

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	79

Interviewee Surname:	Brunner
Forename:	Walter
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	1 March 1922
Interviewee POB:	Vienna, Austria

Date of Interview:	28 October 2004
Location of Interview:	Salford, Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	3 hours and 33 minutes

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

INTERVIEW: 79

NAME: WALTER BRUNNER

DATE: TUESDAY 28 OCTOBER 2004

LOCATION: SALFORD, MANCHESTER, ENGLAND

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: I am interviewing Walter Brunner and today's date is Tuesday 28th October 2004, the interview is taking place in Salford, Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

So, if you can tell me first your name.

WB: Well, my name was Walter Brunner and I was born in Vienna on 1st March 1922, a long time ago.

RL: Did you have any other names?

WB: No, not as such, this is my legal name, I have tried to change it a little bit in my communal work because it is not a Jewish name and I am very much involved in communal work.

RL: What did you change it to?

WB: Lazer Dovid which is my, the name that I was given, the Hebrew name that I was given when I had my bris, which was as I said many, many years ago.

RL: Were you named after anybody?

WB: Yes, after my grandfather, who at that time obviously was not alive any more.

RL: You say you were born in Vienna, and the date was?

WB: That's right, 1st March '22.

RL: So if you can tell me something about your family background.

Tape 1: 1 minute 39 seconds

WB: Well, my family background, we are an orthodox family, we, from my mother's side; we have got very famous ancestors. You can see them here, which is Chassam Sopher, which, Rabbi Akiva Eger and son that is from my mother's side.

On my father's side I am afraid I know much less. I know my parents got married in 19 ... 19 probably. My father was a commercial traveller and there was, amazingly enough, there was a large age difference between my parents. I suppose when they got married my mother probably was 20 and my father was about 35. They had a happy marriage, they were very devoted people. My sister was born in 1921 and I was born a year later, and we had another brother who unfortunately is not alive any more, he was born two years later.

We did not in Vienna live in the Jewish district, we lived, Vienna has got 29, 21 districts, we lived in the Ninth Bezirk, the Jewish district in actual fact was in fact the Second Bezirk in Vienna, we did not live there. Why I don't know, but I was, I went to a non Jewish school up to the age of 10 I think, it was called Schubert School, it was in Ninth Bezirk, not very far away from our home.

At that time there was a little bit of anti-Semitism but in this particular school the headmaster, and the teacher, were very, very nice people, we did not suffer anything of that sort. And, that was up to the age of ten, and after that I went to what they called the Gymnasium, which is High School, which was in a different district. I had been there for two years, I must admit, I failed my exams in Latin, and consequently could not continue in that particular school, and I went to another school afterwards in Vienna, the First District, and I stayed there until I was 14.

RL: Can I just ask you a little bit more about your family background?

WB: Yes ...

RL: First of all, what was your father's name?

WB: Solomon Brunner.

RL: And where was he born?

WB: He was born in Austria, and there was seven Kehillas, seven Jewish Kehillas, and he was born in one that was called Lackenbach, and he came to Vienna with his family as well. I must admit that his family got pretty much assimilated, I don't know why, but he was very strictly religious. My grandmother whom I have known just when I was a child, she was religious, very religious, but the rest of the family somehow got a little bit assimilated.

RL: Do you know what your grandfather did for a living?

Tape 1: 5 minutes 34 seconds

WB: I am afraid I don't know ... my paternal grandfather, yes ...

My mother's family, as I said to you before came from a very religious family. My grandfather died before I was born, in fact I was called after him, and my mother had three sisters and two brothers, all religious people.

RL: Where was she born?

WB: My mother? In Vienna. She was born in 1898, in fact I have got her birth certificate here, which you can, if you want to have a look you can see.

RL: Do you know what her father did for a living?

WB: No, I think he was a commercial traveller but I am not too sure.

RL: Do you know what kind of education either of your parents had?

WB: No, I don't. My mother was fairly intelligent; before she got married she was a secretary in an office, which I suppose was usual in those days. My father, as I say was a commercial traveller. We were not well off financially, far from it.

As a child I remember, when I was four years old I got a very nice birthday present of a pair of new shoes, it comes to show you how the financial difficulties were in Vienna.

My father, as I said, was a commercial traveller, he was selling weighing machines and machines which are suitable for butchers to slice meat and so on, and he was travelling a lot, he was very often away during the week and only came home at weekends.

RL: Did he have to serve in the First World War?

WB: Yes, oh yes, he was in the First World War, we have got photos of him when he was in the First World War.

RL: Did he ever tell you anything about that period?

WB: Not really, not really, no. But I mean, he was in the army and he served faithfully the Austrian Kaiser, which was Kaiser Franz Josef at that particular time, it was before my time, obviously. And, as far as health was concerned, my father was suffering from, eye trouble, in those days you couldn't have a cataract operation and eventually I remember he got blind in one eye, and later in another eye, and it meant he had an operation.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 44 seconds

Financially we were very, very bad off and I remember 1934, no, 1936, somebody offered us a chance to take over a milk shop, a kosher milk shop, but it means that my mother had to be there to serve. The milk shop was only selling milk and we had to deliver it, I was a child, and I was 11 years of age, was in the shop at 6 o'clock in the morning, in the winter, the winter isn't like in England, it was really ... delivering milk, second floor, third floor to people all over. I did it with the greatest of pleasure because I wanted to help my people, and this is where we got our living from, it was very, very difficult, but we were not much worse off than a lot of other people in Manchester, in Vienna. The financial position in those days was very, very bad. I mean there were plenty of people who were hungry. I remember there was many times I went to bed without supper because there was nothing to eat. A thing which is unheard of nowadays, but this was how the position was then.

RL: Did your father give up the commercial travelling when he started with the milk business?

WB: No, no ... he had to continue. The milk business was my mother's work. She had to be there, she had to serve milk, which was mainly sold in bottles, I remember taking bottles and weighing them, what do you call it, that is how it was sold and, as I said, delivery had to be made, and I myself and my mother, two people, made every day deliveries, before I went to school. So it wasn't very, very easy but ... life wasn't easy.

RL: Who went to actually watch the cows being milked?

WB: That was nothing to do with us; we got it delivered in huge cans. In the winter when the milk came you had to take a knife and break the ice, it was so bad, right, and then we had until it cools down, warms up, right, and then it had to be put into bottles and had to be delivered to people. Some people came themselves to collect, it was the kosher milk you see, which we had to deliver.

RL: Did you have a shop? Was there a shop?

WB: Yes, it was an open shop. There was nothing sold except milk, cheese and what do you call, Semmel [bread rolls], what do you call Semmel. That's some .. some ... what do you call it nowadays? Just some pieces of bread, pieces of bread, people had, this was a normal continental breakfast, a glass of coffee and some cake, not cake, water Semmel, like you call them buns, and this is the only thing what we sold.

RL: Where was the business?

WB: In the Second District, Zweiten Bezirk.

RL: Do you remember the street?

Tape 1: 12 minutes 10 seconds

WB: Oh yes, Heit Gasse funf. In actual fact this was the centre of the Jewish district.

RL: Describe to me where you were living and what it was like?

WB: Well, we were living, as I said in the Neunten Bezirk which at that time was very far away from the Jewish district. When years and years later I came once to Vienna they said it's so near, but it seemed to me to be so far away, it was just nothing, but, like the school, the school happened to be in the same street as where we lived, it was called Schubert, Schubert was one of the musicians and the school was named after him, and we went there, as I said.

RL: Your home. Can you describe what it was like?

WB: We were living on the third floor. Mainly non Jewish people were there. In actual fact our next door neighbour was a very anti-semitic person and she had a dog, and we children were very much afraid of the dog and she always egged it on. I have been told that when the Nazis came she was even worse and she made a lot of trouble to my parents, I wasn't in Vienna at that time, but I have been told, and this is how people were at that particular time. We had some very nice people, non Jewish people, but some were rotten people as well.

RL: Did you have any non Jewish friends at all?

WB: Oh yes, from the school, yes of course we had, we had. As I said we had to go to school. Even on Shabbos we had to go to school because it was compulsory, we didn't write on Shabbos so we had to rely on friends to write for us. On Sunday we had to copy what they had written. It wasn't easy but it was a concession which the teacher made for us that we don't need to write. And obviously we were sitting in school without a hat, without a cappel, or anything, in fact, everyone had non Jewish pictures, in fact I have some photographs still from the school, and, but as I said the teacher and the headmaster were very, very fine people and I have no complaints whatsoever. They behaved like human beings and I still remember his names and even after school was left I wrote him a letter thanking him for being so nice.

RL: What were their names?

WB: Myerhoffer, his name was Myerhoffer. He didn't live in Vienna; he came to Vienna every day from outside, the outskirts.

RL: How did you get on with the children in school?

WB: Well, the first children, in the first school was alright, the second children, when I came to school, they started fighting with me, boxing with me, they didn't get very far,

Tape 1: 15 minutes 43 seconds

because I wasn't a weakling in those days, but once we settled, that they couldn't get so much further with me then things became peaceful.

RL: What are your memories of your home life as a child?

WB: Well, I must tell you that my parents were very, very devoted to each other. There is no argument about it. I must tell you further that, as I said, we were very poor, and we had three rooms in my house, and one room we let to somebody, a couple, because we needed the money. So my parents had a bedroom and we three children slept in the dining room, so called dining room, and every day we had the beds in, two beds we had and one slept on the floor. That was, we didn't suffer, we didn't consider it suffering at that time. As I say nowadays it would be pretty uncommon, but so what! We had ... in this house that we lived there was about 35 families, about 12 families lived in this particular house, we lived on the third floor and the caretaker, Mr and Mrs were nice people, they loved my mother and did everything possible to make her life easier.

What else do you want to know?

RL: Your memories of the festivals, of the yom tovim, of Shabbos.

WB: Well obviously Shabbos we had to go to school, so it wasn't like we wished it was. In later years when we went afterwards in the zweiten Bezirk to the school it was much easier, but then we had to go, there was no alternative, we had to go to school. So Shabbos wasn't very much a Shabbos like we would have liked it to be, but we had no alternative.

RL: What happened with the festivals? Did you have to go to school on any of the Yom Tovim?

WB: I don't remember. Probably some of them yes and some of them no.

RL: Do you have any special memories of the Yom Tovim? Of anything special you used to do as a child?

WB: Not as a child. When I was 14 or 15, yes, but not as a child. As I said, we, we davened in the Shiff Shul, the Shiff Shul which was the orthodox community, and although we lived in the neunten Bezirk, we always went on Yom Tovim or Shabbos afternoon or so over there to daven, my father went over there, we as kids couldn't go because we had school but after school we went there. It wasn't ideal, but there was nothing you could do. It was compulsory to go to school.

RL: Who was the Rav of that Shul?

Tape 1: 19 minutes 0 second

WB: Well, there main Rav was Rabbi Furst, F-U-R-S-T, and the second in command was Rabbi Baumgarten, his son took over from him actually afterwards and he was Rav in London in 69, Lordship Park, 69 was the orthodox synagogue and he was afterwards the Rav there.

We, I can remember, that we, on Sukkos, we obviously hadn't got a balcony or anything of that sort, so we wanted to make a Sukkah, with the next door neighbour. There were two houses next to each other and there was a yard in between, so together with the next door neighbour we built a Sukkah in the yard just for eight days. Right, and we wanted to eat there, but there were some nice people about, and they threw water from the top right onto the Sukkah, so we were drenched. It was very, very difficult, but there was nothing we could do. That is how life was in those days in Vienna.

RL: Coming back to the Shul, how big a community was the ultra orthodox community.

WB: What you call Austritts Gemeinde. Do you know what Austritts Gemeinde means? Just the same ... for example in Manchester there is a Machzikei Hadass, in London there is a Union, right ... so ... there was a lively community, a lively religious community, and in any case after the First World War a lot of people from Poland came to Vienna and they continued to expand the orthodox Jewish communities in Vienna. Obviously I was a child but I remember those things.

RL: How big would you say it was? How many people would you say went to that Shul?

WB: Oh, to that Shul, I would say about 250 or 300 people.

RL: And were there other Shuls like that or was that the only one?

WB: That was the centre of the ultra orthodox communities Shul. There were other Shuls as well, little Shuls as well, but this was the centre, right. I mean, for example they were responsible to have butchers shops, to supply butchers shops or milk or whatever it is, they give the supervision, the religious supervision of all the requirements that were necessary. It is similar to, I don't know if you know, for example in London there is the London Beth Din, but there is the Union which is separate, the Union, that is exactly as was in Vienna as well.

RL: Was there any Chassidic influence?

WB: Yes, there was Chassidic as well. I don't know whether you know, but there was ... you know what the Yekkers were, Germans, they were educated people, then there were next the Oberlanders, the Hungarian people, right, and there was next the Chassidim who came from Poland or were Hungarian.

Tape 1: 22 minutes 43 seconds

The Shiff Shul which was what you call the Oberlandische people, these were more people that were in the shittle from the Chassam Sopher, which he's created or Rafael, Dr Rafael Hirsch, in the Austritts Gemeinde, and this was this type of people, mainly this type of people. There were some Chassidish and some, everybody was obviously, only religious people were there.

You know it wasn't common in those days, for people, generally people to have beards, for example, right, so I mean there were people, very, very religious people who were clean shaven because it wasn't, it wasn't common. If somebody was in business, not usually that people wore beards.

RL: So in this community they were clean shaven?

WB: Some of them were and some of them weren't, yes. But I mean, really very orthodox people were clean shaven in those days.

RL: And what about peyos?

WB: Exactly the same, exactly the same, I mean we didn't really know about peyos. We heard of them, they had peyos behind the ears, but a hat or something if you wanted, yes, but you couldn't in Vienna, you couldn't display the fact openly that "I am a Jew", well that couldn't be done, because then we would be attacked and people would start shouting, and people would be spitting and so on. We realised that we were what you call in gollus, right, and so we had to be very careful about what people did. I mean, nowadays people go in the street for example on Shabbos with their tallis. It was impossible to do that there; I mean people would just attack you or shout at you.

RL: And you felt this even as a child?

WB: Of course I felt it as a child, we had to be very, very careful, it was not uncommon that you went into the street and three or four boys came and started kicking you and spitting at you and kicking you and hitting you, there was nothing you could do. In those days the police were perhaps a little bit interested to help, if we would go to the police, to say we have been attacked. Afterwards, obviously, the police were themselves hitting the people, so that is ... but in those days 1932, '33, '34, a little bit of help could be got from the police if somebody would hit me on the ... I would go the police and he would try to pacify me or whatever and tell the boys "clear off", which obviously later wasn't the case, there was ...

RL: How often would these incidents happen?

WB: Probably daily. All sorts of things would happen daily.

