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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Wurzburger
<b>Forename:</b>	Hannah
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	6 January 1934
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Berlin, Germany

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	15 March 2018
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Sutton
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV218  
**NAME:** Hannah Wurzburger  
**DATE:** 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018  
**LOCATION:** Sutton, Surrey, England  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

**[Part One]**

**[0:00:00]**

*Today is the 15th of March 2018 and we are conducting interview with Mrs. Hannah Wurzburger. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in Sutton. What is your name please?*

Hannah Wurzburger.

*And what was your maiden name?*

Gibianska.

*And where were you born?*

In Berlin

*And when?*

1934.

*Mrs. Wurzburger, thank you very, very much for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Can you tell me a little bit about your family background please?*

**[0:00:46]**

I left Berlin when I was five, so I don't, you know- I don't have much recollection there but...came ...My family background. I had...There were five... five... four aunts and my mother, and two men in the- my grandmother's family. I- as I say I was there only till I was five so I don't have, you know, a lot of- lots of memories. It was quite a big family. And... came to England. Yes. Just before my sixth birthday in September, and I was birthed in January. And I had one aunt who had come over here... from the family. The others stayed in Berlin and ...mostly didn't survive. None of my father's family. I don't know- don't know that any of my father's family survived at all. So, so- and I didn't see my grandparents until I was sixteen again when I went for the first time back to Berlin with my Aunt Betty, who was here. And... It was... it was- it was very, very good to go back and see them. I had terrible trouble with the German- with the whole, German, thing, if you like. It took me some time to reconcile with them, which was in my interest to do obviously. And which I eventually did. And. And... I just I went back several times after I was sixteen actually... to Berlin. And I think that's.... All I can... say as I- the main thing was it took a long time to... accept the situation that I had gone through.

*What do you mean by reconciling?*

Well, to- to accept the sit- you know, what had happened. And it took years in fact. And to accept the Germans again, if you like. Yes? I had a very good... non-Jewish German sister-in-law I had. And... And people who understood what had happened and were more sympathetic ...so it did help.

*And... How did the grandparents survive?*

**[0:04:26]**

It's- it's a difficult story and I won't go into it until a bit later. First of all, I don't know it all. But I understood that my grandmother- my grandfather had converted, so he was not- you know. But he- and she, at some point, it's very odd, had dressed as a peasant woman and went on a train up to north Germany somewhere, when they were from Berlin. Well, it was north- north Germany of course, Berlin anyway. But it was a sort of cloak and dagger thing. I don't know because they were very simple people really... and somehow got away with it. Now she had- there was still two daughters living there and one... of them worked- I think both of them worked in a hospital - Jewish Hospital - which they had converted or not

converted but had used also for... German... soldiers, you know... the participants in the war. And they survived in, in that way. I don't understand it all, because I don't- I don't really know all the details. But they did survive. This was Auntie Herta and Ilse, who was very much- very backward and very unworldly. And... and they survived till long after the- everything was- after the war.

*They went back to Berlin?*

They were always in Berlin. This is what...

*Your aunts survived in Berlin?*

Yes. Yes.

*And your grandparents were...?*

And grandparents- I don't understand this sort of separation of the... family there. As I say, my Aunt Betty was over here and so she didn't know all the details. You know she hadn't followed all the- what was happening anyway. So, it's all very vague. But they- they did, did survive. Two of the aunts survived. Aunty Erna was taken. My mother went... the two sons went... and so on. And as I say not none of my father's- father's family that I ever knew about. They came from Poland of course but they were then by then - at least he was - in, in Germany, in Berlin.

*Coming from Poland, when did he move from Poland, your father?*

**[0:06:56]**

I don't know. I think... I mean he was a musician and he moved around with... orchestras even as far as London - East End London - which at that time was quite a cultural centre, certainly of music. ...So, I, I don't- I can't- don't know all those dates, details. But... certainly he didn't survive anyway.

*So maybe let's go back to you and your story. Do you have any memories at all...from Berlin?*

...

*Any images in your...?*

Well yes. ...Coming back- coming from playing downstairs and- and saying, “Hello!” to my mother. And she said, “Oh you don’t have to say hello; it’s- we’re...” you know. “this is” ... it was all very informal. My father was also able to do some- teaching some English. I don't know how this came about or anything. And so, I did know a little bit- a few things in English. “Let me broom the kitchen”, for instance. You know this kind of funny thing kids do.

*He taught you?*

Well, I picked it up I suppose, some of it. And of course, when I came over here within two weeks and with other children you- you've got it so you can communicate.

*And where did you live in Berlin?*

It was Kurfürstenstraße. I don't know which number. It was a flat of course. But my grandparents, later on when I went back at sixteen and subsequently, were in Badstraße, which is the district of Wedding - Wedding. And I got to know that place quite well, because I went over with my aunt who was over here sort of a few times after. So... And on the first time of going back when I was sixteen it was- it was- I mean they laid everything on. I don’t know how they managed it. But they gave me a watch. They took me out. I’d never had this sort of thing before. Beautiful... *Konditorei* places you know, even at that time. It was quite amazing. So, it was... that was- they really laid it on as best, you know, with whatever they had they... They gave it to me.

*Was that in roughly in 1949 when you went to Berlin?*

Sixteen – thirty-four, forty-four... Yes, I guess something like that. ...Forty-nine, fifty.

**[0:09:54]**

*Right.*

Yes...

*We'll talk about that a bit later, but... Do you remember the- your journey to England at all?*

I don't. I seem to- I have a... a- a picture - whether it's made up or not – of being with lots of children. This train- I think I had actually a teddy bear thing and my parents - my mother I remember, I think on the station. I don't know how they let me get there or anything, but it mean- it may be an imaginary thing. I don't know. What you- I think what you think you remember is probably more important than what actually happened. So... And I don't remember anything of the journey or at the other end, coming in here. As I say, I had an aunt over here and so I lived in the same house that she was a domestic in, 'cause this was- they allowed so many in. But they just were mostly doing domestic work.

*What was her name please? Your aunt's name?*

Betty – Betty Hermann.

*So, she was your mother's sister?*

Yes. ...Yes.

*And when had she come over to England?*

It's hard to say... I- I don't...

*It doesn't matter.*

I don't honestly know.

*And where was her domestic- where was her position?*

That was, that was first in Edgware, and then later in Finchley Road... in north London.

*And could she- accom- how- and you went there?*

**[0:11:42]**

Yes. Well, at first, I stayed - that's right - in the house where she was a domestic. And subsequently she- she had a one-room flat, you can only say, which I used to go to in the holidays when I was at the boarding school, in Belsize Park. And I mean it was a very simple living that she had, I must say. And very- not easy for her.

*Gilling Court. Was it there by any chance? Gilling Court, Belsize Park.*

No, it doesn't- no it wasn't. It was... oh, gosh. I can't remember the name of this...

*In a block of flats in Belsize Park?*

Yes.

*Yeah. And did you have a guardian, or did you...?*

I, I did have over here Mr. Wolf. They were in north London in Finchley. And I used to have to go and see him every holiday and come up with what- from the age of twelve and come up with what- what it was I wanted to do. And this changed all the time according to which friend I'd spoken to. I was absolutely terrified of these people. I was so... unworldly, so naive and so... fearful of everything. I just took on what, you know, what the friends had sort of influenced me by. I, I- I just was not at all worldly and... didn't ever know what was going on, what was happening and just lived from moment to moment.

*So, when you left the... your aunt, where did you go?*

That was the boarding school in Haslemere. And then there I felt I'd landed. And that was with the... the... thing- friends of my aunt's. They sort of had gone into this. They- they were also from Germany - were Jewish and living in the same block of flats that she- she was. They were much more worldly. They were a much better set up and so on. And they investigated this and... and found this boarding school in Haslemere, which was mostly with mostly refugees you know from Poland, Germany - Austria perhaps.

*That was your second school. What about the first one? Where did you go then?*

**[0:14:14]**

Well, that was the- Yes. That's right. There was a secondary school Crabtree Lane secondary school in... oh dear... I've forgotten the district. And I- that was all right up to a point. I got on well with there and this is where I really got interested in, in literature and poetry and – and those sorts of subjects. But I don't remember a lot... about that. That that was when I was in the... in the home. But of course, before that I was in an... infant school or a juniors - yes.



*And where was that?*

...It was while I was in the home. It was... I don't remember the name. I don't remember the place.

*Tell us a little bit about where you were settled in 1939 in- in the- after you'd arrived. And you arrived. Was it- you said you arrived on the last Kindertransport?*

Yes, I think it was the last one.

*Which- when was that?*

It was September- it was a couple of days before they declared war here.

*And do you know anything - probably you don't know it - about the decision of your parents to put you on a Kindertransport? Do you know anything about...?*

No... no.

*So, you arrived, you went to your aunt's and then... Where were you taken from there?*

I think that must have been- well, between six and twelve I don't know- I went to the local, as I said, the local secondary school- Crabtree Lane secondary school. But I was...

*At the age of five or six you were taken to a children's home, you told me before.*

I was... at first, that's right. I was. That's right- in Hemel Hempstead.

*Hemel Hempstead?*

Yes.

*And what sort of children's home was it? Can you describe it a little bit? What was it called?*

**[0:16:30]**

It was called- it had two names. Chestnuts because of the- obviously the... trees. And also, a misnomer if there ever was one: Shalom House, right? Which... it was anything but. And I was there for six years. There were other refugee children there- at the end probably about

forty children altogether- something like that. We- we did most of the housework, cleaning, make beds and that before we went to school. Or also you know they, they used us pretty well for- for all their domestic needs. And it was- it was a very bad place and, and punishments and... and hitting. And was really- it was very bad. They only- I had two friends there. One was a, a lovely young woman that- she can only have been about eighteen - who befriended me, and who- I remember on my birthday she would leave these...about three or four of her early poetry books on my bed on my birthday for the morning and the other friend was the dog Tinker. And I've always liked dogs ever since and to this day.

*Did that help you?*

Yes, it was- it was good. And he would sort of come trotting upstairs onto my bed. And if we were caught, if he was caught, we were both sent out into the garden - at night as this was, by the way - as punishment, you see, I mean this was... a routine thing.

*What sort of punishment did you get there?*

Well, I mean apart from the... hitting with a wooden spoon and things, at night as I say, they would just- had... not only no idea, but no interest in the children who they were looking after- supposed to be looking after. So, I was... quite often went there and, and the next day to school with soaking wet shoes. But... this is how it was. It was not, you know it was a very... very bad set up. Very bad things there.

*Hannah, who ran it? Who ran this house...?*

**[0:18:39]**

It was- I don't know. It was somebody called Matron Davis and that's all I know about her. She had two daughters Helen and Sheila. And Helen was actually quite nice, that's the older one and the other one was still a schoolgirl- went to grammar school. And... it- there was- it seemed to be no authority, no control of, of, of- which of course now I guess there would be more. So, they could do what they liked which was- and, and they employed staff who were not- not- they were just local people and not very well educated very often. And things like butter rations all went to them and, you know, we had a basic - very basic... food supply what should I say, we were fed and that but it was not... always was the best. And it was just a, a very hard life. And you didn't know anything else, so that when it came to leaving there, I

sort of was struggling and shouting and screaming and I didn't want to leave because I didn't know what I was going to... at twelve, at the age of twelve.

*Because that's what you knew. And you spent six years there?*

**[0:19:52]**

Yes - yes.

*That's a long time.*

It's a long time. And...

*And in that time...*

And there were three of us. Mainly... the older ones who more or less did all the- a lot of the domestic- domestic work when we were not at school. I never remember anything like any kind of entertainment, or... joyful things. They carried out the Friday evening services I think as a sort of... because they had- it sort of... understood that they had to. And but... it was. I remember later- and later on when I went to Israel in 1964, I think it was - '64, '65. I- I met somebody there who had known about this and she said they did cut- they did... tumbled to this, the authorities, in the bitter end. But not before a lot of the... what shall I say... misbehaviour things that had gone on, and...

*Was it run- did they run it sort of privately? Do you...?*

I don't know about that even, you see. As I say I was so...

*Yeah...*

I mean children wouldn't, I guess- but at that time anyway- but I was in... another world I had then- living in, you know...

*So, were you...?*

Yes. I mean this, this... one incident of many. This little boy, one of twins at the home in Hemel Hempstead, he- I don't know, he'd done something. It can't have been very wrong. But they sent him out to get a wooden spoon which is how they punished you, you know,

with a wooden spoon. He bought a small one. They sent him back to get a larger one, a bigger one- it doesn't bear thinking about now. It's just so... part of... the, the nastiness of it. But so stupid! The mentality was just... Anyway...

