

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Forename:	Betty
Interviewee Sex:	Female
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Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

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Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV250

NAME: Betty Bloom

DATE: 12th February 2020

LOCATION: London, UK

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

Today is the 12th of February 2020. We'll conduct the interview with Mrs. Betty Bloom and my name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. Can you please tell me your name where you're born and when you're born?

My name is Betty Bloom. I was born in Berlin on the 18th of January in 1930.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Betty, for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Can you tell us a little bit about your family background?

Yes. My father, whose name was Josef Schütz, who was born in a place called Dukla in Poland and near the Tatra mountains and not far from Jaslo. He came to Berlin after the First World War. During the First World War, he was conscripted into the Austrian Hungarian army, and therefore could have fought my father-in-law who was in the British Army but thank god, it didn't come to that. My mother - his mother lived in a place called Nowy Sacz. He was... the last, last child of a second marriage because his father had been married before, his father's first wife died. He had two stepbrothers, he had three sisters. [00:02:00]

Unfortunately, apart, apart from one, they're all lost in the Holocaust, they all vanished. I have no idea where. My mother whose name is Baila Gittel-Schütz, Baila Neuwierth when she was- her maiden name- was born in a place called Korczyna. My mother whose name

was Baila Neuwierth was born on the 18th of June 1902. She- unfortunately, her mother passed away in 1915 during the First World War probably from typhoid. I'm not 100% sure. She, so my mother who was 13 years old, came, left school, and looked after because her mother had, she had sibling, twins, a girl, and a boy called Betty and, and Max, who she had to look after plus her father. So, they lived in Korczynna till the end of the war. Then in 1919, they crossed illegally into Berlin following an older brother who had gone before them to escape being called up into the army. My parents got married. My father came to Berlin also soon after the First World War, and they were married in 1924. In 1925, they had their first [00:04:00] daughter, Ruth. In 1930, I came, the second girl, and in 1935, my sister Bronia was born. We had a very warm, traditional- orthodox traditional life at home. My father had a shop so my mother helped him occasionally, selling products, leather, and all things appertaining to cobblers, shoelaces, and heels, rubber heels for the heels, all sorts of things appertaining to cobblers. And he...we saw a little of him during the week, but Shabbat, Friday nights Shabbat and Sunday he spent with us. And we- he loved going out. He loved going for a walk, so he took us around Berlin to all the beautiful because- there were beautiful green spaces, in fact, near our apartment where we lived, there were two parks one called the Schillerpark and one called the Goethepark. They...he devoted a lot of time to us. He played cards with us. And he- he once got very angry with me because I started reading quite early and I was reading 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' in German and I started crying. He snatched the book for me and said, "I don't want you to cry over a book." You know. "I don't want you to cry." It's one of those things I remember, [00:06:00] particularly. Unfortunately, on the 28th of October 1938, Gestapo officers, at six o'clock in the morning, there was a knock on the door and two Gestapo officers marched in and told my father to get...to- they, they arrested my father and he didn't even have time to say goodbye to us. They took him down the stairs and they took him on the transport of the- he was on the first transport of Polish Jews to-you know- deported from Berlin to a place called- I've forgotten the name now. It's just gone from my mind as I'm speaking, on the Polish border. And- it'll come back to me in a moment. The Poles wouldn't let him in. This was done on the instructions of the head of the government in Berlin at the time because Poland had said they will withdraw all- my father still has a Polish passport, they would withdraw all passports from-unless, you know- if they're not in Poland. They sent them to the border and- oh, I've forgotten the name. It'll come back to me. I'm sorry. And they were left there in October without any clothes, without anything, without any heating and for a long time, for months or so. They couldn't go back; they couldn't go forward until the Poles relented and let them into Poland. And then my father made contact

[00:08:00] with his family. He went first to stay with his mother who was still in Poland, in a place called Nowy Sącz near, near, not far from Jaslo on the, towards the Czech border. And I don't know how long he was there for because I really don't know. We had one or two calls from him, and I had a- I'd come to the cousin in a minute. I had a cousin left in Berlin who sent parcels to my father because she was in hiding but she managed to send parcels to my father which I've never forgotten. He- I know he ended up in Buchenwald eventually because somebody came from Buchenwald, a survivor contacted my mother, made contact with my mother and came and tell her that he was with him in Buchenwald in '44. At the end of '44, beginning '45, I assume he was in the death march from Buchenwald to Bergen-Belsen. And we had only about maybe 15 years ago we went- we searched in Auschwitz, we searched the records, we went to Auschwitz, my husband and I, but found no record of him. It was in- only about 10 or 15 years ago. I don't know the exact date now that the Red Cross contacted us and informed us that the last record, they have of my father is in Bergen- Belsen in January 1945, which to us was [00:10:00] the worst news we could have had because to survive from 38 to 45 and then to die like this. Now after my father was deported, incidentally, this, this brought...follow up of these deportations to Poland was the Kristallnacht because one of the people whose parents were deported- you probably know his name, young man.

Grynszpan.

Grynszpan was so angry that he killed some German which gave the Nazis the excuse for the...for Kristallnacht. Following Kristallnacht, I was very aware all the time of what's going on because even, even younger, even seven or eight, at the corner, at the end of our road, there was a display panel for the *Stürmer*- is the Nazi magazine- and I read it- you know- because I was reading. I read anything I could read. And they made, there was a sign on our shop saying "*Kauft nicht bei Juden*" don't buy from Jews and -so even before my father was deported. So, I was well aware of what was going.

Where was the shop in which area of Berlin?

It was in... Wedding.

What area was that? Can you describe it?

It's mainly down-market, very 'Labour'. They called it Red Berlin because there are a lot of communists in the area [00:12:00]. It, it, it was not a very wealthy area. Now before I can go

further, as I said before my father's, my mother's older brother Markus, was in Berlin and lived in a very beautiful apartment in a more... wealthy section of Berlin and he managed to get, he kept his Czech passport because, you know... the border towns one minute they were Czech, next minute they were Poles. And although...well, that's not important. So, his two- his son, his eldest son had already was sent to England to a Yeshiva and his younger daughters, my cousins Paula and Susi came on the Kindertransport. And one of my recollection is before we left Berlin, on my birthday on the 18th of January 1939, I went to the station with my mother to see my younger- my cousins off who we're going on the Kindertransport. Now, my older sister Ruth (German pronunciation), I call her Ruth because- not Ruth (English with "th"). I can call her Ruth, yes.

Call her whatever you want to call her.

Was very, very advanced for her age. She was 13 at the time. She- my mother had to look after the shop. She went around, she went to the Kindertransport [00:14:00] to ask offices in Berlin to ask if we could be accepted for the Kindertransport after my father was deported. They turned around and said, no, we have to look after our German Jewish children first. This is somewhere in her book. This is a fact. This is not...So she tried to get on Youth Aliyah because I had- I haven't mentioned her- but the one, the, the cousin on my father's side, my father, my father had a sister in Berlin. His real sister, not half- he had half-brothers in, in, in Poland still then, but his sister had come to Berlin and she had three children, and one of her daughters had gone to Palestine on Youth Aliyah. That was the first time I went to the station to say goodbye to her but that was much earlier and it's her middle daughter, who sent the parcels to my father when he was in Poland. Now...Ruth went to Youth Aliyah and they said, "You're too young. Come back next year. We don't take them at 13. We would take you at 14".

What? I think BB says this

She then came back and said to my mother, "we must"- yes, she overheard- while she was at the Kindertransport, she overheard a group of girls talking about going on the Kindertransport to Belgium. With a date when they will be leaving and the stations they were leaving from [00:16:00]. She went home and said, "*Mutti*" that's what we called my mother, "there's only one solution for us. You buy us a ticket- to Betty and myself a ticket for England so that we can say we are joining our uncle and aunt who were by then were in England and we will join

this Kindertransport and we will follow them to Belgium." And my mother agreed to it. She, I don't know how she- I'm, I'm 100% sure if my father had been alive, he would have said no, no way. But she was so courageous that on the 22nd of February, she put us on a train, 1939 she put us on a train, leaving for Belgium not having any foster family to receive us just into the unknown. We, she bought me a beautiful, I remember this, she bought me a beautiful shoulder bag, a handbag. I was always very fond of leather because of my father's- I had a few leather goods also apart from having actually pairs of leather. She put us on this train and the train started going and she managed to follow it I don't know how to the station. She followed it to the next station. I don't know. Anyway, we said goodbye and that was it.

Which station and where was that?

It was Friedrichstraße [00:18:00].

Betty, before we go on to that journey just to take you back a little bit, tell us a little bit about your school.

Now I went to - I started school late because I was always ill. I don't know what illness I was when I was due to start school. So, I started school about two or three weeks later than everybody else, but I got my *Zuckertüte*. I don't know if you knew about *Zuckertüte*. Full of sweets and I've got a photo with this *Zuckertüte* but I don't know where it is now. I loved school. I was terrible at writing. I was blotting my paper all the time. I was very good at reading. I used to read the primers we got for reading. I used to read the first day I got them home. As I said, I, amongst other things I read 'Uncle Tom's *Hütte*'. I was bad at, what do you call it? Gym. I was never very good at gym. I couldn't walk on the bar because I had every, I had ear problems. That was one of the reasons I was at home very often. And, but in '38 I was in ... I don't, after, possibly after my father was deported, they told me I was no longer wanted in the school, in the school. I went to Hebrew classes went to Cheder and I was very, very, very- I loved it. And I remember the name of our, of the person [00:20:00] who took the Cheder, Herr Doktor Rabbiner Alexander. Herr Doktor Rabbiner Alexander, that's what we had to call him.

And was it affiliated to synagogue?

Yes.

Which synagogue?

I can't tell you.

Did you go to synagogue on the Shabbat?

Yes, but it was a long way away. And because we were not living in a Jewish area, you see, by then. When they first got married, they lived in, in the Jewish district. That's where Ruth was born actually and lived in the- my mind has gone blank again- the Jewish area in Berlin. And she writes about it in the book. And there was no problem, we but I walked with him. It was a good three quarters of an hour's walk and we walked very fast always. We didn't give every Shabbat, we went. I remember Seder nights when he was dressed up with the Kittel and I'm very fortunate because I remember everything from home which my younger sister Bronia does not- did not remember.

What else do you remember from home? What other things, the festivals?

Do I remember?

Yes.

I remember Pesach, my mother going up to the, to the, into the loft and there was no lift on the sixth floor to bring down our Pesach dishes. I remember going to the market, which was again in, it'll come back to me in a minute where the Jewish area was. [00:22:00] You know- my mind has gone black. To buy fish every- for every Friday and to buy chicken. And... Pesach, we had fish in the bath, you know, so that she could make fresh fish-

Carp.

Carp, of course, and she made Borscht for my uncle. My father wouldn't touch it, but she made Borscht [00:22:30] for my uncle. And she baked beautiful things, Kneidlach and- she made Kneidlach, she made Rugelach and cheesecake. And... I remember Sukkoth [00:22:50], Sefer Torah, walking around with, in the synagogue with my father and on, in the evening, we were given sweets. Not in the daytime we were given in the evening, given sweets. And I remember all the festivals. What else can I tell you? I say things in my book which I possibly forget now.

What was the flat, the apartment, can you describe?

Yes. We had two bedrooms, actually three bedrooms, one was very small, and a nice kitchen and a guest room, a *Esszimmer* which we only used on Shabbat or for visitors. Otherwise, we ate in the kitchen or in the summer we ate on the balcony. It had a balcony, so we ate outside. My mother in fact picked up German dishes, you know [00:24:00]. She made us, she was quite, she was with it. She- you know- what can I say- she knew about nutrition. I don't know where she picked it up, but she sent me for orthopedic... treatment because my back was curved not as much as it's now, but it was curved. And so, she got this knowledge. And we had, we had all set flowers on the balcony, begonias, or whatever. And it was, I said the kitchen was a central stove, *Kachelofen* to heat the whole apartment and one bedroom for my parents, one bedroom for us, and a very small room because we occasionally had somebody to look after us, a helper because my mother helped my father in the shop. And we had a nanny- say but not all the time because I don't think my parents could afford it all the time.

Did they speak Yiddish to each other?

No. Funnily enough, they didn't, they spoke German. My Yiddish is not very good because when I try to speak Yiddish, it comes out German. You see, my mother went to a German- I don't know about my father but in Korczyna she went to a German-speaking school, because it was, what was it called... part of Poland, which was German, they reclaimed afterwards. [00:26:00] My mind's gone blank again.

Don't worry.

I'm trying to remember the name of the Jewish area. Where were- how far do we get now?

We discussed your home and go to synagogue and the festivals. What about friends? Do you remember some of your friends?

I had, yes, I remember something very specifically because I was invited. There were one or two Jewish families in the area. And one of them had a girl about my age, whose name I've now forgotten. And we used to be invited to birthday parties. I was invariably ill, sick, the way I'm always. That's what I remember from the birthday parties. I don't- one family who lived near us, actually, survived, came to England and my mother was very friendly with them. But- they weren't many. It was predominantly non-Jewish area-you know.

You said you remember something- that family, you remember the family?

Yes, Steiner. they were called Steiner.

And non-Jewish children, were your friendly with other...?

No, not at all. I had no non-Jewish friends. I mean from school friend, I had no school friends, no. Being, keeping strictly kashrut I suppose prevented us from going anywhere also. No, I had no non-Jewish... people in the building were quite friendly. You know, I am... no.

Do you remember yourself facing any discrimination at that time?

At that time? [00:28:00]

Yes.

No, apart from the school actually saying you shouldn't come back anymore. My sister was yes, and it's mentioned in the book. Very much so.

What about Kristallnacht?

Kristallnacht we were in touch. They threw bricks through the window into the shop, but Bronia remembers that something came through the house through the apartment, but I don't remember it. I can't say for myself.

The shop you said they threw a brick.

They threw a brick through the window. They broke the window. Very shortly afterwards, my mother had to hand it over to a non-Jew any case. And they spent the last, in fact, she and Ruth- again, it's in the book, she and Ruth spent the last night of the 1938... packing up all the...what they had left in the shop to try and sell it privately, but it wasn't very easy. Now- what I also remember is that she was given notice- that my mother was given notice that she had to move out of the flat as well, where we were. And she put the furniture on the market. She had people coming in to look at the furniture who offered her next to nothing. And my father was very pedantic. Any little scratch he- drove him mad. He was really, he made my mother's life very difficult because he- cleanliness was above godliness as far as he was concerned, and every- all the furniture was- perfect condition and my mother was very sad to let it, see it go [00:30:00] and eventually came to a bookcase where she had my father's books, you know, *sefarim*, I mean Jewish books, Hebrew books and... but I remember Ruth saying to her, "Don't cry because, you know, they're just books." You know.

She had to give a lot away and then where did you move to?

Well, she eventually moved to- no, we left from-

You left from there.

From Müllerstraße We never moved but very soon, funnily enough I didn't ask her this, but I found this through Bronia. Soon after they moved to be with my aunt who lived in- again, I must remember this name of this area where all the Jews lived in Berlin. It'll come back to me. Anyway, they moved because my aunt was still living there, and they moved there. Now we, as I said my mother agreed to us going on this train. We got in Köln, Cologne, all the children and there I differ from the recollection my sister has. We were told to get off the train into a hole where all the children on the Kindertransport were served a meal. It was lunchtime by then or early afternoon. And there were also, apart from being served a meal, they were also given- what do you call them, things, signs with their name, nameplate to hang around their necks. Of course, we didn't get one because we weren't part of the Kindertransport. So, when we came to the border in Aachen [00:32:00] between Germany and Belgium, the border police came, they came on board on the train. And they, so we didn't have the, what they call them in English?

