

**IMPORTANT**

**This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees**

**Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.**

**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**

**AJR**

**Winston House, 2 Dollis Park**

**London N3 1HF**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	169

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Kohn
<b>Forename:</b>	Lady Zahava
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	5 August 1935
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Ramag Gan, Palestine

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	17 March 2016
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	London
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	2 hours 44 minutes



## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV169  
**NAME:** Lady Zahava Kohn  
**DATE:** 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2016  
**LOCATION:** London, UK  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

**[Part One]**

**[0:00:00]**

*Today is the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 2016. We're conducting an interview with Lady Zahava Kohn. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.*

*Please tell me your name.*

I'm Zahava Kohn.

*And when were you born?*

5<sup>th</sup> of August 1935.

*And where were you born?*

I was born in Ramat Gan, in Is- Palestine – then.

*Thank you. Lady Zahava Kohn, thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices project. Please tell us a little bit about your family background.*

Well, my father came, was born in Poland, but was brought up in Germany, in Düsseldorf. And my mother was born in Czechoslovakia and was brought up in Zürich, in Switzerland. And they met in Switzerland, and ...went then to live together in Holland. Because that was already time when the Nazis ...were already quite busy. So, my father wanted to leave Germany.

*Mnn. He lived in Düsseldorf did you say?*

In Düsseldorf.

*And tell us a little bit about their, their parents. Just to set the milieu...*

Well, they both came from very Orthodox back-backgrounds, and also then they went from- After they got married in Frankfurt they went then to Holland, waiting for their papers to go to Palestine. And that was in, must have been beginning of 1935 because that was already with the Nazis, that they didn't want to stay in Germany. So, they went to Holland waiting for their papers to go to Palestine.

*But just to come back before we talk about your parents, about your grandparents?*

Oh, sorry.

*Their names, and what they were doing.*

My mother's father was called Josef Guttman. And his wife was called Rivka...Guttman Schipper was her maiden name. And... my father's- I think his mother had already died... when I was born, so I didn't really know much. But his name was Eliezer Kanarek. And he was born in Poland as well.

**[0:02:36]**

*And at what point did they move to Zürich?*

They- no, at that time – do you mean my grandparents?

*Your grandparents.*

My... I don't really remember the date of that, but it must have been at the end of the '20s or... No, because my mother was born in 1905, in Nowy Sacz [ today Poland]. That was still in Czechoslovakia. And- but I think it must have been at the late end or beginning 20s that they moved to Switzerland.

*And what was your grandfather's profession?*

He dealt in- with cigars. Not that he smoked them himself, but he dealt with that. [laughs]

*Clever. And he had a business in...?*

Yeah, but it was a freelance business and he did it himself. And- no, but in a modest way, but he did all right. And they got themselves a flat in Zürich, and then ...my mother was still born in Nowy Sacz but her younger sister, I think, was already born in Switzerland.

*And what was the sister's name?*

Miriam. Or Miri, she was called.

*And you said they were quite Orthodox?*

Yeah...yeah. Very Orthodox.

*So which synagogue- where did they go to in Zürich?*

In Zürich it was Hasidic... Shtiebel or what you call it, very close by where they lived. But they were very much involved. But my grandmother I must say, she was already... astonishingly, very, very much, because she went to do some business. Because my grandfather didn't make a lot of money, so she was a representative for ...clothes- an underclothes factory, and went all over the country in Switzerland to... to do business. And

spoke the language – German - very well, and Swiss German and... really got very- But still kept everything going at home as well!

*This was before the war?*

Oh yes!

*So, she was working?*

**[0:04:58]**

Oh, very much so.

*I suppose...unusual, or...at that point...?*

Well, I think at that time, from certain circles when the husband perhaps didn't make enough money, and they had three children – two daughters and a son - that they had to... to do something. Will you forgive me one second?

*[brief interruption]*

*Yes, talking about your maternal grandparents, you were saying they were very Orthodox.*

Very- ultra-Orthodox, and-but, they still wanted my mother and her siblings to have a proper education, that they should be able to make a living afterwards, at the right age. And that was very important to them.

*And what did she look like, your grandmother?*

Quite...how shall I say? Nice... but you could see that she was a determined lady. And always-I remember afterwards, for instance after the war when I came to Switzerland and having my friends stay. We used to sit around her; she used to tell us stories and about the past or even other kinds of stories. And very much taking part in bringing up children or grandchildren, and very, very much so.

*You said she was wearing a sheitel?*

Yes. Very Orthodox, I must say. But she didn't go on about it. I mean, I had to know what I could do or what I couldn't do, but she didn't go on about it all the time. And that was the example she set.

*And your paternal grandparents?*

I didn't really know. Because I was too young. My parents had then gone- that was when they came back from Palestine, they came back via Düsseldorf, but they didn't want to stay there. That was already too late with the Nazis, so they went on. Sorry. I saw them, but... my father's mother had died. But his father had married the sister of his first wife. And. But I don't remember any – any of that.

**[0:07:09]**

*What were their names, do you remember?*

...My memory is not as good as it used to be. [laughs]

*Don't worry- don't worry.*

It might come back some time.

*Don't worry. So, your parents, how was it...was it arranged? How did they meet?*

Yes... yes. No, no, they- it was arranged that they should meet, and which they did. And but it went very quickly. They had already different ideas, and were a little bit more broad-minded and so forth. And still very, very Orthodox, but they were broad-minded, and liked each other, and wanted to get married as soon as possible.

*And you said they got married in Frankfurt?*

Yes.

*So how come?*

But that was the reason, because my father from Düsseldorf, my mother from Zürich. And they had a lot of relatives all over, so they wanted to make it a place a bit closer by, and that they should...should be easier for the family to meet. And that's why they did it in Frankfurt.

*I see, but did they live in Frankfurt ever?*

No.

*No, but that's where they got married.*

That's right.

*In which synagogue, do you know?*

No. [laughs]

*But the wedding was there. But their plans were already to leave Germany at that point, or not? When...?*

Not quite.

No.

Because they married in '33.

OK.

So, they were not ready yet to get – to leave Germany. I mean they were looking- that's why I think also they were looking then and wanting to go to - instead of making another country their home - so they were looking of going to Palestine.



*So where did they settle?*

They went from Germany, then to Amsterdam, waiting for their papers to go to Palestine, because they didn't have their papers yet. And they also had acquired papers for Honduras ...citizenship, because they thought if they have to- because that's when the Nazis were already busy. And if they had to go somewhere else, that they might be able to escape. Somebody must have given them that idea. I don't know; we never spoke about that afterwards. That they got the idea to go to ...Honduras, and that they might settle there. But it never worked out.

**[0:09:28]**

*So, when did they arrive in Amsterdam?*

They must have arrived in Amsterdam... went first to Palestine, it was '35, and they left I think beginning '37, if I'm not mistaken, went then to Amsterdam. Because my mother couldn't take the climate. She was too ill, and the doctor said to my father, "You'd better take her back to a cooler climate because she doesn't seem to be able to - to accept this."

*And how did your father manage...? He moved first from Germany to Holland. So, tell us about his profession and how did he...?*

Well, I'm not even sure whether at that- whether he was already working at that time. It was... Perhaps that was just a period to overcome before going to Palestine, which he must have, because he went to the same company to work for them afterwards. But how he got there I don't know; we never spoke about it. It was a rainwear company. They manufactured rain clothes and raincoats and other kinds of things. And... he had to travel around all over Holland to – to sell these.

*Mn-hnn. And I know this is obviously all before you were born, but what did they do in Palestine? Where did they settle? What...?*

Well, they started off in Ramat Gan, because that was a place where they could get a flat at the time; it was very difficult to find that. And my father also tried to find some work there, but that was very difficult too, and with the language and so forth. But then finally, when they did realise that it was not going to work because the doctor said to my father, “You’d better take your wife back to Europe.” And it also might have been because she came very late in pregnancy to Palestine. And that might have been a cause that she didn’t acclimatise.

*So, she travelled, pregnant with you?*

Yeah.

*And how did they travel? ...How did they get to...?*

By boat. [laughs]

*So, it was quite a journey.*

In those days ...I don’t think people travelled much by plane. But it was a very difficult period for them to find accommodation, to find...and work for my father, and so forth. And so that’s why finally they had then to- and my mother being so ill, they had to think about it and... to go back. Couldn’t, didn’t want to go back to Germany. That was too late, in ’37, so they went to Holland.

*And at that point they thought it was safe to go to Holland.*

Well, see they couldn’t go back to Germany. That they knew; that was something they didn’t want to do. And Switzerland was very difficult for them to- because you weren’t allowed in, and my mother had no Swiss nationality.

**[0:12:34]**

*Yes, so that’s what I was going to ask you. So, your grandparents, living in Switzerland... did they have...?*

They were Swiss.

*They were Swiss.*

They were Swiss by that time, but my mother didn't have Swiss nationality because they got it probably after she was born.

*Or maybe also because she married your father...?*

And married, that's right.

*And at that point...*

That's right.

*And your father, what nationality did he have?*

Stateless.

*Mnn.*

And that's what he kept. And then they didn't get Honduras nationality either. And- but I think they had some... Palestine papers as well.

*And what about you?*

Well, I was Palestine, and British protected, being born in Palestine. So, I was protecting my parents. [laughs]

*So, you had your own papers, so to speak?*

Yeah, yeah...yeah.

*And... Came back and managed to settle in Amsterdam.*

Yes.

*And where did they- where did they settle; where did they live?*

I... That I know exactly, actually, the address. That was Nieuwe Achtergracht number 14, and it was right in the centre of Amsterdam, and very much a Jewish centre. And my father went to shul or Shtiebel whatever you call it, at the time, just across from where we lived in the Nieuwe Achtergracht. I remember that. And funnily enough, my husband's parents went there as well when they were in Amsterdam. [half-laughs] So. But I then went to Kindergarten very close by. And, but I think my mother would have taken me to Kindergarten every day. And then afterwards to school. Because in Holland you start at six, with primary school

**[0:14:38]**

*Yeah. So, what are your earliest memories? Do you have any memories from that time?*

Not really. Very, very vague. I do remember actually, because I used to like already at that time, nice voices. And I used to go to the big synagogue, 'Die Esnoga', the Sephardi big shul. And they had a fantastic cantor. And I'm not sure now, whether I was allowed to go by myself. But it was much safer in those days, and there wasn't much traffic either. And whether my parents had shown me how to get there, because it was not far away from where we lived, because we lived in the centre. And I do remember I used to go either there, or to another synagogue, and...until...things changed, and we ...left our home. Or were told to leave our home.

*Yeah. Do you remember from that time, did you have any friends, any...?*

Oh, yes, I had- yes, I do remember- I even remember some of their names because my mother used to organise for instance, very often, either on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday. Because we all lived in the same area where we went to Kindergarten or school. And she organised tea parties in the afternoon, and either on the Saturday afternoon or Sunday. And they used to come to us that I could play with them. And I don't remember what we played,

but we did play together. And...and that went on still for a while until we went to the first camp to Westerbork. And but they lived very close by, some of my very close friends who went either to the same kindergarten or school.

*Do you remember some names?*

Yes.

*Yes? Go on...*

... Saul Solberg was the boy's name, and Jupi Van Dijk was the girl's name; they were the closest, but there were many more.... And which come back sometimes at different times.

Yes.

But they lived very close and I remember Jupi Van Dijk, her father was a lawyer, and they lived very, very close to where we lived in... Amsterdam. So very often either on a Saturday afternoon either she would come to me to play or I would go to her house, to play there.

**[0:17:00]**

*Mn-hnn. And in that time your – your house was Orthodox.*

Yes, always.

*You said your parents were a bit more modern.*

But still very Orthodox.

*Yeah. It was kosher, and Shabbat and...?*

More than that.

*Yeah?*

Yeah, though my mother didn't wear a head-cover. And my father didn't have a beard or anything like this, but very Orthodox. Because that was the background they came from, but neither of them stuck to that kind of...they were already a bit more modern.

*Yeah.*

They had already had education. My mother went to high school in Zürich, and my father in Düsseldorf, so it was a different story.

*And do you remember as a child, I mean this was now after '39, were people worried what was going to happen, or was that not something you were...exposed to?*

No. Because my parents were always trying to keep as much as possible away, that I shouldn't be worried. And then my brother was born in '41. And... so then my mother was very excited. I think she had a miscarriage before. But she was very excited, and kept on telling me that I was going to get a sibling. And that was very exciting for me, and... that's...

*Which is an extraordinary thing. When was he exactly- what was his birthday?*

16<sup>th</sup> of August, 1941. It must have been a very difficult period. But she had tried before, but she had a miscarriage.

*So, she wanted to have another child.*

Yeah. Yeah. ...Yeah.

*Extraordinary.*

**[0:18:42]**

Yeah. And my parents were still very much in contact with my father's family in Düsseldorf. And at that time, my mother's sister – she had married to somebody from Belgium. And, but that was already more difficult, because in those days you know, travelling when you had a

young child yourself, it was much more complicated. But they had very close contact with each other. How, I don't know, because one didn't have... mobile phones or anything like that.

*Of course, not .... Of course not.*

Yeah.

*But your parents must have thought- it was a difficult time to have a...child.*

But again, they wouldn't hand it over to me. They wanted to make sure that I had the right education. That I went kindergarten, school, all these things; that was important to them.

*And do you remember when he was born? Do you remember that yourself?*

Not really. Not really. Actually, when they, when she came out of hospital that I somehow do a little remember. And I was very, very excited about that, that... there was another child.

