

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	116

Interviewee Surname:	Stemmer
Forename:	Salman
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	2 September 1916
Interviewee POB:	Nuremberg, Germany

Date of Interview:	19 February 2006
Location of Interview:	Prestwich, Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	3 hours 30 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 116

NAME: SALMAN STEMMER

DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2006

LOCATION: PRESTWICH, MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minute 10 seconds

RL: I'm interviewing Salman Stemmer. And the interview is taking place on Sunday, the 19th of February 2006. The interview is taking place in Prestwich, Manchester. And I'm Rosalyn Livshin.

RL: This is the interview with Salman Stemmer and it's Tape One. If you just tell me your name?

SS: Salman Stemmer

RL: And was that your name at birth?

SS: No I was born Solli Eigner, because my father married my mother Oleha Vasholom only Jewish wedding. So I was born officially to a girl. Later they married officially, and changed the name, adopted me and my other brother. And the name was changed from Eigner, Solli and Israel Eigner to Solli Stemmer and Israel Stemmer. So on my birth certificate I'm Solli Eigner, changed to Solli Stemmer.

RL: And when were you born?

SS: On the 2nd of September, 1916. In Nuremberg.

RL: And what does that make you now?

SS: Nearly 90.

RL: Now if you tell me first about your parents and their families.

SS: My father was born in Oswiecim, later became Auschwitz or the Germans called it Auschwitz. He died when he was 80, in 1958, so that makes it '78, I think he was born. He married – I can't remember how old he was, maybe in his 20s – married a woman. She had 3 children with him. After, the woman died. I don't know how she

died, he married a girl from a small shtetl in East Galicia, Rava Ruska, and had two children to her, and she died. My mother was the sister to his second wife. So she married him to bring up her sister's children, and she had 8 children with him, so together, they had 13 children. Until my mother died, we didn't know that the older
Tape 1: 3 minutes 0 second

brothers and sisters are not from the same mother. When we started saying Kaddish, and they didn't have to say it so we realised that they're not brothers from the same parents. But my mother brought them up as her own children. Sorry...

RL: Did your father remarry after that?

SS: Then when my mother died, my father married another sister, but had no children with her. She brought the smaller children up. I was already 14 years old when my mother died. But my youngest brother was a few months old when she died.

RL: Did you know your father's parents. Your grandparents?

SS: I saw them once in 1923. They were living in Auschwitz and came to the wedding of my oldest sister, Regina. She married in 1923. So my grandfather and grandmother came to the wedding.

RL: What were their names?

SS: Moshe and Zipporah Stemmer. He also was a watchmaker.

RL: What do you remember about them?

SS: Not much. 1923, how old was I? Seven years old. I remember there were no taxis at that time. He came to the wedding, and there were two horses, with a little wagon like the queen is driving. And we as kids, we were jumping on the back when they were going to the wedding. Not much. I was very young.

RL: How many brothers and sisters did your father have?

SS: My father had a lot. I didn't know them, all of them. I think he had about 5 or 6 brothers and 3 sisters.

RL: And where were they living?

SS: One was living in Germany, two were living in Germany. And we knew them quite good. One was in Ludwigshafen. Two were in Ludwigshafen. One was...And a sister was living in Frankfurt. The rest were living in Galicia, in Poland somewhere, in Krakow; in Katowice. I think one was living in Czechoslovakia, one brother. I think nearly all of them perished in the Holocaust.

RL: Did they belong to a Hasidic sect?

SS: Yeah most of them. Yeah. Most of them were Sanzer Hasidim. Sanzer, Bobov, except the one in Czechoslovakia, he was more Mizrachi. I think more or less all of

them. The two brothers in Germany had beards. The one in Krakow also had a beard. I met him once. The sisters, the one in Germany was very orthodox. I met another sister once in Poland. Orthodox. Very orthodox. Yeah.

Tape 1: 6 minutes 40 seconds

RL: So your father, which Rebbe did he follow?

SS: The Bobover. Bobov.

RL: Did he dress in a Hasidic way?

SS: I show you a picture from him. My father...

RL: We'll see it later. We'll film the pictures later. Don't worry about that now, but how...

SS: He was wearing a streimel in Jerusalem. He was even wearing a streimel in Paris on Shabbos but only when he was at home. He didn't walk in the street with a streimel. But in Jerusalem he was even walking in the street.

RL: We'll film it later...Yeah. What kind of education had your father had?

SS: I don't know. He was a very clever man. Proved that he was clever in the Pirkei Avot, in the Ethics of the Fathers it says 'Ezehu chacham, Who is clever, Haroeh es hanolad, who knows what will happen'. My father left Germany in 1933, after a certain incident. A friend of him. My father's friend. Pinchas Weixelbaum was his name. He...They used to daven in the same synagogue. He had a sack renewal factory. Old sacks, they used to clean them, sew them, whenever they were needed and sell them again. For example if it was a mail sack it could become later a coal sack for coal. And he had a few people employed. Once he was walking in the street - also a Bobover Chossid with a beard. A group of youngsters got hold of him and cut up his beard. But he recognised one of them as an ex-employee. He went to the police and denounced him, 'Listen, this fellow cut up my beard.' So it was a court case and then in the paper, I think it was 'Der Fackel' a German paper it was written - remember we are talking about 1933 - that the judge dismissed the case, 'That you can understand the feeling of a German youth. That an ugly Jewish beard disturbs him.' So my father, Oleh Vasholom, says, 'Children, if that can happen, hier weg. It's not a place for Jews anymore'. And we left. He was clever he said, 'If that happens in a court case, there's no place for Jews.' And we left.

RL: When in 33 was that?

SS: 1933. The first laws against Jews came out, and he said, 'Hier weg!' It's not good. We have to leave.

RL: Coming back to his education, did he have a yeshiva education, do you think?

SS: I think so, yeah. I didn't know him when he was a...He wasn't a grosse Talmud Chochom, he was a working man! In Germany you can be a watchmaker, and you can

be a Master Watchmaker. He had a Master Degree in watch making and he was allowed according to the German law, to have people working for him. They passed a certificate. He was an Uhrmacher Meister, they called it in Germany. He was very, very good.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 30 seconds

RL: Could you tell me something about your mother's family?

SS: I don't know much. I know she had a brother in Holland, who died after...during the Holocaust. I don't know. He was living in Holland and he got in the Holocaust. And my father's fourth wife. She was a sister of that young man. She got some inheritance from him, after he... somehow he had some money I think in Switzerland in a bank somewhere. And she got that money.

RL: Do you know anything about her parents?

SS: Her?

RL: Her parents. Your mother's parents?

SS: No. I know her father's name was Sholom, therefore one of my brothers was called Sholom. I don't even know what her mother was called. My grandmother from that side. She wasn't alive when we were born.

RL: Do you know anything about your mother's upbringing?

SS: No idea. No.

RL: Have you any idea how your parents met?

SS: I told you I know my mother married because her sister was married. I know they were not very rich. And that was the reason probably that my mother's sister, the first one, married a man with 3 children. 'Cause they probably didn't have enough money and in that business... Very poor people. So the girl agreed to marry a man with 3 children. She had two children. And my mother agreed to marry the man with 5 children.

RL: When did your mother marry your father?

SS: Must have been in 1913. 'Cause my oldest brother was born 1914. Israel was born 1914. Yeah. I was born 16 so he was born 14.

RL: What happened to your father during the First World War?

SS: During the First World War, my father was... He wasn't Polish. He was born in Auschwitz, but Auschwitz belonged to Austria - Österreich-Ungarn. And in 1916, the year I was born, or maybe it was 1915, there were rumours that the Austrians - he was an Austrian. There were rumours that Austrians, even people with children, might be called up to the army. So my father didn't want to go to the army. After I was born, I

was a few months old, he left for Holland. Holland was neutral. And he lived in Holland a year or two after the war and my brother Mendel was born in Holland. After the war he came back to Germany. One of his brothers lived in Ludwigshafen. That's in Germany. And he had another shop in Worms. And so both... he gave him the shop in Worms. And that's the reason we went to live in

Tape 1: 13 minutes 58 seconds

Worms. Because my father before was in Worms as well, living in Worms for a short time. Or maybe he was living in Ludwigshafen and commuting to Worms. Worms is not far from Ludwigshafen, about 20-odd miles. He was probably looking after the shop for his brother in Worms. Because Sholom, and Lena, they were born in Worms, but in 1910 or 11, but then he left Worms, because Worms was not a very orthodox place. Not orthodox. But later after he came back from Holland, he had no choice. So we settled in Worms although it wasn't a very frum place to bring up children. And he wanted to leave several times but the Bobover Rebbe didn't let him leave. Because Worms is a very historical Jewish town. Rashi was there. The cemetery is the oldest in Europe. Thousands of Jewish people are visiting that town. And we were the only house where there is kosher. So people could call in, not for money, we had a special room in our house for visitors. And people could come if somebody wants to stay over Shabbos. My father sometimes used to say, 'Stay over Shabbos!' because he wanted to have Yidden around the table. So that we could bench mezumin etc Another thing my father, oleh vasholom, was, he was looking after our education. All the years, we had a private melamed in the house. Usually he used to take a Yeshiva bochur from Frankfurt, teach him to be a watch maker and he was teaching us limodei kodesh. So we had a special room for the melamed. And I remember one of our melamdin was learning to be a watch maker and to be a Shochet. So in order to be able to be a shochet he learned with us the whole hilchos of shechitas, so I knew the whole perek of shechitas off by heart, because he wanted to learn shechitas And then my mother, oleha vasholom, died in 1929 or 1930 and we didn't have minyan so we couldn't say Kaddish. So my father oleh vasholom wanted us to say Kaddish so we moved to Frankfurt am Main where we could say Kaddish every day. And then we realized that all those brothers didn't come from the same mother, because they didn't say Kaddish.

RL: Coming back to Worms...if you can describe the house that you lived in. What it was like...

SS: We had a small house. Now it looks small. At that time it was very big. It was a 3 floor house. Belonged to us- my father, oleh vasholom. We had a built-in Sukkah built of stone in the yard. We had a special room in the yard for the melamed, the teacher, or for visitors. The ground floor we let to a family. They probably were living there when my father, oleh vasholom bought the house. So they stayed there. We lived in the middle floor, there was another flat above, rented to another family, non-Jewish. The bottom was also not Jewish. And we had an extra room for the kids on the top floor as well. So we had I think 3 bedrooms in the middle floor; one room for the small kids above and a room in the yard for the melamed. Sometimes somebody used to sleep with the melamed. The house was full, so we had an extra bed for the children over there. And next to him was the Sukkah.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

SS: Kindergarten. Not a Jewish kindergarten. I remember we used to – or maybe we didn't use to walk by ourselves, maybe an older sister or brother took us to the kindergarten cause it wasn't very far. Very interesting, the town, like I said, Rashi used to live in Worms. The way to the kindergarten we had to pass the Rashi Gate.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 22 seconds

That's the official name. There was a Rashi Strasse, the street was called for Rashi. And the kindergarten was not far from the Rashi shul. I remember the gate and a big tree in the middle. Non-Jewish. We were the only Jewish children in the kindergarten. I went to school in Worms, and my father, oleh vasholom, as I told you before was a chossid. He had peyos. We had peyos as children. We had long peyos. And we went to school. My father, oleh vasholom, didn't want to send us to school on Shabbos. And for months and years and several law cases, the police came, at the end he had to send us - otherwise they would have put him in prison. He had to send us Shabbos to school but on the one condition we don't have to write. And we don't have to bring with us anything; just we have to be in the school. So we went to school on Shabbos. I think on Shabbos there was no school in the afternoon. Normally there was in the morning. On Shabbos it was only in the morning. I don't remember. My father didn't go to the Rashi shul. Because in the Rashi shul there was a music instrument and he didn't want to go in there. So there was a small shtiebel for some Polish Galician Jews. They had a minyan only on Shabbos. I think we got time off school on Shabbos for an hour to enable us to go to the synagogue, or two hours. And then you had to go back to school. That's more or less how it went on until I was about 14...

RL: How did you get on with the other children?

SS: With the non-Jewish children? Fantastic. We had... First of all, all my brothers and myself, we used to play football. Very good in football. And in the area where we used to live, we had a little group. We were the main players in the group. All my brothers. Very good. One of my brothers later became an international Israeli player – football player. Very, very good. Worms am Rhein was in the first league in Germany.....Worms. They were very, very good. There was another team, Olympia Worms. We liked football. Not far from the shul. I remember when we didn't have a melamed at home; there was an old Jewish fellow in Worms, a Rebbe. Betzallel Millet was his name. We used to go to his place and his wife used to come to the football platz to call us to come learning. And the other players, the non-Jewish players used to throw stones at her. They said, 'Leave them here. We need them for playing.' But we managed.

RL: Did you ever come across any anti-Semitism amongst the kids?

SS: As children? No. They liked us - the goyim around us. In school: friends. Years later I used to visit...when I came to England I used to visit quite often my mother's grave in Worms, I tried to find some of the school friends. I believe one of them – an ordinary man - got killed during the war. The other one, they say he was a Nazi, but he was not alive any more. I think. I don't know. We met a few people. Some people recognised us. The non-Jews used to say, 'My mother... My father, oleh vasholom, used to call...My name is Salman. One of my youngest brothers is Shmuel. The one older than me is Israel Saul. They used to laugh and say that, Mr Stemmer, 'Omle

Milu Dulu Rauf Kommen!' They used to call us to come up. The Rebbe wants to learn or something else or the food – maybe eating... Omle, Milu, Dulu – that's the way they used to call us, they used to call the three because we would be playing. Good football players. My brother Shmuel died a few years ago. He used to play in
Tape 1: 23 minutes 20 seconds

Israel for Betar Yerushalayim and Hapoel Yerushalayim. He took part in the national team as well. He was the...In Hebrew we call it 'balam' he was the stopper. The goalkeeper when they have two defenders then he's a stopper in the middle. Then the attackers. He was very good.

RL: Did you play any other sport besides football?

SS: Me? Not really, no. My older brother, Israel was very good in swimming and that saved his life in a way. Because he was good in swimming, he managed to get, in 1934, I think there was the Maccabiada in Israel and was sent from Paris to the Maccabiada, and stayed in Israel. It was a way to get to Israel. You got the Maccabiada and you forget to come back.

RL: Did you swim?

