

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	105

Interviewee Surname:	Mendelsson
Forename:	Steven
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	7 May 1926
Interviewee POB:	Breslau, Germany

Date of Interview:	15 September 2005
Location of Interview:	Salford, Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 39 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE****INTERVIEW: 105****NAME: STEVEN MENDELSSON****DATE: 15 SEPTEMBER 2005****LOCATION: SHEFFIELD****INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN****TAPE 1****Tape 1: 0 minute 12 seconds**

I am interviewing Steven Mendelsson and today's date is Thursday the 15 of September 2005 and the interview is taking place in Sheffield and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

Tape 1: 0 minute 26 seconds

RL: What is your name?

SM: Steven Samuel Mendelsson.

RL: And do you have any other names?

SM: No. Samuel is my Hebrew name, Shmu'el, and I'm named after my grandfather.

RL: And when were you born?

SM: On the 7th of May, 1926.

RL: And where were you born?

SM: In a city in Germany called Breslau, which is in Silesia, the size of approximately half a million - Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield. And now, since the end of World War Two, is Polish and it's called Wroclaw.

RL: Now to start with, if you can tell me something about your parents and their families?

SM: Yes. My father was born in Breslau and my mother was born in Bonn. Exactly how and where they met I don't know but they got married. And they were rather cultured individuals. My father played the violin and my mother played the piano. And at an early age, when I was four or five, they tried to get me involved in musical appreciation. And I liked playing the drums. But unfortunately there's very little

music composed for solo violin, piano and drums and so the repertoire was rather limited. Because my father had a married sister in Vienna, my parents, as far as I remember, left about three or four times a year for about a week or ten days to go to Vienna to breathe in the culture there – the theatres, concerts, etc., etc.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 27 seconds

And we had a nanny, who looked after me while they were away. My father was an associate in a company, a transport company, transporting agency that my grandfather had founded. And the company was known as S. Mendelsson and Son. And when I was born it was deemed that I would obviously take over the company in due course and that's why I had to be called Steven, that starts with an 'S', so that the company's name wouldn't have to be changed. Things turned out rather differently, as you know. But, nevertheless, that was the intention at that time. My father went to work on a daily basis, as the junior, the boss of this organisation. They imported a lot of goods, mainly meat, from the United States, brought it across by boat to Szczecin, which was the Baltic Sea Port of the Oder, the River Oder, on which Breslau was. Then they transferred it to barges and brought it down to Breslau and from there it was distributed throughout the whole of Eastern Europe. So it was quite a large company. They had a branch in Szczecin and the headquarters were in Breslau. And they had obviously agents in Chicago and in the United States. It was a well-run company, entirely founded by my grandfather. And in 1930 they added another son to the family, my brother, Walter, who was born on the 5th of May, 1930. So by that time we were a quartet: mother, father, young Steven and even younger Walter, or Wally for short.

Tape 1: 4 minutes 40 seconds

And I remember basically very little. My mother was very keenly interested in physical fitness. She made sure that at the age of, I don't know, three and a half or four perhaps, I would go to what was known as a 'Turnstunde'. And this is some sort of physical training group for young people, where we did all sorts of little exercises. I don't quite know what the equivalent would be in England. I've never come across this thing. And she always wanted me to work on a farm, become a farmer, possibly, you know, someone who not necessarily labours and slaves on the farm but somebody who owns the farm. And my father's desire, of course, was that I would come and join the business. In 1931, or thereabouts, I went to school. I was five years old and I had to go to school. And of course I went to a German school. Normal sort of thing and, from what I remember, there were perhaps two or three other Jewish kids in the class. But that didn't make one iota of a difference. We were not consciously Jewish in any way. We were not observant in the true sense of the word. We were Jewish-conscious, nationalistically conscious, my parents were. They went to shul, to services on the high holidays, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and we kept the Seder, but we did not keep Shabbat per se. We were very assimilated, like in fact, I would say, I don't know, possibly eighty or ninety percent of German Jewry were assimilated. They'd had a relatively good time where they were tolerated for many, many years. And that obviously encouraged assimilation to some considerable extent.

Tape 1: 6 minutes 43 Seconds

RL: What did you know about your grandparents, your parents' parents?

SM: My grandfather was born also in Silesia and he was the one who formed this company. He was quite an outstanding man. He was the first ever Jewish Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce in Breslau and that was a very prestigious position. He developed all sorts of transport systems, by rail and sea that were as far-reaching as Rumania. And he was therefore an official on the local railway council, whatever it was, or transport council, whatever they had. And he earned the respect not only of the general community in Breslau but he earned a number of medals and commendations not only from the King of Prussia but also from the Kaiser in the olden days. He was a highly respected man, very much in charge of the family. Everybody ran to him for advice. And I was exceptionally fond of him. He was a wonderful bloke. He had two daughters and one son. His son was my father. The two daughters, one daughter married a Viennese gentleman and they lived in Vienna. They had one son. His name was Hans, who was quite an outstanding individual, who, together with me, ultimately, wrote this specific book on my grandfather. He was a solicitor, my cousin, Hans, and illegally he moved to the United States during the war. Quite a remarkable story he had.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 41 seconds

He was very much involved in a socialist organisation in Austria and when Hitler marched into it, I think on the 13th of March 1938, within hours he escaped to France. He fought in the French forces. Ultimately met up with his fiancé from Vienna. They married and then went to the United States illegally, on a boat from Marseilles to America, when America was still neutral. And as stowaways. And they ran out of food three days before they got into America. And they caught him in the galley stealing some food. The moment they arrived in the States, he was imprisoned. But he was released fairly soon afterwards on compassionate grounds. And since he couldn't in fact practice law, as it was practised in Austria, he ultimately opened a business in stamps, I think - he was selling stamps and so on. That was my cousin, Hans. And my grandfather had three grandsons thus. One of his daughters was barren, I mean she had no children at all. And so he had this Austrian grandson and his two Breslau grandsons, as it were: Wally, my younger brother, and myself. And somehow he was particularly fond of me. And he wrote letters to his daughter every week in Vienna. And that was always on a Sunday, because he worked during the other days. And I was then commissioned to take this letter before lunch on a Sunday and take it to the post office to post it there. And I was known as the 'postillon d'amour' because those were letters to his daughter. And for that he gave me ten pfennigs, which was part of my pocket money, and I was a really rich bloke. I owned a bicycle and I had a wonderful life. He was a wonderful bloke.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 58 seconds

SM: And, coming back to myself now...

RL: Can I just ...?

SM: I'm sorry, yes.

RL: You've not mentioned your grandmother.

SM: No. My grandmother was a woman who was very ailing. And she in fact refused to speak to me after I was three and a half years old. Because she was always in bed. She had a lot of, what do you call it, folds in her skin. When you get old, you have lots of creases, or something, whatever they are called. And I, at the age of three and a half, so I've been told, I thought I'd give her some personal advice and said, 'Grandma, why don't you iron your face?', you see? And she didn't like that, and on the strength of that, she never talked to me again. She insisted on living up to her fiftieth wedding anniversary, which she succeeded in doing. And, unfortunately, three weeks after that, she passed away. So I don't know much about my grandmother. And my mother's parents, who lived in Bonn, they had a house that bordered onto the Beethoven house in Bonn. And my mother had one brother and one sister. She was the youngest. The brother was a bit of a go-getter. And he served in the Imperial German Forces in the First World War. He was wounded three times but he survived. He was awarded the Iron Cross, first class, and for a Jewish man that was quite an achievement even in those days.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 50 seconds

Her sister, Leni, she was a pianist, a rather particular sort of woman, who wouldn't touch anything that was slightly dusty or dirty or anything of that nature. And she fell in love with an Englishman. My grandfather, Richard, my mother's father, ran a printing firm in Bonn and he took on an English apprentice. And this English apprentice was a young man and his name happened to be Sam Middlebrook. And he fell in love with my mother's sister, who was a very beautiful woman. And the war started and he had to go back to England. He served in the British Forces. On compassionate grounds he was saved from fighting on the Western Front because he didn't want to confront his brother-in-law, future brother-in-law. And he served in India. What happened there during his service I really don't know. I was quite fond of him actually. And it was in fact he, with his wife, who guaranteed to the British government, ultimately, in 1938, '39, that they would look after us financially, as it were, and so Walter and I were included in the Kindertransport. They had no children. My uncle, Heinz, my mother's brother, married a pianist, a concert pianist, and they had one son. This son was called Theo Olaf. And, Elvira, Heinz's wife, and Theo Olaf, fled to Holland in 1938. My uncle stayed behind. I have no idea why.

Tape 1: 15 minutes 3 seconds

But all I know is that, in 1940, he was forced to scrub the pavement in front of the Düsseldorf Town Hall to the amusement of all the onlookers and was then gracefully shot into the back of his neck by some Nazi official, as thanks for his services to the Fatherland when he was in the army. The mother and son were in Holland and after the invasion by the Nazis... Oh yes, my nephew, Theo Olaf, who was, I think, one or two years older than I was, so at the beginning of the war he would have been fourteen, was already a violin virtuoso and played solo violin, with orchestras of course, in front of various monarchs in Scandinavia - Sweden, Denmark, Norway. And he was of course well-known in Holland by that time. And a non-Jewish family, devout Christians, Catholics, took him under their wing and bunged him into their

cellar, at fantastic risk to themselves. And there he was throughout the war. Never saw the sun and never managed to play the violin. His mother was deported, like all the others, and perished in Auschwitz. So, to some extent, that is the inner circle of my family, if you like.

RL: After the war, where did Theo go?

SM: He stayed in Holland. He was freed like the Dutch were and he resurfaced. And out of gratitude to the family he married their only daughter, a non-Jewish girl. And they had four sons.

Tape 1: 17 minutes 8 seconds

But I understand that... And he's still around, as a matter of fact. As far as I know, and I think that is correct, Benjamin Britten, the composer, requested my cousin, Theo Olaf, to be the first one to perform his violin concerto in the Royal Albert Hall. And he has never regained this incredible status of being a child virtuoso, you know, like Yieman was or Menuchan or Yitsak Bermann. But he was for many many, many years the leader of the Consertgebau Orchestra in Holland, in Amsterdam, under Edward van Beynum for, many, many years. And he has played occasionally with the Israel Philharmonic and various other orchestras. He's an old man today. He is obviously over eighty. But our contact is very, very sporadic unfortunately. So, that's roughly the family, the immediate family that is.

RL: Describe to me where you were living in Breslau, your home, and then the neighbourhood.

SM: Well, we lived in a flat. Most people lived in flats. And I think we lived on the second storey and there was a big balcony. And at the end of the street, which was perhaps three-quarters of a mile away or so, there was a large military establishment, a cavalry regiment was stationed there. And I remember two occasions when a couple of horses broke out and wildly ran through the streets and everybody panicked and so on and so forth. But the thing that impressed me most at the time was when they marched around with their bands. Of course all on horse back. And there was the kettle drum player, who was usually leading this sort of procession. And the German military accuracy and discipline, this is quite incredible. And this man, who was known as 'der dicke Ulrich', his name was Ulrich and 'dick' means thick, tubby, you know, he was quite tubby bloke. And I remember him sitting there with his fantastic, you know, the drum sticks, as it were, and these two kettle drums on either side, on a white horse. Fantastic! And that aroused in me, perhaps, to a large extent, the considerable amount of respect for military discipline and militarism as it were.

Tape 1: 20 minutes 0 second

And that showed itself at a later stage in various forms. Our neighbours? Well, I don't know the neighbours. And in 1937, when things began to become rather more oppressive and so on, my parents left this flat, and we moved into a large house that was occupied by my grandfather, who was by that time on his own, as it were. Apart from a charming lady, Heyda Goldstein, who had been employed by my grandparents as a 'gouvernant', or educator, for his three children. And she became a member of

the family and, you know, she was then more or less, after my grandmother passed away, she looked after the household, and did all the domestic things, as it were, that women do, you know? Organised the dinners and the food and the meals and so on and so forth. And we moved into this large, three-storey house that my grandfather had. And the upper flat, into which we moved, had been occupied by his daughter, Lotta, and her husband, who died a natural death. They had no children, as I mentioned before. He died in his sleep, a natural death. And my aunt was so bereaved by the fact that she died within about three months after his death. And so the flat became available and we moved into the flat. And we had also in the cellar, or down below, there lived a caretaker with his wife and two young sons. And they were Germans. And we had a large, a very large garden, with lots of fruit trees, and my grandfather had... And of course we played there, and the boys did - the caretaker's sons and Wally and I were great friends, you know - we played there. And that was basically the place where we lived.

Tape 1: 22 minutes 36 seconds

RL: Why did the family move from the flat?

SM: I think possibly on the one hand there was the possibility of... There was the fact that the upper storey in my grandfather's house had become vacant. It was going to be cheaper. And perhaps in a way, although of course I wasn't involved in these decisions, I was only a kid, they possibly felt a little safer. And also felt, perhaps, the grandfather was getting old, and so on and so forth, and it would be a good thing if... My grandfather and my mother got on exceptionally well, purely and simply because my grandfather was a quasi-dictator. He was the patriarch. My grandmother... My mother was a very courageous woman, an incredibly courageous woman, and she very often stood up to him. And he in fact respected that and so she was his favourite daughter, as it were, in preference to his own two daughters. Quite a remarkable situation! My mother of course was very fond of him. One thing perhaps I ought to tell you about my mother, which will help to describe her character. She was fifteen when the war, the First World War, occurred and she immediately, against the wishes of her mother and her father, volunteered to serve in a field hospital that was in Bonn. And that she did. Of course she wasn't qualified in any way. She faked her age and she did all sorts of menial duties in a hospital, you know - bring this, bring that, take that away, and so on and so forth. And she asked her older sister, Leni, the one who married later on and lived in England, to come and see her one day. And she did. And she stayed there only for about half an hour. She said she couldn't bear the stench, she couldn't bear the blood, she couldn't bear the moaning and groaning of these people. She didn't want to be involved in these terrible things. That described, to some extent, my aunt's character, and certainly brought forth the character of my mother. And so that's... Sorry, yes?

Tape 1: 25 minutes 2 seconds

RL: What did your father do during the First World War?

SM: My father was at work in this transport agency, which was important, but he volunteered for a year as a 'Freiwilliger', 'Einjähriger' I think they called it in

German, to serve with the Imperial German Forces. And he served on the Russian Front. And that came to help him later on, to some extent, you'll find out, quite a bit.

RL: Did he tell you anything about his experiences?

SM: Yes. He said that he was in some kind of a building on the Russian Front, in Russia, and it was bloody cold. And he was kept warm by rats, because rats used to sleep on top of his blanket because they enjoyed his body warmth and he benefited from their body warmth. It's an incredible situation. And my grandfather, my grandparents, often sent him food parcels and so on and so forth, which they kept in, so he described it to me, in some sort of a bedside cupboard, or something of that sort, made from steel. And of course the Germans are very fond of sausages, and all that sort of thing, and so this contained a lot of sausages. And these ruddy rats bit through the wire, a sort of, whatever it is, enclosure, and ate every little bit. They left the skin of the sausage, which was inedible. They left that but they robbed him of all the food. But, other than that, apart from terrible cold and so on, he was not, as far as I can ascertain, in a combat unit. Because of experience with transport and so on, he was in an administrative position, I think, with regards to logistics, ammunition, you know, equipment, and so on and so forth.

Tape 1: 27 minutes 6 seconds

RL: Coming back to Breslau...

SM: Yes.

RL: What part of Breslau were you living in? What was the area?

SM: We lived in a suburb in the south of Breslau. And about half a mile from our house was a very, very charming park. And my mother often used to take us to the park. And when I became a bit older, when I was about six or seven, I was allowed to go to the park on my own. There was a large pond there. And the thing I remember about the pond was that I took Wally. I had a scooter and I transported Wally on the scooter to the park. When I was seven, Wally was then three and we scrambled - we were always very adventurous - there was a gamekeeper's, or park-keeper's boat moored on the side and I thought it would be marvellous to climb into there, you see. And we climbed into there and then I thought it would be a good idea to give it a push and see what happens. And I gave it a push and as the rope that fastened it to some sort of a fastening there tightened and came to an end there was a sudden jerk, of course, and Wally fell overboard, fell into the water, and I had to scramble him out of the water. And I put him onto the scooter and I rushed him home. My mother was most perturbed. I thought - because he was very wet, was very cold, he was crying I suppose as well, and I felt a bit guilty, I will admit - and I suggested, 'Why don't you put Wally on an ironing board and just iron him in order to, sort of, you know, dry his clothes on?' Crazy idea but... She didn't, I can assure you! Yes, that was an adventure in the park

Tape 1: 29 minutes 10 seconds

SM: The school also that we went to, this was a public school, you know, state school, as it were, for that particular area. Junior school, infants and junior school, I suppose. And that was also very near the park, so I knew the area very well. And we lived in the south of Breslau. And the headquarters of my grandfather's company were actually within the old ghetto that existed there. Breslau was a fairly large community, about 21,000 Jews there, and it had a Rabbinical Seminar, where Rabbis qualify. There were only three in the whole country. There was one in Berlin, there was one in Frankfurt-am-Main, and one in Breslau. And quite a number of eminent Rabbis, you know, graduated from this particular Seminar. It was very close to the very original and old synagogue, which was known as the 'Storch'. But we belonged to a liberal congregation. And that was a huge synagogue. On every view point that you had in the city, there was always the cathedral, and there was the town hall, and there was the convention building, and there was the New Synagogue. It was a beautiful building, beautiful building, with a huge leaden Magen Davider Dome, no, Magen David, right on the top, and four supporting, not minarets, but, you know, turrets. And it accommodated, I think, up to three thousand congregants. And I seem to remember that on Simchat Torah, when they emptied the Aron Hakodesh, there were a hundred and fifty six ???, they danced around the Bima. Quite remarkable!

Tape 1: 31 minutes 17 seconds

SM: And every Shabbat and every holiday amongst the congregation were eight Gestapo men in their magnificent uniforms - black uniform, swastika, all that sort of thing - very smart looking. And they sat very quietly at the back. The Rabbi was an extremely outspoken man and he was basically there only every second Shabbat because when he was missing he was in prison. They were intelligent enough not to bung him into a concentration camp because he had a considerable influence over the congregation. So whenever he said something that wasn't liked by the Nazis, they marched very quietly - there were two - from what I remember, there was a large section in the centre, then there were gangways on either side, and then there were more sections, particularly under the balconies where the ladies sit - and they marched up there, in military style, and did this sort of thing to the Rabbi [demonstrates a beckoning motion with his finger] and he followed without any trouble. It didn't disturb the service in any way, other than of course there was a cut to the sermon, you know, and the Hazzan and so on and so forth. The assistant Rabbi - they had lots of officials in those days, they could afford it - he continued with the sermon.

RL: What was the Rabbi's name?

SM: Pardon?

RL: What was the Rabbi's name?

SM: It'll most probably come to me. I've just thought of it. I've forgotten. I'm afraid I don't remember. I'll most probably remember it again. It's the old age, you know?

RL: So you actually witnessed this happening?

SM: Yes, I saw it once, yes, yes. Interesting that I couldn't see anything terribly wrong with it, quite honestly, at the time. I was, what, seven or eight years old. I

knew that Hitler had come to power, obviously, and so on and so forth. But I was still at school. I was always very popular at school, had lots of friends, who were all non-Jewish of course. And we belonged to a gang. And we had our secret hideout and we lived in the suburbs and the roads in the suburbs were reasonably wide. In those days, of course, there were very few people had motor cars. There was very little traffic. If you saw a motor car coming through the street once every twenty minutes or so, that was an event. And so, because we all had bicycles, we bicycled around these streets in perfect safety and so on and so forth. We played robbers and police, on bicycles. But our main activity really was playing football in the streets. And we often broke the neighbours' windows.

Tape 1: 34 minutes 20 seconds

For which we used to get a good hiding from our parents because they had to pay for the repair. And we also did a lot of scrumping. All these houses had large gardens and they had lots of fruit trees there. And in our garden, if I remember rightly, there was one huge walnut tree, about four or five cherry trees, about ten apple trees, five pear trees. It was fantastic. And so we used to creep into other people's gardens and steal plums and apples and so on. And we used to meet in our hideout and then we used to compare, you know, who was the victor of the day, who had the most plums and so on. And sometimes the plums used to make a mess of our trousers because they used to get squashed in the pockets. But, you know, it was great fun, it was wonderful. By that time, of course, the doctors, nurses, teachers, lecturers, had all been dismissed. And slowly but surely the screws were being put on us. We were not allowed after some time, chronologically I don't remember when all this happened, but we were not allowed to go to concerts and theatres and gymnasia, you know, health clubs, and so on and so forth. And things became a bit tight. And in 1936 the Olympic Games were held in Berlin. And, prior to that, I need to tell you that having belonged to this gang of, you know, real boys, as it were, we used to - the highlights of our existence were the birthday parties. And of course, you know, I had about fourteen or fifteen at my birthday party and I went, accordingly, to fourteen or thirteen different birthday parties. We were great friends. And the fact that somebody was Jewish or so, you know, just didn't play anything. I was the only Jewish boy, as far as I know, in this gang. And in 1936, as I mentioned, the Olympic Games were held in Berlin. And shortly after that we all went back to school in September. And suddenly I noticed that none of my mates would have anything to do with me. I felt very odd and I spoke to one of them and, to give him his due, he was very honest. I said, 'Fritz, you know, what's going on? We're all good friends here but nobody speaks to me'. 'Yes', he said, 'I'll be very honest with you. My father said I mustn't play with Jewish kids anymore'.

Tape 1: 37 minutes 10 seconds

And that was traumatic. Suddenly I was ostracised. Suddenly all my friends - I saw them, you know, as close as you are to me, for instance, but they wouldn't speak to me. They would continue with their fun and their tricks and everything else and I was totally excluded. It was very, very tough. And then suddenly a decree followed that Jewish kids were not allowed to go to German schools anymore, for fear that they may infest pure German kids with their 'mishugas', with their ideologies, with their thoughts, their diseases, God knows what! And that was perhaps a Godsend. First of all, it saved this very difficult situation of being in the class for about two or three weeks without having any contact with my former friends. But, you know, no more

school. This was, this was quite fantastic! No more hassle with parents, teachers, it was terrific! And this went on for about two or three weeks until independently - I had one or two Jewish friends as well - but independently we all came to the conclusion, 'Hell, you know, we're going to grow up. Ultimately we'll have to find a job. Who's going to offer us a job if we've learnt nothing?' And so school suddenly took on a rather important factor. And, fortunately, because it was a fairly large community, and there were lots of redundant Jewish teachers, who'd been kicked out early on, two or three years earlier, they formed themselves into a school. And we went to school and we had a Jewish school. And there were boys and girls there, very nice people. And I made lots of friends with them, really straight away, I had never any difficulties in befriending people. And, for three or four weeks, everything in the garden was rosy. Until somebody, half way down the road, half a mile down the road, there was German school, and those German kids suddenly found out that there was a Jews' school, as they called it, up on the hill. And so they paid us the compliment of coming to visit us the moment school was finished, about three thirty, four o'clock, sometime in the afternoon.

Tape 1: 39 minutes 38 seconds

And they were all in the Hitler Youth, of course, and they were well-trained. And so, as we came out of the school, they fell upon us, only the boys. There were only boys involved in this. Girls had their free access. But, you know, there was a type of chivalry in these atrocities as well, I should imagine. But they set upon us. And there were usually three or four of them against one of us. And we used to get beaten up. And we had our satchels interfered with, our shirts torn, our trousers torn. We were bruised, kicked, scratched. We bled and so on and so forth. And this became a daily routine. And there was nothing that one could do about it. We had to sort of put up with it. There were occasions when you couldn't go back to school the next day, for a day or two, because you were, you know, so badly bruised, or whatever it was. As far as I know, certainly I had never had any limbs broken or anything of that sort, but, it was tough. But it also toughened us up. We naturally tried to defend ourselves, though this was strictly prohibited by law. You're not allowed to touch a German in a Nazi uniform. You're not allowed to hit him, you're not allowed to slap him, you're not allowed to spit at him, or whatever you want to do. But naturally your natural instinct, when somebody pulls you to the ground and starts kneeling on you and, you know, pummelling you into submission, you obviously try and defend yourself. Naturally, we weren't all that very successful in that respect.

Tape 1: 41 minutes 17 seconds

So that was the school there and, well, it was tough but, you know, we had to put up with it.

RL: How big a school was the Jewish school?

SM: Well, I think it'd been running for quite some while. It was what they called the Gymnasium. It was a well-respected school and there were some very, very capable teachers there. And I would say perhaps they might have had six, seven hundred students there, I mean going through the various classes, starting with what they called the 'Sechster', which was the first, until the 'Primer', which was the first class. And there were seventeen, eighteen-year-old kids, who took the 'Abitur', equivalent to 'A' Levels, prior to going to university. So that was quite an acceptable situation. What

we did there, in conjunction with all other schools, I suppose: if the temperatures in the summer rose above twenty five degrees Celsius, then we were given time off. They were called 'Hitzeferien', heat vacations, you know. It was marvellous. So there was a large thermometer on the trunk of the tree in the playground and invariably we sort of got somebody to stand on our shoulders, when the chances were reasonable, you know, it was perhaps twenty three or twenty four degrees, somebody would stand on somebody else's shoulders with a match, would hold it under the thermometer until it pushed the mercury up and we'd then call for a teacher to come and take the reading and occasionally we succeeded in getting time off. Which was useful because we weren't molested then, you see? We left at lunch-time or something like that. It was a bonus. But that didn't happen very often.

