IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Sex:	Female
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Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

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Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. **RV237**

NAME: **Ruth Webber**

DATE: **13th June 2019**

LOCATION: **Harrow, UK**

INTERVIEWER: **Dr. Bea Lewkowicz**

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 13th of June 2019. We're conducting interview with Mrs. Ruth Webber. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz.

What is your name please?

Ruth. Ruth Alexa Webber.

And what was your name at birth?

Ruth Alexa Kiewer.

And when were you born please?

1934.

And where?

Berlin.

Ruth thank you very, very much to- to- for agreeing to be interviewed for Refugee Voices. Can you please tell me something about your family background?

I was an only child - rather spoiled, I think. We lived in Berlin. My mother had been brought- born and brought up in Berlin in quite well-off family. They had a family business. My father had been born in what was then Germany, but is now Poland under border changes, and had- but had spent most of his life in Berlin. I think they probably had an arranged marriage, because she wasn't that young. But I don't know about that. They always said, “We were introduced.” He worked- he worked in the family firm with my mother. Her father was now ill in hospital, and he and my mother worked in the family shop in Berlin. I was looked after by my grandmother, Marie Miriam, at home.

So, you said they were working in the shop. Where- what sort of shop was it – your grandfather’s shop?

It- I gather it sold pictures of some sort, but it also sold other things. I'm not sure. I don't remember it at all.

And where was it?

In Berlin.

And do you know where?

I’m not sure.

And your parents, you said you think it was arranged, but you don't know.

[0:02:28]

I get that impression from the way they talked about it, but they never said.

Okay. And when did they get married?

1929.

On what date, you said, on?

The 13th and the 16th of June, but which was the religious and which was the civil wedding, I don't know.

So, in fact, ninety years today.

Yeah.

That's nice.

I hadn't thought of that.

Yeah. And where was the religious wedding? In a synagogue- in a…?

I presume so. I wasn't there. [laughing]

No. Any idea where? Which synagogue?

I don't know which synagogue.

And after they married, where did they settle? Where did they live?

We lived with my grandmother in Berlin. And it was one of two streets, and I'm not sure which because both have been mentioned to me. I'm trying to remember the name. One was the Haberlandstraße. And what was the other one?

The Marburg-

The Marburger Straße. That's right. And I don't know, because I was only little.

But they lived with your grandmother?

Yes.

And by that time, was the grandfather already in the hospital?

Yes, he was. He had been in hospital for some years.

What was his problem, or what…?

I think it was mental illness. But I don't know what. That's all my parents told me.

Right. Right. So, your father moved in-

Yes.

- with them. And… And what- do you have any memories from Berlin at all?

I remember- we lived in a flat, I don't remember the flat, but we lived upstairs, and there was a lift. And the lift is called a *Fahrstuhl*. And I couldn't say *Fahrstuhl;* I always called it a *Lachloll*. And a friend of my mother's, Felicia, who later escaped to Guatemala and the States, I met her daughter about eight years ago. She came to England. And she remembered- she was older than me- she remembered me saying *Lachloll*, after all those years. So, I remember that about the flat. I remember trains going overhead in Berlin. I don't really remember anything else. I remember the journey when we left, but I don't remember much. No.

But you remember the lift going up?

Oh, I remember the *Lach-*

What sort of a lift was it? What- some sort of- in a metal…?

I have no idea. All I know is it was called the *Lachloll* by me.

[0:05:00]

And what sort of circles did your parents mix in? Or what- what…?

I don't know. My mother- they both had family in Berlin. My father had three sisters and a brother. They were all there. My mother had- let me think- a brother who'd already gone to England in thirty- before. So, I don't remember him from that period. She had a sister who was married to a publisher and he'd gone to Vienna at some point. I don't really- but there are pictures of me with my cousin Tom. So, they must have visited us. So, they mostly moved in family circles - I think. It's my impression.

And did they go to synagogues? How Jewish were they, or…?

They were certainly conscious of being Jewish. They were not particularly f*rum*. I would say they would have gone on the major Holy Days. Compared with my husband's family, they were certainly not *frum* at all. But, yeah, yes, so I was- they brought me up to go to *cheder*, to- we had- we had *Seder* and, you know, this sort of thing. But not particularly- we didn't eat kosher, for instance.

Right. So traditional, in some ways, or- yeah. And your grandmother, do you remember your grandmother?

I remember her. I've got a lot of photos of her. So, I wonder how far that's remembering from the photos and what my mother has told me. Because I never really saw her again after I was- I saw her the last time two days before I was- my fourth birthday. So, I don't really remember her very well. No.

And tell us a little bit more about- any- anything else from that- from Berlin. I know, even if you don't remember, it's something your parents-

Well, I think-

- told you. Or-

Okay, I can remember I had a little friend called Hella Bergmann. I had gone to nursery school, she was there. And they left Berlin before we did. And she gave- they gave me a puppet show that she had. And I remember playing with the crocodile. And I was really sorry when I left Berlin to lose my crocodile. But I still had my doll, called Erika, which I brought later to England. I think- what other things did my parents tell me? My parents told me they took me to Hansel and Gretel. I don't remember this at all, and that I freaked out: “Look behind you!” Because there was the witch. But I don't remember that. That's my mother's memory. That's about it, in Germany.

[0:07:55]

Yeah – yeah. And you said your- your uncle emigrated in ’34 - quite early. How come he emigrated that - early?

He- he was a doctor and doctors were not allowed to practice. So, he came to England and requalified in Edinburgh. That's why he left.

Yeah. So, he was- he left early. Right so tell us now, about your leaving, or was there any discussion before you left, or how- what happened?

I didn't know. You see I didn't know anything about Nazis. Obviously, I was completely protected from all this. And I don't remember Kristallnacht at all, but my mother tells- told me my father was taken on Kristallnacht. He had wanted to leave Berlin. My grandmother didn't want to leave. I think they jointly owned the shop or something. I don't know. But she definitely didn't want to leave. She was an old lady. She said, “It'll all blow over.” He definitely wanted to leave. He could see what was happening. Another uncle, my mother's brother, had already also left. He was a left-wing student and he zipped off and landed up in Israel. So, Kristallnacht they took my father. And a week later, my mother brought me to

England, leaving him in Sachsenhausen, her mother in the flat and her father in the hospital. Horrible decision to have to make.

But do you think she had plan- that plan had probably before Kristallnacht because otherwise it would have been quite difficult to arrange everything…?

[0:09:40]

I don't know.

Within the week.

Yes, it would. I don't know. They must have talked about it in great detail before. Because to start with, they must have had permission from England, for my mother to come and work in England, even if she was staying with her brother. And so- I don't know. Nobody told me.

And you assume she had some domestic visa?

I assume that because that's what she did for the first few years.

And do you think that her brother helped her to emigrate, do you think…?

Yes.

He was involved? Yes.

Yes, I'm sure.

And do you know how? – No.

Not really. I think- I know that- later I have been told, they had a servant in the house. It was general practice. And the servant was let go. So presumably, it meant that they could say there was a place for my mother to work there as a servant.

This was her brother?

Yes. But I don't- I don't think she ever really worked as a servant. But she helped, obviously. But I didn't know that at the time. It's, sort of, forty years later, my cousin told me.

So, he could have sponsored her to come-

Somehow.

Any other way.

Yes.

But in any case, she went to him.

Yes.

To the family.

We- we went to them. Yeah.

And do you know, were you on the- but she managed to bring you as well?

Yes.

Were you mentioned on the pass- on her passport? What…?

I don't know.

Documentation?

I haven’t- I haven’t- no, I don't know. But I wasn't a Kindertransport.

No, you came with your mother.

Yes, I did.

You came together. And, do you know- you have no memories of Kristallnacht, or of your father being taken away?

No, but I remember coming to England.

Yeah. And do you know why they took- I mean, they obviously on Kristallnacht-

I think-

Any- any reason for- particular for your father being taken?

No, he wasn't particularly political. I think just because he was a Jew- it was, that night.

Yeah. What about the shop? What's happened to the shop on Kristallnacht?

I'm not sure. Many years later, after Adenauer, my father tried to get some compensation. By then his - my mother's mother was long dead. And he did get a- he got a German pension. Now what that related to, was it his suffering, or was it the shop? I don’t know. But six years ago, my cousin who was interested in genealogy, looked up things. And she was looking up details about her father, nothing to do with me. And she went to the German Embassy, and they said, “Yes, well, it was this place. And it was owned partly by your grandmother, and partly by an unknown Mr. Kiewer.” And she said, “But Mr. Kiewer is my cousin's…” And so, she got me involved in this. And I got some money from Germany just about the time we moved to this house about six years ago. Nothing to do with the value of the house. It was done via the reparations thing and it- I had to sign a waiver saying I would accept, which I did. We didn't need the money. It was, you know. And so, they decided how much to allot to various members of the family, which actually wasn't quite correct. But it doesn't- it didn't matter to us. It wasn't. So that must mean that there were documents saying who had owned

it. But I don't know. I also have a letter that a man wrote, whom- I don't know the man at all, who said he had done business with my father in the shop. And this must have been written after the war when my father first tried to get something. But he didn't get it at that point. I don't understand it. It's in German and my German- written- my legal German isn't very good.

[0:13:45]

Right. But that means they must have owned the shop- the premises of the shop, or-

They cert- they certainly owned. Did they own the premises or did they just have the good will of the- I don't know. I would assume, in the light of all I've heard of my mother's family and how much money they had, I would assume that they had owned the whole caboodle, but I don't know that.

Right- right. Right. So, you don't know what happened on Kristallnacht, or…?

Not at all.

No. Or whether your, at that point, whether your father would have been in the shop?

I don't know. I was never told-

And he never talked about that? Your father?

He never talked about a lot of things. He never talked about Sachsenhausen, not to me, ever.

And he was- do you know then, later, he was taken straight to Sachsenhausen or some- some time imprisoned or…?

I don't know.

No.

At all.

Okay. So, tell us what do you remember from that journey?

I remember I had Erika, my doll. I remember we went on a boat. We must have had a cabin, because I remember a table, and you lifted the table up and it was a wash stand. I thought that was absolute magic. When I say I remember, I now remember remembering it at many- but I- I- I haven't been told. These are not things I've been told. This I remember. I remember we arrived in a London station. I don't know which station it was. My uncle Alfons met us.
And that's all I remember of the journey.

[0:15:30]

So, you know it was a boat.

Definitely a boat.

A cabin of some sort. Yeah. And were you- do you remember the feelings you had? Were you scared or were you-

No.

…happy to go with your mother?

I was with my mother. I don't remember feeling scared. I don't remember feeling anything particular. I don't think- I didn't understand what was happening.

No. No. You were protected.

Yes, definitely.

You couldn’t understand anything about-

No.

... the danger or-

No, not at all.

No. And arrival at- had you ever- you hadn't met your uncle before?

I don't think I had. It's possible that I had. Because at some point when I was very tiny, my mother had taken me to Sweden to see some of his in-laws. Was he there at the time? I don't remember that. I only really remember meeting him for the first time then. But it's possible I'd met him before.

So, your uncle had Swedish in-laws?

His wife was Swedish Jewish. Her sister had married a Dane. That's how the Danish connection came that later helped my father. So, there was family in Sweden, there was family in Copenhagen.

So that was quite important for later on?

Yes, that was very important.

Yeah. So, to come back here. So, he picked you up probably, from the station?

Yes.

And then what happened?

We lived with my uncle and aunt and my cousin Eva. She was three years older than me. And - I shouldn't think it was very easy for the grown-ups. I'm not sure. It can't have been easy having first two, and then when my father later joined us, three people in the house. It

was a semi-detached house in Harrow. It can't have- at some point they bought then the other half of the attached, but I don't think it was then. I don't remember. It can't have been easy for my aunt. And my aunt and my father were quite scratchy. My father resented being made to feel a nuisance, and my aunt must have felt he was a nuisance, and both feelings are understandable. My mother and her brother were very close. They never felt like this at all. You know. I don't think I fully realised that at time, but by the time I was a little older my father made comments, then I could realise.

[0:18:06]

But he was- your uncle was working at the time? He was already- as a GP?

He was a GP.

In Harrow?

In Harrow. Just around the corner from here.

And when you came the house was you said in Harrow. Not in Neasden? Because you said in-

The house was in Harrow. We stayed with them in Harrow. It's when we left them that we went to work- we went for the few weeks in Neasden.

Right. So, what about- you were still under school- you were not at school?

I was not at school. I was not at nursery school. I still only spoke German.

So how did you manage to learn some English?

I went- my parents moved- it's somewhere- Neasden, Kilburn area, and I'm not sure when, in the summer of '39. I started school in the September - infant school. I didn't speak English.

