

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Taylor
Forename:	Ruth
Interviewee Sex:	Female
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Interviewee POB:	Berlin Germany

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

Interview No. RV170
NAME: Ruth Taylor
DATE: 22nd March, 2016
LOCATION: Rugeley, The Midlands, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 22nd of March, 2016. We are conducting an interview with Mrs Ruth Taylor, and we are in Rugeley, Cannock Wood, in the Midlands, and my name is Bea Lewkowicz.

Can you please tell me your name?

Spell my name?

Tell me your name.

Ruth Taylor.

And what was your maiden name?

Ruth Berendt – Berendt.

And when were you born?

1923.

And where were you born?

Berlin.

Mrs Taylor, thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices archive. Can you please tell us something about your family background?

Like what?

You can tell us; you can start wherever you want to start.

I was born in Berlin; I went to school in Berlin, before the war. I went to high school... before the war, and then they chucked me out. And after then... there was a chance to come to England. And I came to England in 19...39, the end of '39, before the war broke out. Just before the war broke out. And my mother and father took me to the station which was very good. But my brother had left before. A few weeks before. And then...sooner or later the war started. I left I think in May, and the war started in August, or was it September? September. Are you going to correct...?

Don't worry. Don't worry.

And sooner or later the... the post st-stopped. You couldn't send any post. Then the Red Cross took over the special printed forms. And you could send them either end, from Berlin to us, or from us to Berlin, to my parents. And that went on for quite a while, until the war started and the war got worse. And you could still send Red Cross letters but that took up to twelve months towards the war – when, after the war started. And ...that's how we went on... through the war... And... I didn't know what was happening at all, because the Red Cross letters allowed only twenty-five words. And then those were sent off and the reply could come on the back of the Red Cross letter you sent. But then towards the war, when the war got really... I mean, we had four years of war. It took even longer, and then they stopped. I think I've got somewhere I've got a last - the last Red Cross letter.

[0:03:57]

And what did it say?

You could only say “OK, you know, “We are well.” “We are all right.” And my parents sent the same kind of words: “Hope to see you soon.” And of course, they were taken away then... Was that before the war when they... took them into camps?

During the war. During the war.

During the war. And then the letters went right around the world before they came back to England. And then they stopped. And I didn't know until after the war what had happened to them. They were taken to concentration camps, and I don't even know which one. And they just... perished. And I know they gave their wedding rings to somebody to bring them over to England, but I never got them. I think that was a bit rough. I found that nasty. If they had the rings off my parents and never passed them anyhow.

How do you know about that, that somebody had the rings?

They told me that before in one of the messages they sent. ...So that was the end of my parents. What else...?

Yes, so let's go just... [pause] Let us just go back a little bit to your, to your grandparents. If you could just tell us who the grandparents were, and where they came from. And tell us a little bit about the background of your parents?

My mother... My father's parents are buried in Weißensee in Berlin. My mother's father... had died in Cologne. That's right, and there's that grave. And at the Jewish Cemetery in Cologne is a space for my grandmother, which never got used. Still isn't used, is it?

Where is she? What happened to her?

Cologne.

Yeah.

No, she was taken, she was put in a concentration camp and she must have died in a concentration camp because... She's not buried on the Cologne cemetery, where there was a space. There is a space.

Yeah. And what was your grandfather's name?

[0:06:54]

Karl Bing.

Karl Bing?

Karl Bing. Yeah. And they lived in Göbenstraße? Göbelstraße...?

Yeah?

Is it Göbden or Göbel?

Gobel Strasse I think. Yeah?

Göbelstraße *Drei* [3]. [Göbenstraße]

And what was his profession?

Geheimrat Baurat. [Geheimer Baurat]

Geheimrat Baurat, yes. And what does that mean?

I never know what that meant. You know?

Well, no not really.

Must have been a good job...

Yeah.

...because my grandmother had a good pension. We had to have her in our house, and... which was a bit of a squeeze, because it was only a small house in Berlin. And... I...

Did you used to go and visit in Cologne? Do you remember?

We often, yeah. My mother- We always went on Christmas I think, every year. And they had a nice... we call them 'maids'. What do they call those people?

[0:08:20]

Dienstmädchen [maidservant].

Yeah. But she was part of the house and household. And on Christmas, at Christmas she used to take us to the Kölner Dom [Cologne Cathedral].

[sound break?]

Yes, so where did she take you, on Christmas?

To the Kölner Dom.

Aha... [sound break]

Yes, just for the... Yes you were telling us about...

In Cologne?

Yeah.

We always went- My mother took us to Köln am Dom for *Weihnachten* [Christmas.] [laughs]
And we had a, a little old maid, and her name was Pauline. And she used to then take us to the Dom.

Yes?

[0:09:22]

And... I've got some photographs of when we were in Berlin, in Cologne.

In Cologne, yes? And what do you remember? Do you remember going to the cathedral?

Oh, yes, I remember- Actually I only remember going there and seeing the cathedral. I don't know any service or anything.

Yes, Kölner Dom. So, you – you used to go to the Mass?

No. Or did we? I don't think so, we just walked to the Dom and then back again...

Yeah.

And probably had a – what do you have for Christmas - to eat? Pretzel? Brezel?

Mn-hnn. So, did they celebrate Christmas?

Well, not really, except it was a holiday. And my mother took us- That was before my grandmother came to live with us. But after, you know, when Hitler came, my - my grandfather died. And was buried at the Jewish Cemetery in Cologne, where there is space now for his wife, his widow.

Mn-hnn. It should be; there is a cemetery in Bocklemünd. [planned by her grandfather Bing]

Is it?

Yeah, that was the old Jewish Cemetery.

When I went in, to Cologne - I forget when it was - I found out; I asked where the cemetery was. I remember crossing a road somewhere there.

You saw it? You went to the grave.

And to the cemetery.

And as a child, was it very different Cologne from Berlin? From your childhood impressions?

My childhood – we were both little, my brother and I and I think we were- We liked going! My grandfather once hit me, and I've never forgot that. But- and I don't think it was very bad. But he hit me! And I didn't like that. And like you see, I'm now ninety-three and I still remember it.

And you were not used to that?

No. It must have been something awful I'd done. But then when he died, they must have sold up in Cologne, and my grandmother came to live with us, in Berlin.

What was her name?

Adele Bing. Is that right? Do you know? [laughing]

[0:12:11]

That sounds right.

No, she was Adele Bing. And... she was a very what... you know, straight statue. And... very...formidable, almost. She put you, you know- And after my grandfather died, she sold up and came to live with us in Berlin. Which meant that I had my own bedroom at home and my brother had his own bedroom. But we had to go back together, you know, share a room, so that my grandmother could have the little room on her own.

And where did you live in Berlin? Do you remember?

Tempelhof.

And what was the address?

Paradestrasse.

What was it?

Paradestrasse.

Paradestrasse. And was it a flat?

No, it was a little house, more or less like this. With a garden at the front and a garden at the back. And a lot of fruit trees in the back. And nice bushes in the front. And but that was the Straße, the, that Hitler Youth marched from the field in Tempelhof.

Was there an airport?

