

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	133

Interviewee Surname:	Wiesenfeld
Forename:	Henrietta
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	5 April 1931
Interviewee POB:	Antwerp, Belgium

Date of Interview:	27 October 2006
Location of Interview:	Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 43 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

INTERVIEW: 133

NAME: HENRIETTA WIESENFELD

DATE: 27 OCTOBER 2006

LOCATION: SALFORD, MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: I am interviewing Yetti Wiesenfeld and today's date is the 27th October 2006. The interview is taking place in Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin. What is your name?

HW: Yetti ... Henriette ... Yetti Wiesenfeld?

RL: Was that your name when ...?

HW: No, Henriette, Henriette ... my name was. Henriette in French.

RL: And were you named after anybody?

HW: My grandmother. Her Yiddisher name ...

RL: And where were you born?

HW: In Antwerp, Belgium.

RL: And when?

HW: 5.4.31

RL: And what does that make you now?

HW: 21? ... [Laughs] ... 75 ...

RL: First of all if you can tell me something about your family background, your parents and their family.

HW: I really can't tell you very much because we never asked my mother. And then they came from Poland ... they immigrated in 1928/29 to Belgium because my brother was very ill and that is all I can tell you about the background. My grandfather had a concession for tobacco in their home town so they were quite well off, even though they only lived in two rooms. That was ... you know, they lived in two rooms, and they were huge rooms. And they worked very hard at it. And my Auntie ... at one point they wanted to take the concession away from my grandfather, and my mother's sister, my auntie, was 14 years old, she dressed up, and she went to Vienna to speak to Emperor Franz Josef, by herself, she was a very brave woman. And I think she got the concession back, because that was their livelihood. Without it they wouldn't have had any parnossa at all if it had been taken away, yes ...

Tape 1: 2 minutes 26 seconds

RL: Where were they living?

HW: In Lesko, in Poland. It is part of Galicia, yes ...

RL: And how many were in your mother's family? How many brothers and sisters?

HW: She had three brothers and one sister, so there were five children ... yes.

RL: And where did they live?

HW: They lived in Belgium ... in Poland, but one immigrated to Belgium, an uncle immigrated to Belgium and they lived in Belgium, they were there until 1942 actually. My mother corresponded with them until 1942 ... and then silence ...

RL: What was his name?

HW: Yaakov.

RL: Do you know what he did for a living?

HW: I really don't know. I was very young when I left Belgium, so I really don't know.

He was a very good looking man, I remember that, and he had a very good looking child, one child, Gideon. And I wanted to call my son Gideon, but they said you don't name after a young child who was killed, yes ... in the war ... yes ...

RL: And her sister? What was her name?

HW: Malta, Malta ... there was only one sister.

RL: Just one sister ...

HW: Malta, yes ... yes ... and the brothers were ... there was Yaakov, and there was Salamanca and ... what was the other one's name. I don't know what the other one was names ... Salamanca ... I don't remember ... I never knew them, I never knew them. We have a picture somewhere of them, but I couldn't find it, yes ... it didn't occur to me to look for them because I didn't think I would be interviewed.

RL: Did anybody survive?

HW: No ... three brothers survived. They were carpenters, and they were used in the camps as carpenters and they were on the way to Auschwitz and they escaped from the train. I don't know how ... the three brothers they rolled an embankment and hid. And they finally got to Portugal in 1942 and they asked people ... they knew they had an aunt in London if they knew her ... and they met someone who knew my mother and gave them the address and this is the photograph ... I haven't got it, its not here ... and there were three, you could see their hands, they had been starving, the skin, for young people their skin was all puckered, like they were really hungry, starving. They survived and they went to Israel.

RL: Did they stay in Portugal and then go to Israel or did they come to England?

HW: No, they didn't come, they went direct. I only met them in 1952 when I went to Israel for the first time, I met them there. Yes, I was very proud of them, yes ... unfortunately only one is alive now, and the wives are dead as well. But that is how it is, time flies, and they are much older than me, yes.

Tape 1: 5 minutes 25 seconds

RL: What kind of a religious background did your mother have?

HW: Chassidism, a Chassidism background. As it happens, one of my uncles cut off his peyes and he put a bandage around his face, as if he had toothache and one day, it lasted for too long, and one day they took off his bandage, my grandfather and they found out that he had no peyes. You know, they were very modern boys, they didn't keep ... they weren't frum at all afterwards. I suppose going through the war and everything you know, they didn't keep anything, so that is it.

RL: What Chassidic sect did they belong to?

HW: I don't know, but my father was a Chotover Chossid, but the others I really don't know. It is a pity you didn't ask me these questions ... maybe my sister would have answered them, you know ... for me ... because although she was only six or seven years old when she came to Poland, to England ... I mean to Antwerp but she may have remembered. She may known, she may have heard, she may have heard them talking, you know. But, I really don't know ... yes ...

Tape 1: 6 minutes 29 seconds

RL: On your father's side, what do you know about his family ... ?

HW: Nothing

RL: Brothers and sisters ...

HW: Nothing ... I really don't know if had brothers and sisters, nothing. I didn't ask my sister. It is a pity you didn't ask me before ... these questions, I don't know if she knew either ...

RL: Yes ... yes ...

HW: Because she was only a little girl when she left, yes ...

RL: And what kind of ... did he also have a religious upbringing? Your father?

HW: Oh yes, yes, he came from Dobromil and also ... they were very frum, yes. I don't think her family would have accepted him if he wasn't.

RL: Where did your parents marry?

HW: I really don't know, Poland, but where in Poland. It must have been in Galicia.

RL: And did they live there at first?

HW: I know they went to live in Lesko Galicia, where my mother was born, in ... I don't remember, I don't remember, I told you yesterday ... where she was born. She was born in Dobromil, and she was born in ...

RL: So how many children did she have?

HW: They had four children. Three girls and a boy.

RL: Go through them by order.

HW: Toby, Faigey, Menachem Mendel and myself. Yes.

RL: And where were the children born? Where were they living when they had them?

HW: Poland and they came to Antwerp in 1928/29. My brother was a very sick child and my sister just told me that we had an uncle who had also the same, a child so sick, and he recommended that we came to Antwerp. And my father came in advance for a year or so and then they followed and my sister, my brother was given blood

transfusions, direct from my mother to my brother, so that ... for a few months ... so that helped him in the beginning, and she said he was in hospital for a very long time.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 33 seconds

RL: What was the matter with him?

HW: I really don't know, I thought it was rickets but that doesn't sound like rickets to me, you know. And then they told him he can't stay in Antwerp, he has to go away to the country, and he was in the country for about three or four years, and that is why I was sent to the country when I was two years old, because I was showing the same signs, and I was there for five and a half years.

RL: Whereabouts in the country?

HW: Brasschaat, it is yes, it was in a children's home, Brasschaat was in the children's home as well, and that helped me, and it must have helped him because as I said he was passed A1 for the British army when he was 18, so he was a strong guy afterwards, yes.

RL: So your parents started their married life in ...

HW: Poland, yes.

RL: And then moved over ...

HW: To Belgium ...

RL: To Belgium ...

HW: Yes.

RL: What did your father do for a living?

HW: I think he was an accountant, yes ... it seems to run in the family, yes ... yes ... And I really didn't know much about him, because I knew him only for about a year and a half before he died, so I didn't know much about him.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

HW: My friends tell me that ... my sister ... we used to live on the third floor, and when my sister came up with her friends and I used to know all their names, I used to call out their names. I was only about two at the time, I used to call out Leah or Sara, you know ... all their names. But really my first was in Brasschaat and it was very, very ... I don't think there has been much change there, it was just a very level life, I don't think much changed in all the years I was there. Because I remember brushing our teeth

Tape 1: 10 minutes 28 seconds

outside and being given half a glass of water, and we had to rinse the toothbrush in the water and rinse our mouths, and it was outside on the ground. It was very primitive. When you think about it, it was the 1930s, and I remember once we were talking about birthdays, it was a whole crowd of kids, and I said "I am four" and they said "No, you are six." So it just shows you, there was no, it was just a level life, no ups or no downs, or things like that. And then I came back to Antwerp ...

RL: Was it a Jewish home?

HW: I doubt it, I doubt it, it was just, they were saving life, so to say, and for that we are allowed to do anything. I don't think there were many Jewish places around at that time, there is none here either, if you think about it ... yes ...

RL: How big a place was it?

HW: It must have been huge, because there were a lot of kids there, yes.

RL: And how did you spend your days?

HW: Do I remember? I don't know. Schooling and playing and sleeping ... I can't remember. No, I really don't have any memories of that place, I must tell you, no.

RL: Did you see your parents during that time?

HW: I must have done. I must have done. Because they were not very far away, you know, we just went to the country, you know from here ... I mean how far, is it to the country from here, it is not far ...

RL: Was your brother in the same place?

HW: I don't know, no, I don't think so ... but he wasn't there when I was there, he must have been there also the same time because he is five and a half years older than I am, so I don't know if he was there at the same time, when he came home I went ...

RL: And how old were you when you came back?

HW: Seven and a half.

RL: Right.

HW: At nine I left Antwerp.

RL: And what are your memories of Antwerp when you returned?

Tape 1: 12 minutes 21 seconds

HW: Nothing ... go to school and being at home and I remember the windows being taped up with brown paper, you know, brown tape, when the war started ... when it was imminent. We must have heard the beginning of the war because one of my last memories was a wardrobe with a full length mirror, and it was cracked in half. So it must have been quite ... the bombing must have been quite near when we left.

RL: Where were you living in Antwerp?

HW: In Bleekhof Straat in Antwerp.

RL: Can you describe ... ?

HW: We had ... the access, as you came in you came into like a big room which was also part of the kitchen. We had one of those big old stoves with white doors with roses around, roses decorating it, you know. And then there was a room, a bedroom and another bedroom and I think ... I think just a bathroom, I don't think it was a bathroom just a toilet ... and then we had a yard downstairs, we lived downstairs, it was flats, it was flats in those house, and we lived downstairs and I remember there was a yard downstairs, I remember there was a sukkah there, Sukkos time, for the whole house, that I remember.

RL: How many flats was the house divided into?

HW: I think three or four. It was quite a modern looking house ... yes ...

RL: Were there any Jewish?

HW: They were all Jewish ...

RL: All Jewish ...

HW: All Jewish, yes.

RL: And was this in, what kind of area in Antwerp was it?

HW: I really don't know, I wasn't there long enough, I left when I was nine, you know, so people don't take any notice of areas when they are young. Especially when you are only there for one and a half years, yes.

RL: What about Shul, where was your father, or your family ...

HW: I really don't know ...

RL: No memory ...

HW: No ...

RL: Of Shul.

HW: No, no. I remember very little of that time I must tell you.

RL: And what school did you go to?

HW: There were no Jewish schools, we just went to an ordinary school. There were no Jewish schools at that time.

RL: Do you have any memory of the schools?

HW: No, not really ...

RL: Of any incidents or what it was like?

HW: In that school at that time, no. It was only afterwards when they came to England, I have got quite a few memories here. I don't know why it is so blank my mind, because I wasn't that young. I really can't tell you, and I wasn't stupid either, so, I really can't tell you ...

RL: Do you remember how you got on with the non-Jews around you? Do you remember?

HW: I don't think we had any trouble at that time. No, I remember my sisters went back after the war and there was Chossids walking in front of them, you know, in 1946, and somebody said "Oh I thought Hitler killed them all." So it must have been quite an anti-Semitic country at that time, 1946.

RL: How did your father dress? What sort of clothes did he wear?

HW: Black. But I think nobody wore casual wear, they all wore suits in those days, you know. He had a long black beard, I remember that. He was a genial man, always smiling.

RL: Did he ever wear a shtreimel?

HW: No, in those days you didn't. Only Rabbonim wore shtreimels in those days. I don't know if anyone in Antwerp, in Hungary they wore them, but not in Antwerp, yes, and then they only wore them at home on Shabbos.

RL: What are your memories of Shabbos?

HW: Candlesticks, and you know, just Shabbos, it was an ordinary Shabbos, you know, like everybody else, yes.

RL: Do you have any special memories of either Shabbos or Yom Tov? Anything that sticks in your mind.

HW: At that time, no. I just didn't understand, that is all. To tell you the truth, I never thought of it, I never thought of it. I remember going to Shul, Simchas Torah most probably and dancing and things like that, but basically, not really.

RL: You mentioned the Sukkah in the yard.

HW: Yes, that I remember.

RL: That ...

HW: Yes, because we had a yard, and it wasn't a garden, and there was nowhere else for anybody to eat. Everybody brought their own food down. Everybody came and ate there.

Tape 1: 17 minutes 6 seconds

RL: Did you have any toys?

HW: I don't think so.

RL: Did you read?

HW: I think I must have been a reader because I became a very big reader afterwards, so I must have been a reader, yes.

RL: Were you aware at all of what was happening?

HW: Not at all. As a matter of fact I asked my sister, when you hear what was going on there, what sort of a life did you lead? She said "We just carried on living." I think you always believed it's not going to happen to you, but these things happen. But when Belgium was invaded in May 1940 the Jewish people started walking. They must have heard what was going on in Germany and Poland, because it was already six, eight months after the war started, September. And they started walking, and about 30,000 Jews started walking, and not everybody arrived somewhere. Some went back, they couldn't take it, and when my mother's friend who was a very sick woman, couldn't take it, she went back. She and her one son survived the war in Brussels without any medication throughout the war, and she survived and she died six months after the war ended, which was such a shame. And we started off carrying a [...], you know, all the bedding, and everything, because you didn't know where you were going, and every village we came to we left something. And by the time we came to England there was

just my mother's Shabbos candelabra, which was broken, and that was all we came with after carrying such a lot of rubbish with us.

RL: So, besides the bedding, what else had you started out with?

HW: Goodness knows, but everybody carried something, I was the youngest at nine and my brother was fourteen and a half, and my sisters were 18 and 21/22, something like that, they all carried plenty, they all had rucksacks, but it just vanished.

RL: How long did you have to pack up?

HW: Very little time. I think they had already prepared. Because I can't imagine just get up and go without being prepared, my mother was always very, very organised and she must have prepared it all in advance. You know, like you prepare a bag to go to hospital with, to have a baby and you expect to go, you know ... you are just prepared for it, yes I can imagine. I wasn't aware of what was going on because I, kids don't, but she was, and also I think she must have kept money at home and not in the bank, because the banks were closed, you wouldn't have been able to get anything out. So she must have kept money at home, I mean she was a very organised woman.

RL: Can you describe that day? And what happened?

