

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	110

Interviewee Surname:	Davies
Forename:	Ruth
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	9 February 1925
Interviewee POB:	Lötzen, Germany

Date of Interview:	22 November 2005
Location of Interview:	Prestwich, Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	1 hour 40 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

NAME: RUTH DAVIES

INTERVIEW: 110

DATE: 22 NOVEMBER 2005

LOCATION: MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: I am interviewing Ruth Davies and today's date is Tuesday, the 22nd of November, 2005. The interview is taking place in Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

So if you can tell me first your name.

RD: Ruth Davies.

RL: And where were you born?

RD: In Germany, in Lötzen, East Prussia, in 1925, 9th of February, 1925.

RL: And do you have any other names besides Ruth?

RD: Pessel.

RL: And first of all, if you could tell me something about your parents, where they came from and their family background?

RD: I can only tell you very little. My father, olov hasholom, was a prisoner of war in Germany in the First World War. My mummy, olov hasholom, lived in Poland but she came over the border to work, and obviously, they met and married, and here I am. That's it.

RL: Where about in Poland was she from?

RD: Kovno, Kovno.

RL: And do you know anything about her family background?

RD: All I know is that once we went to the Polish border, my parents and us three girls, to meet the family. It was mid-winter, it was bitterly cold, and they were... we were on a bridge, there were Polish gendarmes at the one side, German gendarmes at the other. Our relations weren't allowed to come over the middle of the bridge and into Germany and we weren't allowed to go into Poland. They weren't allowed to accept anything from them, and we weren't allowed to give them anything. So after an hour we were frozen stiff, never said a word, but we met an uncle and a couple of aunties and two cousins and my grandfather, olov hasholom, a tall man with a big beard. And then they went and we went, and that was it that

was the only time... the winter before we came to England. And it was so cold that you couldn't enjoy the meeting, because it was bitterly, bitterly cold.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 54 seconds

RL: Do you know how many brothers and sisters your mother had?

RD: I can't remember. I think she had two brothers that I know of, and three sisters, but I don't know if that is right or if there were more.

RL: Do you know what her father did?

RD: No, no idea at all. No, nothing, I don't know anything about that.

RL: And on your father's side of the family, do you know anything about his parents?

RD: Nothing at all.

RL: Where was he from?

RD: Vilna. I know nothing, I don't know anything. You know, when you are a child, you are not interested in that kind of thing. You don't ask the questions, you don't know. I know that a person who is in the Russian army, the Yiddishkeit... finished. My mummy, olov hasholom, married somebody who wasn't frum, and unfortunately we weren't brought up frum. But in England, I had the opportunity to learn how to be frum, and to keep Yiddishkeit, and boruch Hashem all my children are shomer shabbos, shomer mitzvos you know.

RL: Now your father, you mentioned that he was a prisoner of war?

RD: In Germany.

RL: Did he ever tell you anything about that?

RD: No. We never talked about it. He was a tailor. And afterwards, when he was released, my mother would not want to go back to Prussia. My father did, but my mother would not go back, so they stayed in Germany. And he was a tailor, and he worked for a German firm, and there were about a half a dozen men, tailors, working for a big firm, making clothing, what they call in English 'made to measure'. That was his work. Until the Germans closed the shop, took the shop over and all the tailors were dismissed, and he had to work, make himself what in German they call 'selbständig', how do you call it in English, what's the word... self-employed. And he did, he worked from home. We had a kitchen and a bedroom, that's all, and a WC, no bathroom. But then that's in the story. Anything else?

Tape 1: 5 minutes 32 seconds

RL: So tell me about your memories of your childhood.

RD: Well, I tell you. The first memory I remember, we lived in a, what you would call here a bungalow, but your bungalow is nicer than what we had. We had two rooms, a bedroom and a kitchen. No hot, no water, no toilet facilities, and excuse me mentioning it, the toilet facilities were across the yard, buckets and they had to be dug a hole and emptied. The water... there

was a pump in the yard, and if you want water, you had to pump it in the bucket. As for baths, my mummy had a big Wanne, you know, these oval-shaped, what do you call them, a big bowl, but it wasn't round it was oval-shaped. And we children had a bath first, then my parents, olov hasholom, and then the washing was soaked in the water. Water was precious, and my mummy, olov hasholom, her washing was sparking white, very white; she was a very clean person. So that is how we lived. Now, we had to go to school. Along the path, in the front, we went to school. I didn't like crusts, so I threw them, I ate the inside and threw them overboard, and I got myself into trouble, because my mummy found them once and I got a smacking and I had to eat them after that. In school, I was an only Jewish girl amongst over forty non-Jewish girls. Needless to say, I was picked upon. The school went to swimming lessons. You had a park, and from the park there was a bathing feature that was man-made. But we lived near the sea, you see, it was like the Lake District, it is called in German Masuren See, big lakes, you know. So I went, as long as I was allowed I went, but I didn't learn swimming, because all the girls splashed me and so I was frightened. Now, there was a time, then, when Jewish people weren't allowed in the park, the girls weren't allowed to go to the bathing facility, and we had to pass, going to school and coming home, the boys' school. Every time we passed there, you got pelted, with anything the boys could get hold of you got pelted, 'Jews, Jews', and they threw things at us. It wasn't very pleasant, and it wasn't very easy for us. Then I have to skip, because I can't remember what happened in between...

Tape 1: 8 minutes 45 seconds

But then there came Kristallnacht, you remember Kristallnacht? We went that morning to school, as usual, and when we got there, the girls said 'oh, the Jews are going and they don't want to leave the synagogues with all the precious nice things in it, so they burnt it down'. The SS did it, they burnt the synagogue down, and they came into the Jewish homes, the rich people's houses, smashed things up. And they came to us, but they didn't do anything, they just looked around. My mummy, olov hasholom, hid her, she had a box where she kept extra money, I never looked, never even had the thought to look in, I knew where it was and it never bothered me, she gave it to a neighbour to keep for a few days, until the hunt was off. They took my father away; they took all the Jewish men away and put them into prison. Then they didn't tell my mother where my father was, and she was nearly out of her mind, worrying where he was. After three days they let them out. We were only a small town, and things went from bad to worse. He still did some private work, but it came to the pinch that the people were afraid to give my father work because they said they would be hung or imprisoned or whatever. So in the end, I remember the day, I can see it in front of me, my father, olov hasholom, tidied the table, put all the things away and he said, 'that's it', he has no more work. So he went to work, then they employed him, a road mender. Tailor's hands are very soft, so he came home with cracked hands, and soar hands. But we had something to live off. Also in that time, they were still giving poor people what they call in German 'Winterhilfe', it is winter help, and that was like coupons for food, and it was clothing, especially for the children... shoes, not new shoes, second-hand shoes, and clothing. But when the Nazis came more to power, the Jewish didn't get anymore, nothing. There was no work, and there was no extra food, no help, no clothing, nothing. So anyway, in that place, we went to school, as I said, and we played with three girls, we had to go round the park, round, pass some fields, and onto their long drive. There were two girls and one boy, not yidden, goyim, and we used to play with them every day, holiday time. One day we came round, the three of us, happy to be going to play with them, games, when the three of them stood there, and we came running up to them. As we came, as I am here, near you, they looked at us, no smiles, and we wondered what was wrong. 'We're not playing with you anymore; we're not playing with Jews'.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 6 seconds