Tape 1: 43 minutes 15 seconds

I was - as was the custom in Germany, every class had to have a 'Klassenführer' - and I was elected 'Klassenführer' in our class when I was there. By that time, don't forget, I was already a young man, you know? I was eleven, twelve years, yes ten, eleven, twelve, something like that, eleven. And it was a co-educational school and fantastic, fantastic camaraderie in this class. I played a number of tricks on teachers. I brought a saw one day and sawed off one of the four legs of a chair. And took great delight in seeing the teacher going arse over hat falling off that chair. The class was in uproar, you know, it was fantastic. And when the teacher demanded to know who it was, the whole class stood up. But it wasn't very difficult for the teachers to know who was the culprit. On one occasion - we had a Latin teacher, who was a very capable woman, always wore a black dress - and she was writing up declensions - armor, armas, armat, you know, whatever it was. And I sat in the last row and I suddenly conceived the idea that if I - these blackboards were cleaned with a sponge, you know, and water if you remember - and of course I soaked one of these sponges with water and threw it with all my might from the last row, you know, in the class, against the blackboard, to miss the teacher by, what, I don't know, about two or three feet, but enough to spread all the impact of this chalk-infested water all over her dress and her face and so on and so forth. It was fantastic! It was, oh, it was great fun! On another occasion, we had the geography lesson. I remember that very well. And the teacher was very, very involved in the beautiful scenery. We stood on some sort of a rock or something and looked into a valley. It was very pretty. And there were lots of other rocks. And there was the teacher standing in front of a class of about thirty or so and pointing out this and pointing out that and so on and so forth. It was getting bloody boring, quite honestly. And I suddenly had the brilliant idea that we'd all buzz off and hide behind the rock, you see. And this is exactly what we did, very quietly. And she carried on talking and talking and turned round. There was nobody there. She almost had a fit, you know. But, you know, those were the sort of tricks of the trade as it were. And for that, of course, I used to get punished.

Tape 1: 46 minutes 0 seconds

My parents used to be advised. I had special warnings in my reports. Reports were issued three times a year and they had to be signed by the father or the guardian. And you would then graduate into the next class, provided that you'd passed all the examinations that in fact were commensurate with the year that you'd just completed. And round about Christmas - promotion, the new school, you always started after Easter - and at Christmas there was a report and there was always a warning there, 'Fortsetzung zweifelhaft'. That means graduation is very doubtful. And, on one

occasion I remember, I went to my father to give him the report. And I must have been ten. And I'm quite impressed still today with the brilliance that I exhibited at that time. And I took this report to my father, and I remember, he was sitting at his desk, I remember tapping him on the shoulder and I said, 'Daddy, you know, here's my report, you know', I said to him, 'The most important thing is that we are fit and well', and with that, I buzzed off. Yes! He didn't have a tremendous sense of humour. My mother was the more humorous person. He was a very serious-minded sort of bloke. I loved him immensely and he had a heart of gold but he didn't share this perverse sense of humour that I developed. And ultimately, in my later life, developed very much as a, yes, you could say, as a self-defence mechanism, if you like. It helped me on various occasions. Humour I think is terribly important. And if you can apply it, it tends to break - you know, in a nice manner, obviously, without being obtrusive or insulting in any way - it helps to break a barrier between people right from the word go. And I think this promotes human relations. Doesn't matter on what basis one wants to be related, it's very important I think. Apart from that, it's considered to be very healthy, yes.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 23 seconds

RL: Did you belong to any clubs as a child?

SM: At that time, no. Later on, yes, but, while I was in Germany, no. My father was a member of the RjF, 'Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten', which was the organisation, it was the Association of Jewish Fighting Men. By fighting men, we mean members of the Armed Forces. It's a bit like Ajax actually, yes. And that was very important because many of the Jews had fought in the Imperial German Forces of course and were proud of it. And occasionally that was taken note of. There's one interesting thing with regards to my grandfather but perhaps I'll leave that for a little later. It connects a little later in my developments. So I'll leave that for the time being.

RL: So was that the only organisation that your father belonged to or did he belong to a ...?

SM: I should imagine he was a member of the 'Shul', of course. But, as far as I know, he was not a Zionist in that sense and therefore didn't belong to any, as far as I know, to any Zionist organisation. Obviously, they must have belonged to some cultural organisations and so on. They were highly cultured and extremely well-read but none of this, unfortunately, brushed off on me. I'm a very uncouth, uncultured and, you know, happy-go-lucky sort of bugger.

RL: And what about your mother? Did she belong to anything? What did she do?

SM: I don't, no, she was basically just a 'Hausfrau', you know? Like so many, well, like almost everybody in those days, both in Germany and here. In the thirties and before, they stayed at home, they looked after the family. Yes, yes.

Tape 1: 50 minutes 32 seconds

RL: How did they spend their spare time, you know, if they wanted entertainment?

SM: Yes, there were lots of soirees and meetings in the house where they made music and they performed on occasions, for family occasions, wedding anniversaries, especially the grandparents, who were held in very high esteem by the whole family. They performed, you know, little plays and so on and so forth - that picture there that I showed you. And they went to friends of course as well. That was all permitted. There was no... Yes. We used to have in the winter, I remember, our house was a sort of regional assembly point. They, the Germans, organised what they called 'Winterhelfen', that's winter aid, where people offered not money but goods - tinned food, and jams, and all that sort of thing, was collected and was then distributed amongst the poor. And we did exactly the same thing within the Jewish community. And so things that were collected were dropped off at my grandfather's place and they were then picked up by a lorry or something the next day then distributed to old age homes or to poor Jews. It was fundamentally Jewish. My mother was quite active in that. But this was of course all on a voluntary basis, but out of pure humanitarian reasons. I don't think there was any specific Jewish concept behind it. So.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 20 seconds

RL: Did you used to go on holidays?

SM: No. That's an interesting question. I don't remember every having been on holiday. No. We went occasionally but that was mainly with the school, with what was known as an 'Ausflug', on a day's trip, an outing, you know, to some localities. That aspect I just mentioned with the geography teacher was on one such occasion. No. The senior classes, I remember, were taken by the headmaster for skiing in the winter. They went for a week or so and they went skiing and so on and so forth. But we were just junior pupils and so on. We were not involved in this. And I don't think, certainly I don't... It's an interesting question. I certainly don't remember ever having been on a holiday per se in the same way as we understand a holiday here nowadays. No, I don't remember any of that. Odd, isn't it? That's very interesting. I never thought of it.

RL: Was your father interested in politics at all? Was he involved in any ...?

SM: Ja, I think he voted for the Liberal Democrats, or the equivalent. But he was not a sort of, whatever you call it, a sort of street corner speaker or anything of that sort, no, no, no. No, he kept his nose clean. I suppose it was the best thing to do in those days. I occasionally... I mean the conditions were tough and very, very controversial. I remember, for instance, going for a walk with my mother, or perhaps we went shopping, and there was, as there were so many times, a column of Nazis marching through the streets with a 'Führer' at the front, of course, and flags and all that sort of thing, the Swastika flags. They were very disciplined, and so on and so forth. Perhaps even with a band. Now the requirement then for citizens was to stand and face the flag and give the Hitler salute. But at the same time Jews were not permitted to give the Hitler salute and so we were in a dilemma. What happens? If you don't salute, you're in trouble. If you do salute, you're in trouble. So I remember my mother dragging me into a building. You know, 'Quick, quick, fast, fast', you know, 'Move', so that we wouldn't have to face the column of these people. And that happened on several occasions.

Tape 1: 55 minutes 7 seconds

But, you know, we never were caught either not saluting or yes saluting. So that didn't affect us.

RL: What kind of support was there for Nazism in Breslau, in that area?

SM: Oh, I think the... First of all, people had to be in the Party. And the caretaker, who I mentioned, who lived, was of course a member of the Party. Whether he wanted to be or not, I mean I wouldn't know. But he had to be. In the end, he did a very, very heroic deed. After the 'Kristallnacht', on the ninth of November, they came, Nazis, the Gestapo came at about midnight and rattled at the door and rang the bell. And he went out to go and see them. And they said, 'We've come to collect the two Mendelssons', my grandfather and my father. And he said, 'Ah you've just missed them, they've just been collected'. And that wasn't true. And so they escaped being rounded up on that occasion to go to Buchenwald, or wherever they went to. And I think this was very courageous. And he never told my grandfather about it but I think he must have told my mother en passant or so, and she naturally passed it on to my grandfather. And my grandfather gave him a very special bonus, or present, or something of that sort, you know, he recognised and appreciated it, I think. So, from that point of view, he was very loyal. Although he was, of course, he'd sworn secrecy to the Nazi army, Nazi authorities. And that takes me then into the 'Kristallnacht' occasions.

RL: Well, we're just about to finish this film, so I think we'll just stop there.

SM: Yeah, thank you.

Tape 1: 57 minutes 20 seconds**TAPE 2****Tape 2: 0 minute 8 seconds**

RL: It just occurred to me I haven't asked you anything about Hebrew education, if you'd had any of that?

SM: Yes. Being a Jewish school, of course we had Hebrew lessons and we had Jewish history. And I was taught, I didn't learn, but I was taught Hebrew. And I was quite interested in Jewish history, though I don't remember any details. We had Hebrew and French as the two foreign languages. There was no English. And all the other subjects, in addition to Jewish history. And, as you would imagine, I was very poor both in Hebrew and in French. And I had to have private tuition for both, in order to keep up with the rest of the class, as it were, in order to in fact move up to the next year, as it were, yes.

RL: Was that your first introduction to Hebrew, when you went to the Jewish school?

SM: Ah, yes, yes, I never went to anything like a Cheider, or anything of that sort. I don't know. Obviously, they must have had those in Germany, but, as I said, we were

very assimilated and no different from most of the other sort of Jewish people. I do remember that my father insisted that I didn't speak Yiddish in the house. When I say Yiddish, I mean such expressions as 'Auser' or 'Nabich', you know, because, in his eyes, and he was not unique in this, Yiddish was a defamation of the beautiful German language, the language of Goethe, of Schiller, of Heine and Uhland, and so on and so forth. This was the mentality, you know. He was in charge, my father was in charge. And so I obviously had to follow rules and regulations. The same applied to Wally, my brother, yes.

Tape 2: 2 minutes 14 seconds

RL: And also, do you remember the street, the address, your actual address, both from the flat and your grandfather's?

SM: Yes, the address in the flat was Kirasiastrasse, number seven, which means... 'Kirasia?' The people on horse back - cavalry, 'Kirasia' are cavalry. Yeah. Because I told you there was a cavalry regiment, a 'Kaserne', a large encampment, base, in English, at the end of the road. And we then moved into a street which was called Kleinburgstrasse. Kleinburg was the name of the district, like Fulwood is here, or Prestwich in Manchester, for instance. And it was number ten. It was a large house and it stood on the corner of Kleinburgstrasse and Lindenallee, which is the Lime Tree Avenue, if you like. Yes.

RL: Were there other Jewish families in that area?

SM: Yes. There was a Jewish doctor who lived opposite us. And, apart from that, oh yes, in another street, which was called Kastanianallee, which is the Chestnut Tree Road, there lived a very well-known family, called Lasker. And you may have come across Anita Lasker, who's also a survivor, and she became very famous for... As a young child, she played the cello, and she played the cello at the Auschwitz concentration camp. She was a member of that. And that's how she survived. She was liberated, I think in Bergen-Belsen ultimately. But she was a very prominent member of the Kindertransport family here. Although she came, of course, not on the Kindertransport. The poor girl was caught in Germany. She had two sisters.

Tape 2: 4 minutes 32 seconds

And I do remember I did a lot of skating. Opposite our house, in Kleinburgstrasse, there was a tennis court, and in Germany the temperatures dropped to something like minus twenty degrees Celsius or so. So what they used to do was they used to spray water onto the tennis courts. And that froze and it gave you a wonderful surface for skating. And, after school, provided I was fit after the sort of experiences outside the school, I used to put on my skates and I used to go onto skating. And there I played all sorts of games, you know, racing around and so on, with all the other boys. And, when supper was ready, mother would open the window. And although I couldn't hear her, I always kept my eyes on that. She used to beckon me to come home and then I used to come home. The point I was trying to make was that Anita Lasker and two of her sisters - she only had two other sisters, her father was a solicitor, I think - they used to go skating. But they did a lot of figure skating and all of that, impressed my mother, and she always imposed upon me instead of racing around like a madman,

which is, you know, very simple and very dangerous, why don't you sort of skate like the girls do? Girls! I to skate like a girl? I mean this was... To behave like a girl, I mean, was preposterous, you know, it was unheard of. I was a man, you know, and not a girl. Yes, my mother was always very envious of those girls. They skated very nicely, apparently, and I was not prepared to emulate them.

Tape 1: 6 minutes 19 seconds

RL: Did you used to go swimming at all?

SM: Yes. They had in the Oder, which was the main river there, they had a 'Schwimmbad nur für Juden', which was a swimming pool only for Jews. And I used to go, though it was quite some way away. We had to go by the tram in order to get there. But occasionally I went there swimming, not only with my friends but certainly with my mother. She was very keen on physical fitness and physical development and so she took me there very often. And I think Wally, who was four years younger. And, at that age, you know, four years is a huge gap. Actually, I don't remember whether he came with us or not. I rather dare say he did. Certainly, he could swim. My mother insisted on that at a very early age, both for him and for me. But I don't remember going with him. In fact, socially there was very little unified activity because four years, you know? I was ten, he was six. I was eleven, he was five. So there was basically little contact, in that respect. But we of course shared a bedroom. And I remember there was a bed on one side for Wally and there was a bed on the other side for me. And then next to the bed, there were huge cupboards. And we used to play football in the beds, you know, goalkeeper, and we used to throw the ball from one bed to the other. The room was marginally larger than here, so the distances... And we used to throw ourselves into the bed as goalkeepers do and so on and so forth. We had great fun. Occasionally, we used to get a hell of a beating by my father because he was opposed to this sort of thing, especially in the bedroom. It was a full-size football. But we used to have fun, yes.

Tape 2: 8 minutes 25 seconds

RL: Was there a maid or domestic help in the house?

SM: Yes. There wasn't a maid but we had, my grandfather had a living-in cook, who'd been with the family for umpteen years and so on and so forth. And after some time, a decree was issued that non-Jewish people were not allowed to work in Jewish homes anymore. We obviously had to, you know, dismiss her. Then my aunt and my mother did the cooking, yeah.

RL: In what way did the family keep up with what was going on outside?

SM: Oh, very much so, I suppose. My grandfather listened to Radio Moscow. This was of course strictly prohibited. The BBC in those days didn't have the same influence as it does nowadays or had ever since the beginning of the war, I suppose. And, of course, my cousin, Hans, who was in Vienna, I mentioned to you before, he was a very capable bloke and he built a radio. It was a huge thing. I remember it sitting in my grandfather's study. And ten o'clock, I think, at night, there was German news from Moscow and he used to listen to that. And my father would be

patrolling the house and the garden to make sure that nobody else was coming anywhere near there. The sort of sophisticated equipment that one has today, where you can listen in and detect people who don't pay television license and so on, I mean none of that existed. And I remember this was done at great danger but my parents obviously tried to keep themselves informed as to what was happening in the rest of the world, yes.

RL: What about newspapers?

SM: Yes, they read newspapers regularly but what papers they were, I don't know. They certainly didn't read the 'Sturmer', that's for sure. So I don't know, but, yes, of course, they read papers.

Tape 2: 10 seconds 45 seconds

RL: And how aware were you of the expulsion of the Poles from Germany?

SM: Ah, that I think, the Jewish Poles?

RL: Yeah.

SM: Oh, I don't know. There were quite a lot of them in our area, as you can well imagine. I don't really know. Ja. This must have been in 1939, yes. And, at that time, I was... In 1938, at that time, I was twelve. Because the whole Sarajevo, the *raison d'être* for the 'Kristallnacht' was caused by a young Polish Jew in Paris, as you know, who assassinated one of the German embassy officials there. And he did this because his parents, who were Polish, were shunted, you know, across the border and the Poles didn't want to accept them and so on. This all happened, to some extent, in our area. And I also remember another thing: the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, which also wasn't far away from Breslau, again, geographically, fantastic troop movements through the town. And I stood there with open eyes and open mouth and I was in incredible admiration of such military might and so on and so forth, yes. Yes. They had all, in those days, all the up-to-date weaponry, you know, and so on and so forth. Armoured cars, tanks and God knows what! They all trundled through Breslau, or other places as well, Dresden obviously, but, yes, that happened, I don't know, I don't know exactly when. The 'Anschluss' with Austria was on the thirteenth of March '38. And Czechoslovakia was shortly after Chamberlain had met Hitler. And this must have been round about October or so, 1938 or thereabouts, yes.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 49 seconds

RL: So really we're leading up now to 'Kristallnacht'.

SM: Ah, yes

RL: And your experience of that.

SM: Well, 'Kristallnacht', as you know, occurred on the ninth of November, 1938. And in the morning, Wally and I were ready to go to school, there was a phone call from an acquaintance of my mother, I think, who was not Jewish, who phoned my

mother and said, 'Don't send your children to school today'. And mother asked, 'Why?' This is all related to me by my mother. Mother asked, 'Why?' And she said, 'Never mind why, just forget this conversation, that I phoned you, but don't send your children to school'. And that was a friendly warning, you know, as to what happened. The following night, Wally and I had a room that looked out onto the street. There was a garden all round but we could see over the bushes and so on. Opposite, in a smaller house, there lived a Jewish doctor. And we were woken up, about seven o'clock in the morning or so, by a considerable amount of noise and we rushed to the window to see what was happening. And there was the doctor, whose name I didn't know, in his pyjamas being dragged down some front-door steps, by Gestapo officials, and his wife trying to hang on to him, also in nightdress and so on. And they just pushed her on the floor and there she was lying on the floor and he was driven off in the equivalent of a Black Maria, you know, one of these. And that's when we began to realise that things weren't quite as good as they should have been. The night before was when they came to pick up my father and grandfather and the housekeeper, as I told you, was the one who said you've just missed them, they've just been taken away. So, 'Kristallnacht' was of course the... And all the things that happened after that were fairly dramatic. We stayed at home and we heard on the radio synagogues were ablaze and all that sort of thing, shops had been destroyed.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 9 seconds

But then Goebbels made an announcement and said that the operation was called off, it had been completed. And, on the strength of that, my father went out to go to work in order to, it was Friday I think, in order to pay the various employees. In those days, everybody used to get paid in cash, I think, and on a weekly basis. And he felt it was his duty to go and pay these people. And he was 'cuffuffed', sorry, he was snuffled up on the way by the Gestapo. They had, apparently, rounded up still quite a lot of people and there were Jews, men, Jewish men, in this van, or in this lorry, whatever it was. And somebody stupidly enough waved to my father because he recognised him. And, on the strength of that, they picked him up. And so he got taken into Buchenwald. For three days, we didn't know where he was. We feared, of course, the worst. And then we got a postcard from him: 'He was in Buchenwald. He was being well looked after, but it's mighty cold', it was November after all, and the temperatures do drop quite considerably in eastern Europe, 'would we please send some warm clothes?' Because all he had was his ordinary sort of overcoat and hat and so on, the sort of thing that you go to work in. And my mother immediately bought all sorts of very expensive stuff, and so on and so forth, made up a huge parcel and sent it to him, to the address given. And the Germans, being very meticulous about this, they acknowledged the receipt of the parcel and thanked her for her very generous gift to needy, poor German citizens. Part of the psychological warfare and so on. So we knew he was in Buchenwald. We knew that he was very cold. We knew that that stuff hadn't reached him, and so on and so forth.

Tape 2: 17 minutes 15 seconds

Well, all throughout December and January, my mother went to the Gestapo almost every day to demand, you know... Tremendous courage, she wasn't being put off by 'Judensau, get out!' or anything like that, so she stayed. And she tells me that ultimately they actually respected her for what she did, you know, how she stood up

and so on. They offered her a chair to sit on. Quite remarkable, quite remarkable! But, of course, she had no success in this. But she tried every single day. And then something very interesting happened. An acquaintance of my grandfather, who lived in Breslau, not a friend but an acquaintance, who was a Jew. His name was Milch, and this Milch, like almost all other Jews, served in the Imperial German Forces. He was in the Luftwaffe, in the Nazi Luftwaffe, sorry, in the German Luftwaffe, in 1914-'18. And Goering, who was the Commander in Chief of the Nazi Luftwaffe, had been a fighter ace, and he'd had about eighteen or nineteen kills to his credit. And on one occasion he was in very serious difficulties. There was a Frenchman on his tail and he was peppering away with his machine gun at him, and so on and so forth, and literally brought him down. But he only crashed after the Frenchman had been eliminated by another German fighter ace, fighter pilot. This man literally saved Goering's life. And this was this afore-mentioned guy, Milch. And out of sheer gratitude, and give Goering his due again, he, he retained his connection with Milch and he in fact offered him, believe it or not, a major position, Air Marshall or something of that sort, in the Nazi Luftwaffe. Obviously not as a fighting man, but to be in charge of logistics, ammunition, equipment, and so on and so forth. And this man was so proud (laughing) as so many Jews were in Germany he accepted that. And so, throughout the whole of the Nazi history, they had a Jewish, a Jewish Air Marshall in the Luftwaffe. My grandfather immediately abrogated all connections with him, you know. I don't know if they spoke to each other perhaps once or twice a year. I don't know what that relationship was but I have this from my grandfather.

Tape 2: 20 minutes 0 second

And, out of sheer gratitude to this man, in I think February, and I'm not sure of exact dates now, Goering decreed that all those Jews in concentration camps - Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and Mauthausen, that were all concentration camps within Germany, should be released. And, since my father served in the Imperial German Forces in the First World War, he was one of those who would in fact be released. Of course we wouldn't know when he'd be released. And there was only one train from Buchenwald to Breslau during the night. The Nazis sent these people only during the night because they didn't want these haggard, hungry, skeleton, filthy types of survivors to be seen by the German public. And this train would arrive at six o'clock in the morning in Breslau. And we forget, or they forget, I wasn't involved in this, but, about half-past-six, a taxi would be able to reach our home from the 'Hauptbahnhof', from the main station. And every morning my grandfather and my grandmother got up, my mother, beg your pardon, my grandfather and my mother, would get up at six in the morning and be ready to, you know, open the door for father. And this didn't happen for quite some while. And the snow was very, very deep. And one morning, believe it or not, my grandfather overslept and on that day daddy turned up. My mother's description, I wasn't there. He was totally traumatised and filthy and suffering and in a bad state. And she cleaned him up and put him into bed and immediately alerted doctors and medical services. Jewish doctors were allowed to treat Jewish patients but they were not allowed to treat German patients. So there was a dearth of doctors available. And she decreed that neither Wally nor I would be allowed to see my father in that sort of state.

Tape 2: 22 minutes 27 seconds

And he suffered very badly. He had serious lacerations on his back. He'd lost a number of toes. And he had actually "celebrated" his fiftieth birthday while he was in Buchenwald. This is the only thing he ever talked to me about. Because I pumped him before he passed away and of course long before then as well. And he had signed some sort of an agreement whereby he would not talk about this. And, because he was a very law-abiding man with very high morals, he never talked about it. And I couldn't get any information out of him. I got some information out of other people but not out of daddy. And for his birthday, he said, they clubbed together, all the mates in the hut, and presented him (a) with a large sheet of paper, which was an absolutely luxury because no such things were supplied. And they'd found a dirty rusty old tin can somewhere and they collected some rain water from the drains and they presented that to him. He said, 'That's fantastic, quite fantastic'. Because they got very little food and very little to drink and so on and so forth. So that was a birthday. Anyway, we couldn't see him. And then suddenly my mother dropped the clanger without thinking. After he'd been home for about a week or so, she asked me would I dig a large hole in the garden. I was then twelve and a half. And, 'What for?' She said, 'Just do it, please'. I was terribly worried. I thought, 'Good God, you know, am I digging my father's own grave? What had happened to him and so on and so forth?' It turned out later on that she buried all the clothes that he had worn in the camp. Get it out of the house. They were infested with all sorts of, you know, lice and God knows what, and so on. And that's what the hole was for, which in a way was a relief. Well, this carried on for about three weeks. And of course we had no contact with him. We had to be very quiet in the house. We couldn't have any friends in the house. It was quite an imposition on young, healthy, reasonably healthy, and normal sort of kids. Wally was eight, I was twelve. And then suddenly a letter arrived from the United Kingdom, addressed to my parents. And it gave them... Basically, it said, 'We're offering you two places on the Kindertransport and would you please reply to this within forty-eight hours, yea or nea?'