Tape 1: 25 minutes 54 seconds

RL: Can you tell me about any other types of things that happened?

WB: Not really, one had to be careful, one could not, one had to avoid creating attention to yourself, right, whereas nowadays when you go on the streets you see muslims, you see all sorts of people and one thing one has to remember, nowadays there is television and you can see people who live in Afghanistan, everywhere. People are used to know all sorts of things, in those days it wasn't, people didn't know anything about it. He looks peculiar, he looks different, what is he, you understand? It made a lot of difference. So we had to be careful not to ... just behave like everybody else, don't show that you are different to anybody else.

RL: Was your father involved in the community?

WB: No, not at all. My father was, he couldn't spare the time and he wasn't cut out to do that either.

RL: And you mentioned that he had siblings. Do you know what happened to them?

WB: Yes, two or three managed to go to Israel. And two or three of them were in concentration camps and died afterwards. Some went to Italy.

RL: Some went to ... sorry? Some went to Italy?

WB: Yes, some went to Italy. I think I had a cousin that escaped to Italy. And some went to Israel which was after the war, and others just perished.

RL: Did any go to Israel before the war? Or Palestine as it was then.

WB: Probably, probably yes ... probably yes.

RL: What did the family think about Zionism?

WB: Which family? My family? At that time?

RL: Yes ...

WB: We were not what you called Zionists at that time and those things, that wasn't our cup of tea, although I must admit that my sister for example went to Maccabi which was a Jewish place, and I remember distinctly that there were kids from there and there was some some sort of race on, I don't know what sort of race, and three of the Brunner family were winners, you see my cousin is a macher there, right. But as such we were not, we belonged to the Agudah, which was obviously the Agudas Youth Centre, orthodox youth centre, affiliated to the Shiff Shul and we, at least we boys belonged to it, my brother and myself, but it wasn't for girls in those days.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 44 seconds

RL: What did you do there?

WB: Oh ... we played tennis, we had shiurim, we went on outings, once a month was a social club, which was very important to keep the children off the street, and it was quite successful.

RL: How often did you attend?

WB: First of all every Sunday, that was number one, because we were in a different district. And then I think on Shabbos afternoon, I don't really remember so well, I was a busy boy because I helped in the shop to deliver milk, so I helped not only in the morning before I went to school but in the afternoon I helped as well ... to ...

I remember I was in the shop once, we had a lot of, we bought a lot of candles, and I as a child I wanted to help, to put the candles in the window, in a display. I didn't realise that the sun was shining in and they started to melt, they started to melt and the whole thing, my mother didn't tell me off, because I meant well but it was very, very foolish to do, all the windows were full of wax and I had to scrape it off and so ...

RL: So you say you went to the Aguda Youth Group?

WB: Yes.

RL: Did that have any connection with Zionism?

WB: No, it was, it was a Jewish, orthodox Jewish, and we had no connections with Zionism.

RL: What did the girls do if it wasn't for girls?

WB: I don't really know, probably this was a bit of a failure, but there was not much as far as I know, as far as I remember for girls. I wasn't very much involved, but, I don't think there was very much for girls at that time.

RL: You said your sister went to Maccabi?

WB: Yes, could be, could be ... could be that because there were not sufficient things there. And of course in Vienna, we went, you asked me, when we went first to school, to a non Jewish school in the daytime, in the afternoon I went to the second Bezirk, the Jewish district, where there was a Talmud Torah, where we had Jewish lessons, I mean after all I had to have some Jewish education as well. And, so, it was pretty difficult and strenuous because in the morning after we went to one school and in the afternoon after making homework and in the afternoon we went to the other school to learn Jewish Chumash or whatever we children learned.

Tape 1: 31 minutes 50 seconds

RL: Who ran that Talmud Torah?

WB: Probably it was under the jurisdiction of the Shiff Shul as well. Many, many years later I met one of the Rebbes, or the teachers in America, and I told him I have got a big argument against him, he didn't give me sufficient petch! You know what petch means? He didn't hit me enough, so he laughed and he said, "Well you were not too bad."

RL: How many children attended it? How big was it?

WB: I couldn't really tell you, but I would say perhaps 150 or so, but I couldn't really tell you.

RL: What about your Bar Mitzvah?

WB: Well, I was Bar Mitzvah in Shiff Shul, right. And nothing big was made, we had a small lechaim at home. Not many people came, obviously because we lived far away, but some did come, I remember the Rebbe, the teacher in the Talmud Torah taught me a speech which I had to make, and as I said we had to be terribly, terribly careful with the apikorses. You know what apikorus means? It's amongst us so much that we have to be doubly careful who we mixed with. I remember that distinctly and then some of my family were a little bit... objected to what I said but it's alright, I did say it, and it hit them and they know what I meant. But obviously didn't know something that was unheard of in those days, at least as far as our type of people were concerned.

RL: Who were the Rebbes in your cheder?

WB: I couldn't tell you ... there was somebody called Rabbi Hess, and somebody called Rabbi Deutsch, but I mean, they were teachers, they weren't Rebbes ...

RL: And after Bar Mitzvah did you continue with your Hebrew education?

WB: In the camps I did, and in actual fact when I was 14 my parents made a sacrifice and sent me to Yeshiva in Nitra or Neutra it's called in Czechoslovakia. And I was there for two years and always, what it amounts to, when you went to Yeshiva for six months in Yeshiva and you came home for Pesach, then went back in Yeshiva and you came home for Rosh Hashona. I did it three times, but the fourth time I couldn't do so because Hitler, yemach shemo, came to Vienna and you couldn't go back, right, so I was 16 years of age and Pesach we were at a Tisch at the Rebbe. In fact that is his picture here, this one here, Rav Unger. Not this one, this one here. This is the Chassam Sopher and this is Rabbi Akiva Eger, these are my great grandparents.

RL: Maybe we can just have a look at them on the camera?

Tape 1: 35 minutes 0 second

So if we start ...

WB: This was the Chassam Sopher, he was the one, the well known Rav, he was Chassam Sopher, even nowadays everybody knows about him. He was the Rav in Pressburg, right. This was his father in law Rabbi Akiva Eger, right.

RL: How were they related to you?

WB: This is my great great grandfather, right. Incidentally he is my wife's great great grandfather as well. I am the fifth generation after Chassam Sopher, right, and my wife is fifth generation from the Chassam Sopher as well. I am ... daughter after daughter after daughter, I am the first male, and my wife is the other way round, son, son, son, son and she is the first female, right. All Chassam Sopher's eynikle, right.

RL: And the Rav, the last one ... ?

WB: This one here, is Rav Unger, he was the Rosh Yeshiva in Nitra, in Neutra he unfortunately died from hunger in the wilderness when he had to escape, he was in Wald and he died from hunger.

RL: And this was the Rav of your Yeshiva?

WB: Yes, he was a well-known person; his son escaped afterwards and made a Yeshiva called the Nitra Yeshiva in America. He just happened to die about a year ago himself. And I don't know if I can stop to show you something.

RL: When we start the next ...

WB: Well his son in law was Reb Michael Ber Weissmandel, a very well known personality, he was a big askan. I have got a book there that he wrote, in fact I have got a picture of him there as well and he was in Auschwitz and he tried to rescue people, when they tried during the war to get in touch with the Joint and so on and, people didn't believe what was really happening and so he lost a wife and I think eight children in the war and he went to America afterwards when he was released and he remarried but he was a broken man, like many thousands of others.

RL: Can you just tell me about your experience of Yeshiva in Czechoslovakia?

WB: Well, in Yeshiva it was very, very nice, in Yeshiva there were about 250 boys, and the Yeshivas in those days weren't like nowadays, we had to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning, had to go to Shul to daven, then we had breakfast, which was exactly a cup of coffee and black bread. A bit of jam didn't exist in those days, but we were satisfied, right. Then we had to learn and so on, we had tremendous respect for the Rosh Yeshiva and the Rebbe, and we all felt part and parcel of his family, it was really a great, great

Tape 1: 38 minutes 30 seconds

unity, a great .. not only this at Yeshiva, but all the Yeshivas in Hungary it was like this. And there were all sorts of boys, boys from Budapest and from Vienna from all over came to it ... in fact, I don't know if you know Dr Schonfeld, I don't know if you have heard of him, well he was a talmid there as well, I have got some photographs of him as well. Things of him that he happened to do, he was involved very much after the war to rescue people. In fact he was a second cousin of mine, and that is the reason I came to England, because he got me a VISA at that time. It was in 1938 when I came to England. And as I said, they were together. He was one of the people at that time who was in Nitra, before my time actually, a little bit.

RL: What made your father choose that particular Yeshiva?

WB: Well, he was advised to do that. A lot of the Viennese boys went there from our circle and it was near. It wasn't very far away, it was just about, from Vienna about one and a half hours to Pressburg, which was the capital of Bratislava, and from there about another half an hour to where the Yeshiva was. The Yeshiva was in a little town which had advantages. It wasn't, it was people, people could live there. There were no picture houses to distract the people. It had everything that was needed, and it was a well known community that had this Yeshiva.

RL: Where did you live whilst you were there?

WB: The bochorim had lodgings, we were four boys sleeping, somebody was letting a room so the Yeshiva made this arrangement that four boys, slept in this particular house and so on.

RL: And where did you eat?

WB: In the communal dining room. As I said there wasn't lavish food, there was just the bare necessities that we needed and that is how we lived. And on Shabbos all the boys went out to families to eat, each of those had around two boys to come every Shabbos and so on and so forth, and we had to be careful where we could, after dinner, we talked 'you know it is good to eat in this but don't go in this house, this house is not good, this house has good food' and so on, when we were little boys, well not little so much, we were 14 or 15.

RL: What sticks in your mind most about your time there?

WB: What sticks in my mind? Well we had to learn there, and every so often the Rebbe brought us in and gave us a faher, what you call a test and so on, but the most important thing was the admiration to the Rebbe. I mean everybody would have gone through fire and water to do anything for him, we really felt that he is he, it was tremendous, I have letters that he had written, even when I was in England, I thanked him and so on and he really cared for each and every one.

Tape 1: 42 minutes 31 seconds

RL: Do you have any stories that you could tell?

WB: Amazingly enough there were three brothers there, one became the son in law, called Weissmandel, and I have got that, I will show you the book after. The second one became the gabba rishon, that means the first gabba, and the third one became his house bochur, that is to say he looked after him, he was the second in command, so you got three brothers, one became his son in law, one became his haus bochur and one became the gabba in the Yeshiva, to look after the Yeshiva. But I mean, it was really tremendous, when it was Yom Tov or whatever it is, we looked forward to it, although we had a nice home, in a way we looked forward to going back to Yeshiva to see him and to be with the Rebbe. It was a tremendous, inspiring life.

RL: How long a day did you have in learning? What time did you learn till?

WB: Well, what I did personally, people learned much longer than me, but I went in 1936 and in 1938, in March 38 when Hitler moved in I got to know that I had to run, and in August 38 I came to England.

RL: I was thinking more in terms of the length of the day, you know you said you got up at six in the morning, how long did the day continue for?

WB: Well, we had to do from six in the morning, and then we had to daven and we had breakfast and lets see from half past eight until one and then from two until six or so, and then in the evening, we had to come as well just to be together and to learn together, but there were no lessons in the evening, there were just, we had to be together, to ... I believe so we didn't get into any mischief either, not that we would on purpose, but that was the norm.

RL: Was there any recreation at all?

WB: No, none ... wait a minute, I think in the summer occasionally, there was a river and we went swimming. But there was no football or anything, no, not as far as I remember.

RL: And as you say, at Pesach and Rosh Hashona you would go back home.

WB: Oh yes.

RL: Did you notice any change when you went back home?

WB: In what way?

RL: In the atmosphere or in, you know what was going on?

Tape 1: 45 minutes 27 seconds

WB: Well, not the first year, but the second year yes, because you could see already that the people got, that was after, wait a minute, am I right, it was after the Anschluss in Czechoslovakia, when was that? It was nineteen thirty they came to Austria first and afterwards to Czechoslovakia. You could see that people were more arrogant, they didn't, they weren't so afraid any more to hit somebody, B Jew or something. We didn't feel safe, lets put it that way, some people had the foresight or the luck, could try, perhaps we have to move somewhere else. The anti-Semitism was very rife, I remember there was a peddler going in the streets, and he had horoscopes and he was saying, 'well you were born in this and this and things like that and you are part of the Jewish' and there were people standing there and one said, 'what's part of a Jew, what's part of a Jew?' come on and people started hitting me and ran away. I mean quite openly, it was. My memory of being a youth wasn't very happy but I suppose I am far more lucky than many others.

RL: Did your parents ever discuss at this stage leaving, or thinking of leaving.

WB: No, my parents did not and what happened in actual fact when I was already in England, my sister went to Israel. Yes that's right, because a cousin of mine made the arrangements and my brother stayed in Vienna. He is still in Vienna, but there was very little possibility for them, and unfortunately my mother took ill after Krystall Nacht. You know what Krystall Nacht is, my mother got a cold, she took ill, we were hidden in the shop during the night when it was, it was on 10th of November, I was in England already at that time, when it was bitter cold she took ill and she had been to hospital and she had cancer, but I didn't know that then, and she died in August 38, right, in Vienna. In a way she was lucky, she wasn't taken to Auschwitz. I know at least, and I go every few years to Vienna to visit her grave. When I go to Vienna I stay for a day or two, I don't want to stay there, I have got such memories, I mean I personally haven't seen it, but I know for a fact that people were rounded up and taken to the river and thrown down into the river, let them perish. I mean, there were terrible things that happened there. Once, I went to Vienna with one of my sons, he went in a taxi, I said, "Can you see? From here the Nazis threw people down into the river, from here, from this bridge." And the taxi driver, I spoke in German, and the taxi driver got redder and redder and redder, but he didn't let on. It was a terrible, terrible position, so I said, my brother, my younger brother came with the Kinder Transport to England, and even my wife who was then a child, came to England as well, she with five brothers and sisters came to England, can you imagine, my future parents in law sent five children away, little children not knowing if they would ever see them again, but this was the only solution they had in those days, I mean there was nothing else they could do. My father came to England just about four weeks before the outbreak of the war. Right, and, that is another story of course. I was in Gateshead in the Yeshiva.

RL: Before we go onto that, can we just clarify ... You say your mother died in August 193 ...

WB: Eight ... eight, no wait a minute, the war began in 1939, no '39 sorry ...

Tape 1: 50 minutes 16 seconds

RL: thirty nine, because it was after Krystall Nacht.

WB: Thirty nine, sorry.

RL: Did you go back to Vienna after the Anschluss?

WB: No ...

RL: You stayed in Czechoslovakia ... you never returned.

WB: No, I couldn't go back.

RL: What happened to your parents during that period? Did they suffer ... ?

