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## Interview Transcript Title Page

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<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Newman
<b>Forename:</b>	Peter
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## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV284  
**NAME:** Peter Newman  
**DATE:** 30 October 2023  
**LOCATION:** London  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[00:00:00]

*Today is the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 and we're conducting an interview with Mr Peter Newman. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. Can you please tell me your name?*

Peter Newman.

*And when and where were you born, please?*

I'm sorry?

*When and where were you born?*

I was born in Berlin in 1927.

*Thank you very much. Thank you for having agreed to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive.*

That's all right. It's a pleasure.

*So can you please tell me something about your family background?*

Family background- grandparents, both grandparents were bankers. My father's father was – owned a merchant bank in Germany and my mother's father died very early. He was a *Prokurist* [authorised representative] in a bank but he died in 1929, so I know very little about him.

*What were their names, the grandparents' names? Do you remember them?*

Grandparents, yes. My father's father was Eduard and my mother's was Hugo. Father obviously is Neumann and my mother's maiden name was Edler.

*And they came from Berlin?*

They all lived in Berlin, yes. They were also – as far as I know they were all born in Berlin but my father's family came from Posen, if you go back another generation. [00:02:06] I don't know anything very much about my mother's antecedents.

*And did you meet – you met your grandparents?*

Oh, yes. Not – no, not my mother's. I was one year old when she died – when he [ph] died of diabetes. And my father's father was killed by the Nazis in 1937.

*Okay, we're going to talk about that in a bit.*

Let [inaudible] put it into what you want. [Laughs] You don't want to go too far back either.

*Hmm. And tell us a little bit about your parents and how they met and –*

My mother was a very gifted lady. She studied first of all as a singer in a Berlin conservatoire but was seen, I am not sure under what circumstances, when she was seventeen or eighteen years old. Somebody found her sketching and said she would be given a job there and then as a sketching reporter for fashions and my mother at the time was seventeen or eighteen years

old and she accepted the job and was sent by the Ullstein Verlag from Berlin to Paris to report on their fashion shows there. [00:04:03] In those days we didn't have cameras and she reported these in sketches, most of which are still in existence, the originals, and they were given as far as I know to the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

*And what was her name? Your mother's name?*

Lissi Edler and later when she became – she used the name Neumann but as a – at that stage she was obviously using her maiden name.

*So, she started her career as Lissi Edler?*

Lissi Edler, yes. You'll find the signature in all the prints with the LE approximate.

*So, she was very interested in fashion?*

She was very interested in fashion and very good, and more recently she designed herself and did fashion designs for weddings and so on where people sent her pictures of the bride-to-be and samples of the dress she was going to have and from that point onwards, Lissi – call her that – designed three or four different designs which were then sent to the family concerned and were sold.

*In the – this was in the UK?*

That was late in Germany already because in the – it would have been '32 onwards, she wasn't allowed as Jewess to sell to the papers, so they used a nom de plume. [00:06:07]

*What was her nom de plume?*

I don't know. I don't remember. I know the story and we know that there are very few surviving sketches from that period. The earlier ones are in the gift to the museum of the time. Later ones were the published ones which just had the initials.

*So, when did she start out doing that? In which year? When –*

Oh, she must have started doing this – she was born – 1901, she was sixteen, so seventeen in – eighteen, something of that direction. And she was very – literally very gifted but in more recent years she did painting, didn't – gave up doing the commercial side of it and painted locally, exhibits locally here as well.

*This is in the UK?*

Yes.

*So while in Germany she was doing the drawing and –*

In Germany she was doing – I think it was – you see, the first – up – sort of 1920 to 1930, to give you rough figures, she was doing things under her own name and after 1930 she did it under this nom de plume and I'm not sure quite what it was. I haven't got any of those original sketches. They're all in Germany.

*Are they in the Jewish Museum in Berlin? Or where did she give them to?*

They're in the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

*Okay, so anyone if they wanted to follow this up, they could –*

If you want to go there, you'll find apparently the room where they're shown has a plaque saying that my brother and I donated those pictures. [00:08:01] It makes us feel rather proud.

*Yeah. And how did your mum meet your father?*

Students. My father was a medical student and they met in 1925 and got married in 1926 and I was born in 1927, so they didn't waste much time.

*So they were both students in Berlin?*

In – well, my father was – he followed teachers. He was in Freiburg, he was in Heidelberg, he was in Hamburg, and he was in Berlin. [Laughs] It seems strange for us here but that's the way apparently they did – each semester they got a report and these reports were collated and when you had a requisite number of them you graduated.

*So he was a doctor?*

He was a doctor.

*He was studying medicine.*

Medical man, yes.

*And what did your mother study?*

My mother started singing first and then art.

*So she finished the degree? An art degree or –*

She never finished a singing degree although she had a lovely contralto voice and she used to sing to us as children. I still remember that.

*Yeah? What did she sing to you?*

Oh, er, I'm going to digress here because in 1930 onwards, my father had great difficulty and he didn't like working in the bank where my grandfather was the boss and they invented talking books whereby my – the, let's put it this way – my mother used to sing into a microphone, the microphone went onto a cardboard backing which had been sprayed with shellac and that gave a solid basis on the select pieces which was then used for a gramophone

record. [00:10:38] And they – and we are trying to trace where these things are because I know I had them as a young child. There were paintings on the piece of paper which my mother had made nursery rhyme pictures, and then the nursery rhyme pictures on the shellac base was recorded and played on a 78 RPM gramophone record – was unbreakable. It was flexible but unbreakable. And you had the recording then of Mother singing nursery rhymes to us and the basis was a picture, was a talking picture, which was quite interesting. The patents were sold later we believe – I have no written evidence – but they were sold I believe to Decca around about 192 – 1936 or '37 because when my father – family came to England he had no work, had no money, so he must have lived off something and we think it was these record patents which kept us alive for the first one or two years. [00:12:10]

*So what sort of things? What did they record? You know –*

Nursery rhymes by and large, just simple nursery rhymes that the picture was there and [laughs] basically all you could take is a page out of the book, which was stapled or whatever, put it on a gramophone record and there it was.

*So what nursery rhymes, for example? Can you remember?*

I can't remember. '*Hans hat Hosen an und die sind bunt*' is one, and '*Suppenkasper*' was another one. You haven't prepared me for this [laughs] but I –

*Just checking your memory. Were they played? Did you physically have them here? Were they played to you?*

They were played to us, yes. Yes, we had – there was – basically we have toys, we could take the books and put them on the gramophone, we had to wind the thing up and then – it wasn't hi-fi.

*No, but it was always your mother's voice?*

It was my mother's voice, certainly.



*So maybe the first sort of audiobook.*

It was interesting and I'm hoping that my other side of family maybe would find them because they had – they at the time when my mother died and we emptied the house, they put everything into a big box and it was all put away and nobody's in fact looked after it. Joanna might have it because she took quite a number of things at the time. So we don't know.

*Okay. What were they called, the series? Do you remember was there a special name?*

No idea, no idea. Probably nobody bothered because it was by – it was done as a toy or as a gift for the children, that's me and my younger brother. [00:14:00] Nobody at that time had any need to sell things 'cos the family was seriously wealthy.

*Yeah. So, tell us about your father. He studied medicine but then he ended up working for the bank. So did he work as a doctor or –*

Well, my grandfather – my father's father – owned a company called Sauerland Nachfolger Now, Sauerland specialised in financing grain. It paid- financing. The grain was bought in Canada and then it was shipped to Germany or to Europe and then it was – it had to go into the mills and had to be ground and then the flour was sold and the proceeds were used to pay back the bank's loans. That was a highly specialised area. I have a story which was later told – said that it – that there was no evidence for it at all, that the Germans had the inflation in the middle '20s and for a shortish period when they were trying to get the Mark under control, they had a thing called the *Roggenmark* [rye mark] and the *Roggenmark* was basically, how do I put it, linked to a sack of rye flour. Now, my grandfather's bank had to lean on the German import of all rye, so that money came to the bank and the bank became seriously wealthy at that time. [00:16:07] And that didn't help very much afterwards because when things developed, people remembered who had the money, and it was only – the *Roggenmark* was only a very short period of time but the fact this Jewish bank had rye and made profit out of the trouble we had, was a story which stuck in my mind possibly told me when my grandfather had been killed by the Nazis and they tried to explain to me what had been going

on. I was about eight years – seven, eight years old at the time, so I had some knowledge of what was going on but not an awful lot.

*And the bank was called Sauerland?*

Sauerland Nachfolger. And that was then – it became the edict that no gentile need pay any debts to a Jew and that of course bankrupted the bank immediately. It means none of the people who had been customers for, oh, many years, suddenly stopped paying. You borrowed money from the bank and there were large sums involved and then you were told you don't have to pay it back. So [laughs] that was the end of that story and bank was bankrupted and taken over by ex-employees who were [inaudible]. [00:18:02]

*And when was that, Peter?*

Oh, well, my grandfather was killed in – I think it was beginning of March '37, so it would have been in '37 I would guess that the thing would have been wiped – er, liquidated.

*Okay. Let's come back to that because I just want to take you back a bit earlier to the '20s or early '30s, about your earliest childhood memories. What are your first memories?*

My first memory was when my brother arrived, of two – I was two and a half years older than he was, which was early. I remember seeing – being introduced to my brother and my brother had brought two toys which were in a basket in the clinic. Those toys I can still draw today.

*What were they?*

There was a wooden bus which you could sit on and a lorry which could tip things out. You could put marbles in and you tip it and they ran out at the back. And that my brother had brought me from wherever.

*[Both laugh] From wherever he came.*

I'm sorry?

*From wherever he came.*

Wherever, wherever he came from, that I – they didn't tell me [laughs]. But that is the first thing. I have not a great deal of memory of it and I remember the nurse. We had a nursemaid and we were very, very fond of her. She was a wonderful lady. And I remember her telling me that the baby had arrived and I don't know- funny link which has absolutely no logic at all was that I was taken to a theatre, a kind of theatre, as a child for a thing called *Peterles Mondfahrt* [Little Peter's Journey to the Moon]. [00:20:14] It was a story of Peter which was he who had an adventure and he went to the moon. No connection with the Americans and so on. But Peterle went to see the moon and then there were the stars and that was just something connected – it can't have been connected with the first meeting with my brother but it would – I would have been I suppose three or four at the time when for some reason or other I was rewarded, was taken to this thing and it stuck.

*You remember it. Was it in a theatre, or where was it played?*

It was a theatre and there were lots of people around but no Nazis. At the time no – no uniform, was no – I don't remember. It's bits and pieces of memory, nothing which I would say has any cohesion at all. At that stage, well, I was maybe three and a half, maybe four, but not much more.

*So this is before the Nazis came to power?*

This was before things got sticky.

*Yeah. And what – where did you live, Peter? Where, describe – tell us where you lived.*

In Berlin, in Charlottenburg, just off the Kurfürstendamm, at this – in Mommsenstraße 47, which was a huge flat. [00:22:00] We had about seven, eight rooms, what wealthy people at the time considered normal.

*Yeah. And the nursemaid lived with you?*

We had a nursemaid and we had a cook and we had a chambermaid and we had a washerwoman who used to come in, we had a chauffeur who came every day. Yes, money didn't – it didn't play a role and if you wanted it, you had it. You could not basically [laughs] but unfortunately that was all – that's part of the trouble I think which made people jealous.

*What was the name of the nursemaid? Do you remember her name?*

Hilde. Hilda Schuftan.

*Schuftan?*

Yes. S-C-H-U-F-T-A-N I think. But we've got this one photograph of her in – I showed you.

*Yeah, we're going to look at it. Yeah.*

We had another nurse earlier but this poor, poor girl – she was a young girl – she got cancer of the pancreas and she died in three weeks.

*And Peter, did your mother continue to work while you were –*

Oh, yes. Undercover at a later date. But my mother, well, she continued with that work until the end, middle end of '35 and then again as soon as she was – came to London, she started the thing again and showed designs, went up and down the East End selling her designs to the *schmutter* trade and carried on all the way through the war. [00:24:12] She was –

*But just to come back to Berlin, so tell us a little bit. Your father, did he ever work as a doctor in Germany?*

Only at the very beginning, '36 to about – '26 I mean, '26 to about '29 or '30, by which time his father was insisting that he should take over the bank. And his brother was already in Israel at that time, Palestine, '29, and his older sister had left Germany because of her communist philosophy and had moved to Paris, so Father was stuck by that time and he didn't – oh, that's another story. Let's leave it at that because I get misled on track. We will – we'll come to that if necessary later.

*Okay. Just tell me because you mentioned before about the calcium and what he specialised in, so medicine.*

Yes, well, that was – he became known for his research work in calcium in chilblains and so he was one of the first people in the world who realised that blood was required to get the classics, the metals around the body and they invented in Hamburg a machine to track the, whatever it was needed there to see and as we say, calcium was used as a main anti-frostbite thing. [00:26:16] It was simple like that but it went on and when Father volunteered for medical services at the outbreak of war here, he had his papers, he was recognised, and they said, well, provided that you are under supervision of a consultant at the hospital, we'd be delighted to have you. And he was then posted to Battersea, Battersea General Hospital where he worked for – as a clinical assistant to this Dr Avery – who I still remember – all through the war, unpaid.

*And that was because of this – the work in Germany?*

Well, that was because his work was recognised, although it was by that time of course fifteen years out of date. But then Father went back full time into medicine when the health service started in '48. By that time he could start as a GP and working without supervision, on his own.

*Yeah. But in Berlin then he joined the bank or he –*

In the '30s, well, he [sighs] – yes, until '35 when he was arrested.

*So tell us about that, please, now.*

Well, we don't know why it started but we believe it was due to his sister who was a communist. [00:28:08] And somebody had denounced him and he was – my father was arrested and taken to the Prinz-Albert-Straße, the Gestapo. He was lucky because the chief goon in the Gestapo happened to be his company commander under whom my father fought in the 1919 revolution in Germany and he fought against the communists, so this Gestapo chappy [ph] recognised him as a colleague, realised that it was a put-up job and took my father and paid for a ticket out of Germany, happened to come to London. It happened to be the plane, the first one out of Tempelhof, which happened to come to London. Now, I've got a gap in my memory because I can't understand quite what happened to him when he first got here. But I know he telephoned my mother but I'm afraid there's a complete blank. I know that he started to join somebody else in business or selling [inaudible] of fashions, goods and things. It was pitiful, going from door to door selling things but [sighs] then different ideas came to his mind. [00:30:04] Have I got time to go on for a moment?

