

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee POB:	Vienna, Austria

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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV231
NAME: Valerie Klimt
DATE: 25th February 2019
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 25th February 2019 and we're conducting the interview with Mrs. Valerie Klimt. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.

What is your name please?

My full name?

Yeah.

Anne Valerie Klimt.

And when were you born please?

On the 29th of December... God, what year?

I think 1924.

1924, yeah.

Perfect. And where were you born?

In Vienna.

Valerie, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices Archive. Perhaps we can start- can you tell us a little bit about your family background?

Well, I already mentioned, I didn't have a father, and my mother never remarried. And she carried on the shop, and... that was more or less it.

Tell us a little bit about the backgrounds of your parents. Where did they come from? How did they get to Vienna?

My, my- my mother was born in a place called Uhersky Brod. Have you ever heard of it?

Yes, go on. Yeah? What was it called in German?

Ungarisch Brod. And as I said, she was one of twelve children. And she was a- became a widow when she was expecting me. And never remarried.

And did she come to Vienna or did she come with her siblings to Vienna? Who came to Vienna?

[0:02:16]

She- had a, a- she worked... in a shop, in Vienna. And that's where she met my father.

What sort of shop? Where did she work?

Sort of overalls and- and... shirts and - that sort of thing.

So, did she come to Vienna to- to work?

To work, yes.

By herself? Did she come by herself or with her siblings?

She... worked together- some of her siblings came as well. And I think they- they hired a- a shop. They, they- they - not hired - they were - oh, God.

Don't worry. Don't worry, we have time.

They were- they worked in a shop as a-

Employees? As employees?

As employees, yes.

Right. Right. OK. And that's where she met your father?

And that's where she met- she-

But it wasn't your father's shop where they worked?

No. No, no - no. Because in- in Austria I think you had to have some experience if- if you wanted a shop.

OK. And then tell us about your father's background. What was his background?

Well, I knew very little of my father because I never knew him.

What happened to him? Why did he die? What happened to him?

He got blood poisoning.

Before you were born?

Before- well- my mother was half way through pregnancy with me, and- and- there's a funny story about this, because my brother was the older of- of the two of us. And my father very much wanted a girl as the second child. And in Austria, it was customary for the- the pram for a girl was a different pram as the one for a boy. So, my father, in an attempt to force it should be a girl, he bought already a- a pram for a girl - for me - because he wanted- so much he wanted a girl. And when- my mother had an anaesthetic when, when I was delivered. And when she came around, they said to her, "You had a girl." And my mother said, [with emotion] "My- my poor husband would have been so pleased."

[0:05:42]

Yeah.

Anyway- and she never remarried.

And how difficult was it for her financially, to be by herself with two children?

It wasn't- it wasn't easy. But she managed. And she had in mind that- that- because the shop was actually in a small road. And she had in mind when my brother grew up more, that she would open a shop for him in a- in a district which was more - what's the word? ...which would be a nicer district. And she would open a nicer shop for him. But instead of this happening, Hitler came. So...

Tell us a little bit about the district. Where was this- the district?

You know, there was a market there. The- the place was called Grimgasse and there was a market there. And my mother had- she had a lot of customers which were sort of, you know, regular customers. But they were simple people. So, she had in mind that she would open a - a bigger shop for my brother.

[0:07:35]

So, by the time your father died, he had his own shop? Your father had a shop?

My father had his own shop.

What was it called, the shop?

Moritz Herlinger.

Moritz Herlinger.

Yeah.

And what sort of shop was it?

It was, you know, workwear. They had overalls, and- and things like that. And- and- because in Austria, it was quite customary to wear overalls if you served people in a shop. A lot of them wore overalls.

What was it called in German, the shop, you told me? It was called the-? "Wasch"? You said, "Wasch"? You said something about the type of shop it was.

Workwear.

Ok. Yeah. So, he managed to open his own shop?

Yes, yes. Yes. Because in- in Austria, if you had a shop, you- somebody had to be – Oh, what's the word? Had to understand something about the shop. You couldn't- because in England you can be- you don't need to know anything about the shop. You can still open a shop. But in Austria you had to know something about it.

Right. But it wasn't- you said, "Wäsche"- it wasn't?

Wäsche, yes. Wäsche-

Wäsche.

That – *Bettwäsche*- and- and that sort of thing.

So, towels, and that-

Towels and, and- and... oh, God, what else?

So, on the one hand it was workmen's' clothes and on the other hand it had, like, linens and towels, and- OK.

Yes, and overalls-

Yeah.

Things like that.

And your mother- you mother took over the shop.

Yes.

And what was the District? Where was this?

[0:09:54]

Fünfhausen was- was the, the- the- you know, that area was Fünfhausen.

Fünfhausen. But you said it was in Hietzing?

In Hietzing, that's where we lived.

Aha, but the shop was in Fünfhausen.

The shop was in Fünfhausen.

Aha? And which- was it outside Vienna a little bit, or-?

No, no.

Which Bezirk?

I think the 5th District.

Right. So where did you live, actually?

We lived in Hietzing, because my- because Hietzing was like a *Villenviertel* [exclusive residential area], and my mother thought since she couldn't go on holiday so much with us, the air would be better. [half laughs] I don't know whether that was true. Because it was near Schönbrunn. [coughs]

[0:10:56]

Are you ok? Would you like a drink?

I'm all right.

You're ok? So, what are your memories of Hietzing then? Where, where did you live? What- what was your address?

My mother owned the shop.

Aha?

And she- it- it was her shop and I think there were ten flats in- in that shop.

So, she owned the building?

She owned-

Yes.

She owned the building.

But you didn't live where the shop was? You didn't live there?

No, no. No- no. We lived in Hietzing, and the shop was in Fünfhausen.

So where did you live, in a flat in Hietzing?

In a flat. Yeah – yeah. In a flat.

So, can you describe it? What are your earliest memories of growing up, in Hietzing?

I mean, Hietzing was a nice district. It- it because my mother thought because she was always in the shop, she couldn't go on holiday so much with us. So, she thought if they are in a nice district the air is better.

Yeah. But did you- did other people help her? Uncles- her, her siblings? Did they help her with the children?

She- she had one brother who worked in- in the shop.

Aha, so they worked together?

[0:12:38]

But - not really, because more- he helped her- because that uncle of mine, he was shell shocked after the First World War. And he was going- because in Austria, if you became an engineer that was a study. You- you know, it's not like here, for instance, say, if you have- if you repair something, you- you can be called an engineer. But in Austria, you had to be- that had to be a study. And he- he was studying to be an engineer, but he couldn't- because he was in- in- shell shocked after the First World War. He- he was a, a, a Russian prisoner of war. And he couldn't go back to- to studying. So, he worked with my mother in, in- he helped her with the shop.

So, they helped each other?

Yeah. Yeah – yeah.

But you lived by yourself with your mother, or did-?

Yes, yes. Yes. Yes. Yep, yeah.

And was it a big flat, a small flat, or was it-?

It was a- I think- there were four rooms.

What was the address?

Hadikgasse *hundertachtunddreißig*.

Hadikgasse

Hadikgasse *hundertachtunddreißig*. Do you- shall I say it in English?

Yes, why not?

Hadikgasse hundred and thirty-eight. [138]

And did you have your own room, or did you share with your brother?

No, I shared actually with my mother. [Laughs]

OK.

Because we had the two main beds, my mother and I.

Yes. Yeah. And you said your mother was in the shop a lot so did you spend a lot of time by yourself with your brother?

[0:15:05]

Not really, because my mother had a- an aunt, a- a sister, who wasn't married. And she looked after us a lot.

Right. What was her name?

Mela.

And did she live with your or she just-?

She- she lived with us. And, you know, my second daughter, not Judith, but the other daughter, I called her Melanie. She's Wendy Melanie because she looked after us, and she perished, so I wanted somebody to remember her.

Yeah. Tell us a little bit more about what- what do you remember from your early life in Vienna?

From my early life? [Thinking] I'm trying to-

Your school, for example. Tell us a little bit about the school you went to.

The- the school I went to... *Mittelschule*.

First Volksschule?

To a *Lyzeum*? To a *Lyzeum*.

But first you went to a primary school?

Primary school. Primary school, yes. And, I- there's a, a funny thing. Because I had to do *eine Aufnahmeprüfung [entry exam]*. And I thought, because they told- you know, they put the- the names of the children who had passed. And they had put "Anna Herlinger". So, I was devastated. I said, "That's not me." Because they only put the first name. Because in Austria it wasn't customary to have more than one name. I said, "That isn't me. I didn't pass." Because it- they put "Anna Herlinger". Instead of "Valerie Herlinger" - because Valerie was my first name. Are you with me?

[0:17:50]

Yeah.

And anyway-

You passed it.

I passed it. I passed it.

Yeah. And were there- tell me a little bit- the neighbourhood, were there any other Jews there where you lived in Hietzing? Was it a...?

Actually, there was one other Jewish family who lived in that building. And they were- they were Communists. I- I, I mean, I don't mean that they went with a red flag or anything like that, but they- they didn't particularly want to be Jewish.

Yes. And what about you? Your mother? How Jewish was she?

No, no-

What did she-?

My mother was- my mother was Jewish.

How- did she go to synagogue or did she-?

Yeah. Yeah – yeah.

She did?

Yeah. Yeah.

So-?

And we were members as well.

Of where- where did you go?

There was a- a thing in Hietzing. There was a, a synagogue. And she was a member there.

What was it called that synagogue? Do you remember?

Hiet- Hietzing... It was Hietzing- and the, the chazan had a beautiful voice. His name was Einhorn, Reverend [Salomon] Einhorn.

Do you remember going there?

Oh, yes, yes, yes. We- we saw them a-a-again. They went to England, and we saw them in England. But- but they then emigrated. The wife- the husband died quite young. But the- the wife e-emigrated to Israel. And the whole family. They- they had a- a son and- and a daughter and they... went to Israel then.

[0:20:02]

So, you were quite Jewish when- as a young person?

Yes. My- my mother- my mother was,

That-

Abs- absolutely.

-was important for her?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. It was important for her.

And being Jewish were there any problems in the neighbourhood or did you ever experience any problems with the other children, or-?

Well, certainly after Hitler came.

And before?

Before, I- I wasn't all that- I was quite young. I don't actually- then, of course after- after the Nazis came, they- they did. And also, even Austria, it could happen to you that you called you "Saujud."

Before, even?

Yeah.

Yeah. Did it happen to you, somebody called you, like that?