WB: Yes, of course, I mean, I don't know too much about it, because when I came to England it was very difficult to write to them because every letter was opened. For example, when I wanted to say something about my mother, I would say, "would you tell Auntie Clara", just not my mother, because otherwise that would get her into trouble, but everything had to be done in such a way that they understood what the position is. For example I said, "Would you tell Auntie Clara that she should make an application to come and visit us." I meant my parents, I didn't know that she was so terribly ill, and then, obviously she died ...

RL: So tell me about, well first of all, how the arrangements were made for you to come over.

WB: Well, Dr Schonfeld got VISAs for boys to come over to the Yeshiva, and I was one of them, I came all by myself, basically people didn't come yet, right. So I came actually all by myself and I arrived in Croydon and I had exactly one pound in my pocket to take a taxi which cost me half a pound, so I arrived exactly with half a pound in Dr Schonfeld's house. As I say he was some relation of mine and two days later I was sent to Gateshead to the Yeshiva.

RL: And what was the journey like leaving Czechoslovakia? How did you come?

WB: I went first to Pressburg, from Nitra to Pressburg, and from there I went to Prague and from there I came by airplane to England, because I couldn't go via Germany you see, Czechoslovakia is on the other side of Germany so I couldn't go through Germany so I had to fly over.

RL: And what did you think of all that?

WB: I was a child. What does a child know? Nothing, that is how life was and I accepted it, and I had to accept it and that is all there is.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 20 seconds

RL: What did you bring with you?

WB: Pardon?

RL: What did you bring with you?

WB: One suitcase and a sausage. I remember distinctly that I had a sausage with which I was very careful. That it shouldn't get spoilt.

RL: Who saw you off?

WB: Nobody. Nobody, I had to travel by myself. Yes, that is how it was. Can you imagine, I was 16, I was a 16 years old boy and I was by myself and I couldn't speak a word of English either.

RL: What languages did you speak?

WB: German, Austrian.

RL: What did you learn in the Yeshiva? What language did you learn in the Yeshiva in Czechoslovakia?

WB: Yiddish, Yiddish, German Yiddish ...

RL: Did you ... You say that Dr Schonfeld was a relation ... Did you know him? Had you met him at Yeshiva?

WB: No, he wasn't at Yeshiva at the same time as I was, he was previously, but he once came to Vienna, and I remember he had a little Austin 8 car. I remember he was a tall fellow and he was sitting in the car and he didn't have any room, and he came to visit us, right. So I remember him then.

RL: So, take me through your first week in England, your arrival and ...

WB: Oh, it wasn't very pleasant. I, as I said I couldn't speak a word of English, and I came to the Yeshiva which was very nice people, very nice, very helpful. That was just about before Rosh Hashona, and on the first day of Rosh Hashona I was taken to Sheriff Hill Hospital because I had scarlet fever. I had nobody, absolutely nobody, I was there for about three or four weeks, and I had not much, nothing whatsoever, and I couldn't speak any English, and this was just when Hitler marched into Sudetenland. I knew a little bit of English, I know no means no, and yes means yes, so if I wanted to say I don't

know, I would say I don't know, if I wanted to say yes, I don't, I didn't know how to spell, it was terrible, terrible, and after four weeks I couldn't speak a word, I didn't know anything, it was terrible. And afterwards I came out, I didn't go to the Yeshiva I

Tape 1: 56 minutes 22 seconds

went to a private house and a very, very nice person looked after me. He was attached to the Yeshiva, a sweet person and I recovered, but at that time it was absolutely terrible. I didn't know what day it was. I didn't know Yom Kippur. How many days are we here? I couldn't speak to anyone, I didn't know anything. Anyway, those things wouldn't happen nowadays any more, because I personally go to hospital to visit people, but in those days, I don't know what it was. Nobody took any interest, that is how it was and I had to accept it. This is how life was and I survived, but it wasn't very pleasant. As I said, when I came out of hospital I went to a private house, and they looked after me for two weeks and then I went back to the Yeshiva..

RL: This tape is about to end, I think we will stop here.

TAPE 2

RL: This is the interview with Walter Brunner and it is tape 2.

Now, if you could just tell me again who this person is on the wall here.

WB: This one here?

RL: Yes.

WB: This is the Nitra Rebbe, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva in Nitra, in Nitra and I had the privilege to be there, to learn there and to love him. He was a father to all his talmidim, in the Yeshiva there was, say about 250 young people there and he was father to all of them. He was a fabulous person, he was in Nitra, even during the war, up to about 1942 or perhaps a little bit later as well, eventually he had to escape and he went in the wald, in the wilderness and eventually, unfortunately, he died of hunger there. He is buried, he was buried in the wald and afterwards he was taken to a town called Pistian, which is a spa town and his son, his eldest son was Rav there. He was shot immediately the Germans came in 1939, 1938/39, and he is buried there and I must say I had the privilege to go to his kever when I went to Czechoslovakia once. I went in to his kever and gave him his due respect, we all loved him and he was a fabulous, fabulous person, he looked after every talmid that he had.

RL: Right. Another thing that I needed to ask, is you said your mother had a number of brothers and sisters ... your mother ...

WB: Yes ...

RL: What happened to them? Where did they go?

WB: Well one sister of hers went from Czechoslovakia before the war went to what was called Palestine, she lived in Bnei Brak and I met them after the war. The other sister perished. She was in a concentration camp and she was released after the war but she died soon afterwards from typhus. That is the two sisters, that's right. She had a brother who came to England with his wife, they had no children and they lived in London and they died in London. Another brother she had, well he died years and years ago, actually in the Yeshiva, when he was a boy in the Yeshiva. And I think that was all the children, all the siblings.

RL: What was her maiden name?

WB: Hirschler H-I-R-S-C-H-L-E-R

RL: And another thing that I wanted to ask you was ... if you did anything for entertainment whilst you were a child in Vienna. Did your parents ever do anything in their spare time? You know, just to relax.

WB: Not that I am aware of it. Life was too hard, too difficult to spend time or effort on this. Yes, we played football, the boys did, in fact we played on the street, like all naughty boys do, but not anything else ...

RL: Did you ever learn any kind of music? Did music feature at all?

WB: I am not musically inclined unfortunately. No ... I went swimming. With the school we went swimming, but I don't remember anything extraordinary.

RL: What about books or reading anything?

WB: Oh yes, we were reading, that we did, we went to the library and got books.

RL: Did your father get any kind of newspaper?

WB: No, we had no newspaper at home, no. We had a wireless at home, probably yes. We definitely had no television, it didn't exist then.

RL: And what happened to your family on Krystall Nacht?

WB: Well, as I said, my brother was in England at the time and my sister was in Israel. My parents were locked up in their shop on Krystall Nacht in order to escape attention, and my mother got ill there. I mean she didn't get cancer from that but it was a contributory illness. My father, obviously my father suffered a lot, he was an old man, when my mother died he was a broken man. When he came to England already he was half blind, yes, it wasn't very pleasant.

RL: How did he come across to England? How was that arranged?

Tape 2: 5 minutes 50 seconds

WB: Again, Dr Schonfeld brought a lot of people over before ... teachers who, religious supervisors, all sorts of things, Dr Schonfeld was a fabulous, fabulous person.

I will tell you a story, he was the son in law of Chief Rabbi Hertz, and this is a well known story that he went once with Rabbi Hertz to this home of theirs to get some VISAs and he asked his father in law, "Tell me, how many VISAs are you asking for?"

"I hope to get 25."

"Do me a favour, let me speak to them."

And he came in, and he spoke to him, and Dr Schonfeld spoke to him and he said, "How many VISAs do you want, and he said 250." And he said "Right, counted" and he got 250. I mean, he was, I don't know if you know, he was a very good looking fellow and he had beautiful English presentation, you know, Oxford English. He was a personality, and he had what you called chutzpah and he was very, very successful. I don't know if you know this story, but when he brought children over they asked him afterwards where were they going to sleep, and he said "Well we have the school at the moment is on holiday and you are sleeping there, but there is not sufficient room, they are sleeping in my house." Dr Schonfeld slept on the floor and the children slept in his bed. Yes, he was an absolute person, unbelievable. Unfortunately people forgot what he did and when he died, he died a pauper, really he wasn't well, and he died a pauper ... but he was, Anglo Jewry owes him a tremendous debt of gratitude, particularly the orthodox people but not only, I mean what he did was unbelievable. After the war, he went to, ousted all those people in a home made uniform, and he had pips here (pointed to his shoulder) (inaudible) and people had respect for him, I mean after the war he brought hundreds of Polish children over, and they lived in London all over, they went to America and so on. It is absolutely fabulous what he did and people tend unfortunately to forget, but what he did was absolutely unbelievable.

RL: So he brought over your father.

WB: Yes.

RL: Did he have a position for him? How ... What was ... ?

WB: No, he brought in my father as a religious supervisor somehow and then he came to Gateshead. And there he paid ten shillings a week. He stayed with a family and paid ten shillings a week, and he stayed there and I had to leave the Yeshiva for the simple reason I had to earn some money to keep him, so I came to Manchester and started working as a raincoat machinist and eventually I brought him to Manchester as well and there was a Jewish old age home in Cheetham Hill and he was there, and I paid, and I worked and I somehow paid some money for him.

RL: Did he ever do any supervising work?

WB: No ...

Tape 2: 9 minutes 20 seconds

RL: That was just a ...

WB: Camouflage. As I say I came to England, to Manchester ...

RL: Can I ask you a bit about Gateshead first, because really that is where we left your story ...

WB: Right, carry on, don't be shy ...

RL: You were coming out of hospital and staying with a family to recuperate, so can we take it from there?

WB: I went back to the Yeshiva, and afterwards my brother came, a few months later, after Krystall Nacht, was it after Krystall Nacht? Yes, after Krystall Nacht my brother came as well and then we were in Gateshead. And when we were in Gateshead we were in Yeshiva, and then we got notification that my mother died. So, that was in August 39, July 39, and then my father, we had in actual fact VISAs for my mother as well, but she couldn't come because ... and, well that was what happened and my father came to England.

RL: How big was Gateshead Yeshiva at the time you were there?

WB: Well, when I came in the first instance there were about thirty boys or so, English boys, and afterwards the refugees came. Originally it was mainly English boys who went to the Yeshiva.

RL: And where did you sleep?

WB: Sleep in the Yeshiva? In the Yeshiva, they had dormitories in the Yeshiva, 197 Bewick Road, Gateshead.

RL: And where did you eat?

WB: We ate in the Yeshiva. There was a woman there who was sleeping in the Yeshiva in a room, she prepared breakfast and when she came round with breakfast with two plates, we had to see which we will take, whether she would drop in (pointing to his nose), so we had to watch out or else what dropped in, her nose was running, so we'll have this for breakfast.

It was very, very primitive and amazingly enough we had chicken, because one person, a butcher, donated chicken, but we had no bread, that is how Gateshead was in those days.

And in the Gateshead Yeshiva there were times when we still learnt in the old Shul which was near the railway station, near the railway, and whenever the Scotch, the train came

Tape 2: 12 minutes 12 seconds

past the whole Shul was shaking because it was like a Blechener Shul, it was made from corrugated things in the olden days the Shul, we had to stop learning because the whole Shul was shaking until it calmed down. And then in 1938 and 39 they started building the Shul, and when the war broke out, about that time the Shul was ready, the new Shul was ready, and we left the old Shul which was down Derwentwater Road, which was called the Blechener Shul.

I remember in Gateshead there was only one baal habayis who had a car, I mean that was, unheard of in those days.

RL: And who was the head of the Yeshiva at that point?

WB: There was Rabbi Landynski. As a matter of fact I was recently in America and I met his grandchildren and there was Rabbi Kahan.

RL: And what language did you learn in?

WB: In Yiddish. We learnt in Yiddish. In those days I could speak a little bit of English, I went to elocution lessons as well just to speak a bit of English.

RL: How had you picked up your English?

WB: Pardon?

RL: How did you pick up your English?

WB: Necessity. If you live amongst people that is how it worked. Gateshead was a very nice Jewish community; there were four or five families who were the main people and then a lot of other people. There was Mr Shein and the Guttentags. Some or most people took some refugees in as well, not boys but girls. My wife came, for example, from one family in Gateshead, and her twin sister, which isn't alive any more came to another family in Gateshead. People looked after them, I don't mean as domestic, not adopted children, but they looked after them.

RL: You say your wife came over on the Kinder Transport?

WB: On the Kinder Transport, that is right.

RL: Was that arranged by Dr Schonfeld?

WB: Dr Schonfeld ... Oh yes ... hundreds of kids came, hundreds of kids, and she was obviously one of the lucky ones, she came with five sisters and brothers, but can you imagine how her parents must have felt, when they took the kids to the station, five

Tape 2: 15 minutes 6 seconds

children, sent their five children to England not knowing if they would ever see them again. My parents in law fortunately did, but many others didn't ...

RL: So where did her other siblings go? Two came to Gateshead, she came and her sister.

WB: That's right. And one came and was in London, the others were in London.

RL: With orthodox families?

WB: Yes, with orthodox families, both children were with orthodox families.

RL: And Rabbi Schonfeld, did he place them with families?

WB: Yes, he was responsible for placing them with families, as I say, he was a fabulous, fabulous person, yes, they have some books written about him now. In London there is an old age home, you know that? It is called Schonfeld Square, after him, in gratitude for what he did.

RL: How big was the Jewish community in Gateshead?

WB: Not very large, not very large. I mean, I don't know if you know, Gateshead is a miners district, and in those days, there was a lot of business. Newcastle, which is across the river, is a different town, but Gateshead was a miner, coal mine district, and we settled there. The main person in Gateshead was called Reb Lazer Adler, right, he was the grandfather of all of them, some more people came, but he was the head of the community. And then people developed to become a Jewish community. Funnily enough in Gateshead there were never any non orthodox Jews, they had no place, they were across the river but not there. There was family Baddiel and family Guttentag, the Adlers. Yes, those were the people, I mean, if you read the history of Gateshead those were the people who started with Gateshead and kept Gateshead alive and they built it up and then because Yeshivas started and seminaries started.

RL: How many refugees would you say came to Gateshead Yeshiva?

WB: I would say perhaps 30 or so.

RL: So it really doubled in size.

WB: Oh yes.

RL: And did you find it different, that Yeshiva, to Nitra Yeshiva.

WB: Yes, of course different.

Tape 2: 17 minutes 57 seconds

RL: How?

WB: Well, this Yeshiva was more a Litvish Yeshiva. A different way of learning and Nitra Yeshiva was a little bit more chassidish Yeshiva. Not that it was chassidish to the extreme, but it was a little bit more ... yes ...

RL: So what is the difference? You know, you know, in practical terms what did it mean?

