IMPORTANT

AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
AJR
Winston House, 2 Dollis Park
London N3 1HF
ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	204

Interviewee Surname:	Frean
Forename:	Eva
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	18 June 1925
Interviewee POB:	Vienna, Austria

Date of Interview:	28 March 2017
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	1 hour 26 minutes

REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV204

NAME: Eva Frean

DATE: 28th March 2017

LOCATION: London

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 28th of March 2017 and we are conducting an interview with Mrs. Eva Frean. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.

Can you please tell me your name?

Eva Frean.

And when were you born?

In- on the 18th of June 1925.

And where were you born?

In Vienna, Austria.

Mrs. Frean thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices Project.

My pleasure.

Can you please tell us something about your family background?

Well… OK, I lived- we lived in Vienna. I have an older brother; he's two years older than I am. And my father- my father was a doctor in Vienna in general practice. And both my parents are born in Vienna. And they weren't particularly religious but they were Jewish people. And they- it was just an ordinary family, really. It wasn't particularly… …rich or anything. We- you know, my parents, I knew they always had to be very careful what money was spent on, and holidays and extras and things like that. But it was a comfortable enough life that we had. On account of my mother's- I mean my father's job, obviously it was necessary to have a live-in maid, so that they could take messages and all that kind of thing. And we- he wasn't ever able to go away on a holiday for any length of time because he had to make provisions for his patients when he was away, which was sometimes difficult. [background noise – sound break]

Yes, you were saying you had to have a maid?

[0:02:07]

Yes. And she had to be reliable… because of it was very important and… we had- we had… an ordinary sort of life. I went to the local school- at least it wasn't quite the local school. My first primary school was part of a teacher's training college, I think. And it would have normally been for four years, but at the end of my third year, that closed. That school had to close and the last year I spent at an ordinary local elementary school. And from there I went on to the grammar school where I was for three years until Hitler came. There were only about six Jewish children in my class in the secondary school. It was organised so that the Catholics had one time, and the- the Protestants and the Jewish children had another time during part of school time. So, we had a little sort of basic education, if you like. That was just on a once-a-week basis. And that was school. I went- we walked to school every day. I used to collect another girl who lived around the corner and we would walk together and came back together.

And which school- what was the name of that school?

This was the secondary school.

What was it called?

It was called Mädchen Lyz- Lyzee…

Lyzeum?

Lyzeum. Lyzeum, I think, yes.

And where was it?

This was in the Schüttelstraße, *im zweiten Bezirk.* As it happened it was the same school that my uncle had gone to as a child fifty years before then. But it was an old, established school. And just for tradition- a traditional secondary school.

And which area of Vienna- where did you live?

In the Third District in a main road Radetzkystraße. It was a main road and because of that, really, I was quite aware of what was going on. Because through the streets you had the Nazis marching up and down before Hitler came, and after of course, so you knew what was going on and really quite terrifying at times. We lived in a- in a block of flats. An old-fashioned flat on the first floor. And… it was pretty primitive by today's standards. It was a three-roomed flat. At the time when my parents got married you know it was a housing- there was a housing shortage and they were lucky to live there. So, it was a three-room flat. It was used… The entrance room…

[0:05:18]

[Sound break]

Yes, your flat it the Radetzkystraße.

That's right. Yes, it was a three-roomed flat. It had to be used for my father's surgery. There was no proper kitchen- at least, you know, you had a cold-water tap and a basin. And my parents had put in a- a bath. And in order to make space that was covered for dish- dishes and things during the day. Had to be taken off at night. The maid slept in the partition of that kitchen which was minute: just about the size of the bed and not much else. And I often wondered how on earth the girl managed like that, but they had to. And so, the one room was generally my parents' bedroom, but also the den and living room. And the second room was used for his surgery, but… my brother slept there at night. So, he had- slept on the camp bed he had to put up every morning and pull up every night and take them down in the morning to make space. There was no other space. And the third room was a dining room but it was used as a waiting room for the patients. So that was three rooms; it was pretty tight really by today- today's standards. And that was the flat.

And what about the grandparents? Were they- did you ever meet your grandparents?

My grandmother was still alive- maternal grandmother was still alive at that time. She lived in the beginning independently not very far away, together with one of her- with her son. But when she became rather elderly another flat in my- in our building became available and she came to join us as well as the son who wasn't married at that time.

And your paternal grandparents?

[0:07:38]

They were- they were- none of them were alive at that time. My father's… father actually died when my father was fifteen years old, so he had a lot of problems paying his own studies and all that sort of thing. And he also gave private tuition I think to other kids to get through the school in order to help for his school. And he did have a sort of *Vormund* [legal guardian] who would look after him, up to a point. And that was my father's story. My mother, she was the eldest of three. She was the second, the- her- her younger sister, when they were- two years, the sister became a doctor. But she also had tuberculosis and she had a lot of time off sick. And then all was off with her. The third one was my uncle who at that time wasn't married. And he subsequently went to Australia and from Australia to Israel.

And they lived with you, the uncle…?

And the son- yes. This uncle lived with us, yes. Yes.

And where- do you know how your parents met?

How my parents met? Well- all I could gather was that my mother was a friend- friends with a woman and she had a brother. And the brother was also a doctor. She didn't marry that one. I don't know [inaudible] the reason for that, but somehow my father came into the picture. I don't know. Yes.

And did your mother have a- was she a professional? What- did she…?

Well, she started at the university with- on a four-year course to become a lawyer. But after two years she decided to get married and left the college- left the university. She didn't work when she was married. She looked after the house and there was always enough to do with the patients coming and going and all that kind of thing.

Yes. And what are your earliest memories?

Sorry?

What are your earliest memories of growing up, of Vienna?

[0:09:57]

I don't know that I was a particularly happy child really, I don't think. Being one of- the younger of two. I think my brother was always- things had to be done for him and, you know, I just [inaudible] along as well. And I [inaudible] the family sometimes. And I think my- he- he was probably very spoilt my brother - by my mother. And generally, when you talked to other relatives it was always "Hans", "What about Hans?" You know, "What's he going to do?" Let alone about me. But that's, you know, you just take that in your, in your stride and that's- that's life.

But what other memories have you got from going to school or from that neighbourhood, or…?

Well, we were a name in the- in the neighbourhood on account of my father's practice. Now, he- I must say he- he worked very hard. He didn't have a car. He used to do his calls, his visits either on the tram or on foot. And… So, he was always very busy doing that. And my mother, she was a diff- was very energetic. She always had ideas of this, that and the other. She would go to lectures and things and- I don't think they had a great social life, really, because they didn't seem to make the time. Except my father, he was a very keen photographer. And they belonged to a Jewish photographic society. And on Sundays we used to go out hiking with them. And we'd- they could take photographs.

Where did you go? Where did they take photos?

Oh, in the Wienerwald. Just in the area. Not very far. Yes.

What were your parents' names please? What were they called?

My- my mother was Klara but the family- she was known as 'Klärchen'. And my father was Ernst.

Ernst.

Ernst. That's Ernest.

And his surname?

Oh- Reichenfeld. Yes. And my mother's name was Heller.

Yes. And what about, you said you were Jewish but what about it- did you keep anything or did you…?

[0:12:22]

Well, we did very- regularly- know that we were Jewish. There were the- we kept the main holidays except my father would fast and then work on the same day. And my mother really wasn't very religious. But when she- when she was younger, I think, she had been, but not in my time.

And what did it mean to you? Did it mean anything, or…?

Sorry?

What did it mean to you? Did you ever go to synagogue or did you ever…?

I don't think- I don't think we belonged to a synagogue. My brother did a Bar Mitzvah and- in the local synagogue and there were lots of other relatives came from nowhere, then they disappeared. And that was a big do for him.

Which synagogue was that?

It was around the corner more or less in the Radetzkystraße. I don't know what the synagogue was called. It was a very small synagogue. Yes – traditional.