Tape 2: 25 minutes 9 seconds

And my mother told me, long afterwards, that she certainly couldn't discuss that with my father because he was, you know, it would have made him very much worse. What it meant was to say goodbye to your children without knowing that you'd ever see them again. So she had to take all that decision on her own shoulders. And she began in her courageous approach to all these things. She said, 'Yes, I'll have to send the children. At least they'll be safe and so on and so forth.' So, after about three weeks, we were ready to go off. It was, you know, quick, quick, quick, the whole thing was. And the only thing we were allowed to take with us were clothes, no sorry, it was a suitcase that we could carry ourselves. Now, in those days, suitcases didn't have little wheels and handles on, and then you can drag the things along. You had to carry the damn thing. So, for an eight-year-old and a twelve-year-old, you can imagine, you couldn't carry very much. And all the stuff that they put in there were of course clothes. My parents knew, of course, that we wouldn't starve in England, but who was going to supply us with clothes? So they bought a lot of clothes. And, in fact, if I remember rightly, I wore two sets of underwear, one shirt, two shirts, one jumper, one jacket and one overcoat. And every one of these items was always a size bigger. So, in the end, I looked like a penguin - huge body, very small head, and spindly little legs. And, when we got to the... Wally the same of course, and when we got to the station, there were two groups there. There were about twenty kids who

were on this transport from Breslau. And, then there were the parents, and grandparents, and well-wishers, and so on, friends. You could hardly recognise those because they were, if the faces weren't covered in a handkerchief, they were, you know, full of tears and all that sort of thing.

Tape 2: 27 minutes 24 seconds

As far as we're concerned, I remember exactly how I felt. It was a fantastic experience. You know, we lived in east Germany and a trip like that meant travelling all across Germany by train, and then into Holland, and then onto a boat, across the sea, and then into England, the Garden of Eden. It was fantastic. So we were all very excited. I do remember that, amongst the kids, there were about twenty or so, was a young baby, about a year old or something. And the guy in charge of this went up to what appeared to be the oldest, a fourteen-year-old girl, and said, 'You take care of this baby'. That was all. She'd had no experience, she didn't know the baby and so on and so forth. But you know, somehow people manage. And, as far as I know, that baby got to England quite safely. I lost touch because we spent the night in Berlin, where more transports from other places came, and so we were perhaps, in the end, on the train, something like a hundred and fifty or so. And, just before we got across the border, the German frontier police, the customs people, frontier police, whatever they're called, got in there and they came to see what we were "smuggling", as it were. Just our luck, they chose Wally's case. So we had to get that down. And then this bloke dug into there and threw everything on the floor. They were only clothes, underwear and shirts, and so on and so forth. But, you know, I remember my mother and my aunt, Hedda, you know, the housekeeper, sitting on the suitcase to try and close it. And there we had all these things thrown all over the place. I had to stuff some socks into my pockets and Wally had to do the same thing. So we grew even fatter. And finally we got onto the boat and we came and arrived in Harwich.

Tape 2: 29 minutes 31 seconds

What a reception, what a culture shock. We travelled for about two days, had very little to eat, were desperately tired. It was in April, 1939. Very, very hot because of the clothes that we're wearing. And there was an English reception committee there. From what I remember, young ladies in their early twenties and so on. They hugged us, they kissed us, they embraced us. They tried very hard. And all the time, of course, we were wiping sort of face cream off our faces and lipstick and so on. Because in Germany this was 'verboden', you know, the German women were beautiful by nature and didn't need all this war paint that Indians and all sorts of other second-rate races, like the Hottentots, used to do to decorate themselves. We were terribly thirsty and they offered us a hot cup of tea with milk in it. Well, I ask you! I mean, first of all, normal people don't drink tea with milk in it, but to have a hot drink when you're sweating and desperately tired and so on and so forth, was out of this world. It was ridiculous, really. You know we would have liked the equivalent of a coke, or a fruit juice, or a Fanta, or something of that sort of nature, a glass of milk, cold milk. Nothing! Hot tea with milk in it! Well, we couldn't drink that sort of stuff. And to eat they gave us slices of bread, sandwiches, with hard boiled eggs in it. Now, not the sort of egg sandwich that you have today with mayonnaise on it and

lettuce and so on that gives it a bit of kick and life. All bone dry. Ah, they got stuck in our throats and when we were hoping for perhaps a juicy fruit, you know, our last hope, they gave us bananas. Well, it was incredible! It was ridiculous! It was terrible, absolutely terrible! And then, that was in Harwich, and then we were shunted into a train. Well, we'd never seen a train like this. Looked like a train from the 1850s, 1860s. Wooden seats! You know, in Germany, in preparation for the war, the infrastructure, particularly roads, like the autobahn, and the railway system were up-to-date, were ultramodern. The stations were fantastic, the trains were upholstered, they were comfortable, and so on and so forth. And here we were shunted into this wooden-seat-type of choo choo. It was dreadful!

Tape 2: 32 minutes 7 seconds

And this went from Harwich to Liverpool Street Station and of course through the East End of London. It was April, 1939. And uncomfortable as the early journey was, as we approached London, we came through the East End of London, we looked out of either side of the carriages, and houses had fallen to bits; others had no roofs on them anymore; the other houses that still seemed to be standing had windows boarded up. We came to the Garden of Eden! The food was unbelievable, the trains were outdated, there were no houses for people to live in. And this was our very first time, for almost everybody, at the same time, were dying for our parents to hug us, to kiss us, to tell us that this was a bad dream, that there were green parts to England as well, there were cold drinks available and so on and so forth. But there were no parents. They were left behind in Germany. And this was a very, very rude awakening that I remember almost as if it happened last week or the week before. It did, it left a very, very big impression on us. We were entirely on our own in a strange country, with ridiculous customs and impossible facilities. Trains, houses that were falling to bits. When we got into Liverpool Street Station, well, let's be fair, this was a fantastic station when they built it at the end of the nineteenth century. But, you know, this was now the middle of the twentieth century. And by comparison with the German stations, this Liverpool was a shambles, it was disastrous. And we were led into some sort of a big hall, where ultimately the doors opened and people rushed in. Like a cattle market! And people came to select their new members of the family you see. Turn round, smile, put your arms up, bend down and so on and so forth. Well, most of these people wanted girls because they felt that girls were going to be more useful in the house than boys, you see? So, Wally and I - and no way was I going to be parted from Wally - Wally and I were amongst the last few that were left. And then some kind family came, a husband and wife, middle-aged, I suppose, they picked us up and they led us to their car.

Tape 2: 34 minutes 50 seconds

Now, they had a - we didn't have a car in Germany - they had a car, you know? Obviously, it was a Rolls Royce, naturally. I mean, you know, it couldn't have been anything else! It was possibly a clapped-out Austin or something but I don't know. And we drove through London. I felt like a lord, you know, in a Rolls Royce, London, you know, terrific! And we got to their flat, which was in Maida Vale. Up some stairs, we carried our suitcases and so on and so forth. Basically, a very nice flat, but another hell of a shock! You won't believe it but it is true! In the middle, well, in one of the walls in the lounge, there was a huge hole in the wall and in that hole there was

a live fire. A fire in a room! It was unbelievable! So, you know, we'd survived the Nazi atrocities, and all that sort of thing, and here we're standing a chance of being burnt to death in a flat in London. It was incomprehensible. Wally and I, we pressed ourselves as much as we could against the opposite wall every time we had to pass round there, you know, in order to survive, if you like. But we only stayed there for a week. I remember nothing of that period other than the open fires. And then we were taken to a hostel. And that hostel was in Margate, in Kent, and this was run by the B'nai B'rith. There were sixty of us, ranging from eight to sixteen. And Wally was one of the four youngest. And the two sixteen year old boys, twins, had already been in a concentration camp, but because of their age, or whatever, they'd been released fairly soon. And there we were for about three or four days, getting to know each other and so on and so forth. And there was a question of going to school. Now very few of us spoke English. I mentioned to you the school that I was at. They taught French and Hebrew. And, yes, there were some who'd learnt English, of course, but the vast majority of us didn't. And to be integrated into an English school we obviously needed to know a bit of English.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 7 seconds

So we had an extensive seminar for all sixty of us by a very charming English lady. And this lasted half-an-hour and when we were able to say 'please' and 'thank-you', that was considered adequate and with that we were let loose into an English school. Now, because we came from Germany, and were subject to German culture and German behaviour, of course we marched to school. So, there were columns of refugee kids marching in columns of three to and from school. The same thing happened on Shabbat, on Friday night, and on Shabbat on Saturday. We marched to Shul and we marched home again. And we got to the school. My first impression was that all these kids, they looked quite normal. I mean they didn't look all that different from the kids we played with in Germany. But they were all imbeciles because none of them could speak German. And how do we communicate? Then it suddenly dawned on us, hell, you know, we were in England now, so most probably these kids spoke English. And of course they did. So they were very helpful. They taught us English. They taught us all the swear words and all the rude phrases you can possibly think of. And we gobbled them up most enthusiastically, without knowing what they meant. Even if we would have had the German equivalent, many of us most likely, we wouldn't have understood what it was all about. We led, from that point of view, a relatively sheltered life. And of course that was our only way we could communicate with the teachers. And then, you know, we insulted and were rude to the teachers in the most atrocious manner. Unintentionally, in our ignorance. And the teachers were fantastic. They said, 'Ah, ah, that's not the way to say that'. Then they taught us, you know, and gradually. And the other factor that helped was football. We all played football and they played football and so that integrated us into the class very quickly. And we became good friends and mates, and, you know, we were absorbed.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 19 seconds

And we became Anglicised, at least from a certain aspect. And that went all pretty well.

RL: Which school was it that you were taken to?

SM: Ah, this was known as the St John's Church of England School in Margate.

RL: And were you all taken there?

SM: Yeah, yeah. Well, not the sixteen... I'll be very honest with you, I don't know what happened to the older ones. But because it was in Margate, and because of the evacuation of Dunkirk, Margate was very much in the front line. And they asked for volunteers to help with the civil services, the Red Cross and so on and so forth. So naturally, I'm sure we all volunteered. And I was seconded to a nurse. And in those days, everybody smoked. And I was given a huge box of Woodbines, those were the cigarettes of the day, and my task was to light the cigarette, at the age of thirteen, and then put it into the mouth of the oncoming soldier. Now, this was a pretty pathetic sort of experience. These troops, the British expeditionary force, who were equipped with nineteen hundred and seventeen Lee Enfield rifles to defend themselves against German panzer units, they, in their total disgust, as a defeated army, they threw their steel helmets and their rifles into the drink, as it were, into the water. And they came across the gangways, one by one. And they were in a bad state. Some had bandages round the head and others were wounded in some other way and others were half naked and so on and so forth. It was a sort of thing, you know, they didn't have a dress rehearsal before they boarded the luxury liner at Dunkirk. It was just a question of getting in and getting out. And yeah, I must have...

Tape 2: 41 minutes 31 seconds

For three days, I did this. I had basically no distance between my nose and my lip because these cigarettes, not like today's, they didn't have tips, so. And I wasn't, at the age of thirteen, I'll be honest with you, I wasn't a very experienced smoker. Much of the cigarette paper got stuck to my lips. And very often my lips got stuck to the cigarette. And so I was bereft of all sorts of skin round my lips. They bulged out and they swelled. And I was advised to go to the doctor and I said, 'No, no, there's a war on, you know, we have to work here'. And so that's how it happened. And this lasted for about three days, I think. There was one of the guys in our class, who was a fairly tall fellah, he took it upon himself to row across the channel, single-handed, and he picked up fourteen soldiers in this boat. It gives you some sort of an idea how big that boat was that he rowed across the channel. And he brought them all back. Now, obviously he didn't row for them. They had to row for themselves. And then he went back again and he got machine-gunned by Stuckers but he was picked up by a Destroyer and he came back to England again. A very heroic bloke! I don't remember his name and so on, but what a deed. He was fourteen years old and quite incredible. But that was the spirit of the day in those days. It was quite outstanding, quite remarkable, quite fantastic. And there was the situation.

RL: Were you in touch with your parents?

SM: Yes. I'm glad you asked that because it plays a big part. I am in touch with an insurance organisation that is outstanding. They look after me in the most fantastic way. They're up there [pointing to the ceiling]. And my parents came to England thirty-six hours before the war started. It's an absolute miracle, an absolute miracle.

They were on the last transport from Holland to England. I have a very good friend, who I met at the hostel, with whom I've just come back from holidays again. We've been mates for sixty years. And his parents were on a German boat, in Hamburg, with five hundred or so refugees. Perfectly legal to leave Germany and perfectly legal to come to England. And that boat was half-way between Hamburg and Southampton when Chamberlain declared war on the 3rd of September at eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning.

Tape 2: 44 minutes 26 seconds

And, because it was a German boat, it went back to Germany again. And all these five hundred people lived only for another fortnight or so. They were all decimated somewhere in Hamburg. And that shows you by comparison, you know, how incredibly fortunate Wally and I were. We were reunited with our parents and...

RL: What was their story because I mean we left them in Breslau.

SM: Yeah.

RL: Who had actually waved you off at the station?

SM: Oh, my mother. I don't know if my father was there. I doubt it. I don't think so. But my mother was there, my grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, well-wishers and so on and so forth. Yes.

RL: And then what was their story from that point to coming over?

SM: Well, they lived in Germany, in Breslau, with high hopes. Again, it was my English uncle and my mother's sister who, who organised an affidavit for them. They had an affidavit to go to the United States 1943. The United States had quotas for so many immigrants and so on and so forth. And, on the strength of that, the British government of the day was prepared to have them here at the expense of my aunt and uncle until they could leave in 1943. And so they came over here and we were reunited. And they lived, in fact, in Margate. My uncle and aunt found them a little flat in Margate, where they would be close to their children, where they couldn't take their children. We continued to stay in the hostel but my mother and father helped out in the running of the hostel. My mother mended all the socks and so on. There were sixty boys in there. And my father occasionally took over the administration, as it were, when the hostel warden and his wife had an evening off. They were all refugees, these people who were hostel wardens and so on. They were employed by B' nai B'rith and there was a local committee there as well, the Jewish Aids Committee of Jews, who lived either in Margate or otherwise in London. They were connected with it.

Tape 2: 46 minutes 49 seconds

RL: Do you remember who the warden was?

SM: Pardon?

RL: Do you remember the name of the warden?

SM: Yes, one guy was called Grossman, I think, and somebody else was called Katz. They all disgraced themselves in one way or another and they were kicked out and others were brought in.

RL: What do you mean by that?

SM: Well, there were rumours going around that parcels that had been sent to us from Germany, sweets in it and so on, were confiscated by the headmaster. Various other things suddenly vanished, weren't there anymore. They were all neurotic. They were Jewish refugees themselves. They had never done anything like this before. Sixty kids. Very, very, very difficult people. I mean I was amongst them. We played a lot of tricks there, as per usual. One thing that I remember, which hurt us all very much. We were given the freedom of the town as it were. I don't know if you know Margate, but we lived in the little suburb called Cliftonville, which was full of hotels and so on. It was a resort, it was a very nice place. And our house was right on the front. It overlooked the promenade and then there was the beach and there was the sea. It was very pleasant. But, at weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, we were not allowed out of the house, other than to march to Shul and march back again. And the reason given for that was that hard-working English business people from London came to Margate, and Cliftonville in particular, for a weekend to relax. And they didn't want to be reminded of the terrible things that were going on in Germany, you see?! And so we were not allowed to go out. And we all wore uniforms. We were given long trousers and a cap with 'RH', Rowden Hall was the name of the hostel, and blazers.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 11 seconds

And, of course, I'd never worn - I was thirteen years old - I'd never worn a pair of long trousers. And the material was pretty rough and so I had to wear my pyjamas underneath because it used to scratch my knees and so on. It was ridiculous, all this. And a cap, you know? Who wears a cap? I've never worn a cap in all my life. Go out in the rain and never use an umbrella. So, but, you know, that was part of the English culture. What can you do about it? We obviously ...

RL: How did you spend your time on the weekend, you know, with not being allowed out?

SM: Well, we... There was a very small tennis court where we used to go running around and so on, played games, and I don't know, I don't remember. But they didn't want to see us in the streets.

RL: Was the hostel just for boys?

SM: Ja, Ja, boys only. Ja. There was this hostel. Yes, and after school, of course, there was the Dreamland that was one of the amusement parks. And kids under sixteen, I think, were not allowed there. And we all wore short trousers and so it was a bit difficult for us to get in. But it didn't take us very long to understand some of the machinations. You know, people put a penny into a machine and fruit came up,

or animals, or ships, or whatever it was. And if you lost the penny you put another penny in there. If you were very lucky, you suddenly got threepence back or something. It didn't take us long to understand the mechanisms of these things. And so we lay in waiting for people to come and spend two or three pennies and then they walked away from it and then we put the penny in and got sixpence out. So we became very rich, you see! We had pockets full of pennies and we used to take those to the post office. In those days, you could buy one penny stamps, which were red, and that was a sort of savings book. Like you collect stamps for, I don't know, the Co-op used to issue them and so on and so forth. The only trouble was that there weren't always pennies. They had these playing discs, which had the same size and weight as a penny, but the post office obviously wouldn't take those. So we had to sort those out and could only use those sort of things for playing again. Occasionally we were kicked out, you know, and got into some sort of difficulties, but by and large that's what we did.

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The other thing we did was beachcombing. Now, above the beach in Margate, or in Cliftonville, there was a sort of wooden platform that you walked on, you see? And that was very nice. And what, about six feet below, was the beach and so on. I suppose that could be used, yes, it was used when the tide was in. And this was made from planks and there were gaps in these planks and so on and so forth. And people used to spend lots of money on machines there. I remember there was a Nestle machine. We put the penny in there, got the chocolate out of it, and so on and so forth. Quite genuine! People lost a lot of money on these planks and they fell down onto the beach. And the water was very helpful because it used to sort of wash these up and they used to get caught around the uprights. And we used to comb these uprights. And you'd be amazed how much money we found there. Half crowns, crowns, shillings, pennies, halfpennies, and all that sort of thing. So we became very rich, very rich. And, when I left the hostel, I was one of the richest possibly. I had four pounds, twelve shillings, and nine pennies to my name. And, you know, this was quite fantastic! Why did we leave the hostel? Because we were on the front line. Hitler was expected any day. And all school children were evacuated. My father at that time was interned because he was an enemy alien, his nationality was German. Perfectly natural to my mind, should have done this earlier. But, you know, they were all suspects because there was so much chance for real Nazis to pretend to be Jewish refugees and so on and so forth that the country had to be very careful. Now, they were in camps. They were properly looked after. They were, you know, they were treated with dignity and everything else but they were in prisons, not particularly a wonderful thing.

Tape 2: 53 minutes 47 seconds

My mother moved to London. She also, you know, once father had gone and the boys had gone, so there was nothing for her in Margate. And she went to London to be somewhere near her sister and her brother-in-law. And she worked in my uncle's business, which was in fact a stationary wholesaler. And she was working there in the packing department. And when my father was released, he also worked in the packing department. Released from the internment camp that is.

RL: Can I just ask you a few more things about the hostel?

SM: Yeah, sure.

RL: Was there any religious content to the life there?

SM: Yes. The fact that we went to Shul, Friday nights and Shabbat morning. I think we said, ja, on Shabbatot certainly, when we had tablecloth on the table and all that sort of thing, yes, we said grace after meals and sang the appropriate songs and so on. Yes. But there were, as such, no specific lessons or lectures in the hostel. And quite a number of the people there came from ultra-Orthodox families. But we all mixed very happily. My friend, for instance, who I mentioned earlier on, his brother, he - they came from a very Orthodox family, my friend threw the whole thing overboard - but his brother lives in Stamford Hill and is one of the Chasidim and arranges marriages for his daughters and all that sort of thing. And has five children in his own right and now seventy-three grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And when my wife, on one occasion, when we met at some Simchat or something, made these enquiries and she said, 'Good gracious, seventy-three?' 'Yes', he said, 'of course, we lost six million in the Holocaust, we've got to replace them', you see. And that is the modern approach of these sort of people.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 2 seconds

So, yes, we were a mixed bunch. And ultimately we were evacuated to Cannock Chase, which is in Staffordshire, with the school. And there we were billeted onto local people. And Wally and I were - they were mining villages incidentally - and Wally and I were billeted on to a mining family. A Mr and Mrs Croft, I think was the name, and a six year old son. By that time, I suppose I was thirteen, ja, and Wally was nine. Wally and this little son went to the junior school and I went to the senior school. Most of the teachers had been taken to the armed forces. And those who taught us then were either old people or otherwise unfit for military service. And our English teacher, a Mr Holloway, wrote up three words on the blackboard: Egypt, camels and sand, and for a whole year we heard only about Egypt being full of sand and lots of camels. But only in case somebody came into the classroom. In between, then we were allowed to read our twopenny readers. But we didn't have any two penny readers because we didn't have enough money to buy these things. So there was a certain amount of inequality there.

RL: Right, it's just about to end so if we just stop there.

Tape 2: 57 minutes 45 seconds

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 0 minute 6 seconds

RL: Now, it just occurred to me that I hadn't asked you what had happened to your synagogue with 'Kristallnacht'. Whether it was effected by what was going on?

SM: Oh yes, very much so. It was a huge building and they pumped gallons and gallons and gallons of petrol into it in order to set it alight. There were one or two Jewish people who rushed into there at the risk of their own lives to save some of the Sefer Torah. And there's an interesting story about it. The Cupola, the sort of round Cupola had the Magen David on top, which was made of lead. And next to the synagogue, as of old, there was a police headquarters. It was a very big building. And one of the wings was very close to the synagogue. And the Nazis had taken this over and it was staffed by Gestapo officials and so on and so forth. And as the synagogue burned and the roof started to cave in, this huge Magen David, so they tell us, fell onto one of the wings of this Gestapo headquarters and apparently killed thirteen of the inmates there. Now, how true this is I don't know but I've heard it once or twice before.

RL: And did you go to school after Kristallnacht or did the Jewish school close?

SM: No, I think, from what I remember, ultimately I went back to school, yes, yes, yes. So more or less. Of course, ja, oh yes, there was a considerable change in the school in so far as that many of the teachers were missing, the male teachers, because they'd all been taken into concentration camps.

Tape 3: 2 minutes 4 seconds

So we had mainly female teachers. And I don't remember whether they amalgamated some of the classes or not. Exactly how they reorganised it, I don't know. It was a very tumultuous sort of period. Father in bed, we couldn't see him, but out of the camp again. And the letter arriving from England. So, you know, school basically played a relatively unimportant part in my life at the time. It was overshadowed, let's put it that way, by other infinitely more traumatic events.

RL: Now, coming back to England, you've been evacuated to Cannock Chase.

SM: Yes.

RL: And you're with a mining family.

SM: Yes.

RL: So if we can pick up the story from there and really ...

SM: Yes.

RL: You know, what it was like with this family ...

SM: Yes.

RL: And how you got on there.

SM: We were billeted on a mining family, which consisted of a miner, and his wife and their five-year-old son, Gary. And their custom was to go to a pub every night. And they didn't trust us in the house. So when they were in the pub, Wally and I had

to play in the street. We were in wind and weather and so on and so forth. It was a pathetic state of affairs. And I complained to the billeting officer at the school, who was an elderly fellow, he was the woodworking master, 'Please try and get us out of there'. And I was assured that I had one of the best billets in the village. So nothing, in fact, mattered and happened and we continued to live under those sort of circumstances. They also took quite a lot of our rations in order to feed their little boy. Make sure that, you know, he was alright and didn't suffer too much. So it was a tough time. It wasn't so bad for me but I was always worried about Wally because I always felt that, you know, I was okay, but, you know, what influence does this have on Wally, who was very much younger than I was.

Tape 3: 4 minutes 9 seconds

And missing his parents possibly much more than I did. Anyway, I was, after some time, promoted to prefect. And shortly after that I became, a week or so, I became head prefect at the school. And as head prefect, of course, I was given privileged treatment. And, when I went to the billeting office, they said, 'Yes, we've got two possible billets for you. You go and choose.' And, with this friend of mine, who I mentioned earlier on, with whom we've been on holidays again just recently, we went on our bicycles down to a cottage that was in the valley. And there lived a family. And the moment... There were pigs grunting in the pig sty. And there were a couple of dogs, vicious looking dogs, around the place as well. And when we got in there, it was very homely, very sweet, wonderful reception. And I decided there and then that's it, that's where we're going to stay. And I've never looked back on this. These were also coalminers but they had two hundred, they had some acreage of fields and there they kept pullets, egg laying pullets. And they had a son, the same age as my brother, and he was studying for a scholarship for the local grammar school in Litchfield. And I thought this was a wonderful idea because the schooling we had was pathetic, absolutely pathetic. And Wally got himself involved in this and he actually passed an examination. And I was invited to Litchfield. The letter arrived to the father of Wally Mendelsson and my father was interned in the Isle of Man. And so I went instead, which was nothing unusual because most of the fathers of that age were in the Armed Forces, you know, they were fighting the war.