*Yeah.*

Because this is becoming quite interesting I think because Father decided that he couldn't go and deal with these small businesses and so on and the war was near or had come and he said that he would buy used wiping material, wipers, cloth, he cleaned – had them cleaned, had them boiled in a small factory which he had rented at the back of Belsize Park and they used cauldrons to boil the dirty rags which had been collected and sorted from factories. But what was interesting was that they didn't pull the fat and the grease away but they titrated it, sorted the different types of stuff which came out of the wipers, clarified it and sold it as such. [Inaudible] by this time the war was going on and became very important to use, reuse not only the wipers but the muck [laughs] that had been in them. And I was allowed to help at – in the holiday times to sew up bales with great, big, round needle – well, hooks really. You had to sign – tie up the sacks. [00:32:03] And Father was given the royal approval, royal, whatever – what they called, they used the wipers for the motorcars which the royal family used and they gave them the royal commission thing.

*What was the name? Did it have a name, the company?*

The name of the company was Londra, L-O-N-D-R-A. And basically he used to go to Battersea in the morning and in the afternoon he worked at – with the rags. So, then I sort of have recollections of we had to build an air-raid shelter in the garden and there my mother used to do the bookkeeping for the business and he used to do – come back, do the two jobs, he basically – and that’s what helped us while he was establishing this thing. And then comes 193 – er, 1940 – ’48, ’47, he sold the company and bought the house where – in Finchley where he had his practice.

*Okay, let’s just go back a bit to Berlin, Peter. When do you remember things changing for you in your life?*

Oh, yes. What I remember mainly was that I wasn’t allowed to go swimming, I wasn’t allowed to go into the Preußenpark, I was – you know the reason the yellow benches and so on? [00:34:07] Well, to tell you the truth, I didn’t know anything Jewish really and what little I know, I hated because it stopped me from doing what I wanted to do. I had my friends and in the class in school and so on, they were allowed to go swimming but I wasn’t. And at that time already my parents weren’t there to help. My poor grandmother was at her wits’ end what to do. We didn’t like it. Well, I’ll go back a little bit further. Paul-Lehmann-Schule, very nice, very genteel, but one of the first things I remember of that school – you see the photographs – was *Frau Direktor*. Every morning we used to have an assembly where we had to sing Nazi songs, the Horst-Wessel-Lied I still remember and *Frau Direktor* used to crawl around while little children were all singing their hearts out, to stop Jewish children from singing the Nazi songs, ‘*Die Fahne hoch*’, etc, which is well [inaudible]. I don’t remember the words any more but I remember we were not allowed to sing with all the other students because we were *dreckige Juden*, dirty Jews.

*And you wanted to sing it?*

We wanted to sing it, yes, we certainly wanted to sing it and we were not allowed to go at *Schlittschuhlaufen* [00:36:07] This happened in Berlin. They just poured water on tennis

courts in the winter and froze and you put on your skates. But Jews were not allowed in there. And then I was told I wasn't allowed to go back to school and we were reinforced into the Joseph-Lehmann-Schule which was unfortunately run by very Orthodox East German Jews, people and my class teacher was a Herr Rabbiner Grünfeld that I still remember he had a long beard and he looked unwashed. I didn't like him at all. [Sighs] Gaps in things and then one day I was pulled out of the class by two men who afterwards turned out to be interested not in me really but in my father and my grandfather. They took me in a great, big Mercedes car and I was non-communicado [sic] for about two and a half hours while they drove around and around and bought ice cream for me and didn't hurt me at all, except that they wanted to ask question, question, question, question, and the same question again. Now, by that time I already knew what it was to be Jewish and what in fact these people were trying to find out because they said, *Wo ist dein Vater? Ist dein Vater in Palästina?* [Where is your father? Is he in Palestine?] [00:38:15] Well, it showed very quickly that they knew but they were trying to get more information sideways from me. And I can still remember they dropped me off when they finished, perfectly all right. I even had, some chocolate. I got home to this one room and there was Frau Kobler – suddenly the name appears [laughs] – who ran this Pension, Frau Kobler, who was –

*Kobler?*

Kobler.

*Kobler?*

K-O-B-L-E-R. She and my grandmother were crying. They thought that I'd ended up in Dachau, an early version of that, but no, I'd never seen my grandmother cry. And there they were, both of these ladies were in tears when I just walked in and I was quite surprised.

*So there were two Gestapo men?*

Yes.



*Interrogating you.*

Interrogating.

*How old were you? This must have been –*

Well, I must have been about seven. Six or seven. Well, '35 it would have been. No, it would have been '36 already. '35, my father was in London and my mother was also in London because my mother was warned by the chauffeur who was- he was a communist, Kokott was his name. And my father made him – at the time made him join the Nazi party as a communist. [00:40:11] He says, look, it's important to know what happens and this way you, if you feel that way- Anyway, he was so loyal, he'd been in the family for a long while and I wasn't really interested in chauffeurs [laughs] at that stage but he got to know they were coming for my mother – Father was in London – so they drove off to the – across Germany, to the Swiss – to the Czech frontier. My mother had friends in Teplice and they arranged then to have a guide to take her over the mountains and her friends were waiting at the other side and –

*Czechoslovakia?*

Yeah. And took care of my mother and paid for her to go from Czechoslovakia to London. So my parents were here but Klaus and I were stuck in that one room with my grandmother.

*So they both left very hastily, both your parents –*

Well, my father first. And there was no warning at all.

*You said the person paid for his ticket to leave.*

Yes. Yes, he just – he – they, you know, they came out of nowhere to arrest him. It was quite usual.

*But at the time was your grandfather still alive?*

Yes.

*So they arrested your father first?*

They wanted my – my grandfather, that was more or less the end of my German memories. [00:42:10] Yes, I do remember once I was going – coming back from a walk to the zoo and that a whole horde of Nazi people yelling – I remember hearing yelling and they were coming down the main road and some complete stranger picked me up and took me into a house with a nursemaid as – she walked, and said ‘keep absolute quiet’ and that I still remember. A stranger turned around and says, ‘*still, still sein!*’ and then there was a lot of noise outside. They came pouring down the street and disappeared. And when everything was quiet, he shook our hand, this stranger, and said ‘*schnell nach Haus*’ [go home quickly], so we went. That’s one [laughs] – one memory. [Sighs] We used to go to the zoo every – nearly every day. My grandfather’s firm was one of the sponsors of the opening of the zoo. We had free passes. And certainly, a thing I remember was on the way we had to pass the Savignyplatz and they had hoardings on it with great, big letters, ‘*Dank’ der Nation*’ [thank the nation] and things of that type of thing, which you know. It had the effect though that I saw this every day and I saw these big letters and I got our child’s maid who was *Kindermädchen* to teach me to recognise letters. [00:44:11] And at the age of five I could already read large letters and I got [inaudible] where I’ve started writing at that stage, which was also – I remember if anybody had a cold or something like that at home, I was given books to write big, big letters with lines and Sütterlin [historical form of German handwriting], which is what we had to learn, they had like notes and that was highly regarded at school. And I was happy because I was very curious.

*So the signs of those –*

The big, big capital letters basically. Later on, probably others, I don't know, because this is something I find it hard – hard to put a time to but it was early. I know certainly when I went to the Joseph Schule [ph], I could write. *Gut*.

*And of course you started school in 1933, as a six-year-old.*

Yes, yes.

*Yeah. So, I was going to ask you, what about being Jewish? What did it mean to you at all? Did it mean anything before you were confronted with these anti-Semitic [overtalking]?*

It was – my parents were not here and my grandfather took me to – in 1937 to a family *Seder*, a large family, very, very few of them survived, very large family. [00:46:01] I still remember we had almost like a communal hall with three rows of tables of uncles and – you know- but that I didn't like. But no, anything Jewish was negative, absolutely negative. I did not wish to know. And to cut you a story, you can decide to cut this out, is I didn't really under – take any interest in things Jewish until I was at university, when I had to take – had an extra year because I had an external intermediate. I spent that time on comparative religion and I was very lucky here because they – a girlfriend's grandfather was Leo Baeck and Leo Baeck allowed me to come to see him on a Sunday – Sunday morning to discuss what I was doing at university, not just Jewish but Jewish matters within the wider field. And at that time, I became interested and –

*Where did he live, Leo Baeck, when you went to see him?*

He lives [ph] in Hendon, on Hendon Way. And his son-in-law was my father's best friend, he was a chap called Berlack.

*What was his name?*

Helmut [ph] Berlack. And that had another discussion of things. Berlack was an accountant and it had been arranged that as soon as I had qualified, I would join his firm. [00:48:08] Unfortunately, Mr Berlack died three weeks before I qualified and somebody else took the place which had been kept warm for me and I had a very miserable few years.

*Okay. So, the Judaism started then with Leo Baeck?*

The Judaism was a – it was at university, was purely non-emotional and –

*So when you were in your own house with your parents, so did – they didn't keep any –*

No, parents hated it. My parents were positively anti-religion. They said all the things that happened in Germany, they said that could not happen.

*So you didn't go to synagogue or anything like that?*

Not until we got to the point where I wanted at one stage to become a rabbi myself. I became – I had a lot of friends who were in the Liberal or Progressive movement and I was very interested but my father was very strongly against a good *Yiddishe* boy becoming a rabbi [laughs]. So no, I was interested. I've always been interested. Yes, I did some reading and come across it. I've got friends who are very much more active than I am. I gave it up basically when I had to. We had got married in a synagogue, we had children, needed the money. [00:50:02] And whereas there was a lot of money in Germany, there wasn't that much money in England. Well, it was enough. We were comparatively with other people very comfortably enough. But certainly not as it was – it didn't grow on trees, oddly enough.

*So Peter, when you joined your – the primary school, you said there were some other Jewish children.*

Oh, yes.

*But when you were not allowed to sing, so was that a surprise to you that you were different from the other children?*

No, those children were mainly Jewish children in my class. If you have a look at the photograph and look at their names, they're – they were – I think they were mainly Jewish, non – I would say, my guess is non-practising Jewish children.

*And was your brother in the same school?*

He must have been but I am not sure. Two and a half years younger, perhaps not. I was asked – thinking the other day, I don't know what happened that way to him at all. He didn't figure much in my thinking, except for holidays and things of that nature.

*Why? Where did you go on holiday?*

We went partly in Germany, partly in Italy. The chauffeur took us in one of cars and with my mother – Mother was still on holiday – my father came to join us once in '36 as far as I know because I've seen photographs of them in a car in – with friends because they had – they kept in touch with a lot of their friends and they met outside Germany. [00:52:04]

*So what sort of friends did they have in Germany?*

Look, I was seven or eight. I judged them whether they brought us toys or chocolate or something like that. I honestly don't know. They must have been the same class because by and large Berlin was not a very large place and they, shall we say, the Sephardi Jewish-numbers, the families, they all knew each other. There weren't that many.

*So who was Sephardi Jewish in your family?*

I'm sorry?

*You said Sephardi Jewish.*

My mother, but certainly mainly. Look, they're all mixed, if you go back a little bit. But my family, they came from Portugal and there are odd bits in the Spanish Netherlands and then up the Rhine and I think they were this Edler came from either Vienna or Würzburg, we're not quite sure.

*But there were Sephardi [overtalking]?*

Oh, yes. That's what we believe. But don't forget that they were so assimilated that my mother's grandfather, whom I never knew, was a medical doctor, a general, under Blücher [Prussian field marshal in the Napoleonic wars]. Now, there were not many Jews who worked, were officers under Blücher. We don't know and none of our family other than I have ever been interested because the record of this grandmother's grandfather is *Generalarzt*. [00:54:12] Now, *Generalarzt*, depending on whether it is in one word or two, have complete different meanings. We don't know. But he was certainly an officer but whether he was a general GP or whether he was in fact a *Herr General*, as a Jew, is both unlikely but that's the way the family history goes. My – the present generation is not at all interested, have no interest whatsoever. I find it possibly interesting. Certainly, the family, my mother's family history in that way is more interesting because going back, that family was called Edel.

*Edel?*

Edel originally, and they came from Vienna, of that part of the world or maybe further east. Sometime the Edel was changed into Edler, which is going up one stage, and it happened that this family lent money to help finance a local war, it may have been. We think it's in the 1870s, so effectively the word Edler is as you probably know the next stage up if you – it's not as high as 'von' but it is better than Edel. [00:56:17]

*So, from Edel to Edler, yeah.*

So it's amusing. History goes back like that but we are all talking about things. This generation is of no longer any interest and certainly my children aren't.

*But the Sephardi element, so you knew that or – that there were Sephardi and Ashkenazi –*

We would – look, the Ashkenazi strain, very few penetrated across to the Rhine. They stuck in Posen and in that part, in Eastern Germany. They didn't come across to that part. That's

why it appears that the records – how do we know that they – it's the same people? We've got people with the same name, yes, but whether they're actually in the family or not, we don't know.

*Yeah. Yeah, interesting. Very interesting. Peter, just to come back to you, so your father left, you were basically with your brother and your mother, still in the flat?*

We were in the flat for a short period because we packed a lot of furniture, came out of – which was allowed. What wasn't allowed was my stamp collection, or my father's stamp collection. That might have had some value, so they took all that. Anything of any value disappeared. But what was left, there was still quite a lot of that, came to England in lifts.

*In 1935?*

In – yeah, that would have been '38. [00:58:08]

*Oh, later.*

By – as long as that. It took – it took time to unwind things and of course –

*So you were left in the flat.*

We were left with my mother's mother.

*With your mother's mother, not with your grandfather at the time?*

No.

*No.*

No, it –

*So your mother's mother moved in to the flat or –*

My –

*While your mother was still there?*

My mother was only there for a very short – relatively short period of time because she wasn't given the option, she went – she absconded.

*So you were basically then left, the two of you.*

We were two of us, with my grandmother. And the first year, my father's father still paid for the rent and so on, and after that there wasn't that either, so one had to be a bit careful.

*So tell us about the circumstances of your grandfather's murder. What happened?*

My grandfather – well, I wasn't there. But [laughs] what happened was basically they, when was it? It – this would have been '37. It wasn't quite like the Kristallnacht but there was a riot. There was a riot and they broke in to the bank and my grandfather, who used to work all hours of the day and night there, and he was alone and they just basically kicked him and he had a heart attack and the next day – and didn't survive it. And then that I remember the day of the funeral, my grandmother's twin sister – I forgot her but there was a twin sister – took us into the Tiergarten and we were quarrelling, the two boys and this grandmother's twin sister said, '*benehmt Euch, jetzt wird euer Großvater in die Erde gelegt.*' [behave yourselves, it is your grandfather's funeral] [01:00:23] Well, that sticks in my mind. Later on, we got her out, my father got her out and helped her financially to live until she died.

*So once your grandfather was killed, did they then Aryanise the business or –*

The business was I think liquidated and taken over by some of the customers because you see, the business owned mortgages on many, many mills, flour mills, all over the east of



Germany, even Poland, and that – those mortgages were just taken away. They were – other – other people took charge and that was it.