*So, did you have to really sort of fight for yourself? Fend for yourself, there?*

**[0:22:08]**

Yes, up to a point you did. But I - I wasn't very good at that either. And as I say there were three of us. Bela Hilsum, Doreen Goldberg and myself. And we did most of the- such as domestic work before school. And after school helping to butter piles of bread... you know. And that's all you got, more or less, supper. Bread and margarine. And... I don't know- but porridge in the morning and bread and margarine and cocoa. And then I hated cocoa after that forever.

*So, did you go hungry? Do you remember being hungry?*

Not- I- I don't remember that I did, really. And... the parents came- I think could visit once a month... I think, only. And... my Aunt Betty brought things like... jam, which was quite a luxury. And you did actually manage to get that for yourself. At least they- they kept that in a separate cupboard and so on. And... but... No, it was... It was it was really... I don't know who set this up. And- and of course there was no- once it was there, there was no control, as I said. So...

*There was nobody coming in, or...*

No, no.

*And the school- how far was the school from where you lived?*

It was probably about... twenty minutes to half-an-hour walk. And I remember, being one of the older ones, and we- they had to go... sort of crocodile but two at a time, you see? And I- I can remember as quite a young age... taking them there on my own. At that time you- see at least it wasn't dangerous with this- you wouldn't do this now, but- and, and having to- them not allowed to talk. And I stuck to this rigidly. I became a very difficult, nasty person you know. It was... It was bred into you somehow.

*What was the age range? Because how can you be the oldest? You were only six when you arrived there...*

**[0:24:20]**

Yes, that's right. But... This happened when I was... Not much- I was- well, I was probably nine, ten - that sort of thing. And they had- yes, they had very young children and then they had us three, which, I think, we were the oldest ones there. And as I say, I left when I was twelve. And, you know, it's...

*And did the other children have families?*

They did- they did actually have- they did, because they were not- first of all, they were not all refugees. The- a lot of English children were there. And I don't know how... why and how. And I do remember the matron, when my aunt came, who was- her- her English was still not the best. And she was a very simple person and not treated well. So, the children who had parents from this country - English children - they were- again, the parents were favoured and, and talked to and all this sort of thing. And people like my aunt- and I may have been only one of the, one of the very few actual refugees, in fact. And... you know these these- these people were taught. And my aunt was just sort of on the side lines I suppose. But she- she- and it was quite a struggle for her to come with the... money and distance and everything. And she was not very worldly, as I say. But anyway she- she, she did come and I looked forward to it in fact. And then- and we could go out... Down the- in the town there was this Red Tiles Café - for tea. That was- that was a real treat with her, you know, she- so... little things- you looked forward to little things and, and... it's... No, it was a- it was one of- it was a bad time and six years is quite a long time.

*Very long.*

So...

*And were they English Jewish the matron? Was she Jewish?*

Yes. Yes. They were.

*English Jewish?*

Yes. They all were. I heard about this as I said to you before perhaps, when I went to Israel that somebody knew about this and said that finally- the authorities had sort of... got round to this and located her. And I don't know what happened or what... because the home wasn't there, I don't think, anymore. But they had somehow found out about this whole thing a bit late in the day. And, you know, perhaps she got her desserts. I don't know. So...

*And did you have any... contact with your parents? Was there any correspondence?*

**[0:27:10]**

No... A little while after I left Berlin my aunt over here did have- there was a letter, that's right, from my mother. That's right. And... I think it was on a card perhaps with a photo. I can't remember exactly. But that was it. That was all. And my aunt went regularly to the- was it the Home Office where you went to, to inquire about refugees who- who had escaped and managed to come over, I think? So. No- they had lists of, of names. And... she went there regularly. I mean she did quite a- considering she was not worldly and she didn't- she had such a struggle, she, she did really quite a lot. This was her own. So... But she- she didn't- didn't come up with any family names, so...

*Do you... You were so small. Did you understand your situation?*

No. Not...

*How did you make sense of it as a child?*

I don't think you do. Well, I know particularly if you're not very worldly. I mean I just took everything that was thrown at me and there was quite a lot! You accepted it... and relied on your fellow sufferers if you like- for friendship and talking and so on. And... There was no... you know it all seemed to be very... narrowed down and concentrated. And, and there was nothing outside us so, so. So, I mean I- at the age of twelve I'd never heard of the Queen or the King or whatever, or anything like that. It was just so- I was very... ignorant of anything worldly. That's all.

*So, what education did you receive?*

Sorry?

*What education did you get?*

Well, that was the one thing at the secondary school it was, as I say, the poetry and the literature I loved. And they were- they recognised this, so you- you had a bit of a... support and say in this very often. And if they see that a child is interested in, in poetry of all things! I mean it's... I loved it.

*But in that first school... do you remember anything from there?*

**[0:29:26]**

Well, that was- yes that was just a junior- junior school. That was... that was alright. I mean- I think- you know with things like on a Friday afternoon you could bring your own toys or whatever. Or- if I had any toys. I don't know. That's another thing you see, at the home there was one- there were two sisters, Hedi and Lottie Lampert. And they both had problems - physical problems. The- the younger one Lottie she, she sort of banged her head all night on the... bed- in bed. And Heidi was not reliable out on the street. She would go into the road. And as I said, she was kept mostly at home- in the home. And we had lockers and I- I, you know she just couldn't make her- way into any of these things. And- and things which you- those few things which you had and could put in there, then and very often was messed up and so on. That's not her fault.

*And they were staying in the home as well?*

Yes. They were in the home, that's right.

*They were older?*

Probably my age - about the same.

*Oh, they were a similar age?*

Yes - yes. But Heidi didn't- she didn't go to school at all. So, she- she was... I don't know what sort of- what you would... interpret it as now, as today. But her- they both had physical

psychological problems. And I don't know anything about their backgrounds of course and didn't at the time. And... you had small children there of course.

*Well, in today's terms you would call it 'neglect'.*

Well, it was. Yes. I mean, they- they weren't there for the kids at all.

*Yes.*

Certainly not. So... You know- it's a bad- it is a bad start, isn't it? You know...

**[0:31:40]**

*Yes. But did your aunt- what do you think helped you to cope with this situation?*

Well, there were - as I say there was this Betty Tursley. She was a lovely person, and she recognised that I- you know. I don't know but she befriended me and support- and she can only have been about eighteen, and she had her own room there. One of the nicest of the staff. Otherwise, they were very... simple people and not, not very nice, some of them. That came from the top of course. And she used to let me into her room and... and taught me and things, which was really nice. And, and then the dog – Tinker. But ... I don't know. You didn't think further ahead. You didn't think it would ever end. And you didn't- not consciously think, "Well, when will this end?" Not- nothing like that. Just say, you know, things which are done to you. So that you just- children do accept but some are more... worldly than others and more able to... resist it, or cope with it, or go against it or whatever. And... it was. I was a bit- I was rebellious, I can remember. Because there were simple, stupid things like the, the meals which were very simple in fact. But on one occasion I remember there was this... lunch thing and it was- was a lot of- it wasn't proper meat; it was a lot of fat and gristle. And I said to this ...friend next to me in the home that, "You don't- don't eat it. You don't have to eat that." Well, of course they picked up on that. And when the dinner was over, they- I sat in- sat in there and they said, "Until you eat that up..." and it wasn't even mine, "you- you're not going out. And I thought, "Do I throw this out of the window?" Because- and I'm not sure if I did or not. I probably did eat- I- I swallowed. I don't know. I mean it was- it was things like that which was just unthinkable. You can't, you can't dream this up, you know. So, things- it was- they just had no idea, nor did they care, except for this



one lady. She was- she was really very good and befriended me. And in fact, I went to her home- her house... on one occasion. And this... it was...

*How many people were in one room, or...?*

I'm sorry?

**[0:34:18]**

*How many people shared the room? How many...children?*

There was probably about eight to ten. And we had to make these beds before we went to school. Pull all the beds out, mop behind them, or sweep behind them and then mop. Pushed the beds back, having made them. There were three of us to, as I say, who did most of this sort of stuff. And you just- you had no choice and you just did it. And... I don't know.

*And do you remember crying or being scared, or being...?*

No. ...I think, I might've broken the bed springs because I jumped on the beds... very often and I had- it was- it was really very bad. I did a lot of damage there, I think. I- I- I don't know how this- it sounds very- very peculiar. But you know, it's... it's- these things did happen.

*So, was your aunt basically the only contact with the outside world?*

Yes. Yes... that's right. But...

*And the school...*

And the school. Yes. Yes. And then that was- that was quite good. So- and then later on, when she had met the- this couple who were also German and Jews who'd given me...

*Oh I... broke your chair now??*

[sound interruption]

*Yes, we were talking about your school.*

**[0:35:50]**

Yes, the school. ...Yes. And that's right. And so, these friends of my aunt gave me writing paper and they said, "Right. Take it to school and you leave it there in the desk..." - stamps and everything they gave me - to write back to them... about what was going on. What was you know, at the home. So- and they couldn't know about it because they, they censored all letters coming in and going out, of course. Oh yes! Oh: "How are you?" "I'm very well." "I'm very well here. Thanks very much." And it was... pathetic. It was... so... through that, I think they got going, the friends of my aunt's, and got me into this other place - you know. So, I was- that was...

*So, you made it- at that point you complained. You...*

Yes, I could write everything down. That's right. And- and I never had trouble with... I wasn't a great scholar, but my reading, my writing, my spelling - all this sort of literature things came quite easily. I- I- I didn't have problems with that. And I- I was reading at a quite early age and so on. So... So that was, that was very good. And I did read a lot of books. And my aunt used to give me books for my birthday and things and... so. So that was also an escape.

*And did you stay throughout the war in there? In that place?*

Yes. Yes. I was there, that's right, 'cause I can remember when the war ended. We went to school and there were... assembly thing and there was singing and then- and everything was- it all seemed very wonderful and all that, you know. Not that- not that I'd followed any of this of course at all. But suddenly everything was- everybody was happy and... things were looking up and...

*And at that point, what did you think about your parents? Did you think...?*

**[0:37:51]**

No. I- I never... It, it sounds awful and- but... I don't know. I just... I just accepted what...ever was done to me. And I was not the most - what shall I say? - in that way, imaginative child. In other ways, yes. But not in that way. And... And I didn't- I just accepted everything that happened to me.

*Yes, but you were also so young, that you didn't have, you know, you...*

Yes. But other children might have been a bit more sort of sensitive and worried and... I don't know... I mean as I got older, it was there all the time. You... You never get over it. You never lose it. You know what- what happened to them, and what- the whole of that era- the whole of that episode.

*Yes. But not then... not then?*

No.... just.

*What about bombing? Was there any bombing?*

No. But we... We didn't seem to have any of that, but we had also to put- fold the clothes up and then with- put the largest thing- put them in a sort of bundle so that- because there was a place to go to in the home in the event of a bombing. To go downstairs, right down to... must have been cellars, I suppose. I don't know. But anyway, so that you could just grab that and go, you know, if you had to leave the, the... the ground floor thing and go down. But I don't remember any. I don't remember that there was anything like that. You know we didn't sort of- I mean this- of course this was still a bit out of London I guess wasn't it?

*Yes...*

So, this is...

*And did you have any contact with any refugee organisation, or any other...?*

No. No - no.

*Nobody came to see you, or...?*

No. Nothing like that.

*Except the guardian. You said you met the guardian who...*

**[0:40:08]**

Well, yes. Yes. He was- and he was living in Finchley in a... nice big house and everything. He was alright. His wife was not very nice at all.

*Were they interested in you at all, or...?*

When I went with- I had a very nice- I don't know how she came into the picture and when. She was a lovely person and I only know her as Miss Eckstein. And she came with me to these things. And when- he always wanted to know what was it I wanted to do and what was I interested- you know. Every child from the age of twelve. And I just - as I told you before - made it up. And on this occasion, I was probably quite a teenager already. I wanted- I'd wanted to do art. He gave me this pencil hard as nails, a piece of paper and they had a fruit bowl there. And he said, "Draw that." I mean this is- it's so nasty. But anyway. And I did draw it. Not great drawing but it was- something happened there. And she spoke up for me a lot, this woman - and she went subsequently to America, I think- I don't know why - and was a great help and support. And... And I don't quite know when she came into the picture but I did- relied on her quite a bit. She was- she was good, and she was sensitive, and she was supportive and so on. And... You know, she sort of put in a word for me there about an art school. And I did actually manage to get to Farnham Art School... as a student you know when I was sixteen. It was just the youngest you could be, in fact. So that was the first two years before intermediate and then... National Diploma and so on.

