

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Millan
Forename:	Joanna
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	17 August 1942
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV162
NAME: Joanna Millan
DATE: 15th December, 2015
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:14]

Today is the 15th of December, 2015. We are conducting the interview with Joanna Millan. My name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in London. Can you please tell me your name?

I'm Joanna Millan.

And your name at birth?

I was Bela Rosenthal.

And when were you born?

The 17th of August 1942.

And where were you born?

I was born in Berlin.

Thank you very much for having agreed to do this Refugee Voices interview. Can you please tell us a little bit about your family background?

[0:00:51]

Well my parents were ...both born in Germany. And they didn't meet until 1941. Both my parents had been married previously, but they knew they were going to be deported and they were very scared. And they wanted to be deported together. So that's why they decided to get married. My father was forty-seven years old, my mother was forty. I think they were very surprised that nine months later I was born, in Berlin, in 1942.

When did you know this?

Ah, oh, I didn't find out until many, many years later in little dribs and drabs. Really until I was in my forties. I was busy with children, with education, career. You know, I didn't have time. And I- And I also thought, you know, I might not find out things that are very nice. Do I really want to know? So I – I was a bit resistant to doing the research. But my husband was really keen; he wanted me to do it. And every so often he said, "You know, Joanna you really ought to find out a bit more." And... I don't know if you've heard of **Sarah Moskowitz who wrote this book, "Love Despite Hate"?** She actually knew where the other five children from Bulldogs Bank- where they – what had happened to them. And she also was pushing me forever to do the research. And I really resisted. And I suppose in 1989 I really had no more excuses. The wall had come down in Berlin. The archives were beginning to be more available. You know, the Nazi archives. And my children were pretty much grown up, you know. So I started ...trying to find out. So it was really in very small chunks. It was a little bit like somebody had thrown a thousand-piece jigsaw in the air. And every so often I found a little piece. And gradually, gradually a picture started to emerge. But it was really in little, little bits. Tiny bits of information. Sometimes successful; sometimes not successful.

[0:03:12]

So what picture did emerge? Tell us a little bit about your parents, about what you found out.

Right what happened. Well... Well, first of all I found out that my grandmother had been in Theresienstadt before being sent to Auschwitz. I then found out my mother's name and her date of birth, where she was born...from the papers- the archives in Theresienstadt. Then from...I was then able to find out where she was deported from. I then managed to get my parents' marriage certificate. Because in Germany you have to know the town they come

from, and in Berlin certainly, even the area they lived in. Without that information I couldn't find out who my father was...his name. And then from there- I couldn't find out whether he had brothers and sisters, but I found about his parents.

What did you find out? What did you find out?

What? About his parents? ...When I went to Berlin, I went to the Weißensee and I found both their graves there. And again, so I had their date of birth, where they were born. You know, all the things that you can find out from a cemetery.

What were their names?

And...Isaac and Mina Niestensch [?]. And what was also interesting is that the person who authorised the funeral was their... son-in-law. So I realised then that my father had a sister. But, I had a name but no details, so there was no way I could find out. So... you know, I found a little bit, and then nothing. And... But I found out where they'd lived and where they were born so that was- that was very interesting. And while I was there, I found my mother's father's – my other grandfather – his grave in the Weißensee as well. But not my grandmother because she'd been- she was killed in Auschwitz.

[0:05:22]

And what was that grandfather's name?

Yes. His name was Benjamin Schallmach and he had a business hiring out carriages for weddings. And so- So, that was very interesting. And- but also you know just gradually finding out. 'Cause when I came to England I just knew my name and date of birth. I was born in Germany, been in Theresienstadt, and that was the sum total of what I knew about myself. So it was a real needle in a haystack job, really. And also when you're searching, if two people are searching, that makes life easier. But no one was looking for me because no one had realised I'd survived. So they weren't looking. So how do I find people? It was extremely difficult. And also to get the cooperation. Especially the German government was less than helpful, despite what they claim. At that time. I mean, maybe things are better now, but then, they were certainly not helpful.

You said you found out that your parents were married before... How did you find that?

[0:06:32]

Yes, well... When the... the Israeli archive you know, from Yad Vashem went online, all the records, you know, all the little sheets that were where you filled out who your father... You know, all the testimony sheets. I didn't have much information, but I filled one out many, many years ago. And every year I went to Israel- Every time I went to Israel, they said, "Oh, it's going to be digitised. It's going to ...". Well anyway, twenty years later eventually it was digitised. And an Israeli young lad went online, excited, new website. You know, let's go and have a look. And he found my page of testimony. And he went to his grandfather and said, "Look, I think this is a family member. Did you... Do you know anything about this?" And it turned out to be my cousin. My father's sister's son. And he was absolutely amazed I'd survived and contacted me through - through Yad Vashem. And said he had pictures of my father, and he knew what happened to his sisters and brother and it was just- I was able to fill out about my father's side a great deal. Not only photographs, but also... he met my father because Isaak was, my cousin, he couldn't go to school anymore. And my father gave him maths lessons. And so for two years they were living in the same house together. So, not only did I have pictures but a bit about what it was like. What he was good at; what he enjoyed doing. You know, a little bit of colour to the photograph, which was brilliant.

So you really found out?

[0:08:25]

I found out a lot about my father's family from - from him. My mother's family was interesting where I found them, was that, about the time I was adopted - my adoptive family needed to find out whether I had any family, so that they could adopt me legally. And they found out that I had an aunt living in Lübeck in Germany, in northern Germany. And they contacted her, and she more or less said that I was free to be adopted. She wasn't interested. Her family weren't interested. But she also said that her husband was a master glazier, making glass windows and fancy glassware. And we- my husband and I were actually working in the CBF offices. They had a spare room which they allowed us to use to conduct

our own business. Well we paid for it obviously, but you know, we were there. And my husband got talking to somebody there because he was really keen for me to do the research. And he said, "Well, maybe we can find out who this master glazier is; maybe we can find these cousins." So, ...anyway, she spoke German so it was much easier. And she actually found the glassmaking organisation, you know they were... like ...you know, guilds. He was a Master of this guild, so they actually found who he was, and that he'd died, and his wife had died. But he knew where the daughters lived, who were my first cousins. And- Both in Lübeck still. And so they contact them. And they were very frightened of being contacted. Cause they'd obviously been told by their mother that, not to mention that they were Jewish, and you know to keep a head down, and you know - Totally repudiated their family and their past. And so I had a long time emailing well, sending letters initially. Assuming that the sisters were talking to each other, which they weren't; they'd had a big fall-out over a wedding. And so anyway eventually I managed to find them and said that I would – I would come. And meanwhile my son was stationed in Germany, in the British Army. And when he found out that we had these cousins I gave him the address. He said, "Oh, I'll go." And he took it upon himself; took an Army vehicle, in his Army uniform. Ends up... at one of these cousin's houses. And without announcing himself - he's a bit like that. She had a total shock. Absolutely total shock. You know, British Army officer outside ...her house. And she told me later that she thought that it was her son that had been killed in a car accident. He was – they were so alike and about the same age. And she was just - you know; it really took her back. But after that, I visited and I got to know my mother's family and, and their – my cousins and their children. And we're still in touch. They still live in Germany. So...

[0:11:55]

So this was originally your...?

Mother's sister. My mother's middle sister. My mother was the youngest of the three sisters. And she had pretended that she was illegitimate, that she wasn't really in the family. Her non-Jewish husband protected her to a certain extent, though the daughters were not allowed to go to school. You know there was – there were obviously issues, but she managed to survive in Lübeck. He obviously protected her but couldn't protect my grandmother or my – or my mother, her sister. And I gather she became very bitter and maybe she felt guilty about not being able to save her mother and sister. So...

So which year? When did you meet them?

Oh, it must have been – Oh... The cousins, must have been in the 1980s I suppose – must have been early 80s. They were...I found them first. And so that was, you know, through this letter. Because I managed to get this letter ...from the aunt, so I was eventually able to find them.

Amazing.

Yeah!

So you found on both sides.

On both sides I did, yes.

And they both knew about you? I mean they both knew that there was a child?

Yes, they both knew that I'd been born, but none of, well, my aunt in Germany knew that I'd survived because of the adoption bit, situation. But the German- the- my father's family didn't know. But they– they actually did know that I had, that I was born. Yeah. Yes. And if you see pictures of my grandmother, my mother's mother I mean, it's unmistakable. [half laughs]

That's extraordinary.

Yeah.

But let's come now back to you. And what do you remember? You said you came, you know something. Do you have any...What were your first memories?

Yes. I think my first memories are very... hazy I suppose, in a way but being very scared; being on a plane. Because nobody had told me I was liberated. Leaving the camp was bad

news; no one ever came back, obviously. And so leaving, and going on a plane to who knows where... Didn't know what was going on. You know, it was really, really frightening. And those bombers you know, really noisy and with no seats. Very dark. So that's sort of got... in my mind.

So really the journey was your first memory?

Yes, the journey was the first time. Cause every day in the camp was the same. I was very weak – very sick a lot of the time. You know, it was just a matter of survival. You didn't really think about anything. So that was – that was really frightening. Because - you know when the Russians came they were just in different uniform. We didn't know if they were good people or not good people. You know, so... Just nobody bothered to tell us; we were just little children.

And could you later find out how, as a child, you actually managed to survive in this environment?

[0:15:16]

Right. Yes, I did find some clues. I mean obviously there's an element of just being lucky. But yes, there were contributory factors certainly. That my mother had died in the camp. If she'd have survived, she would have been deported to Auschwitz and she would have carried me into the gas chambers. Because I had no one to take me; I was sort of 'left'. Because why bother? You know, I'd die anyway. Also, I discovered, again through the internet, a woman – a Czech woman, Alicka Schallinger. Her son contacted me. He'd seen- I'd written a chapter in a book for Bet Shalom, and in, under my birth name. And apparently his mother had been looking for me, because she had wanted to take me home with her at the end of the war. But she wasn't married. She was very young. Obviously just after the war, they didn't know whether I had any family. They wouldn't allow it. And apparently she'd been looking for me forever to, you know because she wanted to know what had happened to me. And her son contacted me and told me that her job in Theresienstadt was growing vegetables. You know, obviously for the Nazis. And the guards never realised that when she went in to the vegetable garden she was thin, and when she came out she was fat. And she was hiding vegetables in her clothes for herself obviously but also she brought us vegetables as well. So fresh

vegetables was like gold dust in- in the camp. The food was so contaminated. If you ate it you died, and if you didn't eat you died. So the fresh vegetables was the great life-saver. But I did meet her before she died. At that time, she was living in Cardiff. She was – she was living two doors away from Eva Clark's mother. In Cardiff. And it was Eva Clark's mother that brought the book with my chapter in, to Alicka to say, "Look, you know, we've got this book. I'm sure you know some people in this book." And when she saw my name she was so excited. And... So you know, these coincidences happen all the time.