*And now something which is important for later, you see, and which I thought- at that time and he had a – he had a brit milah?*

Oh, yes.

*There was no question about it?*

No question about it.

*Mnn.*

That was in... almost '41. Yeah

*Yeah, because maybe one could have said it's safer not to, or...?*

Yeah, no that was certain. They were both from very Orthodox backgrounds and that was something... And my, most of my father's siblings lived already in Israel at that time. And my mother's sister, she had married somebody from Belgium. And so, she had moved to Belgium. And...and one uncle had moved to America.

*That was her brother...?*

The brother of my mother.

*Yes. He was in America.*

Yeah. He was in America. And he married a cousin of his.

*OK. So, your grandparents had three children. One in Holland... one in Belgium, and one in America.*

That's right. Or, they wanted to travel all over the world! [laughs]

*Difficult in that- in that time.*

Absolutely.

*So, tell us in your- in your memory what happened... In 1940?*

Well, I just do remember that my mother always used to organise either that I would go and play with one of my school friends, or they would come to us for tea. And then we used to play games at our house. And but everything was always organised; I was not on my own. And I think also when my brother was born, then she would have it more often in our house, that, that I would be around there. But there were always things organised... at home.

**[0:21:44]**

*It was busy. And when did things change? What...?*



Probably at the time when we were not allowed anymore to go out any time of the day. That we had to stay in a certain place.

*And do you remember that?*

Not very well. No, because again, my parents tried to keep as much as possible out of... my mind that I should think things were normal.

*And do you remember the Germans coming to Amsterdam. Do you...?*

Oh, yes, I do remember seeing Germans in their uniforms.

*Yes?*

And also, because then I was told if they asked me where I lived, what, that what I had to say! And but I don't know; I think I still went on my own, because there was not much traffic or anything at that time. And when I went to synagogue or so, I would have gone by myself.

*Mn-hnn. So, you didn't feel as such, in danger - at that point?*

I didn't. I mean, when I think about it now...

*Yes?*

I don't- no but I don't, I think I would have perhaps remembered more, because again, my parents tried to...

*Yes?*

... make everything sound as normal as possible; that I shouldn't worry about things.

*And what about your brother? What happened to him?*

He was then taken ...through my father's work; they had contact with somebody who was a ...a non-Jewish lady who was working for the Resistance. And she was the lady who was instrumental in finding a place for my brother to be hidden. And also, he was very blond, blue-eyed, so they thought that would be very much easier than with me, being very dark-haired and dark-eyed. So, they didn't even think about me being hidden. But he was then sent to people out of Amsterdam. And.... I was told that whoever was going to ask me what had happened to my brother- because the people who knew my parents, they wouldn't have asked. They knew what has happened. But people who didn't know them I had to say that we had lost him somewhere on the way. And it was mainly after, when we went to Westerbork, really.

*So, at what point did your parents contemplate that? I mean probably you didn't know that at the time...?*

I have no idea...at what point. But I think it might have been through the people who employed my father. Because they knew this lady who was instrumental in finding places for people who wanted to hide.

**[0:24:18]**

*What was her name? Do you remember her name?*

Frau Rodenburg. She was a teacher...

*Yeah?*

And... Or what was it? Her husband was a teacher. That's right, her husband was a teacher. And ...And through her, she got all the contacts for the Resistance. And we were in contact with her after the war too, very much so, because she had done a wonderful, wonderful job and we were very grateful to her.

*Was she acknowledged? Was she- by Yad Vashem, or... later?*

I don't know in those days whether that was in existence.

*Yes. But so, you got some news about him even while you were still in Amsterdam, or, your parents?*

Well, we all were still in Amsterdam, before we went.

*Yes.*

But we knew that he had been sent to a place, to a nursing home in Holland. And- but I don't know whether my parents- because in those days, it was difficult to travel as well.

*Yeah.*

And so, I don't know whether they could go. They might have been once or twice there in the nursing home, but that I don't remember the details of.

*Yeah. Yeah. And... then you, yourself had to leave your house. What...?*

And then the... The SS came. First the Dutch... section of the SS came to our home. And... I, I do remember actually, when my brother was taken, my mother stood away from the window crying her eyes out. But I couldn't go near her because she was so upset to have given her child away. And I wasn't allowed to go anywhere, and was told, whoever was going to ask me, I had no idea what happened.

*Right.*

And also, later on.

*That was very important.*

*Yeah.*

*But that you- that's interesting. So, you remember actually when he was given away?*

Definitely. Yeah.

*It must have been traumatic.*

Yeah, oh, for my parents it must have been- but again, as I said, blue-eyed and blond hair so they thought it would be easier to get him into hiding than me, with dark eyes and... very dark long plaits.

*Although you were a girl... and he was a boy.*

Yeah. Yeah. That's right, but nobody talked about that.

**[0:26:34]**

*Yeah. ...That's interesting. So how much time passed in between him being given away and your ...deportation?*

I don't remember exactly, but I think not a very long time. I don't think so.

*So, on that day, of the deport- what, what, what happened, if you can just talk us through?*

I don't really remember, because my parents were trying to keep as much out of my... you know, that I shouldn't give anything away.

*Yeah.*

And trying that I would be upset, having given my little brother away, because it was a very close relationship. And, so that was something which must have been very difficult for my parents.

*And for you as well!*

And for me. Because I...

*Because you were old enough to...to understand what was happening.*

That's right. Yeah. Though I don't know how much my parents told me.

*Well, you were six years old...*

Yeah. Yeah.

*And you said at first the Dutch SS came together with the Germans...*

Yeah.

*... on the day. And then what, what did they say?*

They came to look at our family, and I don't know whether they knew that there was another child, or that my parent had said something that he had been taken to a hospital or something like that. That I don't remember the details of. Because again, my parents didn't talk much about it afterwards. And as little as poss- and also, I think one of the other reasons were my father was so ill, on and off, after the war, that my mother had enough on her mind, you know, to try to keep things under control. Because he did go to work when he could. But he very often was in and out of hospital with very serious...

*That's possible. Yeah.*

And it was very difficult for her, having lost a sister... herself...in - in Auschwitz. And- and then she had the responsibility of wanting to look after her parents who were getting older and older. So... she had a very difficult time. I don't know how she managed all that. I must say.

**[0:28:51]**

*Yeah ... But just before we get to post-war, we have to just get now to Westerbork. Were you deported with other families? Do you have any memories?*

Oh yeah, definitely, I remember that we were on a train... normal carriages...and from Amsterdam, from the Central Station. And then taken to Westerbork.

*Do you remember the date at all?*

No.

*No. OK.*

But I do remember I've got very vague vision still of when we got to Westerbork and- Because there we still had things organised, whether it was a holiday, or school, and things like that. So, you know, there were still things keeping us occupied.

*Could you take a luggage; do you remember? Could you take something?*

We did take at the time.

*What did you personally take? Do you remember?*

I – I wouldn't have; my mother would have taken for me. But just, you know, just changing clothes. And as much as one could; one couldn't take a lot of stuff. But- and also don't forget, I was at the age when I was growing very fast, so it wouldn't have helped to take too much.

*And in Westerbork, were you together with some of your friends from kindergarten? Were there other people you knew?*

There were some. Not many, but there were a few. Yeah, so I did see- they were not necessarily always in the same barrack. But we did meet at other occasions when there was holidays or so – Jewish holidays when they had organised certain things from the school, and that I do remember.

*And maybe- can you describe for us the conditions in Westerbork?*

**[0:30:22]**

Westerbork was- we had- I think there we had two bunks above each other, not three, if I'm not mistaken. And things, my mother had to...had a job. I don't remember exactly what she did actually at Westerbork. And again, we had also roll-calls and so forth. But nothing was as serious as later on. And... the children were taken care of by... teachers, who were still organising programmes for them, that they could be kept busy. And to do some homework. And when it came to Jewish holidays to- and we had a choir. I remember the name of the... who was a choir conductor also in Amsterdam: Hans Krieg [(1899-1961) born in Heynau, Silesia]. And he organised a choir in Amsterdam – in Westerbork, and so we had rehearsals, and particularly because they organised then still evenings that the parents could come and listen to the children. And I do remember...

*What did you sing? Do you remember that?*

I remember one song. [laughs]

*Go on...*

[Zahava sings] *'Die Klarinett, die Klarinett, macht duadua Klarinett,'* [the clarinet goes...]

And then,

*'Die Trompete, die schmettert: tätätäteterätätäteterä,* [the trumpet blares]

*Das Horn, das Horn, das ruht... sich aus...'* [the bugle rests]

Because the man who did the conducting, he was a German speaker.

*He was German...It's not that...[laughing]*

He was Jewish, but German.

*Yes...?*

And so he was trying to get a choir together with some of the children. He listened to their voices first...

*Amazing that you remember that.*

It's still there! *'Das Horn, das Horn, das ruht... sich aus...'* [laughs] [., *The bugle, the bugle rests*]

*Fantastic!*

And there we- and they also still tried to give us some lessons, you know because we'd hardly had any school because you only start six, at the age of six, primary school. And...So by that time I had very, very little education.

**[0:32:38]**

*And who ran the camp in Westerbork? Who...?*

German... with Dutch probably... Nazi people together. But that I don't know exactly. But I do remember, for instance, because when it came to it when they said- I've mentioned that before I think, because being also ...British protected and then my parents had Honduras papers, they had been told that we were not going to be sent to Auschwitz. Because the camp leader, the SS, she had probably said to my parents we were going to be exchanged for other, or German prisoners of war. So, when on...and so they kept on asking my parents to come to their office all the time. And I don't know exactly; I was never there. But on that one Monday night were the papers always called for Tuesday transport to Bergen-Belsen – to Auschwitz, sorry. And on that Monday night when our names were on the list to go the next day to Ber-Auschwitz my parents couldn't believe it, because they had been told all the time that we were not going to be sent off, that we were going to be exchanged. And so my parents got their stuff - whatever we had, could take - together. And I also do remember one other thing. Every Monday night, all the cattle carts came... to the station. And there were always about two or three normal carriages. And I was suffering slightly of asthma. And I said to my mother or both my parents, "Can we please go a bit early?" when I heard that we were going on the train, which, before then we had been told all the time, no transport for us. So, I said, "Can we go a little bit early the next morning that we get a seat on one of the normal carriages?" not knowing that that was for the SS. So, my mother had to explain that to me, that we couldn't go on one of those carriages. And literally the last minute before going on to



that cattle cart- my parents had tried to organise that we were going with friends of theirs in the same cattle cart, because they were so taken aback that we were going to go- be sent to Auschwitz. And somebody said, "This is family Kanarek." And the chap came to my parents and said, "I wish I had a message like this for more people, as I've got for you. You've been taken off this transport." And my parents just couldn't believe it. And literally, had he come a minute later, we would have been on one of the cattle carts. Nobody would have known where. And that would have been it! And- Because there was no registration on which cart you had to go.

*Yeah... So, they took you off that, that transport...*

So, we went back to our... barrack, and stayed there for another several months until they told us that we were going to be exchanged for German prisoners and go to Bergen-Belsen.

*Just before Belsen... In Westerbork, do you remember being scared, or again, was it, did your parents manage to shield you from that?*

**[0:36:13]**

Well, I had quite a few, was in the age of having certain illnesses – children's illnesses - so I had chickenpox and things like that. And that's also- my parents were told the Germans were so scared of getting any infectious disease, so they would leave us alone. And- but things like that happened, and it was a difficult situation for my parents to try to keep me under control. And but they- they managed that, because I slept with my mother, and had to wait for her to come back... after her day's work.

*What was her work?*

I think she must have worked already there for some of the German... different jobs, she had, actually... and also for some of the German... representatives or so. It might also have been because she spoke the language. That I don't know what the reason was.

*But during the day, so you were...?*

I was on my own! Or, when I was well, then some of the people had still organised classes that we should learn something.

*And what about food?*

There we still got some; not much, but we still got some. And I also do remember, my mother and some of the ladies - because the camp was separate the men and the women – and they would exchange recipes all the time. And that happened in Bergen-Belsen too. They always were exchanging...

*Talking about – talking about recipes...*

Talking about recipes.

*They couldn't do much with it.*

Nothing at all!

*But it kept their minds...*

That's right, yes.

*So, food was an important topic.*

Absolutely, because we got some food, but not much. And not very exciting, but we still got. We were not starved yet, in Westerbork. And also, we could still get certain parcels sent. And that I also remember, because the lady who had taken care of my... brother, she still sent parcels to us. And somebody... That's right; my father had asked one of his ...people he had worked with from the company he represented, whether he could send some...a lice comb. Because I had got in the meantime, because you know, the hygiene was very difficult. So, my mother was very worried that they had to cut off my hair, so they asked for lice comb. And that arrived with some, with a bag of beans. And in the bag of beans... was a little photo of my brother. A tiny, tiny photo. And one had to actually sift through that bag of beans. Until today I can't un- but she must have thought there is a reason; they know we have got no

cooking facilities why does she send us beans? And until she found that little photo of my brother. That he was alive...

...All that time. Never spoke about it; had no idea. Because she was worried that I might give things away.