We looked at them, we were dumbfounded and hurt and we just turned around and ran back home and we came home, told our mother, we all burst out crying, my mum put her arms around us and said: 'Well, you've got each other and you have to play by yourselves', and that's exactly what we did – we never ever went round to play with them. Incidentally, when we lived there, I came home from school one day, you won't credit this, I happened to look up at the sky, I saw a Saturn in the sky, high up, you know Saturn, a ball and a ring, and I stood transfixed, I couldn't tell anybody because there was no time. It went higher and higher and higher and in the end it evaporated, but I did see Saturn. So anyway, then, it came the time when my parents, olov hasholom, got notice to leave the flat, because the owner of the bungalow was a butcher and he was a verbrennte Nazi. So we had nowhere to go, so they moved all our stuff out in the yard, I think it was April or March or something, and a drizzly morning, and all our stuff was outside and we had no home to go to, so half the day we stood outside. Anyway, in the end he re-let it, he let us in again, all the stuff was put back in again, but we had to promise to look for another flat, to leave as soon as possible. So my parents... I don't know how, but they found a flat in a different area up at the top on the third floor. Also two rooms, a kitchen and a bedroom. But we had a loo there, but also no bathroom. But we still had the big Wanne, we managed like that. It is amazing how you can keep clean even without a bathroom. In the summertime we went barefoot, no shoes, in the summer... you don't see children go barefoot here... we were barefoot and every night it was 'come on, wash your feet', and we were tired already and there was a great big..., but mummy, olov hasholom, wouldn't let us in the bed unless you were clean, you know. So anyway... so there we were there, wait a minute, we still went to, that was also before Kristallnacht, we had to pass the boys' school, we went to school there.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 54 seconds

And anyway, when we finished, when they stopped us from going to school, I was already thirteen and a half, and I knew how to darn stockings beautifully, it was like a weave, you know, but she sent me to someone whose daughter-in-law was emigrated and she had a great big pile of stockings to darn... in those days you used to darn stocking, you don't do this anymore, so I was occupied with that. I don't remember whether she paid me or anything, I don't remember, but anyway, I was occupied with that. And then it came the time when things were very bad for the Yidden. You couldn't go to this shop, you couldn't go there, you couldn't go to the pictures, you weren't allowed, you were very, very restricted. My father, olov hasholom, couldn't get a haircut, but the barber he went to said: 'Don't come round the front, because you can't, but come round the back, I'll do you round the back'. Some of the people weren't anti-Semitic, you know, but most of them were. It happened that one person went to the pictures with us, a kid; the Gestapo found them and they beat him up. Pictures... we never went... we didn't know any pictures. Incidentally, once in school they were showing a film and I had to go in to watch the film as well. It was a film about what I can see, either it was an old home or it was a film from the camps, but they just showed the Yidden, the people who looked like Yidden. What the goyim think with the long nose and so on, and with the long coats, and I was there and I was crying my eyes out. In the end one of the teachers had rachmonos and said I could go out. But they showed anti-Semitic films, you know.

RL: How did the girls treat you at school? How were they with you?

RD: Well, they weren't exactly nice, you know. I didn't have friends, you know. Anyway... so that was the school. Then afterwards, when we finished the school, we were at home and we played, you know, busy at home, and then there was my mummy, olov hasholom' and I remember her saying to my father, olov hasholom, 'Was wird sein mit den Yidden?', 'What will be with the Jewish people, what will be...', and my father said 'I don't know'. Nobody knew. I don't know whether people knew that there were concentration camps, I think there was some inkling, whether my parents knew I don't know. But anyway, there was a time then they were very busy writing letters, writing to America, writing to Poland, writing here and there, and the point was all that to get us children out.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 7 seconds

RL: How old were your sisters?

RD: Well, I am the eldest, I was fourteen in February, my sister was about... her birthday was in July and she was under two years younger than me, and my youngest sister was four years younger than me. So my youngest sister was not ten yet, was ten, just ten, or just about to be ten. And then, eventually, we got a letter that we were going to go to England, to mishpocha, and we couldn't take it in. Then there was the packing up, you know, and my mother asked them 'can we send you the winter clothing?', they said 'no, no, we will see to it'. We came in the Kindertransport, we went by train to Königsberg...

RL: What did you take with you? What did you pack?

RD: Well, the usual... underwear, and summer clothing, you know dresses and one coat each, shoes, things that we needed. We had one big case and one small case between the three of us, so there wasn't too much there. So what did I say before?

RL: Do you remember the parting from your parents?

RD: So anyway, we went to Königsberg that took half a day, trains were a lot slower than they are now. From there we changed trains and we went to Berlin. In Berlin we stayed overnight... where we stayed I don't know, but they found us a place to sleep. And from Berlin we went to Hamburg, and there we boarded the S.S. Washington.

RL: So had you all departed from your parents?

RD: Yes, I tell you about the parting. They took us to the station, and we got on the train... this hurts me very much... and we said good-bye, and I looked in the train, the window, I waved as long as I could see her, and I knew then this is the last I see of them, and I never saw them again. We came to Hamburg and boarded the train, not the train, the S.S. Washington. There were a lot of children; there were little boys and a baby of six months. All refugees, lovely young women there, beautiful girls, you know, and they all came to England. When we arrived in Southampton, we were met by volunteers, you know, and they took us to London by train, and in London we... my mother's... a cousin met us and he called me over and asked 'are you Ruth Josselsohn and I said 'yes', and he recognised me, probably because he was sent photographs, you know. So they took us to mishpocha, we had our lunch there, and we then went by car from London to Liverpool, and that's where we met our relations, and after three days they told us that they don't want us, we can go. We had nowhere to go, no one to ask for help, nothing. So we had a rough time. Anyway, that's it. Now you can ask me questions.

Tape 1: 22 minutes 8 seconds

RL: Coming back to Germany and the community that you were living in... how big was the Jewish community there?

RD: Well, I can't remember how many people there were, and I can't quite remember whether we had a Rov, but we had a Cheder, one hour once a week and Cheder one hour once a fortnight, there came a Rov from another town, he came in.

RL: And was there a shul?

RD: Yes.

RL: Was that shul burnt down on Kristallnacht? That was actually burnt down?

RD: There was one Yiddisher man nebach he had only one leg and he had nowhere to stay, so he slept in one of the homes of the shul. And he managed to get out, but they burnt the shul down.

RL: But you don't know how big the community was?

RD: There were a few wealthy people, and there were poor people, but I can't remember, honestly, if I told you any number, I wouldn't, I don't remember. I know there was a widowed lady with a son, and there was the people who owned the big shop, and there was a man who had a family, who had a cloth shop, there was a very old lady there who died before I came to England. She went into hospital and never came out, whether they did anything to her, I don't know, but she saved herself a lot of nebach, admos nefesh, she died. And I think that's what I can remember.

RL: Were there any Jewish clubs or organisations, any Jewish activities?

RD: I wouldn't know that, honestly, I wouldn't know.

RL: Was your father involved in the community in any way?

RD: I don't think so, I don't know, I couldn't tell you. As far as I know, there were no clubs, nothing. It was a very small community.

RL: You mentioned that your parents were not so religious, your father had been in the army and so on, what kind of level of observance did they keep?

RD: Well, I prefer not to discuss it. We weren't brought up frum, that's all I can tell you.

RL: Did you ever travel to other parts of Germany, did you ever go away anywhere?

RD: No. We only went once to... we were invited to where the Rov lived, Rastenburg it was called, for Hanukah we were invited, and that's all we went for, we never went anywhere, that's all we went for, we never went for holidays or anywhere. There wasn't any money.

Tape 1: 25 minutes 13 seconds

RL: Did your mother work at all?