*So until then, your grandfather still paid the rent? So, you were staying in the same [overtalking]?*

As far as I realise. Look, I was seven, eight years old. I don't – but it doesn't make sense if he didn't do it.

*And then your grandmother, what did she do with – she had – was in charge of two children.*

Well, there were two grandmothers, don't forget. No, my father's mother, a very strange lady, and she came to visit us in London, arrived here a fortnight before the outbreak of war and we had – my father had to fight with her 'cos she wanted to return to Germany immediately to pay her *Judensteuer* [antisemitic mandatory levy]. [01:02:20] And then [sighs] unfortunately for her the war started.

*She went back?*

And she was stuck. She was stuck here. But that caused family difficulties because we had rented a house but the house had three bedrooms; one bedroom for my parents, one bedroom for the two boys, and the third bedroom for my mother's mother, who had been looking after us. Now, we suddenly had another grandmother [laughs] so we had the two grandmothers living together in the house all through the war. That, I don't want to have any libel actions but –

*No, so don't say anything else.*

But I don't honestly have to spell it out. It caused difficulties. And then my father's mother went to Israel to live with her younger son and she got cancer and died within a year. It was rather sad.

*But in Berlin your other grandmother took – you said you went to a pension. Just tell us about that.*

Yes. Well, there was practically nothing that I could tell you, except that I had to share a small room, there was a curtain, my grandmother had a bed there, and we were in the other side. [01:04:00] And we quite liked it. We had – the *pension* was on the corner of a little open space, the Olivaer Platz.

*Olivaer Platz?*

Yes, that was a corner of the thing. We could go and play there if we – we just pushed out whenever we could. And we had to clean our room and we had a clean help, Frau Kober to keep the room, the stairs clean and so on. And by and large, we didn't have much time. I don't know. We were at school I suppose. And on Sundays we used to visit my other grandfather – my grandfather and it was a very boring, very plain life. Well, we didn't – didn't have the cash [laughs].

*Yeah. And Peter, how did you feel? I mean you were there your parents were not there anymore. How did you feel about this situation?*

[Sighs] I've often wondered. We telephoned. There was no problem. We had to write a letter every so often and we – I think we all met in '36 in Italy, in the Dolomites. But Father couldn't go back. Lissi was also – yes, it was '36. It was '36. My father had got a substantial sum of money which he managed to transfer to Israel to my uncle's account. [01:06:10] And when my grandfather – his father – discovered this, he blew his top and said if that money isn't returned into the bank's account in twenty-four hours, I shall denounce you to the Nazis. And he meant it. So the money had to be returned. It had been – it would have made life very different, let's put it that way.

*It would have made your life much easier?*

Oh, God, yes.

*But the grandfather thought that it was illegal?*

My grandfather, he was a good German.

*Yes.*

No, my – asking about Jewish things, that come – but odd things come back to my mind while I'm sitting here, is my father was active in Jewish association. He was – I don't know what I would call him – he was one of these people who used to fight with sharp swords, *Chargiert* is the word, *Chargierter* [leading role in a fraternity] of the K.C. [Kartell-Convent, association of German-Jewish student fraternities] the – was a student association which I think was active for a period here in England as well. I remember they had a secret whistle, a whistle tone, and if you – one person noticed and then you were a member of this particular organisation. [01:08:07]

*But it has a name. I forgot now.*

*Chargierte.*

*Yes, but it had a name, sort of like a fraternity.*

Fraternity!

*A fraternity, yeah.*

Well, this- in a completely different way, worked for me many years later when I was training to become an accountant. I had a very rough time because the man I was working under had been working as an accountant for many years and he was very good at adding up three figures all together, pounds, shillings and pence, and he used to be able to go like that, up and down, and I couldn't do it. And he used to make me add up pages and pages of stuff and keep on telling me how stupid I was because I couldn't do it. Now, that was a very big

company in the East End, timber importers, where I was working with him. And this man was really bullying me and one of the directors there watched this and he suddenly started whistling the *Adon Olam* [Jewish prayer], just started the beginning. Well, I knew enough about the *Adon Olam* that I could complete. So, he said, you're coming to lunch. And my Mr Mitchell looked at me and I looked at him and he shrugged his shoulders. So I was taken to lunch, I was saved at least for a day by [laughs] the boss there, starting to sing or whistle this tune, which was rather nice to look back on because afterwards I had quite a nice time doing their audits. [01:10:23]

*Yeah. So, in – so you were in this pension with your brother and grandmother. How long did you stay there?*

Well, I would guess from about May '37 to September '37.

*And in that time did your father try to get you out? Do you know how – what led to your emigration?*

Well, of my – look, they – well, my father was doing what he could in medicine and he was dealing with Woburn House, a Jewish charity at the time, and they were working closely together. Now, I must say we owe them our lives. It's no question that from the beginning of '38 onwards, things got very much more dangerous.

*And when did you manage to leave?*

When did I...?

*Manage to leave Berlin?*

September '37. And my tenth birthday was here. I was nine years old.

*So tell us a little bit about the last – what you remember of sort of leaving Berlin and arriving in England.*

I real – I had a friend at the school called Günter Ring. [01:12:05] His family owned a famous bookshop in Berlin and they were very active politically. Now, Günter taught me everything I shouldn't have known about the Nazis. I didn't know. We had no Nazi friends and we didn't – but he knew and he warned me what to say and what to do in case this happened, in case that happened. And I- in fact became aware of the fact that I wasn't one of them, that there was such a thing as being Jewish, whether we liked it or not. And the only thing at that stage which I knew about Judaism and I didn't like was in the behaviour of the Joseph-Lehman-people, who were really very unpleasant and they didn't like rich people and people who effectively were not Orthodox.

*This was in the – once you were in the Jewish school?*

That's right. So, I became – I gently became aware of this without being able to put a point on it. It was something that happened and as I said, we couldn't go and play in the park where I wanted to play, I couldn't do this, I couldn't do that. I was given some books to look at.

*From this Günter?*

Yes.

*So, Günter you met in the first school?*

That's right. In the first school, it was very nice, *Rollschuhe* [roller skates] in the summer and *Schlittschuhe* [ice skates] in the winter. The only thing we couldn't do was to sing the songs which are sung every morning. [01:14:04] It was – look, we were very young, you know.

*Yeah. So, what about before leaving? Was there a time when your grandmother said, now we're going to go, or how – what were the circumstances?*

No, we – basically it was a very routine life. We had everything we could possibly want. Every day the *Kindermädchen* took us out to the zoo. We nearly went every day to the zoo.

*This was while you were still in your flat?*

That was while we we're still in the flat, yes, but later on with the – in the *Pension*, I don't remember anything. I remember outside in the Olivaer Platz there was a man who used to have *Krebse*.

*Crab?*

Cra – well, not crab, not crabs. He used to race them on the hot pavements and people used to come and give 10 Pfennig to watch this thing and horrible for the animals. But that's an odd thing I remember.

*What animals? What were they?*

Pardon?

*Crab? What were they?*

Well, they were *Krebs*. It's like a large prawn, a big thing with a tail that comes up behind. Anyway, occasionally there were visits from children within *Hitlerjugend* [Hitler Youth] we were told and we – you just melt away, go in different streets and come back later.

**[01:16:01]** And that's – the *Hitlerjugend* came. They did apparently do some damage at the Joseph Schule, Joseph-Lehmann-Schule, but I wasn't aware of it.

*They came to the school?*

They came to the school and made a nuisance of themselves. But these ideas are suddenly coming back and they're coming- I'm sorry.

*[Both laugh] That's why we're here, yeah. Yeah.*

But yes. No, look, I was terribly lucky. You know, I'm probably even now not aware of exactly how lucky we were. I had no physical problems and by and large we were never hungry and [sighs] an odd thing comes to me now, when we were coming to England my grandmother got very nervous because we went by train and outside Vlissingen or Hook of Holland, the train stopped, the Nazis came along and looked at papers, and while that was going on, they had uncoupled the locomotive and I remember seeing it going. It was the dark, they crossed flags, German Hakenkreuz and then there was absolute silence. [01:18:01] It was night, it was dark, the engine had disappeared and we sat there in nowhere. And my grandmother said basically 'nur nicht zurück' [anything but going back]. That's [sighs] where does this come from. 'Nur nicht zurück'. Yes. Well, eventually a Dutch engine appeared and we were pushed onto the ship, and a gale and we spent twelve hours zigzagging outside Harwich Harbour because the ship couldn't go in. And my grandmother was almost dead. She was lying on the floor. And we didn't mind very much, except when – awful noise when waves hit the ship and sometimes the propellers came into the air and made a noise. But we came here and my father was waiting for us. And then Mother was waiting in London because of course, we couldn't all fit into one car.

*So your father was waiting in Harwich?*

He was waiting in Harwich.

*What were you able to take? Do you remember what luggage? What could you take, yourself?*

A small hand case which a nine-year-old could carry.

*What was in there?*

There wasn't anything in there. Clothes and maybe a teddy bear but I don't know. I think my brother had a teddy bear but I was far too big for that.

*So did your parents or your father arrange the journey?*

My father was in constant contact and when I think Mrs Naskin [ph] liaised with my mother.

**[01:20:12]**

*Once you were here? That's Bloomsbury House?*

Once we were here and also helped with- because we had to have permission to land.

*A visa?*

Like a visa, yes, and it wasn't as formal as that but it was first only for I think three weeks and then things became different.

*Yes, so you came on a sort of visitor – as a visitor?*

As a – presumably as a visitor.

*And do you remember – I mean your grandmother had quite a lot of responsibility there with the two boys.*

Oh, God, yes. She stayed, she lived with us all through the war and died aged [sighs] – she must have been pushing ninety.

*And do you remember your own feelings on that journey leaving Berlin? What were your feelings at the time?*

I didn't understand it. I didn't- the – what goes on, I was much more interesting in seeing lots of engines, the trains pulling on. I really – I don't honestly think that I had any valid thoughts at – they tried to keep these things from me as much as they could.

*But you knew you were going to see your parents?*



Oh, yes.

*[Both talking at once] You were probably quite excited.*

No question. I was just worried what happened if my grandmother wasn't allowed and how would we do it then, that I remember because my brother was driving me mad, the little one. **[01:22:01]** It was – wouldn't keep quiet and he had a *Bock [ph]*, it was – keeping quiet was one of the things we had to learn.

*On the train or before?*

Well, not only on the train but at – in shops sometimes. You see, we had – for argument's sake I remember at the corner of the road in Mommsenstraße was a dairy and we used to get *Weißkäse* [cheese] and things like that. Then one day Mrs- Frau Reder – the name's – said I can't serve you anymore. The Hitler Youth have been here and I'm not allowed to serve Jews. So, she said, but if you are totally quiet, I close at- this time, come within ten minutes of that time and tell me what you want and we will sort it. And we did. But there it was a question of one where we were in the dairy waiting for her to pack whatever it was- *Weißkäse*. We had to be very silent in case somebody came back. But as far as we were concerned, nobody did.

*So you learned in Berlin how to [overtalking].*

I learnt – oh, yes, and Günter Ring was my teacher. He told me which streets not to go into, what to do if this happened and so on.

*So you knew how to avoid [overtalking].*

I was taught how to avoid – how to effectively anticipate it, if I hear any noise in the street, turn around and go the other way. **[01:24:14]** That sort of thing, because there – well, we had quite a lot of walking in streets I remember. I don't quite know. If we didn't go to the zoo, we had to go to the Tiergarten. If we didn't go to the Tiergarten, we had to walk down the

Herrenstraße [ph] and things like that. The only other thing is the KaDeWe means a lot to me because we went there quite often and used to have cake – cake and coff – cake and whatever milk coff – coffee with the *Mohrenkopf* [chocolate marshmallow] and that was very – well, within easy walking distance of where we lived.

*And KaDeWe was a department store?*

The big department – well, *Kaufhaus des Westens*. And we obviously must have had enough money for that.

*Yeah. So, Peter, what are your first memories of arriving, then? You had a difficult journey then arriving in Harwich.*

Arriving here, I – well, a) we had been sick for- I was. So, the whole ground was going a little bit like that. We were delighted to see my father. I hadn't seen my father for two years. I'm quite interested that I didn't blame my father at all. I would have thought that a child of this time says, Father left me, would have been antagonistic. [01:26:06] But no.

*You understood enough?*

I – it was – there wasn't – was no idea and Mother had cooked something special already for us and that we accepted without any problems. I'm not sure about my brother but he doesn't seem to exist in the memory very much. I know he must have been there but I was probably far too self- thinking about myself then to worry about other things. No, names are cropping up, through various people and so on.

*So where did they live when you arrived, where did they live, your parents?*

We – my father – my – oh, that's another thing. Now, you are coming into a nice, positive area. It's getting nearer. Mr Orton was the owner of the house, Number 30 Holly Park, which is down the road from – anyway –

*AJR offices, yeah.*

We had Mr Orton and I remember meeting him, moving into the house, and a friend of ours who was a Quaker lived across the road and became a friend – friend both of myself and my parents – he was aged in between. And he owned at that time the Hampstead & Highgate Express. I became the company secretary. But Mr Orton and Mr Goss and my father sat around the table to discuss the rent which my father was going to have to pay for a house. [01:28:02] And Mr Goss- Mr Orton, the owner turned to Mr Goss and said, what would you say is a fair price? And the answer was – and I can't prove this in any way – £12. So, the landlord turned around and said, you think that is a fair price? And he said, 'yes, it's a fair price.' So effectively for £12 a month or whatever it was, we had a whole house all through the war. The house was damaged during the war once and- but we were very happy, except for the two grandmothers which was difficult for the two children because they tried – my father's mother – tried to play off my brother against me because she wanted the bigger room. Anyhow –

*But you managed. So, you lived there, six people, together?*

Yeah. Well, it was – we were lucky.

*Yeah, but for your parents obviously very difficult, a very different change of circumstances.*

Oh, that – later on we lived in the air-raid shelter. We had this shelter- the house had no windows for quite a while and the air-raid shelter, we had our – well, don't forget, we're enemy aliens. That means we're not supposed to have telephones or radios or anything like that. But our neighbour who was a local air-raid warden, arranged for effectively all to – all- I think we were six, twelve- I think we were fourteen people in that one air-raid shelter with double bunks on top of each other. [01:30:21] And we lived in there. My mother did her bookkeeping in there and Father was – did his medical papers and the whole paperwork and so on. I was preparing for School Certificate and Klaus was told to go and read and shut up [laughs].

*That was a bit later. What – when you arrived, did you have any English at all, Peter?*

Oh, I?