**[0:39:26]**

*So, she had- there was some outside contact. Also, your grandparents were in Zürich?*

Yeah. But we didn't get a lot of. But cards- my mother had to write, and that was mainly also in Bergen-Belsen. They did it in Westerbork as well. Mainly in Bergen-Belsen that... my parents, my mother asked her parents to send some food parcels, and they could receive those. And not only in her name, but in my father's name. Just the SS wanted more food so they asked people who had connections. And I've got... the samples of the cards my - my mother wrote.

*Mnn... From Westerbork and...*

From- And Bergen-Belsen.

*...and Bergen-Belsen.*

Yeah. Yeah. ...No in Westerbork we still got some food.

*Yeah. So it wasn't that you were completely starving...*

Not starvation. No...no. it was already restricted but there we still got food, definitely.

*Mnn. Tell us a little bit about- before your father left, what did he do? Did he manage to- what did you do with all your belongings?*

There were certain things he gave to one of his ...companions he was working with at the same company, who was not Jewish. And he was very friendly with him. He lived in the country. And he gave him - believe it or not - all his *machzorim* [prayer books] of my mother's, because they had her initial on it. She got them back after the war, and that was for them a very great- they were beautifully bound, and with her initials that he gave them to her when they got married.

*That was a wedding present. Yeah...*

That was a wedding present. And... also other things, which, certain clothes and things like this which were special to - to my parents which I couldn't understand at that time. And he took them ...with him, and, when he came to visit. But there were a few people - there were not many - who he had that kind of- whom he could trust; let's put it that way.

*So, he assumed that he's coming back...*

Yeah... Yeah.

*... to collect those things?*

Yeah. Or, whatever- but he thought he'll do it, because he was requested to.

**[0:41:41]**

*Yeah. And also, his- the rain, his, the things he was selling, also, or...?*

Not much, just a little. Because... they hadn't much possibility to take a lot of luggage with them. From Holland- From Amsterdam to Westerbork, there was very little they could take.

*But that's what I mean. So, he gave that away as well?*

Well, whatever he could.

*Yeah.*

It was very little, because he, they kept certain things which they might need whilst they were in Westerbork. They didn't know what was going to happen to them.

*Yeah...*

Which was quite, you know, when I think back now, you've no idea; you're going to be taken, and you don't know where to!

*So many months did you stay in Westerbork?*

I think nine. That was longer than most other people.

*Yeah, because Westerbork was a sort of transit camp.*

Yeah. Yeah...yeah.

*People were coming and going. And so, your friends, or the people you know, were they deported? Did they go on the next...?*

A lot of them were sent off to Auschwitz. But there were some in the same boat, who also had special papers, and who also stayed on a bit longer. Where the parents must have paid a lot of money for... salvation...for salvation documents or so. But that I don't really know the... details.

*But was it clear for the people what Auschwitz- I mean, I know there was a bit...?*

I think they knew already. I think they knew that it was a starvation camp. Either they had heard it from people who had been sent for certain ...jobs with the... the people from Westerbork, and who had to come back for the next transport. So, they must have heard certain things. They knew that that was a- a...an end.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*Yeah. And what was Belsen when you were- did they know what that meant?*

That was a starvation camp.

*Yeah.*

And also, standing for hours and hours on end...on roll-call. And they were playing games and saying somebody was missing. Which it wasn't; it was just they wanted to keep us longer and longer standing in the most horrible conditions.

**[0:43:52]**

*That's in Belsen?*

In Belsen.

*So just, again, take us a little bit back to your- to the journey from Westerbork to Belsen.*

That I don't remember much of.

*Mn-hnn?*

Because I wasn't well at the time. And that's why my parents thought they might leave us a bit longer, but they didn't. And... And that was very difficult.

*What did you have at the time?*

...I don't remember now exactly whether it was meningitis. It was a ...an infectious disease.

*Yeah, but...*

And also, very ill at the time.

*But so, ill as you were, you were deported with your parents...*

Yeah.

*...to Belsen.*

Yeah. And then my father- my father went to the men's camp, and my mother and I to - to another one. To the women's.

*What was the name of the camp you went into? Not the camp, the... because it was slightly separate, yeah?*

Yes. But the men's section was separate, but it was all Bergen-Belsen.

*Mn-hnn. But was it called the Star camp?*

I think they tried to make it – to call it that. Because it was better than Auschwitz, initially.

*Yeah. So... Could you keep your clothes for example, or...?*

Well, we didn't have much in any case.

*Yeah.*

And then don't forget everybody had lost so much weight then. And there were just... bodies, and... And also, children, they had grown! So, I remember shoes didn't fit me and also clothes – it was all- sometimes, I think some people exchanged certain things with others and...

*So, you were- you were with your mother? And your father was...*

I was with my mother in another...place.

*And did you see him?*

Not every day. Sometimes, and it was difficult at times, because also they organised strange things; that we had either to stand on roll-call for hours and hours on end. Or that my father was allowed, because he was very, very ill, that he was allowed to stay on his bunk, or I. And then my mother was allowed then to come back to me. But it, these were horrible conditions. And nothing to do! I mean, we stood for hours and hours on end on roll-call.

**[0:46:07]**

*You remember that?*

Yeah, that I do remember. And then they would just, you know, laugh their heads off saying, somebody was missing, starting all over again. And they knew nobody was missing; it was just a matter of ...keeping us standing there.

*And counting...*

Yeah.

*And obviously these were now harsh conditions ...in Belsen. What, what, what were the food situation? What are your...?*

Well, we got in the morning a crust of... stale... bread. And this had to last until the evening. And, and some liquid which they called coffee. Coloured- a coloured substance. And then in the evening, they gave something which they called a kind of soup or vegetables with turnips and water. And that was the eve- dinner. And that didn't even always arrive, and, because sometimes there were bombings or so going on so they left that... out of ...our hands.

*So, do you remember being hungry?*

Oh yes. Well, I don't- perhaps again, my mother must have tried and said, more and more, you know, tomorrow will be better, or whatever, just to try and make me worry less. Or she



had- would give me her crust of bread or...It's, you know I find it even difficult now, to think how people, how parents managed.

*Yeah.*

What they did. How they spoke to their children. I mean not all of them did proper- could do it properly. Some of the parents, or mothers, didn't do it... in a – in a good way. I remember there was one lady very close by, who was on the bottom bunk of the three. And I went to school with him after the war, with the son. And she kept on saying, all the time, "*Heinz, gib mir das Messer.*" She wanted to commit suicide. And my mother made sure that the knife was taken away, because she was worried that he would give her the knife and she would commit suicide. And she repeated that again and again. But she did...

*She survived?*

She survived. And I went to school with him after the war. [chuckles]

*And you were on the top bunk with your mother?*

**[0:48:32]**

Yeah. Because again, having suffered from asthma a bit, and the sheer thought of having somebody so close to me, on the middle bunk or the bottom bunk. I just couldn't face it. So, my mother made every effort that we would get- not that it made much difference because the roof on the barrack was so close on top of us. But for me, not having a person above us, made me feel that it was safer. And... and I also- that I've got still a memory of. That, you know we had a beam which separated the bunk next - next to us, from, from ours. And there was a lady who was suffering very badly from typhus. And I don't remember whom she was sharing the bunk with. But she had put- because there was no proper facilities- there were no proper facilities in the barracks. You had to go outside to a loo. And so, she had put a tin pot, which many people had done then, on the beam which separated her bunk from ours. And during the night, she was so weak she couldn't control herself. And it was full of... I can't- just- I can't even say the stuff... that she knocked it over, off the beam, and it came over on me. And my mother was in a terrible, terrible state because she was worried, as she was

suffering from typhus, that I would catch it and that she would have to cut off my plaits. And- Because, that for her was still something very important, that she could...

*You had your plaits?*

I had my plaits, still. Yes. I kept them all that time. I've still got them now! [laughs] ...And so she queued up the next morning. They used to come at six o'clock, with the coloured stuff which they called coffee. And so, my mother went already at five o'clock, to make sure that she would get a little bit more of the liquid, and that she would be able to get it out of my hair. And thank God, I didn't catch it!

*So, the hair was important.*

Yeah, to my mother, very. Because- well, you've seen it on the picture in my book. Having those long plaits and so many people they admired how my mother kept those plaits.

*She must have combed it, your mother...*

Yes! She would- that was- every day. Every day she would separate my hair, and plait it again and again. That was for her...

*Even in Belsen?*

Oh, all the- all the time. Because she was worried that she must cut my hair off. And to her that was very important to... Don't know why, but...

*So, you would think that even in Belsen she shielded you...*

Yes.

*From...*

From whatever she could. Always. Always.

*Mnn. But you were aware that your father wasn't with you?*

Yeah, but we did see him sometimes. Not regularly, but we did see him sometimes. When he was very ill, we were allowed to go to his barrack, and to visit him.

*What was the problem? What did he...?*

**[0:51:50]**

Oh, he had lots of different illnesses. Lots of different illnesses.

*Because he was made to work. Did he have to...?*

Yes, and then he was very weak, and he had to carry on, and... And again, standing for hours and hours on end on the roll-call, which we all had. And in the most horrible conditions. Either terrible heat, or terrible- terribly cold weather. And that's what went on for hours and hours every day.

*What work, what did he have to do?*

He had to dismantle leather shoes of people who had died. What they did with it I don't know, but they used the SS what they did with them afterwards. But just to cut up pieces of leather.

*That was his job.*

Yeah.

*And in your barrack, were there mostly Dutch...?*

It was a mixture.

*What- do you remember who else was in there, or anyone...?*

A few people...yeah.

*Did you meet any...? I know in Belsen the Star camp for example, there were some Greek ...inmates. Do you remember...?*

But I don't...I do remember that they were, but I don't remember, really, any- because we tried to keep mainly in touch with the people we had known.

*Yes. And did you?*

And that we speak- that we could speak the same language. And my mother of course with her German, and so forth. I didn't speak German.

*So, were there friends in that...? Did your mother have friends?*

Well, friends...

*Not friends. Acquaintances.*

Acquaintances, yeah.

*And...*

And some people whom she had known.

*And did they help each other? Did that help?*

Well, there wasn't much you could help!

*Mnn...*

...It might have been for instance, when you had to go to work, and somebody was left behind in the barrack that she would have said, "Can you look... after my child and see that everything is alright?" Because she wasn't allowed to stay behind!

[0:53:44]

*Again, so you were by yourself, or was it... When you were very ill, was there a sort of hospital or anywhere where you could stay?*

There were, but I think my mother tried as much as possible to keep me with her. She thought that was a better idea than that I was going to be taken away, and be left to someone else.

*That was- so in terms of adults, do you remember anyone apart from your mother?*

I do remember a few people...or names. Because we met them after the war.

*Who, for example?*

[laughs] I remember- mind you I think I remember them from a camp afterwards. Bamberger. And I've still got contact with- but that was in Biberach that we got to know each other. And Adler, and there were - Frau Schelder. There were a few people I do remember the names of.

*Mn-hnn. And did you have any contact with the guards or was there any...?*

No.

*You yourselves?*

Yeah. No, no. No, not that I remember. Because I'm sure that my memory must have got affected too, that I don't remember all the things.

*Yeah.*

Because you know, with starving like that... it was not an easy condition to remember all the things.

*No, you were starving, and you were ill as well.*

That's right. yeah.

*But your mother had the strength to...*

She was determined. Absolutely determined. And I think about it I, I find it quite incredible how she managed, having one child not knowing whether he's alive or not. Having me being ill, lying on a barrack. My father... being ill, and at times very ill. And how she managed this; I find it un-unbelievable how she did cope with it.

**[0:55:49]**

*One question which I wanted to ask you actually...is about the food and, obviously they are coming from kosher homes. How did they, both in Westerbork and in Belsen, how did they...?*

Well, they would have... No, they wouldn't have touched anything...like meat or anything like that, no. No.

*They wouldn't. Not that there was probably very much...?*

Even if there had been, in the beginning. They- I think they would have taken a piece of cheese. That I think. I can't remember that now. But otherwise, definitely no meat. Never.

*And in terms of Jewish holidays, do you remember, was there anything celebrated?*

Well, they tried amongst themselves, for instance Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, to get together the men that they would have a service together. And probably the women in their barrack, separately, too. But I don't remember. Because again, I was too often very ill that I wouldn't have been able to go, or, I was with my mother, and...

*Yeah. So how long did you stay in Belsen?*

I think it was eleven months. I'm not sure about that but I think- It might be in my book because we might have found the details of it.

*So roughly nine months in - in Westerbork.*

And eleven in Bergen-Belsen. And there we went out at the end of January '45, instead of April '45 when the camp was liberated.

*So, three months earlier...and...*

Yeah. Three or four, because that I would definitely- my mother always said afterwards, I would never have made that. I was in such a terrible state. Very, very weak.

*She or her- you?*

I.

*You.*

Yeah. Cause she never spoke about herself. [half laughs] No, she said, she tried everything possible to... to get me through this.

*That you, so you- the three months were important?*

Oh, unbelievable.

*And how- can you explain to us, how - how did you get out of Belsen three months before the liberation?*

**[0:58:08]**

We were exchanged for, I think, German prisoners-of-war. And I do remember, because there was again, that was a train which- a normal, a Red Cross train. Because before when I mentioned the train to Auschwitz was only for - for the Nazis, normal carriages. But this was a normal train with carriages. And so, I said to my mother, can we go early, that we can get a proper seat? But again, my mother said to ...the barrack leader that she was worried that I

wasn't going to make the trip, because I was so weak. And the barrack leader said to my mother, "Don't say anything that she's weak. Just push her through - through the control. Once you get on the train, that will save you." And that's what happened! Because that's when we were sent to another camp... called Weingarten [former officer's camp near Karlsruhe], where the first time we got some food served in the evening. I think we might have stopped somewhere else in between, but I do remember sitting at those long tables in Weingarten, and food being pushed through to us.

