

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	21

Interviewee Surname:	Field
Forename:	Willy
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	17 August 1920
Interviewee POB:	Bonn, Germany

Date of Interview:	25 September 2003
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours and 10 minutes

REFUGEE VOICES: THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 21

NAME: WILLY FIELD

DATE: 25 SEPTEMBER 2003

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ

TAPE 1

BL: Can you please tell me your name?

WF: I am Willy, William Field.

BL: Where were you born?

WF: I was born in Bonn.

BL: And when?

WF: On the 17th August 1920.

BL: Could you please tell me a bit about your family background?

WF: My family background? My father and my mother? My father and my mother came from a place in Westpreußen, a place called Graudenz. They married, I think, in 1880. Is it possible? No, no, no - they were married in Graudenz and then they came to Bonn. My father got a job with a warehouse called Leonard Tietz and he became what they called a Rayonchef, but finally he made himself a, - started a men's wear shop in Bonn and it was called Modehaus Kronprinz.

We belonged to the Jewish community in Bonn. We weren't a very religious family, but we used to go to the Synagogue on all the high holidays, Pesach, and occasionally on a Friday night or Saturday morning. My father also was in the First World War. He served in France and I remember still hearing from him what he did, but I don't remember him talking much about it. However, he survived the First World War and I remember him saying there was a lot of heavy fighting and he took part in the battle of Verdun.

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Then they moved to Bonn. I think my elder sister was born in 1910. In 1917 my brother, Manfred, was born and myself and my twin sister, we were born in Bonn in

1920. We had quite a very happy family life. We lived in a very wonderful house in Bonn.

BL: Where was that?

WF: We lived in a street called Poppelsdorfer Allee. We had an enormous big house and I also remember we also had a cook and we had a nanny. On Sundays we always went into what we call outside Bonn and there used to be a horse and cart that collected us and we used to go to places like the Venusberg and we used to go on the Rhine. We enjoyed it very much. My sister and I went to what you call a Volksschule. I was very happy there until the age of eleven. Then I went to a Städtisches Gymnasium in Bonn, but, unfortunately, in 1934/5 I was thrown out because we were Jewish and I had to attend a Jewish school in Bonn which started, actually, in 1935 and I was very happy there. It was a wonderful school. We learned a lot and when Hitler started in 1933, as you are aware, we weren't allowed any more to take part in playing football. So we started our own football club, our own Jewish club. My father belonged to an organisation which we called the RJF - in German Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten. Apart from this we had a sports section. We played a lot of football and we could only play against Jewish teams. There were Jewish teams in Cologne, in Düsseldorf, in Mönchengladbach and in Frankfurt and so, in a way, it was a good thing that happened to us. We relied on ourselves to entertain ourselves. It was, in a way, a good thing which happened to us because we realised we could not live much longer with the Nazis and we had to look after ourselves.

It was very difficult. My father eventually had to give up the shop - couldn't keep it any more. My brother started work, my sister started work and I started work in 1936. My father wasn't allowed to

Tape 1: 6 minutes 26 seconds

work any more so we didn't have very much money. So the only money we had was the income of my brother, myself and my sister. We didn't live in the big house any more. We had to move and we finally moved to a flat, which is still standing - Lehnerstrasse number 40, in Bonn. Even there eventually we could not live any more and we had to leave because the landlord didn't allow Jews to be living in this part of Bonn. Then we had to move to another place and it became more and more difficult for us to make a living. We didn't have much money. We didn't have any chance to get out of Germany because we didn't have the means. We didn't have anybody who lived in America or South America who could get us a permit to get out of Germany.

BL: What about your grandparents? Where were they?

WF: My grandparents lived actually in Leipzig. My grandmother lived in Bonn. My grandfather died in 1936 and my grandmother died in 1938 and she is buried in Bonn. Unfortunately, my elder sister, Betty, died in 1938 in circumstances of which I cannot tell you or believe. We felt that she was neglected in hospital and they just let her die.

BL: What was the problem?

WF: Well, the doctors said she had cancer, but in those days cancer was something not very much known about it. It was a terrible shock for the family to lose - at that time she was only 28. As it happens, she was engaged to another Jewish man and they intended to emigrate to Holland, but, unfortunately, this never happened.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 3 seconds

BL: What memories do you have of Bonn before the Nazis?

WF: My father's sister, she was a widow, and she had three daughters, the names of whom were Ruth, Thea and Margot. They were all older than me. Margot survived. She came to England and actually worked in the same factory where I worked in Siegburg. Then I had an uncle and aunt on my mother's side. They had two boys. The one name was Rudi and the other one Martin. Martin managed to emigrate to America. Rudi, unfortunately, was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp. I visited him when he came out of the concentration camp and he managed to get out. When I was in the army I had the chance of visiting Bonn in 1945 or 1946 and he just was released from the concentration camp, Buchenwald. But he eventually emigrated to America. My uncle and my aunt also perished in Minsk. They died - I never saw them again. When I left Bonn in 1939 I remember, quite clearly, I said goodbye to my father and my mother, my brother, my uncle and my aunt and all my relations at the station in Bonn and, unfortunately, I didn't see any of them again.

On the 10th November, on my way to the factory in Siegburg where I worked I noticed that our synagogue was burning and I really didn't know what to do. Shall I go to work or shall I go back home? I was in two minds but I decided to go to work. I think that was the only normal thing to do but, unfortunately, as soon as I arrived at the factory in Siegburg I had a visit from the Gestapo. I was immediately arrested and taken to the prison in Cologne where I spent, I think, four or five days. I was taken into a cell all by myself and, as I mentioned before, this was the worst part of my life I ever experienced. They opened the cell door, a big iron door, pushed me into the cell, closed the door and I thought to myself, "What did I do to deserve this?"

I was there all by myself but always heard noises of what was going on outside. After being there a day the warden or whatever - the prison officer - came in and said "You're a young chap. Would you like to work?" and I said, "Yes, I would rather work than sitting here." He gave me the most awful job. I had to collect all the buckets from each cell, and there were hundreds of them, and empty them. It was a terrible job to do, but still better than sitting in a cell. After four or five days we were taken to the railway station. It always takes part in the night. Nothing ever takes part during the day so that people cannot see or know what is going on.

BL: Did the Gestapo question you?

WF: Yes. Before I was taken to the prison they questioned me about my former boss. "What do you know about him?", "Why isn't he here - he should be here." But I couldn't tell them anything. But they kept on bothering me and hitting me and, in the end, I didn't really know what to say so they couldn't get anything out of me and, finally, they took me to the prison in Cologne.

BL: The Gestapo interrogated you in Bonn?

WF: Not in Bonn - in Siegburg. But I don't know whether it was in Siegburg or in Bonn because I didn't know where I was. At that stage they take you by car from one place to another.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 29 seconds

When I left the prison, I think after four or five days, we were put on the train, and it was something like a cattle train - not an ordinary train - and we didn't know where we were going because we heard chanting and groaning. We were hours and hours in the train and finally we arrived somewhere. They opened the door and we saw searchlights. We were hurried off the train and I do remember there were SS standing with rifles and we were beaten and hit on the head and things like this. I could see the searchlights and knew we were in a concentration camp because one of the signs was "Arbeit macht frei" - that was the gate you got through.