And what sort of friends did- you said they didn't have much of a social life. What did they- what circles did they mix… with?

Partly… My- my father, he was one of eight children, and his siblings they were all the families around. So, there was quite a lot to do with his family. And they were- children the same age as Hans. There were two cousins. So, there were three boys and me, the only girl. …So, holidays sometimes we had with one- members of the family and that child, yes.

And where did you go on holidays?

[0:14:12]

I think we had, when I was younger, we went to Bres- Breslau, to a sort of a spa place. When I was very young and I didn't remember that very much. And later we went to Payerbach in

the mountains. And my father was very keen on mountaineering and walking and all that sort of thing and often took my brother with him. And we did have in fact one excursion that I remember. We- we stayed… to a- a farm, an Austrian farm in Austria. And the, the farmers vacated their living room for us as a- for the vacation. And that was great fun to be there, because the farmers they were keen, they let us be with the animals and all that sort of thing. And you know, when they were collecting the hay, you know, you could sit on the wagon and all that sort of thing.

Where was that?

That was in Payerbach. And we did go to the same place three years running.

Payerbach?

Payer- Payerbach. It was near the Semmering. Yes. I suppose the area was moderately cheaper than the Semmering… and my father could just come for weekends. He didn't have a- didn't- couldn't spend a whole week.

He was working?

Yes. Yes.

And what patients did he have? Was it very local or did he have…?

[0:15:47]

His patients? I think they were probably through the *Krankenkasse [health insurance]*. He had some connection with them. And some private- they were sort of private patients I suppose. And they did also have… from the city. He was the medical officer for part of the city. And so, these were the poor people so called they could come and they had to sit in the- in the *Vorzimmer [anteroom]* when they came. They weren't in with the [inaudible] And sometimes they could come to the door and they would tell you their sad stories. In a way it was my introduction to poverty and… pain and misery, really.

Because you saw it, when they came?

Well, you did- it came to the door; you couldn't help but see it, yes.

And as a child, were you affected by it, or did you…?

Well, I don't think it- you just- it sort of happened and you know, you turned around and went to your own business, yes.

And what sort of friends did you have in school?

They were- oh there were three other girls, I think, and they lived very near to me and sometimes we went to one and sometimes we went to another. And we just, you know, went there for the day or for the afternoon or something…

Were they Jewish children or not Jewish children?

They were- they happened to be Jewish children, yes.

And you said, just to come back to it- you said from Radetzkystraße you remember the marches. Can you describe what you saw? Was it from your window, or-?

[0:17:42]

Well, there was one thing I very clearly remember. Across the road was a huge shop. It was- they sell the stationary and all kinds of things, but they had big windows. And they were smashed one day; I remember that very clearly. And apart from that, you could hear them marching- marching up and down and so on. There was also the Salvation Army had a hostel very, very close to where we lived. And I think my father saw some of their patients sometimes when, you know, people couldn't pay.

When were those windows smashed? When? At Kristallnacht?

Well before the- before the Kristallnacht, yes. I'd already left by the Kristallnacht, actually.

Right.

Yes. Yes. Yes, this was in, you know… March.

Yes. So, do you remember the Anschluss? Can you tell-?

Do I remember the Anschluss? Yes, I do, and I remember sitting around the radio and hear- hearing Schuschnigg telling you, you know, that was the end or whatever he said. I can't remember now. But yes, I do remember that. And it made me really rather scared.

Where were you? Were you at home?

At home. Yes. Yes. And my parents had… thought some time before that one ought to emigrate and where to go so that- where can you go to? And in fact, you know, they wrote letters to all kinds of people all over the world more or less… to see if they could help or so on. And Kristallnacht, which I didn't know at the time because I left before then, but my father was actually take- take- taken by the Gestapo and he was kept in the… lo- lo- in the little - sorry - in the local prison.

In the prison?

In the prison, yes. And, you know, left my mother on her own, being very anxious what she could do. She didn't want to tell my- my- my brother and I were in England, so she didn't want to tell us… what had happened. But she managed as best as she could. She did her best to get my father released. And in fact, he eventually got released by- partly by Mrs. Dickey who looked after me, or other charities, because… the Nazis had required… proof that he was going to leave. And somebody put up money for a ticket to Shanghai for both him and my mother, which I must say I was very glad that they didn't have to go. But they released him on that, so that when he came to England, he'd just been released forty-eight hours or so before.

We'll come back to that. Just to come back to you…

Yes.

[0:20:44]

So, when was the first time your emigration was discussed, or your brother's?

Well, I think when… My mother used to go to Quaker meetings and she was- not religious reasons, but the Quakers were very helpful to Jews generally. And, and then somehow it was arranged for my brother to… come to England to- with a Quaker boarding school that they got him a place for.

What was it called, please?

The Friends' School at Great- Great Ayton. That was the name of the village, or it was. So, he was- that was- at that time the school hadn't opened; it was still holiday time, but nevertheless, because the family had contacts in Holland and I don't know where, and in Switzerland, so he could go here, there and everywhere. He had a very good time, I think, passing his holiday before school started …in September.

And you? What happened to you?

And what happened to me was well, they thought I could also possibly go somewhere near- near him. And I think the Jewish Committee or whatever- because also I'd been a Girl Guide in Vienna and I think my mother was full of ideas. She wrote to the Guides in Vienna- in, in London. And eventually they found me a wonderful foster mother, Mrs. Dickey, who wasn't Jewish, and- and that Mrs. Orford said, Mrs Dickey said she would take me.

What was it called the Girls' Guide in- in Vienna? What were they called?

It was just the, you know, the *Pfad- Pfadfinder*.

Pfadfinder für Mädchen, or was it-?

Pfad…I don't remember. No…no.

Was it a…

It wasn't particularly Jewish.

Was it mixed? Was it- girls and boys separate for the Pfadfinder?

It was a small group; I think there were about six girls in it. But I think we did go out on camping days and things. And, and they, they- the Guides, when I came to England, they were very helpful to me.

[0:23:18]

And how did you feel? When did they tell you that you're… leaving or that you have to go, your parents, when did they?

I don't remember. I mean, in fact… I wonder really how they could have done this to sort of - seeing I was all of thirteen - out into the unknown, as it were. But I think you know they just had faith and you just- that's what you did.

And how do you remember your leaving? Do you remember? What did you prepare? What did you…?

I remember doing a bit of shopping with my mother before that I had the right things to do. And I had three suitcases and a pair of skis when I came to England. [laughs]

You brought the skis?

Well, I'd had one skiing holiday with the school and this skis- this pair of skis had actually been given to me by somebody who no longer wanted them. But [laughs] it does seem rather ridiculous that there I came with- and in those days you could arrange for luggage to be sent… on my train. And so, these three suitcases and my skis did arrive in London, much to my surprise.

After you had arrived?

After, yes. On the- more or less they were here when- because on this train journey anyway, it took longer because they stopped the train when we got- they stopped the train- … it was at… Ostend, the Dover crossing, that crossing. We went through …through Belgium. And for the Austrian border, the Nazis just, "Hold the train." I didn't know what was happening. But fortunately, they allowed people to send off telegraphs saying the people were being met. And they- so that worked all right.

And at which station? Where did you leave from in Vienna?

I left from Vienna West-West- Westbahnhof, yes. And it was-

And who- who- did you go by yourself, or- on the train?

[0:25:39]

Yes, I did go by myself. I don't know whether my parents just looked around, who there was. And I think this lady was probably also on a domestic permit, had an older daughter with her, and she asked her to "keep an eye on her". And I spent the journey with them.

The train journey, so the-

The train journey- the train, Vienna, Brussels, Ostend… Dover, yes.

And what was your feeling? I don't know whether you remember sitting in that train and-leaving?

Well, you just felt you didn't know what was- what you were going- and I don't think I worried. I mean it just- That's how it is; see what happens next.

And what were your first impression arriving in England or even just on the boat, or?