Yeah, that was – Flughafen.

Flughafen Tempelhof. And is this the house you were born into, when you were born that's where you...?

That's where my father and mother lived, yeah. But they were much the same as these houses, you know, semi...with a garden in front and a garden at the back.

And just before we talk about your childhood, do you know about how did your parents meet? Were they introduced or...?

[0:14:16]

They were introduced. It must have been my father's- because my father was presumed missing, dead – presumed missing, in Siberia. And then when he sort of, suddenly turned up,

that was great joy for all the rest of the family. And the rest of the family must have met my mother's family, because otherwise, well, they met. And they must have got married pretty quick because they were both getting on. My father was forty-two; my mother was thirty. And they had me straight away. Which brings us then to - to March 1923. And my brother was born two-and-a-half years later. And my mother was very happy with my brother. And it was a happy home, till Hitler came, and sort of smashed it all up again, didn't he? And then the only thing left for us was to leave. They'd chucked us out of the schools, and we went then to the school on Kaiserdamm in Berlin.

What was it called? That Jewish school you had to go to?

It was called Kaiser shul...

You said before it was Theodor Herzl school? Was that right, no?

It was Theodor Herzl school, yeah, first of all. And I've got a book here.

Yeah... We can look at that later.

[0:16:09]

What's her name, Fürst was the headmistress. And... that went on because we had to go by underground to the school, an hour in the morning and an hour coming back. And that went on till... she had to close the school, finish the school because so many people already had immigrated, and there were less and less pupils to go to school. So after, we had to stop. Oh, Gott. What happened then? That's right, my parents tried to get us to Israel. Was it Israel or England? Oh, dear, I'm sorry.

Don't worry...don't worry...

England must have been the first. And my brother got to England first. And then I tried to get to more or less the same place, which I did. But I didn't get to the same place, but I got to England, and then had to... Varied a few years before I was able to eventually ...get back to

a hospital where I could do my training. I'd been to several hospitals, before I was eighteen. And... Because you couldn't start your general training until you were eighteen.

Aha. And you came- you were younger?

I was too young to start. I did- I was able to – to nurse school, but not as trained nurse.

Could I just ask you, let's just, before- Just to stick with your schooling a little bit? Did you go to primary school first? What was the name of your primary school in Berlin?

Berlin.

In Berlin.

Yeah. Volksschule.

Volksschule. And was it a local school in Tempelhof?

Yeah.

And who was- Were there other Jewish children in your class? What was the neighbourhood like, Tempelhof?

[0:18:33]

Tempelhof was mainly non-Jewish. There were just a few Jewish couples living there. There was one on the- One was Hannah... Hannah... whatever. She wasn't very far from my place, home But they were- they had other connections. I used to meet her here in Birmingham, but... I don't see her now.

Yes, so she lived in Tempelhof?

She did live in Tempelhof.

And did you go to the same school?

We did go to the same school. But not into the same class. I don't know...

And why did you- How did your parents live in Tempelhof? Why did they choose it, or...?

I think because it was called more the *Englische Dorf* [English village] or something. Tempelhof was Tempelhof and then Neu-Tempelhof. Neu-Tempelhof was a new...

Bezirk – District.

District, sort of built according to an English village. And they were a young couple, and trying to start with a new house...

Yes.

... with their garden in front and garden at the back. My father sort of grew...

[Sound break]

[0:20:10]

We were talking about Tempelhof, and the area where you were brought up.

Yeah. Brought up.

What are your earliest memories of growing up in Tempelhof?

The corner shop...

[interruption]

I asked about your earliest memories.

Flughafen and Zirkus Krone.

Tell us about Zirkus Krone.

Well there was a big field the other side of the road, of the Berliner Straße. Two big fields, because they rode through it, to the Flughafen. And the circus used to come every year. I forget what time and part of the year. And we used to enjoy be able to go and see the circus, see all the animals, which we didn't realise how cruel it was for the animals. Because they don't have animals anymore in the circus. And... my brother used to go to see whether he could see anything on the floor, and he picked sort of a few pence up or pieces – pieces of money. Because people used to sit on these rails, on seats. And... that was part of our growing up, I think. And we- then the one came, and you could go anywhere to, you know, in Berlin from there. From Flughafen the station was Flughafen. And ...Yeah, we used to enjoy it. It was good. And when I had to go to Theodor Herzl school, that was a lot longer journey I had to start? [sound break]

[0:22:28]

You remember coming here?

Yes. You were talking about your memories of Tempelhof.

My memories. Well I was happy in Tempelhof. And I had a girlfriend in the flats, because of the Berliner Straße- do you know that part. Well there's Berliner Straße, a long road from Kreuzberg nach Berlin. And I had a girlfriend. We used to do...what's that language...dot, dot, dot...dots and dot. What's that called?

Morse code. Morse code.

Yes, it is. We learned the Morse code, and we used to... communicate from my house to her house. That was before Hitler.

What was her name?

I forget. Dorothea...no, too English. Dorothy... I forget. We used to do that for years. And then one girl was called Hilde Zenk; she was my best friend. But she never, ever... did anything; whether she was a Nazi, I don't know. Because she never, after Hitler came, she never talked to me again. And that was because she was my real friend, I thought.

And was that upsetting?

Very. Yeah. Because she was my first girlfriend and my only, more or less only girlfriend. Yes. And that was quite hard to swallow; you know, couldn't quite understand. And she never sort of spoke to me again.

After when? After...?

Well, after Hitler, before I left home. And...

What was the relationship between the Jewish and non-Jewish children?

At the time it was good. But then when Hitler came, she finished with me.

And other children? Other non-Jewish children?

They called me dirty names. This one lad around the corner, he used to spit at me, if he, if he saw me coming. I kept out of the way, but he did spit at me. And... my neighbours I could go around – as long as nobody saw me – an elderly couple, they were actors. And somewhere in my photographs I've got a- He was an actor in some theatre.

What was his name, do you remember?

[0:25:35]

Trutz. I don't know his first name. Herr and Frau Trutz.

Trutz?

Mnn. And ...I think when I came after the war, [coughs] there was a midwife who was a friend of our family. And she was pretty good. She used to come and see my mother. But I mean they weren't allowed to come, go and see them. But she came as long as she could. And I met her again after the war. I was able to, after Berlin was all knocked about. And I was able to come to Berlin. I wanted to do something about my house; I forgot what. Sell it or something. And she was still there. And...[coughs]

And what sort of circles...did your parents mix in? What sort of friends did they have?

[Coughs] I'm trying to think; Frau Rosenthal. And I don't know; I forget... who was left after the war. Because I went to see one or two people after the war.

Yes.

And after the war, she was given, or during the war, she must- my mother must have given some neighbours a lot of our things. There were the *Daunendecken* [eiderdowns]... yeah? Do you know what it means?

Yeah, I know what it means.

They were there, after the war. And one or two other little things...

Duvets, down duvets.

Duvets. Mnn.

And did you get them back?

Mnn. Yes, I was able to use them here for a year or two until all the feathers came out, you know, and I couldn't...to have them repaired was more or less...not able.

Your parents had a good relationship with the neighbours?