Label, name tag, a tag.

Name tags. So, they- that's where I again differ from Ruth, they said this "*Descendez*". "Get off." And I started, Ruth had learned French by then, she was in a secondary school, a Jewish secondary school by then and she said, "Sit." You know, she again, you know, at 13 she was completely- she was still 13 by then, I was just past my ninth birthday. I was just nine. But eventually - so she says that we rushed through back to the compartments, back to the- to be amongst the children, the other children. I remember that we sat there until the guard came on board again and said, "*Continuez*". Continue. And then, so we got to Belgium. There, the children were told those of us who have foster parents, waiting them go on one bus and the others go on another bus. We joined one bus because we didn't know which bus to join. Anyway, we arrived in central Brussels, where the Jewish committee, refugee committee had set up a center or assuming a center and all the foster parents came to collect their, their children. When they came to us, and they said, "Well, who are you?" But this I remember myself. So, we said, "Well, we are Betty Schütz, Ruth Schütz we come from Berlin." He said, "How did you get here?" So, we explained. So, one of them turned around and said, in

German, we have enough legal children, illegal ones we don't need. All right. And to say this to two girls, everybody else was already gone, who had said goodbye to their mother in the morning, who arrived. To this day I don't understand but I know that Belgium had a very, was only allowed 800 I think, Kindertransport children, which means that we took two, that we took two Kindertransport children's-

Spaces.

-spaces, and I hope they managed to get through, because apparently, they weren't- they left in a few more.

So, it was basically through the initiative of your sister.

Yes. All through my sister.

You just went through it.

Absolutely through my sister. Without her, I, we, wouldn't be here to tell you the tale, I'm sure.

Because can I ask you, just to go back slightly, you said before you'd actually watched your cousin go on the Kindertransport. That's interesting because we normally don't have a recollection of somebody.

No, I remember it so well. [00:36:00] Well, I remember that they were going to England. And that they were, well, I, later on, found they were going without their parents and they were being, going to a family. That's why, I didn't know it was called Kindertransport at the time. Obviously.

Sure. Which station where did that leave from?

Also, the same station.

And could you- were you with your mother who came to the [crosstalk]

I went with my mother and possibly Ruth and Bronia as well. I can't remember. I remember definitely being there with my mother saying goodbye to them

And coming to the platform or how?

Yes, on the platform. Yes.

Were there lots of children coming onto train?

Yes.

What was the scene because there you were not on it, but you were observing it?

Well. I was mainly concerned of my cousin's leaving, perhaps I wasn't quite so aware- but no, I was aware that there were other children going but you know, one doesn't-

How old were the cousins?

My cousin, the younger one was three weeks older than I. So, she was nine at the time. She turned nine before me and the older one was 9, 11.

Did they have German citizenship? Because you said they didn't want to take you because of-

No, because- I don't know, because my- because maybe she was Czech and because his son was already there. Maybe he managed to arrange with a family without going through the Kindertransport, possibly. I know it became eventually Kindertransport, but I don't know exactly how he managed it

Because it raises the interesting question that some children went to the Kindertransport. Some people were on trains with Kindertransport children and some people like you came and [00:38:00] didn't have anything and then joined the Kindertransport in a way.

That's right. No, they didn't go with their parents. Their parents didn't leave for another, I think a couple of months later, after we'd gone already

What was the atmosphere? Were there...Do you remember seeing the other parents or what?

No, I can't.

Your cousins, were they willing to go?

Well...yes, apparently because she'd written a book and she said she's quite excited about it. And their older brother was in England, but he was what they call a *Lobbes* [Yiddish lazybone] if you know what a Lobbes is. This is why they sent him to Yeshiva in England

because they couldn't manage him at home. [laughs] But this is, maybe- I don't know. They found a lovely Jewish family. One of the family's members is a member of St John's Wood synagogue we know him very well, the Weinbaums. And I don't know, you might know my cousins, Susie Brightfield, no? She's very active in WIZO, et cetera and Paul Oraka. Anyway, it's not important. They spent the war years in London, you know.

Coming back to your own leaving, who brought you to the station, your mother?

My mother.

At that time, she had the little-

She had Bronia.

How old was Bronia at the time?

I was just nine and she was just five, no, just four.

There was no question that Bronia would go with you.

Absolutely not, no. We'll come to Bronia's story in a minute, because in six weeks before war broke out in Belgium, we went to this hos- now, before I get to the hostel, I would like to say that at this assembly room in Brussels, we were standing there and they said, "Well, what are we going to do with you? We'll send you back." I said, "We've said we have nothing to go back to. You know, we have no home; we have no family." She was always it, you know "My father was deported, I don't know where my mother's gone to hiding." Salvation Army. So, when we heard- coming from a religious home, when we heard Salvation Army, both of us, that was the end on a very difficult day. One of the girls on the Kindertransport had not yet been collected by her foster parents. She was late in coming, but her foster parent turned up when this happened, and she heard this, and she saw us crying. She came over and said, "Why are you crying?" and so we explained, "We have nowhere to go." She must have spoken to Ruth in French because I don't think she spoke any other language, only German. She said, "You come with me." So, she took us to her- in a car with a chauffeur to her villa, outside Brussels, in Uccle, it's called Uccle. And at the door was a girl opening the door for us. She was- servants. And they kept us for two weeks. She was, we were very happy to learn that they survived. They managed to get the whole family because they had two sons and a [00:42:00] young girl and they all survived. They went to America.

The Jewish family?

Jewish family. And I, they were in the raincoat factory- business so as it rained all the time in Belgium, they were quite wealthy. And I'm, I'm in contact with the surviving girl now. We were very happy. We looked for a long time, we tried to find them because we knew their name and we knew where they lived, but we couldn't find them. Then we saw somebody by chance, we heard that they were in America and we made contact. What I was going to say that- I was going to say something.

They took you in for two weeks?

They took us in, yes. Then to them. We stayed there. Yes, they made me eat... chicory. I was a bad eater in any case. My mother used to chase me around the room with spinach so that made me eat chicory which- and then they brought out what I thought was an orange, but my mother always bought fruit. She knew fruit is good for you. And it wasn't an orange it was a grapefruit. That was my, my memory of the- and we were served by a, the girl who served the food was a nice little bunny. It was something out of the world for us because we just- we would manage to speak a few words of French with the boys, but that's all I can tell you about this.

Did they take the third girl as well? Was a third girl, you said.

They had taken in the girl, [00:44:00] but- who was there, yes. She went to the same school as Ruth, but Ruth didn't really know her very well. She was a bit younger; I think. Yes, she kept her. She was there. I don't know what happened to her eventually. She was a Kindertransport child. And they had fostered her, you know. And they arranged, they got in touch with the committee and eventually they found this, that there was a hostel for girls, 50 girls approximately, who had no family in Belgium. And they took us to the hostel. And we were then, we stayed in this hostel, you know, for a year. We were looked after by a young couple, who had- a Jewish couple. He was from Belgium. They were both from Belgium. He had actually been in Palestine. He was a ferv- very strong communist and he had gone to, to learn agriculture. And they came back to Belgium and they were put in charge of this, of our hostel. Now, in Belgium there was also an equivalent hostel for boys. We had about 50 boys. When war broke out, when Belgium was invaded, they, the Committee, the Belgium Refugee Committee decided that we must leave, because- but everybody who was in Belgium was on the move because they remembered the First World War when Belgium was invaded and the

Germans- they hated the Germans. And... somehow or other I can't remember how, we got to, we got [00:46:00] on coaches. We were told to put on several garments and you know it- because it was May. We got to Brussels and at the station was pandemonium. Because, and, but- I don't know how eventually, they managed to find something through- the person who was looking after us, the couple were called Elka and Alex Frank. And Sue Frank, he had a brother who was something higher up in the Army or something and he managed to get two goods wagons, one for the boys, one for the girls. All right, we got on this train. The boys brought food with them and they forever said, "You brought clothes and we brought food." Because all the food we had- and there wasn't a lot, I mean how much could they bring? Because we were on the way to the southwest France for four days in this train. And when we stopped on- at various stations or anywhere, sometimes people came with milk and, and, and bread or something to give us, but that's all we had. Now, the main problem was toilet. At one of the stations, Ruth got off. Actually, it was the person who drew these pictures, got off the train to go to the toilet and this train started moving I thought I'll never see her again, but they managed to come back. Why I mentioned the train is because, I had to use the beautiful handbag my mother gave me as the toilet. That was the worst part of my journey. Do you understand what I'm talking about? I was so proud of the shoulder bag because we had nothing. We had... [00:48:00] There was nothing in these like- thank God we weren't going to a concentration camp.

Were you in touch with your mother from Belgium?

Yes. From Belgium. Yes. In fact, so much so that eventually, we found out- we managed to send some postcards to my father as well because we, he was then staying with his, I think he was staying with his sister or with his mother. I'm not quite sure. And we managed to- I have one or two cards we got for him sent to Belgium. And ...my- we then heard that my uncle, who was in England, managed to get a job as a domestic for my mother, who traveled out to England, who came to England on a domestic permit, but on a passport in her maiden name. She had for some reason, maintained her passport, her Czech passport. Maybe it was easier to get to England as a Czech than as a Pole at the time. So, because she actually, she had married, my parents had married under Jewish law in 1924 in a small place in Hungary, because my grandfather on my mother's side came from Hungary originally, but they didn't get married civilly under German law until 1939. When my father was deported but luckily, they allowed him to come back for two weeks [00:50:00] on condition that he return to

Poland, then the Germans let him in for two weeks to finish up business really, but he said if you don't come back, we'll arrest your wife. My mother and Bronia were still, we'll arrest the whole lot and so like a- he went back but before he went back my mother left for England. He said to her, he said to her, "If by any chance anything happens and you're not let in, come back we'll go back to Poland together." Now, my mother stopped off on the way to England, she stopped off at our hostel in Belgium. We were about half an hour from Brussels, we were on the outskirts- to see us, she stayed with us for three days, I believe. Then she got ready to leave for England when the committee said to her, "What about Bronia?" She said, "Well we're leaving together." She said, "You can't because if you arrive in England with Bronia, they'll just send you straight back as a domestic." On your maiden, you know, was- doesn't even- Bronia wasn't even on her passport. They'll send you straight back and we don't want that. So can you imagine my mother had to leave Bronia who was then four years old, I was nine, she was four, with us and she said to Ruth, look after her and she had to go. When I think what she went through- my mother was in England during the war, on her own not knowing where her husband is, not knowing [00:52:00] where her children are, bombs flying, I don't know. I'll start crying when I think of her. Now...

She managed to take Bronia out to the border on the domestic?

No, no she had to leave her with us in the hostel.

I meant from Germany to Belgium?

Yes. I don't how perhaps they did check her I don't know. Well, maybe they didn't look for a child. That's a good question. Yes. It's a good question, I never asked. I never thought- thank you very much. I never ever thought of that that she could have been turned back as well. Anyway, she arrived with Bronia, we were happy to see Bronia, we were happy to see my mother. It was doubly- again to say goodbye was doubly as hard. And then the committee decided, I was almost the youngest in our hostel. We were between the ages of, younger one was about eight and fifteen at the time. Bronia was just four so they sent her to an orphanage. They gave us permission once to visit her in the orphanage. And she was in such a state, she started crying, she said, she knew, she said, "My mother is gone to England and she left me alone in- she left me alone-" Then, she was in a terrible state. They, they were upset because she was speaking German. She wasn't allowed to speak German, but we had no option we had to leave her there. So, when we were given an hour's notice [00:54:00] that we were

leaving the hostel for, to try to escape to France, Ruth tried to get through to the orphanage where Bronia was but there was no telephone connection or anything and we had to leave her there. You know, it's... She blamed herself why didn't I get, bring Bronia with me? You know it's...

Ruth did?

Yes, but who knows, who knows? I don't know if you want me to go on with my story now or to go a little bit into Bronia's story, just briefly?

Why don't you tell us about Bronia first?

Now Bronia was in various orphanages. And in 1942- this was in 1940. In 1940- for two years, 1942 she was on the brink of deportation but this, the queen managed to get- the queen, the Belgium queen managed to get the children... She said children who have no, no family were released- from wherever they were, and they camped where they were before, before deportation. I think it was Westerbork, I can't remember the name of it. They went back to the hostel or to another hostel. I'm not sure where they got to but... she by then was in a terrible state apparently. She had forgotten German completely. The people who eventually became her foster parents, he-somebody in a, in a [00:56:00] little town called Sint-Niklaas near Antwerp. He was tra- he was trading in electrical goods, and once a week he went to Brussels to, to buy goods or to, not, not exactly sure what. And he met with somebody who was either half- Jewish or had a wife who was half- Jewish or something, some connection. Who said, "Look can you help me, we- there're two children here... a boy and a girl who ...will be picked up by the Germans any day. They have no family, they have nobody, they-" By that time Bronia was seven, was six in 1942. I was 12, she was- no, she was seven. And he...he went home and told his wife and she started crying, "Why didn't you bring her?" So next morning, she went back to collect her which wasn't that soon because travelling with the Germans and- you know, I can't tell, I have to tell you they kept her until 1946. They passed her off as a, as a niece from France because the conditions there, I mean, everything was upside down in Belgium by that time. And ...they sent her to school. They had two children of their own but grown-up children already, 17 or 19 or 20. And of the whole family only one grandson is, is alive now and I'm in touch with them but Bronia remained in touch. She was- in 1946- they even had Germans in the house, and they had to give her, you know, I mean they- at the risk of their own lives.

What were their names?

Ball de Wilde. [00:58:00] -A-L [Henri and Gabrielle Ball]. Unfortunately, Bronia never got in touch in time with Yad Vashem to get them recorded because now there's nobody alive to verify Bronia's- Bronia wrote a book as well, I've got the book here as well. A short book about herself. To verify that these facts are true.

Did she think that they were her parents?

No, no. She, in fact, she knew she had a sister ...because- and- called Ruth and Betty because she had a rabbit and she called the rabbit, a pet rabbit, she called the rabbit Betty.

So, she knew that those were not her parents?

She remembered that she had a mother and a father because, you know, by that time she was seven and in the hostel she, she knew. She said my mother is gone to England and left me alone. So- I came over as soon as our mother managed to get this permit for me in October '45. They brought Bronia over, her foster father brought Bronia over in Oct- in August '46 because he had promised his wife that he would come to England, go to England with Bronia and make sure that she- my mother is the sort of person that one can leave a child with and if not, he would bring her back. Bronia was- didn't speak a word of English, didn't speak a word of German. I was the only go-between. [01:00:00] She was terribly homesick for Belgium for her foster parents for a very comfortable bourgeois family life. You know, with their coffee mornings, and with an aunt, and cousins, and school friends and... That's all she knew, a Flemish, you know, not even Wallon but Flemish. If you can imagine it, comfortable Flemish family life. Apart from the restrictions of the war, of course and that they were rationed, you know, and that they had to put up a German soldier in their home. Bronia knew about everything. She wasn't stupid. And the Belgium Jewish Committee was fantastic. They really organised themselves and they saved- a great number of children were saved in Belgium, many more than in Holland or in- anywhere else was Belgium. Bronia's book which was there is called 'A Beautiful Resistance' because she writes more about the, the queen and the committee, et cetera and then about her own story. Anyway, coming back to-

You didn't know any of it in the war time?

