on it.

Thank you.

[Laughs] These are my parents' passports which they needed to get out of Germany. The inside of my father's passport.

[02:22:09] *Yes, please.*

The inside of my mother's passport.

This is the instant dismissal of my father working as a lawyer.

Yes, please.

This is a letter of dismissal from my father from being a lawyer, instant dismissal because he could not prove his Aryan descent.

Thank you. Yes, please. Yes, please, Marianne, what do we see here?

This is a letter that my mother wrote to my father saying he was not badly treated in the Isle of Man.

Written in 1940?

Written in 1940.

Marianne, thank you so much for this interview and for sharing your story and your photographs and documents. Thank you so much.

Thank you for doing it for us. So, what will we receive?

[02:23:27]

[End of transcript]