*Yeah, did you speak any –*

I had no – no English whatsoever when I first came here. None. And the first thing that happened to me was that the teacher pulled me out in front of the class and he caned me across the hand. I couldn't understand a word. The daughter of acquaintances of ours, was in the class and she stood up and told Mr Harding- no, that I was only looking to see what was going on, I don't speak a word of English. What I was trying to do, I was looking at what a boy – we had two on a bench always – I was just looking to see if I could make out what was going on. Well, the first thing I had is a whole [laughs] – I got a [laughs]-

*Which school was that, Peter? Where was that?*

It was here, in one little primary school.

*The Hampstead Garden –*

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Primary. **[01:32:02]**

*And did he understand, the teacher, your situation or –*

No, not a lot for – it took me about three weeks but after a couple of months I was able to hold my own.

*Was it very different, the school and such, the teacher? You know, I mean of course you didn't understand the language, but apart from that?*

Yes, well, I – it took me about two months to be fluent.

*Were there other refugee children in the – you said your friend –*

I was all alone. Oh, Ellen Kirstein [ph], well, she was already born here. Her parents came from Germany and we got to know them in due course. But there weren't – well, I am not even sure that they were Jewish. No, at that time.

*And I wanted to ask you, why did your father – how had your father come to Finchley? Do you know?*

[Sighs] No idea. Probably through Goss. They were – they said- we had friends in another house nearly opposite and the cousin of my mother's – I think that's how it was – lived in the corner – around the corner in a side street as well. They were all – it was a little colony of people we knew.

*And you said you received help from Bloomsbury House.*

Woburn House.

*Woburn House, yes, so what [overtalking].*

Well, I don't honestly know. Nobody ever told me anything, except for the fact that you owe a lot there, and basically that's- been interested in charity work occasionally. [01:34:03] I – all I know is I was aware of the fact that at that stage we had to live on something rather.

*But you got – in the files you can actually see –*

Well, we can see from there, there was close contact. You've seen that.

*Mrs Lusky [ph].*

That's Mrs Lusky [ph] and there was somebody else as well. But I'm not even sure that Mrs Lusky [ph] is not connected with Professor Lusky [ph], who I got on very, very well with. He was superb.

*But you don't know if they are related?*

Not now, no. He must have been dead for – he was – I was the youngest one in his class. He must have been forty years older than I am, perhaps more.

*That was at the LSE, a bit later?*

Yes.

*But did you ever remember going Woburn House yourself? Did you –*

I never went. I never went. No, I – the only time I had contact with – also a funny, funny story – were at aged sixteen, we had to be de-Nazified here in England. Are – am I allowed to be, er, free? Am I supposed to go and to report to the police every so often? Or do I have to be sent to the Isle of Man or somewhere as a refugee?

*This is a tribunal?*

This is a tribunal. Well, I had to go to a tribunal. I was very upset that I had to go to a tribunal. Really. So, they went and started asking me, 'have you ever been in a restricted area? So, I said, 'yes.' [01:36:00] 'Have you ever been in an area close to military installations?' 'Yes.' 'This young man obviously doesn't realise what he's saying.' 'Oh, yes, I do', says me. I hated this whole thing. I was in Bow Street, in the dock there. And I said, 'well, what have you to say-' I said, 'I'm an officer cadet, I've been in uniform, I am a matter of shooting aid [ph] and two weeks ago I was on HMS Prince of Wales within Portsmouth Harbour, having dinner with the admiral. They didn't believe a word. But it was true. I've – I was an international shooting aid, I was constantly having competitions and A and B and C. Here we had a competition against the navy, so we were given obviously every possible good

thing, important thing. I was taken up in a helicopter, a very early helicopter, shortly before D-day and flown along the Channel to see all the ships gathering for the invasion. They wanted to know whether I'd been in a restricted area [laughs].

*So it can't have been a tribunal. You were too young for it. That –*

No, I wasn't. It was – I was sixteen. It was in – that was the tribunal. I had the argument with them 'cos –

*In '43?*

I decided this was – but the lady who was meant to defend me was sent by the- Woburn House people. [01:38:03] They thought they had to defend a poor refugee who had to be – I [laughs] – I was probably bloody cheeky but I was really, really not prepared at the time for that sort of interview.

*Yeah. What about your father? Was he tribunalled? Interned?*

My father was not interned because he helped with intelligence a number of – in different ways because when he came from Germany he took some papers with him which included plans of mills, flour mills, where they were, what they looked like and so on. And that was interesting for air raids at the beginning of the war and he volunteered and said, 'I've got this information, is it any use,' and they did. And then afterwards they came to call him on two or three times, I remember, to have a look at photographs which had been taken, and does this agree with this, and that sort of thing. And I imagine that's why he was never – never interned. He had – he ran free the whole time.

*Peter, I think we should have a short break and then continue because –*

A long break [laughs]. [01:40:00]

**[Break in recording]**

*Peter, we were talking Britain and your arrival in Britain and you started talking about your schooling. Yeah, maybe let's talk about your schooling.*

Schooling goes into different parts. Part one was in London before the war. Part two is as the war seemed obvious, my parents didn't want us to stay in London and we were advised by friends – family friends, the friends whom my mother stayed with when she came to Czechoslovakia – that Burgess Hill would be a nice place to go to this boarding school. And Burgess Hill was not such a nice place, it got machine-gunned quite regularly, so we were as a school moved to Gloucestershire.

*Evacuated?*

Evacuated. That was quite fun for us because we were evacuated and put up in a very old, very large rectory standing in its own ground. No sooner had we settled in, then another school and similar name arrived. Somebody had made a mistake, so effectively we had double – two schools for the same name. And within a week a third school, but this time a girls' school, appeared and they had – we had all three supposed to go into this huge mansion which was basically – we children enjoyed ourselves. [01:42:11] But at first we had to sleep two in a bed because there just wasn't room. And the school made its own electricity and gas. We had no power normally. So, we had a gasworks in the ground, works with acetylene, and the acetylene then drove- what's happening there? Are you all right, darling?

*Yeah.*

Sorry about that.

*No problem.*

The acetylene then had – the gas had to drive another machine which made electricity. So we had partly gas lighting, partly power and we had to get our own water by pumping and that was always two boys turning this big wheel and bringing a pump but we –



*But where were you – where was it?*

This was in Gloucestershire, in Duntisbourne, where we lived. In school, the teaching was very, very good. There were other points which I pointed out to you, which, well, were a bit odd. And two more odd things, we were not allowed to come back to London during the beginning of the Blitz. So one of the things that happened to me among others in this school was to turn me into an auxiliary choirboy and we were shipped to sing in Gloucester Cathedral, which was a nice place for a Jewish boy, with a nice little ruffle and angelic voice. [01:44:16] Well, it didn't last terribly long as far as I was concerned [laughs] because my voice broke and that was that. One other thing was we had one absolute panic. Friends of ours – it was midsummer, late evensong and we never spent a lot of time being on time. We were always a bit late getting to the car to wherever it was. Well, on this occasion it was already getting dark and suddenly we heard singing from the local church to the tune of *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, and number – this tune is – its use today in the Christian thing. We had two boys including Günter Ring I believe – I think it was Günter – who were frightened that Germans had landed and ran off and hid in a local wood. And then late at night we had to go and find – try to find this boy and even the teachers were somewhat worried, this sort of reaction. But it's part of growing up with the threat of a German invasion.

*So it was just a church singing it? [01:46:01]*

It was – the singing in the church but they didn't know what they were doing [laughs] and we were frightened. That's- the school itself was competent because they had three very good teachers and we had no distractions. I had – I certainly suffered once with my brother. We had meat supplement. The headmaster used to shoot rooks and we had to eat the rooks. But what they did to me just to please me one day is to get a semi-decayed rook and put it in the bottom of my bed. It happened.

*Were there any other refugee children or was it only you and your brother?*

There was one, Corbin [ph], name is quite well-known, again went to America I believe. But education goes on. I got into Highgate School with a lot of difficulty because they would only take 10% Jewish children. And my father was with me, we had the deputy headmaster because the school had been evacuated to Westward Ho! but there was a rump in London and this headmaster, Mr Twidle [ph], raised the point, yes, we'll have to consider this but you must understand that and all that. And my father got up and hit the table hard in front of the headmaster, the deputy headmaster, and said, 'that is exactly what Hitler wants you to say.' [01:48:03] The chap went completely pale and he says, 'what do you mean?' 'My father says, you are preaching anti-Semitism which is sending people to the camps.' 'Do you really believe that?' 'I most certainly do.' 'So, we'll take your boy.' But unfortunately, of course, the numerus clausus remained and I wasn't made a prefect until the last term because we had three other Jewish boys who were older than me and 10%, I wasn't in the 10%. I was offered all the privileges of a prefect which were very important. You were allowed to walk down Hampstead Lane on the left-hand side of the pavement, not on the right-hand side of the pavement, and you were allowed to carry the schoolbooks with a cover – the cover up, not down, various very important things like that. But of course, there were two anti-Semitic teachers as well who I had my collisions with.

*What did they say or –*

They didn't – they called me bloody German. [Laughs] That doesn't help when other children hear a teacher call a student bloody German.

*Did you have this sort of anti-German sentiment? Did you experience that more?*

Yes. Oh, definitely. Well, particularly I had it from one teacher who was one commandant in the Cadet Corps. [01:50:00] Now, I was a very keen cadet and I told you I think, that I became part of a shooting eight competitive international competitive things.

*As a cadet?*

As a cadet. Basically, we probably would have been in the Olympics had there been an Olympics. As it is our competitions were all done by somebody coming to supervise it and it had to be done by post. A camera shop took photographs and so on. And this particular master was a commandant of the Cadet Corps and I passed out top of an examination, in a war certificate. That certificate was given in two bits, part one and part two. Anyway, I had an examination, daytime, daylong examination from – my supervisor was a Canadian major and he was very keen to be nice to me, among other things. But one of the things he had to try to do is – I – one of the things I had to do was to drill a small squad, marching across a cricket field and so on. And he carried out a conversation in German with me, trying to make me shout in German [laughs] at the – at my little demonstration corps and I didn't. And that's the only reason why I think I got a top mark. And this schoolteacher, the major, Major Miller, refused to give me – sign off a prize. He says no. He then – the headmaster said he must do it, so I've got it but as part one. [01:52:06] He wouldn't, wouldn't allow me to say that I had fully qualified. There were all sorts of little things like that.

*What about your accent? You told me before, what –*

They didn't – they – the boys didn't care a damn and two teachers supported me whatever I did. It was quite interesting in that way when we had the junior school master, PT master, was called up and they hadn't got a replacement. And the one English master who got on very well with me and much later with our children, said to me would I take over the PT lessons for the junior school until they can find somebody. [Sighs] Beautiful because we had a – had a rule we had to do a run around Hampstead Heath periphery before school every morning. Well, if I had to teach a junior school, had to watch and I didn't have to run around the Heath every morning, and I in fact asked whether I could have a help of one other. I said I've – a bit difficult to keep control of thirty-odd eight to twelve-year-olds who know that you are not a master really [laughs]. Well, that was a great success and that broke an awful lot of the [sighs] things, although one of them tried to – I think tried to do something. As part of the PT things I had to of course attain the right standards which they – all the other cadets had to do this. [01:54:10] I was told to – had to jump over a pit. [Sighs] Well, I was towards the end of the crowd and I didn't pay very much attention until I was steaming up to a place to jump. When I did jump, I noticed that I was the only one who had jumped and the pit was full

of barbed wire. I landed on the right side. But those tricks were not common but they occurred. They – I had a slight fight once in the changing room and was sent for punishment to the prefects. I refused and I was sent to the housemaster for punishment and I refused again. Then he sent me to the headmaster and the headmaster said, ‘what happened?’ I said, ‘I’d rather not say.’ He looked at me. ‘Can I trust you?’ I said, ‘yes.’ ‘I know why you are here.’ ‘That’s all right,’ I said. That was the headmaster, proper headmaster. He was very, very good. Geoffrey Bell. And there were [ph] brutal little boy who effectively attacked me, got told off, and how. [01:56:00] And the headmaster gave me a special mention at the end of term, in the end of Year Two, where he said thank you to the schoolteachers and so on and so on, and to me for having volunteered to give my time to the junior school. So effectively, there were people who were pulling my way [laughs] as well as pushing the other way. And it didn't happen anymore by the time my brother was there.

*And how did your parents – did you share these things with your parents? How did they –*

Barely. Well, they had other things to worry about. They were basically working and we were living in the air-raid shelter.

*Yes, you said. But you also said before that your mother was selling her designs, you said –*

Oh, my mother was selling all the time. Right the way through the war, she was designing, she was reading what's going on elsewhere, in America particularly, out in France, we – the Free French sometimes had something interesting, and basically, she had about twenty or thirty sketches of different things which were then sold at 5 shillings a time or something like that. It was – you know, there was practically no money in it but quantity, yes.

*So who were her clients? [Overtalking].*

She worked – she had to work very hard and had to help my father as well. She pulled her weight. Education-wise, I got – left school, went to Regent Street Polytechnic, which did me no good at all. [01:58:05] It was a bloody – bloody awful place. I did at least learn what a girl was. Of course by that time, being in a boys’ school and had no idea at all and didn't

know what that other story is and got into LSE, that was to everybody's surprise, including me [laughs].

*What were your plans? What did you think –*

I wanted to do economics and banking. Because of Grandfather, I was interested in international money policy and so on. But [sighs] unfortunately fate thwarted me again and gave me whooping cough in the middle of my finals, so I never completed my degree and they gave me a choice of a free – of a year, another year to take the year on, or to take a no-class degree, which I chose. I had had one year at Regent Street Polytechnic and three years at LSE in any case. To have yet another year under no guarantee that I don't get them, God knows what, I gave it up. My father said, 'if you go and take an academic career,' which is what I was thinking about, 'you'll never get anywhere without a first-class degree, and a no-class degree will leave you at the bottom of the pile wherever you are, so that's out.' And that's the way it was, out. **[02:00:00]** I was very pleased to be offered a job as a junior lecturer in history, economic history but I didn't take it and came an in-between period, we had the Korean War as well and [sighs] I worked for two or three different companies in trying to get a bit of experience of what a real life was while [ph]. And then finished up with Stoy Hayward who are around and I got some very good experience there, enjoyed it very much until my world collapsed because it turned out that the man who I was responsible to, the head of the section, was double dating me – my girlfriend and he without telling anybody, she without telling anybody, published their engagement in The Times and I knew nothing about it and I just could not go on working for the man who had done that. So, I moved from that firm, from Stoy Hayward, to two other firms. One was a firm – was the Berlack firm which I think I mentioned to you before, for a short period of time and I was supposed to help there. **[02:02:03]** And it didn't work out, somebody else got the job, and then I went to McLintocks and was put into the high-worth individuals and that paid for all the hassle, I – when they had most of the sort of Lord-this and the Honourable-that and so on, all people with heavy amounts of money and I travelled around the country doing their tax returns. And as a sideline a number of these Lords-this had granddaughters and they were all of an age where they were coming out, and grandparents always saw to it that some non-chinless wonders, like yours truly, were invited to the coming out balls. So I spent quite a lot of time

going to very posh parties with people I didn't really fit in to. But I enjoyed and had a photograph taken of yours truly dancing with a daughter of Haile Selassie, and the Queen Mother and I danced once in the Grosvenor. Would you believe it? She came, she was – the Queen Mother came in and she stopped – we were all standing up there and she says I know you. And she had – I was one of a team who were doing work in Clarence House at the time and the Queen Mother had come in quite often and if it was teatime, she used to give us tea. [02:04:06] She had somebody, a flunky, holding a tray and she just said – that was fun. I learnt quite a lot. I also stopped being completely wet behind the ears and then LSE was –

*Did you join any other – did you join any youth Jewish social things?*

Oh, I went to the Liberal synagogue at all that time, until I got engaged really. I was one of the *machers*, the youth group accountant doing their accounts as well.