Tape 3: 6 minutes 21 seconds

SM: So the headmaster spoke to me and he said, 'Your brother has passed the examination but unfortunately he's not a Staffordshire lad and therefore, you know, it's impossible to take him on'. And I said, 'Oh dear, you know, not only is he not a Staffordshire lad but he's also not a Kent lad', because he knew we'd come from Kent. 'Oh', he said, 'so what is he?' I said, 'Well, we're refugees from Nazi oppression'. 'Oh', he said, 'really? Well, let me see what I can do for you.' And so a fortnight later I got another letter and he said, 'Young man, we've got it, your brother's in', you see? And so Wally got a decent education. He had a good grammar school education at Lichfield, a school where Dr Johnson went to and Garrick and so on, of high reputation. And he grew up there. A normal life. He played rugby and football and so on and so forth. And I started work at the age of fourteen because that was the end of the school.

RL: Which was the school that you were at? What was that called?

SM: That was called Chase Terrace Senior School. And when I left there in the top class, as head prefect, I don't mind telling you there were five kids in that school, in that class, who couldn't read or write. And that was the sort of standard of the school. And I was very fortunate enough to be offered the position as an apprentice tool-maker. I'd always been interested in mechanical engineering and I jumped at that. And this was in a factory in Walsall, which is not too far away from where we lived. Once upon a time, Walsall was a big town and one of its suburbs was called Birmingham, Birmingham near Walsall. But that changed later on because Birmingham is now, you know, a major city and Walsall remained where it was.

Tape 3: 8 minutes 27 seconds

And I was further very fortunate in so far that, while we worked the fortnight on days and fortnight on nights, from eight in the morning 'til eight at night, or from eight at night 'til eight in the morning, six days a week, the managing director was very understanding and granted me time off to go to evening classes. And so I went to a commercial and a technical college in Wensbury, where I studied for matriculation, which ultimately gave me an entrance into university because otherwise I wouldn't have had a dog's chance. And, by that time, I was in the ATC, the Air Training Corps, because I was very keen to join the RAF. Now, in those days, for someone in the reserved occupation, like a tool-maker, to get into the Armed Forces only had two chances. He could either serve with the Royal Navy as submarine duties. And for that you didn't only have to have English parents but English grandparents. So that was completely out. Or you could join Royal Air Force flying duties. And I was in the ATC. I was very keenly interested in flying and so on and so forth. And, after two-and-a-half years in the Lichfield squadron, they suddenly found out from my records that my nationality was German. And so they had to dismiss me from the Air Training Corp because it was a, you know, I was a tremendous risk to the country's security, as a young man. And at the evening classes, whenever we had a break, and we did have breaks, I always sat with the English teacher, who was a Scotsman called Johnny Walker. A smashing bloke! And I told him my tale of woe, and he said, 'Don't worry lad, you come and join our mob, the Home Guards'. You see, he was a captain in the Home Guard. And he introduced me to the officer commanding the Walsall battalion, which was two thousand strong, and was not like 'Dad's Army' because Walsall was a highly industrialised area and so there were tremendous numbers of young militarily fit individuals who were tool-makers, who were mechanics, were electricians, and so on and so forth, vital to the war effort. And so the battalion was quite a good unit actually.

Tape 3: 11 minutes 6 seconds

And I went on Sunday morning by appointment to see the big chief. He was a colonel previously, you know, in the First World War obviously. And he said, 'Jump into the car, lad!' And he took me out to the outskirts of Walsall. And Walsall was part of the outer defence circle of Birmingham. And they had anti-aircraft batteries. And eight batteries they were operated entirely by Home Guards and ATS personnel. There were no soldiers, regular soldiers, involved. And he introduced me to the various sergeants and other commanders of these units. And showed me where the ammo was kept and all this sort of thing and so on. And, on the way back, he said, 'Young

man, you will appreciate of course that you and I are the only two people in the entire battalion who know the exact disposition of ammunition and so on and so forth'. And I thought, 'Jesus, you know, they kicked me out of the Air Training Corp as a young lad because of the security problem and here he opens up'. I mean the Home Guard was, you know, after all, on the sort of local defence organisation, but nevertheless he didn't have to, sort of, show me absolutely everything. And so this nonsense of security was ridiculous.

RL: Can I just ask you ...

SM: Yeah.

RL: ... what you were doing in the Air Training Corps, what kind of things?

SM: They had two sections, they had one for ground staff and one for flying duties, and I was in the flying duty one. And that was sub-divided again into two, pilot and navigator, and then wireless operator, air gunner and flight engineer in the other one. And the pilot and navigator were ones who had slightly higher education, so to speak. And I was in that particular group. And I had high hopes that one day, maybe, you know, I can do my little bit to knock Hitler to bits and pieces. That did never materialise but at the same time we were with the Home Guard. Yes. I'm just trying to recollect my...

RL: With the Air Training Corp, how often did you ...

SM: Oh, about three or four times a week, in the evenings and weekends, of course. And we also had flights. We went flying. On one occasion, I was in a Tiger Moth, and of course there was a qualified pilot in there with me, and he told me to take over the controls and we almost crashed somewhere in West Bromwich or somewhere. Yes, but, you know, these are experiences that you've got to take on board. Nothing happened. It was just my total inexperience and the excitement and fright I suppose as well, I don't know, caused this thing to doodle around a little bit.

Tape 3: 13 minutes 48 seconds

But a Tiger Moth was an incredibly versatile aircraft and you can do almost anything with it. It was terrific.

RL: You were still working as an apprentice tool-maker ...

SM: Oh yes, yes.

RL: ... at this time?

SM: Very much so, very much so, yes.

RL: This was evenings and ...

SM: Yes, very much so, yes. Now, when I reached the tender age of sixteen, I then became a particular security risk overnight. And I became, officially, a friendly

enemy alien. And I had to have a curfew. I wasn't allowed out of my digs between I think it was seven in the evening and eight in the morning. And then there were, fortunately, in that document, a number of free pages and they started putting in the exceptions. Except when he was on Home Guard duties, and that could be any time. SM: Except when he is on fire watch duty. Except when he is on the Air Training Corp duties and so on and so forth. I mean it was ludicrous. The whole thing was a shambles from beginning to end. But that was the sort of thing. And I lived under those circumstances. And we had an international club and I became chairman of the youth organisation. And made contact there with a number of interesting people - the Lord Mayor of Walsall, the Bishop of Litchfield, purely and simply because I invited them to come and talk to us. And this is of some consequence at the later stage.

RL: Who belonged to the international club? Who was it for?

SM: A number of Jewish refugee kids and other refugees. From Basques, there were quite a lot of Basques there, from Spain. And there were one or two other different nationalities there - Polish, Czech, and so on and so forth. And basically that was the situation.

RL: Where did it meet?

SM: In one of the communal halls in Walsall. In the town, in the town. And it was at that stage that I decided to throw my Judaism overboard.

Tape 3: 15 minutes 55 seconds

SM: Because it had done nothing for me and it caused me a lot of problems and difficulties and it was of no value to me. And there was no Jewish community in Walsall at all and Birmingham was far too far away. And then I decided, we were entitled to a week's holiday per year in those days, and I decided to get out of the factory and go and dig for victory in the land. That was, you know, a very sort of thingamajig. And I had a friend, an old school friend of mine, from Breslau, who was an apprentice chemist in Birmingham. And because he had more access to travel agencies and organisations and so on and so forth, we decided we'd go together and he'd fix up the whole thing. And he fixed us up. And we arrived at the camp in Wales, north Wales, and that happened to belong to an organisation called Habonim, which was, in fact, a Zionist youth organisation. People who intended to live on Kibbutzim and dig the land in the Holy Land, in Israel, in Palestine as it then was. And the people I met there, including a very outstanding girl, were so fantastic. They were all either in similar situations to myself, or city people, you know, they were at university, or whatever they were doing. I made friends with them just overnight. It was fantastic. And we were there for a week. And I got myself involved in Habonim, in the youth movement. And I finished my apprenticeship fairly soon after that and went down to London, where my parents lived by that time. I didn't live with them but fairly nearby, in a little flat, or in digs. And I was approached by the leadership of the Habonim movement: 'Would I not come and have a word with them and could I start a group in south London?' Because the Jewish population in south London was very, very widespread. It covered a vast area and there were no Habonim groups at the time. And I said, 'Yes. I mean, I don't mind doing this but I don't know a great

deal about Zionism and so on'. 'Well, we'll feed you with books and propaganda and literature and so on and so forth.'

Tape 3: 18 minutes 21 seconds

Cut a very long story short. Within a year, we had one senior group, two middle groups and three junior groups. And I was literally in charge of the whole lot. And the senior group, and this is quite fascinating, the senior group consisted of about thirty Chaverim, as they're called, thirty members, and we were fortunate to have two Palestinian, Jewish Palestinian, students who were studying engineering in London, within this group, that gave it a very special sort of Israel-orientated, or Zionist-orientated, atmosphere. They were fantastic. And out of that group of thirty people, fourteen married. That means we had seven married couples from within that group. Quite outstanding! And quite a number of these couples are still together. My brother was one of them. And he passed away, unfortunately, five years ago. My first marriage was another one, out of this sort of thing. And there were various other couples there as well. And I took on a job as a junior draughtsman because it was very difficult in those days to get from the workshops into the design offices. And fortunately I succeeded in getting a job as a junior draughtsman, in London. And, not so long after that, and we are now round about 1946, '47...

RL: So the war had actually ended.

SM: Yeah, the war had finished.

RL: When did you move down to London? What period was that?

SM: Oh, when I finished. I started '41, '46, a five-year apprenticeship as a tool-maker.

RL: So you were in Walsall ...

SM: Yeah

RL: ... 'til '46?

SM: Yeah.

RL: Where were you living in Walsall?

SM: In Walsall? In private digs, with another friend of mine. Yeah.

RL: Right. Was it in somebody's home?

SM: Ja, ja. We were, you know, we were, I don't know what you call them. What do you call when you take somebody into your house? What do you call...?

RL: Lodgers.

SM: Ja, we were lodgers, exactly that, yes. And we shared a large room. Heinz, also a refugee boy, and myself. And we, of course, retained this friendship, very much in touch with each other still. He's fairly ailing now and suffers from Alzheimer, unfortunately, but he's still around. And we're still in touch.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 2 seconds

RL: And did you... I mean you've mentioned the international club. Were you involved in anything else in the Walsall area?

SM: No, no, I was far too busy. There was the work, which basically was twelve hours a day, then there was night school, and then there was the Air Training Corp until it became the Home Guard. So, you know, I was really...

RL: What were you...? Can you tell me about your experiences in the Home Guard?

SM: That was fascinating. I was in the Battalion 'I' section, that's the Intelligence section, you see, because I spoke German. And on one occasion we had manoeuvres with a Wolverhampton battalion. And they were going to invade us. And we were wearing red armbands, the Walsall people, who were defending Walsall, and the others were paratroopers. You know, this was all a war game, into the area. And because I was in the Intelligence section - there were about eight or nine of us there, it had nothing to do with intelligence per se I tell you that - we were on manoeuvres. And there were lots of umpires around as well. They wore green armbands, I think. And I had a dispatch rider at my disposal, who at six o'clock in the morning took me into what was known as an 'o pip', an observation post, because it was anticipated that the German paratroopers would be dropped into that sort of rural area. And, true enough, hordes of them came along, you see, and I strictly instructed my dispatch rider to hang around where he was in case I needed to get back to headquarters and so on. And when I saw all this happening, and I was very excited because I saw it and I was possibly the only one who saw the approaches of these units and how many there were and all that sort of thing, at the appointed time, at about half-past-six in the morning, the dispatch rider wasn't there anymore.

Tape 3: 23 minutes 12 seconds

And I was in serious difficulties. And I got myself into, very quickly, into one of these public telephone things and I started phoning up headquarters. And I got my message through to headquarters. And they said, 'Where the hell is the dispatch rider?', you know, and so on and so forth. But I gave the information. And then I couldn't get out of the box because my bran gun got caught in the panels. I broke various windows in this public telephone booth, you know? I finally got out and, by that time, I could see they were coming down the road, they were coming in hordes along the road. And I thought, 'Well, now I've got to hide myself'. And so I jumped over a wall, into somebody's front garden. Now, in those days, people didn't grow flowers, they grew vegetables and all that sort of thing. And no sooner had I jumped in there, to lie low, before being decimated by the enemy, a woman came out of there with her curlers in her hair. And she said, 'Get away from my bloody vegetables' and all this sort of thing. 'Madam, we're being invaded by the Germans, you see, and

they're coming up the road and I'm trying to defend you.' She wouldn't have it. Anyway, I couldn't possibly... I had to move out of there. And, under considerable danger, I crossed the road and in the road there was a huge roundabout and on the roundabout there were bushes and so on and so forth and I went into there to hide myself. I couldn't contact headquarters anymore because my bloody dispatch rider had bugged off, you see? He wasn't there anymore. Now, what I didn't quite know at that time is behind this roundabout there was a very large factory and the "Germans", you know, the Wolverhampton battalion, had made that their particular target. And I was just outside it. And I sat there on this roundabout. And, believe it or not, their commanders established their headquarters in that roundabout. And I was as far away from them as I am from you right now. But because of the bushes and everything else and their excitement, they couldn't see me. And the only thing I feared was giving me away was this incredible pumping of my heart, you know, which of course they couldn't hear.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 34 seconds

SM: But I was so excited. I had all this information. I knew exactly what they were going to do because I listened to them. They all spoke English, fortunately, although they were German paratroopers, you see, and I couldn't get this information through to them. And then they invaded this particular plant and there they had a celebration in front of this plant. And they said, 'We have achieved our target and we have not even been observed or interfered with'. And I suddenly piped up, with my red band, and said, 'Excuse me, sir, that isn't quite true. I've been observing you all the time and feeding back all the information to HQ'. And his face dropped just like that, you know. Finally, we finished the war in the local pub, you know, and we all had a marvellous time, which we had every Sunday, after the manoeuvres and so on and so forth. And, fortunately, I'd been observed on several occasions by one of the umpires and this was all reported back to headquarters. So I was the hero of the..., you know, without having done anything to prevent the Germans from capturing the plant and everything else, you know? This was one of the many fascinating and highly exciting interferences. When I finally got hold of the dispatch rider, I said, 'Where the hell have you been?' He said, 'Oh, I got bored. I went home to have some breakfast', you see. So, that that was the war that we fought in Staffordshire. God Save the Queen!

RL: Did you have any real incidents?

SM: Pardon?

RL: Did you have any real incidents?

SM: No, no, none whatsoever. We never saw any Germans. As you know, no Germans ever landed here. One fascinating incident was that in Aldridge, which was a little town, a little village, near Walsall, there was a Jewish refugee camp. And it came to Pessach and I thought they'd like to attend a Seder. So I managed to get in touch with the headmaster there. And he said, 'Yes, come and join us'. And we had a wonderful time. There were about forty or fifty boys there and I took part in the Seder and everything else.

Tape 3: 27 minutes 57 seconds

But of course I had a curfew and I was subject to reporting every now and then to a sergeant of the police in Walsall. Just to check up that I'm still around and being a good boy and all that sort of thing. A formality, obviously, because we got to know each other and he had a lot of faith in me and I liked the bloke, you know? And suddenly, at eleven o'clock, my, what do you call it, my curfew ran out and it was eleven o'clock and I was still having the Seder. I said, 'Christ!', you know. And I said to the headmaster, 'Look, I think I've got to go and report to the police because otherwise I'll be in for a high jump'. And he said, 'It's just across the road'. So I went to the police station and this was the scene. There was a counter there and there was a bell on the table and there was a door open and there were about four or five, these were all auxiliary policemen, of course, they were sitting around playing cards or something of that sort. And I rang the bell once or twice. And, 'Just a minute, just a minute'. They were finishing with the game, you see, and all that sort of thing. And one of them. They were in shirt sleeves and..., you know? And, and one of them came out and he said, 'Yes, sir?' And I said, 'I want to report', I said, 'I'm an enemy alien'. And he said, 'What?' I said, 'I'm an enemy alien'. So all the others heard us, you see, they came rushing, guns and everything else, you see. They were on one side of the table and I was on the other side of the table. 'How did you get here?' And I said, 'I came by boat'. He said, 'By boat? How can you land here by boat? Where's your parachute? Where's your aircraft and all that sort of thing?' And I said, 'I came quite some time ago, in 1939'. By that time, one had rushed round the other side and he's stuck a sort of machine gun into my ribs, just in case. Until I made it clear to them. I mean they were so provincial these people. They hadn't a clue about what refugees were and all that sort of thing. I said, 'Look, I belong to this mob of refugee kids over there' and finally we sorted out the thing. 'And can I in fact verify my personality?' And I gave him my book and I told him who I report to, Sergeant Whatever-his-name-was in Walsall, and they phoned up this guy at half-past-twelve or half-past-eleven, or quarter-to-twelve at night, and he said, 'Right, tell him that the moment he catches the first bus', there were no buses any more, you see, 'to come and report to me immediately', you see?

Tape 3:30 minutes 30 seconds

In my, you know, not my overalls, but in my sort of jacket and tie and all this sort of thing, I went to the police station and somewhat sheepishly I reported to this sergeant. And he stood up and he read me the riot act. He said, 'Don't ever let that sort of thing happen to me. I was phoned up at quarter-to-twelve when I was fast asleep with a nonsensical story of you being in Aldridge'. And then he smiled and said, 'Off you go to work', you see. And that was it, in fact. This was the farce of the security and all that sort of thing that existed in those days.

RL: Did you ever experience any bombing? Was there any bombing where you ...?

SM: Yeah, yeah, there were lots of bombings because the aircraft tried to get into Birmingham and did a lot of damage there. And yes, one or two bombs fell, of course, in our area as well. And I collected, in those days, shrapnel and my mother, who lived in London, sent me shrapnels because they had lots of bombs and all that sort of thing. Bits of German aircraft and so on and so forth. But that was it, we were never hit by a bomb, let's put it that way.

RL: And did you have to do fire watch duties at those times?

SM: Yes, I did that in conjunction with the factory. But that went off all right. My parents, for instance, did fire watching in London. They were bombed out four times. For a considerable period they slept in an underground station. And then finally they moved to Bedford. And they came to work into town every day. And they found it very difficult at that time because the trains were so crowded that people used to get into the train through the windows. And my parents were elderly people, they couldn't do that sort of thing. And occasionally these trains were machine-gunned by German aircraft. My mother was a fire watcher and on one occasion, in Wimbledon - they lived in Wimbledon - on one occasion, the German airman came down by parachute and got entangled in the gutters of the house and the chief fire watcher asked my mother, because he knew she spoke German, please to tell him not to worry because they'll put up a ladder, they'll bring him a cup of tea, that's hot tea with milk in it, you see, and they'll get him down. And my mother said, 'You must be out of your mind. This is a swine, ein Schwein hängt up there', you know: 'The pig is a Nazi'. He says, 'Mrs Mendelsson, he's a human being'. 'That is not a human being', you know. She refused.

Tape 3: 33 minutes 17 seconds

And then suddenly, he must have read this in the paper or somewhere like that, he remembered the German mentality, and said, 'Mrs Mendelsson, I give you an order'. And that clicked and my mother sent up the message. And he repeated and he said, 'Oh, don't worry about me, madam. In a fortnight, all my mates will be over here and you'll all be killed', you see? And she conveyed that to the chief man but he still insisted on giving him a cup of tea to comfort him a little bit once they got him down. And they were bombed out with the doodle-bug as well. My father was asleep in his bed and he always felt very cold, he had lots of blankets on his, you know, on his bed. And he also always wore a 'Schlafmütze', you know, one of these sort of things at night that you put on, a cap, you know, a wooden cap, or something of that sort. And it cut the house basically in two. And when my mother, who was on fire watch duty in her unit, got to know about this, the bomb had fallen in her street, she rushed back there and there was half a house. And my father was still in bed with lots of debris on his on his thingamajigs. He was totally untouched. I was talking to you about this insurance agent of ours [pointing upwards]: God looks after us. It was a miracle. Yes, quite exciting, quite exciting.

RL: Did you get to see your parents much?

SM: Yes. I lived then in London, not too far away from them, and yes, I saw them regularly, two or three times a week or so. But what I had noticed was that when I left them I was a twelve-year-old kid. And when we got together again, apart from the periods in Margate and so on, naturally, but when I finally got very close to them again, that is geographically, I was, what, I was nineteen or twenty. And lots had happened in between and, you know, there was a totally different relationship. Not that there was no love. Of course love was there but it wasn't any more they give me instructions on what to do and be a good boy and all that sort of thing because I was a grown-up man by that time.

Tape 3: 35 minutes 33 seconds

It was an interesting, and at times difficult, psychological period. Especially when my parents were offered... Their move to the United States, thank God, of course, never materialised because of the war. And shortly after the war they were offered British nationality and they applied for it. And the official came to their flat, and Wally and I were there as well. And after they'd dealt with my mother and my father, they then dealt with me. And I said, 'I'm greatly honoured by the offer but I feel I'd like to decline it'. So my father almost fell off the chair. My mother had a twinkle in her eye. And the official said to me, I remember this, 'Well, of course, we live in a free society here. You have of course every reason to do so. What is your reason, if I may ask?' I said, 'Yes, I'm in total disagreement with HM Government's policy on Palestine'. 'Good enough a reason', he said. And he moved to Wally, who was then a junior and, of course, Wally, naturally, accepted British nationality. And that was it. And so I remained a ruddy foreigner while I had British parents and a British brother.

RL: Where were you when the war ended?

SM: I was, oh, that's a very good question. I think I may have been in London dancing a hurrah around Queen Victoria, the monument outside Buckingham Palace, when the war ended. But I don't remember. I don't remember where I was when the war ended. But, shortly after I'd come to London and I'd become a, what they call a 'Macher', you know, a 'Madrich' in the movement and so on, I was invited, once again, by an unknown person who'd come to the office. And he asked me whether I was prepared to do something for the country and I said, 'Yes, of course. That's the reason why I'm in the movement' and so on and so forth. 'No, no', he said, 'something rather more than that'.

Tape 3: 37 minutes 56 seconds

And I said, 'Yes, of course.' 'Okay. Then, will you come and meet me at a certain place somewhere in Maida Vale at a given time?' And I went there, not expecting anything very much. I was led into a dark room. There was a - possibly the size of this - there was a clothes line strung across the room from one wall to the other and there was a big blanket hung over there. So they created a partition. And all that there was in this room where I was, there was a chair and a small table about half the size of this, and a Tanach [bible] on it. And a very raucky voice from the other end said, am I prepared to, you know, I forget now the exact wording. Cut a very long story short, he recruited me into the Haganah. Haganah was, as you know, the underground movement at the time in Palestine and I became a member of the European branch of the Haganah. Sworn to total secrecy on the Tanach, of course, and so on and so forth. And, 'Go home now, don't talk to anybody about it ever, and we'll be in touch with you'. And, you know, I felt very proud, but I couldn't tell anybody. It was a very difficult situation. I was bursting to tell people, you see, especially my girlfriend and so on and so forth. Nothing happened. And then, one day, I don't know the exact details of what happened, I was commanded to go to France. And I'd be away for about three months. And I mustn't have any contact with anybody in this country. And I told my parents about this. And my father was appalled because at that time I was studying part-time for an engineering degree at

London University. 'How can you overthrow your studies?' And all that sort of thing. And 'where are you going to go and what are you going to do?' And I said, 'It's all a mystery. I don't know, dad, you'll have to accept it like that'. And he was. He didn't speak to me until I left. He was absolutely appalled by this sort of thing. And there was possibly a fortnight between this.

Tape 3: 40 minutes 17 seconds

My mother had a little twinkle in her eye. She had a rough idea of what it might be all about, you see, knowing me reasonably well. Anyway, finally I went over to France. And I had to meet somebody in Brussels, outside the Coq D'Or, which was a hotel, and he'd be wearing a pink carnation, and so on and so forth. And I met this person and he said to me, 'Follow me!' And I followed him into a house, into a cellar, and in this cellar, through some opening, into another cellar and up some..., onto a roof and over roofs. And, finally, we got to a place full of people, full of people. And there were all foreign-looking people, you see, and all busy doing this, that and the other. And two of them wore British uniforms. And I thought, 'Ach, thank God for that, I can talk to them', you see? And I said, 'What the hell is going on here?' They didn't understand, they didn't understand. And somebody came up to me, I remember that very distinctly, and he said, 'That case there, open it up and empty it', you see? Possibly in German or in Yiddish, or whatever it was. I didn't speak Hebrew at that time. And I started opening up this case. It was marked 'Kraft Cheese', you see? And I opened up. It was a huge crate. And somebody helped me to lever off the lid with an iron. And I removed the first lot of cheeses and suddenly, you know, there were no cheeses, there were machine guns in there. And I said, 'Whah!' And somebody came rushing along. And I said, 'There are machine guns in here!' And he said, 'You schmuck, what do you think you are here for, you know, for cheese?' And so that was the beginning of my activity in Haganah in Europe. And I was then seconded to a particular position in, it was in Belgium. I was given a fantastic amount of money. It was near the Franco-Belgium frontier. This money was to bribe the guard. And, as you know, this Aliyah Bet, this illegal immigration, was draining survivors of concentration camps that had been housed as best as possible in displaced persons camps in central Germany, all the way on foot from central Germany down to Marseilles and to Toulon, or, on the other leg, to Bari and Brindisi in Italy, to get them to illegal immigrant ships to be taken to Palestine.

