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Interview Transcript Title Page

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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 50

NAME: STEFAN UDO RUFF

DATE: 8 MARCH 2004

LOCATION: YORK

INTERVIEWER: LEE COMER

TAPE 1
Tape 1: 0 minute 30 seconds

LC: Let me start, first of all, by thanking you very much for agreeing to be part of this interview. We're doing this, as you know, for posterity for anyone who is interested and it will be used for educational purposes, and it's an archive, a living archive and a living history of the experiences of Jewish refugees. Can we start by asking you, please, first of all, just to state your name?

SR: I am Stefan Ruff. I was born in Vienna, on the 9th June, 1925.

LC: Would you like to tell us a little bit about your family background and your circumstances?

SR: Yes, both my parents were born in Czernowitz, in Romania, which at the time of their birth was in Austria. My father ---

LC: The Austro-Hungarian Empire?

SR: The Austro-Hungarian Empire, yes.

LC: What sort of town was that?

SR: Czernowitz is quite an important business-industrial town in the north, in the part of Romania called the Bukowina, which is northern Romania, north-western Romania. It is now part of Russia and the town itself has changed its name from Czernowitz, which was the Austro-German name, then it went to Cernăuţi which is the Romanian name, and it is now Chernovtsy, which is the Russian.

LC: What language did your parents speak?

SR: German.

LC: They spoke German?

SR: Oh yes, they spoke German, but they also knew Romanian and Ruthinian, and they used that to talk to each other when they didn't want me to understand what they were saying. My father had two sisters, he was born in 1882, and he had two sisters, Aunt Gitta and Aunt Tina. Now, Aunt Gitta I met, I knew her because we went to Czernowitz when I was 8, it's the only time I've been there, when I was eight years old. We also went there when I was two, but I don't remember that.

LC: You were born there?

SR: No, no, I was born in Vienna.

LC: Oh, you were born in Vienna?

SR: My parents had moved to Vienna in the twenties.

LC: I see, right.

SR: You know, immediately after the war. If anything, during the war, I suspect. My father served as an officer in the Medical Corps in the Austrian Army. He was a pharmacist and got medals and-.

LC: In the First World War?

Tape 1: 3 minutes 26 seconds

SR: In the First World War. He was taken prisoner by the Russians and served time and was for some part of the war in a Russian prisoner of war camp. And actually the fact that he did this and got medals was quite useful even after the Nazis came.

LC: This was before you were born. Was it before your father was married to your mother?

SR: Oh yes! My parents got married in 1924, when my father was 42. They would-, I think they knew each other in Czernowitz. But I have absolutely no idea about their romantic past. Immediately after the war, about '21 or '22, 1922, my father went to Indonesia. After the First World War, my father went to Indonesia, which was then the Dutch East Indies, and spent some time there in a town called Bandung, as a pharmacist. And I've got a ---

LC: Do you know why he went there?

SR: I think just for experience, I don't know. He was just-. And he was able to speak Dutch quite well; I mean he did a lot of translation work when he came back to Vienna.

LC: Where did he train to be a pharmacist?

SR: In Czernowitz. I think I've got his university degree order somewhere, but he was trained in Czernowitz, got his degree there. As I say, then he came back to Vienna, married my mother, must have been about a year after he got back to Vienna.

LC: But they'd met in Czernowitz?

SR: They met in Czernowitz, yes, he knew her from Czernowitz.

LC: Right!

SR: And their families knew each other, I think.

LC: Can you tell us a little bit about your mother's family now?

SR: Now, my mother's family, my grandfather was a banker in Czernowitz, he had a bank, and they were quite well-off, I think. There were 8 children altogether. My proper grandmother died after the birth of the, I think it was the third child, which was my Aunt Freda, but I think she died at that point, in childbirth just about. And my grandfather married again. His wife brought with her, his new wife, one son, who actually later on lived in Vienna, so I knew him, and they had two more, three more children, I think, three or four more children, I can't remember now which, who is which at this point, you know. I could go off on the fingers of my hand really, but two-.

LC: So, your mother was one of the first three?

Tape 1: 6 minutes 36 seconds

SR: Yes, yes, my mother was one of the first three. As I said, I think it was three or four, I'm not sure. I know it was four afterwards, together. The two younger aunts, called Eva and Nora, well, Eva died about a year ago, she was 101; Nora is still alive, she is now 101, and they are both in Israel. And my cousin has been their carer for donkey's years, which is sad really, because she was married to a surgeon in Israel. He was a very good man, but that's one of - he was also a good sculptor and painter – that's one of his [points] and there's another one in there, another painting. And he died, I'm trying to think, must be 8, 9 years ago. He was a diabetic and there was some disaster befell and he wasn't treated correctly, despite being a surgeon in the medical profession, they still got it wrong. And he needn't have died, I think, but he died.

LC: To go back to your mother's background, you said they were quite comfortably off. Her father was a banker and so on. What did she do for a living? Did she work?

SR: No, no, I don't think she ever worked. You know, there was money, and in those days, in the 1920s, if you had sufficient money, you went to school, I mean, she was very good at school, I mean, she was an intelligent woman, but the thought of working just didn't come into it!

LC: You know you said your father was 42 when he married your mother. Do you know how old your mother was?

SR: Yes, she was born in 1992 ---

LC: 1892.

SR: 1892, sorry, 1892. So, they were married in 1924, so she was 32, which when I was born - I was born literally a year after they got married, a year and a bit after they were married- if I remember rightly, it used to be called in England an 'elderly prima gravida' but ---

LC: Are your first memories then of Vienna?

SR: Oh yes, well, yes. I mean, I do remember at 8 years old going to Czernowitz because we were there for a holiday, to see the family, and I can remember quite a bit about the town, which is quite funny really, about the town and the people I met.

LC: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

SR: No.

LC: You were an only child?

SR: I was the only child.

LC: Okay. Let's talk then about your childhood in Vienna? And your house, and where you lived, what life was like and so on?

SR: Well, I don't think my father, who smoked like a chimney anyway, was a terribly wealthy man. I mean, he was employed in a pharmacist's shop, he didn't own one. We lived in-. Vienna built in the late twenties, early thirties; the Vienna Corporation built all these wonderful council flats for its workers. And they were, I mean they're still there, they're still using them, and they're very good. And we had a council flat.

LC: Do you remember the name of the street?

Tape 1: 10 minutes 22 seconds

SR: Yes, oh yes.

SR: We lived in a district of Vienna called Währing. I mean, have you ever-, are you familiar with Viennese traditions?

LC: You can tell us about them.

SR: If two Viennese meet, they will possibly say their names, but the next question will be 'Welcher Bezirk?' It's absolutely the first question you ask any other Viennese. And I lived in the 18th district, in Währing.

LC: And what kind of district is that?

SR: It's a fairly superior district actually, yes, its one of the better ones. It has a large area of very nice villas and, you know, there's lots of trees and avenues and all the rest of it. But I lived, as I say, in a large block of council flats, which had a very nice garden to it, nice area to play and all the rest of it, you know, very well managed properties.

LC: Do you know how many rooms there were in the flat?

SR: There was a kitchen, a lavatory - not a bathroom - a kitchen, a lavatory, a large bedroom and a small bedroom, end of story. And the hallway, that was it.

LC: Yes, so two rooms, kitchen, bathroom that was it.

SR: Yes, two rooms, kitchen and bathroom, and a balcony.

LC: So you would sleep and eat in the same room then?

SR: My parents did. I had the smaller bedroom, which was also a playroom and everything else, nursery that was it.

LC: And did you live in that flat the whole time you were in Vienna?

SR: Yes, yes, until-. We were thrown out of there, of course, by the Nazis and lived with, oh, sort of in somebody else's flat, which we moved into for a very short time, until I left Vienna. I left Vienna on one of the first Kindertransports, in December, 10th December '38.

LC: And how old were you then?

SR: Thirteen and a half.

LC: Thirteen and a half.

SR: I actually had a Bar Mitzvah in Vienna.

LC: When you were living there, you obviously went to school in that area. Can you tell me a bit about the school?

LC: Well, my primary school was in, I think it was called Heizingergasse. It was a very nice little primary school, for four years you go there. And then I went to a Realgymnasium, which is a grammar school, essentially dealing, concentrating more on technical subjects, other than classics. But, even so, my first foreign language was Latin. My parents got an English teacher to come and teach me English, even at that stage.