SS: I can swim, but I'm not a swimmer. He was fantastic, he could dive. Fifty metres. Under the water. Very, very good.

RL: Did you learn any music, any musical instruments?

SS: Singing. I have a good voice. My father, oleh vasholom used to play the fiddle. My brother Shaul was a very good player. We had fiddles at home and we had a big gramophone I remember with His Master's Voice. Mostly Jewish records we used to play. But my father, oleh vasholom, there are hundreds of tunes he composed, without notes. He was a very, very good. Good baal tephilla. One of the best baal tephillas in Yerushalayim. And because of his davening – I'll tell you later how I came to Israel. Because of his davening, I'm alive here.

RL: Did he use to daven in Worms?

SS: In Worms was a small shtiebel. My father - later on when he emigrated to Israel.....when he came to Israel, he was the Chazzan – the chief rabbi's chazzan of the eida charedis. They wanted to pay him and he said, 'I don't want any money I want a certificate for my son.' – for me. I came to Israel. I tell you how I came to Israel later. I came as a Yeshiva bocher through my father's davening. That was payment, for his davening, they gave a certificate for me as a yeshiva bocher.

RL: So in Worms where would you daven during the week?

SS: There was no week davening. Only on Shabbos. We did just davening at home.

RL: How big was the Jewish community?

SS: In Worms not many. I think there were about, I don't know how many Jews there were all together. There was the non-orthodox community. With the Rabbi, and the shammos in the Rashi shul. I would say the size of the shul probably about 150 to 200 people. Maybe. It's quite a big shul. But we had a small shtiebel, with 15, 20 people. Not far from the Rashi shul. On the second floor a shtiebel, a room - I think they paid
Tape 1: 27 minutes 18 seconds

rent for it. Somebody donated it. Maybe on Friday night on Shabbos, Shabbos morning. Mostly people from the East Europe, mostly from Galicia, one or two I think Hungarians. Not many. My father and another Jew were the only two with beards. The rest had no beards. People had shops. I remember one or two were shoemakers. Not shoemakers. It was modern in Germany at that time to have an automatic shoe repair machine. They had a machine - not with the hand - they had a machine with a motor, and they were polishing. Shoe repair was a big business at that time. At that time shoe repairing was good. They had one at the shoe repair shop at the centre of the town. People used to bring shoes for repairing.

RL: Where did your father work from?

SS: My father had a shop. He had a shop not far from the centre and people used to bring watches. Or, even later a little bit, Sholom, my brother and Chaim my other brother as well, they used to travel around the villages. Around Worms. A radius of about 50 or 100 miles. There was a system that you can pay the town clerk going with a bell around the village, 'There is a watchmaker in this and this place. If you have watches to repair, bring them to this and this restaurant,' or whatever it is, right? He used to collect them, take them home to my father oleh vasholom . He and the worker - he had always two people, used to repair the watches. My brother used to go back, give them back and collect the money. So he was repairing watches not only for Worms. It was for the whole area. There were whole villages where they had no watch shops or whatever. So he used to collect them. I remember as kids we used to help them. My speciality was to cook - to cook the kishkes - the inside from the wall - you know a clock hanging on the wall. A wall clock. There is the face and the two fingers and behind that is usually from brass with wheels and springs, etc. If that gets dirty then it stops working. So the best way to repair it is to cook it! You put it in boiling water with ammoniac, some cleaning thing, and soap and it cooks it comes out like new and then you dry it up, with a hairdryer maybe. I can't remember what we used to do, use the oven maybe. And it was very, very good. They came out beautiful clean.

RL: So how old were you...? First of all you say in 1929 the family; after your mother died you went to Frankfurt. How long did you stay there?

RL: Correct.

RL: How long did you stay there?

SS: In Frankfurt till 1933.

RL: You went to school?

SS: Went to Yeshiva.

RL: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Tape 1: 31 minutes 16 seconds

SS: It started I think with Moshe Schneider's Yeshiva. Moshe Schneider after the war moved to London I think. Then I was about one year in the Breuer Yeshiva, and then we moved to France. We left in 1933.

RL: And how big were these Yeshivas?

SS: Yeshivas? Quite big. Moshe Schneider had about 20, 30 students maybe. Breuer Yeshiva: I wouldn't be surprised if they had 100. The biggest Yeshiva maybe in Germany was in Frankfurt am Main. He went to America –Moshe Breuer

RL: And who were the Rabbonim in these Yeshivas?

SS: As far as I remember one of the teachers was Dayan Ehrentreu's either father or uncle. Ehrentreu was one. Another teacher was Dr Posen. And we had Jakobovits. It's a long time.

RL: And were you living at home?

SS: Sure. Yeah. Not living in the Yeshiva. Living in Frankfurt, going to Yeshiva and coming back home. I think lunch we ate in the Yeshiva.

RL: And what did you think of Frankfurt?

SS: It was nice. Compared to Worms, it was a Jewish town. While we were in the Yeshiva, we were not all at home. My father married again. His fourth wife, while we were in Frankfurt. But not all the children were at home. My two sisters and Shmuel, one of my younger brothers – he died already. They were in a home. The girls were in a home. Shmuel was in another home and the youngest baby, Herschel, he was in a Kinderheim somewhere in Frankfurt. When my father left Frankfurt in 1933, he took the girls and Shmuel out of the... The baby he couldn't take. He was left in Frankfurt am Main. He was only 2-3 years old. Later when they moved to Israel, Shmuel and the two girls went with them from Paris to Israel, and Herschel came later, being sent with a special nurse, from Frankfurt to Israel. But they rejoined the family. I remember when Herschel came, I don't know how old he was, Gershon, one of my brothers who was also in a home, when he came, he had already peyos. So Herschel only spoke German, he said, 'Ein Mädchen Bub!' Like a girl-boy. He has locken. He couldn't understand that. Ein Mädchen Bub.

RL: Whereabouts did you live in Frankfurt?

SS: Frankfurt? In the Jewish area. Rechneigraubenstrasse. There was...I know of two or three shtieblach synagogues in the Rechneigraubenstrasse. Very, very Jewish. Frankfurt was a very Jewish town. Yeah. Before I went to yeshiva or between one

yeshiva and another, I worked in that fellow's factory who used to renew the sacks. I also made a few marks, money - Taschengeld – money for the pocket. I was young.

RL: What are your fondest memories of your childhood?

Tape 1: 35 minutes 33 seconds

SS: Very difficult to say. The Rebbe used to hit us. If we didn't...He used to have a kaynchik to smash us. The Rebbes. Nearly all of them. My father oleh vasholom also. He loved us but we used to get klipped for not...not being frum enough, for not davening in the right time, for not coming home in time. Used to play football – for not coming home in time for eating. But I remember my father, oleh vasholom, had one trick which was horrible. He used to hit us. I don't know how to call that in English. The mattresses, when you want to get the dust out of mattresses there is a woven piece of cane where you used to hit it. I can't remember how we called it. Chepots or something. With that he used to hit us. Bend over to hit us. The worst he used to send us, 'Bring it. Bring it in.' The walk to bring that piece was worse than the hitting! He was a very, very nice man. Loved us. Unbelievable. All the children. I always say that his name was Yaacov. He was a better and bigger tzaddik than Yaacov Avinu from the Torah. Yaacov had several wives, and they hated each other, the children wanted to kill each other - wanted to kill Joseph. We didn't even know that they're not hundred percent brothers. But even now, it's no different for us. My oldest brother was living in Paris. He has a son. We're all mishpocha. We're a family. He's a brother. Even so we are all related because they are from my mother's oleha vasholom sister, but nothing to do with that. The oldest ones are not even my sisters really. We're still related to them hundred percent as if they're sisters.

RL: What hare your memories of Shabbos and Yomtov?

SS: From Germany or...?

RL: Yes

SS: Not much. There was no...It was at home. At home there was no doubt. It was... We lived in Worms between the goyim. We never bought anything... meat or whatever it is in Worms, because there was no kosher meat. But my father oleh vasholom used to take, if there wasn't a melamed learning to be a watch maker, he used to take somebody from Ludwigshafen from another town where there was a shochet over there. A youngster from there, my father used to pay him extra for the train journey. He should come every day to learn to be a watch maker and bring kosher food if necessary from there. So the grocer used to deliver to him and he used to bring it every day with him. So my father used to buy chicken or geese – in Germany mostly geese – he used to send them to Ludwigshafen to the shochet and then used to bring it back. Sometimes we had to go ourselves as children, go on the train to Ludwigshafen, shecht the geese, - the ganz - the geese- we not only had meat from them. We used to make schmaltz. In place of butter you had schmaltz on the bread. It was not easy, it was quite difficult. Especially on Pesach – matzos – where do you get that from? And he wanted to leave Worms, my father oleh vasholom. The rabbi wouldn't let him. He said, 'Yankel, you are sitting.'

RL: Did you meet the rabbi?

SS: Oh yes. The rabbi once came to Wiesbaden. It's a place where...a Kur place. He stayed in a hotel. My father oleh vasholom he sent me and another brother. My older sister and my older brother, Chaim, they used to live in Wiesbaden. So we stayed with
Tape 1: 40 minutes 9 seconds

them and went every day to the Rebbe. I was very friendly later in life; I've done business with the Bobover Rebbe's son, Hersko Dovid. He was about my age, he died already. But I remember him from Wiesbaden. We used to play. I remember one of the Rebbe's daughters was Gitche. I can't remember how old I was. Probably about 8, 9. I played with Gitche. The rabbi gave me a patch. A yingele mit peyos spiel nicht mit maiderlach. That was the Sabba – the grandfather of the Heiliger Rebbe. Benzion, was his name. Nice man, with long peyos and nice spectacle glasses. I think he had a zwicker, he had a pair of glasses with no handles. They used to fit on the nose. We were quite good in learning because we had maybe more hours Hebrew learning than normal learning. In school we used to go from 9 to 12 let's say, and from 2 to 4. We had minimum 4, 5 hours every day limodei kodesh with our private melamed. Whenever we had time till late at night. My father had a trick, he used to pay us for knowing pieces by heart. If we know moidim or whatever it is, different things which you don't open the siddur like this, oleinu we had to know by heart and got paid for it.

RL: What about milk? Where did you get your milk from?

SS: We had a Jewish woman who used to have a - lived on a farm not far from Worms. She used to bring us milk every week or every day. In a big can and measure it out. She had a measuring tin and would pour it in. I think it was cow milk. But I remember in our yard. In the Sukkah, very often we had live chickens. It was easier to buy a dozen or two dozen chickens. We had a place to keep the chickens until we sent them to the shochet. So we didn't have to go to market to buy the chickens and schlep the chickens. Some people from around the villages they brought us 5 or 6 geese and we use to feed them every day. Very often we had a non-Jewish woman coming helping in the house with the washing, and she used to help feed the geese as well.

RL: What was your favourite Yomtov?

SS: Probably Hanukkah. We used to play dreidel. My father oleh vasholom used to play with us. Dreidel or Kvitlach. I don't remember much. You had two zweiers or 11, kvitlach we used to call it.

RL: What was that?

SS: What?

RL: What is kvitlach?

SS: Kvitlach is little pieces of paper and you write numbers on it. Like cards but not cards. We didn't use playing cards. You used kvitlach and dreidel.

RL: Is there anything about life in Germany that comes to mind?

SS: Ok. We left before the real troubles with the Jews started in Germany. I never could understand. Because for me the German non-Jews were quite nice people. We used to live with them, very, very close. All my friends were non-Jewish friends at school; used to play football every day with them. I can't say I visited their houses or they visited our house because of kashrus, but we were friendly. When we

Tape 1: 44 minutes 57 seconds

were kids we used to do shtiklach together. We had no other friends. Our friends were non-Jewish boys and non-Jewish girls and we were very friendly. And when I later – after the war when I came to visit Germany I was looking for them as friends. I couldn't understand how they could do what they had done. To be honest I suspect maybe I am wrong that the German itself couldn't bring themselves to kill the Jews in the way they killed them. They needed the Polacks or the Czechs who had the religious hatred as well. The Germans themselves are not so religious. But the Polacks are Catholics so the worst of the Vernichtungslager or the places where they used to burn the people, they're not in Germany, they're in Poland. I think the Germans they wouldn't have tolerated it, in Germany itself. I might be wrong. I can't imagine that the German non-Jews which I knew them – that they're murderers! I couldn't imagine it. I think in order to be what they have been you need an extra hatred, you need religion or you need some excuse, because of Jesus or G-d or whatever told you to do that. But the Germans they didn't believe in that so they had to move it over there. I think so. I might be wrong.

RL: What do you remember of your move from Germany to France?

SS: Like I said my father he saw what's going to happen. And my oldest brother Chaim, he lived in Strasbourg. He was in Strasbourg. Again he was making his living from watches. He had wall clocks made in France or in Switzerland with his name, Stemmer Clocks. And he had people travelling around the villages where there's no shops selling them in instalments and people are paying him every month or whatever. And he made a good living at it. Good watches. I remember that was new at the time. It was the Westminster, every quarter of an hour, 'Bim, bom, bim, bom. Bim, bom, bim, bom. Bim, bom, bim, bom. Bim, bom, bim, bom.' That was his invention, or not his invention, but he introduced it. So while my brother was living in Strasbourg and my father wanted to leave Germany that was the obvious place. He could arrange it that we are leaving Germany to visit a brother or a son in France. So we got permission to move. I remember my father, oleh vasholom, and the small children, they went first. Israel my older brother who's a few years older than me, two years, myself, we were left over in Frankfurt to finish over whatever needed finishing. I remember a few days we ordered a big trailer with like a ... container, a big container to come outside the house and we filled everything which we could fill in, in there. We had hundreds of old watches, in silver cases. They used to be the watches you needed a key, to wind them up. Today they're worth a lot of money as antiques. We broke out the kishkes and melted the silver. If we would have kept them, today it would have been a fortune. The same we had a few gold watches. We took out the kishkes, because you don't want to schlep brass and you melted that down. And then after the container left, Israel and myself we left. On the way to Strasbourg I remember, we cut off our peyos. We had peyos. We didn't want the border, with the Germans or anything...so we cut off the peyos. And we came to Strasbourg. We lived in Strasbourg a few months only. And we didn't get permission to stay there.