[0:17:33]

And again, she could tell you...

She could tell me a bit about what...

...yourself.

Yeah! Yes. And also... I – I have a scar round my leg which looks like I was sort of restrained from running out. You know, it goes all the way around my lower leg. I reckon that was so that I wouldn't be a nuisance; I wouldn't run out and... That's the only explanation I can think of. So we were kept pretty much hidden. And women from the kitchens just brought us food whenever they could you know, just to... So we didn't have anyone looking after us on a regular basis. People were coming and going. You know, one day it was this one and another day it was another one. I don't think I even realised who my mother was because it was always different people coming and going. And we had no toys; we didn't have anything. You know, we just...for two years there.

And were the children together?

The six of us were...were together. And we all took on different roles within the family group; you know, a father and a mother and children. Three boys and three girls. And we really supported each other. And some of the behaviours that we did in the camp, was actually reported in the Anna Freud study, "*An Experiment in Group Upbringing*". The Dann sisters wrote a daily diary in Bulldogs Bank about what we did, what we said... which is now

housed in the Wiener Library. So we have an unusually day-by-day, blow-by-blow account of everything we did for a whole year.

Which is post-war.

Yes, ja. But the behaviours we'd learned in the camp we still continued. So that was quite interesting. You know, like the touching: we'd clearly seen dead bodies. When we were asleep we weren't sure, so we checked each other at night just to- just to make sure. Other things. Getting used to having adults around. All we knew adults did was to bring food. And of course these- the Dann sisters were telling us all the time "You can't do this" and "You must do that". And... you know, that was really hard to get used to. And when... Sarah Moskowitz actually gave me their address, and I was able to contact them again in, they were still living near Bulldogs Bank in their little cottage. And they, they just- they were telling me all the stories of how nasty words we'd used. And how we'd really resented having adults around, and...and how we behaved, you know, in that first year. What we got up to. And things that weren't in the Anna Freud study.

[0:20:26]

Yeah.

Yeah. So that was interesting.

But were there other children, I mean you said there were six...?

Yes, three girls and three boys.

In Theresien- there might have been more.

No, they were- No we were the six of that age. There were younger children, babies that were born there, you know, in a baby home. And there were older children. But of this age, we were kept together, separately.

So you were all the same age?

Yeah. Roughly. I mean, within a few months. I think I was probably slightly younger – a month or two younger than some of the others. Yes, certainly I was younger than Jackie, but, Jackie Young that you’ve interviewed already.

Yes. So you said your first memory was that - that journey.

The journey. The scary, how frightening that was. Yeah.

What happened from then? Is that clear in your memory or did you have to reconstruct it later?

Well, I remember the fear, but I didn’t- yes, I had to reconstruct a lot of it. The feelings, and the smells... the tastes. We were, when we came down in Holland to refuel, we were given some little biscuits as little treats by local people. And many years later I had one of these biscuits again, and it triggered that memory: “I know I’ve had this before. And I know I hadn’t had it in England.” ...Because you know, they were European biscuits. So that triggered the memory of coming down in Holland, but very vague memories. But after arriving, I have pretty clear memories of the time in Bulldogs Bank.

Let’s talk about it. So...what happened?

Yes...yes. Yes.

And also tell us a little bit– you came with ‘The Boys’ maybe so just to contextualise a little.

Yes, well they called themselves ‘The Boys’ which I’m very upset about, because there were over seventy girls. Out of the 301 children that came, a little boy had stowed away. There were only meant to be 300. And... and I think Martin Gilbert’s book sort of cemented this idea: “The Boys”. And in a way the girls have been hidden, that we were not recognised. Whenever you challenge the name they say, “Oh, well, you’re one of The Boys.” And you say, “Well actually, I’m one of the girls”, you know?

That’s very interesting. I don’t know who used that term first actually, for the group.

Yes...I think the boys themselves. I think the boys were old- a lot of them were older. I mean there were some older girls but a lot of them tended to stick together. They were living together to start with and so on. I think they just slipped into this habit of calling themselves "The Boys".

What should it be called? The Group? What would you like it to be called?

[0:23:17]

Well, "The Children". [laughs]

The Children Survivors.

Yes, or The Child Survivors. In fact, some of them were older than sixteen which was the cut-off age. Because they pretended to be younger and no one checked; no one had any documents. They were very thin so, you know they hadn't grown much, so it was easy to... fool people. So some of them were older than sixteen.

And again, for the records, who had organised this – that transport – we don't want to call it a transport, but...?

Yes, I think the predecessors of CBF. I think it was the...

CBF. Please tell us what it is?

Oh, the...the...what is it called now? I get so used to calling it the CBF.

It's called World Jewish Relief.

Well, now it is, yes, yes, but it was the Central British Fund. But it was the predecessor even of CBF. The Jewish Refugee Council, I think was it.

Yes.

And they, they organised it ...obviously through the Red Cross, because the Red Cross were doing the administration in Theresienstadt, and were trying to disperse people. Because we were one of the last camps they liberated. It was a very good management system in Theresienstadt, so people were given money to go back home or... You know, they were able to help people to find a new life in some form.

Yes, so, the plane...

The plane.

Was in Holland where you stopped over and then...

Yes, well the planes were coming to Prague anyway. They were bringing back the Czech Airforce that had been flying with the RAF. And of course going back, they were going back empty, so this was a great opportunity at no cost to the British taxpayer. Some 300 children were taken. I think just over 750 were found, something like that, in the end - out of the 1000 that the British Government said they would take. So I was one of the first lot to come on the August the 15th.

[0:25:19]

19...

'45. Yes. They were taken to Crosby-on-Eden Airfield, which was a military airfield just outside Carlisle. From there we were taken to Windermere. But the hostel there had housed the workers from Harland and Wolff. They'd been building the Sunderland flying boats. The hostel was empty; the workers had gone back to Belfast. So this was considered to be a suitable place for us to go while they sorted out a more permanent place for us. And so it was the wife of an MP Lady Clark who offered this house called Bulldogs Bank to just the six of us. She'd had a daughter that was at the Anna Freud Hampstead Nurseries. She had some issues, and she knew of the need to find a place for the six of us. Because they felt we needed to be kept together. And so she had this house that she offered for a year so that we could get acclimatised to British life.

So it was clear that the six of you were quite apart from the rest of the...

We were a family.

You were young and you were...

We were younger. And also some of the boys not being in Theresienstadt. Some had come from other camps right at the end of the war. They were children from other camps, in hiding- It wasn't - we weren't all from Theresienstadt. So but we were gathered, a lot of children were gathered there to be repatriated, or, you know, by the Red Cross.

And was the idea...originally the idea was that you shouldn't just be fostered or adopted but that you, the six children needed a help to...adapt themselves, or...?

Yes, I think... Yes, I think the idea was that we - we had to speak English. We had to get used to having proper food. And to toys. You know, that we needed some special care. Though Anna Freud never came to visit us, and we never had any psychiatric help - at all. But at least we had each other. Because we were family. They were brothers and sisters. You know, we were, we were a family. So splitting us up would have been an issue, I think.

And which language did you speak to each other, at that point?

At that point, we were speaking a mixture of Czech and German. And- Because there were lots of nationalities in Theresienstadt. But German was everyone's second language pretty much. So, but, some of them were Czech, but mostly it was German. But we didn't speak much because we were only three. And we had no one to teach us the language. I certainly remember the word for 'soup' and for 'dog', which were the two most important words in the camp.

In German or in Czech?

In German. Yeah. That- and so learning English wasn't that difficult because we didn't have much language anyway. So. We picked it up fairly quickly.

So how long did it take to actually get to Bulldogs Bank from Windermere?

[0:28:31]

Two months. We arrived in August, middle of August and we were in Bulldogs Bank in October. Some of the other children stayed till November. Even December. Others were just found other places so...from, from Windermere they had to find places for us to go. Some of the older children were put in hostels, given work on farms. You know, many different things. So... So, we were in Bulldogs Bank. The children who were only slightly older than us went to Weir Courtney straight away. And...Which was also given temporarily by Benjamin Drage, who owned the house.

And what was Weir Courtney? Another big house?

Another big house, another big house owned by this man. But only temporarily until a permanent home was found in Isleworth. They found a house there, they called it Lingfield House because Weir Courtney had been in Lingfield so they felt there was a link with... the previous house.

I understand. But let's stick with Bulldogs Bank. What was your routine in Bulldogs Bank? What do you remember?

Right. Well, the routine was: In the morning, obviously we had – we had breakfast. We were given toys to play with. We sometimes went into the little village. There was a bus that went in, and... Occasionally one of the people in the village would help me on to the bus and I was really annoyed because I wanted to do it myself. You know always very, very independent. We were, we were really very, very close. And adults were on the periphery. We weren't really interested in grownups at all. And we continued as we had in the camp pretty much. At night if we had nightmares, it was always me or one of the boys – you know - who came to reassure the people. We never went to the grownups. It was always- You know; we did everything for each other. And anything happened, you know it was always, we sorted it, even though we were only three somehow we just did. That's what we were used to doing.

And do you remember was there any special... Were you close to any particular person in that group, or... was it more the whole group?

Well, I think so. I think we were the whole group. I mean we all recognised each other's failings if you like. There was one girl who had you know, more issues. And one of the boys also. We used to just take more care. Made sure they were all right. Protected them. So it was Jackie, myself and Gadi were the sort of stronger three. And then there was the boy and the girl and then one of the other girls was very quiet, and very much kept herself internally. She wasn't giving out much. So I think the three of us were the stronger ones in the group.

So you took charge in a way?

[0:32:00]

I gather, I gather, I gather - yes. I was the queen bee. Everybody had to do things for me. [laughs] But I did care, you know, I also. I was the first person anyone who was in trouble would come to. So I remember Jackie in particular always having his train set near the door for everyone to trip over as they came in, and they were forever telling him to move it. And one of the little boys was also continually wetting his cot and was, you know, lots of - he had emotional problems, so you had to take care. You know it wasn't - It was just that we were a family and we didn't, I suppose maybe with older children they might have just ignored him and just said, "Oh, go away". We didn't because we were - we all had our issues and we just supported each other like we always had.

And what memories do you have of the Dann sisters? I mean, did they just let you get on with it or did you...?

No, no they definitely didn't let us get on with it. And they were firm. They were pretty firm and you know determined that we were going to settle down and be disciplined, and do what we were told and...I don't know. I, I remember that I never learnt which name, which sister was which because somehow the names were not important and in my life people just came and went so why bother to learn somebody's name? I think it was quite psychological you know.

So what did you call them?

I just... I didn't. You know, I avoided using their names because – for that. I think maybe the others knew but did. But I was always, always finding ways to get around what they wanted us to do. [laughs] In fact, there was an episode where I was made to stand in the corner because I'd done something naughty. And the others were so upset with the Dann sisters, they all came and stood in the corner with me.

[0:34:20]

Ahh. So there was an amazing solidarity among...the six of you.