**[0:41:54]**

*So, did he actually sponsor you? Who paid for you in primary school?*

I think- well, you see there was also the Jewish Board of Guardians.

*Yes.*

Now, I often had to go there. And it was terrible because the- that I did see, even quite early, on the front "Relief for the Jewish Poor" That was a major field. It was really- I really- I recognised that as an awful slur... that was. But, so the Jewish Board of Guardians I think must have paid for that. And I don't know whether this Wolf family, Mr. Wolf, whether he... also contributed. Because he was a sort of guardian officially, you know. So maybe he- I mean I certainly don't know anything of the- of all of that because I was too young and a nobody explained or anything. So...

*Yeah. Hannah, where was the Jewish Board of Guardians? Where did you go?*

That was the East End. But I don't know where.

*And what did you have to do there when you came to them? Or- Just to report to them, or...?*

To the Board of Guardians... what did I? I don't know. I don't remember. ...I don't know because... it's when I went to him. I- I had to say what I wanted to do and what... and all this sort of thing. But I don't- I don't remember why...

*So, then you went to the secondary boarding school, which was called...*

Oh, the...the boarding- yes that was... Stroatley Rough...

*Right.*

Yes?

**[0:43:48]**

*So, tell us a little bit about that.*

Well, that was- that was beautiful. I- I felt I'd landed there, when I got there. It was just so open and free. And when I saw young children talking to Dr Lion, the headmistress, I thought, "I can't- no!" You know you didn't- I didn't have any- any of that kind of contact ever at all! You were [gestures being put down] - down there. And it was all so open and so friendly. And I also had- I knew two people- children- two sisters who'd been at the other place in Hemel Hampstead for very short while with their brother before they left. And they must have had influential people and they were much more worldly and they left the place, it was so awful. But they ended up there and then that's when I- so I saw- I had people I knew already. And... And, and so that was really nice and straight away Marian said, "Oh come on. Let's go around the garden." She had a beautiful house, beautiful grounds and beyond that the hills and- it was just lovely. You felt you'd landed in paradise. And... so. So that was really good.

**[0:45:02]**

*Who were the other- who were the ladies in charge? Who was in charge?*

Well, it was these three German women. They'd come over. They- all in their own right. They were professional people. And the headmistress, so to speak, and she liked to be called 'Headmistress' and, and Miss Lion speaking - never mind Dr Lion. She was... in economics. There was the language specialist and the music specialist. There's three of them. And they would all be- and were in fact. And in fact, she had- she ran this place for teachers, Dr Leon did, in- she- I think she came from Hamburg.

*What were the three names again please?*

There was an Louise Leven, she was the music woman who- Emmy Wolf, languages and she taught ...French and German. And I can remember her banging on the table, "And you, who need it so much, my dear!" Cause I was hopeless! I couldn't do, you know- it was not only me, but "You who need it so much..." - anyway. We all laughed at this. They were- they were good people really.

*And the third woman?*

And Dr Lion- Hilde Lion. She did- studied economics. She was an economics specialist, but she had also I think trained teachers... in her hometown in Hamburg - as far as I've got it right. I've got a- a whole pile of... little things which were printed out which we- when we all got together in this country afterwards, long after, and people were writing down their memories. It's a- it's a very fine collection actually, that. Because lots of people - not only from my generation but from before and ours was probably the last one, you know. So, you've got a lot of... back history there- back history and things there. And... And so that - I don't know, it was just... We did that and then we could - yes - got that kind of record you see, still? So...

*And who were the other children there?*

**[0:47:33]**

At the school? Well, they were all... You know there was lots of- again, lots of refugees mostly. Germany, Poland... One lovely person- lovely young girl from France.

*At that point had you lost your German at that point? Or did you...?*

Yes, I think I had. I mean and I was not a good scholar. Not- not academically at all. And it's a funny thing. I mean, if you've had it in the early years- once I got back to Berlin- I was going with my aunt at the age of sixteen, it- I found it-just sort of came back. It, you know it- I mean I wasn't by no means fluent, but I- I knew what they were talking about. And I- I could sort of vaguely communicate and so on. So yes, this does happen.

*So, you had a- that was a good time.*

Yes... yes. It was – it was. So...

*And then did you stay on there after you finished your schooling at sixteen? You stayed on in Stootley Rough?*

**[0:48:46]**

Yes, I was there for two more years... going daily to Farnham Art School. Across Hindhead Common, and things which you wouldn't do now at night- at night. Coming back from evening classes at nine o'clock at night, you know. And there was the RAF . And they were always saying, “No, no my dear. You go with two- two other people always”, so you go with three of you, you know. But we didn't take too much notice.

*And what made you want to study art?*

I was always interested, but I always loved drawing. And every Friday evening at Stootley Rough, we had- she would either play music or she would have a slide show which was really good. That was the... music woman. By the way, she and... and the language person never spoke to each other. There was this- there was- it was a terrible thing. It was understood that they- there was this... rift. I don't know how- how or why it was- ever happened. But she used to put on these- as I say, slide shows or, or music which was really nice to go to. And she- she had a piano transported from Holland. And that was a big occasion. And she would play the piano at night sometimes and we would- could hear all this. It was it was lovely that place. So... you know, I think this is maybe- well I did like drawing- always- always loved doing art things. But these slide shows helped a lot as well. And... you know, you got to know famous artists and people which I'd never come across before. And- and it just took off somehow. And I- I mean was not- I was not at all academic and this was something which moved me and which- which really-was the answer, I think.

You know, it was a kind of escape as well and in many ways. And I think it can be, or shall we say therapeutic at least.

*Yeah...*

And... It- it was a sort of lifeline. It was really good. So...

*But all that time you were in touch with your aunt?*

**[0:51:08]**

Yes. Yes. She came to visit there and that was quite a... It was even more difficult to get out to Haslemere than from- where I was. But she... she. Yes. I mean she put herself out always. And, and- and that was not... Can I stop for a moment?

*Yes.*

**[sound break]**

*Yes, I wanted to ask you, what- if you could tell us, what happened to your aunt throughout that time?*

Ah... yes. Well, she- she developed multiple sclerosis very badly.

*I meant in the war time- in the war time.*

Oh, I see. In war time. Well...

*After her domestic job. What did she do?*

Well, she worked until she- all the time, until she couldn't, you see? So, I mean...

*At what? What did she do?*

Well, domestic in the- in the restaurants and places. Cafés and that, you know, in Finchley Road. And... and...

*So where did she work? In which cafes?*



[0:52:13]

There was the - mentioned before I think - The Dorice. And... I mean I think she had to stop quite early, because she developed this MS very badly and... it's very sad. And- 'cause I was a teenager that- no, late teenager. I was older than that, that's true. And I wasn't very supportive really. She... she- she was given a council flat in the end in Hamps- somewhere in Hamps- it was where that little theatre was in north London. What... you know. Oh God. Anyway... before that, she was up in one of these high- high rise flats. It was awful and there was no air when we used to go. I mean, we went there with the kids when they were quite small still. And... it was just terrible that she never got out. It was very high - very, very high up. I don't know how many stories. And she was then subsequently moved to...to a flat down in... I've forgotten what the theatre place was called, then I would know where the...

*Hampstead Theatre?*

Which one?

*Hampstead Theatre?*

Embassy.

*Emb- Embassy Theatre?*

I think so. I think, it might have been there. That's right. Somewhere around there, there were these flats. That's right.

*Swiss Cottage.*

Yes - yes. And... you know, she- I mean she had a very bad doctor who didn't do anything for her- didn't care at all. I didn't go up that often...from where I was... in Worcester Park here. And it was very hard for her, I think. I- I, I really didn't do my, my, my duty. But I didn't... Really, I wasn't very supportive, I must say. It was...I don't know... The girls were very small still. But Walter was very good as well. He, he was- he was always very, you know, in a quiet way he was very - kind, I suppose. And very... we did go up...

*And she never married?*

**[0:55:03]**

No - no. She never did. We did go up every so often, but... I mean there was a lot- it was a long way apart. But... And she had some good friends. And people - young people, actually - coming to help her. And so on. She always appreciated that and also, she could- they took her up to... I think- I don't know which organisation that was, but... for holidays down to Eastbourne or places like that, you know. So- and she never complained. She was just- I don't know when I think of it now, I can hardly bear to think of her because I didn't... I don't know. I just never really took her into my life and into my... caring life. I don't know. I didn't do what I- I wasn't as supportive and as as good as I should have been- I could have been.

*How old was she when she passed away?*

About seventy-five I think... so. And she had that- the last thing she had that from her fifties - early fifties. So, it was really bad, and on her own. And, and how she sort of struggled to... earn her living and live all on her own... all the time. And I only know what this means now, and I'm not- I can't complain compared with that at all.

*Yes...*

So, it's... It's another... It's another thing which... you can't resolve. You don't resolve. You didn't do it.

*Was she- after the war, did she ever contemplate going back to Germany? Because your- her parents survived.*

**[0:57:07]**

That's right. No, not to live. We did go for visits, as I said. Yes. But not- No - no. I mean she made some very good friends here, 'cause she had a good sense of humour and she was very... nice with people. And she needed people but she was also good with them. And- and you know so... so she had a very good sense of humour actually.

*Did she join for example the Belsize Square Synagogue or did she...?*

Nothing like that. Nothing like that. It was- no... no. And there seemed to be no- no organisation who was- I think there would be now perhaps...

*To help her?*

Which - yeah. Which could help her and would support her and, and open up things for her you know, which- and there wasn't. Or, or the... She didn't come into contact with.

*So, tell me a little bit about this visit back to Berlin. Your first time.*

I'm sorry?

*Your visit back to Berlin...*

Yes.

*How did that happen? How...?*

Well, I got restitution money. That was one thing. And so, I thought, "Okay"- then we thought let's- I presume my aunt must have spoken about it. And with the restitution money, paid for the fare for both of us, and more, of course. And that was- went without- goes without saying that I paid, you know, there was- it did for us both. And... And that was all very- that was always very successful. Very nice. My grandparents were still alive, and... It was- it was nice, and she liked it. She, she was glad to go back to them, and...

*What was it like for you to come to Berlin? Did it feel like home...?*

**[0:58:53]**

Well as I- I think I said it took me a long time. That was all right with the family. But it took me a long time - years, I must say - to accept the Germans as simply as that. Cause I still found occasions and incidents where... And I went at that time with a boyfriend, Ben, who- there's- we were waiting outside of the café once, and there was still a very nasty German youth, of all things, who was sort of insulting. I don't have to go into all the details but... because he had fair hair and a bit curly haired- he was he was a lovely person, a very interesting and lovely person. And he was sort of insulted for- for looking feminine. And he didn't in fact look at all feminine, but because of that- and I remember saying to him it was better than having black hair and a moustache. You know - the Hitler thing. I could- I was very aggressive at that time. I could speak up by then. So... But... yes it took a long time to accept this. And I- I had to work on myself and I knew if- I had to, because it only hurt me in

the end- in the long run... to accept them. Accept them and sort of... just...well, live with it, you know. So... But...

[1:00:39]

*But it was with your grandparents. How did you connect to them?*

Yes, that was- it was...

*Because they were strangers when you went there.*

Yes, that's right. That's right. And they were so- I don't know- so good. Grandfather was a bit sort of, a bit of a dictator in his own way. Not, not- not too nastily but... grandmother was lovely. And... And they were- they were very... warm and very friendly. Everything.

*And how did they manage in post-war Germany?*

Well, I think... Oh, in post-war, you mean. Yes.

*How did they...?*

Yes. Well, I mean they still had to- they had to have- my aunt Herta was over there, and Ilse who was, as I said, very backward. And... they... I don't know how they- how they supported themselves, how they- anything about-

*Did they work...the grandparents?*

My grandfather was actually a shoemaker. And he also made ballet shoes and things. He was not only a shoe mender, he was... But- and grandmother, I don't know that she worked. I don't know about that, I mean. Perhaps she did. I don't know about that at all. And... So... By then of course they were retired and, and...

*Did they talk about your parents? Did you ask them questions about your parents?*

No. No I didn't ask anything, and they didn't... I don't think they ever did talk about them, any of the other family who were lost. You know... But... I mean they must have had- it must have been very hard for them of course. I never thought of...from that angle either. I...