Tape 1: 13 minutes 44 seconds

LC: Oh, why? Why did they do that?

SR: I don't know. Somebody said to them it would be useful for me to learn English. I was very good at school. You only get 'sehr gut', 'gut', 'genügend' and 'ungenügend', you know, you get four classes of marks.

LC: Good, very good, excellent-.

SR: And most of it was 'sehr gut', you see, you know? I've still got my school reports.

LC: Being an only child then, did you have plenty of friends around?

SR: Oh yes, yes.

LC: Did you play sports or anything like that?

SR: No, I've never been sporty, never ever. Sports was something other people did in a way. I don't know why.

LC: Can you remember how you spent your lunchtimes?

SR: Oh, went out with friends, did homework, I mean there was a lot of homework to do.

LC: Did you have a bicycle?

SR: No, but it's interesting, you see, I remember going out with friends, even at 11, 12 years old, a couple of us would go out, take a tram, go to the Prater, take a tram back, nobody gave a minute's thought about safety, it just didn't occur to anybody.

LC: What's the Prater? What was the Prater?

SR: It's where the big wheel is, the amusement park in Vienna. You don't know Vienna? Oh dear, you don't know what you are missing. I loved Vienna, you know.

LC: In school, obviously you came from a Jewish background, were there other Jewish children there?

SR: Yes, there were about half a dozen Jewish children there. I went when I was in Vienna last year. I mean, I went regularly to Vienna, 'cause my mother lived in Vienna from 1953 onwards, but for the first time last year, for some reason, I went back to my old school. And they dug out the class archive from my class and I've got a list of all the people, and I can tell you which are the Jews and which are-. There'd be about 7 or 8 in a class of 30, thereabouts.

LC: And did you experience any anti-Semitism at all, either away or in the school?

SR: No. In the words of Cabaret, 'He didn't look Jewish at all'.

LC: Was there anti-Semitism there if you did look Jewish, in the area?

SR: Oh, yes! Generally, everywhere in Vienna. I mean, what do you expect? 10% of the population of Vienna was Jewish, 10%, you know?

LC: How would you see it? How would you experience it? How would you know it was there as a growing boy, as a young child?

Tape 1: 16 minutes 41 seconds

SR: It was difficult because I haven't got any personal experience, serious personal experience of it. Some of the kids got bullied, I think, a bit. There was a general feeling among Jews, I mean, there were some jobs that just weren't open to Jews, for instance, no way could you get a job like that or like that if you were Jewish.

LC: And you knew that growing up?

SR: Oh yes, as you were growing up you knew that. And, on the whole, you didn't marry out. But on the other hand ---

LC: Why?

SR: Essentially because, you know, your potential wife's relations would object, really, you know, because marry the Jewish, you know? But then racial prejudice, Jews need talk about racial prejudice? Have you ever heard them? You should marry a Schwarze? You know, right?

LC: So, as you say, when you were growing up, you experienced that. But was your family observant?

SR: My parents observed the high Jewish festivals. We did have proper Pessach at home, with the cleaning and the 'Seder haben', you know, just Seder, just Pessach, Passover.

And, of course, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashana**,** my parents went to synagogue and kept the fast on Yom Kippur.

LC: And you were brought up to do that too?

SR: Oh yes, and I did go to the religious education, you know, at the synagogue, for quite a while, never took to it, you know, it bored me to tears. I could at that stage read Hebrew and I can still, to some extent, read Hebrew, and I did Bar Mitzvah, which meant quite a bit of swotting up, because the extract that you've got to read from the Torah, you've got to know it. So yeah, so I went to that extent, but, on the other hand, ham and pork was regularly eaten at home, kosher we didn't know, except at the Passover. You know, sausage, 'Wurst', normal food. We never worried about not having meat and milk at the same time, or anything like that. But my mother said prayers every Friday.

Tape 1: 20 minutes 13 seconds

LC: But you didn't observe the Sabbath?

SR: No.

LC: Did she want you to pray and so on, on Friday nights?

SR: Not terribly, they weren't terribly insistent on it, because they didn't really set a very good example now, did they? No, I just wasn't brought up in a religious atmosphere.

LC: What about the social circles that they moved in and you as a family moved in? Was that mixed or-?

SR: No, I think it was mostly Jewish, distant relations, friends, friends my mother had met, my father, business, you know? It was just, there were other pharmacists and that sort of thing, but on the whole, it tended to be Jewish families.

LC: And when you went to school, obviously it was a mixed intake in that school, did you have friends who weren't Jewish yourself?

SR: No, funnily enough, when I come to think back on it, yes, I think I had one, one non-Jewish friend, but, by and large, I tended to be with other Jewish boys, rather than - it was a boys' school - rather than the Christians, which may have been something to do with anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is endemic in Austria. I mean, it's a Catholic country, for a start, and, as I said, 10% of the population were Jewish, which raised a lot of hackles really.

LC: So, when did you first become really aware of it? And, if you can describe the sort of build up to it, to having to leave and so on?

SR: Well, personally, quite frankly, I mean, if I hadn't been pointed in the direction, I wouldn't have realised that it existed. It was my parents occasionally saying things, which implied that they were worried about anti-Semitism. They didn't affect me personally.

LC: When you say that you had the freedom to get on a tram and go anywhere, do you think that they felt comfortable with that because you didn't look Jewish?

SR: I have no idea. I have no idea.

LC: Did you ever see any events or whatever?

SR: Not until after the Nazis came, not until after that. And even then not a lot. I mean, there was a lot of this business going on of making Jews scrub the streets clean and so on.

LC: Yes, I think I heard about that.

SR: And I think I only once saw it happening.

LC: But you did see that?

SR: Oh, yeah.

LC: What did you see exactly?

SR: Well, it was just a crowd and in the middle there were some people, scrubbing the streets, so I walked away.

LC: Standing or kneeling?

SR: Oh kneeling, on their hands and knees.

LC: With a broom?

SR: Oh no, no, no, they were on their hands and knees, with a bucket and a scrubbing brush.

LC: When was that? When did you see that?

SR: It would be some time, possibly, well, it would be after the Anschluss, but I don't know particularly when. And even then I was still going about on my own, nobody ever touched me, nobody ever shouted at me or said 'Jew' or anything like that, it just never occurred.

Tape 1: 23 minutes 53 seconds

LC: So can you then describe what did happen that forced you to leave?

SR: Oh yes, well, obviously, I mean, my father had lost his job. Everybody was very worried really about what was going to happen next. And then there was Kristallnacht, of course, and in the evening of the 7th-.

LC: Can you date that for us?

SR: Kristallnacht was what? 9th November, wasn't it?

LC: 9th November?

SR: '38.

LC: 1938.

SR: I think it was the 9th, wasn't it? Can't remember now, it was 9th or 10th, 11th November, can't remember now. 9th November.

LC: Did that come out of the blue? Or was there a warning and you knew it was going to happen? How did that happen?

SR: No, it just came out of the blue. Of course, it was a reaction to this bloke killing somebody in Paris. But obviously, yes, it was being used as an excuse. But stormtroopers, police, all sorts came to the house.

LC: To your house?

SR: Yes, to the flat. Arrested my father, took him away.

LC: And you had no sense that this was going to happen, no feeling that this was going to happen?

SR: No, no, not at all.

LC: Were you there?

SR: Oh, I was there, yes, oh yes. They took some valuables, not an awful lot, they took some valuables away, and went away.

LC: And took your father away with them?

SR: Yes.

LC: What time of day was it?

SR: Evening, in the evening. And then my father was in one of the, they took all the Jews they had taken away into various detention centres in Vienna, and two days later my father came back. As I say, I think his war decorations helped. He did have a fair number of contacts in Vienna. And he talked himself out in some way. And I've never discovered how. I mean, a large number of the people who were taken away finished up in concentration camps and died, so, you know-. But as soon as that happened, the Kindertransport was on the horizon and they got me into that.

LC: Just to go back, those two days, how did your mother cope with that?

SR: I can't remember. She coped.

LC: Did you cope with it? Can you remember it?

SR: Yeah.

LC: Did you think he was going to come back?

SR: Yeah. I mean, my life is always, I mean I've always worked on the principle that it'll be ok on the night, sort of thing.

LC: And did he say when he came out how he had been treated, or what happened in those two days?

SR: Not a lot, no, no, no.

LC: And what did you feel about the valuables being taken?