Oh! Totally! Totally. And I don't think that when I was eventually adopted that they had actually prepared the others for when I was going. In fact, the boy that was particularly wetting his bed and so on, told me later that he thought I'd run away because he'd been so nasty to me. And you know, and you think: What was going on? You know. That was not good.

They didn't have the psychological...

No. No. But you'd think that they would understand.

What was the background of the Dann sisters? Who were they?

They were German, from a very respected family in Augsburg. And they managed to get out of Germany before the war.

Jewish?

Jewish family, yes. And... one of the sisters, it was Sophie, worked in the Anna Freud nursery. She was a nurse – trained nurse. She worked for the Anna Freud nurseries in Hampstead trying to help the children who were traumatised by the bombing, in London. And... I suppose when they found out that the children, that we were coming 'cause it was well known. The community had started fundraising to provide for us. So people knew we

were coming. In fact, there was a reporter at the airfield when we arrived. So. With photos, you know, everyone was expecting it. So I'm sure it was Anna Freud and Sophie had decided that this was a good ... good thing to do. Lady Clark obviously also from the Hampstead Nurseries knew that we needed a place. So the Dann sisters came for a year to... That's how that came about.

Hmm. But probably they also must have lost family.

Not immediate family. The four sisters came out with their parents.

OK.

So, I - I'm almost certain other family members would have perished but they came as refugees.

They came with their family. And who else was there, apart from them?

There were volunteer helpers... who came. And from- and they stayed for quite a while. I found some of them again, later. I've got more photos and more information. Amazingly. I was... you know, that was really good. So again, I was able to get more insight into how we were, and what we did, and so on, so that was really good. 'Cause most of them didn't go to Weir Courtney, once Bulldogs Bank was closed. They went their separate ways. Gertrud Dann stayed for a bit at Weir Courtney. Sophie went back to London to work with Anna Freud.

And do you know, did they have, in terms of the day, were there play sessions? Did they try to – you were young, so –

Yes.

Did they try to teach you to read or...?

[0:37:55]

I don't remember teaching to read. I- certainly the language was the most important and also to learn to play. So we had constructive play I mean not just running around. And being outside. Even walking properly, because we hadn't done much exercise. My legs were weak so we needed regular exercise. There was a swing in the garden. We went for walks in the bluebell woods. That's the subject of my square on the memorial quilt, is the bluebells. Cause that was such a- an amazing sight that spring. That first spring. Carpets of bluebells, the flowers, the smell just was amazing. So we learnt a bit about the plants. Just enjoying what normal people would want to enjoy. So we had a lot of... And also we still had visits to the hospital, had check-ups. So we still had a few health issues. So it was just really getting us back to -being a child. So. And learning to read...and then in those days, children under five weren't expected to read. I mean now we teach our children much younger but then it that wasn't a priority. It was learning the language.

Yeah.

Eating proper food.

Yes, tell us a little bit about the food.

Yeah. Yes, I think it was quite strange having no proper food. It took us quite a while to get used to it. Small amounts to begin with. And... So, you know, we had to get used to not grab every bit that was there, to be polite, to pass food. I mean. Simple things, you know that people take for granted, we just had to learn. And our systems had to get used to eating proper food as well. And of course there was rationing, so there were very strange foods that we weren't used to.

Such as?

[0:40:10]

Well, like green vegetables. [laughs] Yes. And...I think fish. Eating fish was, I think we often, tins of sardines, you know - they weren't very popular. So, basic foods that you take for granted. I remember I didn't have a boiled egg until after I was adopted. A whole egg! You know, otherwise it was powdered eggs. Reconstituted sort of orange juice. Do you know

that horrible orange juice...? Oh! It was re-volting, you know. I don't know if it was made out from a powder or something, but it was pretty vile. The only thing we were given to build our strength was jars of malt, the kids were given at that age to supplement their diet. And the Dann sisters always kept it hidden in the cupboard very high up. But somehow we managed to go in one night and raid, raid the cupboard. In the morning we were all sticky and [laughing] covered in this stuff. But one of the boys lifted me up because I was the smallest so I could get it down – for everyone. So we all had some.

And you liked it?

Yes, it was nice and sweet. I mean it was like - almost like golden syrup. So, you know, that was a treat.

But it sounds that none of you were so close to the Dann sisters. They were more sort of authoritative, or...?

Yes, yes. Definitely. And even when we went to Weir Courtney where Alice Goldberger was in charge, she always insisted she wasn't to be called 'Mother'. She was – she was in charge looking after us, but not a mother figure. She...she deliberately did that...

[0:42:12]

Not to...develop...

Yes. Yes, which is a shame really because some of the children stayed there till they were sixteen, so they didn't have this mother figure. But there was- the one who was, in a way the kindest, was the cook at Weir Courtney. And, because I couldn't go to school with the, some of the older children, I was sort of around during the day. So I used to creep down to the kitchen. Nice and warm. And she was always very welcoming. And she always told me I was allowed to pick the rhubarb in the kitchen garden. Half of it didn't make it to the table cause I really enjoyed eating the rhubarb. [laughs] It was raw, but I was allowed to do things to so-called 'help' in the kitchen.

What was her name, the cook?

Sophie. It was another Sophie. Sophie Vutch, I think her name was.

So by the time you got to Courtney...

Weir Courtney.

How old were you?

It was only a year for me, so I was four.

So you were still very, very young.

Mnn. Yeah. But I went back to Weir Courtney many years later. Again through- a German film crew came and wanted to do a film called *The Children of Bulldogs Bank*, which is shown in German schools I think. And.... They- they actually asked the owner of Weir Courtney whether they could film there. And they did. And I said, "Oh, the kitchen's moved! It was downstairs." They were absolutely amazed because they hadn't known. And when they found out they went down into the basement and they did – they found the old kitchen.

So you had clear memories?

So I had clear memories of the kitchen. Nobody else had remembered... the kitchen was downstairs. So, so we were able to film at Weir Courtney and Bulldogs Bank and... So that was – that was quite an experience. A really nice young film company. I'm still in touch with one of the members of the film crew.

[0:44:21]

And how many of the children did participate?

No, it was just Jackie and the one other guy in America. The one who wetted his bed a lot. They found him. The others didn't, either, well one was, had died by then and one of the girls

was in a mental home. And the other one wasn't interested, so it was just the three of us in the end.

And when was that film made?

I don't know, I have a copy of the film here so maybe it's got a date on it, but... Must have been about twenty-five years ago, something like that.

Mnn. Just to come back to Bulldogs Bank. Is there anything else which we need to mention? So there was nobody else you remember in terms of building up a relationship, or...?

No, because we weren't interested in building a relationship with the adults. Though I did find – though I did find some of the other volunteers later, you know, they didn't feature in our life. Maybe they were a bit put out why we didn't form a relationship. But we- It wasn't in our psyche, you know. Adults came and went, and they brought us whatever we needed and that was it. So we didn't- It didn't even enter our heads to form a relationship. We had each other. We didn't need them...

There was also an issue of trust, I would assume.

Yes. Yes. Also.

Adults were also to be mistrusted in some ways.

Yes. Yes. Yes! And ... we didn't need them. We really didn't need them. You know. We only needed them to provide food. That was their function.

Yeah. Because you didn't have that attachment.

No.

[0:46:26]

And were you- do you remember when you went away from Bulldogs Bank, were you sad or was the whole group - did the whole group go to...?

The whole group went. Yes. The whole group. I think the transition was more, difficult because the older ones had to move their dormitories. You know, they had to accommodate us. And they were already going to school and we weren't, yet. And so while they were at school we were playing with their toys and... So there was a little bit of friction. But, one or two were particularly nice to me, of the older children. And or maybe to the others we well. But most of them really weren't interested. And ...we were, we were given little plots of land to grow flowers or whatever we wanted to grow and mine was always trodden on by all the others because it was one the way to the swimming pool or whatever. But... So, it was- it was strange. And I think in a bigger group, and again, it wasn't managed you know, in any way. We were, it was assumed we'd just turn up. Here's your bed; here's – here's some food. Here's some toys; get on with it. No one told us we were moving. You know, one day we were just taken by car to Weir Courtney.

How far was Weir Courtney from Bulldogs Bank?

Not far, it was five miles. You know, in... very, very close, really. Maybe ten miles, I don't know, but a short car journey.

But a big transition because you were by yourself and then...

Yes! Yes, and then we were in a much larger group, so it was hard to integrate into the bigger group.

And just to come back to- There were six children. And if you could give us the names again, and maybe by now, what were their backgrounds – the six children?

Well we were all in Theresienstadt.

Yes.

... for the whole period that we were in. I saw a list of people on my train from Berlin. And one of them actually came on my train. And... so he was from Berlin. Jackie was obviously from Austria. And...

So Jackie Young is one.

Jackie Young, yes.

Who was on your transport?

[0:49:08]

That was Berli...Lazarus. He was from Berlin. There was Gadi... I don't know what his other name was, Gadi. He was...I think he was from Germany as well. There was... Judith Singer. I think she was from Germany. ...The one who's in a mental home, I'm not sure. Leah, her name was Leah, but I'm not sure where she was from. But I would imagine she was either Czech or German, because in our group there weren't any- the Dutch children were kept separately.

Right.

And the other nationalities tended to be separate.

And did gender play a role at all? In the six, were you closer to the girls or...?

No, in fact I was probably closer to the- to the boys. So no, I would say it didn't really ...yeah. So but I think you know you're born with that sort of- I probably get on better with boys than girls anyway, or tend to be closer. Things I like to do, you know, differently.

Yeah. So in Weir Courtney what other things did you like to do? You said you had a little patch of land.

Yes. Yes, there was a very nice swing. ...And I know that some of the boys, it backed on to the Lingfield Racecourse, and some of the boys liked to go down there and watch the horses

thunder past...when it was race day. I liked being outdoors. I just remember being out in the garden a lot and enjoying the, you know, the garden in many different ways. And, yeah. And I remember once I was, it was- there was a thunder storm. And I hid under the big, there was big tree which I hid under. And one of the other boys, one of the older boys came to find me and brought me back inside. We- but neither of us could reach the latch to get into the back gate - through the back gate to get back home. So again he had to lift me up and I was able to undo it. And so between us we managed to get back after a thunderstorm. Of course it was then I realised that hiding under a tree was probably the worst thing I could have done, but...at that time. So, I mean I was only four.

And how many children were there in total, when you...? Do you know?

I think we were about twenty-five, something like that. Yes, because the older children were sent to other places. And dispersed to various different hostels and...

So was it a place where people sort of started leaving?