*And why the Liberal synagogue? What –*

This was the Liberal in St John's Wood.

*Yeah, and did you have a connection there or your parents [overtalking].*

Not really. I just walked in. And the youth minister, Philip Cohen, looked after me not only at the synagogue – well, he sent me quite a lot of work – and he married us in the end. We were very, very fond of him and he was anything other than an intellectual. Philip was a ex-chaplain to the serv – in the army and he was a very down to earth man. And at the time I was quite keen on getting into the rabbinate. I had – John Rayner [ph] was a friend, Michael Lee [ph] was a friend, various people, although they said to me afterwards that I wasn't the right material and they were so right. [02:06:03]

*So tell us, when you met Leo Baeck as well, just a [overtalking].*

Yeah. Well, Leo Baeck and I met in very shortly after the end of the war. This was already quite – six months after the end of the war, something like that.

*So had he just come, because he survived and came to Britain after the war –*

He – well, he had been in Britain before and he went back as a volunteer to Theresienstadt and even the Nazis didn't touch him. He was –

*So you met him when he – shortly after –*

I – look, I knew the Berlacks. My father's best friend was Leo Baeck's son-in-law and I knew the – I knew my other [ph] and that's the way it all – it all happened.

*So did you speak German to Leo Baeck?*

I probably did. I don't know. That's an interesting question. I certainly wouldn't have spoken German to any of the other of the family. But I would guess I would have done. I don't – interesting. I don't know the answer.

*Did you speak German to your parents at all or –*

No. No, we never did except when we were trying to provoke people. I [laughs] remember – it's coming to me – we were going on a holiday to north Wales and this was a time when there was, no name shields [ph] on the stations. The train just stopped, there was. We went in, we had to change train stations. We were going to go to Morfa Nefyn and we had to go and change train in Pwllheli I believe. [02:08:05] Anyway, I remember asking somebody whether this was the right platform for some – this was, what, two o'clock in the morning – and the chap didn't reply, so I spoke a bit louder and he just looked at me. And I turned around to my father, I says, this idiot doesn't know what he's talk – well, he doesn't want to talk – in German. Ah, you're a foreigner, [laughs] you go to platform number three [laughs]. And then again, they had frightened us. There was a cable station on the Llyn Peninsula where cables go across to America or somewhere. And my father got upset because we were all foreigners [laughs] and nobody stopped us going anywhere near here. So effectively, my dad- starts goose-stepping in front of the station, singing loudly First World War songs, of the

Austrian army which had – I don't know where he knew this. And we nearly died [laughs]. We were so frightened. We thought that – nobody paid the slightest attention of this lunatic marching up and down and goose-step [laughs]. And I suspect on occasion, Father actually mentioned this, that there weren't any sentries on duty at all and was this necessarily a clever thing to do. [02:10:03] But when we were side – have you still got time for sidesteps?

*Yeah, go on.*

Well, we got a – I got a client, a chap we know him very well but we didn't know what he was. But we were sitting here and Edward having coffee, Michael comes up to us, says, 'Edward, you a soldier?' Edward looked and said, 'well, yes.' 'Have you got a gun?' 'Oh, yes,' he says, 'look.' Take off the heel of his shoe and he had a small pistol in there. He gave it to Michael. I said, 'is this loaded?' He said, 'I always load my guns.' There was David aged six or so. Anyway, this chap was extremely serious, and a spy. He had his – a car. He had a Mini car which had an electronic button. In it, we can turn all traffic lights red. If he had to get somewhere quickl-y he – this was that. And one occasion I went to see him. He had a place apparently at the time just off Kensington High Street and Bridget was already – we went together. And we went to – we were told to go and see him at this number. Well, let's – multiple house steps [ph], four flights or so, but the top button was 'The Administrator', so we looked at each other and said, well, we don't know which floor it is but 'The Administrator' sounds a little bit like [John] le Carré [02:12:13] So [laughs] we marched up four flights of stairs, pushed the button and the wall I was leaning against – this was like that, and I was facing this way – this wall moved aside and another chicken ladder went up and there he was on the top flight under the eaves in a space perhaps three times the size of this room, full of electronic gadgetry, all manner of dials and things. And at the far end was a lady who just looked at us and was obviously lip-reading. He didn't introduce her, she didn't come up and say anything, she was just sitting there and looking at us. We did our job, our business and so on, and took our leave and that was that until another few months later. My photography problems appeared and we got a letter coming – something came through the post. 'We, like you, have reason to believe that you do not wish to be told what you may and what you may not publish. [02:14:00] We are sending you some samples of the sort of things which we can supply. The address to send your money of so much to was this address where



this chap was, The Administrator.’ The pictures in this book which were meant to be – were sheer pornography. I didn’t hide it from my wife but we said, look, what can we do? This is Edward’s address. I said, ‘there’s not much’ – I said, ‘look, I’m going to talk to him.’ So I rang him and I said, ‘look, I’ve got to see you.’ He says, ‘I am busy.’ I said, ‘Edward, I wouldn’t ring you if I wasn’t seriously worried and I do have to see you.’ He says, ‘what is it? Who does it concern?’ I said, ‘you.’ ‘All right, meet me in an hour’s time on the third floor of Selfridges garage.’ I go round, show him this thing and he says, ‘thank you, I have to deal with it.’ That was all. He went off, I went off. And then three or four days later, who was sitting here? Doorbell rings, I open the doorbell [sic] and two large, very large men push the door right open and had me against the back of the stairs. [02:16:05] And he said, ‘is your name Newman?’ I look at them, I says, ‘who the hell are you?’ ‘You answer my questions.’ By this time, number two goon was in here taking books off the shelves – then we had different shelves. I felt distinctly unhappy. And the other one was pushing Bridget against [inaudible], basically ‘leave her alone’ but they were about twice my size. ‘Anyhow, who the bloody hell are you?’ ‘Don’t take that tone with me, sir.’ I said, ‘don’t you take your tone with me, sir.’ I was shaking inwardly. I didn’t know what the hell this was, this was really. And this chap was taking books out and putting them back again.

*So what was it?*

It – I – when they went, they didn’t do anything, just turned and went out. And I rang up the local police station and asked, ‘did you send any heavies here in this area?’ He says, ‘what are you talking about, sir?’ ‘I said look, this is what happened. I had two big, fat, huge, strong goons break into this house, push me and my wife against the walls and start looking at – through things.’ [02:18:11] ‘Oh, that wouldn’t be us, sir.’ So, I contact and he said, ‘well, I’m sorry that you have been troubled but I think that they have been checking up on me. They wanted to find out who my contacts are and I’m sorry you’ve been troubled.’ No end to this story because Edward had a heart attack and he was invalided out of the service.

*So what was his job or function in the service?*

Well, we can only guess. All I know is that he was also in Marbella at the time when the Irish, people in Gibraltar got – two people got shot. It could well have been that he was involved.

*So MI5 or MI6 or something?*

No – no finality to that question other than the goons had my name and address but they didn't – they never came back. But that happened in England.

*But why did they send you this, the folder with this pornographic [overtalking]?*

Oh, in the first place they – it didn't- they used photo box or something like that and they got my name probably off a whole list of people and they just wanted to sell me their porn. It didn't concern anything else but it was quite an interesting experience. **[02:20:06]**

*And when was this roughly?*

We never heard any more.

*But when was this, Peter? When?*

When was this? Is the – is around. No. Well, David must have been probably three, to play with this pistol, so [sighs] [coughs] it was fifty years ago, almost exactly fifty years ago.

*Tell me a little bit about the end of the war and your naturalisation. When did you become British?*

1947, my father. He was – got the naturalisation and the name change, although the name change was already at their request during the war.

*So name changed from, to...?*

From Neumann to Newman. As I say, we knocked off a loop on the one and stuck it to the end of the other. But [sighs] that was basically –

*And was it important for you to become British?*

Yes, I'm – I would have thought that we would have, in fact this – yet we're coming to something else, okay, but I think National Service would have done that and would have – certainly wouldn't have had considered the thought of anything else.

*So by the time you did the service, you were British?*

Well, I didn't. [02:22:03] They kicked me out. I was – I spent three weeks with them. I – my father nearly divorced me because I appealed against being rejected. I was rejected because I was wearing glasses and this was at the end of the, Korean War and they gave me an option at the time of being requalify – redirected into the mines into the army. I already had my air force, um, I think they kicked – they said we have to – we can't have you – or to do work of national importance in a factory, and that's what I chose. But I have apparently something in my head that if I get a knock in the right thing, I can go blind and they didn't want that to happen. I didn't know that I had it. Nobody knew I had it. But I was – I was wearing glasses all the time until just recently. And they thought I was putting – wearing glasses to avoid National Service, whereupon I go and gave them my shooting qualifications and medal and said would anybody wishing to get out of his service go that line. This is I want to get in, I'm enjoying the fact I have competition in shooting frequently and I'd like to go on. [02:24:03] 'Well, sorry, sir, we can't help you.' My father was delighted and I was upset and I was directed to a company which in fact my parents knew, making food machinery, cooling equipment and ice cream making and that sort of thing. And I had two years of getting deafened by noise in the machinery shop.

*Instead of military service?*

Instead of military service I had to do that and I just basically had to submit a certificate from the form, they had to fill in a form that I was actually still doing – was still there. And I

enjoyed that. I learnt quite a lot, very different from – I mean but antagonism again, antagonism from the staff, here's somebody with a university degree who's – it wasn't true but I had interesting times there. And I spent time getting additional qualifications which were no use to me at all in milk technology. I went to Chelsea Polytechnic in the evenings because I felt I had to talk to people. They were all Italians, customers, and I couldn't speak a word of Italian but we were dealing with milk products and cooling, that sort of – so I had to say – I had to learn something. And I've forgotten it all but I've still got textbooks on how to fix a refrigerator, that sort of thing [laughs]. [02:26:08]

*And at the time, were you still living with your parents?*

Yes. Very little money.

*And your grandmothers were still there as well?*

My grandmothers were still there.

*And how did they manage with the language or with the whole situation in England?*

I don't know. I know my parents both – well, my father picked up English quickly. I think he probably had some to do when we're selling [ph] these gramophone records and things. And he was a boss in the company, so effectively I knew their funny mistakes but no doubt I made them too. I know the car broke down once and he was trying to get help about the *Hinter* axle [rear axle] [laughs] which had broken. The poor AA man or whoever it was, he says what the hell is this lunatic talking about [laughs].

*Hinterachse*

Yes, there were odd things like that I suppose but no, we were a very good, close family by and large. Under normal circumstances I think it might not have been as easy. Seriously, because my parents were both doing more or less two jobs all the time, so they didn't have that much time for us and we basically accepted that. You see, my brother went straight from

school into medical school and that meant he was living away from home in any case and I was left to my own devices most of the time. [02:28:07]

*And you said your father then became a GP or started working as a doctor.*

My father, as soon as the health service opened, he opened a GP- an NHS practice. He was doing medical work for – all through the war years and then from '46 to '48 I think it was, until the health service started, he was working as a locum in – for the man who was emigrating to Israel. So, he was already when he bought that practice, he bought the house with a practice involved in it.

*And where was that?*

Opposite where the AJR is, in 312 Regents Park Road. That is where – it doesn't exist anymore. It's where one of these red block, multiple-storey buildings around the back but there is a medical practice on the ground floor there.

*So also during the war he managed to do some medical work as some other –*

In the mornings he was doing medical and afternoons and evenings and in the rake train [ph].

*Amazing.*

Amazingly, he stuck it medically, mentally. I'm not sure that I would have, find it that easy.

*And Peter, after the war did your parents, did they go back to Berlin? Did they –*

Never. Positively not ever, wouldn't consider it.

*What about restitution and getting things back?*

Nothing, it didn't apply. [02:30:02] There was something which came off. I got a German lawyer to look into things for me because I was interested but they said fundamentally there is no restitution because my grandfather was killed before the date, so from that – the fact is that the bank went bankrupt has nothing to do with restitutorial wealth. And my grandparents' house which was changed into a brothel was burnt down by accident also before 1937 as far as we know and very sorry but there ain't any – I think they had a retirement pension or old age pension but not anything in the way of serious money. But my father wouldn't even accept that.

*Why? He was against the idea of restitution?*

He said, 'look, I don't want to have anything to do with them.' Full stop. I don't think he was the only one.

*No. Did they have any relatives left in Germany or –*

We lost nearly everybody. We lost about eighty-four people. It was a big family. And they just didn't want to move. Look, my grandfather didn't want to move. My grandfather was going to try to – if the money didn't come back to Berlin, he was going to denounce his own family. [02:32:03]

*Because he was so law-abiding and felt German?*

That's right. He was German. Do you think we've got time for another little story? A funny little story. After the, well, after the war was quite a while ago. I – my father, yes, had to apply for a pension or whatever it is and it turned out that he had to prove that he was a German, that he was German. Now, we had – which has just been lost – a *Stammbuch* where all the certificates were entered into and basically that was submitted to the consulate here in Germany and they said yes, this is all very interesting, we've got a family, the fact is that you lived in Germany for nearly 200 years and that you were Jewish. These are *Judenausweis* or something like that. But it doesn't prove that you were a German national, so you can't have anything. I had a lovely idea. In 1935 I think the German Hitler awarded *Kriegsmittelnehmer*

[ph][combatant] for people who were – who served in the army in the '14-'18 War.

[02:34:03] Now, that applied to my father and my father had been sent in the post this medal, so I went talking to the German consulate here in London. I said I think I have sorted the prize that we can prove that my father was not only resident but he was a national. Do you think that it is possible that Adolf Hitler would give a medal to a Jew in that year? The man looked at me. He says, '*ganz unmöglich.*' [absolutely impossible] I said here's the medal. So that sorted that one out. But it's [laughs] – it's a crazy idea that it was in fact this stupid medal.