Strasbourg belonged to the French then. The border was the Rhein, the river. The French authorities didn't want more German speaking people living in the area because originally it was a German speaking area, Elsass-Lothringen. Two parts which had been taken from Germany during the First World War. Then the Germans took it back. So the French didn't want German speaking people to live there, so we

Tape 1: 50 minutes 35 seconds

had to move inland. We moved to Paris. But after only a few months in Strasbourg, while we were in Strasbourg I joined the football club. There was a Jewish community and they had a Jewish team so I joined them and played for them. It was quite good... But we moved to Paris.

RL: What did you do in Strasbourg?

SS: Nothing really. We only had a few months there and I worked with my father. My father didn't have a shop in Strasbourg, but he took in from jewellers, watchmakers. And whatever they couldn't do, he would do it at home. And we helped him at home. And obviously he used to learn with us. But we knew from the beginning that you can't stay there. Because they told us in the beginning, 'You can't stay any longer here. You will have to move.' So we moved to Paris. Paris is a big town and there are hundreds antique dealers who used to have clocks, table clocks – all the different types of antique watches and antique clocks. And we used to help him. Eventually it wasn't enough. So my younger brother Mendel, he learned how to make trousers. So my father, oleh vasholom, bought two sewing machines; Adler, from Germany. And we learned to make trousers. We used to get them ready-cut from the manufacturers about that high. Cut with a machine in bundles and put them together. Obviously we weren't the best tailors sometimes and one foot longer than the other and the fellow who we worked for we had no choice. He took whatever he lost out of the wages he paid for doing it. And we tried to sell them. So I remember myself and Mendel, we went to a market outside Paris and we sold them.Schlep a bissel. We sold them. That went on for about a year. Then, I had enough. I used to go every Sunday maybe or every Shabbos afternoon to Hapoel Mizrachi – an organisation. I couldn't find my place. Then I went to the Zionist Youth organisation. I said, 'I want to go to Israel.' I was already 17 or 17 and a half maybe. 'I want to go to Israel.' So they decided OK, that they're going to send me to a kibbutz Hachsharah in France to prepare me to be a chalutz and then to go to Israel. I didn't know how my father, oleh vasholom, was going to react for me to go to Israel, so one night I took my suitcase with a few belongings, I left a note, 'I'm going to Israel', and I went to stay with a friend in Paris. I stayed with a friend in Paris and see how my father, oleh vasholom, was going to react to that note that I've defected to Israel. My father, oleh vasholom, ran to the Zionist organisation. 'What do you want with my boy? He wants to go to Israel? Send him home, and we will all go to Israel.' I wasn't actually in Paris, so they sent me home. And my father, oleh vasholom, started to make steps to get to Israel. To Israel you needed a certificate. The British used to give only 100,000 to the Jewish Agency which they distributed or whatever. Obviously the Jewish Agency was interested mostly to get chalutzim in mostly to help develop the country. So they weren't interested in Hasidische Yidden with little children with peyos. They're not going to build up the land. They needed young people who could work, to dry up the Hulla or whatever it is. But there was another way you could go to Israel if you can prove to the British authorities that you're a capitalist. You had enough money that you could

get a certificate out of the quota. You had to prove that you had I think £10,000 sterling. At that time 10,000 pounds was a lot of money. That was like 10,000 gold coins. My father shouldn't even have that money. But at that time there were rich Jews who used to put money in your name in a bank. That was a closed account. You couldn't touch it. But it was enough to prove to the British that you had a lot of

Tape 1: 56 minutes 28 seconds

money. That cost approximately £100. They would deposit or freeze the money for a certain time until the fellow goes to Israel. That cost £100. And my second brother was already married and living in Metz. My father went to Sholom and Chaim and they had to bring together the £100 for a certificate, and he got a certificate. And until the certificate came, I was one month over 18. I couldn't go with them. Israel, my older brother went with the Maccabiada a few months before, and he was already in Israel. And I was left in Paris. The same happened to my cousin; a cousin of mine, my father's sister. They had done the same, went to Israel with a certificate, and Shachne, my cousin – my auntie's son - and myself we were left in Paris waiting somehow that my father could arrange that somehow we would get permission to go to Israel. We were waiting only a few months after they left for Israel. The Yugoslavian King and the French foreign minister got killed in Marseille by a Croat and everyone who didn't have a green card had to leave in 48 hours. What should we do the two of us? We decided we got dressed as scouts with big hats, a stick and rucksacks. We are walking to Israel! We couldn't go back to Germany, so we walked to Israel. And we started hitchhiking. We went outside Paris and we got a lift, one town to another town. We were very lucky.

RL: We're going to have to stop here. We'll continue on the next tape.

SS: Ok.

Tape 1: 58 minutes 33 seconds

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minute 6 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Salman Stemmer, and it's Tape Two. Now I just wanted to ask you a few more things about Paris. First of all, whereabouts where you living in Paris?

SS: In the beginning when we came, we lived in the Pletzl. It's a Jewish area in Paris. A flat. My father,oleh vasholom, used to make a living from getting clocks or watches from the jewellers all over the town. And he had a good name. He was a good watch maker. We boys started to find whatever jobs. So we started making trousers. We lived not very long in that flat and then we moved to another flat, also not far from that area, Rue Vieux du Temple, in Paris. And from there, they moved to Israel, later.

RL: What did your father manage to take with him to Israel?

SS: From Germany?

RL: From Paris.

Tape 2: 1 minutes 17 seconds

SS: From Paris, not much, nothing worthwhile. We didn't have it wasn't our own flat. It was a rented flat. He never was a rich man. We were not poor. But we made a living. Not really much money. I remember my sisters got married. My father gave a Nadan It used to be the custom to give money, but I'm not talking about big money. But it was nice. We made a living.

RL: Did you learn French?

SS: I spoke a little bit of French. I forgot it. There's a saying in Hebrew girsa de jankuta lo mishtakcha, 'What you learn when you're young you never forget.' It's not true – you forget. I used to speak quite good French. Later in life I learned even a little bit of Italian. I spoke Serbski in Yugoslavia, but you don't remember it. Mind you only a few...3 or 4 weeks ago we went to a bit of a melave malke here and I was sitting opposite a woman from Yugoslavia. We started to speak Serbski. All I remembered was a song I learnt in Yugoslavia. It's very interesting if you remember that song. That was a famous song at that time in Yugoslavia. 'Moia Mala Nema Mane'.

RL: Can you sing it?

SS: Yes.

RL: Go on then.

SS: [Sings a few bars of the song and laughs]

RL: Just coming back to...

SS: The meaning is 'My girl has no mistakes. Everything is perfect with her.'

RL: Just coming back to France for the moment. Did your father manage to pick up the language? How did he manage to...?

SS: My father never mixed with French speaking people, only mixed with Yiddisher people. No. He had no need for it. And maybe, I don't know how he dealt with the shopkeepers who took the watches. Maybe they were Jewish, or maybe he spoke German with them. My father knew a little bit of Polish as well. I don't think he knew other languages: German, Yiddish, Loshen Hakodesh a little bit, Hebrew. But French...Maybe a few words, I don't.. very difficult. It wasn't something I took notice of it. I think he could – the daily conversation probably. Bonjour...but I don't think he was very good in French. No.

RL: What did you think about France?

SS: I had no contact with non-Jewish people in France. Because we knew we were temporary here. We're not going to live in France. We're going to move somewhere. My father was contemplating maybe America, but then because I wanted to go to

Tape 2: 4 minutes 35 seconds

Israel, so the family wanted... In a way I think I saved the family. French Jews got killed, most of them.

RL: So you used to go on a Shabbos afternoon to...was it a...?

SS: Hapoel Mizrachi. But then later on I joined another Zionist Youth organisation. I can't remember what the name is. Hashomer Hatzair I think.

RL: Was your father interested in Zionism?

SS: Yes and no. We had no; we had no family yet in Israel. Although his sister, she also was in Paris, her children also wanted to go to Israel. So there was a tendency of people to go to Israel. People started to go to Israel. They're living there. Yiddisher people. Hasidische people. Ten or twenty years before it was only chalutzim, people who wanted to be farmers. That wasn't really in our...in our machshova, in our thinking even. We were not farmers. But then other people in different professions went to Israel, so we can live in Israel between Yidden. But that was the reason that... My father, oleh vasholom, that when I wanted to go, decided: the family goes to Israel.

RL: So how did your father travel to Israel?

SS: From Marseille with a boat. From Paris to Marseille, from Marseille with a boat. I don't remember exactly what date...what time. I think it was in 1934, when my father went to Israel. Like I said before, Shachne, my cousin and myself we were left in Paris, and we had to leave Paris in 48 hours. France, not Paris! The problem was: I had a Polish passport. Because in Germany the law was, if the father is Polish, the children are Polish. Although we were all born in Germany, we had never had a German passport. A Polish passport didn't need a visa to Italy. You could go into Italy. My cousin didn't have a Polish passport. He had...it's called an international passport, like a Zamenoff passport with Esperanto writing in it. It was Staatenlos - he doesn't belong to any state. It has an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that no country can send you out. If you are in a country you can stay there because you don't have a home state. If you're from another country, they can send you home. So he could actually stay in France, but he didn't want to stay by himself. His parents had already moved to Israel, so we decided the two of us, 'Let's go to Israel.' We were walking; Young. I was 18. He was maybe 19 and a half, 20. So we got dressed as I said before in short - it was summer- short trousers, with a big hat with a stick - it's called the Pfadfinder- like the Scout movement and usually people with cars gave them a lift. We went outside Paris and we got a lift; fantastic! First we went to Metz, where my brother was living, Sholom. We said, 'We need some money, we want to go to Israel.' So he gave us whatever he could give. From there, again we didn't want to spend the money on trains. So again we went hitchhiking and we went to Grenoble...Colmar, Grenoble. And we came to the Italian border. I could go into Italy, just passing through, but Shachne couldn't go. So we decided one night we're

going to go over the mountain, not going through the checkpoint. I didn't want to let him go by himself. I remember one night we went where the border is and we started climbing up, up the mountain and we're not experienced that the mountain at night is

Tape 2: 9 minutes 10 seconds

not quiet. There's goats and different things moving and we were afraid that it could be police, shooting at us, stones are falling, making noises. And somehow we went over the mountain and we came into Italy, and in Italy we were kosher in a way. He being staatenlos, they can't send him out any more, he's already there. And I have my Polish passport, I don't need a visa. So we were trying to get lifts in Italy, again in the same... We wanted to get to Trieste, because we know that from Trieste ships or boats are going to Israel. Somehow we managed. In... Italians they don't know the Scouts, they don't take them, so we had to walk! I remember we used to walk, whenever there was a field, something growing, we used to pick it, ganeving, tomatoes, whatever it was, free – not free, whatever it was, but we took it. We had to eat! Apples from the trees. And we came to a place called Brescia. And they were packing afarsechim.

RL: Peaches.

SS: Peaches. So we got a job for a few days to pack peaches, and they paid us something and we could buy a ticket; we went to Venice. In Venice we went to a Zionist organisation – there were some Jews in Venice - and they gave us a ticket to Trieste, a train ticket. Because we couldn't get a lift! The Italians don't take anybody. We were standing on the road, we couldn't...we had to walk. So we came to Trieste. We managed to get a room where to stay. And there is an office from a ship company who have weekly or fortnightly boats going from Trieste to Israel. There was one ship called Tel Aviv. Onya Tel Aviv belonged to the Bernstein Line, a German Jewish company, or German Israeli company. And they were looking for Jewish boys or young people to work on the ship. We went to the office, and they sent us for a medical to see that we're ok. I passed the medical. My cousin didn't pass the medical because years ago he had some pox on his...something, chicken pox or whatever it was and it left marks on his back, and they didn't want to let him work on the ship. So he went back to the Zionist organisation. I got a job on the ship. When the ship came, the dealing was still when then ship was on the water. When the boat arrived, The Tel Aviv, I got a job on the boat.

I went on the boat and I started working. The boat runs on coal, not on oil. They fill up coal; the coal gets filled up on a place, from another place the coal runs down into another room next to the ovens. The coal has to be shipped from that room, in front of the ovens, or the people who are serving the ovens can get the coal straight in that room. That was my job to bring the coal near to the fire; very, very hard work. I was young. You work 4 hours and you sleep 8 hours. And you get different shifts. One shift from 12 at night till 4 in the morning, the second from 4 till 8, from 8 till 12 and from 12 till 4 and 4 to 8 and 8 to 12 again. It's called a trimmer. A trimmer and a heizer. Very, very, very hard. Schwartz! I didn't have koach to wash my hands or fingers or my eyes. My hair, my eyes was full of coal. Coal dust. Sometimes I didn't have time to wash myself, lying down on the bed. On top of that, most of the people working on the ovens were Italian. Not Jewish. There was one more Jewish boy with me.; a trimmer, also bringing the coal. The custom on that ship was they used to call me Moses. Why? Because the first boy who started working there was Moses, so they

passed on the name to the next boy. The job of Moses was not only to bring the coal but to serve the heaters, and to bring them coffee, tea or whatever they wanted - in my free time. A servant to the people who served the ovens. I remember one night or

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afternoon there, I was sleeping, and one of the Italians says, 'Moses! There is a cat!' A cat disturbing him. Meaow, meaow. 'Take the cat and put it on the other side of the ship!' So I got hold somehow of the cat, went to the other side of the ship and went back to my bed. They said again, 'Moses, the cat came back!' I took the cat again to the other side of the ship. So the third time it happened, 'Moses, throw the cat in the water otherwise I'll throw you in the water!' So I had no choice. I threw the cat overboard. What can you do? So I was working on the ship and my aim was when I come to Israel, I run away from the ship. The ship was docking in Haifa. But there was a law; you can only get a short leave pass after your 3 months on the boat. So Thank G-d the 3 months passed when I was on the boat and I got my short leave pass. We came in Haifa, I went down and I didn't come back. But I was afraid somebody might look for me in my father's house - my father was living in Haifa at the time. So my father and mishpochah, we decided I shouldn't stay in Haifa. If they come to look for me they won't find me. So I had an uncle in Bnai Brak. I was in Bnai Brak. He got me a job with a builder to build the water trough where the water was running down into the village. Bnai Brak was a small place - now there's a few hundred-thousand people there. We're talking about 50 or 60 houses then. By the way my payment was 17 ½ grush a day, that is 7 ½ piastres we used to call it. I didn't get paid till today. They fellow went bankrupt or whatever. But while I was staying with my uncle I telephoned or my father came, I can't remember... The Jewish Agency is looking for me. Not the police. The Jewish Agency is looking for me. What's this? They want me to go back on the ship. The Jewish Agency wants me to go back on the ship? I'm a Jewish boy; I want to live in Israel. Professor Struck I wonder if you've ever heard the name? He was a well known sculptor and painter in Haifa. He had a beautiful villa living on the Hadar. He was the head of the Sochnut in Haifa. He explained why they want me to go back. Not only me; me and 4 other youngsters who run away on that voyage. That ship didn't only use to bring new people to Israel. That ship used to bring ammunition to the Haganah and while they were unloading in Haifa in the port they could get some of the ammunition down. And the English in order that youngsters wouldn't run away, didn't let that ship anymore into the port; they had to unload 2 miles outside in small boats, the people, and they couldn't get the weapons in. So the Sochnut wanted us to go back. Some excuse: we had been with some maidlach and then we got shikor... All 5 of us we had to go back on the ship, with the excuse that we were drunk, we didn't know what we were doing and we missed the boat. So we went back on the boat. But now they gave me a different job. Not because... probably somebody else got my job. So I started washing dishes. Started washing dishes on the ship and I was waiting for the Sochnut to give me a certificate. It takes time. They had to get them from the English and then divide them between whoever they want to get into the country.