I think, probably yes. But it wasn't such an issue, because you, you were used to it. Because the... but you know, something strange happened to us. Although this has nothing to do with what we're talking now. When we left Austria, because we went- because my brother had gone to Belgium, illegally. And we went to visit him before we sailed for- for India. And in our- in the compartment where we were sitting, two SS officers got into that compartment. I- I can't remember where they went to, but it's also immaterial. They went somewhere on the line. And they got out before us. And when they left, they shook our hands and said, "*Wir wünschen Ihnen alles Gute.*" [We wish you all the best.] Which is odd, isn't it?

[0:22:38]

Yeah – yeah.

Just let's go back a little bit before we start coming to 1938. What sort of friends did you have growing up? Do you remember any of your friends, or...?

Mostly- I had one friend who the, the mother was not Jewish. But the father was. He actually shot himself after Hitler came. And - my other friends were mostly Jewish.

From school? Were there other- there were other Jewish children in your school?

Yes – yes.

Yeah, yeah. And what sort of- do you remember what did you used to like? Did you have any hobbies or what did you do- do you remember, on the weekends and...? You said you didn't go much on holidays, but do you remember anything? What did you like?

We- we went actually, you know, Liesl's grandmother, she was a very good cook. She rented a- a for the summer, she rented a- a place. And we went - several times we went - on holiday together with Liesl. And- in Küb am Semmering.

Aha?

And- and I actually got appendicitis there. [laughs] So I had to come back from- we were in Küb and we had to come back from Vienna and I had to be operated on- do you speak German?

Yes.

Bei Nacht und Nebel. [night and fog – meaning stealthily]

In Vienna?

In Vienna. They had- they had to bring me back.

So, this is Liesl Grunberger-

This is Liesl Grunberger-

... who we interviewed also for our archive. So how did you meet Liesl?

[0:25:00]

We lived quite close to each other, and we went to the same *Volksschule*. And she lived very close, she lived about five minutes away from us.

So, you became friends in Vienna?

And so, we became friends, yes.

How old were you when you became friends?

When we went to school. Six years. I- I was actually- because in Austria you went to school at the age of six, but bec- because I was ill quite a lot, and my mother was worried because she thought- because she'd had this thing that, that I was- this thing had happened with my father; maybe I was delicate. But I don't think this has anything to do with it. But- but, so, she- because in- in Austria, you- you went to school at six. And my mother- she asked whether it would be alright if she- if I went to school at, at- not at, at –

At seven?

...when I was six. Almost seven.

A bit later.

Yes, a little bit later. And- so, I was almost seven by the time I went to- I went to school.

And did you walk to school from your house?

Yeah.

By yourself?

Well, later on. In the beginning not, but later on I used to. Yes.

And how much older was your brother?

Four years.

Right. And when- when did things change? When did you feel- when- what happened - for you?

Well, as soon as- as Hitler came -

And how do you remember that? Do you remember the Anschluss?

Yeah.

[0:27:39]

Tell us about it, please.

Do you know Vienna?

A little bit, yes.

At Hotel Imperial, which was in the- in town, that's where Hitler held a- a, a speech. But I could- now, I- I could never understand how they kept- could blindly follow him.

And what did you see on the day? Did you see? Did you see it? Did you see him?

No.

Where were you, on that day?

We were at home, because my uncle was very worried because my brother went to dancing school. And he wasn't home. And in the meantime, the- the- you could hear the radio playing. You- you realised something had happened. And my uncle was- he- he was a nervous type anyway. And- and he- he was terribly frightened that something would happen to my brother. And, you know, because I went- because my mother couldn't bear to take him to the station, so I was not even quite fourteen. I went with my brother... to the station. And- when he wanted to go illegally across to Belgium. And you know how certain pictures remain in your mind? I can still see my brother, standing on the platform, as the train moved off to Belgium.

[0:30:06]

What were you thinking at the time? What were you- what were your thoughts?

Not very happy. I was fourteen. Not quite fourteen years old.

And he was- was he eighteen?

Yeah.

And why did he decide to go to Belgium?

Because they- they wanted to get out of Austria.

When did he leave? When did he go to Belgium?

In August-

August-?

And- and Hitler had come in- in-

March.

March – March. 13th of March.

So, he- this was August '38 he left to Belgium.

Yeah.

And why Belgium? Did he have any- was there any relatives or-?

No, but- but Belgium was a- quite easy- fairly easy to- to get in to.

And what was the plan for you and your mother? What- what was the discussion?

We were also going to Belgium. And, in a way, that's what saved us. Because we- we had in mind also to go to Belgium, to join my brother. And then I got scarlet fever. So, we couldn't go. And in the meantime, this thing happened, and- and the- the- I got scarlet fever and this lady gave the- the visa for us.

Tell us about that. What happened when you- you got the scarlet fever?

Yeah.

So, it meant you couldn't go to Belgium.

Yeah. And- and my mother's cousin she had made friends with this lady in- in India. The- the- the lady in India, the one who gave us the visa in the end, she was actually Jewish, but she was married to a non-Jewish chap. And she was telling- she burst into tears when she was telling the thing that now we couldn't- we couldn't go because we didn't know what was going to happen, and all this. And she said, "I'll give a- a visa for your cousin and her daughter." And that's what saved us.

[0:33:03]

And was she already in India?

Yeah, well- well she was- she was- her husband was a Scotsman. He wasn't Jewish. And he had a, a job in India.

So, they were sort of stationed in India.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah – yeah. And, you know, we were the only ones of all that family who- where we- because my brother was alright, and my mother was alright and I was alright. We were all saved.

And the rest of the family?

With the exception of this one uncle and- and his wife, and they- they lost both their children. And you know, my aunt lived to the age of ninety-four.

Where did she live? Where?

He went back to Vienna, because that was the only thing, he- he- because in- in Vienna they still- because my uncle was a very good businessman, he still- they still remembered how- how good he- his things were.

But it was- this was not the uncle who helped in the shop with your mother. This was a different uncle?

No, no. no, no. I must tell you something funny. You know that in Prague, that synagogue, where all the names are?

Yeah.

My husband- and I we went to Prague. And we went to that synagogue. And I went into the synagogue and the first name I saw was my uncle - his name.

Why was he there?

Because they wrote all the names down. Because- have you never been to that synagogue in Prague.

Yes – yeah.

They've got all the names of the people who were sent. And I saw his name.

[0:35:50]

What was his name? What was it?

Erwin Fuchs. And he was- he was sent away from- from Brno. Because he- he had a Czech passport.

So, he was your father's- no, your mother's- your mother's-

No, my mother's brother.

So, she is née Fuchs? That was her maiden name?

Yeah – yeah. Yeah.

And what happened to that uncle who- who was in the shop with you? Who was shell-shocked? What happened to him?

He was the one.

That's him - Erwin Fuchs.

Erwin Fuchs, yes.

So, was it very clear for your mother that the moment the Nazis came, that she wanted- you wanted to leave?

My- my - my mother was absolutely adamant that we have to go.

And were there any other options?

Not a lot.

And what happened to your brother? How did he manage to...? What did he do in- in Belgium?

[0:37:09]

When, when- when we- that was also a- a funny thing. My brother was by- by the time we left- I went to- to England first, because somebody sent a, a visa for me.

This is post-war?

Yes, this is post-war. And I made friends with an English girl on the ship- Because you know that the ship wasn't- they were still troop carriers. You know, they, they hadn't put the ships back... to- the normal ships. Because they didn't have, you know, they, they still- it was still the- the- there were I think seven of us in one cabin.

Right.

Because it- and- and- and I made friends with an English girl on the ship. And I said, "You know, what I would- I would like, is if when I come to England, my brother will have also a visa for England." And that's exactly what happened. This fellow who sent a visa for me, then also sent one for my brother.

But you were- you came first?

I came first.

And did your brother survive the war in Belgium?

No.

So just tell-

Because, by the time- when we got to India my mother's cousin told her, "I've got good news." Mr. So-and-so, whatever his name was, has sent for my brother also a visa.

This is during the war?

Well, it hadn't started yet.

So did your brother-

[0:40:03]

But very- very, very- my brother came- because the war started in – no. In January. Not in January. In, in- I can't- I can't think now.

September. September.

September, that's right.

Yes. And when did your brother come to India?

My brother came to India at the end of, of- right at- fairly at the end of September. Not of September - of August.

August.

Yeah. Yeah. My brother came really at the last minute.

He joined you?

Yeah.

So, somebody then also gave him a- invited him or sponsored him?

Yes.

Sponsored him.

Yes, yes. Yes.

Was it the same person who sponsored you and your mother, or somebody else?

No, somebody else.

And so, you all the three of you, survived in India?

The three of us survived. Yeah. Yeah.

Before we talk about India, what else do you remember between the time of the Anschluss and leaving to India in those- in that period? What about your friends? And how did things change for you, as a school girl?

Not- I- I- was working already at- at that time. I was working-

Aha? After the Anschluss?

I was working for Lever Brothers.

After the Anschluss?

You're talking about India?

No, we're still talking about Vienna. I want to know what happened-

Oh, Vienna, no, no, no. Well, we left, we left and went to India.

Yes, but I'm- I'm still- not in India. I'm still in Vienna. I want to know what happened to you and your life-?

Yes, but we then- we then went to- to India.

But before? You had still from the Anschluss, let's say, March '38-

As soon- as soon as it was possible to- to- to leave, we left.

Yes. But for example, were you in Vienna during Kristallnacht?

Yeah, yeah.

[0:42:30]

So, tell us a little bit. Do you remember that?

Yeah, I do remember. I do remember. And, you know the- they came to... search our- our place. And my mother was- do you speak German?

Yeah.

My mother was absolutely - livid. And my uncle, he was- because his wife and his daughter had left already Vienna. They- they went to a sister in- in Czechoslovakia. They didn't survive. And neither did my uncle, actually. And- and my mother had a- Oh, God - *eine Münzensammlung*.

A coin collection.

Yes. Yes. And my uncle showed the *Münzensammlung* and he said something about “it’s, it’s from Kaiser Franz Josef”. And my mother said, “*Der weiß, wer Kaiser Franz Josef war!*” [He knows who the emperor Franz Josef was!]