I must say, one person. I forget which one it was. I didn't even know which one it was. But one of them did have the *Daunendecken* duvets, and several other things. But, you know, it was nothing important.

And how - how religious were your parents?

They weren't religious. I mean they wouldn't deny- my poor mother gave us I think some ham or something for *Einbeißnacht* for Yom Kippur. But I'm surprised because she wasn't stupid. You know, she knew what was going on, but... I don't know. She did it.

[0:29:10]

But you knew- you knew you were Jewish?

Oh, yeah! But especially after Yom Kippur when we'd been fasting all day. Perhaps that's what she fancied. I don't know.

What synagogue did you go to?

I can't tell you the street. The nearest probably. I mean, it was, you had to go on the bus or the tram or whatever. I mean we didn't have a car. I had an uncle who was a doctor who used to come from ...Danzig to Berlin to see us. And he was a...

[sound interruption]

And I... He... was my mother's brother. And he was a doctor in Danzig. And he used to come and see us now and again. And he was the only one who used to have a car. But he never took me somewhere – did he? But when he was married to his first wife, I was able to go to Sopot, in, near Danzig, on my own, on the train... and come back. And they gave me this special drink, in, in, in Danzig. Known, it was a special liqueur kind of thing. And they gave it to me to take back from Danzig to home. And I forget what I was told to tell if anybody comes and sees it. I mean...[laughs] I think that must have been before the war, because after the war it wouldn't have been there.

But you said you used to go to synagogue, in Berlin?

I used to go with my father, yes.

Was he more religious than your mother?

Well, my mother was brought up in Cologne and remember, if you lived in Cologne...

Yes.

... you were very assimilated to the local people. So, I mean my mother didn't know much about Judaism.

And your father, more?

Oh, my father a lot more. Not only because his parents probably were, or whether he was ...because they were living in Berlin, but before he was living in Berlin, he was a prisoner of war so... in Siberia. And apparently, they used to collect newspaper to make- stuff in their shoes, because they'd got no shoes...to wear.

[0:32:09]

Yeah. But is there anything you remember from the synagogue in Berlin?

No.

But you used to go on Yom Kippur you said?

I'm just trying to think whether it's here in...in Birmingham or Berlin...

With your father...

With my father, yes.

So, it must have been in Berlin?

Well here as well, because here- they had men downstairs and women upstairs in Birmingham.

Yes. And in Berlin, were men and women sat separately?

Yeah, it must have been... Yeah, it was because...

Was there an organ? Was there music?

Oh, that I can't remember; it's too long ago. I don't know.

Did you like it?

I liked to go with my father. Yeah, I liked to go with him.

What was your relationship with your father?

[0:33:03]

Oh, I was his only daughter. His first daughter. He was very proud – I've got some photographs there – he was very proud of me. Yeah, and I, it was too soon to ...to leave them, it was awful... I mean, it was just terrible to be sent off on your own. Nobody- You didn't know where you were going to go. And when I came to England it was not easy. Not easy at all. Terrible. Terrible. And my brother suffered too. But he was lucky when he was evacuated to around here, cause the woman there, she was a caretaker at the local school. Only a couple of miles from here. And she, she said he was the last left in the... hall, because the local people were asked to collect somebody. So, he was left. And then she had to ask her husband whether she was allowed to take him home because her daughter and just joined up during the war. She was just joining up. So, there was a bedroom empty. And they did; she, and her husband agreed. And I mean that was after he, my brother had gone there to live with them. And move... after they moved, they were, my brother was so grateful when he grew up and got a bit of money he looked after them and they came to their end.

He kept the relationship?

He kept them financially as well as....

What were their names?

Emberton. Mr and Mrs Emberton.

And they took him in when he was evacuated?

When he was left at the school for...

Yes.

Yeah.

Just to come back to you and Berlin pre-war. So, when was the first time you remember talking about emigration or leaving Berlin, or...?

Oh, I was in the Hashomer Hatzair.

Yes. Tell us what Hashomer Hatzair is? What is it?

Well it's a Jewish youth club, very much for Israel, and very religious as well. And that was the only one there available at that time just before the war, and I joined them. And... there wasn't many weeks that I could go because, we just have to leave then. But that's yeah, Hashomer Hatzair, which... It's a very...bit religious youth club, isn't it?

Were you in Berlin during Kristallnacht? Kristallnacht.

Mnn.

Did you experience it?

Yes.

What do you remember?

[0:36:33]

I do remember it because I always wanted to be a nurse. And...I... my parents had taken me already to the Jewish hospital. And on that day, or the day before, I got the flu. And they sent me home. But I met my mother am Halleschen Tor [underground station in the Kreuzberg quarter], because I think it was the day after the night before, when they did all the... smashing of the... the synagogues and...

Yeah.

That was the morning after. And I remember meeting my mother, on that morning, after all the...how do you do and everything – awful - taking me home! And soon after, that was in November I think – was it the 8th or 9th of November - and in early January I left home for good. I never went back to the hospital. I just stayed at home. My, we fitted my brother out, to come over here. And then me. And after that I went...came to England.

So, did you start a nurse's training in Berlin, in Jewish Hospital?

It wasn't Jewish Hospital, but I was too young; I was only about fourteen, fifteen. Fifteen, I think and I was too young to start so they put me on like- like on any nurse's training they put me on the cleaning part, which I was allowed to do. But I couldn't see patients; I was too young to see the patients.

But did you stay at home, or did you stay at the hospital?

...I stayed at the hospital for that- for a few weeks. It was only a few weeks because anyway after that I came back here – came up here. Not here, but came to England. Left home.

So, you were just fifteen. In 1938 you were fifteen years old.

And I couldn't do proper nursing but I could do the pre-nursing, which they call the pre-nursing here as well. Which is showing how to clean a house or a room or a room or...whatever.

And how do you remember the atmosphere because you were young and ...you said you had bad experiences and people were spitting at you. Do you remember being frightened? Or what was it like in those times?

It was such a short time, wasn't it? Because it was only a week or two- Because... by then I'd sort of tried to get- come over here, and I came over here in March, I think. By the end of March.

And do you remember? Did you see the burning, the smashed windows? Did you see it yourself?

Mnn.

What did you see?

[0:39:33]

Yes, I mean it was rough. It was terrible! And to - to think then... some other people were going to be... Just one girl who went to Australia, who came to live with us for a short time before they managed to get to Australia. And my cousin is still in Australia. And he sent me fifty pounds for my birthday.

And by then your grandmother was living with you?

My poor old grandmother, yeah, she was a proud lady, she came. She lived most of her life in ...Cologne, and if you remember Cologne, and my grandfather – Karl Bing - he had a- he had a – he had some letters after his name. And I never knew what they meant.

The Geheimrat Baurat?

Geheimrat Baurat – yeah. Yeah.

So, do you remember, did your parents try to emigrate? Did they try to leave?

No, they tried to, but they never got- They never managed to do it.

What did they try to do? Were you aware of it?

Well my father always said that he fought for the Germans in the First World War. He couldn't see that they would do that to him. Of course, they did do it to him.

What- You didn't tell us yet. What was his profession? What did he do?