Tape 3: 42 minutes 53 seconds

And there was a human chain there and each one covered about ten kilometres. And I was one of the links in this chain. And the guy who... And we had to take care of groups of about forty or so people every night. They only operated at night. And the person who handed this particular group over to me, I didn't know his name, he didn't know my name, it was immaterial, and I handed over to somebody who was also nameless, but you got to know them by their faces. And I had all this money because we had to take them through woods and obviously not along the road and so on and so forth. And there were dogs around, guard dogs, and all this sort of thing. Occasionally, it was a bit dicey. But, by and large, we had no problems. I had no problems whatsoever because the Belgians and the French were so appalled by the British policy on immigration to Palestine, they were only too pleased to close their eyes and to... So I didn't use any of the money. And of course there were no hotels

there and I couldn't go into a hotel and say, 'I'm one of these illegal immigrants, please give me a VIP room' or so. I found some quarters in a barn. It was in the winter of '47, '48. I found some cover in a barn, where I slept during the day. And I lived on raw potatoes, which were kept there, and snow, which was plentiful, for drinking purposes and so on and so forth. And, at night, I took these people. They were a rather pathetic bunch of individuals. There were old people and young people and women carrying babies on their backs. And each one carried, not a sort of plastic bag, but some sort of a 'Shmatte', in which they had all their worldly collection. The remnants of humanity. It was pathetic. It was terrible. But it gave me personally, being purely selfish now, a feeling of doing something useful. It was a terrific mitzvah, as it were, to be able to help in that sort of manner.

Tape 3: 45 minutes 12 seconds

And so I finally came back to the UK after about three months or so.

RL: Did you just stay in that one position?

SM: Ja. And then we were taken to a training camp. And that was in the Alps, in the French Alps. And it was in a place that had been occupied by the Nazis. Although they were not an occupation of Free France, or southern France, they had, of course, their particular groupings and so on and so forth. And the interesting thing is that from that chateau, and it was really a beautiful place, there was a church nearby, and there was a secret tunnel from this chateau into the church, so in case things went wrong for the Nazis or so, they could escape via the tunnel into the church and then out of the church. Fascinating! All well planned! And there were groups there of ten, from various countries. And I was mixed up with another colleague of mine from Habonim, with people from Hashomer Hatzair and from Betar and from, what's the Mizrahi halutzig movement called there? Ach! Well, there were also the orthodox Chevra in Kibbutzim. And they were called... Again, the name escapes me right now. I forget. I'll most likely think of it. And we made up ten people from the UK. And there were groups from France and from America and from Italy and from Poland and so on and so forth. Very international! And this was a training camp. It was run by young Haganah people. And the youngest, the commander was a twenty-one year old man. And the most outstanding instructor was a girl of nineteen. She was fantastic. And the idea was to teach us in all these sort of violent means of killing people that were permitted, as it were, under the mandatory law.

Tape 3: 47 minutes 34 seconds

You know? How to sever somebody's head with a knife. Or how to cut somebody's ankles and knees with a stick. Or how to deal with unarmed combat. Or how to kill people with a pistol. Or how to throw grenades and all that sort of thing. And this was an incredibly tough training. And, on the strength of it, you would pass out or you would fail. The party that these orthodox people represented was called Mizrahi but I forget now the exact title of the Halutz movement.

RL: Was it Bachad? I don't know whether ...

SM: Bachad! Exactly that! Bachad. Thank you, yes, of course, Bachad. Brith Chalutzim Datiim [the organisation of religious pioneers] Exactly that, yes! And six of us passed this particular course. I was one of them. And we went back to England. Independently, of course, under a secret cloak. I remember when I got home I was fairly dishevelled and so on and so forth. And my father opened the door. He threw his arms round my body and cried and smiled and all this thing. All was forgotten, the boy was home again, you see? Yes. But I couldn't tell him much about it but my mother had a rough idea of what had happened. And I went back to work. I was studying part-time, you see? I was studying all weekends and two nights a week. It was a very tough course. And it was the University of London for a BSc in Engineering at the time. And of course I'd missed a hell of a lot of lectures and all that sort of thing. It was, you know, total and complete chaos. But, nevertheless, I attended all the examinations. I thought, 'You never know, this may be of some use'. And I went down in the annals of the college for having scored one mark in a mathematics paper. That had never been achieved before. But at least I was there. I had a go at it and that was it. It paid dividends later on.

Tape 3: 49 minutes 45 seconds

SM: And yes, and I went back to work and went back normally. And then I spent some time on a Kibbutz-hasharah in Bosham in Hampshire. And then I went to the Holy Land to join up.

RL: Can you tell me a little bit about the Kibbutz-hasharah? I mean how...? Was this in the holiday time? Or was this ...?

SM: No, no, you lived there. You moved ...

RL: Had you finished your engineering?

SM: Yes, yes, yes. Oh, yes, the apprenticeship, my jobs, it was all, you know, thrown to the winds. And I went on Hasharah with the movement. And they had, in those days, there were, I think, five Kibbutz-hasharah in this country. Ba'had had two, Hashomer Hatzair had one, and Habonim had five. And I was the one that went to Bosham in Hampshire. And that was in the hostel and on the land of Sigmund Gestetner, who, in those days, was an ardent leading man. And he had as his guests very often Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Sharret, various other leading personalities who, when they came over to England to negotiate with the government at weekends, they always came there to his country seat. And he occasionally invited Chaverim from the Kibbutz-hasharah, which was, what, five minutes walk away from there, all on his land, to come and meet these people. And, you know, they inspired us with a tremendous amount of... Incredible thing! Now, while I was in London, when I was still a 'Madrach' in the movement, every time the old man, as he was called, Ben-Gurion, was in town, he would stay at the Bait Habonim in London, in, I think it was in Bethnal Green, or, not Clapham, but Clacton, or Clapton. Clapton, I think it was called. And there were sixteen senior groups in London at the time. And whoever managed to do so came to there for the evening, had a meal with the Chevre, with Ben-Gurion and so on. We sat up literally all night, listening to Ben-Gurion. He instilled such an incredible amount of enthusiasm. I mean his personality was so

outstanding that we took that then to our meetings at weekends, you know, transferred that to the... It was terrific! It was quite remarkable, the whole thing.

Tape 3: 52 minutes 38 seconds

And those were, as far as I am concerned, creative days, in so far that we knew what it was all about. We were able to do something about it in a positive manner. But today, unfortunately, the youth has no specific aims. There are no such challenges as there were in those days. There's nowhere to put their surplus energy. And, I've seen this with my own kids, with all the kids of this generation. It's a great pity but we were fortunate to be involved in that era, which was so incredibly constructive.

RL: Can you tell me a bit more about the Kibbutz-hasharah, you know, how big it was and what you were doing?

SM: Yes, there were about forty of us, possibly sixty percent boys, forty percent girls. We all lived in the same house, though the girls lived in the girls' bedrooms and the boys lived in the boys' bedrooms. And although we were all young people, ex-servicemen, very enthusiastic, very virile, very healthy, and very normal and very naturally-developed people, no hanky-panky business ever went on in the house. If people wanted to, you know, do what comes naturally and so on, they went out into the fields or into the barns or whatever it is. This house was..., it was incredible. In those days, it was perhaps not quite so fantastic, but when I look at universities today and what goes on with young people today and all modesty and morals are thrown overboard, and so on and so forth, it's incredible. And what a fantastic amount of respect there was towards each other from everyone to everybody else. It was wonderful. It was really wonderful.

Tape 3: 54 minutes 35 seconds

Yes, of course there were people who had had sexual relations and so on, but never in the house, always outside. It's a very private affair. They kept it very private. One knew, of course, that Sheila was running around with Moishe and Haim was very fond of Shulamite, whatever it was, but this is totally immaterial. That's a natural sort of development with the young people of that age anyway. So yes, and we had three hundred and fifty acres of land. And that was cultivated to some considerable extent. We had a pedigree Ayrshire herd of heifers, forty heifers, and one bull. And I had to look after the bull. Yeah, I don't mind telling you. And what a bull it was. I had to clean out his pen and everything else. A fascinating experience! Possibly one of the happiest periods of my life! I was on a farm with young people, knowing what we're doing and what we were wanting to do and so on and so forth. It was terrific. The camaraderie was marvellous.

RL: Where were the other people from? Were they also refugees or were they all English-born?

SM: Yeah. No, no, no. Most of them were natives, as it were, Scots or Welsh or English and so on. There were, of course, refugees amongst them, yes certainly. But it was a very good mix of young Jewish people. Some had been to university, most of them had been to the forces, others had knocked, that means had ceased going to

university, not finished their course, in order to come. And others were... There were, of course, one or two misfits, as it were. People who, you know, had troubles at home, or here and there and they saw this as some sort of refuge, as you would get.

Tape 3: 56 minutes 37 seconds

SM: And the human problems were quite considerable. They had a, I forget now exactly the name, 'Vardar-ishi' [?], a personal commission, on which there were three people, two girls and a boy. I happened to be the boy on at that time. And people came there with their personal problems. They had financial problems of the past with their parents. Or they had love problems, you know, the jealousy or anything of that nature. And we were the wise ones, you know? We had, of course, no training in this. We listened in confidence to their tales of woe. And we tried to give them some sort of guidance. You know, what sort of guidance can I give people on their love affairs? But they felt they needed to unload it somehow and we were certainly willing. And we were elected, of course, democratically, to this particular commission, as it were.

RL: Now, this film is about to end, so we'll just stop there.

Tape 3: 57 minutes 46 seconds

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 0 minute 14 seconds

RL: So you were telling me about the Kibbutz-hachsharah. I was just wondering when was it that you went to this hachsharah? Do you know what the year was or the month?

SM: Yes, early in '48.

RL: Okay. And you were also mentioning about ploughing?

SM: Oh yes, yes, I was a tractorist. And they have, locally they have ploughing competitions and of course we entered as well and I won a local ploughing competition. And I thought that was pretty good, as a city boy, against twelve, thirteen and fourteen-year-old kids, who were literally born on the tractor. Now, that was quite an achievement for our group.

RL: Was there someone in overall charge ...

SM: Yes.

RL: ... of the hachsharah?

SM: We had a 'Mazkir'. Everything was democratically elected and we elected a secretary and we had various commissions. And every week, on a Monday night, we had an 'Asefa', an assembly, and it was compulsory to attend this, on which we discussed all sorts of things. And some of them were very personal and could have been very hurtful. We had somebody, for instance, I remember, who was in charge of

transport, our bicycles. The bicycles were the bikes that we brought to the Kibbutz because whatever we owned in the wide world before now became part of the community. And this geezer was responsible for repairing bikes and was not very satisfactory. So this was aired at the meeting with him there. That Charlie is not very reliable, he's totally incompetent and I think we ought to get rid of him. And so we elected a new one.

Tape 4: 2 minutes 17 seconds

At times it was very painful. The people who worked in the kitchen, on various shifts, and so on and so forth, were often criticised. In fact, everybody was open to criticism, and we became, to a large extent, immune to criticism. Although we, of course, were obliged to take it on board. We were given, of course, a chance to defend ourselves. Naturally! And sometimes discussions were somewhat acrimonious. But, you know, that was one of the tougher parts, perhaps, of communal life, of people living so close with each another and on a daily basis.

RL: Were there major fallings out?

SM: No. There were occasionally people who didn't speak to each other for some period but, you know, that soon resolved itself because they had to work together as a team. Yes, yes. But there were lots of people who worked on the 'Mashek', on the actual premises, as it were. And others went as farm labourers, as outside workers, and there they earned, I don't know, four pounds a week, or something of that sort, which was all put into the kitty. And if you wanted to take some money out of the kitty, you had to sign for it. For instance, I was given the task of being a 'Madrach', a youth leader, to a Habonim group in Brighton, which wasn't all that far away from from the Kibbutz. And I went there every Sunday afternoon. And for that, of course, I was entitled to a train fare, there and back. And I took that out of the kitty. Totally open to everybody. Everybody trusted everybody else but you entered in there what you took out and what it was for. And I was particularly fond of a girl at that time. And she always wanted to go to Brighton, so invariably we went together. But you can't justify that and say, 'Like to take a girlfriend with me'. That costs extra money, and it's not your money, it belongs to the community. So what we did is I took out my money for the fare that I was entitled to and then we hitch-hiked Sunday afternoon into Brighton. And then, on the way back, we both bought a single ticket and that way we kept the finances straight and whatever she and I did in Brighton, or going together or so, was nobody's business. It was her free time. It was my 'Tafkid', my task to go there. Then, perfectly acceptable, yes, no problems, no problems.

Tape 4: 5 minutes 7 seconds

RL: At what point did you learn Ivrit?

SM: Oh, that was when I was in the army in Israel. And I learnt it fundamentally only by hearing. Because, unfortunately, everybody wanted to speak and learn English. And I wanted to improve my Hebrew. I was in the army rather longer than most of the other volunteers.

RL: We'll come on to it chronologically...

SM: Yeah, alright, sorry.

RL: ... rather than jump onto it now. So, how long were you on the Kibbutz-hachsharah?

SM: Oh, approximately nine months or so. Yeah, eight or nine month, yeah.

RL: Were there any other incidents or, you know, things that you'd like to...?

SM: Oh, yes, I had a girlfriend from my group in south London and she came up at weekends and she brought food and various other things, cakes and so on. And a very good friend of mine also had, yes, he also came along with us, with her, you see. There were four. We were very much a quartet. And they used to bring a lot of food with them and so on and so forth. Well, now, they didn't bring enough food for all forty people and we were morally bound to share everything on the Kibbutz. So, since we couldn't share that sort of thing, what we used to do was we used to devour it at night, in the evening, in dark. And where did we devour it? In the local church because we didn't want to be seen by anybody. So, at about nine o'clock or so in the evening, we entered the local church, which, in those days, all these public buildings were open. Life was rather more pleasant in the country than it is today where you have security guards and everything is locked and so on and so forth. That's how we... You know, we behaved ourselves properly of course in the church. But we ate all these nicely cooked and, I don't know, special cakes that the girls had made and so on and so forth. We had a whale of a time. It was wonderful!

Tape 4: 7 minutes 8 seconds

RL: Was there any religious life on hachsharah?

SM: Yes, there were... Fundamentally, Habonimnicks were not so, they were sort middle of the road. They were not Shomrei' Shabbat and they were not all that orthodox. They were, of course, Jewish-conscious, if only from a nationalistic point-of-view. Yes, we had, of course, every Shabbat, we dressed up in the white shirt, Friday night, the clean shirt. And, of course, the shirt that you wore was never the one that you brought with you. I mean it was somebody else's. But the girls got to know sooner or later what sizes we took. And they were all open-necked, so it didn't matter whether it was fourteen-and-a-half or fifteen or sixteen-and-a-half. And we had entertainment every Friday night. We made our own entertainment or we invited other groups from the movement, who came down. And they had their own. They put on a little play or they put on a little zig and so on. So Friday night was always a wonderful part. And Saturday, then there were many of us, those who were somewhat religious, and they didn't go to work, and that was totally accepted, they had to do other work on other times, and those who were not as orthodox, they carried on. You know, a farm, you cannot run a farm basically on those lines. You've got to go by the weather and you've got to make hay while the sun shines. And so, very often, it was all hands on deck in the in the fields and so on. And we had an acre of intensive market gardening, where we grew beetroot and carrots and peas and potatoes and so on and so forth. And we had a dealer in Little Hampton, which is a bit further east than Chichester, and they would phone up perhaps on, I don't know, at

four o'clock in the afternoon, and they said we want a hundred and forty four bunches of beetroot and we want so many the hundredweight of new potatoes and so on and so forth and so on. And I was the, at that time, 'Sadran Avodah', I was the Minister of Labour, as it were. And so that all had to be harvested. And they wanted this stuff the next morning. And it had to be in Little Hampton at the latest by six o'clock in the morning, so it could go on the train to Covent Garden there to be sold on the market as fresh produce, fresh farm produce.

Tape 4: 9 minutes 35 seconds

And so as people came home from work, at about five o'clock, fairly knocked, I would stand in the gate and they said, 'Moyshe, you've got half-an-hour harvesting peas, and you've got so and so, and we need carrots and somebody else has got to clean them and somebody else will top them'. And we had a tractor, we had several tractors, but we had a Ferguson tractor, and we had a trailer with that, and that used to be loaded up according to what the particular dealer in Little Hampton ordered. And I used to go to bed round about eight or eight-thirty in the evening, and I got up at three in the morning. By that time, I had the trailer fully laden. And then I drove off from the, you know, through Arundel. I don't know if you know Arundel, but there's this sort of main road and a very large hill. And I drove my tractor. And the hour, we got there at about five in the morning, and the tractor makes lots of noise. And, as it goes up the hill, you could see lights going on at either side of the houses as you were getting closer and closer to the top. And people were sort of leaning out of the window and they were obviously wishing me good luck and blessing me and all that sort of thing, this sort of thing [gesturing fist-shaking]. And I used to wave my cap, you see, and I greeted them, you know, there's nothing I could do. And ultimately I arrived at Little Hampton, fairly knocked. I was given a wonderful cup of tea, with hot milk, hot tea and milk in it, and I had a rest. And they unpacked it all and it was sent off to Covent Garden. And I trundled back again. So we were fairly busy and fairly knocked and working hard and enjoying every minute of it. And learning a hell of a lot of tricks of trades. How to, for instance, carry a hundredweight of sack of grain up some rickety steps, and how to throw them around and how to handle them and so on. And, on one occasion, I had to go to the station to pick up a cow. So the cow was delivered and I put the halter round her neck and I used to lead it through the village, you see, all the way back to the farm. And, shortly before we got to the farm, this bloody cow trod on my foot. Oh God, the pain was unbelievable. I couldn't ride the thing and I used to hobble along. The cows are very docile individuals actually, so they don't cause much trouble. They're not like horses. So ultimately I, you know, with a damaged foot, I ultimately brought this cow to the position, the stable, and somebody else took care of it. And I think I was, the doctor came to see me, or I went to see the doctor, I forget details. It wasn't very dangerous but very, very painful. Cows are very strong and very, very sort of stubborn animals.

Tape 4: 12 minutes 34 seconds

RL: Were there people to actually train you in the methods?

SM: Yes, yes, we had a farm manager, who was a Swede and he was specially engaged for that purpose. And oddly, you know, his name was Mr. Juden! But he was not Jewish and he was a very good bloke. And he spent a lot of time training us in the

tricks of the trade and giving us backgrounds to the cereals and how they grow and how they don't grow and so on and so forth. We had forty Ayrshire heifers, bought. And a heifer is a young, it's not a cow yet, but is a pregnant bovine, female, you know? And it isn't until that animal's a calf, then if it is fertilised, it becomes a heifer, and once it gives birth to a calf it becomes a cow by definition, like a mother. And these were all in calf, these heifers, and they are very nasty animals. They tend to gore each other with their horns, and particularly into the hindquarters of their best friend, of, you know, another heifer. And they had to be de-horned. That was a very unpleasant sort of business. We had, of course, the vet came along and so on. Huge shears and you put this on and the cow, the heifer, is strapped into a special steel structure. It's like a scaffolding that you have around houses. And there it is, captive, and you put these huge shears around. It takes sometimes two men to crunch this together. It gives a horrible noise and the horn falls off. And sometimes that turns septic because there's some skin around the root of the horn as well. It's not a very pleasant thing. But, you know, these animals... You give them an injection, of course, and it's all done in a proper manner, professional manner. There's always a vet in, you know, in charge. And so this went off quite well. But these are sort of experiences that you have that are brand new to you, especially if you are a city-type.

Tape 4: 15 minutes 5 seconds

RL: Did you ever have leave to go back home or were you there the whole time?

SM: No, no, no, we didn't want to, it was so nice. It was! Some people, yes. Their parents were ill or something of that sort, so naturally they went. And this was all paid for by the community. I had a court case come up while I was there. I'd only been there for about three weeks and I was caught diddling the underground. And that took quite some - while I was still in London - and that took quite some time to come through. And then I had to go all the way from Bosham to London. And train fares, and possible fines. Yeah, it was a bit embarrassing, quite honestly. The new boy, you know, who came in with a certain amount of a halo because I was a 'Madrich', you know, in London, leading, sort of, amongst the leading members and so on. Yes, but, you know, you overcame that as well.

RL: Right. Were there any marriages at this time?

SM: Yes. One couple got married and the friend of the father was Dicky Crossman, who was a Labour MP and a very, very ardent Zionist. And he came to the wedding and I remember we danced the Hora all through the night, including him, of course. And I have one or two photographs, God knows where they are, he and I fooling about. He was a wonderful bloke. Unfortunately, he died very, very early. And he was one of the three MPs who were chosen by the Foreign Secretary to be sent to Palestine at the time, together with three members of the American Senate, to investigate the thousand per month illegal immigrants. And Ernest Bevin, who was rather anti-Semitic, as Foreign Secretary, said he'd do whatever the commission comes out with. And the commission came out with four voices, which said yes, increase the thing immediately, open the gates, and two said no. And the two people who said no were obviously British MPs, but Dicky Crossman voted with the three Americans because he was convinced that was the only way to solve the problem.

Tape 4: 17 minutes 23 seconds

And Bevin, of course, then said, 'Well, forget it', you know, 'we don't want to have anything to do with it'. Something to that effect, yes. Yes, we had one wedding that I remember there. It was very pleasant. And those people are still married. And they are in Israel. They're retired now, yes, yes.

RL: So when did you leave?

SM: Well, I left possibly in October or so, '48, to go to Israel to get into the Armed Forces there.

RL: Did you leave on your own or were there a number of people that left at that time?

SM: No, quite a lot of other people had gone before. A number of people, particularly experts. There were lots of ex-servicemen there, who were communication signals officers in the Navy and so on. They left illegally. And our problems were always to cover up for them because we all had ration books. Now, on the one hand, because that person had gone, you should have handed in the ration book. On the other hand, people would ask where he had gone. You can't say, 'He's gone illegally to Palestine', so we had to keep these ration books. We had to buy food on their rations. And one very serious incident happened where a guy from Leeds, who had been a signals officer in the Royal Navy, went over to Israel, totally illegally, and he submitted his British passport to the Jewish authorities there. And, shortly after that, three Jewish spies were caught in Baghdad and one of them travelled on the passport of this friend of ours from the Kibbutz. And this was in all the papers because they were all British. The British government was very much involved in this. And the parents of this bloke, who thought genuinely that their son was spying for the Jews in Baghdad and is now subject to be beheaded and all that sort of thing, they came down to the Kibbutz. Because people smelt somehow that I had had something to do with Haganah. They didn't know what but they knew something goes on. There was a tremendous amount of pressure on me by the parents on the strength of that to try and tell them something about it. Well, no way could I tell them about it. I knew of course what had happened. That he had given his passport over to the intelligence authorities in Israel and this was being used by a professional spy, or by somebody who looked very much like him, and they were caught in Baghdad.

Tape 4: 20 minutes 14 seconds

I couldn't tell them that and I felt very sorry for them. You know, the mother was in tears and the father was extremely upset and worried and here and there and all that sort of thing. You just have to keep stum, there's nothing you do about that. Because had I told them about this sort of thing, God knows how much that would have spread and all sorts of other things would have come out. So, yes, it was at times a bit dicey.

RL: So how did you leave?

SM: Well, I left very quickly and went over to Israel. And at that time I was on that particular boat that I was telling you about, which was not illegal immigration

anymore on that boat because by that time there was a state of Israel there. And I was immediately integrated into the army. And I was in the infantry. I'd never had proper military service like so many of the other volunteers, who were pilots and navel people and gunners and God knows what, you know?

RL: Can I just ask you a little bit about the boat, if you can tell me about your journey across?

SM: Oh, the journey took about eight weeks. And we embarked in Marseille and there were, of course, thousands and thousands of refugees there. I don't know how they were selected but this boat was, and I can't verify its truth, but what we heard was that it was a British passenger boat. Most of these boats were totally dilapidated. You may have seen the film 'Exodus', 1947, it was that type of trip. And this was apparently an ex-British passenger boat, which was converted during World War Two, to be a troop transport for eight hundred troops. And the story goes, how true this is I don't know, that the troops refused to go on board this boat, it was supposed to go to India, because the conditions were so crowded on this boat. And that was for eight hundred trained young men to put up with hardship, and fighting a war, and so on and so forth. And we had over two thousand passengers on board. Not just young men but elderly women, old men, young women and so on and so forth. And the trip took about eight or nine days. It was a very slow boat in the end.