- because she was so incensed a-a-about this. And, and, yes, something else happened. My mother, then, when hardly any family was there anymore, we didn’t have a maid anymore. We had just a daily. And- and he- you know, in Austria, some of the flats had a- a maid’s room. And we didn’t- we didn’t have a maid anymore because... we were not so many people anymore because it was, you know, my mother was getting rid of the- of, of the shop and everything. And it so happened, that- that the woman who- I don’t know, that I can’t remember anymore did she come... once, twice or three times a week, or- and she was there on that particular day and my mother- because you know, we had to pay *Reichsfluchtsteuer* [Tax on Flight from the Reich] when we left. You couldn’t leave- you, you- they took your money. And it wasn’t so easy. And my mother had a- a thing- some, was it a- some *Möbelstück* [furniture] and she hid- as she was collecting the *Reichsfluchtsteuer* she hid it there. And when they did the *Hausdurchsuchung* [house search], he wanted to go into that- into that room. And it so happened that on this particular day, our- the lady who did for us, came. And- and she said to that fellow, “What do you want in there? That’s my room.” But she didn’t know that- that- she- she just- she was so incensed when- when they, you know, looked through everything. And so, he didn’t go in there. And my mother had been collecting the *Reichsfluchtsteuer*. If they would have found that, I don’t know whether we would have got it together anymore.

[0:47:40]

Did she help you, that maid?

Well, she didn’t know. She didn’t know anything was there. I mean, almost as if- if you believe in that sort of thing, that something had helped us.

But what happened to your shop in Kristallnacht? Did they come into the shop?

They closed it. They closed it.

They put a sign on it? Was your mother in the shop?

You- [half-laughs] You- you know, they used to put *einen Kommissar*, they used to put in, in- in the shops. And my mother was in the sh- in the shop, and somebody came and opened the door and went into the shop and, and said, “*Sie haben keinen Kommissar?*” So my mother said, “*Wie Sie sehen, nein.*” [As you can certainly see- I don’t] So he left.

But she was forced to sell it, you said, or-?

Oh, of course, of course - of course.

Yeah. So, did she...?

But you- you know- you know, my mother had an old- an old customer who’d been buying from my mother for ages and ages. And this lady, she- when we came- after the war, we came to Vienna. And she was still waiting, because she said she hadn’t paid my mother for something my mother had bought from her shop.

[0:49:50]

She wanted to pay you?

She wanted to pay us. And my mother didn’t want to take it. And she said, “No, no, no. That- that is not- I owe you this.”

*And did your mother manage to give some of your properties to some people, or did she...?
All your belongings, what- what could you take?*

Well, we- we didn’t take any- any- we didn’t take furniture or anything like that. And for instance, my mother had silver cutlery. All that we had to- that we had to give away. That- all that. But my mother didn’t even want it anymore.

And-

And you know my- I must just tell you something funny. [with laughter] When my cousin, my- my brother's son was going to be Bar Mitzvah, my mother wanted to come in a- in the dress that she had worn for the- a dress that she'd had for thirty years! And we said to her, "You can't go in that! I mean, you can't go to his Bar Mitzvah in that dress!"

From Vienna? She had the same dress?

From Vienna- from Vienna, yeah. Because my mother, after, she never got over it. But you know what I- although this is not really what we are talking about today. I went to Czechoslovakia, because my mother came from a place called Uhersky Brod. And, you know, there, the cemetery is beautifully kept - the Jewish cemetery. Beautifully kept. Everything in order. In Vienna, costs an absolute fortune. Because my- my father is buried there.

So, it costs money to keep it up.

[0:52:32]

To keep it up.

Yeah.

And- and a considerable amount of money.

Yeah. So-

But sometimes it- it upsets me that I think of my father, completely on his own there.

Yeah, because the other people don't have graves. He has a grave.

You know, you know, I, when my mother died, I said I want a little thing on her grave in memory of all members of our relatives who have no grave. Who perished in the Holocaust and who have no grave.

And did you do it?

I did it. I did it, yes. I've got it on her grave. Because I know that- that it meant an awful lot for my mother.

You said your mother never got over her- the loss of-

No, she didn't. She didn't.

We were talking about Bar Mitzvah. Did your brother have a Bar Mitzvah in Vienna too?

Yes, yes. Yeah.

Where, in that Tempel in-?

In- in- in Hietzinger Tempel [Eitelberggasse 22].

In Hietzinger Tempel?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Do you remember that?

Yeah- yeah.

And was that a joyous occasion?

Yes. Yes.

So that was still before Hitler came.

Yeah, yeah- yeah. Yeah.

And do you remember, were you scared in that time between Anschluss and leaving? How were you feeling at- I mean, you were fourteen- You?

Well, it's- it wasn't- it wasn't a particularly nice time.

And was it a situation where your friends were suddenly leaving or other people were leaving?

Some, yes- some were leaving. Some were leaving.

Was there ever discussion to go on the Kindertransport? Was that a possibility?

No. No- no. No.

Did you know about it?

Because I was- I was not so young anymore.

Also, you were- were you very close to your mother?

Yes, yes.

[0:55:12]

And was there- did they prepare you for emigration? Did you start learning English, or did you- you said?

Well, I learned English in India.

Yeah.

Yeah.

But you went to- you said, you were in a commercial school.

Yes, but that was after I- I had been to school. I knew already English then.

Right. So, in- in Vienna itself, did you continue going to school at all? What happened after...?

Well, well- we- we all had to go to the same school. You know, we couldn't go to the- to the normal school, that we'd- that we'd attended before.

You were chucked out?

Yeah.

And do you remember that? Do you remember the-?

Oh, yes! Oh, yes.

So, tell us about- what happened? You came to school and then?

And they- they kept us there until the end of, of, of the school year and then we had to go to the Jewish school.

So, at thirteen-?

And you know the one- one of the headmasters, was- I don't know what he had done but something he had done, because he wasn't Jewish and he also had to be... at the German school.

So which school? Where was your-?

In- in- in Hietzing. But after that, when- when the school was finished, we went to Stumpergasse.

Stumper- and that was a Jewish school?

That- that's where all the Jews went.

All the Jews were sent there.

Yeah. Yeah.

And at that time, did they prepare you for emigration-

No.

Some of the things? Or they just continued like a normal school?

Yeah.

OK, so now tell us please about your- your leaving. What do you remember of leaving Vienna?

[0:57:20]

Well... I- I- I don't really- I mean, you know from Vienna, to India, a completely different- you can't even call it in the same, I mean, in the same... you can't even talk about it- how shall I say it? Because I- I mean...it was a completely different world.

Yes. So, tell us about the journey. The journey.

Well, the journey- this was the first time we had ever had a- a ship journey like that.

So where did you leave from, in Vienna?

We went from Rotterdam.

Right.

And somebody gave my mother a- a tip that- that she should ask for some board money, because the- because we went with a Dutch boat, because the Dutch will give us the board money. Because... ten marks! We had no money! And that's what we did.

So, did your mother buy her tickets herself?

Yes.

Or they were sent to her, the tickets?

No, no, no. She- she queued for it and she bought it.

But you- the visa, it was- you had the permission to go to India?

Yes, yes, we had- we had a visa to go to India.

So, the visa was a work visa for your mother? To work in India?

Well, in, in- India, you could, because in England you couldn't. I knew somebody who waited a year before he got the permission to work here. The- because some people waited, I don't know how long. In the meantime, they were starving.

[1:00:00]

But, so you had the visa. So, tell us about- what did you- what did you take from your- with your belongings? What do you remember packing?

Only clothes.

Yeah?

We didn't take anything.

And by then your brother was already...?

No, my brother was still- was in Belgium.

Yes.

And- and when we arrived in India, my mother's cousin told her, "We have got good news. We got a visa" - for my brother.

So, the two of you packed your things, went to the train station in Vienna. Which- where did you leave from? Which train station?

We went to- because we went to Brussels first to- to see my brother. So, and after that we went to- to- we went to Belgium to see my brother and then we went to Rotterdam, and we caught the ship in Rotterdam.

So, when you met the two SS people that was on that journey?

Yeah.

From Vienna to Brussels?

Yeah, that was on that- on that journey.

And did it go smoothly, the border control?

Yes. Yes.

There were no problems?

There were no problems. No problems. It went smoothly.

And did your mother smuggle anything out, any more money or anything? Or she-yYou kept accordingly- You...? Yeah. So how long did you stay in Brussels for- to see?

Oh- just a week.

Yeah. And then from there you travelled to Rotterdam?

Yeah, and- and, and from there then we went to India. You know, my friend Liesl, she asked me once, “Tell me, did you like living in India?” So, I said, “Yes.” She said, “Because you always speak so fondly of it.”

Well, it must have been fascinating.

Yeah – yeah. Yeah - yeah. We went back, my husband and I- we went once on holiday to India.

Ok. I think we should now talk about the ship, but just let's take a little break.

Yes, we were talking about your journey from Vienna to India. So, tell us about the boat, the ship, the- whatever you remember.

[1:02:38]

Well, the ship- there were other refugees as well on- on the boat. And the ship was nice.

What was it called?

Marnix Sankt Aldegonde. [MS Marnix van Sint Aldegonde]

A Dutch ship?

Yeah.

Aha. And did you have a cabin?

Yeah.

With your mum?

Yeah.

The two of you.

The two of us. Yeah.

And how long was...?

And you know, you know, when my mother was queuing for the board money, somebody was also queuing. And he tapped her on the shoulder and he said to her, "Why don't you take a- a bit more board money, because the Dutch they will give it to you." Even- because the Germans didn't, you know, the Germans only gave you exactly what you were allowed to take out of Germany. Which was very little! And- but I must tell you something funny in a minute. And- and so, he- my mother did this, then. And that was a help, because the- the Dutch they gave you that money. The board money that you'd paid in- in Vienna, they gave it to you.

So, your mother paid in money in Vienna?

Yes.

The Dutch company – sailing company-

Yes. Yes.

They paid it back?

Yeah. Yeah.

So, could she manage to get some money - more money?

In- not a hell of a lot, but if you came with ten marks - there was nothing!

So, she got that money back - on the boat?

[1:04:58]

On the boat, yes, yes. Because they- they gave you that. They helped you a little bit like that. They gave us a- a bit of money. But- I was just going to... Yes. But we- because we were going to Calcutta, and - which meant that we had to get off in- in – oh, God I always forget what this place is called. I must ask. The children will know. And we- and they- they gave you this- they gave you this little money. And my mother's cousin, her husband had been in Austria, he had already done in the far east some- not at that time, but quite some time ago. So, he knew somebody there. And he wrote to this fellow and he said that we probably won't have any money, so could he give us some money and he will-

Reimburse him?

...he will re- reimburse him. But we didn't need it because the Dutch gave us this whole- whole thing. But the thing was that this fellow that- that- my mother's cousin's husband. He had alerted this fellow. And my mother couldn't speak English. My mother didn't know- I knew a few words, not a lot, but my mother didn't know any English. So, you know how we conversed? It so happened that this fellow, that- that he had contacted- he knew somebody, a German fellow, so he wrote a letter in German and he gave it to that fellow who translated it. And he then wrote an English letter and he translated it. [Laughing] And this is how we converted with each other. After two days, he gave it up. He lent us a- a driver and... took us and showed us the whole of- of the- the, the - Oh, God, what is? I keep forgetting what this is called now. Because they've got the change now.