*You said you were angry. You were an angry teenager.*

Well... that's right.

**[1:02:49]**

*How did it display itself, or how...?*

I was very aggressive. Not- you mean there? To them, you mean?

*In general...*

Generally. Yeah, I was I was a quite aggressive person I think and... I mean I had good friends and it was art school time and that. And I - you know – I, I liked what I was doing. And then I got teaching jobs and things and...

*So, you went to Berlin when you were still in Stoalety Rough?*

No.

*No. Afterwards.*

It was after, that's right.... Oh, I must have been...

*Where did you go?*

Well, that's when I went up to London to the Slade. Not the nicest time, I have to say. They were all debutantes and things, which didn't- I couldn't relate to. And it was a very rigid-teaching system there, in fact. I mean you always knew if somebody- when you saw that- I mean they would do tiny drawings like the model would be about six feet away or something. It was- they had- it was Coldstream. I don't know if you know William Coldstream. He was at the head of that thing and he brought with him all all these elderly... men - not one woman there - as teachers. They were not all- there was- they were not all, all sort of dyed-in-the-wool. There were you know, some good ones. And...But it was a very rigid system, and I- I couldn't, what was that, and then and then the...the people you got there. We always had to sign in this book when we came in, to see that we'd been, you know. So, I always got

somebody to sign for me. I was not the only one. [laughs] And I then just did my painting at home, for what it was worth.

*Where did you stay at that time?*

That was in Archway and in a, in a flat. In a very – a bit of a rundown flat with another girl, another person- another one from Stoalety Rough. She was in London by then working, and I was going- studying. And... that was quite a- quite a good time. I mean the living conditions were awful. But you know I had- other things were quite good. So... yes. So that was...

**[1:05:39]**

*But you stayed in the Slade one year- an extra year?*

Yes, I did. That's right. They were very good about that, I must say. That's Surrey County Council. They still paid for that. Absolutely amazing. You know, I mean they- I knew people other students when I was at Farnham whose- whose father were able to pay for them but he didn't. He was a- sort of from a military- thing. And so, this son never got much money. And I was very lucky because there was no other income. There was nothing coming in- I had nobody. And Surrey County Council at that time they gave you grants. And I got the maximum grant, which at that time was about £200 and something a year- £220 something I think, you know. And I was very lucky. I'd been- I have to say in many ways I can't complain. I've had a lot of... handouts- support. All sorts of things, on the way, which was nice... at the end, you know, eventually. So... I shouldn't- I'm not complaining.

*But in that time, you had also a nervous breakdown?*

I had. That's right.

*So, what happened?*

I was with- I was in Balham at that time. And the doctor suggested that I should- 'cause I was having great difficulty living outside. I had claustrophobia. I had agoraphobia. I had both: the whole lot. And I- I was not- I was in- in a bad state. I was at the Slade at that time. And so, I went voluntarily into- I think the first one was St. Ebba's in Epsom. They were both in Epsom. Long Grove as well. That was some years later. And then of course soon I wanted to

get out of the place and I couldn't, because- and I can remember running out and it was a huge... building. And on many floors. And I can remember - this was at night - running around the place because I wanted to get out. In fact, they put me in a- what they call in the cell where you have all soft things so you can't harm yourself overnight. Which was not very nice. So I had...had those sort of things going on. ...I just never- I think it was always a case of not having any... grounded support from- really which you get from a family, you know, mostly. Not- not everybody does. And... so I was a bit all over the place, and...

*What triggered, do you think, this- this nervous breakdown?*

**[1:08:20]**

I think it was delayed... action. Delayed things from the past. I- I subsequently was thinking that it was nothing worse... than anything else. It just crept up on me a bit, I think. And my doctor said, "Look..." He was very nice man, this- it was in Balham. He said, "I would suggest that you go for a while and as a voluntary patient into..." what do they call them? Mental home or something. And I did that, because I couldn't live any more outside. It was just too difficult- you know, I- I don't know. And then I was in there long enough for- for me to want to get out. And that took a little while. And I had another one later. Yes - later on, several years later. And... And by then I was in Guildford living with the Loebels. They were just sort of a second... family. Mrs. Loebel she was wonderful – Grete Loebel. Czech family – they were refugees- Jewish refugees as well. And in Guildford. And a friend of theirs had said I- I was looking for somewhere to go- to, to board, when I went to Farnham Art School. And so, we met, and she was lovely- absolutely lovely! Very funny, both of them, very, very funny. And that was really nice to, you know, to have met them and to- to be living with them. So... there was... While I was at- while I was at Farnham for two years, that's right, I... I- no, I was there for four years, wasn't I?

*So that was before you went to the Slade?*

Yes. Yes - yes.

**[1:10:25]**

*But do you think that nervous breakdown was because...*

I had that while I was...

*...of your experiences early on?*

I think it was delayed- actually delayed things, you know. And it was...

*Did you get the right support then...*

Yes – yes...

*...when you came out?*

Yes. Yes. That was- I did. That was- it was while I was with the Lobles that I was in this house- in, I think it was St. Ebba's for- and it was horrible. I hated it. And... it- it was surreal. It didn't make any... reality for me at all. It was- it was terrible, that place. And they gave you night- tablets at night, which I never did take, which you- they really forced on you. You didn't leave the room until you'd taken them- swallowed them. It was- but they had very- back then and I hope they don't do this now, you know, because it was a very- it was a very rigid setup. Even though you might get some very nice, sympathetic doctors, which I did have. A wonderful- one of them particularly, but... psychiatrists I suppose they were. I don't know.

*But you went back to the Slade... and finished your course...*

Yes, yes, yes. I got another year there, that's right. And I only- I got through, but by the skin of my teeth, I think. Cause I didn't do lots of work.

*And then? What did you want to do afterwards?*

**[1:11:55]**

And then, I- I- well, for a year, I'd had no job. And I had by then the restitution money, which I was living on. And... I did my own fabric printing and various art things. And then I- I did get a job in Nottingham as a teacher. I went up to Nottingham, because I also had a- Well, the daughter of the Lobles was living up there so I knew somebody. And I'd had a very bad domestic experience with a boyfriend. And, and the woman who'd sort of muscled in and it was not nice. That was Ben. He was alright... it was, anyway. And... yes. So, so I- so I went



to Nottingham and I went straight to the education office and said I was a teacher and had been teaching art and did they have- “Ah yes! Miss Plackett wants somebody!” It was fantastic. You wouldn't do this now. “Miss Plackett wants somebody over in...in a...” something, “Girl's School.” Sent me there. And she said, “Yes, that's- that's fine. When do you want to- when can you start?” I mean you- I never- I was never good on interviews. I never got jobs or interviews. It was a terrible thing. And so, I was there for a couple of years before I went south again.

*And why Nottingham? Why did you go up? Why Nottingham?*

I knew Gerda Loebel, the daughter of-

*Ah...*

Yes, that was one thing. And it was far enough away from all the... problems I'd had. And... And that was actually not so bad when I was there.

*And you made your own income. You had your own income.*

Yes. I earned my living.

*You made a living.*

Yes, yes.

*So...were you- you were not tempted at all to go back to Germany, or to...?*

No, I didn't think- I wasn't- I didn't think like that.

**[1:13:46]**

*No. Right. So, then you moved back to London, or...?*

Yes, then I came- went back south- and I think... This is when I went to Israel, not long after that. It was probably a year after. Because Mrs. Loble had a cousin living in Israel - she had been for many years - who came over. And I met her and we talked and everything. And she said, “Yes why not have a- come over...” you know, “go on a kibbutz.” And- and I did all that and it was really very good. I was the oldest one there mind you and the least I had the least

able to learn their language. But I got enough to- to get around in Haifa at the end. And that was- that was fine. That was really very interesting and very nice and met some good people and... So that was... I don't know when it was...

*But again, you didn't go with the view of staying?*

No.

No.

It didn't- just didn't occur to me. I just...I don't know. But it was good because you know you got around and, and... there was not- there weren't very serious conflicts at that time. You got sort of... a bit of border skirmishes or- And at night they still patrolled, you know, the chaps were there at night patrolling the kibbutz. And...

*Did you have any contact until then with any synagogues, or...*

No.

*...Jewish sort of, organisations?*

No, I didn't at all.

*So that didn't feature for you? That... as a...?*

Sorry? As a teacher?

*No, the- the whole Jewish aspect?*

No. No.... No, it wasn't on a religious basis at all, ever. I did feel- I did- I know where I belonged. I know where I'd come from and I knew, you know, all that sort of- I was sympathetic to all that but I didn't- nothing active. Nothing... nothing of that...

*When your aunt worked at The Dorice, did you ever go to The Dorice to eat? Did you go anyhow to the refugee cafés?*

Where?

**[1:16:06]**

*In Finchley Road. Did you ever go?*

No. No, I didn't either. No. I mean I didn't- I didn't know about going out... to eat or anything or... coffees or anything.

Nothing nice, like- that came later.

*Yeah?*

It was- although in Balham, when I was in Balham, and I've forgotten which year we're talking about now, but I did work in a- in a café... earning my- to my living while I was in Balham. And... So, I suppose that was the only- the only time, that I was in Balham. Yes. I don't know how long I was there. And that was when I was.... Oh gosh... Don't think... No, I can't remember much about it, but I did go- I did... I think it must have been full time... to earn a living, you know...

*So, when you moved from Nottingham down to London, did you continue to work as a teacher?*

Coming back down to London I... Yes, I went to- I was at- I think that's when I went to the Redhill Secondary School for a couple of years... as an art teacher. And then after that I went to Israel. So...

**[1:17:40]**

*And then?*

And then coming back from Israel- oh yes. And over there I'd met this fellow. Danny Wurzburger. [laughs] Great character. Little incident. I was in a shop. I was trying to get- in a newsagent- and I was trying to get something but having a bit of a struggle with my Hebrew which I'd- I only had six months on the kibbutz. And then I went into Haifa... living- domestic work. And this fellow came up - huge tall like anything - in sandals and torn socks and everything. "Can I help you?" "Oh yes! Thank you." ...So, he translated for me, and... that took off from there. But he- as he said, both too inflexible. That would never have worked out. But I knew him for a long time and he was a nice person, but quite difficult in

many ways. An eternal student. He got married in the end to- to Irmela who's now in Berlin. And she knew how to manage him and live with him and everything. And, and, and then through him I met Walter of course. He said, "When you go back to England, I've got two brothers in England. One's Ken in Essex, a business man. And there's Walter in Surbiton, at the- and he works at the Continental Telekom on the French speaking side. So, get in touch." And I got in touch and as soon as I rang up Continental, I got the right number. He gave me everything. And I was speaking, and I thought, "That voice!" This is- it's the voice which got me, you know. And I met him shortly after probably the next day or something. Stayed at the flat because I stayed there too long and I was terrified I'd be overnight at this man who I didn't know at all. You know. And he had one spare room in, in, in the flat in Surbiton. And I shut and locked the door, I think. I was just- I was very afraid of the whole sex business in a way. Of the- I just- I don't know. Not enough- no experience or... it wasn't that I didn't like- that I was against them or anything. It was that- just how- I was just so naive and so unworldly. Everything. Anyway, so... And, and then that sort of took off. And when brother Danny came over- which he often did- to England from- by then he was- he was in- back in Bonn. He'd been in- he'd worked in Israel also as a... customs... man. You know, seeing what came in and what shouldn't come in and so on. And... so when he came over, yeah, I knew it was impossible to have any kind of real- that kind of relationship with him. And I'd met Walter by then and it was all over in six months, married and everything. All done and dusted, as they say.

*Aha, so you first met his brother.*

**[1:20:53]**

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, and then I- then- and when I came back from it, I was up and I rang up Ken who was working in- in for Scholl. And he did a lot of research things for the Scholl-driving shoes- all sorts of things and he was often going to Austria and places, you know, to- on research. He had quite a good job and a responsible one, and so on. And he had said to Walter, "There's somebody- I think it's somebody for you." So anyway- Walter was quite unlike any of the other brothers. Totally un- none of them were at all interested in the arts particularly. Danny was, but he was not active or participating in anything else. And so, you know it did- it took off very quickly and then he was twenty years older than me of course. So... I mean- yeah. But he was very stable... worldly... very versatile in many ways. He'd like walking. He was a good musician in every way. Composer. And we've got seventy things of

his upstairs, and as I said before, that many of them have been played and performed and...  
But... Yes, so...