Six weeks later, we were all evacuated. So, I hadn't had much time to learn English. And that was- the school was evacuated. Not- not my parents.

So just to understand properly, so when you came out to England, your father was in Sachsenhausen?

Yes.

And then how- after how many months, did he join you?

I'm not sure. I don't know.

Well, we know you said he was imprisoned or taken to Sachsenhausen November '38.

Yes.

And I think we saw a release paper which we're going to film later.

Yes.

Which said that he was released in December-

Yes.

Thirty-eight. So, he probably joined you-

He went first to Denmark because he didn't have permission to come to England.

So, tell us that story please. What happened to him?

[0:19:44]

He got permission to go to Denmark. My Auntie Gerda’s sister was living in Copenhagen with her husband, Ben. And Ben and Aviva got him permission to go into Denmark. So, he got into Denmark when he left Germany. I don't know how long it took him to get to Denmark. I don't know how long he stayed in Denmark, but I do know that sometime in the spring- I think- of ’39 he joined us.

Right. And how did he manage? What- on what papers did he come here? Maybe he had a domestic-

And must have had a domestic, because that was the work he had to do. But to start with, I don't know if he worked, even. I don't know.

But he probably was released because he had some papers showing that he could emigrate to Denmark.

Yes.

So, he had quite a short time in Sachsenhausen.

Yes, I realised that-

Just weeks, or-

I realised that now but I never knew that then.

Right. And that’s not something he talked about later?

No, never.

So, when he joined you, were you aware of a long separation then as a child, or-?

Not really. Or if I was, I don't remember it now.

Right – right. But you said your parents moved out. They didn't want to stay there. And they had some means to find their own accommodation?

[0:21:12]

I don't know. I don't remember where we lived. I don't remember anything about it. I think my mother told me, she worked for a lady called Mrs. Morrier. I don't know how you pronounce that - spell it, who was very generous and would give her presents, but would also throw things at her when she was in a temper. But that can only be for a- a few months. I don't know how long this lasted. But- I've only heard my mother talk about it. I don't ever remember meeting Mrs. Morrier.

As a domestic?

Oh, yes.

And your father, you said?

I don't know.

Also started working?

I don't know what he was doing at that point at all.

Right- right. But you remember going to the- was it a local primary school?

[0:22:02]

I don't even remember the school. I only remember the day we left, to go as evacuees. And I remember the buses coming to the school. And we had gas masks with us. And we had labels, but the labels only told us our home addresses and our parents. They didn't tell us where we were going, because that was a secret. And I remember the parents all waving as the bus left, and the bus went to Paddington. I remember that. And I remember the train

journey to Wales. And I remember looking at a little girl who was called Patsy. And she had little black button shoes and I thought “I'd love to have shoes like that.” And I remember that. That's really awful. To remember an important day like that by something so greedy and trivial, but that's how it is.

But again, you were young? This was your first separation. How- how were you feeling?

[0:23:02]

I don’t remember.

I mean that must have been terrifying, because you didn't have English.

No, that’s right.

And you were with a lot of other English children. Were there-

Oh, yes!

Were there any other refugee children?

I don't know, because I couldn't speak to people.

Nobody spoke German?

I don't think so. But I have no- I have no memory of- I was only in that school. As I say, I was only in that school for six weeks before we were evacuated. So-

And do you know, again from later conversations, were your parents- did they think it was a good thing to be safe on the countryside? Or did they…?

Yes, they did. I have found a letter that my mother wrote to my foster parents in Wales saying she was in London in the Blitz, saying, “I'm so grateful that Ruth is with you. And I

know you're looking after her very well." And I found that postcard. Yeah. So, yes, she was in the- what they felt at the time, I don't know. But by the Blitz-

Yes. And in some way, maybe, you know if they had to work as domestics, it might have been to some extent easier for them, to work and not to-

Possibly. Well, I don't think my father can have worked- either he didn't work or not long, because very shortly after- he was taken to the Isle of Man-

Right-

… to be interned.

Right.

So, she was left in London with the Blitz, but he wasn't.

So, you were evacuated, he was interned and she stayed.

Yes.

And did she stay- stay in that same place or did she move to a hostel or did she…?

I don't know what she did. All I know is that at some point while I was in Wales, my uncle sent his daughters - the second daughter had been born after I arrived in the house. So, Eva and Judith were sent to Twyford to get out of the bombing. And my mother went with them to look after them. And from there, I don't know what happened to the girls, whether they went back to London or not. I think they probably- possibly stayed with some other people. But my mother then went to work in Sonning, which is just a couple of miles from Twyford, as a servant - as a cook! She was a very bad cook. In a very- quite manor- manorial sort of country house - rather a posh house. And later my father joined her when he was allowed- released from the Isle of Man, to work in the same house. And they were both domestic servants. Yeah.

[0:25:54]

So that would have been in ’41 – probably?

I'm not sure of the dates.

Yeah - yeah. So, let's get back to you in Wales.

Yeah.

So, you were put- you were on trains from Paddington-

Yes.

You, said? And then arriving, where?

Caerau. It's a little mining village in Glamorgan. Very small, very friendly. We were all put in a local hall. They gave us orange juice and then people chose. “I'll have that child”, “I'll have that child”. And the family that took me, tell me- I was the last one chosen, because they thought I was mentally deficient. Because I didn't speak English. And I was really lucky. I mean, really lovely family.

Who were they? Tell us about them.

They were the Morgans – Jim and Irene Morgan. He had been a miner. He had had silicosis, and so now he collected insurance, had a bit of a pension from the mining industry. They had three children. Megan was seventeen. She was already going out with her boyfriend Doug, whom she later married. Mildred was ten; I thought she was really old. I was five by then. And Teddy was four. I played with Teddy.

So you really came into the family.

Yes!

[0:27:18]

And how did they treat you?

Wonderfully. They wrote to my mother and said, “We will treat her as our own.” And they did. And I'm still in touch with the- I mean, they came to my wedding later. We've always been in touch. I- I can't speak too highly of the generosity and the kindness. And it wasn't a rich family. Life was hard in those- it was after the- the 30s and all the trouble- financial troubles of Wales, and, you know, couldn't have been nicer.

And somehow you started learning English.

At school, I presume. I went to the local school and I learned- I actually came- learned it. I sang in an Eisteddfod, I’m told. And I don't remember that. And I certainly - when I finally left Wales - came back with a Welsh accent to my parents… [Bea laughs] which I've lost.

But when you were with them, did you have a clear conscience that your mother- I mean, not conscience- were you aware that your mother was in London and that you were in a foster family? Or…?

I don't know what I was aware of. I- I feel very ashamed now that my father at one point, came to visit me. And I clung to Auntie Irene. And he was really hurt, you know. So, I think I had adapted ‘horribly’ well. I'm sure my parents hadn't.

Yes, but you were a child, so-

Mnn.

So, in that time, tell us a little bit about school and your life there in Wales.

Okay- I don’t remember much about school. We went out of the house, turned left down the road, turn left into the local school, which has since been- burned down. I must have learned to read and write. I certainly learned to read because I was beginning to read. I played with Teddy. On Sundays, the eldest daughter, Megan had her boyfriend come round. He was allowed to come to tea. And a little train set was set out in the room and Teddy and I played under their feet with the train set. And I think we were chaperoning them, but I don't think we realised that, and I bet they were not pleased at all. We went and played in the local park. We called it “the Rec”. I sometimes went with Uncle Jim on walks up the hill to collect insurance. I- what did I do? I was sent to Sunday school. I won a prize about missionaries in Madagascar. On Saturdays we went to Saturday morning pictures in Maesteg, which was the nearest town. You know, *Roy Rogers* and what have you. And we would buy fish and chips on the way home in newspapers - a special treat. I don't remember much else, no.

[0:30:28]

And the other children? How did they manage? Were there children who were terribly homesick?

I don't know. I was so embedded in the family that it became my family and I wasn't aware of other children. Must have been. Yes. Maybe once-

They provided the home for you.

Oh, definitely. Definitely.

So, it must have been quite hard to leave from there.

Probably. Well, I had to go to a new foster home then.

And do you remember correspondence? You didn't see your mother in that time?

No, not at all.

Was there any correspondence or letters, or…?

I haven't got any. I don't remember. There must have been. If she wrote to Auntie Irene, she must have written to me too. I don't remember.

And how long did you stay there?

Must have been about a year and a half. Give or take.

And what happened next?

I- well, my parents were now in Sonning - together. My father had been released from the Isle of Man. They were both working in this rather posh house and just around the corner was another posh house where I was put. They couldn't have me in their house because they already had two London evacuees there. So, I was put in this house with another family, the Lonsdale family. Mr. Lonsdale had one arm. He had lost it in the First World War, the other arm. He was a teacher at a local grammar school of Latin or French. He was very nice to me, but he had a terrific temper. It frightened me no end when he would shout. Aunty Lonsdale, his wife, was French. Really kind, gentle, lovely. They had a daughter called Joan who was good at ballet. I think she went to the Royal Ballet School later. She was quite a moody girl. She taught me ballet positions. She was- [coughs] I must have been seven then, she was ten. Sorry. And they had a servant who I think must have been an old family retainer of some sort, Miss Hatchard - we called her Hatchie - who had a little brick house in the garden. And Hatchie was the one who really looked after me. And I went to the local village school. Joan went to a rather posh school in Reading called The Abbey but I didn't.

[0:32:56]

And I did quite well. But then I got rheumatic fever, and I was- missed quite a lot of school with rheumatic fever. That was a pain for them, because they hadn't thought they'd have to look after a child who was ill. And thereafter, I had rheumatic fever every year, a recurrence, till I was eighteen, but never as bad as the first time. And I was always told I wasn't allowed

to get out of bed because it would damage your heart. But it never damaged mine and I often hopped out of bed illegally. I was- I was lucky.

So, your parents arranged that placement, or who…?

I don't know who arranged it. Maybe it was the parents, or maybe the people they lived with said that the people just next there- around the corner, they have room in their house. I don't know how it was arranged.

Do you remember were they in touch with any refugee organisations, or…?

Nothing in Sonning, but there was a refugee organisation in Reading, which was organised by the Quakers, not by the *shul*. And they had meetings in some hall which they hired for my- my parents used to go once a week and sometimes they would take me with them. And when I got back, I would be asked what it was like. I was always terrified when he asked me questions, Mr. Lonsdale, you know. He was perfectly nice to me. I shouldn't have been- but his quarrels were mostly with his daughter, I have to say, not with me. So yes, they- there was something in Reading. But I don't know how frequent it was. There was certainly a woman in Reading, a Quaker, who did an awful lot for the refugees then. And later, when I lived in Reading invited people to her rather posh house. She was called Miss Wallace. I have looked her up on the net. I've never been able to find who she was. Really lovely person. Unmarried, middle-aged lady with a very nice house and a beautiful garden. But she really organised the Quakers to do things an awful lot. Yes.

[0:35:08]

So, was it then on Sundays that you saw your parents? Because they had-

I presume so. I don't know.

And go to the Quaker meetings to- to do what?

It wasn't going to a Quaker meeting. It was the hall was made available for refugees to meet other refugees-

Right.

… in the Reading area. No, no, we weren't- they weren't trying to make us Quakers.

Right. They really facilitated-

That's right.

So, it was more like providing a network for-

Yeah, definitely.

And your parents went there.

Yes.

And you went there as well.

Occasionally.

And do you remember leaving Wales? I mean, that must have been-

No, I don't remember leaving Wales at all. It's a complete- one block is Wales and the next block is Sonning.

Right. But you said you continued to be in touch with the- with your family?

[0:35:50]

Yes. Yes. Always.

Yeah. So, it's like two separate-

Yes.

...memories are there, at that time.

Yes. I did go back to Wales, though, sometimes for a week or a holiday or something, later in- when I was allowed to travel by myself on the train. But- you know- so yes, we've always been in touch with them.

Again, as a child, you must have thought you'd be taken away from your family in some way-

Probably.

When you had one and a half years there.

Well, I was bounced around a lot, but not as much as many other children. I mean, even English children in the war. And when I look at Kindertransport, no comparison.

Yeah - yeah. And tell us a little bit about- your father was interned, so-

Yes.

You probably didn't know much at the time. But what- what happened to him?

Well, when he was taken away, I was already in Wales, so I don't know about that. I only know what he has told me since. He has always said it was a doddle compared with Sachsenhausen. He said there were English lessons. He said there were concerts. There were people like- what is that famous string quartet? They were there.

Amadeus.

Amadeus. All three of them, I think, were there. [Marjan] Rawicz and [Walter] Landauer, who we later used to hear on the radio. They- there were artists there. I- I think he just

resented being thought of as an “enemy alien”, which is what was on his passport, because he felt he wasn't an enemy of England. But he didn't say he was badly treated there anything. Of course, he worried what was happening to his wife and me!