It was arriving at Ostend and getting into this train… there was a couple and they gave me some sweets and I thought, you know, why should they do this? Anyway, so we arrived at Victoria. And the kind people were there to meet me. And then… after they took me in a taxi and I spent a night or two nights with another kind person. And- and they thought it would be nice for me to see- have a look around London. And we walked around looking at Buckingham Palace and standing on Westminster Bridge. And then- and that was it.

So, you were met when you arrived?

I was met when I arrived, yes.

And you didn't come with any other children? You were just-?

I was on my own, yes. It was all very luxurious to me. It was- I think the lady who had quite a posh apartment somewhere. Also, there was a living-in maid who came with her. And you know, it was all- and- and she gave me something to eat and breakfast next morning. And it was all very strange to me. But you know, that's interesting.

And what about your English?

[0:28:06]

I couldn't speak at all; I'd had about three lessons or four lessons before leaving. So, I didn't have much- I could say 'Yes', and 'Please' and 'Thank you'. I was a polite little girl. And that was it.

But you managed with the- the first days?

But- yes, I mean- I was looked after really when one worried. It was all very strange, though because as I say, it- in the summer- like in Kensington I was in the flat in a rather posh area. And… And it did seem rather strange to me, you know, that you had a bathroom there and things like that.

Would you like to drink some water?

I think I would really. Yes.

[sound break]

So, for how many days did you stay in London before travelling on?

It was just for two nights, I think. And also, because... my mother's train arrived the day before, so I was able to meet them so that they could let my parents know that I had arrived. And then again, yes. And- and again, going up to Middlesbrough… they took me to King's Cross Station and you had to change trains in I think Darlington; there was no direct train to- to Middlesbrough. And again, I think they should have looked to see who else was going to Middlesbrough. And this was another nice Jewish lady by the name of Mrs. Joseph. And said she'd look after me and she looked after me. Helped me get onto the next train. Which in fact she forgot my luggage, but…

She did?

The- the luggage went on to Newcastle and somebody had to go and fetch it. But…

You got it?

I got it, yes.

So, you were now sent to this foster family?

Yes.

Yes. So, tell us a little bit about the foster family, please.

[0:30:17]

Well, she was an amazing, wonderful lady. When I got there, she was sixty-nine. Not exactly a young woman. She'd had, after the First World War, a child from Austria because the children- being under-fed and so on. And who- so she sort of knew a little bit about it. In fact,

she always told me how this then boy showed her how to make *Wiener Schnitzel*. That sort of thing. She was a- a very quiet lady. When I came to her, her husband was on a world tour visiting their eldest son in New Zealand. So, there were she, and also in this household she had a living-in maid and a daily cook. And a weekly laund- laundress woman. It- it was a big… detached house in a suburb of Middlesbrough. And in a way it was a bit isolated because it was detached and there was all ground and the next- over the fence the cows were grazing. And so, it was quite rural really. But in order to get to school, I had to get the bus at the end of the road to take me to Ayton, to school.

Which is where your brother was.

That's right, yes. I could get out as a day girl. There were several- a few other day, day-students. But I had to be sure to get that bus; there was only half-hourly service, you know, so.

So again, was it quite affluent for you, when you…?

Sorry?

Did it seem quite affluent?

[0:32:08]

Oh, yes, very much so. But all very, very strange. Yes. Yes, Mrs. Dickey she'd had four grown-up children. The eldest one he was in New Zealand being a missionary or being a parson or something. One daughter had become a doctor and went to- did live in Norwich. The other daughter had been a nursery school-teacher but had gone to South Africa. And the youngest one, he was still - I think he was doing his final year of his medical thing. So, he lived in London and as it happened, that weekend, he came up to visit his mother to see what was going on and had to go and fetch my luggage too. [coughs] As I say, it was a kind of a strange household. And this huge house, it was a four-bedroomed house. And she did at that time, also there was another lady living there, who was invalided. I never quite understood why she was there, but she needed to have her own nurse. So, the nurse also lived in- in this house. And Mrs. Dickey and that – those, those were the only people and there was me. So,

because I think she had enough foresight to realise that it would be very lonely for me. And so, she got in touch with a Jewish community in Middlesbrough to see if they could help at all, if they could, you know, take interest in me. And it was a very lucky thing that she did. There were four families who had girls my age, and weekends I was invited to stay with either Ann or Betty or- forgotten the other now. And which was- again, it was totally different. But an interesting experience, if you like. Because again, there were different standards. The one family was more affluent than the other, you know, I could see that. They were all perfectly normal middle-class families but one could see the difference. And so, this was a good thing for- for me to be able to do in the beginning, to be somebody who's to have. Because being at boarding school they had school on Saturday mornings. So, in the beginning somebody would fetch me there. Then afterwards I'd be- I could go on the bus on my own to Middlesbrough… and somebody would meet me at the bus station and take me to their homes. So, in the end, you know, there were different experiences.

And they were Jewish families?

They were Jewish families. And as I was saying to Michael earlier on, it was in a way the first time of my experiencing an- a sort of ordinary Jewish family. Because we never had the sort of family life like they did. And they- they were… better educated in Jewish customs and things than I was. They were quite surprised that I didn't know anything about *Kashrut* or you know, all that sort of thing. And… everything else. But it was, again, I kept in touch with particularly one of the girls for many years afterwards.

So that was- that helped you?

Yes, oh yes. It definitely did. And this was just for the- for the best part of the year that I lived with Mrs. Dickey.

And what was it like to go to school? How difficult was it?

[0:36:10]

Well, obviously it was very hard in the beginning because I couldn't speak English. And I think the school tried to be… helpful. So, I was in a class with children who could barely-

[inaudible] that were there?? to read. And it helped me to read as well but… I didn't really feel I could make friends with them. And all- also the maths, it meant having to learn pound, shilling and pence and all the rest of it was completely strange and difficult. And I do remember a particular thing but not understanding- understanding. I think the science teacher there was growing seeds in blossing- blossing- blotting paper to germinate. And I couldn't understand what 'germinating' had to do with the Germans. It took a long time for that to sink in. And so [inaudible] one year. The only thing was that my friends were more advanced than they were. And so, for that I could go to a higher class, which I thought they were more my… people I could correspond with, I could correlate with better.

And was your brother there when you came, or?

He was there at the boarding school, yes.

So, who paid for him? For his boarding? Was it your parents or was it…?

Originally there was some arrangement that I think- my father used to support somebody in Holland and that money would be sent but that never happened. There were other refugee boys at the school and the- whether the Quakers just… I don't know. But certainly, my parents had no money to pay for him, no.

And while you were there did you have correspondence with your parents? Were you in touch with your parents?

My parents, they came six months later. I came in September and they arrived in March.

'38. So, you came in '38; they came in-

In March of '39, that's right. Yes. Yes, and my father, having been imprisoned on the Kristallnacht. That's right. Yes.

And did you correspond with them during that time? Did you know what was going on in…?

[0:38:35]

I didn't know what was going on, no. No. I think my brother knew, but again, you know, he didn't want to tell me. And at least I don't know that he knew about my father being in prison but he knew generally about the Kristallnacht and things like that, yes.

And did you- did your brother- did you try to find possibilities for your parents to come? Did you…?

Well, he didn't. But Mrs. Dickey was a wonderful woman. She in fact gave a guarantee for my father to come out. My father- my mother had this post - domestic permit - so that was OK. But she then guaranteed for my father- my father to come.

So, she enabled him?

Yes. Yes. Yes. And she- she was very concerned generally about refugees. Every now and again she had a little… tea party or whist party when the best, the best china came out. And the best sandwiches were made. And- and for these ladies I should think it must have been to raise money for refugees; I don't know. And I was introduced as "My little Eve." I had to be shown- "This is…" – just to make them see. But, you know, I just did it.

But did you mind?

It felt rather strange, yes. But you know, it was just so that I'd take the tea trolley in or something like that and then I disappeared. I had to wear my best dress, such as it was.