Tape 4: 22 minutes 46 seconds

And the people were in bunks of, the three were deep. You couldn't sit in a bunk, you only had to lie there. And wherever they were ordered to lie, where their bunk was allocated to them, that's where they had to sleep, and that's where they had to eat, and that's where they had to excrete, and that's where they had to stay the day. And the conditions under deck, as it were, inside the boat, were, you know, fairly foul and so on. The only people who were allowed to move around were 'Sadonim', the stewards, and I was one of those. And my main function was to bring food down to them and take buckets full of excreta up onto the deck and, you know, feed the fish with them, as it were. It was tough. But we were not involved in any being warded by Royal Navy personnel or so because it was an open border then and everything. The moment we got there, we were immediately disinfected. You know, with DDT, top to bottom and so on and so forth. And I was met by my then girlfriend. She was Palestinian by nationality. Her grandfather was the first ever Jewish mayor of Haifa. A wonderful bloke! He reminded me so very much of my own grandfather. He was one of those patriarchs, you know. Fantastic fellow! And he was elected by fundamentally a majority Arab population in Haifa. This was before the British withdrew. And we ultimately got married in his house, his granddaughter and I. And, yes, as I came off the boat, she was there to meet me. She was in the Navy. She served in the Navy. Navel headquarters were at Stella Maris in Haifa. And, yeah, and then I was integrated into the army. And I was in the army for about, you know, six, eight weeks, in an infantry unit, given basic training and all that sort of thing. Until they found out, and I didn't make a secret of it, that I was a qualified toolmaker by that time. And this was in considerable demand. And I was then transferred to a unit.

Tape 4: 25 minutes 15 seconds

The old Israeli Army was based on the British model with one exception and that was this unit that was known as 'Chael Madah' [?], the scientific corp. And that was made up of very capable engineers, chemists, physicists, mathematicians and so on. We were involved in developing armaments and arms, weapons and so on and so forth. And this was all very nice on paper but, you know, you can't shoot a tank with a paper arrow or something of that sort. So you've got to make the thing. And there was a need for a manufacturing unit. And so, together with someone else, I was charged with opening up a factory and establishing a factory. And this is why I stayed in Israel rather longer than all the other volunteers because they were... After the fighting was over, towards the end of '48, they all went back, you know, there was no more need for these fighting men. And we were just building up this factory. And, in the end, I had about a hundred and eighty machinists of all sorts of skills, from various countries, with various languages. And language was a problem, language was a problem. In my unit, at that time, there were about thirty five people and I spoke English and German and sort of 'A' Level French and I could only communicate directly with about twenty-five to thirty percent of the blokes. The rest spoke languages - Bulgarian, or Russian, or Arabic, or something, which I couldn't understand. And, when you're on combat, that's a very dangerous thing. If you're on rest and you sit round the campfire, there are only two basic items that one discusses. One is women and the other one is food. And if you don't understand, you know, this is, nothing's lost. But when you're on combat, especially in an infantry unit, where your patrols are spread out and you are constantly communicating to and fro, and you don't understand what's what, you are in very serious difficulties. And, in the early days of the war, many of the casualties were entirely due to a lack of communications. This is why, shortly after that, round about '52, '53, or so, anyone who joined the Israeli Forces, by law, first of all had to go into a comprehensive Hebrew course, which is far more intense than the Ulpanim. And that's a very good thing. That's very important.

Tape 4: 28 minutes 0 second

But the cultural differences are enormous. I had a sergeant, a very nice fellow, in my unit, who came from Cairo. And he told me very proudly his wife was pregnant and God forbid she should give him a daughter because he's already got six daughters and he's praying for a son. And I said, 'So, you know, what's wrong with...? No, no no, he needs a son. And he's going to kill her if she bears another daughter. And I took this very seriously. I, you know, I am basically a 'Yekke' [German Jew], so I trust people and I believe what they say, being totally ignorant of various different cultures and so on. And I phoned up the hospital, it was in Haifa, and I said, 'When this woman gives birth, instead of phoning the husband, would you please phone me first of all? I'm his commanding officer'. 'Yes, yes.' They did. So a phone call came through, 'A girl's been born, you see, mother's well, girl is well'. I said, 'Thank you very much'. And then I arranged with some other bloke from the unit that we would give this father, the new father, a lift into town. I had a jeep. And I said, 'I'll give you a lift and you go and see your wife. Oh he was most grateful, you see? We went into the ward there. And my friend was on the left and the father was in the centre and I was on the right, totally prepared to restrain him. And when he got into the - I didn't tell him what sex the child was, I didn't know officially, you see - and, as we got into there, the mother immediately recognised her husband and she started shrieking and shouting like hell because she was dead scared she was going to be

murdered. I mean, he really meant it, you know? And I suppose their mentality is such... The man, when she started shrieking, he realised she'd given birth to another daughter. We restrained him and so on and so forth. It wasn't all that pleasant.

Tape 4: 30 minutes 17 seconds

And, three days later, when he was back at base, he thanked us profusely. He said, 'You did the right thing. I'm most grateful to you. God knows what I would have done. I've got to be satisfied with another daughter. We'll try for a boy later', you see? Yeah. Those are the mentalities of people. And you've got to live with that and you've got to understand it.

RL: So, as far as picking up language, how did you manage with Ivrit?

SM: You know, when you're forced, to some extent, to speak it, because some of the guys don't speak English and so on, you pick it up. And today I can hold a fairly basic conversation in Ivrit but I have great difficulties in reading. Because it's bli nekudot [without vowels]...and I certainly can't spell. I don't know when to put an Alef and when to put an Ayin, or when to put a Taf or when to put a Tet or when to put a Kuf or a Kaf, I don't know. So, you know, you muddle through. But talking, it's not a problem, it's not a problem.

RL: Any other experiences of your stay in the army there?

SM: Well, no. I stayed until about 52. By that time, it was quite a good unit. We had about a hundred and eighty people in that outfit. And the place grew. And let me just add this to you, that that unit that we had there, this scientific corps, Base Number Three, as it was known, that's the forerunner of the outstanding Israel armaments industry that build their own tanks and built, at one time, their own aircraft, and so on and so forth. That was the beginning of it all. And the ingenuity over there is outstanding, especially in the electronics field, which is an ideal industry for Israel because it requires very little raw materials. And the raw materials that are required are very small. It's similar to Switzerland with watches and so on, you know? Of course, it requires raw materials but they're small. They're not, you know, forty tonne ingots, and so on and so forth, for ship building and so on. And it needs a lot of that stuff up there [tapping his brain] of which there's plenty available in Israel and so they're outstanding in their field, outstanding. And they're leaders in many, many areas today in the electronics field.

Tape 4: 32 minutes 59 seconds

RL: What was your actual role, you know, in the setting-up of the factory?

SM: Well, I was basically second-in-command of the factory there. There was, oh, you know, we had a hundred and eighty people there and were responsible for many factories, of the prototypes, in the early stages. There was no mass production there. It was all prototypes. And the machinery that we had were, to a large extent, gifts from the United States of surplus machine tool stuff that had been used. And they were sometimes very difficult to put together because they came in crates and were most probably taken to bits and pieces by people, who were not specialists in this, but

possibly packers, or people of that nature. And very often you had to search for parts. And very often we had to get in touch with the States or with the manufacturers of the machine tool for specific spare parts. But, slowly but surely, we built it together and we made it function. And we built prototypes. And the base was in Haifa Bay and there was a very large area that was a sort of swamp and so on, that was totally fenced off, and we shot off missiles and projectiles and so on into that sort of area for testing purposes. We then started batch production, if it was somewhat useful, or felt to be of some help and usefulness. And, ultimately, when it was good, you know, one went into mass production but that was done in other factories. We were a military base.

RL: And where were you living?

SM: I was living at that time sometimes on the base, depending on my duties, but most of the time in Haifa, which was nearby, you know, in the house of my grandfather-in-law, with my wife. We got married, we got married, yes.

RL: When did you marry?

SM: Ah, the date, it's very difficult. It must have been 1950 or '51.

RL: And what was her name?

SM: Nadia.

RL: And her surname?

SM: Cantor, I think, Cantor, yes.

Tape 4: 35 minutes 29 seconds

RL: And she was born in Palestine?

SM: In Palestine, yes, yes. And she came to London. She studied at UCL, the University College London, studied Chemistry. And worked then for some time in Paddington, in the laboratories where whatever his name was developed penicillin. What was his...?

RL: Fleming.

SM: Pardon?

RL: Fleming.

SM: Fleming, Sir Alexander Fleming, yeah, that's right. She had nothing to do with him but she worked there. I don't know what she worked on. I don't understand it. I'm not a chemist. I don't know.

RL: And was she working back in Israel?

SM: Yes, I think, yes. But, after some years, we got divorced. She came back to England with me and we got a divorce here, via the Beth Din, which was then ultimately recognised by the British authorities. Because we got married in Haifa, and got divorced with the Beth Din, and that was ultimately recognised by the British authorities as a bone-fide divorce, as it were. We had no children, which was a good thing. And we parted on, you know, a perfectly normal friend. There was no intermediary. I mean, she didn't have a boyfriend or so, and I didn't have a girlfriend per se. Yes, of course, I was friendly with lots of girls and lots of boys but nothing of that nature. It just didn't work out. My studies were perhaps much to be blamed for it. I could only study part-time. I couldn't go full-time, I didn't have the means. And part-time meant full weekend and the two nights a week. And then there was a fantastic amount of course work and studying to be done. And I was working full-time to earn a living. So that possibly was a major factor.

RL: So what made you come back to England in '52?

SM: Very good question. I wanted to finish my studies.

Tape 4: 37 minutes 33 seconds

SM: And, as I told you, I was on the books for having attended all my examinations. In other words, I showed my intentions of trying to do my best. And the vice chancellor was a very understanding man. I was offered the place in the Technion in Haifa, an outstanding technical university of international renown. And I could have gone there. But I was never a very good pupil and the material in itself, some of it was fairly difficult for me. And to do that in, as far as I'm concerned, a foreign language was an additional burden. So, I thought why make it difficult if you can make it easy. Go back to England. After I'd got acceptance from the university, I'd have to start all the way down again. I only got to intermediate stage in the first year, which I bugged up, and so I came back to England. And my wife followed me. I had established some accommodation and she came two or three weeks later and that's where we lived. And she then worked at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore? Ja.

Tape 4: 38 minutes 59 seconds

RL: Where were you living? Where did you find accommodation?

SM: In Golders Green. We lived in an upstairs flat of accommodation in Wentworth Road. And I was working, of course, as well, yes. I worked as an engineer in, I think in Enfield. I'm not quite sure where it was at the time. At that time, I changed my job every two years. In those days, there were tremendous amounts of opportunities throughout industry. And that had two advantages. First of all, it was an increase of twenty, thirty, forty pounds per year in your salary. But, far more important, it gave me rather rapid promotion from charge hand to the next job as a foreman, to assistant production manager, and so on and so forth. And that was a very good way of advancing. And I finished work on a Friday afternoon in one place and then on Monday I started in a new place. And I liked that. And the new challenges, new techniques, you met new people and, of course, new responsibilities. And that carried on for some time until in... When I came back in 1952, I think it was, I couldn't apply

for British nationality anymore because I'd been out of the country sum total for five years and two weeks and it was two weeks too many. So I had to sort of do all my bits and pieces again. And I did. The next period is fairly, you know, there isn't a tremendous amount of memory. The fact remains that we got divorced and I was on my own. And I was invited to a friend's Guy Fawkes party, which he thought was a party in which he would announce his engagement to a very nice girl, who took a shine to me, and I took a shine to her. Instead of him announcing the engagement, I snapped the girl away from him, this over a period of several months, and so on and so forth. And that was it, you know?

Tape 4: 41 minutes 50 seconds

We got married, we got married. And we got married in Rhodesia because she was South African and her parents lived in Bulawayo in Rhodesia, as it was then called.

RL: What's her name?

SM: Hilary.

RL: And her surname?

SM: Mendelsson today because she's married to me but her first name was Marks, her maiden name. And she's on one or two of these pictures. No, not that young couple, that's my daughter.

RL: What was her background?

SM: Her background was that she grew up in Port Elizabeth and didn't go to university but took some medical qualifications as a radiographer and came out top of all radiographer's examinations that year in South Africa. And then she took a further qualification of radiotherapy. And that's where - South African qualifications - and then she went to Rhodesia because her parents lived there and she took, I think, some further courses to accept the requirements in Rhodesia, as it then was. And they were identical, fortunately, to the requirements in the UK. So, when she and two of her girlfriends, of a similar training background, decided to come to England because they'd learnt a lot about England and so on, and like Israelis today they felt very cut off from the big wide world in South Africa, they came over here. And what they did, those girls, is they knocked at a door of a hospital, say at eleven o' clock in the morning, 'Have you got a job for a radiographer?' And they would say, 'Yes, can you start after lunch?' And it was as simple as that. And these girls worked for about three or four weeks and they had amassed enough money to go hitchhiking to Spain and Portugal, for instance. When they ran out of money, they came back to England and, 'Have you got the job?' And they started after lunch, literally, and they saved enough money to travel through Germany and France. And then they did this in Scandinavia, and so on and so forth. It was an eye-opener to them. It was an incredible experience. It was perhaps a little dicey, even in those days, as young girls, but nevertheless.

Tape 4: 44 minutes 47 seconds

I wonder where? Shortly after, they came to England and, because they were culture vultures, they went to the Edinburgh Festival. And there they spent all day at exhibitions, a museum, a show, and so on and so forth. And, in the evening, they'd been to some other show and they were very, very tired. And Hilary said, 'I'm going to hitch a lift'. And the girl, 'You can't do that sort of thing'. 'You watch me!' And she did this sort of thing [as if hitching with his thumb out] and the car stopped. And it's incredible! There were three young men in this car, all single, and there were three young girls, all single, standing out there. And the further thing was that these three young men were all Jewish and so were the girls. So, you know, they spent the rest of the Edinburgh time together. Had a wonderful time! And then one of them fell in love with Hilary and he threw this Guy Fawkes party in November, which coincided with her birthday, and the rest I think I've told you already. And that's where I met her. I was invited to this Guy Fawkes party, because he was a friend, and I rather liked the girl. And, fortunately, she liked me and, you know, to cut a long story short, we got married.

RL: When did you marry?

SM: Well, we married in Bulawayo. Her parents were totally opposed to the whole thing for three very good reasons. The very first one, I was already a divorcee and maybe there are some kiddies in the cupboard somewhere, you see, which didn't turn out right. The second thing, I was eleven years older than she was. And the third and most important reason is I had no intention of settling in South Africa. And so they were terribly opposed to this. And Hilary went back and had all these battles and so on and so forth. Well, after a year, everything was cleared and I flew out to Rhodesia, giving up my flat that I'd rented in Golders Green, so that I had no fixed abode. And, when I finally got there, we ultimately, I was there for four or five weeks, we ultimately got married in the Shul in Bulawayo. Certain complications: born in Germany, naturalised Israeli, and British at that time. Yes, I was British. Ah, I haven't told you about my British nationality. I'll come to that in a minute. Divorced, married in Haifa, divorced in a Beth Din in London, and now trying to get married in Bulawayo. Totally international. The complications were enormous. And they all had to be cleared. But, anyway, they were cleared and we got married and everything was hunky dory.

Tape 4: 47 minutes 57 seconds

RL: When was that? When did you marry?

SM: It's in here in this ring, yeah. 1963, I think, yes, '63. Lag Baomer 1963, that was in those days, 22nd of May. '63, ja, that's right, that's correct, '63. I need to tell you about my British nationality because that's quite a remarkable thing, in my view at least. I applied, after I'd been here for further five or six years, which was then '57 or '58. I applied and I paid twenty pounds for the application. I lived in London at the time and I went to the Home Office. And I was shown into a very, you know, very sparse office with two chairs and a desk and I was allowed to sit down on one. And then the official came in with a large book under his arm, a red book. And he opened it up and he said, 'Now, let me see, young man'. And he started reading out the following to me: the date when I went to France, the date and the activities that I was involved in there, the date when I came back from there again. Scotland Yard

had taped me from top to bottom. Everything was now added. It was incredible. I was most impressed and, on the other hand, bitterly disappointed because, you know, I'd paid twenty pounds, I wanted to become British, you know, it had all fallen through. So, a little discussion on this illegal immigration, and so on and so forth. And, don't forget, on my application, I then put my present nationality as Israeli. And this guy said, 'Young man, you know, I admire you for your guts'. Well, I don't know what guts I'd needed, but anyway. 'I don't know whether I would have involved myself in that sort of thing.' 'Now fortunately', he said, 'fortunately, our two countries, Britain and Israel on the other side, are of course not involved in any disagreements anymore. We are good friends and neighbours now, aren't we?' So he took out the big stamp and he stamped that bloody thing and that was it.

Tape 4: 50 minutes 13 seconds

Now this is, I think, the great thing about this country. I doubt if, in America or in Germany or in any country, if you would have been involved in an activity of this nature, obviously not fighting but, you know, involved in a totally anti-government activity, intentionally, for a considerable amount of time, I don't know whether they would have said, 'Well, be one of ours'. I don't know. Anyway, they did. And so I became a British object, you see? And that was a further complication then, ultimately when we got married, with all these other different - born in Germany, married in Israel, divorced in London, Israeli nationality, British nationality, all this sort of thing. But there it was!

RL: Had you ever considered going back to Israel ...

SM: Yes.

RL: ... after you'd got your qualifications?

SM: Yes, but by that time we'd had a little daughter and my parents were getting older and possibly I used that as an excuse, for some reason or other. I'd always wanted to go to Israel but the fire, this ardent desire and so on, that, had waned considerably. And I was in a process of basically establishing myself here as well, you know, with regards to a fairly secure job, and so on and so forth, that this never came to fruition. And I think it's more my fault than my wife's fault. She would have gone with me.

RL: What about before you met her? Had you considered, you know ...

SM: Ja, that was my intention. That was my intention - finish my studies, in a rather simpler manner, or easier way, and it wasn't easy either because I failed one or two papers and the Final and I had to re-sit them and so on and so forth. I was not a very studious, sort of academic-type geezer. And so, yes, but I finally got the thing and that was all that mattered.

Tape 4: 52 minutes 32 seconds

RL: When did you get your qualifications?

SM: Oh, there were various. I have a number of qualifications, apart from the university. The member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, member of the Institute of Electrical Engineers, Fellow of the Institute of Management Consultants, we haven't come to that yet. So, it's, you know, it's a fairly long thing. This is all crap that, oh, I'm sorry, it is all, you know, letters. It's, yeah, well, it's...

RL: And the degree that you took part-time, when did you get that?

SM: Yes, that was... No, that was... Basically, in the end, it wasn't recognised as a degree, it was recognised as qualifications for becoming the full member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and Production Engineers. So, it was in conjunction with the university, but it was not a BA or BSc or BEng or anything of that nature. So, academically, there was no specific university qualification but they were all professional qualifications and they were very important. Because, let's face it, engineering is very much a practical thing and who needs the book-type sort of stuff from, you know, the studies that I had? I'm not trying to decry this because, in the end, I got involved in the university myself, as you know. But there it is! So!

RL: If you can take me maybe through your working life?

SM: Yeah. Well, as I said, when I finished my apprenticeship, I changed a job every two years, in design departments and then in production departments. And I must have had about four or five jobs on that sort of basis. And finally became production manager in a medium-size organisation. And then I was approached by an American firm of management consultants. They were based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And they offered me a job, which I accepted, and I became a management consultant with, at that time, perhaps sixty percent engineering and forty percent management, you know, roughly in that sort of basis.

Tape 4: 55 minutes 11 seconds

And my first job was in Sweden with Bofors, a very well-known company, Bofors, who, during the war, supplied the Nazis and Britain with armaments. And the aforementioned anti-aircraft guns, for instance, were standard British equipment. They were all four point seven anti-aircraft guns. They were all built by Bofors, they were all coming from Sweden. But they made a lot of money by supplying the Nazis as well with the same sort of stuff. They were neutral, as you recall. And from there, I was then asked - I was in Sweden on a pilot scheme, for about eight or ten weeks, very, very interesting - and then I was asked, because I spoke German, 'Would I be prepared to go to Germany and work in a steel plant for a year? If I were to say yes they'd be very happy. If I'd say no, they'd be very happy'. Because they, obviously, from the personnel files and so on, they knew my background. And I discussed that with Hilary for a long time. And, finally, we decided to go and I tell you why. Because in 1964, '65, the Germans had just gone through what they called the 'Wirtschaftswunder', the Economic Miracle. They'd got themselves back onto their feet again in a very, very plausible manner. And management in this country was always pretty grim. It was, you know, at least five or six years behind everybody else.

Tape 4: 57 minutes 2 seconds

And so I thought I could learn a lot in Germany perhaps and then come back to the UK and apply that and it would be a bit of value to me personally and would be of value to the companies and to my employers. And so we decided to go to Germany. Michelle, who was born in January '64, was, I think, seven or eight weeks old when she flew out to Germany. I went there first, found some accommodation, and then they joined me there. And I was working there for a year. Very tough conditions! The management was pathetic. In fact, the chief engineer didn't communicate directly with the second-in-command. And I was the political football in between. And I found the going very tough, had very little support from my American employers. And it was so difficult in the end that Hilary went home to Rhodesia with her little daughter because she couldn't take it any longer either.

Tape 4: 58 minutes 14 seconds

TAPE 5

Tape 5: 0 minute 14 seconds

RL: Now, I was just going to ask you, you know, how did it feel going back to Germany?

SM: Well, that was one of the discussions I had with Hilary for four weeks before we made a decision. It wasn't easy, not at all easy. But the thing that drove me was hopefully picking up some very, very useful things and it was basically on that that we went back. I came across a lot of ex-Nazis. In fact, the two directors with whom I had to deal with in the main were both ex-Nazis. Well, one certainly was, the other one a bit doubtful whether he was a Nazi, but he was obviously in Germany and they were both very good engineers in their own right. There's no question about it. The big chief was a nervous wreck. He was full of tablets. He took tablets every five minutes for this, that, and the other. He was not on speaking terms with the second-in-command, so I was the political football in between the two. The unions would not sit down with him round the same table. That was the type of bloke he was. Despised by everyone. Very capable engineer. Tended to make decisions at an instant and caused one or two fatalities in the plant. They employed about twelve thousand people. The very first day I was there, he took me around the plant, and the plant had been operating during the Nazi period as well, and, as he took me round the plant, he pointed out to me a particular wall in a tunnel and he pulled me back as we were walking and he said, 'This is where we used to shoot them'. And I said, 'I beg your pardon?', I said. 'Not me, of course, you know, see my halo. But, you know, the regime.'

Tape 5: 2 minutes 21 seconds

The slave labourers used to be shot here. And I was appalled by this and I said, 'Look, I think we've got to get one thing very clear, since we've got to work together. It's unfortunate that you're German and I'm British. I think we've got to forget the past if we really want to get on'. And he took this to heart and, give him his credit, the war was never mentioned again. And the fact that he was German and I was British didn't matter. To the Germans, I appeared as a typical Englishman. I had blonde hair, blue eyes, and a moustache. I spoke German with a broken accent and

put in a lot of grammatical errors. That gave me a certain advantage that, whenever I was asked a question... And everybody erroneously thinks that the consultant is a person who can solve anything, you see, whether he's a medical consultant or an engineering consultant. It's a load of nonsense, of course. They're also human beings and they can only base their answers, and so on, on their experiences. So I very often used to say, 'Can you phrase the question slightly different? I don't think I fully understood', you see? And they did this willingly. I was, after all, a ruddy foreigner, you know, so, you know, you had to make allowance for that. That helped me occasionally. I had very serious brushes with the second-in-command, to whom I submitted a very comprehensive report on which I'd worked for about six weeks easily. I had a group of twenty-four of their technicians at my disposal, who were in my department. I submitted a paper; it was about thirty pages, with calculations, graphs, schematics, drawings and everything else. It was very comprehensive. He'd seen it for a fortnight and he called me into his office and said, seven o'clock in the evening, and he said, 'The report is good, the contents are good, they make a lot of sense, but the German is atrocious. Would I please re-write it?' And, greatly encouraged - they're not very liberal with their praise - greatly encouraged by the incredible pat on the shoulder that he gave me, because I worked there under very, very strenuous conditions, I said, 'With the greatest respect, if you were to speak half as good English as I think I speak German, then I think we've got something to talk about. I'm here as an engineer not as a linguist'. And he didn't like that. And I don't blame him.

Tape 5: 4 minutes 51 seconds

And he said, you know, 'I hate the British'. 'Ah', I thought, you know the heart started to pump; I knew we were in some sort of a fight here. And I said, 'Well', I said, you know, 'you fortunately live now in a democratic society and therefore you can voice your views, not as in the olden days, freely and eloquently. Why do you hate the British?' 'Oh yes', he says, 'I'll tell you. Do you realise, Herr Diplomingenieur' - you know, everybody's addressed by their full title and so on - 'Do you realise, Herr Diplomingenieur, that I was imprisoned by the British for three years after the war?' And I thought, 'Oh, oh, we've got somebody in the nut here', you see? And I said, 'Tell me, were you ever in the Armed Forces?' And he stood up and he clicked his heels. He was a huge bloke. And he said, 'I have to report I was a captain in the SS'. And he sat down again, you see? And my heart was... I thought I was going to lose my heart there. The adrenalin was pumping to and fro from here and there. It was absolutely incredible. And I said to him, after a few months, 'Do you know I tend to agree with you?' And he made as if to embrace me, you know, and there was a smile on his face, which wasn't very often. 'I think they should have imprisoned you for twelve years, then I wouldn't have had all these difficulties with you that I'm experiencing right now.' And, you know, it took about five or six minutes for the thing to sink in. And suddenly he realised what I actually meant. And he stood up and said, 'Raus!', you know, which means 'Get the hell out of here!' I don't think I've ever moved as fast as all that in all my life. Those were some of the experiences I had that were extremely unpleasant, extremely unpleasant. But there we were, that was the situation. Of course, I didn't re-write the thing. I told him there were twelve thousand Germans in his plant, including himself, who were infinitely better in German than I am. 'You re-write it if it's necessary.' In the end, my team leader re-wrote it. He was a nice fellow. So! But those were some of the experiences

I had there. They were very unpleasant. But at the same time I was asked to address a considerable number of young German kids. They were about fifteen, sixteen years old, who all belonged to a church or something. They were going to Israel for six weeks and could I fill them in a little bit about Israel?