Yes.

But no, he hadn’t- the- the complaint was that he was taken there, not how he was treated there.

Right. And, where was he?

[0:37:45]

Douglas.

On the Isle of Man?

Yes.

So, he met lots of artists and musicians.

Yes.

And among them he met [artist, Kurt] Schwitters?

Yes, he did. He met Schwitters, among others. Yes.

And do you know how long he – stayed?

I think he can only have been a year but I don't know because I was away all that time. So I'm not sure exactly when he went and I'm not sure exactly when he came back. All I know is, when I went, he was still with us. So, he must have left after. And when I came back to Sonning, he was already back in Sonning.

And, you know, he visited you in Wales.

He visited- yes. And I know he had visited me in Wales and that must mean presumably that he was already free. But I- if you ask me which month or which- I wouldn't know when.

He was then released and managed to get to Sonning.

Yeah.

Yeah - okay. And did he talk about that time a lot, or…?

Not a lot. No. No.

Did he make friends there who he stayed in touch with later?

The Isle of- no, I don't think he did. No, I don't think so. Occasionally he'd meet people and they'd say, “Oh, we were there.” And he’d say, “Oh, well, I was there.” And they’d say, “Oh, well,” and it wasn't always the same time or the same place. No, not really. No.

So, by the time you were in your second family-

Yeah.

... were you aware then of being a refugee or your parents being refugees?

Oh, yes. By then I was - completely.

So, tell us about that.

Well, you see, I was speaking perfectly good English. I had lost my German accent. It was the war. We were advised- everyone was advised not to speak German in public in the war. And so, I was ashamed of having German-speaking parents. I'm sure this is a very common

story that you've heard from lots of people. And I forgot my German because I wasn't living with my parents, I heard English all day at school and at home. My parents, obeying the rules, spoke to me in English - very accented English, but still English. And then, and for many years, I just wanted to be normal. I wanted to be English. I didn't want to have anything to do with being somebody who was different, despised - what have you. I'm a bit ashamed of that, but that's how it was.

[0:40:40]

And how did that manifest itself?

Um, difficult to say, because they didn't speak German in public, even afterwards. It was- it must have made a gap between me and them. I was very close to my mother, actually. I think I would have forgiven her a German accent or anything. She was a really nice person. But no- I think it had more of an effect on me as a person, that I wasn't at ease with myself. And it must have seemed to them, and they did their very, very best for me, that I was quite ungrateful in lots of ways. And I was.

Well, you- you had to adapt- you were adapting yourself to the situation.

I certainly forgot most of my German.

Right.

I could hear things and understand things. And now if I speak German, which I re-learned, partly in the Sixth Form, partly doing a job in Switzerland, I still have the German that is chatty German with a reasonably good accent but no grammar, no spelling, can't read, can't do any- you know.

But you heard it?

I heard it. It was there inside me and, you know. And I still- when I went to Switzerland later I remembered a lot of the German songs that my parents had sung when I was little and things, you know.

And by that time, when you re-met your parents, how- and your father had come out of internment, how were they coping? I mean-

[0:42:26]

I think they found it very hard. They hadn't been used to being servants. They had been used to being the servant-owning classes, you know, very middle class and what have you. And what on earth was my father doing? He was called a “butler”. Well, who needed a butler in the war? Can't have been an important- it was all rubbish. And my mother's cooking – well. [laughs]

If she was cooking, what was she…?

Well, she knew German recipes and things. And there was rationing and what have you. I’ve no idea. She was ever so well meaning and they probably liked her. But they- it wasn't probably the sort of thing they were used to.

But they kept them.

They were kept there until they were allowed to have other jobs, which happened at some point… difficult to know when – ‘43 maybe, ’44? I don't know. At some point later in the war, the conditions of their staying in England must have been changed, because they both left and went to work in Reading - together.

And in that time, what happened to you?

When they went to Reading, we rented a- a room for them and a tiny bedroom for me - two rooms - in a house from some, I think they were Viennese refugees, in Reading. My room was tiny, tiny, and their room upstairs in the attic, we- had their big double bed in, it had our

eating table in, it had their trunks in. It had- it was our “everything else” room. And there we stayed for eight years. And it was when I was eight that I went to Reading till fourteen. Yeah. We stayed in that house for eight years. My mother had to fit in with the owner of the house. Cooking when the owner wasn't cooking, and- fitting it in with her working hours - dreadful for them.

Who was the owner?

The owner- they were called the Heinisches. I think they were refugees. I think he'd been a lawyer in Vienna, but I'm not sure if it was Vienna. And she was a very frightened little lady. She had a grown-up- a son who was- Heinz - reading chemistry at Reading University. Dr. Heinisch couldn't do law in England because – German, Viennese law, obviously different. He was very lordly. I was quite frightened of him and I mean I -think she was too – honest- to be honest. They weren’t- she was a nice little lady, but she didn't work. So, they must have had enough money either to rent or buy the house. It's a very funny thing- may I add something here? Next door was a professor at Reading University, Professor Hodges. And they had a baby called Wilfred. And I used to- they advised my parents which school to send me to- which elementary school to send me to. So, they were very nice. And I remember Mrs. Hodges very well, I don't remember Professor Hodges. About five years ago, I saw a Gresham Lecture in London; there was a Professor Wilfred Hodges doing a talk on maths and music. So, I went up to him, and I said, “Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?” And he said, “No.” “Were you brought up in Reading?” “Yes.” “Were you brought up in Mansfield Road?”

[0:45:55]

“Yes. How do you know?” “I lived next door. I remember you in your pram.” He was a retired professor by then. “No, no. The Heinisches lived next door,” he said, “No, no,” I said, “We had a flat- we rented a room from the Heinisches.” So that's quite funny.

Yeah.

You know. I haven't been in touch with him since, but-

So, you were the lodgers.

Oh, definitely the lodgers. And we had to fit in with their times, although they didn't work and my parents both did. So, it was not easy for my mother, particularly, who did the cooking. Men didn't do much cooking in those days.

No. And eight years, is quite a long time.

It was a long time.

And were you happy to leave the second family, the foster family, to move in with your parents?

I don’t remember. Don’t remember.

You just did it.

Yeah.

And you were still young.

I was eight when I started going to school in Reading. Yep.

So, another change- so then you changed school.

Yeah.

And went to the-

Local- it was not the nearest elementary school, cause Professor Hodges said, “Battle [primary school] is better than that.” Though actually, recently, I saw that it had been in failing- a failing school. It wasn't a failing school then.

And then you adapted yourself-

Oh, yes!

... to this new situation?

Yes. Had to. Parents working.

Yeah. So, what- what jobs did your parents do at that time?

[0:47:20]

Okay. My father worked in the biscuit factory, Huntley and Palmer's. It meant we could get broken biscuits sometimes. And I went to their Christmas parties. And opposite Huntley and Palmer's was a dolls' hospital. And when my doll Erika's arms came off, she used to go there - quite regularly. And my mother worked in a local haberdashery school- a shop in Reading called Jackson's which existed till about three years- two, three years ago and then closed. And she was a shop assistant.

And who took care of you then? Did they manage…?

I, I had look after myself. I came home from school. It was a shed in the garden. I would sit in the shed mostly. I organised a couple of metal bars, so if somebody banged them, I'd know. I made it my little den. It was only a tiny little shed a quarter of the size of this room, I would say. And I would sit and read. My mother would leave me a tea in a tin- a round tin. And nobody would be- I would be by myself till somebody came home. Sometimes I went across the road. There was really nice English family there, who let me read their daughter's books. And sometimes I went down the other end of the road where there was a hostel for Kindertransport. We didn't call them that then. But it was run by two women. Sophie and- what was the other one called? Sophie Friedländer, and I've got- they're quite well known. And they- I used to go there, and they were all vegetarian and I didn't actually that- much like going there. And they would make us listen to Beethoven records- 78-s. I was not interested

and they were quite strict. Can’t remember their names- Hilda [Jarecki] – and Sophie. That's their name. And one was much stricter than the other and I can't remember which was which.

Hilda and Sophie…?

One was called Friedländer.

Friedländer.

And one lived till she was 100 or something and died not long ago and it was in *The Guardian,* her obituary. So occasionally I went there, but mostly I was just in my little thing, or occasionally if I- if Mrs. Heinisch let me in the house, I'd go up and listen to Children's Hour on the radio- on the wireless, we called it then, not the radio.

[0:50:00]

So, you were not allowed to be in the house without your parents, or…?

I'm not sure. Because I must- I have this sharp memory of being in the shed for- a lot. But sometimes I must have been allowed in the house. I don't know. And I must have been allowed in the house because I occasionally read books that I was not allowed to, that were my parents’ books, and they would have been in the house. So, I mean, I remember- what was that Gollancz leaflet? “Nowhere to hide their heads” that was published at the end of the war, which my parents hid. And I found it and I read it and I- absolutely terrified. So, I must have been allowed in the house sometimes. Yes. I don't- I don’t know how it worked. But certainly, my parents- nobody was home till six. I was a latchkey child if that's what you call- yeah.

What was that leaflet? What was that? What you just mentioned?

Latchkey child?

No, no, no, the- what you read. What you were not supposed to read.

Oh, book?

Yes.

It was this this yellow pamphlet about concentration camps, “Nowhere to lay their heads” was the title. [“Let My People Go”, subtitle, “Some practical proposals for dealing with Hitler’s Massacre of the Jews”, pamphlet publ. early 1943 by Victor Gollancz in which he predicted that unless action was taken, six million Jews would be killed] I'm sure you can find it on the net. And I- I read that in great detail. I read a lot. I mean mostly Enid Blyton and some- but not only.

What were you reading?

I- I was a great reader.

What were you reading?

School stories, Enid Blyton, classical children's books, Dickens by the age I was ten. No, I was a reader. It was the one thing I could do. And all the way through school, I saw all my marks for reading and writing stories were much, much better than my marks on anything else – noticeably.

So that helped you-

Oh, yes.

…in the- in the situation. But not German books because you-

Not German.

Didn’t have them and didn’t speak the language either.

Didn't speak the language. Didn't want to speak the language. And my- there were very few German books. My parents hadn't brought lots of things with them. So, no.

No.

No.

But you had your doll.

Oh, Erika?

Yes.

I still have a photo of her. I only ditched her six years ago, when we downsized, I kept her dress. And I have- I took two photos of her, and I've got them on the net.

But you gave her away?

[0:52:18]

Well, I threw her-

Had to go?

Well, my daughter said afterwards, “Why did you do that? I said, “We had to get rid of things, Deborah!” We had a bigger house. A bad decision.

But you kept her until then?

Yes, always. I also had an English doll, which I called Margaret Rose. Shows how English I’d become. I didn't like her as much though. Erika was the one.

Aha. So, you had a German and an English doll, so to speak. And did they get on? [both laugh]

We had dolls' tea parties. I know that! [laughs]

Yeah. So the other question I want to ask, you said you had contact with the Quakers. Did you have any contact with the Jewish community in Reading?

Yes. Not very friendly. My parents sent me- first they sent me to a Mr. Wolff because they thought I ought to learn about my Jewish background. And he taught me my Hebrew letters. And then I went to Hebrew classes - *cheder*. And I went very reluctantly. And they taught me to read again, but they didn't teach us to understand a word. So, my reading improved from- I think it was four and a quarter out of ten to about nine out of ten. I can't remember. I hadn't a clue what I was doing. The children who came from *frum* English Jewish families were mostly- well, they- they were mostly more religious and they had these things at home that I didn't have. So maybe it meant more to them, but I don't think it did that much. And if you got something wrong, he would sort of pinch your ear. So, I didn't really enjoy- 'joy that. What I did enjoy, I played football with the boys at halftime. I was a very un-gamesy child, so my family think that's really funny that I played football with the boys. And at some point, because of that, and the other girls were getting boy-conscious and I was a bit slow on the uptake, they voted me the most popular girl in the Hebrew classes. But it was only- but my parents also didn't find the Reading congregation, which was a United synagogue I think, very easy. They said if you went to meetings, people would stand up and say things like, "I am donating so much money to the cause." My parents didn't have the money to donate. They were desperately saving, hoping to buy a house sometime. They didn't have money from Germany at that point. You know, they had nothing. They'd come with - what was it - ten bob each? And they just felt they were looked down on. And in a way they were, but they were also looked down on not because of the money and the social thing, but also because they weren't as *frum*. It works both ways. So, I saw the other side of it later, when I was older, and I married my husband who came from that United synagogue background. Though he had got himself taught Hebrew properly, I mean, his *Ivrit* is really good. Because he was, you know - that interested him. But I saw that background again later when I got engaged. But by then I was older and could cope, you know. It caused a bit of hassle I have to say. Even when we

were engaged, the two families were so different, and neither was terribly happy with engagement. But look, we've been married nearly sixty-one years. And we still get on - most of the time.

