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The Association of Jewish Refugees  
2 Dollis Park, London N3 1HF  
Tel. 020 8385 3070

[ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk](http://ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk)

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[00:00:00]

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<b>Forename:</b>	Lily
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
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<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Antwerp, Belgium

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	23 January 2023
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<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Clare Csonka
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	1 hour 30 minutes



## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV253  
**NAME:** Lily Borgenicht  
**DATE:** 23 January 2023  
**LOCATION:** London  
**INTERVIEWER:** Clare Csonka

*The interview today is with Lily Borgenicht and today's date is the 23rd of January 2023. We are in London and I am Clare Csonka. Lily, please could you tell me your full name, date of birth and where you were born?*

My full name is Lily Borgenicht. I was born in Antwerp on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 19 – a long time ago, 1929.

*So that would make you ninety-four?*

In two weeks' time.

*Ah, congratulations. You were born in Antwerp. What language were you brought up speaking?*

We had a choice at the time. In Antwerp you could choose between Flemish and French. Nowadays, Flemish is banned and [clears throat] so I chose French. But obviously we all spoke and learnt Flemish as well.

*And your language now of course is English and French.*

My language is English and French, yes.

*Can you tell us something about your family background, your parents?*

Yes. My grand – [clears throat] my grandfather was one of the leaders of Orthodox Jewry in Antwerp. On his grave it's all – it's written. We were a big family and it was – Antwerp was a thriving community. Most of the people were in diamonds. And coming from Po – in Poland there was anti-Semitism, it was difficult to earn money and a lot of the people came from Poland and from the east. And it was a thriving – Antwerp was a thriving community.

**[00:02:10]**

*And did your parents come from Poland?*

No, my parents were already born in Belgium.

*And grandparents?*

Poland, all of them, yeah.

*And in your immediate family were there any brothers and sisters?*

No. I was an only child.

*Okay. So, what can you remember about your life in Antwerp?*

Ah, I was – we went skating always in the park. It was – we were all very happy but we went to non-Jewish school but there was no anti-Semitism at all – [clears throat] because school normally was on Saturdays and they made a special class for people who didn't – for Orthodox people who didn't come on Saturday and that was in a non-Jewish school.

*And friends? Did you have non-Jewish friends?*

I don't at – maybe when I was little but not really because we were a group of Jewish children, not as my – as real friends as I remember.

*What kind of house or home did you have with your parents there?*

A normal, er, a normal home. People didn't have like the ten, er, all these big things. We didn't go to Dubai or whatever it is. We were happy, whatever it – whatever it was. It was a normal – it was a normal life. In the summer we used to go to the seaside in Belgium. We didn't go to these eccentric places. We were happy. I was happy anyway, yeah. But what we did always, we went in the park, roller skating. And I was always sociable. I had some close friends. None of those survived, yeah. [00:04:21]

*So you had this happy childhood when you were young in Antwerp, speaking both languages but mainly French, going to a non-Jewish school. Can you remember what happened when the Germans invaded?*

Well, I have to go back. German – I may get the dates a little bit wrong. The Germans invaded Poland in 1939, in September '39 and that was the time when everybody should have – could have gone anywhere [clears throat]. But people didn't think like this is same like in Iran and the other places. It's nearly a year later I think in 1940 sometimes I was sleeping and all of a sudden, I heard – I thought it was thunder, a terrible, terrible noise. And I remember- this I remember- my father coming into my room and saying, 'I remember 1914, the war. It's war. We have to leave.' And that's when – [clears throat] I don't remember, did we have a choice or whatever it is, but we got the family together, all the family – not all the family, at least my mother's family together. And we decided – I think we decided or was it fate to go to France. We thought we would be safe there. But we still managed to get some money from the bank and we went to the station and it – the refugees and a – we went into the train to France and we travelled eight days and eight nights. [00:06:14] And this I think I remember, the Red Cross giving us something to drink, to eat on the way. And we landed in a place called Luchon. I think it's in the south-west. It's the south-west in France. France is a beautiful – it's a beautiful country. But from – at the age of ten, from one second to the other my – the background, all life, everything, changed. And we arrived there. I remember we –

[clears throat] the whole family were there. We went – yeah. But when we arrived they – obviously where would they put us to sleep. They put us in a *caserne* [barracks] on the floor. And we were with my grandparents. And [clears throat] my mother went to the *gendarme*, the *chef of the gendarmes*. [head of the police force] “My parents are old, they cannot sleep on the floor”, so they allowed my grandparents to go to hotel and they – the – with a little child that I was, to be with them.

*So that was you and your grandparents?*

And my grandparent and –

*And not your parents? They –*

No, no, no, no. They were with everybody else in the *casernes*.

*So that's about –*

The whole train, the whole whoever – whoever it was. And that became a great friendship between the *chef de gendarmerie* and my mother and us. So children, you know, we had adopted – I don't remember being unhappy. [00:08:01] We went to school, the village school, whatever – whatever it was. We went to school there. And I – we were staying – we were living – it was a butcher and there was a horse – a carriage and a donkey. And so, when I didn't go to school, I was on that – I went to the slaughterhouse. I remember enjoying being on that carriage [laughs].

*And this was in 1940?*

194 – yeah, in 1940.

*And you were ten?*

I was, yeah.

*So, you have good memories of that time?*

We were refu – we were refugees but I was with my parents, so it's not like the Kindertransport or whatever. It is – I – and my nature as well was a happy nature. [Clears throat] And then [sighs] the – France – was it before – France capitulated later.

*That would have been around then. But in 1940 this – you went [overtalking 00:09:18].*

Yeah, we were there for a year – from 1941.

*Yes, and it was in the free part of France?*

At the time, yes, until – yeah. And then France – France capitulated and the Vichy leadership took over. And then they told us, look, it's cold here in Luchon, whatever it is, you'd be better off if – I don't know if you heard of it. **[00:10:00]** It was a very French, very famous-Rivesaltes.

*Rivesaltes, yes, which in the south, not far from Spain.*

Yeah. Everybody should be at the station, you'll be better off, whatever it is. So obviously no one ever came. So, one day the *chef de gendarmerie* who was very friendly with us, he came and he said, 'Look, tomorrow they will come and get everybody from their own house.'

*This was to go – I just want to go back a little bit.*

To Rivesaltes, yeah.

*But are you saying that it wasn't true, that they weren't really going to go to Rivesaltes?*

No, the *chef de gendarmerie* said that they were going to collect everybody but he said, 'You, they will not touch.' Did we know anything? And so, my mother asked, she said, 'What about

my brother?’ What about my ‘this’ or what about ‘this’? He said, ‘No, we can only not come to you.’ Did we know that anything would be serious or whatever, it is. And the next day when we came, when we opened the door, everybody was taken, apart of us.

*To the station?*

Yeah, was sent to Rivesaltes, sent first to Rivesaltes.

