

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Alweiss
Forename:	Yvonne
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	26 February 1933
Interviewee POB:	Kassel, Germany

Date of Interview:	22 September 2020
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV257
NAME: Yvonne Alweiss
DATE: 22nd September 2020
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 22nd of September 2020. And we're conducting interview with Mrs. Yvonne Alweiss. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in London.

What is your name, please?

My name is Inge Yvonne Alweiss.

And when were you born, please?

On the 26th of February 1933.

And where?

In Kassel.

Yvonne, thank you so much for agreeing to do the interview for the Refugee Voices Archive.

You're welcome.

Maybe tell us a little bit at the beginning about your background - about your family background.

Well, my family actually comes from a village near Kassel, which is called Hoof. And my grandfather was the first to move into Kassel itself, because Jews were not allowed to live in the towns. So, he dissolved the Jewish school in Hoof. Hoof, we had a lot of Jewish inhabitants, roughly 50% of them were Jewish. And he attended a school which finished after their Bar Mitzvah. And then they either if their fathers could afford it, they went to live in Kassel, lived with a family, a religious family and went to the local school. And if they were bright enough, did the *Abitur*. If the father couldn't afford that, they were- they went into- into some apprenticeship. And my grandfather did that. He was an apprentice to a textile company. And later on he started his own business, tailor's atelier business. But he was not a tailor. He employed the tailors, and he did the business side.

In Kassel?

In Kassel, yes.

And this father, what was his father's job in Hof? What did he do?

[0:02:30]

Well, we don't know what his father did. But what we-

[sound interruption]

Yes, we were talking about your- about Hof.

We were talking about our grand- my grandfather.

Your grandfather.

My grandfather.

What was his name?

Jakob Goldschmidt.

Jakob Goldschmidt– yeah?

Yeah, and we were just talking about him. And you said, “Who was his father?”. And his father was David Goldschmidt. And he had three wives. I imagine two of them died in childbirth, but they all had children. So, the Goldschmidts were spread all over Hessen. I mean they later married to various villages, and different towns. And it was a huge family. What he did for a living, I have no idea. I once asked my father, “What did he do for a living?” And he said, “Nothing.” In other words, he didn't think much of what they did, but what they did, I don't- I've no idea. Yeah. And, and yes- and there was a Jewish school there. And there was a teacher there who- who taught all the classes. So, when one class was being taught, the others had to do some homework or whatever. They didn't learn very much. It was mainly reading, writing, and religion.

So, it was a rural community, or-?

Yeah, a village. Hoof is a village. There- there are two villages in Hoof- in- in Germany called Hoof. One is in Bavaria, which is not the one. And then there's the one near Kassel in Hessen. And then my grandfather started his own business. And he married. My grandmother came from Templin. Templin is in the Uckermark, which is near Berlin, also a very small town, walled town. It's very flat. There are lots of lakes and- pretty and boring, I would say. Nice for boating, nice for cycling and that sort of thing. And he had a grocer's shop, this grandfather. His name was Lefman Hirschfeld.

[0:05:00]

Letman?

Lefman.

Lefman Hirschfeld?

Yeah.

And this was the shop was in Hof?

No, in- in Templin.

In Templin.

Templin in the Uckermark. And he had two children. One was to become my grandmother, Johanna, who married David- who married Jakob Goldschmidt. And he also, they also had a son. And that son had an affair with their maid. And because they were religious Jews, it was what they- he had two choices. Either he- his- he let his father pay her out and she would go back to her village, and he would pay for the child growing up. Or he would be- they would sit Shiva for him. And he decided that he wanted to stay with her. And so, they sat Shiva for him. And that was it. I think the father opened the grocer's shop for him in the village where the girl came from. And he was basically never heard of again. And then the mother, the- Johanna, she married my grandfather and moved to Kassel. And they had six children. The oldest was a girl who died of diphtheria when she was a very small infant age, and- and five sons. And there was a difference in a- age of thirteen years between the oldest and the youngest, and the youngest was my father. Yeah.

And what was his name?

His name was Ludwig Goldschmidt. He was called after Lefman - L. Yeah, I don't really know much about the family in Templin. We did visit the village once and talk to somebody about the Jews of Templin. There were very few. And in the Nazi period, they were hard- there were none left. And they destroyed the cemetery, which they said was con- was-

So where did your father grow up?

[0:07:34]

He grew up in Kassel. He went to the *Volksschule* and then to the *Gymnasium* where he learned Latin and Greek, which didn't help him much in life. But that's what he did. And then he went to study in- his first year of studying was in Lausanne. And there were a lot of Russians in Lausanne at the time. They used to come there in the wintertime, because the weather was nicer than where they came from in Russia. And they came with, they- they rented a whole suite in hotels. And they brought with them their maids and their... and their governesses and everything. And I think my father had a good time with those. And then he went to the casino in, in Lausanne and he started to gamble. And he made a lot of money, he won all the time. And he had a lovely holiday with I think one of those girls. Went all around Italy. And then when he came back, he went back to the gambling table because he thought this would go on forever. And he lost and lost and lost. And in the end, he had to shame faced- to face his father and ask for money. And he never went to a casino again, and never allowed me to even think of going to one.