While I was there, when the boat arrived in Trieste, there was a Jewish café. Usually the sailors used to go in there. I came to the café and somebody said, 'Your brother is looking for you.' 'My brother?' My oldest brother Chaim from Strasbourg, he was in Trieste. What did he do in Trieste? It was already - the situation was - not very good in Europe. He had a business as I said with wall clocks, people used to go around

paying with wechsel, like an IOU, the payment every month. He used to take the wechsels into the bank, the bank used to give him 70-80% of the money until the wechsel came in. That's the way he was dealing. It was a very bad time at that time

Tape 2: 20 minutes 7 seconds

and the people didn't pay the wechsels. And the bank came to him. These are your wechsels. And he couldn't pay the bank so he was bankrupt and he decided to send his wife and two children to Poland to her brother. And he went to Poland. And he was in Poland. And he had an idea. In Poland he saw a lot of geese. Every farmer has geese. And he had an idea to export geese feathers to other countries. And he wanted to open a business like that, exporting geese feathers to Italy or whatever it is. When he saw me, looking like I did, not very clean and working very hard, he says, 'Salman, was machst du da?' I said, 'I'm trying to get to Israel.' He said, 'Come with me to Poland and help me build up that business you will make good money.' I decided ok, I left the boat and went with him to a Poland to a shtetl called Bochnia. His wife and two children were there, living with her brother. After being about a week in Bochnia, I couldn't stand it. No asphalt even. The wagons in the road. It's not for me. I can't speak the language.

I wanted to go to Israel. So I left Poland and I went back to Italy. While I was in Italy I tried to get my job back on the boat, on the ship. They didn't want to take me anymore. My father, oleh vasholom, in the meantime said he will try to get a certificate for me to go to Israel. So I was waiting in Trieste and I had to make a living. There was a firm - a Jewish firm - they used to sell clothing. Not ready clothing; pieces of 4 metres, 5 metres for women to make their own dresses. And we used to take a suitcase full of different stock, knock on the door from house to house and try to sell them. I had a partner. Shloime was his name. And he had a wife and one or two children. And me we were partners we used to take 20 or 30 pieces of cloth, pay for them, pay the wholesalers and sell them double or three times. We used to have an excuse, 'We are from Germany - refugees- and it's German material, etc...' One day we went into a house and we looked down we could see on the street, 2 carabinieri, the police, the Italian police with the red bands here, walking in front of the house. We used to call them the chappers. They 'chap' people. Maybe they're looking for us. So we decided Shloime and me that I'm going down by myself with the suitcase. So I went down, they stopped me. 'What's in there?' Opened up and they said, 'Where's your partner?' And I said, 'I haven't got a partner.' They took me and put me in prison for 2 weeks. Luckily Shloime was outside. He had another suitcase. He could sell my part, bring me some extra food or whatever and come to visit me. While I'm there, I forget. Did I tell you about when I was in hospital in Italy? The first time when I was waiting to jump on the boat. It was summer. We were waiting for the ship to arrive. And we went to the beach, my cousin and I. And I woke up in hospital. I had sunstroke. The nurses were Italian sisters from a convent. My cousin used to come and eat with me. From my food, I used to put it aside for him. They used to say, 'That little German, he eats like a horse and he doesn't get fat!' But now I was in prison. I was about 2 weeks in prison. I remember I was a youngster. There were homosexuals who wanted to do sex with me. There was an Italian goy, he said, 'Anybody touches that boy I'll kill him'. He was watching over me. After 2 weeks, they sent me to Yugoslavia, because I had a Polish passport and in Yugoslavia I don't need a visa.

So I came to Yugoslavia. They sent me to Zagreb. I went to a Zionist organisation and they sent me to a kibbutz Hachsharah in Yugoslavia. I was in the kibbutz Hachsharah and I contacted my parents in Israel. Letters ahin aher. And then my father, oleh

Tape 2: 25 minutes 33 seconds

vasholom, wrote back. Gewalt! It's no good. I davened last year in a and they want me to daven this year again. And they promised me a zertifikat for you as a Yeshiva bocher. You can't be in a kibbutz who doesn't belong to a very frum Zionist organisation. It was kosher, a Zionist kibbutz, they had their own schochet, but it's not good enough for a Yeshiva bocher. I should leave that place. And my father, oleh vasholom, even told me where to go. It's an area of Yugoslavia. Batshka. Very, very frum. The Satmar Rebbe used to come there. There it would take me 3 years to get a certificate; here I would get a certificate faster. So I left that kibbutz and I went to live in Senta. My father used to send me money from time to time in order for me to be able to live there. And after a few months, or half a year maybe, I got a certificate as a Yeshiva bocher.

RL: What were you doing there?

SS: Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

RL: Where were you living?

SS: With a Jewish family. Fischer was his name.

RL: How did you occupy yourself?

SS: Nothing. Nothing really. Fishing. There was a river. I used to go fishing, paying the fish to the family. I was waiting, waiting for the certificate. I had no labour permit neither.

RL: What language were you speaking?

SS: Yugoslavian. Or with the girls, the family had 3 girls and 2 boys. I think we spoke Yiddish or German. I think German. He was a very nice Yid. He had a beard. His wife was a fantastic cook. Her speciality was stuffed Gans – geese. If you are force-feeding, the liver becomes big. Force-feeding, it's cruelty probably, but the Hungarians, they like it. Ah, they were speaking Hungarian between them. Hungarian. Not Serbski.

RL: Any memories from that time?

SS: Very difficult. It wasn't easy.

RL: You know you said when you first got the job on the boat, your cousin didn't pass the medical. What did he do?

SS: He was sent to Hachsharah kibbutz in Italy. And from there he went to Israel. One or two years later.

RL: And then your partner who came to visit you when you were in prison. What did he do?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 54 seconds

SS: I don't know. Shloime? I don't know. He must have got to Israel somehow. I've no idea because from prison I got sent away. From there I didn't go back to Italy. No.

RL: What did you think of Yugoslavia?

SS: Yugoslavia was quite nice at that time. Yeah. We were not mixed with non-Jews. We were really in small circles. I remember the Satmarer Rebbe once came to Senta that place where I'm staying. And I went to see him. Hasidim came from all over place and were staying there. There were 3 or 4 places. Yidden with peyos living there. Rosenta, Petrovo Sela, Iloc or another place . There were some very frum Kehillas living there, with Hasidim, Satmar Hassidim. And there were farmers some of them; Jewish farmers. But Fischer, he wasn't a farmer. I think he had a shop. His daughters, one of them, made roses, for hats; women's hats. In silk, I think, used to dip them in water and... flour I think become stiff, and then with a knife, with a hot ball, pressing it to make the shape of rose leaves. I think she used to make hats as well, not only the roses.

RL: How long were you on the kibbutz Hachsharah?

SS: Not long. A few months.

RL: And what were you learning there, what were you doing there?

SS: I used to milk the cows for a few days or a few weeks. I used to feed the chickens. I think...I don't know. In the dining room I used to work as well, serving.

RL: And where was it?

SS: Podravska Slatina, it's called. The farm used to belong to a Jewish baron, Baron Gutman, he gave it as a donation or lent it to a Zionist organisation between Ljubljana and Zagreb in the middle somewhere. Podravska Slatina. Then I went came Israel...

RL: How did you journey across? What was that journey like?

SS: I was just saying to my wife this morning. I can't remember. I think I went from Piraeus. Or from Varna, Varna is Bulgaria. I think I went from Varna. Not from Piraeus. From Varna we went to Israel; arrived in Israel. My father, oleh vasholom, was already living in Jerusalem. I came to Jerusalem and again, I had to do something. At that time my younger brother, Shmuel, he's not alive any more, he died a few years ago. He learned from somebody to be a painter. At that time in Israel it was the custom – not like today people buy their flats. People used to buy houses and rent their flats. And the people who rent the flats, I'm not exaggerating now, nearly every year they used to change the flat. Paid rent here paid rent there. The period for moving had an Arabic name, muhareem. Muhareem you moved flat. And from one people living there to another you had to clean the walls. So every year the walls used

to be Kalached not with oil paint, just with - zit – whitewashing whatever it is. Nine out of ten flats used to be renovated every year. It was a big, and a very quick job. All before Pesach; starting the few weeks before Pesach it was muharem and you had to

Tape 2: 34 minutes 6 seconds

whitewash all the walls. So all my brothers, all 4 of us, Israel, myself, Mendel, and Shmuel, the 4 of us, we used to be kalachers working. We had a few ladders. We used to buy the kalach, mix it with water a little bit, and washing the walls. We have done this, not bad; used to make money. Some of the houses, when the baalabos wasn't there, used to pour water on the wall. It was clean. You didn't need to- didn't even need to paint it. It was clean! All it was, was freshening it up. The flats usually were empty. People used to move into a flat, it was completely empty. Sometimes, I remember in Rechavia in Yerushalayim. My father used to live in Yerushalayim at that time.

RL: What part was he in?

SS: He lived in Geula in Yerushalayim. The flats we used to do... We had one fellow in Rechavia who was looking after 10 or 20 houses. It wasn't his houses. He was looking after them. They belonged to different people who used to rent them off. We used to be his Kalachers. Fantastic. We came into a flat, there was nothing to do. Shmeer by here. The job was mostly from the pictures to fill the holes and go over it. It was good, good money because you used to get paid by room, not by hours. So we worked, then the brother after me, Mendel, and me, myself – Kalaching is only before Pesach the whole year - so we opened a shop. Not a full shop, a half shop, or a quarter shop on Ben Yehuda in Jerusalem, watches, selling watches, diamonds. At that time a lot of German Jews came to Israel. Some brought with them a lot of diamonds. So we used to deal with diamonds selling them, mostly selling to other shop keepers, not to private people. My father, oleh vasholom, used to sell sometimes to private people from the shop. But we used to mostly take from the emigrants, the people who came. And my father, oleh vasholom, had a beard and the German Jews had confidence in him – he's not a ganev – he will serve them correct. Take some profit obviously, but.. And we the boys used to travel down to Tel Aviv to the wholesalers and try to sell them. Then we were living in Geula. Opposite was Moshe Ludnir living, from Ludmir Matzoh, Matzot Yehuda. And Moshe Ludnir's wife is my wife's sister. She came to Jerusalem to study, and her sister knew us opposite from her balcony she should see us on the balcony; she could hear us singing Friday nights, Sukkot. She said Ruchama, there's a young man over there for you.

RL: You've not got a mike on so I'm afraid we're not going to be able to pick up what you're saying. But if you could tell the story then we'll get it...

SS: Her sister introduced us, and two weeks later we got engaged. And a few months later we got married.

RL: And what year was this?

SS: 1940.

RL: This was already 1940. And what year did you actually come back to Israel?

SS: 36 or '7. We had our watchmaker shop, not a shop, a house in Tel Aviv, with my brother as well. We were making a living. Not too high.

Tape 2: 38 minutes 42 seconds

RL: So the war of course started in...

SS: 1939. Before that, in Israel itself at one time I used to peddle from house to house and sell like lottery tickets, then when the war broke out with another partner we used to sell gas masks. People used to ask me, 'What's your profession?' That's only part of it. We used to sell gas masks. With Moshe Bernak what's his name? I don't know if he's still alive. But then we got married and the war broke out. And Shmuel, my younger brother was a volunteer in the English Army as a mechanic, also as a fine mechanic because he was a watchmaker. So he was working in the REN I think it's called Royal Engineering, stationed in Egypt. Then he came back after the war. And my older brother Israel – he's still alive in Israel - and myself said, 'What will Shmuel do? He used to be a painter.' So Israel was already married. He had a little baby. And he once went to the park in Jerusalem with the little baby. And there was a photographer walking around and taking pictures of the babies and he got paid. And he got thinking, 'In half an hour he made a fortune.' They all took pictures in the park – it was summer. So he said, 'Salman, for Shmuel that is a fantastic ideal. Let him buy a camera and take pictures in public places, wherever it is. You can make a bomb.' So we made enquiries. In the house we never had a camera. We were never amateurs. We went to a shop on King George, in Jerusalem. You know Jerusalem?

And we went to a photographic shop to ask him, 'How do you go about it?' He said, 'The easiest camera is a Rolleiflex.... You look in the top and you can see what you're taking.' We said, 'How much does it cost?' He said about £50. £50, that's a lot of money at that time. Israel and myself we said with my father, *oleh vasholom* that is an idea for Shmuel. He came back from the army, he can make a *parnossa*. That fellow said 'I'll make you a deal. You buy the camera, if you don't like it you can bring it back. I'll give you £45.' So the whole risk is £5. £5 is what we are risking. If he doesn't like it, we get the £45 back. So when Shmuel came back from the army, he didn't want even to touch it. So I says to Israel, 'You know what? Let me try it.' That Zivlin he not only sold the camera he wanted to do the processing, the film processing, the picture processing. And people could pick up the pictures from his shop. So all we have to do is take the money, give the ticket and pay him for the pictures and we get the difference. I says, 'I'm going to try it.' I've never had a camera in my life before so I took about 10 or 20 pictures all without the head. I took pictures of the legs. I didn't hold it right. So when people came to the shop there was no pictures. He didn't even want to process them. Obviously I had to take them again. So he promised them that I would be in the park again the next day and I took them again. He showed me how to hold it and I took the pictures and the people came.