*So, who ran that camp, the Weingarten? Was that still a...?*

That must have been a certain part of ...forced German people. That they had to feed us. I'm not sure about that. But I'm sure one can find out about this. I've never done that before, but that I... think one could.

*Well, the main thing is that you left Belsen.*

Belsen. That's right, because I wouldn't have made those few months, if they hadn't taken us out at that time. And not even talking about my mother and father. But I, because my mother always said I was in such a terrible state that I would not have made it.

*Well, it's amazing you were on one of those- I don't know how many trains in total went, as these exchange trains...*

Yeah.

*... from Belsen.*

I don't know. And also, don't forget I had grown very much, had grown very tall, and without food. And that was not an easy ...thing.

*Mnn. So, they took you to Weingarten?*

**[1:00:18]**



Weingarten first, and on a normal train. And there we had, we were given in the evening- And also, we had beds then, or two bunks, I think. I'm not sure about that. But there we got food, and, in the evening, they were passing though big tureens with kind of vegetables or so. And I've got a vague vision, I wouldn't like to say that I completely rely on the vision, but that there was somebody sitting very close to where we were sitting, and asked for the tureen with the vegetables to be passed through. He didn't want to wait. And when it came, he put his arms around it and wouldn't let go, to give it further to other people. And unfortunately, he over-ate and he died. He just... couldn't cope with it. And people didn't realise that at the time.

*Yeah. Where it was a problem after ... months of starvation...*

Yeah, to suddenly eat - overeat.

*Yeah. And again, so how long were you in Weingarten for?*

Several – I don't know – several weeks or months. That I'm not sure of. And then they took us to... Biberach.

*And in Weingarten were you together with your father, your mother?*

No, I think they were still separate. I'm not sure from – funny now that you ask, whether we were separated or men and women. I was always with my mother, but I think men were separated from the women.

*And were there other children?*

There were other children, yeah.

*In that...exchange?*

In...Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But less and less because so many had died.

*Yeah...yeah. And then the last station, please tell us more, was Biberach?*

Biberach.

*And what was that? What was in Biberach?*

Well, Biberach was then I think liberated by the French. And there we got a... privilege that my grandparents got us out to a place called Sankt Margrethen which was on the Swiss border. And that was through an uncle of my mother's, who was very, very determined to get us out. And said he won't let the Swiss – he was Swiss and he had a political job in Bern- And he said that one of my grandparents' children had been exterminated in Auschwitz who was Swiss by the way, and had lost her Swiss citizenship when she married her husband. So, then he said, "I'm not going to go away from here until you give this family the admission to get into Switzerland." And that's what happened. And then we were sent to another place near St Gallen in Switzerland, called Sankt Margrethen, where they fed us and so forth. And where my grandmother was making sure that they were going to release us and let us into Switzerland, or to Zürich, to go to them.

**[1:03:35]**

*So, at that point, your grandmother, was she in touch? What did she know? Where was the last point of contact between your parents and your...?*

Yeah, well, in between, because I remember and I've got that actually. My mother writing to my grandparents I think from Biberach, that they should send matzos, because they were allowed to get parcels, which was unusual but that's why... They were determined... to stick to their customs, to their belief. And that they would like, not to have bread for Pesach but matzos. And which they sent and...all together. My parents got some parcels sent to...to...Sankt Margrethen or Sankt Gallen.

*And what happened, you said... your aunt didn't survive. What happened to her?*

She was taken with her husband. She lived in Belgium, she had married to a Belgian man, and they were hidden at one time. And they had a son whom I'm in contact with. He survived, but they got killed in- he was hidden. But they was- were killed in Auschwitz.

*So, he was in hiding like your brother? Was he a similar age or?*

A... year or two older.

*And he also survived in- with the underground, or...?*

Yeah. In Switzerland. First in Belgium, and then in Switzerland. ...It's unbelievable.

*It is. But she didn't survive?*

No.

*So, your grandparents must have been very anxious to find out what... had happened?*

Very...very much so. And we were a very, very close family, and for them to have lost one child, and then the other one now being in a terrible situation where they don't know whether they get their other daughter into Switzerland. And...So they spoke to this cousin of my mother's... or a nephew of my grandmother, and who got everything organised that we did get through. And then my mother had a brother in New York, but he couldn't do anything.

**[1:05:49]**

*Yeah. Mnn. No, I'm wondering whether these camps were sort of holding camps, in Biberach?*

Yes, they must have been, yeah, until they were sent back either to Holland or wherever... Yeah.

*Whether they were- the Red Cross was involved, or...?*

I'm sure. I'm quite sure.

*Because I know that some of the trains - these exchanges - didn't make it...*

Yeah.

*And just stayed on the...*

That's right...that's right. [slight interruption] Sorry....

*Yes, so we were in the- towards the end of the war... So, when you got to this San Margarets, you said...*

Sankt Margrethen.

*Sankt Margrethen. Was that already on the Swiss side, or on the German side?*

I- that was the border, I think. That was the border... Yeah.

*And then finally, you got the papers.*

We got permission and- to ...get into Zürich.

*And...*

...Before many of the others did. Yeah, those were still left behind, other people. Because my, this uncle or cousin of my mothers, and my grandparents, they made a big do of it that one of the children had already been killed and that all the things that had happened, and they wanted us to be let into Zürich.

**[1:07:13]**

*When did you get to Zurich? Do you remember that, or...?*

'45... I wonder whether it was October... I must have some paper of that in the book. I can't remember it now. But it would be in '45...

*Yeah.*

The end of '45, I think.

*Yeah. And then when you were...?*

Because April '45 was the liberation,

*Yes.*

And, but I think that didn't go immediately that we could go to Zürich.

*Do you remember the liberation? Did people, I mean...?*

Oh, I, vaguely, you know, that they were singing and dancing around together and... putting flags up or whatever. I don't know exactly. And I was too weak, you know, to...

*Yeah.*

To do all these things. I was very ill.

*You were not in a good- so what was your condition at the – at the end?*

I think it was pneumonia, and jaundice, and lots of different problems.

*And malnu- how much did you weigh? You must have been very...?*

Twenty-five kilos, I think. ...I was just a skeleton.

*So, when you get- got to Zurich, one of the aims was just to...*

**[1:08:29]**

To get health back. And I went there- I went back and my mother and grandparents organised, particularly my grandmother, because there were organisations who were going to help people who had survived. And... To help us to... to get clothes, and food, and I mean that my grandparents looked after because we were lucky to have family there. And but just to try to make us... having a normal- and that's also what I can remember, going occasionally, but not regularly, to a school. To a primary school, though I didn't speak the - the language. Or, a little I understood, because my mother had spoken to me Swiss German. And did I mention to you that one of Hephzi's – Hephzi's son...

*Yeah...*

... spent time in America. And he met a girl there whom he became very friendly with. And that appeared to be a lady who was in the same class in the school in Zürich as I was. And she remembers very clearly, and she wrote that. I've got a whole thing of hers actually. I haven't got it here now. [knocks mic] Oops! I hope I haven't...All right?  
 ...That she remembered the teacher, Fräulein Kremer saying to them, they are not allowed to ask where I had come from. And- because they didn't want to upset me. And... no things about the past. And she was extremely, extremely helpful and trying to give me extra lessons. That. But I spoke to my grandparents, or to my grandmother, Swiss, and to my mother.

*So, what languages – actually we didn't discuss languages – what languages did you speak? Because your parents...?*

With my parents, Dutch. And then I learnt Swiss German when I went to my grandparents. And my mother must have spoken to me in Swiss German. And my father German, to me.

*So, you had some German?*

I must have had.

*Yeah. Which is interesting.*

I must have.

*So, what was it like to come to Zurich? What were your...Do you remember when you came through all this, to Zurich, to your grandparents? And did you have memories? Could you remember them from before?*

No. No memory at all. Because I had been too young when we left... We had left then Palestine, and went to Holland.

*Yeah.*

So, I didn't see my grandparents then.

*You were much too young, of course. You hadn't seen- you were two years, three years old.*

Yeah.

*Yeah.*

And then we couldn't travel in between and then the time in camps. So, I had no idea not about the language either. Only whatever I might have known was through my mother, what she would have said to me, in Swiss German.

**[1:11:28]**

*Yeah. And what were your memories of – of arriving in Zurich? I mean, you know, after all this...?*

I... you know, when I think about it now, and even this girl I'm talking about. On a Saturday afternoon, my grandmother would organise, and my mother too, because there were another few Jewish children in the school where I went to. Not many, but a few. And she would organise a...a tea, and that they would come and talk to me and play with me games. And just to give me as much as possible... try to give me a normal kind of childhood. And also, because during the week, I couldn't always go to school in any case. My mother tried to get me to go school that I would learn something, and not being ...kept at home all the time. But I didn't speak the language, so I had to be responsible and responding to the- but she was a

lovely lady, the teacher. And she kept on trying and trying again, to give me extra time to... let me understand things.

*Because how old were you, at that point?*

I was at that time...eleven!

*And you didn't have much schooling?*

None, for a years!

*And could you write? Read?*

I had learnt writing, but very little. And again, the people in Westerbork, they had tried. Because you have seen my Rosh Hashanah card in the book...

*Tell us about it.*

Well, because what they still did... in Amst- In Holland, they tried when we were in Westerbork, there were some people who had been teachers before. So, they tried to organise certain groups, classes, that they would teach us how to write and to do basic... arithmetic or things like that. And, and that was their ...aim, to try to get us still not that they were wasting all that time that we wouldn't learn anything. And- which I'm amazed about today, how they managed, and really tried to – to do that.

**[1:13:43]**

*And what about the card?*

And the cards, they had- we didn't have proper paper or anything. But at the back of must have been of a parcel card or something, the other side was ...empty, almost empty. And they showed us how to write, and to make pictures of a shofar and a pot of honey and things like this, that we could send to our parents, a card to wish them a happy new year. And my children can't get over it, how I was able to write like that after not having had any



education! And- which was amazing at the time; one just didn't have anything! But they tried still; in Westerbork they still tried. We had somebody who was organising a choir, who had been a music teacher, Hans Krieg, in Amsterdam. And I met him afterwards many, many times. And just to try and keep on teaching us as much as they could because there were not many opportunities.

*No. No, that's wonderful. So, by the time you were in Zurich you could write...a bit?*

A bit. Yeah. And there again, this Fräulein Kremer she was giving me extra time to try and teach me a bit more. And she was a very, very sweet woman. And how she managed I...but I think I was the only one in the class, who had come from a concentration camp. But she told everyone not to ask me where I had come from, and just to be kind to me. And they were.

*So, the philosophy at that point was not to talk about it...too much.*

Yeah. Because she wanted me to get over it. And, because they knew, and it was true, that some people suffered very badly, of memories and... Yeah, who couldn't get over it.

*Yeah. What about your parents...at that point?*

Well, they never let on...with me. And they were positive and I think they were very grateful that they had got- they knew that their other child was alive.

*Yes. So, we didn't talk about that.*

No.

*How did they know that?*

Well, they got- when they got to Switzerland, my ...father wrote to the lady from the Resistance and to find out what had happened. And also, my father went to Amsterdam, to see whether he could find his child back. But- which he did. But he couldn't take him yet, because we had no home, we had nothing! And my mother was not in the position to start

looking after a family. We had to get back...in strength or in- to, to try and be fed before we could go back to...

*But he found him?*

He found him through the lady of the Resistance.

**[1:16:39]**

*In which years? When did he manage to get back to Amsterdam?*

My father went back at the end of '45. As soon as he could. He couldn't wait. Because he wrote a telegram, or a letter, which is in my book, actually, asking this lady of the Resistance what had happened to his child. And she said the child is quite well. And after all that, he went back as soon as he could, to try to set up a life that my mother and I would be able to come back to Holland. Because we had no flat, we had no furniture. We had nothing left!

*No, because you'd moved, and in the meantime, you stayed with your grandparents.*

That's right! And everything had been taken from us in Holland. There was nothing left. And only the certain, the few things which my father had given away... into hiding, but that was it.

*So slowly he tried to...*

To re-establish, and to get a flat organised for us and... And also, to get a job back that he would be able to... get a normal life for us.

*So, did he actually, cause at that point, your brother wouldn't have recognised your father.*

*Did he actually speak to him, or did he just see him?*

He did see him, but exactly the response is very difficult for us to understand, but I'm sure he didn't.

*Yeah.*

I'm sure he didn't.

*And they established, what was, so what- if you could tell us what happened to your brother throughout, during the war?*

Well during the war, he was first with a family in the country. Family Stol.

*One second. [Interruption.]*

*About your brother, and what happened to him.*

**[1:18:40]**

Well, my father or my parents wrote back to the lady of the Resistance to find out what had happened to him. But everything was all right. And she immediately responded and said that he was well, and he had been with a family in Holland. But now, he was going, not yet, because my father went first back to Holland. We left- We stayed in Zürich behind. And he went back because my mother had a cousin in Stockholm. And she had said she would like to take care of my brother. Because Holland was also in very difficult ...circumstances. No food, and...you know, my father couldn't go back yet. We had no home or anything.