Tape 5: 7 minutes 24 seconds

And that was part of their psychological cleansing or reparations or whatever it was. They worked there in Kibbutzim, and so on and so forth, for nothing, but they got free lodgings and food, of course. So there was a move there towards, whatever the word may be, realignment, as it were. That's the wrong word. I can't think of the right word right now. But I must say this, that I spoke German with a foreign accent because if they would have known my background, I would either have had a lot of 'rachmones', which I don't need, or I would have had a lot of hatred, which I didn't need either. I was there on a business partnership and therefore we had to keep everything fairly clean. Anyway, after a year, the whole thing was finished.

RL: What part of Germany were you living in?

SM: Very close to the Eastern border, near Hanover, a major steel works called Salzgitter.

RL: And did your wife rejoin you?

SM: Ja, she, ja, she ...

RL: Because you said she went off to ...

SM: Ah, no, no, she went, she was with me until the end of that particular assignment and then she went to Rhodesia and I was left on my own. And I thought it had gone so badly, in my view, that I thought the Yanks would either get rid of me or otherwise move me to somewhere else. And they asked me, literally on their knees, would I do another steel plant please because it's been highly successful and they want me to do another steel plant. So what could I say? I said yes and that was also successful. And would I do another steel plant? Yes. So, in total, I was there for three and a half years.

Tape 5: 9 minutes 24 seconds

And life for Hilary was very tough because she picked up German while she was there. And David, our son, was born in Germany in an RAF hospital. I insisted on him being born on British soil, as it were, rather than the German soil. And I spent the year with a very large company called Mannesmann, a huge steel plant and industrial concern in Germany. And one day they got... The conditions there were much better. This was in the Ruhr and people were very nice. By that time, we'd found some very nice accommodation with a German family, a flat of our own. Michelle was growing up. David, the baby, was developing. So things were beginning to look up a little bit more. The first year was a disaster. But, nevertheless, the British, two British steel companies - in those days, the steel companies were still on their own, privately owned as it were - namely Samuel Fox and Parkgate, both in

this Sheffield area here, who heard about the American activities in German steel plants, and so they selected a team of eight specialists, extremely well selected, and sent them over to Germany to have a look and see what the Yanks were doing for the German steel plants. And they were there for three days. And I was asked to act as an interpreter. And I did and became very friendly. They were nice people, you know, and so on and so forth. And after, within two weeks, they decided they want a similar sort of service, provided that Steve does it for them. And, for the second time then, I was rescued by the British from Germany, as it were, you know? It was quite an interesting experience.

Tape 5: 11 minutes 29 seconds

And so I came back to this country, here to Sheffield. And we had, until then, prior to going to Germany, bought a house in Mill Hill, and that of course was then put on the market, which we sold for an incredible amount of money, seven and a half thousand pounds we got for it. And that was just before, you know, everything started going up in the air. And we lived here happily ever after. There's a wonderful community.

RL: Can I just ask you a little bit more about Germany?

SM: Yeah, sure.

RL: I mean, who did you socialise with in Germany?

SM: My colleagues from the company, who were all consultants, international people, some were German, from Holland, from Sweden, from the United States. But, you know, you can't socialise very much with those people because they're all involved in an assignment and living on top of it, so miles away and so on. But only every now and then we had a conference or something and we met those. It was a very isolated life. Of course, I made friends with some of the Germans. And some of these people are very, very, very considerate. I give you an example. The chief engineer of the last firm I was with, who was an ardent Nazi, in the Nazi Navy, phoned us up within half-an-hour of the terrible disaster, you may remember it, at Hillsborough football ground here. 'Steve, are the boys alright?' He knew that my two sons were keenly interested in football and so on and he'd just seen it on television. We exchanged letters and telephone conversations. In fact, they came and stayed with us for a week the first time they were in England. He said, 'In the Navy, we were always saying we watch and go against England and we never got here. But now that the peace is here, you know, I can walk around England as a free man'. Yes, he was a very decent fellow.

Tape 5: 13 minutes 44 seconds

I met in Germany a lot of young people, who were very decent and, of course, later on, at the university, I had similar sort of experiences. So, those who were not involved in this, and who were not fanatics, politically, you know, as far as the Nazi party is concerned, are very acceptable individuals. And they all feel a sense of guilt, even the youngsters at university. And that is the second generation, their grandparents were the ones who were involved in this, they still feel guilty about this. And that's perhaps a good sign. You can't blame them for it obviously. And I'm

always reminded by Churchill on what he said. He said, 'It's better to draw than war'. And that is very true. And that, of course, applies to a very, very great extent also to our situation in the Middle East, between Israel and the Palestinians.

RL: Did you meet anti-Semitism in Germany? Did they get to know that you were Jewish?

SM: No. Only on one occasion, when the team leader, my team leader, youngish engineer, nice fellow, very charming wife, gave birth to another child and they wanted me to be the godfather. And so I said this is almost impossible because, first of all, I'm not going to live here and, secondly, I'm Jewish. 'Oh really, but that doesn't matter at all.' And he had, as far as he was concerned, he had four weeks of serious discussions with his priest before the priest finally persuaded him that I was not a good candidate. That was the only person and he never blabbered it to anybody else, no, no, no.

Tape 5: 15 minutes 37 seconds

Yes, of course, we went to synagogue in Hanover on the Chagim and we went to synagogue in Düsseldorf for similar sort of reasons. But, no, amongst our German acquaintances. Yes, this very good friend of mine, yes, he knows by now, but other than that, no. Despite the fact that my name was Mendelsson, you know, and it was a well-known name in Germany: bankers, philosopher, composer. Odd, isn't it? But, yes, anti-Semitism, only on one specific occasion and that was entirely due to the individual. It's rather an interesting incident. Before Hilary and Michelle, my daughter, joined me in Germany, I flew home to London every weekend. And there were only certain flights from Hanover to London and it was always a bit of a rush. Though, of course, I was transported by the steel company's transport department. And I always had a different driver and I always sat next to the driver. As far as they were concerned, I was the VIP, this brilliant bloke from England, you see, and they were not used to having these people sitting next to the driver but, you know, that's the only way I can talk to these people. And, in any case, a driver's a human being. And this was a very unpleasant looking fellow, an old fellow with a bald head. And I didn't want to talk to him. He was very unpleasant. And, you know, we'd only been on the road for about ten minutes, he suddenly said, 'You know all this myth about concentration camps, this is American and Zionist propaganda. It's not true'. And I was very much taken aback by this. Out of the blue. We had said nothing to each other before then. And I said to him, 'Well you must know, you were there'. 'Oh, no, no, no, I wasn't there but my brother-in-law was there, you see? And so it is all a lot of lies' and this and that and so on. Well, I wasn't going to get myself into a big conversation. And then suddenly along the Autobahn there was a hold-up. What had happened was a tanker had come in the opposite direction, had crashed through the barrier, and the driver must have fallen asleep, and buried his nose in our embankment. And the road was closed. And there was somebody flat out on the road, lying on some sort of a blanket or tarpaulin, or something of that sort. And I thought, well, this was the end of my weekend because no way can we get through. It's stuck. And I looked at the scene a bit closer and the guy that stopped us was a British soldier and I looked to the other side and there was a large convoy that had parked there. So it was obvious that British troops had taken care of the situation.

Tape 5: 18 minutes 24 seconds

And I thought, well, we're made now, we've got no problem, you see? And I said to the driver, 'Let's drive on. We'll get through'. 'No, no way', this driver was no way, 'these were occupation forces and they would only shoot us', you see? He was dead scared. So I just couldn't get through to him. And I suddenly remembered 'an order is an order', you know, and I said, 'Right, don't bother, but when we finish, when we ultimately can get through here and I've missed my plane, we go back straight to the Herr Direktor, you and I, and I shall demand your instant dismissal for not having obeyed his order of getting me to the airport on time'. And you should have seen the beads of sweat on his head. I've never seen anything like it. And, in a most trembling fashion, he drove out. There were lots of cars waiting, you see, and there was this sergeant who said, 'Halt!' And I looked out of the window and I said, 'Who's in charge here, sarge?' And he said, 'It's Lieutenant So-and -So, sir'. I said, 'I'll have a word with the Lieutenant'. 'Yes, sir.' He thought I was a senior official in civvies, you see? And the Lieutenant comes along and salutes very smartly. I said, 'Look, this is the situation, I've got to catch a bloody flight because I've got a meeting in the Ministry of Defence at nineteen hundred and twenty hours tonight and unless I catch this flight...'. 'Don't worry, sir, say no more.' And they move this corpse and everything else and the sergeant waves us on. I say, 'Thank you, Lieutenant' and that was it, you see, we sailed through and I just caught my aircraft. Now, on the way back, on a Monday, the very first thing as I got into the office, I had two secretaries there, she said, 'The big chief wants to see you'. That was always calamity. I hated his guts, you know, that was the guy who told me where they used to shoot them. And I come to his office and he sits behind his desk. And there's a smile on his face. I'd never seen him smile. He said, 'It's remarkable, not only are you reorganising the steel plant, but now you have started reorganising the occupation forces'. And I said, 'What do you mean?' And he suddenly reminded me of the incident, the Friday afternoon. So this driver must have gone all through the works, you see? And he says, 'Me and that Englishman, you know, we sorted out the British occupation forces' and all that sort of thing. This must have gone all round the steel plant up to the Herr Direktor. And I had to explain to this man, he was an intelligent man, that these guys in uniform are human beings like you and me. They're carrying on their particular sort of duties and orders and instructions and, you know, where there's a human need they obviously accept that human need in the same way as they looked after the injured driver. So they said, 'This guy's got to go to London, let him go through, this is nothing lost'. That was difficult for the German mentality to understand.

Tape 5: 21 minutes 29 seconds

I had lots of incidences of this sort of nature throughout Germany. It's far too boring now anyway.

RL: It's very interesting. Did you ever revisit ...?

SM: Pardon?

RL: Did you ever revisit Breslau?

SM: Did I ever...?

RL: Revisit?

SM: No. I intended to do that once with my brother. Unfortunately, he passed away five years ago, so that didn't materialise. He was a very sporty bloke. He was in the British Forces, in the 'Z', 'Z' reserve scheme, I think. He was a damned good athlete. He was a middle distance champion, in sort of command of his particular year. But, unfortunately, he passed away, cancer, and so there's just me left now. Despite my smoking and the eggs that I eat! Ah, yes!

RL: So those were the stories in Germany. Is there anything else that you would want to tell me about there?

SM: About Germany?

RL: Yes.

SM: Well, lots of things but nothing specific. I mean, I'm still in touch with one or two of the people in Germany, who I met at the steel plants. And that's basically it. Ah yes, another catastrophe: I worked for a company in Germany that make clocks and watches and time-indicating mechanisms. That's in the Black Forest. And the director there was a very charming man. His name was Herr Graf von Zeppelin. I don't know if he is related to this particular family. And I was warned, I was warned by my employers, by my seniors, the day before I went: 'It's quite possible that this consignment, this assignment is not going to materialise because we've had a number of consultants in various branches of this vast organisation and one of the consultants has done a boo boo. He's dropped a serious clanger and the director was totally appalled by the thing, and dismissed all the resident consultants at three or four of these places. So, Steve, when you go to the Black Forest, have a nice drive but be prepared to be there for a day and then be kicked out again'. Okay. So I went to the Black Forest and I met my team. It was a smaller team. There were about twelve of their technicians. And then I was asked to meet the Managing Director, this Herr Graf von Zeppelin.

Tape 5: 24 minutes 17 seconds

The bloke, about seventy five or eighty years old, very good looking fellow, white hair and so on, welcomed me, very charming, very nice. And he said, 'The very first thing I'd like to do is I'd like to inform all my managers of your activities and of your presence. And would I perhaps be kind enough to talk to them for about ten minutes about what my programme is and what its all about?' 'With pleasure!' And we fixed a time, twenty minutes past nine, next morning. Okay, fine. So work starts at eight. I'm in my department and I'm talking to my people and I'm getting myself organised and so on. A porter suddenly comes in. A very important message from the Herr Direktor, 'Would I go and see him immediately, please? It's terribly important'. Hah! I said, 'Yes, I'll go with pleasure'. I knew what was, you know, what was going to happen. So, I went into there and he hummed and hahed. And he said he doesn't quite know how to put it over to me but you know yesterday we fixed twenty past nine for our meeting and the production manager is likely to be late could we possibly

with my permission postpone it until twenty five minutes past nine? And I said, 'Yes, with pleasure, it'll be no problem at all'. There was no question of being kicked out or anything of that sort, but it was absolutely vital to speak to me personally about postponing the thing from twenty past nine to twenty five past nine. That's the mentality. The time is the ruling God and that was my experience with this particular charming gentleman. Unbelievable but there it is!

Tape 5: 26 minutes 7 seconds

RL: So, after three and a half years what happened? Well, you came back to Sheffield?

SM: I came back to the UK and I worked in these two steel plants here, in Parkgate and at Samuel Fox. And I installed a similar sort of system to what we installed in the... The rationalisation of the engineering departments in the steel plant. I don't want to go into technical details, there's no interest. And that turned out to be quite successful. And, after that, I got one or two assignments here in the UK and so on and so forth. Until nineteen hundred and... Oh no, something happened, yes, ah, that's right.

RL: What year did you come back? What year was it?

SM: Michelle was born '64. '68, I think, '68. We took some furnished accommodation here in Sheffield and, after a year, we moved permanently into this place here. Shortly after this, I was head-hunted by Plesseys, the electronics people. And I was appointed their Industrial Engineering and Training Executive. A fantastic title! There was this little write-up in the Financial Times about it as well. And I travelled around the country. They had twenty-two different plants in the country and I helped and assisted and guided and looked after industrial engineering departments. And these are the experts who deal with the actual manufacturing of components. There are two types of engineers. There's the design engineer, who designs, if you like, a motor car. And then there's the other expert engineer, who actually makes it, you know, designs, develops all the machinery, the machine tools and, of course, all the robotics that go with it nowadays, concept of automation and so on. It's a fascinating thing. And deals, of course, also with the training of the various operators, who operate the various stations. It's a fascinating area and I was always very, very fond of it.

Tape 5: 28 minutes 34 seconds

And I was with Plesseys for three and a half years and then they suddenly felt they needed to reduce their overhead costs. And I was in a department of four other people, they were all experts in their own particular field, all internal consultants, and this department was closed. Just like that. And we were kicked out. That got me. Then I joined another firm of consultants and that lasted for a period of about a year and a half until my original colleagues, the Americans, forgave me for having left them and asked me to come back again. And so I worked for them 1980, when I had a very serious car accident. My mother... My father had since passed away and my mother was in an old age home in London, in Bishops Avenue, one of the AJR institutes, I think. Oswald House I think it was called. And I went to visit there as

often as I could. Always took one or two of my children with me. And, on this particular occasion, Michelle had just finished her 'O' levels and this was the first time she could come with me, because going down to London and back again was a total loss of a day at least. And all three of us were coming home to Chesterfield, which is about fifteen miles south of Sheffield here, we were involved in a very serious car accident.

Tape 5: 30 minutes 29 seconds

I was unconscious for two days, in an intensive care unit for three or four days. Anyway, the outcome of it was that I had a serious skull fracture and a number of fractures between the leg and the ankle. The knee was bugged up completely. And I was in hospital for thirty three weeks. And, after that, on a frame, strung up on a frame, and after that in a wheelchair for six months and on crutches for four or five years. And, once again, my insurance agent was very active there [pointing upwards]. He looked after me. The kids, miraculously, were almost unharmed. Michelle, who was the oldest, sat next to me. She had seat-belt burns and next day went on a treasure hunt with her boyfriend in a motor car. And David, who sat behind her, was blue and black all over the place but no lacerations or anything. The worst guy was Daniel, who sat behind me. The other car hit me at right angles just exactly where I sat. And the car was compressed by two foot six or so. And the roof, you know, came down and hit me on the head and so on and so forth. And that's how I got this skull fracture. By description of a good friend of ours, who was an internationally renowned radiologist, the most serious skull fracture he's ever seen in his life, and he was at the peak of his profession at the time, he was the only one who diagnosed me correctly. Everybody else said there's a dog's chance of survival after this. He said, 'Oh no, I know Steve. He's got a thick skin, a thick skull, a bloody small brain, he'll survive'. And he was the only one who was right. So here I am today, you see? And Daniel, who sat behind me, had whiplash, from which he still suffers today, and two or three broken fingers. But, after about three or four weeks, he was playing the piano again and playing football, so. 'Hashem' was the one who sort of, you know, dealt with all this. Well, then I was unemployed for five years. I was unable to work for five years.

Tape 5: 32 minutes 52 seconds

And I had a good friend at the university who knew me well. And he said, 'Why don't you, while you're doing nothing, come to speak to our final year students about your experiences as a manager, in the School of Management?' 'Yeah, I'd be glad to do that.' So I hobbled in there on my crutches. And, when I'd finished, they all clapped and I was sure that they clapped because I'd finished, you know? And he said, 'No, this went down very well. Can you come again next Friday?' And I did that. And, cut a very long story short, ultimately I was involved totally and completely at the University of Sheffield. And I was teaching mainly Operations Management and Human Resource Development, both in the Engineering Department and in the School of Management. And then I was asked by the big chief, he'd always had international dreams, 'How would I like to try and set up a European Business course, a diploma course which lasts a year? Only with new countries'. And I said, 'Yes, I'll have a go at this'. And finally I tied up with the university in Stuttgart and with the university in Barcelona and with another smaller university in

France and the four of us formed a consortium. And all the lectures and everything else were held here in Sheffield. And I ran this, obviously. This course consisted of seven taught subjects for six months, on which people were being examined in a written case, a written method, and then a placement with a British company to gain further practical experience and to further improve their English. And this proved highly successful. It was really wonderful. I enjoyed it immensely. And I was with the university from 1986, I think, until I took early retirement when I was seventy-one, which was, what have we got now? Five, ah yeah, '98 I retired. And I missed it a hell of a lot and I still miss it because being with young people was incredibly rejuvenating and I was totally involved. And we had ninety two different nationalities there and about twenty two percent of the students were foreign. And it was a fantastic experience. And, of course, there were a lot of German students there, a lot of American, Canadian students, Australian students there, and lots from Eastern Europe and from Africa and Asia, of course, a lot from China. But the German students and the French students had some problems.

Tape 5: 35 minutes 54 seconds

I insisted on being on a personal basis. I did not want to be called Professor or Doctor or Colonel or anything. My name was Steve, with a 'V', so I explained to them. And anybody else who spelt it differently, you know, I understood the plight of the foreigners. And, of course, with the Germans and the French, I tried to speak in their own language, not during the lecture, of course, that was all in English, but, you know, when we were socialising, or a cup of coffee, or whatever it was. And the 'tu', 'tois', in French, you know, the 'tu' instead of the 'vous', was very difficult for them to apply that. Or the 'Du' in German, instead of 'Sie', was very difficult vis-à-vis the 'Herr Professor', the all knowledge, you know? This is the way people are held in the various esteem. There is the stupid undergraduate and the incredibly capable lecturer, you see, who knows nothing basically but anyway he happens to be a lecturer. And so this was a bit difficult but we overcame this and we became very good friends. I took no more than twenty-five people at a time per year into the course and quite a lot of people stayed on in Sheffield because they were offered jobs by their respective companies. And the only problems I had were Greeks. They were here for just a joy-ride. They didn't attend lectures and in the end they even had the audacity.... Although I arranged jobs with them and took them for interviews and so on they just didn't turn up. They just buggered off, they went back to Greece. And then they had the audacity, two of them, to ask me to write them an official letter saying that they attended this course for a full year, which would exempt them from military service in Greece. And I wrote them a letter, which my secretary wasn't even prepared to type to begin with, and I said, 'You don't sign it, I sign it', you know? Yeah, but the kids were wonderful. And the German students were very genuine. And I'm still in touch with them. They're in touch with me. They send me all sorts of presents and greetings and so on and so forth. And it was a very pleasant association.

Tape 5: 38 minutes 9 seconds

And there it is. That reaches the end of the fifth tape or whatever it is I should imagine.

RL: Now, what we need to catch up on now is your family ...

SM: Oh my family, oh yes.

RL: ... and the children. You mentioned the birth of two of them because one was born, Michelle, was born here, and then David...

SM: In London.

RL: ... was born ...

SM: David was born ...

RL: ... in Germany ...

SM: Yeah ...

RL ... RAF hospital ...

SM: And the third one, it'll surprise you, was also born, but he was born in Sheffield, so he qualifies to play cricket for Yorkshire. The others don't.

RL: What was the third one, what's the third one?

SM: Daniel.

RL: That's Daniel and when was he born?

SM: He was born, that's a very good question, thirty five years ago. That makes it '69, doesn't it? No, sixty, sixty, no '70.

RL: 1970. 1970. Thirty five years?

SM: Yeah, yeah, '69, that's right, '69, rings a bell.

RL: '69?

SM: '69.

RL: And when you came to Sheffield, can you tell me about their education and what they did?

SM: They all went to the local secondary. First of all, they went across the wall here to the primary school, which was a very good thing. And after that they went to Tapton Comprehensive School. Tapton Comprehensive School has produced two very famous people. One is called Coe, who is the Minister of Sport right now, who won a number of gold medals in the Olympics, Seb Coe. And the other one is also an MP, he's a blind man, he's called Blunkett. And he went to the..., they have a department for blind children. He went to that school there. And he became a councillor here in Sheffield, then was leader of the council for many years, then became MP. Today he is, I don't know what Ministry he holds, he's just come back

again. Blunkett, you know him, the blind man. Those were two of the students from that school, apart from my three children. Yes. Well, Michelle took a job, ah, no.

Tape 5: 40 minutes 27 seconds

RL: Did they belong to any youth groups?

SM: No. Daniel hops around with Aish, which you may have heard of, Aish Hatorah. It's a group specifically for single males and females of the Mosaic persuasion. And David doesn't but he goes to quite a lot of the many functions. He goes, for instance, to the Shabbat talk that they have at the Sephardi Shul in the... Advertising man, what's his name?

Male Voice: Saatchi.

SM: Saatchi.

RL: Saatchi.

SM: That's right. Saatchi, who instigated the Shabbat talk for young people at the Sephardi Synagogue in Maida Vale, I think.

RL: In Sheffield did they belong to any youth groups?

SM: No, only to Maccabi, where they played football and table tennis and so on. But there are not many youth organisations here. We are totally depleted here in Sheffield. At one time, a colleague and I ran what was known as the post-bar-mitzvah class. And that was devised for kids who were bar and bat mitzvah and who then said, 'Thank God, it's all over, the 'kheyder' is over'. And we had a very specific curriculum: Jewish history, starting with the French Revolution, to bring it a little bit closer to our daily activities, Hebrew, and global affairs. Now, what do we call them?

RL: Current affairs?

SM: Current affairs, thank you, current affairs, which caused them to read the Jewish Chronicle, and so on and so forth. And we had discussions on that. And one Sunday I would run it and the other Sunday my colleague would. We had about fourteen or fifteen people on this course. There was a strong desire from parents to come on it and I said no way because the kids would be intimidated. The kids developed from thirteen to fourteen to fifteen. We were constantly being joined by new ones and that made it very difficult, because they came in, you know, at a very late stage. And there's a big difference, mentally and otherwise, between a thirteen-year-old and a sixteen-year-old.

Tape 5: 42 minutes 2 seconds

And many of the older ones then went, in fact all of them went, to various universities, other than Sheffield. And many of them got very good jobs. They developed into outstanding individuals. And, slowly but surely, this sort of post-bar-

mitzvah class only went on for about three years, and then it fizzled out, unfortunately.

RL: What kind of Hebrew tuition was there for a pre-bar-mitzvah and bat mitzvah?

SM: Pardon?

RL: What kind of Hebrew class was there for ...?

SM: Ah no, no, this was to understand some songs and to, you know, translate Hava Nagila and things of this nature. It was after the Bar Mitzvah and not before.

RL: No, but I'm asking what was there in Sheffield for pre-bar-mitzvah?

SM: Oh, there were proper Bar Mitzvah lessons and proper attendance at Shul, you know? And we had a very, very prominent Reverend Bruschi here, who, when Daniel, my youngest son, who's a very, very good footballer - he played four football matches every weekend, one for the class, one for the school, and then two for two other sort of clubs - and when it came to his Bar Mitzvah class, then obviously, on Shabbat, he was expected to turn up in Shul. And I spoke to the reverend and I said, 'Look, we've got a problem'. 'What is it Steve?' I told him. And he said, 'Well, look, it's very simple, I think'. Let him come to Shul one Shabbat and the next Shabbat he plays football and then he comes to Shul and then he plays football.

