IMPORTANT

AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
AJR
Winston House, 2 Dollis Park
London N3 1HF
ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	89

Interviewee Surname:	Hemingway
Forename:	Hanna
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	26 December 1933
Interviewee POB:	Salonica, Greece

Date of Interview:	25 January 2005
Location of Interview:	Batley, Yorkshire
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	

REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 89

NAME: HANNA HEMINGWAY

DATE: 25 JANUARY 2005

LOCATION: BATLEY, WEST YORKSHIRE

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minutes 47 seconds

HH: My name is Hanna Hemingway.

RL: And did you have any other name from birth?

HH: No, just Hanna.

RL: And were you named after anybody?

HH: I think I must have been named after some…it's not anything that anybody has talked about, I believe one of my aunties, or somebody I didn't know. Normally, in those days, you did get named by different people. Actually, when I think about it, I had a godmother, she was a Russian Jewess and I think she named me after her mother – Hanna – and her name was Ida Maclourgos. My guardian angel.

RL: Where were you born?

HH: Salonika.

RL: And where?

HH: Greece

RL: … and when?

HH: Oh, in 1933.

RL: Now this guardian angel that you've just mentioned, how was she connected with the family?

HH: Well, only as regards…she was a godmother and I was thinking, I suppose she was well, at one time, if there were any single women and they weren't married, it was supposed to be good luck but you see in my case, I've been a very sickly child and she must have taken pity of me. Because she paid for medication I had, schooling I had, in fact she kept me alive, virtually. Because my parents, they couldn't …well, there were no doctors bills or hospitals,

and my father wasn't entitled to anything because of British nationality. He was classed as an alien in Greece.

RL: So tell me, how was that, where was he born?

HH: He was born in the Dardanelles and through British descendants. Now, we never got to know where, we were all British by descent and as each one of us was born, we were all registered at Somerset House through the British Consulate.

Tape 1: 3 minutes 10 seconds

And my father had to get permission to live in a place more than six months and to work anywhere more than six months. So, he wasn't entitled to anything at all, state-wise, medication, medicines, schooling, so my sisters never had any education. Because my father…they just couldn't afford to send them, you know. But as I said, my godmother, she did pay for me. It was an Italian school. It was like a primary school, is that all right? Yes, I could have been about four or five. And I went there until the war, well, until the Germans actually…no, I beg your pardon the Italians bombed Salonika to begin with, before the Germans came in. So there was no school, no anything. It was just horror and chaos after that.

RL: Can I ask you about your family background? Can you tell me a bit more about your parents and maybe even grandparents if you remember?

HH: Well, I've…we don't know very much, well, we know the name of my grandmother, that's the parents from my mother's side, we don't know anything about my father because he was taken prisoner when he was about eight, when the Turks and the Greeks…or, you know and because of, well, we think, we are not sure, but he was taken prisoner with his sister because all the rest of his family were dead. He had some more sisters and he never spoke about his background, only that it was very, very hard. So from the age of eight, he virtually had to work to keep looking after his sister. He was twenty-one I think when he married my mother. She was sixteen and […] he used to laugh and say he wasn't her first choice, because she was an orphan, she lived with her sisters and in those days you married whoever didn't want a dowry. And my father didn't want anything; he just wanted my mother from day one, and that's what he got. But my mother's family came …she was born in Larsa, which is a small village not far from Salonika actually, and she had three sisters and two brothers. Her mother's name was Clara, no, she was called Serena […] I can't just tell you offhand; I've got it written down actually, if you want for me to come back to this…

RL: Maybe later…

Tape 1: 6 minutes 33 seconds

HH: Yes, but they were born in Larissa, her father and mother died, she was only very young, and she was a very, very good tailoress, so from the age of ten she was working. I don't know where they married, must have been a proper synagogue wedding, but apart from that… she was very, very religious and my father couldn't care less, you know. He had gone through so much in his life, I think religion '…' He kept all the…you know, we were Jewish in every, every way because of my mother's strong leaning towards it, but then the funny thing is, nobody realised we were Jewish. They just said 'oh, there is the English' that's what we were called: the English. So we were classed as English and orthodox. They didn't know. Even through all the years in Germany. All the prisons and camps we were in, none of them ever

realise we were Jewish. And my mother instilled this fear: we must not tell. So we went through all the war, not denying our religion but not coming forward with it neither. So consequently, we didn't speak about anything that we went through the war until much…well, after my mother died, my father died, and we all got talking one day and it all came out. You know, bits here and bits there. But, it's a shame we didn't get back together young, earlier you know, when my mother…we could have got information from our parents.

RL: What did your father do for a living?

HH: He was a tobacco worker, for the six months he was allowed, and the rest of the time, he did whatever he could, he sold fruit on a barrow […] and my mother took him washing, he used to go shining shoes, is it…you know, shoe shine, which he did while the Germans were there […] whatever he could, he did. And that's why the godparents came in very, very handy, because it was one less for them to worry about. But she was my guardian angel.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 27 seconds

My one regret is I couldn't say goodbye to her properly and 'I love you', secondly. Maybe hear that she knows she was there. She was killed by the Germans; around about…I think it was '43. My father got to know, you know like prisoners, whenever they went into a camp, they brought information from different sides, and that's how he got to know how many Jews were killed. All the Jews that were left practically in Salonika got murdered, well, the ones who didn't die of starvation, because the first thing the Germans did when they came into Greece, 'oh, we're friends', and nobody was frightened, but within the matter of days, weeks, there was no food, people were starving, they were dying in the streets, and that's when the cruelty really kicked in.

RL: Now, just sort of keeping before that at the moment, you mentioned first of all that your father had a sister. What happened to her?

HH: Yes, she married […] actually I don't know much about her at all.

RL: Where was she living?

HH: She must have been living somewhere around about Salonika…because I can remember my mother's side better.

RL: So tell me a bit about your mother's side…

HH: Actually, she had two sons'…' I'm just trying to think of her name it's written down there, was it Allegra…anyway, she had two sons, who survived the war, they lived in, they went into Bulgaria and then eventually they got through to Salonika. No, no, sorry, Israel, they made it into Israel. And the mother died, the three daughters she had, two were taken into Auschwitz, and the one, Leonora, we know is surviving, well, she had to do whatever she could to survive and live throughout the war. And that's…I never asked her what she did, it wasn't our business to know. But she survived.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 20 seconds

RL: So these are the daughters of your father's sister.

HH: That's right, yes. And as I said, we met the two cousins in Israel and Nissim was named after his father, they…yes, I think, there is so many… in the culture that we had, the first born…in a girl, she was called Benvenida, which is my older sister's name, my grandmother's name. Nissim and Benzion which was my father's name, he was first born. They have another name, a Jewish name, but we didn't know it. And it isn't on the passport or…after I've a few hints of aunties and so on but on my mother's side, as I said, she had the two brothers Sabbatai, don't ask me to spell it, please, and Samuel, now he finished off in Argentina and he became a Rabbi there. What did they call the other one? Sabbatai and Avraham, yes. I can only remember Sabbatai, simply because he was small, he had a monocle and he had a stick, but a little dapper, you know. I can just see him, he used to come regularly to see my mother and it was a little dandy, you know, well, none of them survived, they were all killed. As I said, the only family we had on my mother's side, nobody apart from….no, they were my father's side, so, she never saw her brother Samuel, he is now dead of course, his son came over to meet us for the first time and he was there for my youngest sister, who married a Jewish boy and he came over for the wedding, and it was a fantastic time to meet a relative. They did write, well, my mother couldn't write, you know, we all used to do a bit; you know my younger sister actually did the writing for her. But when he died, the link was broken, you know.

Tape 1: 15 minutes 21 seconds

RL: So was he the only one to survive on your mother's side?

HH: As far as we know, yes, yes. All the rest, on my father's, from one auntie, on my father's side, all her children survived. But none of the others did.

RL: Do you have any idea how your parents met?

HH: Well, I think it was when my father was doing the fruit, you know in a wheel-barrel he used to sell big melons and water melons and that sort of thing and I think my mother was a beautiful woman, I don't think there is a picture that really does her justice, because after constantly having children, she was so badly swollen when we came here, and then she was very, very ill for many years, she had poliomyositis, which virtually left her completely crippled, she couldn't feed herself in the end. So she had been a poorly woman for many, many years, all the years we were here and in the end, what she suffered through in the camps, no food, no sanitation, that didn't help. But I think, all I can think of is he saw her and just asked for her hand, which, in those days, she hadn't a father and I think at that point her sister was quite happy to see her go. One less mouth to feed. That was the…you know, and he didn't want any dowry, he was quite happy, and that was it.

RL: When did they marry?

HH: I honestly can't tell you. The only way I can remember…well, it's something we never ever discussed or talked about, what I want to be…you know the wedding thing, no, that was the present from here, wasn't it.

RL: Yes.

HH: Well, my sister is eighty, and my mother was sixteen when she was having her, so work that back [laughs], I think her birthday was in '24, Bella's, that's right. So my mother was sixteen…

RL: So they must have married ’23, ’24?

HH: Yeah, in the early twenties.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 3 seconds

RL: Yes. And what family did she have?

HH: Eight daughters, but two died while we were there, before the actual war. And then the rest of us, the six of us came over; we all survived. Although since then three others have died.

RL: Can you give me the names of the family, of the daughters?

HH: Yes, I’ll give you the… Bienvenida, we call her Bella, Clara, we called her Claire, Lucia, it was Lucy, and Esther Rina, she was called Stella for short, and there was me, Hanna, and then the two in-between, the baby who I remember was Rose, and then there was one, she was Oro. Now she died through shock of her…we were bombed, well, everybody was bombed, you know with no homes left, but it must have affected her because she went blind, and I’ve never known exactly what she died of, whether it was shock, but she never regained consciousness I think […] she just went. But she was absolutely beautiful, really beautiful. And she would be five, well; I was seven and a half so she would be about five…that was Oro. And that killed my Mum because she couldn’t put her in a grave because there wasn’t… you know, we never knew where she was buried. There were so many people dying that particular week or day or whatever they were just, they shovelled them all away. That’s all I can say, but that was very hard.

RL: What’s your earliest memory as a child?

HH: I think I can remember… Rose, and apart from that, it’s only very, very faint. My godmother, she used to take me to a farm, a vineyard, you know like convalescence, I was always poorly and I can remember smelling the vines. That was a lovely memory because it was clean and fresh air and that was really nice. But I can remember quite a few bits and bobs, you know, the things…before the war I spent a lot of time with my godmother… I didn’t, I must have had a really fantastic childhood, compared to my sisters.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 15 seconds

But it was strange, you know, because I was living in two worlds. I was living in two homes, if you like, in two worlds. One I had virtually everything I wanted and the other, I could see the struggle. By the time the war came, and I was actually at my godmother’s when the Germans, when my father, they came to fetch me to go to the camp. And that was the last time I saw her. But there were pleasant memories, at school, it was a big white marble building and we had this ‘Heil Hitler’…no, it was a Mussolini I think salute, you know when they put there arms up, but the actual school, it was just marble everywhere. And at the very top, they had loads of pigeons and I can remember being taught with a, what do you call them, there is a name for it […]

RL: An apercus?

HH: Yes. And they taught me Italian. I can never remember actually speaking Greek, it was Ladino, it's the same as Yiddish over here but we speak Ladino in Turkey, Greece, it's part Mexican, part Spanish, it's a mixture. It's our language, which was really the only language that I spoke. It's the same when I was home, I only spoke that, so I can't… I remember the words in Greek that I remember most are for the songs my mum and my dad used to sing, to one another, to… and the individual words. I mean I know mother…I mean it's like in Italian. I could speak Italian but I can't anymore, but I can remember words of the songs and…French, same with French, but I can't speak that now. Never mind.

RL: So what language did you speak at school?

Tape 1: 24 minutes 3 seconds

HH: Italian. We had to speak Italian. So I learned my second language, if you like, where I should have been learning Greek and speak in Greek, I had to learn Italian. So it was Italian at school and Ladino at home. I suppose it was quite a mixture.

RL Can you remember where you were living, your home?

HH: Yes, the last house, I can't remember the houses before but the last house we lived in, it was like a one stone, one room house and like a courtyard going to it and my father, well, I don't know whether my father but one of the grew vegetables on one side and the other side they used to have parties on a Friday night, all the neighbours used to come, that's where the fun part came in. And there was a toilet right down at the bottom of this long […] I think saying 'courtyard' sounds very, very posh. But I can't think of another word I could use for that. And that's the home that we were taken from. I remember there is another one where there was a torrential rain and we were flooded out and my father swam with each one of us individually across on his back onto the other side. Then we had to live in another home but I don't remember it – not as specifically.

RL: So this last place that you lived in, can you describe it inside, what there was?

HH: Basically, it was one room, very large, there were no cookers and washing machines and you know…there was a communal bakery where everybody baked for the food and brought it home. So everyday you saw women going backwards and forwards for the baking. And same for the washing: it was the old fashioned way, you didn't use brushes, you used stones like they do… I think there is a place in Holland, I know I remember we went on one of these trips and they did the washing exactly the same way. It was like a stream, it was a lot of water and women used to just literally bang it clean, if you like. You know, it's like speaking of another world…sometimes I think 'well, did I go through all that'? It was very…everybody was the same, nobody was rich, nobody was poor, we were all…if one ate, the other one ate, it was that kind of…it was a typical Jewish village, you know, part of…

Tape 1: 27 minutes 42 seconds

RL: Were there no cooking facilities inside the house?

HH: No, the only fire we had, it was like a brazier, is that what they call it? You know, you take from room to room. Well, that's the only cooking I can remember and all my mum's pans were beautiful, all gold copper, and they shone…But as I said the baking was done in one part and the cooking was done in another part and they had to go there. I don't know how

they managed, but that's how they did the baking and the cooking. They used to use a lot of preserves, I can remember there were two earthenware really big jars, and one of them was full of tomatoes that my mother grew in the summer and then she used it for cooking throughout the year and the other was gherkins, so the other one was full of gherkins and I can remember this bloke used to come around, I wouldn't be so old, and my mother used to buy kilos of gherkins and I used to eat one, pull them out of the jar. I used to love them. That was the basic – that, rice, spaghetti and macaroni. I can't say I remember a lot of meat, because there wasn't any. Fish, when my father caught some, we had good fish, but he didn't catch very often. But …

RL: Did he go out fishing?

HH: Yes, he and his friends, they used to go out very early on Friday morning and my mother would prepare I suppose salads and…she used to be second in her way whether my father would catch any fish, so she'd make the biggest pan of mixed beans and he'd come in with all his mates, no fish but plenty of ouzo and loads and loads of beans and they were happy. One played, not a guitar but a mandolin and one played mouth organ…you know as I remember bits and pieces…but they were happy times, really happy times. That was before the war.

Tape 1: 30 minutes 28 seconds

Because all the young men who…I think my sisters were the reason why so many young men came to the house. They were too young for anything, well, Bella was fifteen and she was getting engaged; against her will, I might add. She preferred one boy and my parents didn't think he was good enough so…but I don't know what happened, I don't think she actually got engaged. But that was before…one of the things I remember is an incident: she got these beautiful blue and white shoes and she was like a bride. And they all…you know like coming of age, and they walked into town and I trotted on behind them, I wasn't supposed to be there I wasn't old enough so I was shooed off home and the shoes disappeared. And I was 'where are the shoes Bella?' But she had to sell them because by that time food was gradually going down because a lot of the soldiers, English soldiers came and they burnt everything they could burn that would have been useful to the Germans, they burnt, and unfortunately a lot of them were caught, they didn't escape in time and there were quite a lot of English prisoners…and…I'm jumping a bit here because this incident I just remember…My father used to go with his barrow and two or three of his friends used to go with theirs put plenty of straw and there were a lot of English soldiers and they used to push them underneath the straw, take them to a house, kit them in whatever clothes and made them pretend that they were deaf and dumb, which wasn't difficult because they couldn't speak our language and we couldn't speak theirs. And there was a small bridge between…which actually left Salonika and went into the Turkish border so they used to go and sell matches, you know, for anybody. I suppose it was a pedestrian bridge rather than a…there was no trains. So I could imagine quite a few of them got lucky and got away that way. So that was my father's bit '…' which nobody thanked him for but then again…

Tape 1: 33 minutes 31 seconds

RL: Coming back to food and you know your father catching fish and life then. I mean have you got any memories of the festivals?

HH: I can only remember, I don't know whether it is Pesach…Women weren't allowed in the synagogue, they used to wait outside. I'm afraid I can't tell you the technicalities because

when it comes to my religion, I'm ashamed to say it, I know very little about it because through the circumstances of later on. But at that particular time the children used to stand or whatever wait and what is it when the sound at the beginning of the fast or the end of the fast, they sound something in shul.

RL: What the shofar?

HH: Yes, that's it. And then everybody used to scatter home to get ready for the food. And '…' of course I can remember we used to fast. I don't remember anything else. Not as regards the feast because quite frankly I don't think we had much to feast about. Or whatever you had you sort kept quiet and kept it away.

RL: How much Jewish life was there around you?

HH: It was very Jewish actually because all the people…it was like a section in Salonika, which consisted of Jewish people. It was only a very poor section. I can remember there were no doctors but there was…I suppose in these days you would call them witch doctors. You know you I used to go to this lady and she would give you some potions. At one point, I don't know how old I was but we had, we later found out it was mumps, and she'd put us this brown cardboard with some thing in it and, it stunk but we had to put it…but it took the mumps away.

Tape 1: 36 minutes 16 seconds

And the other thing I used to have, you know and I saw it here in one of the hospitals, when you have pneumonia or pleurisy and you laid on your stomach and have it like a cup, a glass, and they put it in and it's supposed to take the germ or whatever it is out. I was amazed when I saw…and the same with leeches. They are using them now, and I can remember I don't know who it was, but somebody used to come to the house with whatever they were and they put leeches on, on the infected area. It's like it's another world.

RL: So was that done to you?

HH: Not leeches, no, or I can't remember that. But I can remember those things…as I said, all my life I had, what they call, what a writer would say, I was a run to the litter, I was a poorly of all of them. And in those days, as I said, there were no hospitals, there were no medication and possibly I would have died because they used to put you in a home to die. But my godmother saved me from all that. But the only medication I had was cod liver oil and honey and I can't stand either of them to this day! But rubbing in olive oil, my mother was a great believer in olive oil, I think all Greeks are. And that's…I can never remember going to take a tablet or…you had to eat it in your mouth with a spoon and most of it was cod liver oil. And that was it. So every time I saw anybody with a little short white coat and a…oh, I used to run like hell. Pardon my French, I used to run away.