BL: Did you know about the concentration camps before?

WF: No, but we heard a little about it you see. I heard of Dachau. I tell you why we heard of Dachau because my brother tried to get out of Germany and he went to the Belgian border and tried to get across. Every time he tried to get across they sent him back, and once he was told, "If you come back again, you are going to be sent to the concentration camp in Dachau." So that is how I knew there must be something in Dachau. When we arrived in Dachau, we were undressed, completely undressed, completely shaven. Our hair was completely shaven and we were hosed down with cold water. You can imagine. It was November 1938 - one of the coldest winters you can imagine. It was dreadful. We were given, all our stuff what we had was put into a bag, and we were given a uniform - the concentration camp uniform. Everyone knows what they are like - blue and white stripes. I remember the number I was given - 28411 - a number which you never forget. We were taken to huts and I can tell you later on more about it because I visited the concentration camp last year with the school which brought back a lot of memories. I was taken to the hut number 20 and we didn't really have any work to do. They made you do silly jobs like shovelling snow and cleaning windows and we must have been a few thousand there.

BL: Who were the other prisoners?

Tape 1: 18 minutes 3 seconds

WF: Mostly Jewish people. There were Jews from all over Germany and a lot of Austrians, so this was the first time in my life I got to know Austrians. We were in huts and we only slept on straw because we were so many. Nobody had the bunks or anything. There were so many. We were like sardines for the first month or so.

My job was, apart from shovelling snow, was to get the food which we had to collect from about a place nearly a mile, 500 metres away. Everything had to be done in the double. I was very unlucky the first time. I had to collect the coffee. They called it coffee. You know, it was brown water. It didn't taste of anything. It was carried by

two people and we had to run. You can imagine the hot coffee over your bare hands. I learned my lesson, so the next time I didn't go for the hot coffee, I went for the potatoes.

Tape 1: 19 minutes 29 seconds

So this was a dreadful place. A terrible incident happened while I stayed in the concentration camp. Every morning and every night they had a roll call. We were counted. We had to stand in blocks of ten - ten this way and ten this way (indicating with hands). We were counted. One morning one man was missing. They made us stand for, I think, over a day and night in the cold weather, until they found who was missing. I recall that, that night, they shunted away in a wagon about 40 or 50 people who could not stand the cold, who could not stand any more standing there for about 72 hours.

The man was later found in the toilet somewhere and what happened to him we never knew. I remember that night there must have been 40 to 50 people died. It was a dreadful place. What also happened to some of our people who could not stand being in the concentration camp? They couldn't take it. They used to get out at night and tried to escape. They didn't really want to escape so they ran against the electric wire and sometimes, in the morning, we could see one or two people hanging between the electric wires being electrocuted. You didn't get out of your hut at night because you would have been shot immediately.

My parents didn't know where I was for the first four weeks until my cousin, who worked at the same factory with me, told my mother that I was taken away by the Gestapo. But they didn't hear from me and they didn't know where I was until we were able to write a card that we are where we are, that we were being looked after very well and it was for our own protection. Clever thing!

BL: Do you remember the text?

WF: I remember.

BL: What was it in German?

WF: In German? 'Sie sind hier zu Ihrer eigenen Beschützung, damit niemand was mit Ihnen macht.'

Tape 1: 22 minutes 25 seconds

Therefore my parents got in touch with my boss from Austria in England and he then managed to get me out of the concentration camp. Even that was quite a difficult thing because you were not allowed to come out of the concentration camp unless you are absolutely 100% free of any injuries. Even if you had a little scratch somewhere they would not let you out and I, unfortunately, had a frozen toe just before I was supposed to be released and I had to wait a week or so until it completely healed before they would let me out.

BL: What was the name of your boss? Your former boss?

WF: Herz. It was his name and he got me a permit to come out.

BL: When did he leave for England?

WF: He left for England already in the beginning or the end of 1937. He just disappeared. We didn't know where he had gone until we found out, through his father, that he was in England and he started in England again. You see, when you had money, when you had lots of money, you were able to get out somehow.

The other incident happened when I was released. The first thing they said to me is "How do you get back to Bonn?" I said, "On the train." He said, "Well you have to pay for it." I said, "I haven't got any money." Then, luckily, behind me there was a gentleman. He came from Cologne and I had known him in the camp and he said "Don't worry, I will pay for you." He had a little bit of money in his bag. When you arrived everything was put in a bag and when you left the bag was given back to you. So he paid for my journey for which I was very grateful because they would not let me out until I paid for my journey.

Then we arrived in Bonn very early in the morning. The train must have arrived in Bonn about 5:30 or 6 o'clock. I didn't dare to ring the bell at home because if anybody rings the bell at 6 o'clock in the morning it can't be anybody else but the Gestapo. So I was sitting outside our house until half-past seven or eight o'clock until I rang the bell and they let me in. Of course, they were very happy to see me. They didn't know I was coming out. They didn't even inform them. I was then told to report to the Gestapo every day until I was released, until I left for England. But, I must say, the Gestapo said to me, "We know you. Don't bother to come every day. Come the day before you leave to let me know you have gone."

BL: At Dachau there were many other German political prisoners as well? Did you know any of them?

WF: They were in a different hut. There also had a hut which was called the Paragraph 67 Hut which there were quite a few famous people in this, but they were kept completely separate. They were completely separate, you see. But the worst people in the concentration camp were not only the SS but the Kapo. The Kapo were the people who were in charge of each hut. They were prisoners who had no chance of ever getting out. They were mainly political prisoners and they were terrible. They were even worse than the SS.

BL: What incident? What do you remember?

WF: Well I remember that they beat anybody who didn't clean properly. The things they did were really terrible, but this was what the SS wanted them to do. The more they did the Nazi thing, the more they were promoted.

BL: Did you meet anyone else from Bonn?

WF: Only Otto Schuster.

BL: Was that the only one?

WF: That was the only one I met. We were together in the same hut, I have got a kind of feeling, I remember he was released before me, I think. There was nobody else from Bonn. There were one or two others from outside Bonn, but nobody else. He was the only one.

When I arrived in England I stayed at my governor's, my boss's house for the night and the next day I was shunted off to Cornwall to a farm.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 14 seconds

I could hardly speak a word of English. But I must say they treated me very well at that farm. They were wonderful. It was a gentleman farmer, you know.

BL: Before we go on to England, can we go back a tiny bit? Can you tell me about your work for that factory because that is quite important?

WF: The factory was quite a nice factory. I enjoyed it. They produced non-ferrous metal material - aluminium blocks, brass blocks - and things like this. My job the first year was just to - everybody brought metal in. You know old things. My job was to sort the metal, to put it into categories and, eventually, this was melted down and made into ingots.