HW: The actual day, I don't know, we just walked out, I remember my last view was this cracked mirror and a vase of tulips because it was May, and that is my last memory of home. And do you know, I never went back? I said to my sister "Maybe I should have gone back." Because there are two portraits there, one of me as a baby, which won a baby prize, and....., because there was a big portrait over my mother's bed of me as a baby. Like this, let's say, and one of my grandmother, and we never went back to find out if it was even there, you know, it could have been. But, they never went back either, my sisters, and they were there in 1946, when there was a good chance it was still there, but now it is probably gone. And, and ... that was it ... so to say ...

RL: The day you started walking, what memories do you have?

HW: Just a huge crowd who walked. We stopped at villages. We stopped anywhere, you know, overnight, everywhere, one day was a hall, one day must have been a farm, once there was a barn ... and once we got bags with straw and we made up palliasses to sleep on, it was an old hall and everybody slept together, you know.... I remember one night I slept in a home, they must have felt sorry for me being just a kid, and I slept in a home, and then we just carried on walking. I remember once we were on a train, and it was supposed to go, but it didn't go, it didn't go, it didn't go, so my sisters went to a farm to buy milk and eggs and all of a sudden a rumour was going round that the train was going, and we were frantic, we saw them in the distance, and we said "hurry up, hurry up, hurry up" and in the end the train still didn't go and we started walking again. It took us two weeks to come to England, practically we walked all the way except the crossing, all but in the water.

RL: What did you eat?

HW: Eggs. I remember eating eggs and bread. What could you eat? You ate what you could buy. In those days the food was pure, when you bought ... you were allowed to buy bread. Today it is adulterated, but in those days boiled eggs were ok. We must have eaten things because we weren't starving when we came. We were in farms, everything was pure in farms in those days. And ...

RL: What did you do on Shabbos?

HW: I don't remember. We most probably sat in one place until we waited for night or the next day. It is a shame I didn't have these questions before hand, because I could have asked my sister, because she was 17/18, she could have remembered much more than I, yes. I can phone her up now if you want. No, it's too late ... yes ...

RL: How long were you actually walking ... ?

HW: Two weeks ...

RL: Two weeks ...

HW: Until 24th May ... the night of the 23rd of May, and then we came to Boulogne ...

Tape 1: 23 minutes 6 seconds

RL: Where did you ...

HW: We came to Boulogne and a boat arrived at midnight, and my brother jumped on the boat, and it started being bombed, and the boat moved, and my father was in the process of jumping and he fell in between. And there were soldiers there and there must have been soldiers from Dunkirk, because they were also trying to get away, and they took sticks and they tried to save him, but he had a big rucksack on his back and it just went down with him, and he had all the photographs in it, and everything that was important, all the papers and things like that. And ... that was the end, at that time.

RL: Were you there?

HW: I didn't see it, I don't think I was observing it. There is a book written about this journey, by somebody who was on it, and she said she heard a woman cry out and her husband had fallen in the water, but she didn't know who it was, and at that time she wrote it was Calais, but it wasn't, it was Boulogne, it was called "Pas de Calais", so she made a mistake. We hid under a train, in the middle, and both ends of the train were burning. We were being bombed all the time, and then at 3 o'clock in the morning another boat came along and I remember a soldier gave me his scarf and I properly fell

asleep, I had this scarf for years afterwards. I don't remember what happened to it in the end, you know. And we landed in London ...

RL: Was your brother on another boat?

HW: My brother was on the boat beforehand and he landed in Liverpool, but they didn't find out where he landed for about five or six weeks, or find out where he was. And, so he has got a different registration number to what we had, we had WR whatever it was, because we were war refugees, but we didn't have that one, we had a different one ...

RL: What was your memory of the boat journey?

HW: Nothing, I fell asleep. I was up all day and all night, and I fell asleep straight away, and when I woke up in the morning we were in London. And then we came to London, and we came to Manor Road, we lived in one room, and my sister started working, making, weaving baskets, just to earn a bit of money, you know. And I went to school for three months in London, and I couldn't speak English, and I was with the girl who arrived in 1938 and she translated for me to the teacher, because I spoke to her, she translated for me. And then we were evacuated ... the school was evacuated.

RL: What school were you at?

HW: Church Street School in Stoke Newington.

RL: How did your mother know where to go in London?

HW: She didn't, I think she was just sent there. I think the... more people were there, it was a Jewish area, a lot of Jewish people living there, so she must have known something. There were people meeting them there I think ... my sister once said, from the refugee committee, and they took them there ... yes ...

RL: So your sister was weaving baskets ...

HW: My sisters ... both of them ...

RL: Both of them.

HW: Yes, yes ...

RL: And what was your mother doing?

HW: I don't really know, but she was also working. I really don't know ... because I went to school, so I really don't know.

RL: How did she, how did ... you know ...

HW: She was very frustrated ...

RL: How did she cope, first of all, having just lost her husband, I mean ...

HW: I really don't know, I was a child, but she was a very strong woman, my mother, and she would have coped. Not knowing what happened, really and truly, whether he was saved or not ... but I don't think he was. I don't think she ever thought that he was, but she arrived there with three children, but you see they were not babies, they weren't dependent on her, so to say, so it made it easier for her to cope than if she had babies, yes.

RL: And at school, how did you get on with the other pupils?

HW: Not bad, as far as I know I didn't have any problems. I think there were a lot of refugee children there most probably, so I didn't have any problems, yes.

RL: And then you say you were evacuated ...

HW: Yes, I was evacuated to Wolverton, and there I think I must have been a reader so to say, but after I was there a few months I was asked to read in class, and I know somebody else was asked to read after me, and she was told "why can't you read like the little Jewish child?" So I must have caught on quite quickly. You do, if you go in the area, where all they speak is one language, you do catch on as a child, so I must have caught on quite quickly. So as I say, I was evacuated, I was billeted with a family, with one child, a girl, more or less my age, and at the time I didn't speak the language, and I must have been very frustrated and I think once I maybe had a row ... I don't know ... I scratched her, and they must have complained to the billeting officer, and they put me with a family with older girls. They were nice to me, they were a lot poorer, the first family was middle class, but they were very nice to me. And I met another Jewish girl in the same street, and we became friends.

Now I remember Pesach, they put up a kitchen for the Jewish girls with food and with matzah. So they said, the girls said to me, where I lived "What do you eat there?" So I remember biting a piece of matzah an inch square not to ... I mean I was nine years old, nine, ten by then. But they soon got me out of there because it was a goyiske place and my sister had friends who organised that I should go to Bletchley. Bletchley had a Yeshiva, and I must have lived, I slept outside ... but ate with a family there, it must have been the Rabbi's family. I wasn't the only one. And I remember walking to that place where I slept, to me they were an old couple, but they may have been all of 30, you know, and they were sitting on either side of the fire place, with the fire in the middle and the lady said to me "What is your name dear?"

And I said "Yetti."

"Oh", she said "Mine is Netty".

There was a young boy sleeping there as well who was in the Yeshiva.

And my sister said when she came to visit me she was washing my skirt, it was very sweet, you know. Today you wouldn't find that, would you ... no ...

Tape 1: 30 minutes 8 seconds

I remember once when we were still in London being bombed my mother had a pair of trousers made for me, because in the house where we lived there was a tailor, and I think we had chickens in the garden, and I was the one who always had to go in there, I was the smallest one, and I had to go and get the chickens out. I used to go in with my nose closed and go into either ... and I think my mother paid him with six eggs for this pair of trousers, which he made from an old pair of gents trousers. So, I must have taken them to Bletchley with me, because, we were playing in the garden one day and, and the, it was a beautiful day, and there were blackberries, we saw blackberry bushes, and we couldn't get to them because we had stockings on. And I now had a pair of trousers, so I ran home and I put on these trousers and I was just going into the blackberry bush when all of a sudden I saw a bearded man coming out ... and he said "heraus! heraus!" just like that, so we had to get away and we didn't get any blackberries and I had to change back into my skirt again.

RL: You mentioned bombing in London ...

HW: Yes ... I wasn't bombed there, we had an Anderson Shelter. An Anderson Shelter, I suppose you know what they are, they are shelters built into the ground and they are damp and they ... that is why I had the trousers made for me, we didn't sleep much there, but one night they ... when I came home from evacuation, they all went to the underground to sleep near Manor house, and the friends were all there along the line. We used to go after night they used to go visiting each other on the underground. We didn't need any tickets, we used to visit each other on the underground, and there were bunk beds going up and across, people slept across, like a row of sardines, you know. I only slept one night there, and they had a house near there where they put all their beddings every morning, a house, and they used to come out every morning, at 6 o'clock, before the trains ran, and we used to see fire in the distance. The East End had been bombed, and this had been bombed, and that had been bombed, and we used to come home, and the windows were cracked, that was from bombing, but I only slept once in the underground, but my sister made her friends there, in the underground, because you know, and we met every night there, on the underground. It was like a social there in the end.

RL: What made your family go to the underground when they had a shelter in the garden?

HW: It was only an Anderson Shelter ... it was called a Morrison shelter, and it was just a tin table, we slept under the tin, it must have more comfortable in the underground, because here was just like sleeping under a table.

RL: So it was in a house ...

HW: Yes, it was in the basement. I remember it was quite big, it was metal, and, but, much more comfortable, when you have got space, you can't sit up there, for instance, under the table.

RL: How many nights did you spend ...

HW: Not many, not many, because I was evacuated. I was sent away with the school.

RL: When you were living with the non-Jewish family, how did you find that?

HW: I had no problems, because remember, I had been brought up in Baschaad it wasn't that I had been imbued with Yiddishkeit from home, because I was there very little, so I really had no problems with it, but my sisters did, my family did very much, which is why after a few weeks I was sent away, yes, I went to Bletchley, and then from Bletchley I went to ...

RL: So, in Bletchley, what kind of Jewish life was there there, that you witnessed?

HW: I don't know if there was an awful lot, there was the Yeshiva. And I don't know if there was an awful lot of Jewish life otherwise. As a matter of fact Debbie asked me, when the Enigma film came out, and she asked me "What did you do about it?" I said "Debbie" I said "the people working there didn't know about it, weren't involved with it, so how am I supposed to know, a kid of ten, know about that, or nine, how was I supposed to know, nobody knew, people in the same buildings didn't know about it. It was a few miles ... it was in Bletchley as well."

RL: So where were the meals provided in Bletchley?

HW: That was with a family ...

RL: That was with a family.

HW: I ate with a family, yes.

RL: It was a Jewish family?

HW: Yes, I think it was the Rabbi's wife, actually. She had children of my age as well, girls, it was when we used to play in the garden, you know, and we were observed from Yeshiva by the boys, and they were told, there is a girl there in trousers, I remember that scene, a black and white beard he had, I remember that scene, I shall never forget that scene, yes ...

RL: How long were you in Bletchley?

HW: I think for about a year. A year ... yes ... and then I went to Dorking, Dorking was ... there were people, there was this huge house, and there were families living there, and there were children on their own, and it was under ... it was Rabbi Posen who was in charge of it, and his wife, and he became a Dayan Posen after the war for the Agudah. And, as I say there were children on their own and families.

RL: Do you remember who they were?

HW: Oh yes, one of the girls who was there, I met there, lived opposite me, but she died a few weeks ago, but she was my oldest friend, because I was ten years old when I met her.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 50 seconds

RL: What was her name?

HW: Miriam, at that time Miriam ... Lebrecht, and she died Chol Hamoed Sukkos, this year, yes.

RL: Was she a child on her own?

HW: No, she was with a family, she had three sisters there, there were three sisters, she was with her parents, the men went to London during the week and came home for Shabbos. I remember the men, they had watches, and the watches didn't work for more than 24 hours so somebody used to come Shabbos morning and wind up all the watches, a goy, like we used to have people making up the fires on a Shabbos, during the war, you know. Because a coal fire didn't last long in the winter, we used to leave a shilling on the mantelpiece and the child used to take the shilling and go. We said ... President Truman used to this as well, as a child, and he said the Jewish family was always very nice to him, and he remembered this all his life, yes.

RL: So what other families were in this big house?

Tape 1: 36 minutes 54 seconds

HW: There was a mixture, all frum.

RL: Do you remember names?

HW: No, not really, I remember this one because she was my friend. And she also had a cousin also called Lebrecht, living there, and she lives also local, one of the daughters lives local. And there were quite a few youngsters on their own, and I remember my friend's family, and the others because they were coming and going all the time, some stayed for the duration of the war, and some came and soon after ...

HW: I was there for about a year and a half.

RL: So how many people were living in the house?

HW: An awful lot. It was a mansion, it wasn't a house. It was very big, and it was called Leslie House actually, in Dorking, yes ...

Tape 1: 37 minutes 48 seconds

RL: And did you go to school there?

HW: Yes.

RL: And how was that?

HW: It was ok, fine, fine ... no problems there, no problem, I remember once, a year I was there, I came top of the class because (a) I got 100% for spelling, and (b) I remember my maths book must have been very, very messy, and on one page, on the left hand side must have been very messy, and on the right hand side was beautiful, and I remember her showing up to the class what can be done! You know ... just from one page to the other, it was amazing. And I remember also we were given a sum to do, and I was the first one with the answer, but she didn't accept it because it was the wrong method, crazy ... and we also once had a hygiene lesson, and she said "Who washes their hands before a meal?" And I put up my hand, I was sitting in the first row, and I looked back, and the three Jewish girls put up their hands. Brenda, who is still here and Miriam, who died last year and myself. I often wonder what did the teacher think, you know. Nobody else put up their hands, not one of the children, the Christian children. I remember the teacher's name because I think because of that incident ...

RL: And it was?

HW: Mrs Sibree. It is just something, you know, I am just saying, only because of that I remember.

RL: What did you do when you weren't in school?

HW: We just played, there were a lot of girls there, there was open ground, we just used to play. Some days I learnt with Mrs Posen, but, yes ...

RL: Did you have a kind of Hebrew ... ?

HW: Not really, because we went to a Christian school, and there wasn't anything, there wasn't anything ...

RL: Did you have any religious education at all?

HW: Only with Mrs Posen. And also, I lived the life, I lived the life, you know, of a Jewish girl, a frum girl and that was the end of it ... they were Yekkers, let's put it this way, I learned German there, so I used to speak, I spoke Yiddish ... so I was there for a year and a half and I came out speaking German in the ... and also the expressions for parve, milchig and fleishig was meaty, milky and [...], for parve, you know, so I came out German speaking so to say, because they were from Germany.

RL: Did you have any toys there or any games there?

HW: None, I remember reading the Beano and the Dandy, but that is about it, otherwise I had no toys, no. But do you know like a lot of children, I was always busy with something I suppose, and we didn't use a lot of it. I mean, my son got an encyclopaedia, a part of a set, for his birthday, he had it for a whole year, and it came to his next birthday, and my sister in law said "I must give you the rest". And he didn't touch it again. When he had one item it was different, when you all of a sudden have got a lot, you don't know where to start, and things like that, so, no, I didn't have a single toy, not to my knowledge.