[1:08:26]

In Bombay, probably?

No, not Bombay.

Mumbai?

No, no, no. No. Because, we had to change ships.

Right.

And-

But was it already in India?

It wasn't India. It wasn't in India. I'll ask the children. Because I keep forgetting what this is called now.

What was the country?

That's what I- I can't remember now what it is called now. And- and it- I- after two days he lent us a driver and a car, and sent us and we saw the whole of- of Ceylon.

Oh, Sri Lanka?

Sri Lanka – yes - the whole of Sri Lanka.

Aha, so you docked, the ship docked in Sri Lanka?

In Sri Lanka and we had- we had to wait a week until- because at, at that time there was still the Dutch East Indies.

And then you took another ship to Calcutta.

Yes.

You sailed basically around India?

Yeah, yeah.

And what was it- was it exciting, the journey, for you? Were you relieved to be out of Austria? What were you feeling?

[1:09:45]

Well, it was very strange for me, because- I mean that's- that's all I knew. But I- by the time I came back from school, I spoke English.

But when you left, actually, when you crossed out of Austria, were you relieved to leave? What were your feelings leaving Austria? Do you remember?

Well-

Or were you sad to go?

I don't know that I was sad, but it's- it was strange because everything was completely different.

Yes.

And- and, also with the language.

Yeah.

As a matter of fact, the- the first- the first lesson I attended was a religion lesson. And all I- I understood was 'Jesus Christ'. Because 'Jesus Christ' - I knew what that meant.

The same in German [laughs] and English. So, you arrived-

But I must tell you, which has nothing to do with this now. You know, my sister-in-law, who was in- in a camp. She was actually even in- in- where they killed the- the people. And... she went- left Hungary and she had a relative in India. And she then took- eventually she took on a post and- and she- she knew some English or she'd learnt some- some English and she got a job in- in India. And she used English, and she met somebody who, who said- and she told

this woman at - about my sister-in-law, that- that she knew from- from Hungary. And it turned out that the- she was working in an office, that she met this woman who... was by- she- she knew the- the one of the nuns from the convent where I had been in- in India, she was her niece! I mean, what is the likelihood of something like that? So she came- she visited us after that. Well, I mean, how likely is that?

[1:13:59]

So, tell us a little bit about when you arrived in Calcutta. What were your first impressions?

Well, it was very different to- to... to England – well, England, I didn't know really England - but it was certainly quite different to Austria.

Quite different?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

So, what were your visuals? What did you see? What- what do you remember?

The- the cows. [laughs]

Tell us about the cows.

Because they- they are holy, you know?

So, on the street, cows on the street?

Are holy.

Yes, so you remember the cows. What else do you remember? Did somebody pick you up from the boat when you arrived in Calcutta?

Well- well, my, my mother's cousin, she picked us up. But something strange happened, actually. I was standing on the- by the railing of the- the ship, looking at the water. And

suddenly I saw a dead body floating down the river. And they- they said that sometimes they do that. They- they don't burn the body. They steal the body and- and, you know, put it- throw it away. And let it-

Yeah. That was one of the first things you saw?

Yeah.

Yeah.

But that didn't make a very nice impression on me. Cause it- it's quite frightening. You know? You're standing on the- on the boat and look down and suddenly you see a dead body lying there- lying there.

And then you disembarked from the boat?

Yes, eventually we disembark-

And was there a car waiting for you, or...-?

Yes, well, my mother's cousin, she took a taxi.

And where did she take you then?

[1:16:35]

To this boarding house, where we originally thought that my mother would have a job there. But this woman said she couldn't really give us a job, because things were bad. And so, then my mother then decided- she took a flat. My mother was a very good cook, so, she took a flat. And she then - did it on her own.

She cooked? She became a cook?

She cooked, yes. Yes, she-

And for who? For?

She- she made - for the, the Continentals- they liked her- her cuisine. Because she... cooked like they were used to eat.

So, she basically sold-?

So, she made it on- on- on her own.

And people came to the flat?

Yes.

A little restaurant then?

Well, not a restaurant, but a- a few paying guests.

Ah, so like a boarding house, she herself?

Sort of, sort of.

Or was it just food, people came just to eat? Or also to stay there?

Some of them stayed- stayed as well. And of course, the- the people from the Continent, they came because they liked the food.

So, what did she serve? Tell us. What food? What did she make for them?

[pauses] I'm trying to think. Bean soup, she often made. That was quite popular. And- and ...I can't remember. She- she made- and she was also a good pastry cook.

And she managed to get the ingredients she needed?

Oh, yes. Yes.

Everything was there?

Yes- yes. Yes, yes. And she always used to tell the- the Indian, you know, where she shopped, she always used to tell them that when she gets, when she gets her fees back, then she would reimburse them. And they used to laugh!

So, she was quite enter- enterprising!

Yeah. She had to be.

Yeah.

She had to be.

But you went to school. You were sent to school.

I went to school.

So, tell us about that school. Where were you sent to?

[1:19:48]

To Darjeeling - to the Loreto Convent.

And why were you sent there to that convent school?

Because somebody told my mother that- that they will make a bigger- better price. So that they- they won't charge so much. But it wasn't a hundred percent like that.

Who paid for it then? Your mother paid for it?

Yes.

But- and what was it like?

It was OK, but they- they- for instance, when- you know, the parents used to send the children food parcels. And they never gave me any food parcels, which I think was very mean. They- and they very often, when, when I got a parcel, they didn't give me the parcel. Which- and they weren't very nice to me.

No? Why? What did they do?

For instance, I once had to go to the loo, in the night. So, after that I had to sleep next to the toilet. And, you know, I'd just had a horrible experience, hadn't I? That's – that's not very - how shall I say? That's not particularly nice, is it? Because if anything- and also, they- they used to pick on me. Because they- basically, they wanted me to convert. And that was everything that which made me not convert, because it put my back up.

Aha. They put pressure on you.

Yeah.

Were there any other Jewish or refugee children?

[1:22:38]

There was- not refugee children. But there was- I think there were two other Jewish girls.

But you were not inclined to convert or-?

No, because that didn't- I wasn't- I didn't have in mind to convert. But- but that didn't make me want to convert. If they'd been nice to me, I would have sooner converted.

That brings me to the next question. Did you have any contact to the Jewish community in Calcutta? Did your mother have any contact?

Yes. Yes, when I came down then.

Aha? To which of them? Because there were several in Calcutta.

Yeah, well there are quite a number of- of Jewish- because they are- they are mostly, you know, Arabian-

From Iraq. Baghdadi.

From Iraq. Yeah. Yeah. Baghdad. Baghdad.

And did they help you? Were they- did the Baghdadi community help the refugees or...?

I mean, we never- they gave us anything and we didn't want anything.

There was no organisation set up to help you?

Well, there was the- the Continental. There was - oh, God, maybe my brother – my brother – my son will- will know. There was an organisation. And-

They helped a bit?

I will- I will ask him. But- but most of the- the Jews there- but you know when we went to India, on holiday, we took a taxi because we- we were looking for a flat where we'd stayed. And we had stopped in- in a taxi. And a taxi- and a man came up to us and, "Excuse me. Are you Jewish?" We said, "Yes." "Because my sister said there's a- a couple who seem to be looking for something, and maybe they could- they could help you. Would you like to come up for- for a cup of tea?" So, we said, "It's very kind of you, but we are- we haven't got much time." But they wanted to- to give us tea. But they were- they were not Jewish. They were Indians. I thought that was very, very nice. And then there was a branch of- of Keventers - you know, the milk people? I mean I don't know whether you- whether you know about it, because you probably... don't know the- do you know anything about the Indian? Anyway, they, they- they said that- that- "My sister said, maybe this- maybe they are

looking for something. Maybe we can help them or maybe they can come and have a cup of tea with us.” And the owner of the Keventers- you know that in India there’s a milk-

[1:27:00]

Yeah?

And he said unfortunately he’s on duty at the moment, so he can’t leave this. But he’ll give me a slip and we should go to Keventers and have tea there. They will pay for it. They were very- and they were very, very - how shall I say? Taken by the fact that we’d come back from, from India, and had gone to have a look.

And was that the flat where your mother lived?

It, it was in Darjeeling. And- and the landlord of the- the flat where- where my mother- my where my mother’s flat was, he showed us the flat to see what it’s like now.

So, your mother also moved to Darjeeling?

Well, my- my mother, so- she lived in Darjeeling most of the time because she- during the thing, she used to make money with- with that. Because she used to have paying guests.

But that was for the summer. So, she was not in Calcutta the whole time?

No, no, no. She was in- most of the time, in Darjeeling.

Aha. And how long did you stay in that school?

In the- in the school?

In the convent.

In the- in the convent. I said I’m not going back. I just stayed- really, I think it was five months.

And then?

And then I went for a little while in- in Calcutta to the school. And then I went and did a commercial course. And then took on a job. And they all said, that wouldn't be possible, because I won't know enough English. But I did know enough English. And I got a job then with Lever Brothers.

[1:29:23]

And what were you doing for Lever Brothers? What-?

Commercial, you know, shorthand typing.

And while you were there, I mean, there was obviously World War Two going on. Did that impact you at all, the war, in India?

Not really. I mean, because soldiers came on holiday to Darjeeling.

British soldiers?

Yeah – yeah. But that was about- and then the Americans, because then there was with- with- the- the- also-

Pearl Harbour?

Pearl Harbour, yeah – yeah. And-

What about your brother, you said he managed to get there?

My brother- my brother worked, because he'd done a- a course in photography. He'd done that still in- in Austria. And then he- somebody offered him a job to sell paper and- and - I'll ask Mark, he will be able to explain this better. And he got- he got a job then in- in paper.

And where?

In- in India. In, in...in Bombay. In Bombay.

In Bombay. So, when you got your job, where was that with the Lever?

With Lever Brothers I- first of all I worked in Calcutta for a while. And then I got this job through a friend with Lever Brothers. And- and that's where I worked- most of the time in- in Lever Brothers. In India.

And how did the refugees fit in into this Indian society which was quite- I guess- colonial. You had the British colonials and you had the caste system. How- how did they slot in, if you see what I mean?

[1:32:14]

Well, there were some people- because some people were, were also- you know, how shall I say? Because first of all, there were European employees in- in India. You know, who were – had been sent out from Europe.