WB: A little bit difficult to explain, but a Chassidische Yeshiva is more, it is not only learning but living, different ... it is very difficult to explain to an outsider but a Chassidische Yeshiva is more of a lively Yeshiva, and the Litvish Yeshiva is sitting learning over books all the time ...

RL: Did you find it difficult at all to adapt?

WB: No ... there was nothing extreme either way, right ... so I mean ...

RL: So you were learning similar sorts of things?

WB: The same things, but in a different way. I remember, I was a very naughty boy, for example in the Chassidische people we don't have a chupik, you know growing hair on the head, because you have to put tefillin on. There was a boy there for example, he had a big red ..., one night I went and cut his hair, right, he didn't wake up, he didn't know anything about it but the next morning all of a sudden he saw it, so nobody owned up to who it was and the Rosh Yeshiva asked me, "Do you know who it was?" I didn't know who it is. "I promise you I will not punish him, I just want to know who it is." I owned up "I did it." So I got into trouble.

RL: What happened Yom Tov time? Were you with families over Yom Tov?

WB: Well like on Shabbos we ate with families, on Yom Tov we ate with families as well, yes. People were very nice.

RL: Did you just go to families in Gateshead or did you go for meals elsewhere?

WB: No, I personally for example, there is a town called Sunderland. Do you know about it? Yes, well, I for example was sent to Sunderland over Shabbos. In fact there is a

Rabbi Brazil in Manchester now and I told him that I ate at his grandfather's house many, right, many, many years ago.

RL: Why were you sent to Sunderland?

Tape 2: 20 minutes 49 seconds

WB: Because there weren't sufficient Baal Habatim in Gateshead, so they had to send some boys to Sunderland, which for that time was very far away, and we stayed there over Shabbos and came back afterwards.

RL: How many boys would go to Sunderland?

WB: Probably 12 or so.

RL: Which other families did they go to?

WB: It was arranged before hand. I mean, the Yeshiva arranged ... can you take so and so, I mean even nowadays boys, for example, boys from the Yeshiva are sent out to private houses to eat on Shabbos with a family. Exactly the same there but there weren't sufficient Baal Habatim there so people were sent to the next town which wasn't far away.

RL: Do you remember which families they went to in Sunderland?

WB: No, I don't remember.

RL: What did you think of Gateshead as a place? The town of Gateshead.

WB: I had very little to do with it, we were very compact, we had nothing to do with them generally speaking. The non Jewish we didn't even see because why, there was never any opportunity, because we were just in this little district, one street and round the corner there was a shop where you could occasionally buy a bun or something if you had money, and that is it, we had no contact with the outer world in those days.

RL: Were you given any money at all?

WB: I think we were given probably twenty pence a week pocket money or something. Twenty pence is more than it would be now, but I think so ... Yes I remember we got post from home, they couldn't send us any money but they sent us International Reply Coupons, right, so they sent us two coupons and I could buy two stamps with it, so we went to the post office and changed it and we had twenty pence or whatever it was, money couldn't be sent.

RL: So you didn't really have any contact, you say with the ...

WB: Outer world ...

RL: Outer world.

WB: No, not at all.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 7 seconds

RL: What did you think of the look of the place? Of the houses ... of the ... you know ...

WB: What do you understand as a kid, what do you understand, after all I mean, I wasn't interested, it didn't concern me, the small circle of boys of friends, and we sat together and we went to Shul together and slept together and that is it. We had very little contact with the outer world ...

RL: Did you ...

WB: I remember once when the Tyne Bridge I think was opened or was it when the Trading Estate was opened, The Queen came, not the present Queen, Queen Elizabeth, but the first, or second or whatever it was, her mother, she came, one boy in the night time went away from the Yeshiva, the boy was called Levy, tried to reach the Queen, he wanted to give The Queen a letter to ask if he could possibly get a VISA for his parents. He was caught by the police, but the letter was sent to The Queen. I mean he was completely innocent; he didn't have any that was ...

RL: And, did you know any of the other refugees that came to the Yeshiva? Had you known any of them previously?

WB: No. No, because they came from Germany rather than from Austria. There were some people previously, people that afterwards came to Manchester and built homes and have got families here but I didn't know any of them beforehand.

RL: So were you the only Austrian boy in Gateshead?

WB: Yes, I think I was.

RL: And all the others were from Germany?

WB: From Germany, yes, from Germany and from Hungary, mainly from Germany.

RL: What about Czechoslovakia?

WB: No, I don't think there was anybody there from Czechoslovakia.

RL: And when did you come to Manchester?

WB: 1940. That was after the outbreak of war.

RL: What was the reason you came?

Tape 2: 25 minutes 30 seconds

WB: I needed to work to keep my father. I mean, he stayed with a family in Gateshead but he couldn't stay all the time there so I had to come here. And I stayed in Cassel Fox Home, which was in Upper Park Road and stayed there for some time.

RL: Can you tell me about that place?

WB: Yes, it was a few boys, a few young boys, in actual fact it was not young boys at that particular time, officially I was supposed to be in the Yeshiva, but I wasn't, the people knew that I wasn't in the Yeshiva but they realised why I wasn't in the Yeshiva I was working, I needed to work, I needed to get money for my father. And the head of this particular home was Dr Weinberger at that time, his daughter lives here in Manchester, she is married to a Mr Goldman, Mr Goldman was one of the boys in the hostel and the headmaster liked him and made him his son in law. They live in Ashbourne Grove now, right, and as I said, I had to work, so I went and became a raincoat machinist, I worked on the machine.

RL: Which factory was it?

WB: In Dutton Street, a raincoat factory, and I was working there, and I asked the boss, he was a Jewish boss as well, "Tell me, who does more work, I or the fellow sitting next to me."

"Oh, you do more work."

So I said to him "Why does he get paid more than I do? He gets 25 shillings and I only get 20 shillings a week."

"Be pleased you are alive, you are only a refugee."

That was it, so I said, "Okay".

A week later I left and went to somebody else I said, "Try me out on the raincoat machine" there was a ladies coat, he did, and right, I got 35 shillings, which was almost double.

I then got my father, brought my father here to Manchester, and he was in the old age home, and as I said he was in 2a Cheetham Hill. He was ill and he was almost blind, but I went every day to visit him after work, I took him out, went round the block and brought him back again. I did as much as I could, I should have done much more but as a child you don't realise how people are lonely. He was really heart broken man because when my mother died he was heart broken. So I worked ...

RL: Can you tell me a bit more? You say you were living in the Cassell Fox hostel. How many, erm, was it just boys?

WB: Yes it was just boys.

RL: How many boys were there?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 51 seconds

WB: I should imagine about 35.

RL: And where were they from?

WB: Mainly, mainly from Austria and, mainly from Austria and Germany.

RL: Who had brought them over?

WB: Could be Dr Schonfeld, and there was a refugee committee, there was a refugee committee that looked after them. There was Amy Fox, it was called the Cassell Fox Home, and there was Mr Cassell, they gave I think the building. The building is still in existence now, though now it is a school I believe. And the refugee committee really kept them. There was a Mrs Barash I remember and a Mr Appelbaum, but that is, you know sixty odd years ago.

RL: Was it a religious hostel?

WB: Oh yes, yes, it was a religious hostel for religious boys, there were some Bachad people there who went on a Bachad farm.

RL: Do you remember who the Bachad people were?

WB: Not really, no.

RL: And they went from the hostel to the Bachad Farm or ...

WB: Yes, afterwards.

RL: Where was the Bachad Farm?

WB: I don't remember, maybe it was around, I think it was in Whitchurch ... and as I say, so I worked for some time there, and all of a sudden the position became very, very, very bad, there was danger after Dunkirk, so all the people were arrested, enemy aliens, and we were sent to Wharf Mill in Bury, and we were together with German prisoners of war, right, and when the sergeant came to speak to us with two guns in his hand 'Roll call, son!'. We were treated exactly the same as the German prisoners of war and though we had nothing, nothing to do with them. Right, and we were there, and then we were sent, we were sorted out, and we went, our group was sent, our group was sent to Whitchurch, it was in the summer and there were tents, we were in tents, in tents, not in houses, and afterwards we were sent to the Isle of Man.

RL: How long were you in Wharf Mill?

WB: Wharf Mill ... three or four weeks.

Tape 2: 31 minutes 28 seconds

RL: And what were the conditions like?

WB: Terrible, terrible. It was just a building and we had straw mattresses and nothing else. But I mean, it was a terribly bad time, obviously, I mean they were afraid, they were afraid of invasion, number one and they were afraid somebody may be a spy, they don't know. What in those times they didn't realise how wicked and terrible the Germans were and there was no chance that a Jew would ever be a spy to help them, I mean obviously not.

RL: What about food in Wharf Mill? What provision was made?

WB: Food ... I don't remember, I think we got rations, so it would be ... I am afraid I don't remember, we definitely had no.., we had blechener tellers, we had metal plates that we had to wash ourselves, but I don't remember the food, it was probably potatoes and so I mean, probably like the army got or something.

RL: And what were the guards like towards you?

WB: Terrible, it was ... roll call, 'do this, do this!', they weren't very friendly.

RL: How did you spend your days in Wharf Mill? What did you do during the day?

WB: Nothing, absolutely nothing. But I must go further, when we were arrested, one morning the police came in as police came and arrested all the boys, come on boys, we have to go, for example I have to go, for example I had a collection of stamps, it was all pinched by the police at that time, we brought nothing with us, nothing, things were completely disappeared, and my father was arrested as well and sent to Wharf Mill as well, and afterwards thing were sorted out. But I mean, I haven't got very much grudge or complaints because it was a terrible time, I mean the people were desperate at the time, they were terribly frightened, and people, when things started to calm down people realised who is who and what is what, things became much better, much more friendly, and then he was sent to the Isle of Man to a camp. It wasn't a camp, it was Hutchinson's Square, which was I suppose, there was a garden in the centre and there were houses around about, and houses, people were evacuated from their houses and refugees came in, the so called prisoners were put there, that was not bad at all. So, we were first sent to Prees Heath which was in Whitchurch, and we were under tents, not in the buildings, we slept on the floor and afterwards, eventually, we were sent to the Isle of Man.

RL: How long were you in Whitchurch?

WB: I should imagine six weeks or so, until things were sorted out.

RL: And what were conditions like there?

Tape 2: 34 minutes 54 seconds

WB: It was summer. We were young. What can I say, it wasn't too bad. I remember I helped a bit to cook. There were huge kettles, we cooked like this, we cooked for 50 or 60 or 80 people, so, it was passable. It wasn't too bad.

RL: And what did you do again during the day?

WB: Nothing, we couldn't do anything, we had nothing with us, we had nothing with us, perhaps we played football, I don't remember.

RL: What about davening?

WB: Oh yes, we did it, that we could do, yes. I would say that we were only orthodox boys who were sent there, I don't think any other boys were sent there, not in this particular spot, and then, eventually we were sent to Hutchinson's Camp, all together, and I met my father there again.

RL: Did you have any Siddurim to daven from?

WB: Yes, I suppose we had, and then Chief Rabbi, the religious Chief Rabbi's Council sent us some books and some sephorim, yes. Dr Schonfeld.

RL: And what about tefillin?

WB: Pardon?

RL: What about tefillin?

WB: That we had, that hadn't been taken away. When we left, when we were arrested, we took those things with us.

RL: And so, tell me about the Isle of Man and how that was organised.

WB: The Isle of Man was really very good, we were 29 people in our house, amazingly enough I was in the same house as my future father in law was. We had no intention that I was going to be his son in law eventually, but I mean we were in the same house. We were left in peace. My father in law in actual fact said later that it was the best time of his life, because he had no financial worries, he had his food, and he was sitting all day and learning. He had his books and was learning, he had his books and he was very happy

there. My mother in law was less happy because she had to stay in London, but that is how it was.

RL: What was his name?

Tape 2: 37 minute 17 seconds

WB: Schreiber.

RL: And what was the food there?

WB: The food, it was sent in, there was no shortage of food, Isle of Man kippers were very good. We got sick of them because we had them every day. Smoked kippers, you know what they are? And there was nothing wrong, the sun was shining and really ... if we wouldn't have been parted from our family it was almost like a holiday camp. There were no complaints whatsoever.

RL: Was there any provision for kosher food?

WB: Oh yes, the Chief Rabbi's Council made arrangements, and Dr Schonfeld, again, he came to the Isle of Man and he made the arrangements.

RL: And what did you receive?

WB: With regards to food you mean?

RL: Yes. What kind of kosher food did you receive?

WB: Well, we cooked ourselves. We got flour and eggs and so on and we had to cook ourselves. I don't mean each person, but one was cooking for the whole household, for everybody, we had 29 people in the house, we sat together, ate together.

RL: Was the kosher provision just for that one house, or was it for ... ?

WB: All those that required it. What difference did it make if we got eggs exactly the same, but we don't want any bacon we would rather have kippers for example or fish or something like this. Once we were in the Isle of Man things were really good. We had a professor, in our house, for example, eventually he was released from camp and worked for the government somewhere, the commander was very, very nice. There were no complaints whatsoever, in actual fact I think, people were taken out to pictures once in four weeks or something, and we had, for example, I learnt here tailoring to make ladies coats and costumes. There were courses there to keep us occupied. I wanted to join the Pioneer Corps and I went to the medical inspection but I was refused, luckily.

RL: On what grounds?

WB: Health reasons.

Eventually after 12 months I was released.

Tape 2: 39 minute 52 seconds

RL: What did you do during the day for those 12 months?

WB: I told you. Partly learning, partly having tailor, learning tailoring, partly taking my father out just a little bit in the garden, I suppose that impressed my future father in law that I looked after my father, could be.

RL: Were there any shiurim given?

WB: Oh yes, yes, we had people there, yes we were learning all the time. I wish I had more, I wish I had spent more time with my future father in law.

RL: Who would give the shiurim?

WB: People, people like my father in law gave the shiur. He was there with his father as well, he was there with his father, his father was a great talmid chacham and he gave shiurim, yes. It was, we were better off than most people on the mainland.

RL: Were there any people that you can actually name by name that you remember were in your house?

WB: Oh yes, there were quite a few.

RL: Can you tell me who they were?

WB: Who were the people in my house? Most of them are not alive any more. No, I am afraid I don't remember anybody that is still alive. Most people were from London, I don't think there was anybody else from Manchester there. They were all London people.

RL: And you say that everybody in that house was orthodox?

WB: In our house, yes, and in the next house as well, there were several houses, there were several camps, there was Hutchinson Camp, and on the other side was Orchard Camps, Peel Camps. There were people from London there. In Peel Camps there were a lot of orthodox people, in Orchard Camps as well, everywhere there were ... there were two or three houses and some non orthodox people in the other houses.