And were there other refugee children? Did you meet other refugee children?

Well in the school there were, I think, the three other boys- three or four other boys, yes. I think the Jewish community actually set up a hostel for refugee children who came on the Kindertransport. But they'd come from Germany. And I think I did meet them- meet them once, but kind of feel, well, they're different. So, whether I- I felt a bit superior.

Where, in Middlesbrough?

[0:40:45]

In Middlesbrough, yes. Yes.

Was there- did you have any contact with any Jewish Committee or any other committees, or were you just alone?

No, no. It was just- I was invited at the weekends. They were very nice to me. One day we'd go to Redcar, and we'd go to somewhere else or to Whitby and you know, for a day's outing. And they really tried to- but they were as helpful as they could be. But you know…

And did you ever experience any sort of anti-German- anti-Austrian sentiment? What was your experience like? Did you…?

Not really, because I felt they were con- they were concerned with refugees coming out. Yes. And they- and Mrs. Dickey she- she worked very hard. I think she must have written lots of red letters or whatever to high- members in high places or Parliament or whatever. I don't know. But she was very concerned for the refugees. She used to sort of write] that the Jewish people are very brave people. She would sort of say it.

And your parents, you said they were still in Vienna in Kristallnacht?

Yes.

So, what happened to them exactly?

Well as I say, they came from my father; they came knocking on the door and they took him. And my mother she was left on her own. And you know, she didn't have much money to live on I don't think and difficult. But she was very busy writing letters and trying to get my father released and so on.

How long was he…?

[0:42:25]

Well, Kristallnacht was in November and they came out in March. So quite a few months. I know there were some friends that she had who- who had gone to Hungary and they knew about her plight and would send her food parcels every now and again. Some somehow, you know, she didn't talk about that particularly.

But you said they also got- your father got a visa for Shanghai?

They had a- they had a visa. I think it was in order to let the German people like him- to let him go. This- I don't know how this was arranged, but there was a- I know that in - in the papers they left, I looked at them afterwards - that there was a permit for Shanghai.

But they didn't use it…

No, no. No.

Because she was- Mrs. Dickey guaranteed him.

That's right, yes. Yes.

They came on their own?

They came on- yes.

And your mother as a domestic?

And she- yes, she came- well, when they first arrived, they also came to stay with Mrs. Dickey both of them. And then my mother went off and- because my father had nowhere particular to go. He could stay with Mrs. Dickey also for quite a time. And because Mrs. Dickey had a medical background, she knew all the doctors and things. And so, she arranged for him- for my father, to go to a local hospital once a week or whatever, to experience and to see how things are done in this country. Because in any case he was just out of prison, so he- it took him quite a time to come to, I think.

And do you remember what was it like to meet your parents again after the six months?

[0:44:12]

No.

No?

No, it was- it was very strange, yes. Yes. It was very strange.

So, they just came and…?

They just came and I- I don't remember really, no, no. No.

So, at that point you probably were speaking English?

I could speak English by that time, yes. Yes.

Do you remember, were you pleased to see them?

Did I?

Were you pleased to see them when you…?

Well, yes, I mean- I really have no recollection of that, no. No. And there are other memories that- the aunt, I think who'd also come previously. And she'd come to see me and, you know, it was nice to see her.

How did she get out, your aunt?

That I don't know… because she'd had- she'd been in Switzerland for a treatment, but I don't know how she came to England. No – no.

And how long did both your parents stay, do you remember, with Mrs. Dickey?

Well, they stayed just for, you know, a couple of- few days. And my mother went off to Scotland, to the job.

And what sort of job did she get?

[0:45:27]

I don't know whether she was called a maid, a chamber table maid, or whatever. But it wasn't anything she- she did very well and liked- was- wasn't good at it. And- and really, I think she then applied to the Committee to help her to do something else. And again, she was very lucky, because there was a very nice, well-to-do Scottish lady who said my mother could go and be her compan- companion for a little while. So, she went there. And I don't know about my father, because in 1940 the Jews were interned in any case. So, I don't know how that- he had applied to do his medical exams here. They allowed so many doctors to do it in twelve months. But of course, it was interrupted with internment. And he went to the Isle of Man, and also my brother, actually. He was at the time visiting the school in Ayton on Bank Holiday weekend and he was also interned there. And they both went to the Isle of Man, here. My brother. And they were there for quite a time.

[sound break]

We were talking about internment of your father…

Yes.

… and brother. Can you tell us a little bit about it please?

Well as I say, he was interned as he start- started a course for re- applying for becoming re-medical. And, and- and he went to the Isle of Man and also my brother was- was there. And Hans had a choice of either going to Canada or staying with his father. But he chose to go to Canada. And my father stayed here. He went to Canada and he was- he was eventually released from the internment. And then he joined the Air Force… my brother- Hans did. My father, [inaudible] and that's it, he had a job getting work because… well, he couldn't buy a

practice. And eventually this place- he didn't need capital to- to start. And so, he got this job I think the chap before had gone into the Army before him. Now I think it must have been very difficult for him, because he hadn't driven before, he couldn't drive, he didn't have a car and of course we didn't have any money for cars either. And there was a very kind neighbour, who knew all about mechanics and everything. He helped him with the driving, and eventually he got a car. Because the district was Lozells in Birmingham which was then very run down. [inaudible] Some of the [inaudible] lived in that area and it was a very poor – back-to-back housing. So, it was a very poor area where he had to work but that was where he went. And driving around Birmingham, when you don't know your way at that time must have been very hard for him. And also understanding people who spoke, you know, with a Birmingham accent which wasn't that easy for him. However, he seemed to manage.

[0:48:55]

And was he bitter about the internment or did he- how- how did he talk about the internment?

He didn't talk about any of it. He didn't talk about internment; he didn't talk about imprisonment. Finished.

He didn't talk about it.

No, he said, he was a- survived and that was it.

He was pragmatic.

Yes. He didn't want to talk about it, no. No.

So, he came back from internment, so while he was in interned, where was your mother please?

Now, she got a job as a sort of janitor in some block of flats in Glasgow with poor- very poor accommodation but that's what she got. And that's where she stayed. I think she probably had one or two different jobs there; I'm not sure. But that's where she lived.

You said that she was in Edinburgh before?

That's right, yes.

She had to leave?

Yes.

Why did she have to leave?

[0:49:46]

Because it's in 'Alien Protected' areas, they all had to leave. She was very liked in Edinburgh, actually. Somebody had given a house to the refugees for the women to come to on their day off. And my mother was very, very suitable for that sort of job. And she could entertain them when they came on their Sunday off, or whatever it was. So that was it, but that was finished. So, although she'd had- made friends in Edinburgh as well…

She went to Glasgow.

And she went to Glasgow.

And in that time, where were you…while your father was in the Isle…?

I was still in school in- except when there were holidays one or two girls asked me to come and stay with somebody- for the Easter holidays or Christmas holidays.

And were you still with the lady?

And the lady- Mrs. Dickey?

Yes.

I was just- I was still in contact with her. I wrote to her. She had six little children evacuated…[inaudible] such a huge house. And there were six children; they were all London children. Did I hear about them? I heard about the children from her. They were sort of eight, nine-year-olds. I don't know what help she got for them, but…

But at this point, where were you? Did you- were you in boarding school?

I was- I was in Scotland.

In Scotland?

Yes, I- yes, I think so. I went to Scotland in '39 when the war broke out, yes. That's right, yes. And these London children evacuated to Middlesbrough.

Right. And you went to Scotland because of your parents?

Because, well…

Because of your parents? Why did you go to Scotland?

Well, the- in Grantown-on-Spey, which is a lovely area where the headmistress had- already had a house. And so, the first year, she took over one or two of the boarding houses in the area for the rest of the girls. That was the first year. In the second year she managed to get a whole hotel, so the whole school could be in the one building at least. But you know there were 200 or so girls, I think. Probably not as many in evacuation, I shouldn't think.