Then he wanted me to make more money. He says 'Listen, not far from Jerusalem are three Batei Havra'a, holiday places. Kiryat Anavim is a holiday place. Hundreds of people are changing every week. Ma'alei Hachamisha is another place, and Motza. Go there. Every week there are new people. Take photographs of them.' So I started going over there. At the beginning I took the bus. The bus from there and I had to

walk up the road. Up to the hill where they had their holidays. It wasn't easy. And I came back and I gave him the films and he gave me the pictures. Next day I had to go back to bring the pictures and selling them. First of all I decided I must have wheels.

Tape 2: 44 minutes 8 seconds

Impossible. From the road, up, the whole thing...I bought myself a motorbike. Probably I didn't...I can't remember if I paid for it in one go. Maybe I took from my brother-in-law a loan. Paid the motorbike and started taking photographs. I forgot about the kids. That was much better. A few hundred people are changing every week. Grown up people, I'd take them, I used to take photographs. One day most of them are preparing, they're going on a trip. Zeev Vilnayi - a very well known tourist guide in Israel. He wrote books. Zeev Vilnayi) His son is a member of parliament now. He was the guide. I used to accompany the trip and take the people, wherever they went. Jerusalem, you had the wall...Not the Wailing Wall, the town wall - Jerusalem wasn't in our hands then - the old city. I'm talking before the establishment of the state. I am talking about the year, 1942 about. 1942. I became a photographer. Later I became the photographer of President Yitzhak Ben Zvi. When he was president I was the official photographer in the house. Whenever a visitor came, he used to call me and I used to take the photographs. I tell you later a very interesting case I had with the Beit Hanassi. Yitzhak ben Zvi, the President, he knew me. He used to come very often to Motza, was a Beit Havra'ah from Kupat Cholim for the sick workers, the working class people used to be sent to convalesce. He knew me and he used to call me 'Salminke'. Because I used to bring people. I used to take them. Ah, no, no, I'm jumping. We used to go on trips twice a week with the people from the holiday camps. Zeev Vilnayi was the guide. One day...Ah! I used to book the buses, and make some profit. I used to order the buses from Eged. The bus lets say cost me £50, and I used to charge from each one of the passengers £2 or £3 and make the profit in between. And sometimes I used to make more profit than from the pictures. One day I remember I booked 2 buses to collect the people from the 3 places. And we came to the place where we used to pick up. Zeev Vilnayi, he wasn't there. It's a shame. Other people paid, and I was ashamed to lose the pictures. So I told them, 'Listen, I know exact every word what Zeev Vilnayi will say. I've been on the trip about 50 times. You want to take a chance I will explain what he would say.' So we went and I explained and they enjoyed it! It was as good as Vilnayi, so next time I didn't wait for Vilnayi. So it went on for quite a few years. I used to guide without being an official guide but I knew the places. I knew what he is saying. I knew it by heart. And take photographs at the same time. First of all the photographs...Most of the money went to that fellow who sold the camera. So Ruchama has an uncle and his brother was a photographer in America and he came to Israel. He told me how to process, if I bought all the equipment from him. I bought an enlarger and all the dishes from him. He showed me how to develop and I started developing myself. At night...We lived in a very small place; one room and a kitchen outside. But at night we used to close the door in a red light and develop the pictures. Bring them in the room and used to dry them with an electric dryer. And then deliver them. Somehow we made a living.

RL: Where were you living?

SS: In Jerusalem.

RL: Whereabouts?

Tape 2: 48 minutes 57 seconds

SS: In Rechov Zephania Hanavi in a small room. I was telling a very interesting, a very nice incident we had. I used to collect people from 3 places. First I want to say that in 1948 when the Israeli state was established, they brought a law out. A tourist guide must have a Teuda, must pass an exam. And there will be a course in the university. So I prepared myself for the course, and my friend and his wife also and Ruchama was helping us. And while we were learning, we decided together that she should try to pass the exam because she knows more than we know. So we went to the exam. She passed and I failed. She passed and I failed. I had to do another course. And next time I got my certificate and my number. So her number is lower than mine. We're talking about – now there are thousands of tourist guides. When we were there, my number was 108. Hers was probably 90 or something. It was earlier. Once I remember a very nice incident. I took people from 3 places. I started in Ma'alei Hachamisha, which is on top of a mountain. I don't know how many people went on a bus, in one bus, maybe 10 or 15. We came to Kiryat Anavim, no. Sorry, sorry, sorry. I made a mistake. I started in Motza, and in Motza about 15 people came in. Obviously, the first people who come in, they get the best seats in front. The second from Kiryat Anavim they got further in and we came to Ma'alei Hachamisha, there were no...More people wanted to travel than there were seats on the bus. So – they wanted to go! 'I can take some chairs, little chairs, square chairs. We can put them in the middle, you can sit down.' I had a seat next to the driver with a mike. One fellow couldn't even get a chair. He was standing next to me on the end, you know on the step when you go onto a bus.

When it came to explaining you know, 'On the left...' and so on, the fellow who was sitting on the first seat, a little fatish fellow said 'tiszalech mican, which means 'Get off of here!' Or something like that, 'because you are disturbing my view. We can't see because he is standing there!' But the fellow who was standing said, 'I paid the same money like you. I don't mind. Let me sit and you can disturb me.' So the fellow who was sitting said 'Ata Chatsuf' 'You are rude.' So he answered him back, 'And you're an idiot!' So the one next to him said, 'Do you know to whom you said 'idiot'? He's Doctor, whatever his name is....' 'Then he's an idiot with a diploma!' diplomat ha'idiot. That's a true story. And I have the mike and everybody can hear it. People couldn't stop laughing. A diplomat ha'idiot. Anyhow, we made a living. We didn't build houses. In the meantime the war broke out, the War of Independence. We were living in a very small place. We moved to another place, a better flat. While I was a soldier in the army.

RL: Wait a minute. We haven't really discussed the Second World War and what was happening. How did that affect you?

SS: Not really, no. Israel was affected in one way. We were living at that time in Tel Aviv and Tel Aviv got bombed, so we had to move to Jerusalem. We moved to Jerusalem because the rumour was that Jerusalem would never be attacked. Tel Aviv was attacked by the Italians. They attacked Tel Aviv, and there were a few bombs here and there not far where we were living. We were living next to the Abima not far

in Tel Aviv, quite a nice flat. But in Jerusalem you couldn't get a flat, impossible. So we got a flat somewhere it Beit Yisroel. No water, no electricity. You had to schlep water from somewhere else. We had an oil lamp hanging in the room. You couldn't

Tape 2: 54 minutes 5 seconds

get a place in Jerusalem. From Tel Aviv, Haifa people used to move to Jerusalem cause during the war Jerusalem was not attacked.

RL: When did you move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?

SS: 1941 maybe?.Me'ezer shanah? Maybe 41. 41 probably.

[Wife in background]

RL: Let me go through this cause it's a bit hazy. You got married in 1940. And who was it that you married? What was her background?

SS: Her background? Student.

RL: I mean her parents. Where was she from?

SS: Her parents? Her father - I have a picture here - in the beard. Background about the same. Hasidim. She was Hasidish; I came from a Hasidish home. We had a good language. I couldn't speak Hebrew at that time. Very little.

RL: How did you communicate?

SS: With the hands!

RL: Where did you get married?

SS: In Jerusalem. Rav Duschinsky - the synagogue where my father used to daven, his synagogue. He was the Head Rabbi of the Eida Charedis of the Orthodox community in Jerusalem. The Chief Rabbi. He married us.

RL: And after you married where did you go to live?

SS: We lived in Jerusalem. Not long - a few months. And then I worked in Tel Aviv with my brother...with Israel... no in Tel Aviv I worked for myself. In Jerusalem I worked with Israel. At that time, it was during the war. There was a shortage of nearly everything in Israel. Especially in the watch making branch there was a shortage of knobs. To turn a little alarm clock, for example. There was a shortage of pieces in small watches. So I bought an automatic tray bank with a motor... a turn...what's it called - a lathe, I think. And I manufactured - an automatic lathe with six heads. Every move it turns by itself. And I used to manufacture them, for necklaces little locks; used to manufacture different things in Tel Aviv. So we moved to Tel Aviv. I hired a place in a shop with the machine there, and I used to work there. Then when the bombs fell in Tel Aviv we moved to Jerusalem. We took the machine back to Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem I worked together with a brother of mine. We used to do the same. Later I manufactured silver items. Chanukias, cups, kiddish cups etc- in real

silver. I used to make Chanukias and after I could afford it I tried to buy one back for myself as a souvenir. I used to make a Chanukia with eight candles, nice on a special

Tape 2: 58 minutes 4 seconds

machine from one piece of silver sterling, it's turning very fast, when you push it hard, it becomes like a becher without welding it.

RL: This film is about to end and we'll just stop here.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 22 seconds

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 0 minute 10 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Salman Stemmer and it's Tape Three.

RL: I just wanted to take you through where you were living after you married. And you told us that you started off...

SS: We started in Jerusalem and then we moved to Tel Aviv. And then when Tel Aviv got bombed we moved back to Beit Yisroel, we couldn't find a better flat; a very bad flat, one room. We lived in one room in Beit Yisroel without water, without electricity. But then after the war I can't remember...we didn't live very long there - maybe we lived there about a year. Then after the war, the situation got a bit easier. We found a flat in Rechov Zephania in Jerusalem and we lived there a few years. Two of our girls were born there. And 1948, in the middle of the war with the Arabs, while I was a soldier...

RL: When did you join the army?

SS: Before the army I was in the Haganah. I was member in the Haganah

RL: So when did that happen?

SS: When the Arabs started attacking buses here and there. I was a youngster, a healthy youngster. I joined the Haganah. We were having exercises once or twice a week. Quite often we had to go on shmira, to watch different places. When the war broke out I joined the army. 1948. I joined. I had to join. I wanted to join the army. I joined the army and the situation in Jerusalem became impossible. There was no water, no electricity; very, very bad. And Ruchama's mother lived in Haifa and her brothers. Although Jerusalem was closed, you couldn't get in and out but somehow from time to time there were caravans, army patrols going down and people could get out. I managed to send her to Haifa, with the kids. So she was in Haifa and I was in Jerusalem in the army. Although I got free every week a few hours I never took the Chofesh. Where should I go? I had nowhere to go. So I gave the - when I was free - to my friends. Let them go off in my place. I don't know how many months after that. Five months after that I got 48 hours leave from Jerusalem to go to Haifa to see my wife and two kids. To go there took me more than 48 hours. To get there it was nearly impossible, via Burma, the road wasn't free. We had to wait till the army

Tape 3: 3 minutes 24 seconds

comes. When I arrived to Haifa I went to the Katzin Ha'iyir, to the officer in charge of Haifa to give me extension, it should be longer because I haven't even seen them yet. He said 'No, can't do anything.' He couldn't do or wouldn't do. I went to visit my family and after 4 or 5 days later I came back to Jerusalem. A deserter! They put me in prison. In charge of the prison was my brother. No. They put me into prison, the fellow in charge, Chavilia was his name; he gave me 14 days prison. When I came to the prison, they didn't let me in because I had one degree and you can't go into prison with a degree, you had to take that off; he didn't know. It was a new state; the army didn't know what to do. He didn't take that off so they didn't let me into prison with a dargar, with a degree, it would be a lance corporal or whatever you call it...patent officer, yeh. But the Katzin in charge, he didn't want to be that they sent me to prison and don't let me in. So he put me in the local prison of that little group. My brother was in charge of it. That was the nicest time I had in the army! We used to play poker from morning till night. All day long we used to play with my brother and the other inmates. It was fantastic! And at that time a flat became empty in the same house where my brother used to live. So with the other inmates in that prison and with my brother and with an army vehicle, we moved my furniture into the new flat while I was in prison. It was quite a nice flat. I don't know how many years we lived there. Then I had a motorbike.

RL: What did you have to do in the army? What was your army service?

SS: I was an instructor. Instructing new soldiers how to use machine guns, mortars, hand grenades, etcetera. And at that time, when I was in the army- no, it wasn't that, after I'd been in the army for I don't know how many years...I think it was about a year I was in the army. After the war even the people who have, have still to make miluim. Every year you have to give 3 or 4 weeks. And I at that time was working in the Batei Havra'ah, in the kibbutzim, in the holiday places. So Ruchama took over. She used to do the travelling and the processing at night. Or I used to help her, I don't know if I came home. She took over and she used to take the people around the holidays; visiting mostly around Jerusalem. Once or twice I went to Eilat. I once took the members of parliament on a trip to Eilat. Ladra, Fiach wherever it was... Yeah.

[Wife in background]

RL: Tell me a little bit more about the army. When did you go into the army?

SS: In the army, when the war broke out. The War of Independence.

RL: Before that?

SS: Before that I was in the Haganah. In the Haganah it was either whenever they called me. Or we had a regular imunim I think from time to time. I remember once the English used to make...sometimes close a whole area in Jerusalem and go from house to house, from cupboard to cupboard looking for ammunition. Once the area was closed in and luckily they didn't find it. I had a Mauser gun in my house. In Motza there was a family I became friendly with them. The father, was a ghaffir – a

Tape 3: 8 minutes 2 seconds

special policeman and he had boys going around. He was afraid. He died and his wife didn't want the gun to be in the house. So she gave me the gun. And I took it home and put it under the bed or under the cushions or whatever. But then it became dangerous because they used to go from house to house. So I gave it to the Haganah, the gun. I forget...How often did we have to go to imunim in the Haganah?...How often did we have to go to imunim in the Haganah?

[Wife in background]

SS: Shmira. Yeah. Whenever there was something they would send 10 people there watching a certain area where there was danger, watching. But then the war broke out and I was a soldier in the army.

RL: So did you... any dangerous..?