So, expats? Expats, yes?

Yes. And the- I mean, the- the - how shall I say? The- some of the- were Europeans, quite a number of- of people who worked for Lever Brothers.

Yeah, but for example did you experience any anti-Semitism in India?

No- no. No. No.

So- or for example the British colonials, did they look down on the refugees?

No – no.

No. There was no – you didn't experience-?

No, no. That- that wasn't. Not at all. Not at all.

So did the- the refugees saw themselves as, sort of, Europeans - like the British?

Yes.

Yes.

Although they were not- not- anti-Semitic, they were not. I- I don't even know whether the Indians are particularly anti-Semitic.

So, you didn't have any bad experiences?

No. No.

So, was it a positive-for you, was it a positive experience staying in India?

Yes – yes. That's why I said that- that Liesl said to me, "Did you like living in India? Because you always speak so fondly of it."

Yeah. So, you think it was quite easy for the refugees to slot in, or to find opportunities?

Well, I don't know about- I don't know whether- but they- they certainly did. I don't think they had a hard time there. I mean, basically, I think they were quite happy there.

And you said you were not- people were not interned as enemy aliens?

[1:35:24]

No.

No.

They- they- they were interned for a little while, but then they let them all out. Because the Jewish organisation said, "These people, they've just been thrown out of their country. They've, they've been robbed of everything they had." And some made - did quite well.

So, was your mother interned?

No.

No, so-

They- they- at one time they were talking about, but then it didn't come off. They didn't.

And how...?

My brother was interned for a little while.

He was? Aha.

Yes.

So where was he interned?

In a place called Katapahar, which was even higher than Darjeeling. And we used to go and- and he used- we used to visit him periodically. And he was- for a little while, he was interned. Not an awfully long time. Maybe it- it was- I can't ask my brother- my brother anymore. He'd have remembered.

How long? A couple of months, or-?

Two, three months. Not an awfully long time. And then he went to Calcutta and he went back to this fellow who- and did in paper. He- for the rest of the time.

And what was the relationship between the local Jewish community? You said there were the Baghdadi Jews?

Yeah

Was there- did they try to help the German Jews? Was there contact, or?

There was- there was contact. Yes, yes. But- and- they- they were- certainly weren't against them or anything like that.

[1:37:37]

I wonder whether, for example, there must have been Jewish schools in Calcutta or, you know, by the- by those Baghdadi Jews.

That I- I- I mean, knew some Baghdadi Jews, but I can't actually say that I remember any particular school.

Yeah. But anyway, there was no- you can't remember any problems?

No, no, no problems. No problems.

What-?

I was friendly- I had a friend actually, who was a- a girl who was a Baghdadi Jewish girl. And- and I remember one was called Muriel Abrahams - one girl I knew.

Because the synagogue must have been very different to what you were used to.

I must tell you something about the synagogue. My great-nephew got married just a little while ago. And he and his wife got married just a little- little while ago. They went to India. And they went to see the synagogue where my brother and my sister-in-law got married and they, they told them that- that this is now a synagogue which is, you know, it's- it's got a- a synagogue- quite an ancient synagogue that they are keeping. You know?

A monument.

Yeah.

So, your brother got married in India?

Yeah.

To his Hungarian- to- wife?

To a Hungarian wife, yeah.

And how did she- how did she end up in India?

Because- she was in Auschwitz. She and- and her- her sister, they were both in Auschwitz. And the mother- the mother was gassed. And-

And she came after the war to India?

[1:40:15]

Well, they – no, they- they were from Hungary. And they- they- the mother was- was killed in Auschwitz straight away. And- because by the time they took the Hungarian Jews, it wasn't going so well anymore for the Germans. So, they needed already helpers and- and altogether it wasn't- they weren't doing so well, the- the Germans. And they- the mother was gassed straight away and the- well, they had to work. They were- because they needed the work permit- the- the work force-

Yeah.

Already.

But she came to India?

She- she came because an aunt of hers had emigrated to India. And they came- and her aunt decided if the daughters- because my sister-in-law had a sister. And the daughters and the- she was going to bring them out to India, after the- the war. But they- her sister went to Israel.

So how many, in terms of - maybe you don't know - how many refugees were there in- in Calcutta or in Bombay or-? Was it a big community?

Maybe- maybe Mark, maybe Mark-

But it was a substantial number?

Yes, yes. Yes. I mean, there weren't masses.

Yeah.

But-

And did people work as doctors and as...-?

Yes, yes. And you know, the doctors, not a single refugee doctor ever sent you a bill if somebody was sick. They always treated you free of charge.

[1:43:05]

So, there was a sort of comradery between the refugees?

Yeah – yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

And how- how did your mother-? What take was she? How did she feel in India?

My mother? I think she was- I think she was quite happy. She liked Darjeeling.

A hill station.

And she had one friend who always used to say that she's going to sing, "*Von meinen Bergen muss ich scheiden.*" [I have to part with my beautiful mountains] Because they- they had these beautiful mountains. You know, I saw, on two occasions I saw the thing, a sunrise over Mount Everest.

So, she was quite- she was happy there?

Sorry?

So, she was happy there?

Yes, yes. Yes.

So, was there any idea of staying there, or when did it- when-?

I- actually one of the ladies, she was from Germany actually- I mean, also a refugee. But, but she stayed in India. She- she remained there.

And what about you?

No, well, I was- I had in mind to- to- but I have soft spot for India.

So, was it always clear for your mother and you that you would come back to Europe or go back - somewhere?

No- yes, because at, at first, we wanted to go to America. Because my cousin, she was in America. But then- as it got longer and longer, my mother got older and older, we gave up the idea. And my mother stayed with us in- in- in India.

[1:45:35]

And after the war finished, did you- was there any idea of going back to Austria? Did you want to go back to Austria?

No. You know, my mother would have killed me if I had gone back to- to Austria. And what I can't understand is, these people taking Austrian passports. You know quite a number of- of them have taken Austrian passports?

You don't think it's- for you, that's not a possibility?

No. There is no way that I would do that. But for my mother's sake, I couldn't do that.

She felt strongly.

You-you speak German? You- you know when they did this- when they came to raid on *Kristall* night she said to this, to this fellow, she said, "*Ich will nicht einmal gestohlen gestorben? sein hier!*" [pause] My mother never forgave them. I mean, she lost all her relatives.

OK. I think we'll take- [sound break]

Yes, so you said you had this- your mother didn't- nobody wanted to go back to Austria, but you had the idea of going to Europe.

Yes. Yes. Because in India it was uncertain what was going to happen. You know, when it became independent.

Yeah. How did the German Jewish refugees, how did that affect you the whole independence struggle, an...-?

[1:47:40]

No. That- that was OK. That-

People didn't get involved politically, or – did some people get involved politically?

No. I don't think so.

No.

I don't think so

But because of the political uncertainty, it was a reason not to stay.

Yes, because basically I think, they- because one didn't know, which way- it was going to work out.

But at- towards the end of the war you had a job, you had enough money to live?

Yes. Oh, yes - yes.

So, you could support yourself?

Yeah. Yes, I did. You- you know, as a matter of fact, I had a friend. And she used to- she used to love spending money. And she used to give me, when she got her salary, she very often used to give me the money to put a-away and she said, "Don't give it to me. Even if I ask you, don't give it to me until such-and-such a time." And then I should give it to her because she wanted to get a new dress or something like that. And I, I used to do it.

And did you have a nice circle of friends and colleagues?

Yeah.

Yeah?

Yeah – yeah.

Who was there? Who did you meet?

I had- actually, various people. Some were Anglo-Indians, and Indians, I didn't have so many- so many friends. Some were English - a mixture.

And what about your husband? Did you meet him in India?

He – yes, yes. Because my husband actually was- first of all they were in Palestine. And then- and his father had bought a visa to go to India. That’s how he went to India. And he sent my husband and his mother they should come to India. That’s how they originally-

[1:50:35]

From Palestine?

From Palestine.

So, he was also from Vienna?

Yeah – yeah. Yeah.

And in fact, they had shop- they had a shop- a chain of shops.

They had- they had- I think they had four shops.

And what was it called?

Klimt – Brüder Klimt.

Brüder Klimt?

Yeah.

And what was it, a-

Suits and - that sort of wear. They had one- one shop in- do you know Vienna, Vienna at all?

Yeah.

In Mariahilfer Straße, they had one shop. And they had one in-

They had several shops.

Sorry?

They had a few shops. So, they got out...?

Yes, yes. Mostly menswear.

Ausstattung-s, you said?

Yes. Yes.

Ausstattung.

Auf der Mariahilfer Straße – there was one shop.

And they left to Palestine in '38, '39?

My- my mother-in-law and my husband, they- because the- her- her brother, he was a, a member of the *Deutschen Jüdischen Volkssoldaten*. As a matter of fact, my- my husband was a 'von'. [“von” meaning he was of nobility]

[1:52:20]

He was a 'von'?

Yes.

Aha!

Because his father was – [calls her son] Mark! Mark!

We'll ask it later.

Yes.

Don't worry. So, he was a 'von Klimt'? And how did he get that- it's also a very prominent name, Klimt. Were they related?

No, because – Mark! Mark, can you tell how, how did uncle Mundi and- and Grannie's-

[Mark:] Brother.

Brother – get a 'von'?

[Mark:] Oh, how did he-? Well, no, the grandfather- so my father-

The grandfather, the grandfather, yeah.

We need you to be a bit closer in the picture. Maybe stand behind your mother, then you can pick up on the sound as well. Yeah. A bit lower. Yeah. OK.

[Mark:] How did he get- I think it was because- I mean, so my grandfather- my father's grandfather was a-

High ranking officer.

Yeah?

[Mark:] Officer in the Austrian Army. And so, for- I think he was decorated for his war activities. That was basically-

But the- but the- also I think he got a 'von' because he was a very high-ranking officer.

[Mark:] Yeah.

And did they use it? It was in their name?

[Mark:] Yeah - von Friedmann.

Von Friedmann?

[Mark:] Yeah.

Aha.

[Mark:] Yeah, he was- so, my- my grandmother was-

Edler- Edler von Friedmann.

[Mark:] Yeah. So, my grandmother was Frederike von Friedmann. And when my grandfather, who was Fritz Kohn, who ran- who was a- a menswear shops-man, he came to ask his future father-in-law for my grandmother's hand in marriage, it was felt that a- a tradesman called Fritz Kohn marrying Frederike von Friedmann wasn't quite the thing. And this was in 1919. So, my grandfather and his brothers, he had three brothers, they decided that they'd change the name from 'Kohn' to something a little bit more, sort of, upmarket.