But we were treated well and had no complaints whatsoever, that is as far as I was concerned and as far as my father was concerned. My brother was in Gateshead and when they started arresting the people he wasn't arrested because he was under 16 when he became 16 and said "What am I to do?" and he was straight away arrested and he was

sent to camp as well and from the camp he was sent to Australia. I mean a lot of refugees were sent to Australia, because they took them in, because England didn't know what to do with them. The Isle of Man, a certain amount could go to the Isle of Man but otherwise they couldn't. He was sent to Australia which was pretty dangerous because a

Tape 2: 43 minute 14 seconds

lot of German U boats about. I don't know if you know this story but the British soldiers weren't too nice to them. A lot of people had one suitcase with them, they took the suitcase and threw it overboard, just out of spite, and you know, G-d helps, there were U boats there, and the commander of the U boats all of a sudden saw all of a sudden suitcases floating about, so he took two or three suitcases on board the submarine and opened it up and saw it was written in German, so he told all the U Boats, don't touch this boat, this boat has our people on, our Germans are being sent now to Australia, right. And, they didn't touch the boat and the boat arrived to Australia and they survived. On the way back the boat was sunk and all the people, all the soldiers on the boat went down.

RL: What boat was it?

WB: Pardon?

RL: Which boat was it?

WB: I think it was called Andorra Star. It is a well known fact, I mean ... and my brother at that time was in Australia and the Australian Government of course told the British Government that they can stay here as long as they don't come to stay, but once we release them they have to go back to England. And after we were released and came back....., my father and myself, my brother was still in Australia and he was released and so he had to come back to England. He was a minor and so he had to get permission from my father to come back. And so my father wrote him a letter and said to him "Permission granted, but I would suggest that you go to Palestine, Israel, Palestine, you have got a sister there, I don't know what is going to happen here, go there." He didn't want to go, he didn't want to go. My father impressed on him, "Please do go, I am asking you to go. I give you permission to come, but I want you to go to Israel, don't come here, we don't know what is going to happen." Four days before he was supposed to come to England in this boat, he went to the commander and said "My father asked me to go to go, I have to obey him, I can't go back to England." He was sent to Israel via wherever it is, this boat came, this boat was torpedoed with all the people, so in actual fact, by, this is a known story, by listening to my father his life was saved. Right, the boat with which he was supposed to come back was torpedoed, unfortunately like many others and nobody survived.

RL: Do you know which boat that was?

WB: I don't remember the name, but it's a well known fact, people were, it is definitely a fact, and he went eventually to Israel he went via South Africa or wherever it was, a

long, long journey, but eventually he arrived in Israel and he went to a kibbutz there and he got married ... to a French girl, the French girl was brought up by non Jewish people and their mother was in the mental home. Officially because she was mentally, supposed to be mentally not in order and after the war, this particular woman had a son, the son was working as a doctor in hospital and after the war he got a letter from the government,

Tape 2: 47 minutes 15 seconds

“Isn’t it time that you looked after your mother.” After all this she was kept in the home for a long time, and he wrote back “What do you mean? My mother is dead a long time.” They said “No she isn’t, she is in this and this particular mental home.” He was working in that mental home himself as a doctor, it was a huge place and he didn’t even know that his mother was there, right, and he went and they recognised each other. His mother didn’t speak a word all the time because she was supposed to be mentally not in order. When she saw him she started screaming and crying and ran to him and she was normal. She died soon after, a year or so afterwards, so my brother and his wife went afterwards to Paris and they met the mother there. But as I said, this girl was brought up in a non Jewish home and knew very little about religion, right, and unfortunately she drifted away and took my brother with her and my brother went into the army, the Israeli army, he was a Major in tank transport, specialising in tank transport and he was in the army eventually, and ...

RL: What is his first name?

WB: Aaron, well wait a minute, he was called Alfred Brunner but they got Israeli names afterwards, he called himself Aaron and not Brunner but Barnir right, and he was, as I say a Major in tanks in the army and he went to, where was it? The place ... near, near, near ... in Israel near the place he lived for some time, and his wife was smoking terrible. I told her to stop smoking, but she didn’t, and eventually my brother took ill by passive smoking, two years, no three years ago he died, right, and she was still smoking, (made gasping sounds) with oxygen and they said, “Give it up, give it up.” They have got three children, one child died. He fell out, off a roof from the house and died, and the other two children are still alive, I have very little contact with them. But this is his story, he wrote a book actually, I can show it to you, I can give it to you, about his journey and what he did, what he did in the war. I can give it to you, you can have it if you want provided you give it me back.

RL: What language was it in?

WB: English, it was translated to English, right, about his life experience. Right, so coming back now to myself. Oh look, time is getting on ...

As I said I ...

RL: You came out of the internment camp?

WB: Yes, that is right. I got another job somewhere. As a cutter in a factory.

RL: Where was that?

WB: Here in Manchester.

Tape 2: 50 minutes 50 seconds

RL: Do you remember the factory?

WB: Yes, it was in Bury New Road, not very far away.

RL: When did you come out of the interment camp? When was that?

WB: I think it was in May ... 42 was it? Or May 42 I think it was, that's right. In the day time I was working in the factory, in the night time I was fire watching, when the bombs fell I stood with the helmet, like this, and the bombs fell, and I fell asleep standing up, that is how it was, right.

RL: Was there much bombing in Manchester?

WB: In Manchester there was quite a bit, yes.

RL: What can you tell me about that?

WB: Incendiary bombs, I mean even not very far from here the houses were bombs, but I didn't see it, it was before I came back from internment camp.

RL: Did you witness any bombings yourself?

WB: No, I didn't, as such, no, but I was present when the bombs fell, but I didn't as such because we had fire watching, we had duties to do.

And eventually there was a certain lady here, a Mrs Segal who was manufacturing bags and I became a cutter in her house. She, I was a cutter, and she had, the work was given out, she didn't manufacture bags at home, and the cutting was done and so on but the bags were, outworkers were doing it. Eventually I started myself to do so.

RL: Where were you living at this stage?

WB: I was living, wait a minute, at that time I got married. I met my wife and I got married and we lived in a very, very small house, part of a house in Ashbourne Grove.

RL: How did you meet your wife? How did that come about?

WB: Well, she was in Gateshead as well. That is number one. And as I said I was interned together with her father and before I left my father in law spoke to me and said "I would like to have you as my son in law." Right, and so amazingly enough, both girls, my wife, once came to our shop years and years ago, my mother said, they were twins, "Look how sweet those children are." Right, but obviously I had no intention, nothing of that sort, so eventually I met her and we got engaged and we got married. In 1942 we got married, 18th November 42.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 19 seconds

RL: Where were you married?

WB: In London, because she lived in London then.

RL: Which Shul?

WB: In the Adass, again the same as I mentioned before, and we got married there and we moved to Manchester. We have had part of the house, we shared a kitchen with somebody and one bedroom and I think a dining room, that's right, that is all we had. And the person who had the other part of the house was a very nice lady and she was evacuated somewhere to Buxton somewhere, right. And then, when the flying bombs started, hundreds and hundreds of people from London came to Manchester, orthodox people. And even my wife's family came, we had no room where to put everyone, nowhere but we opened the doors to the house, to the other bedroom and as it happens my wife's sister had a baby, she just came out of hospital with a baby and we didn't know where to put her, she went in this particular room. We didn't touch it, everything was left as the women left it, I mean we didn't touch anything, no drawers or anything, just the bed we made it and all of a sudden the woman turned up, she just turned up, but she was so decent she didn't say anything. We told her what the position is, that hundreds of people came when the flying bombs came, it was 1945, or 44, it was 1944. Right, so that is about the story so far.

RL: You know you said that your wife had come over? She was ...

WB: She was in Gateshead originally, and both people, afterwards, in order to be able to still have my wife moved to Manchester, in Cubley Road, with Mr and Mrs Shine, we went into Cubley Road, which isn't very far from here, and they looked after my wife and my wife's younger sister. Right, the other sister was only about 14 years of age when they came, perhaps even less, 12 years of age when they came to Gateshead in 1938, right, but they moved in order to still keep them, they wanted to adopt them but my parents in law didn't agree, there was no necessity to adopt them, and they came, they didn't want to be parted from them, they came from Gateshead, through to Manchester as well, and they bought a house here and they lived here, and they lived here until, almost until my wife got married, they lived here.

RL: Now this film is about to end, so we will just stop here.

WB: Yes.

TAPE 3

RL: This is the interview with Walter Brunner and it is tape 3.

When did your wife's parents come over?

WB: Just before the war. I have told you, Dr Schonfeld brought them over as well together with many other people, and they lived in London, but they couldn't take the children back because they only had a very, very small room where they lived, right. That was number one, and number two, the people, Mr and Mrs Shine did not want to give them back, and in actual fact there was a little bit of a tussle going on, they said no, you have children, we have no children we want them, so there was a little bit of difficulties. I rescued her because I married her.

RL: What is her first name?

WB: Who?

RL: Your wife.

WB: Marlene, the Yiddishe name is Malkah, Malkah means queen, and she is a queen I can tell you.

RL: So you were living in part of the house in Ashourne Grove?

WB: That is right, that was in war time, after we got married.

RL: And you say that family came up from London?

WB: That's right. So we moved out, we actually moved back to Mr and Mrs Shine during that time, in order to give them ... but I have to tell you there were hundreds and hundreds of people here, that was probably the first time that we got involved in communal work. I, we borrowed stretchers from the corporation because we had no beds any more and when we gave back the stretchers we were 300 blankets short, you can imagine how many we have had. Anybody, any Jewish person that arrived at London Road Station, that is what it was called then, now it is called Piccadilly Station, the police automatically sent them to 35a Northumberland Street, which was the office of the Agudah, right. We tried to place people wherever possible. For example, there was these two ... a Mr Reich, he lived in George Street, which has got small houses. Yet he had a family with 11 children in his house sleeping on the floor. We were absolutely desperate, there was just no room for anybody. There was nowhere to put people, because of the flying bombs. In actual fact the government, the official asked me, how come that so

many Jewish people come here, much more than English people, English people are not so much frightened. And I said, "I will tell you why, the Jewish people have suffered

Tape 3: 3 minutes 0 second

more in the last six or seven years already, before you started suffering. They haven't got the nerves any more, they couldn't possibly, they appreciated what the position was and that is, the people stayed here.

RL: Who was running the Agudah office in Northumberland Street?

WB: It was voluntary, people voluntarily ran it.

RL: Who was involved?

WB: Quite a few people. I was one of them who was involved, and quite a few others that were trying to place people and see that they had what they needed.

RL: Do you remember anybody else by name?

WB: Oh yes, there was Mr Reich. Some of them got married in the meantime. There were ladies as well, obviously. And we had Mr Goldman, I don't remember anyone else.

RL: And you know you said you borrowed stretchers?

WB: Yes.

RL: So, where were they going the stretchers?

WB: Just in people ... we hadn't got beds, we hadn't got mattresses, so people slept on stretchers, I mean hundreds of people went to houses, people were accommodated, but there was people who we didn't have room for any more, it was just impossible, Machzikei Hadass Synagogue, there was an old synagogue there, people slept on top of the synagogue as well, and on top, they just, it was a long time ago now, it was just impossible to place them, and there was no room, anywhere that we could put them.

RL: How many would you say were evacuated up to Manchester? Jewish people?

WB: Hundreds, in actual fact, all after the war went back, except one family stayed, but all of them went back after the war.

RL: And what about food? How did they ... ?

WB: Well, they stayed with people and people shared everything with everybody. I mean, people were very generous and they provided food for them as well.

RL: You lived with the Shines?

WB: Well, we moved with the Shines in order to give our house over to our family.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 32 seconds

RL: And how long did that last for?

WB: Several months.

RL: And then what?

WB: And then the people moved back to their own homes. Afterwards we built a house in Wellington Street, I think it cost ... what did it cost? £600 or something, and we took a mortgage out and we had to pay back £3 15 shillings a month, that's right. I was earning money because ... we lived happily there.

RL: Had you started your own business by this time?

WB: Officially, no. Unofficially, yes. Because being, at that time I wasn't naturalised, I wasn't allowed to have a business, so somebody else officially had this business but I was looking after it, was running it.

RL: What were you doing? What exactly was it?

WB: Bags, making shopping bags. It was at the end of the war, there was a shortage of everything, so we did things with shopping bags. It could easily be done and we did it.

RL: And where were you doing it?

WB: We had a place in Faulkner Street in town.

This was my private life, but I, wait a minute, in 1940 ... wait a minute, we got married in, 1943 my first child was born, and three days after she was born my father died. Right, he never knew about it, he died in the old age home, I didn't tell my wife that he died and although I was sitting shiva I went every evening to visit her in the nursing home until she came out, that was 1943, that's right. So you must imagine people came to be menachem ovel and wished me mazel tov at the same time. Well, that's how life is, that is how it was. And we lived in Wellington Street, we lived in Wellington Street for a few years. The furniture we bought in Newcastle at Gillis on the never never system, it cost £38 all the whole furniture that we bought. It wasn't luxurious, far from it, but we were happy, we never looked for anything luxurious. I remember we bought a washing machine, an old one, a round one, we had to do it like this you know, with the handle, not the type of washing machine you get nowadays, but we were happy, we were very happy when we could buy another chair, and we could buy another this and another that. And

thank G-d we had our family, we had, our family increased, neither my wife or me were looking for luxuries, we lived happy.

In 1944 we belonged to obviously an orthodox Jewish community here, I was a little bit of a macher and I joined the executive of the Machzikei Hadass. I was about 25 years

Tape 3: 9 minutes 25 seconds

younger than anybody else, I was what they called the shick yingel, all the things that had to be done I had to do because I was the youngster, but I did it. I have been an executive member of the Machzikei Hadass since then, it has been 60 years I have been on the executive and I still am, and in 1965 we had a lot of troubles with the general community here, and we were separate, and in 1965 eventually when we got our own shechita facilities, or permission to shecht, I became president of the community and I have been for 35 years. It is hard work, I have done my share, I hope I have done my share, but there is no thanks due to me, it is very simple, the Almighty was and is very good to me and I only have to repay a little bit, right. I have been fortunate to have a fabulous wife, bring up a family, I had, I have had ten children, they all are the way I want them to be, and they are my pride. And they have had children, and they have got grand children I have ten children, I have a lot of grandchildren and a lot of great grandchildren and I am the happiest man, the most grateful and happiest man alive really. And that is about the story of my life.

RL: Can I just ask you, going back, you mentioned going onto the executive of Machzikei Hadass, when you moved to Manchester which Shul ...?

WB: Machzikei Hadass, I always belonged to Machzikei Hadass, it was the orthodox, that was even that it was the ultra orthodox Shul.

RL: And you said that they had an old building ...

WB: Oh yes, on the same spot, yes, on the same spot was the old building.

RL: And that was on Northumberland Street.