RL: You had books, and you mentioned the comics.

Tape 1: 41 minutes 20 seconds

HW: Yes, books ... we didn't have any books, but I must have read books, because as I say I was already a reader then, and I remember speaking to one of the people working for the old age home in Stamford Hill, and she said "The people who sit there, and they wait from meal to meal, some of them ..."

And I said "Oh, I read a lot."

She said "Oh Mrs Wiesenfeld, you will never be bored."

TAPE 1 - 41 minutes 40 seconds

RL: Do you know what kind of books you were reading at that age?

HW: No, not really. When I was older I read Shakespeare ... no, not Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, but at that age not really, children's books. There were no Jewish books around in any case, at that time, they would have had them I think, yes ...

RL: And whilst you were living in this mansion, I mean, give me like a flavour of life there ...

HW: Well, we all ate together, and on Shabbos, and Friday night and Shabbos was very nice, and outside in the summer we ate outside, and making bread, and I remember in Bletchley being called in for tea, and what did we have, in Bletchley all we had was bread and tomer, that was our tea, and we were definitely not deprived. We were not hungry, we did not feel deprived not having toys, not having this, not having that. We didn't feel deprived. We never thought of it, let's put it this way, we never thought of it.

RL: You say you all ate together, so how many people were sitting down to a meal?

Tape 1: 42 minutes 54 seconds

HW: I try to remember the tables and everything, it must have been about fifty people, a minimum of about 50 people, there must have been two dozen families, about 20 children, something like that, Mrs and Mrs Posen themselves had nine children, so if you think about it ... yes ...

RL: Who did the cooking for all these people?

HW: I really don't know. I really don't know. I know they had a daughter who was a very hard working girl, she was 14, she used to bath us all, I remember that. And she emigrated afterwards to Australia, but she was such a good girl, her name was Hannah. I remember her. And she was a very good girl, like in between the others, one son became a communist and went to China, these things happen everywhere, and as far as I know he was still there recently, he must be a very old man by now. Yes, I really think a family like this, an Agudah family, and all of a sudden he became a communist and went to China. You know, it's ... it must have hurt them very much, but what can you do?

RL: Did the children, like yourself, did you have to help in the house at all?

HW: We did help, we helped with the washing up ... I remember once they boiled the milk for Shabbos, so that it should keep, because nobody had fridges and the milk went sour. And they said, anybody who drinks a cup of milk gets half an orange. I don't know whether I did or not, I think I tasted it and it was vile, you know. I remember we had no corn flakes, we had wheat flakes, and the minute the wheat flakes, you put milk in it, it became mushy, I can't bare mushy food, and I was forced to eat it, about a quarter of an inch at a time, it took me three hours to eat that bowl of wheat flakes, I couldn't eat it, it was disgusting. And I never had that again. I was made to sit there until it was finished. We used to say, during the war, waste not want not.

HW: Did they used to grow anything?

RL: No, not, I don't think so, I really don't think so, I really don't know.

HW: We didn't work in the garden at all, we worked in the kitchen, you know, but they were very nice, and I don't think we were forced, we were just asked, I don't know ... I remember being in the kitchen helping, especially motzei Shabbos, there was no plastic ware at that time, we had to wash up, can you imagine for all those people, yes. And somehow I didn't mind.

RL: Did they have help in the house?

HW: I don't know.

RL: Non Jewish help ...

HW: They must have had cleaners there, I really don't know, I don't remember seeing anybody. I don't remember the rooms being cleaned or anything, nothing, no ...

RL: Where did you sleep?

HW: We slept about eight or nine in a room, because they were huge rooms there, with one bed next to the other. One girl, Brenda, she is still there ... she lives in Schonfeld Square now, she was one of the girls there, and one of the daughters, the oldest daughter lives near me as well. She is not very well but she lives near me, and you know we never discuss it, we never ever talk about it. We never talk about Dorking, it's funny, and I see Brenda quite a lot because I go once a week to Schonfeld Square as a volunteer. So she comes down to play games, so we never discuss Dorking, you know. And then I came home ...

RL: Do you have ... let's stay here for a moment, did you have any memories of the Yom Tovim there?

HW: Not really, and yet they must have been celebrated very well, not really. We davened there.

RL: Sukkos?

HW: I don't remember seeing a sukkah there, but there must have been, because there were a lot of men there.

RL: Chanukah?

HW: No, no ... they must have done.

RL: Pesach?

HW: No, no ... you see, I suppose that things were changed over, we didn't know, and we just continued. I really don't know, isn't it funny, I never thought about it. Now that you mention it ...

Tape 1: 47 minutes 30 seconds

RL: Seder night?

HW: No, I don't know. I remember living there and I remember Shabbos and that is about it. Yes ...

RL: What kind of food were you eating, say during the week, what kind of meals were you given?

HW: Dried egg ... it was disgusting ... and we were never starving, there was always bread and tomer and jam and I don't remember being hungry, never starving. I have to

get a tissue out. So, that was it ... yes ... we used to make piles of sandwiches and things like that.

HW: Did you use to come home for lunch from school?

RL: Do you know what?

HW: We must have taken sandwiches with us. I don't remember coming home. Maybe that is the piles of sandwiches I am talking about, we must have made that, yes ... I remember playing in the school, I remember sliding, we had slides in the garden in the playground, and when it was snowing we were sliding along and all that, and I had no problems with school at all.

RL: What contact did you have with your family? With your mother?

HW: My mother, they used to come and visit me, they used to come and visit me, and ... but, they didn't stay, they were too old to be evacuated, they didn't stay, they stayed in London the whole time. As I say they went to the underground every night, it couldn't have been easy, but I think they made life of it. Yes. The underground was safe, as long as it didn't get a direct hit, the underground was safe.

RL: And you say you were in Dorking for a year and a half ...

HW: About a year and a half, yes ...

RL: And where ...

HW: And we came back to London.

RL: When was that? When did you come back to London?

HW: It must have been about 1944, 44 ... something like that ...

RL: So why did you come back?

HW: I think it was somehow quieter, and then the doodlebugs started, and we went to Denham, all of us.

RL: How long were you in London?

HW: I really don't know, I can't tell you ...

RL: Do you have any memories of that

HW: Period in London?

RL: Yes ...

HW: Yes, I went to Dalston County School and I think I must have been home for about a year and it was very ... no problem, I just carried on living ...

RL: Where was your mother living at that point?

HW: Highbury New Park, in London.

RL: And what did she have?

HW: What? What do you mean what did she have?

RL: What kind of a place was it?

HW: It was a downstairs flat again. We had two ... three rooms and a kitchen and a bathroom. It was a big house. There were flats. That is where they had ... the tailor lived upstairs and they had the trousers made for me. We had the Anderson shelter there. She also grew things, she grew flowers, she had a bed of flowers, she had a bed of potatoes, and then alongside she had cucumbers and tomatoes. She had green fingers my mother. Yes, she was very capable, not like me at all. If needs must, needs must at that time.

RL: And chickens?

HW: Yes, chickens at the back of the garden of course, yes, yes.

And when we moved at the end of the war, we took the chickens with us, and my mother built a pen there for the chickens. And the first Christmas, two weeks before Christmas, they were all pinched. And my mother said "That is the end", and she didn't have any more after that.

RL: So were you all living in ...

HW: In Highbury New Park ... yes ...

RL: You were all together.

HW: My brother never wanted to go to any shelters, he slept at home. And my sisters went to the shelters, with my mother.

RL: And whilst you were there, were you going to the shelter ...

HW: Once, only once when I was there ... once, yes I found it like a social there. Everyone met everyone there every night and a "Hello, how are you?" "What has your day been?" Things like that, you know. Yes ...

RL: How did you get on? You know, going to yet another school here, you know ...

HW: I just went from school to school ...

RL: How did you cope with slotting into a new place ... and ...

HW: I don't think I ever had any problems. But then of course I spoke English. I don't think I had any problems, I don't remember feeling anything, you know, that I was feeling somehow different or somehow not at all, I made friends there. They are still my friends today.

RL: Jewish children?

HW: Yes, Jewish children ... yes, Jewish children. Somehow we mixed with the Jewish children there, you know. A lot of Jewish children there, and I was very proud of the uniform and, but that was only one year. I then went to Denham.

RL: So that one year in London, did you, you know, after school, what did you do?

HW: I came home, I suppose I played, I most probably had homework. You know, no, nothing, no special activities, my brother in law, that was after the war already, my brother tried to teach me to ride a bicycle, and he held on to it and fine, and I rode and rode and rode, and I realised all of a sudden that he wasn't holding on any more, and I fell off, you know.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 17 seconds

RL: Did you have a gas mask?

HW: Yes, of course. We all had gas masks, we all, I don't think we ever used it. I don't know what happened to it in the end.

RL: And that went with you, did it?

HW: We had to, we had to. Yes, we had to go to school with it, we all had gas masks.

RL: In London at that point, did you go to any Shul?

HW: We went, at that point, we went to the Adass Shul, which was in Green Lane at the time. And afterwards we went to Poets Road Shul, which was a United Synagogue Shul, there was a chazzan, I think he was called Kusevitsky, one of the brothers, yes, yes

Tape 1: 54 minutes 4 seconds

RL: Did you belong to anything at that point in London? Was there any youth group or club ...

HW: There may have been, but I didn't ... afterwards I did, but not at that stage, not during the war, no ... no I didn't, not at that point.

RL: So your brother, that landed in Liverpool. What was his story up to this point?

HW: I never asked him. And he isn't here now?

RL: Did he come straight to the family?

HW: Yes, when he came back, he came straight to us. I don't know where he slept, because we were living in one room, but he must have slept there as well. I never asked. I should have asked my sister, you know I wish I had known these questions before hand, she would have known more than me.

RL: We have got you ... so ...

HW: I know, I know ...

RL: We will make the most of ...

HW: Exactly, yes ...yes ...

When we came to Denham there was a family house there, a family was living there, a Jewish family, also evacuated, and we had one single bedroom, which had a single bed across the windows, then up we had a double bed, and we, there was a cupboard, we could barely open the door. We had a flap table, when you open the flap we sat on the bed because there were no room for chairs, we had wooden crates, orange crates, and on top of that we had a paraffin stove for cooking, one flame. I don't know, my mother must have been a genius, I don't know how she managed, I mean she must have stored the vegetables somewhere, the fruit somewhere, something ... you know.

And we all went to London to go to school, to go to work, my sisters went to work and I went to school, we came back every night.

RL: So were you still going to school?

HW: By that time I went to Pitman's College in Southampton Road, I was learning shorthand typing, and then one day ...

RL: I was about to say that this film is about to end and we will stop here and continue.

HW: Ok Fine.

TAPE 2

RL: This is the interview with Yetti Wiesenfeld and it is tape 2.

So you were just telling me that you have just remembered other activities that you did in Dorking, if you would like to start with that.

HW: Well one of them was going to on outings to Boxhill, which was a very beautiful wood in Dorking, and we used to go through it and we used to rustle through the leaves as we picked some flowers there. And very tall trees there and we were climbing up, and somebody told me recently it has all been built up now, yes ...

RL: Did you go with adults on these outings?

HW: It must have been supervised, because it was only nine or ten, so it must have been supervised, maybe some of the adults went and the children went, but it must have been supervised because they couldn't let us go by ourselves there, it wasn't near Leslie House. It was a nice place.

RL: Did they take you out anywhere else?

HW: Not that I remember, but they may have done, maybe I will remember later on, because I have just remembered about Dorking, you know, going to the woods there, and I remember even when we went to Denham, we haven't come to Denham yet, have we ...

RL: We are just on Denham now ...

HW: Yes ... yes ...

My sisters used to walk home from work. They used to go on the bus, and walk through the woods to get to a place, and take off their stockings and pick up nuts, they used to have hazel nuts there and all kinds of nuts and they used to come with their stockings full of nuts. You know, it was hilarious, yes ...

RL: What were your sisters working at?

HW: My older sister was a diamond cleaver, which is a very specialised cutting of diamonds, which she learnt in Antwerp, and my younger sister worked for a diamond company in Hatton Garden.

RL: And what was your brother doing?

HW: My brother wasn't doing anything. He was working also, making frames, for glasses, glass frames. I don't think he ever went to school in London, in England, he was

14, and in those days children left school at 14, I left at 14, so I don't think he was ... he started working, yes.

RL: And you were all living in Denham?

HW: No, my brother wouldn't go. He stayed in London. And we travelled down every day. I remember we used to leave home at 7.30 each morning to catch a bus to Uxbridge Underground and go to Dalton, Russell Square Underground and Pitmans College was in Southampton Row. And one day I thought I saw the bus pass at the top of the road, and I thought I had missed it, so when I came to the top of the road, and a car stopped and I asked for a lift to the underground. It was the airforce officer, and I just walked into the car, today you couldn't do that. And then I met the bus behind, what I had missed was the earlier bus, which was late, and my bus was behind there. They took me to the underground with no problems.

I remember when there was a bus strike in London, people were told to stand at bus stops and people would stop and give you lifts. You couldn't do that today. That was years ago, I just put my hand out like this and a car would stop. I was only 12, 13, 13 ... and, and they were living with the family ... they also lived in Stamford Hill, those that were left lived in Stamford Hill.

RL: What was this family called?

HW: Steinberg.

RL: Where were they from?

Tape 2: 4 minutes 6 seconds

HW: I think they were English. They rented the whole house, yes, and they had a daughter Sarah, who was two years older than me. And one day, when I came out of school they said the war was going to end, we have been bombed and the war is going to end. I tried to get home and I had to get off at this stop, I couldn't find anywhere, because the railways had been bombed and I had to go from place to place, and I was only 14 at the time, 13, or 14, it was in 44, and at 9 o'clock at night I was still going round and round in circles and I met Sarah and she was also from London, and I was so happy to see her, and from then on we started going together also, and we finally got to Uxbridge about midnight and all the buses had stopped already, and we walked for about two hours to get to home, but we were together, we didn't mind, we had walked along, sauntering along and all that, we had no problem with it.

RL: Where were you living at that point?

HW: We were in Dorking.

RL: Dorking ...

HW: Yes, no ... no ... in Denham, that was part of Denham ... yes ...

RL: Yes ...

HW: And as I say we travelled every morning and we came home every night, and my sisters as well, yes ...

RL: So was Denham ...