He learned his lesson.

Yes.

And how well off was the family? How- how-?

Well, I don't know how well off they were, but they must have been reasonably well off. Which family are you talking about?

Your father.

Oh, my father.

Yes.

Well, he was very lucky because he studied law. And when he finished, his brother who was thirteen years older, and who had already got a very well going practice, took him in as a partner. So he never had to sort of start from scratch.

[0:10:06]

So, his brother was already a lawyer?

Yes.

And the other three, what did they do? You said he had five- four siblings?

Four more. Yeah, the second one- no, I don't think there were- one of them was not so bright and he later on took on the atelier of his father. One of them- that was Julius. And then there was Henry, and Henry became the assistant to a very rich industrialist who was interested in antiques. And he needed a manager to run his hobby, namely, importing artefacts from that part- Iran- Iraq and- and Egypt and these places. And it was he who brought the *Nofretete* to Berlin. And Henry had learned for- to become a sort of forwarding agent. And he knew how to get these- arrange for these artefacts to be brought to Berlin. This was before the First World War. And the First World War started in 1914, and he had to- he was drafted into the army. And after that, he also started a business in the same atelier as his brother. The father had since died. And he made - I don't know - aprons, and pyjamas, and things like that, which I think were made by people in homework. And he had agents who went all around Germany selling these things. But then that all stopped in 1933-4 when he couldn't sell to the shops anymore, because they wouldn't buy from him and his agents. And he- he didn't- he was unable to emigrate because he had nowhere to go. And he died in Riga. And that was one, two, three - who else is there? The fourth one was- the- the- the next one was- he did *Mittlere Reife*, he did O-levels at school and then went to the Credit Lyonnais in Paris as a- as an apprentice. And then the First World War started and he had to come home. This was a- enemy territory. He was very anti-war. They all were very anti-war. But

most of the people were very enthusiastic in those days, but they were not. And he was killed in Verdun in 1918. And then there was my father, the youngest. And that was it.

[0:13:24]

Yes. So, your, that's your family, your mother- your father's family. What about your mother's-?

Well, let me just say the last brother was- was called Friedrich.

Yes?

And he was known as 'Mopse'. And he was my favourite, my father's favourite brother. They were two years apart. And they spend all their holidays in Hof. And in later life, my father always said the nicest holidays he'd ever had were those when he was young, with no responsibility in Hoof. They walked- they went from Kassel to Hoof by- on foot with a rucksack. Stayed there for six weeks, and then came back again. And a teacher in that school in Hof was very poor. And if you sent a letter to Kassel, it would cost five *Pfennigs*, say. I don't know how much it costs, say five *pfennigs*. And if you posted it in Kassel, it only cost two. And so, before he went back to- they walked back to Kassel for school, the teacher would call him over and say, give him a pile of letters, which they had to post in Kassel. And later on, his son went to Kassel, lived with a family as I mentioned, and- and did his *Abitur*, became a dentist, and he lived in Monte Carlo later. And he was very ashamed of his parents because they were so poor. And he'd made it. And I think that happened quite frequently. It was very sad.

So, people- that the children managed to get themselves into better positions?

Get themselves educated, yes.

[0:15:28]

So how far was Hoof from Kassel?

I don't really know. About twenty kilometres, something like that.

Yes, Yvonne. So, what about your mother's family?

My mother's family- my mother was born in Bonn. And her father moved to Bonn from Reichensachsen [district of Wehretal], which is also in Hessen. He was- they were extremely poor. I think they had horses, but I don't think they had 'horses'; they probably had one horse, perhaps two. They were a very large family. And they- and the father went to Fulda when he was probably fourteen or so as an apprentice, and then started a business in Bonn. I don't know why Bonn, but that's how it was.

And what business was that?

He had a shop doing exactly what the other grandfather did, except that he was younger. And whilst the older grandfather made everything to measure, because you couldn't buy anything off the peg or ready-made, he already sold ready-made and- and made-to-measure. But for everybody who wanted- some clothes had to have it made-to-measure whether it was a uniform, or whatever. And their main clients in both cases, I think, were tram drivers and conductors. And- and, and the- the average German would get his first suit when he was confirmed, and his second suit when he got married. And in between they were altered. They had to get lengthened. They had to get widened, and all this sort of thing. And that's what he did. But he had an op- the- the grandfather he wasn't called Salomon Stein-

Stein?

[0:17:48]

Stein. But he called himself Siegfried, as many did. And he was married to my grandmother, who was called Hedwig Stern. And that family came originally from- from Reichensachsen as well, but she was already born in Eschwege. And later they moved to Netra [district of Ringgau] which was posher, apparently. I don't know. They're tiny little villages.

In Hessen?

Yes.

Netra?

Netra. No, you wouldn't- [laughs] No. And what- later on, when, when the grand- when that grandfather- when her father died- no, when her mother died, her father moved to live with them in Bonn, until he died. And as far as the people in Templin were concerned, they- the grandmother, or the great- my great-grandmother, whose name was also Johanna, she moved to Kassel to live with her daughter until she died.

And did your mother have siblings?

No.

And how did she meet your father then?