*[Inaudible] went to Rivesaltes?*

And then to Drancy. None of – none apart of us, none of my mother’s family who were there ever survived because whoever was in 1940 from Rivesaltes they were sent to Drancy, the famous Drancy, and from Drancy, as you know, from France, everybody went to –

*Yeah, there was a transit camp.*

To Auschwitz. And whoever went to Auschwitz in 1940 did not survive.

*So, you were very lucky, to put it mildly, that you didn't actually go to Rivesaltes.*

Yeah, I mean that – that my mother was so friendly with these – yeah, that –

*Yeah. So had you gone to Rivesaltes, which as you said is an attractive place with a nice climate –*

No, that's what they said, yeah. It wasn't.

*But in fact –*

It was a camp, yeah. [00:12:16]



*You would have then, had you done that, you would have then been transported to a transit camp in Paris, like Drancy, which was – the next stop really would have been Auschwitz.*

Exactly.

*But you were lucky, if I have understood correctly, because your mother had a good relationship with the chief of police, the gendarme, and he somehow managed for you not to get on that train?*

Yeah, exactly what – it's exactly what you say. Anyway, we went, yeah. And then France was divided between Occupied France and Free – *France Libre*. And Nice was not occup – was *France Libre*. So, from everywhere the thousands of people came to Nice because it was free, it was not occupied by the Germans. And then Italy, Italy declared war, whatever it is. Anyway, they occupied Nice. But we Jew – the – Mussolini said 'In my reign, nobody will wear this...'

*The armband?*

The armband.

*With the Star of David?*

Yeah, the *carabinieri* [Italian police]. Anyway, but then Italy capitulated.

*So, this would have been, what, 1942?*

'41 I think. One. [00:14:02]

*'Cos you would have been in Luchon for about a year.*

Yeah, yeah.

*And then you had this lucky escape and then you were taken? Do you remember how you actually went from Luchon to Nice?*

By train.

*And do you know –*

It wasn't a problem.

*But do you know who might have organised that for you?*

No, we took a train. We went to the station, we took a train. It wasn't a problem to travel at the time.

*But do you have any memory of how you knew that Nice was the place to go to?*

Like everybody else- like everybody else knew. You know, I still was – I was a child, I did – I went – I was with my parents. And this I remember, it was – we arrived in the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 194 –

*1942 maybe?*

In Nice. And I rem – [clears throat] as a child I remember there was just one wealthy family in Antwerp. The parents went away in Nice in the winter. And as a child I was walking in the street, I said, now, I'm – what did I know. 'Now I'm like all the millionaires. I'm in Nice.' But obviously people would not understand that today. Money was very scarce. And I remember going in the – through the Rue de France, one of the main – and I saw the doll. Today – it wasn't a computer, little children – bigger children, we were playing with doll. And I looked at the doll and I said, 'ah'. I said, 'If I ask my parents to buy the doll, they will buy the doll.' But if they buy it, as a child – if they buy the doll we won't have enough to eat. [00:16:01] I must tell you that at the time, ten years or what – eleven years, I was very

childish. Today I think youngsters are a lot more – mature – and every day I pass in that street, this I remember. And every day I look.

*And you looked longingly at this doll.*

I looked at this doll, at this doll.

*But you couldn't have it.*

And this is just a *parenthèse*- when my daughter was two years or three years old, I went to Harrods and I bought a doll. You've never seen anything like it. A doll that could walk, that could talk, [laughs] all that – a doll that you don't see, and I gave it to her. And I remember her saying, 'Mummy, thank you very much but I don't want a doll. I want an aeroplane like my brother.' Back went the doll, that's a little story.

*But you yourself when you were in Nice, but you were a child –*

Yeah, but obviously I went – yeah, I changed again, changed friends, changed school. I went–

*Where were you living when you were in Nice? With your parents and grandparents? You were all together still?*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, we were all together.

*Do you – what do you remember about where you were actually living to begin with, in Nice?*

We rented a flat I think, yeah. We rented a flat. And then again changed again, changed school. It wasn't easy. I went to the *lycée*, the main–

*Secondary school?*

Yeah, the main *lycée*. Again, it wasn't easy because the standard was much higher than what I was used – but I managed.

*What age would you have been by then, can you remember, when you went to the lycée?  
Maybe twelve?*

Eleven or twelve.

*Eleven, twelve, something like that?*

Yeah, something like that.

*But you spoke French, which helped?*

Yeah, but I improved my French because the French from Belgium was nothing like the French in – like the French in France. [00:18:07] [Clears throat] So when the Italian capitulated, that's when we were occupied by – the Germans came.

*What were the Italians like? When the Italians occupied and you were refugees of course.*

No, they – we were living a normal life. The *carabinieri*, they – there was no anti-Jewish apart that they put the *commissaire* in Jewish shops and things but it didn't affect me. I went to school, everything normal. But when they capitulated, that's when the Germans occupied the whole of France. And there was these –

*That's 1943?*

These thousands of people like us who went into hiding.

*Can you remember when the Germans did come in –*

Yeah, as soon as – as soon as the –

*Come into Nice?*

As the Italians capitulated, the Germans took – yeah, the Germans took over.

*And can you describe some of your feelings and emotions at the time when the Italians went and the Germans came in?*

We went into hiding. We had to change sometimes from one place to the other. But I was with my parents and I was a child and they took over the responsibility. And whatever it is, did we ever imagine what would happen or something like- [clears throat].

*Can you remember being frightened?*

Yeah, it's a fear sometimes somebody knocked at the door, we thought they come to arrest – to arrest you, but nothing. [00:20:03] [Clears throat] Until – I was already – yeah. Until the age of fifteen when I was asked by – the Resistance was very active in – very, very active in Nice. And the Jewish Resistance was very close to the Resistance. I was fifteen and I was asked – in France up to the age of fourteen you did not have *identité* papers.

*Identity papers.*

It's not like in England. Everybody has *identité* cards and up to the age of fourteen or fifteen you didn't – fourteen, you didn't need *identité*. I was fifteen but could say I was fourteen and I was asked would I bring- the Resistance knew a lot how many people we're hiding, what would I bring *carte d'alimentation* [ration book] or –

*Some food?*

Thing or when they were denounced or whatever, it is, would I help – basically would I help the Resistance.

*And you could do – if I can get this straight. You could do that because you could say that you were only fourteen?*

Yeah.

*Which meant that you didn't have to carry papers, so if you were stopped by Germans [overtalking 00:21:44] then you wouldn't have to show anything?*

Yeah, but I want to tell you about the Germans, what people don't know, that the Germans didn't have a clue who was Jewish, especially in the south of France, the – it's Mediterranean, the non-Jews, everybody looked – a lot of the people looked Jewish. They didn't have a clue. [00:22:07] And the French did all the jobs for – in the whole of France- did all the jobs for them. And I was told if I'm stopped, would I be able not to give in who are the other people. It was a big risk and I must say, my parents were very good, they allowed it. And that's what I did. Do you know how many times I was – had papers on me? How lucky I was? How many times I was – they used to close the roads, the French, yes, and ask for papers to see if they could find any Jews or whatever it was. Anyway, I survived that.