HW: It was a village ... Uxbridge and Gerrard's Cross, which is supposed to be very famous, a lot of rich people live there, film stars live there, and there was a mansion at the top of the road, and a very rich family lived there, a Jewish family, a frum family, my mother became friends with them. After they lived in Bishops Avenue and we used to visit them there, and I remember when one of the children got married, one of the grandchildren of my mother's friend, they had a big marquis in the garden, you know ... in those days ... and we went there ..

RL: What family was this?

HW: The name was Weinman and they were manufacturers of Luxram Lamps, and they came from Switzerland these people. And, and, they were living in the toffs house at the top of the house, and we were the minions, down the road, you know, the small houses.

RL: On a normal day how long would it take you to get to Pitmans College from there?

HW: Well Uxbridge was about an hour and they had to get the bus to the station, which wasn't much, about an hour and a half I suppose each way. I remember it, now that you mention it, they had a daughter at the top of the road, and she had been married for six weeks, and they went for a walk on Shabbos, and he saw a tin can at the end of the road, and he went into the road to put it to the side, because he said it would be dangerous for a car, and he got knocked over by a car and he died, he got killed. I didn't know about it, I think it just happened before we came there, and she never remarried and never had children, the one daughter only had one son, she moved to American afterwards ...

RL: So which family was this?

HW: The Weinmans ...

RL: The Weinman family.

HW: Yes ... it is terrible when you think about it. And they lived on Bishops Avenue, but they ... nothing is fantastic, they used to go to the sales and buy things for themselves, they used to buy too big because it was cheaper and alter it to fit. They were

not such posh people. They were very nice. They were very nice to us anyway, they loved mummy, yes ...

RL: How did you spend Shabbos in Denham? What did you do on a Shabbos?

HW: Nothing much, walking, I liked walking and things like that. Shabbos was, Shabbos morning I slept in the double bed with my two sisters, I was in the middle, and Shabbos morning they tickled me, they had nothing to do on Shabbos morning and they tickled me from both sides, you know. We went out, there was no Shul, there was no Shul, there was nothing there really. And we just went out for walks if it was nice, and we stayed at home. It is amazing when you think about it how we lived.

RL: What did your mother do? Was she working at this point?

HW: No, she couldn't work. She was in Denham, she cooked for us, I think it was a full time job just to get the food together. I don't even know where she shopped, because there were no shops there, it was just like a street of houses, and I don't even know where the shopping was. She must have gone to Uxbridge or to Gerrard's Cross to shop, but all this happened when I was at school and my sisters were at work, so I suppose she went shopping there.

RL: I wonder how she got kosher food ...

Tape 2: 9 minutes 10 seconds

HW: We didn't have meat, no meat..... vegetables, things like that you could buy. I did not feel deprived at any stage of food, we had very little space as I say, we opened up the flap table and sat on the bed. We had visitors there as well, she cooked for visitors as well, some days my sister's friends used to come and they used to visit us as well, and we used to cope with that as well.

RL: You just had that one little paraffin ... ?

HW: One little paraffin ... for Shabbos she was allowed to use the blech in the kitchen for the cholent, but the rest of the time she had this little paraffin heater on top of this wooden crate, when you think about it today ... how dangerous it was, it could be knocked over, although it was standing in the corner, but even so, it could have been knocked over, and the crate was our cupboard.

RL: So when you travelled into Pitman's College did you witness much destruction or..

HW: Not really, we were underground.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 20 seconds

RL: Yes.

HW: We were underground, yes. I remember once going home at night, it was rush hour, and a man tried to get to me so to say, and a woman saw it and she took me under her arm to protect me, I was 14 at that time, and I remember that easily. There were that type of people all the time, but it was not mentioned, it was not publicised as it is today, but that is how it goes, that is life.

RL: How long were you at Pitman's?

HW: A year.

RL: How did you find it there?

HW: No problem. And half way through there was a job going on Southampton Row and I went there after school from 4.30 to 6 o'clock, I was already back in London then, and I went to work there for six months, and they offered to keep the job open, and I went there afterwards to work, it was for the Agudah at the time.

RL: So you would go from college ...

HW: ... to school ... it was on the same row, down the road, 114 Southampton Row, yes ...

RL: And what was your work there?

HW: Office work. I earned the magnificent sum of three pounds ten shillings, and when I wanted to change my job because I went to Hatton Garden afterwards, I had to go to the Labour Exchange which is today the Job Centre, and there was a woman in front of me and she must have been told that she was entitled to this and that, and she said "I don't want charity", you know, people were proud in those days, however poor they were.

And when it came to my turn I was so ... when I told her how much I earned she sort of looked up to me ... it may have been a lot, I really don't know. And I had to report to her that I changed my job, because I wasn't British yet, I didn't become British until 1946 I think, the end of 1946. So we had to report when we changed our jobs, and I went to Hatton Garden.

RL: So for how long were you in this Agudah Office.

HW: About a year and half.

RL: And what kind of things were you doing?

HW: All sorts, stencilling, typing, because I learned to type. You know when we learned to type we learned with a shield over the keyboard, and we had to type blind, that is how we learned to type. They don't do that today, no, in any case, and so we typed and filing and stencilling. In those days we had to stencil like this, you know, like that ... and I don't know, I enjoyed myself because we had nice people working there.

RL: Who were your bosses?

HW: One was Mr Springer, M R Springer who was very busy with refugees and he was also friends with Harold Wilson and all the Home Office People, he was friends with. I was sent to, I was 14 and I went to Downing Street to send a letter, or take a letter there, or something, and I asked a policeman, and I said "Can you please tell me where Downing Street is?"

And he said "Are you a Londoner?"

And I said "Yes."

"And you don't know where Downing Street is?"

You know I was 14 and I was sent there, I don't know, it was just one of those things ... yes.

RL: What activities was the Agudah office involved with at that time?

HW: Refugees, I remember Harry Goodman was one of the directors there, and he had a factory of clothing, and I remember a group of boys came, and they all got the same coats, black and white herring tweed coats. One of them I liked very much, I was 14 at the time, and they all said "Your boyfriend's coming" and all that, he was a very nice boy, but he went back to Czechoslovakia afterwards and mostly with refugees at that time ... it was World Agudah actually that I worked for, not just the general Agudah office. I don't think it exists any more.

RL: And were they ... in what way were they helping refugees?

HW: Bring them over, money I suppose, you know, and helping them here, who knows?

RL: Were they running any hostels?

Tape 2: 14 minutes 24 seconds

HW: Oh yes, I don't know if they were running hostels, but I know those boys were staying in the hostels, yes ... yes ... And we worked, I am still friends with people I worked with there.

RL: How many people were working in that office?

HW: Not many, about four, there was Harry Goodman. I realise now, he used to shout a lot, and I realise that I think he was a sick man, and I think he was suffering ... and he

used to scream sometimes, and we all used to listen to him screaming and think it was great fun, I was only 14, you know. And I was so stupid, I went to his house on Sunday nights and took two hours dictation to type out the next day, and I never got paid extra for it. It wouldn't happen today, I was so stupid, or maybe I was just naïve, or maybe just didn't care, I am not a money person, I didn't care, I just took it for granted. Today, who would do that, two hours every Sunday dictation, yes.

RL: So were they giving out money to refugees who came over?

HW: Most probably yes. I don't know where they got the money from. They had committees, and ... I don't know ...

Tape 2: 15 minutes 14 seconds

RL: You just did the activities in which they were involved in ...

HW: You know, they were travelling all over and they were, you know, and ... I remember once we had no sugar in the place, and they wanted to make a cup of tea, and one of the men, he died recently, he had just got married, and he said he was going to bring his wife over and get her to stir it with her finger and make it sweet. Little things like that ... you know ... yes ... yes.

And I remember my sister had her first child then, while I was there, and I think they must have phoned me up or something, and she had a boy and I said "She didn't really care what she had."

And they said "A monkey?"

And I said "No, not a monkey."

RL: So who did your sister marry?

HW: A refugee, from Vienna, he came over in 19 ... with Schonfeld in 1938, and he went to Yeshiva in Manchester, and she married him after the war. Both my sisters married after the war actually, one soon after, and she, her husband was in the British army because he was born in the 1914 war here, in England, and then he went back to Belgium, and he was a prisoner of war, because he spoke several languages, I don't know if they knew he was Jewish, his name was Hase, which could be anything, and he was used as an interpreter, because in Belgium they spoke several languages. He was used as an interpreter.

RL: So he was a prisoner of war in Belgium?

HW: In Italy ...

RL: In Italy ...

Tape 2: 17 minutes 20 seconds

HW: Yes, in Italy at the time, I think so, I think it was Italy, and as I say he was used as an interpreter. And she married him and then, and then my other sister married a few months later, my younger sister married a few months later. And then in 1947 my sister was always very Zionist, my older sister, and she wanted to go to Belg ... to Israel before the war, and my parents wouldn't allow her because before the war people didn't travel. They said "When you are married you can go, but not ...". In 1947 they went to Israel, they were going to go to Israel, but they expected to be sent to Cyprus, the boats at that time went to Cyprus, but they were sent back to Germany, there was the famous Exodus boat, and she showed me photographs of the men being taken off the boat by four soldiers, one on each arm and one on each leg, and then they escaped from Germany, they went to France, and they got false passports and they went to Israel, and they were there before the 1948 war, yes, and they went straight to kibbutz.

RL: Is she still alive this sister?

HW: Yes, kneine hora, she is 87, or 88, something like that.

RL: And where does she live now?

HW: She is still living on the same kibbutz, near Hadera, it is non frum kibbutz, she wasn't frum at all my sister, she didn't keep anything, and my younger sister said that she was going out to these non frum clubs with her friends but she said "If you tell our parents I am going to kill you", kids you know, how they talk, and not for two years did they find out, and by then my younger sister, they sent her to Beis Yaakov.

Tape 2: 19 minutes 8 seconds

RL: Now, coming back a little bit, where were you when the war ended. At what point of your life ...

HW: I think I was in London. I remember my brother coming home, he was a soldier already, and we went to, we were part of the crowd in the mall at that time, VE day, and I remember being with him, he was a very tall man, and I felt very protected by him, because there was a big crowd there, I was 15, in 45 ... 15, yes 15, so I was in London, yes, we were back in London by then.

RL: When had your brother joined the army?

HW: When he was 18, he was drafted, he was drafted. He never ate anything, the meat and things like that, they called the sausages bags of mystery, you know. He used to, they got an ounce of cigarettes, and he never smoked, so he used that to get all sorts of things from the other soldiers, or in ... I think he was in Germany and he brought a camera home, he got it for a packet of cigarettes or something, you know, things like that, I think it was a Leica, it doesn't work, you can't get film for it or anything, but I have still got it, yes ... yes ...

Tape 2: - 20 minutes 31 seconds

As I say he was a sick child and he passed A1 for the British army. And then he followed my sister to Israel and he was a parachutist in the Israeli army in the 1956 war, yes. So he grew up to be a strong man.

RL: And where did he get married?

HW: In Israel, yes.

RL: What family do the both of them have?

HW: My older sister has two sons, one lives in America and one lives in Israel in the kibbutz with her, and he has five children, the one in America never married. And my brother has three children, a boy and two girls, and one girl never married, the in between one, the younger one is married and the older one is married, yes.

RL: And where does he live?

HW: In Michmoreth that is where my brother lived, yes.

RL: How did you feel, coming back to the end of the war, how did you feel, you know, when war ended?

HW: I don't remember having any particular feelings, because I never really suffered from the war, I know it was a very joyous occasion, you know. Lights lit up again, we walked in the dark, it was like walking in the fog, I used to love walking in the fog because I was invisible, it was wet ... and the fog ... you know, you couldn't see a yard in front of you. But, not elated, because we didn't really know what had happened at that stage. And our brother was there, he was really the only family we had that was in the war, my brother in law, he wasn't my brother in law yet, although my sister knew him before the war in Belgium. So, it wasn't, I can't say I was jumping for joy.

RL: You talked about walking in the fog, how did you know where you were going?

HW: Well, I know where I was going because I walked straight and I hoped for the best, and I hoped to find the entrance to the house where we lived. You know, it was a real peasoup as they were called at the time, and you can't see through peasoup, can you, no ... we got damp and you know, it didn't worry me, I didn't do the washing. No.

RL: So you, when you moved back to London, have you said ... yes ... Where were you living?

HW: In Highbury New Park at the time.

RL: Have we described that? What was it?

Tape 2: 23 minutes 15 seconds

HW: Well, we lived in three houses in Highbury New Park, 125, 153 and 160. In 125, I wasn't there very long because I got sent away, when I came between I came to 153 which was like in the basement, and then they moved across the road to this 160 where we had a ground floor flat, yes. And it wasn't bad, yes, it was ok, no problem. I remember waking up one morning, and we had a put you up, you know, you opened it up, and I found my sister sleeping there with four friends, you know, it was too late to go home and she was sleeping there with three other friends, there were four of them, sleeping in that bed, it was very, it was very easy going.

RL: When did you move back?

HW: To London?

RL: Yes.

HW: It must have been some time in 45, at the beginning of 45, when the doodle bugs stopped most probably, you know, V1s and V2s they were called, pilotless bombs. And I remember in Dorking, in Denham rather, if you heard one, if somebody heard it it was fine, but the noise stopped when it was dropped, so as long as you heard it, that was it, yes ...

RL: Right, so you were back in London by 45?

HW: Yes.

RL: And you were there when the war finished.

HW: Yes.

RL: And you said you went to Pitmans College.

HW: Yes.

RL: And once you finished Pitmans College?

HW: I went to work, in the same street, yes. And after that, I just carried on living.

RL: You were working for World Agudah and then what was the job after that?

HW: In Hatton Garden?

RL: In Hatton Garden and what were you doing?

Tape 2: 24 minutes 57 seconds

HW: It was office work but there was much more form filling and additions and multiplied and so many carats and so many pounds and pounds per carat and we had a machine and we put the numbers in and this and that ...

My boss used to get many Indian customers at that time, and one came with his son, there was a beautiful boy, and I must have described him when I came home, because he wanted to take me out, and I knew I couldn't go out with an Indian boy, and at that time I was 16/17 and so, I came home, and I described him, and my sisters told me that they were very worried about me, because I must have described him you know, in a very glowing way, but I never went out with him, I wouldn't have gone out with him, he wasn't Jewish, I wouldn't have gone out with him, I am just saying that various people came there, a mixture of people, people who remembered part of Stamford Hill being fields, and you are talking about in 1947, and they remembered at the beginning of the century it was fields there before it was built up. And the first biros came out I remember when we got the first biros, and we could write it was about five miles with it, or something, it was very expensive to buy, not 10p like today, biros were very expensive to buy at the time.

RL: Who was your boss?