Well he wasn't really... I mean, he was so old, in his forties. 'Kaufmann' he called himself. The German word I think: 'Kaufmann'.

Were you well off? Was he well off? Did you struggle?

No, no...

Was it difficult?

Very difficult, yeah. I think they ended up to send us to Theodor Herzl School. I went to Theodor Herzl School.

That was the Jewish school?

Jewish...

How many years did you have in that school?

Only about six months because again, the people, pupils all left and they were all emigrating as fast as they could. So, I mean, by the end of the school year they had to close the school!

So, your parents were struggling? Your father was struggling financially?

Mnn...mnn.

So how did he support the family? Did they get some help, or...?

I don't know. I mean, children weren't involved, in the financial... part of life.

But you said both of your parents were painters?

Yeah.

[0:42:04]

Yeah?

Mn-hnn.

What did they paint?

Well, my mother that's one of my mother's somewhere [points at the wall]. Also, that's one of mine and those are mine. Not that one. That's... Joe from Birmingham emigrated to Israel, about...couple of years, oh, it must be more. And he couldn't take that picture, so he left it here.

But what about your parents? Did they- You said- What did they paint?

I've got one picture of my mother...somewhere.

Yes? They were hobby- like amateurs, they painted?

Oh, yeah. My father used to sketch more than paint. My mother used to- my mother learnt to paint. She's got a- there's a picture on the stairs of hers.

She studied painting? She studied it?

Hmm?

Did she study painting?

Yeah...yeah. Yeah, because I mean in those days, they must have had enough money. Their parents must have had enough money.

And what was your mother's name? We haven't mentioned...

Grete.

Grete. And née- born Bing?

Bing.

And your father's first name?

Julius.

Julius. Berendt?

Berendt.

So, they were quite artistic, as a family.

Well, yes, I mean, they both painted and I painted. I'm painting.

And did you paint as a child?

Yeah, I must have done, but there are no pictures of me – mine, as a child. The only pictures are now, what's hanging about. Not that one. That one outside and... that one there. Yeah.

And what, do you remember, what other interests did you have as a child? Did you have any hobbies or?

[0:43:56]

As a child, no. But I mean later on, painting was one and making jewellery. And I finished, I was doing something... and didn't know what to do next. And there's a list on a- on a board, and jewellery was another one. So, I said, well, I'd always liked jewellery. So, I make my own and so gone and done jewellery ever since.

Lovely! That's lovely!

Mnn. I went to the jewellery quarter in Birmingham, and to the, where you buy your... materials, silver and gold, and ...yeah. I did that then.

So, let's just go back to Berlin. So, it was after Kristallnacht. Your parents put your names down on the...

I came home, yeah, and then waited. And it was January. No, my brother went in March and I went soon after.

But you didn't go on the same transport?

No, we couldn't get on the same transport.

What was it like? You remember your brother leaving first?

Terrible. Terrible.

Can you describe it for us, please?

Terrible, yeah. My poor mother, I don't know, it must have killed her. I don't know how they lived. I remember them seeing me off, seeing my brother off first. And then me.

Where did he leave from? Which station?

I forget- I've forgotten. And of course, she didn't hardly speak, because of all the Nazis were on the platform. And then... it wasn't until we came to the... Holland border, you know the border where Germany finished and Holland started. And it was tulip time; I remember that when I came. But my brother had been; he'd been earlier. And I remember the tulip fields after we could breathe, you know, after we left Germany.

[0:46:14]

Tell us about your journey. What happened? Who took you to the station?

When I left, yeah, well, it's a terrible thing. Yeah, I mean you never realise that you don't see your parents again do you, when you go there? You just thought it was just a short time until they'd follow you. But of course, they never did, or couldn't.

Who took you to the station? Did they take you?

My parents.

And then what happened?

Well, that's- I mean, Hitler- the Hitler people were on the station all the time, and you just- you just thought you'd just seem a week or two and they would be able to follow! And then they didn't. You didn't realise that. You just...

So, when you were leaving, were you upset?

Well no, because I mean, like I say, you, the whole thing was – they'd follow you! You never have thought that would be the end, would you?

And what luggage? What were you allowed to take? What did you take?

Well, you know, there was not much. There was a little case I think that was the... size of it. And one spoon, one fork... and one knife, no, two spoons. Soup spoon and a teaspoon. And I've still got those.

That's what you were allowed to take? Anything else?

No.

Clothing?

Yeah, only just enough for ...weekends. Yeah.

And was there anyone on the train who you knew? Were there any of your friends there?

No. I remember getting off the train then in Holland. And...What did you have to do, what did we have to do – got off...And of course, you didn't know who was going to meet you at the other end. That was another problem. [dog whines] Was that Benji? Was it? No, it wasn't...

Let's continue, so...

It was- I mean, things happened so quick. When once you... [dog whines]

The journey...on the Kindertransport...

It was terrible, cause especially when we had to cross on the boat, you know, the channel. And all those kids crying, those little ones, little - younger ones, , three years, five years old. They were crying, and I remember the children crying. And...

Were you one of the older children?

[0:49:13]

Yeah. Mn-Hnn. Tried to keep them, but that was awful. And then of course as soon as we get to London, a lot of them had people picking them up. And I did have, just my grandmother's brother who was living in London. And I think, did they take me home the first night. But the place I had to go stay at I couldn't; I just couldn't. I had a little bed, a little camp bed in the window. And they were Jewish people and they weren't very clean either. No, it was horrible, so...

They took you in? A family took you in?

No, it was a...it was- they knew these people. But it was so horrible I couldn't stay there. So, they had me, I think for...they didn't have me, but they found me somewhere else. That was another home, I think. There were a lot more Jewish grown-ups. And we had a fivepence, a shilling a week, from the Jewish... people. And I walked from Marble Arch to Cricklewood, because I'd got those relatives in Cricklewood. And then at night they could only give me a shilling. And I think it took me to the station. I forget the name of the station. And I could go two or three stations, and then walk the rest.

What were your first impressions arriving in England on that boat?

I don't think I could tell you. I mean it everything happened so...quick, and horrible. I mean, arriving on- It was a terrible time, you left your parents, you don't know where you're going, who's going to look after you...where you're going to sleep at night. You didn't know anything! And you were so innocent. I mean I walked along... Cricklewood. [to her dog] Benji come here. ...Around London...and then we were, there was a place - near - I forget where it was - where there was quite a lot of us staying.

In a hostel?

In a kind of hostel. And...

*Because by then you turned sixteen. You must have just left before your sixteenth birthday?
Or was it after your sixteenth birthday?*

After I think.

Did you turn sixteen in Berlin or sixteen in...?

[0:52:11]

It must have been in Berlin, mustn't it? I forget. I mean in those days, everything... you tried...you tried...everything happened so quick, from leaving your home to wherever you were getting to. ...And then this place in - in London... And there were quite a few girls that by then I knew, but I mean you couldn't stay there. And then some friends I think from my family... wanted a maid. And I was given this job as a maid, with a uniform. It was a bit...and I- no, I had to eat my food in the kitchen, and serve them in the dining room. And they had a son the same age as me, and he was sitting in the dining room and I had to serve him. And I did do something terrible. They had a beautiful cut-glass lamp. And cleaning and tidying up which I had to do, I smashed - it fell, and broke into pieces. The worst thing that ever happened to me... [laughs] in other people's houses. And soon after, I think I walked out. And I met some Jewish girls who also wanted to do... nursing. And this was near the sea by then. But then we couldn't stay by the sea because the barriers went up because the war started.