[0:55:48]

Yeah. But- so, your parents- the synagogue wasn't something they-

No, and we had a JNF [Jewish National Fund] box and they would come and op- empty it every now and then. It was always embarrassing, because we hadn't put enough in it; we didn't have enough to put in it. You know - awkward.

What other support, apart from the Quaker? Did they get any other support or…?

I don’t think so. Don’t think so. They just had to work.

Yes, but they- their English-?

Their English improved a lot. They never lost their accents, but they- I mean, they read English novels and things. My mother was used to be asked in the shop how to spell English words by the English girls who were there, which really shook her. You know. No, their English got quite good. Occasionally, when they were very old, they jumbled between the two languages, but not then. No.

And did they have other refugee friends?

Oh, lots. Yes, yes. They had met a lot of these people at this Quaker centre and they stayed friendly with them all the time. The Reading refugees were all- all knew each other, and – yes.

That was a sort of group of friends they all had. And some had come with more money, so some of the wives didn't need to work like my mother. Some had come out early or some

had- had some arrangement or some had careers that they could follow. But it didn't seem to make any difference. No, no.

And then you finished your primary school?

Yeah.

And what happened next?

[0:57:30]

Well, it was the very first year of the 11-plus, and I went into the local grammar school, which had been a paying school till then, but that year- from then on, hasn't been. And I was dead lucky. I mean, you know, because now- a few years ago, I used to go to- my husband worked at the College of Surgeons, and I used to go to their dinners. And people would say, "Where were you brought up?" "Reading." "Where did you go to school?" "Kendrick." "How did you get in there?!" Because now people move to get into the district and what have you. But then, it was just the 11-plus, which I did at ten. But it was, you know-

And you enjoyed it?

Oh, yes. They were very good to me - very kind.

And, what- your interest was English, or?

I liked English. I liked history. I liked French. I was an arts person. I wasn't, you know- not- not maths, and so on. I could do them, but I wasn't interested.

And you were still in Reading the whole time, so…?

I was in Reading the whole time from then, so since then my life has been much more stable.

And at that point, did you have friends who had a similar background, or friends whose parents were in fact refugees?

Mostly, I didn't. There was a girl in the hostel at the end of the road, Daisy Bendiner. She was in my class at school. We were quite friendly, but she wasn't one of my friends as such. And I always felt- they- I knew that they were suffering more than me. In a way I felt I was the refugee, and what? You know, they were getting more sympathy and- it was horrible of me. I can't put my finger on it. And there was a little girl at school who arrived at the end of the war, who had been hidden in Belgium. She was a fat little girl called Herta Scher. And I was told to look out for her. And I tried to be nice to her, but again- my aim was to be as English as possible. And so I had English friends –

Yeah.

… more than that. Yes. I'm afraid.

And what sort of- you said there was this hostel. What was it exactly? What…?

It dealt with children who had no parents in England. And it dealt with them from the age of about eight to fifteen, sixteen. You can look it up. I'm sure you can find details of this hostel. And it really- quite strict. They were a bit like what I think Germans must have been in the 30s. *Wandervögel* and vegetarian, and they played recorders.

[1:00:36]

So-

Awful, I thought. I play recorder now with pleasure with friends, but that's another matter. I chose. It wasn't – you know. It was like a sort of picture of a cer- certain type of German in the 30s - I think.

Yes. And when was it started, this school?

I don't know when it- the hostel.

The hostel.

No, I don't know when it was started because when I went there, I think it was already there.

Aha. And did they take also children post-war, so people who were in hiding or survived- young child survivors?

I don't know the details. I only really knew Daisy from that place. I probably knew other people, but I didn't- don't remember them at all. No.

But it wasn't a place you really particular wanted to go to?

It's very clear my memory what it was like being there. And sometimes it was nice, but sometimes I felt - peculiar.

Yeah. I understand. And could you get away- I mean, people thought you were English, probably?

Yes.

You had no accent.

That's right. And that causes problems in itself. Because then you sometimes hear things that you wouldn't have heard. I was sent away for holidays sometimes by charities and things. And I know at one point I was sent to Lyme Regis. Lovely. And played with a girl - very nice. And one day the father- who had heard I was a German refugee- said to me, “Hitler should have finished those Jews off.” Now, he'd obviously thought I was German and not – yes? And I must have been ten, twelve, something like that. I don't remember. And I was so upset. And I know I got in touch with my father and I got them to- and I said, and I honestly now don't know if it's true, that my rheumatic fever was flaring up again. And my father came from London and took me back in a taxi. Terribly expensive for him. Now, I cannot

remember if I lied about it, but I knew I wanted to get out of that place if somebody was like that, yes? Now, at that point I was speaking English was absolutely no German accent, so somebody must have told him “German”. I don't know the ins and outs of it. But, you know, I can visualise the situation. I can remember the place completely and I remember my complete horror. And it must have been after I knew about concentration camps and things, because otherwise I wouldn't have felt quite so- you know?

Yeah. And did your family lose many family members?

[1:03:21]

My mother's family were reasonably lucky. They were, I think, more professional, more middle class. She had a cousin who went to the States and sang in the New- in the Met. She had a distant cousin who was a philosopher who went to the States. What was his name? Honestly, I can't even remember now. This is ridiculous. He's written a book that Will’s got somewhere around the house. And he came to England. He’s terribly well known. A German friend of mine, a Christian friend of mine, was really impressed when I said I was- he was a friend, a cousin of-

Who was it? We’ll find out.

I- I- it's my age. Words slide every now and then - sorry.

Don’t worry.

Another member of my family- and I don't know how close, went to Israel- and he was in *Hapoel, Mapam* and he became the speaker there. So generally, most of them got out. My father, it was different. He had an elder brother who went to the States, Leo, who had a son Ernest who was in the American Army. And I met him when he came over to Europe. He had three sisters he lost in Germany who could not get out. I'm not sure which order they were. There was Annie, and I don't know what happened to Annie. I have looked her up on the net and you know, all these things. I've never been able to trace Annie. There was Grete - Margarete Lubinski. She died in Auschwitz. There was Elsa, his favourite sister, who was

just a year older- two years, a year - just older than him. He- when he was twelve, he had to take these sisters to dances and escort them. Leo was considered unreliable, and my father **'H'**, as he was called, was considered, at twelve, a good chaperone for these three sisters. Anyway, Elsa married and had two sons, Harry- Heini- now called later called Harry in England, and Gerdi. Gerdi was blind. I'm told he was terribly good at maths and if you gave him a date, he could say what- if it was a Tuesday, whether it was twenty years, for or behind or something. And he- his life and mine overlapped, but I was only a baby so I don't remember him and he died. Nobody knows why he died or what happened but he died well before the war. Right. Her husband committed suicide. My parents have always wondered if it was in order to get insurance for her and the other child, but they never knew. She married again. And she and her husband were deported to Riga. And that's the last we know of them. So, three sisters he lost. Yes.

[1:06:28]

But the child? The son?

The child who survived, Harry, came to England, was in the British Army. He married an English girl, Lily. They had two daughters. I exchange Christmas cards with them. They don't want to meet - fair enough. I have met them when they were little girls, but they're not interested now. Okay. So, they live down in Kent.

Did he come on the Kindertransport, or how did he…?

I don't know how Harry came. He would have been- he must have been ten years older than me, so if I was four, he was fourteen. I don't know how he came, because he certainly didn't come with his parents because they were both deported. I don't know how.

And he hasn't been in touch?

Well, he's long dead now.

No, but after the war.

He- oh yes! He was in touch. He- he came- he was at my wedding. I met- I met the little girls when they were little. He went to my parents' golden wedding. Yeah, yes! But then they seemed to lose contact. And the one in the States, Ernest, who came to stay with us after the war, I don't think my father liked him at all. His hands shook. And my father thought Ernest was on drugs. He drank a lot. He spent a lot of money. He borrowed money from my father, who would ill afford it in 1945-six. Didn't pay it back. My father never told his brother about this. We never saw him again. And I have looked up death records in the States. And he might well- I think he died. He would have also been about ten years older than me. I don't know what happened. But my father was very cautious about what he told his brother. He really, you know, but- I don't know. And he was very racist. He wouldn't sit next to a- black person on the bus. I don't think we used the word 'racist' then. There weren't many black people in England. And I remember being on the bus with Ernest and being completely amazed that somebody would say, "I can't sit there. There's a black person." You know, it just hadn't struck me. Now I would be shocked. But then I was more amazed.

[1:08:40]

At what happened to your mother's mother? She also survived.

My mother's mother was got to Sweden, and stayed with the family members of my uncle Gerda- Gerda and my Auntie Gerda's wife- my uncle Alfons's wife, Gerda, her brothers and sisters. She stayed there. My mother never saw her again. She died just before the end of the war, I think, somewhere around then. And I think she was looked after. But it must be really awful to go- to have to start in a new land. To lose your home, to lose all your grandchildren, to lose all your- never see any of your children. Yes? So, she was perfectly safe. She is buried in Malmö. I went to see the- I did a crash course in Danish when I was at university. And I was in Copenhagen and I went to Malmö to find the grave. And I did find it. But that's all I know, really. I'm comparatively lucky. But it's only what you compare with, isn't it?

Yeah. Yeah. But you said you did find out about concentration camps after the war?

Even before the end of the war, because Belsen was found even before the end of the war and this thing would have come out then. Yes, yes.

And it was something you were interested in, or you- you?

How could you not?

Your parents?

Of course. And it haunted my father all his life. No doubt about it.

[1:10:10]

And you were aware that there was family affected? I mean, you…?

Oh, yes. Yeah. Oh, yes.

And how did it haunt- it affected him – when he lost…?

He had terribly bad headaches. He could get very depressed. He was- by nature, he was a very outgoing, cheerful person, who liked playing *Skat* [popular German card game] with his friends, and you know, but-- and it must have been very difficult for him that I wanted to be so English and was so cutting myself off from all this stuff, I supp- yes? And, not always easy for my mother, who was very gentle. And of course, her family having survived she didn't have the same- she felt bad for him, that he had lost so much compared with her. Yeah.

So, what happened to you and your family, post-war, then?

Well, not very much. My father went- left Huntley and Palmer’s and he went to work for the AJR in Compayne- Compayne Gardens. I think he must have worked at a clerical thing. I don't know what he did. He used to take me occasionally, when I had school holidays, I used to sit there and read in the office. And he would take me to lunch at- was it The Dorice or something? Occasionally- it was quite an expensive thing for us to do. And I’d go swimming.

There was a swimming pool in Finch- by- outdoor swimming pool there at that time. Not in "The Dorice" just- in that area. And- and there was- he- he liked the atmosphere there; it was so Continental. It was so different from Huntley and Palmer's. [coughs] Sorry.

How did he get to the AJR, I mean, how?

By train. He took an early morning train. If they went before a certain time, they were quite- comparatively cheap. But it was the workman's train or something.

No, I meant how, how was the job? Did he have any contacts?

[1:12:22]

I don't know. I had no idea how he heard about it. No idea. No.

And what- who- who was there at the AJR at the time?

Well, I remember a Mrs. Strauss who made wonderful Continental cheesecakes which nobody had in England in those days. I don't remember the other people really. I remember the offices being full of bits and pieces they were collecting, in order to sell to make money to help people who needed things.

What were they collecting? Yes, you mentioned-

Well, they had lots of books, magazines, I remember getting old copies of Vogue from them which helped me to draw no end. Draw badly - but still, I enjoyed them. Neglected clothes. They gave things out to people who needed them, but they also tried to sell things for money to give to people. I didn't really know what they were, to be honest. I knew they were an organisation that helped Jews, refugee Jews. And that's all I really knew. I don't know- no, I don't remember more about them.

But your father was happy there, in that environment?

Yes, he was, but he- then he moved from it. So maybe he got a - a job that had more money, I don't know. Yes, because he then he moved from there to Tretol, which was a paint factory in Slough, where he was a dispatch clerk. I remember that's the title. And there he stayed till he retired. But I don't know- if AJR was changing its working practices and becoming a- more a magazine and not- didn't need so many people, or whether the journey was less to Slough, which it was, or whether there was more money. I don't know what informed the decision.

But when you came to visit, were you aware that suddenly this, you know, there must have been more refugees?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. My uncle Kurt. My mother’s sister Rita had married Kurt, who was a publisher. Yes. In Germany. And he brought [Erich] Kästner with him, and people like that. He had a flat. His son, Tom, became a very famous publisher later, Tom Maschler. Have you heard of Maschler? He started the- what's this fiction prize called? The big fiction prize. Oh, goodness me- the-

Booker Prize?