*And can you – was this the Gestapo mainly who were there in Nice at the time?*

The – yeah, the Gestapo, the – yeah. But the Gestapo were in that very, very, very famous Hotel Excelsior, which was a – when the people were arrested, whatever, the French arrested them and gave them over to the – the French gave them over to the German. And from there you stayed a week or two weeks Drancy, and from Drancy to Auschwitz and everybody knows what happens.

*So what you're saying is that when people were denounced, Jews, denounced by French people, they would be sent to the Excelsior Hotel which you –*

Yeah, I must –

*In Nice, which is a luxury hotel, or it certainly was, but that was obviously a very bad thing [overtalking 00:23:45] because then they would –*

They were occupied – no, their quarters, the German quarters, the Gestapo quarters were there.

*Right. So that was like a headquarters for the Gestapo in Nice?*

Yeah, yeah. It's very – it's very famous and unfortunately where thousands of Jews – because at the time when it was so unbelievable, everybody went there and 6000 people from Nice were deported and there is a monument opposite that Hotel Excelsior, with the names of all the people, yeah, who – yeah, who –

*Who were deported? [00:24:25]*

Who were –

*To Drancy or somewhere like that and then –*

Who were deported.

*On to the death camps.*

The fir – yeah. The – if you denounced – if the French denounced something they got a certain amount of money, so some of those French when they knew where people who were hiding, they did. And as well when you were arrested and if you gave five people – the name of five people, they let you out. But obviously only in – they arrested you later. But it's in certain circumstances like –

*Sorry, just to go over that again, just to be absolutely clear, who – the five people, just go over that and explain a bit about if you denounced five people?*

Yeah, they let – you were free.

*And you, when you say you, who exactly would be free?*

The people who were arrested, the people who gave the name.

*Jews?*

Jewish, yeah, yeah.

*Okay. So –*

But you know in circumstances, you never know how people react, people you think they know or whatever.

*So really what you're saying, and this must have been horrendous really, is that if you were arrested as a Jew because you'd been denounced by somebody probably, if you gave away the names of five other Jews, you would be released? [00:26:05]*

Yeah, but only temporary. But it's amazing how people react in certain circumstances. The first of – we were hidden with the whole Jewish, we were together with eleven people, the –

*Where? Where were you hidden?*

Hidden, yeah, together.

*But exactly where? Do you remember where you were hidden?*

It was a villa somewhere outside- our headquarters. Anyway, we were denounced. The 1<sup>st</sup> of – this, the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1944 we were arrested.

*And do you know who would have informed on you?*



No, no, no, no, no, no. But arrested by the French because we were always talking the French. First of all they took us to the French headquarters of the police and in there, there was *menorahs* and all – at the time silver was something very costly. And they said to us, ‘You see, we wanted you to feel at home, so you've got all the *menorahs*,’ all the things there is, they'd been stealing. And they gave us over to the German in the Hotel Ex – in the Hotel, er –

*Excelsior?*

Excelsior, which we were supposed to be there for a little – no, a week or two weeks, sent to Drancy, from Drancy to Auschwitz. Auschwitz, it was like that, if there was room you were in the camps, if there was no room you went straight to the- But we didn't know, we didn't know. As it happens, as it happens, where my grandparents, where my grandparents lived, that was before even the – was it a man who was arrested, his wife and child were there. [00:28:08] How he escaped the camps from Poland and how he came to Nice, that was a miracle. And he told us, he said, ‘They are building-’ That's what I remember. ‘They are building crematoriums.’ We did – he said it, we didn't believe it. And when a car was passing by, he was shivering, you know, he was trembling and we say, ‘You see, he's a madman.’ It's funny because certain things we heard but nobody – why? Today when you look back, nobody believed anything. Anyway, the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1944 we were arrested but the Hotel Excelsior was the middle of the – the middle of the town. And one day, this – the Resistance sabotaged the railway so that the German couldn't escape, whatever it was, the railway, so we were there. We didn't know what happened but there was fire – they burnt, a bonfire and whatever, the noise, whatever it was, and this I really remember, maybe four, five o'clock in the morning, the *Obergefreite*, the chief of the Gestapo, came down – they didn't ill-treat them – ill-treat us there, you know – said – totally drunk. And he said, ‘If you would know what happens to us, you'll all come and you will embrace me. You are free.’

*This was – so you were – you'd been arrested, you didn't know –*

Because the Americans were coming.

*Okay. So just to backtrack a little bit. You had been arrested, with your parents at –*

Not – they did not take – they did – with all this they did not take the old people, they did not arrest my –

*Okay. So, you'd been arrested with another – a group of Jews? [00:30:14]*

No, it was all – we were still hidden in the Resistance, we were together, eleven people. And when they arrested us, we were very lucky because they were all compromising papers- they managed to burn, to hide, otherwise they would have – I don't know what they would have done.

*But you were still arrested.*

We were arrested.

*And you went to –*

In the – to the hotel, yeah. The French first who gave us over to the Hotel Excelsior. So, we are now in the Hotel Excelsior.

*Right. And this is in 1944?*

Four, yeah.

*And this is the Gestapo headquarters in Nice, which is the Hotel Excelsior.*

I don't know headquarters but that's where all the Jews and everybody was –

*And the Gestapo was there as well.*

Were there, the Gestapo. So –

*And you went there-*

Yeah.

*And then what exactly happened after that, once you were there? 'Cos you must have been terrified.*

Yeah. We were not ill-treated. So, what I remember is four o'clock in the morning the chief of the – *Obergefreite*- whatever it was, came in military uniform because as a Gestapo they were criminals of war, as a soldiers they were prisoners. He was totally drunk and he said, 'If you would know what- your fate is, you'll all come and kiss me, you're free.' And they opened the door. And instead of going to Drancy we were freed.

*Because – this was because of the timing.*

The timing, yeah, yeah.

*Because this was the time –*

There was already – after the *département*

*The Liberation.*

The *département*, the *département*. [00:32:00] We were actually liberated by the Americans. But when we were out, everybody knew that us, we were not given – we were not denounced people. But people avoided us because you never know who did what. Anyway, that was the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, yeah.

*In 1944?*

Yeah, when we were liberated.