*How old were you when you married?*

Oh, that was in 1964 we married, I think. '65 was it? 65? I was in early thirties I suppose, very early thirties.

*And he was in his fifties?*

**[1:22:29]**

Yes, he was twenty- that's right. Yes. Fifty-three – that's right - and I was about thirty-two, thirty-three. And... And it- it was just- I just felt the second time I'd landed and that, and also, there was somebody... grounded. Really well based and in, in- in many ways. And just- what I needed, I think, really. I mean you stood on- it was on the cards obviously that he was going to- I was gonna be left alone at the other end. But it did come- he said, "You may be wheeling me around in a- pushing me around in a wheelchair." I said, "Well, I don't know about that. I can't think of that... so far ahead. I only know about now, and I'm happy." You know. So yes, it took off. And he was really very versa- he was interested in the arts and in... I don't know. He just...

*And what was his story of immigration? When had he come?*

His story. Yes. Well, he - oh it's a long, long way round cause he... He left Germany I think he was thirty-three. No. He was- hang on. He was born- born in 1914... anyway. And his father was saying, "My sons, don't leave me." And they said- he said, "We've got to. The situation is desperate, and I've got to get out of here." Lost both parents, of course. And... he went to- he was with the band – that's right. And they went to Singapore... first, I think. And then they went to... ...He was- he was with some very good bands, actually, some of them quite well known.

*Was it an orchestra?*

Walter was.

*Orchestra or band?*

A band. They were a bands at that... Yes. And quite well-known.

*What was his instrument?*

One particularly well known- it doesn't matter.

*What instrument did he play?*

Clarinet at that time. But as I say he changed to bassoon of course, and- and he was also good on the saxophone. So that was- I guess that was it. So, he... ...I've lost track.

*Walter's emigration. When did he come to England?*

He was thirty-seven, so he- he was thirty-seven when he came. And he was born in 1914. Twenty-four, thirty-four- he was, yes, he was about- he... I don't know. Well, he was thirty-seven and he was born in '14 so...

[1:25:44]

*He must have been younger. He came before the war to England? Or after the war?*

After the war.

*But you said he was interned as well.*

Well, he was. Yes. That's- that's right. He – oh, God, they were sent to... it's- it's a very- it's quite a complicated story, Walter's is, because it's back and forth. And he- he ended up in Singapore with the band. And they were then... Oh gosh, I must be tired; I don't really remember whether they were sent from Singapore to Australia. And a lot of them were...

*Yes.*

As enemy aliens or something, because they were German. Never mind that they were Jewish, but they were German.

*So, he was in Australia in an internment camp?*

Yes, he was.

*For how long?*

I think he was- well, he was in Australia for eleven years and- and in the internment camp for a lot of that time. But he got out to do his music degree which he did manage to do over there, which is pretty good. And he also taught for a year at Melbourne University. Taught...

*I see. So, he came to England much later.*

Yes, I suppose. Yes, that's right.

*Which camp? Do you know where he was in Australia?*

They were first of all in this awful one - Tatura.

*Tatura, yes?*

That was an awful. But they... gosh. I do know it but I can't offhand...

*Don't worry. Don't worry now. How did he describe his time in internment camp? Did he...?*

**[1:27:27]**

Well, they were, you know they- they were always very good at picking up life, if you like. I mean, especially on the art side, artistic side, on the- you know. They'd often- they had... schemes - not schemes - what do you call it- it's a sort of a structure, in a way. And... I think he started composing seriously in the internment camp, in fact. And he met his good friend Klaus Friedeberger... Friedeberger, and... Klaus always says, "Oh, he taught me the rudiments of music." But he was a very good teacher, Walter. One of his great strengths that was, really. And, and... yes. So, he, he- he made some friends there and as I say, he was in Australia altogether eleven years. One year teaching at Melbourne University. He did his degree there- in Australia. And it wasn't that bad. I mean they had jobs. They were never sent to the front or anything, but they... I think he said he'd had one job unpacking asbestos things of all things but it never did affect him. So...

*Why did he- why did he come back to England? Or, not back, but why did he come?*

Well, he came to England see his brothers, and then he forgot to go back, as he said. And...  
[laughs]

*Right. So many brothers did he have in England?*

He's got- he had Ken up in Essex and... Well, no, Danny wasn't living in England. Ken was in England. Danny was still in- in Germany.

*So, by the time you- you met him, he was already- was he settled here in London?*

Yes.

*Right.*

Yes. He was in Surbiton then. That's right. And... And working at Continental Telephone Exchange, you see? On the French speaking side, which he never had any tuition in. But he- I think the Germans, the Dutch, the Swedes - whoever - they have this flair for languages and they seem to- it seems to be natural and... he didn't have any tuitions or anything.

*And why was he in Surbiton then, in particular?*

**[1:29:42]**

I don't know, but that's where he ended up. I think at that time, the LCC as it was then, gave not exactly grants- they helped people to get their- to get living accommodation – flats, buying them. Yes? And so, you took out this loan or whatever it was they offered. In Surbiton. I don't know why it was Surbiton. It was not far from the river, which was very nice. He- as I say, had this flat and it was- it was not very high- there were only three- two or three stories- I can't remember. It was a very nice flat and... working at Continental. That was right in the East End in Faraday- Faraday House, or something. And you know he was on his own and he had a very lovely sense of... furnishings - deco and that. He had a friend- oh, they're- they're very well known... for this. He had this- sort of all this textile place, factory or whatever. And Walter got a lot of very modern, lovely stuff at that time- 50s, 60s... furnishings. And he, he had a beautiful flat! All which he, on his own, which he'd- you know decided he'd have this and this wallpaper and this and that and so on. Anyway, so he was there. And...



**[1:31:26]**

*Were you British at that point already, or...?*

Yes, I'd been naturalised a long, long before - long before.

*When were you naturalised?*

I was- I think I was... twelve or thirteen when I didn't know anything about it. But I was sort of guided through it, you know.

*Was it important for you to become British?*

Not personally. I didn't... But yes- I never thought about that one.

*So, you moved to Surbiton?*

So, I- that's right. That's- that's it. I met Walter and then... Well, it was, as I say, it was very short; all over in six months we'd married and everything. And then it was... And the girls came just about on the right side of marriage, but not too long after. [laughs] And- and then of course the flat was too small. And so we found this one in Worcester Park which is very big- it's a big place. And...

*Which is this house?*

Sorry?

*This house?*

Yes.

*So, you moved here.*

Yes - yes.

*When...?*

It was about '60... early sixties.

*So, you've been here for a long time.*

Yes, I have. I've been here about seventy- seventy-four years I think, it's something like that.

No. Can it be?

*A bit less- yeah.*

No, it can't be.

*Almost sixty years.*

January '74. Eighty-four, four, fourteen, forty-

*Almost fifty years.*

Yeah.

*Yes. Quite a long time.*

It is.

*Hannah, I would suggest now we take a break, and then pick it up.*

**[audio break]**

**[1:33:19]**

*Yes... We got to the point where you got together with your husband...*

Yes.

*But actually, before talking about that, I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the Slade and what sort of people you met. Did you meet some...?*

I met one or two- one interesting person who I got on with. I mean, there would be many, but... they were a lot of high fliers. There were debs- debutantes, and there seemed to be a very... not clique exactly, because there were too many of them. But they all seemed to be very socialites and the social sort of... set up it was. I didn't seem to- I didn't feel I fitted into

that at all, you know. And so, I- I hardly ever went in and I had to get somebody to sign for me. [laughs]

*Oh, I see. So, you didn't like the atmosphere there?*

No.

*No.*

Oh, no. It was- and also it was very stylised, as I said, you know, you could have a model six foot away and you end up with drawings this size. And it was- they came from the- I don't know what it was, but it came from the top and, and you could always tell at that point if somebody was at the Slade because of their drawings. And there were one or two very adventurous and good artists among them.

*Such as?*

Not- not well known. A woman... Good stuff she did, and I remember her drawing of this ...crashed aeroplane. You know. So, there were people who didn't take much notice of that. But most of them somehow adopted the 'Slade style', if you like.

*Did you come across a woman we interviewed called Susan Einzig?*

I've heard the name, but I don't- she was there was she? Yes. I think- I don't know if she was there when I was there. When was- I don't know when that was.

*Another year.*

No. I've heard the name.

*She was a refugee.*

Was she? And she was an artist there? She was a... a painter, was she? Cause they did sculpture as well. Yes... Yes, I have. Is she still around?

*No. I don't think so.*

Oh...oh... Susan Einzig. Yes.

*She did book illustrations as well.*

Did she?

*Yes.*

Oh, right. Okay. It is familiar to me, the name.

*Any other names you came across? Any other people you-*

**[1:35:49]**

No.

*That stand out, or that...?*

Not well-known.

*No... OK. So, let's move then to the time when you met your husband as you set up home together.*

Yes, he was already in service and had this flat. And beautifully decorated - beautifully done. He had such good taste and everything. Anyway, yes, and I- we married. I moved in... I moved in before we were married, I think. [laughs]

*Where did you marry?*

Registry Office, Kingston... nothing very exciting.

*And who- did you have any family?*

Sorry?

*Did your aunt come?*

Yes. Yes, she did. And also, the one from Berlin, Auntie Herta, who was still with us. Yes. ...Klaus Friedeberger and his wife...other friends. You know. And... yes, so... And the, that's right, the same evening we went - flew - and it was a terrible flight, and I was holding on to Walter for dear life. [inaudible] But we got there.

*To where?*

**[1:37:20]**

Paris. One o'clock in the morning. Looking out for somewhere to stay. Hadn't booked anything hadn't prepared anything. Went from one to the other. "Oh!" they said, "There is one down the road." They were all very helpful you know. "Yes. Try that one." And we found somewhere eventually, we got in. And it was interesting because this lift, one of these really old-fashioned, heavy, iron, wrought iron ones, you know. And we got in and all of a sudden it shot up. [laughs] We thought we were never going to stop. And... that was fine. That was one in the morning. I mean they- I don't know if they were open all night, but... so that was OK. Booked in there. And... we had a very nice- lovely week in Paris. It was November, rotten weather. Not- not actually pouring with rain, I have to say. And Walter knew his Paris very well, because he'd been an itinerant musician in, in around then. He could speak French fluently and so on. So... it was really most enjoyable. And I've forgotten what it's called- we went to the Jewish Quarter. It's that- do you know it?

*The Marais... The Marais.*

Yes. The Marais. That's right and went all around. And it was marvellous to have somebody, you know, I just felt- protected and supported and laughed and it was- it was lovely. We were only there for a week. He was still at Continental at that...that point. And... had to come back obviously. And they gave him a- I think it was the French small copy hardback of French... sort of many copy encyclopaedia thing as a wedding present. Which was nice. Very nice. So... So that was lovely, that week. It was really very good. And... then it was back to... And then it was back as a- and I couldn't get used to the idea of being called 'Mrs. Wurzburger', you know... takes a little while. And- and even then- when he was working- every so often he had to work nights at Continental... as an- even as an instructor. But- and when he wasn't there I thought, "Have I done the right thing? This- - you know - "This is so not like me." I- I- and I wasn't sure and everything, but of course it was right. And, and... you know I just got used to the new life, the new status and everything. And it was... it was- it was OK. It was fine. It was good. Yes. The girls came I think just about on the right side of marriage and... and that was another big event of course, with two of them.

*Did you know it was twins, or...?*

[1:40:22]

Well, they did- just before this- oh, one doctor said, “Oh, no, no it's not twins. It will be a very big baby, but it's not twins.” And then they had me in because they had done a scan thing. And they said, “Yes, you've got to come in earlier because it is twins and we...” you know, you've got to be- bit more vigilant. So that was all alright.

*Identical twins, or...?*

Well, they never quite could be sure, because of the placenta things which were not very clearly separated, I think. I don't know. And I don't think they are because they turned out as different- with different approaches to life. But I think in one case they're too much influenced by the husband, and not, not a good thing actually. That's another story. So... you know, they're not... They're not like bosom pals, which you might expect with twins, even even non-identical. But they- but they get on all right, and they have similar interests and, and, and so on. And- but they are- they do lead very different lives and, and different approach to things, you see? Mnn.

*And what sort of identity when you raised them. What did you- how did you want to raise them?*

Well, not, no- never to wear the same- exactly the same clothes or have the same sort of any identical... things, you know, which people tended to do that. An old friend made these lovely little turquoise little coats for them. They were only about three years old. Sort of very furry and lovely warm which I did- use them, of course. But I tried to keep them as separate identities. And in fact, they were. And they were also not the same weight when they were born and not the same shape head. One was rounder one was- so I, I just took it that they were not entirely identical twins. And I was not going to bring them up in that way. So... And it seemed to suit them and you know, it worked and so it was alright.