SR: I wasn't particularly concerned.

LC: Were they bothered?

SR: Yes, obviously, yes. I mean, some of it was sentimental stuff, but I wasn't directly affected, you know?

LC: Your friends, your school-friends and so on in your social circle, did they talk about all this? Were you aware of discussions about all the things that had happened and so on?

SR: Ah, now, I of course had had to leave my Realgymnasium, shortly after the Anschluss, about May or something, and then went to the Jewish secondary school, the Chajes Gymnasium. And I didn't- I started in September - and hardly got to know anybody in my class, really, to talk to. What is more, the Chajes Gymnasium was in the second district of Vienna, it was about half an hour at least, on the tram, to get there from where I was living. So you spent your time going there and coming home. And the other Jewish children - and Währing is not a particularly Jewish district - and the other children

that were there were mostly in the second and twentieth district, which is the island on the Danube, and so I didn't have people to talk to.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 27 seconds

LC: And did your parents tell you what was going on, did they explain things to you?

SR: Oh yes, yes, oh yes. And obviously, I knew what was happening, I can still remember when the Anschluss was about to happen, because it was all being hyped up about how Germany was a bad thing and Austria was wonderful. And when Schuschnigg was the Chancellor, he came onto the radio to say what was about to happen. And apparently, well no, I remember I cried like nobody's business, you know, I was very upset. Not because of Jewishness, but simply because Austria, for which I had been built up to feel patriotism, was being invaded by Germany, about to be invaded by Germany. I mean, it was nothing to do with being Jewish; it was all about being Austrian.

LC: And the German flag went up, didn't it?

SR: Oh yes, yes, oh yeah, I mean it was all-.

LC: And did you go out and see this happening?

SR: Oh yes, I mean I didn't go to the wonderful big rallies where all the Austrians cheered Hitler and all the rest of it, but I was astonished that they did, I mean, because to me, as an Austrian, it wasn't the right thing to do, but, as I say, it was nothing to do with being Jewish, it was much to do with being Austrian,

LC: So the impact of that on your life and your family, what happened immediately after that?

SR: Not a lot.

LC: Why? Did you carry on going to the Jewish school?

SR: Yeah. Well, I went to ordinary school for a couple of months still, and then-. I mean, one of the most amazing organisational feats that I witnessed, of course, in Austria, it always gave me great respect for German efficiency, was - Austria drove on the left, like England; Germany drove on the right - and Hitler said, 'No way, change it.' It was done in about two months, which meant rearranging all the exits and entries from trams and trains and, you know, everything had to be changed, tram stops, the lot. The way things went, cars, road signs, the lot, it was all done in two months flat. Now, that's some achievement.

LC: Mmm, fantastic when you think about it.

SR: Yes, you know, it was one of the things that really impressed me. It was terrible for the Viennese, because nobody ever, I mean, trams didn't have doors, nobody ever waited for a tram to stop to get on or off, if you were fit, but if you're always used to doing it on the left side, you've suddenly got to start doing it on the right side, and a lot of people finished up with broken ankles and God knows what.

LC: Can I just touch on the fact that your father lost his job? How soon before the Anschluss did that happen?

SR: After. Oh yes, well, it would be about, I think it was May, something like that, and the Anschluss was in March. And it would be about May, about two or three months after.

Tape 1: 32 minutes 5 seconds

LC: And how did that go down?

SR: Well, my parents didn't really sort of talk to me about it much, so I haven't a clue. We were still eating, God knows how, or why, or where the money was coming from, I have no idea.

LC: Maybe they had savings?

SR: They might have had, I have absolutely no idea. I had no knowledge whatsoever about my household. The thing you've got to remember: my parents were a lot older than me, so they were definite and they came from very traditional families. They were simply not used to discussing things like that with the children, no way. You know, it was very different.

LC: In terms of sort of protecting you from what was going on around you, maybe?

SR: Possibly, I've no idea, but just didn't enter their minds. It wasn't something you talked in front of the children about.

LC: So, do you have any sense of what their reaction was to the Germans coming to Vienna?

SR: Well, they didn't like it, they didn't like it, obviously, they were worried about it. But I suppose, to some extent, they sort of hoped that it would go away, you know? People did, didn't they? I mean, think of all the Germans, who lived from 1933 onwards with this thing hanging over them all the time.

LC: Thinking it'll go away.

SR: Yes, it'll go away.

LC: In terms of him losing his job, was it made apparent as to why he lost his job?

SR: Oh, yes!

LC: It was made apparent to him?

SR: Oh yes, yes, because he was in friendly relations with the people who owned the pharmacy, you know? They just said, 'I'm sorry, we have to dismiss you because you're Jewish.'

LC: So then you were still living in the flat, did you notice a change in the behaviour of the people in your block of flats, for instance, or anybody else to do with the family?

SR: Not seriously, honestly I didn't see it. My parents obviously did, but me, I never felt persecuted, not at any time in Vienna.

LC: So how did, how long then did you stay in that flat after that, after the invasion?

SR: I can't honestly remember, it might have been about June, July, something like that. But it was only just sort of across the street we went.

LC: So who did you actually move in with then? And can you remember why you did?

SR: Well we were told that we had to give up our flat.

LC: You actually had to give it up?

Tape 1: 35 minutes 6 seconds

SR: Oh yes, because it was a council flat and council flats were not for Jews.

LC: And were you the only ones in the flat who were Jewish or were there others?

SR: Oh no, there were other families there, I think, I'm not aware, no, actually I'm not aware, I can't remember, no, there weren't any other Jewish families in that block of flats, funnily enough. At least, not that I can remember.

LC: So who did you move in with?

SR: Pass. It was somebody who owned a flat in the same street opposite, who had rooms to let in effect.

LC: Right, so you weren't sharing with friends, you just rented rooms?

SR: No, no, no, we rented rooms, you see? But I'm not quite sure what direction-.

LC: Can you remember that flat where you lived?

SR: Yes, vaguely, but I can't remember how we lived or where we ate even, or how we cooked, or anything. You know, I just can't remember that.

LC: So, we're in the summer of 1938 now, take us beyond that, what happens then?

SR: Well, the next thing that happened is Kristallnacht, and the next thing after that is going on the Kindertransport, in December.

LC: In December. Is that in December, '38?

SR: Yeah.

LC: So, how did that come about? Take us up to that?

SR: Well, as I say, after Kristallnacht my father simply said you must get, you know, we all must get out, and then it became apparent because they wouldn't let anybody in, you couldn't go to England, you couldn't go to America, it was even worse for my parents, because America then operated a quota system, depending on how many from your country of origin were actually in America at the time. You know, it was a relationship of that kind. And, unfortunately, of course, there weren't very many people from Romania in America, and my parents, although they were born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Americans considered them as being Romanian, place of origin.

LC: Did they have Romanian nationality?

SR: No, they lost their nationality, all the Austro-Hungarian, no, we had Austrian passports.

LC: Austrian passports, yes, yes.

SR: You know, because anybody who was a member of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had an Austrian passport automatically, they were Austrian nationals.

LC: So, for the Americans, they were classed as Romanians?

SR: Well, place of origin, not actual nationality. And since there were not many Romanians in America, not many people with that nationality were allowed in. If they'd been Austrian, they might have had a better chance. Because, I mean, my father's sister, Tina, eloped with a Mormon preacher in the early twenties and she was, at that point in time, living in Utah.

LC: So you did have family there, but would you have wanted to go there?

SR: Well, we were in contact, but, as I say, there was this quota system, which made it impossible for my parents to get an American visa. At least, you know, they were working on it, but then Kristallnacht happened, the time just disappeared, you see? You couldn't carry on without, 'Ah, Kindertransport, let's get him out anyway'.

LC: Do you know how they found out about that? How they heard of it?

SR: Haven't a clue, haven't a clue. But my father had contacts with the 'Kultusgemeinde', with the Jewish community in Vienna. I have no doubt they told him. And, as I say, he did have quite a lot of contacts and he knew how to pull strings.

LC: Do you know how they explained it to you, how it was told to you, what was going to happen?

Tape 1: 39 minutes 21 seconds

SR: I was just going away and that was that. You know, there wasn't any great deal of discussion over it.

LC: Did they say they were going to follow?

SR: No.

LC: And you were 13.

SR: Yes.

LC: You had your Bar Mitzvah?

SR: Yeah.