*You were allowed – you were set free.*

Yeah, but – yeah. When we were liberated. But fight – there were street fights. You know what? You get so used to, you should – this – you should – just to tell you something else. When we were – the Resistance, we were told, one of – we are – the chief of our Jewish fellows that in a kiosk where they used to sell the paper, newspaper, there was this fellow who denounced people if – because he got money for that. If he put – if he gave the change on one side it mean that he was Jewish and the other side, he wasn't Jewish. So, the next day he didn't exist anymore. One of our people shot him. You know, you get used to shooting and things like that. Anyway, so we were liberated but there were street fights going on. And it's the – I think about – I may get the dates wrong – about the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, the Americans came. And I remember the young – in a tank, the young Général de Gaulle coming with an – in a tank with an American dark –

*A soldier?*

-skinned person in there. [00:34:26] And this give, distributing at the time, chewing gum [laughs]. But then it still – it's difficult to give over the emotions what it meant that after all this hiding and all these years, to see all of a sudden we were liberated. And it was French against French. It was very difficult because there was the *collaborateur* and the Resistance. But people went in the street, it's – I can't tell you the emotions and things, everybody was dancing and there are moments you can't – it's impossible to de – impossible to –

*Describe?*

Impossible to –

*But can you – can you recall for us, can you describe some of the feelings that you had?  
Because you must have been about fourteen.*

Yeah, the same. But I don't think – I don't think unless you lived there, it's not something – that's why I never thought about it. It's something that you cannot – you cannot describe. But – so we were liberated by the Americans. And there were a lot of Jewish soldiers there. The funny – funny? Not funny. Some of those – I was young and I was fifteen, but the girls of eighteen, nineteen, they dated and some of them got engaged to get married. But once the Americans went home, they forgot about it [laughs]. [00:36:04] A lot of those, they forgot about. And it was the *Palais de la Méditerranée* [Hyatt Regency Nice Palais de la Méditerranée, a luxury casino hotel complex on the Promenade des anglais in Nice] was a big thing. There was the first *Yom Kippur* where the American organised, the soldiers organised the service.

*Where did you – just to go back a little bit. After you were set free by this drunk Gestapo man–*

Yeah, we went –

*From the Hotel Excelsior, do you remember where you went? You had to go somewhere.*

Yeah, we went back. We went back where we lived. But these people, the owners thought that we would never come back. They – everything was – we had nothing to eat, all the – because of a street fight, everybody was shut. And me as a child, I thought we was better at the Gestapo, at least they gave us something to eat. But then when the liberation came, my friends, they were the ones with the guns, and only for the people who arrested us a few weeks before, they were with the guns. And people were screaming, “*PPF aux poteaux!*” [PPF- hang them on the gallows] PPF [Parti Populaire Français - French Popular Party], that was the *collaborateurs*, yeah, in these – on the poster, they would be hanged. I mean the emotions, the things. And on the contrary, we were, you know, young and whatever it was, yeah.

*So you said that your friends had guns. These were –*

No, no. Yeah. No, the – from the Resistance, later on, after the – when we were – when the – that's when the Americans came.

*So these were like colleagues really in – 'cos you were in the Resistance yourself. [00:38:02]*

You see, they all famous afterwards, they were all – me, I was a kid [laughs]. They forgot about me – no, it's nothing.

*But you were part of this?*

Yeah, I was the one who went with the false papers because some people went out saying the French reprinted very well false papers and as well, we distributed *carte d'alimentation* because without it, our food –

*So, what exactly is a carte d'alimentation?*

No, it was – without tickets you couldn't get any food.

*Yeah, that's right. So this was a ticket for food? A voucher for food?*

Vouchers for food. And as well, we knew from spies that people were denounced. I was the *courier*.

*You were the what?*

The –

*The courier?*

The person who was out to talk to –

*Just say that again, your French – you said it in French. What was it?*

*Courier.* And sometimes we knew that certain people would be denounced. We had the spies and everything. I remember one day I knew that these people were going to be – were denounced so I went there and I said – me, a little kid – I said to the owners, ‘You’re hiding some people.’ ‘No, no, no.’ I said, ‘Yes. I’m telling you. You tell these people, otherwise, something will happen to you.’ And they were – I can’t even describe. Special time, special whatever it was. Anyway, that’s when, yeah, that’s when we were –

*So, you took many risks? [00:40:03]*

A lot of risks. You know, at home, I must say that my parents were very good, when I was five minutes late, they thought, yeah. And I did risk my life but you know, I should have been more fright – it’s things I had to do. Fear, when I think of it, I can’t understand when I did – that I wasn’t – no fear. I don’t understand. It’s difficult to explain but whoever was in the Resistance. Anyway, after the –

*So just- so yes, so if I’ve understood, you were like a messenger really?*

Yeah.

*You were taking messages to people to warn them that they were about to be denounced.*

Yeah.

*And also you were –*

Whatever was – I was part of the Resistance, whatever I had – I was circulating freely sort of. Imagine if they would – and I had papers on me or something like this. But it’s nothing to do with the Germans. It’s all the French who did all the – and that’s what people don’t know. It’s in the whole of France, the French did the jobs for the Germans, because the Germans, how would – they didn’t know any – they didn’t know anything.

*So when you had to show your papers if you were doing an errand, you were a messenger, and you were stopped by police, these were French?*

Only French. They used to close the street and – to find out if there are any Jews or whatever, whatever it is, and when they came and they asked me – can you imagine, a kid, I had the papers on me, they would only doubt or look or whatever it was. But it was only the French. [00:42:04] Anyway, I managed to get back my studies.

*This was in Nice? You stayed?*

In Nice, yeah. I mean for a long time obviously I was hidden and I didn't go to school. But I was – I worked. I worked for twenty-four hours.

*At your studies?*

At my studies, yeah. And I managed, yeah, to take the *Baccalauréat*, which is a very difficult–

*The Baccalauréat at the age of sixteen?*

In France, with at the time we had to have all the subjects. But one subject, a little one, was on a Sat – nothing, because it was *coefficient*, French is it – it's important maths. It was a little thing which was on the Shabbat and being Orthodox, I couldn't do it. But I had enough points without this to pass it. But to tell you the anti-Semitism but a nought cancels everything. And since I didn't come for the exam, they didn't – he did not correct, did not correct my – they did not correct my papers. My father went to Aix-en-Provence and said – well, but if you didn't pass in June there was another *session* in September. So, my father went to Aix-en-Provence because that was the –

*The centre for –*



Yeah, the thing. And he said to the *doyen* [den], whatever it was, he said, 'Look, I understand.' Yeah, in France the different district, different days and different subjects, he said, 'okay, this time we didn't correct the paper. We couldn't do it.' 'Please.' He said, 'for the next *session* would you – because they decided to the date, would you please see that you don't do any subjects on Saturday.' [00:44:09] And what he answered my father, he said, 'and if the Japanese don't write on Monday and the – this on Tuesday. 'Anti-Semitism, and especially, made a subject on Saturday.

*So he was very unsympathetic.*

On Saturdays.

*He made it –*

So I went, yeah. So, I went to Montpellier. Nice was a small university town. My father, with my father, we went to Montpellier. I had to travel all these kilometres with a strange – in a *amphithéâtre* in a strange thing.

*And how old were you then?*

Pardon?

*How old were you at that time?*

I wasn't that old.