Yes. Tom started the Booker Prize and he ran Jonathan Cape for a long time. You know. So, they lived in Compayne Gardens. Though his parents got divorced and at some point, Tom lived with us later. But anyway, my Aunt Rita, when they were divorced, lived in, where did she live in Haver- Haverstock Hill?

Haverstock Hill, yes.

With her second husband, who was, I think, a defrocked French priest. She had lots of friends. She was very outgoing. She had lots of friends, lots of lovers. She sold cards, when- around England, crashing her little car everywhere. So, they were there. There were lots of- lots of German Jewish people in that area. Yes, we knew, and, you know. That's of course why he found it a congenial atmosphere.

Yeah. So different from Reading.

Oh, well, because their friends were refugees in Reading. But the workmates weren't.

[1:15:55]

Right. Right.

So, this gave- yes. Very different.

And your uncle was still in Harrow, the one who worked in the-

He was- stayed in Harrow all his life. Yes. I had friends, as I say, when I came to live in Harrow later, and I made friends, I had several friends who were his patients.

Right – right. And your mother at the time, what did she do then, post-war?

Well, she was working first in this one shop, Jackson's, and then she went to work- maybe about the same time as he went to Tretol… at some point, she went to work in a department store, Wellsteed's, where she sold in the coat department. They had commission. And in those days, sometimes she would nearly sell a coat and then the person in charge would come and say, "I'll take over this sale" and get the commission, which ev- annoyed her somewhat. They were never allowed to sit down even if there were no customers in the shop. It would look bad. So, she was jolly tired. My headmistress used to go in the- she was a GP, a JP in the area as well, and very well-known. And the head of the department would always go and say, "Oh Miss Town- can I serve you?" "No, I want to be served by Mrs. Kiewer", she would say, because she knew we needed the money. [laughs] Very sweet of her, really. But- yeah, so my mother stayed there till she retired.

So, the school were aware of your situation?

[1:17:31]

Oh, very aware.

And did they help you?

They tried. I could have opted out of Christian assemblies. Some Jews did. I didn't. I didn't want to be noticed. I remember a very kind Quaker teacher who taught us RE, saying to me sometimes in RE lessons, “And what is the Jewish position on this?” And I would, “Oooh, leave me alone. Don't ask me.” They tried. And any failure they had, it wasn't theirs, it was mine. No, they couldn't have been nicer. Lots of unmarried women teachers at that time, some had lost fiancées in the two world wars. Married women had only just been allowed to start working anyway, they had always had to give up. There was no equal pay. But my father always said to me, “You don't want to be a teacher, Ruth. You'll never- there are no men there to marry.” And maybe that was also true for them. It was considered quite an unsexy career. And they were mostly nice. They tried. They tried to give us a good grammar school education, no doubt about it. Yeah.

And at the time, what did you think you were going to do later?

I was going to be a journalist. Quite sure. I won various prizes in - *Sporting Record* I won a prize in. Does that exist? I shouldn't think so. I won a prize in the *Daily Express* for a review of a film by Anna Neagle. I was quite scathing about it, and I was invited to London to look around the *Daily Express*, which was still in Fleet Street then. I was quite sure that's what I wanted to do.

And your parents, what did they think you should do, or what…?

They didn't know. They would have liked me to do something very safe. But- they didn’t know.

And post-war, was there any discussion about going elsewhere, or what, at that point?

No. I think by then they were so settled. No, they didn't think of going to Israel. They didn't think of going to the States. Maybe originally, they might have wanted to, but it was never discussed in my hearing. No.

[1:20:00]

And when did they become naturalised?

Forty-seven. [1947]

With you- and you as well?

I was automatically done through them.

You were still under sixteen? – Yeah.

Yeah.

And was that important for them to be British?

Well, it was important, because one, they didn't want anything to do with Germany. And two, it gave them passports. So, it meant that they could, though they couldn't yet afford, but they could go and say, afterwards they went- later to places where they met family members in Merano or they went once to Israel where my mother's brother had settled in Tel Aviv. Yes? Though they couldn't fly there. My mother wouldn't fly. They went Marseilles in a boat, you know. That passport- yes, it did mean a lot to them. And they just didn't want German passports.

What did they feel about Germany at that point?

It was the language they spoke. It was the literature they knew. It was the songs they had liked. There was a definite German background that was part of them. But it was also the cause of so much pain. No. My mother - never went back to Germany. My father went once. He had a cousin who was hidden in the war, a lawyer, hidden by his Christian girlfriend. What do they call them? “Divers” or people. Erich Meyer, he was called. And Erich Meyer, after the war, took up law again and did compensation for people. And later, after Adenauer, he was the one who organised things from my parents to make their life easier. And I know at

the time when my father got a pension, he was asked- he was told, "This pension will be taxed in Germany and also in England. If you take German citizenship again, it won't be taxed in Germany." And he said, "No. Stuff it. I'd rather pay the tax." And he refused. So that- I think that tells you everything.

Yeah.

And he never went back to Germany. So, but of course- you- they couldn't forget all their childhood and all their lives.

[1:22:30]

But what about you? Did you- when- when did you first go?

I first went to Germany- when I was eighteen, I'd got into university but I had some months, and I went and did a job in Switzerland at the - it had been the Odenwaldschule in Germany, but it was called the Ecole d'Humanité in Switzerland, and I-

In- in Geneva?

No, it wasn't in Geneva. It was in Goldau in the- what are those mountains called? Above Lucerne? Honestly-

Oh, don't worry.

It doesn't matter. I've just gone blank. What was the place where- it's just up the hill from Meiringen? Anyway, you know Meiringen from Sherlock Holmes.

Yes.

So, we're- on my way home from there I stopped in Germany to visit a Christian family in Rottweil. My father had worked with this Christian chemist who had worked in Slough in the paint factory. He'd come to England, a Christian, without his family to work there. He was

quite lonely and my father got on quite well with him, which is quite surprising, after the war. Nice man. Bullinger family. And they invited him around and my mother would cook him some German meals. And so, they invited me and I went there. They couldn't have been nicer to me. I felt very odd. I haven't been back until - five or six years ago, we went. And I thought I must lay this ghost. And I do feel very peculiar. It sounds really silly, but I had a tummy upset when I went. And I was whipped off to a hospital, and they put an injection in me and, you know, I sat and thought, what are they injecting me with? And I knew that was stupid. And they said to me, “Your German is very good. Why is that?” And I explained, and they were very embarrassed - very. And they couldn't have been nicer. And for instance, there was one day I got better and we went to Weißensee, and we got on the wrong bus, because the bus timetable- the bus routes had been recently changed. It was pouring with rain. And we kept looking at the map. And the German student opposite us said, “Where do you want to go?” And we- and he said, “No, this bus doesn't go there anymore.” And he got off the bus in the pouring rain with us, to help us. And I'm pretty sure he knew that we were Jewish. It went really well, you know, to go to this- so I can't say anybody treated me, but I felt peculiar. I'm not going back. And I know- people- I feel peculiar. They feel peculiar.

[1:25:28]

We have a very- had a- he's dead now. We had a very good Christian German friend married to an English friend of mine who was in the Hitler Youth when he was in his early teen- early teens. His mother tried to keep him out of it and said he was ill, but- you know. Couldn't have been nicer, lovely, lovely, good person. And he- we got on really well. In fact, to the degree that the night my third child died, and I was in hospital and I called Will to come and join me, Klaus came and looked after our other two children that night. I mean, we trusted him to that degree. And we were right. You know. Last year I was in Kew. I'm a member of Kew, among other things - and I paint there, for pleasure. And some woman came and talked to me - young woman. And I heard the accent. I said, “Oh, where do you come from?” “Oh, Berlin.” And without thinking, I said, “Oh, I was born there.” And she looked at me. And she said, “When did you leave?” And I said, “Thirty-eight” [1938] And she said- and she looked horrified. And I said- explained why, and she- she couldn't have been more apologetic. I think she was a university lecturer somewhere in Berlin. You know, I can't describe how appalled she was. So, I gave her the picture. I thought it was the only thing I could do. I said,

“It wasn't your generation. It wasn't you. You can't- you have to separate.” But when I look at older Germans, not many left now, people who- a gene- my generation or older than my generation, then I can never be quite sure where they stood. Were they- were they- people who kept their heads down in order not to get into trouble? Which I might have done, let's face it. Or were they people who were convinced Nazis? And that you don't know, do you?

No. So on that trip to Berlin did you take your family, or who did you…?

[1:27:36]

No.

No. Just-

I didn't. We went together. My son has been several times to Berlin. He goes for medical conferences. In fact, he is trying to resume German citizenship. I said, “It's up to you, Jonathan.” He knows I wouldn't do it. But he said, “Would you object?” and I said, “No, it's up- your generation has to make their own lives.” I can’t-

But you wouldn't do it for yourself?

Oh no, I couldn't. No. And our daughter, doesn't seem interested one way or the other. But she doesn't travel as much. But - you know. I don’t know.

Yeah, yeah. Well, a lot of people now are getting citizenship.

Well, I mean I understand his views. I agree with him on Brexit and things like that. I think we all have to be friendly. But for myself, I don't go there. It’s funny because I have been to Austria- I- we go to the Alps and- and of course Austria is- I don't- I don't know why I make the- it's inconsistent. I know.

Yeah. But you feel okay going to Austria - for you?

Well, will I in future? I don't know now, so. But we go to the mountains. We don't-

Yeah. But you went to this Odenwaldschule, which was…?

It was called the Odenwaldschule. But it was the Ecole d'Humanité with Paulus Geheeb and Edith, who ran it.

What was his name?

Paulus Geheeb. You can look him up on the net. Wonderful long beard, knickerbockers - the lot.

Yeah. Because I tell you, we interviewed somebody who came to this Odenwaldschule and had lots of paintings. She's a painter called Milein Cosman.

I know her work. She was married to Hans Keller.

So, she went to the Odenwaldschule.

Yes, she did. I know. I saw that. I went to look at her exhibition at the Austrian Embassy. And I love her drawings. Yes, yes. Cause I like doing portraits so I looked- yeah – yeah.

And I think she had definitely one drawing of Paul Geheeb.

She might- may have.

At least one.

I've got photos of him.

She talked about the beard and- so that was that school.

Well, when I was there, Edwin Fischer came and played the piano there. He had letters from Rabindranath Tagore. And the person that I most remember was Mrs. Gandhi. And she came and for that summer I was there, Rajiv and Sanjay Gandhi were there, and I was put in charge of them both because I spoke English. Of course, they're both dead, poor things.

And what were you doing there? Just as a…?

[1:30:08]

I was teaching English. They had *Helferin* and *Mitarbeiter [helpers and staff member]*. I can't remember which was which but I was the one that was posher, and we were not supposed to talk too much to the others. A lot of rubbish, really. *Helferin*- and I think I was called a *Mitarbeiter* rather than a *Helferin*. So, I taught English. Kids could choose their own subjects. For- each morning they did three subjects, they could choose them for three months and if you didn't do any maths for the whole of your life, nobody cared.

So, it was still a sort of progressive school?

Very progressive! It was quite a change from an English grammar school. [laughs]

Yeah – yeah. And then when you came back what- what did you do?

I went to Oxford.

To study…?

Well English literature originally, but I decided, because I got much more interested in English language, so I did philology and Anglo Saxon and Old Norse and I did nothing later than 1400.

And enjoyed it?

Oh, yes.

And which college- where did you go?

St. Anne’s. And that's where I met my husband. Not at St. Anne’s – at Oxford.

Yes – yes. And did the undergraduate-

Yeah.

… study there. And was that a good time for you, for…?

Oh, yes! Lovely.

And at a women's college you were in a-

All the colleges were single sex in those days. Yes.

Yes.

So, I'm quite- I was quite pleased when two generations later my granddaughter went to Oxford too.

So that- you had the English experience there.

Oh, yeah. By then it didn't seem to matter what I was. I had come to terms with it all. And my friends were quite posh. I mean, they'd all been to boarding school. I was the only state school person at that time, in my group of friends, which didn't seem to matter. We all got on terribly well and, you know. I think I’d grown out of being a refugee. Well not- it doesn't hurt me, is what I mean. It's part of me, but it's-

So, when did that change, in your upbringing? Or at what point- do you remember, was there at some point that you thought…?

[1:32:28]

I think it changed near the end of Oxford. Because even at the beginning, my tutor said to me, “Miss Kewie,” - that's what they called me at school – “I see you have German background.” She spoke German very well. “Would you like me to call you Kiewer, as it is?” And I- I was still embarrassed. And that was in my very first tutorial. And I was still embarrassed, but by the end I’d come to terms with it. I thought, what the hell?