My job was, eventually, to produce these ingots and work out whatever percentage of brass or lead goes into each ingot. That was my job. I enjoyed it very much and learned very, very much there. My apprenticeship was a very good apprenticeship. Even so, the last year the owner of the factory was not a Jewish man any more. He was a very amazing man. He was a religious person. He believed in --- he was one of the few people who believed everybody is equal and things like this. He treated me, I must say, quite well. I was lucky there.

BL: Were there other Jews working there?

WF: Only two more Jews because really they weren't allowed to employ Jews any more. But somehow he kept me going, this man. He took a risk. I was quite lucky.

BL: You said the atmosphere in the school became difficult and you had to change schools. Would you say the atmosphere in Bonn was very anti-Semitic?

Tape 1: 30 minutes 35 seconds

WF: Not at the beginning. Bonn was not one of those towns, I imagine, like Nuremberg or Berlin or Munich. The anti-Semitism became more and more in 1935 and 1936, in those years. Don't forget Bonn was not a very big town - a university town - very close to the border of France and Belgium. Most of the establishments in Bonn were in Jewish hands, especially the shops - all the men's wear shops, the stores. A lot of Jewish shops were in Bonn so the anti-Semitism was there but it was gradual. It became, of course they had to, it became impossible.

BL: What social circles would your parents mix in - and also yourself?

WF: During the last years, during Hitler or before?

The Jewish business people stuck together because, being a small town, it was mainly Jewish people.

BL: So it was quite a close-knit community?

WF: Yes, it was a very close community. Everyone knew each other. There was no such thing as "We know *about* him". It was a very close community and even if you go back to Bonn as we are doing now, to me it is still the same. It has not really changed much.

BL: What friends did you have, for example?

WF: Well, at the beginning, I had a lot of friends when I went to the ordinary school. I had a lot of German friends. I used to play football with the kids. I used to play football with non-Jewish boys and when we noticed it was when my non-Jewish friends weren't allowed to play with me any more because they became members of the Hitler Youth. They wore the uniform and they weren't allowed to play with me any more. Then we realised we have to stick together, we Jewish boys. We had our own football club and we had our own club and everything. In certain places we weren't allowed to go swimming any more with them. We weren't allowed to do this and this any more. It just became difficult.

BL: How did it make you feel as a boy?

WF: Well, I felt it in the beginning a bit. When you're young you feel, but didn't really feel it is such a terrible thing although, thinking back, it was terrible. We took it in our stride. We had no alternative. We stuck to our Jewish friends. At least we were comfortable amongst ourselves.

BL: The time after you were released from Dachau before you emigrated to England, do you remember what the atmosphere was like with your parents? You must have been worried.

WF: At that time - it was only a very short time - of course I was worried. The worst thing was knowing what happened in the concentration camp and being told not to talk to anybody. I didn't even tell my parents, I didn't tell my sister. I didn't tell anybody what is happening in the concentration camp because you had to sign a pledge that if you ever talked about it you would be back and you wouldn't be released any more.

BL: You had to sign this just before you left?

WF: Oh yes, before you left the concentration camp. The only thing to worry about now was what will happen to my parents, what will happen to my brother. It was the only thing you could worry about. I am out, see - I have got my permit. But then there was always hope that, perhaps, they will make it.

BL: What sort of permit did you get?

Tape 1: 35 minutes 8 seconds

WF: The permit?

BL: What sort of permit?

WF: It was an agricultural permit - that I can only work in England on the farm, learn the trade and, eventually would be sent to Palestine at the time. But, as the war started, there was no going to Palestine or anything else, you see.

BL: Before, you described the journey which took you from Bonn to London.

WF: Well, we - I went with my cousin, Margot. The journey, we left the station in Bonn. I said goodbye to my parents and everybody else. We went to Scheveningen. No, not Scheveningen. We went to a place in Holland and I remember, when I was over the border for the first time, I breathed "I'm free!" because you were free. I got on the boat. The only money we were allowed to take with us was 10 shillings. I only had 10 shillings in my pocket and I remember, on the boat from Flushing to Harwich, I had a glass of beer. I was so sick, you just cannot imagine and I said to my cousin, "I can't stand this - I want to go back." I was so sick having a glass of beer!

So, when we arrived in Harwich, we took the train to Liverpool Street Station and there was my boss waiting for us to take us to his house.

BL: What were your first impressions of England?

WF: Difficult to say. I was quite impressed. I tell you what impressed me very much. The next day when I was taken to the Bloomsbury House where all the refugees had to report and from there you were told where to go. I was supposed to be there at 9 o'clock in the morning. The wife of my boss took me there. We were early and she took me into Lyons Tea Shop. They were all over the place then, and, as we didn't have breakfast, she ordered tea and toast and English marmalade. That is what impressed me so much. The English marmalade was something fantastic! We have lovely marmalade in Germany but, to this day, I still love English marmalade. It was so free. You could talk even though I could speak hardly a word of English. Then, of course, Bloomsbury House told me I should go - they gave me a railway ticket, and told me I should go to a farm near Bude. A beautiful place, I must say! I was very well looked after at this farm. The farmer was a very nice man and even asked me if he could help my parents to come to England. He is going to organise something to get my father, my mother and my brother, to come to work on the farm.

Tape 1: 38 minutes 49 seconds

Unfortunately, after three months, (I don't know when the war started - in September, didn't it?) I was told I cannot stay there any more because it was a restricted area or a protected area. They sent me to a farm in Sussex and this was a dreadful place. You

just cannot imagine. I worked from morning, 5 o'clock, until evening because we were haymaking. We must have worked until the light, you could not see any more.

BL: Were there other refugees as well?

WF: No, I was the only one. It was only a small farm. I had to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning, bring in five cows and milk five cows. Then I had to clean out the pigsty and then I got a bit of breakfast. Then I had to go haymaking. I wrote to my sister where she is somewhere in Birmingham, as a domestic. I said, "I don't get anything to eat, so send me some food." I remember she sent me a half a loaf and something. It was dreadful there.

BL: She had a domestic permit? Did she leave before you?

WF: No, she left after me. I organised it, actually, through somebody at the Bloomsbury House. You could get this. When you were here you were able to help people.

As the story goes with the farm: I hated the farm - a dreadful place. I thought I must get into London and get myself a job in London. Every morning I had to take the milk in a big churn to the main street and put it somewhere under a wooden part because, every morning, a horse and cart came and took it into the nearest village. I made myself a plan. I saved a little bit of money. I packed my suitcase and, the night before, I took my suitcase and put it under this wooden thing.

Tape 1: 41 minutes 21 seconds

The next morning when I delivered the milk, I went off with the milkman into the village. I can't remember the name of the village, and I took the next train to London. I just disappeared from there.

When I arrived in London I had no money at all so I went to the Bloomsbury House again and they told me off terribly. "You can't just disappear. You can't do that." So I told them how dreadfully I was treated, so they said, "What do you want to do now?" Well, I have got to find myself work in London and they gave me coupons to stay at a Rowton House in Whitechapel. You know what a Rowton House is in Whitechapel? A Rowton House is a place where, for one shilling, you can stay the night. You get a blanket. It is where all down-and-outs stay. So I got 3 shillings so I could stay three nights. I got myself a job filling up sandbags at the bank. All the banks there in the city. I went round there and they said, "Yes, you can fill up the sandbags. How many you fill up you get 5 pence or 6 pence or whatever." So I got a bit of money.