No, not. How did we know? What we had in, during the war the first year, as I said we were in this small village in Seyre, in this, in those two stables.

Just take us back. You were on these wagons, you said, for four days.

Yes, and then we arrived in- well, we got off a train station, but I can't remember which, but which was close to a small village. I don't know why they chose that village, you know, but everybody was going and oh, the train was bombed [01:02:00] on the way as well and some- we saw, it was full of English soldiers coming back. It was after Dunkirk... coming back. It was awful. We landed in this village, and where the- maybe the- I don't know who organised. The squire of the, of the village had given two barns to accommodate us. And which was, well, obviously, it had no running water opposite a pump but in the winter, the pump froze up. It was the winter of '40- '41 was the hardest winter of the whole war, was a terribly hard winter. And ...Alex Frank had by then- he hadn't come with us because he had been mobilised into the Belgium army, but he was demobilised as soon as they-as they co- what's the word when they give in?

Capitulated?

Capitulated. He went out looking for food for us. He walked for miles to find maize, and you know because a hundred children, too malnourished without food. Summer wasn't too bad, but the winter was awful because all we had was straw and one blanket each. And I always suffered from the cold. I've never suffered hunger. I only suffered cold. Ruth was always warm. She was hungry but she had [01:04:00] terrible boils on her legs from nutrition, you know... I was, I had lice so I just shaved my hair off and there's a photo with my hair shaven, which to me was the second most traumatic thing because my hair was, I liked my hair.

The bag and the hair?

That's right. Now, we were there in very bad conditions until one of the ladies who was on the committee in Belgium also managed to get to France. And her husband, for some reason, was in touch with the Red Cross. They were well-to-do people and they got in touch with the Red Cross and said, "You must help these children. They must find other accommodation. How long can you live on straw? Can you sleep on straw with toilets, without anything?" You know, and they found us Chateau de La Hille, which was a disused in- which was the other side of Toulouse, about half an hour from Eus near Foix. The nearest train station was

Foix. Towards the Spanish side, towards in...in west, southwest. In fact, we could see the Pyrenees from the, in the distance. And...

It's Pyrenees Oriental, that area.

No, the Spanish Pyrenees. They are called the Oriental?

I think that whole region is.

Yes, it could be, yes...which Ruth eventually crossed to escape, but that's not yet there. You got time?

Yes, we got time. [01:06:00] Tell me when you want to take a break, then we can take a break and continue.

I will take a break if you will have a cup of tea or coffee with me. [sound cut]

Betty, we were at the point where you left Belgium and arrived in this-

In this village.

Tell us about the first village. Was it cold?

It was freezing, well when we arrived, it wasn't cold because it was in May, end of May, but...

What was the name of the place?

Seyre. S-E-Y-R-E. Seyre par Nailloux. It was absolutely, in the winter, it was absolutely freezing cold.

Who was in charge of this place?

Well, we had two. The boys- somebody came with the boys' hostel, but they went back- a couple. They had a child, but she was in France. They went back to Belgium. Belgians. We didn't like him very much. We were in charge- we were looked after by Elka and Alex Frank, then Alex Frank's- who came from Belgium. Alex Frank's mother joined us as well and she taught us. Any French I have, I know, she taught me. That was later on, in the Chateau de la Hille We looked after ourselves, really. The older ones looked after the younger ones.

So, are you- basically, there were only three adults for all the children?

Yes, yes- all the time.

Did they receive any help from any other organisations or-

No.

- in France there were OSE (Oeuvre de secours aux enfants), Hostel for [crosstalk]

No, no, no, no. We were under the "*secours du- secours suisses, secours enfants, croix rouge, secours suisses enfants*". [01:08:00] But *secours suisses, secours enfants* were in charge of other hostels. Not Jewish, not particularly Jewish hostel only. It was just at the- Mrs., I think her name was Goldsmith who came from Belgium who was one of the committee ladies from Belgium, knew us and remembered us from Belgium of course. And went to, her husband went to the Red Cross and said, "You must help these children. There's hundreds of them in this village, in Seyre, they have nothing." Then afterwards, they not only found us to Chateau de La Hille. And the boys went first, too. Again, we had no inside toilets because there was no heating and no running water. Water came from the- maybe we had water by then but not hot water. But in Seyre, for instance the pump froze up in the winter.

What about food?

Well, as I've said, Alex Frank went out. There was some money because the French government gave some money per child. I think there was some money left. He brought some money which had been with the home we were in. You know, the, but- he was is in charge of the home in Belgium, so he brought some of the money which was left over from Belgium. I'm not 100% sure on the finances. But...no... food, there was a shortage of food. The squire of the, who gave us the barns, the son of the squire, charming people, met us. We had a reunion, as I said, when we took [01:10:00] the photos in 2000, the year 2000, where about 30 of our comrades came from all over. One girl came from Australia, from New- from America, they came from France, from Belgium, from wherever one came from... had gone back to Holland and you know...to Germany. We were 30 survivors who, 30 of the Chateau - we called the enfants de Chateau de la Hille, all right? And... what was I saying before?

About the conditions we were talking.

So, she went, they- her husband went to Mr. ... I think it was him who went who went to the... They took us on and there we had beds and also, we had more blankets. They send food from Switzerland from time to time. They sent- I was thinking about the food, they sent milk, powder milk which had gone off. And they sent big rounds of cheese. And, but Alex Frank had, I would say a *mishigas* [Yiddish for craziness] for he had- he was raised- strict in his upbringing. He said we must eat the eggs. We had eggs. We bought eggs from the farmers, but we must eat them raw because... and there's more vitamin, you know, and so nobody liked raw eggs, you know, anyway. And...

What about kashrut, I mean, was there-

No, nothing. [01:12:00] But I don't think that we ever saw any meat any case. Ruth mentions in the book, yes. She joined a Kibbutz, a Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz, she became- but she would never touch meat, that was... and she kept Yom Kippur. She fasts on Yom Kippur. She gave up everything else but ...again, even in the- so eventually the boys went ahead to the Chateau-to... It hadn't been occupied for 40 years to clean and, you know, to serve. They found beds and they found blankets through the Red Cross they supplied us.

It was an improvement?

It was a very- 100% improvement. We didn't sleep on straw; and we had more- I was still cold, but we had more blankets.

How long did you stay in the first, in the village?

We stayed until- we arrived in May, until for a year, for a good year. Downstairs in the Chateau, there was one room, which was the dining room, which had parquet flooring. I mean, it was disused but they had a piano. And two of our, two of the boys, one had been playing the piano before he, Ivor was about 17 by then or something. He played the piano and one of the boys came with a violin. And they gave us, and my love for music, for classical music comes from them. Another thing which was a great boon to me, was books.

Apparently, the Red Cross [01:14:00] gave, gave a fund to, so that we, that they could buy books so I read and read and read as much when we weren't doing anything else, when we didn't have- lessons we had through the French. We learned, I learned all the French I know, and I found mistakes when I was corresponding with agents in France. I found mistakes they make in their- grammatical mistakes. Somehow, I've got a gift for languages, right? I write

German, French, or English equally as well. I think, English is a bit more, you know- my husband said, I always said to my husband, I didn't marry you for your passport or your money because I was naturalised British before- well, I'm jumping the queue now- my mother applied as soon as she could, after five years in England, she applied for naturalisation. I was registered because I was under 21. I was registered as of British birth you see, so I said, I didn't buy you for your - money he didn't have. After the Air Force, he volunteered for the Israel Air Force. But I'm jumping the queue here. So...

Let's go back to the Chateau. One thing I wanted to ask you; you were with your sister? How was it, how were you feeling? I mean...do you remember as a child in that situation, was it- did you feel safe because you were with your sister? Did you feel...

I never felt unsafe, funnily enough. I don't know, not because, no, I don't know. We just assumed this was the life. I mean, I didn't feel [01:16:00], until, until, we felt safe until the September 42, because in September 42, all the older ones including my sister, who wasn't on, in the Chateau at the time because a lot of the older people went to work for farmers outside. And she was in a farm run by Swiss people. The son proposed, he wanted to marry her. Very, you know, primitive Swiss people but- very nice, very good, but two hours away from the from the Chateau. And we, one morning in September 42, we were surrounded not by the Germans, we were surrounded by- because we were still under the free French, in the free French section by the *milice*- by the French collaborators. And they took all the over 15s to the [internment] Camp Le Vernet which was about half an hour, three quarter from, from the Chateau, which had been originally built or used for people coming from Spain, Franco, you know, fighting Franco opponents but then turned over for Jewish... They found Ruth, we were all registered, so they knew where she was working. She got to the- and they were there for five days on the brink of literally on the moment. They had been told to get ready to- for Drancy and Auschwitz. Well, Drancy and further. [01:18:00] And they helped, then. The Swiss- I am jump-I am getting, I'm jumping the queue. The Swiss, the Swiss Red Cross sent another woman to look after us. 'Cause the French was still with us, but they said as it's now under Swiss Red Cross, we want to put in our own personnel. So, she was somebody, her name was Rösli [Rosa] Naef, and she's in the, she is inscribed in Yad Vashem. She was working before she came to us, she was working for Albert Schweitzer in, in, in the Congo in Jamboree [Lambarene], you know, where he was looking? And she treated us like that because she had absolutely no- when we said we were ill, she said you're faking, you know,

because the coloured people were faking very often when she was in charge of the- they pretended to be ill when they weren't ill apparently. And she said you're faking. And, but...she went to the people in charge of the Camp de Vernet, the high her authority and say, "You have to release the children of- our children- our, under our protection." They wouldn't even see to her. They said, they almost threatened her to keep her there themselves, herself. She went back to the person in charge of the Swiss Red Cross, Secours Enfants in Toulouse, Monsieur Dubois, who is also inscribed in Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile. He went to and said [01:20:00] look, we must do something for- they're, they're going to be sent to Drancy and whoever, wherever. He went to the highest authority he could contact without the permission or knowledge of the Red Cross in Vichy. And he said, "If you don't send those children back, release those youngsters from Chateau de La Hille. We are stopping all- " He took it upon himself, is stopping all help to orphanages in France. As I said, they were looking after non-Jewish orphanages and quite a lot of them. And there were a lot of orphanages by then because people had been killed or deported or for forced labor. So, they released them. And until that moment when they were arrested, we didn't even think that we weren't safe. But- we were still, we were listening to Radio Andorra which was a free radio, one of the radios we had, I think, I don't know because there was some Spanish- people came to Chateau to work as labourers, you know, to- cleaners or, or gardeners, I can't remember. It was also with children; they came to the Chateau and through them we, we decided to listen to Radio- "Aqui Radio Andorra" I remember. This is- to hear what was going on in England and bombing and things. So, after that, the older ones decided it's not safe for us anymore because they released us once, but they can come back, even the younger ones, they can come back at any time. So, Ruth, my sister and with [01:22:00] one of her friends decided to go to Toulouse and to try to get into Switzerland over the Swiss border, you know. Another person who was sent by the- who I liked very much as a teacher, by the Swiss Red Cross, Eugen Lyrer, he bought the books for us. And he understood he was much more- he was a bachelor, but he understood youth much more, he read to us and he, he taught us shorthand. I don't know what, you know, no good to us French shorthand, but he tried. And... the old lady, she was 50 years old, Frank's mother, who taught us French, 50 years old because to us she was age-old, you know. She always had her nose was always dripping. I think she was 50, in her early 50s. What I know, what I remember in French I owe to her. Mathematics, I owe to one of the boys who was my sister's age. He joined my sister's keyboard- he's still alive as far as I know, but he's got also a bit Alzheimer's.

What were the children, where did they come from? What were their backgrounds?

In the hostel?

Yes.

Mainly ...Germany or, or Austria.

What language was spoken in there?

We weren't allowed to speak one word of German, only French. In fact, I was called one morning. I was called very early in the morning, I woke up and I said something to the girl sleeping next to me, I must have said something in German. And this horrible man from the [01:24:00] boys hostel heard me, and he put me on bread and water for a week in a secluded place. It couldn't have been, it must have been- I think, that's what Ruth said. I think it happened in- I can't understand it because there were no secluded rooms in, in Seyre, but I don't know, anyway.

Because you spoke German?

Because I said two words of German. I must have said, maybe I said "*Was sagst Du?*" [What are you saying] (01:24:35 or some remark in waking up. Anyway, Ruth managed to smuggle some food into me, not that I ever had much any case.

Do you think they did for security or why?

Well, yes, it wasn't a very advisable, it wasn't very advisable to speak German even in a small village, you know, I mean. But, you know, it, it was sensible but there's ways and means, you know. But we spoke French and one of the books I didn't manage to read was 'Gone With The Wind' in French. So, when I eventually got to England, I remember reading it in English because I was ironing for my mother. One of the things I remember. So, books were my saviour, literally. Because, if ever I become homesick or wanted like every normal child wanted her parents, I lost myself in books.

There were enough books available?

Oh, yes, yes, yes. We read and read and read.

In French?

In French.

That's quite amazing that in the short time span you managed to have [01:26:00] that level of French.

I can't say that everybody was reading, you know, but Ruth and I were reading, I know.

What was the name again of the lady who stopped the children from being deported you said?

Rösli Naef.

Rösli?

Rösli: R-Ö-L-I- N-A with a... F, Naef.

How many children were released and how many were they?

Well, they took away about 40, 45, or something. The main, I mean- as I say, I was amongst the younger ones, so, all the older ones. Also, boys with working for other farmers roundabout but, jumping the queue, but from the 100 children who arrived together as it says in the Chateau- in that book, we lost 12 people, either by being sent back by the Swiss, trying to cross the border, or by being caught on the Spanish border, or two, in fact, volunteered for the French Resistance, and one was shot and killed in the- in battle. We lost altogether 12. One of the boys who was deported came back from Auschwitz. And I was very, very, very fond of him. He was the cook. I've got a photo, I don't know where it is, I must look for it, where I'm in the kitchen of the Chateau. Don't ask, [01:28:00] it wasn't, you know, it wasn't actually sort of- I'm on top of a big stove with my nose in the, in the pot and he is standing near me cutting up some vegetables or something. He was a cook. He became a chef afterwards. So, when people ask, how did you manage in this Chateau? We were, we were a self-governing body honestly, because, you know, nobody went to say, "this one hit me" and went to Rösli Naef for instance, rather gone anywhere but to go to Rösli Naef [01:28:50] or to even to Eugen Lyrer, you know, to complain. But Eugen Lyrer is the one who, well, I'm jumping again now. Ruth- I'm jumping. After this when they were released from Camp Le Vernet, as I said, she decided: no more, I'm not staying here to, you know. So, they decided, they- with Eugen Lyrer's help- they got an address in Toulouse where they could pick up, somebody could help them because they needed food coupons, they needed somewhere to

stay, et cetera. But unfortunately, he gave them some money because my mother had sent some money actually. Through- I don't know how she managed to send some money, but they had some money for us. And they gave us, he gave him some money, and they got to Toulouse. If you read the book, you'll see the story how they got to Toulouse. But they, the person who was supposed to see had been arrested. He survived. He survived [01:30:00] and he went to Israel eventually. So, they spent, they went to a, a convent, they got taken in by the convent and they kept them for a while but then they said it was too dangerous. They couldn't keep them any longer. And they wanted to try and get into Switzerland but then they found out that the Swiss were sending back anybody over 16 which both of them were already. They ended up, they stayed in Grenoble. In Grenoble, one- the girls, she went out with Lixie [Grabkowitz], got a, got a job with somebody looking after children as a nanny. They were passing themselves off as French, you know, and Ruth, first got a job with a terrible farm in- god knows, nowhere, terrible conditions. I will leave that for you to read in the book. Eventually she got, she went and came back to Grenoble and she was working, making scarves and handbags. And one day she was walking along on the road and somehow, she saw somebody, she said, "Bonjour." Somebody looked, I don't know they said, and it turned out that she was a Jewish girl, member of the Jewish- I've forgotten what they call themselves, it was a group of young Jewish Zionists, French Zionists. Who- it's also in the book, the name, you know, names escape me sometimes. My mind goes blank. I'll remember it but I can't remember it this second, who told her that they have- there's a group and would you like to come along. And to Ruth, that was like a - from being away from us, away from [01:32:00] anything Jewish and any contact with any at all, that was amazing. And they met in the mountains and they like any young Jewish group, but their main purpose was to save Jewish children, right. Now one of Ruth's jobs was to- she told me about it to let us go, was to go around to see parents who had children and tell them, to tell them to send them into, to safety in Switzerland. And...one of her colleagues who was the one who took them across the border was caught on the way back with a false group, I think. She managed to go across with groups of 18-20 at a time. And it wasn't easy to persuade the parents to let them go, you know. People said, "No, how can we send my child into nowhere," you know, but Ruth was persuasive and that was one of her jobs. Her other job was to secure false papers and- by going into- I'll leave you to read this. She... one of the- girl who's the main girl, taking them across from Annemasse, from Annecy, Annemasse across to the Swiss border, she was caught, and she was tortured but never gave away the group. She was killed. Ruth said, "I'm doing this for other children. What about Betty?" You know.