LC: Did you know at that time where they were going? Did they know?

SR: No, no, they didn't know where they were going. They may have said, although I can't actually remember this, they probably said, 'As soon as we can, we'll come', but, you know, I presume that is what parents would say, but it doesn't stick in my mind as something they said.

LC: I'm sure they did say that.

SR: Probably, but then, you know, I don't remember it.

LC: Were you close to your parents?

SR: Not really, no. No, I think my parents thought more of me, if you see what I mean. They were closer to me than I was to them. It's just-.

LC: So, can you then tell us what happened after they told you that you were going to go away? Can you take us through that?

SR: Oh yes, we got things ready, we had to get clothes organised. And you weren't allowed to take a lot, you had a sort of kit bag and a case to take with you.

LC: And you knew why you were going?

SR: Oh yes, yes, and, you know, there were some people supposed to be friendly in England who had organised this, go.

LC: Okay, so now can you take us through the actual, you packed your bag and then what happens? And when it was?

SR: You get taken to the station. That would be on the 10th December, I would say, that was in the evening, I think it was in the evening, and we went to the railway station in Vienna, Westbahnhof, with lots of other kids, and we were bundled onto this train, and the doors were locked. And that was that! We had food with us, you know, I had a packed-.

LC: Did you say goodbye to your parents?

SR: Oh, yes.

LC: Were they emotional?

SR: Yeah, well, my mother was crying, I suspect, but, you know, it wasn't terribly, it's not a memory that sticks in my mind, funnily enough. It was more interesting to be on the train, you know? I was a boy, remember, you know, it was very different for girls. If you saw, what's it's name, the film with -? Damn!

LC: Schindler's List?

SR: No, no, no, the Strangers - Into the Arms of Strangers. Haven't you seen it? Judi Dench. You haven't seen that film?

LC: I haven't seen it, no.

SR: It was out two years ago.

LC: Really?

SR: Oh yeah, it was narrated by Judi Dench, it was on public release, you know, general release; it was shown in the cinema in York.

LC: And it was about the Kindertransport?

SR: It was entirely about the Kindertransport. It showed four or five stories, individual stories, as they were told. There was one horrendous story where one girl went on the train and was then yanked out of the window by her father, who wouldn't let her go, and of course they all perished in the end, you know? There were parents who were very emotional about this, who weren't going to let their children go, who changed their mind at the last second and so-.

LC: So, you're in a carriage then with lots and lots of others?

SR: No, it was a separate compartment, you know, they were all compartments, half a dozen people in each or 8 in each.

LC: And were you nervous?

SR: No, no.

Tape 1: 43 minutes 55 seconds

LC: Were there any other adults with you?

SR: Oh yes, there were people in charge, I have no idea, there'd be partly the Quakers from England, possibly, there'd be some people from, I can't think, they couldn't have been Jewish people from Austria, because they wouldn't have got into England, you know?

LC: So, can you remember the journey at all?

SR: It was boring, I was sick part of the time, I used to get travel sick, so I was a bit travel sick part of the time.

LC: Can you remember the route you took?

SR: It went through Holland, so-. But I don't, it would be out through Passau, I would think, that way out, Salzburg, Passau, but it didn't go the Alberg route, it didn't go through Switzerland or anything like that. It went through Germany - Austria, Germany and then through Holland. And the doors stayed locked until we got to Holland and then they were unlocked and people gave us food and all sorts of things.

LC: Which people?

SR: The Dutch.

LC: The Dutch? What, they came on the platform?

SR: Oh yes, they came on the platform,

LC: And gave food?

SR: Yes, gave food and drink and made a fuss of us, yes, made a fuss of us. So, the Dutch were very nice. And then we travelled, we took a ferry to Harwich.

LC: So had you been on a boat before?

SR: No.

LC: So, how was that then?

SR: I went to sleep. You know, I was stuck on a bunk, so I went to sleep. The following morning we were in Harwich.

LC: And then what?

SR: We'd got-. The organisations, who were organising the Kindertransport, I mean, this was only the second Kindertransport from Vienna, in fact, the second Kindertransport of all, I think, I'm fairly certain, so they weren't terribly experienced. But they'd organised - there was Warner's holiday camp in Lowestoft, which was all wooden chalets. And 1938, December '38, was one of the coldest winters in sort of British history, I think. And, of course, there was no heating whatsoever, they were hastily installing some form of heating in the communal halls, the dining halls and things, but there was nothing for the chalets. I don't think I had my clothes off, ever, for about a fortnight. I must have smelt to high heaven, but that's by the by. Anyway, and when in the chalets, two or three at a time in the chalets.

LC: And do you remember who shared your chalet with you?

SR: No, it was just another lad, he must have been about a year older than me, I think, he was a slightly older lad than me, but that's all I can remember, I can't remember his name or anything.

LC: And the food they gave you, did that seem different compared to home?

SR: Oh, yes! I've got a paragraph in Karen Gershon's book, there's a paragraph about me. And I can still remember this wonderful stuff I discovered, it came on bread, it was rock solid and yellow, and I had never tasted anything like it before: margarine! I mean, in Vienna, margarine was what the poor ate, you know? Everybody else ate butter. And, if you've ever eaten Austrian butter, which - even now, when we go to Austria, my wife says, 'We must bring back some butter because you can't get anything like it in England'. And what they did was, it was bitterly cold, so they melted the marge, poured it on the white bread, it was that thick on it, and this was what you got! And, as far as I was concerned, you know, it was manna from heaven, it was wonderful stuff.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 37 seconds

LC: Just margarine on white bread?

SR: Well, there was other food as well, but this is the one I remember.

LC: And because you were in England, you said you had English classes as a boy-?

SR: Oh yes, yes, I did know some English, that's right.

LC: You knew some?

SR: Oh yes, I could sort of talk. And then they shifted us out of Warner's after about a week because it was just impossible. And they'd taken over what must have been a Jewish old age home, I think it was, it was very nice building, in Walton-on-the-Naze.

LC: In-?

SR: Walton-on-the-Naze, yes.

LC: What county would that be?

SR: Suffolk. On the Naze.

LC: A long way South?

SR: No, north, well, Suffolk is the same area as Essex, it's the next one on, isn't it?

LC: So how did you get there? How did you go there?

SR: Well, I presume there were coaches. They just got a couple of buses and shifted some of us.

LC: Some of you?

SR: Well, this would only hold about 60 or 70.

LC: Who was looking after you at this time? Do you know?

SR: God knows!

LC: Do you remember them, the adults, who they were, or?

SR: I can't remember the adults, I can't remember whether they were Jewish, or Quaker, or what they were, I haven't a clue. I was a little distressed at the time, because the great

aim at the time, which gradually emerged, was to get somebody to come, a family to come and take you into their home, and nobody ever showed any interest in me. I was most upset about that. I thought, ‘Why don’t they-’?

LC: Did you see any other ones being wanted by families?

SR: One or two, yes. Occasionally, somebody got taken away, yes.

LC: Did they come and look at you and say, ‘We’ll have this one’, or how did it go?

SR: I’m not sure what happened, or how it was worked, or whether it was parents in Vienna getting in touch with the carers here and getting it organised. I have absolutely no idea how it worked. Somebody must know.

LC: Did you know, I mean, obviously, in your circle of friends in Vienna, did you know other children who were on the Kindertransport with you?

SR: No, no.

LC: So you were entirely-?

SR: Yeah.

LC: There wasn’t a single person that you knew?

SR: No, nobody on there that I knew, and-. But then, the next thing, we hadn’t been there more than a fortnight or something, when somebody got scarlet fever. Now, this meant that the whole place was quarantined. And, as soon as one got rid of the scarlet fever, another one got it. I never got scarlet fever, but I think they stopped it by sticking me in a room and saying, ‘You don’t touch anybody’. So, I must have been a carrier and immune, but I’ve always been a healthy sort of person, you see, but I suspect a pattern had begun to emerge, that, if they were in my dormitory, they would get scarlet fever, but this went on for about three months before it was clear.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 31 seconds

LC: So, you had a room on your own then?

SR: So, eventually they stuck me in a room on my own.

LC: So, this is in Walton-on-the-Naze?

SR: In Walton-on-the-Naze, yes.

LC: Do you remember how long you were there?

SR: I can't honestly remember, probably about two months, three months, something like that.

LC: And this was another camp or a house?