Where were you by the sea?

Eh?

Where was it? Where were you?

Mention one or two seaside places. I forget.

In the south or...?

Yeah, in the south.

Brighton, near Brighton... or Bournemouth?

I can't remember. No...no.

So, you'd moved from that- And when you were the maid, was that a Jewish family or not Jewish family?

Not Jewish family.

Not Jewish family. And where was it in London?

In London. And I had to- as I say, I had a big drive downhill. And every morning I had to get out and get the bucket and the brush and wash this blooming drive. It was a posh house.

Which area of London?

Not Cricklewood, but... that, that area.

Willesden? Brondesbury?

Mnn. That way.

You didn't like it?

No.

No. And you didn't...

I did have a room of my own, because I was a maid, but I didn't like wearing the uniform and serving at the table.

And there was no question that you could continue schooling?

No, I was sixteen by then, was I? Yeah!

Mnn. By then you were sixteen. [sound interruption]

We were talking about your experiences after arriving in Britain. And you were saying that you were a maid with a family. And what was the situation like? How did you get enough food?

[0:55:49]

Oh, yes, but I had to wear a uniform, which you know... And I used to pinch the cake, bits of cake out of the pantry, because I don't think she would have given me any. And I liked a bit of cake; I still do like a bit of cake. [laughs] And well, I met some more girls. Where was I, on the sea? Near the sea? Anyhow there was a lot of Army personnel as well, near the beach...

Yeah?

So, you couldn't go on the beach. And I met these other girls. And... I think they wanted to be nurses. So, I think I just went with them. And I mean I didn't have much luggage, so I didn't have much to carry. And it must have been a Jewish hostel. It might not have been a Jewish hostel because it was filthy. The woman used to keep the bread... and she used to sit on it. There was a board, and she kept the bread underneath. That put me off eating bread.

Where was the hostel? In London?

In London.

Back in London?

Mnn.

Did you have any contact with Bloomsbury House or with the Refugee [Committee] ...?

I think by then we must have had, because they gave us so much- They gave us, was it a shilling pocket money. That must have been from the Jewish people. But...

Was it easier for you to stay with the other girls, that you were together?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. But then everybody tried to get somewhere where they wanted to do nursing or whatever else they wanted to do. And... I must have gone with the ones who wanted to do nursing. There was quite a few who wanted to do nursing. And...

And where did you go?

Was it then... Oh, Hampshire! ...Hampshire!

You went to Hampshire then?

And there was a...a boys' or children's' hospital evacuated out of London to that place. And I wound up there, on nights. And I was quite happy there.

What did you have to do?

Look after the little children... at night, well, anytime when I was on duty. But then after... if they had visitors on a Wednesday usually. And all the visitors left them... their papers, there were little papers what they had. And the kids used to when the visitors were there tear up all these papers. And all the paper was on the floor, and then we had to sweep up all this paper. I couldn't blame them. I mean I enjoyed sweeping it up.

[0:59:21]

How good was your English at that point?

It must have been- yeah, I mean it must have been all right, because I mean you couldn't speak German. You'd got nobody to speak German to, so you had to speak. At that house before, I think I got mixed up with the... butcher and the baker. And I- you know they used to come for the orders because they wouldn't do their own shopping. And... whatever... was it, the butcher or the baker I got it mixed up. But they were pretty good.

When you were a maid?

When I was a maid. Yeah. They came for the...

Butcher and baker sound sort of similar, yeah.

Yeah, I mean, it's completely different but the butcher and the baker; when they came for their orders, they sorted it out. Yeah.

But you spoke some English. Did you learn some English before you came?

I did a couple- yeah, a couple of years at school, but it isn't the same. I learnt at the... Theodor Herzl School. But when you come to speak you can't, I mean it's completely different isn't it?

Yeah. So how long did you stay in Hampshire in that hospital?

Not very long- Oh, in Hampshire? ...Not too long, why didn't I? The government wouldn't let us stop. They wouldn't let us stop because we weren't English. So, we had to wait until we had to become English. And that was another process out of the blue, which you had to go through. And then... It was one of those things. You know sort of upside, up and down. But in the end, I finished up here. How did I finish up here in Walsall General? Why? Because my brother was evacuated to... not very far from here, and I wanted to be near to him. So, I applied at Walsall General, to do my general training. I was- By then I was eighteen. And they accepted me. And I got my CRN. And then I stupidly got married, and then I got divorced, and then I come up here...and that's about it, I think.

Were you in touch, when you came to England, were you in touch with your brother?

Oh yes, I've always tried to be near him. I've always tried to... he's my younger brother. He was.

What happened to him when he came to England? Did he go into a family?

[1:02:18]

Yeah. He was- the Grovers lived a couple of miles from here to school. And he was the last - like I said - he was the last one left, and the caretaker asked – the wife asked her husband if they could have him. And because their daughter had just joined up so they'd got a spare bedroom, so they had him. But that got to a very good... friendship, over the years. And my brother, by the time then he was working in Birmingham, and I think had a garage there, because he got good money. And helped them out once or twice to those people who gave him a home. And then right up to their deaths, he helped them with what he could help them with.

That was when he was evacuated, but did he go before his evacuation? Did he stay with a family when he came on the Kindertransport?

No, he was down in Rowden Hall ...at school, I think...a Jewish School is it?

What was it called?

Rowden Hall.

In a school?

It was a school. And....

So, he wasn't fostered by a family? He didn't go into a family?

Not until he came up here and went to those people who were caretakers.

Right. And those people, the caretakers were Christian - a Christian family?

Mnn. And they were very good to him. And now, when he could, he was very good to them, until they died. And...

They were not so well off?

No... And he helped me all my life.

Did he?

[1:04:16]

Mnn. Because his needs were very small. He was... [half laughs] I don't know, he, in between he of course lived in Vancouver for ...quite a while. And ...in Vancouver he... what did he do there? Oh, he got... whatever it... I've got a silver plate they gave him, whoever employed him there. He got that from somewhere... So.

Did he stay in Vancouver or did he come back to England?

No, he did for a short while, and then he couldn't get a job after the war finished here. He stayed with me and he couldn't get a job. And that's when he decided to, I think, go to Canada? That's when he decided to go to Canada. And he went and then... Oh, he's done everything, he's been in the ice-breaking ...ships, you know, in North Pole. He's done- been down to the South Pole. Then after quite a few years, they allowed him to have a world trip with a friend. And we went all around the world – he took me - Canada, New Zealand...

And did he, did he ever marry?

No. I don't think he ever married because he was too fond- He was my mother's son, and there was no other women like my mother, for him.

And he was younger than you. Was it very difficult post war when he realised that your parents... didn't survive?

That was awful, I mean, I went to that place where they killed them, and had those mass graves, in Germany. Where was that?