Yes.

[Mark:] And it was either going to be Kovacs or Klimt because they wanted to keep 'K' for the monogram on the, you know, the serviettes and things like that.

Yes - yeah.

[Mark:] So, on the- and so it was- and because Gustav Klimt had died the previous year, he was very much in the news. So, Klimt got the- got the nod. And so, he became Klimt. So, so my grandfather and his three brothers were the first Klimts, and that's how we're called Klimt. My-

From Kohn to Klimt.

[Mark:] From Kohn to Klimt. And my grandfather's- one of his three brothers- two lived in America, New York and one went to Australia. But one of the ones in New York, he had a son. And in later life- we always knew him as 'Bill' or 'Billy' Klimt, but in later life, he started styling himself 'Wilhelm Klimt' in New York. And he was selling sort of reproduction Klimt pictures, this is under the sub, "The Klimt Collection". And at first- I was alerted to this by my cousin in Australia. So, I went on to the website and at first it said, "By perm- Wilhelm Klimt, by permission of the family." So, I thought well, I don't know whose family. I haven't given him permission and I don't think Gustav Klimt's family have given him permission. Then a few years passed and I logged on again for some reason, and it said, "Wilhelm Klimt a distant relative of- of Gustav Klimt." So, he's getting closer, right? We're no relation at all. A few years on, I logged on again, and it said, "Wilhelm Klimt, a relative of Gustav Klimt." I thought, if this goes on, is he actually gonna say he is Gustav Klimt?

[1:56:32]

[Mark:] But anyway, so that's the- that's how we became-

So that's the story of Klimt.

[Mark:] That's Klimt. The Klimt story.

That's a lovely story. Thank you.

[Laughing] You see? You didn't realise what an illustrious – illustrious people!

Well, my mother is actually called Friedmann, so maybe she's a 'von' too.

Really?

Yeah. Yeah – yeah. I haven't heard the 'von' yet. But who knows?

Who knows?

So, by the time you met your husband he was Klimt?

Yeah, he was Klimt.

He wasn't Kohn.

He wasn't Kohn.

So, tell us, how did you meet him?

A friend of mine made up a- a party, to go to a dance. And she asked- she was at that time going out with my - the one who eventually became my husband. And, that's how I met him.

And- but you didn't get married in India?

[1:57:47]

No, no. I got married in- in England.

So, in fact did you come together then, here, or you come separately then to England?

Actually, he came first, and I came a bit later.

And was it difficult to come to England? I mean, what- what passport did you have at that time, after the war?

Actually, I had an- an experience. When I landed in- in- in England, they- you know, we had to show our papers. I didn't have an Austrian passport. I just had an- an Indian travel paper. And they, who came- you, whatever you call them, the- the you know, who look at the papers-

Yeah.

They got off the boat, with all my papers, and didn't give me anything to show who I was. Now, if that would happen now, can you imagine what a, a, a song and dance they would make about this? Cause you can't leave somebody without, completely without papers! And then they came in the afternoon, somebody from the Home Office came and apologised. And then they let me- let me off the boat and said that I should ask for an Austrian passport. Because my mother, under no circumstances did she want an Austrian passport.

But did you come back- not back- did you come to the UK with your mother?

No, no. I came on my own. I came on my own.

So, what was- did you know anyone? What was the plan when you came to...?

[2:00:00]

Because my husband was here already.

OK.

But I wasn't married. And I came a bit later. And we got married then, here in England at the Great Portland Street Synagogue. I must ask Mark exactly what it is called.

Yeah – the Great Portland Street Synagogue.

Yeah.

Yeah. So, you followed basically your husband to England?

Yeah.

Yeah. And- and when did your mother then join you?

My mother in the meantime had- there- there was a- a, a paper called 'Aufbau'.

Yeah.

Do you remember it?

Yeah.

And my- we were looking or my cousin.

In America?

In America. Because, you know, this is also- my- my cousin she had a boyfriend. He sent for her from- from America. They- they had- is family had- for America, you know, an affidavit and, and everything. And he sent for her. And when she came to America then they got married. And my cousin had everything ready. They had an affidavit for her, for her- for my cousin's father, for my cousin's mother and for her brother. And they were waiting for the quota *Nummer*. And in the meantime... And I have the feeling they ended in Minsk. You've heard of Minsk, haven't you? Richard Grunberger said once, "From Minsk there was one survivor."

[2:02:38]

So, did your mother want to go- she wanted to go to America?

No, my mother wanted to be with us, actually.

Yes, but you said you put an ad in the 'Aufbau' -

Yes, because we- she- I can't remember what she was- something she looked in the- and my- my mother had a fellow who- he was a salesman for- for carpets. And my mother used to go to the shop and he always said that my mother was very nice, she used to talk to him and- and all this. And he saw in the 'Aufbau' my mother's name, and he wrote and said, "I- I wonder are you the" - my mother's name was Bertha Herlinger - "Are you the Bertha Herlinger that we- that I knew from Vienna?" So, we answered and said, "Yes, she's the one." And in the end, they sent an affidavit for my mother to, to come to America. To Spokane [in Washington

State]. You know, who comes from Spokane? [tries to remember name] No. There's the- the singer – now, crumbs. Mark!

Don't worry.

I'll have to ask him when- when, when he comes. And they sent a- an affidavit for her, so my mother was in America for a- a few years. And-

Aha.

But the people- People, they all said to her, "You know, in- she was in Spokane.

Spokane?

Yeah.

Where is that?

This- that singer.

Where is Spokane?

In-

Ok, don't worry, don't worry, we'll find out - we'll find out.

[2:05:15]

And- and, so my mother went to America for a little while. But- and that was actually funny. I- the- we went to America, to Spokane, but our visas didn't come. And the people used to say to my mother, "Go to your children. Go to..." And there was somebody – was he a rabbi there? Something. He- my- my mother was at that time I think about fifty- fifty-five, something like that. And he said, "My advice to you is, You're not...." My mother, as I said,

she was about fifty-five – fifty-five, fifty-six. “You’re not so old yet. But- go to your children.” So, she came then to us.

So, she went from India to America?

From India to America, yeah.

And then she joined you?

And from America she came then to us.

*And when you came here to England, what was it like for you to come, post-war, to England?
What were your impressions?*

It was alright. ...It was OK. I didn’t- I didn’t find- it was a bit of a struggle, because we didn’t have anything.

Where did you settle?

In London.

And where in London?

Near, near... Oh, God. Oh, dear.

[2:07:15]

You said Wembley? In Wembley?

In Wembley, near – in Wembley, yeah.

And why Wembley? Why did you go to Wembley?

I don’t actually know why we went to- to Wembley.

Did your- did your husband have...?

Bing Crosby! Bing Crosby.

Bing Crosby, aha.

He came from Spokane.

OK. OK, now we know who it was. Right, so you came-

You- you know you came here today. You got more than you bargained for! [laughs]

Definitely. Definitely – definitely. I just wanted to ask you one more thing. When did your mother find out, or you found out, what happened to the rest of the family? How did she find out?

I had a- an, an aunt. She was in- in the Czech Republic. And she knew what had happened to everybody.

So, during the war was there hop-, did your mother hope that more people- you know, she didn't know.

She- my mother said- there was a, a doctor that- that- who had the flat next to my mother. And he was also from Austria. And this- one aunt of mine, wrote to my mother then after the war. And told her. Because they were really all-

Yeah.

And you know in, in the Czech Republic, the- the cemetery - my grandfather is buried there, my grandmother, my step-grandmother, and- and an aunt of mine who died at the age of sixteen, they - beautifully kept. Because I've been to- my- my mother came from a place called Uhersky Brod-

Yeah, which is now Czech Republic?

Yeah.

Yeah. And when did you go back to Austria first?

I can't actually remember when I went the first time. [thinking back] Got- We went to Vienna once.

[2:10:19]

In the 50s, or 60s, or-?

I think about the 50s.

And what was it like for you, to go back to Vienna?

You know, we went once to Vienna and we went to look, because my mother had- had a house in, in Vienna. And for some reason or another, they never- because they- they took all the houses of the Jews away, you know, in Austria. But my- my mother's house had not been taken away. But it got bombed. And burnt. And-

The shop? With the shop you mean? That one?

Not with the shop.

Ah, another house.

She had a house, you know, with flats in it. And then my- my uncle, they- they lost both their children. And they- he- they still remembered his firm, when- when they came back from- from having been- and, but he needed money. And my mother lent him the money so- because she said that was more important than-

They lost their children in a concentration camp?

Yeah – yeah.

Yeah. But in the meantime, you were here, you built up- you had a family?

Yeah.

Yeah? You had three children?

Yeah.

And how- what was your aim? How did you want to raise your children? What sort of identity did you want to give them?

I wanted them to be strict Aryans. [both laugh at the ironic response] I, I- no, no, ‘cause I raised them- on the contrary, if anything made me want them to be Jewish, that did.

And was it important for you that your husband was from Vienna as well? Was that important?

I don’t know whether it was- I mean, we knew each other and- and so how shall I say it? You felt quite comfortable.

[2:13:27]

Yeah. Did you know him in Vienna?

Sorry?

Did you know him from Vienna?

No.

No. And did you have similar views on being Jewish? Did you have similar...-?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yes.

Aha. So, you said you joined this synagogue - this Portland Street Synagogue?

Yeah.

And why Portland Street Synagogue?

My- my brother was- because my brother always said, "When I hear the chazzan's voice, I feel closer to *Hashem*."

And you didn't tell us- how did your brother get to England?

Because they- he had this visa, that- by the time we arrived in India, somebody had sent the visa.

But to England? How did he get to England? You got to England – you followed your husband-

No, no. Yes. But- but my- my- the first thing my brother, when we got to India, he- he had a visa to India.

Yeah, but then how did he come to Britain?

He- the same. That was another thing, because my mother had a- a shop in, in- in a certain street. And she was quite friendly- they had a- a bakers, the husband and the wife. And she was quite friendly with them. And this fellow said that he has somebody who can get some money out, and would my mother be interested? So, my mother said, well, she wouldn't be a little bit- she wouldn't be against it. And that fellow waited while- he emigrated to England. He was a- he had a shop in the same street as- as my mother.

In Vienna?

[2:15:53]

In Vienna. And he was a baker. And he had- he had to wait one year to get the permission to work here in this- in England. And of course, by that time, he was already starving. So, obviously he used the money. I mean, who can blame him? But after the war he wrote to us and said that the fellow who had kept his money, gave it back. And he sent for a visa for my brother and a visa for me.