HW: Rabstein, he is, you know, I remember once I had to buy tickets for him, with a "b" Rabstein with a "b", R A B, I had to go and buy tickets for him to go to Antwerp, and I queued eight hours in Victoria Station to buy tickets for him and by the time I got there, there were none left, and I thought he is not going to go on Shabbos, so I bought him a ticket for Sunday, and he really wanted to be there for Shabbos, and I came home at midnight, and my family were on the street, they didn't know where I was, I didn't phone up, I don't think we had a phone then. I didn't worry, I came home, on the underground, I lived near Manor House at the time, I didn't worry, and I sauntered up the road, when you think about it ...

RL: Where was Mr Rabstein from?

Tape 2: 27 minutes 10 seconds

HW: Belgium. He was a diamond merchant, and he used to go to Belgium regularly, but in those days there were no travel agencies, and if you wanted to buy a ticket, you had to go to the station, and I queued for eight hours.

RL: Did you join any clubs at all?

Tape 2: 27 minutes 27 seconds

HW: I went to Beis Yaakov. You know, group, but, I don't remember going on outings or things like that, you know, I had my friends, we used to go to the West End, we used to walk about, we used to go to the pictures sometimes, in those days. Today, none us goes, but in those days we did. But it was so innocent, when you think about it sometimes, I see sometimes on television, we go somewhere and we see it, and I see some of those films. If there was a kiss or something, there was music playing and we didn't see anything, you know ...

RL: Where did the Beis Yaakov used to meet?

HW: In Stamford Hill. Manor Rd, Beis Yaakov, and then they moved to Amhurst Park.

RL: Was there a building?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 16 seconds

HW: There was, it was also the nursery, a children's nursery, it was there, it was just used by the Beis Yaakov, and my nephews went there.

RL: And the club used to meet there as well?

HW: Yes ... yes ...

RL: Who was in charge of it?

HW: I don't know at that time. I don't remember who was in charge. No. Sorry ... I don't remember that, I remember the girls there. I still see some of them.

RL: Can you name some of them?

HW: One was Raizie, Miriam, you know, the usual Jewish names.

RL: What were the surnames?

HW: Raizie, I don't know, I know what it is now, I don't know, one was Schreiber. I knew them all by their first names.

You know, we had been right through ... I remember my machutenista said, she was real English, she was born English, her father was born English, she said that she was the first one to marry out. What did she mean, she married a Hungarian, she called it that she married out, so you know ...

RL: What was the community like in Stamford Hill at that point?

Tape 2: 29 minutes 47 seconds

HW: Fine, no problems.

RL: I mean was it mainly a refugee community or other?

HW: I don't think I ever took any notice of it, we were just people ... my friend was English, her mother was English born, and she went to Highbury New Park, and I remember she used to say "Yetti come with me to visit my aunties, and my grandmother", and I could never say the same to her. I felt it at the time, I felt it, I couldn't do it ... So I was upset in a way at the time that I couldn't do it.

RL: How often would the Beis Yaakov meet?

HW: About once a week, on a Shabbos. It wasn't like we went on outings today. I don't think I went on any outings with them at all.

RL: What would you do on Shabbos?

HW: Sit, talk, sing ... afterwards I belonged to Ezra as well, singing, we had a shiur, we sang until nacht.

RL: Who would give the shiur?

HW: I don't know ... one of the men... men ... women. Beis Yaakov was only girls, but Ezra was boys and girls at the time. We lived a normal life.

Tape 2: 31 minutes 20 seconds

RL: Where would Ezra meet?

HW: In a house in Lordship Park, somebody's private house, they had a big house, and we all met there.

RL: Whose house was it?

HW: Somebody called Wechsler, a family called Wechsler, and it was very nice. Today you wouldn't do it. True? Yes, I really didn't do much after that, just worked and came home, and had a little holiday sometimes.

I saved up, when I worked in Hatton Garden, I saved up for three years to go to Israel for six weeks, I thought to myself that I am not going to spend all that money and go for two weeks only. So I saved three years and I wanted to go in 1966, I wasn't married yet ... it must have been in 1951 or 1952, when I was 20, I wanted to go before I was married. And my boss wouldn't let me go, because Maccabi was going at that time, Maccabi

Tape 2: 32 minutes 37 seconds

Sports, and they were selling tickets at that time for £66, which was an awful lot of money at that time, it was an awful lot, but it was less than half the money of the normal fair and my boss wouldn't let me go, and I said "In that case, if you won't let me go now, I want to go after Pesach", this was in the autumn, but I said then it will cost me £142, and he said I will pay you the difference, and he did. It was a lot of money £70 difference, but he did pay it, £80, nearly 80.

RL: How did you feel about going to Israel?

HW: I felt ... I wasn't scared of flying, I tried not, I was a very bad traveller, when I went on the underground I had to stop to be sick, I was very bad. And I was ok on the way there, not too bad, and we flew six hours to Rome, and we got off and everybody ate in a restaurant a meal, everybody ate fluffy potatoes and peas and meat, and I got my Kedassia box which was I think was a salami sandwich, with a tin of, a tin of pilchards, not pilchards, sardines, and that was my lunch and I looked at those people and I didn't have anything to eat, and I got to Israel, and it was another six hours from there to Israel, it was 12 hours for the flight, so it was a long journey. My mother went first, to visit my sister and I remember crying when I left her, and then when I came down, and when I went, I just went there when I left her, and then when I came down, and when I went, I just went there, and I stayed with my sister. And it was a non frum kitchen, but she brought vegetables home and cheeses home and I ate in her place, she lived in one room, and it had a tap outside, it was a hut really with a tap outside and public toilets. Now she has got a beautiful bungalow. She is very happy. I was there Shavuot, I was there, and then I came back, and I was really one of the first ones to start going and to travel like that, yes. And then I didn't go for 17 years to Israel. And I went, I remember my cousin said to me "If you come every 17 years, we will see a lot of each other" but then I went three times in one year, for the weddings, my nephews got married, my niece got married and I remember I was there when Maggie Thatcher got elected again, I wasn't here, I was there. And my sister said "Why did they elect her again?" And I said "Toby, there is nobody else" at that time, no ...

Tape 2: 35 minutes 40 seconds

RL: So bringing you back to, you were working, and you were living, in 1951, where were you living at that point?

HW: In Woodbury Grove, we pulled down the houses in Highbury New Park and we went to live in Woodbury Grove, which is near Manor House.

RL: And who was still living at home?

HW: All of us, my sisters were living with us, no my sisters got married, so there was only myself and my brother. But then my sister moved in with us with the baby, and my other sister was in Israel, she went to Israel then, but I think she was there still because I remember her with eggs in her hand, a photograph with eggs in her hand from the

chickens, that was before they were pinched, so it must have been the first year that they were there. And then they moved to Israel, yes, we moved to the flat upstairs, I don't know how we managed to move because there were quite a lot of people in that place, but we managed, we managed, yes.

RL: So it was an upstairs flat?

HW: Yes ... yes ...

RL: So were there other Jewish people there?

HW: No they were horrible people downstairs, they were disgusting, the people who lived downstairs were disgusting, they were council tenants, but what can you do?

RL: How long was the family in that flat?

HW: Well, my sister, we were all rebilleted, the house was going to be pulled down, and we all moved and we lived in the flats in Woodbury Down Estate.

RL: In?

HW: Woodbury Down Estate which had been built then and we had another flat there. She had a flat opposite me, and my other sister was in Israel by then, she must have been there for two or three years, and from there I got married from there, yes.

RL: Were there other Jewish people in Woodbury Down Estate?

Tape 2: 37 minutes 36 seconds

HW: There were, but they were not frum, none of them were frum. I mean upstairs was a family, he worked on Shabbos, he was a taxi driver on Shabbos and Yom Tov and Yom Kippur and we managed to stop him going on Yom Kippur, but every Shabbos was too much for him, and actually the son became a doctor, and I met him years later at Whipps Cross Hospital when my mother was there. It was very nice meeting him again, but he was already grown up and he was a doctor you know. He was a very clever child, and he was given, he went to cheder, and in Yesodei Hatorah, they had in Amhurst Park, and Dr Schonfeld's offices in Amhurst Park were there, and he was offered a free place in Yesodei Hatorah. But he didn't take it, he said it isn't for us, it is much too religious for us, he could have gone there, it is a shame, he was a lovely boy.

RL: Did you belong to a Shul?

HW: That was still the same Shul. Oh yes, we went to Frumkin Shul, which was up the road, near Manor House Station. It was like a Shteibel more like, about fifty or sixty people there, yes ...

Tape 2: 38 minutes 52 seconds

RL: Who was the Rav?

HW: I don't think we had a Rav, just everybody could daven, you know, everybody took a turn.

RL: Was it in a house, or was it in a proper building?

HW: It was in a proper building, not purpose built, there were a lot of buildings on Seven Sisters Road, there were a lot of big buildings. There were a lot of hotels there along that place, and it was one of those buildings it belonged to the Frumkin family. The Frumkin family had a wine, they were selling wine in the East End, they were a very well known family, and he bought this Shul, to make a Shul out of it, yes. And when he died he said it was only allowed ever to be sold to be used as another Shul, but I don't think it could be sold now, they pulled it down and made a hotel out of it. Along that road was all hotels, near the park, Finsbury Park Hotels, near the underground, near the park, it was all hotels, beautiful park, Finsbury Park. But it has been vandalised, they used to have a toy village there, it was really beautiful, people used to come and see it. It is such a shame but it has gone away. It was there for years, right through the thirties and twenties, but it came to the sixties and seventies and it was all vandalised.

RL: So the Frumkin Shul, what kind of davening was it there?

HW: Normal, Ashkenazi davening I should think, Ashkenazi davening, I found it normal there, yes. We went there for a long time.

RL: And how did you meet your husband?

HW: It was a shidduch. I used to go on Shabbos afternoon with my friends to Springfield Park. All the Jews went there, Springfield Park or Clissold Park, and a friend of my sisters saw me there, and she said to her sister, who was sitting next to her "Oh that is Faigey's sister, I wonder if we have got anybody for her." They tried somebody else and I said "No thanks, no way." And then they tried him, and I went to see him, and we went out, and we got engaged. And the funny thing is that across the road Faigey had a very good friend, and they had two daughters, and she went to the Bearsted to have a baby, and it was Shabbos, and her husband wouldn't go to the Bearsted to ask what his wife had, in case the goyim were mechalel Shabbos, I am just saying, I am just telling ... so I said to my friend, come on Ruth, let's go and find out, if it's a girl we won't come and tell him, if it's a boy we will come and tell him. So we went back and we told him, it was Shabbos, it was in the summer, it was Shabbos afternoon, so she said afterwards, we davened for you. Isn't that nice, and five weeks later I got engaged, yes, I thought it was so nice, yes.

RL: What is his name?

Tape 2: 41 minutes 56 seconds

HW: Who?

RL: Your husband.

HW: Yitzchok, Yitzchok Wiesenfeld, yes.

RL: And where was he from?

HW: Poland, Poland. Przwerosk. Do you know how to spell it?

RL: Yes.

HW: P-R-Z-W-E-R-O-S-K, that is how to spell it in English, yes.

RL: And when did he come over?

HW: In 1947 he came over. And we got married in 52, so ...

RL: Where were you married?

HW: Grove Lane Shul, which is called Stamford Hill Beis Hamidrash, the official name. It was Grove Lane Shul, we went there to register the wedding, and we didn't know what to say and we were a young couple, and they said "I suppose you want to get married." And we said "Yes".

RL: Who was the Rav?

HW: Rabinov, I think he was the Rav at that time, Rabinov.

RL: Were you British by this time?

HW: Yes, my mother became British, I was under age for me, at the end of 1946 I became British, I had no problems at all. Yes. But my husband was still a foreigner, and he came into England over age, and he came to England underage he said he was 21 and he came as an 18 year old student, Yeshiva student, because they wouldn't allow the other age to come, and he was one of many, many, many, and when he came of pensionable age we started thinking about it, to see if we could do something about it, and we have got some very good friends, and she took over the whole case. She dug, she found papers, Rabbi Schonfeld's papers, she found them in a sack somewhere. She found the forms from when he entered the country, with Dr Schonfeld. There were a lot of mistakes there, but what she didn't dig up, now I believe they at Southampton College now, you have no idea what she dug up, she was marvellous, and in the end he had to go to a tribunal, and there were upright three English men sitting there, you know, and one

of them sat..... you know that much of a distance, and they asked him all sorts of questions.

Tape 2: 44 minutes 23 seconds

So they said, and then he came British in 19 ... when his son was born, they said you have got a son now you can become British. They said to him "Why didn't you change your age when you became British?" He said "I was afraid I would be thrown out." And they understood that, and he got his backpay for the pensions that he missed out from 65 to 68, yes, he was working for 33 years on the job, and he was already beyond pension age, and he couldn't afford to leave work because he didn't have a pension, he said "As soon as I get a pension I leave" and after Pesach, he worked very hard after Pesach, they moved offices, and he got them before that, he got home from work on Friday and he got a letter saying "Your finished", that is how they finished his work. And he was very upset and he never went back, and he got the pension, in June or July he got the pension, in June I think, but that is not the point, we didn't know that, we thought it was a very nasty way of doing it. He had worked there for so many years, but he wasn't the only one, afterwards they chucked out others as well, and, in any case, and it seems the tribunal was very fair, so they wanted proof. So my son was going to Antwerp, by then he had already married, in 19 ... yes of course he was already married ... when was this ... (background noise) – it is itching me that is why.

Cameraman: Can you just turn it over a bit? It is falling down ...

HW: And,

Like that?

And he was going to Antwerp, a man from Poland who knew my husband, he was a Rebbe there, and he wrote a letter, he was a Rebbe there, Reb Itzikel, he knew my father from Poland, and he wrote a letter, saying he remembers his Bar Mitzvah at this and this age, and this was the clinch of it so to say, and he sounded very honest when he said I thought I might be thrown out, they could see he was an honest man, he wasn't trying to do any tricks, he just wanted his, having paid pension for so many years. 1947 onwards, he was entitled; I mean it is 40 years, so that was it.

RL: So you got married and where did you go to live?

HW: I went back to the flat with my mother, because she was living on her own at this time, my brother was living in Israel already. We lived there, I had two children and we had to move one child out of the bedroom at night because we had no space, to get to the window we had to cross the beds, we had two cots, the children until they were six or seven were in cots because we had no beds, we had to get out, we got out then and we went to Homely Road, where I live now, and the first thing we did, I did, was buy two big beds, it was the first purchase for the children. Because if they wanted to stretch their

legs, they had to bend their head, if they wanted to stretch their neck, they had to bend their legs. Can you imagine, at six or seven in cots, think about it, they were normal boys
Tape 2: 47 minutes 30 seconds

grown boys, can you believe it, we had nowhere to put them. So we bought the house..