SR: It was a house, as I say, it was an old age home, it was a lovely house, it was a very nice house, with nice biggish dormitories, it must have been, you know, really like wards, in a sort of hospital, I suppose, I don't know.

LC: How many of you were there, can you remember?

SR: I can't, about seventyish, I think, something like that, not that many

LC: Was it just boys, or was it mixed, boys and girls?

SR: Pass, can't remember! No, it was just boys, I think. And, I mean, we had a spectacular accident, because there were lovely banisters, and somebody started to slide down a banister and it was three stories high, there was concrete at the bottom, he fell off on to his head. He survived, but it was, you know, not good. And, from there, we were shipped to another refugee camp, which was then mixed: Clayton House, near Ipswich, which was a large country estate.

LC: Well, I think we'll bring this to an end because the tape is coming to an end.

SR: Well, that was it, that was the end of that period, and we got to Clayton House, near Ipswich.

LC: We'll take it from Ipswich in the next tape, so if we can just stop here for a moment.

Tape 1: 54 minutes 24 seconds

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minutes 20 seconds

LC: So, you went from Walton-on-the-Naze to Ipswich?

SR: Clayton House, which was near Ipswich, still exists, it was a large country estate. And it was quite, again we lived in a camp, if you like, we lived in dormitories, you got institutional food. And, at that point, somewhere around that time, my father placed an advert in the British pharmaceutical press, which must have been before they went to Shanghai, so it would be about March of 1939, asking if anybody would want me.

LC: Did you know that at the time?

SR: He told me, yes. And then a pharmacist in Glasgow volunteered, Christian family, who had a baby girl, one or two years old. And I went, you know, they picked me up, I went to London to meet them, got into Liverpool Street, of course, and they picked me up in Liverpool Street, or he did, the man did, picked me up in Liverpool Street and took me to Glasgow

LC: Did you have a note around your neck saying who you were?

SR: Presumably. And took me to Glasgow on the Coronation Scot, which was then running, very luxurious train, very fast train, which only took about four hours to get to Glasgow on the West Coast, which is far better than you get now. And I stayed with that family, but, what my father didn't realise, I suspect, and I didn't even think about to start with, was, at that time, school-leaving age was 14. There was a very different approach, English chemists were, if you like, not of the same class as Austrian chemists. I mean it was a nice enough family, but the thought of me going to school after 14 or even going to university never entered their head. As far as they were concerned, as soon as I was 14, I didn't need to go to school and I needed to find somewhere to work. Now, that didn't penetrate all that clearly to me, but I was a fairly badly behaved child, I think, you know, not very good.

LC: Had you had any schooling while you were in the camps?

SR: No, none at all, only English.

LC: So you missed nearly a year of schooling then?

SR: Nearly a year of schooling, yes. As I say, I was not a very nicely behaved child. They were Christians anyway, so in the end, after about 2 months or three months, they went to the Jewish community in Glasgow and said, 'For God's sake, take this bastard away!' You know, to put it bluntly, I think.

LC: You were a 14-year old-?

SR: I was a 14-year old and a bit stroppy.

LC: Hormones, as well!

SR: Probably, but I was a bit stroppy, definitely. And, luckily for me, I mean, this is how I never plan anything, it always works out alright. Luckily for me, at that time there was a family in Kirkcudbright - Kirkcudbright is in southwest Scotland, in Galloway – a family in Kirkcudbright called Sassoon. David Sassoon, who was an artist, I've got a picture that he did in there, if you want to see.

LC: Are they related to the Sassoons?

Tape 2: 4 minutes 28 seconds

SR: Oh yes, they're related to the Sassoons, they are part of the Sassoon family. But David was then, he had married a Russian lady, I think, she was quite something. But they had a house in Kirkcudbright and a seaside hut, if you like, on the shore, on Carrick Shore. And they were then offering holidays to refugee children in this hut, so, for the time being, the Jewish community put me there. It was absolutely idyllic, one of the happiest holidays I can remember.

LC: Was it just you or were you there with other refugees?

SR: No, other refugee boys were there, this bloke called Wagner, who has died since, and also, of course, their own children, and I'm still in touch with them. So, I stayed there, you know, it was just a wonderful holiday, it was a hot summer, 1939 was a good summer, I spent the time on the beach, going about in canoes, and it was great. And I got back to Glasgow, and now in Glasgow the Jewish community was running a hostel for refugees in Hill Street, next door to the Hill Street, Garnet Hill Synagogue, and I was put into that. And, because I could speak English, I was then put into, I was put into the local general secondary school, not a grammar school, secondary school, which was down there, Woodside Secondary School. But, of course, war started on the 3rd September and the school was evacuated, all of it. So a group of us were sent to a farm in Perthshire, quite a number of us, a farm in Perthshire, but, because I and another fellow there were reasonably good at English, we were sent to Perth Academy. So, I got into Perth Academy in effectively the second year, which would be about a year below I would have been age-wise, I would say. Got into Perth Academy, went to school there, did very well actually. We were there for a year.

LC: And was it residential? You were living there?

SR: No, I was living on the farm and travelling daily into Perth on the school bus. It was a grammar school, the Academy was the local grammar school.

LC: No, I mean who was looking after you on this farm?

SR: The farmer and his wife and there was some help as well, I think, but nothing to do with Jews, I don't think. It was an evacuation accommodation, you know, it was nothing to do with Jews as such, except that all the kids that were there were from the Hill Street hostel.

LC: And how many of them were there, how many on the farm?

Tape 2: 7 minutes 52 seconds

SR: Might be about 10, possibly, 10, something like that. It was a big house, was a lovely house.

LC: All boys?

SR: Yes, all boys. I mean, it was wonderful. They had their own electricity generation and all the rest of it. And then, when the school year finished, a lot of the children went back to Glasgow, I think, but I stayed on and so did another lad. But we were taken off that farm and put onto a smallholding, where there were only two of us, a lad called Hans and me. Lovely place, yeah, a Mrs. Campbell, in a village called Glencarse. And in the summer holidays I worked for six weeks on a pig farm, which taught me a hell of a lot about pigs, very nice animals, pigs, very clever. Then, the Jewish community in Glasgow had opened a Jewish evacuation hostel for Jewish children in Castle Douglas, in Kirkcudbrightshire, only 11 miles from Kirkcudbright, and I was shipped there. Went to Castle Douglas High School for my third year at school and then went on to Kirkcudbright Academy for my fourth and fifth.

LC: So then you were living in this hostel?

SR: I was living in that hostel.

LC: So you moved around a lot. How did you stay in contact with your parents? I mean, presumably they were ok?

SR: They were in Shanghai, and very occasionally there was communication via the Red Cross. I got letters from them and I sent them letters.

LC: And they were able to keep track of you through all these moves?

SR: Yes, oh yeah.

LC: Fantastic.

SR: But we haven't got to the Shanghai bit yet anyway.

LC: Take us through your school years.

SR: So, as I say, quite pleasant really. I mean, Kirkcudbrightshire was a wonderful, Galloway was a wonderful place to live in the war. I never heard, all through my life, I have never heard a shot fired neither a bomb dropped, never, nothing.

LC: The power of being evacuated to the right place.

SR: Yeah. And, what is more, of course, rationing wasn't a problem either.

LC: Was that because you were on a farm?

SR: Well, no, we were in Kirkcudbrightshire then, in a hostel, but the whole of Galloway is the sort of, the place where they grow the food for England just about. And it had to be

transported away, didn't it? So, that didn't work all that wonderfully well, so there was a lot left over.

LC: During this time, I mean, the war had been declared now, so what are your memories in terms of, apart from not seeing bombs and so on, of the effects of the war?

SR: Not a lot, it had no effect whatsoever. None. You know, I didn't have parents who had gone to war. I was being looked after, we had plenty to eat, we had no problems with that. You know, money wasn't a question, wasn't a problem either, because we were - everything was done for us, you know. It was alright, fine.

LC: And you were learning English and of course you were also living in a good Scottish environment, so-.

SR: Oh, I had a good Scottish accent at that stage, oh yes, it was. I mean, if I go back to Glasgow for a short while, you can tell.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 0 second

LC: Can you do it?

SR: No, can't on command, but it's-, oh yes, but if I speak to somebody from Glasgow!

LC: You can understand them?

SR: Oh yes, and I can drop back into the accent quite easily. And then I took my Highers at school, Scottish Highers, and then I went for a bursary exam at the University of Glasgow and came somewhere near the top and got a bursary.