Was that before, it was in Riga?

Riga. Mnn. We both went there together. And we walked around the woods where the signs were still up. And we came to a place...that's one in one of pictures there. And where

the...How do you say? We came to the place where the mustard grows, all around by the graves. Tick-tack, tick-tack, tick-tack. And it's a huge place. And if you look at my photograph, all you got to do is do the enlargements in your head. That's where we were.

[1:07:53]

Was it important for you to go there?

Yeah. And we were both glad we went. It has a huge entrance.

And could you find the names of your parents or...?

We couldn't find their names, but we knew they should have been there.

And when did you find out what had happened to your parents, after the war...when?

I think we knew what happened, you know, by then. And also... they killed them all, didn't they, one way or another? Some awful ways and some not so awful.

But- But when the war ended, did you have any hope that your parents survived?

No.

Because you were- You had some correspondence until...?

Yes, I've still got the last Red Cross letter upstairs. ...I mean, it's awful, isn't it? I mean it's so terrible you can't even talk about – what you know, you think you know. What you do know. So, I mean from the time... we crossed the Channel, till now, it's never gone away. It's, it's sort of, if you let it, it takes over. But now I've got Benji... that little dog.

Benji.

Yeah, Benji.

I think he went out; he's coming back.

And my husband was very nice to me... when I got married. ...And... I just wanted to get rid of him. [to the dog] There he is. Hallo. Come on! Little Benji where have you been? Where have you been? Well, Tom hasn't come yet. He'll be here in a minute. You wait for Tom, he'll take you. He'll come.

You said it hasn't gone away, since you- since you crossed. It stays with you...

My luck?

No, that your parents, I guess...that...

My parents are in my memory all the time, I mean, you can't help it, can you? I mean they'd been good parents but I only knew them a very short time. I was fourteen, fifteen when I left! And now I'm ninety-three.

How do you think this has impacted your life, your experience of- this very traumatic experience?

[1:11:10]

Well it's never stopped; it seemed to go from one... crisis to another crisis. But you have to cope with it. I did have a partner, for twenty-five years, I think. And we were very happy here together. But he was then too old and died. And that was the end of a new partnership for me. I've been on my own ever since. And now- I've got friends. I've got Andrew, who's married to Sonia, who are living in Eccleshall which is the other side of- quite a way away. And they come to see me. And... Andrew said the other day what he's got set up for my birthday I don't know. So... That will be something to look forward to. And... he's helped me with a lot of paperwork. And... when I was in the other house, before I came up here, his father, George, was living down the road from me. But his father took him to me when I was down in Chase Terrace. Brought him to me when he was a little boy. And now he's nearly sixty. And...he's been a good friend.

He's taken care of you.

Yes, he's got his own family and I get on well with all them.

That's nice.

And...there's- it's a big family now. And Andrew's got... No, Andrew's got.... they live in Eccleshall anyhow.

So, when you- when you moved up here and started you training in the hospital....

No, I started my training long before I came up here...

But I mean you said you moved to the Midlands, to the hospital...?

Walsall General, yeah.

Walsall General. That's where you started your training? Yeah?

My general training. Yeah. But before I'd been sort of nursing in other little hospitals.

Tell us a little bit about your professional career. So, you started training there...and then...?

I started when I was eighteen at the General Hospital in Walsall, which is finished now. And I got my CRN in, three years later, when I was twenty-one. And... that's it... isn't it? I stopped at the General. And then...

[1:14:30]

And what happened then, after you finished your training?

I'm just trying to think!

Sorry.

I think I met this man whom I married! I wish I hadn't!

Who was your husband? Who did you- what was his background?

He was the manager of a Co-op shop - branch. And... I think we just got together. Oh, no. There was a theatre show on in Blackpool, and you could go. But I mean I couldn't go and stay the week unless I was married in those days. So, I had to get married – so I got married. I didn't have to get married. Matron thought I'd have to get married, but I didn't have to get married. That's what they say, you know. And I had my son... in due course. I got married in September and he was born in July so work that out, well over nine months, so that was all right. But then...

So the Matron thought you should get married, of your hospital?

I was married by then.

Yeah. But did you...?

But that didn't... He wouldn't even touch him as a baby, and he wouldn't love him or do anything. It was awful. You know, not a happy marriage and not a happy father-son. And then Peter got a job at Lichfield King Edward School. And he was managing the Coop shop in Lichfield, and they wouldn't go together. And I thought that was a terrible thing to see. So... And I didn't get on with him either then. By then I'd had enough of him, and he didn't treat me right. He treated me like you know like you know the normal Walsall people treated their wives. Like, you know, you're just of a cover kind of thing: 'I'll have dinner on the table when I got home.' But I wasn't that way inclined. And... that went to *kaputt*. And then somebody found me and... treated me well, and I think he was living here with me for a good twenty-five years, and then he died here. And that was the end of my... my mixed... my whatever - marriages. Since then, I've been on my own with just friends and...

[1:17:32]

And what was the background of your partner, of your second partner? Was he also- Was he from here?

Yes, he was from- He was a farmer. Yeah, he was from here. And he got on with a farmer up here, up the road, up the hill. And now I'm just too old to have anybody.

And when you came, did you want to stay when you got married? You didn't want to go to London or any other places? You wanted to stay here?

Yeah, I mean, he'd got the job at the Co-op shop and I'd got my job at Walsall General, so...
And did you continue working as a nurse?

Mnn!

And what happened after you had your son? Did you continue working or did you...?

I forget... I forget... That's when Peter went to- He wanted to go to Israel, and ...we both went to Israel, and by sea to Israel.

You went to Israel as well?

Mnn. Travelled with him. And he went on... I forget which kibbutz. And then he went on another kibbutz. And then he... That's how, God, that's... You see he was a rugby player here, over here at King Edward School. And he was a good rugby player. And he had a fracture. And the doctor had missed And now I think they do say rugby players have a problem with fractured skulls. And Peter, I don't know whether he actually fractured his skull or whatever. But then by the time he came to Israel, and went swimming there...that was the end of him. That's how... And he's buried in Israel. And for years I went every year.

[1:20:21]

How old was he when he died?

How many years? Twenty years.

That must have been very difficult - for you...?

There isn't a word, is it? There's no words to describe it. Yeah, my life was not a happy one. And he's the best one now.

Benji?

Yeah. He helps me now. He looks after me.

But your son, you said he emigrated to Israel. He wanted to live in Israel?

Yes, there was a girl. He met a girlfriend, and she was Israeli. She was the niece of some friends of mine here. And I don't know how deep it went. But whatever, he wanted to go. He got to Israel, and he got to one kibbutz and then he went to one more agricultural kibbutz and he liked it and he planned to stay and then ...I don't know. Then I was there, and then he... He didn't go out of the water.

Were you there when it happened?

Yeah. And I stayed a couple of days and I couldn't stop and then I - I came back. And... And that's more or less my life now.

And were you still married by then?

No, I don't have anybody now.

No, when this happened were you still married to your...?

I was married to...

Your first husband?

Yeah. I haven't married any other husband. No. I've either lived with them but not married them, no.