RL: Did you ever learn any Hebrew at all?

HH: No, because Hebrew was…because we spoke Ladino. And here, I know they go to school to learn Hebrew because it's the second language. But in Greece I honestly don't think…I may be wrong, possibly my sister would probably prove me wrong, she has taken after my mother, very religious, but I can't remember speaking or hearing the language at all.

Tape 1: 39 minutes 21 seconds

So if they did it or not, I wouldn't know. I think the services would be in Hebrew and all the young boys…in fact I don't think my father had his Bar Mitzvah because there was nobody there to give it to him.

RL: So, you also mentioned that girls were not allowed into the synagogue…

HH: No. They weren't. I think they were allowed into the back, well away from men. Well, it's similar here: they don't have women integrated with men in the synagogue. The women are upstairs and the men downstairs, because it's a nice building. But in Greece it wasn't such a nice building so there was nowhere for the women to go. So outside or on the step was the only place they could…if they were religious enough they could go and pray when they had to pray with the men outside on the steps but…I'm sure there wasn't anywhere for the women to go inside. I'm positive.

RL: Do you remember any weddings?

HH: Not as such. I can remember…I don't know if the tradition is here, it's like 'washing the bed linen'. Do you know, every girl had to have a dowry. And just the week before or, I don't know when, just before the wedding, they used to wash all the bedding and that was a thing in itself. We used to go down the streets, singing and get the washing done and hang it out…what's it called 'La lava la ligna', you know washing the linen and what have you. And that itself was a …and I never remember going to a proper service, possibly I was too young anyway but I can remember that. And all the women used to go and they had a wail of a time. And there used to be Turkish baths, and you could smell the…was it chloride?

RL: Chlorine?

HH: No, a really strong smell in the Turkish baths. And there again, there was women and children because that was the only way you could have a bath. There was nowhere to wash so you had to go there for a bath.

Tape 1: 42 minutes 27 seconds

As I said, when I think about sanitation, it's hard for me to remember because we're so used to hot water now and cold water and baths, showers and in my mind we only go back so far. What did we do, I know we were clean, but how mother used to wash us I don't know. But it was peculiar. I think I would imagine it was the big old bath and everybody got in individually at one time, like they did here. Exactly the same as they did here. But that is the one thing I can remember. But I can't remember going into a bath apart from that, maybe two or three of us together. We used to sleep head to toe because the house was…I'm trying to think actually what it was like inside. I can remember the bedroom, well, what you would class as a bedroom all of us used to sleep there, all my sisters, and my parents had another section and then there'd be where we used to sit. But it was just a big, basic one room. That's all that springs to mind. But then again, that's all you ever wanted because you didn't know any different.

RL: Did you have any toys?

HH: I cannot remember having a toy. I can't remember having a birthday because my birthday is on Boxing Day and until we came here, I must have had some party or other, what it was I couldn't tell you. But my godmother probably would have taken me where we used to go for the weekend. And I remember I used to go in a Landau, horse and carriage, somewhere just outside Salonika. And there were all vine fields and I should imagine there being a guesthouse at the end. Sometimes we slept outside. But they are vague memories but they are good ones, they are happy ones. The horror came after.

Tape 1: 45 minutes 8 seconds

RL: What kind of games did you used to play?

HH: We used to play…hopscotch and we used to stick, buy a packet of stickers with different…you know like snap but instead of playing it with cards, we used to stick and whoever snapped first got the prize I would imagine. I bought the cards but I have no idea, but it is similar to snap. Generally, I think… I mean all the children used to play the same. Hide and Seek, although we didn't call it Hide and Seek, it was just natural, normal growing up. Because apart from today… a lot of people now wouldn't survive it. But when you're born to it and you don't know any different and you're paired and torn, paired and torn, they don't have the mobile phone, they don't have the technology as today. You don't want for anything, because it's not there in the first place.

RL: The Italian school you went to, was that for Jewish children or was that for anybody?

HH: That was for anybody. I don't think religion came into it because it was a private school so I don't think religion came into it at all.

RL: And how did you get on with the other children?

HH: I don't think too bad. I can remember one girl, she had ginger hair, she was a lot bigger than I was and she used to look down on us, because they all knew that…my sister Stella came for about six months and we used to go in together and she made my life hell, to be honest. And then one day I got so fed up I just threw her, knocked her on the steps and she fell down and I got reprimanded and she didn't. She stopped the bullying. I wouldn't recommend that to anybody. But I think I was more frightened than she was hurt. Because my father would have killed me. Oh, he was very strict.

RL: How did the non-Jews get on with the Jews in Salonika, what were relationships like?

Tape 1: 48 minutes 6 seconds

HH: There again, I don't think we mixed with non-Jews. Because of where we lived, you didn't need…unless of obviously the men worked…my father got on, well, we all got on, as far as I know, we got on all right. But there again we were never in contact. The only first foreigner I can honestly say I remember was one of the days where my father had been to the market and called past the what they call it line, where the Germans were taking the prisoners, they used to march them through a this…I suppose a sort of train or…they must have put them somewhere. And he used to go around with a cart and they had to wait while the prisoners passed and that's why…I mean they could have been caught, they would have been killed. So he really literally put his life on the line. But I walked into my house this day and we always knew if all the curtains were drawn, not to go in, for various reasons. And this

particular day, I don't know what happened but I walked into this room and I saw this…ginger hair, like my father, well, sandy-haired and it was the only man I had ever seen with the same coloured hair because everybody else was dark. And I looked at this man and he had…he must have been sweating and it was trickling down his nose and I was mesmerised. I was just waiting for that drop to fall off his nose. I was there with my mouth wide open until my father realised I was there and…I saw him beat and retreat, and I mustn't say what I saw and that sort of thing, which we didn't. We'd end. But it's the first…and I'm assuming he was English, I don't know. But it was just this one dribble coming down his nose. He was sweating, he was bright red, obviously must have been sunburned at one point. And then the next time, they used to let them know on the grapevine how they went on if they caught, if they weren't, and this bloke, he wasn't caught, he got away. But there again, you don't know whether they caught people you don't want to know. In circumstances, you just do what you can and forget about it.

Tape 1: 51 minutes 9 seconds

RL: Did you then…I mean really then the only contact that you had then with non-Jews was at school?

HH: Yes, yes.

RL: So, did you become friendly with any of the children there?

HH: I don't remember taking any home. I don't think we were encouraged to take, as they are today. I always encouraged my children to bring their friends home. I'd rather they slept here than…you know. But it's like a blur, you remember distinct things but I can't remember the people from there. Apart from this one girl and I think it was because she was so different because of the hair colour. She used to mock us, you know because we couldn't…we hadn't the clothes to go to that kind of school, but eventually, I believe we got a uniform. It was like a prisoner's uniform with a […] bird, you know what the prisoners where here, what is it called…? Anyway, I'd say bird for want of a better word, just blue and that's all there was. I think but I am not sure we had a hat, yeah, we had a hat. And that was it.

RL: So how long did you attend that school?

HH: It couldn't have been very long because I would spend more time off school, being ill, than in school, and… it was about 1939 when the Italians bombed Greece before they invaded, wasn't it? Around about then. I would have been five or six.

RL: So what is your memory of the bombing?

HH: …Loud. … Very frightening because my father, he used to have like a big table, wooden table, and we used to bunch all of us underneath this table. And I can remember particularly one day and the houses around us, they were all dropping. Everything was flying, limbs and…it was horrifying. I suppose we must have gone somewhere unless our house wasn't as bad. I know the wardrobe fell down one day.

Tape 1: 54 minutes 24 seconds

So there must have been a wardrobe. But that was our shelter. But they did have proper shelters and at one point there were…I don't know how it came about but where we lived,

there was a huge field and the reason the Germans bombed it is because they saw somebody. They thought the army was using it as barracks because they must have seen a uniform going down or…and because they were trying to hit that, they hit all the other innocent people as well. And then the school came down as well. So they did a lot of damage. But then they opened the …I'm trying to think what kind of a room we had. It was definitely an air raid shelter, and we had to run from our house there and I don't know. My mother used to make us all, as we were born, like a lucky charm, ayin hora, evil eye sort of thing. And as we were running I dropped mine, and I turned back to pick it up and somebody picked me up from my waist and the next thing I knew, I was in somebody else's shelter, I didn't see my parents at all. But they came back and found me straight away. But it was engrained; I had to wear this all the time, like these earrings. My godmother bought me these when I was less than two days old and I've had them ever since. That's a memory of mine, that's the only memory I have of her.

RL: What was it that you wore for the ayin hora, what was it exactly?

HH: I honestly don't know. It was like a little bag, and they used to put herbs and all different things that would ward off evil. Same if you were looking at a baby and it's your child and somebody said 'oh, isn't she beautiful!', you go 'pepepe' [makes gesture]. It's all very superstitious. And that's it; it's basically superstition. But what was actually in it, I have no idea. Probably some herbs or little stones or something. What they thought would stop the evil eye.

RL: This tape is about to end, so we will just stop here.

HH: Okay, thank you very much, I hope I have…

Tape 1: 57 minutes 34 seconds

TAPE 2

RL: This is the interview with Hanna Hemingway and it's tape 2. So you were just telling me about superstitions. Do you remember any other superstitions?

HH: I think they are similar. Not walking on the steps, and throwing salt over your shoulder. I think superstitions go from country to country. But my mother was very superstitious in her own way. I'm trying to actually think of the things she was superstitious of but basically I can't bring it to mind at all. I think it was general. You go out through the same door as you come in. Yes, that's my younger sister's…she is very…she cannot go out of a door she hasn't come in, that's really bad luck for her. There is all sorts of superstitions, isn't there when you think about them? We do it automatically…when knives were crossed…something about when you crossed knives or if it fell on a different spot, there'd be an argument. All silly things like that. But I think they are all the same.

RL: Is that from when you were child?

HH: I think it's interwoven in both. Some from being a child some from here, but my mother in her own way was very superstitious. Same as, as I said, if you looked at a child or a baby, they had to have something. She classed it as an evil eye, so whatever she could do to avoid it, we all had to wear this. If I would have known before I would have asked my sister, she, Bella will know… [Interruption]

RL: So I was just wondering, did you ever have to wear anything red…?

HH: Not red, not specifically unless you had a red coat sometime. Red wasn't in the issue….

RL: Or a red thread or anything like that?

HH: No, it was blue. The actual thing that we had to pin on, as far as I can tell you it was all blue. And inside, the different things were inside. What they were, I've no idea. I couldn't tell you.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 16 seconds

RL: Coming on to something else – do you remember, was there any entertainment at all?

HH: The only thing that I remember is when the Italians invaded Crete and the women and the men, they literally drove them back with sticks, they had no ammunition, they had nothing and they used to put like a big white sheet in the middle of the …road and they used to project the pictures on it, like a cinema. And I can remember, prior to that they had a… we saw some cartoons, which my godmother took me, but that was the only entertainment I can think of. But everybody used to shout and scream because it was so happy. This happened, they were actually winning. In fact, if Germany had kept out of it, Italians wouldn't have got very far in Greece because the women in Crete they were strong as… I don't mean big and hefty, I mean a fighter's spirit. And everybody was with them, they used to cry and shout so that they could hear them. Well, like you do when there is a fight on television, you scream and shout but they can't hear you, but it makes you feel better.

RL: What about music?

HH: The only music I can specifically relate to was a Friday night, when my father and his friends used to have, as I said, ukulele. And I think some form of an organ, not a piano, what you squeeze…what do they call them?

RL: A harmonica?

HH: Yes, a form of a harmonica.

RL. Accordion?

HH: Well, something similar, not quite as big, it was a smaller thing, but anything that could make music. Pots and pans, anything. As long as you made a noise and you were dancing and singing, that was it. That was the nice bits I remember.

Tape 2: 6 minutes 17 seconds

RL: Now coming on to the Italian invasion – did life change for you at that point?

HH: Well, not with the Italians, no, because they didn't touch Salonika, it's when the Germans actually came, that's when the trouble started, every which way.

RL: So what is your memory of the Germans coming?

HH: That sounds funny, but I have two memories: the first when the Italians were bombing they flew over Salonika with British flags. Don't ask me why. And everybody was in the street and I was playing hopscotch and my legs …you know when you are skipping, I just couldn't move. And all of a sudden there was the most horrific bombing and…it was terrible. And you didn't know which way to go because everybody was shouting and clapping, they thought it was great, you know. Because apparently, I mean this is hearsay, England was supposed to send so much aircraft to protect…I don't know what they then announced, that was too far beyond my… it's only what you hear now. And I do know that quite a few British soldiers were caught as prisoners and that's about all we knew of England. For all, my father was British, we knew we were foreign but nobody ever says to my father 'do you know you can get a dual passport'…he just used to go to the British consulate as each of us was born, register and that was it.

RL: Could he speak any English?

HH: No, no, it was completely foreign. He spoke Turkish and Greek and Ladino, which isn't bad for somebody with no education whatsoever. My sister is quite good as well, Bella, she is very, very good. She is a star.

RL: Can you say something in Ladino to us?

HH: What would you like? I have lost a lot of it and I made the mistake of taking a Spanish course so I could improve but I found it hard because I was saying things in Ladino and in Spanish it was totally different words.

Tape 2: 9 minutes15 seconds

You know for example: you have 'liar' for reading I think, well, walking is 'passo' and we say camino, or 'vamos camina?', let's go for a walk but in Spanish its totally different. I have always said vino for wine but it's bino in Spanish. You know those are little things but it made it difficult. It would have been easier to stuck to one or the other. I would love to…but I don't know anybody around here who has a course in Ladino that I could get to. You know just to learn in better. I can get by and I can get by when I go to Spain because you can merge the two together. But it's something that I'm loosing because I have nobody to speak it to. You know, I was trying teaching my daughter when she was little [laughs] what a nightmare. She used to start giggling so I gave it up as a bad job, I had no patience. Not for that.

RL: No coming back to your memories of the Germans.

HH: Oh yes. I must have been at home because I wasn't dressed and I heard all the tanks make a hell of a noise especially when your houses were made of egg shells and I went out of the house, and I was told not to and as I just peeped behind that wall, I saw the first tank. I didn't know it was a tank then, I do know, and I just froze, literally, the memory was so vivid, I thought they were coming for me. You know it's childlike, you think of all the silly things and then they went right through this town with propaganda and 'we're friends, we're going to do this for you and we'll do that for you' and as I said within a matter of days, weeks, they were literally shovelling people from the roads and the sidewalks. Either they died through malnutrition or, well, you couldn't buy food. The only thing you could buy was some…there were some farmers somewhere up in the hills, where about I don't know.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 12 seconds

But they used to come down and bring this black bread and you had to…the money was just ridiculous. You used to give a handful of money and it wasn't worth anything. But the bread itself it was horrible. Well, it was just potato peeling and sawdust as far as we could tell. That's what it tasted like anyway. And I don't think I'd be far wrong. And my mother got a lo of corn and she ground it down and made like a form of bread and my father must have got some….or he carried a little brazier and he got permission to polish the Germans shoes and than my mother would grill this bread and sell small pieces. In Greece you don't drink without eating, the same in Spain, you always got something and that was…my mother used to come home with her pockets full of money, which was worthless because it was German money. Well you couldn't buy anything because there was nothing to buy. And then eventually, they used to let so many of us go to…well, there were actually mountains of vegetable which were rotten and you scrambled as hard as you could, as much as you could and washed it and my Mum made something. Well, she kept us alive, let's put it that way. And then the horror came when the Gestapo got involved. Somebody told them my father was British, and they used to come around and it was terrifying. It was night, anytime, night, day, they used to come in, literally empty the house, everything that was of any value, including my mother's wedding ring and my father's wedding ring and o by the time were actually taken prisoners, we hadn't anything to declare.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 2 seconds

They had already pinched everything. But then they started getting really nasty. And in those days, I don't know whether they did it here, they did it in the Victorian days, they used to put a nappy on a baby, they used to wrap it, like a mummified, and for the first few months they used to have their arms, so they wouldn't grow…I think so that they would grow straight, as far as I know. And this particular day my sister, she could have been…she was born in August in '40, so the Germans couldn't be far of there, I believe they came in '40, yes, late'40 when they invaded and she was unwrapping her to change her and this German, he got frustrated, he didn't know what he was talking about and my father didn't know what he was talking about and he got so frustrated that he pushed mother and she fell and Ida went straight into the fire, we picked her up and luckily, it was only hot ambers, but it scarred her legs and you would think that with babies, I mean she still got the scars now, but very, very faint, as she has grown they have grown smaller but you never know what psychological that has done to that child. She cannot stand to be…is that agoraphobia? Is that when you can't stand to be in a small place?

RL: Claustrophobia.

HH: Yes. Claustrophobia. It's unbelievable. Even till now. So maybe that has started her off, you just don't know. And from then on, they got less and less coming to see us. We started marching up this hill they asked us stupid questions, but we couldn't answer them, we didn't know what they were talking about. We were given these injections, possibly now with hindsight, they were preparing us for the journey. Why they gave us injections I have no idea, whether because we were British we had to have a certain amount of care, I have no idea...

RL: Who gave the injections?

HH: The Germans.

RL: But you don't know what they were for?

HH: No… I think, is it smallpox that leaves the scar? Here I've got a scar there. I mean I have no idea what it is for, so I don't want even…it could have been anything.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 11 seconds

RL: So how long did this go on for that they kept…?

HH: A few weeks. No, I would say two or three weeks because it was a long time…well to a child's mind it's a long time and then it came the day when we were taken prisoner, I said I was sleeping at my godmother's and my father came with this soldier, well, there were two guarding him, and he came for me and he says to my godmother 'say goodbye', because he called her Ida. And she took, I had my magen dovid, the Star of David bracelet and a little Star of David around my neck and these earrings, which she had bought me, so my father said…it would have been no good going with the Jewellery because they would have taken it away, but my godmother would not take my earrings, she said 'no, leave them' and that's why I left them. So we went and from then…in the meantime these soldiers that were left with my mother's, one of them must have spoken a little bit of Greek and he just says to my mother 'take all you papers or anything of value, you are not coming back'. And I don't know who he was but he did us a service. Without that passport we wouldn't have…well, that was it, we wouldn't have known. And so that's all my mother took, oh and…she took that and an alarm clock. Now, she must have been absolutely demented. Passport you can understand but why an alarm clock? She must have thought…why she wanted an alarm clock, I have no idea. But as far as I know that's all she took with her. We had a good laugh over the alarm clock over the last years, but that's another...