I remember that, opposite the bank there was a little church - a very tiny church. One day the vicar saw us filling the sandbags and he came out and said, "What are you boys doing at 4 o'clock?" There were about half a dozen of us by then. We said, "Nothing." He said, "Why don't you come in for the Evensong? You get a cup of tea, a cigarette and a bar of chocolate." Then we went for the Evensong and we got a cigarette, a bar of chocolate and a cup of tea. We also put sandbags around the little church.

Finally, I got myself a job in the East End fitting sewing machines for a firm who fitted sewing machines for people to make khaki for uniforms. I got a job there which I enjoyed very much and I got myself a furnished room. I can't remember how much I paid - perhaps 5 shillings a week or something.

BL: For a Jewish company?

WF: Yes, it was a Jewish company. He came from Russia. He was a very nice man and did help me. He did realise that I was a refugee boy and things like that. He even got me a permit to work because this was almost war work, setting up machines for war work.

BL: What were your impressions of the East End?

Tape 1: 44 minutes 20 seconds

WF: Oh it was wonderful, the East End! I had a little room. There was a tobacconist downstairs - I smoked then already - and he let me have cigarettes on tick. I only had a little room with a bed and nothing else. I used to go to the Jewish place in the East End where you could get some bean and barley soup and a slice of bread for 4 pence or 5 pence or 6 pence. I could afford that then so this was wonderful. I had quite a good time at work and I gradually learned to speak a bit of English. I could say 'steak and chips' and I could say all the swear words.

BL: You picked it up?

WF: I picked it up very much. I had quite happy days there. I mean it was wonderful. I made friends with other Jewish boys there and we also then got friendly with some kind of club. I remember, every Sunday, I went to a club near Kingsbury where there were refugee children and we went there to help out playing with them. We played table-tennis and did things, so I quite enjoyed that.

BL: What sort of place was that?

WF: That was a kind of hostel. It was run by a church actually, but they were all Jewish refugee kids. I enjoyed doing it and then, unfortunately, it was - here it goes again - all of a sudden a policeman arrived outside my door where I stayed. He asked me "Are you Willy Hirschfeld?" "Yes, I am.", and he comes out and says, "I am very sorry but I have got to intern you."

He took me to Leman Street Police Station. Now that was a funny thing. I knew one of the policemen there. The policeman was a very nice guy and we went together to football matches. At that time I started to watch football matches and my favourite was, and still is, Arsenal. He took me to the Arsenal and then, all of a sudden, he had to intern me. He said "I can't do anything about it - your name is there." My boss, being a Russian Jew, arrived at the police station with £100 in his pocket and he tried to bribe the policeman to get me out. They wouldn't have it. They wouldn't have anything of it.

BL: Did you have to attend a tribunal?

Tape 1: 47 minutes 9 seconds

WF: Yes, I had a tribunal. At the time I was a C, I was a C even. I had a permit. I was a friendly alien. I was not an enemy alien. But somehow, like the story went, things went bad in the war as you know, and everybody was worried the German invasion would come. So what did Churchill say? "Intern the lot", and a lot of us were interned.

So, I was shunted off to Kempton Park Internment Camp under canvas and, gradually, they sent us, after two or three days to Liverpool. Huyton, I think it was and, after a while, we were shunted off to the dreadful ship, the "Dunera", of which so much has been written about.

We must have been quite a lot of boys and people from all ages. I think we must have been about 1,200 if I am not mistaken. There was that big ship, the "Dunera". We didn't know where we were going. All our luggage was taken away from us. Everything was taken away. Luckily for me I had nothing. I had nothing. There was barbed wire and we were put right below. We didn't have any beds or anything. We slept on the floor, on the tables. It was dreadful. The conditions were unbearable. You can't imagine on the boat, no lifebelts or anything.

We sailed off and we could not go to get fresh air. Once or twice a week, we were allowed to go on the deck. There were soldiers standing with bayonets making sure we didn't do anything wrong, and then we were put below.

The food was all right. There was nothing wrong with the food, but we slept on hard boards. We had a blanket and we had nothing else. The toilets were unhygienic and after we reached the Irish Sea we heard a tremendous bang. It was the story, but we only found out later on that we were hit by a German submarine. They didn't hit us properly. It only hit one of the propellers. We carried on, but we had to leave the convoy and we were on our own because we could not keep up with the speed of the convoy. The story goes that the British soldiers then, the Pioneer Corps, threw all the luggage overboard. The luggage opened up and the Germans must have found a lot of German written documents, birth certificates and certain things, and they were under the impression that this ship was loaded with German prisoners or German people so the submarines left it alone. So the story goes, what you read in the books later on. We still didn't know where we were going.

BL: Did you suspect where you were going?

Tape 1: 50 minutes 45 seconds

WF: No. A lot of people thought we were going to Canada and then, you know, you hear things. Conditions were dreadful, but we were youngsters. We managed it. It wasn't for us when we think back on it. We noticed, all of a sudden, you could see through the port-holes place and then we landed in Freetown, Takoradi. [Freetown is in Sierra Leone and Takoradi is in Ghana.] So somebody who knew a little bit about it said, "I think we are going to South Africa." As it happened, we landed in South

Africa, in Cape Town. We stayed there for two days because they took on food and two or three of us youngsters were allowed to help loading up food. I was one of them. I had to carry, what do you call, boxes of apples or oranges. They were very fragile, so, while I was carrying one, I dropped one by mistake and we stuffed our pockets with apples and oranges and took it on to the board. We lived on this for two days. It was like pennies from heaven!

I remember we could see Table Mountain but I could not... A lot of the boys tried to get some letters smuggled out there, but whether they got through I don't know.

We carried on and finally we landed in Melbourne. They let off all the German and Italian prisoners there. Not us. We were the refugees there. We weren't really -.

BL: Were they kept separate?

WF: Oh yes. They were kept completely separate. So they were let off and we sailed on to Sydney and we arrived in Sydney on the 9th September. A train was waiting for us to take us. There were Australians and they were wonderful, the Australian soldiers. They knew already that we weren't prisoners. Just look at them - some were old men, some were youngsters. I mean, they are not prisoners of war. They were very, very kind to us.

Then we went on the trains. We finally finished off in a little place in New South Wales called Hay. It was like in a desert. It was all sand and nothing, and there was the camp again, the Internment Camp let us call it now - barbed wire. I immediately volunteered to go into the kitchen. I think it was the best place to be. There were about six or seven of us. We got friendly on the boat and we all volunteered straight away to go into the kitchen. To our horror there was nothing else but spaghetti and macaroni! So the Australians expected Italian prisoners of war. There were boxes and boxes of macaroni and all this Italian stuff.