Well, they- well, we're related - doubly related. My grandfather in Bonn had a sister who lived in Reichensachsen where he was born. And- and she married a cousin. And they had children, but they were older. And they lived in Kassel. And one of those children married my uncle, Julius Goldschmidt. And she was invited to visit them, and there, they met. And she was twenty-one when she got married, and moved to Kassel. And she was very proud of being- I think she was very proud or I imagine it, being called 'Frau Doktor' [laughs] - which she was not.

Because by then your father had-

[0:20:20]

My father was- my father qualified, I think in 1924 or 5. And then he married in 1928.

In Kassel?

No, in- they married in Bonn.

In Bonn.

Yes. But she moved to Kassel, yes. And my uncle, Uncle David, the oldest one, who had the practice already, he also had what was called a *Repeti- Repetitorium*, which is- I think one calls it a ‘crammer’ here. So, when the students had their holidays, they would come to him early in the morning for a session of law- in- law tuition. And they’d- they chewed over what they’d learned at college. And one of his students was Freisler - Roland.

Tell us who Freisler was, because not everyone will know.

Roland was- originally, I think he was almost a communist when he started off. And he was very bright - very bright. And he and my father studied together in Marburg. And they travelled home together, and they knew each other. They would never meet privately because he was Jewish, and the other was not, and they didn't mix. But they knew each other, and knew about their girlfriends and all of this sort of thing. And then Freis- one day, it must have been in 1924 or '25- there was a café in Kassel- there weren't many cafes in Kassel, but there was one particular one where the- all these students who studied law and who weren't home for the holidays would meet in the afternoons. And my father came in and he saw that Freisler was wearing a- a swastika in his lapel. And I said, I asked him, “What did you do when you saw that?” And he said, he was shocked. And he got up and sat somewhere else. And Freisler later became a *Polizeipräsident* [sic] of Germany, I suppose, in Berlin. And one sees him sometimes on old films, where they are trying- where there's a court case where they are trying the- those- was it Stauffenberg? And those who stood up against Hitler. And you hear him screaming and shouting in a most – it just goes down your spine, we get- you get the shivers.

[0:23:26]

So, he was a friend of your father's?

He was not a friend. He was a-

[inaudible]

Yes, he was a – law colleague. Yeah.

So, what did your father- did he specialise in anything as a lawyer?

Well, he- that's civil law, and he was also a Notary. He was actually a- yes, he was a lawyer at that time. And one of his other- one of my uncle's other students, who came to this – to him as a crammer, was Georg August Zinn, who later became *Ministerpräsident* of Hessen. And it was through him that we went back to Germany after the war. He offered him a job as a judge, and then he became a judge. Yeah.

And where did they live, your parents, in- in Kassel? Where?

Well, first, we lived in a- a flat. When I was born, I think they moved into a flat in Kassel Wilhelmshöhe. And then, in 1933, business went downhill, because he could- they couldn't see Christian clients anymore. And the Jewish clients, many of them emigrated. So, then it was decided- they had a huge practice, really big. It was in the shape of a horseshoe and- and half the rooms were no longer needed. So, my, my uncle and my father decided that we should move in there, so that half- half of that horseshoe was our- our home, and the other half was the practice. And that was in Spohrstraße *Zwei*, or two.

Say it again?

Hm?

What's the address again?

Spohrstraße *Zwei*.

Spohrstraße Zwei.

[0:25:30]

Spohr is a-

Spohr?

Spohr, like the composer. It was called after the composer, yes. And-

And tell us, Yvonne, what-? One second.

[sound break]

Yes, Yvonne, we wanted to- you wanted to correct it. About Freisler.

Yes, I wanted to say that he was Minister of Justice for the Reich - Freisler. And then, in 1945, when Berlin was bombed very heavily, everybody ran- there was an alarm, and everybody ran into the cellar. And Freisler also ran into the cellars it is told. And suddenly he remembered that he had something very important on his desk, which mustn't be seen by anybody - very secretive. And he rushed back upstairs and everybody said, "Come down, come down," as- "the bombs are falling." And he went upstairs, and the building got a direct hit. And that was the end of him. And his widow, later on, applied for a pension. And everybody was upset or, some people were upset. But anyway, she- in the end, she went to court and I think she got it. And the brother, who was not so bright, but also had a job in the Ministry in Berlin, he was- he realised what the situation was and he jumped off the top window of his ministry to his death.

[0:27:08]

So, Yvonne, tell us about your first memories of growing up in Kassel.