You stayed throughout the time.

I was still in Château de La Hille. So, she sent [01:34:00] a message to Monsieur Lyrer [01:34:02], my friend Eugen Lyrer, to bring me to Annecy, again without permission from anybody, against strict instructions of the Swiss Red Cross, I must tell you. Rösli Naef was recalled Switzerland afterwards, not Dubois. I'm glad to say but she was recalled. [1:34:29] Eugen, she made arrangements for him to bring me to Annecy. He took me on the bicycle. I didn't, couldn't say goodbye to anybody because I wasn't supposed to tell anybody I was leaving, and he took me Annecy. And he took me to the nearest station which was Foix on the bicycle and from there we took a train. He must have paid for it himself; I don't know how he- you know? He was a bachelor, but he was incredible, and I don't remember the journey. I say in my story, I don't remember this, this journey, but I remember arriving in- it was night, we went by night. Arriving in Annecy and Annecy, the station was absolutely full of Germans, controlling but he passed me off as a child going to another- Swiss Red Cross had various- in the mountains, various homes, so that I was going to another home. We got through and arrived. And we met up with Ruth. We went to, had to say goodbye to Eugen Lyrer. He went back to La Hille, he was, you know. They didn't even know he had gone; I think [01:36:00]. He- and we had an ice-cream together and she said, "Now you're going to cross the border. I have to take you- with another- family of the parents of one of her colleagues in the movement and their two children, you are going to cross tonight to Switzerland. " And I really didn't want to go. I said, "I want to stay with you," but I realised, I couldn't stay with you, with her because I was too young for them and by the time in '43 I was 13 and she was 18. Big difference and we couldn't cross that same night. We said goodbye and she went back, and I didn't see her again until '55, I think. Because she was in Palestine by then. She- we went back and the guide took us to his home, and he said, "We can't cross tonight because they caught some people crossing the border and they're extra careful tonight. So, we'll have to wait for another day. " We spent the night there and the next day at about very early in the morning, he took us to the border. He took through, he took us across two barbed-wire fences. The border was in Annemasse, on the border with Switzerland. And he said, "There's a third one you have to cross," but neither of us, neither the parents, nor- the girl was almost the same age as I, us. The boy was bit younger. He said, "You have to go straight across or go to the left to get to the second, the third barbed-wire." So, we the girls said, the parents we told them to stay put with the young boy. [01:38:00] We went and went straight across and we heard some German. It was the French-Swiss border, so

we knew that's no good. So, we quickly came back, and we decided to take the left or the other way round. Anyway, we got this, we managed to get over the second, the third barbed wire. We were in Switzerland where we immediately got a welcome from the Swiss border guards. They said, "You're very, very lucky because you almost ran into-" They saw it all. "You almost ran into the arms of the Germans." Ruth doesn't say so in her book, because she didn't know about it, till I started, till I told her. So, then they took us to- by that time it was about maybe eight o'clock in the morning, all right. They took us to the nearest border police station, started questioning us, didn't offer us tea or coffee or drink or toilet or anything. First thing they said to me, "How did you come?" I say, "I don't know." because I wasn't supposed to know. You know, I, I wasn't - "I don't know, I don't know how I've come." "Why did you come?" I say, "I'm asking myself the same question." I remember it so well.

In German- at that point?

In French, it was the French. (crosstalk) "*Je me demande.*" [I wonder] Because I can't tell you. Then they put us on eventually- again no drink or anything, they put us on a police van or something, you know, and they took us to the nearest camp in Geneva which was called Charmilles. [01:40:00] Opposite the "Palais de Nations" in Geneva. And we arrived there and we saw guards with dogs surrounding this camp. I say in my story in the French version. Or in the, in the- which I've got, I lent the copy to somebody. In "We remember" are we as Jewish refugees are we, are they so frightened of us they have to have police dogs policing the camp. Can you imagine how we felt by that time? Another thing and I became ill there, I was ill and eventually, it turned out I had tuberculosis in the tubes and therefore I couldn't have children. I had no food, no, no literally very little food.

Tuberculosis you caught do you think still in-

In, in Switzerland. I think so because I remember being ill, I remember being ill and we had no change of clothes because just what we'd come with. But luckily, in- whilst we were still in the Chateau, the Swiss Red Cross had arranged us- for each of us to have a- what's it called... godmother or godfather. But mine -they were hoping that they would take in the children or look after the children if they ever came to Switzerland, but mine were confused to know but what she did, once a month she sent me a parcel with sardines which I shared with some other people but I have haven't [01:42:00] been able to eat sardines since [laughs]. Well, reluctantly because that's all we had. Literally, there was very little to eat. So, I can't

say the Swiss behaved. From there I was sent to another camp, I went through four camps. I found a little diary. It's got exactly, I don't know- I crossed the bor- it's not very clever, but I crossed the border with this diary. Because I recorded that I got this diary for my birthday... from Ruth. And there was a shop near, in Allières there was a tobacconist, apparently where we got things. I didn't know, I didn't go, I didn't get there, but they knew. And I recorded the names of the various camps and eventually, the Red Cross found a family to take me in, in Schaffhausen. And...by that time I was almost 14 because I arrived there at the end of '43. I was almost 14. So, I wasn't really, I didn't have to go to school anymore, but they decided to send me to a school, a secondary school - so to learn how to be a good Swiss *Hausfrau* [housewife **01:43:25**]. [laughs] I wanted to do a, I wanted to learn to be a kindergarten, you know, a nursery teacher but, no, they decided how to teach me, how to do, how to polish and how to clean.

In Switzerland were you in touch with your mother? Was that possible?

Yes, yes, yes. From there. I'll tell you how because when I arrived, that's another thing. Lucky for me when I arrived, and they asked my nationality at the border police I gave it as Polish. Why did I give it as Polish? Because in Berlin, in Germany [**01:44:00**] - I don't know if it... you were the nationality of your father, not the nationality of where you were born. To this day, this is my- not that I ever wanted to get a German passport. I wouldn't be, I wouldn't be able to claim for German passport because my father was a Pole. So, I gave it as Polish, why I say luckily- because the Polish embassy in Bern every month sent me 10 Mark, Francs or some, from which I could buy stamps- for which- not a, not a great sum for which I can buy stamps to write to my mother. You know, I had no money, I had no pocket money, I had no money. And the family I was with they were typically- small-town Schaffhausen. If- I don't know, now it's- Switzerland has changed but a woman who wore lipstick was a fallen woman- you understand. And another thing, she went on holiday and to the mountains with her- t hey had one child with Maile [unintelligible], and she left me at home. She didn't take me along. Moneywise it wasn't in her interest to take me along, but she left me with some- eggs were rationed in Switzerland during the war. She- instead of eating them, she put them in water to conserve them, eggs you can put them in water- water glass- I think it's called. So, she left me, two of the eggs were broken. She left me these eggs, so I could make myself, but I didn't know how to make myself an omelette. [laughs] [**01:46:00**] I, I literally hadn't had an

egg to make myself an omelette with, you understand? Anyway, she wrote to my mother and apparently, she was well-meaning she just didn't understand.

What's the people who were there, the family who took you?

Just ordinary. He was, worked for the government something ordinary, but they accepted a child. you know, they were very Christian, they firm- they wanted to help and good nature. But it just- I felt so lonely there. I can't tell you because I didn't have my comrades, I didn't have my milieu, I didn't have my books, I didn't have- but I learned to speak

"*Schwyzerdütsch*" [Swiss German] (01:46:44

There you had to speak German? Schwyzerdütsch?

Schwyzerdütsch- which I quickly forgot again. [laughs] I also learnt to speak- oh, I forgot to tell you this. I'll come back to in a minute. I forgot to say I learned to speak another language, Flemish because, in Belgium, the y decided, the committee decided that I was too small and didn't eat properly, they would send me to the countryside for a couple of weeks to- but which weeks did they choose, do you imagine? Pesach. So, I arrived there. Your colleague does not know but I arrived there, and I refused to eat until the committee sent me a box of nuts.

When was that? That was still in Belgium.

That was in, in, in Belgium. Yes.

In this short period, you learned Flemish, French...

Yes. French, I started learning in Belgium already but the, the family I stayed with for a couple of weeks sent me to a convent [01:48:00] and there I learned to say, "*Oui, ma soeur, non ma soeur, bonjour ma soeur.*" [laughs] [Yes, sister, no sister, good morning sister]

By the time you arrived in Switzerland, I mean, that must have been challenging because you left your milieu.

Exactly, exactly but then, in Schaffhausen, it was very difficult. I had to register once a week with the- once a week, once a month? Once a week at the- I'm not sure once a week or once a month now, at the police to say I was still there because I came in illegally, so you know... And, but the Jewish committee in Zürich, community in Zurich decided to send- because

Schaffhausen didn't have a synagogue. They used to go- before the war they used to go to Weinhausen, which is on the border, where there was a synagogue. They shared the services but obviously we couldn't go to Rheinhausen, we did not want to. And incidentally, Schaffhausen was bombed once by the Americans because they thought they were over Rheinhausen. They let the bombs off in Schaffhausen. And they sent a rabbi to us once a month. There were a couple, two or three Jewish families in... in Schaffhausen. And we met there once a month for this, with this few of us and this Rabbi. And one of the days I remember so well it was Hanukkah. And I thought remembering Chanukah from home, I thought at least we might get a piece of cake or something. All they gave us was, I say- an apple and a...one walnut or something, you know, typically Swiss, I mean... [01:50:00] But...luckily for me, a member, a distant member of my family, who was called family Meder who lived in Bern, they had a-the- they had - the woman, I think, she was a cousin or something, was very ill. She had-I don't what it's- even her leg was- she had to have injections a few times a day. Her leg was, was- oh, I don't know what else it was called, in any case, she was almost dying. So, they asked me if I would like to go and look after her. Having learned how to cook and how to manage, so I immediately said yes, because I knew in Bern there was several of our boys and girls from La Hille, who had managed to get across the border, including the one who taught me mathematics, who's now on, on... and there, I loved the woman, I looked after her, I gave her injections a few times a day and I managed to go swimming in the Rhine, and, and it was a different life, you know. I had my first boyfriend- because it was a young committee and, actually he got married the same day as I did, funnily enough. And...

So, there you had contact to Jewish families?

Yes. I met somebody who- we became very friendly who came from Milano and she also ended up on Ruth's kibbutz through Ruth, or they all got there. And why I mention her that on the first, Rosh Hashanah [01:52:00], after the war, it was over, the war was finished, we, in Bern, we decided to look for the synagogue but she didn't live in Bern, she was somewhere else, with a family. But the two of us- oh, she was living in Bern, but she didn't know where the synagogue was. And we decided to find the synagogue. So, we followed somebody wearing a hat, but he wasn't going to the synagogue because in those days, even in Switzerland, even in England, there were people who were wearing hats. Anyway, we found it eventually. And another reason why I mentioned it, the family there, rabbi asked families in

Bern, Jewish families, if they would take children for the *Hagim/Chagim*. So, somebody said, I will take me- decided to take me for Yom Kippur for the fast, before the fast, after the fast. She ...she heard that I was looking after this family in Bern. She heard that I eventually got a permit to come to England- visa. She contacted my mother to say that if I'm looking for a job as an au pair or something, she- her family in England would very much like to employ me. Can you imagine my mother? I hadn't been with her for six years. I was all of 15 years old to get a note to say, if your daughter gets to England, I know somebody who will employ her. Unbelievable. [01:54:00] Right? To this day, I don't understand. Understand the family I was with in Schaffhausen because they didn't mean ill, but they just didn't understand, first of all, my background and that I was different, that I was more advanced for my age because-you know- because I had letter from the daughter, daughter who later became married, married a, a priest, you know, not Catholic, they were Protestant. So, she said I adored you, you know, I thought the world of you and, you know, they didn't mean harm. It's just, they didn't understand, you know- but in Bern I was so- now I must go back to Ruth's story because Ruth is-

My question is why didn't Ruth not come with you?

Oh, no, I come to you. She was working, after she left, she was told by her committee that there's this child in Grenoble who has been left by her parents, a Jewish child, an infant under a year old, in an orphanage, and that the Gestapo had found out that this child is in here, and they had- the warned them, that they were coming to arrest her. Somehow, they got out to the committee, to Ruth's committee and what can we do for this child? So, she dressed up; my sister dressed up as a German officer. With her good Berliner accent, in her "*Berlinerisch*", which she could imitate- with boots, and you know, [01:56:00] and hat and- although she was black, but you know, she covered...She demanded this child and the, the person in charge of the orphanage didn't want to give her away. She said, "What's wrong? We like this baby, we love him, we love her. We'll look after her. "You know. "If you don't give us this child, we close the orphanage." They gave her the child; she took the child to a safe home and the child survived the war. Got eventually, also different story, got to Israel and she was told that she was saved by a person. She found through the rabbi, who they had supposed to meet in Toulouse, who knew Ruth by that time, who was in Israel. She was told where Ruth was. One day she turned up at the kibbutz. Can you imagine? Knocked on the door and says, "I am,

Celine. " I've forgotten her name. Speaking too and my mind goes blank, anyway [crosstalk]. Yes. She said, "you are my second mother. You gave me birth a second time."

Ruth dressed up as a man or what?

As a woman, a Gestapo officer, they were German, they were German, you know. In- I don't know, whatever they wore, whether they had costumes, their made-up costumes, you know. They did everything. They had passes, they had costumes they had- so she had the, well, every time when I first read the story, I, I had such a cold, you know, cold crept up my- yes, she saved this child.