*This is for the Baccalauréat?*

The – yeah, the – anyway, I got it. But you see, it just shows you the anti – but still, with all this, I don't know how but I was still very attached to all the culture and still and my friends and they are something, I don't know.

*Oh, yes, just to go back a little bit, after the liberation and you were still in Nice with your parents?*

Yeah.

*And your grandparents?*

Yes.

*You'd all survived. And you went to school.*

Yeah.

*And you worked hard, as you said. And then –*

Yeah, I jumped classes because I –

*But can you remember apart from school, obviously important, what was your daily life like after the liberation? When during the war you –*

Yeah, very, very, very, very, very, very good, yeah. Friends and things, whatever, yeah.

*Because you'd been so hungry during the war, with no particular luxuries obviously, or comforts and your life must have changed a great deal. [00:46:02]*

Yes, you know, I was still – it's still so many, many, many, many, many years ago, the memory comes back but certain things maybe I forgot or –

*Do you remember where you were living after the liberation?*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

*Was it a flat, an apartment?*

Yeah, but we – yeah, people went back. Ah, yeah, so what it was, when we were dancing and everything like this, we thought now everybody's going to come back. We didn't have an idea. We were waiting for people to come back. We didn't – at that time still we did not have an idea what really happened in Auschwitz, what happened during the war. A few people came, a few – oh, yeah, there was as well near Nice there was orphans that survived. And they were from Aliyat Hano'ar, from the Youth- they were sent to Israel. But before then they wanted to educate, they wanted to help them, to prepare them to – and they were supported, there was plenty of money for them from America, from the JOINT. And they asked some students if you could come and talk to these orphans and three of us, we went. We went. So, when we first went, we tried to explain who we were but they didn't trust, you know, they were so frightened. They didn't trust, they didn't trust us. It took a while until they trusted us. There was everything there, the Americans – but what they did, they went out at night and they were stealing bread and they were still putting under the pillow. You know, you can't heal these things. [00:48:00]

*So things were still difficult.*

Things were – yeah.

*And what you were saying is, that of many people who were taken away from Luchon and from Nice and you thought they might come back?*

No, that's – we thought they come back. It took us – we knew very quickly that no – what happened. It's funny how we – they were very clever, how we ignored everything. If we would have known, they couldn't arrest us so quickly or whatever. We would have – people would have defended themselves in a different way. It wasn't good. It was – or maybe I was a child and I didn't realise how terrible the parents felt when we were arrested. This, I really wouldn't know how to –

*But many people did not come back.*

Nobody came back.

*Hardly anyone?*

Who came back? There's 6000 – there is six thou – a list of 6000 opposite this hotel of the 6000 people who did not come back.

*So you were amazingly lucky.*

Yeah. Always. Always. That was anti-Semitism, yeah. Yeah, so later, a few – later a few people came back but you – they were not human beings, they were like logs [ph], you know. And people who were – very bad. They looked so bad that we did not – I am not talking about myself – not behave how we should do. They were so terr – the ones, you know what they looked like, these people who came, yeah, if you –

*So these came back from the camps?*

But I what I lived through, so yeah, it's what I lived through, so in my life it's something, isn't it? [00:50:00]

*It certainly is. So, these poor people, but they survived, they came back, but just a few –*

A few I think, yeah.

*A few orphans came back from [overtalking 00:50:10].*

No, no, the orphans, that was in the [overtalking 00:50:12] – a special – later on, yeah, later on they trusted us.

*Okay. These were a few – okay. But a few people did come back. But they looked terrible. They were –*

No, the kids were – yeah. [00:50:23] But what I want to say, the kids, they had everything. But it shows you, they still went out at night to steal bread and to put it under – you can't heal things like this. And when you look today at Israel, at – yeah, then for me the declaration, the 1948 declaration of the state of –

*Of Israel.*

Of Israel, what it meant to me doesn't mean to a lot of people. I remember Ben-Gurion, when he declared the state of Israel, look, you can say that you're the Queen of Sheba, and we were trembling. And Asher was the first one to run election then – [phone rings] it's all right. The Americans.

*Okay. Let's go – so yes, so you –*

Do you know, so many things, I mean it's ninety-four years.

*Oh, yes, I mean it's amazing, your memory –*

So you can imagine, yeah.

*Is fantastic. Just to go back on something. You were living in Nice and you were doing your studies and eventually you did get your Baccalauréat.*

Yeah.

*It had been difficult because there were exams on the Sabbath which you couldn't take, there were certain subjects that you couldn't take.*

Just one, little yeah.

*Just one, which obviously meant you didn't get the certificate. But eventually you did. You passed your baccalauréat.*

Because – but I had to travel all these kilometres in a strange place, huge – because Montpellier is one of the top universities in –

*But things were difficult, were made difficult for you because you were Jewish. [00:52:12]*

Because I was – yeah.

*Because you didn't want to do anything on Shabbat.*

But you know, even when I went to school – oh, yeah. Difficulties, you see. I was the only one, I had to go Saturday to school because it was important but I didn't write. And I was the only one. It's difficult for a child. I don't know how I did it, not to write on Saturday. And I remember –

*But you had to. Did you –*

Every – yeah.

*Did you find that with some of the people you were at school with in Nice after the war, that there was some anti-Semitism there?*

No, I was only to school, there was hardly any Jewish person there. No, I had close – at that time- I had close friends who were not Jewish.

*And throughout your life or things that you've been telling us about, there were non-Jews who were good to you when you were at – in the Pyrenees, in Luchon, the gendarme, he seemed to have been quite kind to you, at –*

But it was just us, a friendship, yeah.

*Yes. And –*

But I mean they did what they – they were from the- they, that's what they ordered, they were ordered from the top to get these people. I don't think that they knew what was happening.

*No. And you lived with a butcher I think you said, for a while.*

Yeah.

*A butcher [laughs] and –*

I went to the slaughterhouse. I did, yeah. And I remember some – I went to the slaughterhouse and you get used to it. I saw how they slaughtered the animals. You get – it's amazing how you get used to things. [00:54:02]

*And so you didn't come across very much anti-Semitism then, after the war when you were at school, apart from the difficulties over working on Shabbat.*

Yeah.

*And so you got your Baccalauréat and as you said, it's a very – it was a very difficult exam because there were so many subjects.*

You had to do two, the *bachot* [old colloquial term for baccalauréat]. It's a complicated system.

*Yeah, two stages. And then –*

Actually, I went to same school as Simone Veil, yeah.

*Who was a great philosopher.*

She was, yeah. She was in the [inaudible] class.

*And then after – after you got the Baccalauréat, what did you do then?*

That's a long story [laughs]. I had my friends and I was going to do in Marseille, pharmacy. But unfortunately, my friend got pregnant and my parents said, 'You're not going to Marseille.' They think the same thing would happen to me. And there was very little choice in Nice University, so I took a language, I took – for my Baccalauréat I took German because I always spoke German and I did a degree in English. But at the time it wasn't the language. I think I knew more about the literature and things in English, that the English people did- because believe it or not- if you took a degree in English the lectures were in French. It was a different thing. People didn't travel.