Well- I was very, a very secluded child. I didn't have many friends. I- I don't think I had. I was not introduced to any children. I lived with my parents. We had a maid, who took a- who took me for walks. And I remember, nothing very much. I broke my arm. I was a bit loud and got told off from the- the uncle 'cause I- because he had a client with him, and that sort of thing. We had- we had a very nice maid who came from the countryside. She was called Lina. I loved her very much. And she, in 1935 I think it was, some- some such time, Jews were no longer allowed to have maids. And she had a boyfriend who was a Party member. And so she had to leave, which she did. And then a- a family- a relative took her place as she had a- she was sixteen. She was called Edith Hammerschlag, and she was somehow related via this grand- great-grandfather who had so many wives. She was one of- one of those siblings. And she stayed with us. And- and I had a cousin who was called Eva, and she lived quite nearby and every Friday she came for a bath, because they didn't have a bath in their flat. And the problem was that she was seven years older than me, and she was a guest, and therefore she was allowed to stay in the bath longer and I had to get out first. And that was a tragedy every- every Friday. [half-laughs] I had a little- I had room to myself, a nursery which was pink: pink cupboard, pink table, pink chair, pink bed. And I- I just remember learning to go to school- to cross the road, and then going to school on my own. When I was six, I had to cross the Spohrstraße where there was quite a lot of traffic, and then go to school. And that must have been in 1939. School started in the spring and my birth- birthday was in February. So, I started in '39 in the spring, I can remember absolutely nothing of the school. I know I had a satchel and a- and a bag around my neck with elevenpins in it. And I can't remember anything - nothing. I do remember 1938 when the shop in the- around the corner from where we lived went up in flames. And- and my mother then took her- her sister-in-law to a hospital in Frankfurt, because they were not treating Jews in Kassel anymore in their hospitals. And my father went to the countryside where he had relatives. And he knew that- what was going to happen, and he thought he would be safer there and I would be safer there. And it- that night, they were picked up and taken to Buchenwald. I can't remember anything other-

[0:31:05]

Who was taken to Buchenwald?

My father. And all his brothers were taken to Buchenwald as well.

So, was that after Kristallnacht?

Yes - yes. That was Kristallnacht.

Yes.

Yeah. And when they came out- yeah, my father always said, the thing about- about Buchenwald was, however awful it was, you were with your family, or you were with people you knew, which made it easier, and you were all Jewish. But there were several Kassler lawyers who were half-Jewish, and who had been baptised and who pretended that they were more Christian than ever, and felt they should be treated better. And they were- treated- the, the Jewish Jews didn't want to have anything to do with them. And the political Jews did not have anything to do with them. And they were rather sort of left to their own devices. And for them, it was even harder in the camp.

And for how long did your father stay in Buchenwald?

I don't know. I think about four weeks, but I don't know. It was never discussed. Never discussed.

[0:32:33]

And where were you in- on Kristallnacht? Where were you?

I was with this Tante Matilde, who lived outside Kassel with her husband.

And what did you see?

Nothing. I can't remember anything except that burning house – shop, rather.

And did you understand what it was about, at the time?

I was very frightened. I was a very, very frightened child. But- and I also- also remember marching, the marching of the SS. I also remember one SS man coming to the house. And he rang the bell. And my mother said, "Say I'm not in." She didn't know who it was. And so, I went to the door and said to this man in uniform, "My mommy said I'm- she's not in." And my mother was very upset about that. And the once- someone came in and took a photograph of me. I don't know why. But that's- I don't have any recollections.

But you remember that you were scared.

Very, very frightened. Very frightened. And then, for some reason, I was sent to my grandparents in Bonn. And I went to the local school there. And I can remember absolutely nothing about it.

Where was this in Bonn? When?

Well, it must have been between spring and August '39. And, and I can just remember that my grandfather was very strict. And I had to learn to write in *Sütterlin*, which is a script I cannot read very, very well. And my- I had to do diagonal lines. As neat as soldiers, they should just stand one next to the other. And of course, they didn't and he told me off. And that's- and I had to go for walks with him on Saturdays. And I wasn't allowed to walk on the grass, and I wasn't allowed to walk or sit on the cannon. There was a park with cannons and- two cannons from some war or other. And the kids liked to climb on them, but I was not allowed to.

And how Jewish were they, your own home and your grandfather's or grandparents'?

[0:35:03]

My, my Goldschmidt grandparents had a kosher home, but they ate out. I- I don't think they ate meat out, but they- yeah. And I- and they kept all the festivals and all that. And the others, although they came from kosher homes, I don't think they kept kosher properly.

And your own home?

No, nothing. That, that feeling of being Jewish was a family affair, where they- they celebrated- in Kassel they celebrated the, their- all the festivals together, at the home of the grandparents. And when the grandparents died, there was a cousin who ran the house as - together with the mother, that was Tante Minna. Tante Minna was loved by everybody. And she cooked beautifully. And, and when that finished, and we were suddenly alone in England, just the three of us, it just fizzled out. They did it a bit for my sake, kept Pesach. And we went to synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And they kept- they kept Yom- Yom Kippur, but that that was more or less it.

For them it was the family in Kassel, to be together.

Yeah. It was a community thing, which then fizzled out. And my father, when he didn't have so much work as a solicitor in the 30s, he, he became head of the Jewish community's *Wohlfahrtsamt*. What is a *Wohlfahrtsamt* in English? I can't remember.

Social welfare.

Social welfare, yes. And, and the, the Kinder- with the Kindertransport, the Kinder that came from that region, he was responsible for finding- I don't know exactly what he did but he was- did that. And he, together with a rabbi and a nurse, they used to go from one- one of these villages in Hessen to the next, and talk to the people. Try to help them to emigrate. So, they had to find a relative who might have emigrated in 1880, or something to America, or South Africa, or whatever. Try and get in touch with them. They also had to fill in forms to get a visa for America, or wherever they wanted to go. And my father helped them to do the legal side and helped them to fill in these forms in his, the best English he could muster.