The camp was in two sections - 400 on one side and 400 on the other side and immediately it was well organised. We had people there, solicitors, doctors, judges. We had really a lot of very intelligent people, and it was within two or three days, the whole camp was organised by ourselves. The kitchen was organised and I must say our time in Australia was a wonderful time. I would not have missed it. After all, we were away from the bombs in London and we were safe in Australia. We had a wonderful time in Australia. We were with youngsters of our age. I was in the kitchen. We played football, we played handball we had everything so and so. Of course, it was a mistake that they sent us, but we made the best of it.

Tape 1: 55 minutes 13 seconds

Of course, they have written letters to the High Commission of Australia, to the High Commissioner of there, to the Home Office in London, to the War Office in London, saying how ridiculous it was to send people who were refugees from Nazi oppression to send there again.

Finally, they sent a gentleman from the Home Office to Australia. His name was Major Layton. He tried to persuade young people to join the Pioneer Corps and come

back to England. Of course, all of us youngsters immediately volunteered. But he said we can only come back if we can get transport. It was not easy to find transport from Australia to England. Finally, they separated the ones who wanted to go back to England from all the others. We went to different camps and finally they got a boat because it collected Air Force pilots at Auckland, New Zealand. So, it stopped in Australia, in Sydney and took us on board. We were about, I can't remember, about 100 or 120 and from then onwards we were treated no more as internees. We were treated as British troops. So that was quite a good journey.

Tape 1: 56 minutes 54 seconds

We landed in Auckland where they took on officers to go back to England - mainly pilots. There were the Jewish organisations coming on board and bringing us food and things. They found out about our internment in Australia. Then we carried on, went through the Panama Canal and back to England. I had a wonderful journey going through the Panama Canal and everything. So we landed in Liverpool, where we were sworn in to be soldiers. We were given the pass to wherever we wanted to and we were told that in ten days we have to report to a place in Ilfracombe to join the Pioneer Corps. The funny thing was that my sister, who was a domestic, in the meantime joined the ATS. They could join the ATS.

BL: The ATS?

WF: That was the Auxiliary Territorial Army. That was the girls. She was stationed in Liverpool. She knew there was a ship coming from Australia but she didn't know that I was on it. When I arrived at the dock, she was there waving and greeting me, my sister!

Tape 1: 58 minutes 25 seconds

It was such a surprise. She was in the army.

BL: Some of the ships that came back got torpedoed.

WF: Oh yes. One ship the "Arandora Star" that came back from Canada was torpedoed. One or two ships were torpedoed but we were lucky. There you are - that's life. We were told already when we joined up in Australia, "Don't think you will see your land soon", it is just a possibility. There were lots of German submarines around, especially near the Panama Canal.

TAPE 2

BL: You were just telling me about your arrival back in Britain and your sister waiting for you?

WF: That is right. It was quite an amazing thing for me because I didn't expect her to be there. I knew she was stationed in Liverpool. All my friends were immediately taken in by all these ATS girls - taken into the kitchen and given a feast. It was wonderful. It was a good surprise and we really enjoyed it.

BL: Did you have any contact with your family while you were in Australia?

WF: None whatsoever. None whatsoever. I only heard occasionally from my sister because I had no other family then. Then I went on to London. I stayed there a few days and quite enjoyed myself.

BL: Where did you stay?

WF: I stayed with my former boss. He had a house in, I think, Golders Green. I stayed with him. He wanted me to stay with him. Then I had to leave and go to Ilfracombe. Now Ilfracombe was at the seaside. We were given uniforms at the time. Quite a few of our Australian boys were there all in the same company. We were trained there and it was quite funny, the Pioneer Corps, because most of them could not even speak proper English. So it was quite comical. I must compare it with "Dad's Army" if you want me to be honest with you. Then, once we finished our training - we didn't have rifles or guns or anything. We had broomsticks and things like that. It was quite comical. At least we were in the British Army and we were somebody. It was something I always wanted to do.

From then on we were split up and sent to various Companies. I was sent, with one or two of my friends, to a company near Oxford - 65 Company. But it was the type of work. We had to build huts, we had to build roads. I found myself in the kitchen again, which was quite nice. Then we were split up again and I was sent to Internee 149 Company at Catterick Camp.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 5 seconds

It was always the same. We were always working building huts or building canvas and that was not what I really wanted to do. How old was I then? I was 22 years old and I thought I could be doing better things than building huts etc. Then, all of a sudden, they called us in and said, "You don't have to, but, if you want, you can join the fighting forces." I thought, now is my time, so that is what I did. I was thinking, "What shall I join? The infantry? No, I don't want to start walking." So, I said I wanted to go into the tank, the Royal Armoured Corps. So, I applied but you don't hear anything. After about a month, the Commanding Officer called me in and said, "You have been accepted for the RAC, but you have got to go on a test." I said, "That's all right." I didn't mind and they sent me to a place in Wales somewhere - Aberystwyth. I stayed there for a week and they gave us a test - a mental test, a physical test after all. That was very nice and I was accepted. Eventually I was sent to Ilfracombe to the RAC and was trained as a tank driver. I changed my ordinary Pioneer hat to a beret, a black beret with a tank on there. I was so proud you can't imagine, and I used to walk through Ilfracombe and I thought at last now I can do a bit of fighting.

I passed my tank driving test and then I was allocated to another regiment and I was sent to somewhere in Norfolk, Thetford, to another company, the King's 8th Royal Irish Hussars. That was the best thing that could happen to me. After all, I was a refugee from Nazi oppression, I was of good German origin and I was accepted by them as their own. I had no problems. Nothing. I was given a tank and a crew. A tank crew consists of a tank driver, a co-driver, a wireless operator, a gunner and a

commander. I was in this little group and we trained to get ready for the D-day landing.

BL: What was your position?

WF: I was the tank driver. The tank driver's job was to look after the tank, make sure everything is all right, that there is always enough petrol. That was the best thing that happened in my life.

Tape 2: 6 minutes 19 seconds

Not only it was the comradeship, it was wonderful - completely different from the Pioneer Corps. You are somebody then.

BL: You didn't find any discrimination?

WF: None whatsoever. I must say that, in all fairness, no anti-Semitism. They knew I was Jewish, they knew I was originally from Germany. I was absolutely like one of them. We trained and then, eventually, we went to Bognor Regis and we got our tank ready for the D-Day landing. The D-Day landing we took part. I was always with them. I took part at the Normandy landing it is called. We landed and I was with them. It was a wonderful thing for me arriving in France and taking German prisoners. For me that was one thing I always wanted to do ever since I left Germany. I wanted to have my revenge and I had my revenge. That was a wonderful feeling. Wonderful comradeship.

We went right through to Holland and here comes the sad part I'm afraid. We were always together with my five, we lived together. On the way to Nijmegen and Arnhem, my tank was knocked out by a German 88 gun and, unfortunately, everybody was killed except me. I can show you - I have got the book there where my name was mentioned. It was a dreadful thing. I managed to try to save the gunner operator. He had his leg already off, his arm was half off but he was still alive. I got him behind the tank and I managed to get the ambulance boys to pick him up. I couldn't pick him up. I was wounded myself, but I think it was a blessing he died on the way. That was a terrible thing. I was in hospital for a few days. But, like everything, if you fall off a bicycle you get on the bicycle straight away and they gave me another tank. I went right through to Hamburg and we liberated - no, not liberated - we took Hamburg and then the war was finished.