Oh, I see. So, the Kiewer they pronounced?

My school had always pronounced it “Kewie”…“Kiwi”.

But your first name obviously was… could be English.

Ruth?

Yes.

Yes. But I kept jolly quiet about the ‘Alexa’. Now, of course… [Bea laughs] We bought a new radio this- last week. And they said, “And if you buy this one, you can have an Alexa.” And I said, “No, we don't want any more Alexas in our house.” [laughing] Why, I didn’t explain. I thought it was too foreign when I was a child.

Yeah. But in that Oxford time you- you think you accepted…?

I think so. I met other people who had similar backgrounds and, you know, it's all- it all fell into place. It wasn't a problem anymore.

You broadened your horizons, in a way.

Yes. I was quite spoiled, wasn't I? Let's face it.

So, tell us a little bit about your husband and how you met.

It was- I think it was the Israel group.

Aha?

And I hate to tell you this, but I've been thinking it out. I- I was quite interested in boys obviously by then. And I liked quite a lot of boys. But I was also thinking quite seriously of marriage. Because girls did. It was *the* thing. I mean, they don't think of it as much now as young not- not educated girls. They want careers first – you know. But we- it mattered. And I didn't want to marry someone who wasn't Jewish, and that I knew, because I thought he'd turn around in a quarrel and call me a dirty Jew. And that was in my mind. And I, I've written this in what I've been writing. And I said to my daughter, this is what I wrote. And she said, "I'm not sure you're right, Mum. I think Jonathan and I both probably had these thoughts a little bit, but not as much as you, obviously." She married an English Yorkshireman. And he married a Kenyan Asian. You know. But- so that was in my mind. So, I was looking at- more at the Israel group. Anyway, I went to this and I met Will. And I went back and I said, "I've met someone I could marry." And- and I don't know what Will thought, but he offered to teach me Ivrit. So, we both had ulterior motives. But I don't think his was marriage one bit. And the first time he took me out, he took me to the cinema. After the lesson he kissed me goodnight. And I said, "What sort of girl do you think I am?" Because in those days one- waited six weeks before he kissed me again. So, after that, we went out, yeah, regularly. He was reading history. He's been at St. Paul's. He was sort of, you know- but he- he would have liked to go to Israel. And I didn't really want to. I didn't want to be mucked about and I was frightened of war anyway. So, I mucked his life up a bit. Yeah.

[1:35:58]

But you went to the sort of society- so you were looking for something Jewish?

Oh, definitely. Definitely. Definitely. That's- I mean, there were plenty of other handsome young men. I remember working in the magazine *Charwell*. And Michael Heseltine was there. He was so handsome in those days. I can't describe! Took no notice of me. But- you know. No, no I was aware. You couldn't not be.

Well, it means also your parents'- so your background or heritage was there, was present?

Yeah.

And the marriage so- and at that time, I mean, you were sort of expected, or it was expected that you would marry, and there was pressure as well. Probably.

Pressures on all women to marry. It wasn't just on me.

Yeah.

And it wasn't just Jewish. It was all-

Yeah, of course.

Yes. Yeah.

And you said- so, your husband's family was a different background to yours.

Well, they were. They lived in Hendon. They were in the Hendon social circle. They played bridge. They went to shul regularly. They ate kosher meat and you know, they did everything properly. They weren't as frum as some people are now, when people- frum people are getting frumer. But - there was a sharp difference. Oh, yes.

So, what did they think then, when…?

[1:37:32]

I don't think they were very pleased. To start with, they thought he could have done better financially than marry a refugee. We didn't have any money. And certainly, the wedding caused a lot of hassle, because my parents couldn't afford what their social group seemed to need. It was a - you know. That was point one. Point two, was the Jewish difference, that we

weren't *frum* enough. Point three: He was- we were both the same age. We were both twenty-one. He had to do the army first, then we married when we were twenty-three. They thought it was too young. His grandmother, who was a great matriarch, and had come from Poland. And had made quite a lot of money working really hard. And she was a tough old lady. And she offered him a car to ditch me, which he refused. And I have to say she also offered his sister a car to ditch her fiancée, and Shosh and Raymond have got their 60th wedding anniversary this year. They live in Kfar Hanasi in Israel. Again, she was wrong. I mean, a- a very good stable marriage. But. I have to say, Will's mother was really gentle and kind and lovely. And my mother was too and they got on, and they calmed things down for the men. My father wasn't that pleased either. I mean, he said to Will, when Will came and said, "I- I want to be engaged" and it was in our last year. He said, "And what are you going to keep my daughter on?" And Will, who had the army to come first, and knew he wanted to do a diploma of education said, "Well, actually, I'm not going to keep her. She's going to keep me." Which was true for that first year. I did. So, my father said, "What sort of unreliable boy have you got there, Ruth?" But- we all were- it all worked out. You know. It taught me not to be too interfering in my children's marriages.

Yeah. But it's different worlds, meeting each other.

Definitely. When my son got married, as I say, he met this girl- he was at Cambridge doing medicine, and she- and Maya was at Cambridge too. And when they got married, her parents came from Nairobi for the wedding and her uncle was also a doctor. And her uncle said- we all had a family meal with my cousin, and them. And her uncle said, "You two have got to remember, you come from very different backgrounds. It's got to be even more give and take between you than most marriages." And that's how it, you know-

And you also forked out your own way of doing it. You and your husband?

[1:40:28]

Yes, not a problem. We're not very religious, I have to say, but we are both very conscious of being Jewish. And wanting to pass that on. So, it doesn't work, really. If we were religious, it would be clearer, but-

What did you want to pass on to your children?

I want them to know what they are. I want them to be free to choose what they are and not be ashamed of where they come from. More than that, I think I want them to be good people and have happy lives.

And did you join a synagogue or were you part of a synagogue?

We are members of the Middlesex New… which we go to very little. Will went- last year was it when he had the? Which anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah? He popped in and it was just hear the same reading. You know what I mean? I think he goes- no, he doesn't- we don't do that- I think we are members because he wants to be buried in the community. Now that matters to him and it doesn't matter to me. But I will let him bury me whichever way suits him because it matters to him. And I would bury him the way he wants to be bur- because it matters. It doesn't to me. Does that make sense?

Yeah.

And so that's where I stand. But the background, the Jewish background, yes, of course. That's part of us and it's an important part.

What about your parents? Did they join a synagogue?

No.

Here in England?

[1:42:20]

Not really. No, they didn't- didn’t go very often. They- they- they joined- I think they joined some- in the end they joined some- they retired to Bournemouth later - after my marriage, when they got the money from Germany. And they retired and Erich had got them this

money. And they bought a little semi bungalow in Bournemouth. We used to take the children down for the seaside, you know. And I- they had a lot of Jewish friends there and things like that.

Why Bournemouth? Why did they- why did they go to Bournemouth?

I don't know. Did old people always go to Bournemouth? What made them- I don't know why they choose it. No idea. It wasn't always a happy time; my mother had depression. She had it first when I was in the sixth form. I think her brothers and sisters all got depression a bit except for Rita, the one who lived- who was the way out one with a car that bounced everywhere. She was - reckless, and- and she wasn't so introspective as the others. She was the cuckoo in the nest, I think you might say. And, and my mother had it. So, I had to go home from school in the sixth form, rush home and feed her and things. I didn't know what depression was, you understand. I didn’t know it was depression. I thought she was physically ill. And later in life, in her seventies, yes, she had quite a lot of depression. And they actually ended life in Osmond House. Do you know Osmond House? Which was – yes.

In Highgate?

It was in- what's that posh street called? The rich street?

The Bishop’s Avenue?

That’s it. That’s it. My father always kept his wits all about him, but she was quite confused at the end. It was horrible. Because it wasn't what she deserved, because she had always been very kind, very good- you know. Not- not fair. But he was quite supportive. So, he should be, but he was.

And do you think her depression was- not triggered, or her- her experiences enhanced the depression or do you think it was-?

It's difficult to say, because when I look at the family pattern, her brother Alfons could get depressed. Bruno in Israel, the youngest brother who had a flower shop, he, you know- Rita

was the only one who didn't. I don't know how far it was a family pattern or how far it was what had had happened to them.

Yeah.

I can't judge. Or, how far, given the fact that their father had had mental illness? And I still don't know precisely what that was.

[1:45:23]

Yes.

I don’t know.

And the father- you haven’t told us what happened to the father who was in that psychiatry- what happened to him?

He died in 1942. We have a letter from the Jewish Community to tell that he died. He was in Germany. His- none of his children were there any longer. His wife was in Sweden. The question in my mind is always, was he bumped off in the hospital? Or not? You can't tell. All I know is that he was buried in Weißensee by a cousin, and there is a headstone there. And it's on their computer list, so I found it. Well, that means that somebody was there for him at the end, but whether they were told the truth about his death or not told the truth, that I can't tell. And I do wonder.

But by that time was he moved to a Jewish hospital? You see, that's quite interesting, where the- where-

I have somewhere a- a list- a thing where it was, but I- I don't know the name of the-

I would have assumed he wasn't allowed to stay in a- a ‘normal’ psychiatric-

No, so I, I don't know.

Yeah.

I don't know. And my mother never mentioned this to me. But growing older, I've put two and two together. It was I think officially before… the final solution, but I still think things could have happened well before. I don't know. All I know is that whoever buried him, gave him what they thought was a proper Jewish burial. And it was a family member. And that I do know. But-

Did you visit that grave?

I had- yes. That was when we went to Germany. We did go on that rainy day. Yes. And there were Christian people all around the cem- cem- cemetery, trying to tidy it up and get it- it was noticeable.

So, there is a- part of you thinks that the depression could run in the family?

[1:47:33]

It's a possibility. It crosses my mind, but I don't know, you see, what his struggle was depression.

Yes.

I was never told.

And with your mother do you think it got worse in her older age?

Yes. Well, yes, definitely. And then it shaded into- I suppose you'd call it dementia or it- confusion, certainly.

And your father?

He's- kept his wits right to the end. It was horrible for him because they were living together then. He could see her deteriorating. And she had always been so nice to him. Yeah. And now she needed- you know, he couldn't quite understand it. I don't think depression was so-

No…

…understood. Maybe the medical profession understood it, but the rest of us didn't.

So, you said as a child, you- you didn't understand what it was?

No, no, not at all. I didn't know. I knew that a family cousin… the sister of the singer who sang at the New York Met, Jenny. She was in England during the war. She went to the States after; she- her brothers were there. And she was depressed. And I know my mother and Alfons and all the families members tried to help her and nothing seemed to help. So again, there's a pattern. But she was a woman on her own in England. It- again, it's difficult to know if it's- in her circumstances or one triggers the other off. I don't know.

Yep –

[sound break]

Yes, so we were talking about your studies in Oxford and maybe you could tell us a little bit what happened after you left Oxford?

[1:49:28]

Well, after I left Oxford, Will went in the army for two years to do National Service in the artillery. And he never got abroad, which annoyed him no end, 'cause he had several lots of leave for embarkation. And each time they cancelled it all, because Britain moved out of that area or something, so he was a bit disappointed. But I was quite pleased. And I went to teach in a very awful potty private school, boarding school, which I hated. I had actually had an offer in Oxford to go and work on the Scottish dictionary in Edinburgh, but I wanted to be around for Will when he came on leave. So, I was really stupid and I said, "No- no thank

you." So, I worked in this really awful - school. I've recently found out that a little girl who was there as a toddler, and we thought she was so sweet but I didn't teach her because she was too young, was Helen Leadbetter – you know? The comedian. I found that out. But that was an accident. And I remember her as a little- a dear little thing. Anyway. It was very, very old fashioned and very, very- you had to live in and you weren't allowed to have visitors unless the headmistress allowed you to. And the children had a lousy library and it was all much worse than my state education had been, although parents were paying for this. And a lot of them were parents abroad, who were in the army or diplomatic or something. And they probably thought they were doing the best for their children - poor things. So that was two years. And then, at the end, we were arranging the wedding. And- which I had- I remember going up, I had to go to Woburn House, to get details- to have it passed that I could get married. We were going to get married in Hendon Synagogue - United. And they said to me, "Well, where is your proof that you're Jewish?" I didn't have all the right documents. I went home in tears to my father in Reading. And he said, "I'll deal with them." And he trotted in in fury the next Sunday; they were open on Sundays. And he showed them all these details about Germany and what have you, and his passport with "*Jude*" written all over it. And- and that thing- his release from Sachsenhausen- you know – the lot. They gave in to him at once.