*Yeah.*

So this cousin of my mother's took on to let my brother come to Stockholm that she could look after him. And that's what happened. But as soon as possible, because my mother found it very difficult not to go back. But as soon as possible that we had had some treatment and as much as possible and got fed, then she decided we were going to go back to try and be a family again. And that I've got vague memories of, actually. Because my... mother then tried, as soon as possible- Or my father had got a flat for us, a tiny flat. Which was a bedroom for my parents, a living room, and a tiny room which was a small size bathroom for my brother and me and a shower, and kitchen. So we went back, and my mother started you know, to try to get things organised. And...then we, after that must have been after another

nine months or so, being liberated, we went to Stockholm. And I've got clear memories of that. Because in those days I don't think people were used to for people to fly. And my mother and I took a plane from Amsterdam, to- we wanted to go to Stockholm, but couldn't go directly so we had to fly from Amsterdam to Copenhagen, and then take another flight from Copenhagen to Stockholm. And people afterwards- I got a reaction from people later, they couldn't believe it, because when we flew from Amsterdam to Copenhagen, the plane had to fly very low over the sea, because you couldn't go directly to Stockholm. And I said in a very loud voice, apparently, or very loud, but in a loud voice to my mother, "Can you imagine? We survived Bergen-Belsen and now we are going to drown in the sea." Because we were flying so low over the water, that I thought we would never make it; but we did. [laughs] And then we took another flight to Stockholm. And there, which was fantastic how my mother managed that, because she was still weak, and having lost a sister in any case. And- But she wouldn't give in. And so every day she wanted to go as soon as possible back to Amsterdam to be with my father, and that we should have a family. And so every day she organised for the three of us... walking together. Because he didn't want to know from my mother. He had a mother in Holland, mother in Stockholm, now comes another one who calls herself his mother! So she started organising these walking trips and going to places, the three of us going together. And then she bought him a big balloon and he was very excited. He was a very young child. At that time, he was about six...six? Yeah, six-and-a-half. And he was very upset. The balloon shrunk and became smaller and smaller. So, my mother said, "You know what? Daddy in Amsterdam, he will be able to blow the balloon up for you and that it gets bigger again." After that he didn't want to wait; he wanted to go back the next day to Amsterdam. But in any case, we went back as soon as possible, and started ...family life again.

*Because for him he didn't recognise anyone...*

**[1:23:10]**

Nothing!

*Yeah.*

Because he was so tiny when he was taken from us, and then having the...the Dutch... mother from the Resistance. Then he was in Stockholm, so he didn't remember – remember anything! And then now comes the one who calls herself the real mother!

*But he was also in an orphanage...is that correct?*

Also.

Yes...?

And that was very lucky.

*He went from this Dutch lady to the orphanage?*

It was I think initially, that the... the orphanage was at the beginning... they took him there, until they found a family to look after him.

*And in the orphanage, there was the... the, the Germans came to the orphanage?*

Yes, they did. And apparently one of the people in charge pulled him up and covered him up that they shouldn't see that he was circumcised. So that's what happened.

[interruption]

*The orphanage...*

Yes.

*The Germans came. What happened then?*

Well, I don't know exactly the details, but we were told afterwards that one of the people in charge, lifted him up quickly that they shouldn't see that he was circumcised. And- Just held him on their shoulders, and...and that was it, until they left. But that was only for a very short

while, because he was taken to some- Or, I don't know. Perhaps he was left longer at the orphanage; that I'm not even sure of the details.

*And the other children were deported? Was it a Jewish orphanage?*

[1:24:55]

I don't think they were only Jewish children. I don't think so. That's why they could leave him there, because he was blond and blue-eyed. This is what must have been the reason.

*Ok, understood. But so, when you met him again, what was it like for you? Did you think of him as your brother?*

You know when I think back now, probably because the way my parents talked about him. But I wonder; it might have been difficult for me. Suddenly I've got to share all the attention with somebody else, which I got! And- But I don't remember exactly that, because my parents were fantastic. They didn't make any kind of situation to, for me to feel that I was secondary best. We carried on, and they were just very instrumental for my brother and me to get on, and for him to be accepted as a child of the family. Because I was there, but for him, that he didn't belong anymore to somebody else, but...

*But that's also- you helped, because it was your mother and you going...*

Yeah.

*And maybe that helped as well, that there was a child.*

Absolutely. Absolutely!

*And was he close to the cousin? To your mother's cousin?*

In Stockholm? Very much so. Very much so. The lady's husband was not Jewish, but she was. And she had been very close... to my mother originally, and it was wonderful what she did to... take him in. And...

*OK. And then you went back to Amsterdam, and a new chapter...*

That's right.

*... started. And I think this is a good point to have a break.*

OK!

*Is that all right?*

OK!

**[1:26:49]**

*Interview with Lady Zahava Kohn.*

*So, we, we got to Amsterdam and basically your life ...after the war, when Yehudi joined you, or came with you to... to Holland.*

Yeah.

*So, my first question is actually that you managed to convince the little Yehudi to come. So, did he resist to come at the end, or did he come voluntarily?*

No, I think probably it helped a great deal that my mother and I had come to Stockholm. And that he took to us, because my mother organised every day programs and the way she carried on and spoke to him. And that must have had an effect on him, and probably also having another sibling who said that I was a sister of his, and had it just been my mother might have been more difficult. But like this, having another sibling, that might have made it easier.

*And how did your cousin feel, who had him for a year, about letting him go?*

I probably- I don't remember that, but I would have thought- She had three children herself, so... that might have been enough for her... to think you know, that's where he belongs and that's where he should go to.

*But it's also quite a remarkable thing to do, to take him in for a year.*

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah.

*Was it a year? How long?*

I think definitely a year and... No, I'm sure, I don't remember exactly the details but it must have been definitely a year or more. Yeah.

*And which language did you speak to him?*

I must have spoken Dutch to him, so I don't know whether... He probably hadn't forgotten Dutch yet. And which again, was quite amazing. Because coming to Stockholm, he wouldn't have had much chance to speak Dutch. But that was the only language he was really used to. And then having to learn Swedish. But still the Dutch must have been important to him.

*And did you learn some Swedish?*

“Tack så mycket”. [laughs]

*I have no idea what that means. [laughs]*

‘Thank you very much’. Another few words but not more, because we tried to teach him Dutch.

*Yeah.*

And...



*And was your mother strong enough? I saw in the book there was a letter that your cousin was concerned that your mother wasn't strong enough to take you back.*

Yeah. No, because she had ...quite a few health problems. But my mother was determined to start again the family. And she wouldn't give in. And wanted to go back as soon as possible, also to be with my father.

*And how did you travel back from...?*

**[1:29:39]**

We flew back again. Because at that time, it was very difficult any other way. And or to go by boat, that would have taken a long, long time.

*Yeah. And then you went back to the - the flat?*

To the flat which we had then got in the meantime. But that was a very small flat. And then afterwards, my parents then got a larger flat, later on.

*And did...?*

But even then, it wasn't a very big flat.

*And did you share a bedroom with your brother?*

We still shared a room, and then afterwards when I became a bit older, then I think one of us went up to like an attic...room.

*So, you were quite close?*

Oh, yes. And my parents made sure, you know. They always- We always had friends to come, and... and they made sure that they got a relationship between us, that we would like each other, and so forth. And organised outings, you know, to go to galleries and so forth just to be together ...a lot.

*So, did you do a lot as a family? The four of you?*

As a family. Yeah. Yeah. And when I think back now, or at least three of us, when my father had to work, that my mother would take us. And both of them, because they needed a lot of medical care as well. And my mother also went quite a lot to Switzerland, to see her parents, because they, my grandmother wasn't well. She was diabetic. And my mother felt that she wanted to give her help and support, because also knowing that her sister had died. So for her, it was very difficult you know, to just leave my grandparents alone.

*So, it was quite a bit of responsibility on your mother...*

Always.

*...with young children...*

Always.

*...elderly parents, and her own health, presumably.*

Absolutely. But she never gave in. ...Never.

*And tell us, so your brother started. He'd never been schooled before I guess? Or had he been able...?*

He had been to kindergarten, but I think that was about it. And in Stockholm as well to a kind of kindergarten. But that was it.

*So where did he go?*

And then he went to nursery in Amsterdam, and then afterwards to the Jewish primary school.

**[1:32:05]**

*So, were you together in the Jewish primary school? Or were you already in a secondary school?*

I must have just then gone to the secondary school, because there was six years' difference between us. So, there must have been just that difference that I had to go to the secondary school.

*And what was the atmosphere like in Amsterdam post-war, in the school? I mean...?*

Well, there were quite a number of... youngsters who had been suffering from depression and so forth and who talked about it, and... But on the other hand, others again, we had been together in camps, recognised each other. Even some of them I had known from before the war. So, we tried to organise trips and so forth, or not trips, but to get together. That happened still quite often.

*So, was it a close-knit Community?*

Yes...yes. It was. Because... my parents belonged to one kind of Community, the others to another. But the children, they made up their own mind whom they wanted to be together with.

**[1:33:16]**

*So where did your parents go to?*

They went...

*To synagogue for example?*

To a very small one which was opposite where we lived. Oh, sorry, but that was originally. And then that was the same kind of what you call a Shtiebel where Ralph's parents went to because they lived very near where we did. And...

*This was pre-war?*

Pre-war. But after the war, we were taken to a place, we got a flat ...very much on the outskirts, which was very difficult because it was a very long - for us – a very long walk. It was about half an hour to go to synagogue. And so we had our health problems. But my father went actually further to a Shtiebel which- where he knew a lot of the people. And only when the weather was bad, would he go to another one. And I would go to that one. That was the official synagogue where we also got married.

*Which is the Spanish-Portuguese one?*

No, that was the Jacob Obrechtstraat. That was a very nice Community. And I knew a lot of the people, and I knew the Headmaster from my school was a member there as well, and some other teachers. So, I spent quite a time, a lot of time... when I went to synagogue on a Saturday.

*That brings us to this whole topic of religion and faith. So, obviously your parents were quite religious before the war. Did they keep their religion - and also you?*

Well, I was brought up like that.

*Yeah.*

There was no question about anything like that. And I then also went to a youth group called Bnei Akiva, and- which was Orthodox. And these were my friends! But I had other friends too. But the main circle in particular from school were the people who I had known from Bnei Akiva and so forth where I carried on my friendship with.

**[1:35:18]**

*So the religion was integral?*

Absolutely. My parents never gave up.

*It wasn't questioned. Their experiences didn't ...challenge that?*

Never at all. Never at all. And probably also helping that my grandparents from my mother's side were alive, and they were very Orthodox, so... And from my father's side, not all his siblings, but most of them, I would say, were Orthodox. So that ...remained.

*And did your parents have contact with non-Jews in Holland?*

They did. But not- through business and so forth. And, but I wouldn't say with very many, but they definitely did.

*And did they keep in touch with the family, with the lady who helped you?*

Very much.

*Can you tell us a little bit about that?*

Well that was very interesting actually, because the lady who had taken him in - not the lady who... was the person, who got the place and everything - her husband was the headmaster of a wonderful school in Amsterdam. And she- they lived- no children, and they lived very close to where we lived. And my parents saw her quite frequently, she would come, not with her husband but she would come on her own and keep up the relationship. But the people who had taken care of my brother, we went, that was outside Amsterdam. And we went regularly to – to see them. Because my parents felt all the time... to say thank you-s and so forth, what they had done. And we used to go quite often there.

**[1:36:58]**

*And what was their name again?*

Stol. Stol, Pieter & Elisabeth Wilhelmina.

*Stol.*

Family Stol. But I don't remember the husband. I remember the woman; she was a nurse. And... But I don't know whether she was divorced or whether anything else had happened, or whether he had died...that I don't remember now. And...

*Just for the record here...*

Yeah.

*So, they didn't get any money or any...?*

Not that I'm aware of.

*They really did that to...*

Initially. I think afterwards perhaps my parents did do things to help them. But initially, it was done through the Resistance.

*Yeah. And risking – and risking their own lives.*

Absolutely. Absolutely. And Yehudi was not the only one whom they had taken in. They had some other children as well. And I think a couple of...an older couple. So that must have been their aim, to help people.

*Yeah. And there is a story in your book about Yehudi going out - sort of naked outside.*

*What...tell us about that.*

That was when he- when he was with the family Stol...

Yes.

...and that was in a small house in a very small, I can't - in a very small town or village. And on one occasion he went out of the house without his pants on. And she got in a terrible shock, because she was worried somebody might have passed the house and the garden and

see... that he had no pants on that he was circumcised. So after that, he wasn't allowed to go out into the garden again... or was watched that he was dressed properly.

**[1:38:39]**

*Yeah...yeah. Because that's...a giveaway.*

That would have been a risk to...for her!

*Yeah. And do you know, how was she connected to the Resistance?*

That I don't know. What made her take part, that I don't really know. I must once ask; I don't know whether my brother... found out.

*And did she have other children?*

Yes, she had her own children. And also, some children which she had taken in as well. But she had her own children, because I remember we went to the weddings of her children and afterwards and...yeah

*And could your brother remember her or...at that point...probably not?*

I don't think. I wouldn't have thought so. And to him, I'm not even sure whether he wasn't resistant at times to go back there, that he was- because he was very happy with us as a family. That he was worried that they might give him back to this lady and... So I don't think he would have been very happy... to have too much of a...an attachment to them.

*But they stayed involved and for your parents it was...important?*

Very much. Very much. No, my parents went regularly to see them, to visit them, and took him along. And also gave them some financial help. And always my mother took always presents there and... always.