Was it part of the Résistance or was it part- [01:58:00]

Yes, sure, but they weren't, they weren't killing Germans. They were trying to save children.

That was their mission, that group. [crosstalk].

Yes. That was their activity.

And what was that local group? Did they have a name, or?

Yes, they have a name, and the name is in the book. And I will remember the name, I can re- I, I will look it up and I will- it's in several books, but it's just I-J-F something. I can't remember.

Ruth basically didn't want to leave because she felt she had to do this work or continue?

Yes, but after that episode, the Gestapo were looking for her. Because, you know, somebody walks in as a German officer into- Gestapo officer- into an orphanage and goes out with a child. So, the, they said to her, "Ruth you can't stay here anymore. A, you endanger your own life, B, you endanger our lives" So she decided to try and cross into Spain. By- she knew Switzerland wasn't for her. She decided to cross into Spain because they kept on changing the laws because the day I passed, they let the parents in and they were well over 16, you know, but who knows, you know, they went, they didn't send them back, you know. So, she met up with some other people, a group, and that's all in her book, and it took her four days across the Pyrenees, to cross into Spain and Spain received them, you know. Spain didn't send back like Switzerland.

Did you go with somebody else?

With a whole group, there was a whole group of them. [02:00:00]

And which route, do you know where they went?

Yes, it's called "*chemin de la liberté*" [the freedom trail]. You can look it up if you look up Google, you can see it.

Okay.

And very, very, very difficult. And they ran out of food, they ran out of everything and one or two of the, one or two of our girls also joined her. One didn't want to go on any longer because they walked literally through ice and through nothing at night for four days across the Pyrenees. And...in Spain, they were well received. And eventually they, she said she wanted- eventually she got to- to Portugal, to Cádiz in... Cádiz is in Spain, sorry, Cádiz southern Spain, not Portugal. To Cadiz...and she was given the option of either going to Palestine or to come to England. But come to England, she would have had to wait till after the war, you know, because war was still on, it wasn't that simple. I mean, I didn't get- after the war, I didn't get here till October, and the war finished in May. This was in, this was in '43, no, in '44, sorry, '44. She said, she was in terrible quandary. She, you know, she wanted to see my mother but all her life she wanted to be in [02:02:00] Isr- in Palestine. She wanted- she didn't want another *Golah* [Diaspora, Hebrew], how to explain it. She said so in her book, she didn't want to really start the whole-- so she went- when she got a permit to go, to come, to go to Palestine on a legal ship, but on arrival, she was interned by the British because she couldn't prove that she was Ruth Schütz because she didn't cross the border with a passport. You know, how do they expect- the British expect-you now-so...

She was returned in Palestine?

Yes, in Atlit, Haifa...not, not Cyprus, I'm glad to say, but by then my Aunt Betty, who my mother had brought up, you know, was two years old when my- her mother died, was living in Haifa because she'd emigrated in- she'd gone in Aliyah in 1936. And she ...heard that Ruth was- and her, her brother, her stepbrother, her twin brother, Max, was also in Israel. And they heard that Ruth was there and she went to the authorities, the- in Atlit, and she said, she's my niece and she proved- she showed photos. I don't know what, anyway, they let her go.

[02:03:40] And Ruth's book finishes at that moment, when she, when they, in Haifa, she said, she stays, she stands in, on a square in Haifa and she says "I'm 19 years old and life is in front of me." [02:04:00] Then eventually she joined the Kibbutz, not Lehavot Ha Bashan, where she met my brother -in- law, who had been to the same school. They went, in Berlin they went to the Große Hamburger Straße, very famous Jewish school, founded by- in the name of ...the one whose son who converted to- a famous German who became a composer

Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn. It was founded by Mendelssohn, the school. And the grave of Mendelssohn actually, were in the grounds of the school. She writes about in the book. And... she- what was I going to say?

She met her husband.

Oh yes, she had gone to the same school but he was two years older and boys and girls were separate in the school. They both went to the same school and, and they got married. And they were founder members of Lehavot HaBashan which is in the Galilee [inaudible] opposite the- by Kiryat Shmona about 10 minutes by car from Kiryat Shmona and opposite the Syrian border. The Kibbutz was shelled, the boys- she had four sons. She had two big sons and then with gap of nine, eight years, or nine years, she had twins and they grew up in the shelter, literally. Because- and one day they shelled from Syria, they shelled the whole the *cheder ochel*, [Hebrew] dining room, which was completely destroyed and they rebuilt it. My mother said, [02:06:00] "Why did they need to rebuild it because it was perfect", you know, she said, "It needed", she never told my mother it was shelled. My mother- first time when she came back, absolutely heartbroken because they didn't even have- they lived in the beginning of the Kibbutz, they lived in a hut. My mother went a couple of years after the, after the war and I think for the first time and they didn't, they didn't even have toilet paper. Once they, they cut up newspaper. Why am I telling you this? Because, when I went for the first time, my mother said take some J's flip pack, and it was marked by appointment to His Majesty, it was still His Majesty, the King. My sister's never forgotten that her sister turned up on the Kibbutz with oiled, with oiled (laughs) toilet paper.

What made you sister join the Kibbutz?

She wanted to, she wanted, I mean this was the only- she wanted to build the country, and how could you build the country without- and she was a founder member, you know and now it's a, it's a- now the Arabs are- she was upset because she said even Kyrat Shmona [02:07:30] - "we took it over!" You know, we- you know, there were Arabs living there, it was a village, but now the Arabs are- when they got to the kibbutz there was nothing. They planted the trees. They planted eucalyptus trees all along the way from, from the main road, which is a long- because we walked it more than once, Alan and I. It must be a good hour's walk or longer [02:08:00] to the Kibbutz. They planted eucalyptus trees all the way to there be shelter and soil conservation, and... yes go on.

You said it was the Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz?

Yes, left wing. And... the children didn't sleep in the- children slept in children's homes. In children, you know, they were separate and she made sure to cut the- because the twins were completely identical, even later on when they were bit older already. When I- I used to go once a year without fail, and always stayed on the Kibbutz. And Ruth would say to me, "Have you seen or heard Ohad," they were called Ohad and Hovav- " have you seen Ohad or Hovav?" I would say, "I've been playing with one of them, but don't ask me which one." But my mother always knew them apart. But she made sure that they had different haircuts because otherwise one would be fed in the children's home, would be fed where they were living, would be fed twice and the other one get nothing. [chuckles] But thank god, another one had a little accident so he had a broken tooth, anyway. They're wonderful boys. Each one served in the army, the- one of the twins became a lieutenant- colonel, I think the equivalent in the Air Force. And they're all over Israel, you know. But none of them left Israel. They all, they even- not all remain in touch with me, I'd say, here, I mean... One went a little bit perhaps more towards the center, but not much.

But your sister stayed throughout her life in the Kibbutz?

Yes. She, she, when- before the twins were born, [02:10:00] she became a nurse. She took, she went for two years training, fully registered nurse. And... eventually, she became the nurse, the Kibbutz nurse, which was very difficult she said, because she knew all the problems. She knew them too well, especially her age group who were getting older, you know. But she remained till the end and then eventually when she had to retire, when, it came time for her, she volunteered for- to look after old people in Kiryat Shmona - right till the

end. She was the editor of the local paper for the golden age or whatever they call them. We went to Eilat once, I went to Eilat, to Sdom with her with her. Suddenly, somebody walks in to the dining room and she heard her name. She said, " Ruth Uzrad [02:11:04], aren't you the famous Ruth Uzrad [02:11:07] who writes in the-" She was known, she was very gifted in writing.

Let's get back to you and we were still in Switzerland, in Bern?

Yes, but then I got this permission, and I was told by the Red Cross- I got a letter from the Red Cross to say that on such and such a day, I will be -get a flight- get a...train and then I will be taken to, to England, by train and boat. would I- I kept the thing- would I just bring hand luggage? Well, all my hand luggage went into a holdall something I could carry myself. Which wasn't a problem for me. It made me laugh. It makes me laugh till this [02:12:00] day, that I shouldn't bring too much luggage because, you know- anyway, I was given-

You didn't have anything else, you didn't have that much?

What did I have? I mean, i made myself a dress in Bern. You know, I had nothing. I mean, [unintelligible] the only money I had - was maybe they gave me a little bit of pocket money by then but the only money I had, was from this Polish- by saying that I'm Polish which was true.

Where did you live actually in Bern, where did you live?

With the lady I was-

With the lady?

Yes. Day and night. I gave her the injections in the night.

But at that point, did you know, did you think, "I want to go to England?" I mean, was that...

I have a diary from the time, and I also have got- where did I put it? I put it, I had it here. [02:13:00] That I am in two minds because Ruth always says, if- "Come to Palestine," or, "Come to Israel", by then- no, Palestine still of course, because Israel wasn't established till after And our mother will join then, Mutti will also join us, and we'll create a new Bronia and we'll create a new life in Palestine. I was in, but I felt I couldn't do this to my mother. I couldn't not come to England. But as I say in my story, I say by that time, our relationship

was almost reversed. I felt I had to look after my mother, knowing what she had gone through in the war. And she was really working day and night. She said the only time she stopped was for- on Shabbat or on a *Chag* [holiday] to...to... [02:14:00] she wanted to have enough to make a home for us, if we survived and if we came to England. So... I went to... Chandos Road, I went to school as I told you before, learn English for foreign-

Just one second, just tell us a little bit, how was it possible that you actually came to England.

Because my mother had made this application in '42.

Tell us. We haven't said that on camera yet.

In 1942, my mother had- somehow or other, I don't know, without knowing English, without anything, she contacted the Foreign Office to try and get us, Ruth and myself to England. And the answer- she must have had somebody who wrote the letter for her or something. Answer came that, yes, provided- first of all, it will cost £60, which she sent to them. She had saved and- with great difficulty, because she wasn't earning very much. By then, she had left the family she was ...working for as a domestic. She was- at some stage, she was sewing uniforms and then she took another, she took a job with somebody privately she knew, who was making handbags. That's- she was doing when I arrived. Anyway, in '42, I'm not quite sure what she did, but she managed to find £60 to send. And, but they said if your children, if Ruth and Betty can come, can get to Portugal, [02:16:00] we will make arrangements to bring them to England. Now, for Ruth, that was in '42, Ruth would have been- I was 12, she would have been 17, and I was 12. For us, to get from south-west France, south-east to Portugal was like saying- in, during the war, as Jewish girls, without passports was like saying go to the moon. On the strengths of this visa which was never taken up, she made a new application as soon as she could after the war, which was then granted for me to come over. Which was then granted in October '45 when I arrived.

And what was it like when you received this message from the Red Cross? What did you feel like?

Well, I was, I was happy but I was nervous. You know, I left my mother when I was nine, and I was going back, I was almost 16.

It's a long time.

And as I say in my story, by that time a very [laughs] independent person because obviously I had to be independent.

Did you fly?

So, I felt- no, no, through- we went through Paris. I was another two girls who had been in Switzerland during the war. We had, we were supposed to be on a group with other people, but-somehow or other we- it was my fault for missing the train. But somehow the connection weren't correct and suddenly [02:18:00] we were taken to Paris, then from Paris and when, on by boat, by Paris, by train to Dover I assume and then by boat to Calais, and then to Calais and then to Dover by train. And on arrival in, in... in Victoria, not- you know, in Victoria, I couldn't believe it because it was so against Switzerland. It was so dark and dreary, I arrived in October, don't forget. And, you know, it was very strange. It was strange meeting my mother. It was strange my uncle came- also to the station. Everything was strange.

Did your mother pick you up from that station?

Yes.

Did you recognise her?

Yes, yes, oh yes. I think she might have sent me her photo to, to Switzerland, I'm not sure.

What was the reunion like? What was the reunion--

Well, I said. I can't tell you. I was...I think I've blanked it out, the reunion.

Because it was after many years?

I left, I was, I had just had my 9th birthday and I came back I was almost 16. And I felt, I had to look after her. So, my first thing was to learn English and second thing was to learn shorthand typing. I even did [chuckles] an exam in book keeping which I never used. I read in English, the [02:20:00] Dickens, Christmas Carol, at Pittman's.

That was the college you went to learn--

Yes, to learn shorthand typing. It was in Finsbury Park, there was one in Holborn.

At that point, there was no question of you going to school to continue your schooling?

I wanted to help my mother, what with? First of all, you know, well, what with? Bronia was still of school-age, I wasn't anymore 16.

Where did your mother live at the time?

Stamford Hill.

Her own accommodation?

She- through, with the help of somebody, very kindly, she managed to buy a house. But the downstairs was let, we were upstairs and to Jews but not very nice people at all. They made my mother's life a misery. And it was- just consisted of a kitchen, living room, one-bedroom, and a very small box room. I had to share a bedroom with my mother because Bronia got the box room- which I- when she arrived,

Did you arrive before Bronia

Yes. Bronia didn't come till '46. Yes, because I have- her foster parents, I don't know if I told you, or told the- for the record, her foster parent didn't want to bring her over until they were sure that my mother was the right person to look after a child. My mother literally was working day and night and I helped her. Even when I was at Pittman's, I used to help in the evening. With a- she was doing handbags, gluing handbags, and afterwards [02:22:00] she did something, threading pearls. I helped her with that and eventually, she became, she helped- a thing called *bikur cholim*, looking after ill people, who were ill, et cetera. My aim was to help as much as I could because, you know, she needed help. And but then- I, I didn't tell you how I met Alan.

Just one thing before. When Bronia came over how old was Bronia?

Bronia was...she came in '46. So, she was- I was 16, so she was 11.

And what was that like?

Traumatic, traumatic because she was so homesick for Belgium. She had no language in common with my mother. I was the interpreter, until she learned English because she'd completely forgotten her German, and my mother didn't speak French. And... she resented

my mother for sending her to- my mother sent her to a Jewish school, Schonfeld school because it was the only- in, in Stamford Hill, it was the only school where they would have- where would she send Bronia who didn't speak- you know, with her background? She had to send her somewhere where there were other children like her, what she would have done in a normal school.

Hasmonean? Was that the Hasmonean school?

Avigdor... Yes, the- well, it's the junior thing of Hasmonean yes, [02:23:40] Avigdor it was called.

And your sister, she didn't like it?

And she, she was very unhappy- because one minute she became very *frum*, so *frum* that she wouldn't comb her hair on Shabbat. And next minute she gave it all up again. [02:24:00] But she, look, she found herself on her own when she was four and she ca- she found a wonderful family to look after her. Then she was taken out of this family to be brought to England where this family, there was a father and a mother- a *Paps* and a *Maps* as she called the-, and a sister and a brother. She came to England where there was no father. There was a mother who was working day and night, who didn't speak the same language. There was me who was five years older and Alan always said she was one of six million and one. She was a victim of the war. Because it wasn't till very recently before she died, that she made absolute peace with my mother before my mother died because she blamed her for taking her out of- but how could my mother not take her out for not leaving her in Belgium. Although she studied psychology, she didn't-- [chuckles]

Did you manage to have a relationship with her?