BL: When did this incident happen?

WF: It was during 19-- - after the invasion. The invasion was in 1944. It must have been 1945 on the way to Arnhem. You know when the Arnhem landing that went all wrong. It was that time. I have since found out, they sent me a certificate of where the boys were buried in the cemetery. Two or three of them were all buried in a cemetery somewhere in Holland. They sent me the thing, but it was rather sad for me to see people like this killed. But that is war I thought to myself, you see.

Then I was very lucky. I was promoted to become a sergeant in the field and I had a wonderful time in the army until I was demobbed. They sent us to Berlin at the

victory parade and they even asked me at the time if I would like to stay on for another two or three years. They even offered me a commission then, but I thought enough is enough. I think it is a good thing that I didn't volunteer to carry on because they went off to Korea and the regiment then was fighting in Korea afterwards. I could have done without that.

BL: When did you change your name?

WF: I had to change my name before I joined the RAC because they said this, "You cannot keep your name Hirschfeld. You can, but we would not advise you. If you are taken prisoner with the name Hirschfeld, well?" I thought it was the easy way out, so I looked in the telephone book. We did all sorts of things we boys. But I thought, take the Hirsch away and you have Feld and Feld is like Field so I called myself Field. Since then I have been Field. I kept the name.

Tape 2: 11 minutes 36 seconds

Eventually I was demobbed at the end of 1946.

BL: What were your feeling and impressions when you entered Hamburg?

[Large chunk missing]

Tape 2: 30 minutes 41 seconds

WF: We were able to go and look for a house. We looked for a house and we found this house here, and we moved in 1954. I don't want to tell you what I paid for this house and what it is worth now. Let people have their own imagination here.

BL: When you lived in Greencroft Drive can you describe the atmosphere?

WF: Oh, wonderful, wonderful. We had a basement flat. There were two little bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room and a tiny garden at the back. Wonderful and the atmosphere was fantastic. We had a lot of friends, a lot of our army friends from Australia. We belonged to the Bar Kochba Club. We played football and we did a lot of things. We used to go to each other's house. We used to eat at Cosmo and we used to go to Dorice. I don't know if you remember at 20 Abbey Road there was a restaurant we used to eat. We did a lot of things. We had a wonderful social life. We did a lot of things.

BL: Mostly refugees?

WF: Oh yes, mostly refugees. We hardly had any English friends. We just mixed with the refugees who were with me in Australia and who played football with me in the Bar Kochba Club. Gradually everybody got married and gradually everybody had children and we had a wonderful time then. We used to go out on Saturday evening. Sundays we used to go to each other's house. We didn't all have television then. Whoever had a television we used to go there on a Sunday night or something and we all sat round the television. It was I tell you something, we grew up in a different atmosphere. It was good. It was good.

BL: Can you tell me something about the Bar Kochba?

WF: The Bar Kochba. We played football. We had a football team. We played in the Kilburn League at the time. We played every Sunday and we played in Hackney Marshes and sometimes in Lyttelton Road and sometimes in Vale Farm. The women all came along and watched us playing football. We weren't a wonderful team but we enjoyed ourselves. Then we had parties sometimes. It was a good social life for us. Apart from playing football, we used to go swimming. In those days there was the swimming pool in Swiss Cottage. Next to the Dorice there was a swimming pool. We used to do our football training there on a Sunday night.

It was a good life. Nothing was expensive in those days. Then, of course, eventually we all got older and older and older and now it is finished off and now a lot of our friends are not with us any more. That is what happens. Then both of our sons got married and we have seven grandchildren. David is the elder son, who is the accountant, has got four boys at the age of 26, 23 and going to be 20. The 26 one has got a wonderful job in some dress company. The second one, Jonathan, is studying and is in law school just working on his exams. The other two are twins, Adam and Lawrence. One is going to school and is learning graphic art and the other one doesn't know yet what he is going to do yet. That is from David.

Tape 2: 35 minutes 17 seconds

The younger son, Anthony, has got three children - a little girl of 13. Her name is Gaby. Then there is Alisa. She is 17 and she wants to go to university. They are clever, both are very clever. The boy's name is Mark. He is 19 going to be 20. He is studying at the moment. They are all doing very well, I must say. I got no complaints. I am very happy with them.

BL: When did you become naturalised?

WF: As soon as I came out of the army.

BL: Was that important to you?

WF: Yes. Oh yes. Funnily enough, a lot of people didn't want to join the army without being naturalised. Some people got on their high horse. It didn't matter to me. I knew we would be naturalised as soon as we got out. As soon as we got out we got naturalised. So, when I married Judy she automatically became a British citizen. So that was not a problem. I didn't mind, but some people did. "I am not going to join the army unless....." Perhaps that makes sense. I don't know.

BL: In terms of your identity, how would you define yourself? Still as a refugee?

Tape 2: 36 minutes 50 seconds

WF: Well, are you a refugee still? Yes and no. I don't know. We are British. We are British. I am not English. I define myself as being British. Not German - definitely not! But I know what I am and where I come from personally, and if

somebody asks, I am British. I am at home here. I have lived here longer than anywhere else. A lot of people ask me, would you like to live somewhere else. No, I would not. In any case I am too old to change now to live somewhere else now. If you would have asked me after the war perhaps, would you like to go to America or South Africa or anywhere it might have been a different thing. But I have always felt at home here. I still do. I feel at home here. I am very grateful and thankful to this country what they did for me, what they gave me. It was only a pity we could not save more people, but this is life but I am grateful. I don't mind having to pay taxes or whatever it is. It is thanks to them that I am alive and I am able to have a nice family.

Tape 2: 38 minutes 22 seconds

BL: What impact do you think it has had on your life being a refugee?

WF: I think it has given me a lot of thought that life is not a piece of cake. It is that a lot of things happened to me, I think it did. I sometimes look at my sons and my grandchildren, how at the moment I know of their lives, and see how easy life is for them. They do not really understand what happened to us, even if you tell them, even if they read books about it, I don't think they really feel what we went through.

BL: Did you talk about your experiences to your children?

Tape 2: 39 minutes 16 seconds

WF: I did talk about the experiences to my children. They know about it.

BL: Does it sink in?

WF: Does it really sink in? Do they really understand what happened? I don't know. I know we are old-fashioned, perhaps, but I don't know what the future will bring for them now, how the world is going now. But I feel absolutely British. Very often, when I go to Germany, the children ask me "Would you like to come back to Germany and live in Germany?" "No, I would not like to live in Germany, but I like to come here. I like to talk to you and tell you what has happened. I like to be able to explain to you the things." I always say to them that I don't mind coming back, but I can never forget what happened to me. Forgive? Perhaps, but forget - never. You can't. Therefore, it is also not easy for the German youngsters nowadays, the blame for what their parents and grandparents did. Can you blame the children? I don't know.