RD: She helped my father, olov hasholom, in the business, she used to, you know, everything was done by hand, when you put the lining in, it had to be sewn in by hand, she did all that, a beautiful sewer. She didn't work as such, but there was this family who had a cloth shop, the balabosta couldn't do the washing, she had a woman to do the washing, but when Hitler came to power, the goyta left and she couldn't do it herself, so she asked my mother, olov hasholom, whether you would do the washing for her, and she did. But she did it as a favour, I'm sure she paid her, but she did it as a favour. But work as going out to work... no, she didn't. But she worked for her family before she got married.

RL: What was she doing?

RD: First of all, she was the house girl, you know, like that. They had a vegetable shop, and she helped bring up the children.

RL: Do you know what kind of education your parents had?

RD: Of that I haven't the faintest idea.

RL: What language did you speak at home?

RD: My parents, olov hasholom, spoke Yiddish, we spoke German.

RL: Did you ever speak any Yiddish at home?

RD: No, we spoke German, but I can speak Yiddish now, because it sort of came back, you know.

RL: So you described the journey over. How many children would you say were on that particular Kindertransport?

RD: Oh there were a lot. There were little boys of four, five six, you know, little ones like that, there were little girls and young ladies, and there was even a baby of six months, a little girl. Somebody gave their baby to be saved. There were a lot. And on the S.S. Washington we had the first time orange juice, oh and that was delicious, never had it before. In Germany it was guns before butter, and all these things had to be imported, you just couldn't get that. I remember the orange juice, it was beautiful.

RL: Were there adults in charge of the...

RD: Yes, yes, yes. We had, yes, we had people in charge.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 2 seconds

RL: So you described coming first to London and then to Liverpool. What was your first impression?

RD: First Königsberg. Impression? I tell you my impression. My impression was blank, because I was too upset, too hurt that my mind was full of leaving my parents, olov hasholom,

I wasn't thinking about anything else. That's it; otherwise it's just a blank. We were going like sheep, herded into there, and herded into there, you know, you just follow a leader and do as you're told, and that's that, but your mind was still with your parents.

RL: So what did happen to you in Liverpool?

RD: That's a story I don't want to go on. All I can tell you is we weren't very happy.

RL: Were you kept together, the three of you?

RD: No. One family of mishpocha took my youngest sister, and I think one of us should have gone to another family, but they backed down for some reason or other, so the two of us were there. I was there for a few years, and then they got a new job, I was there for a month, and they had me working from six o' clock in the morning until ten o' clock at night, and I just couldn't take anymore, so I left and went from one hell to another hell, and I stayed for a time, and then eventually I left.

RL: What kind of work were you doing?

RD: Housework.

RL: And which sister were you with?

RD: The one next to me.

RL: What was her name?

RD: Shaina Raizel, Gerda in German.

RL: And was she working as well?

RD: No, she got to Manchester in the end, to the hostel, there was a hostel in... what's it called... off Cheetham Hill Road, near Halliwell Lane, what's that called... Waterloo Road. There's a little park there now, there was an old house there, and they made it into a hostel, and there were some girls there that didn't have a home. And you know, some were working, some were not, but they had somewhere to stay.

RL: And what did she do there?

RD: I don't know what she did there, but she went in the end, in the end they decided to dismantle, to close the hostel, and she went to a private family and she took up dress-making.

RL: Do you know who was in charge of that hostel?

RD: Yes, we had a matron called Mrs. Lorz, she's not alive anymore.

RL: Mrs.?

RD: Lorz, I don't know how you spell it.

Tape 1: 31 minutes 4 seconds

RL: And then you said she went to a family? In Manchester?

RD: Yes. She got married from there.

RL: And your youngest sister?

RD: She was in Liverpool, always with the same people; they were very kind to her. They had a daughter who was a little bit younger than her, but a bit taller than her, so she'd outgrow her clothing and that went to my sister, and very often she got new and they both got new, and was beautifully turned out, beautifully. They gave her lessons, office lessons, typing and that, my youngest sister. She met her husband there...

RL: So how long were you in Liverpool?

RD: A few years.

RL: And you were working very hard?

RD: Yes. But don't ask me more what I did; I am not very proud of it.

RL: And this was whilst the war was...

RD: Oh yes. I was on munitions as well.

RL: Were you allowed to stay in Liverpool?

RD: I was an enemy alien. And if I wanted to go out of Liverpool, I had to ask the chief constable for permission. I was only allowed in the radius of five miles from where I lived, I wasn't allowed out. In fact, at one time I had the opportunity to go to the Isle of Man with a family and asked for permission, and they wouldn't let me, they wouldn't give permission. And somebody offered me a passport of somebody else who looked, they thought looked like me, and I looked at it and looked at them and said, 'No, I rather not take it', and I didn't go. I never wanted to be in trouble with the police.

RL: How did you have to register as an enemy alien, what did that entail?

RD: You have to go to the police; every so often I had to report.

RL: And how was that?

RD: I don't know, they stamped something, I can't remember, but they stamped something. I never got into trouble with the police, because I refused, I wouldn't take the chance, it wasn't worth it to me.

RL: How did you get on with the language?

RD: Well, when we came to England we only spoke German, because you could only speak a few words of English, what we learnt before we came over. The one word that amused us was handkerchief. We couldn't believe that a little thing like a hankie got such a long word. So anyway, I know that, and then mishpocha said 'now you're in England, you speak English'.

We couldn't speak English, we weren't allowed to speak German, so we didn't speak. We didn't talk, that's it. I learnt English with the newspaper... slowly, slowly, you know, the newspaper, and then later on I read all the kids schoolbooks, you know, and gradually, gradually, I can read English, my English writing is very bad, but I can read, yes. I went to night school at one time, but they learnt poetry and that was not for me, I don't like poetry, no.

Tape 1: 34 minutes 36 seconds

RL: And your sisters? How did they pick up the language?

RD: Same as me, same.

RL: Did they go to school at all?

RD: My youngest... no, my sister next to me didn't go to school, but my youngest sister went to school. My sister next to me, she went to a college to learn dressmaking, and cutting as well. But my youngest sister, she went to a college to learn typing, or what I don't know, but she worked in an office for a time.

RL: So your second sister, how long was she in Liverpool before she went to the hostel?

RD: Well actually, I can't remember that. But I heard about the hostel, I got her into the hostel. And I was on munitions, and I wanted to go to Manchester as well, and I had a terrible job getting the release, because you had to get released, when you're on munitions, you're on munitions. So I told them, I want to do nursing, and there was a supervisor, and I got very cheeky, I answered back and I got myself thoroughly disliked, and I was just a nuisance, so then I got my release.

RL: What did you have to do on munitions?

RD: We did switch gear, the switches for ships.

RL: And how was it? How did you find it?

RD: Very boring. But I had to do some work, and so I did it. I got little money, and I was always hard up, in fact I was so hard up one time that I looked at a shop window, it was a fruit store, and I fancied an apple. I looked at that apple, and I thought 'can I afford it?', I looked at my purse, looked at the apple, and I said 'no, can't afford it'. I put my purse away and walked away. I couldn't afford not a pound, one little apple, that's how hard up I was. It's unbelievably, isn't it? I didn't know who to ask, and there was nobody to help me, so I had to do without. And from the little money that I did have, I managed to save up, in those days, twenty-five, twenty-two pound fifty for a coat. But you know, I had to skimp and save every penny; every penny was important.

RL: And was this what you earned on the munitions?

RD: Yes.

RL: Where were you living at that point? Were you still with the same family?

RD: No, I wasn't.