[0:52:24]

No, generally not- This was not. No. There were a couple of- No, people started arriving. Some children that had been in hiding, or from other camps had found their way. Cause they were the right sort of age. There was a couple of Italian girls... that made their way to Weir Courtney. And after a year or so their birth mother actually found them, and took them back to Italy. So they were always looking to see whether there was any family. You know, again, the Red Cross people were all the time making lists of children that survived and, you know, so that people could check it out. So they left. And some children that had been in hiding also arrived. But they had to be within that very small parameter of age that was suitable. They weren't adopted generally, because they felt that this wasn't suitable, that we weren't suitable for adoption. And it was only the six of us that they even thought about it. Because in those days only babies were adopted. So they didn't even try with the older ones.

I see, it wasn't an aim with the older ones? No.

No, the aim was that they should stay, be looked after... Learn a trade or profession, and you know, and so on.

But the aim for the six of you?

Eventually they decided that we were able to be put up for adoption. Again, without any preparation or anything. So... I think the boy that wet his bed, Berli, he... he eventually found an aunt that had remarried in America and he went to live with them. But the step-dad didn't, wasn't happy with that. So he had a pretty- not a very great time with that. And so...

But stayed in America?

Yes, he stayed in America. So the six of us were tried out at weekends, and always to be returned, rejected, on Monday. Until eventually you know, they found, they found a match.

So did people come in and look at you?

They'd come and look, and take us away for the weekend. Had a- went to their place, homes to, for the weekend, just to, you know, see what it was like. So, yeah we had a great, as far as we were concerned we had a great time but we didn't know what was going on so, we came back on Monday and you know. Just had a weekend away.

Nobody said why?

[0:55:14]

Nope, nobody said anything. No. And they had a system of having aunts and uncles there, which means that people who took a particular interest in a child, could take them out for the day, get them some sweets on their birthday. You know, little treats. You know, in the community. And the people that eventually adopted me, actually had one of the boys as their- they were the uncle and aunt of this little boy, who also had red hair, funnily enough. And he was - I'm not sure - he didn't forgive me until near the end of his life that they chose me rather than him. They felt that I had sort of somehow weaseled my way into his- what should

have happened to him. Which was a bit uncomfortable because I knew that I, that he was unhappy about it. But there was nothing that I could do about it! It wasn't anything to do...

But were they local? You said they were the uncle...? How come they were...?

Well, people from the community... just generally...

From the community where? In London?

In London or anywhere. You know, anywhere. They sort of took one child under their wing, just to...you know, just to be nice. You know. They felt it was the nice thing to do to give them a birthday present. You know, and take them out for the day.

So who organised that?

I don't know! Presumably the Community organised it. And I know that some young people- There was a group of young London ...teenagers, I suppose, late teens, who came to visit and sort of did some social work with us, if you like, to help...take an interest.

I see so there was an involvement.

There was an involvement from the Community. And in fact, West London Synagogue who financed Weir Courtney, they got money to re-decorate the synagogue after the war. And they - they didn't do that. They put the money towards trying to put money towards Weir Courtney - the running of it. Paying the salaries and so on. And every year they had a bazaar - West London - to pay, to help pay. So the Community were very involved. Especially the West London Synagogue. But. And so they organised people to come and visit, come and help out or just to - to take kids out for the day, out for tea or... that sort of thing.

So what happened to you?

Yes. I don't remember ever having an auntie and uncle. All I remember is that they were this boy's aunty and uncle, and that you know, I was- That one day they decided to take me home with them.

OK, and no preparation?

No, no preparation, at all. And I thought I was going for the weekend like... you know, I'd been to with other people.

[0:58:23]

And then? What do you remember?

And then I just stayed. [laughs ironically] Well I just stayed.

What was that like? A bit of a shock?

Well it was. And then when they took me back, they changed my name to 'Joanna'. And they didn't want me to have anything... about the past. I wasn't allowed to keep up with the other children. Lose touch with them completely. As far as they were concerned I had no life before coming to them. And they always pretended I was their natural daughter. You know. Imagine it, you know, I was five. I was tiny with red curly hair. My adoptive parents were both six foot... very dark and you know, I wasn't a baby. So it was really weird. So I had to be their daughter, to pretend... Or you know, at school I wasn't allowed to talk about being adopted, or being born in Germany. A lot of anti-Jewish feeling, so even being Jewish was an issue. So another thing I had to hide.

Where did they live? Where did they...?

Just across the road here, in...in...the block opposite. What's it called? The one just opposite.

So, Swiss Cottage?

Yes. Swiss Cottage, yes. Yes. [laughs ironically]

But how could they manage to say you were their daughter when you were five?

Yes. Well they did! Everybody played along with it. Everybody. All the family. They weren't allowed to talk about it. I was introduced as their daughter, and I had to like the things that they did, and be what they were, just to be their daughter. And I - I suppose I was equally determined to keep my identity... as much as I could.

Yes, but you knew that wasn't the case...

Yes! Yes, I mean at five you know that they weren't my, my, my parents. So... and I remembered the - that I was with six children. That I'd been in another house, and...so...yeah.

[1:00:37]

Because that's not true for everyone. Like for example Jackie who couldn't remember that.

No. He doesn't remember much. I was really surprised.

No, but it's a quite different situation.

But some people don't. Some people don't. Some people have better memories than others.

So what did it feel like for you that you had to change your name, for example?

Well you know, I was totally confused! And I was angry, as well. Because you know in a way they took away my identity. That was... And so I was quite determined I wasn't going to forget about it. And so I had a sort of double secret. I had a secret- A double life, if you like.

What was your – the name - you mentioned at the beginning? What was your real name?

Bela. Bela, yes.

So that's quite different Bela to Joanna.

Yes. Yes, and I didn't think Joanna was a very exciting name. And I thought maybe it was a game. Maybe I could – you know - choose a name. You know, but clearly they had decided before I, they brought me back to London. This is how they were going to deal with it.

And tell us a little bit about their background, and...what made them want to adopt?

[1:01:53]

I don't know, I don't think they did really actually want to adopt me. I mean he certainly never did. You know, I knew that. It was quite clear. I don't know, they were on the Committee you know, organising the, you know, the finances. And... maybe they felt that because they didn't have any children and these children needed homes that they felt an obligation. They could afford it. They could do it and...And why not? I really think it was on that, because they never really changed their - their lifestyle to accommodate me – at all. So it was...

What was their lifestyle?

Yes. Well, very social... going out, you know, being... or going to a lot of parties and entertainment and...no doubt to the theatre a lot. Going abroad, travelling. You know, living a full life of an un- a couple with no - no children who had the wherewithal to enjoy everything. And you know, they had a car. They had all the luxuries in life, and they enjoyed it!

And who was there to look after you?

Yes...yes. Well, to begin with they, they had a - I suppose you would call them an au pair now. You know. So I learnt French, actually I became quite fluent in French quite quick, quite early on. But you know it was, it was always a bit of an issue. So you know, I was brought out when they had friends, 'This is our little girl', you know, nice, pretty clothes, ribbon in the hair. And as soon as they'd gone, back into the room, back into the nursery with my toys. It wasn't really a nursery, it was my room where I was sleeping and everything so... My adoptive father had his clothes in the wardrobes in that room and the ironing was done in the room. It was sort of... It was a general all-purpose room.

[1:04:09]

So it must have felt, not easy.

It wasn't easy because I was with other children, and now I was an only child. And, you know, as soon as I wanted to do anything they sort of said, "Oh, go and find something to do." And one thing I remember particularly, is that they used to take me to the park quite often. Into Regents Park. They made me go up to every single dog in the park, to... so that I would lose my fear of dogs. Because the Alsatian dogs in the camp weren't exactly friendly. So, you know and eventually I did lose my fear of dogs but that was really quite difficult. It was before the idea of aversion therapy but they'd obviously thought it was a good idea. But... Yeah, it worked in the end. But I'm still a bit nervous of Alsatisans, but probably a good idea. But enough that I had a dog when my children were small. So you know, got over that.

But you were not in touch with the... At that point you were not allowed to be in touch with the other children...?

No. No! It was only relatively recently, you know, when Sarah Moskowitz wrote the book that- and found us, that I was able to find.

And do you know, were they in touch? I mean...

No.

...the process of adoption: were they in touch?

No.

How was it monitored? Or...?

No, not at all.

It wasn't monitored. I mean they had extraordinary...

Not at all. Not at all. And none of us knew where each other was. We lost touch completely, and... eventually I found a letter... that Alice Goldberg had written to my adoptive parents offering some support and help. And they flatly refused. You know, they, they said they could handle it. They knew it all, and... They were the sort of people that wouldn't have accepted help, you know.

[1:06:18]

So tell us, Alice Goldberg was - who?

She was the, the person in charge of Weir Courtney, and then subsequently Lingfield House.

Yeah, but she was here. She was based in London – afterwards?

Yes, well once Lingfield House was closed down, everybody - by the time everyone turned sixteen then the children were in hostels, apprenticed, you know had- went to college, you know at sixteen they were considered they were... Yes, they found her a flat, I think in West Hampstead. I'm not sure whether that was the first place she went to, but certainly she was there. And one of the, one of the children actually went to live with her.

Right. Because she's the one you said wouldn't allow them to call her 'Mum'.

Yes, that's right.

So she stayed the longest with the...?

This particular girl. Not one of my group, but...

Yeah. So was there support for the parents, your parents or...?

Well they were offered it, but they didn't want. And I think that was pretty true of most of the people that adopted children.

So what happened to the boy who thinks he should have been adopted by...?

Well he wasn't, he wasn't adopted. He stayed until he was sixteen, and he died of a heart attack... actually not long after the fiftieth anniversary of... you know, when he came to England we had a big party. And he died very shortly after that.

[1:08:00]

And what - what school? Where did you go? How did your school life develop?

Right. Well, you know, I was privately educated, first of all locally here. And then they were quite astonished that I'd passed my exams to St Pauls which was - you know - quite difficult. But gradually as time went on I was having more and more issues living at home. And I decided I wanted to go to boarding school. I needed some space. And so they arranged for me to go to Benenden... to board there. But school life, you know, it was difficult. There were... very few Jewish girls. Very privileged backgrounds. You know, when you considered my- where I'd come from, you know, I was a fish out of water, really. So I left at sixteen and spent time in Paris. They told me I'd never manage to do A-Levels or a degree level or anything like that. They said, "You're wasting your money." They arranged an exchange visit to Paris which I spent most of my time playing tennis and going around with other non-French students. And ...but eventually I got a degree and a Masters, you know, much later. But you know I had emotional issues I needed to sort out and that was- At that point I couldn't put my mind to study.

No, and also you... So they were willing to send you to private school...

Yes.

...in that way.

Yes. Yes. Yes, well they were disappointed I wasn't doing better at school, but...

What were their aspirations for you, what did they...?

Oh, I was going to be a diplomatic wife or a, marry somebody in the minor aristocracy I expect. [laughs] Always as a wife, not as a- You know, not doing anything.

But they were Jewish?

[1:10:08]

They were Jewish, yes.

And what did they- Were they involved at all in the Jewish life? Did they go to synagogue?