And what about his own emigration? Did- was that ever discussed?

[0:37:55]

His own emigration, well, well he felt that he had to be there to help these people. And he went with a rabbi as well. And the rabbi was called Robert Geis. He was in Kassel during the 30s. And he became a friend. And when it came to emigration, they decided they wanted to go to Chile. Because in Chile, you didn't have to have a visa. And you didn't have to have a- you didn't have to have a visa- sorry, you didn't have to have a sponsor, a guarantor. And he didn't want to be dependent on anybody. So, they got a visa. But they couldn't- by the time they wanted to go, which was very late, there were no ships any more, because war was imminent. Now Geis, the rabbi, his mother had a sister who had been married in the- probably 1900 to - or perhaps even earlier - to an English man. And, and she lived in England, and had a daughter. And that daughter was married to Mr. Benedictus, who owned a- who was a very wealthy man who owned a sports shop in- in Piccadilly, at the corner of Regent- Lower Regent Street. I think it's still there today. And those days, it was a very, very smart shop with a footman in a uniform standing outside the door.

Lillywhites, is-

Lillywhites.

Yeah.

That's right, Lillywhites, yes. And he sponsored us. And so, we went- we left in 19- I think 1939 on the 31st of August.

[0:40:03]

Just about-

We just made it, yes. And I remember that- I remember the journey.

Just Yvonne, one second, before we come to the journey.

So, were you in Bonn at that time or were you-?

No. That went on. My grandmother couldn't keep me any longer. She- they were in a terrible situation also; they had no clients. And then they couldn't emigrate. And they didn't know what- what was- what was to be. And they had financial problems. And so, I was sent to a *Kinderheim*, a children's home in- in Bad Dürkheim, in the *Schwarz-* Black Forest. And I remember being there. I was completely lost. I had much too pretty dresses, which my mother had bought at- for me. I was always very beautifully dressed. And all these kids who were there probably came from different homes. I don't know why I was there. All I remember was falling out of bed, because I'd never- I'd always slept in a cot. And I fell out of bed in the middle of the night, and was terribly frightened and woke up in the morning and found myself under the bed. And there was a doctor who used to come once a week, I think, to see that we were all healthy and well. I can remember nothing else.

Why did they send you there? What-?

No idea. Quite frankly, I never asked. I wasn't all that interested at the time. When I could have asked then- then it was too late. And then I- and then I came home, to Kassel, and we emigrated.

And were you close to your parents, or what was your relationship?

Yes, I- I was very close to them, I think. Yes.

Maybe they- they- did they try to organise- they felt they needed to organise-?

[0:42:00]

Well, my mother was very busy, she was buying- well, my father was earning a lot of money, or had earned a lot of money in those years. And he bought- and they bought a- a lot of clothes, for example, for me until the age of twelve. And my father bought stuff to wear in Chile, which he could never wear in London. And also, clothes for England, in case. And they bought furniture, and- and everything. Knitting needles, needles and thread, and everything. And all this stuff was then with his uncle who had learned to become an- *Onkel* Henry, he did the - what's it called? - you- he- he knew how to send, he was a forwarding agent. He'd learned how to send things. All these- all our furniture, which - some of

which you see here - was put into huge, huge boxes, and sent to Hamburg. And they came over to England just after the beginning of the war.

So, everything arrived?

Yes.

A crate- that-

Crates, they were called. What were they called? *Brandkiste*? *Brandkiste* is still in the- in the shed here. And they were enormous crates, yes. And we had a grand piano. Had a huge table- and all the furniture had been altered, so each item was only one metre in width. Because one knew that one couldn't put heavy, big furniture in the English homes. And my mother did all this. And all those chairs, and - everything. Books-

So, they were busy preparing their emigration?

They did all the emigration. Yes.

And do you know who found this guarantor, or-?

Yes, he-

The rabbi?

The rabbi. This guarantor was the guarantor- our guarantor- guarantor and the guarantor of the rabbi's parents. They also came to England.

Okay, so tell us about the journey. So, you came back briefly to parents, and then?

[0:44:34]

And then then we emigrated. I remember leaving the flat. It had a huge heap of clothes and belongings, knick-knacks lying in the middle of the floor. And I saw a hairband which I so much wanted, I took the hairband with me to London. I wore- used to wear it here. And then we travelled, or we said goodbye first of all in Kassel. It was- it was a dreadful, miserable day, with- it's all grey. Tante Minna was at the station, as was some other friend of hers. And it was- we said goodbye and we would never see them again. And we went to Mönchengladbach by train. And we had some- my father had a bit of money to spare. We were only allowed to take out the equivalent of ten pounds, I think it is. And there was a shop there, which did not have a sign saying '*Juden unerwünscht*' – *Juden*- Jews unwanted. And he went in there and bought a wristwatch, which he never wore, because he hated wristwatches. But he thought he might be able to sell it in England, which he didn't do either. Because he was not a businessman who could do these things. And whilst he was doing that, we- my mother and I went into a phone box. And I was to look out to see that nobody observed us. And- and while I was looking out, she phoned her mother and father in Bonn and said goodbye, and wept. And I'd never seen my mother cry before and I was very upset and also cried.