But how come you- from the Quaker school? How did you get to that school? Was it the- was the Quaker school…?

[0:52:05]

The Quakers, that was finished.

Finished?

Yes, I think I left. I stayed with Mrs. Dickey and- and that was that. I don't know. And somehow, I sort of- my mother was in Scotland, she tried to see what she could do for me. I think that's probably what happened.

But you couldn't stay with your parents at that time?

With my parents? No… no.

And at what point did you join your parents?

Well, really not until… Well, it was still during the war. In '41 I- I had to leave school. I had the two years and two years were finished. And I got my school certificate and that was it. So, I came down to my parents; they were by that time living in Birmingham.

When you were sixteen?

Yes. Yes. And I really hadn't a clue what I was going to do. I- I wanted- I was, you know, too young to go to university or anything. At that time, I thought I would like to study languages. Because, you know, I'd studied a bit of French. But in- I had a job in the day nursery in Birmingham, looking after children where the mothers went to work, or fathers in the Army or whatever. And I did that for two years really on and off in between holidays.

And at that point were your parents established enough? Were they comfortable in Birmingham?

Well, they- they had no choice, I suppose. I know my mother wasn't a particularly good housewife, ever, anyway. But, you know, that was it; that's where they lived. And my father, he [inaudible] for the surgery; he had to do a morning surgery and an evening surgery. And with a couple of hours in between they could come in for lunch. It was a pretty…

It was tough.

…busy day for him, I think, yes.

And how did he manage- how did they manage with English?

Well, they'd had some English before they came. So, you know, you learn as you have to. Yes.

And at that point your brother was in the Army?

[0:54:11]

He was in the Air Force. Yes. Well, I don't know how- I can't remember exactly how long he was in-

When he came out…

In Canada, but he was discharged into the Air Force. And with the Air Force he eventually got sent to Iceland. …And he married in Iceland... [laughs]

An Icelander?

So, it's a very mixed family, so yes. He- yes…

And then where did they settle?

No, they, they- they eventually they came down to- he- well, he married someone and had a child before. And the three of them came down to Birmingham but that wasn't a very happy arrangement. And he- I think he- I'm not sure at what stage- what stage he applied to go to university to study medicine. He had worked with my father for a little while before internment, probably.

So, he became a doctor as well?

So, he became a doctor, yes.

And where did he settle down?

Well, he stayed in Birmingham for a time because he worked with my father. And then he went to Canada. And he got a job in a hospital and eventually took up psychiatry in- in Canada. And- and he lived in Ottawa and various places.

OK, so to come back to you. So, you finished school. You were doing the two years…

In a day nursery, yes. And then I was ready to go to university. And I thought the social work thing might be right for me. So, I applied and got the course that gave me the right qualifications for university entrance. And, and so I did a two-year course.

In?

In Birmingham.

In what field?

What- what year?

No, what field? What was it? What was your topic?

It was social work and economics. [inaudible] and economics and economic history and public health and something else the first year. And the second year it was more on social things; I can't remember quite. It was a… two -ear course.

And what attracted you to the social work?

[0:56:30]

Somehow, I'd always felt before doing this course, that this is what I- I feel I wanted to help people. I think that was really the basis of it. And doing this course, part of it was- we were attached to the Birmingham Settlement. And so, you know we had to learn to visit old people

and whatever the problems they had. And one of the girls, I think she got involved in the youth work and that sort of thing.

What is the Birmingham Settlement?

It was the Birmingham Settlement. It's a sort of community centre. It had been there- it had been there a long time. And so, they- I was their only refugee child there. And I think they were- well I don't know [inaudible] yes, except one of the assistant- the assistant's person had been a refugee at the Settlement. She was a German lady.

And the- in your social work was there that feeling of migration or refugees- was that of particular interest-

No.

…to you at that time, or…?

No, didn't really want to know. Didn't really want to know that I was a refugee. Or my Jewishness- just forget it.

What did you- you wanted to be British?

Yes. I think so, yes. Yes.

When did you become naturalised?

Well, I think my father and- my parents did, when everyone said he was due. And, and I didn't have to go through the process, because it must have been before I was sixteen, I think. …But I- I didn't- you know I didn't really want- my name, eleven letters in my name, [sighs] always was a bit of a mouthful for anybody. You had to- wherever you went, you had to spell it out. But… I did actually change my name eventually. Not- not at that time but at some later time because I- I just- Oh, yes, I think I changed it after I'd done this course in Cardiff, I remember, when it was difficult to get a job. This was in about 1930-40 or so. And it seemed

extremely difficult, as a foreigner, to apply to local authorities. You know, they always thought I was a stranger. And I then decided I wanted to change my name.

And what did you change it to?

To 'Hillier': a slight connection to the name of 'Heller'. I didn't want to have no connection. And I think my father was very upset about it, but…

He didn't change his name?

No – no.

Hillier? How did you spell that?

[0:59:22]

H I double-L I E R. Yes, it was quite a time but, you know, it's- it's- as I said, my father wasn't very happy about it, but the whole situation at home wasn't a very happy situation anyway.

Why?

I don't want to talk about that really, no.

So, you wanted to- not stay? You wanted to…?

Yes, I mean, I had the two years, I was finished and then wanted- everyone wants to come to London. So, I tried to, you know, get a job in London. And this was a- in a voluntary society called 'The Invalid Children's Aid Association'. And they mostly sent children who'd had tonsillitis and that sort of thing, oh, and some convalescents. That was the kind of thing. So, the job was to interview the parents and obviously the children. And they had, you know, their list of places that they could go to. And I did that for quite a time - in Peckham. I think I was down in Peck- Peckham maybe for one year and then I moved to another branch in Camden Town.

And why did you want to come to London?

Mn?

Why did you want to come to London?

Well, you know, you wanted to see life. [laughs] Yes.

And so, the job that you managed to get then-

Yes, was- was a job in London, yes. Yes.

And then what happened next?

That was… Let me see, ’41, ’43… must have been ’43… nearly ’45. Yes, that sort of thing, yes.

And what was your feeling when the war ended? Did that have any effect you, I mean, did you…?

Oh, yes, I mean, we had a street party in Birmingham. [coughs] Yes, I mean I always say one was delighted when the war was over; there’s no doubt about that, yes.

What happened to your grandmother, for example?

[1:01:28]

My grandmother, she’d- she’d died before we left Vienna. I never knew my grandfather, no. Nor the other parents, no. …So it- it was a new life, really. Coming to London after the war was, well, not that easy, I don’t imagine. I must have been difficult, I think, to get accommodation - all that sort of thing. And at that time, I was really quite involved with the Young Austrians.

Aha, tell us something about Young Austrians.

Yes… yes. So, you know, that was my social contacts were the Young Austrians. I think I had- in Birmingham there was a group and I'd belonged to them. But coming to London I did join them when it was going. So-

Which centre? Where did you go? Where was the meeting place?

The meetings were in Bayswater; they had a house there, I think. And there were some meetings there, and you could go to that. I used to cycle around London at that time.

And what did you do at Young Austria? What do you remember?

Mn?

What were the meetings? What- what did you do there?

I don't know- singing, yes, that's right. We had a choir. We had the singing and I could never sing. But there was an Austrian singer- at least the- people who sang. And even in Birmingham, I think, we used to go around to various youth places or something, to sing Austrian songs.

[1:03:02]

Do you remember any?

I don't- I don't remember- I can't remember the songs, no. But they- they were- it was all very nice. The woman who organised it, she was very gifted and she could conduct it and all that. But I mean, I was out of tune, but I quite enjoyed the company, and doing it. Yes.

Why did- was it nice to meet other refugees?

Yes, but the others all were- they were mostly refugees of course. And they were mostly Jewish. And they were people who really didn't recognise their Jewishness particularly. So it was, you know, a different- a different line altogether.