Tape 1: 37 minutes 43 seconds

RL: So you moved out of their house?

RD: Yes, and eventually I got to Manchester, and I came to the hostel, and I applied to the hospital to train for nursing. I had to write an essay, which I couldn't write an essay, because I can't write English, so they wouldn't have me as a nurse, but I could be a nurse's orderly. That meant living in a hospital, which I didn't want because kashrus, you know, so instead I went to, they got me a job working for a family with children, and I had to see, you know, they didn't want to let me go, because wartime, everybody had to do the work that they wanted you to do, you know, not what you want to do. They don't care whether you can do your Yiddishkeit or not, you know what I mean? So anyway, I had to go face a tribunal, I had people helping me getting off, I got off, and I worked for these people, and she was a schizophrenic, and I didn't realise, didn't know it. And I was the kaporra.., I was there for nearly five years, another hell. And then there I met husband, we got married, and now there you are.

RL: Just coming back to Liverpool, did you suffer any bombing raids?

RD: Yes, oh yes, we were there, we hid in a cupboard under the stairs, oh yes, the news it was bombed, oh yes, definitely.

RL: So were there places near you that were hit?

RD: Well, we were out, we were sort of in the outskirts of Liverpool, but you could hear the bombs, you could hear the planes, you know.

RL: And it was under the stairs?

RD: Under the stairs, yes. Then the all-clear sounded, you went to bed and in the morning you had to get back up again... the nightly business of the bombing. Horror was in Liverpool then, yes.

RL: But it wasn't your particular area that was badly affected?

RD: I can't vividly remember that it was badly affected, but there were some bombs in the area as well.

RL: Which part of Liverpool were you?

RD: Childwall. Do you know Liverpool?

RL: Yes.

RD: Childwall is a nice area, you know.

Tape 1: 40 minutes 21 seconds

RL: And how did you manage with the rationing?

RD: I wouldn't know. But every time the butter was finished, we got the blame.

RL: Were you in touch with your parents?

RD: Yes, we got two letters. Unfortunately, they've got lost with moving house. We had one letter from the Warsaw ghetto, twenty-five words, and that's all, Red Cross letter, and one letter from Theresienstadt, and that's it.

RL: Do you remember what kind of thing they were saying?

RD: What could they say? Everything was censored. They said they were well and papa is working, that's all. Twenty-five words, that doesn't give you much. Every time we got a letter, we cried bitterly, our mishpocha couldn't understand why we were crying. But my sister and I, we vowed to ourselves if, when the time comes, and we are lucky, we were to meet our parents again, we wouldn't tell them how unhappy we were here, and we'd never write them that we were unhappy here. They didn't give us... they didn't feed us properly either, didn't clothe us and didn't feed us. We had no cardigan, my hands and my sister's hands were chapped up to here, we had chill blains, and we didn't have any winter clothing, and I don't remember getting any shoes or stockings or anything, but we wore what we had.

RL: So this was no longer your relations, was it?

RD: This was the relations.

RL: Were you in touch at all with any other refugee children?

RD: No.

RL: Or with any refugees committees?

RD: I didn't know there was a committee. When they came, the committee came to see how we were faring; they made sure we weren't in. So we could never speak to anyone.

RL: And in Manchester? Did you find that Manchester was different to Liverpool?

RD: Oh yes, yes, yes. Well, I was with these people here, and he was very kind to me, but she was ill, and I didn't know for years, after I got married, that she was a schizophrenic. Put it this way, I remember, I don't know if you remember, do you remember a person called Yankel Levy? And his wife, they're both not alive anymore. She came to visit where I was working, and I was cleaning the candle sticks, just that day, and she said: 'oh, they're so nicely polished, you beautifully did them' my balabosta 'nice job, yes, yes'... she just reversed it, you know it was so hurtful: you get a bit of praise from somebody and the other one comes in and knocks you down. Incidentally, they're not alive anymore.

RL: Did you meet other people in Manchester whilst you were here? Did you get any friends, did you mix with anybody?

RD: Well, I went once to the Agudah Group, once. There were a few girls there, not one girl asked me about my name, where you're from... didn't say one word to me, so I wouldn't go again. You'd think a strange girl comes, you'd speak to her, ask her... no. I didn't have any friends. Later on I got a friend, but she was always busy with something else, so that wasn't very good.

Tape 1: 44 minutes 49 seconds

RL: Did the three of you keep in touch with each other as sisters?

RD: Oh yes, yes, yes. I used to sometimes go to Liverpool sometimes to see my sister, yes. And my other sister came to me.

RL: And was she happy?

RD: They were very kind to her, yes.

RL: And had she made friends in Liverpool?

RD: I am sure she had. But she had the daughter there, you know. Yes, I know she still lives, she lives in Liverpool. They were always very kind to my sister. If we would have been looked after like she was looked after, we would have been alright, but then we might have never left them, you know what I mean?

RL: And your sister in Manchester, did she get to know people, did she develop any friends?

RD: I suppose she did, but we never talked about it, we were so miserable, both of us. The people weren't too bad to her, where she lived, yiddisher people, you know. And she met her husband, and I got married first, and then she got married, she married a Manchester boy as well. And my youngest sister married a boy; he was from Birmingham, a doctor.

RL: How did you meet your husband?

RD: It was a shidduch, yes. I talked to him straightaway, but he, he was not too keen, so they persuaded him to come again, and we went out a bit, and then in the end, you know, it came, you know.

RL: Who organised the shidduch? Who was it that you turned to?

RD: My balabosta.

RL: Was that a religious family?

RD: Oh yes, but he didn't have a mother, his mother died. A father he had, and two brothers and a sister. They're all gone now, all dead now.

RL: Your balabosta, was that a religious woman? So you had gone into a religious family?

RD: Yes, I learnt Yiddishkeit there. And then I learnt, you know, in Yiddishkeit there is no end. You start, and then you go from this to there, and you steig, you go higher and higher, chas vasholom, you don't go lower, you go higher. When anything comes up, you know you

have to keep, you keep it, and that's that. And Yiddishkeit, to live a Jewish life is a different life to not a Jewish life, because it is so more rewarding and it is a rich life in, not in money, in a perspective of richness, to live a Jewish life. There is always something that gladdens you, and you know you feel, you get chances to do a Mitzvah, to help somebody, you feel happy, you know what I mean? It's a life of dedication, yes. I've never been sorry, I always say that people who don't keep Yiddishkeit, they don't know what they are missing. They really don't know. If they would realise what a life it is, they would run to keep it.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 35 seconds

RL: So how did you find it when you first came to live with this family? Was that the first time you really had been exposed to a religious...

RD: I was exposed in the hostel, I was there for a fortnight, and that also started it.

RL: In the hostel. Was that the hostel in Waterloo Road?

RD: Yes.

RL: And how did you take to that?

RD: I had no problem whatsoever, no problem to take to Yiddishkeit, no problem... I wanted it. It is a way of life that gives you spiritual satisfaction, it is a life that is different, it is satisfying, it is a life that makes you happy and fulfilled.

RL: Did you find it easy... how easy did you find it to pick up?

RD: I just picked it up gradually, bit by bit, bit by bit. From the first time when I came, and I went to switch the light off, no, no, no it's Shabbos, you mustn't, you mustn't, on Shabbos you don't switch on or off the light. That's it, that's the first one, so you sort of go from there and build up gradually. You learn your dinim, you learn everything. And you bear in mind, and you try not to do it.

RL: Which shul did you daven in at that point?

RD: At that point, there was a stiebel in Wellington Street East, which is no more, and I used to go there. The rebbetzen knew me.