SS: Any dangerous...I remember once the Har Hatzofim, Mount Hatzofim in Jerusalem was menutak it was cut off. They needed food. They needed ammunition. And they were looking for volunteers –to go at night through the Arabs - you had to go through the Arabs, through Sheikh Gerack - the Arabs were there – you had to somehow go through the Arab lines up through there, to bring them help. I volunteered and my brother Shmuel volunteered. But they didn't want to take two brothers on the same mission. And Shmuel was not married. So they didn't let me go. But I got a pullover and I got a pair of shoes with rubber soles. So that I kept. I was prepared for going but they didn't let me go because Shmuel went. Ah. Shmuel didn't go, because it got cancelled! The whole thing got cancelled. He volunteered. That's the one that later we bought the camera for him but he didn't want to take it. He was a good brother, very good footballer.

RL: How did you get on with the British?

Tape 3: 10 minutes 20 seconds

SS: With the British? Not really. We didn't have contact. There was no contact with the Jewish... Not in my circles. Maybe there was contact, but not with us. I know we didn't look with sympathy at some Jewish girls when they went out with British soldiers. There was the time they used to cut off their hair, when they got hold of one of the girls. That went on, in that job I was working made parnossa but not more. The girls grew up, go to schools, high schools. And I was the photographer. I can't remember how many years ago. My sister, in Tel Aviv. She was married, and one of her children went to kindergarten. Came home from kindergarten with a new idea...Usually photographers go to the kindergarten, take pictures of the children. Somebody put the pictures in a little kucker where you look in through a lens and you see a coloured picture. A coloured; they are positive. It's the film itself. Reversed. Beautiful. It was round. There was a fellow in Tel Aviv who imported them from America. So I went to him and I bought some; very expensive, and I put pictures in. Took photographs, bought a special camera - little half frame camera, small camera. But then first of all the pictures are square, and it is round, so it's not really matching. I made enquiries. Who says we have to bring it from America when we can

Tape 3: 12 minutes 31 seconds

manufacture them in Israel? I had a tool made. First I made a round one. Then I changed it into a square one matching the size of the half frame camera. It's a half 35mm. You're getting 72 pictures out of a film in place of 36. I learned how to process... Ruchama's uncle's brother, the one who sold me the processing machine, he taught me how to process the Kodak film reverse. And I processed the film myself in colour. So I had the tool made for the little viewer and we had real glass lenses inside, very expensive lenses. To make in each one a lens and that's the way I used to sell them to the holiday people. Used to sell them... Then I manufactured a little box where six slides could go in and the kucker which opening you can put slides in. I manufactured the whole box. Everyone going on a tiyul on a trip, used to buy a box; minimum one box, sometimes two boxes. I made a good living out of it. It went on for a few years. And one brother in Paris, his daughter got married. I came to the wedding and I brought with me pictures of my children in that box and in the thing.

[Wife in background]

These are the viewers I manufactured. So...Where was I? Manufactured the viewers... became a very good business...made more money.

RL: You went to the wedding...

SS: Ah, we went to the wedding in Paris, and I showed them to him and I also had a brother living in Manchester. And he said, 'Salman, you bring that to England, you'll make a fortune.' It went in my head. It was somewhere in the back. A year later, or three years later, my oldest daughter; she was going out with somebody.

[Wife in background]

SS: She was teaching Ivrit in a school. My brother says, 'If she comes to England she can be a teacher here and we'll find her a nice chossen maybe.' So we decided...

[Wife in background]

SS: They were looking for a Hebrew teacher in Broughton Jewish. And so she wanted to try it. So she came over to England. And she was living in Broughton Park somewhere and became a teacher in Broughton Jewish. Then she wanted to come home, didn't want to stay by herself. If her sister can come and be with her, and study here in university or in high school, then she will stay. So we sent the other one as well. I had in the back of my mind, if the girls will like it, I will make arrangements maybe to come to England with my patent, with my machine. They liked it and we decided we want to come over. So I applied for the labour permission before I came. I got the labour permission to introduce something new into England with machinery and open a factory here. So I came over in 1963. We opened a factory for manufacturing that. I brought the tools with me. I brought all the tools with me and started taking pictures in schools. I couldn't speak English. I had people canvassing, booking the school, and I took the pictures.

Tape 3: 17 minutes 5 seconds

I remember once in a school in Manchester in Marlborough Road. The headmistress was a nun. So that they shouldn't know that I was a foreigner, I didn't speak. I had Jewish students canvassing the schools. One was Sammy Silver. He got that school booked for taking the photographs. He said to the nun I'm deaf and dumb. I'm deaf and dumb, ok I didn't speak. I took the photographs. He got his commission. Years later I returned to that same school to try something else – a key ring or something. And the nun said, 'What a miracle! He can hear! He can speak!' But it went on for a few years. Not long. I think about two years. I didn't sell the flat in Israel – didn't give it up, but you could still get key money in Israel. I didn't give the flat up because if I didn't like it here I'll go back. I paid rent. Five years we lived in Chandos Road here. But then after we decided that we would stay we gave over the flat. And we bought the house in Ferndale Avenue. In Israel, I've told you before, my main income was from 3 holiday places, where in all 3 together there were about 5-600 people changing every week. While I was taking pictures in the schools here, and I had people canvassing the schools and there were people booking, there was holiday in the schools. There was nothing to do. But somebody suggested there are holiday places here. Like Butlins, Pontins. It's ideal. So I took some examples of viewers... In every Butlin camp there's a photographic shop. But that's a separate company. It doesn't belong to Billy Butlin. The photographic license is a separate company. The head office is in London, and the head is called Mr Alshbord. So I went to London to see him. Made an appointment. And I showed him that – 'Aaa. Not for us.' Maybe most of the managers were ex-Royal Air force people. Maybe he didn't like a Jew or didn't want to do business with a Jew. 'Not for us.' What can I do? I can't force him. But I had the girls or boys working for me as canvassers. We walked from caravan to caravan. I took pictures in the caravans during the holiday. Fantastic! People liked it! It's new! While I was canvassing once we came to Powelli [?] and it said 5 shillings or half a pound - whatever to go in. Carousel for kids, whatever it is. So I went in and I saw the photographic shop. I went into the photographic shop and I spoke to the woman in charge, a Mrs Chapman. She said, 'We can't do anything without the head office.' I says, 'Mrs Chapman. I have an idea. Let me take photographs in your camp. I give you the money. I don't want any money. Just to show you how good an article this is for your type of... There's 5,000 people – I was making a living from 5 to 600 – here's 5,000 who are changing every week or every 10 days. Let me try.' She says ok. I didn't have enough film with me so I went home and I came on Sunday with two girls with viewers and all the equipment to process all the film - later. I had special machines to cut the film. One click and the picture is in the right size which I made myself here, or I had it made by an engineer. And we started. The girls started to stop people to have a look first of all people said 'It's dirty pictures. Oh, no, it's nice!' 'Do you want one of them? Just go over there near the bush.' I took the picture, gave them a ticket. 'Come next day, or tomorrow morning.' I took 5 films, 72 in each film, and I promised them for next day. About 5 o'clock I finished. I don't know, sun went down. And I went back to the shop and asked Mrs Chapman, 'Where can I process the pictures?' 'What do you mean? We are closing soon.' 'What do you mean you're closing? I promised the pictures for tomorrow, and I wanted to show you how easy it is to make them.' Until she convinced two of her staff to stay with me a little longer to see how to process the film and how to cut them, we stayed there till 11 o'clock at night. Finished the 5 films, processing, cutting, everything and put them in the viewers and have them ready, according to the numbers. To make it short, the next

Tape 3: 23 minutes 1 second

day people came and picked them up. There was a queue 2 miles of people who wanted to be photographed. Two miles! All around the camp people were queuing! Fighting to be photographed! Mrs Chapman couldn't understand it. She went on the phone to London. A miracle! Normally people, when you want to photograph they say, 'No, no, no, no, no!' Mr Alshbord with all his staff took a taxi or a car and came to Powell's [?] to see that miracle. 'That is fantastic!' So I reminded him, 'You didn't want it.' To make it short he ordered a few hundred thousand. Over the years I sold him a few millions of the viewers. It became the main income of Butlin's Photographic. That was the only income they made money on it. Then they wanted to be clever. They started manufacturing their own viewers. 'Don't need anymore that bloody Jew'. So they started manufacturing their own viewers but they couldn't make the lenses, so they bought lenses from me. Bought lenses from me. What can you do? I made more money on lenses than I made on the viewers.

[Wife in background]

Anyway, we made a living, thank G-d. Then I went once to Blackpool - I had clients not only in Butlins but every where in Blackpool, Rhyl, North Wales, everywhere, because everyone used to buy them. Then I came across another key ring. A flat key ring. A normal key ring. I started manufacturing a different type of key ring. My company was called Photo Plastics. Started manufacturing frames. Then we started manufacturing photo albums for super snaps. We had super snaps printed on the album. We bought welding machines. First I was in a place near the Old Odeon on Bury New Road near Margaret Street whatever it's called behind King's Road. From there we moved to Cheetham Hill down in Park Street on Cheetham Hill Road. Again it's a very interesting story about the building. That's the type of key ring. There's a picture inside. Two pictures if you want. We started manufacturing them. This one is broken, we have to change it... I told you it's a broken one. The picture goes in here. It's a broken one. Put it back. Doesn't matter...remind me to get a new one.

So we moved to Cheetham Hill in a building on 3 floors. Belonged to a woman, she lived in Bolton somewhere; I don't know...South Manchester. She let that building to the Electricity Board with a lease for 25 years. £500 rent per year. She was quite old and that would be enough for her. The building became too small for the Electricity Board. And they gave the lease over to Olivetti. No profit. Same money, you continued paying. Olivetti was there several years and they gave it over to me. I can't remember what year it was. Same price. £500 a year. I let the top...no... the ground floor I let to somebody, and the top floor I let to somebody. I got more money in than it cost me anything. Didn't cost me anything. I don't know how many years ago. We're talking about 10...15 years ago. It doesn't matter. 15 years ago. A surveyor came, sent from the woman's solicitor, surveyed the building. They want to increase the rent. Five hundred pounds a year probably wasn't enough for that woman. And he looked around. 'There should be a fireplace here.' 'That's the way I got it.' Either Olivetti or the Electricity Board built a wall there and there's no fireplace. 'There used to be a wall here.' He came with a letter from the solicitor. Everything has to be back like it is on the plan. It would have cost me over £30,000 to put everything back. I started negotiating with the solicitor. How much do you want for the rent now? In **Tape 3: 29 minutes 16 seconds**

place of £500 they want £900. Ok £900? How much money you want, I'll give you £900. Don't make me invest in things I don't need. 'What do you want?' '£900.' 'What is it worth, £10,000?' To make it short I bought the building for £28,000 and I don't have to invest that money in those things. I bought the building. I sold the building a few years later and I think I got nearly £50,000. And I bought another building in Bury, beautiful building, still there. About 10 years ago I gave it over to my son and he changed the main income of his company. He changed the name of the company from Photo Plastics to Mydent. Mydent is dental supply. Why dental supply? I have a nephew in Paris. My oldest brother's son, he is a dentist but he's not practicing dentistry. He has the biggest dental supply company in Europe; the biggest in Europe. And my son is supplying him some of the items he manufactures. And my son himself also has a catalogue which goes out once or twice a year and he is supplying English dentists. But we manufacture. We have automatic machines. We manufacture disposables mainly: trays, mixing bowls, whatever it is. Now he's employing about 10 people, on automatic machines; fully automatic machines. One machine costs £100,000.

RL: So when you came over to England...

SS: After 5 years here we became British citizens... Naturalised.

RL: What did you think of England?

SS: England? Fantastic. I think England... I always say that a country where football is more important than politics is a good country. Or compared to Communist countries. In Russia you need a permit to go out; in England you need a permit to go in. That's the difference. No. It's good here. I like the English people. To be honest I'm here now 40-odd years. We came in '63 now we're 2006. I can't really say that I came across anti-Semitism except the Butlins, which I suspect that the reason was they didn't want to hear anything from me, but they changed their mind later. Could be anti-Semitism or could be just disliking foreigners because they could see from my English that I'm not English. One small incident we had with one of our people, an employee in our factory. We had to fire him and when he went out, said 'Bloody Jew.' He came back later. He came back to work. And his brother is still working till today. He apologised. I don't think that's anti-Semitism. That's the way that we are talking. I say 'Paki'.

RL: How did you adjust to life here?

SS: Fine like I was saying, we are here now. My two daughters got married. That's the reason we decided to stay here after all. They married before the 5 years...as I said 5 years we wanted to try if we wanted to stay. They got married and we had grandchildren already here. So we decided ...We had one more son. He was younger. 6 or 7 years between. How many years between Rachel and Gidon?

[Wife in background]

Tape 3: 33 minutes 57 seconds

What's the age difference between Rachel and Gideon?

[Wife in background]

Seven and a half years difference, so he is much younger, but he grew up and went to university. Originally he wanted to be an optician but couldn't stand looking into other people's eyes. So he came into the business and he took over. Quite successful and he's a governor in school – in King David. My oldest daughter has 2 children, my younger daughter has 3 children, my son has 3 daughters. Altogether we have 8 grandchildren, and 17 and a half great-grandchildren. And thank God we see them every week. They come to us every week. I spoke on the phone this morning to one of my great-grandchildren. I don't regret. We go to Israel minimum once a year maybe twice a year. She still has a brother there. I still have – one, two, three brothers there and two sisters in Israel. We're on the phone every week. Minimum a few times a week. I phone them, they phone us. My sister whenever she has a good joke. She gets me on the phone. She told me a good joke by the way, the other day.

A doctor had to go for 2-3 days away. So he asks his friend, 'Can you do me a favour, can you take over?' So he says, 'I'm not a doctor!' 'Doesn't matter. I'll give you a list of specialists. Anybody who comes with a pain, you send them to the specialist, I've written for what. Somebody has this pain, send him to this one. Somebody has this, send them to that one...' Comes back after a few days, says, 'How was it?' 'Fine. One woman came and said 'I haven't had sex or seen a man for 7 months'.' 'What did you do?' 'I sent her to an eye specialist!'

RL: Is there anything that you miss about Israel living here?