*And after that, after you did your degree? Did you then work in France?*

I work, yeah. I worked. I did- I created- lots of things but in the end, I worked for Associated Press in Paris.

*What, as a journalist? [00:56:00]*

No. I don't know how to take a photo [laughs] but I was doing the – I went over the – when I think of it, I did the commentaries about the – they gave me the photos and a few things and I had – the Fren – in French- not in English- I had to write the commentaries. I was quite good at it because when I got married here, they wanted to train me properly. I was good at – I was good at what I was doing. But my husband wouldn't hear that I should work. And I took the easiest – the easy solution, I did always charities and things but not in my profession, yeah.

*So what brought you to this country?*

That's too long story.



*Give us a shortened version of what brought you here.*

I was very orthodox. I was very – *frum* – and actually I had a boyfriend but I didn't do anything wrong, not like today when you live together. I was going out with one of the Rothschild, very important people in France but he was not just not religious, but totally different. Anyway, he wasn't – I didn't think he was for me and I wanted to be able to think, so I came to England. And my friend's, my best friend, her husband was consul of Israel in London and at the time you were not allowed to work, only as an au pair and I went to – as an au pair, believe or not. But she knew who I was because my friend, I mean – anyway, I wasn't a maid to –

*So you went to a friend? You were au pair –*

No, no, au pair, no, to some import – to important – in Kenwood to very important –

*And how old were you, then? [00:58:18] Roughly [laughs].*

After my degree – twenty –

*Maybe twenty-something?*

Whatever it was.

*You were in your twenties.*

Yeah, and I was a youth leader, so these people were very lucky to have me. But the funny part, they were very well known- whatever it was. And when- sometimes you don't know people, when it came the first Friday night, all of a sudden, you know, they knew who I was. I mean I wasn't a maid or anything. I look at the table and there's no chair for me. They put me with the maid. It is well-known, I couldn't – I – the woman, I couldn't – and she was known – I couldn't believe it. So I said to her, do you mind if I go to – I wasn't going to sit on Friday night. Yeah, you can come in for *kiddush*. I wasn't going to sit with that maid on

Friday night. It was winter. And I said to my friend – to her, ‘Do you mind if I go to my friend?’ So, she looked at me and she said, ‘No. But you can’t go alone.’ She gave me that enormous dog and I walked from Kenwood to the station where my friend – she never forgot this, at ten o'clock, somebody knocks at the door, Lily with a big dog [laughs].

*So you had a dog companion. And so, you were working [overtalking 00:59:47].*

I met – then how I met my husband and that's how I got married, yeah.

*Yeah, how did you meet? How did you meet your husband?*

Through friends.

*And what was he doing? [01:00:00]*

What was he doing? He was in – he had a very good – yeah, he was in textile, he was very – he was a success – a very successful man. I didn't go for the money but I would never go on with somebody who wasn't successful for the principle, it wasn't just the money. He liked me, yeah. Anyway –

*I'd like to go back to something about France. You obviously had a very mixed experience when you were in France.*

Yeah.

*You were a refugee.*

Yeah, but you know, I must tell you, I still – in the summer I still go to France.

*Yeah, this is what I was going to get to. You have very mixed feelings about France. You were a refugee, you saw some terrible things but you saw some kindness as well. But you, as you*

*mentioned yourself, you know what the French did, the amount of collaboration that there was. I wondered how –*

Yeah, but there was the Resistance as well, yeah.

*Yes, exactly. I just wonder how you feel about France now and whether you visit France?*

I go in the summer. It's not a question of anti-Semitism or not. I don't think about it. But sometimes they admire what Israel did. I go to La Baule, not very political.

*So you go on holiday?*

On holiday, yeah. I used to – I've been with – there for sixty years. I took my kids. They all speak French.

*I should ask you about your children. How many children do you have?*

Three. But I have twenty great-grandchildren.

*Oh, twenty.*

Yeah, great-grandchildren.

*My goodness.*

But you see, with my grandchildren I'm – I always took care, you know? Like people, they [inaudible]. I really took, you know, I was the first one when I went to La Baule, I took them all together and I got – you will see in the kitchen, 'where cousins became best friends'.

**[01:02:19]**

*So you have a very big family.*

Now, yeah, with an only child, yeah. But there were a lot of only children at the time. But it's

–

*Is there anything we talked about, well, you've talked about a lot, but I'm just wondering whether there's anything that you would like to add that you think we haven't touched on, which we should have talked about?*

Yeah, maybe tomorrow I'll remember.

*But for the now, do you think that most things –*

Yeah, but as I said, I went to bed last night, I didn't sleep. All of a sudden, I remembered things I thought I'd forgotten about a long time. I tried to remember the emotions, the – the Ameri – when I saw that they are in tank, the young Général de Gaulle, everyone went – because the peace was – the war only ended one year later because the Germans up to the very – but the satisfaction, what I survived, Nuremburg, the court, the thing what I – the happiness, the satisfaction that I had in my life to see all these people.

*And you remember very vividly being there in Nice and seeing the young General de Gaulle.*

Yeah, this I – this, yeah –

*Driving –*

There's no –

*With the Americans.*

Not me. Even people who have got Alzheimer would remember that. [01:04:05]

*Yeah. On a tank, driving through the streets –*

Through – and the black fellow giving chewing gum, the cheers, the dancing and the – it's difficult. It's difficult because you cannot explain, you cannot – when you talk, you feel you don't – you don't –

*But do you remember those things? When you talk about it, do you remember the feeling?*

Yeah. For me, I feel that I – I feel that I can't express enough, that nobody – yeah, yeah, yeah.

*But those feelings [overtalking 01:04:42].*

But I rem – yeah, I remember we were on holiday in – with my husband in Cannes and we saw a film of all this and the tears were going down my cheek and- And my husband looked at me, he said, 'Why do you cry?' It was difficult to hear, just to see all this.

*And your husband was not a refugee, then, like you?*

He came in – he came before the war because my in-laws in Poland, they were very wealthy people and they sent my husband with some money to England before the war.

*So his experience was very different from yours.*

Yeah, yeah.

*Is there anything –*

But yeah, you see, he went to a Jewish grammar school in – not religious. He was [inaudible] in Poland. And funny enough, that most – by miracle, most of his friends, almost all of his friends survived and we used to meet every year in – make a meeting in Israel with all the friends.

*Is there anything that you would like to say, a message to people who will be looking at this recording in the future, who will be looking at you, listening to your story? [01:06:15] Is there any kind of message that you would like to pass on to them, based on your own life? Or your own philosophy?*

To save your life when you can, when there is a risk, when there is a thing, not to think that everything is going to be well, because in Iran as well there were planes sending to take refugees from all these terrible countries and from – and people didn't believe, they didn't go. They were wealthy or whatever, whatever it is.