RL: And who was that?

RD: It was called the Shotzer Rebbe's stiebel. That was where my husband, when he wanted to know what kind of girl I was, he went to ask the rebbetzen, she got a good report, and, you know, the shidduch came off. Incidentally, my balabosta, where I worked, she made the engagement, and they paid for my wedding as well. But I had nobody. I borrowed the wedding gown from another rebbetzen, who is a rebbetzen now... you heard of the Kanowski's, Rabbi Kanowski. Well, I borrowed her wedding gown, the rebbetzen Kanowski's wedding gown I wore, and I remember I had it dry-cleaned, so I took it to, in town, in Johnsons, now what was the street called, I can't remember the street, and it was a high-class cleaner, and it was the day before my wedding, and I haven't got no gown, it hadn't come yet. So I phoned the shop, and they gave me the number where they clean it, and I phoned direct, and they did it, and they put it on the train, and I got it the morning of the

Chasna, I got my dress, and I borrowed things, you know. But, you know, there was nobody to help me to see that the colours, or nice clothing... nobody there to give, not a penny, not a penny. I had to buy my shopping to go to, I remember cups and sauces, I'd go to Cheetham Road, and this and that, and when I came to the first meal, Friday night, after the sheva brochos, I went to pour out a soup... no ladle, I forgot the ladle, I forgot the ladle... in Yiddish it's the Kochlöffel, so I had to do it with a spoon, but I soon got a ladle after that, but I completely forgot. These things... so we started off with very little and, you know, kein ayin hora, you manage. Fortunately, I wasn't the sort of person who expects this and that and the other, like the girls nowadays. My mixer was a wooden spoon for years, for years I had just a wooden spoon, and I managed.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 2 seconds

RL: Coming back to the shul you went to... what made you go to that particular one?

RD: Well, that's where the balabos went, and I liked the rebbetzen, and it was near as well, twenty-five minutes walk, and I liked the shul, the stiebel.

RL: How many people davened there?

RD: Oh, it was a nice number... I don't know, I never count the people. In fact, the rebbetzen used to serve after the davening hot kugel, they made Kiddush and served hot kugel, it was beautiful.

RL: And the Shotzer Rebbe, did they live in Manchester?

RD: They lived there, they had the flat, and the front room was the stiebel, you see, two rooms, one for the men, one for the ladies, with a through door, and they lived in the other part... it was a stiebel.

RL: Where was he from?

RD: I think they were both Polish, I think so. Polish or, I don't know, something like that.

RL: And the people that davened there, were they foreign?

RD: Yes, most of them were foreign. Well, it was the kind of shul that was not English, you know what I mean? The English liked a different kind of davening. It's the same, and yet it's not the same, if you know what I mean. If you go to the kolel the davening it's different to when you go to the Central Shul, yet basically it's the same, if you understand my meaning.

RL: So the family that you were staying with, were they foreign as well?

RD: He, he was a Manchester person, but she came from Hungary. So things were so hard when we got married... we had Friday sheva brochos, at my balabosta, we had Shabbos dinner at her sister's, we had no shallah shudos, no melava malka, but that was in the summer as well, and Sunday night, my father-in-law, oleh vashalom, made sheva brochos at Fulda's hotel, that was my sheva brochos. I didn't ask anyone and nobody offered. And I remember meat was scarce, so nobody offered, and that was it.

RL: Can you tell me a little bit about your husband's family?

RD: Well, my husband's mother, olov hasholom, died when he was only fourteen years old, she had, she was ill. And my sister-in-law looked after her brothers, and her father and herself. Yes, they lived in High Town then.

RL: What did your husband... do you know what kind of education he had?

RD: He went to a Jewish school, he didn't go to high school or anything, just to a Jewish school, and in the evening he went to the Manchester Yeshiva.

Tape 1: 56 minutes 17 seconds

RL: And what did he do for a living?

RD: My husband? Well, at first he did a business, you know, selling, and then afterwards he became, he was a Shammos for a time, and the last job he had, he was a secretary in a shul.

RL: So when you married, what was he doing?

RD: What was he doing? He did a little bit of business, tell them, point out the fault first and then try to sell it. He was very, my husband was very ehrlich. If it wasn't perfect, he'd show it to them first.

RL: And where did you go to live when you married?

RD: First we lived in Hightown.

RL: Which street?

RD: Well, I don't want people to recognise it.

RL: And were you renting?

RD: Yes, renting part of a house. I had to walk through her kitchen when I wanted to go to the stove or to the yard, and she had to walk through my living room when she wanted to go upstairs. And it didn't last very long, because I wasn't well at one time, I was very sick, and I told her I had my stomach upset, but it wasn't my stomach upset, I had a baby. And upstairs the bedroom was so small that when I wanted to clean under the bed, I had to move the dressing table out to the landing. I moved the bed, cleaned them, and moved everything back. There was no room for a cot, so we couldn't have stayed there. Every time I went, you know where, once a month, she used to tell me where I'd been, so in the end, I got so fed up and hurt, and I told my husband about it, and we moved out, and we moved into a condemned house, with cockroaches in it. You know, I've not had an easy life. And we could only use the downstairs, the house was eighty years old then, and it was condemned, and we lived there for a time, and when I was going to have a second baby, I said to my husband, 'you know, we can't stay here'.

RL: This film is about to end, so we just stop here and continue on in a minute.

TAPE 2

RL: This is the interview with Ruth Davies, and it is tape 2. So you were just telling me about the house that you moved in to.

RD: Oh yes, well, we had that condemned house, and I had a little boy, and I found I was pregnant again with a second baby. We couldn't use the upstairs because it was in a very bad condition, so I said to my husband, 'you know, we can't stay here, because the older one can wake up the younger one, the younger one can wake up the older one, we got them in our bedroom, and none of us will get any sleep'. So my husband realised that I was right and we looked for a house, and we moved to a house, a proper house, you know. The house was too big, so we let off one room downstairs and one room upstairs to a friend who... I got on very well with her. A wonderful friend, she is also not alive anymore. And I remember when I had my third boy, where I worked before... the husband bought me a present of a washing machine. And I was in hospital and my husband came and told me, and I was so relieved, because I didn't have disposables, it was only for the first months I had disposables, we couldn't afford it, I had nappies, and up to then I washed nappies by hand. So we got a machine, and this friend who shared the house I said to her 'now, you know I got a machine, no more washing over the sink for you', 'what do you mean?', she says, 'your washing will go in there', 'oh no, it won't', 'oh yes, it will', 'oh no', and so 'listen', I said, 'we will compromise, you put the washing in, you'll put the powder in, and all I'll do is twiddle the knobs when I'm in the kitchen', it was a semi-automatic machine, 'so I'll twiddle the knobs and I'll call you when it's ready'. Well, she said 'ok, right', and that counted as yes, and so she came in when it was ready, took it out, and that was that, you see, so we compromised. But you see, I believe in one hand washing the other. I do for them, they do for me... she went to Ireland, butter was rationed still, she bought a kilo of butter, she said 'half for you, half for me', I said 'no, no, no, you have it', then we were no, yes, no, yes, and in the end she insisted, I got half a kilo of butter, we divided, you know, she was good to me and I was, we sort of helped one another. The kids loved her. As soon as they heard she'd come from work, 'can we go?', 'let her have her supper, leave her alone a bit', and I wouldn't let them go and have a little play with her. And actually, then she met her husband in my kitchen, my husband introduced them, and the next thing you knew they got married, they lived a very happy life. He lost his first wife and three little girls in Russia, so he married. She had no children, but they were very happy. She always said 'I bring my husband to the flat' because she was happy with us. She was a very nice person, I liked her very much.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 37 seconds

RL: Where was she from?