[1:51:58]

So, he came back and said, "Don't you worry, Ruth." So! We got married seven days after Will came out of the army. Exactly. And then we went to live in Oxford for one year - in a bedsitter. He wanted to do- he thought he wanted to teach. And so, he wanted to do a Dip Ed. And I went and worked in a State secondary school in Banbury. I had to get myself to Banbury each day, and back. I found that jolly tough. It was a secondary modern and I wasn't used to that. And I don't think I was any good. And the- the children knew far more about sex than I did, although I was married- I think. And at the end of the year, what happened? We went to London and Will got a job teaching at what was then called Stratford Grammar School. And we had a tiny flat at the top of a house. Two rooms, so we were up on what we'd been in Oxford. Horribly decorated with a- a cocktail cabinet took up a lot of space. We had no, we didn't drink cocktails, and there were all these glass - anyway. So, we were there, and it was in the- Woodford constituency – that's Churchill's constituency. And there was an election there. I remember seeing Churchill there. He was an old man then, and had to be led

on very carefully, you know, well past his best. And again, I taught in a private school, which was called Clark's College, which was much more up to date, but even so, not very interesting. And after a year Will decided he didn't want to teach at all. And so, he's never taught since. And he went and worked at the Institute of Chartered Accountants for, I suppose three or four years- I can't remember how long. What had happened to me? I was still teaching there. I had a miscarriage there. And then we bought a house in Harrow. We were- chose Harrow, because Will was working in London, and we needed somewhere on the Met line that would get us in easily. And Harrow- we looked at Wembley, and it was more expensive, because it was nearer. I suppose this was the cheapest thing that we could afford, you know. And so, we bought our first house in Harrow. And I think I was already pregnant again then. Okay. Yep. And we went to Harrow. And I had my first child in Harrow. Yeah. And so, Will worked there for four years and I didn't work at all. I was housewife at home, it was very- John Bowlby had written all about children, and how if you were away from them for half a minute, their lives would be ruined forever. And we all believed it. So, I was a wife at home. And also- having been so bounced around as a child, I actually wanted to be a wife at home. That's true, too. So, I had Jonathan.

[1:55:33]

Eighteen months later, I had Deborah. About two and a half years later, I had Daniel. I was home all the time, but I did a bit of coaching at that time. And I went into Harrow Technical College and did some evening classes, teaching English to people. But not very much- nothing, nothing proper. And then I can't remember when Will changed his job. He must have changed- yes. He changed and went and worked at the College of Surgeons where he stayed till- all his working life. And when Daniel started local primary school - state primary not private, none of them- I went and worked in a Catholic primary school in Harrow. It's quite funny really, because it was primary and I hadn't ever taught primary, and I had to- a lot to learn. And I always remember the headmaster saying, “Well, the local priest is coming in today and there'll be confession today.” And he said, “I don't want those of you who do all the talking to do all the confessing. Remember that!” Anyway, I was there- it must have been less than a term, when Daniel was discovered to have leukaemia. He went in because there was something wrong- some hospital in London, and they transferred him that night to the Royal Marsden. And I knew, what the Royal Marsden meant, you know. And so, I left my

job and I had- we went backwards and forwards for a year. He died- he lived- lived about eleven and a half months after. They said to me, “There's no chance he will get better.” It was the sort of leukaemia they still can't cure very well now. Some- some they can but this was one they couldn't very well. And they- so I was in and out of hospital with long treatments with him and we were coping and friends were helping out with the children. And my mother was having a breakdown, so she couldn't help. And they were in Bournemouth- anyway, she couldn't help. And friends helped. Vera was one of them. And lots of local friends, sort of stepped up to the mark and picked my others up from school or gave them tea or washed their hair or - you know. So, he died- he was diagnosed in ‘71. He died in ‘72.

[1:58:17]

And I went straight back to work. After two or three months I went to the education, no, I went to my local primary school where my children were and said, “Look, I can't sit at home doing nothing and thinking. Have you any jobs?” They said, “No, but we will speak to other people.” And they did it. And I got a job in Harrow… teaching part time, helped bad readers in a primary school, very traditional school with A class, B class, C - stream, primary, very strict, very unimaginative. Nice headmaster, but old fashioned. But he retired and a really tough woman took over who had never had children, who didn't know that children vary. And they didn't seem to like- she- she and her friend didn't seem to like Catholic children, Jewish children, Indian children, children whose parents were divorced, children who were on ben- their parents were on benefits. Children who had untidy handwriting- I- I can't describe. Anyway, I stuck that out for some time. And in the end, I decided, no. And then I went and worked in South Harrow in a much tougher area in another primary school where said sixteen years till retirement. And it was much nicer. It was much tougher. It was- had a dump council estate. We had some very neglected children, but we also had some very nice ones. And some of the neg- neglected ones were nice too. Okay. And that's all I ever really did. Meanwhile, Will was working at the college.

What was he doing at the college?

[2:00:02]

He was in charge of higher surgical training committees. So partly it was approving - he's not medical, you understand, in any way - approving posts in hospital that would be training posts for surgeons. So, checking information and check- and also checking the people that they had the right information. And specialist committees for different parts of surgery and you'd have to ask him - that sort of thing. Anyway, it's all much more- much posher than me. And he went abroad several- he went to Ghana, I think, thirteen years running to take examiners to Ghana. And he went to Sri Lan- yes, Sri Lanka. When we first sold the first house, I still had the three children. And it was a January and he zipped off for three weeks to Sri Lanka, leaving me to sell the house. Which I did. And so- you know he had- we had slightly different careers.

But-

No, I was going to say, we were still the generation that thought that a man's career was more important. I don't think my children would have thought that and I'm sure my grandchildren wouldn't think that. But that's roughly how it was. And maybe by the end I'm not sure I thought that. But by then it was too late.

What happened to your- the idea that you wanted to be a journalist?

Well, I suppose it fitted into life. You fitted your job into your husband's life and what [it all went … inaudible]

Yeah.

Yeah. I never was.

So, you were teaching in different capacities, in the primary school and-

In primary, you have a class, you teach every subject. So, I mean, I - English, maths - hockey. Computers, science – as- we didn't do much science, more nature, but by the end it was science, French. Anything going. I quite enjoyed it. I liked- it seemed, actually, I got on with my class. We shared quite a few jokes together. You know, it seemed worthwhile doing. And

I wasn't ever sure that what I had done before teaching- pushing Wordsworth down unwelcome throats who didn't want him- I thought this was actually probably more use. So, I didn't feel bad about it that way. No.

You preferred the primary school?

[2:02:34]

I did. Yeah.

And do you think in the time when you- when you lost your son, do you think your own trauma from your childhood came back, or do you think it had any…?

I certainly compared, when I was in hospital, the Marsden had a wonderful- it was the London Marsden - they didn't have a children's department now. They had a wonderful department there. Little, for children. And a wonderful nurse in charge, and I'm still in touch with her. And I could see all the other children and I could see what was happening. And I knew that Daniel was getting the best and kindest possible care. And I was aware, and I could compare that in my mind with what other children had suffered under the Nazis in Germany. I wouldn't say it helped, but I was aware. And it certainly made me aware of children all over the world. His best friend there came from a little Arab state I can't even remember which one. This little boy had come with- some Arab oil money had sent him - he wasn't a boy from a rich family - had sent him as a private patient to the Marsden. And he and Daniel had their little tricycles and zipped up and down the corridors on- in hospital! Unbelievable that they allowed it, you know. So- yes, it made me think. But didn't make it much better.

No.

I don't think I can talk about that too much. It still makes me want to cry if I'm not careful. I'm sorry.

We don't need to talk about it. What impact do you think did your early experience have on your later life?

[2:04:26]

It made me cautious. If there's an option that is more dangerous, although it has better options and better chances, I don't take it. I play safe. I'm the one who says, “Are we insured for this? Are we insured for that?” Yes. Will is the one who says, “Oh, come on.” Not that he isn't cautious, but I take the safe option. Definitely. That's one clear thing. I am- I never feel entirely English, because obviously I'm not. But I'm not sure I feel entirely Jewish. I feel European, if anything. So, Brexit upsets me - actually it upsets all our family. My granddaughters - one of my granddaughters the other one - said to me - she was just too young to vote. She said, “Granny, some of my friends aren't talking to their grandparents after the Brexit vote.” And I said, “Anya, do think, that right?” And she said, “Well, maybe not.” But, you know, so at least as a family, we know we're all on the same side. But- so, I can never feel absolutely English. It makes me feel a bit conceited in that I look sometimes at people who’ve had very, very easy lives, middle, and I've mixed with a lot of English middle-class people who've had nothing to cope with, and I think, “What do you know about things?” It means sometimes I misjudge them. I've had two friends who had very posh accents and very posh backgrounds. And I thought well - but they turned out to be really nice and worthwhile people. So, I have to be careful. I think that's the affected side. I touch wood, so far, I haven't had depression, or anything like that. Joys to come, maybe.

And do you think your life would have been very different if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

[2:06:30]

Well, if Germany hadn't become Nazi, maybe so. There would have been a large family, which I didn't have. There would have been a middle-class environment. My mother certainly went to a private school for instance, I probably would have. I- I don't know. Yes. It would have been different. But then when my father asked for money from Germany, and he said, “And I had a daughter who was also whatnot-ed.” “And what did she do?” they said. And he said, “Well, she went to school in England – university.” “Which university?” “Oxford.” “Well, you can't say she would have done any better in Germany.” And they gave me nothing

as a result. If you see what I- which is also true. So, yes, my life would have been different but not different if the Nazis were in, would it? I mean, gosh, I was amazingly lucky to get out. What happened to that little girl Hella Bergman that I told you about, whose crocodile I had. I've tried to trace her on the net - no idea.

That was the family who emigrated?

Well, they left Berlin, but where did they emigrate to? I mean, my uncle Kurt first went- was in Vienna to get out of the Nazis, went from Vienna to Holland to escape them and then got to England. But plenty of people got stuck in other bits of Europe that they thought they were safe in.

And do you feel- I know you- you told us your views about the past, but do you feel any sense of nostalgia or something - towards Berlin, or-?

No.

No.

None. I wasn't old enough when I left for it to have mattered, to have meant anything to me. It was presumably only my family and my friends.

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

[2:08:38]

Jewish Continental, English in lots of tastes - mixture. Not sure which of those comes first. Don’t know.

And what- what’s the most important part of Cont- being Continental? Or what does it - for you – what does it…?

It's because I'm very aware that there are different ways of living from around here. That I see- I see people who haven't ever lived any other ways. And I- I- I don't know. When I go across to Europe, I don't feel a stranger. It isn't just the way they eat or talk. I'm- I'm reasonably good linguistically so I can manage over a lot of Europe. Well, it helped having the Scandinavian stuff didn't it in that area. And then I sort of had Latin and- which helped me in Italians and Spanish. You know, I can sort of muck around. It all seems less strange to me than it would to an English person, I think. I'm not sure. It's difficult to answer that.

And where- where do you feel at home? Where is your home?

Oh – here. Oh, no, I have no other home except – no, no, no. My home is, well, where Will is. But you know. No- no, no. No, I wouldn't say I feel at home in Eur- I certainly wouldn't feel at home in Germany. But even- I can feel happy there. I could live there for some time. I could have a second home there and be perfectly happy. I can't afford it, but I could do that. But no. My home is here. I mean, you know I know, I know all the English songs and what have you. I listened to all the English comedy programmes in the war. I have that – no, no-no.

[2:10:43]

Well, you were- you went to school in England, your schooling was here.

But what is interesting is, I have quite a lot of- or had over the years quite a lot of Continental friends. And I probably have felt slightly at home with them in a way. Yes? Maybe we all seek each other out a little bit. Don't know.

Also, of the younger- of your generation?

My children don't, I don't think. No, my children- I don't know what they feel, but the way they live, seems very English.

And that's what I wanted to ask you. So, whether you talked about your past to your children, or is it something they were interested in or…?

My daughter’s very interested. My son, I don't know if he's very- he's op- he knows. He's been very busy. His mother-in-law was very ill and only died just before last Christmas and they were very busy looking after her and she needed it. Yeah. So, you know, and I don't know. They- they're quite busy. They're both consultants. They sort of- no, I think my daughter's more interested. But is it because girls talk more? We talk more to our daughters than our sons. I don't know. And Jonathan's bit like Will - rather quiet.

And do you think the history affected them in any way?

Well-

Your children?