Tape 2: 40 minutes 33 seconds

How would we react? If I hadn't been Jewish or my children hadn't been Jewish in Germany, how would I react towards what happened in Germany? You can't.

BL: Can you tell me about your lecture in Germany?

WF: Yes, the lecture in Germany I found... When it started with the children they were 12. I thought they were very young at first.

BL: How did this happen in the first place?

WF: Well, it happened like this. They always asked people to go to the schools in Germany, and ever since I started going to Germany in 1979, I always said, "I am not going. I have met people and I like coming here to see what is going on." Then I could see what was going on, that the children were getting more interested during the last ten years what was going on with the Holocaust. It is in their school they learn about it. They don't sweep it under the carpet, I can tell you that. They talk about it all the time. It is on television all the time, they see films all the time and finally, I said to Judy, "I feel something, should I go and tell them about it?" Very often they came to me, "Oh, Mr. Field. You have been in a concentration camp, you have been in this, etc. It would be interesting for the children for you to talk to them." I said, "No. I am not coming here to get myself involved." Finally, this schoolteacher, Gaby Barthe, we were on a boat trip at the time from all the people in Bonn. She came to me and said, "I have heard so much about you from the concentration camp and all that. Why don't you come and talk to my children?" So she persuaded me. "They will be well prepared," she said, "They won't ask you silly stupid questions." "All right," I said, "You have persuaded me." So the next year I did actually go and I was pleasantly surprised the way the children were prepared. They didn't ask silly questions. They asked why, what did your parents do and how did it happen, what did you do at school. They didn't only want to know about the concentration camp, they wanted to know what I learned at school, whether I went to the synagogue.

Tape 2: 43 minutes 15 seconds

They asked lovely questions which I could answer and I spent nearly one and a half hours with them. The children kept putting their arms up and wanting to ask me more and more questions. Then the schoolteacher said, "Mr. Field has answered enough. Give him a bit of rest." This went on every year and then the kids started writing letters to me, wanting to know about Simchas Torah. They wanted to know about Hanukkah. They wanted to know about Yom Kippur. All these things accumulated and so the next year I told them more stories and so I became attached to the children and the children became attached to me. So I thought to myself I am doing something in the Jewish school here. Then I heard the children singing, singing Jewish songs, Israeli songs. When these children, who cannot speak a word of English who know nothing about Hitler start singing Israeli songs I could see they were interested. But it was only because of the schoolteacher. She was and is wonderful.

They organised to come here on my birthday, to come here on my 80th birthday to visit me. By that time they were already 14 or 15 years old and they paid for themselves. They stayed all night travelling from Bonn and arrived at Victoria at 10 o'clock in the morning getting on to the underground. I picked them all up at the station and brought them here - 25 of them! They had a big banner "Congratulations, Willy, on your 80th Birthday" in English from the school. Everyone wrote their names on it. They stood outside Dollis Hill station with it and the people looked, God forbid, what is going on here? I thought it was very sweet. It was wonderful.

Tape 2: 45 minutes 25 seconds

This is something which I enjoyed. They made a bit of a fuss about me and I liked it. I know some people would say, well you know, but I liked it. It was very nice and I appreciated it. Now again, next month when we go, they want me to do something. They always want me to do something with them. So I told them I am getting on in age. I cannot come to all these things. You know they have a discotheque and they want me to come to the discotheque. I tell them, look I am not 28 or 27, but they appreciate that.

BL: So they have finished school now?

WF: Yes, this is the last year. They have finished and are getting jobs already. I don't know whether they learned anything from me, but I think they did. They wrote this book. I can bring it down to show you. They wrote this book about Bonn and they wrote an article about myself and what I talked to them about. But they wrote it - not the teacher. You can see when you read it in German, they wrote it down the way I spoke. You can see it when you read it. It is not edited or anything. I thought it was quite something.

Tape 2: 46 minutes 57 seconds

BL: How did it make you feel to see that book?

WF: Wonderful. I thought it was very nice. Quite a lot of people did buy it. I think it was quite interesting. They came to me and asked me to put a few signatures in it, Willy Field, so why not? It doesn't cost anything to be friendly and kind. It is something which you can't help, being like this.

BL: Did you ever speak in German to your children?

WF: No. As it happens my younger son speaks German because he has taken over my business. I had a lot to do with German businesses. We represented a very big German firm here and he has taken this over. He had to speak German, so he speaks German but my other son, the accountant, cannot speak a word of German.

BL: What is the most important part of your German Jewish heritage for you?

WF: The most important part of my German Jewish heritage? Well, I am Jewish. For me it is not like the olden days when you think back. I am talking about the 1930s. Already, when I was ten years old, I knew what did happen in Germany. That was the mistake, I would say, a lot of Jewish people, especially in the Rhineland, what they did. They were German first and Jewish second, and I felt, at that time, it is wrong. By all means, you live in a country, you are German, but it was a different Germany in their eyes. That is something which did happen, and I witnessed this. It was not a very good thing to say, but nowadays, when you take the English Jews, you ask them, are you Jews first and then English? Is that correct, if I am right or not? Would you say they are Jewish first and then English, or English first and then Jewish? Some people are different. Some people say to me, how can you go to Germany? How can you go to Germany after all these terrible things that happened to you? I am of a different nature. These things do not worry me. It doesn't worry me

to go to Germany. You have to bring things to an end. You cannot go on hating people all your life. I don't.

BL: So you thought it was wrong in the 1930's people feeling German first?

WF: Yes, looking back to it. Not at the time, but looking back what has happened in Germany. My goodness, these were Germans. I mean, even my father, he fought in the First World War. I have the photographs. They were Germans.

Tape 2: 50 minutes 27 seconds

They were Jewish all of them, most of them.

BL: Do you think there is a lesson to be learned?

WF: What is the lesson? The lesson to be learned is very easily said. Yes, what I learned in Germany, I suppose there is a lesson to be learned but what is the lesson? If we know that things like that should not happen and will never happen again, then we can say the lesson we learned has helped. But I don't know. The world is still full of, bombs are still flying all over the place. Is that so nice? It is a very difficult thing to answer. I also understand people and I will never argue with people who say, how can you go to Germany, or why do you go to Germany. Everybody has their own feelings. I would never say to them, you are wrong in what you say. I would try to convince them, you are absolutely right. I am like this and you are like this. If you don't want to go to Germany, if you don't want to go to Austria. Some people don't want to go to South Africa. They are different. Whether it is wrong or right that is something which I cannot be the judge of.

Everybody should know themselves what they are doing. We should all live in peace together and that is the main thing. I have always been the forgiving type so that I cannot alter.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 14 seconds

Whatever happened, I've always been the forgiving type. There have been good things and there have been bad things in life, but you must remember that you cannot go through life hating people all the time.

BL: We discussed many things. Is there anything you think I have forgotten to ask you or anything you would like to add?