LC: So how old were you at this stage then?

SR: 18, yeah.

LC: And were you still living in the hostel?

SR: I was living in Castle Douglas when I took the bursary exam, and then, when I started at the university, it was back to the hostel at Hill Street. And I lived in the hostel at Hill Street ''til I graduated. It was a four year, it was a three year course, but it was a four year course, which had been turned into three years by cutting out the summer holidays. You had four terms a year. No summer holidays.

LC: Was there any effect, did the war have any effect on Higher Education that you were aware of?

SR: Not that I was aware of, no. I mean, there were more women teachers in the school. It was a mixed school obviously, all Scottish education is co-educational. So, there were

somewhat fewer men teachers, more women, but that was-, I wasn't aware of a war, quite frankly, not really.

LC: Did you follow the events on the radio or anything?

SR: It wasn't desperately interesting, was it? If you see what I mean. Neither side was my country. So ---

LC: So, can we just go back a bit and can I ask about how your parents got out? And how you heard about it?

SR: Well, in April they told me what they were doing, in April '39. I think Shanghai took about, I can't remember, I think it was something around 50,000, if you compare it to Canada, which took 9,000 refugees and Australia, which took 8.000. No, its 28,000, Shanghai took 28,000 refugees.

LC: Just from Austria?

SR: Austria and Germany. And there was a large Jewish ghetto, if you like, created once the Japanese got there. But, as far as the Japanese were concerned, as far as I can make out, the fact that these people were Jewish meant absolutely nothing to the Japanese. They were simply Germans and the Germans were their allies, weren't they? So, I mean you need to go - I haven't got a full history of what went on in Shanghai myself at all. And some of it got quite difficult because there wasn't much space in what was the Jewish enclave, and some people had horrendous experiences. But my parents had a flat, my father worked in a hospital there as a pharmacist. The climate is not very pleasant in Shanghai, I think you know, and, in those days, air conditioning didn't exist but, apart from that, that was all there was to it.

LC: Do you know how they got there?

Tape 2: 15 minutes 43 seconds

SR: They took a boat from Genoa. They went to Genoa and got a ship from there, went by boat.

LC: And it was all refugees on those boats?

SR: Yes. They took a boat to Shanghai, which was a hell of a journey, because my mother was seasick.

LC: So did you know before they went that that was where they were going?

SR: Yes, oh yes. In '39, you could still correspond, of course, you know, I mean it was before the war. They wrote me letters, I wrote them letters, they wrote to England, I wrote to Vienna.

LC: So you'd graduated now.

SR: Yes, I'd graduated now, then took a PhD.

LC: What did you study?

SR: Applied Chemistry.

LC: Was that because of your father?

SR: No, no, chemistry has nothing to do with Pharmacy. No, it just shows you, I don't plan things. My interest had been, at school, as a youngster, tended to be in engineering. And then I went to Glasgow to have a look at the university and the engineering department was housed in one of the older parts of the university. And there was this absolutely brand new beautiful chemistry building, so I took chemistry instead.

LC: And you took to it?

SR: Yeah, yeah, oh, it was no problem, you know. And I got a First, and I stayed on for three years to do research to get a PhD.

LC: And where are we now in terms of your education and the war?

SR: We're getting towards the end of the war. While I was at university, now when did I start going to university? At 18, would be '43, wouldn't it? I was then a member of the Officer Training Corps at the university, which was all great good fun. Have you ever built a Bailey Bridge? Yes. Have you ever blown a hole in the ground? Yes. It was in the engineering section of the Office Training Corps. But that was all the service I saw because studying a science course meant you were in a reserved occupation. So, I was never called up, I never served in the armed forces at all, I was never near them. I took my degree, got a job in a chemical factory and-. Now, by that time, my parents had come here.

LC: When did they come here?

SR: I was still doing my PhD and they would have come here about '46. They had come here via the United States where they had been to see my aunt, who was then living in Fresno in California. And then, so you know, they came, and I picked them up in Southampton.

LC: And what did that feel like for you? You hadn't seen them for?

SR: I recognised them and I think they recognised me.

LC: Because you were a boy of 13 and now you were a man of?

SR: Really, I would have been 21, wouldn't I? 21. And, well, it was an interesting experience. But they thought, I suspect that they saw me as a 13 and a half year old, and they found it rather difficult to come to terms with the fact that I wasn't the lad who would do as I was told anymore, you know? And we hadn't, as I said, we had not been all that close anyway. So it was just, yeah, fine, let's go and live together, but no.

LC: So did they come with any money, or any possessions, or anything?

Tape 2: 20 minutes 4 seconds

SR: No, no, not really, and they-. But then, I was lucky enough: we bought a flat in Glasgow, it cost us about £400, I think, or something like that. Very nice flat in Carmarthen Street, near Charing Cross in Glasgow.

LC: So, did you have the money to buy it, or did they have a little bit, or?

SR: No, the Jews helped us.

LC: Oh, that's nice.

SR: And they stayed there, but I got a job near Liverpool, in Widnes, in a chemicals factory, once I'd graduated and got my PhD. Got a job in Widnes in a company where every budding chemist that I know has worked at some stage. It wasn't a large organisation but Blackenstocks is well known in the industry. It was one of those where you had to be quick on your toes. And so I worked there for 3 and a half years or something and then I had a job with Beecham's for a year, and then I came up to York and stayed there.

LC: How did your parents adjust to life in England? I mean, they didn't speak English, did they?

SR: Well, my father, oh yes, they spoke English, oh yes. Well, they'd been in Shanghai and that was the language.

LC: Really? You mean they didn't speak German with each other?

SR: No. Well, there would have been quite a lot of German, but - with each other they would obviously speak German and with some of the others there - but my father in hospital would have to speak English. And my mother was always good at languages; she spoke French and English anyway. So, no, that wasn't a problem and, in fact, my father got a job in a chemists shop in Glasgow for a while. But my mother was never terribly happy in England. She didn't like the climate, she didn't like the people, they were so uncultured and, you know.

LC: It is Scotland you are talking about, because they were up in Scotland, in Glasgow?

SR: Yes, even worse! And then my father died during that famous smog epidemic in 1952. Because he had been a smoker all his life, but he had given up smoking, but he couldn't cope with that, and he got emphysema and ran out of oxygen, in effect.

LC: But you weren't there then, you were away?

SR: I was in --- yeah. And my mother said, 'Oh', she was still in the flat, she had that, and then she said, 'It's silly, I've got a big pension in Vienna from my husband, you know, which they would now pay me because we've put in a claim and it is all going through. I'm going to go to Vienna'. Because, I mean, at that point, I certainly didn't have a lot of money, salaries were not wonderful, and, I mean, my starting salary was 500 a year, I think.

LC: In-?

SR: '44/'45, something like that, and '46. So, she went to Vienna, got a council flat in Vienna, and got a second council flat later on, and lived there from 1953 until she died in 1978. That's 25 years she lived in Vienna. And she had friends there, and she went out.

LC: Did she have friends from before?

SR: From before, and she made some afterwards, and they went out to the Café Lampen to have coffee and all the rest of it in the normal way, and-.

LC: Did she want you to go back with her?

SR: No, I don't think so. I had no desire, you know, there weren't any jobs there, it was a mess was Austria still, to some extent.

LC: At this time, were you thinking of yourself as Scottish? Or English? Or Austrian. Or how did you think of yourself?

SR: Well, I've never thought of myself as English really.

LC: Or British even?

SR: Or British even. I mean, I know I've got British nationality, but I've now instead - when the Austrians did this a few years ago - I've also got Austrian nationality.

LC: So they've allowed people born in Austria to---?

SR: Born in Austria, who were, which is very unusual, but they allowed the refugees effectively to have dual nationality. The Austrian passports come in very handy. We went, when we were going out to Perth last year, last autumn, we went via Dubai. And

my British passport, of course, had Israeli visas in it. So I went in and out of Dubai as an Austrian.

LC: So can you tell us what happened to yourself after you got, you were working in Widnes, and how your life developed from there on?

SR: Well, eventually, as I say, I got to York in '54, met my wife here, actually at work, funnily enough, my first wife, got married, we had three kids.

LC: Can you tell us a bit about your first wife, her name and ---?