With Bronia? Yes, but not like Ruth. And then, in a way, somehow, I resented her having a bedroom and my, be- sharing with my mother. Also, she was completely different. I sat up one night to make curtains. I'm not a great thing, but I managed to, with the sew- my mother had a sewing machine to make curtains for, I don't know if you know the houses, with very high ceilings in Stamford hill, old houses. And... I spent all night, sat up all night. Bronia got up in the morning, she said she was asleep, she said, " [02:26:00] I don't like them." [laughs] You see, I mean, when Ruth died, before Ruth died-the relationship began- incidentally there's a photo of Bronia there. When Ruth died- Bronia was in touch more with Ruth than

with me. Because, maybe Ruth was a mother figure for her, you understand? I was too close and not close enough. And I got married...She came over in '46, I got married in '52. So, I was barely at home for six years. We weren't, we didn't have that time together and then I was a teenager and I went out and Bronia was still a child, you know. But with Ruth, the age difference didn't matter anymore. But she, but once Ruth died, she used to phone me- but she very often said to- because of the force of circumstances, I believe, a very- often said to Alan, "I feel I've had a conversation with myself." Because I got no- you know, she talked about herself, I got no response from her at all. You know what I mean? I shouldn't actually say this for the- for this...

You're saying it in the context that shows- how affected she was really. We often find that age is so--

That's right. She was so affected, in fact so much so that when I saw her, she has a son and a daughter- Bronia has a son and a daughter. I'm very much in touch with the son. He phoned me yesterday, in fact, or the day before [02:28:00] who ...can discuss things with me which he couldn't discuss with his mother. He sent me a note, Christmas, New Year note, he said, "Betty, you've not only become closer as an aunt but you've become my friend." You see, he and we, you know, we discuss things together. And when she suddenly became ill, she was rushed to the hospital, she...Malcolm, her son, was called Malcolm, was in fact, his first name is Henry, she called him Henri [French pronunciation] after her foster father but he prefers Malcolm because he was teased at school as Henri. He. ...he phoned me and he said, "Bronia is in hospital, would you like to come see her." I said, "Of course." So, he came and collected me. And she, he lives an hour and a half from London. He came to collect me and took me up to Yorkshire, she was, she lived in Yorkshire and we spent two days together. I went in the hospital and I really talked to Bronia. One of the things which upset me is when in the hospital, she often complained about the nurses that she didn't get the, she was short of oxygen she felt. She had problems, her heart suddenly, and I said, "But Bronia, look, it's a big hospital, it's Bradford Hospital and they've got other patients. You have to wait you have to be patient." She said, "When I was little", [02:30:00] I will repeating her words, "When I was little, in Belgium, I had to look after myself. I had to stand up for myself, now I'm standing up for myself." You understand?

Yes, she was at... a young age?

Yes, too young. She had barely, barely- she recommended, she recollected one thing from my, from my father, that every time he- every year he went to Poland and he came back with amber. One year he came back with amber necklaces for the three of us. She remembered that he brought her an amber necklace and she loved amber after that. But otherwise, she had very little recollection.

What sort of road did she choose in later life?

She complained about the school that they didn't give her enough freedom to, to follow her... culture in reading things and, and in writing, and whatever, you know, in music and- but it was after this war. I mean, '46 there was a lot of children and you know. It wasn't- but she managed to get- I think she must've got a free thing for university. She went to the LSE, London School of Economics, she did sociology. She got a degree and she worked on and off, but not very much in her- at LSE, she met her future husband, who unfortunately eventually abused her. And she was- [02:32:00] I shouldn't say all this in this, for this--

Just stop for one second. Yes.

What was I saying before?

You said they divorced.

Yes. She...they got married in Zambia and she came back to England and they lived in Bristol, and then eventually they moved to...to West Yorkshire, but they divorced after 25 years.

She stayed in Yorkshire?

She stayed in Yorkshire till she died. And she died a week after she- I saw her. And again, Malcolm came and collected me and went up to the, for the funeral, and- which was conducted, I was worried- she chose a green cemetery. Have you heard of green cemetery?

Yes.

That's what she chose. Completely different from me, she was 100% different because I didn't even give a thought to making a will up till recently. She said in her will that she wants to be buried in a green. But I'm glad to say she didn't ask for cremation because my father, had he been cremated, I assume, or something similar, I couldn't have faced it. Not for

religious reasons, just couldn't face it. So, she had one of the- member of, of her local group. She was a member of the AJR. I think her local group was Leeds... that area. [02:34:00] A member who is head of the synagogue in Bradford came and made the funeral. I said something. And her son said and her daughter said. It was very quiet, very peaceful. And the burial place is, it was in March or April, so young lambs were-you know, just beyond the burial place you see the lambs in the fields and it's very peaceful- peace. Yes, I want to go back to my mother. My mother eventually-- for a long time she was either here or in Israel. When she was here, she wanted to be in Israel. Ruth with her family and children and when she was in Israel she wanted to be here. Here she had her own home in, in Hendon. In Israel my sister got her- she got her a- one of the little houses on the kibbutz. And eventually she had to get a help- somebody to look after him, but she was all right. Then she became ill and I went out. She was in a hospital in Safed and I went out several times to... to be with her. But then eventually the...they said, "There's nothing more they, we can do for her." They suggested they would move her to another hospital in Haifa and Ruth and I, we both decided that enough's enough. She died a year later. She died in...in 1984 on the kibbutz. In the morning of [02:36:00] Yom Haatzmaut, Independence Day, having had the privilege of- well, the afternoon of Independence Day. Having had the privilege of seeing her, the twins in their uniform would come home for, for the Independence Day. And who...she had gone to sleep. And she had been there with her in the morning. She'd gone to sleep, and then in the afternoon Ruth went around to get her up and get her dressed and she was getting up and suddenly- s he was getting dressed and suddenly- Ruth felt that she was- she wasn't- with her anymore. She said, "*Mutti, stehst Du?*", "Are you standing?" She said, "*Ja, ich stehe.*" [Yes, I am standing] Finished. So, she died on the kibbutz. She's buried on the kibbutz. And on her tomb, there's this stone for my father. [crying] Sorry.

We didn't discuss your father and how you found out after the war.

We found out through the Red Cross. Sorry. The little?

Father. I asked you--

My father...he, we found out through the Red Cross in- as late as about 10 or 15 years ago that he had actually, after going through various camps and ghettos, he finally lost [02:38:00] his life. He was murdered in, in, in, he ended up in Bergen-Belsen. He was on the death march from Buchenwald. He had been in Buchenwald. He was sent on a death march from

Buchenwald to Bergen-Belsen, but got to Bergen-Belsen and the last record the Red Cross had of him was in, on January 1945. To us that was of terrible news because we realised that he spent all the war- all the years since '38 in Poland and to finish up on the, in hiding or in, in ghettos or in camps under what conditions, I cannot imagine. I don't wish to imagine, and to end up in January '45.

And how did your mother deal with this?

My mother had hoped to be- right to the end- well, by the time she died she knew that, but she hoped that he was- she would hear that he's alive. She never gave up hope. In fact, she had brought some- my father was very keen on being well dressed. If you can see on that photo with us- in the photo there, well dressed. And he liked English fabric, so she bought some suit material, which she took from Berlin to London for him to have a suit made if he came- you know, when he came back. She's really thought it. She never remarried. She never even considered remarrying.

Because you don't know for sure [02:40:00] what happened to him?

That's right. But then, but also, had no inclination. I don't know, she was quite reserved. She wasn't, didn't talk much about her early years or anything.

That was the other thing that I was going to ask you whether after you came, did you talk about your experiences, her experiences, or was it like you just get on with it?

No, not with my mother. My uncle, my uncle who was here, he spoke about his life, a life in Poland before, before they left for Berlin. But no, nobody asked me really. No, come to think of it.

So, tell us how you met your husband. Is that-

Same to about my father, is that there is a stone in his memory as he has no grave or known grave, we've put a stone on my mother's grave in his memory. They are, my mother, my father, and Ruth and my brother-in-law are buried almost next to each other. Well, my father's stone is on my mother's grave, because the Kibbutz have their own cemetery. And... it's very peaceful overlooking the valley and you see the hills of the Galilee in the distance. It couldn't be more peaceful. Unfortunately, I didn't get to Ruth's funeral because I'd just broken my hip, so I wasn't mobile. And... but the girl she rescued came to the funeral, [02:42:00]

spoke at the funeral, and said, "She was my second mother. She gave me birth the second time, without her, I wouldn't be here." And there were- I think my nephew who said there were about 400 mourners at her- because she knew so many people through her work as a nurse and through her work at her- on the Kibbutz itself of course, for the older members as she was a founder member and through her work for the, for the magazine for the 'Golden Age Magazine' and- she was known.

Let's come back to you. You how did you meet your husband?

How did I meet my husband? Now, thanks to knowing French. Why is it thanks to knowing French, because my second job was- I saw an announcement- advertisement for somebody, a French watch importer was looking for a secretary. I applied and I got the job because my French was good enough... probably better than my English at the time. You know, I once said to Alan, I said, "How was my English when we first met?" He says, "I can't remember. " Because I really- you know- I mean - he can't, he couldn't remember. Anyway, the...my office was in, in the top end of Charing Cross Road, Cambridge Circus. And Alan had- Alan was first call-up after [02:44:00] the war, in the Royal Air Force. He became a radar engineer because he had a degree in electronics. Although when he first joined the RAF, he was, he was on a farm in a- in England, for- preparing to go to Israel, you know on a Hakhshara.

Was it the David Eder farm?

No, Horsham. Which one was he on? Sextet. I worked for the Shnat Sherut Scheme and we used the David Eder farm and we used Horsham that's why I got mixed up.

What did you work for Shnat?

Sherut.

Shnat Sherut.

, year of service in Israel, one of the jobs, one of my jobs. Now, he was classified as a farmworker, but then he convinced them that in fact, he had, he had passed, he had a degree in electronics, so they made him a radar-- they trained him as a radar... As soon as he- was kept in the British, the RAF, six months longer, because he was in during the Berlin airlift. When, I don't know if you know about it when they were sending food to Berlin because it was barricaded by the Russians. When he came out, he as soon as he could, he volunteered

for the Israel Air Force, because that was his intention, but he didn't want to- you know- decamp. He went [02:46:00] off to Israel. He got there just after the War of Independence because he was in the Air Force still. And... he only came back from Israel in 1951, because his brother, who is nine years younger, was Bar mitzvah so he came for his brother's Bar mitzvah. Whilst he was in England, he came, now- at the bottom of our, my building, three floors in the building were occupied by Bachad, Bnei Akiva and Mizrahi. My boss had the keys to the building, nothing to do with religious organisation, but during my lunchtime, obviously, I became friendly with them and with some people working there. And one of the people was a friend of Alan's who when he heard that Alan was home for a short period, he left all his stuff in Israel. He asked him if he wanted to rewire the building. The building needed rewiring. And he said, "Yes, why not." He wasn't earning a fortune, he hadn't earned a fortune before he went to, before he was called up. He wasn't earning a fortune in Israel, so why not. To go back to Israel with some money. And but i, but we had the keys to the building because my boss was the caretaker for the building. Nothing else, I mean he didn't own the building but he- he was the caretaker. Every morning, Alan came to me for the keys and every evening, he brought them back. One day he said to me, we started talking about Israel and I had a sister in Israel and he, he had left his- you know, he was in the Air Force there. He said [02:48:00] to me, "Would you like to come and have a coffee?" So behind, there was Soho, so we went to a little café in the Soho, had a nice coffee, when it came to paying, he realised he had no money on him, so I paid for our first coffee. But this is why I said thanks to speaking French. I...and then we went out for about a year. The, i don't know, I've said to Alan before he died, I said, "Alan, did you ever ask me to marry you?" I don't know if your husband did it to you, but he said, "I can't remember." I said, "I can't remember either." We just drifted into marriage. We decided, we're together, why not get married. Then I said to my boss at the time, after I had left the French watch importer because he moved out from Charing Cross Road, he moved to, oh- there were 20 stops on the underground from Manor House. I can't remember which station it was, but it was a long way, and I got fed up going back and forth. I looked for another job, and I got a job as a secretary to a watch- to a structural engineers. And one day I said to him, "You know, I've just got engaged, and I hope to get married soon, would you by any chance know of a flat?" Because even then, you had to pay key-money to get a flat for renting, not to buy but to rent. We had no, no money between the two of us. I hadn't worked long enough and nor had Alan. He said, "Yes I've got two. I've got one in Chalk Farm and I've got one in Finchley, I could help you with" So... as his parents, and my mother lived at Stamford Hill, Chalk Farm obviously was much closer to

Stamford Hill. So, we went to have a look at Eton Place and we chose Chalk Farm. This is how I came to Chalk Farm and how I came to South Hampstead, North. [02:50:00] We've made the big connection.

And he decided not to go back to Israel.

He then decided not to go back to Israel. We went to Israel for six months in... a few years later, I can't remember the exact year, '58 I think, but to give it a try, and I had a very good job, I was working for the office... of the Israel Philharmonic in Tel Aviv. Alan had a good job. He got a job as the- for the Standards Institute also in Tel Aviv. We had a hostel, rooms in a hostel in near Tel Aviv, Ramat Aviv and everything was lovely and we talked about staying in Israel, but we'd gone there by car incidentally the long way around through Turkey, Bul- Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, through Turkey. And... I said I can't do it. A, we only rented a flat and all, all we had was furniture that was rented. B, we had a car, an old car, an old Lagonda, which we'd driven in and, and but more importantly, I said, "I can't leave my mother." My mother was living in England. "How can I..." Oh actually, before she had her own place in, on the kibbutz... How can I, you know, after all this time, how can I leave my mother? Because I really [02:52:00] looked after her very much. Because she became- she was independent, but- she- financially she was completely independent. She understood stocks and shares much more than I do but in all other respects, she relied very much on me. She used to come to us when we were in Eton Place or when we were in here every Friday night, every Shabbat, she was here.

She was a member in Hendon and at the beginning, for, for, for holy days et cetera we used to go to Stamford Hill. When she was still in Stamford Hill, we slept with her, or, or we stayed with Alan's parents, and... actually mother was a stepmother, she lost his mother, very young, but she was a wonderful woman. And... so- so we compromised. I said, "As long as we don't live in Israel, can I go and see her?" I did, once a year, without fail, I was on the kibbutz, became a second home. I saw the children grow up.

For how long did you go every year?

Up to very recently I used to go.

How long did you stay?

Oh, not more than...longest I've ever stayed was a month. The first time, but then I realised though I couldn't. Alan wasn't very happy on his own. Normally a fortnight. I used to go Hanukkah time always and I saw the children grow up, you know. And I saw them when they were in the army and I went to their camps. [02:54:00] And you know, we- I really, I really- I didn't live with them but to this day they know me.

Did Alan want to come back from Israel, did he want to come back as well?

Well, he...he had a good job. I mean, he would have settled there very easily. He worked twice as hard as anybody else because he couldn't understand the hours were from nine to, to one and he said, "I'm in the middle of testing and equipment, how can I leave at one o'clock?" So, he was there till six o'clock. That was him. He was a- when you come to do the photos, I'll show some of the new year cards he produced because he became an artist on the, on the computer but that's for next time.

So, you settled at Chalk Farm and you joined the synagogue?

I joined the synagogue and then eventually we decided to make a move. We moved to- the synagogue move. We moved membership to St Johns Wood.

And what was South Hampstead like when you joined it?

It was a hut.

And were there other refugees actually because--

Oh yes, yes, yes. There were other refuges. We knew them. Yes. We knew them.

It was a hut?

And Alan said, I, I am, that he was almost the only English-speaking person there. [laughs]

Was it like that?

Yes. Well, it was shortly after we got married in '52 which wasn't very long after the war, '45,'52.