RL: And that was on Woodbury Down Estate?

HW: That was on Woodbury Down Estate and then we moved to Homely Road, and we let three rooms upstairs because we couldn't afford the place in any case, to help pay the mortgage. We lived downstairs, and until Rosalyn was born, my youngest daughter, and as the tenants left, we stopped, we stopped letting, after Rosalyn was born, and we had one tenant, he was the last one, and it came to the Yom Kippur War, he was Israeli, he went back to fight and he came back two months later, and he saw his stuff was still there, everything was there as he left it, and he wanted to pay me rent. And I said "You went to risk your life, I should take your money?" I didn't take it, no, and he got married and he left, that was the last one. Then we spread out in the house so to say.

RL: The tenants that you had, were they self sufficient or did you ...

HW: Yes, they were working ... working people, yes.

RL: Did they eat with the family?

HW: No, no, no. One of them was a police sergeant, and she was ... she worked for the police, she was hilarious, she was from Durham, and she worked for the RSPCA in Durham and she had a row with them and she came to London and she worked in Caledonian Road Police Station, and she said once, it was December, and she was in the toilet singing "Oh come all ye faithful" and she comes out of the toilet and there are six policemen there with helmets under their arms singing "Oh come all ye faithful". You know, and she said she wouldn't trust one policeman to bring her home, she used to come home at midnight, and she always made sure she had two policemen in the car, she didn't trust them, I don't know why. I mean ... she was a young woman, and I used to give her to eat, because she never fed herself, she never bothered to feed herself so to say, I used to give her meals as well. She was very nice, very friendly, we used to get on very well, and I had to go to Great Ormond Street with my children, with the girls, Rosalyn was about two at the time, and we walked around the West End afterwards, and we walked down Bond Street, and my daughter is holding from the push chair, she was holding a paraffin lamp, you know from the street lights. They used to be paraffin lamps, today they have these cones, plastic ones, and in those days they had lit paraffin lamps, and she was holding it, and I didn't notice until I got to the bottom of the street, and I looked up, right at the bottom of Bond Street, near Oxford Street, they were doing road works, so they had these lamps, and as we were walking past she picked it up, typical, and I had to go all the way back. It was so dangerous, it was a lit paraffin lamp. She was very nice my tenant, they were all nice, I got on very well with my tenants. They used to do my ironing for me, and one used to tidy up for me when I went to work. I used to tidy up

every day before I went to work, and then one day we went to the seaside and I thought if I start tidying up and making the beds and all that I will never get out, so I thought I would leave it, I came home and the whole place had been tidied up by one of my tenants, she was an old lady, and after that she made the bed every day, she tidied up every day. I was good to her, she was good to me, I was nice to all my tenants, depends on how you are to them, how they are to you. I used to get their library books out, and I used to get food for her, and things like that.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 0 second

RL: They weren't Jewish the tenants?

HW: No, none, she used to buy nash for the children, every Shabbos, until I got her to buy kosher nash it took a long time. And once, there was, I don't know if you remember the general strike in 1972, you wouldn't remember ... Do you remember it? The children were off school ... there was no heating, so my older daughter, she was ten years old at the time, she said "Can I wash the front path?" It was a beautiful day in February, can I wash the front path ... I said ok. Rosalind said "I want to wash the door". So I said "Fine", so my tenant came home while they were doing this and she said "Oh, you are good children, when you have finished I will give you wages." So Debbie said "What will you give us? Money?" No ... "What will you give us? Chocolate?" So my daughter of eight said "Money is always wages, wages is always money" Let's put it this way ... an eight year old, you know. Little things do come back.

RL: You say you were still working?

HW: I was working, yes, at that time, I think I had to stay off work because the children were home. After three weeks they had no more cold.

RL: I mean in general.

HW: I didn't, I stopped when the girls were small, when Rosalyn went to school, and started work at 14, and I am still working.

RL: And when the boys were small?

Tape 2: 52 minutes 23 seconds

HW: I lived with my mother at the time, by the time I left there they were going to school already, and my husband used to come home earlier so either of us were home earlier for them, whoever came home first started making supper.

RL: Where were you working?

HW: At that time, when the girls were small, I worked for my brother in law, yes. No ... I wasn't, I worked for my brother in law before then, when the boys were still small I

worked for my brother in law. They were eight or nine, eight and ten, and my eldest daughter was born, so I left when my eldest daughter was born.

RL: Where was your brother in law working? What was he doing?

HW: He was doing jewellery boxes and things like that, and he was supplying the seashores, and I used to do the packing for him. I remember when I became pregnant a woman said "We will have to cut a hole in the table for you to stand!" You know.

RL: Where was the work?

HW: Dalston, not far from me, yes.

RL: So was this your husband's brother?

HW: No, my sister's husband.

RL: Your sister's husband.

HW: Yes.

RL: What was his name?

HW: Storfer, Freddie Storfer, he died last year actually; we are going to have the matzever soon, yes.

RL: Was he a refugee?

HW: Yes, he came over with Schonfeld's and went to Yeshiva in Manchester direct, yes.

RL: Right ... and how long were you working for him?

HW: Oh, quite some time. Until, I think, maybe four or five years.

RL: And then it stopped ...

HW: Yes, when Debbie was born, and then I stopped until they, I didn't need to go, because I kept them at home, across the road was a little boy who was in between the two, and they used to come over and play, so it wasn't necessary, and then Debbie went to school, and then the boy went to school and then my daughter said "I am a big girl now, I want to go to nursery." She was four years old, Rosalyn. So that I when she went, and I went back to work when she was five.

RL: What did you do?

HW: Office work.

RL: Where did you go?

HW: I worked for Chinuch Atzmai, no, I first worked for a firm that produced plastics, scrabble pieces and dartboards and things like that. And ... but I worked in the office in Stamford Hill, they were somewhere in Clapton. And then I once, I had the flu, but I couldn't go to work, I could go to bed because the children were home from school, it was shevuos, but afterwards it left me with aches and pains and is said to Miriam, the boss was Miriam, she was actually a girl from Dorking, I said "Miriam I am sorry I have to go, I have to give up work, I can't walk any more."

So she said "We will pick you up and take you home."

Tape 2: 55 minutes 25 seconds

And I said "Fine". That was in May, and by August I couldn't move my arms, so I said "Miriam I have to give up now" and I gave up for a year. So I went to the doctors, and I went to the hospital, I went privately in the end because nobody could tell me what was wrong with me, and they said I had a virus going through the body, and it takes a year to get out, and it took a year, it took a year, then I started working for Chinuch Atzmai, and I took veganins round the clock, I don't think you get veganins nowadays. Veganins, like a very strong paracetamol tablet, I used to take them around the clock, I used to wake up in the middle of the night in pain, I used to take them, and in the meantime I still had to look after the children, so, what can you do?

RL: When did you start working for Chinuch Atzmai?

HW: After that, when was it, I worked there for about a year and a half, so about, well I am there now about 36 years, I am mad, mad I am, I wanted to leave, I told Moshe my son that I want to leave, and he came to the office and he said "Well mum, when are you leaving."

And my boss said "I am not letting your mother go." And he told my daughter, he told Ros, "If your mother leaves I will close the office."

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

HW: There is not much more to say really.

TAPE 3

RL: This is the interview with Yetti Wiesenfeld and it is tape 3.

You were just saying that you went to work for Chinuch Atzmai and you were there for 36 years ...

HW: I still am, yes.

RL: What, can you just tell us what that is, and what you do there?

HW: It sends money to schools in Israel, they started in 1958, the schools in Israel for the frum children, and it also supports the children in the afternoon with extra activities because otherwise they just play in the streets, and you know, they don't learn anything and they don't ... and they have extra activities in the afternoon and they give them a meal as well, and whatever money we send, I don't know about today, but at that time, was doubled by the government, but they wouldn't give money for the afternoon unless we sent money as well. Yes, and it was just to support the school, like for instance now, they have got trouble, they have taken the money away for the transport, like Jerusalem is fine, but the rural countries, they ask for the schools to open up there, and they come from miles around, so if they have got no transport they can't come, so they send to local schools and they become non frum children, because most of the families in the rural areas are not frum in any case. So we sort of collect money, what is needed, I am sure whatever we collect is not enough, it is like a bottomless pit you know, all schools are.

RL: How many schools does it support?

HW: I don't know how many schools. A few hundred, but it has got over 80,000 children, all over the country. They started a school in a place called Tsoran, and there was a lot of antagonism against it, one man used to come with his big dog and scare the children going to school. But they still persevered and they came. And a couple of years later he came with his children to the school, to enrol her, and they said "Why? You were antagonistic."

"We heard you teach them manners here"

When you think about it, the biggest rasha sent his child to the school. Yes ...

RL: How big is the organisation in this country?

HW: Not very. Nothing, just us, to tell you the truth, people are so busy with the local, they are not interested. They are not interested in what is going ... they are interested in what is going on in Israel, but to support the people who need food and who need things like that, for the schooling they are not interested. Years ago they were more interested, but today it is one of the millstones so to say ... and we do produce a calendar which Debbie has here, and it has adverts on it, without the adverts you might as well forget the calendar because it is too expensive to produce, and that is sent all over the world. People who emigrate from England like to have it as well, to know what time Shabbos is out or Yom Tov is in England, what time it comes in and out, they want to phone up their families in England, because people don't write letters today, they make phone calls, so they like to know, but it is getting less, because every mossad and every school is producing calendars today, so, our share of it is getting less, and I said to my boss one day, "you know we might as well close the place down", but he said "No, not yet, we have still got time."

RL: Who is your boss?

HW: Mr Tiefenbrun, Lewis Tiefenbrun, he is an artist.

RL: And who was your boss when you started?

HW: He was still there, he was there. Yes.

RL: Where is he from?

HW: He is an Englishman, yes, he married a French woman, he has got a lovely wife, she is absolutely super, and one day they had a phone call, they had a son in America, they had a child, and a second child, they had a phone call from America saying their son wasn't well, one Friday, by the time they got there on Sunday he wasn't there any more, it was horrendous. And they have Yom Limmud every year on his Yahrzeit, they are having one soon, it is in November, and he was, apparently he was being, they were Lubavitchers, and he was being trained by his father in law to take over the radio programme that his father in law was doing because he was getting old, and he died. He never spoke about it when he came back, he sat shiva there and he never spoke about it.

Tape 3: 4 minutes 58 seconds

RL: So how was money raised?

HW: Through the calendar and one appeal, a Pesach appeal, basically, yes. We really need somebody there really who is, who will fund dinners and things like that, but he is not up to it any more, he is an old man as well. You know, in the beginning he was more enthusiastic and all that, but he has been let down by a lot of people who ... who ... you know, you get very disillusioned when you work for places like this, with people, I have found it in any case, I have become very cynical. I have become very cynical, not only with them even the Agudah. As long as ... people say, this man, such a great man, and I say "big deal", you know.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 55 seconds

Ros had a cousin there, my daughter, her husband's cousin, and they are talking about this big man in the Knesset in Israel, and I said "big deal" and we both said "big deal" at the same time, because we are not impressed, you know, when you know the people personally you are not always impressed. We had some lovely people there, we had one man who came from Chinuch Atzmai, a really nice man, but he had nobody here, we used to take him shopping, he didn't speak ... he spoke very little English, I took him everywhere because he had nobody and nowhere, and so, I was sort of his you know, I took him where to go. He had one daughter, and she had a child of about six months, and I took them shopping, they wanted to buy clothes, it was during the sales and I made him buy a ladybird dressing gown for a three year old, I said it is half price, it is good quality, it is worth keeping, you know. I am sure she had a dozen, I don't know, but I am sure it is well used, yes ... Most people came who had family here, but he had nobody, so I was his family so to say ... yes ...

Tape 3: 7 minutes 3 seconds

RL: Coming onto your family ...

HW: Yes ...

RL: Where did your children go to school?

HW: Avigdor Primary School. Then Hasmonean, the two Hasmoneans.

RL: Could you just name your children, go through them by name.

HW: Yanky, Moshie, they were eight and ten when Rosalind my younger daughter was born, and then I had two families, so to say, because there was an eight year gap between them, and then I had Debbie and Rosalind, yes ... as a matter of fact I went to Israel in 1967, I started saving with my sister in 1958, and I said "Let's save ten shillings a week, and in ten years time we will have £250 and we have got small children, and we will go to Israel" but after the six day war, I phoned up my sister, sometime in October/November and I said "Let's not wait any more, lets go now." And I went and when I came home the boys stayed away from school, it was such a big deal, it was the first time I went in 17 years that they stayed at home and I went shopping with them in Dunstable our local shopping centre, and they said "Who are these boys?" and I said "They are my sons", they had never seen them, because they were six or seven and they were going to school already when I moved to Homely Road, so they only knew my girls, so they said "Who are these boys?" Yes ...

RL: So I was asking about schools ...

HW: And then afterwards they went to Hasmonean Grammar School and then after that Debbie went to Gateshead, the old Gateshead Sem, and I sent Rosalind to Switzerland, because I didn't think it was right for her, but Debbie said there were all sorts of girls there, really ... she might have fitted in, but she was very happy in Switzerland, so what have I lost, you know ...

RL: And your boys?

HW: My boys went to Yeshiva in Gateshead, after my doctor said to me, my son was about 21, he said "How long is he going to stay? Is he going to marry a rich girl?" So I really thought about it, so I said "Yanky, you know what, you had better come out, you have been there for five years, you had better learn something, I can't afford to buy you a house, but I give you room in my house. So he came out, and he started studying to be, he didn't want to be an accountant, he said all Jewish boys are accountants, so he started studying to be a surveyor. And he was going to start in July, but he wanted to go to Yeshiva until Yom Tov time, no, he wanted to go until October, until after Yom Tov, but they said, and he wanted to take the exam in March, because normally the first exam is a

Tape 3: 9 minutes 45 seconds

year later, he would have had to wait a year and a half, so they said “In that case you have to start now.” So he started in July, or something like that, in August, and he got engaged that year. I said “Yanky, wait until after the exams before you get married. So of course they didn’t wait, they didn’t listen to me, and every week they used to come every second week they used to come to me for Shabbos, and they used to tell me, you never told me when they first came, it was coming again at the beginning of June, at the beginning of July, the results, and they come round one Motzei Shabbos, holding hands, they had been married about three, about six months, and they said “Mum, may we get married?” And I said “What do you mean ‘May we get married?’ You are married already.” He said “Well you said we should wait until after the exams, and I have passed.” You know, and, yes, he said, as he was taking the exams year after year, more people came in the morning and didn’t come back in the afternoon, they just couldn’t take it, the next day of the week was less, it was four and a half day exams, it was four days, and he said quite a few people dropped out on the way. Then he went to work for Enfield Council, he had an interview with Enfield Council, there were 50 applicants, so they said to him when he went in “You can take your hat off”, and then they said, “Oh, you have got another one underneath.” He was wearing his Kappl, so he explained to them. They asked him what he had done, and he said he had spent five years in theological college, Yeshiva, and they were impressed with the idea that he had studied for five years without an end product, because he didn’t want to be a Rabbi. He could have studied to be a Rabbi, it would have been easier, but he didn’t want it. And, maths was his worst subject, and yet, they asked him some questions in maths and he wasn’t ... but in any case, he got the job. And he was working there for two or three years and somebody came in from college with a degree already after doing three years college, and he said he knew nothing. He had been working on the job and had been studying one day a week and he said this guy knew nothing, he didn’t know what was going on, and then he decided to leave, he saw no future there, because he wasn’t getting much money, but his boss said, “I will keep the job open for you for six months, if you want to come back within six months you will be welcome.” But he never went back. He struggled at the beginning, but Boruch Hashem he is doing ok now.