Aha. So, because of him you then could come to England?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

And- but your brother came after you, or you came-?

When- that was when I arrived in England my brother told- had- I had a letter waiting for me that he got his visa for- for England.

And then he joined Portland Street Synagogue?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

And-right, so you travelled-it's quite far from Wembley to Portland Street Synagogue.

Yeah. [both laugh]

Yeah. And in England, did you find some friends from Vienna?

Well, Liesl-

So, tell us the story with Liesl. How did you find her?

The **chazzan** of the synagogue in- in Vienna, my brother looked in the- in the telephone directory, and he found the name. The- the- the **chazzan**'s name was Einhorn. So, he rang, and said, "Are you this Einhorn from Hietzing?" And it was. And- and it was near Rosh

Hashanah. And my brother was actually more Orthodox than me. And they were delighted! And they immediately invited us, because it wasn't so far from Rosh Hashanah. He was- they were delighted. We must come for Rosh Hashanah and for Yom Kippur and, and this and that. And this is how we met them again. And- and this is how we got together, and- but they then- he, actually, the **chazzan**, didn't get very old. He died- I think he was only about fifty-six. And it was near the holidays. And my brother was very keen to go to *shul* on the holidays. So that's- we met them again, and-

[2:19:13]

*But was he the **chazzan** at Portland Street Synagogue?*

He-

This Einhorn?

No, no. no. He was in- in Shacklewell- Shacklewell Lane. I don't know whether you- you know that even. Because now it- I don't even think it's a shul anymore.

Aha. But Liesl you met through him? - No?

The wife of the **chazzan**, she knew that Liesl and her mother were here in- in England. And she said, "Have you seen," she said to my mother, "Have- have- did you- have you seen Liesl?" And my mother said, "No, we didn't know, we didn't know that we were here." And that's how I- how I contacted Liesl then.

And how did you then meet? Where did you then meet?

In Holborn tube station. And, and I- I was- I- we arranged to meet. I waited for her at the top of- of Holborn tube station, and I was waiting for her. And I thought, my God, how am I going to recognise Liesl? All of a sudden, I said, "Liesl!" - because she looked exactly the way I remembered her.

And you hadn't seen her for a good-

I hadn't seen her for some years. Yeah.

[2:20:43]

And then did you join- because she had been here throughout the war- did you join her and meet other people through her?

Yes, yes - yes.

Aha.

Yes.

Because she was active with Richard in the Young Austria.

That's right. Yes. Yes.

So, did you go into those circles as well?

No, I didn't. I didn't join the- the- join the *Young Austria*. But she told me and I- I had met somebody else - she's also gone by now – who, we used to meet, used to have lunch together.

And what did your husband do professionally here in- in England?

He, he was in the cloth trade. He- they basically, more or less the same that they'd been since they- that they'd been doing.

And did he have a shop, or-?

No.

A wholesale?

And then he joined his father.

His father was also here?

Yeah, yeah.

The father- his father had survived?

Yes, yes. Yes, he survived.

And came to- to Britain?

Yeah.

And where?

[2:22:13]

But they were in India at first, and then they came to- to England, and then-

Right. So, he had a textile business?

Yeah. Yeah.

And did you work or did you raise your children, or-?

No. No, I worked at first.

Yeah?

Yeah- yeah.

What did you do?

Shorthand and typing that was- that's what I could do.

Yeah. Yeah. And now you have a big family?

Well-

Grandchildren. And are they close to you here, or where are they?

Yeah. Close.

Yeah. And how do- how do you define yourself today, in terms of your identity? How do you see yourself?

In what respect?

Are you British or are you...?

Yes, well I am British. [laughs]

Viennese?

No.

No.

No.

Continental?

No. I'm British.

OK. And is there- what is for you the most important aspect of your heritage? Of your, you know, Viennese heritage? What's important for you? Was there anything you wanted to transmit to your children?

Well, I did transmit, you know - I- I've always been Jewish.

That's important?

Yeah.

I couldn't- First of all, I- I couldn't do this to my mother. And- and secondly, we lost our whole family. I mean- but you know, I- this I also wanted to tell you. They- after some time, they wrote all of a sudden once. My quota - just mine, I don't know why - my quota number [for entry to the US] has come. So, I wrote to them and thanked them very much and said, "But unfortunately I am not able to avail myself of it, because I'm expecting a baby." So- which was actually- well, I was expecting Judith. And they said, OK, they will hold it for me, and they will let me know again. A year later, they wrote again to me that my quota number has come. So, I said, "I'm very sorry but I can't avail myself of it, because I'm expecting another baby." [laughing] Because that was Wendy; that was my next daughter. So, they said, OK, well they will hold it for me for one more year but then I have to make up my mind. And then I- I-

You didn't want to?

I didn't want to go to America anymore.

And you are happy that you stayed in England?

Yes – yes. But we- we went to America quite- because my mother- my cousin was in America and we went- we had some very nice holidays in America. And we visited my cousin quite-

And did you talk about the past to your children? Did you talk about it?

Yes. Yes.

And do you find it is coming back more to your now, being older, or has it changed? Your memories?

I don't think so. Not really. I don't think it's- it's- but I mean, I would, no way, ever have denied what I am. Because that would be unthinkable after losing everybody.

Yeah. And is there something you miss from Vienna? Anything you miss?

No - [laughs]

You kept up your-

The Antisemiten.

[Laughs at the ironic comment] *We've got some here as well.*

[2:27:17]

That's what I miss.

But you kept up your- your German?

Yeah.

Your Austrian?

Yeah.

Did you speak some German to your children? I-

Oh, yes, yes, yes, they all speak German-

Did you speak-?

I, I don't think they speak necessarily hundred percent correct or anything, but they all speak German.

Did you speak to them in German?

I speak to them in German, yes. Yes, sometimes.

And with your husband? What did you speak?

Also, with my husband. Yes, yes.

You spoke German?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Was that important for you?

[2:27:50]

It was quite natural.

Yeah. And how do you think did your experiences impact on your life, the fact that you had to leave Austria? How do you think it influenced your later life?

I don't really know whether it made- I mean, I never intended to go back to Austria. Because I didn't want to. And there's no way- I- I couldn't have done this to my mother. And also, quite frankly, if they've killed your whole family, you're not going to go back to Austria, are you?

No. Do you sometimes think what would have happened if you would have stayed in Austria? What your life would have been?

I can't say that I've spent an awful life- an awful time - about it.

But you went with your children? You showed them where you lived?

Yes – yes.

That was important?

Yes, yes, and that we showed them.

Yeah. And your husband, how do you think it affected him?

I- I would say much- much the same. The same thing. I mean, he never wanted to go back to Austria or anything like that.

You wouldn't be happy if, let's say, your children would get Austrian citizenship or...?

Oh, no.

Because, you know, it was just in the- in the papers that the Austrians-

Yeah.

- said now that the children can apply-

No – no-

But it's all changed now; they- they can't.

Yes – yes. It's changed again?

Well, they wanted to, but it was blocked in Parliament so-

That's - really?

[2:30:16]

Yeah so, it's not. I don't think it's a possibility. But anyway-you wouldn't be keen on it?

No. No. So- they're- they're not giving them?

I think at the moment not. As far as- I'm not an expert. As far as I understood.

But it serves them right, if they- if they asked for it. How could you do a thing like that? God. Do you know, this would, this would have killed my mother -if she would have known this?

Yeah. And-

Hah! That's- *geschieht ihnen recht* [serves them right]- that they- because how could they do that?

And you do you belong to the AJR?

Yeah – yeah.

And do you go to it? Do you go to any activities, or do you go to anything?

I- I haven't been to any activities, but I'm a member.

Yeah.

I've always been a member and I think because now, they're getting fewer and fewer aren't there?

Yeah. But did you have many Continental friends or did you have mixed friends or what?

I have mixed friends.

Is there anything we haven't discussed which you think is important to add?

I think we've-

Or which we haven't asked?

I think we've- we've discussed this. Because Liesl used to- used to say to me, "Why don't you contact the- the Austrian - the AJR?"

Yeah.

And I never got round to it and, and- so, because Liesl would say, "They're, they're still doing it. They are still..."

Yeah. Yeah. And they're still doing it.

Yeah.

[2:32:42]

Is there any message you have for somebody who might watch this interview, based on your experiences?

I don't think so.

But on, that you had to leave everything behind?

That- that was actually what my, my mother, she never get- got over it.

She didn't get over it?

She didn't get over it, no.

Because she lost so many-

She lost everybody.

And did you feel when you had your children, that you- that- how small of a family you were? Because you didn't have the extended family. Did you feel that or?

I can't say that it bothered me un un- unduly. But-

Did you find you had support here in England?

Yes, yes. Yes.

Did you have- ever have any negative experiences here, being a refugee, or?

I can't say, actually – no, I haven't. I mean, I- I- I didn't really have anybody you know, abuse me, or, or, anything at all.

Does it bother you when people say, "Where are you from? You've got an accent." Or something like that?

Yeah, they- they have asked me sometimes. But- but they seemed- they didn't seem to be particularly concerned about it.

No. And do you see yourself as a refugee still? How do you see yours- you know, would you still say...?

Well, I don't consider myself English. But other than that -

And your children, do you think your experiences impacted on your children's lives at all?

I don't think so. I- I don't think so. I don't think so.

And just to sort of finish up. How do- how do you see the future of, let's say, the legacy of the German Austrian Jews here in England?

[2:35:41]

Maybe I'm wrong, but I like to think that the English are - fairly tolerant. But, who knows?

Are you worried about Brexit and the sort of current political situation or...?

I'm not so worried about it, but maybe one should be worried. And particularly with this chap, with his anti-Semitic remarks.

Yeah. OK, Valerie. Thank you so much for this interview, unless you have something else, you'd like to say?

I think- I think I've- I think I've covered everything.

You certainly have. So, what we're going to do, because your- two of your children are here, we're going to invite them briefly-

Yeah.

And come and appear on camera with you. OK? So just [to] say, thank you, in the meantime.

And where do- what do I have to do?

You just don't have to do anything at the moment. I'll tell you. One second.

[sound break]

[2:37:45]

Valerie, would you please introduce the people here, to your left and right?

What must we do?

[Mark:] Say who we are. *Wer wir sind.*

Sind wir verwandt? [jokingly- are we relatives?]

[Bea laughs] Who is on your-?

[Mark:] Shall we say for the camera, who we are?

Yes.

So, how- what do I have to?

[Mark:] Tell them who we are.

[Judith?] Just introduce us to the camera.

[Mark:] ‘Cause they don’t know. I mean, they do know, but-

No- no. So, what do I say? And, and my name, or what?