RL: So, what do you remember of being taken?

HH: Everything. I wish someone would just give me…you know like the reels on videos. There is a reel in here [points to her head] and I can't get it out of my mind. It's there. Continuously, day in and day out and I just wish that somebody would erase it and I can't. So, I remember the good things, I remember the bad things, because wherever you go you can make a laugh and you can find a laugh.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 20 seconds

But that particular day, we were taken into the prisons, it was a Greek prison and it was known actually for very hardened criminals. We went into this room and they just opened the door and we were literally thrown into this room. Six young children and my mother and we were just shown… pieces of straw on the floor, filthy and we just sat there – we were petrified. And all the women, I cant tell you how many there were but there were a hell of a lot women and they were walking around and looking at us and walking around, and in the corner there was one small window, barred window and just before that you had this cauldron which was used as a toilet. And I can remember the stench to this dying day. It was really bad. The only food we had was a piece of bread once a day and eventually they let us…they used to let the women go round in a circle while they watched the dinner being served and somebody would tip a sack of potatoes with mud and everything, a sack of carrots, and within a matter of minutes we each had a carrot and a potato and…well it just doesn't bear thinking about. And luckily again, my guardian angel, god bless her, she contacted the English consulate in Greece and said 'there was this English family held in…blabla' and he came

from the consulate and luckily, as I said my father had his passport, where my mother kept it I don't know, she must have kept it somewhere on her. And they took us out of this filth, put us in a shower, we needed it, we reeked, and my Mum took as much of the lice she could out of us, because she used to be up night after night, wiping the lice off our faces so that we could sleep and she couldn't. She used to sleep as much as she could during the day and they put us in, and for the first time we saw clean straw.

Tape 2: 24 minutes 35 seconds

We were put into this room, it was a long room, less people in it and we had a clean straw and we were cleaned, we were bathed, well showered, and we were scrubbed and our backs, the skin was sore…they weren't very gentle. And we thought we were in heaven because we could lie down and just go to sleep, it was clean. The food was no better but then eventually after about two or three days, we did get some food and we were told it was a Red Cross parcel. And if the Red Cross…if I could say to them 'thank you' because those parcels saved our lives. We used to get one a month and my Mum didn't smoke, she didn't drink tea and Bella, she used to weasel her way around and get us bits of food in exchange for the things we didn't want. And that…throughout the war, for three and a half years we went doing that.

RL: You got once a month…

HH: Yes.

RL: The whole time?

HH: Yes. Well, no, because they ran out. When we got on the…that was the most horrific part as I remember prison.

RL: Who else was in prison with you?

HH: All my sisters.

RL: No, but I mean the other people, who were they?

HH: We didn't know them at all.

RL: Had they been rounded up as well or were they there already?

HH: I think in the actual prison they been there, they were actual criminals but I don't think there was anybody who wasn't…but we got this food, my father was in a different part of the prison, in the men's section. Now, all he had was a blanket. And well he was dysentery and malaria. That, he has something else, I can't remember what it is now, I can't think about it.

Tape 2: 27 minutes 13 seconds

But he really suffered as well. But eventually, once we contacted, well, they…the consulate told the, whoever was in charge of the thing, that my father was there and he wanted him to have a basic living accommodations and there wasn't anything at all, there just wasn't anything for them to go to. And we were there four weeks and than this particular day, again we were taken to this little room and my father had…I think it was Bella who signalled where he was and they took him into town…this is the mentality. He was absolutely, well, he was

down to shadow, you know from dysentery and all and they asked him to sign the papers of all the things we had left behind and that had been taken, he didn't know what day it was, so the gist of it was that there was no bank, the name of the bank that he gave, it wasn't there, so we couldn't claim anything at all. But things got…when we were on the trains…

RL: Just staying in the prisons for the moment…

HH: Yes.

RL What did you do during the day, how did you spend your time?

HH: Very little. My mother used to tell us stories; she used to sing to us, that's all we could do. Go to the window…I stopped going to the window actually, when it was said …I don't know whether the same is here now but if any prisoner does something then the whole prison knows about it…. Right, and this particular day they all said, there is being trouble. Well, there were dustbins, not very far from where we were and one of the boys, what nationality he was, I don't know, but he was caught in the bins, scavenging in there, and in front of our window there was a big tree, really wide tree, they took him up and they stretched his arms and his legs to go round this tree. Well, he screamed…the screams, you don't forget. And they left him all night and they cut him down the morning after but of course he died. But the horror of that man's death is…I just wish I could forget it, but I can't. And after that we were glad really we did get out of the prison. Going back to your question, we were allowed to go out on a walk around twice a day and then we could have one shower a week that was the recreation.

Tape 2: 30 minutes 55 seconds

RL: How did you get on with the other inmates? How did they treat you?

HH: I don't suppose, whether it was my mother was so scared, she kept us all to herself, we didn't make…I can't remember making friends; I mean we didn't have anything in common with them anyway. Apart…age wise, I mean there were no children there apart from ours. I think they just left us alone, virtually. I can remember one night, it must have been…I think it was the Turkish…it must have been some sort of holiday. And on the shelf, there was a thin ridge and there was a piece of cheese and if I tell you that it was actually walking on the shelf…and these women they were clapping, they were shouting, they were dancing away and these cheese was there, must have been the dinners, or suppers or breakfasts or something, because they just cut it so thin and everybody had a bite and they were dancing away, they were clapping…I think Bella joined them, if I remember rightly, she would join any dancing. And now they were very kind to us. That just sticks in my mind, very kind. But apart from that there was nothing, nothing happened that I remember out of that place.

RL: How long were you there?

HH: It's roughly…a guess, but I would say approximately a couple of months, two to three months.

RL: Did the prison have a name?

HH: Pavlo Mila. We were trying to get into, when we went back…I think now it's not a prison, it's for soldiers, an army camp or something, but we couldn't get anywhere near it.

The fact that we were going back in again, so we scooted but…no, there was nothing there. Apart from those women and that one night, that's the only happy memories I have of there.

Tape 2: 33 minutes 34 seconds

RL: And did you receive warning that you were about to leave when you went?

HH: No, no, only the day before or the night before it was practically straight away. This bloke, I don't know what he said, it was the British consulate, I think he checked the passport and stamped it, and he said 'you're going on a journey'. So as far as we knew, we were going on a journey. And whoever controlled the journey, forgot to stop because it lasted a lot longer than it should have done. There were two or three carriages and they were full of German and Italian soldiers. We were the only people there who weren't military. And that wasn't very pleasant because again…I think… the soldiers ran out of food because they got permission…they had soup at every…once a day at every…wherever they stopped and at this particular time Ida was crying, she was hungry, my mother had no milk and she'd been ill, so Bella literally put her on her breast because none of us had any food and she cried so much that one of the…I don't know, some sort of an officer, came in and got hold of her and were just gonna throw her through the window, literally, the baby was half out of the window before…was it my father, somebody pulled him back. And there was a senior officer there who tried for a few days to encourage us to talk to him, I think he could speak Greek, I am not sure, but he used to bring my mother the photograph of his family, and to show that they weren't all barbarians.

Tape 2: 36 minutes 3 seconds

And that wasn't so bad. Now, when he was there we used to get our food parcels, I think he was every two weeks there, for a few weeks and it was on one of this particular day that this particular incident happened. It's funny, we laughed about it every since, but it wasn't funny then. And as my mother was opening the food parcels, he happened to be there, showing her photographs of his family and so on. And she'd opened this tin and he pointed to it, you know 'what is it?' and my mother being my mother 'would you like to taste?' so, up, goes a spoonful into his mouth, well of course, it was mustard. Well, we had never seen mustard. And there was no water on the train only as it was passing, coffee. Well, he…as I said, you can laugh now, but it wasn't funny then. I have never seen so many bayonets in our faces, we couldn't move, because they thought…and he couldn't speak because his mouth was burning. And until that man got some speech left we had to sit in those compartments like sardines, I can't remember going to the toilet. That part of my brain has shut, completely gone. I cannot remember what happened. But he did eventually realise that…he must have made things right because all of a sudden the bayonets went out…and then the next nightmare started, out of his kindness, he said we could sleep in the carriage, you know the carriages you have in trains, what are they called…racks, where you put your luggage on, and he said, well, he gave permission for me, Lucy and Stella to sleep in the three compartments. I mean my father wasn't too pleased because he wanted to see where we were and he tried to keep us together. And the first night we were put in, I don't know how many ways a person has to touch you to lift you up and put you in this…but it was quite a few. And all night long, my hand gripped, I daren't go to sleep because every time you looked down, you saw soldiers in different shades, undressed, just looking up at you. And you just clung on and prayed for morning.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 21 seconds

You know, I just daren't go to sleep and I think I'm still the same now. I've been insomniac since. Actually, I found…I've got this piece of paper and it's the doctors, it's our doctors but it's this address and it's giving his idea, his impression, medically, of how fit we were when we came here. And we weren't fit at all. I'll have to find it have you have a look at it. Whether it was including all the family, whether somebody I needed to find, we did put a claim in, well, we've put a lot of claims in, which we couldn't get because we're either too late or it had been finished or…But can you imagine a Jewish family living in the centre of a train full of German Gestapo, Italian. I don't know how we survived? I've always said an angel on my shoulder because it stopped me from doing some stupid things. And we did. And then because of course the mainlines were being bombed, they had to stop and take side-roads or whatever, I'm not sure, but I know we went on country lanes and in one of them, the train had to really slow down and there was some corn, must have been a farm and this German let, I think Bella, and Ida, no it was the baby… it was two of them, get out of the train and scoop as much as we could get, heads of corn, or is it…do they call them heads, and we just sat and ate them raw. We were eating something...And then the next time when they actually stopped in a station, he did arrange for us to have some soup and a piece of the bread, like the soldiers. There were no Red Cross parcels then, because we've been on a long time. And then we went to…first of all we went to Graz and we were taken there and put in a prison…

Tape 2: 42 minutes 5 seconds

RL: Can I just ask how long were you on that train?

HH: I can't…specifically I don't know. It's like, forever and ever but if you go back, Ida was born 1940, this is '41, so I would say roughly, we got to Liebenau about '42. I would say approximately six months, according to that…

RL: On the train?

HH: Yes, because there was nowhere for them to get us off. And the thing…as I said, they couldn't go on the main roads, they took the side rails and it took longer and longer. And they didn't know what to do with us, they didn't know what to do with themselves. So when we got past the Balkans, the next actual stop was Graz.

RL: Where is that?

HH: That's in Austria I think. It's somewhere on that border. But that's a prison.

RL: How did you spend your days on the train?

HH: I don't really know. I can't…there is a lot of things I can't remember because I don't want to remember. Somehow or other, my brain just goes dead. And information goes overboard. I suppose children are resilient, we couldn't run, we must have devised some sort of games, you know. My parents were there…it's strange, I will ask Bella because of all of us, she will remember. Although she as well has been trying to forget, we all have tried to forget, but…

RL: Did the soldiers ever molest you at all?

Tape 2: 45 minutes 1 second

HH: Not that I can remember. If touching is molesting, yes, but not molesting as sexual in that respect. The fear…well, I wouldn't have known if they had because we don't know what it went, you know. If they did, we didn't know about it because it would have come across…we were very sheltered, from being very tiny. And again you would wriggle with fear, so that again could have brought on…I don't know. You think one thing and it brings up something else. I know we used to have to roll underneath the train when they were bombing; we had to get out off the train and we had to get underneath it to hide. That's the only time I can remember getting off the train, actually. Unless we were going to an air raid shelter or…well, we hadn't come across one until we went to Graz. And from that, we were there, I was there about five to six weeks.

RL: And what kind of place was that?

HH: Horrible prison with a very big dungeon, which we were put in. The ground was full of…well, now I would say mushrooms, but of course they weren't, they grew in the damp, are they toadstools, right, and there was a little trap door and this thing used to come down and there was some bread and some…twice a day we had a piece of bread and then, once, after that we got some soup. And that's how it worked. But my mother by that time was very ill, and Lucy was very ill. So I think we…how did we get out of that…I don't know how we got out of that room, but they put us underneath the level, would you call it the street level, where they have air vents…we were just below the air vents wherever they were, I couldn't say. And we heard the voices and the women prisoners marching round and we must have made a noise because they couldn't stand and look because they had to move but they must have realised that there were some children there. And every time two or three of them came pass them, they used to throw a piece of bread, a tomato, anything going, and that kept us…I mean this is…we're talking about murderers and rapists and everything else, but to us, they saved our lives. Because that food gave us that little bit more then what we were getting.

Tape 2: 48 minutes 27 seconds

And then, although…that room was definitely cleaner than the others had been. Whether that was because they had six thick, very, very…our Claire by that time was bad as well, they all had malaria, I was the last to get malaria, I got malaria in, I think it was in Ulm. Anyway, wherever it was…

RL: So, is that what, your mother was ill with malaria?

HH: She started. We all had malaria but I think my mother was also lack of care after child birth, anxiety, looking after children…you got to remember that this woman, young girl, she brings up six, eight children, she is taken, and she as to go like a gypsy from pillar to post every six months. Now, when I was born, they got permission to stay in Salonika. My father still couldn't work and he had to have a permit every six months but they allowed him to live, which made it a little bit easier. And then, by the time we got to…Graz, you got to remember that my mother hadn't had any sleep. She was feeding a baby with hardly any food in herself; Ida wasn't weaned because there was nothing to wean her on. So, one thing kicked off and then another kicked off, she was really ill. And as I said, Stella, no, Claire, she got very ill. We assume with Malaria, but we don't know. Because they let us off somewhere for the night in some form of a hotel, because I can remember having a bath and I can remember they gave us some food, so they could give Claire some medication, and my mother. Then back we went on the train until we got to Ulm, that's in Germany.

RL: So from there you went back onto the train, you didn't go back to the prison in…

Tape 2: 51 minutes 3 seconds

HH: Oh, no, no, no, we went back on the train because we were en route. We got back on the plane…plane, as well [laughs] and next stop was Ulm.

RL: Who was on the train with you on that journey?

HH: The same people, the same soldiers. But that was a nightmare for Mum because she was really taken ill in the chilled shelter and they took her away. We didn't know where. My father had been taken away in Graz, we didn't see him for about three years.

RL: How long were you in Graz for?

HH: I would say about five weeks, approximately.

RL: So when you left, it was just you and your mother, the children and the mother, right.

HH: Yes, yes. And we got to Ulm as I said Mum was taken away then, and there were just six of us. Poor Bella became mother. She was responsible for us all, she made sure we had something to eat whenever and we were all right. You know, she took on the responsibility.

RL: Where were you in Ulm, what was the accommodation?

HH: Just an air raid shelter. We didn't stay in long, it probably would be an overnight stay or whatever. And then from then on we went on to Liebenau.

RL: Back on the train?

HH: Yes.

RL: How long did that take?

HH: … You know, to be honest, it's roughly a guess, two or three weeks, because time has no relevance… dates and…unless you know afterwards, 'oh I must put those dates down', you don't think, you know. So, none of us put any dates down.

RL: How did you feel when they took you mother away?

HH: Very, very frightened, we were all hysterical. But I must give credit to the German people in that air shelter. They tried to…they gave us food, they tried to in the best way they could to give us affection, protection if you like. They came around; it was like a fairytale place because there were swings, everything for children. It was like a fair ground and there were all these children with their parents and they seemed to have plenty of food…But they did, they were really kind. And the next stop, after we stopped, I don't know which platform we got off but they put us in a horse and cart for the final journey that was from the station to Liebenau, the monastery. And we actually went on a horse and carriage, [laughs] full of lice, stinking to high heaven…but it was lovely, it was fresh air. We thought 'we are here, that's it'.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 57 seconds

RL: Who was in charge of you at that point?

HH: I don't think anybody was in charge. I seem to remember one German soldier, he was behind us, now, whether anybody followed us or not, you know, I can't say, but once we got there the nuns, the soldiers were there and quite a few actually but the nuns, it was a monastery that we were taken to and again we got a lovely delousing and by heck can those nuns were rough. We were given clean clothes. I was given some Wellingtons I believe. It was summer but I was given Wellingtons, I thought that was lovely. And then we were taken upstairs to…it was like when we first went, the iron bars and the windows, there were little faces peeping out, which I didn't know then were mentally handicapped, otherwise handicapped children, but every window on those…there were three floors, they were like long dormitories and on each of those windows there were some people. And by the end of the week, there wasn't any. They'd all gone. So I'm assuming, they didn't take prisoners. They were all killed. That's an assumption because the nuns, they used to make their own cider, they used to grow their own potatoes and that sort of thing, so what they did after they went, I have no idea. I know one day, there were air raids as usual and we were taken downstairs into the cellars for protection against air raids and we saw mounds of potatoes, absolute piles and piles, well, someone had the bright idea of putting some into the clothes, well, if I tell you, we went down like Twiggy and we came back up like Marilyn Monroe. We had potatoes everywhere, but nobody stopped us. But by heck, did we have a fry-up that night. Oh dear.

Tape 2: 57 minutes 52 seconds

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

HH: Ok, yes, I'll have another drink.

TAPE 3

RL: This is the interview with Hanna Hemingway and it's tape three. So, you had reached Liebenau…

HH: That's right, yes.

RL:…So can you tell me what life was like there and what you did?

HH: Well, when we first went there, it was very, very frightening because we were handled by the nuns, and as I said we were deloused, given some clothes and taken into like a part of a dormitory. We were all kept together, my sisters and myself, and then as time went on, we could go out actually into the courtyard with the other children, up and down the steps like you do, in the corridors or wherever and we would spend time chasing the nuns, especially for food but they were very…although they were harsh in some respects, on the night-time when they used to have their evening meal, which I assume consists of potatoes and macaroni cooked together and whether it was because we were so hungry but it was so delicious. I have tried to duplicate it here but I cannot get that particular taste at all. So, the prisoners themselves were taken for two-hour walks every day through the woods or wherever and Stella and I decided, we children couldn't go, only adults – and we decided we creep in and see where they are all going to. And it was snowing, so obviously it was winter and there was

this drop and I slipped and I fell down at the bottom. Well, nobody knew we were there, so Stella, she was crying and yelling to attract their attention and when they looked it was me…I was in panic, absolutely, and in the end the Germans, they weren't gonna stop at first and then the prisoners all got together and the only way I could get up – I was slipping, it was really icy – so they took the chains off the dogs, we were guarded with dogs as well as soldiers, and they took the chains off and that's how they got me up. I grabbed hold of the chains and managed somehow to scramble at the top. We were taken to the commandant's office, and I tell you I didn't see day for a week. That was putting it mildly. But we were definitely…I didn't get the chance again because I was taken ill there, and…

Tape 3: 3 minutes 2 second

RL: Who were the prisoners there?