WB: That's right, where it is now as well.

RL: How big a community was it at that point ... Machzikei Hadass?

WB: I will tell you, there was a man called Mr Phaivish Feingold, right, he lived in Stanley Road, 39 Stanley Road and he told me once "You know, before the war there were seven or eight orthodox, strictly orthodox families in Manchester and they made an Orei Miklot" I will tell you what Orei Miklot is, in olden days if in the biblical times when somebody accidentally killed somebody he had to go in what they called the Orei Miklot, if it happened accidentally, not if ... this was a refuge, right. He told me that they made a refuge for the refugees to come and they built the town and they builded it, but

there were only seven or eight families, and from there on they developed. I must tell you, from a Jewish point of view, from a religious point of view, Manchester was, 60 years ago was terrible. I mean all the leaders, all the leaders in town were completely irreligious. I mean, I don't want to tell you stories, but they were completely irreligious at that time, and it was absolutely essential that the religious block keeps together and they were building the orthodox. Manchester is beautiful now, even the town, there is no

Tape 3: 13 minutes 29 seconds

one such in town for example, on the executive of the Talmud is not 100% shomer Shabbos, but in those days it was completely irreligious. You know what a Mikveh is? The person of the Mikveh said "The Mikveh, I wouldn't send my dog to the Mikveh." Barry Secree his name was. All things like this, completely, completely, not irreligious, anti religious, completely anti religious, and it was essential that Machzikei Hadass ... and they built the town. And afterwards they, I mean, Machzikei Hadass started in nineteen thirty odd, in the early thirties, we had the first, the first Rav of the Machzikei Hadass was Rabbi Feldman, afterwards, I was an executive member, I remember distinctly immediately after the war Rabbi Feldman said "I am very sorry, I am not well, I am not well, I want to resign and from now on I don't want any wages and I don't want anything, I cannot take the responsibility any longer." So the executive went to the continent, it was after the war, and they brought over Rabbi Schneebalg, Dovid Schneebalg, he was here for many, many years, he gave his life to the kehillah.

RL: Where was he from?

WB: He was from Hungary. Grosswardein I think it is called. Right, after many years he wanted to retire, his son, the present Rav of the Machzikei Hadass was appointed, right.

RL: Was he chassidish?

WB: Yes, he was more chassidish, Machzikei Hadass became more chassidish in a way, because in a way there were many other synagogues started to be established and, at the moment Machzikei Hadass is the centre. At Machzikei Hadass at the moment, over 1,000 people daven there every morning. You can imagine what that means. But, I must say, all the other shuls, we have got Ger and Belz and Satmar, all those shuls are now in Manchester, that didn't used to be years ago. I would say that the orthodox Jewish community consisted in Manchester about 10,000 souls, over 1,000 families. This spread out completely ... In this particular street now, when we moved in here, in nineteen fifty ... in about 1945, 1950 perhaps, there were only two orthodox families living in here, living in this street, now it is all except one, right. 100% everywhere, 100%, Manchester, Broom Lane, all those streets, completely, completely 100% orthodox people. In actual fact there are some very nice non Jewish fellows around the corner here, they once spoke to me and said "You know my friends ask me, 'How can you live amongst the Jews here?' You have no friends here." He says, "Yes, you are quite right, it is true, my children have very little friends to play with here, but, it is safe here, there is no shouting

here, no wife beating here, no screaming here, no fighting here, no drunkards here, it is fabulous to live here, I wouldn't dream of moving." He still lives here, he is a very, very nice chappy, he is just around the corner. He has a caravan, a six berth caravan, he takes his family out always, but that is how Manchester has developed tremendously.

RL: How did that happen?

Tape 3: 15 minutes 59 seconds

WB: They started school, the first Jewish school, Rabbi Feldman, who was the Rav at that time, at Wilton Polygon in Seymour Road with eight children it started, and do you know how many children there are now? In the orthodox Jewish school ... there is in Prestwich the Jewish Day School has got 400 children. Not very far from here is Bnos Yisroel School, it has got about 600 girls. In Upper Park Road there are three or four schools, it has tremendously expanded, tremendously expanded, look my own family, when I tell somebody, right, my daughter was born 60 years ago, right, 25 years later she had her own family, 50 years later she has got kneine hora ... it has expanded. Hitler, yemach shemo, did not succeed in what he wanted to do, to exterminate; on the contrary, we have become stronger.

RL: In this town, you know you were telling me how in the early days, how bad it was amongst the general community here. How did Machzikei Hadass or whoever it was begin to change that? How did it change?

WB: Partly by example, and even more so by the Jewish schools. The children were taught what to do, told them what to do and how it should be done. Lets put it this way, King David School, is not, from our point of view anyway, is not very strictly orthodox school, but they are fabulous, they are fabulous, I mean the children who go to school know that they are Jews, they know what they are, they know that they have to keep Shabbos, even if they don't do it, at least they know, they have got knowledge. In the olden days, the children, when my children for example went to Broughton High School, I mean, then there was no Jewish school where to go to, that made all the difference.

RL: As a member of the executive, what were you involved with?

WB: Everything, yes everything.

RL: In the early days, what kind of things were you involved in bringing about?

WB: I was Hon Secretary to begin with, and whatever needed to be done, I mean, I was the shick yingel, you know what I mean by shick yingel, the boy who does everything there is to do. I mean all the other people were probably 30 years older than me, I was the youngest there, in fact there were some people who said they didn't want to sit with children on the executive, and then for example, another example, in Manchester there was the Chevra Kadisha, right, there was nothing, there was nothing in the Chevra Kadisha, so the Yekkers, the people that came from Germany they created a small Chevra

Kadisha, right, for other people, but anybody, any Jewish person who wanted to have tahara went to Machzikei Hadass should do it for them. I mean, I personally, I am in charge of the Chevra Kadisha now, for the last 15 years or so, I joined the Chevra Kadisha after my father died in 1943, 44, I have been all the time there, but anybody who was orthodox wanted ... in the olden days, when somebody died they were taken to the mortuary and a fellow came with the.... they were buried, it has changed a lot, I mean it has got 100% perfect Chevra

Tape 3: 15 minutes 59 seconds

Kadisha as well, but 30 years ago, nothing of the sort, nothing of the sort happened. I am telling you, in the olden days there were 38 butcher shops in Manchester and one mashgiach, right, there were next opposite Mandley Park there used to be butchers shop called Rosenberg I think it was, he sold horse liver, kosher horse liver. I mean it was absolutely unbelievable. In a town that there was tremendous influence was a fellow called Zigmund Margolis, he was the secretary, he was a tough guy, a friend of mine, he died unfortunately very early, but he was what do you call it, he was strict, he put his life into making Manchester as far as the general community was concerned to a higher standard than it was. Manchester, I must tell you, Manchester today, Manchester Beth Din is far, far better than in London, far better. Manchester is getting very near to Machzikei Hadass standards, yes it is. Machzikei Hadass its very important to keep on, keep on showing to someone. Imitation is the best compliment, right. What these people don't realise now from our point of view, I don't know if you would be interested in hearing that, but from the orthodox point of view it is very important that Machzikei Hadass exists, although the town is very, very good, the town is very, very good, I must tell you, there is no argument about it, but unless you have got, perhaps you would call it competition, competition is good for business, the fact that there is competition very, very important. That is why I always say to my people when it comes to a meeting, it is important that people realise what Machzikei Hadass stands for and the town is very, very good, but they must realise in Cardiff there was a Jewish community, in Birmingham there is a Jewish community, in Leeds, in Liverpool, they all disappeared. Why? Because there is no competition, eventually there is nothing to put new blood in it, they die off and are finished with, they are not interested, they haven't got the Jewish schools, they haven't got the education, slowly, slowly it died. My grandfather was 80% frum, my parents were 50% frum, some are 20%, my children marry out, I mean this, this is the unfortunate part. It is important, it is absolutely important, that is why I am very strong on this fighting for Machzikei Hadass, I retired a few months ago, they haven't accepted it, but I am not official any more, working there I mean, I have got another project ...

RL: Before we come onto that ... you mentioned the Chevra Kadisha, so was that the first proper Chevra Kadisha in town?

WB: Yes, 100%.

RL: And you would help anybody that ...

WB: In those days, anybody that was shomer Shabbos, the person that wanted to, free of charge, nobody gets paid on the Chevra Kadisha, it is not a paid position or anything of that sort, we even didn't have our own cemetery, we have got it now, but we didn't have it years and years ago, but anybody that needed it and was shomer Shabbos and wanted it, absolutely, free of charge, everything was done free of charge.

RL: And what about, you mentioned the Mikvehs, what about Mikvehs, did you ... ?

Tape 3: 26 minutes 11 seconds

WB: Well Mikvehs again ... there was a mikveh in Ramsey Street which was down Bury New Road which was bombed, and we wanted to build a new mikveh in conjunction with the town, we had many meetings, there was a fellow called Nathan Furst, he was the in between person and we nearly came to some arrangement, but then, the town, in those days, they said "Yes, but we are not responsible for the upkeep." Yes they were prepared to pay for the mikveh to build it, so obviously that was a no go, so we had to build it ourself, but afterwards Manchester became better and better, they built the mikveh in Tetlow Lane, which is perfect, everything is perfect, perfect ... but again we have to set the example first and they have to follow.

RL: And where was the Machzikei Hadass mikveh built?

WB: Where? In Sedgley Park Road.

RL: When was that?

WB: Oh ... I could look that up, I could tell you and show you some photos of when it was built. Dayan Abramsky was here at that time when we started. Yes, I am afraid that over time it is very difficult to think of it, was it thirty years ago, fifty years ago, sixty years ago.

RL: So what happened between the bombing of Ramsgate Street Mikveh and the building of the next one?

WB: Well there was a small one, a very small one in George Street, which was a very, very small mikveh, very non comfortable one but was in emergency it was done, it was a person called Mr Yankel Davidson, in Broom Avenue, and he built it, it was built in a private house, right. In a cellar in a private house, he built it and he was one of the good people in Manchester. Manchester has and had some really good people actually. I don't know if you know what Manchester is like really. Do you know, in Manchester anything and everything that you require you can have. Whether you need tables to borrow, or chairs to borrow, or dishes to borrow, or prams to borrow, or beds to borrow, everything is available here. Manchester is a fabulous, fabulous town, I must tell you, the chessed, the charity that is being done, I will tell you ... there is an old age home, right, I just called yesterday somebody, and he said to me, "Look this woman has an appointment at

9 o'clock tomorrow morning at Hope Hospital. Can you make arrangements to take her?" Yes, no difficulty. Like everything is there. I am very much involved with the old age home. The old age home has a very good story as well.

RL: How did that come about?

WB: I will tell you, in 1946, 1946, there was a building available. First of all, let me put it this way, where Machzikei Hadass is now, this was the headquarters of the black shirts,

Tape 3: 29 minutes 39 seconds

right. And Mr Pfeffer, he bought this building, right, the next building as well, he bought this building, he wanted to build a Shul there, but he was worried if we would ever have sufficient people to make a minyan, right. Mostly people didn't live up here, they lived down at Strangeways, they were at Strangeways. Right, so he bought it, next door was a building that became empty, and there was a person in Manchester called Sidney Wolfe, he was a good natured fellow, he had some money, and we approached him and asked him if he would buy this building in order to make an office for the Agudah. And he agreed, he paid £9,000 for the building with the condition that within ten years we can buy it back at the original price, and in the meantime we could expand. We bought the building, I personally went to Mr Pfeffer and gave him £9,000 and put it on the table. He said take it to Mr....., my solicitor tomorrow morning, I don't want this in the house. And we bought the building, and six weeks later once we were still negotiating the corporation requisitioned it because there was a terrible housing shortage, they took it away from us. They paid the money back, but they took it away. Fifty years later, in nineteen fifty ... where are we now ... about eight years later we bought the building again.

RL: So when was that?

WB: About eight years ago. For £250,000, right, and we had to pull it down, but the fortunate part of it is that we rebuilt it, the old age home, I happen to be chairman of it, right, and we were mazeldik that we were next door to Machzikei Hadass Shul, so people that in the past who couldn't go to Shul, or couldn't go on Shabbos to Shul can go to Shul because there is a ramp there and they can go to Shul. I will never forget we opened this binyan, took the people to Shul in wheelchairs, and they started crying, I haven't been to Shul on Shabbos for ten years, I couldn't move, and now I am in Shul for the first time, we are very mazeldik, we are just next door, we could do with expanding it but there is no space, there is physically no space there.

RL: Why was it felt the need for another home, an old aged home?

WB: Why was there the need? Well I will tell you, there is a beautiful home in Heathlands, but it is not for our people, it is not for the strong orthodox people. I mean, people have got television in their room for example, but nobody would think of putting it on on Shabbos. We discovered when we went to visit our people in the home on

Shabbos, they are a different kind of people, Heathlands is a beautiful place, a really beautiful place, but I mean, if you go there on a Shabbos, people sit there without a cappel and they don't wash, they don't bench, they don't daven, it is a different type of people altogether. It is, Heathlands is beautiful, very, very good but you have to know who for. We are very strict, let's put it this way, it is for people of the type of Machzikei Hadass, we have got in our home people from Gateshead, we have got people from London, we have got people from, obviously from Manchester, from Antwerp we have got a person there, we have got people ... I will tell you something, yesterday there was an inspector there, to interview somebody, and when she went out the inspector said,

Tape 3: 33 minutes 45 seconds

“Whenever I get old I wish I could come into a home like this, I can feel the atmosphere here.” It is so nice, this is our pride, let's put it this way.

RL: How many people are there?

WB: We have got 16 flats, 16 rooms on the first floor, where people are needing attention, whether they are in wheelchairs or are ill or whatever it is, that is on the first floor. On the ground floor we have got 16 flats, is it 16 flats, yes 32, we have got people that have got their own kitchen, their own sink, but they need supervision, have we got 16? Yes. And on the third floor, on the second floor again we have got another 16 flats, right. I am right, I think I am right. People who want to come in can eat, they can eat in the dining room, if they don't want to they can cook for themselves, but they are under supervision. Unfortunately we have people in there who when they come in are very normal but after five or six years they don't really know what is going on, and it is heart breaking, heart breaking, but such is life, such is life.

RL: What is the name of the home?

WB: Beenstock home, it is called after Mr Beenstock who gave the originally £250,000 for the home, to buy the property. I went to him, and I told him what we wanted “I am not interested”, and what did he say just afterwards, he was interested. First time I came to him, he wasn't interested, second time he was a bit more and so and so, he warmed to it, as it happens, his wife, she was a very nice person was ill and she came to our home as well, and she died after she was there about 10 or 15 days, and she said I never knew there was such a thing here, such a beautiful, she was proud that she had the Beenstock home, she had an internal artery burst and she knew that she could have it at any moment it could happen, it can happen, now, in six months time, in twelve months time, but she knew it could happen.