Tape 2: 26 minutes 0 second

SR: Her first name was Joyce and she was a laboratory assistant in the firm where I was working in York. But, you know, we got married, we had a very nice time really, very enjoyable. Unfortunately, about 8 years ago, she got an aortic aneurysm, which, with a great deal of work, they repaired at Hull, but the surgeon said, 'We've managed to repair this bit, but it's all a mess all the way down'. He said afterwards it's only held together by blood clots and sealing wax, that sort of thing. And she died about a year later. But we had a wonderful 10 months after her operation, a horrendous operation. We had a wonderful 10 months because she recovered all her faculties, we went to Baden, we went on holiday, and all sorts. And then, one morning, she got up from her chair and coughed and died. You know, just full of blood. And then, you know, ages ago, we knew Elizabeth and her family. But she lost her husband 15 years ago, something like that. And so I cried on her shoulder and one thing leads to another.

LC: You have three children. Can you tell us a little bit about what happened to them and so on?

SR: Oh, yes. My eldest son lives in Lincoln, and-.

LC: What does he do?

SR: He sells agricultural-, well, he runs a company and sells agricultural chemicals, they're very well-off, thank you. His wife is a headmistress in a primary school; she was a lecturer at Lincoln College of Education, very good-looking wife. He's got 2 boys, the eldest of which I'm taking to Perth at the end of March. My daughter, who's the middle one, once mother had died, once her mother had died, she said her husband had been offered a job, he's an engineer, a civil engineer, she said her husband had been offered a job in New Zealand, and now that mother was dead she was going to go. So they went out. They, at that point, had twin boys, they went out to New Zealand, to Auckland, and I went out to see them a couple of times, and then they moved to Perth because her husband had been offered a better job in Perth. And because they'd been in New Zealand for three years, they were then New Zealand citizens, so they had no problem getting into Australia to work. And they've been living in Perth ever since. Quite happily, my

daughter's now had a baby girl, but she had her in New Zealand, but, I mean, so, there's three of them.

LC: So we're up to 5 grandchildren so far.

SR: My youngest son lives in York.

LC: Well, that's home, you've got one still around?

SR: Yes, my youngest son lives in York, he is in management in the post office, doing very nicely, thank you, I think. His wife, well, my wife says, 'According to her she runs the Health Service', but she says-, I don't think that's true, but she's working for the trust, the NHS Trust in Yorkshire, in a directorial sort of position, you know, she's doing very nicely there, thank you. And she's just done a degree, an MSc, an MA degree, I think. My daughter took a degree in Aberdeen, a language degree in Aberdeen, and then came back to York and did an MSc in Information Technology and was, for several years, a senior systems analyst for the Royal Bank of Scotland.

LC: So you're very proud of your children then?

Tape 2: 30 minutes 35 seconds

SR: Oh yes, they're doing very nicely. My son in York's got a daughter of his own, but his wife was previously married and she's got a daughter as well, so there's two kids there, one of whom is actually a grandchild.

LC: So when you say you came to, what was your job in York, what did you do?

SR: Well, I started off as a research chemist in a chemical firm, and I worked my way up into management, and then retired eventually.

LC: Did you retire at the official age?

SR: Yeah, sixty-.

LC: So how long have you been retired now?

SR: Well, I'm 79, 14 years.

LC: 14 years. So, how do you spend your retirement?

SR: How do I spend my retirement?

LC: Yes. Are there any organisations that you are a member of?

SR: Yes, I'm a member of what's called the York 41 club. For a few years, I was assisting a charity dealing with Huntington's Korea**,** Huntington's Disease, which was very interesting. I had no, you know, involvement with it but it was very interesting. I organised a conference in Dublin for them and winkled some money out of the European Union to get it. What else? Oh, I don't do as much now but I still fly gliders, which can be fairly time-consuming and-.

LC: What you go up, you actually go in?

Tape 2: 32 minutes 1 second

SR: Oh, I fly gliders, yes.

LC: You fly gliders, but not from the ground?

SR: No, I fly real gliders, yes, with pilots, you know, of which I am one. So, and I-.

LC: Are you in any networks of Kindertransport people or other-?

SR: Well, I know some of them. Well, obviously I am a member of AJR. I've been to both the Bertha's reunion things, I went to her 80th birthday as well, I thought I'd show up. I've got friends still in Glasgow and elsewhere, who were also transportees, who I've stayed in touch with. I have attended a number of functions at Beth Shalom, which is the Holocaust Museum at Laxton in Newark, which is a very-. Have you been there? Have you never been to Laxton? What on earth are you on about? I don't believe it.

LC: Anyway, it's not about me, it's about you.

SR: Have you not been? No?

LC: Given that we've not been there and a lot of people won't know what it is, would you like to describe what it is?

SR: Now Laxton, Beth Shalom, have you not heard of Beth Shalom, have you not got records on it? Beth Shalom was founded by the sons of a Methodist minister, the Smith brothers, who were taken by their father to Israel and got involved in hearing about the Holocaust and said, 'This is dreadful', you know, 'We must do something. Everybody will forget unless we do something'. And really, largely with their own money, they set up this extraordinary museum in Laxton, which is originally part of their house. It's extremely well-constructed: there's a lecture theatre, there's a sort of underground labyrinth, which is the museum with displays of exhibits and photographs and a very clear history of what happened in the Holocaust, with wonderful photographs and scenes from the Holocaust. And they hold a load of functions. They've now widened their interest into taking in other forms of genocide. They started off with the one but they've gone into other ones as well. Really because, they said, you know that Holocaust isn't the

only thing that happened. Of course, Stephen Smith has now been honoured in any case, he's always involved with the memory.

LC: So you've been to various functions?

Tape 2: 35 minutes 19 seconds

SR: I've been to various functions there because they are fairly regular. I mean, the AJR held its own AGM there last year, to which I went. Some of the lectures there are very interesting indeed and they do an awful lot of outreach work to schools, which is very good.

LC: Just going back a little bit, you brought us to York, I'm just wondering about what contact you had with your mother and any of her friends and so on. Did you see her? Did you maintain contact with her?

SR: We, my mother came to us, we went to Vienna in Austria in alternate years, on holidays anyway, and other times as well.

LC: So, she's met all your children?

SR: Oh yes, yes. And, in fact, she eventually developed cancer of the breast when she was about 85 or 86, and they took her in, and I spoke to the surgeon and he said, 'There is no way we are going to do a mastectomy', he said, 'but we have removed the lump so that she doesn't feel it'. And, of course, the cancer spread and it eventually involved her liver and she died. But it wasn't, she didn't have a terribly painful time of it, I don't think. She moved from a flat into a Viennese municipal elderly home, which was out of this world by comparison with what you have here. It was a very large building, and it was a big place, and there's one in every district in Vienna, holding, you know, a few hundred elderlies. Now, each one has a flat, I've got a plan of one somewhere, if I can dig it out, each one has a sort of combined, if you can think of, a big square room, big, of which one corner is cut off to be the bathroom and kitchen, shower room et cetera, shower room and kitchen, and a balcony on it. So, the bed is in the small bit of the large square and the rest of it is dining room and living room and what have you. The people who are there must come down for breakfast, which makes sure that they haven't died in the night, but all other meals, if they want them, are delivered to the flat, which-. That is what it is. On every floor, there are a number of sort of fridges in which you can keep your own stuff. I mean, it's all beautifully clean, really nice.

LC: So, did you get closer to her if you were going to see her every other year?

SR: No.

LC: You never got any closer to her than you were?

SR: Not really, no, she was just my mother, you know?

LC: Did she talk about those times in Vienna before the war?

SR: Not a lot, no.

LC: Did she tell your children about it at all?

SR: She did a little bit, and it was-. The interesting thing was that the last person to visit her was my youngest son. She was very, very fond of my youngest son, Paul.

LC: Did any of her family, well no, I'll start again, did all of her sisters and so-?

SR: They all went to Israel.

LC: They all went to Israel? Was she able to visit them?

SR: Oh yes, she went to Israel several times, so-. And they came to Vienna, you know, because my cousins, they're high up in the munitions business in Israel, liked going to Germany and Austria for holidays.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 40 seconds

LC: Did any of your father's family perish or did they all manage to escape?