*And did they come to ...a Bar Mitzvah? Did they come to your family occasions?*

I think they did. I do think they did. I'm not quite clear about it anymore. As I said before, my memory is not as good as it used to be. [laughs]

*It's absolutely fine. Absolutely fine. Quite amazing that they...*

My parents made sure that they kept the relationship going because they wanted to help as much as they could for all what they had done. And they were very grateful for that.

**[1:40:33]**

*And in terms of your parents' health. Did they get any help, I mean...to go to the hospital and to...?*

Well, my father had to go quite regularly to hospital, and had several surgical... things done. And- But he was very, very ill. My mother also had problems, but she tried you know, to be stronger and to be able to look after us children and after my father as well.

*What did your father- What operations? What did he have to have?*

Stomach, and... and also on heart ...conditions. Yeah. No, he was very, very unwell.

*And at that point when they had re-established themselves, did they want to stay in Holland or were they thinking of going elsewhere, or...?*

That would have been more difficult in any case, because they might have thought at one time that Switzerland would be easier, because Holland had very difficult conditions financially and so forth. You couldn't get all the things food-wise and so forth. But... No, I think they tried to keep Holland as their main...And Israel would have been difficult, because my mother wouldn't have been able to take climate conditions.

*And you said you were in the Bnei Akiva youth movement. Were you tempted at all to think of going to Israel, or...?*



Later on, yes. But then my parents wouldn't give in. I had to go to school and to make sure that I was going to carry on learning properly. And... So that was not a topic of consideration.

*Yes. So what was your secondary school?*

**[1:42:18]**

Well, I didn't go to the- because it was either three or five years. But then again as I mentioned, my father was so ill, I got a job. I had learned certain courses that I would be able to help him in business and so forth. And I started to, to, to get jobs, to be able to... keep things going. Because otherwise it would have been very, very hard.

*So, you left school early, when you were sixteen...*

Yeah.

*... to help.*

Yeah. Yeah. Because otherwise, for my father it was a terrible responsibility he couldn't really look after the family properly because he was in and out of the hospital.

*Yeah, and at that point he had re-established himself...*

Yes.

*... as what?*

Yeah, well he had started off this kind of business of making... plastic capes for cyclists. Because Holland is a country of cyclists, and...

*And rain.*

Sorry?

*And rain. [laughs]*

And rain. And it was a very important thing, because that was, I think he saw it the first time either in Sweden or in Switzerland. I'm trying to remember but I can't at the moment, because- going over the... hand...things where you...

*The hand rails.*

Hand rails.

*Yes?*

And that you wouldn't get all soaking wet. And that was a very, very great idea. And that went very well, but it was very difficult to start. And he was very weak and very ill so that's when I started after. I got another job during the day, but in the evening I very often then helped to- People were sewing the things... as... workers, and I would stick things together at night that my father didn't have to worry about it.

*So, you wanted to help them?*

Yeah, because I could see that he wasn't able to carry on like this. He was too weak. And he was in and out of hospital all the time.

**[1:44:32]**

*It must have influenced you... being also a teenager, being aware that your parents needed help.*

Yes. Absolutely.

*Did you, do you remember that responsibility, or...?*

Well, that's why I got a certain job when I wanted to stay in Holland, to be near my parents. I didn't want to leave them, that they would have no chance, you know, to carry on what they were doing or, what my father was doing. And... that's how - how things started. And then I went to London on a visit, because my mother had cousins here in London. And in...Stoke Newington. And I... met there certain people, and they were very, very kind to me and very, very - and also it was another reason. I used to like go skiing. And I had met quite a few people from London who used to come in the winter skiing as well. And then they said, because it was not easy at the time to find the right suitable husband in Amsterdam, as my parents were so Orthodox and so forth. And they said, "Why don't you come to... London? We've got many, many friends there, and we would love to introduce you to see what life is there like." And that's what happened! I went, on a visit. And did like it, and liked the people I met. And so, I went back and forth much more often. Until I really got a job, and then I stayed longer.

*Because you- you worked with Rabbi Shonfeld. Is that correct?*

Yeah, he, because the people whom I had met in Switzerland, they had contacted him. They must have liked me; I don't know why. [laughs] And so they must have said to him that they would like me to get a job here in London, and that's what he did. And he employed me then to work at a kindergarten in Edgware first, and then also at some of the other schools. And... And I met a lot of very lovely people who were very kind and generous to me and, and that's what started things off.

*And what was it like, so at some point you left your parents behind in some way?*

Yeah.

*And made the step and came...?*

Yeah. But then my parents were very keen on that, because they realised it was very difficult in Amsterdam to find the right kind of ...partner at that period. Because you know, so many had disappeared. And so, so they encouraged it. And my mother had cousins here in London as well.

*And it was a small community. I mean, how many – how many Jews were there in Amsterdam post-war?*

**[1:47:20]**

I don't remember figures, but in any case, the kind of background I came from were, was very, and then there were other synagogues and so forth. And through Bnei Akiva I had lots of friends there. When I say 'lots', it's oh...comparative. But I had met then a lot of nice people here.

*Yeah. And what were your first impressions arriving in England?*

People were very, very gentle and very hospitable, I must say. A lot of the people when I came to- I stay-started in Stamford Hill, because my mother had a cousin there. And but that was not my ...kind of, of way of life. And but that's how I met, how I got there. Also, with Rabbi Schonfeld and so forth. But then I realised, and I don't even know originally how that happened, but there were quite a few people I met there, who lived in Golders Green. And they were very, very kind and invited me to come and stay with them. And... that's what I did. And then I got a room, and paid my rent and got a job in one of the schools and then in another school. And... And that's how things then started.

*So, you were quite independent... at that point?*

Yeah. I wanted to- I wanted to show that I could do my own thing.

*And how good was your English?*

Well, they always said, because in Holland you learn very well English – very well languages. The first year when you go to high school, you learn English and the second year, French and German. And that must have been the thing, because they always said that I spoke - we forget about my accent – but that I spoke very well and so I had no problems with that.

*Just before coming to London, I wanted to ask you, because you said that in... in Zurich they were instructed not to ask you too many questions about where you'd come from, you know that – that teacher when you started.*

Yeah. Oh, that was right at the beginning.

*Yes, in Zurich. So, what- what was it like when you came back to Amsterdam? Did people talk about it?*

Well, much more, because they had been much more involved. They had had similar problems.

*Yes, so for example...*

And I went to a Jewish school so a lot of them either had been hidden, or had also been in concentration camps.

**[1:49:56]**

*That's right, so I wanted to know, the children, do you remember speaking to other children, or did everyone try to just get on...?*

No, some children did talk, and I also remember some of them were suffering from depression because they had been talking too much at home about it. And that really bothered them.

*And in secondary school as well?*

Yeah. Well, it was then- by that time mainly already secondary school, I think.

*Yeah. And what about you and Yehudi? Did you talk about the past at that point or...?*

I don't think we did. I mean he knew that we had contact with the people who had been hiding him, and we went regularly to visit them. And so, and but otherwise, because he then

went to a Jewish school and had new friends, and my parents... encouraged all that very much.

*And what about your parents? Did they talk about, at that point...?*

Not to us. But I do remember when, because they always had many, many visitors coming to our flat. And I do remember whenever I or my brother came into the living room, when they were entertaining, they always changed the subject. Immediately. They didn't want us to go on worrying about what had happened, and... Because they had seen the results of some of the children who were suffering from their experiences before, and they didn't want that. They wanted us to look ahead, and to get on with school and...

*And did Yehudi show any signs of...?*

No. I think the way my parents brought - brought us up, and the way they looked after him and everything, and made sure that he always had friends coming to the house and so forth, that there was no kind- of that feeling. He always had friends coming to the house and...

*Yeah. So, he managed to, not...*

Yeah...yeah. And then also perhaps he had had this period in Sweden in the meantime, where he had been taken care of, and then comes my mother. And so that made it all perhaps a bit easier for him.

*And maybe also personality.*

Yeah.

*You know that's...always also a factor, isn't it?*

Yeah. That's right.

*He sounds as that he...*

No, he's always been- that's probably why he became- his last job, he was first working for the German... Council...

*For the Israeli...*

For the Israeli... in Germany. And then...

*He was a diplomat.*

A diplomat. And he ended up as the Ambassador for Belgium and Luxembourg. That was his last job. But he was in Canada and in Germany first as ...in official positions. But his last one was the Ambassador to...

*Wonderful.*

Yeah. Yeah. No, he has got a very... nice, easy personality. And they liked that. And he spoke languages. That was a great, great plus. Because in Holland you learn, the first year in high school you learn English and the second year you learned German and French.

*And what about his Swedish? Did he keep that up?*

No.

*No. He forgot.*

I'm sure he did, because there was no opportunity for him to carry it on.

*Yeah.*

I remember still 'thank you': '*Tack så mycket*'. [laughs]

*Yeah. So your house...despite the difficulties, was not- was a happy...*

Very much so. In spite of all the terrible things that had happened. My mother's sister having been killed and...but still they were looking ahead and trying. And many of their friends hadn't survived but still they were looking ahead. And I think also mainly to us as children, to give us a positive kind of feeling that we shouldn't worry about all the things that we had passed.

**[1:54:06]**

*But by the sound of it, it also wasn't a taboo...So you know it was that...*

Oh, yes. Definitely.

*So it wasn't that it wasn't a topic you couldn't...*

No, no, they never. They didn't encourage it; let's put it that way. But it was not that we were not allowed to talk about it.

*Yes.*

Because they must have seen some of the friends who came to the house. And they knew it from other things that they did speak. And. No, but there was no question about that.

*So, now coming back to England. You came to England, in quite a different context. And then tell us, how did you then meet ...your future husband?*

[Laughs] Well I met first a lot of people whom I had met in St Moritz skiing, from here. And through friends and so forth. And they were very, very kind, and very often invited me on Saturday or Friday night for dinners. And I had a very, very good relationship with many of them. But I think I went back and forth to Amsterdam because my father was so ill. And I just didn't want to let go so very often for weekends and so forth, I would go back. And one of the occasions, no that must have been another, when I had been in St Moritz, there was a couple from here. And they said they would like me to come to London because they have some very nice ...contacts whom they would like me to meet. And that's what happened. So I came here. And but that was another thing. On my father's birthday, on another occasion, I



had gone to Holland to be - for his birthday. And we... the people who were instrumental in that, they had a restaurant in Scheveningen, a seaside outside The Hague. And my parents had been told, I don't now remember actually...by whom. Oh, by the people who owned the restaurant in Scheveningen, and that there was a couple from London, and they had a very nice son, and I should come over to... to meet him. And that's what happened. I came – on my birthday I came to the restaurant in Scheveningen. And I was introduced to Doctor Ralph Kohn! [Laughs] And... But the funny thing is, my father was a little bit better. He was still in hospital but a bit better. That was my holiday period when I was teaching. So my mother encouraged me that I should carry on, because she was worried that I wasn't meeting enough people, that I should and go to Montreux where this ...seminar was held. And but I should come with her to Scheveningen to meet a couple whom she knew from before the war.

**[1:57:06]**

*Yeah.*

And I didn't know anything about it, that there was a son there too.

*Yeah.*

And that's what happened. And he asked me to change my plans. Not to go to my place – to my seminar in Montreux. But I said I had booked it, and I was going to carry on with it. And that's what I did. [laughs]

*Yeah? But you...*

The day, the day I came back to London, I had a telephone call [laughs] ...and then we met very soon.

*But you come, you have very similar backgrounds. That's what's amazing.*

Yes. Yeah, yeah, because our parents went both to the same... little synagogue.

*And do you think that was important for both of you, that you have that shared background?*

Well, there was some kind of a relationship probably that would have been- That we both were used to, that would perhaps be easier. And I don't know whether that was all, but we just... liked each other's company that first time, and, but I didn't like it that much that I gave up my plans to go to Montreux! I carried on. [both laugh]

*Yeah.*

And so I went on my trip. And had a wonderful period, and then went back to London.

*But Ralph was here in London.*

He was here in London. And I think on the day I came back he phoned me. And that was it! [laughs] He didn't let me go!

*Yeah. And here you are. Sometime later.*

That's right! That's right. After fifty-three years.

*That's wonderful. And then when did you get married?*

We got married... fifty-three years ago.

*OK. So now it 2016 [laughing] minus 53 years ago.*

Yeah...

*Cameraman: 1962.*

1962. You're right. Sorry. [all laugh]

*1962. And where did you get married? In Holland?*

In Holland... In the big synagogue there, which was lovely.

*And can you tell us a little bit about the wedding?*

**[1:59:34]**

Well, it was a very traditional wedding. Though not as they call *heimisch*, it wasn't- because it was a very, more 'Jekke-ish' kind of... synagogue. And... we knew very much or very well the rabbi and the chazzan and all the people there. And I had lots of friends there from before and from my job and so forth. And so many, many people came. And my parents organised everything, and I was very happy that my parents, that my father was able to come and join.

*And were your grandparents still alive then?*

My grandparents- Yes! They came to the wedding! And nieces and nephews from both sides. They all came. Yeah.

*But was it clear that you would settle here, in London, or...?*

Because I was already living in London.

*Yeah...and so was Ralph...*

And I liked it. And ...then when I met Ralph that was something that happened very quickly, and, but I had many, many friends here whom I had met on holidays and so forth...