RL: Is this a residential home?

WB: Yes.

RL: Not a nursing home?

WB: We are not a nursing home, no.

RL: Now, going back a little bit, obviously you are very involved in the home, what about what you said about the Chevra Kadisha and the Mikveh, what about other aspects of the community have you been involved with.

WB: I would say you have to be careful, but as far as Machzikei Hadass is concerned in everything for the last, for the last 60 years, 58 years, every aspect.

Tape 3: 37 minutes 4 seconds

RL: How about the improving of the kashrus of the community, how were you involved with that?

WB: Well, it is not, well I may be involved, but it is not my personal responsibility. We have got somebody there who is responsible for the kashrus, an employee, a Rabbi who is employed looking after the kashrus and doing whatever has got to be done. Right.

RL: Has that always been the case?

WB: Yes, that has always been, that is the Rabbi's responsibility, not the layman's responsibility. I mean in town is exactly the same. And I must tell you, I have to repeat again and again, town is on a very, very high standard, there is no argument about it, it could be that Machzikei Hadass has to be a little bit more, because, let's see, there are certain things, which they are all right, but it is not the best thing, the town is, there is no doubt about it, it is alright, but Machzikei Hadass is a little bit more in certain circumstances, right. So you can't impose the strict on everybody in town, Machzikei Hadass are prepared to make sacrifices, the town, you can't, but I wouldn't say anything is wrong there, far from it.

RL: I am interested in how it changed, you know from how you have described the early days, ...

WB: Changed what?

RL: How things have changed for the better?

WB: In Manchester?

RL: Yes, yes.

WB: Very simple, there was this Mr Margolies, and then Dayan Weiss came to Manchester, right, he is a world known personality and he came to Manchester, probably, I have to be careful what I say, probably he wouldn't have come to Manchester if it wouldn't have been that it was after the war and ... but he came to Manchester and he

said he came to Manchester because it was the most orthodox community as well and he got people together and he built, just like Machzikei Hadass it took him years to build, he built the town, it didn't come immediately, but now the town is very, very good, there is no argument about it, an expert in Machzikei Hadass say completely that the town is very, very good, right.

RL: When did Machzikei Hadass ... can you tell me about when they got their own shechita?

Tape 3: 39 minutes 37 seconds

WB: Well, there was a big fight with the shechita board all the time. Well we had, originally we were under the shechita board and we had our own shochet, right. It was perfect but our shochet had more treifus than the shochet in town, so the wholesalers don't want him to shecht, they don't want him to shecht. So the town at that time, they should have said, if you don't want this business, he is employed by us, if you don't want this business, if he doesn't shecht for us, we don't come to you either, but they didn't, they let us down in that respect. So the shochet had to go to Ireland to import the meat from Ireland. We were fighting all the time, and in 1965, Rabbi Brodie, he was the chief Rabbi at that time, and we had been in his house, I remember distinctly he told us at that time, "You know, officially I have got to fight Dr Schonfeld because I am the chief Rabbi and he is the so called Austritts Gemeinde but I want to tell you, under the table I help you, because I know very well that my Baal Habatim of today, my Baal Habatim of today are the reform of tomorrow, and the reform of tomorrow are the people that are lost from yiddishkeit completely and marry out, and I have to help him, there is no argument, officially I cannot help him", right. And he came from Newcastle and he understood, the very last job he did when he was asked to give a license to Machzikei Hadass to shecht, because you couldn't shecht in England without a license of the Rabbinical commission, because the Rabbinical commission always refused to do so because the London Beth Din or Manchester Shechita didn't want us, they didn't want the competition, but they got it, and since then from then onwards we have our own shechita and from then onwards I became president. That was simultaneously because at that time we said we don't need fighters now as such, because we have got what we required, now we need people that are less fighters but to organise things, and that is how it started.

RL: Who was instrumental in fighting for that?

WB: Well, we all were, but we had two or three strong people, strong fighters.

RL: Who were they?

WB: Well there was a Mr Halpern, Mr Reich and so, so they were ...

RL: And did you open your own butcher shops?

WB: Yes, we had our own butcher shops, even before, we always had our own butcher shop, but it was under supervision of the board as well, but under our shochetim, but then, when our shochet couldn't shecht any more he had to go to Ireland, so it didn't work any more, so we had our own butcher shop, it was a market place and I remember the first side of meat that arrived in Manchester, that I collected in my own car from the airport, Manchester airport, and that was the first time. Halberstadt, the big butcher in Manchester was under Machzikei Hadass all the time, but when we broke away from the board he said "but can you guarantee that we have supplies? I will come with you, but can you guarantee supplies?" We had to admit that we can't, we will try our best, but we can't guarantee, we don't know what is going to happen, at the moment we are shechting

Tape 3: 43 minutes 24 seconds

in Ireland, we are shechting every week in Ireland, but what will happen if the government stops us, or we can't import, we cannot guarantee, so he said, and I don't blame him, "If that is the case I cannot be under you, I have to be under the Manchester Shechita Board." And he has been since then under the Manchester Shechita Board.

RL: Who became the MH butcher after him?

WB: He was our butcher as well, but we couldn't guarantee supplies so we had to get the supplies from the general, from the Manchester shechita board, right, so we had our own butcher shop at 438 Bury New Road.

RL: Who was in there? Who did that?

WB: We got a butcher from Bournemouth, he came up here, a Mr Clyne, right, and he was our own butcher, right, and we got, we got meat from Ireland and our butcher shop must stay and we made everything kosher and everything was all right, and we expanded and expanded, and opened another butcher shop. We had no contact, no connection whatsoever, as far as shechita was concerned with the general community, we were completely separate; we always will be now as well.

RL: So how many butcher shops are there under Machzikei Hadass now?

WB: Under Machzikei Hadass there is one in Bury New Road, there is one in Leicester Road and there is one in Kings Road, three. It is sufficient.

RL: And what about the provision of kosher milk?

WB: Again, exactly the same, there was no provision for kosher milk at all in Manchester, there was a fellow called Mr Ormacher who went every day to the farm and he brought back milk in cans, like I did when I was a kid, right. There was no ... eventually we had kosher milk, somebody down Middleton Road, a Mr Furst, it was delivered in bottles, and then United Dairies I think it was called, United Dairies, and

then we had kosher milk. The town has got kosher milk as well, the town has got almost everything that we have got.

RL: But was the Machzikei Hadass supervision, was that the first kosher milk in the town?

WB: Yes, yes.

RL: There wasn't any by the community.

WB: No, no, people didn't bother to have kosher milk, the general community; it wasn't accepted as a necessity.

Tape 3: 46 minutes 9 seconds

RL: Who was Mr Ormacher?

WB: He was a fellow, on his private business he went to a farm for milk and he delivered the milk to people. "How many pints do you want?"

"Three pints."

"Right." And so on ...

RL: Who was instrumental in organising a proper collection?

WB: Of what?

RL: Of kosher milk. Who was behind that?

WB: Nobody that was his private business that he did.

RL: After him.

WB: After him it came to be a necessity, we went to a farmer and someone made supervision, we sent a mashgiach out and the milk was delivered to Liverpool Road to a fellow, I have forgotten his name, and he delivered the milk to the district, to whoever wanted it.

RL: And he ran it is a business?

WB: That was his business, yes.

RL: But you organised the supervision?

WB: The supervision, yes. In actual fact if you want to know, the fellow, all of a sudden we found out that the fellow was cheating, and we stopped immediately. He made himself ... the milk came in bottles, and Machzikei Hadass put the stamp on,

engraved it, and then we found out that he made, that he started making himself, because he paid I think a hapenny for each bottle of milk so he thought he could save, he went away straight away from there, and we went to United Dairies I think, I don't remember any more, I can look things up afterwards and give you, if you wanted some papers that you can see.

RL: So that was the provision of kosher milk?

WB: That's right, yes.

RL: Were there any other aspects of communal life that have changed because of Machzikei Hadass?

Tape 3: 48 minutes 13 seconds

WB: Well, put it this way, I pride myself that, not myself, Machzikei Hadass, that we set the example and we built it up to a standard as it should be and as it is now, we set the high standard, and this is very, very important, Machzikei Hadass set the example and the others follow, and they nearly caught up to us, I am very proud to say so, but I think that this is, as I said, in Manchester, Manchester I can honestly say is a most beautiful, beautiful town in every respect, I don't mean just physical, I mean as far as this is concerned.

RL: Who was the shochet who killed on behalf of Machzikei Hadass?

WB: He was called Rabbi Katz, he came from Hungary after the war, and he was a great personality, a great personality.

RL: And how many years did he remain the shochet?

WB: After the war ... first of all he trained, he has got pupils that he trained as being shoachim, some of them in London and some of them is our present shochet, Rabbi J J Weiss, he is our, he is one of our present shochets, even he is of retiring age, but he taught some others now. At the moment we have got three shoachim.

RL: And were they all trained one by the other?

WB: That is right.

RL: And these schools? You mentioned that your children went to non Jewish schools.

WB: Yes, they had to, in those days there was no Jewish school available, I mean, more the girls than the boys. I mean now they have got a reunion, there are four or five or six married women here, grandmothers, you know, they went together with my daughters to school, and they are saying "Do you remember this and do you remember this?" We

were six or seven girls in the school with a hundred and fifty other non Jewish girls and so on. We were treated alright but it wasn't a Jewish school at that time, right.

RL: So which school was this?

WB: That was actually Broughton High School in Broom Lane, it is been pulled down now and another school has been built there, right. The girls' high school from Radford Street is being there now.

RL: What about junior school? What junior school did your children go to?

WB: Well they went ... there was a Jewish Day School in Prestwich, they went there, the boys, that is right, and it was all Machzikei Hadass ...

Tape 3: 51 minutes 37 seconds

RL: And the girls?

WB: The girls went to ... they went to Broughton High School, they went to Broughton School, there was no Jewish schools in those days, and then there became, a small Jewish school became, they went there. Mrs Royd was the head mistress.

RL: What was that called?

WB: It was in Radford Street, and my children said "Do you know how naughty we were there? Do you remember what we did? How naughty we were there in school?" Again there was a bunch of ...

RL: Was that the present Jewish High School?

WB: The present Jewish High School ... ?

RL: That is in Radford Street ...

WB: But they are moving now ...

RL: So is that the school?

WB: That was the building at the time, it was a private house previously.

RL: So was that the same school ...

WB: The same school ...

RL: As your daughters went to? That was the high school ...

WB: That became the high school, yes.

RL: Did your daughters not go to a Jewish primary school?

WB: Yes, but they were mixed, the Jewish Day School, it was boys and girls together at that time, yes I think so.

RL: Right, and then some of them went on to Broughton High?

WB: Yes, that's right.

RL: You say you had ten children.

WB: Yes.

Tape 3: 53 minutes 5 seconds

RL: How many boys and how many girls?

WB: Six boys, four girls.

RL: And what did they go on to do after school?

WB: Right, first, the first boy, the first girl, wait a minute ... she was a secretary, that's right. My boy went to the Yeshiva; Gitti was my secretary in my business. Maurice went to Yeshiva, Moshe. Yehoshua went to Yeshiva, Akiva went to Yeshiva, Danny went to Yeshiva, Binyomin went to Yeshiva and then I have got two girls, the two young ones, I don't think they did anything, they went to seminary of course, yes, the girls all went to seminary.

RL: Which seminary did they go to?

WB: The eldest went to London Seminary and the others went to Gateshead Seminary. That's right, yes. No, sorry they went to Manchester Seminary afterwards, Manchester Seminary was established and they went to Manchester Seminary here. In that time the eldest went to London, that's right, the second one went to Gateshead because there was no seminary here yet, and the others, the youngsters they went to Manchester seminary.

RL: How usual was it for the girls to go to seminary in those days?

WB: It was, the girls have to learn as well. What does a girl do when she comes from school when she is 15 until she gets married? Either she becomes a secretary or something; she has to have something to do in order not to get up to mischief and most of them went to seminaries. Incidentally I am a governor of the seminary as well, it was nice, I hadn't done anything for years and years, the Manchester seminary.

RL: When did that start?

WB: Oh, it started soon after the war, I couldn't, in 1950 ... I think.

RL: And who was behind that?

WB: It was Mrs Royd, who was originally the headmaster of the Jewish Day School. Afterwards they went to Israel, her husband was a doctor, they somehow didn't find her a place, and they came back to Manchester and made the seminary. She was obviously the principal of the seminary, unfortunately she took ill, so her son became principal, and she died pretty soon afterwards, she had cancer.

RL: Was her husband Dr Royd who is still here?

WB: Yes, yes ... he is still here.

Tape 3: 56 minutes 3 seconds

RL: Right, right ... so they formed the seminary on their return from Israel?

WB: Correct.

RL: Right. Which Yeshiva did your boys go to?

WB: First to Manchester, and afterwards they went to Israel. Everybody went to Israel afterwards, they go for a year or two in Manchester and then you go to ... it is very important to be away from home.

RL: Which Yeshiva in Israel?

WB: Different ones. One went to Tsebin and one went to Ger, different yeshivas, there is no shortage of yeshivas there.

RL: And where have they settled? The children?

WB: Well one is in Manchester, and he was a lecturer in the Manchester Yeshiva. The Rosh Yeshiva wanted him as a lecturer. I have to count them ... one went to Tcebin, and then they became business people, they were not what you would call Klei Kodesh, they are ordinary business people. One is in Israel, went to Israel, and he is a very great Talmid Chocham, and I can show you photos of him when people come to him and ask him for advice and everything. Yes, I am very proud of my family.

RL: Now this tape is just about to end so we will stop here.

WB: Can I consider it as being finished now?

RL: I have just got a little bit more to ask you ...

TAPE 4

This is the interview with Walter Brunner and it is tape four.

So you were just telling me about your children and how one is a Talmid Chocham and another in Israel has gone into business.

WB: No, no in Israel no one has gone into business, no.

RL: The one who has gone into business, where is he living.

WB: He is ... I have got three boys in Manchester, I have got two boys and a daughter in London, and I have got two sons and a daughter in Israel and I have got one daughter in America, so they are spread out.

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RL: And the ones in Manchester, are they the ones that are in business?

WB: Two of them are in business, yes. They are manufacturing liquid soap and this type of stuff, gel tile things.

RL: Is that for the kosher market?

WB: Not necessarily, the general market, general market, some for kosher as well but for the general business as well.

RL: Do they have a trade name?

WB: Yes. AIN Manufacturing. AIN Manufacturing.

RL: Right. And the boys in London?

WB: He is a mashgiach in a Yeshiva, that is right, there is only one in London, yes that's right, and the other two are daughters in London.

RL: Just one boy in London.