No. No, they didn't go to synagogue even on the High Holy days. Didn't have Friday night...didn't... But they were very involved in the Jewish Community in a cultural sense. They did a lot of did welfare, you know, work within the Community supporting charities and so on.

And the Jewish Museum.

Jewish Museum, yes. My father, before the war actually set up the Jewish Museum with a friend. And... which was a very, a great success. And he was very proud of. And he was their President for a long time... until his nephew took over, and now it's somebody else.

Right.

So they were very involved with that. Very involved with cultural and artistic life and collectors and...

Yeah.

But you know, they lived a very- They were always entertaining. They were always, always entertaining. Dinner parties and everything else. But they were the sort of people even as a daughter I had to make an appointment to go and – go and see them.

It was busy. I mean, they were busy.

Yes, but you couldn't just drop in for a coffee in the morning, or go and have a chat saying "I want to- Can I come round?" There was always, never time for that. And we were invited to dinner perhaps three times a year, you know, when we made up the numbers or something.

Yeah. So not an easy situation at all?

No. No it wasn't.

And did you have any other support growing up? Friends, or...could you bond with other...?

It was difficult because I wasn't allowed to talk about my past, and so it was difficult. I mean I had friends but not very close friends. But I did have friends. And... But obviously when I married, it was, I had a very successful partnership. And- which was good. And, and I had my own family, which was brilliant. And I expected that his family would support me, but they didn't. They were pretty useless as a family as well, which was a great disappointment because he had daugh- a ...sister and a brother and I thought, "Oh, brilliant!" But they didn't want to know. So... But we managed. We were our own family. And you know, we had a good time.

[1:12:53]

So was there nobody when you grew up? So there was nobody you told your story?

No, because even though I tried, no, I mean, even if I tried they would always say, "Don't be stupid." You know. Yeah, I did try... but always... And, and I think- I don't know whether they didn't believe me or whether they were just too embarrassed. You know when something bad happens to somebody, always the response was, "Oh. You're so..." You know, don't talk about it. You know. It's not like you know... totally closed door. Couldn't – couldn't do it.

Couldn't go there, so at what point?

Even his parents, even my husband's parents, weren't interested. Didn't want to know.

So at what point could you share your story with somebody? When?

Well I told my husband that I was adopted and it was funny because somebody had obviously told him that if you want to marry a girl you look at their mother because that's what she's going to turn out like. [laughs] And so he was quite relieved about that. [laughs] But obviously before we married I knew I had to tell him. And... So it really wasn't a lot until 'Schindler's List' came out that people really started to listen, to want to hear. So many people say, "Well, why didn't you talk about it?" And it wasn't that – most survivors – it wasn't that they didn't want to speak; it was that nobody wanted to hear.

Yeah.

I don't think people understood this. They thought we didn't. And I think that was important. So when 'Schindler's List' came out, people started to talk. People then wanted to, started to hear. You know the trial in Israel. The- Spielberg coming in, with the- wanting to record the survivors. You know, gradually, gradually it started to happen that people wanted to hear them.

The schools program started. ...But it's always very strange when I'm with friends who haven't had a similar background to me. Sometimes the conversation will start, "Well, we were evacuated to this place and we were evacuated to that place..." and I'm sort of keeping absolutely quiet...you know? And sometimes people don't ask, and other times they do. And it's a bit of a, a showstopper, isn't it? And you sort of feel, do you really want to put a damper on the evening? You know?

So you have to navigate this.

[1:15:27]

Yes. Yeah.

And sometimes share and sometimes probably not.

Yes. Yeah. That's right.

And was it something you talked to your children about or...?

I did, but not until they were in their teens. There was a - a long documentary on BBC – it must have been in the 80s – you know with actual war footage. And I sat them in front of it, 'cause I thought well, they really ought to know. It must have been in the late 70s, I think. And they didn't really understand why, but I said, "This is important; you need to know." And then after that I then told them that my family were involved and – you know - they were very shocked and surprised and upset to a certain extent but... I felt that they needed to know. And then, when my adopted parents found out I had told them, they were absolutely furious. And they said it – you know- had ruined their relationship with their grandchildren. Which was rubbish. They didn't have any relationship with them, but they were really cross.

So even then, again...

Always! Till the day they died, he- they wouldn't. Yeah. And I think in my father's obituary they mentioned that I'd been adopted. And my mother was furious. Absolutely furious. "Who told them that?" "Who? They shouldn't have put it in!" You know.

I guess it was the norm, or they...

They just couldn't accept that I wasn't their – then, their daughter.

But even explaining it to the grandchildren; they didn't want the grandchildren to know.

Yes. Yes. Didn't want them to know. But it's their birth-right; they're entitled to know. And I've introduced them to my birth family now as well.

And are they interested?

To a certain extent. Yes, I think so. I mean they're busy with their careers and... bringing up their families but yes, they are. And... when I talked to them about the Second Generation Project, amazingly they were actually interested. I expected them to say, "Oh, no, it's not for

us.” But... So- And they’ve heard me now speak at a school. I found schools near where they live, and they were interested to hear me speak. And I think they now- Yeah they are interested. Mnn.

You said before that the reason survivors didn’t speak was because- that people didn’t want to listen. But I – I also assume that for child survivors it’s even more difficult, because...

[1:18:05]

Yes. What do you know? You didn’t suffer. What do you know? You don’t remember. You’re not really a survivor.

And what’s there to tell? I mean, it’s beyond memory in certain...

Yes. Yes. In some ways. And I even had older survivors tell me I’m not a survivor and... some that even refused to shake my hand once. You know.

On grounds of...?

On grounds that I wasn’t a survivor, but also that, “Oh, you must be a convert; you don’t look Jewish.” Yeah. And so, “you’re not really a Jew and you’re not really a survivor”. Which of course you know, [with emotion] it’s quite hurtful.

Very hurtful. And did it come- I mean you said when you finished school you were not- you had issues. What issues did you have? Or what...?

Well, I suppose normal teenage- I mean teenage issues anyway. But I needed to find out who I was. You know, what I was about. I was very uncomfortable living at home... with my adoptive parents and wanted to be independent. I suppose I was older in, in, not in years but older than my peers; more aware of what was going on. More mature. And I really just wanted to get on with the rest of my life, which, I had to bide my time while I was a child. But as soon as I was able to have the independence, I managed to find myself little bedsit in London. Got myself a job with just enough to pay for that and a... a tin of baked beans [laughs] to eat.

And did your parents support you or did you...?

No. I supported myself. I didn't ask them to - to do it. I wanted to do it myself. I didn't even give them the address. I said, "Look I will phone you when I'm ready." They weren't happy but you know, they couldn't say anything. So, that was the start. Things got better afterwards but not much. But it did; it did eventually. Things got better. They didn't approve of my husband. He wasn't from the right background. Family didn't have money; they didn't have status. You know, he was- he was still studying. And you know, he was twenty-seven but still, he was- he'd had to do National Service and had to get back – you know- afterwards to a new career. So things were... So, but we - we helped– you know - we backed up each other and we struggled a bit financially, but we ... We made a go of it in the end.

And how did you support yourself when you were sixteen? What could you do?

[1:21:08]

Well, I had a year in Paris. They – they had an exchange with another girl from Paris. So my mother's family originally– my adoptive mother's family - were originally from France. So they had- they had relatives who knew a family who had a... So they arranged that. So. And when I was seventeen, I went to secretarial college. I went to a cooking ...course. Was determined I would be able to cook 'cause she couldn't even open a milk bottle. 'Decided that was – I needed to learn. So by the time- By then I was eighteen, and I got myself a secretarial job. Anything, just to get a job. At that time, it was very well paid. I mean, relatively. I think it was only about four pound a week or whatever but it was enough to pay my rent and a bit of food. So... from there, I didn't go back.

And at what point- when did you meet your husband?

I was twenty when I met him... at a Jewish youth group. And you know, so, I was twenty at that point. We married and I was twenty-one. We married in 1964. My first- my son was born in 1965. My second, a daughter, was born in 1966. The younger one in 1967. And I thought by the time I was thirty all the children were at school, which was brilliant. I could then ...have some life.

And where did you live at that point?

We lived Middlesex, sort of around sort of Northwood, Pinner area. So, which was semi-Jewish. It wasn't as Jewish as it is now. But you know, there were Jewish community around. They had good schools, and we were able to get a house with a garden and so on, so...

And then you decided to go back to study or...?

[1:23:17]

Yes, I think... Well first of all I had to put my husband through studying because he wanted to go into computing; he felt that was the future. So he went on a computer course and eventually, you know when he was more established, he... the children were grown up. My husband was thinking about starting his own business as a consultant. I thought it would be useful to have some paper - something on paper to say that I was, I could manage his business for him. So, that's what I went to college – went to the university to get a degree in business studies. Which, in the end I passed with flying colours. They said I should have taken an MBA at the time but I wasn't confident enough even to apply for the course.

So did you work with him?

I did work with him and that's when we rented out this room at CBF. That's how I got involved with them. Central British Fund. And talking to the other employees in the – in the building, they said, "Oh, did you know that we have all the files of all the children that came over? Would you like to see it?" So I said, hmm, yeah, that sounded good. When they got there, it was empty. They told me my adoptive parents had burnt... the contents of the file. They didn't want any record of what had happened. But they knew about me. They knew, you know, they knew what. So - so that was a bit of a blow. But that was when they helped me to find my mother's family.

And when was that Joanna?

Gosh... It must have been- It must have been in the 80s. 1980s... something like that.

And was that the first time you tried to find out or...?

...Yes, I suppose it was. Yes. Yes. Well as I said my husband led the, led the – the search.

How come? Why did he think it was important?

Well he just- he just felt it was. I don't quite know why. He said, "You know you need to know who you are and where you come from." And... he was a very empathetic sort of man so he probably thought it would be a good idea. So he started the ball rolling.

And you, do you feel – as you had three children – do you feel your experience affected your parenting? When you saw the children that age did you feel...?

Oh, very much so. It affected my parenting hugely because I never even held a baby before I had my own. And so I thought, "What am I going to do with this baby..." [laughs], "taking him home?" And... And I think one of the best advice my husband ever gave me was he said, "You've got to do what you think is right." He said, "Put away the books. Don't worry about what other people tell you. Just go by your instinct." And he was right! You know. And I suppose the biggest compliment a mother can have is if your daughters come and say, "When I have children I'm going to bring them up like you brought me up." Yeah. That was brilliant.

So you did it yourself. You listened to yourself.

Did it myself. Listened to myself. What I... And I mean I knew all the things that you shouldn't do, [laughs] cause that's what happened. But... Yeah, and also that you know I told them "It's never equal. You do it equal but different." You know because each child is different with different needs. So you can't say, "Well, I had two sweets and therefore I have to have two sweets." So, well, they might want chocolates. So you treat them equally but not the same, if you see what I mean.

Yeah.

[1:27:19]

And they're all very different. All going on, doing what they want which is brilliant. They're all independent. All doing useful – you know, useful members of society. And married with kids of their own. It's brilliant. What else can a mother want?