SR: No. My, well, my mother's-, my father's sister survived the war, she was in Poland, I think, but I'm not quite sure what happened to her after that, but she-. I know she didn't get into a concentration camp. Then my aunt in America, of course, she was fine, she was OK. And there was nobody else in my father's family. My mother's side, Ernest, or Ernst, who was brought into the family by my grandfather's second wife, her son, he went to Vienna and married out, much to the disgust of the family, you know, it was not-. I liked them, you see, they didn't live far from us in Vienna, so I did spend quite a lot of time there, and I don't think, my mother didn't really approve of this, me going to see Aunt Vicky, Victoria, but nevertheless I did. And they hadn't any children. Now, his wife was Yugoslavian, or of Yugoslavian origin, and he and his wife spent the war in Yugoslavia, where people sort of prevented him getting carted off to concentration camp. After the war, he came back to Vienna. He had been working as a civil servant before then. He made a sort of high civil service rank in the Ministry of Trade in Vienna. And, unfortunately, in 1949, I think it was, he was on a trade mission to Yugoslavia and he was killed in a car accident. So, my parents and I went to Vienna for the funeral by train. And this is what bothers me to this day, there's no way I'm British: we got on the train and, it's very difficult to describe, I got off the train at the main Westbahnhof in Vienna, and the feeling of 'I'm home', it's the first time I had been to Vienna, you know, was very strong. You know, I knew which tram to take, where to go, what to do, instantly. And I left Vienna when I was 13 and a half. But, you know, there was absolutely no question, you know, I knew where to go and what to do and speaking German and I had, I mean, if I got to Vienna, my German is Viennese, and if I go to Austria, and I go into a hotel and I

book rooms or any things like that, they say instantly, 'Oh yes, you're from Vienna, you're a Wiener.'

LC: So you've never lost that, I mean, have you, apart from, have you any reason to use your German?

Tape 2: 43 minutes 3 seconds

SR: Well, yes, I did work for a company, for a chemicals company, which had associations with a German company, so I had quite a lot of contact with people in Mainz and so on. But I've always maintained, I mean I speak German fluently still, really. I'm a little short of, I'm short of vocabulary, because-, I have not quite the vocabulary of a 13 year old, I mean, I did read a lot, so I had a reasonably extensive vocabulary, but even so, you know, I am sometimes short of words. But, by and large, I've got no problems.

LC: Looking back at all that, do you have any strong feelings about that destruction of your life and-?

SR: Yeah. What I hate is the fact that I was taken away from Vienna, not from my family, funnily enough, you know, the anger, if you like, is about not having the civilised life in Vienna that I would have expected to get to. Because I almost certainly would have gone to university in Austria, I would have had a nice job undoubtedly in Austria, and I would have been in an Austrian society.

LC: And you have no feelings about the way the Austrians, well, really-?

SR: Not really, I mean people do that sort of thing, and the Austrians did dislike the Jews, there is no question, they were very anti-Semitic, Austria is very anti-Semitic.

LC: Do you think it still is now?

SR: Oh, yes. And, I mean, the Viennese are not as nice as you think they are. They can be very charming, I mean, you go to Vienna and you'll find that the people are very, very nice, very pleasant. But I said to my wife, I said, 'You watch it, you wait 'til something sparks an Austrian into being annoyed and you'll see something you haven't seen before'. Well, when we were in Vienna, she said, 'Oh that can't be, they are so nice, you know, so polite!' 'Wait!' And when we were in Vienna last year, we took a taxi to get to our hotel, which was right in the middle of the city centre, and, as it happened, and this is quite a rare experience, our taxi driver was Viennese. He wasn't a Turk, or a Yugoslav or whatever else, or black or anything, he was just Viennese. And we got into a narrow street and there was this bloke in front, parked his car and he was unloading and kept on unloading this and that and the next thing, and our taxi driver erupted, went out of his cab. I said, 'Right, what did I say?' And eruption was the only word you could say. That's very typical.

LC: So, given that there is this anti-Semitism, do you still feel comfortable in that environment?

SR: Well, I don't go around shouting I'm Jewish, you know?

LC: Had your mother mentioned any experience of that?

SR: No, I don't think so, no. People were very friendly.

LC: Just wondering what prompted her to want to go back?

SR: Yeah, she was quite comfortable. No, people were very pleasant and nice because they didn't want, you see, there were not many Jews there, for a start, anymore anyway. So they were kind to her because she'd come back, because you know-.

LC: I mean, '52 is quite soon after the war, you know, it's still fresh.

SR: Well, yes, yeah, so you know, nobody spoke about Nordhausen, which was the concentration camp near us.

LC: We're just coming to the end of the time, Stefan. Is there anything, any kind of lasting comment, you'd like to make, or anything you'd like to say to future generations at all?

SR: Well, the main thing is not to be angry really. No, it's not, I don't think I have anything seriously to forgive other than this disruption of not being in Vienna. I didn't lose anybody to the Nazis, I have had no sort of trauma of that kind to live with, so I can't think myself into that. The action of boys leaving parents is very different from girls leaving parents because the relationship between girls and their parents is much closer than between boys and their parents, always has been. And boys get sent to boarding school and all sorts of things and they're perfectly happy. And so, going away from your parents, the things that stick in your mind are the new things that you see and not the old things that you have left. And I always feel, to some extent, that some of the harsher 'I couldn't do that and I couldn't do this' are just that very little bit artificial. It's something people are doing to excuse themselves from the fact that they don't actually feel it, if you see what I mean. It's quite difficult. I can, you know, see serious problems, you know, people have lost their parents in concentration camps and things, and who were maybe close to their parents entirely and younger will have had, you know, a much, much harder time of it. I've, I mean, I've had a very nice life, thank you. I've never had to work hard, which is true, you know, it's all come relatively easily. And that's all, you know, I've been lucky in that way. I've never won anything on the lottery, but you can't have it all!

Tape 2: 49 minutes 54 seconds

LC: Shall we look at some of these documents now, have a look and see what they are?

PHOTOGRAPHS

Tape 2: 50 minutes 0 second

Photo 1

SR: That's my father, Berthold Ruff, in 1920, and that's his photograph on an identity card, issued by the police in Vienna.

Tape 2: 50 minutes 22 seconds

Photo 2

SR: And that's my mother with me in 1926, when I was about one year old.

LC: What was your mother's first name?

SR: My mother's first name was Rosa.

LC: Rosa Ruff?

SR: Geboren Salzmann.

LC: Salzmann was her maiden name.

SR: Yes.

Tape 2: 50 minutes 44 seconds

Photo 3

SR: My whole family came from Czernowitz in Romania and this is me in a Romanian costume, which somebody sent to me.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 2 seconds

Photo 4

SR: And that is me as a boy of about 11 in Vienna.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 15 seconds

Photo 5

SR: That's a photograph of my parents after they came to Glasgow from Shanghai.

LC: So roughly when was this?

SR: In about 1946.

LC: Just after the war.

LC: Okay, we can now look at some of these documents.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 41 seconds

Photo 6

SR: That is a letter, which would be written after the war and came to me from Shanghai. 125 Hill Street was the Jewish refugee hostel, run by the Jewish community in Glasgow.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 15 seconds

Photo 7

LC: Can you say what that is?

SR: That is the document that let me into England in 1938. Unfortunately, its photograph of me has disappeared, become detached.

LC: Can you say what it says on there?

SR: Yeah, it says that this document means I do not need a visa, so an entry document, into the UK.

LC: And it's got your name and-?

SR: And my Vienna address on it.

LC: And your address in Vienna.

SR: Yes, my address in Vienna.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 58 seconds

Photo 8

LC: What's this one?

SR: This is my certificate of naturalisation, issued in 1946, sorry 1948, issued in 1948.

LC: Was that an easy process for you?

SR: Yeah, no problem at all. I had to swear allegiance to the Queen before a Justice, a Jewish Justice of the Peace in Glasgow.

Photo 9

LC: And finally, Stefan?

Tape 2: 53 minutes 35 seconds

SR: That's my birth certificate, issued, a copy of my birth certificate, issued by the registry office of the Jewish community in Vienna. There was no registration of Jews in the non-Jewish registration system because that was run by the Catholic Church, so each religion had its own means of issuing birth certificates.

LC: Does it have your parents' name on there or is it just your name?

SR: Yes, yes, Berthold Ruff and Rosa. It tells you, it says on it, that I was the legitimate son of Berthold Ruff and Rosa, née Salzmann.

LC: And your date of birth?

SR: 9th June 1925.

LC: Thank you very much. We've done the saying what it is.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 27 seconds

END OF TAPE