*This is about your citizenship, when you got German citizenship? And when did you apply for German citizenship?*

Automatic. It came automatically with the EU when you applied and fill in the papers it says do you wish it to go for your children or you not wish it? And when I did it, I said no, I didn't wish it, although they, the kids are very upset by it. They've [laughs] done their own things.

*But why did you want to get it, Peter, the citizenship?*

I wanted to get the pension. [Laughs] Well, it's quite honest, I still had I think eight or nine years to go. It wasn't imminent but it was relatively cheap. [02:36:01] I had to pay about 1000 Marks or something like that and then in due course –

*So you got it?*

I got it. I get my £385. I think it's gone up just now. But I said if I can [laughs] *Wenn man Dir gibt, nimm'!* *Wenn man Dir nimmt, schrei'!* And that's –

*Who told you that?*

*Vater.*

*[Both laugh] Translate it for us, to anyone. What does it mean?*

Well, if one offers you something, take it. If one takes it away, shout. Nice?

*Yeah.*

[Laughs] It's an interesting language. It's got some things which don't seem to translate properly.

*Yeah. We were talking about restitution. I wanted to ask you, when did – did you ever go back to Berlin? Never?*

[Shakes his head] I've been to Berlin for about three hours. I had to get some papers notarised but not for me, for a child [ph]. I spent more time in Köln and a little while in Munich but that was not for me. I find it almost frightening to have two Germans talk to each other. It really scares me. It's completely crazy.

*Meaning to listen to –*

But if I listen to Berliner, you know, not cultured people, just talking and I can see they're coming around the corner with a stick... [02:38:09]

*You're scared?*

Yes. I suppose so. I can't understand why I don't want to sleep in Germany. I used to fly in, I used to fly out, if necessary, come back next – the following week instead of staying there and getting things done.

*So you never slept in Germany?*

Once or twice. Socially, we had to do, with my wife's family. You know, I am not stupid but I feel unhappy.



*Well, it's an emotion, isn't it?*

It's just there, and the noise or the sound of two uneducated German talking to each other. I have met many German people on work. We met people on holidays who – a judge, I got on famously with him. But there's always that little bit of extra. And we had a shock in – on holiday on one occasion. We were sitting and having some coffee and somebody who stayed in the hotel, see them on the beach, just come and sit, join us and talk, have a chat. And then after a few minutes, ,*Wissen Sie was ich im Krieg gemacht habe?*‘ [Do you know what I did during the war?] I said, ,*nein.*‘ ,*Ich war Kommandant vom Konzentrationslager.*‘ [02:40:00] We got up and we did say good evening and left them to it. But I have never forgotten that and you can ask Bridget afterwards. I'm sure she'll tell you the same story because it was so shocking. *Kommandant vom Konzentrationslager.* I don't know which, they were –

*Did you ever talk to the person?*

*We didn't stop to [inaudible].*

*You just left?*

We just left. There are to – limits to what we were trying to get and we agreed the fact that there are lots of people who suffered badly and so on. Mind you, if you see what's happening in Germany at the moment it's not buried that deeply.

*But what is it, Peter? So, you said you – is it the sound of two people speaking, it's –*

I think so.

*What does it –*

I think it's something which I was listening for the Gestapo or the SA to come and so on, you listen to people in the street, whatever it might have been, I can't – I honestly don't know.

But I know that I feel very uncomfortable. Crackers, possibly. You know, it's silly because I know nobody will come and with a stick and set upon me obviously but it's there.

*And is it particularly – you said the sort of- more sort of the Berlin –*

It's Berlin, in [inaudible], yeah.

*So that must bring back something. [02:42:02]*

It brings – I don't know where it comes from because look, I was a child.

*Yeah, but it's very much the fear of a child, isn't it? The –*

It could be, it could be. It's – I sometimes wonder where these odd illogical things come from because they are illogical.

*It's an emotion.*

Yes.

*But did you – were you never curious to go back to your flat, for example?*

I wouldn't – I would – I've walked past the house, I have looked at it, but that's all.

*So how did you –*

You see, we didn't go very far. We went on holiday by car, we walked from home to school, which was just around the corner, and that is it. And, you know, if you look at the age groups concerned, there's a very short period only where you effectively become aware of- maybe things are not quite as easy as you would like them to be. It's – you know, if I had been another two or three years older, I think it would have been very different.

*In which way?*

I would have been active in some direction. My friend, Günter Ring was and I'm quite sure I would have gone the same way. But at that time and when it mattered, my parents weren't there, we – things were already on – very much on the change, so we were presumably occupied by that. [02:44:12] But I can't, you know, I can't put hand on heart and say this, or this was it, I don't –

*And Peter, how do you feel today about Germany and the Germans?*

I'm nervous. I'm not surprised. I'm nervous particularly with the people in the east. The Germans I met personally, were all very cultured, very nice, basically interesting. The people I met were moneyed people and it – there weren't all that many. You know, I didn't spend a lot of time looking for German clients. Yes, if somebody walked through the door, they were welcome, I had some very interesting time, German companies putting money into English companies and they were actually listening to me, which is unusual. You know, I'm not a company expert or anything like that. Yes, I had common sense, I did work in the hotel industry with this American group which did have French and German and Italian and Swiss hotels which – all of which I had to keep an eye on.

*So did you work – did you have your own company, Peter?*

Yes.

*You had your own company.*

Yes.

*As a chartered accountant?*

As a chartered accountant, very often behind that curtain [laughs]. [02:46:03] No, I had an office in town which was redeveloped and I got compensation and I bought – I built the annex next door, so it saved me the hassle of having to try and go into town, unless I had to.

*Peter, tell us a little bit how you met Bridget.*

Bridget, well, I – we were introduced. That's – in fact it was – and the man's funeral today and he was somebody Bridget went out with- year – not seriously. He was too – too unpleasant I felt for it to be serious. Anyway, we got forced together by my sister-in-law because they disapproved of my girlfriend. They were right but they were also wrong. They should never, ever have had interfered. Let me make my own mistakes. And second time – I made myself really actively unpleasant that I didn't – and we were asked for a dinner party and I said the only way I can do it without being totally rude is to make sure that I don't get asked again. And –

*[Laughs] So you went, and being very sort of horrible?*

Very. I had a Jewish girl who was totally free physically in every sense of the word. [02:48:05] And for four years we knew each other, we went out with each other when we wanted to, and we didn't when we didn't, and we – it wasn't as if – she didn't have me as the only boyfriend and in fact she had drugs problems and all sorts of things and my father was perfectly right not to be very happy.

*So your family wasn't happy about [overtalking] choice?*

The family was tot – oops, I'm sorry. Family was totally unimpressed but she was everything a young man might want. We were totally, totally friendly and we were friendly even for a number of years after we got married, we were just real, real friends in the wider sense of the word. And –

*So you went to a dinner party because you were asked to or –*

I was forced to, yes. It was organised by my brother's wife that we met because Bridget knew that family well before she knew me. Anyway, the second time around I was forced by my father who interfered. He said look, your family have taken all this trouble, you'll bloody well go and have lunch with the girl. I'm not going to ask what happened afterwards but I want you, for your sister-in-law's sake, to behave like a human being. What choice did I have? I was still living at home. So we had lunch together in the City and we had a very nice lunch and we chatted for I don't know how long and things just turned up then and six months later we were engaged [laughs]. [02:50:00] But oh, we had all sorts of terrible troubles. My father was a man who would never accept any form of criticism of himself or any part of his family. He was right and that's all there was to it. And on one famous, most important occasion he and I crossed swords because he says, 'you can't get any good pastries in England, you've got to go to Vienna.' 'Well,' I said. 'Oh, no, I've had some very good pastries here.' He said, 'you haven't.' My father had a patient, a Czech pâtissière, Mr Karel. My names are coming back. And I went to Mr Karel who had his shop in Temple Fortune and I poured out my heart to him and he says, 'leave it to me, Peter. I'll have something for you next weekend when you're supposed to be going to have coffee with him.' So, he made me a selection of the most scrumptious cakes you can possibly imagine, things like that. So I went to have coffee with him, I put the box on the table which was not touched by anybody. Father-in-law just looked at me but didn't say anything. Next day I – it's the day afterwards he said, 'those cakes were good.' [02:52:02] That was all that said but we never, ever had an argument about anything.

*That was your father-in-law?*

Father-in-law, Bridget's father. And then –

*[Inaudible]*

It was – he was a very, very clever man. But also, if you think of a Jewish family when you get the – we don't actually know or whether we think the family came from Galicia but we don't know. He came from Vienna and built up this business of his alongside but he had done all sorts of other things. He'd been in the Austrian army, had been a prisoner of war of the Italians, had owned and run a dance school. He then went into with Ullstein where he might

have run across my mother, for all we know, because they both were working for the same company at the same time. And oh, it was – we had a lot of fun, a lot of fun, but had our ups and downs as most people do.

*And once you got married where did you settle, the two of you?*

You're sitting in it.

*Uh-huh, here?*

We had a short period of flat in – behind John Barnes in Finchley Road on the fourth floor, an impossible place, which was literally falling to pieces. [02:54:00] But my mother-in-law had found it for us while we were on honeymoon and we had that for about three – two or three months while we found this house and did it up and we've been here ever since. It's sixty years next February.

*So which year? When did you get married?*

'64.

*So you raised your family here in this house? And you sent your children to Highgate School as well?*

Yes. And my brother's children also went there. We all – my brother went there, I went there, my brother went there, our children went there and my brother's children went there.

*So despite your own experiences [laughs] there were not –*

Oh, yes. Well, I think quite seriously those experiences are not confined to us. It would have happened probably everywhere. I don't think it was anything – at least we didn't take it as anything very special. Yes, it was unpleasant but there are all sorts of unpleasant things that happen in life and you just basically look the other way and carry on. I nearly killed

somebody once. I'm not very proud of it but I did. I had an office on the fourth or fifth floor in Golden Square and there was circular stairs going up. Now, one of my clients was a Polish solicitor who used me for inspecting certain documents which came his way, moneywise, to see what somebody who looks at the records can read from them. [02:56:10] It was quite an interesting connection. I quite enjoyed doing the work because you see bank statements and so on. Now, what sticks out and doesn't really ring true I'm sure, on this occasion I had a Mr Belau [ph], a Pole, and he was a very naughty man. And I got this job about him and I wrote a report and sent a bill and I still remember him saying, 'I'm not paying.' I said, 'pay, I've done the work.' He says, 'you've not shown me anything that I didn't know beforehand.' Well, the solicitor, who was this man's adviser, nearly died. And then Mr Belau, 'it's you bloody *Yids* do everything for money', whereupon I'm afraid I lost it and I got hold of him by his shirt collar and I started shaking him and then I started pushing him over the circular stairs. Well, my then- a temp [ph] partner – who was a friend of mine, we were working together – got hold of me and says, 'pull him back, it's not worth going to prison for.' And I just got- [02:58:00] He lost his teeth and I think I would have literally dropped him. I had the solicitor there. He didn't know what to do. I got paid.

*So that enraged you, this – he touched a raw nerve or something.*

It just – it just went, and when he called me a bloody *Yid*. I'm sorry, there are some things which I don't put up with.

*You think that this was related to your own experience, to –*

Listen, it's not anything I am terribly proud of. It's not a thing that one should be proud of. But he was a) a Pole which in itself is something which rings alarm bells with me and b) he was effectively refusing to pay something which I had spent quite a lot of work on which annoyed me and then he insulted me on top of it all. I thought that was enough, enough to drop him down five flights of stairs.

*This brings me to the next question. How do you think your own experiences impacted your later life? Like as a refugee, as a child refugee.*

As a child, I don't think it made any real difference. I was, well, I am, very lucky in knowing a lot of people of my own shall we say, race, interest. I am still interested in things Jewish. [03:00:04] I have the present president of the Liberal Synagogue as a close friend of ours, we often talk about some of their problems, which I like, it keeps me in touch with something which is outside. I've just recently come in contact with another Jewish organisation, Paperweight. They were actually very helpful in setting up- my speech is going. Just give me a minute. It will come back. And doing power of attorney. I'm sorry, it does - shows that I'm not as young as I was but that is what I find most difficult, difficult to put up with the fact that there are things which I can't do any more. And my brother is ill and it's not a thing that will ever get better, worries me. They're all right, they're financially comfortable as far as I can see, so I'm not worried on that score. But yes, there are things obviously. As one gets older you –

*What do you worry about?*

Basically cash. I'm very lucky people are helping me. The fact of having a living-in carer is very expensive. [03:02:05] And whereas everything was doing very nicely, I'm spending more than I earn. It doesn't matter, there's enough for a while in any case but if there is anything to worry about, that's what worries me because I was brought up with my parents being very stressed, moneywise and as a boy I remember seeing people at one time coming into the house to buy this or buy that to raise some more money, and that hurt. And –

*You saw your parents' financial worries? In the wartime?*

Yes.

*And post-war probably as well.*

Well, this is something, it's not acute, there are people who are hungry, it's not at that line of country [ph] at all. But I was always trained from the beginning to live within one's income.



*One's means.*

And I can't do that anymore. I have to use savings to pay. You know, in – it's – there's enough there.

*Are you worried at all about the political situation today, about recent events, Peter?*

I – let me put it to you in another way. I have a watchful eye on what's going – it's not that I'm looking the other way, not at all. I'm – yes, I am concerned. I haven't got to the worrying stage yet. I don't like the idea of having a mob going down the street coming to set fire to this house. [03:04:04] I think that is a little premature but it's not totally impossible. And what would one do – look, I wouldn't want to go to Israel quite honestly, in not only the fact that I don't speak the language but I don't like what I see over there either. But where does one go?

*That's a question.*

You sit it out. In the end I think it's still one of the best places in the world to be in. I wouldn't know, maybe Australia, but I don't know Australia, I don't know anybody who's been there other than for – on holiday, and that is a form of escapism and you have to face up to the fact that you're lucky to be here.

*Do you feel British? What do you feel is your identity today?*

I don't feel British, no. I don't even feel Jewish. Because here, and please don't accept this as any personal situation, the English Jews do not like *Yekkes*, and I am a *Yekke*. I don't think I have to explain that in more detail but it exists. I see it with all my neighbours here. They say yes, hello. During the Covid time, lots of young people, one family knocked on the door and said can we help. [03:06:00] The others, you are not a member of a *shul*, you don't go to Kinloss Gardens either, we don't wish to know.

*So, it's the English Jews [overtalking] the German Jewish refugees.*

Particularly. No. And look, let's face it, the German Jews as such look down their noses at the eastern Jew, and most of the English Jewish families are of eastern – Lithuanian, Polish – origins. They don't like us and we don't like them.