[2:12:18]

I can only say what Deborah said to me, “Mum, I want to know more.” And she said, “Mum, when I said about not wanting to marry out,” which after all she did, she said, “but I knew Peter”, you know. Which is true because she lived with him for a couple of years before they got married. So, they do want to know. And the one granddaughter who did Japanese went to Auschwitz once with her school, not her school, this school system. And she went with a group of Yorkshire children. Yes? And I'm not meant to know what she said about it, but I do know, because my sister-in-law in Israel asked her and she wrote her a long letter. And she didn't tell me what she said, but my sister-in-law secretly sent the letter back to me. And so I know. And Dot wrote how appalled she was, she knew, of course all about it, but it really shook her to be there. And she said, “I feel ashamed that I don't know more about my Jewish background.” So, her father- his mother was a United Reform person, really lovely person went and did work in helping in Romania with orphans and things - lovely. And Dot's father is the son of this woman, is very anti-religion in any sort. And the funny thing is that Cass, the- Deborah's mother-in-law, sort of quite liked Deborah because she was Jewish, because there’s a sort of connection between the Old Testament and- it's quite odd. But Dot has no religion, I think, at all. In fact, I don't think any of my grandchildren is religious. I don't think my children are. I don't think my son's wife who is officially Hindu is at all. She's no more

religious and my son is - neither of them. So, you know, I don't think it's, they're conscious of it. They have friends of all sorts. But I don't think it's a material part of their lives. I don't know.

[2:14:38]

And how did you feel? I know you're a member of the AJR. How do you feel to the legacy of the German Jews- and your father worked for the AJR. How do you think it should sort of live on, or…?

Do you mean the legacy in England?

Yeah.

Well, they obviously did quite well, didn't they? I mean, lots of them- I mean, you spoke to Milein. Lots of them have done well, have made money, have been in medicine, have done inventions, have been in the arts. Some of them have not done at all well, like Robert Maxwell, which I noticed the AJR put on their cover. And I thought they should be ashamed of themselves for mentioning him as somebody to be proud of. I think they all benefited from England, but I think for those, England benefited quite a lot too. I would say. I think they infused a sort of, what do I mean, a Continental culture into English that came in, maybe in from the 50s. I think. Well, they certainly did more than I did.

And do you think something else could have been done more to help people like your parents, or…?

It's difficult to know. By the AJR, you mean, or by England?

In general.

In general. Okay. Well, when they came, England was coming out of a long period, wasn't it - of unemployment and a lot of poverty. They had an expensive war, which they thought was coming. I don't know that much could have been done. Sometimes they could have been

more imaginative, like when they assumed German Jews were sleeping spies. But of course, some might have been for all I know. You know, not- none of the ones I knew were, but it's a possibility. Now we see these films on telly. Who knows who are sleepers and who are on? I wouldn't know. No. No, I lay the blame - what happened - totally on those who inflicted it. And much less on those who had to cope with the result. I mean, I think - I'm trying to think. No.

So, your father, for example, in his later years, was he still bitter about internment? Or was it something…?

He wasn't bitter about it. No. He took it for granted in the end, it all- he got on with his life. He didn't suffer from depression or anything. He had friends. You know, he- he read a bit he, sort of- and they travelled a bit. No, I think despite his losses, in the final years, apart from looking at my mother deteriorate, he had an easier, happier nature at that point. But that hadn't been true all the years.

Right.

No.

And tell us a little bit- he brought a souvenir from the Isle of Man. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

Well now, what would you like me to tell you?

Well, we're going to look at it a bit later but just-

[2:18:12]

Right. Okay. Well, the only souvenir I have of it, is, I have a picture still that was painted by Schwitters, which he would have called a potboiler - I'm sure - because it's not one of the ones that makes the money. And he painted it and my- my father bought it from him, well he swapped it, for a packet of cigarettes. Well, that's what my father always told me. And it

hung- when my parents bought their first house when I was fourteen, when we left the digs, it hung above the fire, which is why it's still so grey. And I never have- I once tried cleaning it a bit and I thought a bit of paint was coming off and I stopped instantly. I thought it has to be done properly or not at all. So, I haven't done anything. And he always said to me, "Well, if anything goes wrong, you can sell it."

But you don't want to- you're attach to it?

It's not a picture I am attached to. It's the fact it was- my parents. It's the fact it was in our home. It's the fact it's part of his history. That's why I'm attached. What- what the children do is another matter. If I'm not here, I won't mind if they want to flog it.

So, did he know Schwitters? Or was it just a…?

I don't know. But if he swapped it for a packet of cigarettes, did he swap it from Schwitters or via a third party? I don't know that. You know, but I think it likely they were in the same camp, because otherwise I don't think he'd have got hold of it. But that's all I know. It doesn't mean anything. And my father would certainly not have liked Schwitters' normal work in Germany, because my father was a very conventional person. But he had obviously heard of him, and therefore thought it was worth-

Or whether he asked him to paint this which is-

Exactly-

…which is a little. Well, we'll see it later. But now this little-

It's a little street with a bit of sea in the background, isn't it?

Yes, whether he would have asked him-

I don't know that. Or did he see it and say-

"Can I have that?"

[2:20:11]

That don't know. Or, did he get it via a third party? Again, I have no idea. I can't pretend.

Well, it's a bit of history here-

That's right.

... for you.

And I like history. That history keeps me going.

Okay. Ruth is there anything else you'd like to add, which I haven't asked you?

Not really.

Which we haven't touched upon?

I didn't think so.

Maybe, I mean, I could ask you, but we don't have to necessarily- what do you think the- whether the government should learn and do something for current refugees? Is that something you're interested at all in?

I think one has to help all refugees. I'm a little worried how many there were going to be if we let everybody from every poor country. And there are how many poor people in Africa? I see that as a problem, but certainly, at least everybody who's in a war zone, who's, who's suffering. Yes. You know. I haven't- haven't done anything about it. But who is that- there is a Kindertransport person in the House of Commons isn't there, and I'm trying to…

Yes, Lord Dubs.

Sorry?

Dubs – Lord Dubs.

That’s it. Alf Dubs. I do absolutely agree with him. And I think- and the fact that maybe they're on the other side from us as Jews and they're- as Arabs and the whole thing is so complicated, shouldn't affect it. If they're refugees, that's what they are.

Yeah. Do you have any message for anyone who might watch this video in the future based on your own experiences?

Well, keep going, if you're the refugee or the stranger, and if you're not, be nice to the stranger in your midst, I think. Just be nice! I would rather maybe not have learnt this message quite so painfully. But I think that's the only message I get from it. You have, you know, if we don't behave nicely, the world gets worse.

But in your own experience, people were nice to you?

[2:22:30]

Most people have been very nice to me. Yes. Which is very lucky, because I have read some of these refugee evacuee-type stories and people have had a really tough time, and I didn't have that.

And you said your- you're still in touch with the first- your first foster family?

Yes, we went to an eightieth birthday party last November.

So, who was still alive?

Teddy's wife. Teddy has died. Teddy's wife. Some of them emigrated to Australia. Mildred is still in Australia. She's not at all well. So, we went to Barbara. That's Teddy's wife’s- well,

actually they're divorced- they were divorced before he died. But that's a separate story. It's nothing to do with it. But anyway, yes, yes. No, no. We stayed in touch with them.

And the second foster family, did you stay in touch with them as well?

No. No. And I didn't know why either, because she was a lovely lady. No, I don't know. And I- again, I've tried to chase them up on the net. Never found anything. And now Sonning is quite a posh village, isn't it? With George Clooney and people living there.

Yes?

But in the war, it was just- it- there were big houses though. You could see they had been posh. And I know the people my parents worked for, the brother of the owner- the wife was a very famous racing driver who'd been killed in a boat crash in the beginning of the 30s - Henry Segrave. And he'd been to Eton. So, they were posh families even then, the ones who looked after- that my parents worked for, you know. Quite interesting, but-

But the first, the Morgans who took you in, were they- did they have- actually have a choice or did they have- did everyone- has to take a-

I don't know.

…a child?

Probably everyone had to, but it was which child they could- but I don't know. Nobody ever told me. I have a feeling, from what I've seen in books and things that evacuation officers just went and said, "You have to have one, you have to have one. You have to have two. You've got a bigger…" - I don't know. But they only had a tiny little house. I mean, you know, they were very working-class people. They were not in the least posh, but gosh, they knew what was what.

Okay, Ruth. Well, all I can say now is thank you very, very much for sharing your story with us.

Thank you.

And we're going to look now at some of your photographs and documents.

Okay. Do you want to come to the kitchen for that?

Yes, just one moment.

[2:25:19]
[End of interview]

[Start of photographs and documents]
[2:25:38]

Photo 1
This photo is Marie Miriam, my mother's mother, my grandmother, who looked after me in Berlin while my parents were working.

Photo 2
And this is a photograph of my mother and her brothers and sisters when they were young. My mother is on the right. Her sister Rita is next to her. She was much younger. Her brother Alfons, who came to England as a doctor, is the next one. And the one on the left is Bruno, who left Germany in a hurry as a student in the 30s and went and lived in Israel.

Photo 3
This is my father when he was a child. [*Where*?] I think it may have been in Inowroclaw, which is now Poland but then belonged to Germany [Hohensalza]. It would have been about 1900 I would have thought, or even a little before.

Photo 4

This is my father when he was in the German Army in France in the First World War and he got the Iron Cross.

Photo 5
This is me with my mother, back in Berlin.

How old were you?

I must have been two to three, I think.

So which year would this be?

Well, I was born ‘34. So, it would be ‘36 maybe ‘37. It's difficult to say.

And where is it?

Berlin, but I don't know where in Berlin.

Photo 6
This is my grandmother, Oma Marie Miriam. And with her is my cousin Tom, who became a famous publisher in England. And me.

You are in front?

I- yeah, I'm the younger one.

And when was it taken?

I don't know. It was in Berlin.

Photo 7
This is me. Probably one of the first photos taken of me in England.

Photo 8
This is a photograph of my time as an evacuee in Wales. At the back is Megan who was seventeen. She has her hand on the shoulder of Mildred who was ten. And in front is Teddy who was five and me.

And which year?

It would have been about 1940, because I was evacuated in ‘39. So, it was 40 to 41. I can't tell which.

Photo 9
When my father was released from the Isle of Man, he came to visit me while I was evacuated in Wales, and he's there with Mildred, Teddy and me. Me on the right.

Photo 10
This is me in Reading, probably from when I was at my elementary school, Battle School.

Photo 11
At some time, just about the end of the war or after it, a suitcase arrived from Sweden. It was with things that had belonged to my grandmother Marie Miriam. We put it out on the lawn in Harrow at my uncle Alfons’s house, and we shared the contents. My mother got a sampler her mother had made, and I still have it. And we also got a dinner service from about 1900. We sold that, because at that time there was only boring china in English shops after the war and people wanted patterned china. And they got forty pounds for it. And on that we had two weeks- our first family holiday ever, in Broadstairs. And my parents are sitting on a deck chair. And I'm in the front with somebody else who was at the boarding house, I think.

Photo 12
This is a class photo of us at Kendrick. In the front, with the plaits is Daisy Bendiner, who lived in the hostel at the end of our road. And in the second row, not the one right on the right, the one next to the right with the dark hair, is me.

And when? When was this picture taken?

Difficult to know. I shouldn't- I would have been about fourteen or fifteen I would think, but I'm not sure now.

[2:30:52]

Photo 13
It's 1956. We had just finished our university courses, and this was our engagement party which was held in my uncle's garden in Harrow. At our engagement party these are the two families: from left to right is Wilfred's father, my mother, me, Wilfred, his mother, my father and in front his sister Shosh.

Photo 14
When they finally retired and well after I was married, my parents retired to Bournemouth. And this is them in their garden with some neighbours.

Photo 15
This is a photo of the family at our golden wedding. On the left is my granddaughter Dorothy, next to her is her mother Deborah, then me, then Wilfred, then my son's daughter Anya, my son, and my daughter's son Alfie. And in front is Sam. I wonder why- wonder why Maya wasn't in. I love this picture. But this has nothing to do with it - you.

Document 1
This is a carbon copy of my father's release document from Sachsenhausen. And it's had to be photographed in a mirror.

Document 2
This is a letter that my mother wrote when my father was in Sachsenhausen after Kristallnacht. She wrote it to the police, asking them to let him go, because he had the possibility of going to Denmark where he had a visa.

Everybody does this on the net now, don't they? They can all do this, and I find this sort of thing so difficult.

So, you have four grandchildren?

Yeah.

Document 3
This is a note from the Jewish Community in Berlin to say that my grandfather, my mother's father, had died in a hospital.

Document 4
This is when I was an evacuee in Wales. And a grandmother there of the children there had died. And my mother wrote from London to sympathise and also to thank them for taking care of me and keeping me away from the Blitz.

Thank you. Yes, please.

[2:34:34]

Document 5
And this is the other side of the same postcard that my mother sent to Wales.

Thank you.

Painting
Yes, I inherited this picture from my parents. My- it is of Douglas, in the Isle of Man, where my father was interned, and my father bought it there.

Ruth, thank you so much again for sharing your story and your photographs and documents with us. Thank you.

Pleasure.

[2:35:01]

[End of photographs and documents]