SS: Difficult to say. No. I can only tell you, I like it here. I have a good reputation as a baal tephilla – as a hazzan. Wherever I come in every synagogue nearly, people want me to daven. To be the leader. Even this Shabbos, Friday night I davened in Shomrei Hadass. On Shabbos morning I davened mussaf,. At Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur I davened at the Shrubbery because they had no hazzan this year. I can't complain. I play cards twice a week. Poker. With the same people I've played already 35 years. One is a doctor, the other one was a doctor. It's not bad. I can't complain. Our flat is quite nice.

RL: What made you move originally up to Whitefield? You say you lived in Whitefield at first?

SS: We got a house in Whitefield, and I enjoyed it. We went to see a house in Whitefield and at that time we lived in Ferndale Avenue. Our garden - was a farm behind. And the horses used to come and I used to give them sugar. We liked it. It's like living in the country. Now they built houses there.

[Wife in background]

We paid 6 and a half thousand pounds for the house. I think we had a small mortgage, paid it off very quick. We sold it now this year.

Tape 3: 37 minutes 59 seconds

RL: Which shul did you belong to up there?

SS: In Whitefield.

RL: That was the Whitefield...?

SS: Yeah, and I used to be the second chazzan. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur... I helped quite a lot in building up the community in Whitefield. Some of them still prefer me over alle hazzonim they have there. Used to tell them jokes...Can I tell you a good joke?

RL: Well it's really your life story we're after but...

SS: No, only this week I heard a good joke. I think my sister told me this joke. Margaret Thatcher. When she was Prime Minister went to a meeting in Coventry with the Trade Union. And Dennis, her husband asks, 'Margaret, can I come with you?' 'What do you mean come with me? What are you going to do? We have a meeting half past 10 it may go on till 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon.' He says, 'I want to play golf in Coventry. I know the golf course.' She says, 'You want to play golf? Why not take the train in the morning and you can play all morning and on the way back we'll pick you up. He agreed and told her secretary, 'Book me a cabin for London to Coventry, and in the first class, a compartment for me.' In the morning he came to the station. There was no ticket. Nobody booked a ticket. So he went to the counter and booked a ticket. So he went in the train and sees in first class there is a compartment reserved. So he says, 'Very good. They didn't forget to reserve me a compartment.' He went in and he sat down. Took off his shoes, his tie. In Watford the train stops. Six lunatics from a lunatic asylum come in and are sitting all around him. Then the supervisor gets on with the lunatics and starts counting. 'One, two, three...Who are you?' 'I'm the Prime Minister's husband!' '...four, five, six, seven.' And the supervisor says, 'I can't understand. I left the asylum with six crazy and now I have seven!' My sister told me that on the phone from Israel.

RL: Tell me about your siblings in Israel – where they ended up. Where they are living and what they became...?

SS: My oldest brother is 92. He is retired now. He used to be a cinema operator. Operating the machinery in the cinema. He was a milkman before, but became an operator. He has children, grand children, great grandchildren. My youngest brother, he is a diamond merchant in the borse. The one with a beard he was the head of the frum organisation, the frum Yidden in Jerusalem. Rosh HaEida Charedit The head of the Eida Charedit and he was in charge of giving out Hechsherim for food, different things. But now he's very, very ill. He had a stroke. He can't go out. When they have a stroke, they can't go out. My sisters are retired now. My youngest sister has two sons; one is the head of all the eye specialists in Israel. He is the head of the eye department in Tel HaShomer hospital. Very, very nice fellow. The other one is a business man. Building supplier, he has a company. My older sister – she has two daughters. She had a son, the son died. Her husband died also a few weeks ago, yeah.

Tape 3: 42 minutes 29 seconds

[Wife in background] At the age of 92.

SS: I have a brother in London who used to be in diamonds, now retired. That's all, more or less. My brother in Israel who died, he has two sons. They are both solicitors.

RL: When did you first pay a visit back?

RL: To Israel?

SS: Not to Israel. No. To Worms and to your place of birth...

RL: From here I used to go mainly to Germany to visit my mother's grave. My mother's buried in Worms. We went to see her. Several years ago, I can't remember how many years ago... When Karen got married, when Karen got married?

[Wife in background] It is now nearly 18 years ago

SS: Eighteen years ago my oldest granddaughter got married. All my brothers and sisters came to the wedding. I think that picture has been taken then...

[Wife in background] Not this one. Sali, the one over there.

SS: No? Could be. There's another picture. Yeah. Then we all decided we all go to Worms and visit our mother's grave. Although one of them, my mother was his auntie. We took two cars and we went to..

[Wife in background] Straight to Worms.

SS: No, no, no.. We took the cars here. We took the ferry, not from, from Hull?

[Wife in background] ...

SS:...from Hull? From Hull to Zeebrugge. And from Zeebrugge in Belgium we all went to Worms and visited my mother's grave. But through the years we used to go quite often to Germany to visit my mother. There was a time at the beginning when I used to buy cameras in Munich. I had a wholesaler, I could buy cheaper from him if I needed cameras. Half-frame cameras, whatever it is, when I used to do the...

[Wife in background] We've been many times.

SS: During the holiday. We took the car. In the first year we used to travel quite a lot in England to see England, Scotland – everywhere. But then we started to go further. I remember once my younger daughter, she was living in Butt Hill, in Prestwich. Her husband is a solicitor. We had a friend, one friend an accountant and one friend an architect. The three of them decided to buy a plot of land in Bamford. You know Rochdale – Bamford?

Tape 3: 45 minutes 48 seconds

[Wife in background] They built, they built.

SS: They built three beautiful houses. Until the house was finished, and they moved in, my youngest daughter, she said, 'It's not for me. The children have no friends there. It's in a goyishe area. I don't want to live there. I want to live in a Jewish area.' She sold the bungalow and moved into where she is living now – corner of Hilton Lane. They became more frum and they didn't want the kids to grow up over there. We moved to Whitefield after 5 years living in Chandos Road – I bought the house. It's nice. I like Manchester. I think it's nice. You ask how often we've been back in Germany. We're going back quite often. When my daughter was in Bamford, the house in Bamford was not ready, so she had to move out from her house. So she wanted to move in with us – not here, we were living in Whitefield. So I said, 'I don't want my grandchildren to disturb me. Take the house and we go away.' I took the car, left them in the house and we started travelling. We went to France, Spain, Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria, Germany and every time the phone, 'What's the house? Not finished? We come next week.' And that went on for several...a few – two months. Everywhere. I didn't want my grandchildren to disturb me until they finished. We travelled everywhere with the car. Been to Germany several times...In France. I had two brothers there.

RL: How do you feel towards Germany?

SS: I said - I don't know... If I come across young people – no problem. If I come across older people, if they are older and I start thinking, 'where have they been during the war? They could be one of the people who killed my brother or sister.' 'It is very difficult. Very difficult.

RL: Which was the brother and sister that...?

SS: I've lost two sisters in Germany.

RL: Right.

SS: And my brother has lost a wife and two children. And I've lost uncles! You can't count it. Probably a few hundred people in the family, thank G-d.

RL: When did you discover what had happened?

SS: Probably after the war. I remember, from Israel, we tried once. We knew we have a sister in a camp. A younger sister, not the oldest one. And we tried to make contact; maybe we could bribe somebody to get them out. You couldn't do it. We were afraid to go back actually to Germany. I tried from Yugoslavia from other places maybe somebody could have contact. Couldn't do it. Nobody had contact with Germany itself.

RL: How aware were you of what was going on in Germany at the time?

Tape 3: 49 minutes 20 seconds

SS: Nothing. We didn't know. We knew there were in Arbeitslager, to work. To work! Other people work as well. But nobody thought about Vernichtung. That they

were destroying them or killing them, or... No. Nobody knew. Maybe people knew but nobody spoke about it. No.

RL: In terms of your identity, how would you describe yourself?

SS: Israeli. I think I'm Israeli. My machshavot - I'm thinking mostly in Hebrew. That's why we speak mostly Hebrew between us; with the children only Hebrew; with the grandchildren Hebrew and English; with the great-grandchildren Hebrew and English. But I personally think I'm an Israeli, and...I'm not an English Jew. No. I'm Israeli.

[Wife in background] We go often you know

SS: Even during the davening, ninety percent of what I'm davening I'm davening in loshen hakodesh, the way I was brought up- boruch ato. As soon as I come to a piece where I'm not saying it daily, or not used, I can only say it in Hebrew. Maftir for example, if I get Maftir in shul I can only say it in Hebrew. I can't say it. It doesn't come out. If I want to understand what I'm saying I have to say it in Hebrew. Ok, the rest of the normal davening, Shabbos or during the week, I daven Ashrei Yoshevi Vesecho. That's the way I was brought up but...Very often, during the davening I mix Hebrew words in.

[Wife in background]: You know he told you his life story. Four or five years ago he was invited to daven for Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur and every year for me it was a 2 weeks holiday. They asked him, 'How much do you charge? And he said...

SS: I didn't take a penny. They paid my expenses, my hotel or whatever it is, and I used to daven. Fantastic. I think it's a fantastic mitzvah. You know Marbella? Nice place. Around Marbella, in the area is about 250 or 300 Jewish people who have no contact with Judaism. There is one shul in Marbella, a Sephardi shul, and the Ashkenazim don't like the davening there. So there's a fellow there who married a Sephardi girl, from Marbella. He wanted an Ashkenazi shul. So in the garden of the Sephardi shul they are putting up a tent and making an Ashkenazi minyan. And I started it. They heard me davening once, and he said, 'Salman, if you come I make it.' And every year, 250 people are coming to shul. They come by cars; I don't care if they come by cars as long as they're coming. They come and they enjoy it and they mix, they meet each other. Very great. Now it's continued. Then it became too difficult for me. I was in my 80s already. I couldn't stand on the legs because the Baal Tephilla there has to do everything. Starts in the morning Shacharis, Brochos, shacharis, mussaf, leynening, mincha. I couldn't stand. My legs hurt. I got cramps in my legs. So, I gave it over to a young man...from here. From Manchester.

[Wife in background]

Woodgrove or something. He went for a year or two, but now there's a Rabbi Groundland. He goes there every year. I believe they don't want Groundland any

Tape 3: 53 minutes 38 seconds

more; they want someone who can daven in Hebrew. Because the Sephardim want to unite Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur; they want to daven together. They want somebody who can daven in Hebrew.

[Wife in background] No he said he is not going this year.

SS: No. He doesn't want to go any more.

[Wife in background] He enjoyed it.

SS: Yeah. Groundland enjoyed it.

RL: Where did your children ...they went to school in Israel, did they?

SS: Yeah, one. The younger one went to high school here and then to university here.

RL: Which high school?

SS: There was on Moor Lane there was a high school, I think, Moor Lane.

[Wife in background] Jewish High

SS: Not Jewish High

[Wife in background] For the girls

SS: Rachel was not at a Jewish School.

[Wife in background] The Girls High School

SS It was a girls' high school but it wasn't Jewish. Mixed. On Moor Lane.

[Wife in background] No it was Jewish

SS: Are you from Manchester, are you Manchester born?

RL: I know the different schools but...

SS: Further down, nearly opposite the Heathlands or whatever it is on Moor Lane, was a school. She was there at school then she went to university. Even now she's a grandma she made another degree.

[Wife in background] She retired last year

SS; Another degree now

RL: What was her first degree?

Tape 3: 55 minutes 1 second

SS: Rachel [asks wife in Hebrew]

[Wife in background answers in Hebrew] Then BA, MA. If she does now a course at University it is PhD.

RL: What was her first degree in? What subject did she take?

SS: Geography, I think.

[Wife in background] Jewish Studies

SS: Jewish studies and geography.

RL: Right. And then she became a teacher?

SS: [In Hebrew to wife] Aramaic I think. You know her? You know Rachel?

RL: Yes.

SS: She's a very good teacher.

RL: Who did Rachel marry?

SS: Geoffrey Marks. He's a solicitor.

RL: And how many children?

SS: They have 3 children. They have how many grandchildren? 12 or 13.

RL: And your oldest daughter, who did she marry?

SS: She stopped teaching. Her husband is retired now.

RL: Who did she marry?

SS: Epstein, Bernard Epstein. He was a businessman. Plastic. Selling properties, etc. They have two daughters. One is married here to an Irish boy. They also have 2 children. Noyek? You know Noyek? In the timber business. Quite big. She lives on Danesway. Big house. Big money. And they have two daughters. One of them has two children, Noyek. And the other one has a baby. A miracle! She had the baby after 36 ...no 26 weeks pregnancy. The baby was one pound weight. You could hold her in your hand. And she's a beautiful girl. If you want I can phone her up and you can talk to her!

[Wife in background] She is now 2 years old

RL: And then your son, who did he marry?

Tape 3: 57 minutes 26 seconds

SS: Lax. Dina Lax. She has a shop on Bury Old Road. A big shop. She has a nice family.

RL: And his children?

SS: They have 3 daughters. One married and two not married.

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

Tape 3: 57 minutes 49 seconds

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 0 minutes 5 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Salman Stemmer and it's Tape Four. I was just asking you, you know, recapping and I was just interested in what effect the Second World War had on the community that were living in Palestine at that time and in what way life might have been more difficult?

SS: I really... I don't remember anything special. The shortage. During the war there was shortage. Everything was short. People used to be queuing to get the Nepht - the heating or the cooking was on oil. And the wagon or the car - I think it was a horse, with a horse - sometimes a car, used to sell Nepht. Every household used to have a container and fill it up with nepht so you could cook. Used to cook on a primus. You know a primus? It's like a little...you pump it up and you have a fire in the house to cook. You used to get nepht once a month or once a week. Even less. And there were queues of people queuing up. And you had to schlep it you had a container. That was a shortage during the war. Obviously you couldn't buy anything. The shops were empty and you couldn't buy anything without coupons. When the war finished, all that was finished.

RL: Did you use to have blackouts?

SS: Sure. You used to put black curtains on the windows. You used to get fined if they could see the light - in Jerusalem.

RL: What other shortages were there? You were talking about furniture as well.

SS: Nothing! You couldn't get anything - anything imported to Israel - stopped the imports. Nothing came in. So there was a shortage of everything. I remember I had a friend who used to sell anchovy pasta in boxes. And he went to Tel Aviv to sell it to a wholesaler. There was a story that the wholesaler sold it to a shopkeeper, and the shopkeeper to market people and then somebody opened the box and it was smelling. 'It's impossible!' And somebody said, 'It's not for eating. It's for selling!' Everything was old. Not used. You couldn't get anything.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 0 second

RL: What about food?