And you said they– they didn't have close contact to your adoptive parents, or...?

No, no, they dreaded the call. The summons. [laughs] When it came. You know, every time they'd go they got a little present, but... that was about it, you know. And... they were just. They hated going.

And did you keep in touch with your parents, or how did that develop?

Yes, I did. I did, to a certain extent. But as I say, we were summoned about two or three times a year. So you know, it didn't really impinge on our life that much. So we, we just got on with, with the house. And they would contact us occasionally and say "It's about time you." But they wouldn't come to me. They felt that my house wasn't clean enough, wasn't good enough, wasn't – I don't know - whatever. Always it was going to them, so... Which, when the children were small, was quite an issue.

And in later age, in older age did you take care of them? I mean...?

Well actually they were in pretty good health till the last year of their life. But they could afford to have ...servants and ...you know, they didn't need me to do anything. But later on, she would- she would ask me to go and do her shopping for me; it would have to be from Marks. But it wasn't,- It couldn't have been the Marks that's convenient for me; it had to be the one near them. And she would- She used to look at the receipt to make sure I hadn't cheated. And I thought, you know, I had to go down to Chelsea which is impossible to park, impossible to get to across London, to go and get the things that she wanted from the list. Which I could have gone out to Temple Fortune much more easily, or wherever I was. But no, it had to be. So, you know. So I was- And occasionally she would ask me to go out and help her to walk, cause she needed help to walk out, so... But really, until the last year of their life they were pretty much independent. And...You know.

And did you ever manage to talk about your adoption with them?

[1:29:54]

No, nope. Nope. Never. And in fact, I got my husband to ask them once and they wouldn't even talk to him about it. It was a total taboo – total taboo subject. Yeah. Mnn.

And now you have your own grandchildren.

Yes.

And do you talk to them about your experiences?

A little bit. But usually only if they ask, because I didn't... You know whatever you do is wrong. You know you either don't say anything and then, "Grandma why didn't you tell me? Why don't you talk?" Or you talk about incessantly and people say, "After all I've been through how can you do this to me?" And, "How can you use it all the time?" So I try and tread a middle path, but it's difficult. But a couple of them heard me speak in their school, which is interesting. Especially my ...my older granddaughter is actually living with me at the moment. She is the one that's is most interested. But you know, they, they, they now know. So... Yes, to an extent they're interested.

But you do speak in schools?

Yeah.

When did you- can you tell us a little bit about that? When it started and...?

Oh, it started a long time ago. As soon as the Holocaust became a topic on the National Curriculum, there was an advert in the JC asking for survivors to speak. You know, anybody willing to speak. And I thought well, I'd done some public speaking and I wasn't afraid to do it. And I thought well, you know, I have to offer. I didn't know whether they'd want me but I thought, well, I'll offer. And that's when I started. I felt an obligation because some of the

survivors already by then were too old, or were too frail or... didn't have the confidence to speak. It started off with only a few survivors doing it. And gradually you know, more and more came forward. So it's an obligation.

And what is it when you give the talks, what is important for you to tell, you know, of your story? What do you feel?

[1:32:27]

What's important? Well I think – I think it's this, I suppose feeling that everybody knew what was going on, and yet it wasn't anything to do with them, somehow. You know that's important, that we're all responsible for each other. And the understanding that ...by learning about it, by seeing how the absolutely unimaginable... horrors that happened...that you know, we, we learn how it was possible. How it was enabled, and you know the steps that were taken. We can stop, that it's possible. Because people did resist. And mostly nothing actually bad happened to those people that resisted. I mean, think about all the people the citizens of Naples refused to give the names, and nothing bad happened to them, and...and Jews were not rounded up. I mean it was – there's all this myth, "Oh, well, they were too scared" or they were... You know, all the excuses. They didn't know what was going on. I said, it's a load of rubbish, you know? I said, people made that decision... that they weren't going to you know, that. And in a way gave the Nazis permission to do it. Because nobody in the...you know, the Évian Conference - countries refused to open their borders. Some, not even one, or reduced numbers. I said, the Nazis knew nobody would stand up and stand up to them. And I gave them permission to carry out what they did. So I think all these things are things that youngsters need to think about.

So it's about bystanders... and?

[1:34:20]

I don't think there were bystanders. I think there were people that made the decision that they weren't going to...they weren't going to react to what they saw.

Yes.

And actually most people actually did cooperate. That it wasn't just... So this- I think this division. I don't like that division. Like, people are now dividing different camps. I said, "What's the point? Everyone died." I mean, you know, "Oh, you were in the best camp." I said, "Well one in four people actually died in the camp. Everybody else was deported to Auschwitz. I mean, what's best about it?" You know. People died of starvation. You know, thousands of people died there of starvation and - and deprivation. I mean. "Why do you say it's not a death camp?" I mean, it's crazy, these divisions! Why do people want to do this? It's this layering of - of suffering?

The hierarchy of suffering, yeah.

You know- the hierarchy. And I think it goes beyond just the individual, but you know to the camps, to the hierarchy of people who helped, or didn't help. All this categorising I think is dangerous, because without the active cooperation... you know, they couldn't have done this.

Yeah.

And people knew what was going on and they chose, they chose not to do something. It wasn't... well, you know, yeah?

So did you see yourself, when you said you saw that. Did you actually always see yourself as a survivor?

[1:35:56]

Yes, absolutely! Always did! But nobody wanted to acknowledge that, which is quite difficult. And I suppose when the child survivor group got going, that gave very good support. You know, because there were other people in the same situation. Then we were able to support each other and... the recognition. Even the 45 Aid Society didn't want to know. They - they actually invited the Second Generation, before they actually acknowledged the child survivors.

That's very interesting.

You know, so we didn't- They didn't want to know us at all. You know, "You're not real survivors."

So they held meetings where you were not invited? You were not seen as a part of the survivor's group.

Yeah.

So that's why I mean it's quite interesting that given your upbringing, and the lack of talking about it, that you still saw yourself as a survivor?

Yes, well – you know - as I say I was- I was quite mature for my age. And also very stubborn... [laughs] And so you know I stuck to, I stuck to it. I thought, no, this is – you know – this is who I am.

And how do you think did your experiences affect your life?

I think it's affected it enormously. I mean first of all my understanding of people who are in, in a bad place. I was also a Magistrate for many years. And did a lot of work in the Youth Court as well. And I think my understanding of where they come from is - is important. And people who've watched me, you know, think you know, I have compassion, if you like, for people. But also I get people who say, "Well, I had a terrible upbringing" as an excuse... get short shrift from me. [laughs] But I think it has affected my life. In some ways in a good way, in other ways... I find it quite hard to empathise with people who... phone up and say they've had a terrible tragedy. And you know in tears and I think oh my God, somebody's died- you know. And they say they've just broken a tea cup that belonged to their grandmother. And I have to pinch myself and say, yes, to them it's really, it's a big thing in their life. But I find sometimes it's quite hard to put an arm around somebody, you know, to a friend and say, "I'm sorry. This is tough." My husband was very good at that, and he taught me a lot you know... to be softer in my approach, at times. So that was good.

No, because the question obviously is that with the lack of attachment in the early years and then in the later years as well, you know that must have been difficult to form attachments.

[1:39:19]

Yes, I suppose it was, but I think my husband knew, knew the limitations. And he was- He was fantastic and he knew that at times I needed to have some space to myself... which he always gave me. But you know, he was fantastic, you know, a really good partner.

Because you didn't tell us- You had another business, you know you were saying before: the double bass...

Oh yes, well I sort of fell into that in a way. You know, I was doing sort of a lot of temporary jobs because in those days I had no childcare provision. I didn't have anyone I could leave the children with. So, I could only do sort of small jobs just to... earn a bit of extra money. And... my younger daughter is very musical. And she had a friend who was also very musical at school. And we- I got very friendly with her parents, this friend's parents, an American couple. And eventually he told me, he was a world-famous double bass player. And he said that he had so many jobs that he was playing so much, that he had a side line of buying and selling double basses, and would I manage his business? I thought that sounded great. I had no experience of instruments really and so on but I thought, well, I'll give it a go. My husband was already ill by that time. He was due for a heart by-pass operation. And so I thought well it was good, cause it was local and being a friend, I could work in my own time to a certain extent. So I accepted and - and after a while his marriage broke down. And he said, look he can't cope with the business anymore; would I buy it from him? So I did! And that's - that's the story of how I got involved with that.

For how many years were you running it?

A few years. Again, my husband got to the stage even after the second by-pass operation, that I - you know- couldn't really travel and run the business. So I sold the business to a bass player. And so that was the end of that.

And when did you become a Magistrate?

Oh, yes. Years ago. I was a Magistrate for thirty years; thirty-three years I was a Magistrate. So I was in my thirties. It was quite early on. It was something I felt I was interested in, that I could do.

What motivated you to do that?

[1:42:04]

Well, I suppose... my husband was really against me going to work. He was quite old-fashioned in that way. You know, women worked at home, looking after the house, having the dinner ready, the slippers by the... you know. And so on. And I thought this is driving me crazy. The kids were going to school, so I had my days free. And I thought, well if I can't work, I've got to do something. So, so... And I thought this was something that would be interesting. So I applied, and amazingly I was accepted. And so... and I did it till I was retired when I was seventy. You have to retire when you get to seventy. But I was ready; it was enough. But I did enjoy...

Did you enjoy...?

Yeah, I found it very interesting! A lot of training's involved. You meet lots of interesting people. And... I was sitting at Uxbridge which has all the Heathrow cases, which is particularly interesting. Immigration cases as well as smuggling and other things. But you know, all the usual stuff but, so that was quite interesting too.

But also you're very involved in the AJR, and the LJCC [inaudible].

Yes. Well I suppose that's the influence possibly of my adoptive parents to be involved in the Community. Which, which. But I didn't do that till much later... till I was already moved to London, and the children were pretty much off my hands. And... they left me a small legacy to give for charitable donations, so... which I used, you know, for mainly for the Jewish Community. So...and I feel though I'm not very religious, I don't go to synagogue much myself, but in a way it's my way of... being part of the Jewish Community.

Yeah. And the AJR. How did you get involved with the AJR?

Well, before I came to London I was in Northwood and British ORT were looking to open up some groups in the suburbs. And I heard about it and I thought- Ron Channing came to see me - cause I was already donating some money... to them – and said would I be interested in putting together a group - an ORT group in Northwood. Which I did, which worked for a bit. And that's how I got to meet Ron Channing, who then moved to AJR. And after a while, he, I must have come across him somewhere and he said “Why don't you get involved with AJR? It would be great!” So... And that's when I got involved there, it was through him, really.

And did you find again, through your involvement at the AJR that you met people with... probably the answer's 'no' – also with a similar background? I don't know...

[1:45:21]

Yes. No that wasn't- no, I don't think- it wasn't- no it wasn't really that. In fact, the...