[0:46:21]

And then we came out and we took the train to Holland. And we were in a carriage with, I think there were eight people in the carriage, some of whom my parents knew. They were all refugees. Every single one. Some of them came from Hessen, and my father knew them. And I was told I had to be very quiet and I mustn't say a single word. And when the customs people came in and the ticket collectors, I was to sit still and keep my mouth shut. And I was terrified. And then they when we got to the border, they opened the door and asked for the- somebody had to open their suitcase. And they looked to see whether there was anything and there wasn't. And they were actually quite polite, I think. But we were sitting there absolutely stiff with int- with fear. And then the second one came in. One was I think the- the customs man and then the ticket collector. And then we went, as the train started again. And after about ten minutes it stopped and we were in Holland. And everybody had a sigh of- gave a sigh of relief. And I was allowed to go to the window and look out and it was dark outside. And I opened the dirty brown curtains. And I was- I would mention, I was terrified of dogs. And I opened the curtain and I looked out and I shouted into the carriage, "*Guck ma*", Mami - look Mami, there's a Dutch dog barking." And they

all sort of melted somehow; all the stress went and they all began to laugh. And then we moved on to the Hook. And in the Hook, we stood- my mother and I stood and waited with our baggage. We each had a case, I think, a suitcase. And my father went into a shack at the back, where he had to show the English customs people his papers. And my mother was stiff with fear that we might be rejected and sent back. But after a while, he came out and smiled and waved and she was relieved and we got onto the ship. And she sank into a deck chair; ahh, she was so happy. And then five minutes later, a con- a ticket collector came and asked for sixpence. And she didn't know what he was talking about. But when she realised, he was in uniform, and he had a little - I don't know - pouch to put the sixpence in and give her a ticket. And she realised that she had to pay sixpence. And she suddenly jumped up and said 'no, no, no'. And I always thought that must have been the moment where she realised that she was a refugee. And then we travelled to Harwich. I don't remember much of that. I think it was overnight. No, it couldn't have been. I'm not sure. Anyway, we got to Harwich and then we took a train to Liverpool Street Station. And this Tante Matilde who I'd been staying with on Kristallnacht in Kassel, she had come to England a few years- a few months, or - I don't know - earlier anyway. And she met us at Liverpool Street. And it was very- very noisy and very busy. And I was small and there were these people dashing and screaming and shouting. And I was very, very frightened. And we took a- I imagine we took a bus or the- or the tube or - I can't remember - to her place where she was living, in Finchley.

[0:50:25]

And we slept on her kitchen floor, the three of us. But we were so tired, I think we could have stood standing up- slept standing up. Now, in Kassel there was a lady who taught my parents English. They took English lessons when they were in Kassel. And they took Spanish lessons when they were in Kassel. And they didn't succeed with either very well, but they- they took these lessons. And this lady was called Frau Levy. She was a widow, and she and her mother had a boarding house in Broadhurst Gardens in northwest- London, northwest six [NW6] West- West Hampstead. And she offered us a room. But she didn't want children. And she had let all these rooms in this big house to pair- to couples. But she took us in, and we stayed with a view that we would try and find something else as soon as we possibly could, which we then did. But while we were in- in that room- ...What was I gonna say? I can't remember what I was going to say. We- I remember that my mother couldn't go out. We had- we- she had one suitcase and she had one pair of shoes. And those shoes were worn through. And she didn't have

a second pair. So, she had to stay at home until they were repaired. And my father spent time at Bloomsbury House trying to get some financial help. And- and they found a flat for us. And we moved out to Kilburn. But while we were in that house, the neighbours were very nice, and they invited me to come and play with their son. And they offered me a cup of cocoa. And I know that my mother had always told me that I was never to take anything from strangers. It was ab- perfectly forbidden to take anything from strangers. And I didn't take anything- I was so frightened I ran home. I don't think I touched the cocoa. I never wanted to go out. I didn't want to go to the boy, I didn't- I was just terrified. And when we moved out, I was sent to a convent school in Kilburn. And the nuns were very nice to me. Very nice. And I learned the alphabet. And I remember standing outside the door during catechism lessons. And that's all I remember. But they were very nice. And then I was sent away. And that house in Kilburn, in that house of Mrs. Levy's, that boarding house where we had first stayed, it was during the Blitz, and there was a sire- the sirens went, and the bombing started, and everybody was told to go into the shelter, a sort of little igloo at the bottom of the garden. And they all went except her son, Ernst. He wanted to stay- he was a teenager at the time and he wanted to stay in bed. He didn't care. And that house got a direct hit. And he was killed. Anyway, I went to- I was sent from- also through Broom-through Bloomsbury House, I was sent to Leighton Buzzard to the children's home run- which was owned by the Rothschild family. And I went to the local school. I couldn't understand much of what was going on. I could neither read nor write properly. My English wasn't- well, I learned to speak English there, but I couldn't follow the lessons.

[0:54:35]

And why- why were you sent? Why were- do you know? Did they explain it?