WF: No, not that I can think of, unless you can think of some things you have forgotten.

BL: I didn't ask you whether you had Barmitzvah?

WF: Of course, I had a Barmitzvah in Bonn. I did have a Barmitzvah in Bonn at my old synagogue. That was already during Hitler's time - August 1933.

BL: Where was the synagogue? Do you remember the address?

WF: Yes, in the Tempelstrasse on the Rhine. The synagogue is not there any more. I can remember that I quite liked my Barmitzvah. I remember it quite clearly, but it was not like a Barmitzvah is here nowadays. I went to the synagogue; I did my bit of saying. You got given a book by the rabbi and he blesses you, all very nice. The whole family is there and then we go home and only the nearest relations had lunch. In the afternoon, the house is open for anybody who comes for coffee and cake and perhaps a glass of wine. This is how a Barmitzvah was and what was given to you. You were given a propelling pencil. You were given, perhaps, a writing pad. But there was nothing terribly [expensive]. You were given a watch perhaps. I remember my eldest sister gave me a watch. But the Barmitzvah was just one day.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Tape 2: 54 minutes 13 seconds

BL: Can you please describe this photo?

WF: Yes. I think this photo was taken in 1924/25. From the left to right, my brother Manfred, my sister Betty, myself, my grandfather, my twin sister, Thea and three of my cousins, Margot, Thea and Ruth.

BL: What was your grandfather's name?

WF: Moses Hirschfeld.

BL: Can you please describe this photo?

WF: This is a photo which I treasure very much. It must have been taken during the First World War in the German army. My father, with the pipe, is the second from the left.

BL: Do you know where it was taken?

WF: No idea!

BL: Can you please describe this photo?

WF: This photo must have been taken in 1923. My father's shop. My mother standing on the left, my sister and myself in the front.

BL: And where was the shop, please?

WF: In the ...strasse in Bonn.

BL: Thank you. Can you describe...?

WF: This was our flat in Bonn, Lehnerstrasse number 14. My sister looking out of the window on the first floor. I feel it was 1930.

BL: Can you please describe this photo?

WF: This was taken on holiday in 1925. My mother standing on the top left, me standing at the bottom left, then my elder sister, Betty, then my brother, Manfred, standing and, on the right, my twin sister, Thea.

[New photograph]

Well, this picture must have been taken in 1927 - coffee afternoon at my aunt's house. I am standing at the back next to my father.

This was a fancy dress party in 1927 - my twin sister Thea on the left, my brother Manfred in the middle, and me again on the right side.

BL: Can you please describe this photo?

WF: Yes. This was taken in 1934 at the holiday camp with our Städtisches Gymnasium. I am standing second from the right.

BL: So this was just before you left?

WF: Yes, almost before I left the Gymnasium.

Oh yes, this was taken during our gymnastic lesson at our Jewish school 1934/35. I am on the top row, second from the right.

BL: Yes please.

WF: Well, both pictures were taken at the factory in Siegburg where I worked in 1938. The picture on the left is me on the bicycle at the entrance.

BL: And the other picture, what is that about? There are some barrels.

WF: Chemical things we made there.

BL: Yes, please.

WF: Well, this picture was taken after I came out of the concentration camp, Dachau. I went to my office and sat at my desk, and as you can see, my hair was still not grown. It was taken in 1939.

BL: Yes, please.

WF: This picture was taken just after I came out of the concentration camp in Dachau. On the left is a friend of mine, my mother, my sister Thea, me standing at the back and on the right another friend.

BL: Your hair is still very short.

WF: Yes, my hair was still very, very short.

BL: So this is one of the last pictures before you emigrated?

WF: Correct. It was the last picture that was ever taken before I left Germany. (Looking at a drawing) Yes. Nice.

BL: Can you please describe this photo?

WF: This picture was a sketch. This is a drawing by Professor Hoffman which he did on our trip on the 'Dunera' to Australia. It was done in August 1940.

BL: He gave it to you immediately?

WF: Oh yes. He did it on the spot under terrible conditions, but he gave it to me straight away. It is one thing I kept.

Tape 2: 59 minutes 27 seconds

BL: As a present?

WF: Yes, as a present.

BL: Yes please.

WF: Well this photo was taken in 1946 while I was serving as a sergeant in the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars.

BL: Yes please.

WF: This photo was taken out of action in Holland, me standing on the left. It is all very interesting.

BL: Yes please.

WF: This is our wedding photo taken on the 29th March 1949, Aah.

BL: Where?

WF: I think at the register office in Haverstock Hill town hall. Hampstead Town Hall.

Barmitzvah picture of our grandson, Daniel. The picture is, as follows, on the left myself at the back, my son David, our son Anthony, my wife Judy, Jonathan, our daughter-in-law, Marilyn, Daniel, our daughter-in-law Lillian, the two grandchildren sitting down, Adam and Lawrence, then Alisa and Mark.

BL: Yes please.

WF: This picture of the Barmitzvah of Mark. Judy and myself sitting with Gaby on our lap. From the left to right is Adam, Mark, Jonathan, Daniel and Lawrence and Alisa.

Tape 2: 61 minutes 37 seconds

BL: Yes please.

WF: Taken in 2001 during a book launch, a book written by the children and the teacher Gabriele Barthe. Me making a speech surrounded by the children of the school.

TAPE 3

BL: This is tape 3 and we are conducting an interview with Mr. Willy Field. I will just go back slightly. I was asking you if there was anything we hadn't discussed. One of the things we have not discussed yet was your Barmitzvah. Could you may describe your Barmitzvah.

WF: My Barmitzvah was in August 1933 in our old synagogue in Bonn, the one which was burned down on the 10th November. It was, of course, a family affair. I went to the synagogue, I did my bit. The rabbi gave me a book and when we were finished, we went home and the family had lunch. In the afternoon it was open house. Anyone could come for a cup of coffee, some cake, or something to eat. It those days it had a meaning, a Barmitzvah. Not like it is nowadays - a commercial affair.

BL: What presents did you get?

WF: Ah, presents! I remember my sister gave me a watch and from my friend I got a silver propelling pencil. Those are the two presents I remember very well.

BL: Are you a member of a synagogue here in England?

WF: My wife is a member of the synagogue here at the Belsize Square Liberal Synagogue. I used to be a member, but now I leave it to my wife. She is still a member.

BL: Are you a member of the AJR?

WF: Oh yes. We have been members of the AJR ever since I can remember.

BL: Is that important for you?

WF: Very important. I feel that the AJR is doing a wonderful job. As you know, my wife she works voluntary there on Thursday and on Wednesday they are doing wonderful meals on wheels. I think they are doing a fantastic job. May it last forever.

BL: Do you think it was important for all of the refugees?

WF: Absolutely! Very important that they have a place where they can get together, where they can have lunch, where they can have coffee, where they meet people - especially those who are on their own. It is a good thing.

BL: Is there anything else you would like to mention?

WF: No, I don't think so. I think we discussed everything. It was a pleasure talking to you.

BL: Thank you very much for the interview and I hope you will receive the tape very soon.