*Strong advice, maybe even –*

That's all, yeah, that's the – it is, yeah.

*You did mention that you tend to be –*

But you see, we all – people don't realise today, if tomorrow you were told they're going to kill the Jews or whatever it is, you got – you can take a plane and you got – you can go some – you go to Israel. People don't realise what it really means. We had no – nobody wanted us. People – do you know how many people could have been saved or even – you've got to be more realistic. You think that things can't happen. Look what's happening in the world.

**[01:08:01]**

*You also mentioned that despite all of this, all the experiences and the knowledge that you have, that you're a positive person, that you tend to –*

It's my – yeah, it's my – it's – I'm an optimistic person. That's my nature. I believe that the way you are born, that's the way you are. And in Yiddish my mother used to say, 'the way you are at seven, you are at seventies'. And I don't – it's my philosophy, you don't have a choice if you – who you are. I think the way – I think it's the way you're born. And it's not easy to adapt. You've got to be more careful today what you're saying.

*Well, Lily, thank –*

There's a lot, you know, I mean, yeah, tomorrow probably I would add I don't know what.

*Well, you've done very well [laughs].*

We were a very big family. We were a very big family in Antwerp. My father was the youngest of twelve children and they all – mainly they went to – we went to France, they went to – a lot of them went to South America, to Mexico. I was a child so basically, I lost touch. Some of them came back to Belgium, some – if you say that today, the refugees, they Hungarian or whatever it is, it's different. You feel that people are more – but yeah, that's – such is life. If not for the war, who knows how fate would have been different.

*So, do you actually know in any detail what happened to some of your family who stayed behind in Antwerp?*

Some of my family, some went to Marra – we went to Fra – went to Marrakech, went to South America. [01:10:07]

*So they survived?*

Survived, yeah. But not – yeah, in – if you go to Yad Vashem, you will see that from Belgium there exist in percentage the most people who were killed, yeah.

*In Belgium?*

In Belgium.

*Yeah. Very few survived.*

And you have to be realistic. When they invaded Poland we should have thought, they're not going to stop there. We should have said, 'all the poor Polish people there'. It was a normal

thing that they were going to invade – are people more realistic today? I don't know. I don't think people – difficult to learn. And the Holocaust- look how many people today in the countries.

*And to pick up on Frank's point about the Resistance, the Jewish Resistance, what – do you have particular memories of the Jewish Resistance? Because you were part of the French Res–*

Yeah. No, they were Fr – yeah, very, very, very – later on, very, very political when – very pol – we were very involved in politics and things. Maybe, yeah, I think today the people think much more about the – what they're doing. And you know there was no computer, no mobiles, no – we used to talk to people.

*So when you were a messenger and you were taking risks every day probably, were you part of the Jewish Resistance?*

Yeah, the Jewish Resistance.

*And not the general French?*

No, no, but they were all together. I was part but there was a – yeah. [01:12:00]

*So they were the same organisation?*

Yeah, yeah. No, no, the – everybody was together, yeah, but me – yeah.

*But there was a separate Jewish Resistance?*

Yeah.

*And you were part of that?*



Yeah. But they were – the Jewish and the non-Jewish Resistance were very close. But I was only – I didn't kill anyone [laughs]. I didn't shoot anyone. And do you know, at the time – today when you're fifteen or whether you're grown up, we were a lot – for everything, even when you look about the Jews and whatever it is, we were very naive. Today – at the time I would say fifteen is like today, twelve, you know? People – yeah. It's a different world.

*Is there anything else that you would like to pick up? Would you like to talk about that?  
About what – Jewish observance during the war, is that what you were thinking of?*

There was nothing to eat anyway [laughs].

*Sorry, you said you were quite Orthodox, your family were quite Orthodox, sorry –*

I'm still Orthodox but –

*[Inaudible] Jewish, like essentially continued during the war?*

Yeah, but you know, Orthodox at the time, Orthodox today, it's a different thing. Today, Orthodox is the length of the sleeves and the – we were modern Ortho – but I think we had the right values. I think.

*So, you were disconnected from your faith during the war, in that sense?*

No, we could – we observed what – we were hidden anyway. We observed- but you see, what's in – it was in me. I remember my parents said a child, you have to – for the tickets that we got some non-kosher meat, I should eat. [01:14:05] But you see, I was only a child but I put in the toilet, I couldn't eat it. So it's something that –

*It was internal, your faith, it was –*

Yeah.

*It was inside.*

Today, yeah, I'm still Orthodox. It's more tradition, I don't know.

*Do you think that you became either more religious or less religious when you found out what had happened?*

I think more or less, religion seems to be different today. It's more exterior.

*But from your own –*

It's not what they – yeah, it wasn't, as I say, when I was in bikini, it was perfectly okay, you know.

*But at the time, when – and just after the war, when you learned about what had happened to the six million, I wonder whether that affected your religious faith?*

It doesn't affect me but it affected a lot of people. Some of the people became more religious and some of them be – yeah, left the faith. I did philosophy in school but not that one [laughs].

*What do you think about your own identity? Do you feel that you're Belgian or French or British or –*

I must tell you something. The people in this country, they do not know how lucky they are. They don't appreciate the freedom, the things that in France we – yeah. Even today, because all the Muslims from North Africa who came to France, the people feel very insecure. People don't realise how good they have it, how the religious, how good they have it in this country because I experienced – yeah. [01:16:01] But it's a culture, I still – I don't think – I still miss the – and my friends who were – who today are in Israel and so really Israel patriot [ph] and everything. There's something about – all of us I think, at least my friends – about the French culture that we – and I learned as well, yeah, forgotten everything I learn. In France they said

what is – your culture, whatever it is, it's everything you've learnt and everything you've forgotten. And that's it. A way of thinking, yeah.

*So do you feel British, would you say?*

You see, the Israel today which didn't exist when I – when I lived in France and everything, today I'm very, very, very, very grateful, very grateful to this country. But for me personally, Israel means so much. I say that I live here but –

*But in your heart –*

In my – yeah. Because I used to do [inaudible] whatever, I sent everybody else to Israel. But people, you see, the Jews, I mean we don't realise Israel is not what it means, that if anything – you feel secure. Because if there wouldn't be Israel when you see the anti-Semitism or whatever it is, you will be frightened and say, what's going to happen to me? Today, nothing can happen to you. You take a plane and you go to Israel, you'll always be welcome. It's a feeling that the generation today, it's natural, I mean it's a holiday place, it's whatever.

**[01:18:08]** I still go to Hebrew courses [laughs]. Only in maths and the language but it's important to me. You know, I could talk for forty-eight hours.

*[Laughs] Well, thank you very much for what you have –*

It's – yeah, I'm old, yeah. And as I say, you see, not just me, the emotion, whatever happens, so whatever happens in life, the emotions when you are old are not the same. Your emotions, whether it's good, happiness or unhappiness, it's age is age. And you see, when you're old like me, you don't have any more – all your friends – it's a horrible thing to say but I think we live too long, even if you look well, and your friends have gone.