They- I was sent there for- to be out of the Blitz, for safety's sake. And in that sch- home, they were all children like myself, although I don't know whether they- no, they were not all like- some of us some of them were Kindertransport. And some of them were like myself. And then- I don't think I was there very long. In 1941 I think, or 19- end of 1940, Leighton Buzzard became a protected area. Foreigners had to be removed. And I think I, I met my father at the railway station somewhere in London and we were put- and I couldn't speak German properly anymore. And I couldn't understand him properly, and he couldn't understand me properly. And he said, that was the most terrible moment for the- that- that he'd

ever experienced. And then I was sent to Peterborough, with- with some of these other children. And there was a school there called Lady Margaret School. I thought it was- it was a school that had been evacuated from the East End. But my companion there, Renate, said she thought it was set up for refugee children. I don't know. Anyway, I hated it there. I felt very lonely. And they had a big dog there, which wasn't exactly nice for me, although everybody loved the dog. And I was very bad at school. I couldn't learn to read, I somehow just didn't manage it properly. I made friends there, but I was terribly, terribly homesick. And there were- there were a couple of blind children there. And there were a couple of children whose parents were blind. They lived in Lon- the parents were in London, and they were in this place. And they had a feather bed. And we all had blankets. And they were allowed to bring their feather bed to, to the boarding school. And it was a pleasure for all of us to be allowed to jump onto their feather beds once in a while. It made us feel home- at home. We had to write letters home every Saturday. And I always wrote that I wanted to go home. And I was told that I mustn't write that. And it was torn up, and I was dict- the teacher dictated what I had to write. So, I did. And then-

[0:57:32]

But it must have been quite difficult because at that point you had- you had to move. [sound break]

I was saying, it must have been difficult because at that point you had been moved to quite a few places.

Well-

Even in Germany, before you-

Yes, exactly. I was- I was a very confused. I was a very difficult child. Very confused child. I know I had lice there; we all had lice. 'Nits', as they say. And- and we had our hair washed every night with this very smelly tar soap, black soap. And then Renate, who- my parents only knew one family in England who had a child the same age as me, and that was Renate Eichelgrün. I don't know whether you-

Renata Eichel-?

Eichelgrün.

Eichelgrün.

Mnn.

Mn-hnn?

My father had been at school with her mother's brother, and that's how he – [coughs] excuse me-

And she came with you?

No, she was sent to that boarding school later.

OK.

She joined the boarding school. And then the boarding school had to move out of that big building, because it was going to be used as a hospital for injured soldiers, or Army personnel. And moved somewhere else, I don't exactly know where. And then I think- Renate said that- I thought I was just sent home, but Renate said the place closed down. Whichever it was, we were sent home. Renate was in the carriage with me and some other kids. And when we got to London, Mrs. Eichelgrün was at the station to meet Renate, but my mother was not there. Why wasn't she there? I have no idea. So Mrs. Eichelgrün took me home. And my mother was most surprised to see me, and she didn't know what was going on. Why was I here? Anyway, that was it, and there I was. And- and well they- by that time they'd moved to Highcroft Gardens in Golders Green here. And they'd had all their furniture installed, and they let rooms. But at first, they only had half the house and the other half was, was inhabited or lived in, moved in by another couple called – I can't remember now. And they had huge furniture. And they furnished two rooms upstairs with a huge- cupboards, and chests, and a huge Chinese- covered with a carpet was beautiful, was bigger than the room. And they had a son who was in the countryside and he said, "Get out of London, it's the Blitz, but you can't come with your furniture because- because the houses are too small for- for that."

[1:00:56]

So, they sold their furniture to my parents. My parents sold the grand piano for 1000 pounds to whoever, and paid them 1000 pounds for their furniture. And then they let the rooms. So, when I got there, there was no room for me 'cause they were all let. And so, I used to sleep in the living room. And when they went to bed, I was- no, I used to sleep in the- in their bedroom. And when they went to bed, I was put on- put down on the couch in the living room. And then I attended- I was eight years old then, and I attended Childs Way School in Golders Green. And I was a very bad student. And one of our- one of the kids- There were a lot of Jewish kids in the school. One of them was the daughter of the kosher butcher Frohwein. And Ruth Frohwein had to bring the meat ration to the Jewish teacher every week. I think the Jewish teacher thought she'd get a bit more if she did it that way. And when we had milk at school, we got every- every recreation time we got a half a pint of milk, and if there was a half a pint left over, who would get that half a pint, but Ruth Frohwein?

[1:02:21]

And- anyway, then the time came for us- I became eleven at some- Oh yeah, then I was ill. I was ill. And I- they thought I had appendicitis. And my mother couldn't understand the English doctor. And he kept calling her 'Mother', "Mother get me a glass of water" or, "Mother get me a spoon." And she- she found it very difficult. But there was a Kassel doctor, children's paediatrician, who lived in London, and he came to see me. And he wasn't sure either, and the other doctor wasn't sure either whether it was appendicitis or not. So, they sent me to the hospital. They sent me to the Middlesex Hospital. And it was pitch dark. It was the Blitz, or the end of the Blitz. And my mother was allowed to come with me in the- in the ambulance. And first they took me to the wrong hospital. And then they realised that it was the wrong hospital, so they had to take me to the Smil- Middlesex Hospital in Goodge Street. And they made- my mother had to get out of the ambulance and go home. She wasn't allowed in. And I was taken up into a ward. It was sort of dimly lit, it was dark. It was in the night. And I was told that when I wake up in the morning, I'll see lots of little children like me, like myself. And when I woke up, I was in the maternity ward. And they asked me whether I wanted a kipper for breakfast. I didn't know what a kipper was, and I said yes. And I had it, and had a mouth full of- full of bones. And then they weren't- and by

that time my temperature had gone down a bit, so they didn't think it was right to take the appendix out. They weren't sure. So, they sent me to Aylesbury with an ambulance. And I was there for four weeks.