So, were these your main social contacts in London, through Young Austria?

The main- I remained with Young Austrians, yes. I- I shared, eventually shared a flat with a woman who then married one of the chiefs of Young Austrians. Yes, I was in touch with them up to a point, yes.

But you were not in a leadership-?

No, no. No.

And at some point, then, some people went back to Austria?

Yes, they did, yes. Yes. And this was when my parents were dead against it, that I could have that possible idea you know. Cause I'd [inaudible] told them the day before that I might.

Were you contemplating going back to Austria?

No seriously, but at least, you know, it'd had a façade of doing it. [laughs]

Why? To build up a new Austria? That was the idea.

Yes. Yes. Good luck to them. Yes.

What were your feelings at that point - I don't know whether you can remember - towards Austria or towards Austrians? At that point, just after the war?

[1:04:50]

No, there were- it was just incitement from the – are the Young Austrians sort of- you know, that that's what you- that's what you are and that- you know, try to put on a bit. But really, it was very- fictitious really.

Did you consider at all emigrating to other countries, to America or to-?

At one time I thought of going to Israel. This was after Israel had become independent. And- I just thought, not seriously, but I thought it would be quite nice to see and to make contacts with various- this was after I'd done the psychiatric training. I thought that- quite interesting to see what can be done in Israel. And I made contact with one or two places to visit. And I was only there for about three weeks, something like that. And when I got back, I felt, well, I couldn't cope with that. It was just more than I could cope with. And so, I- I think it was probably even- yes, when I was doing this mental health course, it was probably at that time that-

You went to Israel?

That I went to Israel, yes. I stayed there for three weeks.

And what was it you couldn't cope with?

Well, I just really went around asking about other places.

Yes.

They didn't- I stayed with an uncle at the time; they'd recently come, too. So, I stayed with them and that's how- you know, got around from there. But that was just three weeks.

But was it very different, the social services, the whole...?

Well, it was very early in- in the life of Israel.

Yes.

Yes – yes. They weren't do- and also that the language would have been a big problem for me of course as well. So, I decided no, that's not for me.

So, you moved from social work to- you got a special training to…?

Yes, psychiatric social work, yes. Yes.

And what did that prepare you for, the psychiatric social work?

[1:06:55]

Either for people who'd been in mental hospitals or people- help get people discharged from the hospital and to find, you know- help them get back to their families or whatever. And- and also, really, I was more interested in working with families. And- I was still working in Birmingham. We had this special section of people who were dealing with the more difficult families. All sort of problem families. And others who had other- had the problems that they had. So, I sort of got interested in that sort of work. And really, I was… very lucky in having a very good supervisor of that team.

Where, in Birmingham?

In Birmingham. This was still in Birmingham, yes.

So, you then moved back to Birmingham?

Well- I'm thinking back in Birmingham… Yes, I did. That's right. After, yes. This was at the time when I- I'm- 'cause I went to Switzerland for a year in between. I'm trying to think when that was, yes. Working in Nottingham as a- was a children's officer. It was a very good team, and people were very close together, the workers. And it was really good. In fact, after many years, one of the people still corresponded with me – you know, after twenty years or so. And- but that was a good team. And then from there, that's right, I just- I think it was also because- I don't know, I'd had enough of that sort of life, I tried- I went to Switzerland for a year and had six months in Zurich and six months in Lausanne. And then when I came back- also my father's health was deteriorating a bit. And so, I stayed in Birmingham for a while.

And in fact, he passed away quite young, your father?

He was sixty-two when he died. Yes.

Which year? When did he-?

Which year was that? No, I wrote it down here somewhere.

In the 50s?

Something like that, yes. Yes, it was after the Health Service had come in.

Yes.

But he was sick so then he died in hospital in Birmingham. Yes.

[1:09:22]

And your mother stayed in Birmingham?

And she stayed in Birmingham. And after I got married- I got married in ’58 and after that she decided she’d like to come up to London. By that time, they’d had a house in Birmingham which I think she had tenants in. It was one of the big Victorian houses. So, she let that and she could come to London. And again, she had problems with accommodation, with housing. But she eventually managed to buy a house in north London and- got by that way. I don’t know how she managed, but she did. Yeah.

So, in your professional training so you went to Switzerland and you went to Birmingham and then – what happened? When did you come back?

Then I applied for this mental health course at the London School of Economics, encouraged by the…the man that- of that team. He was the most extraordinary person but he was very helpful. And that was twelve months at LSE.

What diploma was that? What course was that?

It was a [inaudible]. It was a mental health course. And we had the famous- people like Winnicott was on the- on the panel teaching us and that sort of- I can't remember the other people but there was certainly Winnicott. It was that period.

About attachment and-?

That's right, yes. Yes. Yes.

So, you were drawn more into the sort of psychiatric, psychological-?

That's right, yes. And many of my contacts were mainly other social workers. I wasn't interested in either refugees or Jews or whatever. It was mainly- call it colleagues that I was working with.

Did you have any contact with any Jewish community at all in London?

[1:11:25]

Hardly, no. No. It wasn't really till after I was married and my husband, he said, "Well, children must have- should have a Jewish education. We ought to join the synagogue." Well, I'd never been to any services or anything. We didn't have a Jewish wedding or- none of those things. And we just- you know, I just wanted, you know, we just wanted to be married there and that was it.

Where did you get married?

Hampstead Town Hall. [laughs]

And how did you meet your husband?

He knew a lot of people and sort of- someone got introduced somewhere and decided it was time to be married.

And he was also from Vienna?

He was also from Vienna, yes. But he was established in his business- in his business by that time. He'd- well, as I said, he left Vienna in 1933. And then was the war, and he was in the Army and all that sort of thing. But he… He was involved in- he'd started off with fancy goods and went- in the end he went on to jewellery. And he'd had a contact originally with a German firm of 'Mosaik'- a large … jewellery. And that was his basis. But he did, you know- he was a man who worked on his own. He- he didn't want to have a partner or join with anybody else. You know, he had someone helping him of course, but he was a one-man business.

And he'd been in London?

And did I not say- he was in London. He was based in London, yes.

And was it important for you that he was another-?

The- what?

Was it important for you that he was from Vienna, or-?

Yes, I think we had more or something, but we never spoke German to one another. But, you know, felt we had the same background kind of thing, yes. And I got- you know, got involved all about his family and all that.

What happened to his family?

[1:13:38]

His parents and his sister, they came out and he helped them. He did a lot to help his sister to get out here. And- and the parents I think his father worked with him for a little bit when they

came to London too. Various- various members of his family were- some went to South- South America and you know. Kind of things like that, yes.

And did you continue to work after you got married?

Yes, I did. I worked until I think the eldest child was about eight. And then I went back and just did- acquired part time. And again, it was a matter of luck where we lived then. The office of the Social Service was around the corner and it was just very convenient to pop in when I had to go to the job. It was just like that.

And what job did you get then?

Well, this was sort of social work and whatever you had to do then. Either checking people with handicap or old people. Or again, family work, and anything that was referred to Social Services.

This was for Barnet?

This was for Barnet, yes.

And how many years did you-?

Twenty years. [laughs]

In Barnet Social Services?

But I always worked part time – nine hours, yes.

[1:15:01]

Yes. Did you enjoy it?

It was… It was a job, really. Yes, of course I enjoyed it but it, but again, it was that I was more involved with colleagues and things. And at that time, well, we had joined a synagogue

by that time I suppose. But on a half-time basis if you like. Not very seriously, you know, because we wanted the children to go to services- services occasionally and that sort of thing.

This was Alyth Synagogue? Alyth?

It was- originally, we joined the Finchley Progressive. And then my husband was very keen on Dow Marmur who was the rabbi at Alyth Gardens. And so, we went to that. This was before the eldest one became Bar Mitzvah. And we've stayed with Alyth ever since, and I must say I'm very glad that I've stayed with them ever since; they've been very helpful to me here, particularly, and you know, since- since my husband died and before, and so on.