*And in terms of their identity, I don't know, did you join anything Jewish or not Jewish, or...?*

[1:42:45]

No... There wasn't, because it wasn't in the home. I suppose if we'd all been brought up in this tradition in the, you know, Jewish religious tradition- doesn't have to be rigidly religious but just- but there wasn't anything. And I know when Madeleine went to Israel, and she went- she did go there for about six months, on a kibbutz. And she said, "Well, you never told us anything about that. I wish I'd known- known more about the Jewish aspect of our... identities..." ... partly the religious but not, not necessarily. Because it wasn't there. And Walter's family were very liberal, very- I don't think there was any sort of religious upbringing particularly there. And I didn't have a... a... In fact, at the home, we did, as, I think I mentioned before, every Friday evening we had to- it was a formality: they had to do it.

*Yeah.*

But... And subsequently I was on the High Holy Days I was sent sometimes- I was staying with... I don't know. That was from Stootley Rough, actually. And-again, they probably felt they had to do it. On one occasion to the West London Synagogue. And I just hated these things. I was just so glad when it was all over. I didn't understand any of it. I couldn't read Hebrew. It wasn't all in Hebrew. And... you know it was... I, I just- I mean there must be - what's the word? Compatible, nice ways of bringing up people in a religious way, without it being too... too religious or too rigid or too... You know, it's part of the everyday life in a way, isn't it? And then we didn't- didn't have that. And certainly not at Stootley Rough, there was nothing, so...

**[1:44:54]**

*And in your family life with the children, where did you send them to school?*

Yes, they- ...They were- they were not- actually, at the junior school they were not very happy, and that's just up the road from here. For some reason. I guess they were- children can detect this if other children are not like them. You know, can't they? And I think this was a case of that, because they were- Ruth came home once running home from school one day, which as I say it's not too far, because she couldn't stand it anymore there. And they'd been persecuted, or not exactly persecuted, but maligned and, and- I don't know why they didn't seem to fit in too well. They didn't like it there. And so- so it's just one of those things. I mean we- we got through it but... I don't know. It's just different. Not better, not worse. Different.

*And did you talk to your children about your past? Was that something...?*

No, not- hardly. They know something. And I hardly ever have. And I keep thinking well perhaps I should... tell them more about this. Madeleine's a writer, and she could write- and make some notes and things and write things down. Because it is... It impacts on their lives doesn't it, you see, so...?

*Did it? How did it? How do you think did it impact?*

Well, I mean... It's hard to say, but... But being- being different. First of all, a refugee. And... They should know perhaps more about the background- my background, in fact. It's not that I... enjoyed much of it there. As I say it was five, five, nearly six when I came here. So- I mean there are still things which they would be interested in. I think Ruth more than Madeleine. They are different in many ways. And... well I don't know... I guess that's it.

**[1:47:30]**

*How do you think...?*

It's good to know your background, isn't it? After all I mean you have to, really. And if you don't - I know from experience – you, you miss out a lot. You miss- you miss out on things. So... So...

*What is the most important thing for you, from your background?*

Well, the fact that I didn't... have a family- a, a....a near, close family - right? ...of my own, to... to support me. That would be probably- I mean you need that, even if they're not always the best... whatever. You know, where you belong. And I- I didn't. I was always sort of floating a bit you know. Not- not well-grounded and not... You, you have to know your heritage if you like, your inheritance - whatever. And I think that's- that's a great loss if you don't have that sort of inbuilt, you know, from the word go.

*And now do you feel more grounded or do you still feel... [inaudible]?*

Not- yes, I am. Well yes, because I've worked on myself a bit. I've done- you know- things. But... there's something which you- if you didn't have you- you don't gain ever, I'm afraid. So... you live with it. You.... I mean people have all sorts of... missing bits, if you like, which



they adjust to, I suppose, and which they have to accept. And... I suppose many, many people who don't have to go through what I've been through or what other people like me have gone through. Because... nobody is super perfect parents or has perfect backgrounds and perfect histories... and it's just you live with it. Or you just have to- I don't know- I mean, in my case I can- I can pick up on a lot with books which – several, I mean you see them in there, there's many of them - which help to ...help you to identify yourself with other people in that situation and, and with the situation at the time, for yourself. So, you can do quite a lot of work on yourself to... I mean I haven't ever had a lot of confidence and- and... and that's not- not very good. You know? And I've had always people... boosting me and helping me and being very supportive. But if you- you've got to have it in yourself. You've got to believe in yourself. I think this is the thing and I didn't... and I don't know. I was always looking around. What were other people doing? And what would- you know what would so-and-so do if such-and-such?

*Yeah...*

So...

**[1:50:35]**

*What do you think would you have done if you had more confidence? What- what- in which way?*

Well, I would have certainly persevered with the art on a- on a more professional basis if you like and I didn't. It was inter- I did it all my life, but it was intermittent. And I loved- I wouldn't want to lose it. But I would have taken it seriously. And... And hopefully made- possibly made something of it. And, and I mean I used it in teaching- in my work in teaching but- and I wasn't teaching for that long. It was intermittent. I think, two years at a time and then maybe moved on to another school or went abroad or whatever it was. And... Yes, I think this is the important thing, to- to have enough belief in yourself that you persevere with something. It may not be as good as the next person's or... not, but if you trust your own... what shall I say... your own direction, and- and way and believe in yourself. This is the thing.

And then you don't always criticise and, "Oh no this is no good". I mean I had this at art school. I had it everywhere. And I had- people keep saying, "Don't keep running yourself down", you see because you look around and there's always somebody better. [half-laugh]

[1:52:01]

*And do you think it was important for you that your husband had also a refugee background?*

Yes, from where he came. Well, I don't know about- But... ...Yes, because he, lost- he lots- lost his parents in the- you know, they were killed. And... he- some of his later music which didn't- involved songs. And what's the one? "*Vereinsamt*"... and things like that. Do you know that? Yes. Cause he did a concert. He was- he had his own orchestra here. I've told you this. You know, he could identify with that and he could make the best of it. And he could get the right singers and so on. And... ...He... He never really got over the death of his parents. I mean, he was actually- in Australia... I think he was no longer in the camp by then. I'm not sure. But they called him... I don't know- maybe he was teaching, I don't know. But he- they sort of called him out - I don't know if it was Australia actually, because - to tell him that his father had died. His father had been- had died. And- and I don't think he ever really got over that. He talked more about his father. Well, his father was a very strong influence on the music side of course. Mother also taught piano, of course, but-

*What was his father's name?*

Siegfried.

*Siegfried...*

Siegfried Wurzburger.

*And he was a musician as well?*

Sorry?

*He was a musician?*

Yes.

*What was he?*

He was a- well, he was mostly a singing teacher... And in Frankfurt he was well known. And you could hear from down in the street what- you know, what was going on up there. And he- and I think his wife taught piano. I'm not- I think that's what it was.

*Siegfried Würzbürger?*

Siegfried Würzbürger.

*So, your husband never... accepted- or couldn't... it was difficult.*

His death you mean? Yeah. Well, he- he- yes, I mean, in the normal way, people die and sooner or later you accept it. But in an abnormal way, it's very hard.

**[1:54:36]**

*Yeah... You didn't tell us- when did you find out what happened to your parents?*

I've... I've got two- I've got a death certificate of my father... and I think of mother in... in the- next door in the drawer was all this- with some of this sort of stuff. ...But I don't- so know where and when. But I don't really know anything... any details about it all. My aunt didn't tell me anything and...

*So, there was no moment when you can remember that suddenly you were told, or...?*

... I don't know. It's... 'cause I've got a record of it, you see, so I'm probably using that. But...

*Yeah. But the difference between you and your husband is that your husband left Germany as an adult.*

Yes. Yes absolutely.

*And you left as a child.*

Yes.

*How do you think that- so he had German I assume, you know, he must have been fluent ...*

Yes, yes - yes.

*So, you had quite a different experience.*

Yes... that's right. He- and he- and he also had brothers, you see there were other siblings- there were other...

*Yeah.*

So- and he chose to leave... as well, right? So... I mean he had the foresight I suppose. But I mean, for many years he was an - as I said before I think - itinerant musician around Europe everywhere: Scandinavia, France, Paris... Holland... you know... and managed to get work.

*Could he re-establish himself here as a musician?*

Well, he... It was very, very hard - very hard. They- they couldn't- wouldn't accept him. He was- cause as I said, thirty-seven when he came. They don't- they want them at twenty. And he did establish himself locally, I can only say. I mean he started the- where there'd never being a resident orchestra here at all, he started the Kingston Philharmonia - yes? - as he said to largely- partly to play his own works. But he didn't play many of his own works. Occasionally you got- they did do some. His work- apparently his music was very difficult to play- to perform. Quite difficult. And- but he put on some very good concerts, otherwise.

*So you've got all his music?*

**[1:57:34]**

Yes. Yes.

*You have- you are the keeper.*

There's several- well, yes, I am, but I haven't done all of the catalogue- all the work on this like- there's this Matthew Kelley. I have to get in touch with him now, because I've got eight boxes of his music there, right? A lot of it has been printed out, played and performed.

*Where? In England or in Germany?*

Yes. Here- here- well, actually in Berlin- two years ago, I think when we went. That was the last time I went there. And with Ruth and- I think with both girls. Because [Albrecht] Dümling - yes? - was doing a- a thing on... whether it was Australian com- refugee composers in Australia, because there were lots of them, or whether it was some other thing- I've got all the- all the stuff is there. I just can't...

*Yeah?*

They did a very good- very, very well done and well attended, I have to say... project on- on this subject. On- and- and with photographs, and detail and sort of a bit of background and so on.

*And does- do you feel that some of this music deals with the experiences of being a refugee?*

It's hard to say. It's very hard. I'm- I am not a musician so I didn't- can't go right in- I can't sort of go into the- right into it. But I don't think- and certainly not consciously - yes?

Whether anything came out in that- in that vein. I don't know. He would not- you know he- I think he thought of music as being too pure for- to, to involve any personal- anything so personal and so touchy, really. So- so... sensitive. So, so I just don't know. But... it's....

*And as a married couple, what sorts of circles did you mix in? What...?*

Well...

*Who were your friends?*

It was a lot of musicians, in fact. A lot of them... cause certainly once he started this orchestra and he- they came. At first, he had to do with very- very, very amateur musicians. He did it. He didn't mind who came, would just, you know, get- get people come- get the musicians there. And they were not always was very...what shall I say? ...Quality musicians. But eventually he did... build up a very- very substantial and quite serious orchestra- resident orchestra. But always with outside- outsiders coming who were professional very often, you know, friends- but professional. And, and, so he- I think this- this gave him a feeling of satisfaction that he was at least doing something creative in that way. And... especially here with a big town like Kingston who'd never had any resident orchestra. They had something I think called the Thames Concert Orchestra which came from time to time, but they did

smaller chamber works or... which is nice, but it wasn't... Whereas he used to have, I think... three concerts a year. I'm not sure if it was three or two because it needed a lot of rehearsals. They were not professionals, most of them. Although they were- that was their main interest... most of those musicians. And they, you know, they, they joined chamber music groups and all sorts of things. So, he had some good- good people among them.

**[2:01:27]**

*And did your daughters play some music?*

I'm sorry?

*Did your daughters play some music?*

Well mad- I was very disappointed. Nothing I can do. Ruth gave up very easily. No patience at all with ... First of all, with a very, very lovely teacher, woman we had - a friend - with piano. And she- she was very hard to teach, had no patience so that was- that was a write-off. Madeleine got Distinction in Grade 8 with the violin and she didn't go on. She was in his orchestra. She didn't want to go on. And I- I- well, you know it's- it's- you can do all your other things as well. But why not? Anyway, she didn't. So that was a waste of- a wasted talent.

*But your daughter Ruth took on the art? Your art?*

Yes. From the word go. From the very first things- she did things which- which have this... I mean children's art anyway is- is lovely, most- a lot of it, because it's so spontaneous and so... you know. But... she's never stopped doing it. She wanted- they wanted to both be actresses and they went to auditions and things, and that was not on. They were not up to- they were quite funny in fact in, you know, at times and they could put on little shows at Christmas and things. But it was not to be. And- she- I remember her saying to me once, "I'm so glad that you encouraged me to do..." - this is Ruth - "encouraged me to do art." But I mean she didn't need- well, if she needed encouraging, I don't know. But from the word go, I- I mean... I can show you stuff when we go out later on... on the wall. I don't- I don't normally- what's the word? You know, make a big thing of this. But she- I've said it before, I think. She had this- given. And it was always, and she, she just- just loved doing it - just did it.