*And did your parents feel that as well? Did –*

They didn't – never had time. My father was a very popular GP. They used to be at eight o'clock in the morning, used to come in and they used to sit up the stairs because the waiting room was full. And even five or six years after my father had died, I was stopped in the street often and told by people I look like my father and how much they appreciated him. It's, you know, that side of it is fine but I've given up worrying. You know, it's sad. I have practically no – well, I have no male friends any more.

*That comes with age [laughs].*

It's time, it's time. You can't blame anybody. But I miss them because at that time I was still much more active in synagogue matters and so on. Can you see, I was able to assist even in the youth services and things like that, yes.

*In the Liberal synagogue?*

I had to prepare for it. It's not a thing which – which just came. [03:08:03] But yes, there were discussions and there were discussions on Mattock and Edgar and Cohen. I don't like Alexandra White who is the chief – head rabbi now. [Sighs] She's – well, this doesn't interest you. She's – she and the other people are too Orthodox.

*What do you think, Peter, of the recent merger of the Liberal and the Reform movements?*

I worked hard for it years ago with Dr van der Zyl, and Louis Jacobs helped there, from the top end. I was working from the bottom end. But yes, I was working very hard for youth groups to get together, not for any religious meeting but to have an *Oneg Shabbat* and then as many people as wanted to, would just come to somebody's house and have tea and biscuits

and we just used to talk. But the [coughs] problem at that time was that the rabbis said we can't allow you to have this without a rabbi being present to guide you. And I said no, we just do not want this. This is just the point. We needed to be taken from inside, without supervision and if in fact anything comes up that needs help, we are old enough to ask for help, to know to go for the next weekend or whatever it is. We do it ourselves. [03:10:02] And in the end we were shut down. They wouldn't have it.

*But do you think it's a good idea for that merger or –*

I think it's a very good idea, provided that you are dealing with people who do not rape and who do not drug, basically. These are people of our own class and it would have worked perfectly well. Because even after we were told no, we had the odd party when effectively it was the same thing under a different name. But we were told at the time quite clearly that the rabbis need to oversee.

*Supervise?*

Supervise, yes, and we said no, this is – we are able to – if we want supervise, we have the weekends at Bracklesham Bay and things of that nature where we went away. But this is where we go into people's homes, relax, and if anybody has anything to contribute, they can, sometimes they didn't. I don't remember very much. There are still two or three ladies, widows, who I know who live in – here, in Finchley, in that area. [Sighs] It was disappointing but yes, I think getting groups together, we need to be more cohesive.

*And do you think that especially in the Liberal Reform movement, I mean the German Jewish rabbis played quite an important role?*

Oh, they did. Yes, without any doubt and some of them very naughty too, 'cos I know, I did their tax returns.

*[Laughs] Okay, don't – don't go into details now because –*

You'd be quite – no, I'm not – I – look, [laughs] I am not.

*Not to the camera [laughs].*

No, I wouldn't. [03:12:01] But it was quite interesting when you suddenly [laughs] get a whiff of something which is very different from- [laughs] unexpected. No –

*Yeah. So, there were quite a few German Jewish rabbis?*

There were quite a few. Well, even now, Wittenberg and Masorti.

*Yes, so did you know Dr Salzberger at all? His grandfather?*

No, Bridget knew the Salzbergers far better than I do. It's – I like Louis Jacobs pretty well. He's not German but he is, or he was, a thinker. And he – I'm not a Masorti Jew either. I don't know enough Hebrew but I admire the way he handled his people.

*But you said when I asked about your identity, so you said not English and not Jewish either.*

*How –*

Well, no, I have – we're floating, we're without roots basically. We have – well, look, we put down the roots here because we've got quite a number of people like us and we all have the same experience, this experience of you and we, is I think sad because it's far too long. It was shortly after the war when people would have made much more sense but the English Jewry on the whole are totally uncompromising.

*And do you still feel this today, Peter?*

Oh, yes. Well, you see, we then met or developed far more of the Masor – not- or less Orthodox modern Jew who is not willing to give up his heritage but does not, for argument's sake, take kindly to prayers being said for in biblical Hebrew, and you sit there, let somebody else do your prayer for you. [03:14:26] No, you've got to do it yourself. But if you want to

do and produce that, you can't have a three-hour service. By and large the services are far too repetitive and far too long. Now, I would like to see all this challenged. It's not up to me anymore. There's nobody who listens, who knows who I am. They used to. But basically, my views have only consolidated rather than changed. But I can't change it and I don't think it's right for me to change it 'cos it's a different generation and they have a different way of looking at things and that's the way it should be.

*So for you, Peter, what is the most important part of your German Jewish heritage?*

It's a difficult – very difficult one. I don't know whether you call it a German Jewish heritage. I don't think there is such an animal. I think I look at it in a way that – a horrible concept of class. By and large, our German development is far more cultural and less dogmatic than we get it in other community groupings but I don't like this old definition, I really dislike it because as long as I have this, it won't change, and it's got to change, I think. **[03:16:19]** And I don't want to change the way Mr Netanyahu is changing things in Israel either.

*What has got to change? Who?*

Acceptance of other people's point of view. Genuine acceptance and not to go and go like [hand gestures: talking behind people's backs] afterwards. It's – and it's hard to believe, believe you that you say you're talking nonsense, your – things will fall to pieces if you do it this way, we've got to keep a standard and it's got to be kept in – within bounds of the prayer book and so on. We don't want to change anything. And I say, oh, yes, you do.

*You want –*

But that's my view.

*You want shorter services and [overtalking].*

Shorter services and much more participation of people who believe that they go to the synagogue not to go and have a chat with somebody else but basically to be seen to be willing

to help. You see, we had a [laughs] – a pretty bad shock, this friend of mine who's now the president, started giving teas and services for people who've come here with nothing. We – I say we – we without – excluding me, collect clothes and once a month we have [inaudible] and they have a doctor and dentist and everything.

*A drop-in? A drop-in centre? [03:18:12]*

A drop-in centre properly. Just fairly recently it's been discovered that the people come and take their whatever they're given and around the corner they start selling it. [Laughs] [Inaudible] came to me and said what on earth does one do? [Laughs] I blew my top when I first heard about it. [Inaudible] look at these poor people.

*Do you feel as a – you have a – having been a refugee that you feel an obligation to help [overtalking] refugees?*

I would like to – personally I would like to adopt a child basically and give them so many pounds a month and if that can be taught something or do something which is more direct, I think an awful lot of charity is wasted and there's no real control, there's nobody there who can enforce a little bit of common sense. And here I talk more about the English tax system and the charities which people use to pay less tax and to find out what actually happens, I personally have been interested and talked to the Charity Commission on a number of things. And I asked one just the other – just about a year and a half ago, two years ago maybe, and said look, what are you doing to see that this money which is being sent to Zimbabwe is actually being used to educate? [03:20:13] They say, I'm sorry Mr Newman, we don't have the staff to follow things up, we just send the money and we hope that some of it is used the way it's collected. As far as I'm concerned, I'm too old to start doing anything else. I can't. But I know that other people think the same way. If you give money, it's a good thing to do but you've got to make sure that you've got the facilities to make sure that it is applied correctly. I don't want you to go and have a look at my bank account to see that I apply what I am given correctly either because that is interfering in somebody else's affair. That's the other side of the argument of course. Difficult.

*Do you sometimes think what would have happened to your life if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?*

I would have been a very rich German. That is an easy one [both laugh]. I might have been dead, mind you [laughs]. But if I wasn't, that would have stayed.

*Yes, so for your family it was a drastic change.*

For my family and the wider family, they were all very, very comfortable. [03:22:00] I don't know the full details but I know that nobody ever talked about money. Money was just there to be spent. A shame. I would like to find some, have a money tree at the bottom of the garden [laughs] but it's not that important. It really isn't. But [sighs] that was a long time ago and as long as it doesn't happen again...

*And would you say you feel at home here in London or in...*

I can't imagine feeling more at home anywhere else but whether I feel totally at home, I require notice of that question, yes, I like the idea of theatres, I like the idea of concerts, I like the idea of being able to get in my car and to drive out. At that level, totally okay. But the other levels- not Hamas [ph]. [3:23:15]

*So you think it's difficult to feel sort of really rooted somewhere [overtalking].*

I don't – I think for me it would be difficult because I've seen what happened before. I've seen what happened in Germany. It was totally unacceptable. My family were – lived in Berlin 200 years and I have documents for that – that is not – it's not just talking. Look, we've seen what happened, not necessarily with the Russians walking down the Potsdamer Straße. But at a much lower level you- "*ich war Kommandant vom [inaudible]*" - at that level, I'm worried or shall we say, I look over my shoulder and I always keep back a degree of reserve just in case. [03:24:26] And that I think could go back to where we started here. I don't want to keep you forever. I do –

*No, no. We're coming to an end, Peter. We're coming to an end. And do you think that sentiment transferred to your children at all or that – do they talk about your past?*

Yes, well, I – very rarely. They wanted to know why I object to their taking German nationality and the reason they wanted to do it is they don't like to stand at a passport entrance when they're travelling. So effectively in order to make travelling easier, they become bloody Germans. I'm sorry, I can't go along with it but I can understand it.

*You don't approve? You don't approve?*

[Inaudible].

*I'm asking you.*

I don't think so. I don't know. I want to because it – you shouldn't have any major rifts within a family at all and I'm too old, I stand back and let them do their things and that's the way you can be relatively happy. You've got no choice. But with David it's very much different. He's a totally different type of character. I don't know what he will do. He will end- up I hope – the way he's going at the moment is one of the rich City boys but he doesn't show off and that's a plus. [03:28:01]

*Peter, we have discussed many things. Is there anything else that you'd like to add, which we – I haven't asked you? You didn't talk, for example, your mother lived to a ripe old age. Tell us about it [overtalking].*

Yes, so she's – look, my family are fabulous. We found yesterday the silhouette thing. She did a lot as a sixteen-year-old. She was already doing that at sixteen-year-old. She's had one or two of her things auctioned in America. Nobody knows of her except in the Jewish environment really. They were – both parents in their own way were very special. My –

*But she lived till 106 you said.*



Nearly 107.

*And she painted when she was 100.*

She took up painting again when my father died when she was eighty-three. And she exhibited. People wanted to buy her [overtalking].

*Locally?*

Locally, in Hampstead. And now in Berlin in the Jewish Museum.

*And she was also an AJR member, because there's a bit written about her in the AJR Journal.*

Yes. Well, that's – my brother wrote that I think. And that was a long time ago but it gives you the background. No, my – both parents were in their own ways I think very special. Well, I would say that. But I really do mean it because it's happened from other picture [ph]. I've got a picture, my sketch upstairs, my mother just called it 'My Mother, Old Lady Sitting'. [03:30:06] It was exhibited at the Frogal Gallery, at Frogal. They had six different people who wanted to buy it.

*But you kept it?*

I've got it. That wouldn't go anywhere. Joe wanted it and I said – the only time in my life that I said no to any of my next generation. I said no way, [laughs] that stays here.

*Yeah. Anything else, Peter, which I haven't asked you?*

Look, we'd love to see you again sometime. I'm sure ideas will come or I will remember things that should be [overtalking].

*You've done really well. You have remembered a lot of things. Is there a message you'd like to give somebody who will watch this interview, based on your experiences?*

I don't think I'm that interested. No, I'm not interesting, not interested [laughs]. No, I – look–

*You've lived almost a century, Peter, so what – how can we get – what –*

I – at the moment I've got to get through the winter. I've got to make sure that she [pointing] is okay. Anything else after that would be nice but we're lonely. You understand, by and large as a natural part of it, people are dying like flies all around us and as long as we're around, we like talking, particularly me. I love talking and I try not to offend. But maybe I do. It's not meant maliciously [laughs]. But of course you can't always agree with everybody else and if you did, it would be so boring. [03:32:00] You know, I like a polite discussion and that gets more and more difficult as you get older.

*Yeah. Yeah, losing friends is hard.*

Well, I've got no friend – practically no friends left. We had a ghastly thing happen a little while ago, where a friend of ours who took an eightieth-birthday trip to Croatia and she disappeared on a walk and was found dead four days later. We didn't know whether she – went to Croatia for – to be – commit suicide, didn't want any more fuss at eighty or whether she had a heart attack or something. But they didn't even have a doctor's certificate, just shipped her home and that was that.

*Peter, do you think there was something which helped you to cope with being a refugee?*

I don't think that I ever considered there anything to need to help. I didn't – I had interesting times but I didn't resent them in any way, other than what we've already mentioned on a different level. No, I didn't find anything. I had – in fact, the people I met because of our background, I was very friendly with and I had all the friends and intelligent, and look, I had a very interesting life, I could afford to pick my clients and I had a fascinating cross-section of people who came to me for professional purposes. [03:34:07] But I have various university professors, various people talking, international conference interpreters, for argument's sake, people who attended meetings between the top people, French, German,

interpreters as the top people were talking, they were translating things into a machine. And although they – I would hate to say that they broke their professional oath, we did hear a lot of very interesting things which would not be in a general – for instance, the president of X didn't like so many poplin things under his bed. [Laughs] You get stupid things like that, or you get people who are in fact trying to set up international this and that. That I enjoyed.

*So you are happy with your choice of profession?*

That side, I was very, very happy. It took a hell of a long time to get there. I didn't really do this until I was close to forty but at that stage I felt I'd done enough, I'd met enough, I knew enough, and yes, of course you had to work every day of the week, you had to do the work and you had to keep up to date with what was going on. But it was interesting and I liked it. [03:36:00] And this is a thing which I find sad is when I look at the AJR review. It's 90% of the commentary is how good it was in Vienna or how good it was here or there, and wasn't it-it's – that's what – it, it's not positive. I find a lot of the letters are sad. I feel sorry for the people. I say, is it necessary to take such a nihilistic attitude? Maybe it's my own interpretation of things but I like to look forward. I don't – look, when it comes, what – the good old days in Vienna or the good old days in Berlin, yes, I was there, I know, I don't need you to tell me. And that of course you can say is age. If [ph] you were there, there are not that many people who can say that they were there but it does upset me reading it.

*What, a sort of nostalgia? You feel there is a place of nostalgia?*

Yes. Well, yes, nostalgia but more than that because it's very often not entirely credible and if I want to indulge in nostalgia, I can read a book. There are plenty of books written. There are books reviewed nearly every month. No, that's not – I want something positive, I want something going forward, I want to know how do we get the King of Jordan to take charge on Hamas and produce something different from what we can see at the moment. [03:38:03]

*What do you think of some of the terms? Because there has been discussion about the term, refugee. Do you still consider your – you came as a child refugee. Would you think of yourself as a refugee?*

No. We weren't refugees. We were forced migrants. Refugees to me is something completely different.

*You see yourself as a forced migrant?*

I would say so. I didn't wish to migrate but of course it was something which had happened.