Because what's interesting, I find, you know, many people know that Belsize Square Synagogue was founded by German Jews.

But they lived, they were more- they weren't our- they weren't Polish Jews, you see.

No, but less people know that South Hampstead that there were- many refugees.

Sure.

[02:56:00] But do you think- that's interesting that you say that, do you think that the refugees who were in South Hampstead were more Polish were more eastern Europe--

Yes, yes, yes. Very much so. Not so German, no.

Less German. That's interesting.

The Germans must have gravitated towards Belsize Park. [crosstalk]

Liberale? Makes sense that one. What else do you remember from that South Hampstead Synagogue, what was it called at the time when you joined it?

Regents Park and Belsize Park Synagogue.

Right, so they got together?

Regents Park and Belsize Park Synagogue. That's what it was called when we joined.

And where? It was in the same place. Eaton Avenue?

On the same spot but it was a hut.

Meaning, describe it for us, what was that?

It was a lot like a large marquee, right? And then- when they started building- and for a while, yes, they took down the marquee- they couldn't use, because they wanted to build on this- that they had the, the area- this, this thing for it, the plot. So, we moved across the road, they moved the- moved us across the road into a flat across the road from the hut in... what's it called that road where the synagogue is?

What is it? Eaton Avenue, is it?

No, no, no. no. Villas, Eaton Villas. Then they build the new, the old new shul, which was lovely. [02:58:00] but then we were not there so much on the Shabbat because, and, and, we

used to go to Stamford Hill or to Hendon. No, Hendon wasn't on the scene yet. My mother was still, my mother bought the house in Hendon, luckily, funnily by herself whilst we were in Israel that time. But...she was always, as I said, when she was there, she wanted to be here when she was here, she wanted to be there, which I understand.

Did she become- you think- British?

She was so British, that- so fond of the Royal family. She would dis- she would be absolutely horrified now what's going on in the Royal family. And she, as soon as she could- in...19', I came over in '45. I think in '48 she applied for-

Naturalisation.

Naturalisation We were interviewed by somebody in Stoke Newington, very nice fellow, who asked me what I'm doing. Being under 21, I was registered as of British birth. I was very proud of that, not naturalised. I'm still very proud of that, not naturalised. I said, "I'm working." I was working, I think at the time I was working for the British drug houses in fact, and he wished me luck. And, you know, and- that's another job I forgot British Drug Houses and wished us, wished us luck, my mother, very nice and there was no exams, you know, [03:00:00] to prove that you could speak English or it was completely different at the time. Well, you must know from your own, are you?

Yes, I've just picked up British, last year, last year.

Last year, but it cost you money?

It did. [laughs]

I know I have- my next-door neighbour was from Italy, and she told me it costed £200 or something.

Anyway, it's another story. But tell me -after you came back from Israel, so what did you do? What did your husband do professionally?

Well, then he decided he wanted to, he wanted to... manufacture, because he missed his profession, I think. He managed to both visualise, design, produce, and sell a product. He should have been an architect actually, but he was led towards... what'd you call it? He became a... a thing engineer, a electronics engineer. And where there's no- production, you

know. So, he set up, we set up a little factory in, in... it was near Euston. Where he produced- to begin with he produced, what did he produce first of all? Oh, small items of furniture, which he designed, and made, and sold. We were quite successful with that. Then, he went into- he had a concept that he could do do it yourself central heating by using plastic pipes. And he was the [03:02:00] only one to do it and he- we then moved to another factory in Kentish Town. And he produced and sold do it yourself central heating. And I left my job. I was working then for the Jewish Agency on a scheme called Year of Service in Israel, Shnat Sherut. And I left them after eight years or so. And I worked with my husband. But we had a show room in Holborn to demonstrate to people how- about the equipment needed for- show the equipment needed for central heating. If anybody was interested, I used to send them to Kentish Town to purchase. One day- and we had a direct line between Holborn and Kentish Town. One day, somebody- I sent somebody to Kentish Town. He said, "This phone lady you have in your showroom, hold onto her she's very good. " Alan said, "Honestly, I can't help it, she's my wife." You could hear my accent. We kept the end- from the central heating eventually, we branched out into sun- sunbeds and overhead sunbeds and sunbeds to lay on. And again, I was working for him from the showroom. I had models there to show, and also to take orders, [03:04:00] and which were produced by him and... And we were demonstrating those at exhibitions at the Ideal Home Exhibition. And there came a point just towards the end of 1990 that sunbeds became, got a bad name, because it was said it can lead to cancer if you expose too much UVH- UVA. And also, the lease to- the, the factory were, in Kentish town was leased. The lease came to an end. And also, the, the rates went up and up and up. We decided it was no longer was while keeping it and Alan said, "Provided I can work from home, I'll find something to do at home." And we'd already moved into this house and he- I said, "Well, what, what am I going to do?" He said, "Well-" you know, he always when we- from the very early stages of our relationship, from when we got married. Even the year before we got married, we went to Juan-les-Pins. Because cousins of mine went and they spoke about it. And they spoke about the Riviera. I knew France, but I didn't know that part of the Riviera. So, we used to spend two or three weeks there and then Alan- renting something. Then, Alan always looked in the estate agencies. I don't know why, he more than I. And he said to me, "Why, you speak French? Why don't you try and sell property in the South of France?" I said, "That's a good idea." But the French- first letter I sent out, I got somebody to translate [03:06:00] because I wasn't sure of my French by then. I could have done it myself. The answers I got - I came in at the moment when property from almost walking off the shelf, if property can walk off a shelf, went down to nothing- people...and

they were only too pleased. Oh, yes, we went to the apartments we stayed in. At the and- at the beginning, it didn't have a phone. At the end, it had a phone with yellow pages. I took the yellow pages, took them back to England and I with this letter written by somebody else, surprised all the agents in Juan-les-Pins- Antibes, in that area. Enormous, the replies I got were fantastic because I came in at the moment when they couldn't sell. And they heard somebody who speaks French, who writes French, who can sell the properties in England, why not? I shared, I shared commissions with them and I did this until January '18. That was my last exhibition, because in September- I don't know the- wasn't feeling so well and I gave it up.

Not that long time ago?

No, 18 months ago.

And did you continue going to France as well?

No, no. We went up to - oh, I have somebody who's going to come and visit me because I got very, very friendly with one from my state agents. She's gone- she promises this year she's coming. She sent me a lovely card for the 90th birthday. And we used to go up to- [03:08:00] I think up to about seven years ago, or no, eight years. The years go by and I forget now, used it regularly. They came up. We were always used to drive. But the last, yeah, then, I had my- five years ago, I had my accident. So that year I didn't go. Maybe the year before I had- my accident was in '15. '14 must have been the last year, six years ago.

What accident? Did you fall?

I fell and fractured my hip. And then a little while later, Alan found that he...he wasn't getting better and he was frightened of driving all that way. He wouldn't go any other way and you know, anyway.

You lived- through the year, so you went to France and to Israel. So how, how would you define yourself today in terms of your identity?

My identity, I don't know. I suppose British, I don't know. What's my identity? More British. I can't say English, British.

How important is your Jewish identity to you?

How important? Very important. Of primary importance. I wouldn't be my- me if I wasn't Jewish. And my contact with- up to- I'm very good contact with my neighbours who are not Jewish. I'm very good contact with- but it's not the same, it's not the same. The person who translated my book, we are real- [03:10:00] I mean, I've never met her personally. All by email, because she phoned me once, but she's got such a strong accent and the line wasn't very good. So, it wasn't a very good- we are really good on email. We can, we can correspond daily almost. I mean lately, when she told me that somebody is making this research about the place in Seyre, we've, we've been exchanging emails almost every day. But what can I say? For a strong relationship, I can only have with a Jewish person. To start explaining what I feel about Israel, to start explaining what I feel about the Holocaust, to start, it would be too difficult for me. I mean people realise enough, I've ever spoken. I haven't hidden anything and this person I'm in touch with in- she's not in Juan-les-Pins. She's in, in near Grasse. She... has bought my book, the French edition of the book. She knows my story, but I don't have to explain myself. You understand? I don't. How- what can I say?

Do you find that you started talking about the past more recently or when was that?

Recently more and more, because suddenly- in St. John's Wood nobody ever asked me. It's in South Hampstead, it's like a, it's nonstop. I was invited to- do you know by any chance Sue Nyman?

Yes.

I was invited by her to a second Seder- to a first Seder [03:12:00] night. I was sitting next to her son. I don't know if you know her son, Josh, who stutters very badly.

No.

He asked me- I have to say that he asked me, "What's your background? Where'd you come from?" or something. I must have said something maybe. I said, "Not sure, it's too long to explain now, but if you'd like to come with your fiancé," he just got engaged. "Please, come round to Fellows Road and I will tell you." They sat here for two hours listening to me. When Alan died, his...somebody who was Youth Minister for- worked with the youth in- actually, he's a second, a great -nephew, Danny Bloom, came and sat with me, because Alan, when he died, the consult- the consultants said to him, "You have- we can't keep you for long, but we have three options, a nursing home... a convalescent hospice in- or home." Alan said, "Where

do you want? What do you want?" He said, "Home." There's no way I could have had him at home. Unfortunately, he put on a lot of water. He put in water and I couldn't even lift his leg out of the bed, back into bed if you try to get out of bed. He tried to get to the toilet and I couldn't. Really, I mean, it was day and night nursing. I couldn't have done it. I couldn't afford it any case. So, I really dreaded it, but he died in his sleep at the Royal Free. So, I never was put in front of the- you know- what to do.

So, you think in South Hampstead people are more interested? Everyone wants to--

Since the moment he died, I've been surrounded by people. I don't know whether Nicola started it or Nicola and Michael [03:14:00] or their friends, but one of them I knew from- because, I have a friend in Israel, who- originally from England who knows them, but they are like - they invite me and each one wants my story. So more and more and more I've been talking.

Do you mind? [crosstalk]

No, I don't mind at all.

Do you feel- I mean, is it upsetting or how?

No, no, no. I think people should know. I must admit, Bronia went around and spoke in schools. I never felt inclined, even when- now, I'm not mobile, so it's not, not so easy. Do you know, by any chance, do you know- I'm sure you do. Oh, friend of mine. Ralph and Zahava.

Kohn, of course, yes.

She's fantastic.

She goes to schools with her daughter.

That's right. Her daughter spoke at. I tried to get to her daughter because I didn't have a chance. Do you know her recently? Because I think she's got Alzheimer now.

Yes, she has.

Yes, she has. I thought so because I smiled at her, I waved to her and when she walked past the table when we were sitting down, I don't know whether you afterwards sat down for the tea. I was sitting down at the table and she sort of, you know, didn't recognise me.

So, you're friendly with her?

I was very friendly. We were on the same committee for Emmunah.

Okay.

I love them both.

But you were saying you were not inclined to go to school.

I don't know, I never- I was working full time. Even when I had the- when I did the [03:16:00] properties, my, my second bedroom upstairs was my office. But it was my office, not just a study. It was my office. When I wasn't there, I was in the kitchen. When I wasn't in the kitchen, I was up there. I really worked. I worked except for the time when we took off for Shabbat, I think, and I worked in exhibition. Apart from the time we spent in France, there was very little free time. And then, I had my accident, I became less mobile and I felt I was better at talk- at writing than at talking, but maybe I made a mistake. Maybe I could have gone to schools. My nephew now, Malcolm, Bronia's son, wants me very much to- he's teaching in a school somewhere in Surrey. He wants me to come to his school to teach. Maybe.

Just do it. How do you think your experiences affected you in later life, your war experiences of being separated and being in the hostels?

How can I say? I get very attached to people. I get very emotional. [silence] Especially since my husband died. No, not having family to discuss things was- I feel lonely. There's all these friends, wonderful friends, I feel lonely. I still have second cousins. I have one cousin, real cousin in Jerusalem. [03:18:00] I speak to her from time to time. I have second cousins, who are wonderful. Who came to- one came to- she's just gone back. She had an accident- broken, fractured her knee or something. She's just gone back to Israel, but it's ...difficult.

Yes, it's your sister- it's just somebody knows your story.

Yes. And even Bronia at the end, although she didn't understand, and she wasn't really listening to me, understood if I said something. There's many things I would- like to tell them all. [silence] You know...On the other hand, because of it, I was independent all my life.

Yes. I mean, that's what the situation made...

That's right.

...created. And do you think in your experience, because you were partly with other children and then partly on your own, would you think it was easier to be in a sort of communal situation than by yourself in a family?

Yes. It depends on the family, I suppose, but, yeah, for me it was, yes. For me it was.

I think that's really interesting. It's true for a lot of the Kindertransport children as well. What emerges, I think, from my interview, is that the communal situation was easier because you are with other children and the other one.

Sure. that's right. Somebody to share, who maybe understood you better.

Somehow.

Some of the Kindertransport people were [03:20:00] very lucky, some were terribly unlucky. I've read this. I don't know if you read the book about- what's it called? The thing in... the one who was abused by her--

Yes. This is Sue Bechhofer, yes. I know what you mean.

What's the book called? I've got it here, I think. The...it's a strange title.

I know what you mean.

Yes. Terrible. It's her first family who took them, her in who... The the grandson of the first family, who wrote her story.

Yes.

You know which book I'm talking about. I'm sure.

Yes, yes, yes. Is there something you miss from Berlin or from-

I miss? No. I was too young.

You were young.

I remembered Berlin as a very, very ugly town. I revisited when my, my cousin, the one who sent parcels to my father. She survived Ravensbruck. And she kept her mother alive. She was on the way to the Kindertransport to the station. She turned back and she said, "I can't. I can't go. I won't leave you." She wouldn't leave her mother. They were in hiding up to...forty...'44, I think, when they were, when they were denounced by something and she- they finished up in Ravensbruck but they both survived. And she married somebody from the- she met after the camps. [03:22:00] And they went back to Berlin. They lived in Berlin. I went out once as a visitor to visit them... And I even then thought Berlin is ugly. You know, even then...

Did you go back to the Müllerstraße?

Yes. Oops, don't worry.

Berlin

Don't worry.

Berlin.

Berlin, yes. We were invited when we were making sunbeds. The tubes, the sunray tubes used to arrive- they often arrived broken. And the factory was in Berlin and they put it down to a bad road between Berlin and- you know the- what's it called?

The airport?

No. They went by transport, but it was a bad road to the coast [inaudible 03:22:59] They invited us to show us the way they produced, they invited Alan, myself, and was our English agent to-through whom we bought to Berlin. I said, I spent, I spoke to Gusti, I said, "Gusti," my cousin, "whatever you do, we're coming to Berlin, but don't speak a word of German because I won't let on that I speak German." So... She was very funny. I only gave myself away twice because apparently to Alan, because apparently, I said München instead of Munich. Alan could never pull honestly "ü". I mean, he spoke some- not very good German. He spoke some, but "ü" was beyond him. I would refer to something else in, you know, but they didn't find out. And they wanted to take us out to a restaurant. And Alan said, "If you take us to the Berlin Philharmonic..." It was very funny because they were discussing between them why these lamps, you know, why these lamps were broken. They didn't, obviously, know that I understood every word they said. It was very comical. Also was

comical they employed some Turkish cleaners. And she was going there with her broom and saying, "*Bitte schön, bitte schön, bitte schön.*" [laughs] And at the end, yes. Somebody, when we arrived, somebody asked me, "Have you been to this, have you been here before?" I said, well, I said, "Once or twice," but I didn't go into it. So... at the end, I turned around to when we were leaving already, we'd left the company, I said to the English agent. I said, "Actually, I would tell you I was born in this time." He didn't understand, but I wouldn't let on. He could not understand at all what I was getting at.