WB: One boy and two daughters in London.

RL: And your two sons in Israel?

WB: The two sons in Israel, both of them are semi attached to yeshivas as lecturers.

RL: And your daughters, who did they marry? Who did your daughters marry?

WB: Husbands of our choice and they are happily married. You know what it is here, marriages are arranged. With us you make enquiries. Who are the people? What are they? Where do they come from? What is the family like? What are the parents like? Everything else, I interview the boy and then you tell the girl, this is what I suggest. But the decision is yours, you meet the boy and you see if you think he is compatible, and you meet them once, twice or three or four times and then you make up your mind, and you rely very much on the judgment of the parents. This is not only by us, it is done in our community. You know what they say, Liebe Macht Blind if you fall in love with somebody you don't see the faults, then it is awakened when you see them it is too late. It is important that you come to everything first, look through, have a look at the background and so on. And this is generally done in orthodox Jewish communities and this is the right way.

RL: And did you do this for all your children?

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WB: For all my children, yes. Not only me, everybody does it. It is the exception for people to find love match themselves but most important thing is that you don't have to fall in love; you don't have to be in love when you get married, you have to be in love afterwards, this is the important part in life. And furthermore I always tell my children, it is not what you take out of marriage; it is what you give in to marriage. And thank G-d my children are very happily married. Unfortunately one of my children has no children. They just trying to adopt a pair of twins, rather wild kids, but we will see how it works out.

RL: When you were arranging who they should meet, was it often the case that the first person that they met they married?

WB: No, not necessarily. No, I don't think so, I don't think so. Look, I will tell you something, let's put it this way, the four or five machutonim I knew for 30 years, before I start. I mean it is the same background and so on, so it is not necessary, not necessarily the first or the second time, maybe the first of second person but not necessarily.

RL: And where were they from? What town or countries were the spouses from?

WB: Either from parents who were refugees like us, or as I say one son, one mechitan was interned together with me, in the same house, and he married my son, his daughter married my son, so we are a very closely knit community. Fortunately there are not too many divorces, far too many there are, but not as many as in the general community, because we are very careful, we don't go in blind and we just never question that, as I said to you before, it is not that we fall in love, and then we get a rude awakening, it does happen, obviously it does happen, there are exceptions to the rule but generally speaking.

RL: So most of the spouses came from where? From London or ... ?

WB: From London, no, I have had three from Switzerland, and there the parents I knew as well for 15 or 20 years, so I know who the people are.

RL: How did you know them?

WB: Just from my youth and whatever it is ... ever since, you must realise, we are close in the community ... her father is this and this person, you know who the person. Let's make enquiries, let's see what they are like, let's see what the family is like, this is the recipe really for everybody.

RL: So three were from Switzerland, one from London and one from America?

WB: The America one is, she was in seminary in London and she used to ... let's put it this way the grandfather was the same person, the great great grandfather was the same person, so it was a little bit was family.

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RL: And what grandchildren do you have?

WB: I can't answer that, I am sorry. Do you mean how many?

RL: Yes ...

WB: I honestly don't know, in excess of 50, let's put it this way, and great grandchildren as well. Every second week I get a "Opa, a baby was born, I mean you must realize, thank G-d. I must say I am a multi multi multi millionaire, not in money, but that is not the important part.

RL: In terms of nationality what would you call yourself?

WB: Me?

RL: Yes.

WB: Well, I am, I had a meeting not so long ago with Hazel Blear. Do you know who she is? The MP. And she said to me she lived all of her life in Salford. And I said "Yes Hazel, but I have lived much longer in Salford than you do." She is still a youngster, do you understand. I have lived over 60 years in Salford, and you, how long could you have lived here, 40 years maximum. I was born in Vienna, right. I came to England and was grateful, England gave me hospitality. I hope I am a useful citizen, I have done my best, I have never committed any criminal offence except for once a parking ticket but nothing much worse than that, and I try to repay what has been given to me, to the community, and that is it, and this is my attitude to life.

RL: And what would you class yourself in terms of nationality? What would you call yourself?

WB: When I was a child I considered myself Austrian and I would have died for Austria if it was necessary. I have a long time given that up, right, I am a Jew, and that is it.

RL: How secure do you feel in this country?

WB: I do feel, I must tell you, the English mentality is very good. They are fair, they allow ... it has become lately, anti-semitism is become worse, it has become worse, it could possibly be, I don't know if it is jealousy, or if it is about Israel, or whatever the position is, the position is not as rosy as it used to be many, many years ago, but that is how life is.

RL: Have you met anti-semitism in Manchester?

WB: I saw a lot.

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RL: Have you come across it?

WB: Yes, of course I have come across it, it is something we have to take into consideration that is how life is. Far, far, far less than I had in my youth. An English person is a fair person, morally decent, there are exceptions, obviously there are exceptions like anything else, but no complaints.

RL: How do you feel towards Germany?

WB: I will never set foot on German soil. I don't want to know them, I don't want ... this country is full of blood. Not only Jewish blood, they didn't kill only Jews, they killed the gypsies and they killed everybody that isn't an Aryan. I don't want to know them, it hurts me whenever I have to buy anything that is made in Germany, I don't want to know them.

Although the generation as this is completely innocent and is nothing to do with them any more, but still. My daughter in law the other day travelled in an airplane and there was a German girl sitting next to her, and she said "How do you know? How don't you hate me? How do you know that my grandfather did not kill your grandfather. How do you know?" It is true. I have not set foot on German soil and I don't intend ever to do so. Although I must tell you the Poles were not any better, even the Austrians were not any better.

RL: Have you returned to Austria?

WB: Yes I do, because my mother is buried there and I go every five or six years, just to visit my mother's grave, I go for one day or two days, I don't want to know, and I come back.

RL: How do you find it when you are there?

WB: Well there are Jewish people living there now. I personally can't understand why, but people that haven't lived there before haven't seen and haven't gone through, I am the lucky one that I haven't seen too much myself either, but that is how it is. They are building; they are slowly, slowly building a Jewish community there.

RL: Have you ever come across anyone there on your visit who knew you from the past?

WB: No, no, I don't think so. I don't think so. Do you mean Jewish people?

RL: Or non Jewish ...

WB: Jewish people yes, but non Jewish people no. I don't mix.

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RL: How do you feel towards Israel?

WB: What do you mean? Israel is our holy land. At the moment how it is being run is not to my liking but that is another matter. But the land is ours, it has been given and promised us by the Almighty and this is our land. The fact that it isn't now as it should be or as I would like it to be, well ... that is how it is.

RL: When did you first visit it? You have visited it I presume ...

WB: 1948 I was there. That's right, for the first time, I couldn't go to Jerusalem, it was what do you call it, it was a Kvish Burma up from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, I have a sister there and I wanted to see her, and my brother was there as well, that is right. He was there, when he came back from Australia and I wanted to see them. I have been there many times since of course.

RL: How did you feel going to Israel for the first time?

WB: Like many other people. I fell down and I kissed the earth, it is our land, this land has been promised by the Almighty, just, that is what it is. It is our land, G-d given land, and that is how I feel it is, the fact that it isn't run the way we want it run, and perhaps the world does not recognise that it is our land is a different matter, but it is still our land.

RL: What happened to your sister? You haven't brought her up to date.

WB: My sister, she is married, she married somebody, and she lives in Israel, she has got two children and she lives there. Unfortunately she is completely irreligious, not that she wants to be religious, but the husband she married came from Poland, a socialist, he knew very little about religion and she married him, she had in a way, she was ill and he looked after her, so out of gratitude she married him, he is ill now for many years, now the roles are reversed and she is looking after him and she is completely irreligious, not that she wants to be but this is her life, you know. She hasn't been to Shul, even Yom Kippur for the last 30 or 40 years, but what can I do. When I go and visit her I am on good terms with her, obviously I don't touch anything in her house and don't eat anything in the house, perhaps a glass of water but that is about it, and I am on good terms, but that is it.

RL: Do you feel that your experience as a refugee has affected you in any way?

WB: Has it affected me? Probably yes. It has affected me in a way that I can see the necessity to help other people, if I would have grown up where everything is alright and I didn't see the difficulties with the way other people have to live, and I didn't see the difficulties of life, perhaps I wouldn't have been active in communal work. I am spending all of the time looking the other way. I mean my telephone, I am telling a lie, up to about six months ago my telephone was never off, in the middle of the night or day

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people would call, and I am going, I know I am an old man, but thank G-d I am fairly well, considering my age I am very well, right, thank G-d for that. What else can a man wish for?

RL: Do you think it has affected the way you brought up your children?

WB: To be honest with you I brought my children up very strict, very strict. I am a disciplinarian, I am very strict, and my children are very grateful for that, right. Nowadays children do what they want to do, it doesn't exist in our house, definitely not. If there was anything on the table you eat it, you don't like it, you eat it without liking it, I am not asking you to like it, I am asking you to eat it, if you don't eat it, come on, on my lap, open your mouth, feed you, I was very strict.

Perhaps the biggest compliment that I ever got, I have a nephew who didn't get on at home so much, right. So he stayed with us for quite some months. And he told my wife "How is it that uncle is so strict and yet so kind?" I was strict, very, very strict, but credit is due, I was gentle as well. I am a disciplinarian in a certain way.

RL: Did your experiences every affect your religious belief at any stage?

WB: Perhaps the other way round? Look what has happened to me, I am lucky, to have all this that I have got. On the contrary, it is unbelievable how many things happened in life and the Almighty is good and helps, right. There are many, many, many good

people, really fabulous, and it is really important that one helps the other person, don't live for yourself, you never know, you may need it, or even if you don't need it, you give, not only take in life. And my children are very much the same, they have the same attitude in life.

RL: Have they become communally active?

WB: Well, my son in Manchester for example, very much, yes. All young people, mentally ill people, he sees to them, he goes to mental hospitals and so on, yes, he is very much a bit of his father in that respect.

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

WB: A plain man, that helps a little bit of the community. A plain man that has a lot to be grateful for and is grateful for it, and that is it. I am one of the luckiest people alive, I told you before, I have got a marvelous wife, thank G-d, and the help from, the Almighty will help to keep us for many years yet, and that is it.

RL: Is there anything that you feel we have missed out that you would want to touch upon?

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WB: Perhaps yes, perhaps when I was younger I should have learned a bit more than I did, right, I started being a naughty boy and perhaps I should have taken a book and learned a bit more, but that is it, but that is how it is, you can't alter things any more, accept it.

RL: If you hadn't had to have left Vienna, if Hitler hadn't come, what do you think you would have done? What do you think your life would have been like?

WB: I was supposed to become a doctor, to study medicine. That was originally, originally, but it was a long time ago. Fortunately I am not, I only deal with the mistakes of doctors.

RL: Is there any last message that you would like to give?

WB: Who to? Try to help people, people who are in need, try to give some time, give some effort, give some love to the community, to the people, they desperately need it, and never mind, you might need it as well sometimes so give it now, whilst you can. Nothing else, that is my attitude to life, I am grateful to many, many people who have looked after me, who have helped me and so in, in life, in business, and so on. And everything, one has to thank the Almighty, I cannot thank enough the Almighty. And this is my attitude. I can't think of anything else to add. Thank you very much for spending your time, and if you wanted some papers or pictures I am able to ...

RL: We will do that next. Thank you very, very much.

WB: Am I released.

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Right, this picture is my great grandfather, Yitzchak Fleishman who is the son in law of David Hershonfeld who was Chassam Sofer's son in law, it must have been taken many, many years ago in Hungary. I couldn't tell you exactly when.

Right, this photo is from Rabbi Moshe Nachman Hirschler, who was my great grandfather, I believe he was the machuton of Rab Yitzchak Fleishman and as I say he was my great grandfather and he lived in Vienna.

This is a photograph taken of my grandparents and their family, this must have been taken in 1910 or thereabouts. My grandfather is sitting down and my grandmother is standing next to him, she was a rather energetic wedding, as you can see where she has her finger. Next to her was her son, next to her was my mother, my mother was called Clara and next to her was her sister, I believe it was an elder sister, she was called Haydi, and next to her was the younger sister who was called Alise. As I said this must have been taken about 1910.

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RL: And where?

WB: Probably in Vienna?

RL: And your grandparents names?

WB: My grandparents names were Lazer Hirschler, I am called after him and my grandfather's name was Adele, Aydel Hirschler.

This seems to be a photograph of my parents at their engagement which must have been about 1918 or so. My father called Solomon Brunner and my mother is Clara Brunner, her maiden name at that time was Hirschler and obviously this was taken in Vienna, and as I said it must have been taken about 1918 or something.

Now this picture was taken in the Volkspark. I remember distinctly when it was taken. It is my sister and my brother and myself. My sister on the right hand side is Lizbet, my little brother is Alfred and I on the left hand side, that is myself, it was taken in the Votivpark which is a place that people went, and it was taken in Vienna, as I said around about 19, at that time, 1926 or 27.

This picture was taken about 1937. It was taken in the Yeshiva in Neutra, in Nitra I am standing in the back row with a cap on, I was young boy who hasn't got a hat, I couldn't

afford a hat at that time, and I am standing there, I was very happy, it was very happy times, as I say it was taken in 1936 or 7.

This is my engagement photo. I was very, very lucky to be engaged to this beautiful girl. It was taken in Manchester in about 1941 and my wife exactly, she was called then Malkah Shreiber before I was lucky enough to marry her. This was taken here in Manchester.

This photo was taken in 1943, it was my grandmother who was alive and in England and she was holding her first great grandchild, my first baby. This was in 1943, my grandmother was called Mrs Bayla Hirschler, she died about 1948 or something like this in London, and she was buried in London.

RL: And the baby's name?

WB: The baby was Clara, or Rivka, our eldest daughter.

That is a family photo, I have got all my children there, plus my daughter in law, my first daughter in law, standing at the back behind my wife, plus my son in law on the right hand side holding a baby. All my ten children are there and I would say eight grandchildren are there as well. The little girl holding her hands in front here is the youngest but one, sitting on my lap is my youngest daughter and standing in the back is

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my youngest son which is called Binyomin, the next one is Danny, the next one is Gitty, the next one is my daughter in law and next to her is her husband, then is Yehoshua, Akiva and Danny. I think I am right. And then I have got three grandchildren and of course my eldest daughter sitting next to my wife holding her own children. This picture was probably taken here in Manchester in the 1960s. But the whole family is there which I have counted out already.

Right, this is the photograph taken at the wedding of one of my grandchildren, it is taken probably in 1996 or thereabout, and this is just a sample of the family I am blessed with. This is my eldest daughter and her husband and she married one of their children and behind them are some of their children and some of their family standing. It was a really nice photo and we are grateful to the Almighty that we have been able to produce and bring up such a nice family.

RL: Where was it taken?

WB: It was taken in London.