Tape 5: 44 minutes 48 seconds

I thought that was fantastic. And when I put that forward to the boy, he said, 'Fine'. And he accepted it without any difficulties whatsoever. Because he knew in advance that he couldn't play for the school and for the class and for the club on the following Saturday. And he could give that, you know, there was a properly structured programme, and he accepted that very well. Yes, they all had proper teaching by the Rabbis who were in charge and so on. And they all read their Haftorah, or even part of the Sidrah, and they did very well, yes.

RL: Was there just the one synagogue in Sheffield?

SM: Yeah. We only had one congregation until about ten years ago or so. And they formed a reform congregation. And this is doing well. They have about a hundred members. They have no premises of their own. They're not allowed to use our premises, unfortunately. And I would say that sixty to seventy percent of the members are Jewish and the others are non-Jewish partners that they have married. And there are one or two non-Jewish girls, who've embraced Judaism, and they wear a tallit top now and all that sort of thing. They've gone right over-the-top. It's an extremely well-run community. And because we have a Lubavitch Rabbi, he obviously doesn't get himself involved in their affairs, but he's totally tolerant towards them and, if need be, he helps them. And they're invited, of course, to our functions, be they religious or otherwise. So it maintains a structure within the community and his leadership is much appreciated on that basis, yes.

RL: Who is the Rabbi?

SM: His name is Golom, Johannes Golom, and he has now been here with us for ten years. And he has, I think, ten children. Yes. The youngest one is a boy. He's got three boys and seven girls. And, yeah, they're very nice people.

Tape 5: 47 minutes 8 seconds

RL: So, you were telling me about your children.

SM: Yes.

RL: And what did they do when they left school?

SM: When they left school, Michelle went to Manchester and that was the Victoria University, the original University in Manchester. And she studied Economics there. And she became President of the Economics Society there. And she also became Northern Regional Manager of, not AJ6, but what's the next step up? A youth movement. And she travelled. She had a car. She went from Manchester to Edinburgh to Glasgow to Newcastle to Hull to Liverpool and also to Sheffield. And she was the Northern Regional Organiser, as it were. She was only nineteen or twenty years old. Quite an achievement, actually, for her. And I forget now the exact name of the youth movement, the national youth movement. And then she joined Marks and Spencers. And her first job was in a store in Ashton-under-Lyne, which you most probably know better than I do. And she started there on Monday and on Thursday and Friday it was Rosh Hashanah. And so she felt extremely embarrassed, and understandably so, she'd just started the job, she was going to ask for two days off. So she went to see the MD of this particular store. And that was on the Tuesday of the second day she was there. And he said, 'Well, of course, Michelle, I always take it off, so why shouldn't you?' You know, that made it a bit easier for her. He also happened to be Jewish and he also took the holidays off. And, ja, from that she was on a two years training course. And we came home - about a year and a quarter after that, a year and a half after that - and we came home here, and there was a tape, and there was a message on the tape for her: 'Would she please get in touch with personnel director of Marks and Spencers at headquarters, company headquarters?' And she was very worried about this, extremely worried. And he said to her, when she spoke to him, 'You've done rather remarkably well'. She was in charge of a department in Manchester with a staff of eighty one, and she was twenty one or twenty two. And she was involved in the abseiling on this huge building. I don't know whether that was one that was blown up by the IRA, or not? But this apparently, possibly the new one, no, it couldn't have been the new one. Anyway, the staff did abseiling from the roof right down to the bottom for charity. And she was involved in this. She gets involved in all these sort of things.

Tape 5: 50 minutes 25 seconds

And yes, he said, 'You've done remarkably well on your course. We don't need to bother you for another half a year. Come and join us at company headquarters'. And so she transferred to Baker Street, as it then was, personnel department, and ultimately became one of the big people in the personnel department. And this was interesting. I went there on behalf of the University of Sheffield, to one of their seminars, purely

to discuss placements for students, and so on and so forth. And it was a nationally organised thing. And, when I got there, Michelle was running it. It was rather odd, yes. David did not go to university. He is like his father. He's not a very studious sort of individual. He went to a very good catering college here in Sheffield. It's got a very high reputation. And he was there for, I think, two years. And then he got the job with Harvesters, I think. And he was running one of their departments and he had, one of their outlets, and he had lots of problems there. They moved him from that one to another one and so on. He ran one in - where are the Plessey headquarters in London? It's not Ipswich. It's something with 'I'.

A Male Voice: Ilswood?

SM: Well-known, well-known.

RL: Ilford?

SM: Ilford, thank you, yes. In Ilford. And there he was threatened to being shot and threatened to be knifed, and went to the police and the police didn't help a great deal. And it was fairly tough. And finally he threw in his hand and he joined Marks and Spencers. And he worked, first of all, I think, in their staff canteen at Baker Street and then they transferred him to their computer centre, which is just outside Heathrow Airport.

Tape 5: 52 minutes 46 seconds

And he ran that for about a year and a half. Terribly tough, very, very difficult. And the people, who he had there, were those who are currently on strike with the suppliers of food for British Airways at Heathrow. They're all, to a large extent, Asians and they're very argumentative and he had arguments with them almost every day. So he has a certain amount of sympathy with both parties in that strike, the employees, on the one hand, who he thinks have been handled very shabbily, but the management, on the other hand, which happens to sit in the United States, so it's very much a remote control sort of operation. And he's now... From there, he joined the central staff and he is now in charge of wines. And his function is to select wines, especially new ones. He's just been to Porto, in Portugal, on a special course, on a special, you know, promotion thing. And to ensure that the various shops have enough of this that and the other and so on. And he quite enjoys that. Before he moved to wine, he was in charge of bacon and eggs. And he said, 'What does a Jewish bloke know about bacon?' He says, 'You'll learn, you'll learn'. And apparently he did learn. I don't know. But, anyway, yes, and he's quite happy. He's the one who's going to get married on the 11th of December. And then we have Daniel. Daniel went also to Manchester. That's him with the funny hat on the top. Daniel went to Manchester, to what is known as the 'Mickey Mouse' university. That used to be known as the Manchester Metropolitan Polytechnic, the largest polytechnic in Europe.

Tape 5: 54 minutes 53 seconds

And when he got there he had a very good time, very good time, and he failed all his subjects at the end of the first year. And he was appalled and I was appalled. The

kids went to Israel every year, during their summer holidays, they worked on Kibbutzim and so on, and he came back two weeks earlier than usual because he felt, that, you know, what is he going to do? He's got to look for a job. He doesn't know what sort of a job. He was in a state. But I spoke to his tutor and I said he's..., I wrote to the tutor, and I said, 'He's a decent fellow, he's a willing chap, he's rather immature and he wasted his first year on all sorts of things other than his studies. Is there not a possibility for another chance?' And they gave him another chance. They put him on another - he also did Economics - they put him on another course which was infinitely more interesting. He had to start from rock bottom again. But he played football also for the polytechnic, and that possibly helped a little bit in retaining him. Anyway, he came out with a very good degree at the end and he joined, I think, he had a number of jobs, one or two. Yeah, one job he had with the bank was... The day he joined them, they declared the department closed. And he was there for six month, doing all sorts of odd things. Nothing directed or anything of that sort. And then he was paid, I think, six thousand pounds redundancy money for doing absolutely nothing for six month. He was thoroughly fed up but he was quite pleased with the six thousand pounds. They paid him, of course, a salary as well. He never... This is unbelievable, unbelievable.

Tape 5: 57 minutes 0 second

And this is mainly due to lack of communication, where one department doesn't speak to the other department and therefore they don't know. One recruits and the other one in fact chops.

RL: And what's he working at now?

SM: Oh, he's established himself in a recruitment agency. He found a niche department and he's done rather well. It's very hard work. He's working on his own. And he's been running this for two years now and it's on the up and up.

RL: Well, this film's about to end, so we'll just stop here.

Tape 5: 57 minutes 36 seconds

TAPE 6

Tape 6: 0 minutes 15 seconds

RL: How do your children relate to their Jewish identity?

SM: Very strongly. My daughter's married out but she's coming up here for the Chagim, and the little one is just starting, possibly today or yesterday, in the Jewish Kindergarten. She's two and a half years old. In Barnett. And the boys are very conscious of the fact, yes. They're not religious in any specific way. But Daniel, after he came back from Aish, which was a trip to South Africa, where he met a lot of very nice people, became extremely friendly with the young Rabbi who was running this group and attended a one-to-one meeting with the Rabbi every Tuesday evening. And became very interested in the traditions, the Halacha, and so on and so forth. So that, last year, for instance, when he came to Shul, he read all the time a specific book

that the Rabbi had recommended to him. And he reads that at home as well. He's a well-read bloke. He takes after his mother, who is the cultural member of the family. I'm just the clodhopper. I'm a plumber. You know, I read the newspapers and technical journals and so on but I don't read a lot of books. I'm very fond of music and opera and we often go to concerts, whenever there's a possibility, and the theatre also. But I don't, and I underline this, I don't go and watch ballet. That's not for me.

Tape 6: 2 minutes 8 seconds

RL: So how many of the children are married?

SM: Just Michelle, and David is about to get married, and Daniel is still available. So if you have a nice daughter!

RL: Who's David marrying?

SM: David is marrying a young lady from Mill Hill, who is currently in South America. She has a job whereby she looks at scenery, hotels, accommodation facilities for tourists. And recommends and writes up about these things. I don't think she's tied to a specific travel agency. She belongs to a small group of these sort of people who specialise in certain areas and then supply this information to various tourist operators. That's the way I understand it. I may be wrong.

RL: And how many grandchildren do you have?

SM: Two. Two girls. Michelle's daughters. Yes.

RL: Okay. Now what kind of activities have you been involved in the community?

SM: Ah, quite a lot. I just took retirement from being the administrator of our two Jewish old age homes. I was with them for twenty one years and decided that, although it's an old age home, it's perhaps better if a younger person takes care of this sort of thing. For - this is not in any chronological order - for six years, I was the member at the Board of Deputies for the community here. For about three or four years, I used to run the newsletter, which came out, in those days, every two month or so. I've been chairman now for, oh a number of years, perhaps twelve or fifteen years, of a cultural society, Group Sixty-two. It was formed in 1962. And we arrange for ten lectures throughout the year. The first lecture this year, which will be after the Chagim, of course, on the 9th of November, will be addressed by Professor Sir Ian Kershaw, who was the one who wrote the outstanding biographies on Hitler, you know? Internationally famous now. Then we have, three weeks later will be, three month later, every Wednesday in a month, being addressed by, you may know him, Professor Leslie Wagner CBE, who was Chancellor of the University of Derby, and was granted the CBE for her services to education and the Jewish community.

Tape 6: 5 minutes 5 seconds

Not all the lectures are on Jewish subjects but about thirty or forty percent of them we try to do. So, I've been chairman of this for about fifteen years or so and still continue. I'm an active member of the Sheffield Israel Society, where I'm the

Cultural Chairman and I organise talks, film shows, lectures, meetings, and so on and so forth. We have a very, very capable chairperson and she runs the thing, mainly the fundraising and so on. I don't get myself involved in money affairs. And what else is there? Yes, of course, I'm on the Shul council and on the representative council. These are sort of normal things that one has to take in one's stride. I am the official organiser of the Yom HaShoah services that we have here. I advise the Rabbi and, with his agreement, we follow invariably, what I propose, be they readings, be they guest speaker. We invite a lot of non-Jewish people for them.

RL: What made you get so involved with the community?

SM: Well, I like working with people and I suppose they were scraping the barrel and so said, 'Would you do it?' And I said yes. When I took on the editorship of the newsletter, I was on crutches, I was unemployed, I had a lot of free time. I don't have a lot of free time now. I do quite a lot of talks to schools on the Holocaust, both for the London Jewish, LJCC, Cultural Centre, which used to be the Spiro Institute, and also of course for Beth Shalom, with which I've got a fairly close association. And this Sunday, for instance, we're going to commemorate or celebrate their tenth anniversary. And that should be very interesting. But I give a lot of talks there. And also, of course, mainly in the north. I don't go down to London. There are lots of people in London and so on but hardly anything north from here: York, Durham, Darlington, Newcastle, I'm on my own, as it were. And as far north as, the place I can't even pronounce, it's just south of the border.

Tape 6: 7 minutes 46 seconds

And I usually go there either by train or by car. It's not a problem. And the Lake District. I recently went there, organised four or five talks to various schools, and I took Hilary with me. They paid for the expenses, so it was wonderful, and we loved the Lake District. It was in spring. It was most enjoyable, yes.

RL: You've been connected at all with the AJR?

SM: Yes, in so far that the local, no, the Northern Regional Administrator, Suzanne Green, in Liverpool, she appointed me 'Gruppenführer', if you like. I'm sort of the geezer what does here in Sheffield. Yes, yes, that's right, I forgot that! So, that's another job and occasionally this requires a lot of work. And I am basically busier now than possibly I was when I was working. But this is different. I'm a keen philatelist and I spend winter months playing, as Hilary calls it, with my stamps. And, in the summer, I potter around in the greenhouse, in the garden, and so on and so forth. Apart from the other things.

RL: What work did Hilary do in Sheffield?

SM: Hilary was a radiographer and she was, at one stage, running the children's department. And that is where she broke her back, literally, by carrying, you know babies and very small children, onto tables and into cots and all that sort of thing. She's got serious back problems. And so the last job she did was also radiography again but the pneumoconiosis unit, which deals with the entire area of Northern England, mainly coal miners who suffer from pneumoconiosis. And this was chest

screening, very much like breast screening. She didn't have to carry people, and so on and so forth, and that was much easier. She used to be the radiographer there. That was a full-time job. Very busy! People came from as far north as Newcastle and so on.

Tape 6: 10 minutes 9 seconds

And she is a remarkable woman. Apart from dealing with three children, literally on her own, because I was overseas, apart from the fact when, in the early days, when we were together in Germany, and that was no fun for her at all, she was suffering from back ache to such a remarkable extent that they couldn't even transport her from her bed here to a hospital. And it was at that time, when the kids were very young and I was working with Plesseys, that we needed some help and help was very difficult to get. So I got compassionate leave from Plesseys for four weeks. And, after that, they said, you know, 'Hard luck, but we can't do any more than that'. By that time, we found a girl, a lady, from Liverpool, and she came to stay with us for about four weeks. And that gave Hilary and a friend of hers the idea of starting an organisation to supply such people and she ran an organisation called 'Guardian Angels'. And that extended from nursing to domestic work and they had something like eighty or ninety people on their lists. And this was a job that she ran in addition to running the home here and in addition to her full-time job at the pneumoconiosis unit. And this was twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And she shared that with a friend of hers, the wife of that radiologist I was telling you about who, you know, said this was the most serious fracture he'd ever seen. And now she is very active as a bridge player and belongs to the University of the Third Age and takes, very enthusiastically, painting lessons. And we have a lot of paintings around the house by her. This is why we have to move house because we haven't got enough wall space anymore, as you can see. And she is also going to history classes, modern history. And there's something else that she does, there's painting and bridge, oh yes, she plays in a group about three times a week and she also goes to a bridge class, as it were. And that rather fills her day actually. Yes. She's a very, very busy girl and highly efficient.

Tape 6: 13 minutes 0 seconds

RL: Have you ever got restitution from Germany?

SM: Yes, considerable restitution. They paid me five hundred pounds once, no five hundred marks, for the loss of university training. And the solicitor who organised it took only forty-five percent of it. So, in the end, I had something like about eighteen or nineteen pounds. But, other than that, no. Ja, I get a pension. I get a state pension from the Germans and that's also very little but it's better than nothing. It's about eighty pounds a month or so, which is paid into my bank account. That's all, yes.

RL: I'm just thinking, we never followed up on your grandfather because, when you left Germany, he was still alive.

SM: Yes.

RL: What did happen to him?

SM: Oh, he was carted off to Theresienstadt, where he ultimately died. And his Vienna-based daughter and son-in-law, who joined him after my parents left Germany for England, they were on the last transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, where they perished.

RL: Coming back to this country again, how would you describe yourself in terms of identity?

SM: Can you elaborate on that a little? I don't quite know what you mean.

RL: Well, you know, you were born in Germany, you've, you know, been brought up partly in this country, you've been to Israel. So what do you see yourself as?

SM: Oh, I'm a Jewish Brit. Yes, as opposed to the Germans, who were Germans of Mosaic persuasion.

Tape 6: 15 minutes 10 seconds

So I'm fundamentally Jewish but I'm very fond of this country, although I criticise the government quite frequently, and particularly the Prime Minister, who used to throw a handbag around. Because she was, in my view, the root of all our evils, Mrs. Thatcher. And I'm not an admirer of that disgusting man in the United States called Bush. I have very strong political views and I am known to be very contrary. I like to argue with people for the sake of an argument but, at the same time, I hold very strong views that are not held by all my friends, that's for sure.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

SM: No, no, I've never suffered from any anti-Semitism or anything of that nature. Well, yes, of course, people make the odd anti-Semitic remark or so, without being aware of the fact that I happen to be a Semite. No, no, no, I feel totally at home here. I don't go crawling around and thank everybody on bended knees for having saved my life. I am indeed very grateful for that naturally. But the people who did this have long gone. No. My political views are very left. Not very, very left but are with the Labour government, even New Labour, but totally appalled by Tony Blair having been gobbled up, like Mrs Thatcher was at her time, by this evil man in the United States. I hold that very strongly against him. Although I do feel that he did it in all sincerity. Whereas I feel the other guy did it in order to justify himself after Nine-Eleven, and to, I don't know, throw his weight around because that's what he does.

Tape 6: 17 minutes 13 seconds

I think the invasion of Iraq is totally unacceptable. It's a sovereign country. It threatened neither the United Kingdom, certainly not the United States. They were misled on very, very poor intelligence. And now we see the results of it all. It's terrible. And it's not going to end and it's likely to spread into other areas.

RL: Did you ever speak to your children about your experiences?

SM: Yes. Yes. And they get rather bored by it. And that is, I'll be very honest with you, at times very disappointing. They know about my personal experiences but when there are shows on television, for instance, about, I don't know, about Israel and about so on and so forth, or matters that, you know, pertained to my own personal experience and so on, they either have some other programme to watch or otherwise they've already seen it and so on. They're not interested. And to be very fair, very fair, I've often thought about this because I've felt a bit cranked, quite honestly, when my father used to tell me stories about his time in the army in the First World War, and I was only twelve or thirteen, I was also fairly bored. It seemed miles away. It had really nothing to do with me. It was a different generation, you know? These kids are just normal. They must view this in exactly the same way. And the excitement that we had when we were young, with regards to the birth of the nation of Israel and all the cons, all the difficulties that were involved in this and the suffering, and so on and so forth, it's history to them. It's like talking to them about days when there was no television. It's impossible for them to imagine it because, you know, the moment they were born, there was television, full stop. And to tell them that we didn't have a car at home and I was, I think, twenty-five or twenty-six before I had my first car, ridiculous, you know? How was it possible? No, I understand their approach to the thing. But it still hurts me at times. Sometimes I like to talk about these things but, you know...

Tape 6: 19 minutes 48 seconds

RL: Do you think your, your experience as a refugee has affected you in any way?

SM: No. I consider myself very fortunate, in so far that I think I acclimatised myself very quickly. Let me tell you this, that I, on a normal day, I mean not today, as you know, but on a normal day, I drink up to six or seven cups of hot tea with milk in it because I like it, you see? I even eat egg sandwiches, so you know now I've got used to this sort of, the business. I'm very often late to meetings, not like the Germans for instance, so yes these sorts of idiosyncrasies I've acquired. But there are a lot of people of my generation, with my similar experiences, who still dwell on the fact that they came here as refugees, that they were lost, they came into a strange society. And I think, to a very large extent, I can't share this with them because I was fortunate enough to have my parents here. I didn't live with them and so on. So there is a difference here. But some people like to dig around in this. And, while I am of course obliged to talk about my experiences very often throughout the year, that's part of the task, and I consider this to be a mitzvah, I am sometimes asked, 'Why do I do this?' And I said, 'There's three good reasons'. The first one is it's part of the curriculum today and it's not only history but it is history of a very special nature and it is a heinous sort of situation. That's number one. The second reason is that I talk about it with fervour because we are a multiracial society today and to prove that racism is totally futile and totally unjust, to show the intolerance and its result. Hopefully with young people, especially when they get together, they're all friends, they're not particularly worried as to whether you're Chinese or African or Afghan, or whatever it is. There is our only hope - at the schools and the universities, where people mingle freely and recognise the value and have respect for other people, although they are different. And we can't help that. And the third reason I give is I consider it to be my duty to talk about it because those who perished in the Holocaust

can't talk about it. And so, while I'm still around, I want to talk about it from my own personal experience, from my own personal viewpoint.

Tape 6: 22 minutes 33 seconds

RL: Right, now, is there anything that you feel that we might have left out that you would want to speak about?

SM: No, not really.

RL: And is there any message that you'd like to end with?

SM: No. I think that the good that ought to come out of all this sort of thing is not only to recall what happened to specific individuals, but to come back again to racial integration and racial respect and tolerance. And I think the government is quite right when it demands, or when it proposes, that immigrants who come over here and want to live in this country should be taught a certain amount about British history. Certainly should be taught the English language. And that there should be a test, I don't want to call it an examination, but there should be a test, which ought to be passed on basic sort of concepts of being in Britain and being British, if you like, before they're granted the nationality, never mind the five years' residence in this country. And it is essential, I think, to preach that not only the indigenous people of the UK should show more tolerance but the newcomers must also show tolerance and respect towards the concepts, the culture, and the beliefs, and the modus vivendi of the people who've lived here for generations. And so it's a two-way, a two-sided affair. And that is my thought on the matter. I mean it's not a message but it's at least my thought.

RL: Okay. Thank you very much.

SM: Thank you.

Tape 6: 24 minutes 40 seconds

Photographs

SM: This is a photograph taken in 1932 or '33 in Breslau, showing my grandfather, Samuel Mendelsson, with his wife, Louise Mendelsson, my grandmother. In the background, my cousin, Hans, who lived in Vienna. And, in front of him, my good self and, on grandfather's lap, my kid brother, Wally.

Tape 6: 25 minutes 9 seconds

SM: This is a picture of my parents' wedding in Breslau, in 1925. My father, Frank Mendelsson, is in the centre, next to the beautifully adorned bride, my mother, Margarita, née Wolfberg. On my father's right, as we look at it, is my maternal grandmother, Betty, and her husband, Richard Wolfberg, my mother's parents. And on my mother's left, as we look at it, is my grandfather, Samuel Mendelsson, and his wife, Louise Mendelsson, parents of my father. In front of the bride sits my cousin, Hans, from Vienna, and next to him on the floor is my mother's brother, Heinz, who was very active in the First World War and was ultimately shot in the back outside the

Düsseldorf Town Hall by the Nazis. And the extreme back row, standing up, the third person from the right is my Aunt Leni, who is my mother's sister, who married Sam Middlebrook, who stands next to her, my English-born uncle.

Tape 6: 26 minutes 37 seconds

SM: This picture was taken in 1942, somewhere in Staffordshire, which shows my younger brother, Wally, who had just enrolled at the Litchfield Grammar School, King Edward the Seventh, and myself, who was at that time a member of the Air Training Corp.

Tape 6: 27 minutes 4 seconds

SM: A picture taken of some home entertainment, of which my family were very fond at the time. Round about 1930. Showing, from left to right, my Uncle Lutz, in Vienna, and his son, Hans. And, next to him, our housekeeper, Hedda. And then, next to her, is Lutz's wife, Frieda, my Aunt Frieda, and my Uncle Ernst, and his wife, Aunt Lottie, who was the second daughter of my grandparents.

RL: And this was taken in?

SM: I mentioned it. It was taken in 1931 or 2 or thereabouts.

RL: And the place?

SM: In Breslau, at my grandfather's home.

Tape 6: 28 minutes 3 seconds

SM: One of my many reports, three of those were issued per year, and always had to be inspected and signed by my father, to indicate that he had seen it. The note at the top says that his performances in French and Hebrew are totally unsatisfactory. He disturbs the lessons by constant talking and he's often very unruly. Books and exercise books are not sufficiently tidy. And there's a very special note at the bottom that graduation to the next class is extremely doubtful. That's rather typical of almost all the reports that I had in the school in Germany. I was never a very attentive or very good pupil.

Tape 6: 28 minutes 56 seconds

SM: A certificate, which I treasure with considerable pride, given to me on the occasion of Yitzhak Rabin's visit to London, specifically to talk to Mahalnicks, volunteers from this country to fight in the Israel Defence Forces, in 1948, '49.

Tape 6: 29 minutes 26 seconds

SM: A happy family get-together in Wales in 1999. From right to left, seated, my daughter, Michelle, my charming wife, Hilary, myself. And, from right to left, in the rear, Daniel, my younger son, and David, the older one.

Tape 6: 29 minutes 51 seconds