SS: Even food, I think, during the war. You couldn't get everything. You couldn't get food. Everything... Vegetables you could get because the farmers, the Arabs used to sell whatever it is in the streets. You could buy it. But everything imported you couldn't get it. And if it came, it came...I remember some cheese came into boxes. Metal boxes. There was no eggs. You couldn't get enough eggs. So we had egg powder to make an omelette. It wasn't easy. Especially we when we lived in Bet Israel. During the war.. No water, no electricity in that flat which we had. Some houses had, but we didn't have because it was the only room we could get, but we didn't want to go to Tel Aviv. It was still...still the end of the war. People were afraid there might be again bombs – the airplanes. Then, after the war when the British...Then the Arab war then started. Travelling here, there, it was dangerous to go to Tel Aviv. They used to shoot at buses, wherever it is. One of Rochama's cousins got killed on the way to Hadassa in Jerusalem. But as I say we went in the Hagana, we had to go to Shmira. I remember my place nobody went to Shmira was the tachane hashidur, where they used to... the radio station. The Hebrew radio station.

[Wife in background] I was called up to the army but I had already two children. I had to tell them. One was about 4 years old, the other about 2.

SS: It wasn't easy. But, Thank God...

RL: When were your children born?

SS: Ahuva was born when?In '42, two years after the wedding. The other one, Rachel, '46. And the son, Gideon? '53.

RL: Right. And then of course - so you had the Second World War ended. And then you had the War of...

SS: Independence in '48.

RL: And then you had the War of Independence.

SS: And then we had another one '57.

RL: Were you still there then?

SS: Sure yeah.

RL: So were you involved?

SS: I was in the army. Called up. Yeah.

RL: And where were you sent?

Tape 4: 6 minutes 35 seconds

SS: I don't think they sent me somewhere. It was in Jerusalem. In '57. To be honest I don't remember. What was my army service in '57? Did I come home every night?

[Wife in background] I don't remember

SS: I think Shmira. I don't remember. In '57...

(Wife in background in Hebrew)

SS: I think she's right. In '57 I think the war was - when they conquered...when the Israelis conquered Sinai so the road became open and I remember I made a tiyul to Gaza, Rafia, Chan Junis etc. I remember I organised a tiyul there. I was already a tourist guide. I organised a tiyul to Gaza, Chan Junis and Rafia. I remember in Rafia there was a traffic light but no electricity. They said that the mayor, an Arab, he wanted a traffic light. Not important there is no electricity, but the town has a traffic light.

RL: Did you belong to any organisations in Israel?

SS: No. We were busy making parnossa.

RL: And in this country have you joined anything?

SS: in this country, sure. We are members in B'nai B'rith, active members. My wife was president. She was president twice already. She has even visited the White House in America on behalf of the B'nai B'rith. She got a personal invitation to go to the White House. At that time I was in America with her. Very interesting. I was driving in the Catskill Mountains. That was the time when I used to supply the photographers in the Catskill Mountains with the kucker with the names of the hotels printed on. So I had business to do there. And I remember once - I hired a car - I drove a car down a hill and got stopped for speeding. So the policeman came. I showed him my international driving license. 'What are you doing here?' I said, 'You're going to believe this, but my wife is invited to the White House.' 'Have a nice day.' He didn't book me.We showed the invitation to the White House. 'Have a nice day.'

RL: So you belonged to B'nai B'rith...

SS: B'nai Brith. We are members in the Historical Society. I organise a study group in the B'nai B'rith every month. Every month I have a speaker. About 15, 20 people are coming.

RL: And when did you move back down into this area?

SS: Here?

RL: Yes.

SS: In 2000. Six years ago...five years ago.

Tape 4: 10 minutes 20 seconds

RL: And which shul did you join?

SS: I joined 3 shuls. I'm a country member in Stenecourt. I'm a country member in Shrubbery. And when it's raining – very, very difficult - I go to Sha'arei Tephilla here, the nearest one..... And if whenever we are invited by one of the children or grandchildren - like this Shabbos, I was invited to my daughter I davened in Shomrei Hadass and we stayed with my daughter over Shabbos because Ruchama has difficulty in walking. So we stayed with the children. When we are invited by my granddaughter in Danesway, so we stay over night and daven in holy law. I davened there as well.

RL: Has your...would you say that your religious observance has changed?

SS: Changed since we came to England, yeah. We are more observant here than we were in Israel. In Israel we were less, although we were a very frum family – less in Israel. More here. First of all...my... it's more important here to be religious than in Israel. My daughter...my younger daughter became quite religious. Her children are very religious. Three of my grandchildren are wearing sheitlach, my granddaughters and we I like it; I like it as well. I like it more religious, a little bit. I'm not meschugge, but I like to be religious. It's..... nicer.

RL: At what point did you become less religious? Was that on the move to Israel?

SS: On the move to Israel, in Paris already. I joined the Hashomer Hatzair. We came to Israel. In Israel we didn't feel that we need the religion. It's less important, you can say. But, I like it. I like to daven in shul. People enjoy my davening and I enjoy it. It keeps me young.

RL: What about your father? Did his religious level change at all?

SS: My father – on the contrary. My father was a very, very clever man. Very clever. His motto in life, his principle in life was, 'Leben und leben lassen'. Make a living and let other people live as well. He did not stop contact with children even if they were not 100% according to his... And it's continued in our family. Like I said, here are my brothers. This one...

RL: Do you want to turn it so the camera can see?

SS: This one is the most orthodox you can see in the whole world; you can count them on the fingers, he will be between the five, most orthodox or most well known people in the world, for orthodoxy. Anybody in Jerusalem will tell you, Rav Gershon Stemmer. It's like talking about more than the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I'm not joking. He's is the head! He is a very, very religious fellow. With streimel and his children all with streimlach on Shabbos. But he will not eat in his house. Ok, not because of kashrus. There is a certain principle you don't eat shechitas chutz. If it is Chutz miyerushalayim, the Eida Charedis, he doesn't eat..... So whenever he goes to one of his simchas, he brings his own food. Right? This one is very, very...he will not give a hand to a woman, but he will talk to her. He will not even talk to a woman.

Tape 4: 14 minutes 56 seconds

He needs a mechitza to talk to you. This one who lives in London. Also became frummer. He was not so frum. Now he became frummer. He lives in Tel Aviv. Not

frum at all. That's one looks like me. I'm sorry. He died unfortunately. She is quite frummer. She's less frum..... She wears a sheitel, she is less frum..... We all -We like Judaism.Do you know what I mean. We like G-d. We're not afraid of him. All of us. We like shomrei Shabbos, nearly all of them. We like it. We're not afraid. Let's say we wouldn't be afraid except for the two maybe, Herschel and Gershon. All the rest would have gone one holiday let's say to Spain for example and choose what to eat. What we can eat. It doesn't have to be a kosher hotel. We can choose different things. So we don't eat meat for a week or two, or we don't eat anything cooked for a week. We are vegetarian probably... That type of religious Judaism where I am between the brothers, chutz these two. The two of them wouldn't even enter a place like that. Or if we come into a town...All the rest of us we will go into a church to see if it's nice. The two of them, believe me, will not go near the church. We will enter the church, so what? Nice building, nice architecture, you can enjoy the pictures, etcetera. I have here two pictures. I think there's a church in each one of them. Here you can see a church. I bought it in an auction somewhere. It's a Belgian painter.

RL: Do you think that your experiences have affected you in any way, you know psychologically, or...?

SS: I don't know. I'm very... I'll give you an example. I try to understand people and the same as my son to his... Did I tell you about my son? We manufacture different items, and the prisons - two prisons - are finishing them off for them. We give work to the prison. They are doing a job for us. In Risley prison near Warrington. The fellow in charge of the job in Risley was the fellow Brian was his name. He was serving 8 years for killing somebody. He killed his wife and I think he killed her lover. His wife had an affair and he killed them both, I think. He got 8 years. In prison he was in charge of our job. When he finished, my son spoke with him whenever he goes there. He was in Manchester. Lived in Manchester, and he started working in our factory. Doing the same job as he did in prison. He knows how to do it. And he was very pleased. Now he left, he got a job with computers or something. I had a girl working for me - 30 years ago - she needed a nose fixing. She had some bone here or something. I lent her the money to do the fixing. Not Jewish. All the staff, non-Jewish. Every New Year I get kisses from them. Not only a hug. I kiss them. Lately I kiss them on the head. It's like a blessing, not a kiss. My son Gideon is adopting now two Russian orphans. Not adopting but bringing them over and looking after them. Getting them through education till they get married. Now he pays for a teacher to teach them English over there in Russia. They're coming over in September. Cost him a lot of money. But...I hope so that we have a fantastic relation with the staff with the workers, non-Jewish. None of them Jewish. A man who has now two grown up children - teenagers. He started when he was 15 years old. Now he's in his 40s. He calls us 'My adopted grandparents'.

[Wife in background]

SS: It is affecting I think. It is affecting the attitude to other people. I don't care if they're Jewish or non-Jewish. If they're human beings, if they're schwartz or if

Tape 4: 20 minutes 44 seconds

they're Blacky or not Blacky. Mind you, it's nothing against...I can like a Paki as well, but they are very difficult sometimes. Pakistanis are very, very difficult to do

business with. But I do business with Pakistanis. Lately I have started something for myself. Since I've given the business to my son, I have to be busy. I can't be not busy. So I started...Somebody offered me batteries. Small batteries. Kodak and other camera manufacturers are making millions of cameras every year. Disposable ones. Where you don't buy the camera, you get the camera to use it, you bring it back to the shop. They take out the pictures and give you another camera or the same camera. The batteries have to be changed every time. If you have used it or not used it they change the batteries. I buy the batteries. Which 9 out of 10, are not used. If there is no flash, there is no battery used. I buy them in weight, by tonne. I can buy 100,000 batteries in one go. I have them checked and card them again on cards. That was my business. It's still my business – I still do it. I go to work every day even now I'm 90, or nearly 90. Lately I made a deal with somebody. I gave him batteries, and he bought a factory out in Wales somewhere – used to manufacture ties – men's' ties. Silk. For the best companies all over Europe; from Next, Marks and Spencer, John Lewis, you name it with names, brand new and sometimes with prices. Some have prices £25, £29, £30 a tie. I am selling them – you're not going to believe that – for less than £1 per tie. Silk ties. But I bought 120,000. Fantastic ties. If I can find some I give them to your camera man. Do you wear ties? Yeah? I try to sell them for £1 a tie. If somebody offers me 50p and takes the lot I sell it as well. Beautiful ties.

RL: Do you have a place where...?

SS: In the factory I've given over to my son, I left myself one corner, for myself – where I try to do business. There's another business I have done, where I've worked and I've tried to get out of it now. In one of our trips when I went to Spain to daven there. We went to a market and I saw somebody selling letters, A, B, C... for children to make a necklace. I bought one or two for my great granddaughters. Then I thought about it. It's not bad! It's an idea. Let's make letters like that in Hebrew! So I found out who is the manufacturer and how is he doing it. It's injection moulding. It's like a big machine. The machine can be half the size of that room. But in the machine you put a tool which engraves the different letters, and the metal is poured into the form so it becomes a letter. So I had the tools made in Hebrew. I gave them a picture of the aleph beis and they made me the tools and I can't remember how much it cost me. And ordered Hebrew letters – the whole aleph beis - put them into a box and sold them to different people in Israel, in America. Then I had different letters made. First of all I bought some of the non-Hebrew letters – the English letters and sold them here to wholesalers. And they're selling them to market people with a piece of string, or a chain. And I'm still selling them. I want to get rid of them. I still sell them. Lately I made some stocktaking and I have about 350,000 Hebrew letters and about 200,000 English letters in silver, in gold, with chains. I want to get rid of them. I still sell them. Wholesalers are buying from me. In Blackpool, in Rhyl there are people who are selling it. But the ties I now invested money to make a special packing for 1 tie. I had boxes made for 3 ties, with Merry Christmas, Happy New Year for Christmas time.

RL: Is there any message you'd like to end with?

Tape 4: 26 minutes 48 seconds

SS: I can only tell you I would like...I hope she doesn't listen... One of my brothers, the one from Paris, always used to say, 'I would like to die from a bullet.' 'Why?' 'When a jealous husband comes home and kills me.'

RL: Thank you very much.

Tape 4: 27 minutes 18 seconds

Photographs

Tape 4: 27 minutes 24 seconds

SS: This is a picture of my father, oleh vasholom taken about a year or two before he died. He died in '58 so that must be '56 or '57.

RL: Where was it taken?

SS: In Jerusalem.

RL: And his name?

SS: Reb Yankel Stemmer.

SS: This picture is Ruchama, my wife and myself taken in 1941 in Tel Aviv. We got married on a Friday afternoon; we had no pictures from our wedding. A year later, in 1941, Ruchama's brother got married in Tel Aviv and we took him to the photographer for his wedding photographs so at the same time we took this photograph.

RL: So the year was?

SS: 1941.

SS: This photograph has been taken in 1976 on my 70th birthday. It's Ruchama and myself sitting. And our three children standing. Left Ahuva, in the middle, Gidon, on the right, Rachel. It's been taken in Hilton Lane, in my youngest daughter's house.

RL: I think the date, if it's your 70th birthday, it would be 1986.

SS: Maybe I made a mistake. 1986? 1986.

SS: This photograph has been taken on the 80th birthday of Sholom, my brother, in Yerushalayim. From the left is Shmuel, oleh vasholom – he died. There is me, Israel my brother who lives in Tel Aviv, Sholom, oleh vasholom – he died in Jerusalem – in Paris several years ago. There's Gershon, my brother lives in Yerushalayim. Mendel, my brother lives in London, and then Herschel my brother lives in B'nai Brak. And

sitting are my two sisters. On the left is Penina. She lives in Haifa. And Yafa she lives in Rana'ana.

RL: And the year?

SS: The year must have been 1990.

SS: This photograph has been taken in 2005 Hanukkah in my daughter's house. It's my wife and myself with our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Some of the machatonim, and even a girl and a boy my son had brought over from Russia. Boruch Hashem, all Jewish.

RL: And the place where it was taken?

SS: In my daughter's house corner Hilton Lane and Bland Road.

RL: The town?

SS: Manchester, in Prestwich.

Tape 4: 30 minutes 30 seconds.