RL: What did he go on to do?

HW: Accountancy ... no not accountancy surveying, yes ...

RL: And what job did he take after Enfield?

HW: That sounds like the cemetery, Enfield ...

RL: Mmmm ...

HW: He went on to do private surveying, he was on his own, but saying that a few weeks afterwards, he had an accident, his car wasn’t working, it was apparently on, and the AA came and they started it without realising it and he got crushed in between, he was in bed for four weeks, and no money, he wasn’t working, no money, if he had been

working for Enfield he would have been paid, so they had a big struggle at the beginning but you know, they always do.

My second son worked for a propertier.

RL: Who did he marry?

HW: A girl from Belgium, Evelyn Dick.

RL: And what family do they have?

Tape 3: 13 minutes 0 second

HW: They kneine hora have eight children, yes, they have four married, and they have four boys and a little girl still at home, yes ...

RL: And do they have grandchildren now?

HW: Yes, yes ... the youngest son hasn't got children, they have been married two years already, but the three girls have got children. Yes.

RL: And the second boy?

HW: The second boy is married. He is ...

RL: What did he do after Yeshiva?

HW: He went to work, he worked for, he went to work for wholesale stationers, and he wasn't getting much money, so after four weeks he said "I want a rise"

And they said "No, we are not giving it to you."

So he said "In that case I am leaving."

So they said "In that case you leave now. You don't come back."

"Fine."

On Sunday, the boss came back and he said "I want you back, my father likes you."

You know, he was a real boychick my son, you know, and in any case he didn't go back, he started working for a property company and he worked for 11 years, then he saw no future there, he had a top wage, but it wasn't enough, because he said "the children go to private schools and they go to Jewish schools" and all that, he saw no future there, he saw the bosses grandchildren were growing up and they might take over the firm, and he would be out, so he started himself as well, he also struggled, but thank God now, I mean they are not millionaires but they are managing to live.

RL: Who did he marry?

HW: A girl of my mechatonista who married out ... a daughter of a man who married out, Marilyn Klein, as a matter of fact, Debbie said to me, when she first went to

Hasmonean, Marilyn was in the top class, and she once came to Moshe and she said to Moshe “Why don’t you marry a girl called Marilyn Klein” and he married her a few years later, and I knew nothing about it ... isn’t it funny, and they met through a friend, my nephew got engaged, and Marilyn Klein was a friend of his Kallah and that is how they met, at a wedding.

RL: And what family do they have?

HW: They have six children, yes ...

RL: Any married?

HW: Three girls are married ... I had five granddaughters before I had a grandson, so they each had three daughters before they had a boy, and as a fact, the oldest one got married when she was nearly 23, which is quite late for ... but within a year all three were married, can you imagine, it is amazing isn’t it ... yes

RL: And then your girls?

HW: And the girls ... well Debbie got married ... in ...

RL: She went to Gateshead Sem ...

HW: Yes, she went to Gateshead Sem, and then she came home and she worked ...

RL: What was she doing?

HW: She was working for a firm, and she was bored stiff, they were very nice to her, they gave her a lift, they were Stamford Hill people, but she was bored, and somebody told me about this job at a travel agency, and she applied, and they phoned up the firm where she was working, and they thought it was for a shidduch and they gave her a most marvellous reference, and she worked there, and she just ... she worked there just before Pesach, so she worked there for half a week, and she said “I made arrangements for Pesach. Can I have Chol Hamoed off?” Because they were working Chol Hamoed, and they said Ok, and then it was a bank holiday, and then for the one and only time in her life she got conjunctivitis, and she didn’t go to work, and then again there was a bank holiday, so for the first four weeks she only worked half a week, so when I met her boss, I knew her boss from years before and I said “Mark” I said, “Why didn’t you sack her?” He didn’t know, she was there for three and a half years and she didn’t take a day off afterwards. It just was so, you know, it was coincidence, although they say there is no such thing, but that is how it worked ...

RL: And who did she marry?

Tape 3: 17 minutes 0 second

HW: Mechel Haffner, from the dentist ... that was another story, I got a phone call from a woman, who tried to phone me before with shidduchim, and I always phoned up Yehuda Brodie my nephew in Manchester if it was a Manchester boy, and he always said "Not for Debbie, not for Debbie", this one he said "I used to be his leader in pirchim, but he seems a nice boy." So I phoned up Debbie and I said "Debbie, I have got very little information about him, but this is the position. What do you think?" So she said "Ok, if Yehuda says he is a nice boy, ok." So I phoned up the woman and I said he could come at half past eight, so she phones me up at quarter to eight, she wants him to come now. I said "Debbie just came home from work at 7 o'clock, she has to have a bath and has to eat, it is a bit early, you know." So she says her husband is going out, and she can't stay alone with him. I said "Open the front door."

She said "No, she wants to go to bed."

I said "Ok, so let him come, and I'll see."

He comes in, and as he comes in my husband is going out to daven. And he says "Mr Wiesenfeld, I am Mechel Haffner", and they shook hands and he walked out, my husband. So I am stuck with him, Debbie is upstairs and I am stuck with him. So then Debbie comes in, and I say "Debbie, you know what" and my husband came home from Shul, I said "Take daddy to the shiur", because she had a car. She took him to the shiur and I said to him "you know what" I said, I only heard about you yesterday, and he said "You are lucky, I only heard about Debbie today". I said "Pardon! She promised she would phone up your parents to say you would see this girl, and I said "I feel sorry for your parents, you see this girl, and nobody knows anything about". I offered him a drink and all that, and I said "Why did you come?" I mean "You didn't know about her. Why did you come?"

He said "You don't let a girl down."

Nice isn't it. I was told he was little, he had a funny voice, but I liked his voice. You know ...

In any case Debbie came, and she took him out, and I didn't see him again until the l'Chaim. But she took him to visit Yanky, my son, he had a little girl of four and a half and her name was Michal, one of Yanky's daughters, so Debbie said I shouldn't mention it, so Debbie said "Michal this is Mechel", and she said "A Jungele was heisst Michal!" You know, she was four and a half. And then my daughter in law phoned up and she said "If you don't get engaged to him, I am going to smack you", she said to Debbie. You know, because he gave a very good impression. He used to come down, he came on a Wednesday because Thursday he had a course in dental college, so he came for six weeks on Wednesdays, and I met him sort of halfway and he used to come on Sundays down, he came down for about four weeks, and then they got engaged, and then Malka phoned me up, and she said, she wants to come and meet me, and I said "Don't you want to meet my daughter before you agree?"

And she said "I trust Debbie." In any case, he told his mother, that first night, that he met this girl called Debbie Wiesenfeld, and she didn't know her. You know, who is she, nobody knew anything about her, and so they started thinking, who do they know from London but she wouldn't phone up, she went to her sister in law, Hannah, and Hannah said "You know ..." Rosalind Pine, yes, Rosalind Pine, no ... not Rosalind Pine, Dalia, Dalia Pine phoned up, and couldn't have asked a better person, because her auntie lived two doors away from me and she was there a lot, "What a marvellous idea", whoever

they asked said “What a marvellous idea”, and what is her name ... came up with a shidduch, Mrs Wosner, and Mechel was seeing somebody at the time, and she said “You will either hear or you will not”, and by the time she came back he had already seen Debbie, so she said, Channah my niece “I wanted to make the shidduch”, but it wasn’t a shidduch yet, you know, and then somebody else also suggested it, the same shidduch, and whoever they asked they all said “What a marvellous idea, what a marvellous idea”. You know the boys who knew him in Yeshiva, our neighbour’s son, you know, his cousin, said “What a marvellous idea”.

RL: And what family do they have?

HW: Who?

RL: Debbie and Mechel.

HW: Ahh, they have kneine hora eight children, they have Chaya, who is named after my mother. They have Avi and Eli, named after the Haffner family. And then they have Yehuda, no then there is girls, Rivka, also after, and Miriam, and then they have Yehuda who is named after my father, and then they have Rafi and Tzvi. That is eight, I’ll start counting my fingers.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 50 seconds

RL: And does Debbie work?

HW: Only a bit, a few hours a week, I told her not to give it up, to keep her hand in, because it is very good.

RL: What does she do?

HW: She works for interlink, it is like an organisation helping, either the poor people or the handicapped people. Yad v Ezer is for the handicapped, so it is for the poor people, yes. But she finds it very interesting, yes.

RL: And then Rosalind.

HW: Rosalind was the type of child who never wanted to learn, unless she was interested in something, she never wanted to learn, and ... but she was always left to learn in school and all that, and she just carried on in life, and she was liked everywhere she went, very much, and she wanted to become a children’s nurse, a kindergarten teacher so to speak, and she became one, and the children loved her, so much so that they cried in holiday time that they wanted to go to Auntie Rosalind, so one of them phoned up, the mother phoned up, please Rosalind talk to her because she is crying non stop. And then she got married and had children and about 15 years ago she started to study, and she passed, the nursery nurses course she passed, and then she did NVQ1, 2, 3 and 4 and she became an assessor computers and she is continuing and she is doing

marvellously, and she was a late developer. And I said to her, one thing, “If you relied on your hand writing, you wouldn’t get anywhere”, it was appalling, but she relied on computers so that is ok.

RL: Who did she marry?

HW: Jonathan Teller, he is an accountant, but now he is ... his father is an accountant, they come from Ireland, the father was a Rabbi in Ireland, and they are a very well known family in Ireland, today I don’t know they would be known, but people there would still remember the family Teller, yes ...

RL: What family do they have?

HW: They have five children. They have Yehuda, Yehoshua, Daniel, Bracha and ... what is the little one called now, named after his grandfather on the other side, mmmm ... Sholly, Sholly, yes ... and he is six, yes.

RL: Did the children when they were younger belong to any clubs or groups?

HW: They belonged to Pirchim, some of them ... my children or in general ...

RL: Your children.

HW: My children went to Pirchim, and Debbie went to Beis Yaakov, while she was in the Avigdor with Rosalind, but the Avigdor children always kept separate, but you know, they went, but when they changed schools, one girl from her class went to Yesodei Hatorah, and when they went back to, went back to the club after Yom Tov, this girl wouldn’t talk to her, and they left, they left Beis Yaakov for two years, and they went to Lubavitch. And then my neighbours daughter became a leader and she took them both back, and she was there for a couple of years before she went to sem, and when she came out of sem, they voted her as leader of Beis Yaakov for a year, every year they had a new leader. While she was still at home she organised for them day outings for them, maybe she did such a good job they were impressed, I don’t know, but they appointed her as leader, and she had to make a speech, and she asked my husband what she should say, and he gave her ideas, and one of the girls who were there said “Mrs Wiesenfled, Debbie spoke beautifully” ... yes ... yes ...

RL: How do you feel you have settled in to life in England?

HW: Very well, I don’t have any problems, as I said before I am very easy going and I just take things in my stride, you know, whatever I have to do, I just get on with it.

RL: Have you ever met anti-Semitism here?

Tape 3: 25 minutes 57 seconds

HW: Not really, not really ... not really. I have been mugged once, but it wasn't because of that, it was because of my jewellery, it was a cheap rubbish necklace and they took half of it, but not really. No, I can't say that. You see, I talk to people, I say hello to the dustman and the sweeper of the streets, I say good morning, you know. They are digging the road and I will say "Are you going to Australia?" you know down under ... and I had no problems.

Once I took Ros's children, they were in The Normandy, and they stayed there for the week, and for Shabbos, I had the boys and I took them there, and I took them to Waterloo, and I took them on the bus so they should see the bus, and the 76 bus to Waterloo is very winding, it is going through the city, and so on, you get some buses they go straight, like the 253, it goes straight through the West End to Amhurst Park straight to the East End and it is winding, and I had dressed them in their Shabbos clothes because they were going for Shabbos. They looked different because of the Shabbos clothes, they were only five or six years old or something like that, and the driver looked very, sort of antagonistic, so I went to the front of the bus and I said "You know what? I have never seen anybody have such a winding route as you have." And I made him smile. You know, so, if that was anything I don't know, well I think it would have been, but I made him smile, and he agreed, you know, so if that was anything I don't know, and he agreed, driving through the city of London, it was quite a heavy job.

RL: How at home do you feel here?

HW: Very, no problems, I take what I want, when I want, but she does the same in my house, so it doesn't matter. But it was her home as well. Yes ...

RL: I was talking about at home in England. How at home do you feel in England?

HW: Very. You know we lead a very relaxed life, and when my daughter in law came from Belgium she got a cultural shock, because her mother is Hungarian and her father is Rumanian, and when her father came into the room she had to get up, when the parents came into the room they had to get up from the chair until the father sat down, and then they sat down, in my place we were free and easy and she has the same home life as I have now, and I think she prefers it to maybe to the one that she had at home, it was exactly the same.

Tape 3: 28 minutes 25 seconds

RL: How would you identify yourself in terms of, first of all let's say nationality?

HW: I suppose I am British. Had I stayed in Belgium I suppose I would have been given the choice of being either Belgium or Polish, because I had Polish parents, but I was never given the choice, I didn't come to it, and yes, I feel at home, yes, I have no problems with it ...

Tape 3: 29 minutes 0 second

Sorry – I didn't touch it ...

Cameraman: Just pull it out a little bit, it is rubbing again.

HW: I will probably have a red patch afterwards, I will put some cream on it, it will go. So I had no problems with it, no ...

RL: What about a sense of belonging?