*Yeah...*

So... Madeleine was not interested in that. Her- her thing was more- or she did very girly things. In fact, like her daughter does now, or did do, cause the daughter is now eleven. And... she liked doing it and they were both terribly interested in... in the entertainment world. Film- especially film and film stars... for years - and still are. I mean, I can remember Madeleine writing a letter to Olivia de Havilland on, on her- I don't know, it was her hundredth birthday or something and I think she's still with us... you know. And... all this sort of thing. They- they were- and there's not much they didn't know about that world. It was just.... They loved it all, so...

**[2:04:22]**

*How do you think your experiences affected your role as a mother? As a parent?*

First of all, I was so glad to have a family. It was just so marvellous. And... When most people were going out to work, I was at home doing things, until they were about twelve in fact. And went back to teaching. But... So, I did everything I could... for their benefit and... I think I was a bit- fairly strict. And also, they- they will never- never forget this. I would not let them go to see things like "Grease". "No," I said, "this is rubbish." It's a terrible thing, I mean that's not- you know, it's, it's their- it was their age group and things and... But- and then on the other hand we went- I took them to see "Superstar" – "*Jesus Christ Superstar*" was it, or the other one? Anyway, one of those. But in fact, I learned from them in this way... to take these things on board. And quite- really quite enjoyed a lot of it. And... Not Superst- what was the other one? There was.... with- I think they used Elvis Presley as the- anyway, it doesn't matter really.

*No.*

But I learnt a lot from them actually in this- in this way and taken an interest, and... you know. Madeleine doesn't work so much. She's got her hands full of course with kiddies and teaching at home. This is in Richmond. And Ruth's- they've got no children, Ruth and Mike. And she's- she's more into all the things which are going on like that. So... I think the last time she came- last weekend she came and... what did we watch? Oh, that was about- the

Hitchcock thing. I don't know if you saw that or what you know about that. And we went into great detail with this one psycho with this one- practically the one scene for a whole week it took. And so, I said, "Yeah, okay. I'll watch with you." And I mean it was- an- analysing the thing really. And an iconic thing apparently you know for film. So, she's interested in all that. She- she's got this insight into the things but because of the interest, I think. And again, I learnt a lot from her there you see. I learn a lot from the girls.

[2:07:07]

*And have you taken them to Berlin, your daughters?*

Yes, they've been. Yes, they've been separate times. They have. Yes, that's right. And... they- they loved it. I mean they like going, you know. They'll go anywhere. And ...Ruth's quite ambitious. Or that's the wrong word, but... more- very... not ambitious. Better word. Interested in, in- in going to other places and seeing other cultures and other things, you know. I mean, this feeds into her- she's not doing a lot of it at the moment because she does dog's body in the school. But into what her main interest is. So... And she's had to stop doing it which is a... terrible waste I see- as I see it. But she hasn't got the energy now. Not got the time. Mike has been very ill. He's- and he was the most massive robust fellow, he is. And to some extent he still is. And they discovered he had this heart problem, and in the meantime lost two stone, which is not a bad thing because he was a bit over- he wasn't fat, but he was just muscular and big and then- could lose weight. And she's very loyal to him because she hasn't- he's not the easiest one to live with. He's got a bit more subdued since his illness. I never thought it would happen to him. And she is absolutely loyal and- and you know, does whatever she can for him. And he's changed a bit which is good- a very good thing because he was- he was very- well, he threw a diatribe at me once I can only say was really absolutely terrible and shouldn't be on record. He was difficult and he's- he's got hang ups and he drank a lot. Now that's cut down enormously and hasn't quite stopped, but since he's been ill, he's cut this down. He doesn't seem to mind, doesn't seem to notice it. So, a lot of things have changed... in many ways he's still his- his old self. He's got a good- he likes people and is totally opposite to Madeleine's husband. Totally - extremes. He really is gregarious. He goes into a pub or meets- wherever... and immediately he's talking to people and he, he likes it. And John wants to keep away from crowds. So, you know, she- I don't know. I think it's very good that she has stuck to him because there were times when I- I'd think, "Oh, God, why didn't she meet a nice Jewish boy?" [laughs] You know, because of course they aren't. But...



I think it- they're very well suited. It's not easy for her. She said, "No well I'm terrible to him sometimes." I said, "Well I'm absolutely not a bit surprised." Because I mean, I've had to tell him just to stop and shut up and, and. He's, he's been- this has changed since his illness. I mean he, he was really- and there's nothing- he can read a book in an evening and remember it. Not that he reads the best books always, I have to say. Rubbish stuff - television the same. And she goes along with all of that. Well, you know she doesn't have to read those books she doesn't have to see those... television things. And I think they are very well suited, so she's- she's actually very good for him. And she gets a lot from him, she reckons. So... yeah, I accept that there are- what was it Elizabeth Taylor said? "Stuck together for love always, like feathers to tar." [laughs] You know.

*And what about your grandchildren? Are they...?*

They're very spoiled and I can't- I do get on with them. More so with Elan, the fella- the boy. He's now thirteen, he's gone- just been- last September gone to secondary school. And Yael, is eleven. She's terribly spoiled, and this is- I can't go into it and there's no need. It's John's need. He's so- I mean he's ruined her almost. I mean, it's- everything comes first. Madeleine comes last in that family, and we both see this, Ruth and me. And I don't think we're wrong. And I'm a bit fed up with- you can't do anything. If I say anything about when Madeleine is there about what's happening, she- she just up and defends them and defends him and everything you know. She's loyal. But it's not good. But the grandchildren are very spoilt. I don't think it's doing them any good, and I don't think it will later. Hopefully they will grow out of this or be pushed out of it somehow.

**[2:12:09]**

*And are they interested in your past at all? Are they interested?*

No, but I haven't sort of- I don't think they know- they're aware of this even you know. So, I mean it's not their fault and I don't know if they have. Perhaps they do have to be- it has to come from Madeleine I think partly. At first, anyway. And...

*Have you been attending- did you ever attend the Kindertransport reunions?*

I haven't. I haven't.

*Are you interested in meeting other... Kindertransportees?*

I am interested in actually in meeting other people. Just lately somebody's come to light who knew me when I was- when we were both six. She... is she Jewish? I don't think she is.

*From the school?*

No. It was... evacuated- I- as a refugee. And she was evacuated from London where she lived - to Broadstairs, this was. And this came to light after I'd written a letter to the... one of the- what's the Jewish paper? The AJR [Journal]...

*The AJR...?*

Yeah. About some experiences that certainly happened, because it was relevant to what a- what they'd written about before. And through that the- one of the fellows got in touch with me... and said, "If you are..." such-and-such - "Hannah Gibianski that was..." and so on and opened up that connection.

*Who is that? What was his name?*

He was- who is- who it is? That was... Levy, somebody- what's his first...? Paul Levy?

*Mn-hnn.*

Paul Levy.

*Mn-hnn.*

And... Yes so- so...

**[2:14:00]**

*You are- but you are a member of the AJR?*

Sorry?

*You are a member of the AJR?*

Yes. Yes. Oh yes.

*When did you join?*

Long ago. I've been for a long time, I have. Yes. Yes. They do these interesting- every so often, the paper, don't they?

*The Journal.*

The Journal... so. Yes.... No, I- I'm quite interested in that. And they do a very lovely... Jewish Renaissance book- magazine.

*That's another magazine, yeah.*

Lovely one. ...Interesting, 'cause it covers- it goes to all countries and that, doesn't it?

*Yes.*

And, yes, I mean in that sense, broadly speaking I- I would be- you know, I like to keep in touch with all that sort of... those- those people, places, issues. And... And... Cause I mean you never really – although I assimilated very well- I think we are pretty good at that, actually. But you're- you're not really- you're not English, you see? You're not really English. You still... The first few years are- are the significant ones I think for the whole life almost, aren't they? So...

*How would you identify yourself today? How do you see yourself?*

I don't know, it could- it could be from so many different directions. I don't know... .. I'm not easy. I'm not an easy person to get on with, as I know from my daughters. I- I don't... I think I haven't moved with the times, frankly. I don't- I don't think I have... I'm- I'm learning to do this. I'm still learning, and mostly from them...

*Do you...?*

... and realise- sorry?

*Do you see yourself as British or...?*

Yes, I, I- I think... Not really. I- I can't- again, you- you're stateless forever because... I mean I have this loyalty to the... to the British. But... you don't really... I don't know where I belong. [half laughs] It's... it's...

**[2:16:39]**

*Where do you feel at home?*

Where? I'm alright here, really. I mean I wouldn't know where else... you know... Yeah, I mean... I'm, I'm- I'm at home here, really. I'm not sure if anybody who's, who's- is not born and who went through this ever can ...totally identify with this... with you know- with the country that- with their 'host country' if you like. And I mean I know a few people- the painter Klaus Friedeberger. And... while they're very good at - I think they are - at assimilating and - you know - appreciating the, the, the culture and the- everything to do with the country that you're in. I still have this very strong affinity feeling with Germany. With Berlin. Whether I like it or not. So...

*What do you like about Berlin, or what...?*

Well, first of all, it's enormously- it's, it's the most full of life city that I've been in, and I haven't travelled an awful lot. But it's absolutely... full of life. A lot- more than London because it's in a different way. It's still a very political city. Wherever you go, you've got the *Siebzehnten Juni Allee*, or whatever it is, or.... you know. And I think I always will. And I think- I do think it's a very not just alive city, it's - it's ... And it deals at long last with very important... social - political issues. I think more than this country does- they have more- but perhaps it has to and this country doesn't have to, you know. So... it's- I can identify quite well with it. And- and I do- and there's an awful lot going on. I mean I know there is everywhere, but I know from my sister-in-law Irmela - who married Walter's brother, and she moved from Hanover to Berlin - the amount of discussions you can go to. The- all sorts of things which... visiting people from- visiting lecturers talk and so on from other countries. There seems to be an awful lot more of that. I may be wrong because I'm not getting around much here, I must say. There seems to be a lot of that and it is absolutely a very alive - full-country. And... and no, it's... I mean it's not a holiday resort exactly like you would go if you wanted- if you'd needed a rest. But it's got this other identity and I can identify with that. You know. I just...

[2:20:00]

*Would you ever take on a German passport?*

I don't think- from a practical point of view there's- would be no point, because I - I can't move around so easily. I wouldn't mind going back for a visit. The last time, as I say, was when they had this... Dümling put on this...

*The performance?*

Yes.

*Yeah.*

And that was really good. That was not that long ago. I think three years or something. And I went with the girls and that was-

*What about your daughters, if they took on German passports? Would you object?*

They wouldn't- oh I see. If they did?

*Yes...*

Well, no, I don't- at my age and all that, you know. A lot comes- the age comes into a lot of things, I'm afraid. I wish- it wouldn't be- it needn't so much if I was very mobile and I'm not. And I've had- it's been a series of ill health things from when I was thirty. And somehow, I still... lived a reasonably normal life. I was working and married... kids. So, I can't complain but on my own I do [laughs] complain. No, it's not too bad. And I get a lot of support here now and so on. So, you know, I'm... I'm- I'm stable here I suppose and that's it. And... I wish I could get around more. But I'm lucky to be here at eighty-four, I guess. So... I think the worst thing is being alone. Being on my own so much of the time, you know. It's- I'm glad that the winter's coming to an end and we're getting some lighter evenings and things and- because it makes a difference when you're on your own.

*Yes.*

It's- and- I don't know- always having to do everything for yourself and, and by yourself. And it's... You know, it's nice when Ruth comes up cause- Madeleine's not far away of course so she doesn't- and she's got the family, so she doesn't come here for weekends or anything. And we go down there when Ruth comes up for one day as well. But Ruth comes up from time to time. And... that's very good. So...

**[2:22:27]**

*When did your- how many years ago did your husband pass away?*

Ninety-five, I think it was. Ninety- was it '91 or was it '95? He was eighty-one which is not that old, but... Heart trouble. He otherwise... respected his body. He looked after himself very well and he was not overweight or anything like that. But he- it's just one of those things I guess, he... You know, it's... Yes, so... And many is the time I wish he was here to- to talk to and to... He was interested in culture and things and politics. All sorts of things. So... But I mean this is life. It happens to many people and it's on the cards certainly if he's- if your husband is twenty years older than you. So...