HH: Women. Polish, Russian, all were there, they were definitely Jews.

RL: They were all Jews?

HH: OH, yes, even Americans were Jews.

RL: How many people were there?

HH: To begin with, not so many, probably twenty, thirty, forty, in that region. But then of course when the children, the boys got to eleven, they were taken away from the parent. That was very harrowing and sad. And actually after we left, Liebenau became one of the biggest women's camp, they were definitely outgrew it by four times. What we heard, on the grapevine and later on, what my parents were told, it was really horrendous, in the late 40's.

RL: Whilst you were there…I mean, you said there were nuns…

HH: Yes, it was a convent.

RL: It was convent, and they put prisoners into this convent?

HH: Yes, yes.

RL: So what were the nuns doing, were the nuns looking after the prisoners or…?

HH: Not looking after, it was only like a guard, that kind of looking after, not nice looking after if you know what I mean. I mean there were some bad and some weren't so bad and at least as I said we could walk in the gardens, and there was a school in which the nuns taught us to speak German. Well, started, a few words. I learned more when I was in the prison, eh, hospital because there was my sister Claire and I, we both became very ill with malaria. And we were locked in one little room, and I mean locked, one window and that was barred. If you looked through the window there was like a little arch yard so whenever the nuns came around with our rations of food, I used to point, and one of them told me the name. So next time she came, I asked her with the name and she was thrilled to bits. There were three or four who came and I'm not saying we could speak, we were learning, she must have thought we were animals in the zoo as far as they were concerned. But they were very, very strict. But there was one little nun and she was gorgeous.

Tape 3: 6 minutes 7 seconds

She used to come around, and I am only surmising, I don't know for sure but there must have been offices way further down because of the food in the platters and if there was any left she used to slip the key and we stood waiting with our hands there. And she would slip whatever food was on those platters. And as much as we could catch. Some went on the floor but it didn't make any difference. But it was those things that made life liveable. And we used to have the attacks at different times and all they used to have was quinine. So of course, the water was rather yellow. And I never had very good…well, I used to wet the bed, to put it honestly, so when Claire had her do, I used to sit at the end of her bed and hold her hand for company more than anything. And so of course, her bed used to get wet and the nun would come around and would crack me on my backside, it's a wonder I've got any left. But apart from that, we had nothing to occupy our minds, so what both Claire and I did, we used to test each other. What name is that fruit and this fruit. So in the end, we had about five, six names of fruit. And then she became very, very ill, Claire, and I can remember seeing this…I had never seen a man, a bishop, not a bishop, a priest and because again, we were accepted as English and therefore religion was…what are they called, orthodox, so we were treated as orthodox, not Jews, the orthodox church in Greece, so we were treated as, you know, and I stood at the window, well, I was crying at the window and the guy…they were giving her the last rites, I know now I didn't know then, and I started crying and I felt there is somebody on my shoulder. And it just said to me 'don't cry, she is going to be all right'.

Tape 3: 9 minutes 7 seconds

And I can remember specifically, turning around and pulling the thing that he was wearing, this white…there is a special name for them, I call it uniform, I don't know, and I gave it a pull and I said 'go away now, my sister is going to be all right'. And she opened her eyes within ten minutes or a few minutes anyway. And they just couldn't believe it. But to me, I just thought 'that's it, she is here, she is going to be with me'. And I thought no more about it. But since then, people have said to me 'with all the things that happened to you', we have gone through a lot of bad things, me personally through illnesses, and the family since and they said 'well, how can you believe in God?' but to me, God is not some being that you look at. He is there for me when I want him. I talk to him and he doesn't always answer but I don't feel I'm on my own. And that's why to me, religion is not a big thing because there is only one God, so if you believe in him you believe and that's it. You don't need, I know you do need the little artificial bowl, whatever it is that goes with the… with religion and religious ceremonies but I have never known them and so I haven't missed them. And when we came here, I mean we couldn't tell anybody, first of all because we didn't know the language…and so it's been something I've missed. By the time my mother actually got back into Leeds and in the Jewish community, I was engaged to my husband and that was it. Well, I got married at twenty-one, I met him when I was sixteen. I just wasn't interested. But he was a marvellous son-in-law for my mother. She really, really…all of them were, they treated my mother with more respect than their own parents. They really, really loved her. But didn't do any good in the end, but never mind.

RL: Now, coming back to your sister and yourself when you had malaria, were you still in the convent at that stage or had she been taken…?

Tape 3: 12 minutes 2 seconds

HH: No, we were in a hospital in…I don't know if it's Ravensburg, there was a big military hospital there. It couldn't have been that far away from where we were. And I think we were there about a month. Yes, because while we were there, there had been an air raid by the Allies, well, I'm assuming so, they didn't bomb themselves, and we could hear everybody running and screaming in the passageway, but we were locked in or so we thought. And all of a sudden I pulled the door and it opened. So I said 'come on Claire'. Well, we didn't have any clothes; all we had was this little…like a sheet with sleeves in, with the back open. And so we're all running down and I say 'come, we go this way' and she said 'we shouldn't be out'. I just thought 'well, we're out' and we ran with the people and then they seemed to split. Well, I didn't realise there were two parts of the hospital. So I followed on the way I was going and all of a sudden these doors opened and…there must have been every type of soldiers with ailments, with no knee, legs, no fingers, no heads, no…there was absolutely…it was like going to a horror film. Only I didn't know there were horror films in those days. And somebody gave a scream and they literally picked us up and threw us in this little room, it was all sandbags, and then they closed the door. Well, we were absolutely petrified. We shouldn't have been there in the first place. Anyway, at the end of whatever it was, it must have finished, and they came looking for us. Were we cracked, oh boy. We got a really good belting. But I felt sorry for Claire because without realising, I mean she was seven years older than I was, I mean she had a figure, you know, and there she was, stood in this little, white, see-through thing and we were absolutely into the light, they could see everything. I mean to me, I hadn't thought about that because I didn't know anything about it, but she must have been mortified afterwards. But she forgave me in the end. Poor Claire.

Tape 3: 15 minutes 0 seconds

RL: So after the month, were you taken back to…?

HH: Yes, we were taken back to Liebenau by which time my Mum had been found and she joined us there. So we were all joined up in Liebenau.

RL: Where had she been taken?

HH: We never found out. It was a prison, she was very badly treated. Her hair was cut off…well, because she couldn't speak the language she didn't know what they were asking her. And with hindsight, they thought she was a spy. No papers, no nothing. All she could say 'where are my children?' So when they brought her food she wasn't able to eat because they put paraffin in her mouth or something. So she couldn't eat the food and the other prisoners were eating it. And of course the wardens weren't bothered as long as the plates were empty…and she was like that for quite some time, she was absolutely…well how she…it was malnutrition, she was like a skeleton. And I mean she has always been lovely, but plump, but there was this skeleton with two little plats and my mother's hair, you could sit on it, it was beautiful and really long. And it was just horrific seeing her like that. Well, we didn't recognise her. We did not recognise our own mother. But we soon did [laughs]. That was a very traumatic time.

RL: The other prisoners who were with you in Liebenau…

HH: Yes.

RL: …Were they families as well?

HH: Oh yes. Well, some had children, some had daughters, I know there was one family who came over to Batley with us, she had a son and a daughter, they now live in America. Well, I used to play with Regina. I believe they were German, I am not sure. Yes, they were German. But they must have had a dual passport or some…because when they got to America, they wouldn't have got there without a passport.

RL: Were all the prisoners in Liebenau, did they all have some kind of British connection? What was is that singled them out?

HH: Well, I assume they must have had either British or independent like American…because it was no good if you had French or German or Greek for example because you couldn't even go back to your own country. The Germans were there. And in Poland, they didn't have Polish nationality. But most of them were taken because of their religion. So a lot of the people in Liebenau were German or Polish origins, which we found throughout our…we never met another Greek family. It was just so bizarre, you know.

Tape 3: 18 minutes 37 seconds

RL: Right, so you were the only Greeks.

HH: As far as I know, yes we were the only Greeks in Liebenau, the only Greeks in Vittel, unless we never came across their name but I would imagine with Bella, she is so outgoing, she would have made friends with anybody. So I would think, if she had met any Greek people we would have gotten to know about it.

RL: So besides the words that the nuns taught you, I mean how did you understand what was going on?

HH: Because when we got to Liebenau, they gave us some form of, I won't say teacher, it's a bit too strong but they gave us basic words to memorise, every week or every day or whatever, we went. We had to memorise these words. And that's how we…I'm not saying we spoke perfect because we didn't but we did have the background. We could make ourselves understood. The same as, well, more than when we came here. Then we went to France, again we were taught by the nuns and we had a basic French, so that we could communicate.

RL: So were you the only Jewish family in Liebenau?

HH: No, the others were Jewish.

RL: They were Jewish as well?

HH: Yes, yes. We were the unknown Jewish family because nobody ever found out because of our religion. I always remember, we used to hide in a little corner and she would say a prayer, you know, when it was time. And then she wrote us…I wish I could remember them but I can't, my sister does, she actually wrote a song and the words were for like 'mi jovinas ermanicas', this is from Bella to sing to her young sisters. 'el jovas silo', I can't remember…the God would look after her. And then she wrote one from her to us and that to me is unbelievable that a woman who suffered as she had could still find the time to pacify

children. Because we didn't know any stories or children's fairytales or children's stories, we didn't have enough time to accumulate any.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 54 seconds

So the only ones in the Greek…they are all horrific you know it's like if you go to Yugoslavia, it's all about Dracula, you know, very dark so my mother didn't tell you. There was always someone coming to get you or…there was no light-hearted that I could think of, so she used to make the stories up as we went along. And she kept us all entertained, she kept us all together and Bella was one hundred percent help to her. My older sister is fantastic, she is a star. She is eighty years old but she can do more. Anyway…

RL: How long were you in Liebenau?

HH: I think it was about nine months altogether. Judging by nine to ten months. Judging by the time we got to Vittel because it didn't take us that long. We were on the trains again but there weren't as many soldiers. It wasn't the same train that we had been on before. We were still guarded, we still had nothing but I think if anything they used to treat us…it was the people outside, they used to treat you like you weren't human. I mean today we know such words as dignity, in those days we didn't know the words dignity but we knew there was something wrong. People didn't associate and you had to accept it, you know.

RL: So why was the decision made, you know why you were moved from there?

Tape 3: 24 minutes 3 seconds

HH: Simply because Liebenau was getting a bit more…there were more and more people going there and Vittel was just opening up, if you like, so they transferred…it was also more of a prisoner of war camp. They were better facilities there. And there, the whole place was in sections: the British subjects were in one section, the Russians and Polish were in two different and they were very badly treated. I remember one night, it was said that they were going to be sent to Belsen, we got to know this afterwards. And that night, is it genocide when families kill one another, children, mothers kill their children, fathers kill their wives so they wouldn't go to Belsen…

RL: Suicide.

HH: Suicide, yes. Well, there was about 200 people died that night and they had the other prisoners shovelling them, you know to put them in carts and take them away. But they were mainly Jews. But they were Polish and Russian and they were two the worst kept. They were segregated from everybody.

RL: Did you have any contact at all?

HH: I believe yes, because in every camp I suppose it was all over the world, they would put a show, you know like a pantomime thing or…so they would involve everybody in, well, because Vittel was a very beautiful…well it was before the war and it is now, it's supposed to be a lovely place, and again they used to have a group of older people having a quite for themselves, an entertainment, they used to entertain one another. And then the children used to be roped in, and Stella and I were two fairies at this particular time, you know, standing up on our toes with the hands up in the air…but we had those photos and I don't know what

happened to them. I am so annoyed because I think Ida had some and my Mum had some but I think they got destroyed with the move to Italy, eh, Israel, Bella had some but she got rid of them because they were, we didn't think they were any good to anybody. And when you send them to one body to have a copy made and to another body to have a copy made, you never get them back. And unfortunately with Claire dying, we never got them from her. And that was a tragedy really, because a lot of people there could have been identified.

Tape 3: 27 minutes 38 seconds

RL: How big a camp was Vittel?

HH: Oh, it was huge. It was a proper spa town, I think it would take you roughly three or four days to walk around the actual park, so it was really, really huge. And the hotels were luxurious, I mean they weren't then but they are now, they have retained, because Vittel water, it's a spa town. We used to have the water for nothing. That's about the only thing we got. That's where my sister met her husband. My older sister. So…

RL: Where was he from?

HH: Benghazi. But he had a British passport. Now he is…It was…Clement..They lived in a British…somewhere…this is not in his lifetime, previous to his…you know…I think when the British invaded a place they gave the people a choice of getting the nationality or staying and with Clem they got the British nationality. Their name was Riginano. Now he was taken prisoner. He spent six months in Belsen, but again, as soon as they found out that he had a British passport they let him out. All I can gather is, there couldn't have been any British people in Belsen. So, the Red Cross saved our lives by feeding us, keeping us going and the British passport saved your life because you didn't have to go to Belsen and places like that. So we have a lot to thank Hitler for at the end of the day…

RL: Did you get the Red Cross parcels in Liebenau?

Tape 3: 30 minutes 2 seconds

HH: Yes … you know, I don't think we did …'I don't think…well, we must have done, yes, we must have done because our Bella swapped…I know she swapped something to get…I remember we used to have little tins of spam and I had never tasted…we had never tasted meat and things like that. Oh, they were really lovely and when we used to get down to the potatoes, we must have had some form of cooking. I don't know what it was, whether it was just a little fire but we used to get potatoes and this spam and…oh, it was lovely, I tell you. And that's another happy memory, when we were full.

RL: The journey from Liebenau to Vittel, how long did that take?

HH: I don't think it took very long, but again, it was trains but it couldn't have been so long because it's only a few hundred miles and I don't remember being bombed on that train. You know when we were coming…we actually got in Dijon…was it Lyon or Dijon, I think it was Dijon and we got off there and from there we marched, so I don't think it was too far.

RL: Were you all taken? All the prisoners?

HH: No, only the British.

RL: Just the British.

HH: We were being repatriated for German soldiers. This was in 1944.

RL: So when you were taken from Liebenau, it was just the British being taken, was that it?

HH: No, no, I thought you meant Vittel.

RL: No, just thinking of leaving Liebenau and thinking of who left.

HH: I don't think it was just the English because there weren't so many there. I think there were a few French and I know at least there was one Polish family […] because she came over here with us, we called her auntie Julia because we used to call everyone auntie whom we knew anywhere when we were younger. No, I think it was a mixture of…I think it was a case of manoeuvre…they were getting one lot out and bringing another lot in.

RL: And what was the accommodation like in Vittel?

Tape 3: 33 minutes 10 seconds

HH: There were long corridors, long dormitories, just long and then each family was given a section. In the centre, in the corner, whatever. And you had to stay in that section obviously, you slept there and you ate there. But that's the only thing…there was no privacy as such. There was no curtains you could draw or doors you could close. You had no privacy whatsoever. But compared to where we had been before it was great because there you had the freedom or running, jumping, we used to play volleyball, we had maybe a couple of hours lessons a day. Then again I finished off in hospital and our Claire was the same. I was there not for as long, maybe a couple of weeks, if that…you know I wasn't there for a long time. I remember because I was wetting the bed they were going to…now I don't know whether they were stretching the bladder or making it smaller, I don't know what they did but it didn't help me at all, I still very, very…if I laugh, if I'm really, really happy, I have to go for the Tena Lady. And it was…and that hospital, I can remember looking up and there was this…it wasn't very old, blonde hair and he spoke in a language I didn't understand but he sort of reassured me. Now, what they did, if they did anything, I don't know. I can't say. It didn't help, whatever it was. And my mother used to get by, used to do a bit of sewing for people in the camp, she was a beautiful tailoress and Bella would work in the kitchens…

RL: What was the building before you came, what were the dormitories, what had they been?

HH: Hotels they would have been. Well, I should imagine high-class hotels. Well, the dormitories would have possibly been the doors removed at one point to give them…I mean even now, the reason we know it's so good is because we met somebody who had been to Vittel and he actually went with his wife and you wouldn't know it, it's like five-star hotels everywhere. Everything you could wish for. So, some of them must have renovated it. It took a long time.

Tape 3: 36 minutes 38 seconds

RL: How were you enclosed, how were you…how was your freedom restricted?

HH: It was restricted; you could only go to certain areas. You could only go through…for example if I want to go to a Jewish Russian for example I had to get permission from the Gestapo to go in. 'Why are you going in?' I was going to play. We had restriction in that respect, we couldn't just go anywhere we wanted. But where we were allowed to go we could go as many times as we wanted. We could run in the park for example as long as we were in the section. In the section you were allowed, you had freedom but you could not overrule that section.

RL: Was the camp surrounded at all?

HH: Yes, by barbwire. It shows in one of the photographs. There were sentry…I think there were about three or four sentry boxes. And there was always soldiers, wherever you go and went there would be soldiers about. So you weren't actually as free as…but it was free tours to what we'd gone through. And when my dad actually arrived, it was better still.

RL: Where had he been?

HH: Stalag, now I don't know whether she was thirteen or eleven or twelve, I don't know, Stalag something. And he was with a lot of English prisoners. Some were soldiers, some were prisoners of war.

RL: And how had he been moved to Vittel, why had he been moved?

HH: Because they found out that he had his family, they were trying to unite all the families for repatriation. But unfortunately when my Dad got to Vittel, he was only there about three or four months and we were ready to leave and they wouldn't let him come because he was forty…he wasn't quite forty actually, so he was of military age. So he had to stay in there, well, it was the Americans that freed them. And then of course the the powers that be, he told them his family was in England and somebody must have kept in touch with him and told him that, because we didn't. Unless, there must have been some security thing so they knew exactly who was there. But as I said, my father came, he was with us about three or four months and then we were ready for repatriation.