HW: I never thought of it, I never thought of myself as a refugee, although Mechel calls me the refugee all the time, that is my darling son in law, but I have never had any problems with it, no I don't feel an outsider, I don't feel as if I am ... for instance my neighbours were talking about all the people who were coming into the country and he said "All the Jewish people came in the forties and fifties" but the other neighbour said "But they never got anything, today, they get a house and they get money and they get everything", we got nothing, we had to work for everything we got, we never got anything, so, a big difference, first of all it was during the war as well, but none of the refugees got any help. I mean, before the war if you had to have help you know, the dole, so to say, they means tested you, you can sell this, you can sell this, you can sell this, you know, to live on, but you can only sell things once.

RL: Did you ever have any help from the refugee committee?

HW: Not to my knowledge, it is quite possible that we did, but not to my knowledge, not to my knowledge.

RL: Did your mother have any contact with any refugee organisation?

HW: No, no ... you know what? It wasn't so, like today, I mean there are so many centres, another Holocaust centre has been opened up and all the other refugee committees have been opened up, but at that time there was nothing, there was nothing, it has all been over the last twenty or thirty years, and my mother has been dead over 30 years, you know ... and I don't suppose she felt the need for it either, she had her family, and she always lived with us, so ... no ... maybe I take after here and she took it in her stride and we take it in our stride.

RL: Who did she tend to mix with? Who were ...

HW: My mother? Her friends ...

RL: Her social group ... were they also refugees ...

HW: they were all refugees, yes, yes. First of all she didn't speak the language either, although as soon as she came here she got a teacher to teach her English, really enterprising, because her friend who was here for over 30 years didn't speak a word of

English, and then she used to read the Daily Telegraph, the first page to the last page, she always had an accent, a bad accent, she wasn't afraid to speak, she spoke ... yes ... people still say that I have an accent, but I don't know ... I am here longer than I was anywhere else ... yes ...

Tape 3: 31 minutes 39 seconds

RL: What ... you must have seen Stamford Hill change over the years ...

HW: It has become very Chassidish, you know you go out on a Shabbos morning after Shul and it is black, shtreimels, but I have got no problem with it, they let me live, I let them live, they can do what they like, I can do what I like, as long as they don't force me to do what they want, I don't mind, it doesn't bother me.

RL: When did the first shtreimels appear?

HW: From Hungary, in 1956, when the Hungarian refugees came, people had shtreimels before, but they didn't wear them in the streets, and then they started ... the Hungarians started wearing them in the streets and now it has become a fashion item. You know, all the youngsters, it is part of their wedding, it is part of their dress, finished, it has become a uniform. I don't know if they really believe in why they are wearing it. But their brothers wear it, their fathers wear it, they have to wear it, yes ... and it is so hot, you see them in the summer. The square people ... we have got a square, a Shul around the corner, they come from New Square in New York, it is a branch, they wear boots, in the summer, they wear coats, they wear shtreimels, in the boiling weather, it is fur, and they wear them. I don't understand why they do it. I wear as little as possible, I can get away with, I just don't know how they do it, yes ... I remember thinking, I was walking in Stamford Hill in the summer and it was very hot and there was a woman walking past in a Burkha, a little old lady, with a little old man, he wore chinos with his shirt sleeves rolled up and she was wearing this Burkha, and I thought to myself I would like to take it off her and put it on him, you know, she must have been sweating underneath it, you know, but ... and what this lady had, she had lace over the eye. Can you imagine? How can you see through lace? Over the eye openings ... I feel sorry for them, maybe they don't feel sorry for themselves? I don't know ...

RL: So are there like two communities in Stamford Hill?

HW: Let's put it this way, the type of our community has dwindles, the Chassidish one has blossomed. I belong to Grove Lane Shul which had two overflows for Yom Tov, Egerton Road which was United Synagogue had three overflows for Yom Tov, today ... if they get twenty people it is a lot, and we get about thirty people. That is how it has dwindles, our type of people, and the rest have become Chassidish ... there are so many shtieblach, every street nearly has a Shul ... of some kind, that ... and they are all Chassidish, and that is a big way they have changed, yes ...

RL: And do you belong to any groups, or ... ?

Tape 3: 34 minutes 31 seconds

HW: Not any more, I used to.

RL: What did you belong to?

HW: First ... committees. We had a lot of fun, once we had a meeting in my house and it started off with a joke, and it finished off with a joke, the whole meeting, and we only had one decision, to have another meeting. Sometimes a meeting doesn't get off the ground, and it is belaboured, and this one was real fun ... everybody had a good evening, yes ... otherwise, I don't belong to anything now, because I am still working, I come home and I am tired. I can go here and I can go there, but also there are not so many committees for women any more ... you can go to groups like nashei, for older people, I don't have time to go, I go if they ask me to help, but otherwise I don't go.

RL: So when you were younger ... what did you belong to?

HW: Ezra and Beis Yaakov. First Beis Yaakov and then Ezra.

RL: And you mention visiting in Schonfeld Square, what is that?

HW: It is an old age home which is like a village. It has got flats, it has got houses for families, it has got sheltered accommodation and it has got residential accommodation. The residential is for people who can't look after themselves, sheltered accommodation is flats, the warden knocks in the morning to see if you are alright and the rest of the day you look after yourself. And then they have got ordinary flats like anywhere else, but it has become a village, and it is beautiful, and it is clean, and my friends sister said "I have never been to an old age home before where it doesn't smell of urine" and the woman who runs it, she loves old people, and she is very tough with the nurses, well the carers ... and they are lovely, they come from all over the world, from Columbia, from the Philippines, and from everywhere, and they are so nice, they really are nice, we are nice to them. We come in and we say good evening to everybody and we say hello and all that, and they are so nice.

RL: How often do you go?

Tape 3: 36 minutes 39 seconds

HW: Once a week, after work ... I come home from work, quickly make supper, eat something or not and then go, you know, because I am tired, especially I am so busy at this time of the year, I am very busy, if my husband said leave it off for one week, and said I don't want to start, once you start with one week you start with another week and another week, and I say "No way" and I go because I don't want to disappoint them, and my helpers couldn't come for the last two weeks, I had one helper, and so I went by myself, we will see how it goes, and I managed ...

RL: Have you ever joined any holocaust type organisations?

HW: Only the holocaust centre because we wanted to go to Nottingham to see the holocaust centre there. It is run by a goyishe family ... Smiths, and they went to Israel, and they were very impressed with Yad Vashem and they started this holocaust museum there. I think they are marvellous people, absolutely marvellous people ... brothers smith ... yes ... and, but I don't go, it is too far for me to go, it is in Hendon, I have to take two buses, it is too far for me to go ... and I can't go because I am working. I still belong to them, I think it is good to belong to something, I pay my fees once a year, and I haven't been since ... yes ...

RL: Do you think your experiences have affected you in any way?

HW: I don't know. I really don't know. I don't know what I would have been like otherwise, so I really don't know ...so I do I know. If I had lived in Belgium I might have been a completely different person perhaps, although my husband, he was going to be a Rabbi, but the war stopped that, but after the war I don't think he wanted it, yes ... He told me when he came to the kibbutz first in Poland, they did exercise first thing in the morning, and he started a minyan ... yes ... he used to sing in Siberia, he used to sing, and they used to say Yitzchok sing, and he used to sing sad songs you know, it was very sad. He told us once he was, they were cutting down a tree, it was like a yard wide, it was like a metre, and they have to cut it, they have to watch which way it goes, if it goes the wrong way ... one man was killed .. he told me ... and they had to watch it go the other way. Sometimes they were busy just making holes and filling them up again ... just to keep him occupied. They lived in huts, without windows, today Siberia is a university town, part of Siberia ... they have got triple glazing, they had nothing ...

Tape 3: 39 minutes 10 seconds

RL: Have your religious beliefs changed at all over the years?

HW: I don't think so. I tell you the truth, sometimes I think "What is it all about?" but not really, not really ... not really ... I mean why was it allowed to happen, the holocaust, I mean, there is no answer, I remember reading in one of the Jewish magazines, in Hamispocha, one Rabbi said "If you have faith there are no questions, if you have no faith there are no answers", I thought it was brilliant, absolutely brilliant, so that is your answer.

RL: I was thinking how the first number of years of your life, you didn't really have that much Jewish input ...

HW: Not only did I not have much Jewish input, but no childhood, if you think about it.

RL: So how did you then take to a religious Jewish life after that?

HW: No problem ... well I started immediately I went to Bletchley, so it is only perhaps really the first few weeks, I went to Bletchley and it was a Jewish life from then onwards, so although at the beginning it was hardly none, I shouldn't think, but, I just took it, just did it ... yes ...

RL: And how do you feel towards the Germans?

HW: I can't stand them ... I heard the accent here, I can't stand them, I will never go to Germany, never ... no ... and yet they are not responsible, it is their grandparents, their great grandparents, their uncles, their aunts and .. you know, I always think like that, it wasn't you, it was your family, but there were some Germans who did help, so I can I know, I can't stand it, and yet it's not fair really ... not fair ... I mean my whole family was killed. They say it never happened ... I mean David Irvine said it never happened, how does he know? He should be put into a place like that once to find out whether it happened or not. How does he know? He doesn't know, we have got proof, we don't need more, proof. He is a stupid man to be taken to court, to go to court at all, he shouldn't have done it all, he had to lose, there was no way out, he had to lose, yes ...

Tape 3: 41 minutes 28 seconds

RL: And you say you have never returned to Belgium?

HW: I went to Belgium for the first time when my son got married which was 36 years later, but I never went to the house. But I went to Brussels with my brother and I said to my brother "Look Mendel, bollockess", bollockess are sweets, now I don't think what is the word for sweets, it just came out of my mind, and I think everybody says, that any language you ever knew, or anything you ever knew, is always in your mind, and something brings it out, and drags it up, and if I went to Belgium I would very quickly pick up Flemish again, but not in the Jewish areas, because they speak English and Flemish and Yiddish and French, so I would have to go to a real goyishke area where they only speak Flemish, because otherwise I would never learn it. But it shows you that it is there, because it just came out of my mind, of course it had to be sweets.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in anyway?

HW: Only in one way, I wouldn't like to be like them. Like the Muslim girl who said she had trouble with the veil. She said "They want me to be like the British, but what culture have they got, the drugs, the drinking, the fighting." They are not all like that, but I think the aristocracy in Britain are very anti-Semitic I think, they try to hide it, but it is there. The Home Office was always anti-Semitic, they were always pro Arab, I think because they have got the oil, it is quite possible, and I don't trust them, I don't trust them. Now ... as a youngster I didn't think about it, but now I don't trust them ... I don't trust what they say, and I don't trust them full stop.

Tape 3: 43 minutes 23 seconds

RL: Have you ever been interested in politics?

HW: Not at all, they are liars, to be a politician is to be a liar, full stop. Blair, look what he says about education, education, stuff on crime, what has he done, nothing, even if you become an honest politician, you become a liar, it is inevitable, I think so in any case, but maybe I am wrong, maybe there are honest politicians, but maybe I am wrong ... I don't know ... I wouldn't know ...

RL: I suppose we have got towards the end now. Is there anything that you think you might have missed that you would like to add ...

HW: I suppose I will think about it tonight

RL: Is there a message that you would like to end with?

HW: Just to be alive, I am glad I am here, I am lucky, I have got children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and I hope to continue well, that is all I can say, and I wish Klal Yisroel a peaceful year. I have finished, that is all I can say ... ok ...

Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 44 minutes 36 seconds

RL: Thank you.

PHOTOGRAPHS

HW: This is my mother, Yenta Ginsburg, who I was named after and I think she died sometime in the twenties, and that is all I know about her unfortunately.

RL: It wasn't your mother, it was your ...

HW: It was my mother's mother ...

RL: And where was that taken?

HW: In Poland.

This is a Polish passport issued to my mother, with my mother Chaya Goldfisher on it, my brother, Menachem Mendel Goldfisher, and myself Yetti Goldfisher. It was issued in 1940, September 1940 in London.

Tape 3: 45 minutes 11 seconds

This is the ration card issued to me, under the proper name of Henriette, Henriette, issued in March 1940, and I don't know why.

RL: Where was it issued?

HW: In Belgium.

This is a close up of the entries of the ration card, just to show clearly which date it came in, and also where it came from. It is a picture of me, Yettie Wiesenfeld, taken in February 1945, a couple of months before my birthday of 14 and it is taken in London.

This is a photograph of a group. Myself Yettie Wiesenfeld and my nephew, Leon, who was born in 1946, and my sister, his mother, her name is Faigey Storfer, it is in London, I never said it was in London, did I, I am sorry.

This is a picture of my husband and his brother and his friends, and his name is Yitzchok Wiesenfeld, and my brother in law Chaim Wiesenfeld, and a friend Yitzchok Teitelbaum and his friend Yitzchok Mendelson, taken approximately in 1947 in London.

RL: And that was taken from left to right?

HW: From left to right, yes ... left to right ...

This is a picture of me and my husband at our wedding. My name was Yettie Goldfisher at the time, and this is a picture of my husband Yitzchok Wiesenfeld, and this was taken on 14th December 1952, and it was freezing weather and my friend, my cousin let me wear her fur coat.

This is a picture of my brother and his wife, her name is Clara Dayan and Menachem Mendel Goldfisher and it was taken approximately in the 50s ... in Israel ...

This is a picture of my mother and myself, on my wedding day, taken on 14th December 1952 in Grove Lane ... in Shul ... no ... it was taken at home actually ...and that is it ... so to say ..

RL: And what town?

HW: London.

RL: And your names?

HW: I was already Yetti Wiesenfeld, and my mother Chaya Goldfisher.

This is a picture at my wedding, on the right is Rabbi Dr Schonfeld, who brought my husband over, and then Rabbi ... this is Dayan Braceiner, whose wife was my shadchanta, and I am afraid I don't know the young man on the left, it was taken in 1952.

RL: In?

HW: In London.

This picture was taken in Israel in 1967 after the Six Day War. From the back left is my brother in law Paul Hase, and his son Uri. Front row from the left, my niece Hazel Storfer, and my nephew David Hase, myself Yetti Wiesenfeld, and my brother Menachem Mendel and my nephew Leon Storfer, and my mother Chaya Goldfisher and my brother in law Freddie Storfer and my sister Toby Hase, and my sister Faigey Storfer, and it was taken in Israel, yes, I said it at the beginning.

RL: What is this?

HW: This is a picture of my daughter Debbie's wedding taken on 4th September, I don't know which year ... I will think about the year afterwards ... from left to right, my son Moshie, my daughter Rosalind, Debbie the Kallah, and my son Yanky. And it was taken in London ... 22 years ago ... work it out ... 84, 1984 ...

RL: This is a picture taken of my family at my granddaughter's, Michal's wedding, in the year 2000, it shows myself and my husband Yitzchok Wiesenfeld and my children, my grandchildren and one great grandchild, and it was taken in London.