*You said you had- I wanted to know what impact- you had the mental breakdown you had when you were at the Slade?*

Yes. That was the second one, I think. I had one before- I had one much earlier before I went to the Slade when I was... living in Balham with the girls- with Valerie and Angela.

*So that was before?*

Yes. So it was.

**[2:23:52]**

*So, after you were married and had the children you managed [inaudible] ?*

Yes. I think that's right. I don't think I had- no that's right. I didn't have any after they were there. They were born seven- '61, did I say? Or '64... Yes, so...

*Because mental health is something people often don't discuss... you know.*

Oh, right. Yes. Is it not now a little bit more focused on?

*Now, maybe.*

Yes.

*But you know, often...*

I mean it's- it's something I'm- not to be surprised at, in the way we live even at the better of times it was better. But I mean at the best of times it was not the- well, at the best of times it was good and I enjoyed that here and I'm glad I was here when- when there were the best of times in this country.

*Yes...*

But... I mean I was only growing up then. It was all- they started all the things. They had 'Education for All' for everybody and the NHS... social services - everything. And that was amazing because that came from somebody from the upper class. Attlee - Lord Beveridge. The both of them, they- you know. And I was just reading- actually I made a note of this the other day. The Webbs - Sidney and Beatrice Webb started the state... what shall I say? State social system for the people- for everybody. And that's going back a bit. That's good. That's...

**[2:25:29]**

*How do you think your life would have been if you hadn't been...*

If I'd been back...?

*...forced to leave?*

... in Germany? I think I would...

*...been there...?*

I'm sorry?

*If there wasn't a Hitler? If you hadn't been forced to leave?*

Yes, I think I would have probably learned to play some musical instrument. Walter wanted to teach me piano and I just didn't persevere with it. And I think I would certainly have-may not have made a profession of it, I don't know. But certainly, learned some musical instrument from the parents, you know, both of them. And it's- it's fascinating to think about. It would have been totally, totally different. ...I mean... I suppose this life is not what you- doesn't follow a smooth path, does it? As, you know, you're going all over the place. ...But... Well, it certainly would have probably been more stable as well. Yes, that's...

*Do you think - from the perspective of a Kindertransportee - that it was good to be with other children, in- compared to being fostered into one family?*

Yes. Yes, I-

*Do you have a view on that?*

It's hard to say. I mean... very often I wasn't with or with all- with those children were not always refugees for instance, you see?

*Yes. Yes...*

But it was good to be- it was good. And especially when I got to the boarding school of course. That was- because there you did see- meet people who had bad experiences especially in Poland and Germany.

*Yes.*

And, and- and even though I didn't consciously think of it or be aware of it... they were sort of soulmates, in a way.

**[2:27:39]**

*Yes.*

So... No, it's...

*Do you think the fact that it was so bad, that children's home, was partly the failure of the sort of English Jewry to understand?*



I'm not sure if it was the... the Jewry. I mean there seemed to be no authority which... regulate. Which checked up on things. I don't know who- who was responsible for this place whether it was- I don't think it was her private enterprise. It... Well, it probably was a Jewish thing, if you're right. Because she was... Yes... It's- it was very bad, I mean.

*Do you still- do you feel bitter about that?*

No.

*Or angry about it?*

Well, not- neither of those, but just... wasted years in a way. Because, you know, your talents such as they were as children, or whatever you like to call it, were not developed as they would be in a family. No- not respected. And so, it's a bit of a loss again, I suppose.

*And do you have a feeling today about the child refugees and...?*

Yes, I think this is absolutely- I mean this- it's a bottomless pit. This- it is so absolutely appalling. Children are so vulnerable. And especially when they're separated from their family. It- it's... I don't know how they can do this. The whole thing is just a nightmare. It's it's- it's terrible.

*Do you think that Britain should allow the children refugees in?*

**[2:29:26]**

Well, I mean... yes. I mean I don't know about... They seem to have the size and the space. And I do think they should. Yes. You see there is this sort of... is it a backlash they call it? I don't know- of, of native people who always say, "Oh, all these- we get all these refugees, all these bloody foreigners... all these... people with no homes and that." And of course, they're afraid that they're going to impact on their lives and take away their jobs and their- whatever else. And I think there's still room in this country for many more. And they've just got to be properly assimilated at the beginning. You can't just throw them into some... community. You know, they've got to be gradually... assimilated into the culture, the society and so on. It's even worse in Germany, Irmela says, because the - Turkish people, a lot of them - and they stick to themselves, and they stick to each other- stay with each other. And- and they are

not friendly apparently. And as is a lot of antagonism- a lot of problems there. Worse than here. Has- Frank [cameraman] hasn't gone to sleep, has he? [laughs] Oh, I'm sorry.

Yeah, are you alright then? You know so. It's- it's very bad there, she says. It's really- they make themselves hostile but they are hostile. And, and it's, it's- it's, it's a big- it's a big social problem I think over there in Berlin.

**[2:31:09]**

*So, Hannah, have you got a message for anyone who might watch this, based on your experiences?*

Who might want...?

*Anyone who might watch this- this interview.*

Oh right. I appreciate very much that you're doing- I was going to ask is this off your own bat or is this from a bigger organisation?

*This is funded by the Association of Jewish Refugees.*

AJR. Right...

*They started it.*

Because I do think this is terribly important. I mean they talk about- there's no such thing as blue-blooded Englishman, never has been- they've always had foreigners. And- and I think it's very important again for the... to know that this - you know - that you're living- they're living with all different kinds of cultures and people. And I think it's a- it's a very positive thing actually and very rich. As long as you don't have this... faction of, of resentment of certain classes, which you- I can understand up to a point. Because...they think English is the- England for the English in this country- and they're going to take away your jobs or they're going to...to supersede you in other ways. I don't know. There's always going to be this fear, isn't it? It's a fear of other- and if things were- I think half the trouble is that we're never given the- the, the real situation about things. I've just finished reading Polly Toynbee's book "*Dismembered*", and there's that going on. Dismantling of the state of course, which she reckons is the only answer for a- a healthy civilised society. Not privatised, because they've

got different agendas. And if- if it could be made clear to people what is going on and why this is not good or why it's good, it would be very helpful. Whether it comes into the school curriculum or whether it comes through television programs. And made- people may not watch that who need to watch it. You know, it's important that people know what is going on and we never get the full... Even when you read the best as far you can, you never get the whole truth anyway. You know. I think you've got to be very open minded and this is very hard for...for not well-educated people who- who fear their- their livelihood. Foreigners all things like that. And then this country's always been very good at taking foreigners this is what's so amazing. It's always been very open in that way. So, it's... But if things were more explained to people about what is happening and why. I am amazed at the moment – I don't want to go into politics - but quite amazed at today's papers. I didn't have much respect for Theresa May. She's standing up to things at last, very well. And you know I do have respect for that. And then there are forces at work which are very unhealthy and which are reaching our shores. So...

**[2:34:36]**

*So, you think there should be more education?*

I do- open. Absolutely, I do. If it's on television, people don't have to watch it. It should come in with the school things. And also if possible, in some other way to people so that- because if they're going to read the rag papers they won't get it from that.

*Hannah, is there anything we haven't talked about? Anything you'd like to add?*

No, you've been very- very kind, very sympathetic and everything. And I don't think so. I mean you can go on indefinitely. I can stop and it's- you know it's- as you say there's hundreds of people like this with their stories isn't there? Two-hundred and eighteen is it so far or something?

*Everyone is different. Everyone has a different story.*

Yes. And also, it is important that it's part - as I said - part of the history of this country. And the great thing is that this country takes people you see, which other countries are very reluctant- Hungary... whatever. So... I mean there's a lot of good to be said for this country... in this way they've always been very broad minded in, in - in these sort of things and... And it does make

I think, in the long run make the culture much richer- make it make the whole civilized life much richer doesn't it, you know? So... yes. Yes. No, there's- I'm, I'm very lucky to be here. I mean, I came with the last children's [inaudible]

*Yes?*

Complete the circle. ...And I- I could have missed it. Could have just been left behind... cause only so many they could take, and that was it, so... And I have to be very grateful to you as well. Thank you so much. You've been very helpful in suggesting things to talk about and... sympathetic. You know, so it's- it's important to have this. It is part of the- part of the history.

**[2:36:49]**

*Thank you...*

Next door my- books...

*Thank you very much...*

Nothing to thank.

*...for this interview and for sharing your story.*

Well, it's very good of you. Thank you very much, Bea.

**[2:37:02]**

[End of interview]

[Start of objects, photographs and documents]

**[2:37:05]**

Just go next door and have a quick look. You don't have to open anything. Just look. I'm sure you know all those books; there's about six or seven of them... dealing with this subject. The whole... I don't know...

*Hannah, can you tell us a little bit about this painting?*

Object 1

It was done very spontaneously - not from any photograph or anything - many, many years ago in my twenties. And I never did anything with it until recently I covered it again- discovered it. And I just felt it's- it's just sort of the mother - general mother picture.

*Is it your mother?*

Not unlike... but that's it, I think. ...And at a time when I was just using very complimentary but simple colours in a not so hugely colourful thing but... comp- reds, greens, blacks... that's it.

*Thank you.*

Ok.

**[2:38:20]**

*Thank you.*

*Yes, please who is on that picture?*

Photo 1

That's my father, presumably as a student- music student at Warsaw Conservatorium. As far as I know.

*And his name?*

Max Gibianski.

Photo 2

That's with my mother. I think I must have been about eighteen months or... a bit less perhaps. About eighteen months, I would say.

Photo 3

With my parents. And I probably was about five. There's no date on the back, is there?

Photo 4

This is one of me. I think I was probably about four, because my Auntie Erna who didn't survive is on this one. On the right-hand side is Auntie Herta who did survive into her ninety-seventh year I think or ninety-ninth year, possibly. In Berlin.

Photo 5

A picture me, probably four or five years old in Berlin. A studio photo.

Photo 6

I think this must be a passport photo. From- coming to England from Berlin when I was about... I can't exactly- I must have been five at least then, cause shortly after I came I was six.

*Yes, it says: "May 1939" on the back.*

Possibly. Oh, right. OK.

Photo 7

This is in England. I was probably six by then. Studio photograph.

Photo 8

This is a photograph in the garden of the home in Hemel Hempstead. The Chestnuts. And the lady at the back, Betty Tursley, was very supportive and a great friend. And very kind. I'm not on this of course, but...

Photo 9

This is in the garden of a block of flats in Belsize Park Gardens where my aunt was living. And I was eleven years old.

## Photo 10

I'm with my Aunt Betty who was living in England then, in Oxford Street. And I was probably about twelve or thirteen. So that would be thirty-four... forty-six- late forties.

[2:41:50]

## Photo 11

At Farnham Art School, with several of the other students. I'm on the left. About...oh, when was I at Farnham? 19... Oh gosh, I was about twenty... mid-forties.

## Photo 12

My grandparents in Berlin. Well after the war. Must have been celebrating their golden wedding. Sort of late-sixties.

## Photo 13

This is my wedding to Walter Wurzburger in... '65 I think it was, with the family around. That's, by the way, Klaus Friedeberger right at the back on the left.

*Right. Who else is here?*

There's Walter's brother Ken, on the left. His son Stephen on the- next to Walter. Stephen was thirteen, so that would be- oh, gosh, I haven't worked it out. Both aunts on the right hand side. Auntie Betty first and then on the extreme right, Auntie Herta. She came from- over from Berlin for the occasion. And two friends: Gordon on the right who disgraced himself by getting drunk. And Klasina, an elderly relative of Walter's. And Gerda, who you may- well I've mentioned before Mrs. Loeble's son. Mrs. Loeble was a sort of second mother to me - Czech lady. And Klaus Friedeberger on- next to her.

## Photo 14

These are my twin girls. Ruth on the right. Madeleine on the left. And they were about- I would say about twenty or eighteen. They always looked younger than they were and they didn't like that at all. But they always looked younger than they were. So...

Photo 15

Yes. A picture of Walter Wurzburger. In his later years. A posed photo of conducting his orchestra which he formed in 1971, Kingston Philharmonia and kept going- it still is going today.

Mrs. Wurzburger, I'd like to say thank you again for this interview and for sharing your photographs with us.

Oh, I haven't done anything. It's really- it's very good of you.

**[End of photos and documents]**

**[2:44:54]**