Tape 3: 40 minutes 4 seconds

RL: How long were you in Vittel for?

HH: I think as near as I remember rightly I would say roughly eighteen months. Eighteen months to two years because we left Greece in '41 and we were in England in '44, so…it was winter '41 when we left and we got…so if you count altogether we were away from being taken prisoners to getting here we were altogether about three and a half years, away from home.

RL: How many people would you say were in the camp in Vittel?

HH: Oh, there was a lot. Hundreds and hundreds. There used to be a lot of British people because they used to do the Lambeth walk. I mean they were always having…you've got to have a laugh, you've got to have a party, they used to put concerts on, all different, but I can remember the Lambeth walk because it was such a strange…you know, and I think we learned the first thing learned 'we don't know where we're going until we're there'. And we used to sing that all the time. Well, of course you pick it up. You don't know what it means

but you just pick it up. So I could sing that. I couldn't speak English but I could sing that [laughs].

RL: What kind of contact did you have with the Germans whilst you were in Vittel?

HH: Very little, unless they wanted you to go somewhere or unless you were doing something wrong. Then they'd shout and ball. We didn't have a lot, not daily contact. You knew they were there and if the adults went for a walk, they had to be taken with a guard. So we saw them but we didn't know them, if you understand me.

Tape 3: 42 minutes 21 seconds

RL: Was anybody punished at all was there any physical punishment?

HH: It is difficult to say. You hear so many stories, before and after about girls trying to leave and the soldiers would promise 'be at so-and-so, do-what-you-want-with-me sort of thing and you can go.' And they'd be shot. They'd probably have their way or have sex or whatever they went for. They wouldn't let them go. Nobody ever…not to my knowledge anyway, we weren't conscious that anybody actually ever got away from Vittel. Well, quite honestly, we could have…well, unless they were trying to get back to their own company, I think they would be better off in there because we weren't…I can't honestly say we were really, really, badly treated. We were still treated like animals, you still had no dignity…the people, the French people, they used to stand outside and jeer at us. We could see them. It was like they used to come for an afternoon outing. And just look and point and laugh and make fun of us. And the one thing that sticks in my mind, when we first came into Vittel, we were marched through the streets and people were spitting at us. And to me, I was crying, I couldn't understand why. I didn't do anything wrong, why should somebody spit at me? So when people say to me now 'do you hate Germans?' I can't honestly say 'yes' because I can't. Because we had good vibes from them but, well, I can't say I hate all French because they were very good as well. You know, you can't hate a nation for what one section does. And that's why hatred is not a word familiar to me. There is only one person I hate and that's Hitler and he is not going to hurt me now.

Tape 3: 45 minutes 1 second

RL: So who did the French think you were?

HH: I have no idea, I honestly don't know. And nobody told us. I mean there were that many guards on either side of us and they weren't spitting at the guards they were spitting at you. You know you can tell. So what they thought we were gonna do or take their country or eat them out of house and home, I have no idea. I don't know what…but they have a peculiar mechanism the French people to foreigners. It could be good or bad, I don't know. I just go through.

RL: Was there any Jewish activities at all in Vittel?

HH: Oh yes [interruption] they used to have the prayers I don't know whether there was a synagogue I think there was possibly a makeshift synagogue, where people went for prayers and when it was that particular time, my Mum used to have us, we were huddled in a corner. We were still saying the prayers because we must have had Pesach and Hanukkah, we must have had those in the time we were there but you couldn't do anything about it. All you could

do is pray. You could fast, which was no stranger [has she gone?] I think everybody sort of mucked in. As I said, the only Jews who were picked on, if I could say that, were the Russians and the Polish. All the other ones, you could intermingle. When they had these parties, well, not parties, when they had these shows, everybody went to them and everybody was in them. There was one girl, they played…oh, she was absolutely beautiful and my one regret is that I did not keep a picture, 'No, No, Nanette', that was it, it was a play, it's a musical, is it? And this girl, she was absolutely beautiful and I can remember as we were coming out, she gave me this photo and the German was going to snatch it from my hand, we weren't allowed to take anything out, and I don't know how I managed but I got it out, how I don't know, and it's something I kept for years and years and years. Without reading it, without looking at it.

Tape 3: 48 minutes 25 seconds

And then when I was having a clearout actually, and then you throw away things you didn't think you needed and there was a letter back and all I could remember reading was 'dear' and the name and it was obviously a message to a child, it was a message to somebody in the family. And I was really, really disappointed. I never thought to keep that, because I know it's a long time since but somebody, somewhere might have known. It could be their mother…and I don't even know…I know she took the lead in the 'No, No, Nanette' but I don't know whether she was Russian or Polish or…I mean there were also lots of Germans there as well, German Jews, they were a huge mixture. So, when we came on the boat, we were absolutely full when we landed in Liverpool and…[laughs] that's another story: the first sign of Liverpool that we saw…we were actually taken in march, no, not nastily but kept in line by the…you know so many English people were taking us in and they were splitting us up and whatever to find a home for us. And we passed a market in Liverpool and they were selling bread, I mean bread, I remember it was four and a half pence a loaf, and kippers, oh, we hadn't seen…it was like being in a dreamland so we begged my Mum to give us some money, so she gave Bella money because they gave us some money on the boat, they gave us a passport and they gave us enough money to see it through until the authorities that they sent, would do anything they could. So we begged her and Bella, I don't know how much money she had, obviously she didn't, and she'd come back with four loaves and five kippers and each one of us had nearly half a loaf and a kipper. And she gave my mother the change.

Tape 3: 51 minutes 2 seconds

Well, the look on my mother's face, fear, I have never seen anything like it, she belted at Bella, saying 'take it back, take it back', she thought she'd stolen it. Because there was so much money, she didn't understand and we must have thought food was really expensive. And she couldn't understand why she was given…and luckily one of the women who was looking after us for a better word, she came and she explained that was the proper change. She must have given her a note of some description. Oh, poor Bella. But those kippers and dry bread, they tasted ambrosia. And you can imagine what a sight we made coming through. You know, talk about foreigners and their dirty habits.

RL: What had you been given to eat in Vittel?

HH: It was basic, all I can remember mainly is Macaroni and potatoes and that's when you could get it. It wasn't a regular…you didn't have a regular dinner time, breakfast time or tea time. You got it when you had it and that was it. But with Bella working in the kitchen and as I said my mother…we didn't drink tea, she didn't know what tea was. Cigarettes, before she started smoking, but Bella used to take them to the kitchen and swap them with all the

different prisoners for things they didn't want. And also in Vittel they used to have a lot of people from '…' Algeria and Tangier, well, they had a lot of them as supporters, so of course they could bring things in and my mother , she had stayed up all night and made us all a dress and that's the dress on the photographs there. No, that's what we came in, that's right. That's what we came in.

RL: Why did she get the material?

HH: From the porters through swapping cigarettes. She was the one that kept us fed. My mother looked after us and Bella was the provider. And she could weasel a loaf from anybody or a slice of bread, she would do. She was, she could sell snow to Eskimos.

Tape 3: 54 minutes 6 seconds

RL: Take me through a typical day in Vittel. How you would spend the day.

HH: As a child we would get up…we always had something to do before we could leave; either make the bed or tidy up or…we had to clean up. And sometimes we would go with Regina, or there was an American boy and they called him Wolfgang. Wolfgang de Beer, that was his name. And quite a few of us we would go and play Volleyball, we would play with that or we chased one another, I don't know, what children do. We would go to the…school and that was…But for me, there was a woman there, I don't know if it is right or wrong but we soon found out that she was Cary Grant's first wife. And she was an artist. She used to crayon and paint and she wanted to draw me, which she did do. And she hadn't finished it actually but she came to the gate as we were leaving and she was passing it over to me and they wouldn't let me have it. So the guard took it back and threw it at her. He must have thought it was something…I didn't realise who she was and it was one of the gentlemen who came here with us to Batley and he was in Vittel with his daughter and his wife and this is talking about coincidence, my nephew got engaged to this girl and of course my sister invited the parents to come to the house, her parents, well, it was her grandparents, the grandma, and they were the first people we saw when we came to Batley because they came over with us and we were in the same house. We were all put in a house in Batley, three families, and then we were split as we went on, so we hadn't seen them. So that was such a coincidence to see, and I was just beginning to learn to ask the questions because he was an adult, he knew more, what I wanted to know and then he died unfortunately. And also the engagement was broken and so…

Tape 3: 57 minutes 8 seconds

RL: Right.

HH: Is it time I stop talking?

RL: Well, this tape is about to end so we'll just stop there.

HH: Okay.

TAPE 4

RL: This is the interview with Hanna Hemingway and it's tape four. So, at what point did you learn that you were going to be taken across to Britain?

HH: Probably two…well, we didn't know we were going to Britain, we didn't know where we were going. It was only a matter of weeks while we got the injections and all that things and the paperwork sorted, so it wasn't so long. It was a matter of weeks. We didn't realise my father wasn't coming until the end. That was the biggest shock. But apart from that we didn't have long to wait. And we got on – again –train and the German guards were with us right up to […] this is where my memory goes, we went to Lisbon, is it the Portuguese border, right. We went to bed this particular night, with armed guards, the military in might and when we opened our eyes, there was nobody. Literally nobody, apart from across the train driver. And when we realised what had happened, well, you talk about having a feast, every bit of food on that train was eaten. We had life. And of course we were taken through to Lisbon and I don't know whether we were taken on a sightseeing tour, all I can remember is this one big hill coming down and these beautiful houses painted white and that's my impression of Lisbon. And then we were put on the boat. There were quite a few of us; I mean it was a big boat.

RL: How many were travelling?

HH: I don't know, a hell of a lot. All the prisoners. But I wouldn't dare guess how many there was but there were a lot. And the first day out everybody was sick. There were few of us who were very, very lucky and we were eating and eating and you know that was the first place I had my first banana. And since then, I have been everywhere trying to get a replica taste of this banana and the nearest I came to was when we went to, not last year but the year before, with Claire, we went to, she was in Marbella at that time, and we went to Gibraltar.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 38 seconds

That's right, we went to Gibraltar. And they had some bananas and they are called Chiquita's. And I nearly died because it tasted, for the first time something actually tasted like I remembered. They were lovely. Because nothing ever tastes the same. It was the same with figs. The very first time I went to Spain, I can remember figs, the were green and luscious and really red inside, so I went in and I asked the woman inside for 'figos' and of course it was the same word so 'how many kilos?' and I didn't know about kilos, I was still in pounds, so I said 'uno', you know, one kilo, and I have come away with this. And I have never even thought of looking at these figs what they were like, and I just looked at them and I could have sat down in the middle of the flipping street and cried because they were brown. They were red inside, not as red as I had remembered, so obviously these were dried figs and the ones I remember you used to take them straight from the tree and eat them, you know. That was another disappointment.

RL: How did you feel leaving Vittel and going on that journey?

HH: I think the first few days were just excitement, the fear of strange places. But by that time we had been to so many strange places, the fear wasn't the same. But anxiety, those are the words that I can pronounce now because I can speak English, but I couldn't say what anxiety was when I was seven. Well, I was ten then, because I didn't know it. But as you get older, you associate different words with different feelings. But I can't…tell you how exciting it was, the joy we had when we first realised we were actually free. And everybody, we were demented. Everybody was hugging everybody else, there were no barriers to conquer, no language to conquer. Everybody knew what a hug meant and free. It was just fantastic, really fantastic. But then we were put on the boat…

Tape 4: 6 minutes 38 seconds

RL: What was the boat called?

HH: I can't remember. I have often thought of writing to the paper in Liverpool, because it was 1944 so there won't have been many ships coming in in that time because the war was still on, so I'm sure they'd remember it.

RL: What nationality was the crew?

HH: I think they were English. Probably a few mixture but mainly they were English. I know the captain was English, definitely. Only because of the way he sounded. I didn't understand him but you could tell the English speech to the French, it's more guttural. So you have an idea, but they were very, very nice

RL: How did you spend your time on board?

HH: Again playing games, running about, going stupid, like all kids do. Doing everything we shouldn't be doing. They said 'don't go there' so of course we did. But there were so many of us, it was just joyful, it was just the time for to be happy, and we were. Then, of course, when we got to England, I think the penny dropped. Hello, we are in alien country again: we didn't know the language, we didn't know the ways, the culture, we didn't know a thing.

RL: How long did the journey take?

HH: From?

RL: From Portugal to England.

HH: I think it was about a week, perhaps ten days…it couldn't have been more than ten days I don't think.

RL: And were you attacked at all at sea?

HH: You know I can't remember. I don't think we were…unless it being 1944 maybe the Germans were more involved more to their end of…than to the Portuguese. Weren't they, like the Swiss, neutral? Or possibly that's why…

Tape 4: 9 minutes 36 seconds

RL: And you say you landed in Liverpool?

HH: Yes, Liverpool docks.

RL: And what was your first impression of England?

HH: To be perfectly honest, I don't think I actually have one, because it was mad. Everybody had to be there or there or […], your name was called to be with your family and it was hectic, absolutely hectic. As I said, the first thing I actually remember was that walk into Liverpool into the market, well, past the market. That was the first…that actually penetrated.

And people staring, but they weren't staring with malice. There was a difference. It was idle curiosity of course but not malice like in France it was malice, you could tell the difference.

RL: And take me through that first day that you remember in Liverpool, what do you remember what happened?

HH: Well, we walked through to a…I think they put us into bed and breakfast places and they took so many. Luckily, we were in one the lady spoke Greek […] and again I don't think they were Jewish. There was no indication of religion when we came here because everybody was the same. And, we were taken to this…well, I should imagine it was like a bed and breakfast place, we were given some clothing by the Red Cross because we had no clothes actually apart from the things we stood in. we weren't given much but just enough to tie us over, and a funny thing I remember is that I always had to wear thick pure wool vests because of my chest, built-up shoulders and somehow or other they managed to get me some from the Red Cross. I didn't actually appreciate it because I had to wear them right up to…when I was having my oldest daughter.

Tape 4: 12 minutes 8 seconds

And I've got…I mean they are quite expensive to buy and I couldn't afford them. So I asked my mother, permission to get married, I was married with a child I was asking my mother's permission if I could have a thinner jumper and that was the best day of my life when she said 'yes'. Of course, after that I didn't wear them at all. And how they found these vests, hideous, built-up shoulder vest…oh god. But they must have done the trick because they kept my chest going anyway. And […] it's very…I can remember we sat down at the table and for the first time in I don't know how long, we actually ate as a family round this table and I can see this man, there were three of them, they came and they were Greek, and they were living in Liverpool and one worked in a fish shop or owned a fish shop or something like that, and brought us some, you know when they close the fish shop, well, we thought we died and gone to heaven. You know, the difference, it was just unbelievable. And then the day after, we were taken round Liverpool to sightsee, individual parties, I don't know whether my mother came with us or whether she couldn't or I don't know, I know Bella came with us, and did we go and see a film […]? I believe we went to see a film, was it 'Gone with the Wind'? You know, I believe it was 'Gone with the Wind'. And it stuck in my mind…so that would have been in 1944…wouldn't it, when it was…it was either 'Gone with the Wind' or … 'Robin Hood' with … one of the most popular actors of his day … Errol Flynn. And those two pictures I saw before we came here, well, before we came to Batley. So whether it was from there or…we went to Hull after that.

Tape 4: 15 minutes 7 seconds

We were in Liverpool about a week until we got all the papers and everything sorted and then we were taken to Hull. And that's when our problem as regards the religion started. Because when they asked my Mum, well, they couldn't put us all together, and they were willing to take two of my sisters into service, and my mother says 'no, no way, all my children are with me and they are staying with me'. Well, if you want Jewish that's the only thing they could offer at the time, so my Mum refused point-blank and that is why were finished in Batley, where there were no Jews [laughs]. Don't ask me how but that's it. But that's basically because Mum said she would not have a split. And…

RL: So how long were you in Hull?

HH: Eh, I think it was about a month, because Clem, he came over with us and he went straight into the army, you know, English army. And this particular…no, it must have been about six weeks, easily, because this woman came to my Mum and said 'you've got a big family', she spoke Ladino, she has seen a butcher and she could go and get some meat from this butcher shop, which she did do and the meat was lovely, well, we thought so anyway. And she went about three times, and then Clem came home for leave, well, they found out where Bella was and then he came over with us, got the connection, so he says to my Mum said 'I'll take you shopping but she says 'I'll take you to the butcher's first' and we had only been eating horsemeat, oh dear god. But what we've eaten is nobody's business… [Laughs]. But this woman couldn't speak English, my Mum couldn't, and I think they must have had a picture or a sign with a cow on, so obviously they must have thought it was a butcher's. So I won't tell you something my brother-in-law said, oh…but anyway. It wasn't the worst thing we did.

RL: So, for the six weeks you were in Hull, what did you do?

HH: Again we were taught…they tried to teach us some English, basic, you know 'hello', 'good-bye', 'good evening', 'how are you?' the basic language.

RL: Who did that?

Tape 4: 18 minutes 16 seconds

HH: I should imagine some English teachers. I'm presuming so.

RL: Was that in a school?

HH: No, well, that actual camp, it was an ex-army barracks so there wouldn't be a school there. It was somewhere called 'Priory Road' in Hull. I could be wrong, I don't know but that's something that's sticking in my mind. And we made quite a few friends there because Stella, myself, we went down into Hull to meet these friends of ours. So how we made friends, I don't know, but we did and they used to entertain, on an evening, they used to…people like amateurs, well, they might not be amateurs, I don't know, but it was nice it was something different, it was something we hadn't seen before and they were very, very kind. Really nice people.

RL: So you were living in the ex-army barracks?

HH: Yes, we were staying there for a month. And from there they took each individual family and placed them as near as they could with the religion or the race. And the people who came here with us, there was … there is a manse in Batley, is it called a manse…it used to be a chapel, it's a big house with about four bedrooms and there were four families living, each had one bedroom and we all lived in that bedroom. And I think you could cook communally, I don't know, well, that we used to play out, made friends, we were there roughly about six-seven weeks. We then were given this house in Taylor Street and the council provided us with one of everything we needed, from a spoon to a bedchamber, everything: blankets…they fitted my Mum's house for personal use but we had to repay them.