Do you still go? Do you still go?

Yes, I mean- not so much- go to services, but I try and take part. In fact, we did- we got very involved in the Soviet Jewry problem when there was- whenever it was. And we each went separately to visit Jews in Russia. We didn't want to go together in case - the children were still fairly small - in case something happened. So, we went independently with different people each time. But that was a very interesting experience. But some of the people who went- well, I used to keep up contact with them. But as far as I'm concerned, they were very helpful; they used to see you and all of that. But that was that. But that's how it was. But that was my only involvement really with synagogue activities.

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

Jewish – yes, very much so. I've got- Michael, the one who has just been here, he married out anyway. Paul, the older one, he married an American Jewish girl… who had more Jewish background than he had. And the young one, she, I don't know if she's involved in Brussels in a synagogue. She hasn't got a partner.

So, the Jewish thing was- you wanted to give them a Jewish heritage.

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes – yes.

[1:17:41]

And did you talk to your children about your past at all?

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. And I mean I've written out my history. In fact, when I retired, I'd got the time now, I did write my history. But I looked back on it now, and even that, I wrote it twenty years ago. It hasn't changed. [laughs]

The history- the past is still the same.

That's right. Yes – yes.

And did you ever go back to Vienna?

Yes, we did. We went- we went a couple of times to show the children. One of them, I think- can't remember, only one of them was with us, I think, for some reason, to see where we lived. And I think I went back. Yes, once went together and once I went on my own after my husband had died, I think.

And what was it like to go back to Vienna?

[1:18:43]

It was- no, well you've been- you've seen it all before. I mean. No, not really. I did pick up one girl I was at school with. She- well she was the same as I was. And she'd gone to France during the war and married, I think a- no, I don't know whom she married- anyway she- she had the child and I made contact with her- looked her up. And it was a wonderful reunion. And then she said, "Yes, we'll keep in touch." And then I never heard any more.

This was a school reunion?

She was- we were at school together yes; this was the girl I used to pick up for school every morning.

Aha. So, the school organised the reunion for you, or- the City, or-?

No, well independently, because it was after my husband had died, I think, I wrote to the school he'd gone to and said I would like to come and see them and so on. Now they knew all about the history of the refugees who'd been in their school. And then also the school I'd gone to, I went to see them too. And then, yes, I think I went on my own to do that.

And did you feel at all sentimental or you felt you still had a connection to Vienna?

Not particularly, really, no- you sort of- I- no. It's a nice place to visit. Not really. I think in a way my husband felt more towards Vienna than I did. He was nine years older than I was. So, it was different for him really, because he'd had a good time when he was a youngster.

Yes.

Which, I'd missed that period. So, I think it was different for him, really.

You already had your strong memories as a-?

As I- had child's memories. That's right. Yes.

[1:20:48]

Yeah…yeah. And how would you describe your identity today? How would you describe yourself in terms of your own identity?

As English Jewish.

Is there anything from your past which you feel connected to?

Not particularly really. No – no. No.

And German, do you still speak German or read German?

I do, I do speak German. I did in fact, when the U3A [University of the 3rd Age] started I had a little group of German people. It was very nice; I enjoyed doing that.

To speak German?

Yes. To speak German, yes. Yes. They- it was not difficult because they were all different levels but it was a nice little group that lasted for about a year. And then I- I couldn't do it any more after that.

But did you keep your German? Do you speak German?

I can speak German, but I- I- yes, I can speak German, but I don't find reading very easy. And I- as such, I don't like the language particularly. I find it too guttural and too- I just don't like it particularly. Because I have a friend here, who's in the same position as I am, but very German. She says "it's your mother tongue", and she feels, you know, thinks it would be nice to do it. But I say, no, I just don't like to.

You don't feel…

No.

Nostalgic?

No, I just don't like it. No.

Is there anything you miss from Vienna?

That I miss from Vienna? Not particularly, no.

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

[1:22:33]

Well, I would imagine so. I just don't know what I would have done- would have done. I- I don't know. No, I don't know whether I might have wanted to do medicine, or law or something. I don't know. I was always very concerned with underprivileged people. But I don't know whether I would have done that in Austria more than anywhere else.

But in a way you'd seen- you saw poverty in Vienna as well. Not only when you came to England.

I could, sorry?

You saw poverty in Vienna.

Poverty? …Well… not overly, because as a tourist you know, you don't-

No, I meant as a child.

As a child? Well, it was just- the people would come to the door sometimes, yes. Yes. Yes. And there was even- he was a- I don't know, he was a cousin of my father's or something. He used to sell Sunday newspapers. And when he finished, he used to come up to us and got his lunch. And I used to feel it was terrible for that chap. To- "We've finished dinner", you know. And then he was- because he really needed the meal then. And I really thought that was most uncomfortable. But… I don't even know how he was related. He was a very distant cousin of my…father's.

So, you think you might have become a doctor or lawyer or-?

I might have done, or social worker there, I suppose. I don't know. I did do quite a bit of work here with people who had mental- handicapped children. And while I was working here, I had a little group of mums who had handicapped children-

Right.

…to support them. I did quite a bit of that.

[1:24:23]

And as somebody who has worked with mental health, do you feel that… let's say that the group of German Jewish refugees who came, that they should have got more help… in terms of mental health? Or should have asked for more help, some people, and didn't ask? Or- I mean- is that something you came across?

No, I mean, I sort of- as I say in Middlesbrough, they had this hostel of children.

Yes.

And I felt even then, I didn't want to know… too much.

Yes. And later?

And later on… No, I didn't- I never thought that they should have more help than anybody else.

Yeah. But what I mean is… It seems there is a generation of survivors and refugees…

Yes.

… who probably didn't ask for help and maybe needed some help.

Right.

You know, whether- well, now there are some groups to help but I don't know. What do you feel is the benefit?

Yes, I would think there must have been people who could have had help.

Yes.

Yes, and that's a- but I don't think I really sort of went into that, no.

No, it didn't…

No – no.

You didn't come across it in your own work?

No.

And when did you join the AJR, or-?

I think after my mother did. She used to be a- a regular member. And used to come back and you know, we used to sort of think "Why do you go there?" And- and in a way we teased her about it. And after she died, I found, you know, I enjoyed the magazines and so went to join, yes. Cause I think it's an excellent- excellent journal and has been for many years.

[1:26:02]

You enjoy reading it.

Yes – yes.

And how do you see the future, what do you think should they do?

What, the AJ- for the AJR?

Yes. For example, yeah.

Difficult to know, because I sort of wonder… we must all be dying off. I mean, here I am – ninety. So, there can't be many others like us. And the second generation- it surprises me that there are so many second-generation people who come forward and they say they want to join. But again, there are others who don't want to know. And I appreciate that also.

Yes.

I mean there's a lady here whose husband came on the Kindertransport; I think he was very small when he came.

And do you think the experience of the parents could have affected the second generation?

Well, I would think it must have done. Anything happens, you- you just pass it on to your children, or you don't.

Yeah. In your case, do you think your own education, how you raised your children, do you think it was affected by your… migration experience, uprooting?

It's hard to know, really.

Yeah.

Because how might it have been if it hadn't been like that?

That's right, but maybe- I don't know, maybe… what do you feel?

No, I didn't know. I mean, I know there's a high incidence amongst refugees, [inaudible], of course there is. But then that's how it is. I think, well, that's part of life.

[1:27:44]

Yeah. But do you think for example, in… older age, that the refugees or survivors have different issues than, let's say the local British population? I don't know.

I really sort of think of the current refugees, who are a very different kettle of fish. They have different problems and different situations.

Yes.

And I do- I really feel more for them now than I feel- a lot of the refugees, some have made good and have overcome their problems and they've coped. And then some of them have had help and others haven't. I know.

Yeah. What do you think the government should do? Let in more refugees – at this point? In the current-

Yes.