Wait, wait....

[brief interruption]

Ok, so when I- when I got involved with the AJR it was mostly refugees. And second generation refugees, so... I didn't really have a lot in common. Though they were people- For the first time I was meeting people with a German background. Because I'd never mixed with anybody with a German background, so I was looking to see initially, whether anybody – you know - from Berlin knew my family. You know, what the situation was with Jewish families in Berlin before the war. So I was learning a little bit about the background of my - potentially of my own family. So I found that was interesting. And there was also a group... of Jewish ex-Berliners that I was interested in. But again, I didn't get any joy from that. But I was interested and I felt that the work they were doing was - was really good. I think because Ron Channing asked me if I would stand I sort of agreed. I mean I probably wouldn't have volunteered. And then I was really responsible for the child survivor group becoming part of the AJR after a while.

Which it has, now.

Which it has. So. Which I think was a good move. So, some people, you know, as always there's always two - two opinions, at least. [half laughs]

Yeah. Do you feel that – not do you feel... How... would you imagine your life if Hitler hadn't happened?

Gosh.

Do you ever imagine your life?

[1:42:04]

Yes, I do! And of course now having met my family – my real family - I can see that I have so much in common with them. And I probably would have ended up being a teacher. A lot of people think I was a teacher anyway. But... I probably would have ended up being a teacher like many of my other family are, especially the German family. Yes, I think I do, do imagine it. But it's- It's difficult to know, because, I mean I probably wouldn't have been born because my parents wouldn't have met, possibly. So... quite different.

Yes, that's what I wanted to come back to actually because you said that your parents married... They thought it was better to be married... Yeah.

Yes. Yes... To be deported together, you know, for support. Yeah.

But you don't know exactly about the circumstances...?

Of...?

Where did they meet?

Oh they met in Berlin, because my mother's first husband died in October of '41, and she married him a month later, in Berlin.

OK.

So, I suppose at that point there weren't that many Jews left in Berlin. Maybe they were introduced by a friend, I don't know. But... I'm not sure how they actually met.

Yeah.

But they may have known each other before, because my father was sent back to Berlin in 1939.

They might have been friends.

The families might have known each other.

Yeah.

I don't know. It's possible.

And you said that when you met them you felt a similarity. In which ways did you recognise, or...?

I don't know; I just felt they were empathetic. They were my people. And they felt the same about me, funnily enough. I was wondering how they would accept me. And they did, absolutely, without hesitation. I mean...

On both sides?

Both sides, totally without reservation. And I must say when I – when I heard about them I was a bit wary, because, especially on my father's side I thought, you know, is he just somebody just pretending? You know, you get so many odd people who say, "Oh, well. You're my friend.", "You're my relative", "We're cousins." And you think: Mnn? Especially 'Rosenthal', I mean it's sort of... But no, it actually, it actually was right because they have things in the end, photos that matched and photo...so, yeah! It was brilliant.

[1:50:15]

So what did it feel to then...?

It was amazing! And I mean it was only really three or four years ago I really felt that I knew who I was, because all of the last pieces of the jigsaw were actually put in. It was only about five years ago. I had the last piece. My mother's older sister. I found her family after searching for ages, trying to find her. And again, it was through the internet, you know? And... She's- A woman living in Arizona and saw, she'd seen my...I'd put – Go back a bit. In Israel, there was- One of the Dann sister's daughters, said that she had a friend who used to make websites for missing people. And she sort of felt it was her obligation, it was her 'thing', that she wanted to help people. And she put this website on about me, and to see whether anyone out there was around. And that's when it was about five years ago I got a reply to this. Actually it was her brother that found it. He was a sort of guy who trawled the internet all the time. And... And you know, after all these years of trying to find her. I knew they'd gone to America. I'd found the ship she was on going to Ellis Island but then, nothing. Absolutely nothing.

This is the older...the mother?

The older sister. Yeah. And she obviously married, because the next census you know she didn't appear so clearly she'd married in between. And... so he got in touch with his sister living in Arizona who then contacted me. And I mean they were so excited. I mean I was absolutely over the moon. And...

They were your cousins. She's not alive any more, the...?

The, no, the sister, no, no. I mean she was ten years older than my mother; she was born in about 1880 or something, you know.

So it's the children, her children?

Well her children are not alive any more. Her daughter isn't alive but it's her grandchildren. And because my mother was forty, and she was the youngest by about a mile from her sisters. I mean she was twenty years younger than her oldest sister. And she was forty when I was born, so her grandchildren are my age. You see?

Yeah.

And so I anyway eventually I went over to meet her, and I've got photos, and we have a wonderful relationship. One of my grandsons went over to stay with her last summer. And you know, internet and Facebook is brilliant.

Amazing.

And so I found all my parents' brothers and sisters. I found out what happened to each one of them. I've got family in Australia and... One of my father's brother's family moved to Melbourne. Some of them went to Buenos Aires and all over the place, anywhere, to get away. And finally I found some family in Brazil. The- All my grandparents' brothers and sisters were killed pretty much, well, all the ones I could find. But some of their children and grandchildren managed to get out somehow or another, which was amazing.

[1:53:48]

And did they know about you - that family in Arizona?

No.

How did they...do you see what I mean? How did they?

No they didn't, you see the...

How can they respond to something?

Well because on the- On the webpage that they made, it gave my mother's maiden name, and who she was, and who her parents were. And the name Schallmach was- there was, the

woman in Arizona, her grandmother's name was Schallmach. So that's where they- the connection was. You know.

And it's a slightly unusual name. So that's how they knew you.

Yes. That is unusual. Yes. Absolutely. Yeah.

Which is coincidental in a way.

Yeah. But lots of coincidences. I mean the, the brother in- My father's brother in Melbourne. Again, it was total coincidence. Isaac gave me the photo. I knew that he had a brother there. And I was looking for Rosenthals in Melbourne, but again, there's loads of them, you know. But again, just by chance a... In the Melbourne newspaper carried an obituary of- his daughter would have been my cousin. And it said the family had changed their name to 'Ross' to make it more English. So then I was able to find the grandchildren, the Ross grandchildren, from that. And... So I've got some people called Ross that are relatives in Australia. And some people in Israel called Tau... [laughs] So... You know, people change their names. Yeah.

Is there anything at this point you feel you need to find out more, or do you feel that you really...?

I've pretty much got the whole picture. The only- there's a big gap in my father's history. By the time when he was captured by the Russians in 1915. And he didn't come back to Berlin till 1939. He couldn't get back, out of Russia. At the end of the war he was in hospital and wasn't able to come back. No. They couldn't write you know, in Russia. I know he worked on a communal farm but I don't know where. He became the accountant on this farm and he married a Russian woman, I don't know who. And both she and the baby they had together died. So it would have been a great- There's a whole twenty-year also gap in his life that would be quite interesting.

[1:56:25]

But you found out what happened to your parents.

Oh, yes!

Yes.

Yes, yes. My father was- I know which train he was on to Auschwitz in begin- third of March- and he was- 1943. And my mother was recorded as having died of tuberculosis in Theresienstadt. And her mother was killed in Auschwitz as well. And all my grandparents' brothers and sisters ended up in Auschwitz. All the ones I know about, anyway. Yeah, so.... I think some- no, some of them were- died in Theresienstadt as well, but most in Auschwitz.

So you managed to find out...

Yes! Huge amounts. But it's been a big effort. And I've had some successes, and I've had some pretty disastrous failures as well. So I managed eventually to get the deportation documents. The- the train lists. The, you know, a huge amount of paperwork I managed to get. And met some interesting people along the way who've helped me. Amazing people you know that have volunteered on the internet. German policeman, who'd married into- whose cousin married into my family, sent me photos. A woman in Hawaii said that you know, that she was helping. I mean, amazing people! This Norwegian woman in Israel who did the - the website for me. And yet, you know I had a lot of opposition from some quarters as well, you know. So... it's been an interesting journey.

So how do you feel towards Germany today?

I suppose I have a mixed emotion. I mean I go to Germany to meet my family there. And going to other cities I don't have a problem with, but I still have a problem with going to Berlin. It just gives me the creeps. I can't help it; I know it's not their fault. And I think in a way, having all these memorials and the *Stolperstein-s* in a way I find it a bit overdone, you know every corner you go there's a... Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know, but I just feel...yeah, it's good to have a memorial obviously, but everywhere you go, every underground station, every street, everywhere you... I don't know. ...I can understand why some Germans might feel this is a bit overkill, you know? At least it's a good idea? I don't know.

Mnn. And how do you see yourself in terms of your own identity? How would you describe yourself?

[1:59:14]

Ah... You mean nationality? Well I'm- obviously I'm British. The Germans took away my citizenship. They did write to me when I got to retirement age. And they said that if I took German citizenship I might be able to get an old-age pension. But... it didn't appeal to me. [laughs ironically] But... And then I'm a British Jew, of German background. I suppose a lot of American people feel American and Hispanic whatever it is. I mean you just – But I think it's important to acknowledge that you are from a certain cultural background, even if you're... I mean certainly 100 percent British in every way. My son was in the Army. My, my, my children do- you know, British citizens. We're all British citizens. So... I don't feel German in any way except that, that's where my family originated. And I have obviously some cultural Germanic traits that my - my husband always liked to point out. [laughs]

Such as?

Always arriving on time everywhere. [laughs] Sometimes being a bit uncompromising, at times. You know? He's – he's helped me with that, but yeah, the instincts are there. And when I'm with German people, the love of debate and discussion. Whereas British people tend to skirt around issues you know whereas we'll go straight in and...

More direct.

More direct. Have the debate and if we don't agree, we don't agree. But you know the enjoyment of actually having a good discussion with somebody who's got a different point of view to you – I mean it's - it's very invigorating. But, that I can do with German, people of German background very happily. Everyone's happy to do that. But in other societies this isn't... they don't do that.

And what identity did you want to transmit to your children when you raised them?

[2:01:36]

Well I think until they were in their mid-teens, I mean they were British – you know, Jewish British ...children. Brought up in a suburban London, like everybody else. You know, they should have as normal a life as possible, if, whatever that is. But...

Yeah. And how do you see the - since you're involved in the AJR I have to ask you this - the legacy, of let's say an organisation like the AJR for the future. How would you like to see it?

Well, to support the education... of you know so that the Holocaust, the truth about the Holocaust isn't diluted, or changed. That...the, not only to memorialise, because I think that's sometimes overdone but at least to put some energy into... in education. You know. Into genocide education, you know. Using the Holocaust as an example, of, you know, so that we– We don't sort of say, "Well the Holocaust is the only important genocide", but that we can use those examples and say, "This is what is happening now, to other people." And yet we haven't learnt the lessons. We're still allowing these things to happen. And so this work isn't finished. We have to carry it on. And if the AJR, once we've catered for the survivors and the refugees that that money should be used to – for education purposes. You know, the best way possible. And I've always thought that the second and third generation, you know. They, I mean clearly they've had difficulties in upbringing, but so have children who've got drug addict mothers, drunken fathers. People who experience living in domestic violence situations. I mean, everybody can say, "Oh, I had a terrible childhood." And I'm not sure that they need special consideration because they were children of survivors. And I think, you know they've had their opportunities as well, so I'm not so keen on perpetuating a culture of being a survivor. I think, you know, get up and go and make your own life. And don't excuse whatever happens to you, what your parents or your grandparents. You can make things happen yourself.