How did you have a relationship with Israel and your son, also? Because I assume here...?

[1:22:45]

Like I say, I got a friend in Walsall who was Jewish. And her parents were doctors. And she lived— The parents lived in Israel, and she lived around here. And... she got this niece come to stay with her. And my son, I think sort of fell in love with her, or... but anyhow, he wanted to go to Israel. So, he went to Israel and then... that happened.

Because, that's the other question: Did you raise him at all Jewish, your son?

Oh, yeah. A little bit, as much as I could myself here. You know...

What did you do? What sort of identity did you want to give him?

No, to him, I mean he had a non-Jewish father. And ...by now recently ever since sort of has gone whichever way. You know you just go whichever way you want to go.

But what did you do? Did you celebrate some festivals? There is no synagogue here. Or is- Did you take him to Birmingham, or...?

He went... did he go? No, I mean it's, it's a journey from here. We've got this... Joe, whose picture that was and he gave it to me before he went to Israel because he couldn't take it in his luggage. So... that's- We went, we went to the synagogue with Joe, when he was in Birmingham. But he's now in Israel and he's been right up the top of... Jerusalem. Right on the top of Jerusalem in a flat, in a new building. I don't know why he went there, because it's a horrible place. It's all new estates. Just nothing Jewish there.

Did your son have a Bar Mitzvah, for example?

Mnn?

Did he have a Bar Mitzvah, your son?

No...No. I wanted to. We wanted to, but something went wrong there. It was the time and the place and no car. I mean I couldn't drive to Birmingham for him to go to any...lessons or whatever. My son.

And did you talk about your background with your son and to other people? Did they all know that your- what your background was?

Here?

Yes.

No, I don't talk about it much. They know where I- something I come from Germany and some... No.

You didn't talk about it?

Not in general, no.

With your son did you talk about the grandparents, and...?

[1:26:00]

No. I don't know what he talked about. He was very... He got on well, I mean he got a lot of friends. Used to sort of go playing rugby. And... you know with all the things that got on with him, they say rugby is a - a terrible place for head injuries and...skull problems. But what he actually died was... he went swimming didn't he and didn't come back. That's it.

And do they think it was related to the rugby injury?

Hm?

Do they think it was related to the rugby injury?

Oh, yeah! They say now, definitely it is. The injuries they get with rugby - playing rugby are, happen to the brain, whatever happens to the brain is almost you know, sort of... It's known now rugby players do just another knock or another or another whatever - and they're gone.

Yeah. And what was your husband's attitude towards your background?

Ignorance. Complete ignorance. Yeah. And the way they used to treat the wives over here apparently, you know in the mining area or in a working area. All that was expected of it was dinner on the table when they got home. And that's about it. If you didn't have the dinner on the table, you might as well as go and be dead.

Yeah. So, you found yourself in a difficult situation.

It has been...It's not been easy ever since that Hitler came... to Tempelhof on the field there and started Hitlerism...Nazism. And all the other -isms. I mean I've lived ninety-odd years now but it's...

It's your birthday on Monday. How do you think would your life have been, if Hitler hadn't come to power?

Oh, you can't imagine, can you? You can't imagine. I mean, it would have been... I don't know a normal life, which, we never had a normal life! The only bit of normal life was before when we went to school in Berlin. Otherwise it's been sort of ...and very often now anybody says to me, "You're not...Where do you come from? You've got an accent." After all the years over here.

[1:29:04]

And what is your answer?

I don't know that I do answer. I just let it go over my head.

Why, does it annoy you? Does it...?

Well, yeah, I mean what can you say after ...how many years have I been here, seventy or something? What can you say? Bugger off! That I like to say...

And did you have experience of any anti-Semitism in Britain?

No...no. No. Thank goodness. No, I don't think so. I hope not. No.

And how do you define yourself in terms of your identity, today?

I'm an old woman now! Being here. Yeah, some people I've known many, many years and have a good relationship, like Andrew, who still- who comes. And he'll be here on Monday. And he does me books and he does... I mean I've known him since he was so high. And he used to come with me on a Saturday in the district. And then we came home, and he used to see what they gave me, cabbages or... whatever was going. And he used to see all the patients. They were always very nice to me – to us. And we used to come back on a Saturday and have a cup of... What did we have? Egg and chips. I used to cook egg and chips for him in the kitchen when he was so high. He's sixty nearly now, so you see how many years this is going over. And I don't know what he's got up for Monday. Be a surprise.

Is your Jewish identity still important to you?

Well, yes, of course. I can't get away from it, can I? I've been born with it. I've suffered for it and with it. And... I've never denied it. I've never denied it. I couldn't with my nose and with me hair, could I? I couldn't deny, not like you...blond and blue-eyed.

[1:31:42]

Yeah. And what is the most important part of your German-Jewish heritage? What was the most important part for you?

Well, I know who I am. And I wouldn't deny it, and I wouldn't... I've suffered for it and with it. It's part of me! It's part of me, I mean, my- even my Jewish jewellery stuff. They've

made jewellery for centuries haven't they, Jewish people, because they weren't allowed to do anything else. So, I've taken it up anyhow. So, I can't deny...can't deny my hair, my nose.

It's part of you.

Of course, it is. I think I've done, yeah, pretty well to be able to live here, with my brother's help. And ...unless I can't look after meself when the time comes, I'll need to probably go somewhere else. I don't know where. Jewish homes are too expensive. That place where we used to go, where they take us to for outings - I don't want to go there. I don't want to go there.

But you belong to the AJR?

Yeah.

Yeah? And do you have any other contact with any other refugees? In your life, did you have contact with other refugees?

Well, yes, but I couldn't pick one out now.

And what about your German? Do you still speak German?

I don't speak German, no. I've forgotten that. No I can't speak – I mean I can, but I don't speak it now.

And how do you feel towards Germany today?

I don't feel anything. I mean Germany is now, what is it? It's mixed up, cut up. They don't know who they are themselves, do they? There are so many other nations now in Germany. They haven't got a Hitler, but I don't know what else they've got.

And have you been back to Berlin?

[1:34:06]

Oh, yes. I've been back yes.

When did you go back first?

Oh, I've been back several times...several times... I've been- Actually I've made a friend here, somewhere where we went on a trip, on a group - as a group - and I got friendly with her. She lived near. Bit south from here.

Yeah?

Next time I had to see her in hospital near Worcester. She lived near Worcester- she was in hospital in Worcester, and the next minute she was dead! And that was a good friend I made in that short time! And she went, so... These things happen. And...

Yeah. But in Berlin, when you went, did you meet some friends?

No.

Did you meet anyone you knew?

No.

Did you go to your house?

Yeah.

And?

Lived an old woman; she made a mess of it. It was awful to see it. I shouldn't have gone. She ... she made an awful mess of it. No...and, there was another friend I had [Lore?] that I knew. And she died, so now I don't know anybody now there.

You're by yourself. But you have friends?

I did have friends.

Yeah.

But I don't have friends now; they've all died. Nobody's gone on as long as I have.

Yeah. Is there any message you have for anyone who might watch this interview?

Not really. I haven't thought about it!

Based on your experiences?