*You didn't want to go back to Holland?*

No. I had given up that, because there was nothing really going on as a Jewish background, of the things that interested me.

*Yeah. I mean, did you feel Dutch at that point? Did you feel...?*

I can't say, because my parents were not really... Dutch. But they had many Dutch friends, and so did I. But it was a different. I had made so many new friends here in London, that that was the kind of life I really wanted to carry on with.

*You didn't feel attached that much to Amsterdam?*

Not any more. No. Because a lot of my friends who had gone to school with me, had also left. They had gone to Israel and to other places or got married. And they were not there anymore, so that all changed.

*Yeah.*

**[2:01:40]**

Because I remember very much. The children always laugh about it when I tell them. When we were once a whole group of ...students, of pupils. And we had to meet the Headmaster. And it was very close outside the, the school. And they always teased me afterwards with it. And so we were trying to get the Headmaster to listen to our complaints or whatever needed to be done. And then he pointed at me and said, "You take the word, because you are the most decent of them all." And I felt so embarrassed! [laughs] That outside the Headmaster says something like this in front of all my school friends. And but I had a very nice relationship with the teachers. And they were not all Jewish in any case. But it was a Jewish high school, and a very good one.

*Mn-hnn. But there were quite a few Jewish students? Mostly Jewish?*

Only!

*Only Jewish.*

Only, yeah. Yeah.

*But some non-Jewish teachers?*

Yeah. Quite a few. Because they couldn't get so many anymore.

*Of course. Of course. And, anyway, then you started your- to settle with Ralph. Where did you live at that point?*

Well, I was living initially in Mill Hill; that's when we met. And then afterwards I moved to Golders Green, Portsdown Avenue. And- Because I started then teaching at Menorah Kindergarten, so that was easier. Because the first school was Edgware...Jewish Primary School so that's why I stayed there, and then afterwards to Golders Green. And I've got wonderful memories. People were so kind and so hospitable. I was always invited every Friday night. Never, never...never that I would have said, "What am I going to do?". I mean the people where I lived would have hosted me for dinner in any case, but it never happened. Because I had met so many of my friends skiing and so forth or on other holidays. And they just...

*And with Ralph where did you – together – where did you live?*

With Ralph... Well he lived in Mill Hill at the time. And he worked for a pharmaceutical company. That's why, when we got married, we got a place in Mill Hill. And... So, I changed from Golders Green to Mill Hill.

*And did you continue teaching as a nursery teacher or...?*

Initially, but not very long because then he wanted, no, I'm not very sure whether I still did. Trying to remember. Because then very often when he had to go on journeys, he wanted me to come with him.

**[2:04:30]**

*And did you?*

I did. [laughs]

*He was travelling a lot.*

Yes. Because he was representing a very major pharmaceutical company, and so that- and he didn't want to go and leave me behind. He was probably worried that I might start a relationship with somebody else. [laughs]

*And did you actually speak- Which language? Did you speak Dutch to Ralph at all or did you speak?*

Mainly English, I think. But I occasionally, when we didn't want somebody else to hear, then we would speak Dutch, or Double-Dutch to you.

*Double Dutch. [laughs]*

Or sometimes German, or some Yiddish expressions as well.

*Yes...yes. We can check actually. [sound break] Yes, so we are in London.*

Are we? [laughs]

*I think so. So, you said you started travelling quite a bit with Ralph.*

Yeah. ...Well actually only for a short while, because I became very soon pregnant after we got married...

*Yes?*

... so that I couldn't really travel any more. And also, to set up a new home and so forth. So that wasn't that easy, and so I had to give it up. But initially I did travel with him.

*Yeah? And when were your children born?*

Well, Hephzi was born just about a year after we got married. And Michelle... two years later, and then Maxine a few years later on. And but and we had wonderful relationships with- and that's why also Ralph wanted me very much to come with him. Because he...for

instance he used to have relationships with a very fine company in Japan. And...they was the biggest pharmaceutical company in Japan. And... the owner used to come very often here, very often to this house, or already to the house before. And then his wife used to come very often with him as well. And they came to the weddings of the children. And Ralph always took me when he had to go to Tokyo – Osaka, sorry, not Tokyo. And I remember she used to take me all over the country on outings to show me things. And... Which was a wonderful relationship. And... And, you know, what I got at the time, that was a very rare honour. Because normally you know we used to stay in a hotel when we got there. But on one occasion, Mrs Kaneda, she said to Ralph, “If Dr Kohn doesn’t mind, I would like to ask if you would allow your wife to come and stay with us in our house.” And people couldn’t believe it, because you never were asked to stay in their home. And so, I was put nicely on the floor. Had my...But I had a wonderful, wonderful relationship with the wife of the company. And the children came to us, and our children went to Japan too. And I had wonderful experiences of going to these places.

*So, you helped Ralph...*

**[2:08:05]**

Oh, I was working very much with him.

*Yes.*

Because initially I did a lot of just... bookkeeping. But then the children were born, so it wasn’t, I used to look after the children first, and when they went to ...back, to bed, then I started doing all the invoices and everything which I did for the company. And I used to work till midnight every night! And because I didn’t want to- When they came from school, I was there with the children. I never wanted them to feel that I had no time for them. I always used to invite their friends for ...tea and or supper that they had together. But I was very much involved with the children. During the day I was working as well, or doing housework and - or office work. But then I wouldn’t do anything; I used to fetch them from school. I was just mentioning I used to go- Cause all three went to North London Collegiate. And I used to take them to school, and pick them up from school. Well, not all at the same time, because Maxine is several years younger than the other two. But Michelle and Hephzi were two years apart.

And we were so happy that they got in there. And so I used to take them, because it was more complicated with buses and everything.

*Did you still live? Where did you live?*

We started off in Woodlands in Golders Green, and but I drove them. And then we moved here.

*To this house?*

Yeah. We only had two places.

*Aha.*

Oh, we started off in Ralph's flat in Mill Hill, but only for a very short time until we found our place in Golders Green.

*So, for how many years have you been here?*

I can't remember! [laughing]

*This is where you raised the children.*

Yeah...yeah. No, here, a very long time.

*But was it important for you to be there with the children?*

Very much. Because I felt it was very important. And I had seen it probably also from other children, if the parents were not involved with them, what it did to them. And I thought it was very important to be there. As I say, the children always had friends for tea. And only after they had finished their homework or anything, were they allowed to watch a little television, but not more. [laughs] I was very strict in that. And I think Ralph encouraged me in that, because he didn't want me to do much of that either.



*Yeah. Do you think your sense of family was sort of strengthened by your experiences or did it, you know, that you had...?*

**[2:10:50]**

I didn't know anything else. That's how I was brought up. Because I remember the feeling my mother had to her parents. And my father had not any – I mean he had some siblings left but they were all in Israel, so he couldn't really have much with that. And, but otherwise, that was really... the way I was brought up. Because my mother was very, very firmly connected with me or first with both of us. And then with me. And but then she went to Israel. And so it was more difficult, but still...

*When did she go to Israel?*

Well, when she couldn't really manage anymore, because she lived on a first-floor apartment and my father had died. And then she had gone to a home in- outside Amsterdam. Because she couldn't do it; we had that very steep ...apartment, and which was wonderful, in a wonderful position, but she couldn't take any more the stairs. And then she gave in when we suggested that she went first to a home ...in outside Amsterdam. And then from there, because my brother had in the meantime moved and got married in Israel. So, she moved to- Because here she always said she was upset that she hadn't learnt English. She learnt French at school and Italian, but English she hadn't learnt. And she couldn't speak properly the language. And she thought that was terrible for her that she couldn't – that she didn't want to live here because she couldn't speak proper English. And so that's when she decided that she was going to live in Israel. And also, with air conditioning and everything it wasn't the same problem.

*Yeah. And at what time did, Yehudi- when did he move to Israel?*

Oh, he was first in Germany as a diplomat...

*No, I meant after school from Holland. Initially, when did he- did he finish his schooling in Holland and then?*

Yeah, but then he studied also in Switzerland, and ... And also, he spent some time in America as well. But then, after all his courses and so then he went to - to Israel.

*And so, your mother in a way joined him.*

Oh, but that was much later. And because my father had a lot, quite a number of relatives - brothers and sisters in Israel. And cousins and so forth, so that was a much easier. And also my mother knew of a very nice Dutch home in Israel, in - outside Herzliya. And that's when she decided, or we talked about that, that she should. Because I didn't want her to stay in Amsterdam where she didn't know any more, many people. They had disappeared or died, and I didn't want that. And also, not being able any more to go to her flat. That she had to go to a home in any case. So, we encouraged her to go to Israel.

*And was she happy in Israel?*

In that home very much. For her sometimes so it was a bit too hot. She wasn't always happy about that. But... also having the family there, and my brother, and... And brothers and sisters-in-law. So that made it a bit easier.

*And in later life, did you find, was your mother haunted by the past or did she put it behind her?*

**[2:14:16]**

She did put it behind. Or, she might not have with certain people. But she never showed that she went on about it. But I don't know. Initially it must have had- And I remember actually a condition, situation like that. Because initially I wanted nothing to have to do with Germany. I didn't buy any German products. We didn't want to go to Germany. But then again with rehabilitation, certain things happened that I had to sign certain forms to get compensation and so forth. And also, when Ralph was employed by a very large pharmaceutical company, he couldn't decide who the companies were- whom he was going to deal with.

*Yeah.*

And there were- the pharmaceutical industry was very, very important in Germany. So he had some very important... things to do there. And a lot of the Germans came here. But as I said, initially I didn't want to know about it. Until on one occasion, there was one couple from Hamburg, they came over. And I realised what nice people they were, and their whole attitude. And they had a son who Ralph helped get a place here in one of the schools. And I mention that actually I think also in my book. I remember every year for Christmas, they would send us a hamper. And- But I still hadn't gone to see them in Germany. But then- So every year they, we got a hamper from them. So far, when they died, the son continued and still, until today, we get our hamper for Christmas from the son. Because it was such a nice relationship between the parents. They were a wonderful couple, and I realised that not all the Germans were the same, that I had to look individually... what they were like.

*And your mother? Did she feel the same or...?*

My mother didn't, I mean only when she got compensation also, she had to go once or twice to show where they had lived in Germany. But otherwise, she didn't really want anything to do with them.

No.

No.

**[2:16:36]**

*But you said she didn't speak about it, but then tell us about that suitcase you found.*

Well, when I went- And that was an amazing thing actually. I came to visit her, in, because she had been ill. And I came to visit her in Herzliya, into this Dutch nursing home. And... just on that day, in the morning, she had passed away when I got there. So, I was terribly, terribly upset of course. Because the day before I would have still seen her. But it was too late arriving, so I couldn't. And I didn't realise, or they didn't realise, how ill she was. And so then I came back to the home, and to start sorting things out because they wanted to take over her room and so forth. And I could have just chucked everything away, because the clothes or anything didn't mean anything to me, I mean to keep. I didn't have any... And I started

emptying her cupboard, and found at the back of a cupboard, that small bag. ...I can't call it a suitcase. It was more like a soft bag. And I could have just chucked it! And I don't know what made me open it and look what was inside. And when I opened it and saw some of the things which I hadn't seen before, I couldn't believe it! And then I started really looking at the things and...

*And what was it? What was in it?*

Oh, all the fragments. All the letters. Any kind of documentation which she had over the war years whether it was from Holland, from Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen. Whatever she had been given or had to do, signed. I mean it's in my book! All these things were in there. The yellow star. And...

**[2:18:33]**

*She kept everything?*

Everything, she kept!

*She never mentioned that she kept it?*

Never talked about it. I had no idea! As I say, I could have just chucked the bag thinking when I opened it, "Oh, they're only papers: chuck it." But I didn't. I just saw one or two things and I thought, "Oh, I must have a look at that", and that's what happened!

*Extraordinary.*

Couldn't believe it. Because she never, never spoke to me about what she was keeping. And they didn't know it in the home either.

*What did you feel like when you suddenly saw all these...?*

Well, I think then when I started talking to certain people about it, and to Ralph and so forth that I thought, you know, one can't just get rid of it. It has got to be looked at and to be

mentioned. Because then I realised how important so many of the fragments were. And that it was ...something to really show, the things that had happened. That having ...absolute proof.

*And did it change something in you? For example, did you speak about your history with your three- with your daughters before then?*

Not before, no. I carried on what had happened to me before that my parents didn't talk about it. And I wanted not that they should feel guilty about what I had gone through. But only after that, when they saw what had happened and I brought the things home, and then I showed certain things to the children. And then we started talking about it and then we realised it had to be mentioned.

**[2:20:09]**

*It's almost that you had the sort of tangible...*

Yeah. Absolutely.

*...Something to touch and to see.*

To have a proof!

*Yes.*

I mean, you know, having little things which nobody would have known about, or believed. But to have it there!

*And that helped you in a way to...*

Yeah.

*...to speak.*

Yeah. Yeah. Because I didn't feel when it was, that people would think it was made up, which some people did. And it was really evidence of things that had happened and...

*I think it's really interesting, because I think it's quite... typical for you, as a child survivor you know you think your memories maybe ...are not correct, or not correct.*

That's right!

*While, if you see a photo or document... it sort of validates your experience.*

Yeah. Quite.

*So then what journey did it take from there?*

[laughing] It took a little while, because then I had to look at dates and things to see, from one thing what could I find out from someone else. And because then... certain things were not in my possession. They were still with other people. And to ask them to send it to me and... yeah.