[all speaking at once]

[Mark:] Who *we* are. *Wie wir verwandt...*

Here.

[Mark:] You’re introducing us. Say, “This is my...” I’ll give you a clue: This is your daughter and this is your son, remember us?

This is my daughter and this is my son.

[Mark:] And who’s your favourite, would you say?

Perfect.

So, I just want to say thank you again for your interview. And since you're here, what I'd like to ask you how you think your- the experience of your mother has shaped your life, or you know, whether it was- the past has sort of been a topic, and maybe has come back more or less or?

[Mark:] I think past has always been very important to my mother particularly because of her very good memory, and the fact that our grandmother lived with us. So, it was very- and who was also directly affected by everything. So that has always- The- the history of our family has always been part of our everyday life. And my mother has been a loyal custodian of all the fallen relatives, which is, how I think, it should be. And she's taught us the importance of remembering our relatives and everything that happened.

Judith?

[Judith:] So- and, I don't know. I think as regards her migration, it was just- and it was- this was by chance, but it was a very good preparation for the life that we've come to experience in Britain. India, nine years in India, was always in the background. And it was a very fond time for my mother. So, fond stories of India. And when they moved, particularly at the time of Idi Amin, the expulsion of a lot of Asian people from Uganda, and- and generally immigration, I think that it made us feel very sort of at home with- with that sector of the community which sort of grew up. So that- that's just something which, I don't know, comes to mind. I mean, obviously other than the topic that you've covered.

[2:40:30]

Which is interesting, because it's an unusual experience.

[Judith:] Yeah.

It's sort of - twice migrated. Which is similar to the Ugandans actually, you know?

[Mark:] Yes.

Because they left- the Asians- the Indians went to Uganda and then were expelled.

Yes. Yes, yes.

[Mark:] And generally I think it was because of the different countries that both my parents had lived in, it was a sort of cosmopolitan upbringing. Because we had- we had sort of exposure to lots of different cultures and cultural influences.

[Judith:] And it was great having German in the background because we always had a secret code.

Yeah?

[Judith:] We could laugh about people without them realising. That was very, very practised, wasn't it? When we went to places, all the comments about people were- that we wanted to keep secret were in German, when we were out.

And did you all speak German? I'm quite surprised.

[Judith:] Yes.

[Mark:] Yes. Because my grandmother who'd lived with us and she- we spoke- it's fair to say of my grandmother, she was a wonderful woman, but she was not a linguist. [all laugh] And she- she- if there was a- if there was a mistake to be made in the- in the language, she used to make it. Just as one example, the favourite, probably, example: She was reading an article in the newspaper about Bing Crosby. And she came into my mother and she said in German that, "You know Bing Crosby is saying that he actually- people think he's wealthy. But he isn't that wealthy, because he's given it all to his uncle." And my mother sort of looked- looked at the article and Bing Crosby had said, "I haven't got much money left; Uncle Sam's got it all." But, but- so my grandmother spoke German to us and so we learnt German without us even knowing that we were learning a second language. So we were, at that time, we were sort of more or less bilingual.

Right

[Mark:] And although it's easier when you're at home, because you know more or less what your relatives are going to say anyway. It's all quite practised.

Correct-

[2:42:19]

[Judith:] Yeah, it was, actually- I must say it was very different as an adult living in Austria, because I was at a loss in a social situation, talking about politics, talking about economics, anything adult. When I got ill and had to go to the hospital I was in perfect control, because we had all that vocabulary at home.

[Bea laughs]

[Mark:] Yeah, we knew the German for every illness didn't we? [all laugh]

[Judith:] We did! We did! It was much discussed.

Yeah. And when did you go to Austria?

[Judith:] I lived there in 1990. Yeah, for about nine months.

And what made you go there or what-?

[Judith:] I wanted a change from my job, which was teaching English as a foreign language. And an awful lot of my colleagues were working in between other countries and Britain. So I wanted to have the experience as well. And lastly, I had a sort of on-off romance with an Austrian boy from Vorarlberg, who was prepared to put me up in Vienna so that I could have an experience of working there. And I actually got my rent free of charge. So, that was- that was that. And there was, you know, there were relatives to see. I had a very old aunt there at the time.

Yes.

[Judith:] And then we still have living- two cousins of my mother's.

Right.

[Judith:] And- yeah, so that was-

And what was the reaction? Did your mother support you going there or?

[Judith:] Oh, absolutely.

Yeah?

[Judith:] Yeah. I used to phone you, didn't I? From the branch line-

[Mark:] They didn't get cross. I mean, you know-

[Judith:] No, no. I don't think you thought it was anything strange for me to live there, did you? No, I don't- I don't have the feeling of-

[Mark:] The rest of us had an off-off romance with Austria, I think it's fair to say, didn't we?

[Judith:] Well, that was my experience of it. Actually, I wanted to know what life- you know, I took the opportunity. It didn't come to anything with the suitor but I took the opportunity to, you know, ex- experience life there for, for- for a bit.

Yes, and did you go to the places and find things?

[Mark:] Oh, yeah. I mean we have been. I've not been- I haven't been for a long time to Austria but I mean, on Interrail I went to Austria, and went- visited my grandfather's grave, my mother's father's grave and the various places that were key to our family. Yeah.

[Judith:] I- I walked from the end to end of Vienna when I lived there, all the time. I know it very well. And we still go with my mother-in-law now. We still go on holidays to Austria to the lakes district or to the Tyrol. Yeah.

[Mark:] My mother-in-law went to- my parents-in-law- my late parents-in-law went to Austria. And they arrived one day and my mother-in-law said to my father-in-law, "I hate it here", and the next day they had to fly out again. She didn't like it at all.

Pamela?

[Mark:] Pamela. She went and straight away she wanted to leave Vienna.

Yes? I didn't know that.

[Mark:] No.

Why did she want to leave it straight away?

[Mark:] She didn't like it. She didn't like the [inaudible], she didn't like the vibe. She didn't like any of it. She just wanted to get out.

[2:45:45]

Ok. That's all from my part. Anything else you'd like to add, that you have to say to your mother?

[Mark:] All the best. And keep in touch. [all laugh] I think you've done very well, as I knew you would.

Yes, you've done very well.

Yeah.

[Judith:] Kept on talking.

OK. Well, I'd like to thank all of you, thank you for your comments-

[Mark:] Thank you very much.

[Judith:] Thank you very much.

And for participating in the Refugee Voices Project.

[Mark:] And thank you to Frank [cameraman], he's my- he's my man.

[End of interview]

[2:46:20]

[2:46:25]

[Start of photographs]

Was sehen wir bitte auf diesem Foto?

Photo 1

Was sehen wir bitte auf diesem Foto? [Who do we see in this photo?]

Meine Mutter, meine Tante und mich im Garten. [My mother, my aunt and myself in the garden.]

Und wie hieß Ihre Tante bitte, den Namen? [And what was your aunt's name?]

Mela.

Mela.

Und Ihre Mutter?[And your mother?]

Bertha.

Und das war im Garten von...? [And this was in whose garden?]

Von unserem Haus. [In front of our house]

Und die Adresse? [What was the address?]

Das haben wir vorher besprochen.

Eins drei acht Hadikgasse. 138 Hadikgasse.

OK. Dankeschön.

Bitte sehr.

Ja. Also Moment. Was für ein Foto sehen wir, bitte? [A moment please. Which photo can we see here?]

Photo 2

Ich bin jetzt dreizehn. [I am now thirteen.]

Und wo? In Wien? [And where? I Vienna?]

In Wien.

Okay, Danke.

Ja, wen sehen wir bitte auf dem Foto? [Who can we see in this photo?]

Meine Tante Mela. [My aunt Mela]

Und wie alt war sie ungefähr hier? Um die dreißig, oder? Ja. [How old was she approximately? Thirty?]

Und wie ist sie...Sie, sie hat nicht überlebt, Ihre Tante? Wissen Sie- wie ist sie umgekommen? [And how did she...She hasn't survived, your aunt? Do you know how she perished?]

Auschwitz.

In Auschwitz. Danke.

Photo 3

Wer ist bitte auf dem Foto? [Who is in this photo, please?]

Das ist meine Mutter. [That's my mother.]

Und wo? In Wien?

In Wien. [In Vienna.]

Und das ist noch in den dreißiger Jahren?[Is that still in the 1930s?]

Ja.

Ja. Danke.

Ja bitte. Was sehen wir auf dem Foto?

Photo 4

Ich – [coughs]- da bin ich vierzehn Jahre, bevor wir auf die Emigration gegangen sind. [I am fourteen in this photo- before we went on to emigrate.]

Photo 5

Danke.

Yeah. Now we speak in English, because you are in India now. What do we see here?

What is it?

[Mark:] It's a picture of you in Bombay in about 1946.

This is in Bombay, in 1946.

Yes please.

Photo 6

[Mark:] It's Uncle Hermy, and on his left is you, on his right is Aunty Clary and-

So-?

[Mark:] And then, so the left is you, right is Aunty Clary and then right is Uncle Hermy.

This is my brother, Uncle Hermy. They were married for nearly sixty-five years.

[Mark:] And who else in the picture. Uncle Hermy is in the middle and who else is in the picture?

Uncle Hermy is in the middle and Auntie Clary is on the left.

[Mark:] And you are... on the right.

And I am on the right.

[2:49:35]

Thank you, yes please.

Photo 7

[Mark prompts Valerie:]

This is Daddy and me. We are going to the Olympic games.

Where?

In London.

Which year?

1948.

Thank you.

Photo 8

This is my husband, his mother and me, in 1948.

Where?

In London.

Thank you. Yes please.

Photo 9

This is me in 1948, in London.

Thank you. Yes please.

Photo 10

[Mark prompts Valerie:]

This is me, holding Judith and Wendy.

And when?

[About 1957, I think]

About 1957.

Yes.

[2:51:00]

Photo 11

This is all my three children in Preston Park. [About 1960 probably.] About 1960.

Thank you. Yes, yes.

Photo 12

This is my six children-

[Grandchildren.]

OK-

Shall I start again?

Yes.

This is my six grandchildren, on my eighty-fifth birthday. In Brighton.

And what did they do for you on that occasion?

Yes, they carried me... [The grandsons, on to the pier, yeah?] Yeah.

They carried me to the pier- so that I shouldn't need to walk.

That's very nice of them. So, I want to say to you, thank you again Valerie, for sharing your story and your photographs. And I hope you will like the- the film when you will get it. Yeah?

Thank you very much.

Thank you very much.

[End of photographs]

[2:52:08]