What can I... What message could I have? I haven't...even thought about it.

Anything....

No...

I mean you are still here, you...

[1:36:24]

Yeah, but I... don't think I could think... I mean, all you have done is letting one's life... make bad decisions, good decisions, can't even speak now. Decisions. I've met a lot of people one way and another. I mean Harvey, who used to take us, he still does I think, to Israel. Make trips from London to Israel. They're doing one in- it's advertised in the whatever... No. Anybody... no. I'm still here if you want to come and see me, come and see me.

That's good. And is Israel important to you?

Well, yeah, my son's buried there.

Yeah. And you were in the Hashomer Hatzair; in the youth movement.

Yeah. I started with that. [about the dog] Isn't Tom here yet? What time is it? He'll be coming any minute now. Can you get out? Yeah. Tom should be coming.

Did you? Ruth, can I ask you- [dog whines]

Go outside! Go outside! Go outside and see if Tom comes! Go in the porch.

Did you ever think of emigrating to Israel yourself?

Yeah, but...I have thought about it, but at the moment too many... problems. I mean, and I've got to think about selling this. Getting rid of this. I've got to do something sooner or later. But... I wouldn't know where to go, do I go on the kibbutz where my son is buried? Do I go...? I'm too old now to get another... lot of new, strange people.

Are you still connected to that kibbutz where your son is buried?

Well, yes, because he's buried there so I am going. I have to go to Israel to go to the kibbutz to see the grave, yes.

And do you go?

I've been going nearly every year, yeah.

[1:39:06]

But getting there now is a big job for me. Bigger job than it used to be. I mean, I could get on a train here- On the station in Cannock, get to Euston, get to Heathrow, get to wherever and even get to ...Israel at five o'clock in the morning, or even earlier and wait for the buses to start to go by bus to the... kibbutz.

Yeah.

The buses start after the plane arrives from Europe.

Is there anything I haven't asked you, you'd like to add, which we haven't discussed about your life?

Crikey! I don't think so! [laughs] I think you've done pretty well. Pretty...

Where is your home? Where do you think is your home?

Well, it's here. Just here... at the moment. I mean it would be a big... I've been here fifty-odd years. Longer than anywhere. [to Benji] You make sure Tom doesn't come and go without you!

And do you feel connected to the local community here?

Yeah, I mean... I still get the monthly... whatsit. [to Benji] What's the matter, dog? I don't want Tom to go without you.

I think we should have him in the picture. He wants to... [barking]

Go and have a look whether Tom is coming. Go and have a look whether Tom is here. I hope he is, cause if he doesn't come to take you... Go and have a look. Go and have a look, duck. We need Tom to take you. Yeah.

Once second, we are almost finished. We are almost finished.

Go and have a look where he is. Tom. There. Go on! I can't take him; you'll have to take him.

We'll can take him; don't worry, we can walk the dog if we have to. Right?

Go and see if Tom is there.

*Ruth just really the last question. Is there anything you miss particularly from Berlin?
...from...? Is there anything you think about?*

No... no. No, there's nothing I miss from Berlin. Nothing at all. The only thing is that my little house is very much like my little house at home in Berlin.

[1:42:50]

Is it?

Mnn. Yes. Garden at the back, garden at the front. Only I don't- I can't do much now.

But you find you have a similar house. You found yourself a similar house.

I suppose it got a lot of similarities, yeah. Back and front and garden. Yeah.

I also wanted to ask you, did you ever get any restitution or help... or pension? Do you have a restitution or a pension?

I do get that, don't I. I should do. Yeah, I do. Could be a bit more 'cause that doesn't go very far now, does it?

But you manage?

Well, you've got to manage.

Yeah.

There's nobody... going to give me any more. If I go to them and, "give me some more" they won't give me anymore because there isn't any more to have. And my brother's been pretty good to me, and... I can afford a bit of. Well I can make my own jewellery here; I can make my own ...paintings.

You took up painting and jewellery? Yeah. And when did you stop working?

Hm?

When did you stop working?

At sixty. But I've done voluntary work. I was in- A lot of voluntary work. ...That's Tom, isn't it? Benji!

Yes, I think Tom has arrived. Thank you very, very much for this interview and for sharing your story for the AJR Refugee Voices archive.

There you are! He's here. That's Tom.

[1:45:00]

[End of interview]

[Photographs]

[1:45:06]

Yes, please, who is in this picture?

My father. Taken...1938. It must have been at... I don't know. It's a passport photograph wasn't it? It's in Berlin.

My mother. It's on the back of the photograph. 1938...in Berlin. They needed to have a- They needed a photograph taken with the left ear uncovered. That was the... rule, or the order.

And you think they were passport photographs for emigration?

Well, I don't know why the left ear. I've never found out about the left ear.

My mum, no, my... It's one of my grandmothers. My father's mother, must be. Because the other one was alive and my mother's mother lived a long, she lived through the terrible times as well. She died before the terrible times. She died a normal death.

And what was her name?

Berendt. She was a Berendt. I don't know what her Christian name was.

It's a photograph of my brother and me. Well if he was in the Army, he'd be in the Army...at eighteen, twenty, and he's... he would be what is it now? Oh God. Must have been during the war, before the war...

In the forties?

Oh- Yeah, late thirties...

That's me and my son!

Could you just tell us again?

What did it say last one? First one... on the kibbutz.

Ein HaMifratz?

And when was it taken?

That's my mother and father. That's my mother and me. That one. Can I pick it up?

That's my son, and that one is my... brother, isn't it? I can't see. That's the family, anyhow.

That's the letter from the Red Cross! It's the same as this one, it's got two sides to it. [pause]

That was on my birthday. 7th of March, isn't it? '41 – 1941.

That's the same as this one, isn't it? 1941.

[1:50:52]

*Bea reads: OK. Dated 1941, 16th of June and it says, "Liebes unser Ruthchen....
Im Garten Pfingstfrühling! Hoffen Euch heute zusammen. Schreibt Herzenskummer und
Freude, Euch zur Erleichterung, uns zum Mitleben. In inniger Liebe bei Euch
Mutti und Vati"]*

This is for my birthday in 19...

Yes, please. What can we see here? That's the last telegram.

It's not a telegram it's a long and alive letter.

Yeah, from the Red Cross.

Took about twelve months to get here.

*Bea reads: Dated 17th of March, 1941. But written on the 27th of February, '41. And it says;
Geliebtes Ruthchen, wie immer auch zum Geburtstag mit unserer Liebe Dir besonders nah.
Nur einen Wunsch im nächsten Jahr vereint. Erzähle Tante Grete von Euch. Mutti und Vati*

Well it comes the right time; it's my birthday is on Monday. ...All right, dog.

Painted by my mother and I don't know when or where. Before, before she was an artist, I think. Unless I take the frame off, and I don't want to do that.

And how did you get it? How did you get this painting?

I don't know. It must have come via that woman who was in Berlin. And she filled a case full, eiderdowns and all sorts of things. That's where it must have come. Because I didn't bring it and I have got it here. And it's the same old frame by the look of things.

Ruth, thanks again for sharing your story with us.

[End of photographs]

[1:54:06]