*And then... who of your children was most interested, or how...?*

No, they all were interested, but I think Hephzi became, I don't know how it developed. It was also perhaps the kind of work she was doing. Because Michelle was involved in medicine so she was very busy that way. And Maxine with her job at the time too. So, it just happened they all were interested. But it was just one thing that led to another that ...that Hephzi started with me then to do this.

*But it first led to a book... to your autobiography.*

Yes – yes.

*So how did that happen. I think you were in conversation with ...somebody?*

**[2:22:10]**

Yeah, with Ann Rosen. Because she had come to me a few times to talk about. She was doing certain things about Holocaust for other people. And then she heard, because we were on the same group of students, I think a Jewish group where we used to meet. And she heard about and also through her in-laws, I think. And she heard about my past. And other people had told, probably about the things which I had found and so forth. And then she said she would like to write with me... together. And that's how it started. And that kept us busy for a while.

*And then you published the book in 2009...?*

Is it? [laughs]

*That's what it says. And then what happened after the book?*

Oh, and then I think so many, for instance the people in Nottingham, the Smith family and others, they heard about it or read about it. And they became very much- because one of them, what's her first name? Which was? She had heard about it and became very, very ...enthusiastic to do more things about it. To organise meetings. And that's what really started it. Other people in certain committees wanted to have lectures and so forth, and to hear more about it.

*And now you have a programme together with your daughter.*

Yeah. And now we, we have invitations for many more but we can't do all of the time. And also, because Ralph and I are sometimes not available. And, but Hephzi has set up a wonderful programme. And...

*And it's called...here's the name of the programme. "Surviving the Holocaust"*

Yeah. And so that's what we do. We get invited and wherever we've been, they ask us the next year to come back to the following year.

*So, do you feel that it's your duty to do this? Or what...?*

[2:24:22]

Yes, I think in a way because I realised that so many people don't really know what happened. And the whole- the circumstances, and what goes through people's lives and so forth. And to show what people can go through...and in any kind of religion. And, but that's why I thought it's very important. And also, perhaps the way some of the people encourage me to do it. That's the Smith family, or Wendy Ridgeworth. You know, all these people they talked so much about it, to show me that I should carry on. And...and that's then what started it.

*And do you find it rewarding? ...And do you find it rewarding to go to the schools?*

Well, I can see the reaction of the pupils, and the questions they ask afterwards and so forth. Then I realise... that so many of them don't really understand what happened. And... that it is important. It's history!

*It is.*

Yeah.

*And what was- is the most maybe surprising reaction you've ever had or the most surprising thing to your story?*

I – I can't actually think of that now. I mean occasionally there was, that was perhaps in the beginning that some of them would ask silly questions. More or less, you know, that can't be. That can't be true, or whatever, that they didn't believe it. But on the whole it's the other way; that they find it difficult to think that people can survive conditions like that, and talk about it. And that they realise that it's important to- for history to see what has gone on.

*So, in fact you have many letters from pupils.*

Oh, yes. Yes. To be frank, now I don't even, can't even look at everything anymore because there are so many of them and... But I, I do look. Sometimes not immediately, then I look at it a bit later.



*And you were rewarded for this recently?*

Yes, we got- Hephzi and I got The Freedom of the City of London. [laughs]

*Congratulations!*

So, I can take all your sheep across London Bridge now, and yours too. [both laugh]

*Was it important for you?*

I didn't know about it!

*Aha.*

But when I was told afterwards what it means, then I realised that it was something.

*Yeah.*

And no, I must say, we've had such fantastic responses. And...Also David Cameron, we were invited twice there and... No, all together very, very nice reactions.

**[2:27:24]**

*Yes, so your stories are part of British Holocaust Memory in some ways.*

That's right. That's right. I didn't realise it but I think perhaps more and more are no longer. So that's probably why.

*Mnn. And what do you think should happen for the future in terms of...?*

Well, it's part of history. People should know what people can do to others. You know, to really fight them to such an extent, and to do such horrendous ...deeds to people because they have got different ideas or different beliefs!

*Yeah.*

Which I think is terrible!

*And what is your main – normally I ask you – what is your main message for people who watch the interview? But I'll ask you now: What is the main message in your presentation for the pupils. What do you say to them?*

Well, they should be more aware of differences of opinions and differences of belief. And not criticise or just try to emphasise what they have to think. They are brought up in different ways, and they should be allowed to have different issues or different comments, and so forth. And to give them the freedom to do that.

*So, a message of tolerance.*

That's right.

*Yeah...yeah. That brings me to my next question about... being different. How would you define yourself in terms of your own identity today?*

No difference of identity. I'm very lucky that I survived all the horror – horror stories. And I'm very happy to be able to do it. And also, what I'm very happy about, is the way my parents carried on that they didn't go on about it. I think it's a very important issue. Because, as I mentioned before, so many people got so depressed. And not, to be more positive, and show different angles of the situation. But, at the same time, to make people aware of the horrendous things that have happened.

*Do you think your parents chose the right path?*

I think so.

*And how- do you feel- do you feel British today? Or do you feel European, Jewish? How would you describe yourself?*

I don't think about it! [laughs] I- I'm, I live in Britain, and have been very happy here. And...I don't really think about it at all. And I've been happy with my Jewish upbringing, and... And it's, that's part of- the main thing is I survived the Holocaust and survived a horrendous, horrendous situation. I mean, as I mentioned before, had it not been for being British protected, I wouldn't be sitting here today. Because I wouldn't have made it for the next few months.

*Yes.*

It was just literally the right time that I got out, because my parents afterwards said I would never would have made it. I was so weak and so ill and I would never have made the last few months! And that's ...my major grace and thanks to Britain what they did for me. And my parents.

**[2:30:54]**

*Yes, that they went to Palestine.*

That they went to Palestine, where we became British Protected.

*You could have been born a bit earlier.*

Absolutely! Then I wouldn't be sitting here. [Laughs]

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*Do you see yourself as a survivor?*

Well, I- Only when I read about certain people or certain issues. But otherwise, I must be very frank. I don't go in about it all the time. Though I find the topic is, and when you see whatever happens all over the world again, it's horrendous. But I don't want to concentrate

all the time on... on that issue. Because otherwise it would probably depress my children if they think that I'm going to worry and think about it all the time. And I don't want that.

*No. And you didn't.*

No.

*No. And what did you- what identity did you want to give to your children when you raised them?*

I wanted them to be decent human beings, whatever else they were thinking. And it didn't- I just wanted them to behave in, in a good manner, and to be good to other people. And that really was important. And also, because they met very, very kind, very nice people always through the business and so forth. Because we had so many contacts with so many foreigners and so forth. And but even then, even then there were certain people I liked less, because they were not as decent as I would have liked them to be. But some of them, luckily enough, didn't show it to me, so I could carry on.

*Yeah. So, to be decent human beings.*

**[2:32:50]**

Yeah. Yeah. And to care for other people and not just, you know, to take this narrow... path only thinking of yourself.

*Mn-hnn. And you said so at the beginning, you didn't talk about your experiences. What about your grandchildren? Is that something? Did they- are they interested in this topic and...?*

Well, they are too young, I think. Our eldest, Hephzi's son, he's now twenty-one so he... understands a bit more and has read more. But the others are too young. And so...

*Yeah. How do you think, how would your life have been, or developed, without- if Hitler hadn't come to power?*

That's a difficult question, because I don't know where I would have ended up. Whether I would have ended up in- to stay in Holland, or whatever with all the circumstances. I've got no idea, really. Whether I would have ended up in Switzerland, or whether I would have finally got there or anywhere else, I don't know! Because Palestine was at the time out for us, because my - my mother couldn't have taken that on.

*But they wouldn't have gone to Palestine in the first place maybe, without – without 1933, so to speak.*

That's right! They might have- but I don't know where they might have ended up. They might have wanted to go to Switzerland, but they couldn't. And I don't know!

*Yeah. No, it's one of these questions that we sometimes wonder.*

Yeah. And I don't know whether we would have got to Honduras, because that was another – I didn't mention it at the time – that was another miracle. When the German, when the SS woman in Westerbork had the Honduras document in front of her, and looked at everything. And it was all in... Spanish and so forth, but there was a passport photo of my father, one of my mother and one of my brother and me together. And she never asked what had happened to the other child. Because she knew we were only three of us in Westerbork. Because my parents had kept on saying, if you are asked what happened to your brother, you have got to say that we lost him on the way. Because they were worried that I might give things away. But she never asked! And that was a miracle.

**[2:35:35]**

*Yeah. ...What do you consider the most important heritage of your let's call it Dutch-German-Jewish-East European background?*

Well, I think- again, that's different from family to family actually. But I think the tenacity to carry on and to try to get on with life, and not to give in too quickly. I think just to see what you can do to... hopefully survive and in whatever way. I don't know, but at the time I wouldn't have thought about any of that in any case. But afterwards, you know, I think that's

really what ...I admire how my parents carried on after. How they- what they had gone through, giving a child away into hiding. Not knowing whether they will ever see him again. And suffering ourselves so terribly in Bergen-Belsen. Not knowing whether we'll get out on time, and, but they were determined to try and make things happen.

*And so, did you and your brother.*

Yeah. But we were encouraged. Well, my brother by the people who looked after him. And I, by my parents. Being with them made everything so much easier. Because otherwise I wouldn't have had the strength as a young child to think like that.

*And where would you consider your home, today? ...Here...*

Where you are sitting now. [laughs] Very much. No, I've been very happy here, I must say. I've raised my children here. We've had a wonderful home and...

[short break]

*Yes, I'd just asked you about where's home?*

Home is here. And I'm very lucky, I've got all my three children here, with their families, and we very much enjoy that. That we are in regular contact and no, we have got a wonderful relationship with them, and it's very happy.

*It's everyone. That's very lucky that everyone...*

Yes, absolutely. And the children get on together amongst themselves, which is another plus. So, that doesn't always happen. [laughs] Sometimes in a family you've got children not talking to each other or whatever. But we haven't got that problem.

**[2:38:25]**

*Yeah. And your brother?*

Unfortunately, I would have liked to see him more often, but we speak to each other regularly, and because he lives in Israel and so it's not always. But we talk every few days to each other and whenever we can, if we go there. That's of course is another story. But we are in regular contact.

*And is the past something which he has been dealing with, or that aspect...?*

Not really. No.

*No.*

No. Well he knows about the book and everything. But no, and he is also a positive thinker and has been very much involved always in foreign policies and so forth. So probably that has made him a different kind of... personality. And no, he's – and he's had very good relationships with people all over. But it's his personality. He's got a very nice way about him, and...

*And how do you feel about- You said at the beginning you didn't go to Germany. How do you feel about Germany today?*

I just look at people what they are. And because I have seen that there are some very, very nice German people, because as I've mentioned before, initially, I didn't want to set foot in Germany. I didn't want to know, or have to do anything with German people. But then I realised there were some very, very nice people. And also, I got restitution from Germany. So that became another difficult way then to say I've got nothing to do with it. And but I thought I deserved that, after all what they took from us. And... But that's another matter. But I look now- Look now, plenty of other people who are horrendous. And look what happens even amongst ...Islamists amongst themselves what's going on. It's just horrendous. I find it really, really unbelievable.

*Yeah.*

And all over the world, I mean there are so many horrible conditions and situations and... one should try to set an example of trying to... help people or to be good to others if you can.

[2:41:02]

*Yes, so that brings me almost to that question I asked about the message before to the children. So, have you got a message for anyone who might watch this interview in the future?*

Just to try to be positive, and to try to help people if you can. And you know, not, whether you've got a different religion or so, you shouldn't look at that. You should look at the person what their qualities are and what their way of dealing with other people is, and try to - to lead it that way. And not to go because you're being told you've got this religion or that religion. That's shouldn't come into it.

*Zahava is there any- we discussed many aspects of your life. Is there anything you would like to add? Something I haven't asked you?*

I can't think of it.

*Something... Something we haven't discussed?*

I can't think of it. We'll have to do that in our next interview! [laughs]

*We'll do that in the next interview. And I know you have been interviewed recently. After giving] two interviews you must be quite exhausted. I don't know what it's like for you, to tell your story.*

Well, I'm used to it now. [laughs]

*Yes?*

And certain times I remember different things than another.

*Yes. And do you feel- Do you get upset when you tell your story, or do you kind of keep it...?*



[2:42:30]

No, I- well, when you think the things that can happen to people, it's horrendous. But I've got to say Thank You. I'm sitting here and can tell the story. And also, I got through it with my parents and my brother. And that's important to me. That we had a relative, though a difficult life because my father being so ill all the time. And... But my mother made it until ninety-five.

*And it sounds like she shielded you from many...*

Very much. Very, very much. No, she was incredible. Which I wouldn't have appreciated so much as a child. I would have thought perhaps sometimes that she was strict or so. But afterwards when you become yourself older and have children, and you realise what she went through and how she managed.

*And do you think she would be happy to see your book...?*

Oh, I'm... I'm sure.

*With all the things she – that she collected!*

Unbelievable. She would have thought, that's why she did it, and I made use of it.

*She would be pleased.*

Yeah. Yeah... yeah.

*OK, Zahava, is there anything else you can think of?*

I thought this was just the beginning! Now we start!

*Now we can start; now we can start... [both laugh]*

I'm just frightening Frank. [laughs]

*I'd like to thank you very, very much for this interview, and the next time we are going to look at your photographs.*

OK...OK.

**[2:44:17]**

**[End of interview]**