Tape 4: 21 minutes 3 seconds

Everything had to be sent back, if every spoon they lent us, every fork, knife, whatever, it had to be replaced. So then my father came over and Bella had to work and Claire and Lucy, they all three worked and my father worked, my mother worked because they were paying to replace and also to live. You know, they had two and the wages were nothing. I think my father's wage was £2.50. He used to work as a wool-comber in the mill. And my mother, she was a tailoress. Bella and Claire they first of all they went and worked in a laundry and the things that they did to them, you know they have to empty all the pockets and everything, and Bella being Bella shouted 'Claire, I found a balloon', of course there wasn't a balloon, and everybody howled with laughter. After that well, it was…if it's got to be found, Bella would find it and if it wasn't to be found, Bella would still find it. Then they left there, and they went to work sewing. And from them on they all had a story to tell of things that happened to them, silly things like they went…Bella and Claire, because they were older, they had an affinity and Claire used to say 'Mum, Mum' and she was asking for Bella when she asked for Mum, because they were so close. And they went to the pictures in Bradford on that particular day, now they could speak more than half a dozen words in English, the last bus went, the last train went, they didn't know what to do and they knew that they would get a good belting of the father if they were late, so they found a policeman and asked the way. And an interpreter was found for them and eventually, they explained they were lost and they took them home, they brought them home with a police car. Oh boy, I think they could hear my father's voice three times round Berstel [?]. He went berserk. With worry, because each one of us, we hadn't got the freedom. That's the one thing I can relate to Asian children or foreign children because behind their closed door they have to live one life and then they open that door and they can see children having freedom and they can't join in.

Tape 4: 24 minutes 25 seconds

Now I don't think it's as bad but I couldn't go like my friends, I couldn't go out and play like my friends and that caused resentment, as you grow older. But now I can understand because I did exactly with my daughters to protect them but at that time I think children should be children while they are about fifteen and when they are fifteen, I think they should become parents and then when they are thirty, they want to go back to school and start being children again because they loose the values because there aren't any these days. You know the values we had, honesty, it's a thing of the…it's a shame because there are a lot of kids out there who are really honest but it's the odd few, that let them down.

RL: Why do you think Batley was chosen?

HH: I honestly don't know. I think I heard Bella say …there used to be some flats in Roundhay Road, in Leeds, I think that's what they were and there were going to put us there but they weren't big enough, we needed four bedrooms and they weren't big enough or something like that. And has it happened they all got pulled down. I think it was a case of Batley was the only place they could get us in or put us in or…Possibly because nobody knew we were Jewish. Well, one or two did but you know when we were in Hull, my Mum tried but it just wasn't enough. And as you can see there is a lot of shops around here where you can't have Jewish food. There is no way you could live a normal life and live in Batley because the facility isn't there and the people aren't there. I know when I was at school, somebody came to Mum and they said that there was a gathering and would she take myself and my sisters and what have you. She was highly delighted because it was a Jewish and she thought she was gonna get back in but the way…a condescending way they spoke to us a way that my teeth gripped and I said 'Mum, I am not coming here anymore'. And she is 'well, I can't blame you' in her own words but I had more in with the girls at school and people we played out in

the street than I had with them. There was just no connection. But there again Sephardim and Zion is totally different. It still exists. You go to…

Tape 4: 28 minutes 8 seconds

RL: Where was that gathering, where was it?

HH: It was in somebody's house and I think it was every month or every two months. All the Jews who were not involved in the living away from Batley, Dewsbury, there wasn't a synagogue or anything like that and that's how we got to know, because when my sister wanted to get married she asked…I think Clem had to get permission from the registrar and they got them in contact with the Jewish association in Leeds and they put a wedding feast so she was able to get married as Jewish. And that's where I think Mum and Dad had to because Bella hadn't got…do they have to have the parents…some form of paper, well, Bella didn't and they didn't have it so they asked my Mum and Dad if they would remarry to get the…. Which I thought was sweet.

RL: So did you see that?

HH: Yes, we all went.

RL: And where did that take place?

HH: I think it was in Chapeltown, somewhere around there, I am not sure because I know that when we went to live in Chapeltown I just went straight into a youth club around there, Jubilee Hall is it? I think that's where most of the young people used to hang out.

RL: And what was it, it was a marriage ceremony?

Tape 4: 30 minutes 14 seconds

HH: Yes, a marriage ceremony and they gave them a small sent-off, a small party, made it more like a wedding. And the unfortunate thing if you like, shortly after that my sister got married and she got married in a chapel because her husband was Christian.

RL: Which sister was that?

HH: Claire and Lucy, they all three got married. They all got married in white and Stella got married in the registrar office. I think I am going ahead of myself there, aren't I?

RL: Yes, we'll come back to that. So your parents, they were living in Batley and you had to go to school presumably?

HH: Yes.

RL: So where were you sent?

HH: Purwell School, not far from where I lived, well, it was up a hilly walk. We lived in Taylor Street and the school was Purwell, which is up the hill and around the corner sort of thing.

RL: And how did you find it at school?

HH: Well, I was lucky if you like because our headmistress Miss Childs and Miss Lloyd who was a friend if you like she was a geography teacher, they both spoke fluent French so they gave us…we used to go twice a week to her house and they taught us to speak English through French. It sounds double Dutch, doesn't it? But they translated the words that we understood or we didn't understand or whichever from one language to another. And when I first went to school, I went into the oldest class because it was her class and she could rectify my mistakes. Obviously the other teachers couldn't. So possibly about a year before I got into my own class. I didn't find it easy, I used to love to go to the pictures so I think 50 % of my English came from American films and the other 50 came from English films.

Tape 4: 33 minutes 1 second.

RL: How did you get on with the children in school, how did they treat you?

HH: Very well actually because I was the only foreign girl there and they could do things, break things, go behind the teacher's… 'oh, it was Hanna, she didn't understand' so they used to get away with it, so I was the one who used to let them get away with murder so I was very popular. The only thing I wasn't popular with, they would not invite me to their parties and I was really, really sad and I asked one of the girls and she says 'well, the other girls won't come because the boys only want to see you' because I had really big boobs for a young girl. And I used to go home and cry 'why did I have these and nobody else in the class had them?' But I made a lot of good friends that I stayed friends for many years. I enjoyed…on the whole, the only…I didn't like gardening I must admit and our gardening teacher was also our history teacher. I loved history but she used to read so slowly and I wasn't patient so I used to set off and I was half way through my assignment and then she'd cleverly look at me and say 'now what was the next word?' so of course I had no idea, I was miles in front. So she'd prod me on the back and I was in detention. I loved learning, I loved reading but I was too lazy to concentrate on the spelling and that's what's let me down. I mean I ran a business, it can't have let me down so much but now I realise I could have done with spelling. When I come to write…I mean we used to have a young boy coming with my order when we had the shop in Batley. I had a greengrocers, and he used to go and his grin was from here to here, you know how I wrote cabbage and cucumbers and carrots, I always missed the middle letter out and he used to say…his boss used to come around 'here you are and there is so much for the laugh we had today'. Even today, I went to the hospital last week to give the assessment but you have to put down all your ailments, well I forgot to ask my daughter, she helps me a lot with spelling, so I spelled everything, I thought and I just said to her 'please don't show this to anybody' and she said 'oh, don't worry about it, we already had a good laugh'. I thought lovely.

Tape 4: 36 minutes 37 seconds

RL: Did you belong to any youth clubs?

HH: I did but they were all chapel because in those days the youth club…if you wanted to go anywhere, they held dances, I loved to dance, I loved dancing and we used to go for day outings, they used to take us for walks but you had to belong to a youth club. And the chapel you went to, you followed into their youth club. The chapel I went to, I was very interested in religion, I always wanted to know everything I could about the various religions and so they had, in two of them they used to have a meeting in which they would discuss different…again

not knowing that I wasn't…I still didn't tell them that I was not Christian. They all thought 'oh, Greek, orthodox'. So we would leave it at that. We never actually said, we never lied, only by default; so anyway, I am still here so He can't think too badly of me. He is my friend.

RL: So which chapel youth group was it?

HH: Well, they were near school, near Taylor Street, I don't know there names. There was one opposite where I lived in Taylor Street. And there was one at the bottom and you turned right I think, and they used to go to different…We used to go…dancing and that was the only place. I used to love it, for the entertainment value, not for the religious value but for the entertainment value because perfectly honest, I didn't know what Jesus was, for me there was one God and he is everybody's God. But I learned, to be perfectly honest I did learn that there is no difference between one religion and another. Because you can call it by any other name you can call Him whatever you want at the end of the day all the religions come from the same place and they all go to the same place.

Tape 4: 39 minutes 28 seconds

That's why I never changed it when I got married. When I was asked I said 'no, I don't see the reason why'. And that was that. My husband didn't mind, he loved my Mum. He loved my family.

RL: How did you meet your husband?

HH: This is another funny thing. I used to work at the pictures in the evening, selling ice cream. My sister did it first and when she stopped, I worked at Marks & Spencer's during the day as a sales girl and then I worked at …..pictures in the night, selling ice cream. And there was…we had a…I can't remember the exact detail but there was somebody going around and exposing themselves. And this particular night I heard this voice 'are you going home on your own tonight?' and I said 'yes', and I knew Ronnie because he used to go to the pictures so many times, that was his brother by the way, and he says 'oh, my brother will see you home tonight. Oh, you'll be alright, he is safe', so I thought 'fair enough' and for six weeks my husband took me home every night from the pictures and I never saw his face in the daylight. So in the end he said 'well, will you go to the pictures with me', so I said 'yes' and it was Stella, if it wasn't for her I wouldn't have kept the date and he had wavy hair, Bob, and as he stood the wind would blow it that way and I thought 'I'm not going out with that'. I was ready to walk away and she said 'no, don't do that, be fair'. So I did and I kept the date and that's it.

RL: So what was his background?

HH: Bob, he was very working-class. He was a person I felt very sorry for because the money that should have been his for school… he had passed his eleven plus and he couldn't go on because his parents couldn't afford it. When he went for a job, he used to be a beautiful cartoonist and one of the papers wanted to give him… they wanted him to be an apprentice and in those days they didn't get paid so again he couldn't do it. So eventually he wanted to go to the army and in the end he got the chance to go into…it was an officer's course, he passed everything else to go but at the end of the day they didn't have the money for him to buy the uniform and it was really a shame because he was a very intelligent person. And he was the perfect gentleman, he wasn't perfect, my daughters think so…

Tape 4: 43 minutes 2 seconds

RL: So what did he do for a living?

HH: Bob originally, he worked in a shop, he worked in the railway and after we were married he was a charge hand in a bakery and the he moved up…whichever job he had he always got to the next stage and then he worked in he railway and he became the linesman, all electrical lines around here. And then after that he worked in Velmars Carpet place. Well, by this time I had started the shop with my sister ……in Leeds, I can't remember the name now, and we were there for two years and then I had the chance of opening back the shop which we had between us and then I was thirty-nine and a bit I found out I was pregnant. Fifteen years later, so he had to come back and work for us in other words as a salesman.

RL: So lets just take you through your jobs. So when you left school, what was your first job?
HH: Marks & Spencer's.

RL: And what were you doing there?

HH: Sales, well actually I was at the shoe counter. In those days you were responsible for that apartment and we used to have to take stock every Monday and keep all the stock underneath.

Tape 4: 45 minutes 11 seconds

You were virtually in charge of that little department. I don't know what they are doing now, the same or not, but that was…I mean the incidents that happened, you wouldn't believe. I was asked to help out at the trousers and this bloke came in and said 'will you measure me?' I didn't know how to measure, and I said 'yes, of course', measured his waist, measured his (points towards her chest) and he said 'no, I want trousers' so I said 'right, this is the measurement' and he said 'no, you have to go inside the leg' and like an idiot I was just bending down to measure his inside leg and the manager had kept an eye on me and he just said…well, they had to call me Terry because they couldn't pronounce Tarragano and it was always Miss and then by your first name, so Miss Terry so he said 'get up and don't do this again' and I didn't know I had done anything wrong. I honestly didn't and he didn't tell me what I was doing wrong. But he said to that man 'we don't want to see your face in here again'. Which I thought was brilliant because it is not often that they stick up you because I was definitely ignorant of that. But we had some good laughs in there. It was like…I used to go out with the girls that we were with, they were friends and we used to go out together, we used to go on day trips together, if I used to go on family holiday one or two of them, with their parents, and they included me. So it was more than a friendship. But then when I had to move to Leeds, well, when my parents moved to Leeds, I didn't think I would be able to get from Leeds to Dewsbury so I got a transfer and actually I was in for a, well they always tell you afterwards, in for an increase for a supervisor's job. But I can always remember the Mr. Lamont and the words he says to me 'here you are a name, there you'll be a number' and it was perfectly true. They didn't know who was what…but I didn't stick it very long because there was too much aggression I mean we didn't bother with it in Dewsbury if a customer wanted serving, you served them. You don't wait. Anyway, I stuck it out for about six months and then I…

Tape 4: 48 minutes 7 seconds

RL: So when did your parents move to Leeds?

HH: Oh, when I was nineteen……..

RL: When you were nineteen, so ‘52?

HH: Yes, well, I was……..

RL: You were born in ’33 and nineteen is 1952.

HH: Yes, that’s right because I was married in ’56.

RL: And where did they live in Leeds?

HH: Chapeltown.

RL: What did you think of that place?

HH: Studley Terrace, oh, it was a….. One end of the streets was full of prostitutes and the other end, well, god knows what they were. And you had to pass before you could get to our house. And the nicest people there who really took to help my Mum was an Indian couple, well, they had some family as well. She wanted to go home, you know when my mother actually left and went on to further live with Ida, when they got married they lived in Studley Terrace and moved house by then and so she’d always lived with my Mum our Ida so when they moved to Chapel Allerton, they went with them. Ida always looked after my Mum.

RL: What did your father do in Leeds?

HH: I think he still worked in, I believe he worked in Lewis’s at one point.

RL: In?

HH: Lewis’s, like a porter at one time and I was there as a demonstrator. I used to be a demonstrator for different firms.

RL: Is that what you did after the Marks & Spencer’s job?

HH: No, after Marks’s I went on to Character shoes. It isn’t Character shoes now, the boss ‘…’ it’s a big name but I can’t bring it to mind. And then I went to Lewis’s after I got married because I got married form Character shoes.

RL: How old were you when you got married?

HH: Twenty-one.

RL: And where did you get married?

HH: Batley Parish Church.

RL: Were you the first after Bella to marry or had the others…

Tape 4: 51 minutes 10 seconds

HH: No, no, no, there was Claire who married in a chapel, Lucy married in a chapel, Stella married at the Registrar office and then I married in a chapel but I was the only one my father wouldn't give away. '…'

RL: Why was that?

HH: Because I was getting married at the chapel. I think by that time he was really disappointed that only one of his daughters had married into the religion and my mother, she must have been devastated, absolutely, but it was too late. You can't live your life not acknowledging something and then all of a sudden expect to turn around. I mean, all right, I could have met some Jewish people, well, I did but it wasn't to be. But I mean my father and my mother they really thought the world of Bob afterwards when they realised that he was a good man, which is perfectly true. I have never been…this is probably the wrong thing to say and the wrong place to say it in but I can remember somebody saying to me once 'religion does not put food on the table' and that's stuck with me somehow. If my children were starving I wouldn't think two minutes turning to religion to feed them because it's not important enough. I know what's in my heart and He knows how I feel every day, so it isn't as important to me. I know it was very important to my mother and unfortunately or fortunately I may say, it is very important to my younger sister. Ida, she is so much like Mum.

RL: Did she get married?

HH: Yes, she got married in shul and Mum was alive to see that.

RL: So when your parents moved to Leeds, did they become involved in the Jewish community there?

HH: Not straight away, no, because there wasn't a …when we lived in Chapeltown, it was only with Ida went to a girls school and her friends came and that's how…you see Mum was too poorly even then to associate. My father wasn't, he was quite happy to go down the club somewhere in Chapeltown, in Barrack Street or something like that. I think it is, he was quite happy to do that, so the occasion didn't arise. When David, my sister's boy, had his Bar Mitzvah, I mean I didn't see my father sober for days because his day was happy. I mean as each one of his daughters were born, he used to get drunk because all he wanted was one boy, that's all he ever wanted, was one boy. And speaking about…I know one time, we all had very long hair, very curly as you can see by my daughters, and at this particular time I was working at Marks and I just used to wear it with two clips and this friend of mine said 'come one, lets make it, let's make it look more your age', so she said 'I cut your hair for you' and she made such a mess. You know that advert on television, just like that. And at that particular time, the only thing I could do with my hair was, do you ever remember something cut, what did they used to call it? Urchin cut, which was virtually, well, you were practically bald. And what made it worse, I put a scarf on because it was raining, so I walked in the house, took it of and the first thing my father saw was no hair and he gave me such a belt, we ran from one room to the other 'I always wanted a boy, but not like this'. I don't think he ever forgave me for a long time…that's my phone '…'

Tape 4: 56 minutes 10 seconds

RL: So, did they become involved at all in the Jewish community your parents or so they never really…?

HH: I don't think they really ever had the chance. As I said, my mother was really ill, my father had pneumonia and he was ill for three years, so they hadn't the chance of going to places which if they both had the health, they could have gone. Ida, she was working, she was looking after Mum and then…I mean people used to come to the house I know she paid for the ground, the one they gonna get buried in, every week, they used to come to the house. As I said we had some association but not …….socially.

RL: Where are they buried?

HH: In the Jewish cemetery at Gildersome Road.

RL: Right, and who did Ida marry?

HH: Melvin Frieze.

RL: Where was he from?

HH: …..From Leeds.

RL: And where does she live?

HH: In Tel Aviv, no she doesn't, she lives in Ranaana. Near Tel Aviv

RL: Now this film is about to end so we'll just stop here.

HH: Okay.

Tape 4: 58 minutes 6 seconds

TAPE 5

RL: So this is the interview with Hanna Hemingway and it's tape five. So you say that you remember something that you want to go back to.