RD: Hungary... also very frum.

RL: Had she come before the war or after?

RD: No, after, before the war, I think, before the war. And so that was the house, so...

RL: So where was the house?

RD: In Great Cheetham Street, West.

RL: And when did you get married?

RD: The end of June or July, I can't remember. Nearly fifty-seven years now.

RL: So 1948?

RD: I can't remember.

RL: Must be 1948.

RD: Yes, something like that.

RL: And where did you marry?

RD: At the Holmes, you know Mrs. Fruhman catered our wedding there, in the grounds there.

RL: And who acted as your ...?

RD: I can't remember who gave us Chupa Kiddushim, I don't remember, I just can't remember. Might have been Rav Schneebalg, I just can't remember. It's all a blur, you know.

RL: And the condemned house, where about was that?

RD: That was on Waterloo Road, near the bottom end. It's all down, it's gone. There was a lovely shul near, the Ostreiche shul, a beautiful shul, inside was beautiful, but it was in a very bad condition.

RL: Which shul did you daven in once you were married?

RD: When we lived in Waterloo Road, actually I didn't go to shul much, because when I was pregnant I wasn't well, I was very sick, I was sick the whole nine months, the whole time, and when I had the children, I was at home, you see. I might have gone to the Ostreiche shul, it was a lovely shul, but I didn't go out much.

RL: Where did your husband daven?

RD: That's a good question, it might have been Kahal Chassidim, I can't remember. There were plenty, there were lots and lots of shuls there. Oh, you know, I did just say we didn't have Shallah Shudos, but we did have Shallah Shudos, Uncle Harry made Shallah Shudos in one of the shuls, yes, we did have Shallah Shudos, now I remember.

Tape 2: 6 minutes 12 seconds

RL: So how long were you in Great Cheetham Street West for?

RD: I tell you, it must have been for some time, because my Chaya Toby, my youngest was three months old when we moved. The reason we moved... not because the house was too small, but there were some goyim there who chased them with knives every time they went in the park, chased them with the knives every time they went in the park, and in the streets, and they got chased with the knives. So we were frightened for the children, so we decided that's it, we're moving. We moved to King's Road then. And my Chaya Tobele was three months old, we got rid of the tea chests and the packing cases and everything, and then three days after I said to my husband 'I don't feel well, I'm going to bed, I'm taking the baby upstairs with me'. I put the baby in the cot, I went to the bathroom, and I was violently sick, very, very

bad, and I went all dizzy, and I was terrible, and then the pain started, and I was groaning in pain, you could hear me a mile off, I was in so much pain. But we didn't have a phone, and we needed to get a doctor, so they went over to somebody to phone the doctor, and until the doctor came the neighbours came in, because I was ill, I was really in pain, and the doctor came and gave me pethidine, and when the pain eased off I was like this, shaking all over. The doctor said it's the reaction of the pain, I was shaking. And the next morning, the doctor came again with the specialist, the surgeon, and they examined me and they found I got a stone, a kidney stone. And Mr. Goldberg, olov hasholom, was the surgeon, looked in the little cot, 'how old is the baby', I told him three months, he said 'what's he fed on', I said 'me', he said 'off, off, off, off, off', I had no weaning her, so I had to take her off, she wouldn't take the bottle, so there I was in the night, with a tea spoon and the milk, feeding the baby by the tea spoon the milk, and every time she got a tea spoon in I was... I wasn't well, and the neighbours came and fed the baby, tried the bottle, it was a struggle. And I couldn't look after the baby, for three days it didn't have a wash, they sent the nurse out to look after me, district nurse, you know. And after three days they took the baby in the Sarah Laski home, to be looked after, because I couldn't cope. The children, I don't know whether they were home or friends looked after them, I can't remember. But I got over it, and then I had to have an x-ray, and they said, yes, I must have passed the stones, because there was nothing there, they must have broken up and I passed it, boruch hashem I hadn't had any more, but I was very, very ill. And I couldn't tell her that they got the baby feeding on a bottle. And this was in King's Road. But it wasn't easy.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 9 seconds

RL: What was your husband doing at that point?

RD: I think he was shammos in Vine Street shul.

RL: And where did you daven?

RD: I had little children...

RL: Or your husband?

RD: My husband went to Vine Street, yes. I wasn't going to tell you about it in Manchester, those things.

RL: So did you join any organisation, did you belong to anything?

RD: Well, we belonged to the Machzikei Hadass, yes. I didn't have much time to go out, so I didn't go out much. Because the children were little, I couldn't leave the children on their own, so inevitably I stayed at home.

RL: Which school did they go to?

RD: Jewish day school.

RL: And after that?

RD: Jewish Grammar...and the girls Jewish High.

RL: And after that?

RD: Gateshead Sem, the girls, and the boys Gateshead Yeshiva and Mir, the boys, and my second eldest son has been all over the world, in Lakewood, in New York, this Yeshiva and that Yeshiva and Mir, you know. He's a Rav.

RL: And which one is that?

RD: The second eldest son. He's got about eight or nine Semichas.

RL: Where does he live now?

RD: Eretz Yisroel.

RL: And is he still learning, or...?

RD: He is... at the moment he's giving a shiur for Balabatim, biyon, that means deep shiur and he learns part-time. He would like to be a Maggid Shiur, but he was Maggid Shiur in a Yeshiva, but there was no wages. So that's it. So now he's started, he's giving a shiur for balabatim and I don't know how many times a week, and he gets some money for that and he learns. His whole life was in learning.

RL: How usual was it for children to go to Yeshiva at that age?

RD: At that time they were already doing this, yes. In my time, when I first came, or when my husband was a youngster, it wasn't common to go in Yeshiva, you learnt in Yeshiva in the evening. But now they finish school, and the derech is now to go to Yeshiva, and they went.

Tape 2: 13 minutes 9 seconds

RL: So in your children's classes, did other children do the same?

RD: Yes, yes, yes.

RL: Were there shiurim ... did you ever attend shiurim in Manchester?

RD: I probably did, when my children got a little bit bigger, and I could go out when my husband was in... we didn't leave them on their own. So I used to go to an occasional shiur, oh yes.

RL: Where would you go to?

RD: I remember going to Rebbetzen Kaufman's Shiur. I still go to her shiur. I go to... I have every other week Rebbetzen Kraus now, and every week, well, when she is here, Rebbetzen Kaufman. But now I don't have babies, you know, so I can go out. Now that I can go out, I don't always feel like going out.

RL: So coming back to your children... your second son, he's in Israel. Where is the first one?

RD: He's here. He's a carpet fitter, and he works for a butcher, because people can't afford carpet-fitting because it's a lot of money.

RL: So if you could just go through where the others are as well, what they do?

RD: The older, the other two boys are in Manchester, they're accountants, both are accountants.

RL: Where did they study?

RD: Also here in Gateshead Yeshiva and Mir.

RL: And then to become accountants?

RD: Yes. After they finished the Yeshiva, then they started studying for a living.

RL: Where did they do that?

RD: Here. But the youngest son did part of his studies in Newcastle. He had a Koleh flat, and he studied, and the people were very good to him.

RL: And then, that's all the boys, and then the girls?

RD: They were teachers, Hebrew teachers in the Kindergarten, they taught Hebrew the little ones.

RL: And where are they living?

RD: Here in Manchester.

RL: Who did they marry?

RD: You know who I am.

RL: So did they marry in Manchester?