So that leads me to my next question: What message would you have for somebody, based on your own life history?

[2:04:46]

Yeah. Well, to... I think there's, there's several really. I suppose one is that... if a door opens you go through it. To use every opportunity in life that's given to you. Life is short. Go out

there and make the most of your life, because you never know when it's going to finish. Go and enjoy it. Life is for living and for experiencing. Gather all the experiences you can and...because this is really what life's about! I think that's, that's really important. And to make the best use of your life. You know, don't waste it away. Go and do something positive... In whatever field you choose! Be a positive influence on people around you. Don't just- I think, I hate the words 'stand by', but be an active participant in the life around you. Don't ignore what's going on around you. Go and get in there; get stuck in, you know?

Joanna, is there anything else I haven't asked you or you feel is important to add, or anything?

No...

That we haven't covered?

Mnn... Well I suppose my father's brothers and sisters... Some of them they have stories of survival that are absolutely amazing. But of course it's not directly related to my story but nevertheless I think that... Isaac was able to tell me so much about my father's family, which was great because in Germany when I was doing the research they told me I could only look for my parents and grandparents. You couldn't ask about uncles and aunts and nieces and nephews. And I wrote to the Interior Ministry in Germany to say that, you know, I explained the situation and said, "This is a special case. Can't you make an exception and can't I look at the records to see if my father had brothers and sisters?" And the reply was, I've got to go to the Court of Human Rights, but they couldn't and they wouldn't. And. So...you know the finding was - was absolutely amazing. And there was a woman who kept some, some archives, birth certificates in Germany. She said, "Don't ask me; I'll lose my job if I do it for you." So clearly, you know, there was a resistance. And getting the deportation files documents was a nightmare as well. So there were various issues in especially in Germany, which was a problem. And for some reason I can't find my, my mother's parents' marriage certificates, birth certificates or their grandparents. I don't know why! I don't know why. They told me they were all in Warsaw, because they were in Posen and all the records went to Warsaw. And not a – not a thing, which is, I'm really surprised. I'm not quite sure what's going on there. But...

Actually I did want to ask you one other question. It's about the six children and when you saw them again, as original Bulldogs Bank children?

[2:08:20]

Yes. Well that was- Well, again it was through Sarah Moskovitz that I found Jackie. And we- Probably Jackie told you there was this, this reunion at Oxnard, in California. And, and that Sarah Moskovitz organised. And she got as many of the Lingfield children together as she could find. And... So it was not just the six of us but all the ones in Weir Courtney and the ones that went to Lingfield House in afterwards. We were all invited so we had a huge reunion there which was brilliant. I think that was the first time I saw Jackie afterwards, you know, afterwards. And in fact Berli, who was the one who was adopted in America, he also came. So that was the first time we - we met each other again, at this conference. And of course Sarah made a big fuss about it. And, you know, publicity and so on. So. And after that I did see Berli again in Germany when the film Bulldogs Bank film was made for the premiere. And I met him there. And so Jackie I'm in touch with from time to time.

Yeah.

Yeah, his life and my life, we don't cross each other's paths very much, but if he's got something interesting to say, he'll phone me or if I have. Or...And we do meet up as well from time to time, but, you know. Yeah, it was brilliant because they were like my brothers. I mean it was just brilliant. And what is amazing it that though I hadn't seen them for fifty years or forty years or whatever it was like I'd only seen them yesterday. You know, the time between had just – just gone.

Extraordinary.

Totally - totally gone. Berli himself hasn't changed at all; I mean I'd have recognised him. Jackie of course without his black – lots of black curly hair looked quite different, but...it was great.

And you said one girl was in a mental hospital...

Yes.

Was she in that all her life, or...?

[2:10:30]

Yes, apparently, according to Sarah Moskovitz that she... She was always strange I mean, even I remember her. She was...

In England?

Yes, in England. She was always a bit strange but, you know, we just took it in our stride; we knew she was a bit odd.

So she didn't overcome this experience?

No... Well, except that I'm not sure whether she was born like that, because you don't know, do you? Because mostly if you see survivors, they're very strong, both physically and mentally strong. Probably that's why we survived; I don't know. But... The weaker ones tend not to... So it was unusual for somebody like her to survive. But I don't know. She could have been born like that, I don't know. I think it's a fair chance. I can't say.

But that's four. So in terms of countries, so Jackie and you were in England...

Yes.

And Berli in America.

Berli went to America. And the other girl... the one in the mental home, I think she's in America for some reason. And the other girl lives in London, or near London. And the other boy died. He was also adopted in America. There was a- a group of- they called them the Foster Parents Plan. The American families that sent food parcels and clothes parcels, cause remember... with rationing they sent stuff, and they took an interest in the children. And I think possibly they were adopted from people who were involved with that.

And in hindsight, are you- how do you feel towards the, let's say the British Fund or you know, in terms of handling the six of you, or you? Could they have done...?

[2:12:30]

Well they could have- they could have done a lot more and I think that because we...we seemed to be happy and we were smiling and we were doing well physically, that, you know, there was minimal damage. And I think that- I don't think they appreciated that... young children learn very early on that if you smile you're sweet and nice, you get what you want; you're treated nicely. I certainly remember knowing that, you know, if you'd got a nice smile and you were nice to the grown-ups, they gave you food. And if you were nasty and crying a lot and miserable, you didn't get. And you know babies learn that before they're a year old. And I don't think they appreciated that. They just saw what they wanted to see on the outside without realising that actually...you know we were... You can see from some of the photos when I first arrive, I'm in total bewilderment. You know, with... And they could have done more but I don't think they meant it out of harm or anything else. They just didn't realise.

And concretely, do you think it would have been better for the six of you to stay together?

Hmm. Well, yes. I think well, I mean what's interesting is that those that were adopted all wished they hadn't been, and those that hadn't been adopted wished they had. So, and the thing is it's a bit- you know I suppose we had the benefit of a really good education and growing up in a, with modern comforts. But they had the love and the, the care and each other and support. So it depends what, you know, how can you pit one against the other? I don't know. You know, I certainly had advantages that the others didn't. But they had a wonderful community. So...I don't know.

There's no answer to that.

No...no.

OK, Joanna, thank you very, very much for this interview. And we're going to look at some of your photos.

OK. Good. Thank you.

[End of interview]

[2:14:52]

[2:15:11]

[Start of photographs]

Yes, please.

Right, on the back left is Johanna, Kurt and Paula on the right. My father's sisters and brother. In front are my father's parents. Mina and...Isaak. 1915.

This is my father and his sisters and brother. My father is the one on the left. There's Johanna with the black sash. There's ...oh, what's her name? Gone, gone. There's Kurt on the right and there's Paula in the front. Her name was on the Zillah. Sorry, can I go back? It's my father on the left, Johanna, Zillah, and Kurt and with Paula in the front. Roughly 1906. I must assume in Berlin; I mean that's where they were living.

This photo was taken in 1915. My father had just enlisted in the German Army, and he's on the left with two of his friends before they were sent to the Eastern Front.

That's Benjamin Schallmach. He's my mother's father, in Berlin. Must have been shortly before he died, I would imagine. Probably the 1920s, that was taken.

This is my grandmother. My mother's mother. Her name was Auguste Schallmach, and I'm not sure when that was taken. It certainly would have been in Berlin.

This is my mother, Elsa Rosenthal. She's sixteen in this photograph. In Berlin, in 1918.

Right, this is a photo of me when I arrived in August 1945, in the north of England. Edith Lauer is holding me. She was also in Theresienstadt with her husband, and her husband was responsible for looking after the gas in Theresienstadt. He was a chemist.

[2:18:04]

Right, this is me around November 1945, at Bulldogs Bank in the- just out in the garden.

Right this is the back of the Bulldogs Bank which is in West Hoathly in Sussex, owned by Lady Clark who offered it to us for a year.

This is the Bulldogs Bank children playing in the back garden. Gertrude Dann is on the right and Mrs Pruitt, one of the volunteers, is on the left.

This is outside Bulldogs Bank, 1946. Five of us are there. And the man is a reporter, sent over from America, from the Foster Parents Plan. They wanted to check out on our progress.

This is a picture of the children inside Bulldogs Bank. Again with the same reporter, from the Foster Parents Plan in America. I'm the third on the left of the children.

This is Jackie Young and myself with the American reporter, again in 1946.

Right this is me eating a - a meal. I haven't got the idea of knives and forks yet. At Bulldogs Bank.

This photo was again at Bulldogs Bank. There's Judith on the left, myself, then there's Jackie Young, Berli and Gadi front right.

[2:20:10]

This photo was taken at Bulldogs Bank. There's Gertrud Dann on the left, myself behind. Jackie and Gadi. Berli...sorry there's Berli and Gadi in the front. Shall I repeat that? Right. This photo was taken at Bulldogs Bank. That's Gertrud on the left, there's myself just behind, Jackie and Berli and Gadi in the front.

This is a coloured photo in Bulldogs Bank with- in our winter snowsuits. So there's Jackie on the left, Judith, Leah, and myself in the front. And Berli on the right. I presume that must be Gadi at the back.

This is a photo of the six of us in Windermere, the seventh child is the child of the carer, and I'm third on the left, in this photo.

This is a photo of the front of Weir Courtney in Lingfield in Surrey.

This is a group of children in Weir Courtney, again with the reporter. I'm in the front there with the bows. With some of the slightly older children.

This is me when I was six years old, after I was adopted. Living in Regency Lodge in Swiss Cottage.

Right, this photo was taken in our living room, with my older daughter, preparing to get married. Mandy, my husband and I were with her.

[2:22:33]

And when was it taken?

Gosh, they've been married about twenty years now, so that was ...

'95?

'95 yeah. My husband's name is Harvey.

This photo was taken on the occasion of my older daughter, Mandy's, fortieth birthday. That's all my children and their partner, husbands and wives, and their children, except for one granddaughter who is in Australia. But it's all my family.

This picture was taken in La Gomera in the hotel to celebrate my seventieth birthday and my son-in-law, Mark's, fiftieth birthday. We had a whole family get-together. Me and my children, their husbands and wives and my grandchildren as well.

This is my version of my Aunt Bela's cookbook. When I found her descendants in America, they gave me it, and I put it in a usable format. The picture was designed by one of the German family cousins. And he's an artist.

Joanna, thank you very much again for this interview.

OK! Right.

Thank you.

[End of photographs]

[2:01:36]