*Why not refugee?*

A refugee is much more down – to me, is much more direct if somebody is running now, looking for a house or shelter or anything of that nature, yes, that is a real refugee. Somebody who seeks refuge. But somebody who's been living for fifty or sixty years in a country, it's as bad as having Israel in- a Palestinian person living in a camp. They don't – they aren't refugees and they don't [inaudible] live in, er, sorry, I'm finding it a bit hard to sit on the chair. [laughs].

*Yeah, sorry. We're almost finished.*

[Laughs] No, it's already nearly finished but you understand, I get very upset reading about the refugee camps in Haifa or wherever. There's no such thing as a camp. These are buildings, these are flats, these are shops. They're not camps. Camp is – it irritates me to a point that I want to get annoyed and hit them on the nose. **[03:40:00]**

*Okay. Peter, anything else, a message? You don't think – anything you want to think about? For anyone? You said looking forward. That's a message.*

Yes, looking forward. We'd love to see you some other time. I know you have a – let us know what happens and if you have any ideas in the meantime, think of that necklace. I would not know what to do if it were true.

*Okay. So, in the meantime I'll say thank you so much for sharing your story with us. And we're going to look at some photographs now.*

That's –

*One second. Just one moment, please. [Pause]*

*Peter, so that's what – yes, please. What are you doing on this picture? Are you reading?*

I would guess so.

*Yeah. You're reading what book?*

[Sighs] I have honestly no idea.

*I think it says 'Struwwelpeter'. [03:42:00]*

It could very well be.

*And you're reading to your brother. And who is the other person in the picture?*

Micha, that's the – our famous cousin, a famous member of the family. He is, or was, well, he's still alive, he lives in Tel Aviv, C.G. Jung [Institut] in Zürich.

*And what's his name? Micha?*

Micha Neumann.

*Micha Neumann.*

He was dean of Tel Aviv University and he's a psychiatrist and a psychologist and a doctor.

*Anyway, there you are reading to him.*

Well, we read to him or played with him, I have not the slightest idea. We, well, it's me.  
German navy.

*When was it taken? 19...?*

'3 – I believe it's in 1937. I look fairly grown.

*And do you think it was sent to your parents?*

I don't know but I can't see who at that stage was going to bother about taking children's  
photographs. Because –

*Because you were –*

I was from – as far as I remember, both of my parents had – were in London by that time and  
I – my grandfather was killed in March '37 and in September '37 we were all in London. So,  
this is – I can't quite get the time right. It's unlikely to my mind that we would have bothered  
with photographs unless those photographs were taken in order to send them to my parents as  
a present. It might be but it's –

*Yeah, Peter, what do we see here? [03:44:02] Is this your album?*

That's my album, yes, sure.

*And you made this?*

I believe so.

*And it says – the year is here. It says Peter –*

Well, that was written down later, I am quite sure that is when we looked through my parents' things and Ruth who wrote Peter on it.

*But it says 1935 to 1937.*

Yes, that's – she did that sort of work.

*Okay, thank you. Please.*

Who spend so much –

*One second. What do we see on this photo? It says here "vor der Schule".*

*"Das ist vor der Schule", yeah. Das war meine erste Schule, erste Klasse."*

*And what was it called, the 'Schule'?*

Paul-Lehmann-Schule.

*Okay. We're going to see a few more pictures shortly. So here we can see the street where the school was.*

I'm sorry.

*Here we can see the street exactly where the school was.*

Yes, I suppose so. Mind you, Berlin, you can't recognise it [laughs] any more.

*Yeah. Thank you. So here, more school photos. 'Auf dem Schulhof' [in the playground]. You must have been fascinated with the school. Do you think you took these pictures? Or your parents?*

No, my parents, certainly not. No, I think, I probably did it unless it was by another parent, but certainly mine weren't.

*I think it's definitely your handwriting. And your teacher was called...?*

It could be.

*What was the name of your teacher?*

Frau Wiener.

*Okay. And Frau Wiener, we're going to see her in the next photo as well.*

Here is – good.

*Yes, Peter, tell us about this class photo, please. [03:46:02]*

Well, that's basically the one and only picture I've got of that class because later on that year, I believe it was June or July, the Nazis said that we Jewish children were not allowed to stay in that school and we had to go to a special school. So that was the end of being with that class.

*And do you remember the names of the other pupils?*

I've got them written down there. They're all there.

*And the teacher? The teacher?*

The teacher is Frau Wiener and –

*And what else is hanging there in the background? What can we see?*



That's just a couple of pictures hanging on the wall I think. There's nothing special there.

*Who is there in the middle there, hanging on the wall?*

Yes. Oh, you mean my dear friend Mr Hitler? He is there, yes. Well, at that time we didn't realise who or what he was.

*Repeat that, please, for us. Every morning...*

No more. No more now.

*No, no. We didn't hear it. Every morning you said you had –*

Oh, do that, yes, every morning and Frau Direktor used to crawl around in her slippers to listen that no Jewish child, God forbid, should sing *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* or the Horst-Wessel-Lied which we all enjoyed singing very much but we weren't allowed to do it anymore.

*Thank you. Yes, please. Tell us about this photo. [03:48:00] This is your – a little party?*

That must have been a birthday party.

*And what was your friend's name?*

Fritz. That was Fritz Selten.

*In 1936.*

It's a strange thing but I have a feeling that somewhere or other I read that somebody by the name of Fritz Selten did a lot of charitable work in America but whether it is that Fritz Selten or somebody else, I have not the slightest idea.

*So this was a classmate?*

I have no idea.

*But he was in your class?*

He was in my class, yes. The name Fritz Selten sticks.

*Okay. It's a little birthday party. Thank you. Yes, please, Peter. What do we see here?*

What do we do now?

*What do we see there?*

Oh, we see the end of one life and the beginning of another one. That's really – to see me, I remember by suddenly seeing this, how proud I was of my Cubs uniform [laughs]. That was something my parents had to save a lot of money for 'cos at that time they didn't have much if –

*And what about the pictures there in Potsdam? It's your grandmother with your –*

My grandmother. That was – in fact it's my grandmother's twin sister at the top there. That picture, I remember that was taken on the day my grandfather was – had his funeral. That was the end of Germany as far as I was concerned.

*And one picture in a zoo.*

I'm sorry?

*In the zoo.*

Oh, in a zoo. Yes, you will have seen we went there nearly every second day, a day, because my grandfather and my grandfather's firm were founder members of the zoo in the late 1800s. [03:50:03] I'm not sure about that at all but the children's nurses we had used to take us there. It was a short walk and we had a permanent entry, so the zoo was something I loved and I continued to love that when I came to England.

*And Peter, what do you think of this line in the middle? There is a clear line here.*

I'm sorry?

*The line in the middle here. What does it stand for? The line, there is a line between the top and the bottom. There's a white line.*

Oh, the white line divides our lives when we finished in Germany and started in England, and I was not aware of that. My mother must have dealt with that one and that's – it shows an awful lot, rather more than we can talk about. That line was a line.

*How do you feel about seeing this today?*

Shocked that I've not taken so much interest in it. I've got – as I say, I've got two bookshelves full of photographs and I can see people who I didn't know were interested in it and have asked myself, why am I not? This is something I suppose that not many people who I know who have that sort of history.

*Thank you. Thank you, Peter. Yes, please.*

Here we go to somewhere [inaudible].

*What do we see here? Your mother?*

We see my mother, my brother and me. Are we – I'm in Cub or Scouts outfit.

*You're only in the middle picture. [03:52:01] I don't think you are – it's only the middle picture.*

The middle picture is just my mother, my brother and myself, I think.

*And where is it, in Finchley?*

That must be in Finchley, yes.

*And it's February –*

30 Holly Park.

*February '38.*

February '38. Yes, we came to London in September '37.

*Thank you.*

Yes, please.

Was 1941. Yes, it must be. That was right in the middle of Blitz.

*In Finchley?*

Yes. I would – well, '41, well, certainly I came back from – I'm not sure whether – if the class came – was back by that time.

*Thank you. Yes, please.*

Yes, that brings other memories.

*Where is this, please, Peter?*

That was in Gloucestershire and in winter we had to go and grub up potatoes and swedes with our hands.

*Is this where you were evacuated to?*

That's where, yes.

*And it's called...?*

Duntisbourne Abbots. It's near Cirencester.

*And where are you in this photo?*

Oh, I was there for two years.

*Okay. And where are you in the photo?*

Yes, yes, we were. Well, 193 – roughly 1940 to 1941, maybe early '42, I came back to London, to Highgate.

*Thank you.*

Shooting eight, yes. That would have been an Olympic team if in fact we'd had peace. But as it was, all the competition was done by post. [03:54:01] You had people who came to adjudicate, made sure that you didn't cheat.

*And this was in Highgate School?*

That particular was a competition at Highgate School.

*And where are you? On the left?*

Front row. Front row, left, at the end.

*And did you win some medals?*

Yep, this one, and badges galore, and the right to wear different school uniform. Oh, I was very proud. I still – it was [inaudible]. I get annoyed when I see that the top man there was such a swine [laughs].

*He was – he discriminated against you?*

Oh, he tried. He tried to – he tried to keep me out of the photograph even.

*Why?*

I complained to the headmaster eventually and I got him in trouble.

*Because you were – he considered you –*

Because I was German and I was Jewish.

*One sec, one – yes, please. The photo here, what do we see on there?*

What do I see is that's after I had my freedom taken away. We had a good booze-up and this is where we went off on our honeymoon.

*Where did you go?*

Majorca. We went to –

*And when was this?*

I'm sorry?

*When was it?*

This was 1964.

*In London?*

February. Yes.

*Thank you. Yes, please.*

I think that must be my mother's hundredth birthday. We have more people there but that looks as if it's a small, um –

*And who is in the photo?*

I'm – it's my brother and his wife, and me and my wife, with my mother.

*And your mother was very active in [overtalking].*

My mother was very, very active until almost within a matter of a couple of months of her passing on. [03:56:10] She was nearly 107.

*And there is something written about an AJR Journal as well.*

Yes, she – oh, yes.

*And tell us her name.*

But another – the AJR and the – some of those photographs are much older.

*And what – your mother’s name, please?*

My mother’s name was. Alice, but Lissi for short.

*Lissi Newman.*

Yes.

*Okay, thank you. Yes, Peter. What do we see? What is this medal?*

That is the shooting medal for international rifle competition against America and Canada and other members of the Rifle Association, presented by the King. And as you say, I was lucky.

*And when did you get this medal?*

Looking on it, it’s engraved on the side. I think it’s 1943. And then you see the other mark-  
the thing which followed, 1944.

*Are you proud of this medal?*

I’m sorry?

*Are you proud of this?*

Well, I’m pleased to have it obviously but it’s nothing other than a topic of conversation.

*And do you remember the occasion? Meeting the King.*

Ah, well, I have met members of the Royal Family on a number of occasions. Yes, I enjoyed-



*So there was just one of them?*

That was – I'll tell you the truth, I'm not 100% certain. **[03:58:03]** I think it was, that one. But we had different occasions.

*Okay. Peter, I'll just say thank you so much again for sharing your story and all these amazing photographs you have in your collection.*

I'm glad you enjoyed them because I wouldn't have looked at them again unless you'd asked for them. There are plenty more for you, if you wish [both laugh]. But I would not recommend it.

*For the time being, I think we'll say thank you. So sorry, here we are again. We found another little jewel in your collection. What is this? A copy of the AJR information?*

This one?

*Yeah.*

Yes, of course it's still – it's an *Vorgänger* [predecessor] what we have today.

*And you collect all of them or just this particular one?*

No, no, just the ones which interest me.

*And why this particular one?*

Well, this one, it's got notice of getting engaged, warning to other people.

*[Laughs] Okay. Let's look at it. Yes, so you said it was announced here, your engagement.*

Yes.

*Who put that in?*

We were discussing it last night in fact. I would imagine it was put in by my parents-in-law.

*Yeah, and you kept it all these years.*

Yes, that's – I was digging through an old drawer looking for things and there it turned up.

*Okay, so again thank you so much.*

[Laughs] Not at all.

*Peter, tell me a little bit. What are you holding in your hand?*

I'm holding a history, a living history. **[04:00:00]**

*And what is it?*

A photograph album, twenty, forty-odd years old.

*A bit older.*

A bit older still.

*Because it says here 1935 to 1937.*

'3 – whoa.

*So why did you –*

That's getting on for sixty years.

*Even more.*

Yeah.

*Just open it, tell us what photos you want to show us.*

I just open them and see what turns up.

*Yeah, and what is that? Can you open it a bit wider?*

That is a picture of my school, my class the first day at school, and my friends and the teacher, Frau Wiener, who taught us first year. And the small school, small classes and very good learning.

*And which year was that?*

1934. Let me have a look and see [sighs]. February '35, 1934. Sorry, do you want to do that again?

*No, that's fine. And who is hanging there? Some pictures on the wall. So what is there on the wall?*

Oh, that was *der Führer*, who had to be displayed in every classroom.

*And Peter, how do you feel today, looking at this photo of yourself as a six-year-old?*

I'll just say it's unlikely to find many people who have pictures of Hitler on the wall.

[04:02:07] It would be considered aggressive to have it there. And I must say, I was quite surprised to see it there when I discovered this picture, looking through an old file and it suddenly jumped out and I recognised the teacher and one or two of the children there. But certainly I did not expect to see Mr Hitler on the wall.

*And Peter, you were not allowed to stay for too long at the school. How do you think – is it important today to – we've had a long interview and is it important to talk about those experiences today?*

Look, yes and no. These experiences were luckily without any physical consequences for myself or my family. I personally prefer to forget quite a lot of what I believe to remember. It should never be forgotten but from a personal point of view, I'm lucky to have escaped and I don't really want to go and revive things which have been buried. It's not that I think it shouldn't be taught in schools and brought to the attention of a new generation people but I know as far as I'm concerned, I can never forget and I never want to forget what happened in Germany and consequently teaching of what happened in Germany is not important to me as a personal experience. **[04:04:21]**

*Thank you. Thank you. Yes, please, Peter. Tell us what are you holding in your hand, please?*

I'm holding in my hand a little figurine of a robin which I remember having admired when I went to visit my grandparents' flat in Germany. It survived the war and it can be seen on an old photograph of my grandparents where I first got to know it. I'm delighted to see that it's still in one piece and that it survived all those years.

*And how did it survive? Do you know? How is it in your possession today?*

I – we found it among my grandmother's assets after she died and we were clearing out the house. She loved it, I know, and we've loved it ever since.

*Thank you. Give me one second. I'm going to take a picture. Look at me. It's an unusual thing to have, Peter. **[04:06:01]***

I'm sorry?

It's –

**[04:06:08]**

[End of transcript]