RD: Yes, both Manchester boys. No, the older daughter married a boy from London, and the younger one married a Manchester boy.

RL: And they live in Manchester?

RD: Yes. Actually, my daughter took one look at London, she said 'I don't like London, I want to live in Manchester', and he came to Manchester. He had a good job in London, gave it up, still in the same job as when he came to Manchester... all these years.

Tape 2: 16 minutes 2 seconds

RL: So do your daughters work?

RD: Work? Henny for a time she was a carer, recently. She trained to be a carer. And my youngest daughter worked in an office, but she's given that up because she's got a little one now and she can't manage.

RL: So really they're all in Manchester except for your second son?

RD: Actually, one died. One little girl died.

RL: Did your husband belong to any organisations?

RD: Well, we've sort of always been affiliated with the Machzikei Adass. I mean, we're still; we're burial board members, but not shul members, because we don't pay shul dues, but we're burial board members and belong to the Machzikei Adass.

RL: In terms of identity, how would you describe yourself?

RD: In what way do you mean?

RL: Well, you're living in England, you were born in Germany, you're Jewish, how would you describe yourself?

RD: British, British by marriage. But first of all, I am orthodox Jewish. Yes, but you see, I am born in Germany, what did I say, born in Germany and...

RL: I mean, how British do you feel?

RD: Well, I never want to tread German soil again, as long as I live. Even when I want to go to Eretz Yisroel, I won't even go in a plane that lands in Frankfurt, I won't go in that plane. I don't, as long as I am alive, I never want to tread German soil again. My children feel exactly the same. I went through Denmark this time, and next time I think I might go either through Holland or through Belgium or through Switzerland, but I won't go through Germany.

RL: How did you find out what had happened to your parents?

RD: I didn't find out, I never got any more letters. And then you know what happened.

RL: Did you see any compensation or any...

RD: I do get something, yes.

RL: When did you first visit Israel?

RD: Oh a few years, oh wait a minute... my eldest... my granddaughter there was a baby. The first visit there must have been twenty, twenty-two years ago. Yes, they lived in Telstone [?] then. Now they live in Jerusalem.

Tape 2: 19 minutes 17 seconds

RL: How did you feel going to Israel?

RD: Oh, I felt wonderful. I didn't want to... I felt great regret when I watched through the window and the Israeli shore receding, and we going out onto the Yam, I felt such regret in my heart, I didn't want to leave. People are lucky who can manage to live there, for us it's too late, at our age it's too much, too much of an upheaval.

RL: Did you ever consider going to Israel?

RD: No, because for years we couldn't afford it. There was no point in considering anything, because we are realistic, you can't afford to go and live in a different country, you can't do it and that's that, and you resign yourself to that. You have to be happy that you can go and visit, you see. As a matter of fact, when I was there I went out to a shiur with some ladies, American ladies, and one of the ladies paid me a compliment, 'you know', she said, 'you would fit beautifully into our group', they are like a group, you know, 'you would fit in beautifully', so I guess I'm very well with them, you know. I have a habit... I don't discuss people, I don't talk about people, I don't mention names, if anybody is wearing something that I wouldn't like... she's happy, I am happy, finished, that's it. Me and my husband... I make a point never to discuss people. That way you don't talk Loshon Hora

RL: Coming back to identity... I said to you how British do you feel... do you feel different to the British in any way?

RD: Well, you see, I feel British, I am British, but basically I'm Jewish, and my Jewish identity surpasses everything else. And I think that's how it should be. Being British is incidental, I just happened to marry someone who is born in Britain, in Great Britain, and I accept my new status that I am British by marriage, but my feeling is I'm orthodox Jewish, and that is first and foremost in my life.

RL: And how do you feel, you know, looking back over the years, how do you feel you were received by Manchester, or how do you feel that you have adapted?

RD: Oh, the people... I have loads of friends now, loads of them. In fact, I've been doing taharos for, oh, thirty years or so, and I've retired now, and the rebbetzen says to me 'you can invite a couple of your friends', they made a reception for me, you know, because I retired. And I looked at her, and I smiled, 'you know', I said, 'the Tahara ladies are my friends', and she smiled back. And I didn't invite anyone else, only my children came, my daughters and daughters-in-law, they came, and all the ladies, you know. I couldn't think of anyone else, my Tahara ladies are my friends. And it's true, they've been wonderful, they made a lovely reception for me. And I got a present, yes.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 4 seconds

RL: How did you get involved in that?

RD: In that? Well, I can't remember the person's name, he's not alive anymore, he asked my husband, they were very short of Tahara ladies in those days, and he asked my husband to ask me whether I would be willing to come and do that, to be a Tahara lady. So my husband asked me, and I thought about it, and I said, 'well, I'll try it, and if I'm going to dream about it, or worry about it, I won't carry on, but if it won't bother me, then I'll carry on'. It never bothered me, I don't dream about it. When it's done, it's done, you pick up your life and you carry on again. It never bothered me, so I've been doing it regular, I was on on every Tahara. They sent a letter to me what times are convenient for me, and I wrote back, or my husband

wrote for me, any time, any date. So I've been doing that, that's why they showed their appreciation, you see. Sometimes I've been out twice a day as well, but kein ayin hora I'm eighty now, and it comes a time that you feel it's enough. So now I volunteer for Friday morning. If there's anything on and they call me, I'll go, and if there's nothing, then I don't go.

RL: Which group were you doing...?

RD: Orthodox. Beth Din. But the Tahara that we do are done exactly the same as the MH. Same.

RL: Has the way the group has operated changed over the years?

RD: Well, new people are engaged to come, younger women, you know, or some people have retired, or they're not well enough to carry on, so it's sort of a change of faces, you know what I mean? But some people, they're retired and maybe have to look after their husbands, or nebach they are not well enough to come out, so that's it.

RL: Did it make a difference when Rabbi Ehrentrau came to...?

RD: He was a very dynamic person, and I knew in my heart he wasn't long for Manchester, because he is such a dynamic person, kein ayin hora and his wife, oh she's a sweetie pie, but I knew her before she got married, I knew her mother, olov hasholom, as well, lovely people, but she's also very dynamic, you know, they're a matching pair. But I knew he wasn't going to stay in Manchester, not for a year long, he was a short time and then gone to London, you see... a very, very dynamic person. He asked me to be in charge and I didn't want to be in charge. When I asked them when I could be in charge, he said 'no, we have enough ladies to be in charge', you know. So you needed otherwise, you see. I think someone did say they miss me because I knew everything, you know, I can do things in my sleep, I've been so long. There's a way of preparing the garments, you know, and everything, yes well...

Tape 2: 26 minutes 32 seconds

RL: Who taught you?

RD: Well I started off; there were only about four of us. And four of us, we did the taharal slightly different, but when I went on to the other ladies, they showed me how they do it, so I do it how they do it now. But when we, first when we started we had a very difficult time, we couldn't, we didn't have a tahara stiebel, we had to do it in the hospital, in the corridors, ah, it was very, very difficult.

RL: Who did it in those early days?

RD: One of them is emigrated, one lady, to Israel. And one lady, two are nifta and then there is me.

RL: And were they already doing it when you joined them?

RD: Yes, they had another lady before me and she had died, so they needed someone to replace her, you see.

RL: And now there is a place?

RD: Now we have, the Heathlands has a tahara stiebel, and we've got, Crumpsall has given us over the building where they used to do PMs, we do them there, you know.

RL: So it's two places?

RD: Yes.

RL: How many ladies are involved in it today?