HH: Well, yes, it's when we first came here and we were learning the language, difficult things, and because I was at school, I learned a little bit quicker than the others and my mother, she used to go with me to do the shopping and she'd asked me in Ladino and I would tell the shop keeper or whatever. And of course bear in mind that you are talking about a time where there is food queues, coupons, and all this messing about. And this time we happened to be at the butchers and he said 'now Mrs. Tarragano what would you like?' because he was as much a bloke, we had always gone there, in fact his family live up the hill here, and instead of saying to me what she wanted she just stood there and stuck her tongue out at him. Well, you can just imagine the gasps of horror. These foreigners coming in our country, being…and he said 'leave it ladies, I know what she wants' and she took her by the hand and took her straight into a big freezer that he had, and pulled this huge tongue out. And my mother said, yes, that's what she wanted. And that was just one of the comical things that really happened. The other one was when I was at school as I was learning the language the headmistress said that for every word I actually learned, I had a prize for that and the girls, they decided they

would take a hand and so they taught me the words for 'Little Nell'. I won't repeat it, I don't think it's good for the video, and honest to God, I didn't know what I was saying I just went in, proud as punch and said 'Miss Childs, I've learned some words' and she said there, straight-faced, never said a word, she let me finish and then said 'very good, now who told you this?' and without knowing I was doing anything wrong I mentioned the girls. 'Alright, go back to school' and a bit later, I was the most hated girl in school. They all really got some stick from her. And as she said, which rightly so, it wasn't a nice thing to do. If you got to learn something, learn something you can repeat anywhere, not something that is so…I mean in those days, you didn't think of that language, it wasn't heard of. But that really was…you had to be there to appreciate it. But anyway…we got by.

Tape 5: 3 minutes 24 seconds

RL: How did you find integrating into an English way of life, how easy or difficult was that?

HH: For me it was easy because I had my school friends and later on wok people but my father he was so strict I had to be the biggest liar there ever was to get out of the house to do things. I used to love to dance and I had to tell him I was going to my friends and we could not go out, as we wanted. I think in truthfulness he was frightened for us because he comes from a culture where fathers, the eldest are respected and the girls especially, they do what the fathers tell them to, and they don't play with boys, you don't have that kind of freedom. The same thing applies today. And another incident that I remember, while I was at school, and I keep harping on about dancing and I used to love it and this girl at school, at that particulate time there used to be a group of children who used to do, they used to follow shows, they were in pantomime, you know, children's groups and they could go to school in whichever town they performed, they could go to school, well I made friends with this particular girl and she just showed me her routine, you know, friends do, and then unfortunately she fell and twisted her ankle very badly and it was very short to the evening performance, and she said 'well, Hanna can do the steps' so this bloke came, he was apparently the manager or something and I did the steps and 'oh, yes, that will do, but we need to put your parent's consent', I think he wished he never met my Dad 'no daughter of mine is going on the stage, showing her legs', out of the house. Oh, he never gave the poor guy a chance. That's how strict he was.

Tape 5: 6 minutes 6 seconds

And that's where when it came to as you said integrating, you could do so up to a point but 'you never had the same freedom as your friends had. Before, if there was anywhere I had to go and I wanted to go, I had to tell so many lies, it's unbelievable. Leave my clothes at other friend's houses, start putting make-up on in the dark and speaking of make-up, when I was seventeen, when Stella got married and I wanted to put lipstick on, I know it was in a registrar, but I was a bridesmaid, I wanted to look nice. 'Over my dead body' he says, so that was it. So I put some real pale pink on, thinking he wouldn't notice, he did. He made me wash it off. And on the morning when I was going to work, I used to…we used to have a little snicket. You know pathway, where my bedroom was above it so I could tell when my father went so I used to shoot off and put some lipstick on. Well, this particular time there was something that happened where my Mum couldn't be with me before I went so my Dad gave me the key at Marks & Spencer's. I saw him at the door but I shot under the counter and said 'don't tell him, I'm not there' and one of the girls had made me…not only lipstick but eye-shadow on, mascara, all the lot, I think he would have killed me if he had seen me. And I had to wait in the rain for two hours before my Mum or whoever had the key came because they

told him I couldn't be reached and he couldn't leave the key with anybody, and he just says 'so-and-so wont be in, she'll have to let herself in', which of course I couldn't. I nearly got pneumonia just through putting some make-up on, but that was my father.

RL: Now coming on so…you got married, what year was it?

HH: '56, no hang on, would it be '55? I always get confused because my daughter was born eighteen months after I was married. Married in March, Dawn was born the following October. That's approximately eighteen months, isn't it?

RL: Yes.

HH: So it would have been '55 because she was born in '56.

RL: And where did you go to live?

HH: Well, we bought this house in Clutton Street, it was a two-bedroomed house with one room downstairs.

Tape 5: 9 minutes 11 seconds

RL: Was that in Leeds?

HH: No, no, in Batley, I came back to Batley. And because we bought it and obviously with a mortgage you can imagine the outcry of my father-in-law because I was taking his son into drudgery and all this palaver, you know in those days, people didn't buy houses but I had had my wedding dress two years and everybody promised us a house and nobody had, so I thought I'm gonna wear this dress before I get out too fat in it. And I mean we were happy, it was a lovely little house and then we moved here and we've been here ever since.

RL: So how long were you in the first house?

HH: Well, we came here in '61, so '56, well about five years. That's right because Joanne was…well, actually it was for her we came for the garden.

RL: And your sisters, who did they marry?

HH: Right, from the youngest to the oldest, well Ida married Mel, I married Bob, Robert Hemingway, Stella married John Haigh, Claire married Arthur Mitchell….., they are both dead, unfortunately, and Bella, she married Clement Reggiano.

RL: And where did Stella and Claire go to live?

HH: Well, we all lived in Batley, but in different parts.

RL: And Lucy you have not mentioned.

HH: Oh Lucy, sorry, she married Alan Snelson. Well, he worked for the mining company but he was an electrician for them so he first of all they went to live in one of the mining houses in Birkenshaw.

RL: And what children did you have?

HH: I had two daughters, Dawn and Lisa-Carol.

Tape 5: 12 minutes 22 seconds

RL: When was she born?

HH: ’72, August ’72. I don’t know who got the biggest shock. I wasn’t supposed to have any. I was told I couldn’t have any, but I finished off with two.

RL: And were you working between the two of them?

HH: Yes, I have always worked. At that time I had my own shop in Batley.

RL: So of course you had a first of all you had a green grocer or was it a grocer shop?

HH: No, no, no, it was lingerie and clothes…oh good god, how can I forget? Tights, lingerie, fashion. Ladies fashion.

RL: How did you get into that?

HH: I had always enjoyed.. When I started, when I went onto the market actually, I worked for my brother-in-law to begin with. But when we sold the tights, there were all the good names like Pierre Cardin, Aristoc and, Pretty Polly, and then of course the more but when we started with those, we were the only ones selling those things. But then, like with everything else, the supermarkets they got the cheaper version, but with the same name. So I would get people turning up in droves ‘well, how can you charge me so much when these are so much…’ it took a heck of a lot of explaining but they were not the same tights and they weren’t. It says so on the package but… And then after Bob’s accident, he couldn’t work at all. He broke his neck, so…

RL: How did that happen?

HH: He went straight through the middle of the windscreen. He took the windscreen straight with him and landed on his head. How he survived is a mystery. The fact that he walked at all was a bigger mystery. Because it was just black ice on the road. He was a passenger he wasn’t a driver.

RL: When did that happen?

HH: Bob was 47 I think, Lisa was only a baby, she would be two or three, she was born in ’72. I should say somewhere in…something eighty-one, two, something like that.

RL: So what, Lisa was about eight years old?

HH: No, she wasn’t as old as that?

RL: She was born ’72, so…

HH: Oh right, yes, I was going up the other way. I would say more down to ’75, ’76.

Tape 5: 15 minutes 49 seconds

RL: I think I have missed out on some of your jobs really because the last job you told me about was in Lewis's.

HH: Oh, demonstrating.

RL: Yes.

HH: Well, I worked for different firms

RL: Right.

HH: So I would finish one demonstration and I would go to another demonstration.

RL: Right. And then after that, what did you go on to do?

HH: Well, after that I went on to work for David Jenkins, well for the fish-shop here. My niece used to come and look after Dawn and then after the fish-shop I went to work at David Jenkinsons, it's a very well known carpet firm at bottom and that's when they were wringing carpets when they were fitted, you know they wrung them and that was my job, to wring. I couldn't do the stretching because obviously I didn't have the strength but we used to do the seaming, and if…I used to go to somebody's house, if they wanted a corner mitering, I spent seven years on my hands and knees, virtually, so that my daughter didn't miss knowing she didn't have a working… mum at home because he was so good, he let me start later, finish earlier, then later for dinner, and then earlier for tea, I used to be at school at the right time to a tea. So, that was that. And then after that, actually I injured my knee and that's when I think the problem started because you are on your knees constantly and you know I've always had a bit of a problem with my ankle because again when I was younger, there used to be a skating ring in Batley and I went skating an somehow rather I must have finished off in a pile and that's where I spread my ankle. So it was always a little bit…but they advised me to stop, the doctor said I should take pressure off now and that's when I started working on the market.

Tape 5: 18 minutes 23 seconds

RL: And then from working on the market, you…

HH: We went on and got the shop in Kirksall Road.

RL: Was that with your sister?

HH: Yes, she used to do the buying; I used to do the selling. Because she'd had a baby then, she could take him in and…you know. So…and then when I found out I was pregnant, we only had the shop less than eighteen months, we were doing really well, the hot pants were in, we were the first with the hot pants, so we were booming. And I went to the doctors, nothing intending about being pregnant, the last thing on my mind and on his mind, so he said 'we'll do the medium test first, then we'll test further on'. So he rung me at work he said 'are you sitting down'? I said 'no, but I can do'. He says, well, I should and when he told me I was pregnant, I said 'you are joking'. I said 'well, how am I gonna tell my sister?', not my husband, I said 'how am I gonna tell my sister?' and that's the first thing that came into my

mind. We often laugh about it. She was here not so long ago, she came here to see her daughter-in-law, she wasn't so well, and her son.

RL: So, did you go back to work after having her or was that it then?

HH: No, no, I had to go back to work, I had to, well, I had to have a child-minder obviously and then when she was about two, we realised she wasn't happy wherever she was. The thing was she'd had a very bad start. I had a very bad delivery because they thought the baby was dead so obviously they didn't give me anything. There was no care while all they were waiting for the baby to be born dead and then I fell and they realised that the baby wasn't dead. But there was nothing available. So of course by the time she got in the…she was so short of oxygen so I had her every three months, have to go to the hospital to have her checked, so that's …so she was never a 100% but when she went to the child-minder, she got alopecia and that was a nervous disorder, which is not common with children, not so young. So we decided that we would all work in tandem so one would go one day the other would go another day so she was only left one day. So it was good, so we all pulled together and then when she was about five, he had his accident and that was nightmare alley. And then when Dawn started, well, there was four years of absolute hell.

Tape 5: 21 minutes 55 seconds

RL: And what was the matter with Dawn?

HH: She started off with aneurism and they tried to stabilise her but it ruptured, so she had to have a brain operation and then she got an…abscess on the brain, so she had to have another operation, take this piece of bone out, well, as you can see in the paper. But she did actually…they had to resuscitate her two or three times. She was in intensive care, she was on these machines for days on end, so it wasn't a pleasant time.
RL: And how old was she?

HH: Dawn, twenty-four. She was married a short time.

RL: Who did she marry?

HH: David. I don't think…I go for David; of course it's the second marriage, so…

RL: Did she have any children?

HH: No.

RL: With him? No?

HH: No, she couldn't have any children after the operation anyway, because it left her with epilepsy, partially sighted, you know, all the things that…you know, visually, she looks perfect, she is a character, she is the life and soul of a party, if there is a group of people, she could tell a dirty joke, she is off, you know that kind. And people, when we go out say 'what the heck is she on, I'll have a pint'. But she doesn't drink because she can't have alcohol so luckily she doesn't need alcohol for her character. And she works, not wage works, that's a stupid way of putting it, she is a volunteer and she does with the blind, she is a volunteer with the badly disabled in Dewsbury. So she spreads herself around.

Tape 5: 24 minutes 18 seconds

RL: Right. What's her second husband called?

HH: Michael.

RL: And his surname?

HH: Field.

RL: Where is he from?

HH: You are asking me…I think he lived in Batley, his parents lived in Huddersfield. But he himself went up to London and he was at the Met for a while, but then he had to leave because of ill health and then he came back over here.

RL: What education did Dawn have?

HH: She was a very bright girl; she had what you call a retentive memory, which made her extremely lazy until she was thirteen. She was in a contest with one of her friends, either one would be top or the other would be top, but when she got to thirteen she got involved in the more righteous girls, girls who rather have fun than…I mean girls who are now fabulous but education wasn't important. I mean she passed with eleven plus, but the first was 'I'm not going Mum', I said 'why'? Well she said 'they speak posh'. And that was it. It was no good forcing her to go. So…but she is happy.

RL: What did she do after she left school?

HH: Well, she worked for Blundells as an accountant or a trainee accountant for a while and then she went to…it's a firm that dealt with computers…I can't remember their name, in Leeds and then she went to work for my sister and in the end she was managing the showroom, doing the buying and doing deliveries and…in other words, she loved it. It was a taxing job, very, very hard but she loved every minute of it. And the customers…if love, a penny worth of love could have made that girl right…it was unbelievable. She was getting flowers as far as from Ireland, from Scotland, all religion, and there was one particular day one of my sister's friends had been in Lourdes is it, and she brought us some of this water and there is, I don't know whether a Sikh or a Hindu, one of them, she was doing her bit and Claire was doing her bit with this water and Ida was doing her bit with a…oh what was it…it was like a bible, the Old Testament…she is reading from that…

RL: Tehillim probably

HH: That's right, yes and she is reading from it and somebody else was Catholic…I cant describe but that bed was surrounded by every religion you could wish to meet and they were just customers, people she'd served and helped and been and they thought she was fabulous.

Tape 5: 28 minutes 17 seconds

I always felt a bit sorry for Lisa because from a very young age, she became her sister's minder. She had to go wherever Dawn went because she would walk into things and Lisa would say 'mind, there is something there Dawn, there is something there, there is a step',

you know she spent most of her youth in that situation. And whenever she did bump into things, there would be a huge ……..and she used to be embarrassed as hell. 'Oh Mum, she did it again', I said 'she can't help it'. But it is difficult to tell a ten-year-old you have to act like a…because I couldn't be there twenty-four hours a day. But we managed and they are very close now, thank God.

RL: Was Lisa all right as she grew up?

HH: No, she has had her problems because unfortunately her…you know with the heel, she couldn't put her foot down flat, she walked on her toes, she was forever on her toes, and I took her to the doctors and he looked at it and said 'she is an only child' and I says 'no, she isn't'. In other words, overactive imagination, you are spoiling her and blablabla. So I said 'look, let's ask the specialist and if he says there is nothing the matter, we'll abide by that'. Well, of course the specialist had her straight in and she was in pots for about six weeks but as he said at that time…at that time she was the tallest girl at nine or ten years of age but she has forgot to grow since. She is five foot and she wanted to be a stewardess. So all school life, she has worked really, really hard, we never ever had to tell her your homework, she always did it, you know she was perfect in every way, but she didn't grow. So she would have had to go to Thailand. Well, after that, she works in a bank now. She is a trainee in a bank and she has two lovely children and a very, very good husband.

RL: Who did she marry?

HH: David Hunter.

RL: And where was he from?

HH: From Leeds. Well, his parents live in Leeds so I assume he spent his youth Leeds.

RL: And what are their children called?

HH: Georgia and Alfi.

RL: And how old are they?

HH: Georgia, she just went to school this year, she is five, so she'll be five in a bit and Alfi is one in October, so he'll be about fourteen months.

RL: Where did they live?

HH: Leicester.

RL: Right. Have you joined any groups or clubs or societies?

HH: Well '…' I went volunteering at the blind and another place, but when I started with my leg I couldn't do it because I can't walk. I have gone with the blind on a day-trip because I can see, you know, and you know when you go on the bus, well, it's hilarious because they are saying to me 'what am I going to…'…'just a minute, you've got a step but I have to get up first' and it is hilarious because it is the blind leading the blind. But we have such a laugh, they are such a fantastic crowd. They really are. So I'm hoping that after this operation I can

go back to do something because I enjoyed it. But it is one of those things you can't do anything about.

Tape 5: 33 minutes 5 seconds

RL: Do you think you have suffered psychologically in any way from your experiences?

HH: I did. I used to have a lot of anger, a lot. I have grown up and feeling that anger until I had that psychologist and he said to me 'I'm gonna let you face your anger and you'll cry before you are better' and I did. I faced all this and because I couldn't understand why, I couldn't…if there for example I was hungry; I've got up at four o'clock in the morning and cook something. I could not be hungry. I could not not have bread in the house because if I didn't see any bread, I associated that with pain. And I had to go to a …I have tried every type of diet you can mention, including the pills, going back in my teens really, and I could never ever face the one thing…bread. So by going to the psychologist, writing my story down as much as…well, not as much as this, only half of that, I got it off my chest and I felt the hatred…it was anger because of the way my Mum was treated and my father and nobody ever, ever had the guts to say 'I'm sorry'. That's all I ever wanted, somebody say 'I'm sorry'. They had nothing, they were stripped of everything and there was nothing…I mean my Mum was really, really ill, we were very poor, it was very difficult when we came to England but I mean we had to pay for the prescriptions and it was so hard. I see my mother walk with callopers a mile-and-a-half to work because she didn't have the two pence bus fare or tram fare as…and those things, they made me very bitter. But as I got older, I have realised it's in the past. As long as it is not forgotten. And that's why I think this is important. I mean it might bore people to death but somewhere in there, they find something associated with their life.

Tape 5: 36 minutes 6 seconds

RL: Were you angry towards England?

HH: No, I don't think it was…the only time I was angry is when people say 'oh, you foreigners, you come here, you take our men, you take our houses, you take…', and that I used to be angry because we didn't come here, we had to. We couldn't go back to Greece because we were foreigners there. If my father had gone back to Greece he would have got everything he belonged from the Germans, it was all available for him. But here, it was always too late. And I felt like shouting 'don't! We are not like that!' You couldn't tell people. I have seen now, standing at the bus stop and I cringe when I hear, and it's the older people that I so '…' when they are anti-everything. A young coloured girl got on the bus with three children, beautifully dressed, so are the children, and this woman at the back, she was probably sixty, no teeth, she reeked of smoke, she reeked of beer and she is shouting and bolting, looking 'there, they've got kids, they are coming…' and I just turn around and says 'what the hell have you got to talk about'. This woman looks, because the little girl started crying, and I said 'look, we're not like that, don't take any notice, that's ignorance'. And that is the main thing; it's ignorance because people, they don't look at the picture.