…current atmosphere- climate?

They should-

Do you think the British government should allow-?

I think they should do more. They should let people come in, yes. Yes. And I think because really you know they have the opportunity to- to make good and to do something- whatever: a lot of them have.

Yes.

And it's a problem all around the world now. But nevertheless, I think they do need help.

And indeed, you were helped by one person. And your family.

Yes.

Has this lady been acknowledged somewhere?

Sorry?

Did you keep in touch with this- with your foster mother?

Oh, yes. And she was most helpful. We you know, used to write a lot of letters and so on. It wasn't a very close relationship, but it was a- a relationship by letter. And when I didn't know what to do, I would write to her. And- and she would give me her advice, as it were. But it was on a distant sort of basis. And I think she, she was very concerned not only for Jewish refugees but generally, for the world. Like- I worked in the Settlement which was just ordinary people- people.

And do you feel your own- your experience enriched your- let's say, your professional life? Could you relate differently to people?

Well, I'm sure it did help; it must have done. You've got the background and you can't get away from that. Yes, I think it must have influenced me quite a lot, yes.

[1:30:22]

In which ways?

I don't know. But you do kind of feel you- you underst- you have a slightly better understanding of people. Yes.

As an outsider, or…?

Yes.

Yes. And you said you wrote your memories.

Yes.

You wrote a little memoir. How- how did- what impact did that have? Was that- you wanted to do that for your children, or?

Yes, I wanted mainly to do it for the children. I thought when I retired, I've got the time. And I sat down and wrote pieces. I could dictate some of it and get somebody to type it out and all

of that. It took me a long- quite a time to do it, but I felt I- something I could do. And so the children all got a copy and as I say, the Wiener Library got one. I don't know who else.

Do you have grandchildren as well?

I have grandchildren, yes. The one here, he has two- two boys. The elder one is seventeen and other one is thirteen. And the one in America, they've a ten-year-old boy and twins of seven, seven-and-a-half. Yes.

I was going to say, are the grandchildren interested?

[1:31:34]

Those are grandchildren, yes.

Are they interested in your history? Some of them are too young, but still.

It's a difficult thing to know, really, because… discussed about it and my son said he gave my story to read to the boys. And he said, "No comment." And I thought well that's [inaudible]. "No comment." But- although he's a boy who does talk a lot. But there was nothing- so I don't know what he thought about it, really. As I say, yes, they know, because also their background is probably so different from their father's side. Because Michael's father, he came from rather poor circumstances I think in – I don't know where they come from - in Africa somewhere. So, I think that background was quite different. I know he came at eighteen and started going to college here and he's made himself into an electrical engineer and, you know, he's fine. So, you know, he's proof, really, that you can do things with yourself, if you want.

Sorry, who is that?

Sorry. This is my- my son's father-in-law.

Father-in-law. OK.

Yes. Yes. And- and the mother-in-law, she came to study nursing here and you know so people have done… They've got on- they've got over their problems.

Yeah…yeah. OK Eva. Is there anything you'd like to add? Something I haven't asked you? I think we've got a very good idea about your life and-

Well, it's hard to know because I'm sure it's a sort of one-sided picture that I give you. I don't know. One- as I talk, one remembers things. And then you wonder if I should have told you this, I should have told you that.

[1:33:29]

Yes, that's part of a conversation.

Well, that's right, yes.

I mean a question I have for you: Is there any message you'd like to give somebody who might watch this interview based on your experiences?

…Do the best to be patient, I think. And to try and understand your point- for you to ask the right questions. And to get, to, to- perhaps be able to give you a sense that you can in a sense relate to me. That you're not a complete- that you're not a stranger anymore. I felt, you know, I could talk to you. And I think it- I felt it was important to be able to do that.

OK. Eva, thank you very, very much for this interview. And we're going to look at your photographs now. Thank you.

You want to see the photographs now. I'm not sure- well let's see, I can look in a suitcase what there is. I think they're mainly from my husband's family.

OK. We'll have a look.

Yes.

Thank you.

OK.

[Sound break]
Yes, there was one more thing you wanted to say.

Yes. I feel I'm very glad to be here. And I think it's wonderful to have this home, the way it is with twenty-five people. It seems, you know, it's the right number, in some ways. They're all different kinds of people. Some have more problems than others. But somehow, we all seem to fit in well together. And I think the staff are extremely kind. The- it's very helpful to have people from different backgrounds on the- on the staff and they seem to understand what they have to go through.

And are there other refugees here in- you are in Clara Nehab Home in Temple Fortune.

There are. I see other refugee- AJR people here.

Yes?

And I like to go over to the AJR meetings. The local ones at- at Alyth Gardens…

Yes?

The synagogue across the road. I think they're not that committed to coming to them, I don't think.

[1:36:04]

But you do.

But I do, yes. Yes – yes.

It's important for you to go?

It's important to have that kind of contact, because it's been difficult to make contact with some of the people here because they're not able to talk.

Yes.

And it's hard for them and for you as well. But I do try and make contact with the ones that one can have a conversation with.

Yes. And you managed to adapt yourself, coming from a flat to…

I did manage that, yes – yes. And I- and… For me, it's the end of the line here. Because I know I can't go back to live alone anymore. And so I make the most of what I have and so, you know, I haven't bothered very much having my own- my own things or- what's gone is gone. And it doesn't matter really very much. They're only things.

That's very positive. That's very good.

Well, I feel really, I've got to be positive about being here. Because otherwise, you know [laughs] you'd get depressed if you did think about it.

Yeah. Because for some people it's a difficult transition.

Well, yes, I mean, I'd no- no choice this time of coming here, because I just fell in the road and fortunately somebody came to pick me up. But when the period was finished of looking after me, the thought of going home again, and the worry of getting people to do your shopping and your cleaning and all this kind of thing- however nice they may be, it was a lot of work. It would have been a lot of work for my children. Especially as one is way out in London and the other is in Belgium. You know, they can't- they're not around the corner. They've been very good and very helpful and done as much as they could. But you know, I wouldn't expect them to- to do any more.

OK. OK - Eva, thank you again.

OK. Well thank you for coming and doing this.

[End of interview]
[1:38:15]

[1:38:36]
[Start of photographs]

Photo 1
Yes, please, who is on this photo?

Katarina Treibl. It's spelled T R E I B L.

And who is that?

My maternal grandmother.

Your mother's mother.

Yes.

And when was this picture taken?

I have no idea; it must have been taken in Vienna a long time ago.

So, it's the 1880s.

Yes, I should think so.

And you said she wanted to be a singer?

Well, I don't know how accurate that information is, but yes. But they felt it wasn't suitable for a young woman on her own.

Photo 2
All right. …This is Peter Freedman, who became Peter Frean as my husband, and the younger child, Hans- or Heinz - H E I N Z - his younger brother who unfortunately died at the age of four or thereabouts.

And where was it taken?

I don't know. If it's signed by Hanne Freedman, she was an aunt of Peter's who became a professional photographer. But the signatures there at the bottom- doesn't apply to the picture.

Photo 3
OK. Well, this is a picture of Peter Freedman as he then was, when they had an exhibition of his- I don't know, I think, combs he was selling, in London. Soon after he came to London. I mean- soon after he came to London - yes. I believe some royalty attended this exhibition but I have no knowledge of that.

Photo 4
This is my wedding photograph on the 20th of December 1958, taken outside Hampstead Town Hall.

Photo 5
This is a picture of Paul my eldest son with his wife Sabrina and their three children. Zachary, Bella and Mina. That's it.

Photo 6
This is a picture of Joseph and his- sorry - Michael and his wife Sandra and their two boys, Joseph and Luke.

Photo 7
This is a picture of me with my daughter Ruth, taken at Kenwood Park. When?
In the spring of this year. In the spring of – what are we? – 2017.

Mrs. Frean, thank you very much for this interview and sharing your story and photographs with us.

[End of photographs]
[1:26:02]