Why did you not want to tell them that you are from Berlin?

Tell them that they killed my, my father, what? You know? Tell them what? That they threw me out of school, that they deported my father. That they made us move. That they, you know, ruined my childhood. You know...That's why.

Yes. And how do you feel towards Germany today?

I say I don't blame the young, the new generation. I'm very friendly with somebody who picked up a book about L a Hille [03:26:00] written by a- s he very recently passed away. She lived in Berlin and she was half-Jewish. And she said, "*Man kann keine half-Jüdin [Halbjüdin- half-Jewish] sein.*" It was very difficult for her, but she somehow got hold of our story and she was fascinated by it. She, we got a bit annoyed with her because she actually pinched some of those things from Ruth's book without asking permission. But her book was picked up by somebody who lives in Rheinhausen, near, near Basel, you know. And she decided to- German, a young German woman. She ...is a psychologist for young people, helping them with their problems. through theater production, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And she produced a play called "Die Kinder von La Hille" based on the story she read in that person who's passed away, and which I've got here as well, or probably there. And she had one of the- produced for school children, she had one of the school's children play the part of Betty and one play the part of Ruth. She put me in touch with them and she said, "You must come to the opening night." Now, I had a problem because Alan had been in hospital, only the second time he had ever been in hospital for a very short time, he had some problems with his stomach, something. And he had just come home and I didn't really, [03:28:00] didn't want to leave him. I said, "I can come, come for one day." I literally, I booked a mini-cab to be here at 6:00 o'clock in the morning- I took the first- or 5:00 o'clock in the morning, I took the first plane to Basel... and arranged for her to meet me there. And then, the last flight

back from Basel to London. And... I arrived in Basel, and I couldn't find her because Basel, apparently has got three exits. One goes to Germany, one goes to France and one goes to Switzerland. She was wai- she was waiting at the wrong exit. She had come over to London, interviewed me. And she said, "You must, absolutely, must come." And she wrote a fantastic play- all produced solely by children. And her husband wrote the music to it. And I forgot the play, but I'll give it to you the next time. You can, I can, I'll lend it to you next time you come. It's upstairs. And- I've got another question for you in a minute. The way I was received was incredible. The- not only by the children, but by their parents, who came later on to watch the performance.

This was where?

In Rheinhausen.

In Germany?

In Germany. It was so unbelievable. They were so warm. They couldn't- and the person who came to interview me for the paper, local paper, Bayerische something rather Zeitung [a Bavarian newspaper]. I am sure she sent me even- she sent me Christmas cards or emails. [03:30:00] I don't know whether it's me or I don't know what it is- but I can't tell you that I came back and I wrote an article, which I sent to AJR, I said- I think I sent it to the Jewish Chronicles, well, I don't know if they published it. I cannot believe the warmth, because it's the first time I was in Germany after the war on my own, because previously- o h, I'd been flown out to be with my cousin, but there I was completely on my own, not with Alan, and amongst German [unintelligible] . They couldn't do enough for me. And then, she, the producer, she- they came to London, she went to Israel to interview, to interview Ruth and show how interested they are. Her husband's learning Hebrew, he's a linguist, any case. And she- they came here and I invited them for supper. And they sat here and Alan said, "It's the first time I've sat around the table with Germans." I, I didn't feel uncomfortable, because it's the new generation, it's the young generation. She's very much, now very much involved with producing plays with Syrian refugees, with Lebanese refugees, all over the world. With the peace movement with everything, but she's, you know, another friend I made. When you asked me about Germany, what I feel, the young generation cannot be- responsible for what their grandparents did or very often even their parents, because no- I didn't choose to be born in Berlin and they, you know, [03:32:00] didn't choose their- where they come from.

What do you think is the most important part for you in terms of your German Jewish heritage or German-Polish Jewish heritage?

What a difficult question you asked me.

Sorry.

I think it's my feeling into the atmosphere of festivals and Shabbatots, and the way people behave. And- I mean, more or less, I don't know I can't- where it comes from- I don't know because I've only lived in Germany for eight years, but somehow or another, I must have...my father was more German than a German in the way he was, as I said, pedantic in cleanliness and funnily enough, one or two of Ruth's children are exactly the same, you know. She, she used to go crazy because they came to the kibbutz, and they went into the kitchen and threw this out, "You don't need this anymore, Ima. Ima, this goes." Because it wasn't brand new. It wasn't- not that she was dirty, she was tidier than I am, but I don't know what it is. I can't tell you where it comes from. Probably the basis is religion, I suppose... because of the way I was brought up.

But you continued to-- [crosstalk]

It continues family, family atmosphere. Although, you know, as I said, [03:34:00] but this would be a strange family. I don't know, it depends on the family, that I would be happier with a group of children, but it depends on the family. I'm very much for family. Believe it or not, I'm quite reserved. I don't start speaking easily. [chuckle] You probably don't believe it.

You know, what I'm thinking about listening to you is how this has affected the three of you, your siblings so differently and partly because of your different ages and you all had different experiences as well.

Yes, yes. Well, Ruth, of course, became completely integrated in Israeli life, I mean the Kibbutz life and she was part and parcel of it. She worked there. She lived there. She lived through the wars and she lived through the you know...

That's the other thing, do you think- it was easier in some way to be part of Israel than be, be in Britain?

Oh, yes. Definitely. Definitely. The sense of belonging.

She was Israeli.

She was Israeli, yes. Although she spoke perfect English and she was the only person I spoke to in German- after. Now, I haven't spoken German I don't know for how long since she died. We used to speak in German. We had French in common. We had English. She could perfect with Bronia. She spoke English, but for us, it was natural to speak German. She used to call me Bettylein [affectionate form].

And you kept- I mean you were very young when you left, but you managed to keep your German?

[03:36:00] When I went to this Rheinhausen, this thing, production, Kinder, the Kinder-. I wrote- I had to speak to them, you know, obviously. And I wrote it out in German and I sent it to Ruth by email. And you know, she was five years older. And her Eng- her German certainly was much- you know, she went to secondary school already. She said, "There's very little, very little, very few mistakes in it." And reading or speaking, I found- maybe now I haven't spoken for so long, but last week I had to speak French and I hadn't spoken French for a little while since I don't do the thing. So- for a minute or so, it becomes more difficult but not really, no. I'm quite happy in German, I'm quite happy in French, I'm quite happy in English.

And Betty, do you have any message for anyone who might watch this interview based on your experience?

Talk about it. Talk about your experiences. People are interested and the more people know, the more people will keep our memory alive. [phone ringing] Oh, I haven't switched it off properly.

Yes, you were saying to talk about it.

Yes, talk about it. The more people hear about the Holocaust and our experiences, the more people will remember and more people will keep our memory alive and hopefully, it will never happen again. [03:38:00] Although, unfortunately, the way the world is going at the moment. It doesn't look very promising.

Betty, just to end up and I also wanted to ask whether there's anything else we haven't discussed which you want to add.

I really can't think.

Well, we'll come back, and then if you want to add something, you can. But for you, what was actually the worst experience in your, in your time between '39 and '44?

I think probably the worst experience was when Ruth was, when they arrested all the older children or teenagers, or whatever you want to call them. And we thought we might never see them again.

You understood the danger?

Oh, yes. Oh yes, we knew. I mean, by that time, I was 14 or 12 years old. i mean. Gosh, yes, did we know. I think that was the worst, yes. Well, the very first, worst was when my father was deported because then to me that was the very first, very first and very worst. But you asked me before if I was ever frightened. I can't remember being frightened in France. Somebody else asked me the same question. I don't know. [03:40:00]

Is there anything else, Ruth, or anything you more you need to add, or? We discussed many things. Maybe one question, has it affected your faith or belief? That's always children-people get asked that.

Yes, yes, very much so, but traditionally, Alan even more so than I, I don't know the later stages, but traditionally we have remained very- I would not ever not light candles on Friday night. It's part of me.

You've always done that?

I've always done it and I always will, I hope. I will always, as long as I can, fast on Yom Kippur. You know, I don't travel to shul, you know, I don't have to. If I don't have to, why, why do it? It's something which is, but it's not- I don't know what to call it. But it's to call it faith or... I've made Shlomo laugh. I've sent him after he came to the, to the *shiva*. I sent him an email, and in the email I've said, "If you had been the Rabbi at the time, we wouldn't have left." I must tell you something, that Alan did not do security at the end and self-censorship,

because he very much lost his faith and didn't want to upset you, offend you. He became [03:42:00] what I call the *frumest apikoros* what's the word in English?

Atheist.

No, the other one. Not atheist, the other one.

Agnostic?

Agnostic. The *frumest* agnostic. You can imagine. So, he wrote back and, "Thank you for all your [unintelligible] you know, for letter." I wish all my, all my congregants were as *frum* agnostics as Alan was. " Yes. I don't know what it is tradition and what is- you know, it's, it's inbuilt in me.

Okay, Betty. Thank you very, very much for this interview.

Thank you for your patience.

I think- I feel sorry I took a long time with you. Have a well-deserved break now. We'll come back and look at your photographs.

Okay.

Thank you very much.

Maybe you can find some old photographs. I don't know where they are. We've got so many photographs. I can't tell you. Stacks and stacks and stacks.

Today is the 28th of February, 2020. And we are now looking at the photographs of Betty Bloom. Betty, can you tell us about this photograph?

Yes, this photograph is the only photograph I have of my paternal grandmother, who lived in Nowy Sacz [Austro-Hungarian Galicia, present day Poland] and was- disappeared in the Holocaust. Nowy Sacz was a little town near Tarnow. And my [03:44:00] father was her youngest son.

What was her name?

Her name was Perla Zimetbaum, Paula Zimetbaum.

Zimetbaum. Thank you.

This is the wedding photo of my parents. My mother was called Baila Gittel, and my father Josef. It's Baila Gittel and Josef Schütz. They married in 1924 in a small village, I've forgotten the name unfortunately, in Hungary.

Yes, please.

Yes, please go ahead.

This is a photo of my father in his shop. He supplied goods for cobblers such as leather and soles, et cetera, et cetera. And he- it was taken in, I believe, perhaps 1934, '35.

What was the name of the shop?

Just in our name, Josef Schütz. "*Leder, Leder* good..." I think. I'm not sure

Okay, thank you.

This is a photo of Ruth, my older sister who is holding me and I'm smiling. I loved being held by her I can see, In- I think probably in 1932.

Where?

In Berlin.

Thank you.

This is a photo of my father, Josef Schütz, with his two daughters, Ruth and Betty, proudly [03:46:00] walking, going for a walk in the Goethepark in Berlin in 1935. This is a photo of Ruth, my older sister and Bronia, my younger sister and I in, taken in Berlin in 1938, I believe. This is a photo of Ruth, Betty and Bronia tobogganing in the Schillerpark in Berlin in 1937.

Yes, please.

This is a recent photograph of the barn where we were accommodated when we arrived. A hundred children arrived in 1940 not having anywhere to go. But it was a barn in a small village called Seyre in south-east France.

Thank you.

This is a group photo taken shortly after our arrival in Seyre, a very small village in south-west France, of the hundred boys and girls who escaped from Belgium and were accommodated in a barn.

Where are you on the picture?

I'm not very- I am a bit hidden. I'm on the left. [03:48:00] Let me see. You can't see me very clearly. You can see Ruth, but not- I would have to- no, I'm a bit hidden.

But you're on it?

I'm on it. Both Ruth and I are on it.

Thank you. Yes please.

From Seyre we were moved to a Chateau in south-west France, delapidated-- I'm sorry.

Dilapidated.

Dilapidated chateau, which hadn't been occupied for 40 years, but was more comfortable than the barns and photos taken in front of the Chateau, which was called Chateau de La Hille in a village called Montégut [-Plantaurel] and it shows Ruth, my older sister and myself. Ruth and Betty on a horse cart in- near the Chateau de La Hille in 1942.

Yes, please.

The Chateau de La Hille in village, a near a village called Montégut-Plantaurel in... taken in where we were accommodated in 1942 onwards. This is a wonderful photo of Bronia, aged..., aged...aged seven [03:50:00] with the lovely people who rescued her, Gabrielle and Henri Ball and their two children Clem and Sinecke. Photo taken in La Hille of a group of brothers and sisters of whom there were several. Ruth and I are in the middle of the photo. This is a photo of a very young and devoted couple who- Alex and Elka Frank who looked after us both in Belgium and later in France up to about 1942.

Okay.

A picture of Ruth taken in Grenoble in 1943, 44 I'm not exactly sure of the date. No, it would be 1944 when she had met a group of Zionist- young Zionist volunteers who were helping Jewish children to cross into Switzerland over the- legally over the border into Switzerland, including myself. [silence] A picture of myself at liberty in Bern towards the end of the war, age 15. [silence] **[03:52:00]** Reunited with my mother in- at the end of 1945. This is a photo of our first holiday after the war in- taken in Margate in 1946.

Yes, please.

A photo, a wedding photo with my late husband, Alan, taken on the 25th of May 1952. Alan passed away. We would have been married 67 years, but he passed away a few months before our 67th wedding anniversary.

Where was the wedding? Where was it?

In London.

Thank you.

Alan, I'm sorry, Alan a radar instructor in the RAF in 1948. He subsequently volunteered to serve in the Israel Air Force as well in 1949. I'm working in the famous building, 77 Great Russell Street, made famous by Weizmann, Chaim Weizmann working for the Jewish Agency. Enjoying a holiday with Alan in Portugal in 1962 [silence] Breakfast on the terrace with Alan in Juan-Les-Pins **[03:54:00]** in 1962. Making use of the French I learned during the war, I am trying to sell properties in the south of France.

Yes.

In front of the gates of the, of Chateau de La Hille with Ruth taken during a reunion of the enfants de Chateau de La Hille in the year 2000. The mayor of the small village of Seyre addressing us during a dedication of the- affixed to the barn where we were lodged when we first arrived from Belgium. Betty is- I am the first one on the right. Ruth is next to me.

Yes, please.

Paintings of Disney cartoons made by Friedel, the, on the left of the photo, which she drew, she painted in 1940 when we first accommodated in the barn and still existing today.

Even today?

Even today.

2020?

2020. Ruth, Bronia and I, [03:56:00] three sisters reunited at our golden wedding, which took place in London in the year 2002. Was celebrating our golden wedding with our Bloom nephews in 2002.

Thank you. Yes, please.

My sister Ruth with her four sons at her eldest son Yossi's 60th birthday.

What are their names?

From left to right Ranan, [pause] Hovav, Ruth, Yossi and Ohad. I had to look because the twins are so much alike. [chuckles]

Thank you. Yes, Betty.

Blowing out the candles on my birthday cake- my 90th birthday cake with help by Mike Cohen on the 19th of January, 19- [chuckles] I'm sorry 19th of January, 20-

20

-20. I was going to say 1930. [chuckles]

Betty, thank you very much for sharing your story and your photos.

The words came out... Doesn't matter.

Anyway, this was from your birthday party?

That's right.

Which was organised by?

Mike and Nicola [03:58:00] yes.

Thank you very much

Thank you. **[03:58:12] [END OF AUDIO]**