RL: Did you come across any hostility?

HH: Oh yes. We didn't understand what hostility was. Only once did I take it seriously and that was girl. We were walking down towards home actually and I don't know what we argued, school children, you argue over anything, but she went on and on and on 'go back

where you came from! We don't want you here! You want to go back where you came from!' Well, I gave her one crack and unfortunately she was walking at the side of a wall. Well, that crack went straight…well, she had a lovely face and again my father, he was so tense, smack first and ask questions later. No matter how sorry he was, that was his way. And I didn't see why I should be hit for, well, I don't know what I called her, I must have called her some funny names in every language which I knew, which were quite a few languages in those days. So my father did apologise and her father apologised to me.

Tape 5: 39 minutes 21 seconds

When he brought her, I mean her face did look a mess, I had no intentions of knocking her into the wall, I just pushed her out of anger. But I just thought 'she is sending me back where I came from'. At that particular time where I came from was the hunger, disease, filth, you know. And I am not hungry anymore [laughs].

RL: Do you think it affected how you brought up your children?

HH: I am more open with my children, they never had to lie and they don't. Don't ever ask my daughter…if you want the truth, don't ask her because she will tell you it. And I think that's because I couldn't. And they are both the same, really, both will tell you the truth, whether it hurts you or not. I mean sometimes it can be a bit too…I say 'pan it down a bit', no, she asked me for the truth, which I…but I can't knock them for it because that's what I brought them…and they've learned respect of other people, think of them before…and my youngest daughter is doing exactly the same with her children. She is teaching them respect, family values, which I think are very important, and I think family values, once they get those back into focus, the whole world will change.

RL: How interested have they been in your story, in your background? Have you ever spoken to hem about it?

HH: Oh yes, because when Dawn was at school, she got a very high mark, they had to tell some form of a story and all our children, they have all used it as a base and tell the story and got the marks. Lisa was the one who translated my gibberish handwriting into presentable…well, what you call English and then my niece has actually copied it and written it…I don't actually know whether it's type-written or whether it's done on the computer but in doing that, we lost the me and thou and they… the softness.

Tape 5: 42 minutes 14 seconds

You know that softness when you are telling a story. But then again, when you are going to do that book, you've got the 'ifs' and 'buts', you've got them in there. They have all used it for school projects. They've not actually looked at the videos. I think probably they'd be better seeing them in their own home because I haven't looked at them. My nephew has and he didn't realise what we had got through what we had. But he's only just seen the half of the one. I just keep forgetting, my niece saying 'well, can I have a look at it?' and I just keep forgetting because it isn't like my story, it's printed, it's lost so much in the retelling, its still very poignant in my own words…I have to be very careful with my English, that's the one thing my daughter said, oh no, it was Lisa, she said 'before you open your mouth Mum, think'.

RL: Have you been connected with any refugee organisations?

HH: No, I haven't. All I have I give to the charities. But there isn't a…the only one I have seen or heard around here was when I was sending blankets and boxes to…Czechoslovakia. I put stuff in a box and my neighbour took it in, I didn't actually go, I don't know…I don't know where?

RL: What about the AJR? That's the Association of Jewish Refugees?

HH: Well, I have done this for them, I have done the…record, you know where the people put the little bits of their lives on the record, which again is a very different department and then Amanda is doing this tree, which is gonna be this in another department.

RL: How did you first become involved with them?

HH: Well, funnily enough it was through my brother-in-law in Israel, he was working at the consulate there I think, and he met this woman, they were just talking and he said that his sister-in-law was living in England and I had gone past the age of…I was about sixty-five, no I wasn't, it was about two years ago, to cut a long story short, she referred me to Barbara and Barbara Dorothy, she came and spoke to me. And from that, I have tried to get to Leeds, but it's a lot of taxi fare and they can't afford to pay. And to be perfectly honest, I went a few times because my nephew took me but I had nothing in common because they are all from three sections: Polish, Russian or German. And I had nothing in common with them at all. My experiences were totally different to theirs so…and when Susanne Green, she started one in Bradford, well they do have…so I went there and I made one or two friends there. Not because I had similar interests but because somebody…unfortunately they are all unable to travel because of our condition so we used by telephone so…and I tried to go to the meetings when I can…

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

HH: English.

RL: And in terms of identity?

HH: Well, British.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

HH: No, not really. I feel more than they have because I have suffered like my father, he had to suffer for his nationality, all our lives, so I feel I am no different to anybody else here. I have been here sixty years and as far as I am concerned I am as English as anybody else.

Tape 5: 48 minutes 4 seconds

RL: What does being Jewish mean to you?

HH: It means for me, I was born Jewish and I will die Jewish. But because I don't do the little bits in-between, I don't feel as guilty. I can honestly say 'yes, I am Jewish'. When the preacher asked me whether I was going to change my religion, I said 'no'. And he said 'well, why?' and I said 'because I don't want to'. Why should I? And as my husband said, he was quite all right with it and that was as far as I was concerned, but do I feel guilty because I

have a pork chop? No. Do you know what I mean? It's the thing that make the…I feel guilty when I go to my sister or when they come to me because I am giving them a plate, which is not kosher, you know. So in fact I have tried to keep a few plates and cups and saucers, a few knifes and forks, which I don't used during the year. I never use them unless they come. And that, I don't feel as guilty; I don't put my values onto their shoulders. They've got to have their own.

RL: And what about your children? How do they feel about their Jewish blood?

HH: I think they are proud of it, my oldest daughter certainly is. She worked with a lot of Jewish people through her business when she was working. Lisa, I don't think she has a religious bone in her body but not because of the Jewish or the Christian religion but because of what happened to her Dad. He was the nicest person you could meet and he got, when he went through the windscreen and hurt his neck, he went through years of… I was at work and I didn't know what to expect when I came home. Because the only known fact of that particular fracture was total paralysis, which we saw in the hospital or dead. And the fact that you got a man here walking is hard to believe, but the fracture was there. And then he got through all that, he got a stroke and when we, actually when we were coming back from Israel, on the plane, oh, five hours of hell, because he didn't want anybody to know.

Tape 5: 51 minutes 14 seconds

He didn't want any fuss until we came home. And he fought all that, and he did have a fight, he was just doing, well you can tell I mean there, he just then had an operation for cancer but he just couldn't fight it. That was just one thing too many. And he was only sixty-two when he died and as far as Lisa is concerned, there is nobody like her Dad and same as Dawn, they worshipped their father and he worshipped them. You know, there wasn't nothing small or big that he wouldn't do for them.

RL: When did you first visit Israel?

HH: Oh, more than twenty years since now. … It was…was Dawn married, no, she wasn't,… it was twenty-one, twenty-two years ago now, must be more. We were bombed there. We were on the actual bus to go to Ein Gedi and I was sitting in the back seat with the little one because I was a smoker. And this woman said 'you should sit in the front…go and sit somewhere else if you smoke'. And I said 'no, because all the seats for smoking are here'. And another woman pipes up, you know like they do, once says one thing, and we got to Ein Gedi in a lot shorter than we had anticipated because we were all arguing, and when we got off I saw the same people on the bus, so Bella said 'you know, I'm hungry', so I says 'ok, we'll go for something to eat, then we'll catch the next one'. And on our way to Tel Aviv, we saw this massive fire, on the bus there were soldiers, we didn't know what it was until we got into Tel Aviv and the Lisa looked up and our bus driver had a chain full of golden things on, all different things, that's what we noticed about him, and she says 'look Daddy, there is our driver there' and that's when Bella looked up and I mean that had been bombed. The seat, we were sitting at the back, had been bombed. And that's going back, I'm just trying…I can't remember, I know it's more than twenty years since.

Tape 5: 54 minutes 9 seconds

RL: What did you go to Israel for at that stage?

HH: To see my family, to see Bella, because Ida was over here then.

RL: So who lived over there?

HH: Bella, my older sister.

RL: Just Bella?

HH: Bella and her husband Clem.

RL: And how did you feel visiting Israel, what did that mean to you?

HH: It's hard to describe … I honestly can't describe it. It was like something I have never felt before. I can imagine when people get up and, like our Stella did, she had been so ill herself and we decided we would take her to Israel. And the first thing she did, she gave me her walking stick, on her hands and knees, kissing the earth. And I couldn't go to that depth but I know exactly how she felt. We'd made it, and that was it. But it's difficult to describe your feelings at the time; there is no words that reflect, really. But it's a beautiful place and it's a shame that there is so much…it's the hatred in Israel that…there is so much hatred. And there is plenty of room for everybody. If everybody was just willing to sit down or just take a step back and speak to one another. I mean they always have done before, but there is always the few who…well, they are never satisfied, they've got to have horror.

RL: So, which of your sisters eventually did live there? Was it just Bella or…

HH: And Ida.

RL: And Ida lived there as well?

HH: Yes, and her husband Clem. But she went with her family, Ida. Well, her daughter went there because she was getting married, ….. And then Marshall went to join the army. So he did his national service or whatever they call it. And they in that case had to come back because he couldn't hack it over there, he just couldn't make the…he wanted something but they just couldn't make the money, it was very, very hard. Living in Israel is very, very hard. You have to pay to live there, virtually. If you have any money when you go, you wont have it…[laughs] but people there they would right willingly eat jam and bread in the sunshine than eat caviar in the rain, you know. So it depends on people's view. But when I first saw Tel Aviv and you see it now, there is no comparison. It's beautiful, the whole I have been, we went to Beer Sheva, I have been to quite a lot of places and it's all beautiful, you know. So…

Tape 5: 57 minutes 42 seconds

RL: So this film is about to end, so we'll just stop there.

HH: Right.

TAPE 6

RL: This is the interview with Hanna Hemingway and it's tape six. You know I was asking you about identity and where you feel you belong, do you have any vestiges of any kind of Greek identity?

HH: No, as I said we went to Greece with all my sisters and I didn't feel anything at all. The only thing I remember was the khiliadhendra , which is I was told…when we got there we were told wrongly, it didn't exist anymore, it was bombed but it doesn't, it is still there, the white tower, which is that one there, which Stella remembered. You know the things that we remembered weren't there; I had more affinity with Kavalla. It was a lovely little place and when we found out that Mum had lived there it's was made you feel nice and warm, if only I had taken the proper picture…so don't ask me to take your wedding photograph.

RL: So you didn't really feel any affinity?

HH: No, no I didn't, I didn't. I haven't been back to Salonika since, but we went to Crete and I've been to…somewhere else, I have forgotten…when I hear the Greek spoken, when I hear the words, I do get a kick, because the only words I know in the Greek language… are from songs, like my father used to have a special song for Mum, like when they used to argue, he always sung 'You have no heart' ….it's a (hums) it was…I know the ……. that you haven't got it's the one, it's the same as Macria, you know the Paloma, it's words, it's individual words you can strung together but, I can ask how you are, the date, you know but I couldn't hold a conversation and I don't think mentally I could even go and take…I could take a Spanish lesson, I feel more for that, you know because of things like Ladino.

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

Tape 6: 3 minutes 18 seconds

HH: Oh, the German people, I don't have a hatred for at all, I wouldn't particularly go across the road to say hello to anybody, I didn't know, but I think on an average, we met a few Germans on holiday, they are quite nice people, but as soon as they start with the Gestapo and that grinds my teeth, you know …I cannot stand anybody saying nice things about them because there isn't any, there mothers must have loved them. But the things that they did in the name of whatever it's just '…' beyond comprehension. The things, which are done in the guise of God or religion, that's beyond comprehension. Why involve religion in your hatred. It shouldn't be so. Religion should be part of you, you are born with it you can't do anything about it But…no I can't honestly say I have any hatred, I have met some very nice German people.

RL: Have you ever received any restitution?

HH: What's that?

RL: Restitution. You know, payment for what you underwent?

HH: No, no. [...] Not from the Germans or anybody like that.

RL: Did you ever try to?

RL: Yes, we tried. As I said, we got letters that we wrote, my parents wrote, from '58 and they were either sent to the wrong department or we were too late…and this is an example: my father, all the time he was in Greece he paid his stamps I would assume to the British government, I don't know, but when he was ill, my Mum wrote up and asked if they could help to get some other pension First of all they wrote back and said they are sorry but he

hadn't worked here, you have to work so many hours, two or three hundred hours to claim then they wrote again, in the meantime my father had died, 'yes, he had worked the hours, yes, he was entitled to a pension but because he died before his 65th birthday, she couldn't get anything. So even his pension she couldn't claim. I mean here you get the weirdest pension don't you… but things like that really make me mad.

Tape 6: 6 minutes 30 seconds

RL: How secure do you feel in England?

HH: Very secure. In this house very secure, because I have people looking out for me and that doesn't include religion whatsoever, it's not part of it. They are here because I like them or they like me. It's individual. There is a blind boy up here and if ever I had problems with my feet and I couldn't get out of the house, his mama sent him here, and he's got me pension book, he's good me bread, he even went down to Batley, and got me a bit of shopping, you know when Dawn couldn't do it. So, to me it's, he is a blind boy, well, he is a man but he has that inside him. He could turn around and say 'I hate the world, why me, you know he was just nine when the accident happened and took is sight, but he is as cheerful as a corn man and that's the sort of people this world needs. Badly! A little bit more give and less take.

RL: Is there anything else that we have missed that you would like to tell me about?

HH: [laughs] I mean there is bound to be the little bits, you just…well, you don't forget but probably tomorrow I will remember. On the whole, I am quite happy with this because If it's translated as it's spoken with if and buts and what nots, you know in other words as it is, than it brings out…I'll show you what has been written and you can see what I mean. So much has been taken off.

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

HH: Well, for all the generation, just bear in mind, there is only the colour of the skin that is different. We are all the same inside. And just love…well, I wont say 'love one another' that's a bit too much but tolerate. Be prepared to give a little bit. Don't expect everything handed out to you on the plate, it isn't. And the harder you work for it, the better you like it.

RL: Thank you very much.

HH: Is that it? Five and a quarter hours.

Tape 6: 9 minutes 36 seconds

PHOTOGRAPHS

Picture1:
HH: My sister Bella, also known as Bienvenida, is on the left with a tray in the hand and myself and my younger sister Ida, we are both at the front, one behind the other and the other three people, all are adults, I don't know who they are, probably going for a stroll.

RL: And where was it taken?

HH: Sorry, that's in Liebenau, and it's a convent or it was a convent run by nuns and they made their own cider, did the apples and pears, everything … green.

RL: And the date?

HH: Oh, approximately, as near as I can tell you, 1941.

Picture 2:
HH: This picture is actually taken in France, in Vittel, I can't tell you exactly where it is, it is approximately 300 miles from Paris and it's a concentration camp. From left to right: I am the first on the left, the other two I don't know who they are, and then there is my Mum and my little sister, they are he next two, and then the lady I don't know who she is and then I have got two of my sisters, Lucy or Lucia and Esther Rina who is on the last. On the top we've got Clara and Bella and my father and then the other three are strangers. Now that was taken just before we left Vittel, as a propaganda.

RL: And the date?

HH: Approximately, well, 1944, which as before we came here.

Picture 3:
HH: Now this is another picture of Vittel, it is taken from the outside and I would say about 1942, that barbwire, we are all fenced behind, and all the people there you can see they are fenced behind the barbwire.

Tape 6: 12 minutes 23 seconds

Picture 4:
HH: That again is another view of Vittel, it is approximately '42 to '43 and the people you can see on the road are actually…they are not prisoners they are the general public coming to have a look at the monkeys in the zoo, which of course were us.

Picture 5:
HH: That photograph was taken in Vittel, the prisoner of war camp, and it's when they deliver the food parcels, approximately every two or three weeks. The table would come out, they put all the people surrounding it and then the Germans would come and distribute all they think, deserved a parcel. All those people didn't get a parcel only the ones where the faces fitted.

RL: And the date?

HH: The date I would say approximately '43, I am not 100% sure. It's difficult to guage when you are young.

Picture 6:
HH: This again is Vittel and these photographs where all the children put together for any of the bigwigs came belonging to the Gestapo, and they were always put on a show and the show was the propaganda of children having fun. Now this on the right, first front row […] there is four, there is my youngest sister Ida in the centre, fourth child from the right, and my older sister Bella is he one with the dark coat on the back…on the right, sorry. And there be… possibly they'd come around and they'd give us a drink, I don't remember being given

anything in these days, and the date, judging by Ida, I would say back end of ’41. She only looks about eighteen months old, doesn’t she?

Picture 7:
HH: That’s my husband Bob and myself, obviously on the right, and that was taken in Blackpool on a daytrip. I was sixteen and Bob was eighteen, just before he went to the army. And the year was 1949.

Tape 6: 15 minutes 18 seconds

Picture 8:
HH: That’s myself, Hanna Tarragano and I was sixteen and that was in 1949 and it was just…I can’t remember why the photograph was taken but that was taken in Dewsbury.

Picture 9:
HH: That’s a declaration of my parents’ wedding certificate, which, because we didn’t have one when we came here. My sister wanted to get married in the synagogue and they needed that for proof that they were married so they proceeded with giving them this proof… and actually I didn’t know about this, and that was in 1963.

Picture 10:
HH: That’s my husband and myself and this was in Scotland and it’s a wedding, his nephew wanted him to give him away and so he got himself …actually he was in a wheelchair but he is standing for this photograph and unfortunately he died three months later. But he looks really well there.

RL: What was his full name?

HH: Oh, Robert Hemingway and Hanna Hemingway.

Picture 11:
HH: This is the Tarragano family. My father Benzion Tarragano, he is on the left, next is my youngest sister Ida, then my mother Serena or Sereca, then is myself Hanna, top row is Claire, next is Esther Rina then Lucy and Bella. And that was taken in the house we lived in, in Taylor Street in, I would say I was about thirteen there, that would be about 48, about ’47.

Tape 5: 18 minutes 0 seconds

Picture 12:
HH: You are now looking at a photograph of myself and my two children, and my granddaughter. From left to right, I am Hanna that’s on the left, then Lisa who is the youngest is in the middle and Dawn is the last on the top and then you have Georgia who is the baby. And that was taken in this house in Batley in about 2001.

Picture 13:
HH: That’s my grandson Alfie, he is a belter, he is beautiful and he was taken when he was… approximately when he was ten month old, and this picture was taken in Boots in Leicester.

RL: The year?

HH: 2003.

RL: And the surname?

HH: It’s Alfie Hunter.