RD: I don't know how many ladies, but quite a lot. But you see, each one has days... this one that day, that one that day, and they get called, and you don't tread on somebody else's toes, if you see what I mean. I've got two little stories to tell you when you're ready, when you finish asking me questions.

RL: Yes.

RD: When I told you when we got back, I was very hard up. And I needed a pair of shoes, so I went to town, to Saxons I think it was, for a pair of shoes. I found a pair of shoes, fitted nicely, but the trouble was I only had so much money, I didn't have enough. So I sat there, should I, should I not, should I, should I not, and in the end, one lady came over, a Jewish lady, I know her, very nice, she gave me some money towards the shoes. She must have realised that I couldn't afford it, and the rest I took out of my household money. When I got home I told my husband, and he said, 'you wear them gesunde heit, but next time don't take it out of the household money'. I never did it again. But I wore them for years, you know, and in the end I threw them out. That's one story.

Tape 2: 29 minutes 17 seconds

The other story goes back to when we lived in that bungalow-type house. Well, my parents, olov hasholom, had a little garden there, and they planted vegetables, but when we wanted to go in the garden, we had to pass the... our, our living room window. So we went and ducked under the window, where did we go... to the carrot patch, and we each pinched a carrot. And we got out, but you can't eat a carrot from the ground, because it's dirty. So what did we do? We went, the three of us, to the pump, and you'd put the handle down, and it makes a noise, and mummy, olov hasholom, looked out of the window, saw us rinsing the carrot and you saw... we still went pinching the carrots. Yes. So she said 'you got very naughty', you know, so we used to then have the chimney sweep, I don't know whether you ever saw a chimney sweep, black from head to toe. She must have told the chimney sweep that we were very naughty that day, so he should knock on the window and go like that. We were hiding from him, we were hiding in the bedroom under the bed, we heard him knocking on the window, so we put our heads up, and... we were that scared of him. You know, I remember these things very vividly, yes. So, any more questions?

RL: So coming back to this country, I mean how secure do you feel?

RD: Well, how do, how secure do Yidden in a strange country, that's how secure I feel, that gives you the answer. Even people in Eretz Yisroel, are they secure? Unfortunately they're not. But we hope, we hope, Hakodush Boruch Hu should protect all the yiddisher Kinder.

RL: You obviously got grandchildren, and have you got great-grandchildren?

RD: Yes, yes, kein ayin hora quite a few. They wouldn't all fit in here kein ayin hora.

RL: How many married grandchildren do you have?

RD: My eldest son has got no children married, my other one has got one married, another has got three married, my Henne has got, nebach, well, two are married and divorced, nebach but it would have been four married. And then my Henne has got one married, no Henne has four married, but two are divorced, one is going out with somebody, I'm hoping that something will be, but I don't like to dig too much.

Tape 2: 32 minutes 17 seconds

RL: And great-grandchildren?

RD: Yes, oh yes, kein ayin hora. I'm not telling you how many, but I got quite a few already, and I expect two more.

RL: Where are they living?

RD: One lives in Manchester and one lives in Israel.

RL: Have you... you mentioned the instant down in Great Cheetham Street with the knives... have you experienced anti-Semitism?

RD: No, but the kids... the children were threatened, they were threatened. The neighbours weren't bad, we had goyim on both sides, and I remember the young, the little boy, the goyim, used to play with one of my boys, and one day he asked his mother 'where are my Shabbat shoes?', his mother told me. Incidentally, when Mrs.... the lady who shared the house, lived with us, she had a little coal bunker, didn't have central heating, we had coal, you know, fire, coal fire. And my boys, real youngsters, one day, I was in the kitchen busy as usual, and I heard a lot of laughter going on in the back, 'what's going on now, who is having such a good laugh'? I go out and see, what I saw, I saw red, they laughed, I saw red: there were two little boys black from the coal, they had been playing with the coal, and they sat on top of the coal, and they were black from head to toe. The hair was black and the faces were black, the hands were black, the coal was black, they were black from head to toe. I looked at the two of them and dumped them into the bath, of course then they weren't allowed out anymore. That's the sort of thing that went on there. And another time, when we lived in Great Cheetham Street, I was having a rest, I may have been pregnant, I don't remember. I was having a rest, we had a couch in the morning room, I was having a rest, and half of me was resting, and half of me was watching the children, if you know what I mean... a sort of semi-... And then the goy had been cleaning there, the kitchen was nice and clean, and then I looked and I thought 'what are these footmarks?', on the floor, you know, and I was sort of sleeping and then waking up again, and I saw those footmarks again. In the end I got up, I went outside to see... there were my boys, they'd taken the lid off the dustbin, there were ashes in there, they piled the ashes on their heads and were playing a game. So of course, again, they got... that's the sort of thing. One of the boys used to like going into the coal bucket, it was a little proper coal bucket, I had it covered with a helmet, to keep the hands off the coal, so I used to say 'don't touch', and he used to say to me 'do do, don't touch'. And in the bedroom, there, they nearly had a little fireplace out, because a little bit of cement had

come off, there was a little hole, and they were poking it and poking it. Every morning when I came in, the drawers were open and all the clothes from the, from the cupboard were open. There were four drawers and all the clothes were all over the floor. You couldn't get in for clothes, and every day they got smacked, and every night they're busy with the clothes. They'd get the thing out, the fireplace, boring it with the fingers...

Tape 2: 36 minutes 7 seconds

RL: Did they belong to any youth groups or clubs, or did they go to anything?

RD: Well, you see, their school was like a club as well, because by the time they finished school, they did their homework, and there was a little time to play, then it was supper and bedtime, you know. There wasn't anything, any clubs for boys; I don't think there was anything there then.

RL: And on Shabbos?

RD: On Shabbos, what did they do on Shabbos? Well, they went to shul, you know, with children.

RL: Which shul did they go to?

RD: They went to the Roumanishe Shul.

RL: Afternoon groups or anything?

RD: I don't remember whether there was anything. There was for the girls, you know, a group, the girls used to go to.

RL: What did they go to?

RD: The Agudah group. I don't know whether the boys had anything, I can't remember. They probably had something.

RL: Ok. So is there anything else that you would want to mention that we might not have touched on?

RD: No, I don't think so, I can't remember anything else.

RL: Is there any message that you might want to end with?

RD: A message? Yes, the people who don't know about Yiddishkeit should look for it, find it, and keep it, and treasure it. Because there is nothing like a life of living a life of Yiddishkeit and Torah, there's nothing like it.

Tape 2: 38 minutes 0 second

RD: This photograph is of my father, may he rest in peace. It was taken, I think, before I came to England, during 1939 in Germany, in Lötzen, East Prussia. Yes, that's it.

RL: And his name?

RD: His name is Reuven Dovid.

RL: This photograph is of my mother, her name is Henne Rochel, and it was taken somewhere, about 1939, in Germany, in Lötzen, East Prussia.

RD: This photograph is of me when I was a little girl, approximately two years old, and my name is Ruth Pessel and it was taken in Germany, in Lötzen, about 19... when I was about two years old... 1927.

This photo is of me when I... before I... it was taken in Germany before I came to England, in 1939, so I was about... just turned fourteen years old. It was taken in Germany; it is a photograph of the passport I came to England with, it was taken in Germany, Lötzen, East Prussia.

This photograph is of me and my two sisters. On the left is my sister next to me, and me in the middle, and the other one is my youngest sister, on the right. It was taken about... what year? It was taken in Manchester, unfortunately I can't remember the time, but I think it must have been taken about fifty years ago or so, in Manchester in England, in the 1940s. I can't remember who took that photograph.