*Have you shared your wartime experiences with your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren? Do they know about –*

It's a funny thing. I used to do a lot of talking. And my husband funnily enough, he had this idea that a lot of people had before, children don't have to know. And if I – I talked, I did a lot of talking but when I talked to my children – I shouldn't really say this, my daughter, 'Ah, Mummy's off again.' [Laughs] Apart of my kids, everybody knows everything [laughs].

*So you have talked about it?*

My husband did – at the time, at the time nobody talked about it. And my husband didn't – he thought children don't have to know about it. And then it was too late. And well, everybody knows. But it's not the same. You can read it. It's – now this generation, it becomes more like history. [01:20:01] We, when you read about the Maccabee and you don't stop crying. You know what I'm talking about? But today, yeah, we lost more about mixed marriage that we lost in the Holocaust.

*Is there anything else you can think of?*

Are you attached to Israel?

*Yes. Yes.*

Yeah, obviously, otherwise you wouldn't do – yeah.

*Yeah. Well, I really – I am, yes. An aunt was there and a refugee from Hungary. Yes, I'm very attached. So I understand what you were saying.*

To me, you know when I was – no one wanted – you know, we had nowhere to go, no one wanted. When they arrived there, they were sent to – my – I have cousins – to Cyprus, to whatever it was. Do you know how many people could have been saved? But that little country, look what they – technical, look what – science, what they achieved in all these years. But my generation were very political, very, very involved, because there was no – all these compu – all these telephones and all these – I think.

*Yeah, so you've seen many changes.*

I get myself a bit mixed up [laughs]. [Overtalking 01:21:29].

*You have seen – in your long life you have seen so many changes in society.*

Yeah. But as I say, if you live so long, your friends have gone.

*But you still have yourself, so much to teach people, so much to tell people.*

And I'm lucky. I mean I'm lucky, I've got – I'm in a nice flat, you know. I used to live in a big house, which when my husband died, I sold.

*But your long life is of value because you have so much experience going back so far.*

Yeah, and I want to tell you something. [01:22:09] I am old. Experience is – that's the message, that experience is more than intelligence because unless you make mistakes, you wouldn't know this. Even at an old age, experience is more than intelligence because unless you experience something, you wouldn't know. I think.

*Do you think that some of your wartime experiences have actually shaped you as an individual? Had an impact?*

Yes, I'm tough. Not tough but, you know- sure, we are part of our past, a part of our nature. And it all depends where you're – people here in England, I mean, you see, some – we were in France, some people, when the trains stopped in the north, they went to England. Some of them were already arrested straightaway because the Germans advanced very quickly. The Germans advanced very quickly. But when you think what – not human being, what people can do, when you read and you know what people can do with – yeah. But it's – I try not to think too much [laughs].

*Well, thank you so much.*

Thank you, yeah.

*For all your time and I'm sharing all –*

Yeah, you see, I wasn't going to do – I wasn't going to do it but she insisted [laughs]. She says, 'I'm coming'. I said, 'Oh, no, no, no, no, no.' And I said – when she comes, I said, 'I don't know who she is but in five minutes she'll be out.' Two and a half hours later, I still talk to her [laughs].

*Well, you're a fascinating person to talk to. [01:24:01] I really would like to thank you on behalf of AJR, of all the people who are going to be looking at this film in the future.*

But I think maybe I added something about– the French – because people think the German in France, the Gestapo obviously they were terrible but the French did all the jobs for them.

*Yeah, you made that point and that is very, very interesting.*

You know, that is a big point, that people don't realise.

*Yes, and it's important to know.*

But the satisfaction, Nuremburg, the – because when you look at all these people. But some of them were very – the defence, some of them were very clever. And even I mean – I know, it's some – there's a lot there in that stomach that's – [laughs].

*Yes, it's inside [laughs].*

It's inside. But as I say, that exper – when you grow too old you lose your friends.

*And talking about friends and family and memories, I know that there are some documents and some photographs. Frank is going to photograph those and you're going to talk to him*

*and explain what they are. And I know there's something from the Resistance there. So, I'm going to leave you two to do the next part of this interview.*

But I tell you, not him. It's not – it's not easy to – when you've been active and something like that, fear – I mean when you think what – this is nothing to do with me, when you think the risks and the sacrifices, I think I did in life and today when I'm afraid to put my foot down. [01:26:04] But I'm independent. It's my nature. Is it my nature or is it what I went through? For instance, my children, they said, 'Mummy, you should have somebody living with you.' Never. I have somebody? No. I want to do – to make my mistakes, I want to get up when I want to get up. But it's getting very difficult and you mustn't think too much of the future. You've got to be lucky when you live, you've got to be lucky when you die. Some people suffer, some people just go to sleep. And as I said to you, I clean my kitchen in the evening just in case.

*Is that off now?*

[Break in recording]

My paternal grandfather.

*And his name?*

Yitzhak.

*Do you know where and when the picture was taken?*

In Belgium, late 1800s.

My grandfather- my maternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother.

*And their names?*

Leibel. Rachel [ph].

*And these were taken in Belgium? [01:28:00]*

The photos were taken in Belgium, yeah.

It was me, frightened of the photograph, I just started crying as a baby, in Belgium obviously.

*When was it taken?*

When I was a few months old. Well, it looks like it now.

*So, what year would that be?*

I was born in '29.

On holiday in Ostend, at the seaside, just before the war.

*This one?*

So, you don't have to [inaudible] my parents, yeah.

*[Laughs] You can tell us, who is it in this picture?*

My parents and myself, in Nice.

1947.

1947.

*Who is in the picture?*



I think it's me [laughs]. Resemblance- I am not so sure [laughs].

*Where was it taken? Well, how old were you?*

Age of eighteen, in France.

Our wedding.

*And when was this?*

1955. Five, four, whatever.

*And your husband's name?*

Izydor.

Yes, it's me in my wedding dress. **[01:30:00]**

*There's a story about the dress. No? When was this taken?*

At the wedding.

*In 19...?*

In Israel.

*In Israel in 195...?*

Five.

On holiday, in La Baule[-Escoublac], France, a few years later.

*And who are the two – who are the two small –*

My children.

*And their names?*

Nicky and Debbie. My third one wasn't born yet.

A gathering of some of my great-grandchildren, some of the family, for the fortieth birthday of one of my granddaughters, Danielle.

Yeah, this document is to – the proof that I was part of the Resistance, signed by one of the top known people in France for the Resistance, from the group. So, it's very funny because my father took me to Montpellier and we left early in the morning because of the exam was somewhere and the owner, this I remember, the owner of the hotel thought he was an old man with a young mistress. So she ran after, 'Can you pay before you go?' [Laughs] But how is it for a young person to go to a –

[End of transcript]