By yourself?

Yes. Well, I was in a ward; they were all adults. And later on, a girl who'd been at my school, in Childs Way also came. And she had her appendix out. I didn't have mine out, but I had to lie in bed for four weeks. And it was a big ward with a stove in the middle. And it was- it was a prefab building.

And could your parents come and visit?

[1:05:12]

No, they didn't have the money. My mother wrote me little letters every day. And then, well- Oh, yes. And one day, a woman came in. She'd been- she was- had terrible burns. She'd been standing with her dressing gown in front of an open fire, at home. And the dressing gown had caught fire and she came in with burns, screaming and screaming and screaming. It was terrible. And she had a curtain round her. And she died. And that was a very- it made a great impression and it was terrible.

Which year- when was this Yvonne, roughly?

Well, I must have been eight or nine.

What about internment? Was your father affected, or-?

Hm?

Internment. What about-?

My- my father was interned. Yes. He was interned in- in- on the racecourse in Lingfield. And later on, that racecourse was moved, or the people at- on the racecourse were moved to Sutton Coldfield. And

then he was- from there he was released. And my mother sent him parcels of food to eat. And he- and he had to write to her in English because the letters were censored.

Yeah.

And I've got a few of those. [laughing]

Oh, from the-

Yes.

And what did he say?

That he wanted- he wanted- he was all- I can't remember now. That he wanted things – food.

Was he-? How did he feel about internment? Did he talk about that later, or-?

[1:07:10]

He didn't talk about it much. No. It was- it was lucky. They lived in tents. And they- and it was a wonderful summer. It was a very hot, sunny summer. So that it wasn't as uncomfortable as it would have been on a- in a rainy summer. But he- he didn't talk about it much. No – no. But it was- my home was not the sort of place where people talked. Children were seen and not heard. And I was always not present when visitors came. I was sent to the kitchen. So, I- all these things were private, and not for the ears of children.

And also, you were physically not there because you were-

Well in that time, yes. But then I came back, and then I was at home.

Yes. So, after that hospital you came back home?

I came back home. And then I went on to Childs- Childs Way School and then it came to a scholarship. Well, I was not up to it. And they took me- my parents took me to a German- a teacher, a German Jewish immigrant who was a teacher in England. And he tested me, and he told my parents there was no chance of my passing the scholarship. So, I never- never sat the scholarship. And I was sent to another school which was called Ravensfield College. Which is where now the Hasmonean school is in Hendon. It was a lovely school. The- the teachers were awful, in the sense that they weren't proper teachers. They were- they were- I think they- they might have been teachers, but they were retired and some of them weren't even teachers. We just kept us quiet, basically; we learnt very little and played a lot - and had a lot of fun. And there were a lot of Jewish children there. And some of them were also refugee children. And I was very, very happy there. But then the school closed down, and the headmaster had a bad mark. He'd had some affair with some of the students or with a student. I don't know. The school was closed down, and I- and by that time, the Doodlebugs came, the V1. The V1-s. These unmanned aeroplanes - they became dangerous. So, my parents sent me to- to Stroatley Rough School in Haslemere, where I was a boarder. And I stayed there over the summer holidays, until the autumn when, when I came back to London, which was right at the end of the war, but still war. And I went to the Manor House School in East End Road in Finchley, which was a convent. And-

[1:10:25]

Why did you not stay in Stroatley Rough, or-? Was it meant just to be a temporary-?

Yes, I think so.

And were there many other refugee children?

Masses – masses.

And teachers?

Yes, yes.

There were refugee teachers there?

Yes, Dr.- Dr.- Dr. Lion was the head.

Leren?

Lion.

Lion.

Yes, and there was Miss Astfalck and Miss Nacken, they all came from the Odenwaldschule in- in- where in- where is that in – near Bensheim in Germany? They were – socialists.

And were the- was the teaching different? Was it progressive, as they say?

Well, completely progressive. Yeah, I think some of the- two- two lots of teachers were lesbians. But I didn't know that then. And-

What, for example, how was it- how different was it to what you were used to?

Well, it was completely- completely different. We had to get up early in the morning, and Miss Astfalck has a tambourine with little bells on it. And she banged, we had to put on a siren suit was- as it was called. And we would- she would make- hi- hit the tambourine and we had to run down to a playground, we had to do exercises. And sometimes we played what was called - *Völkerball*. I don't know what that is in English. I didn't like any of this. And then we had to go back, wash, dress and have breakfast which consisted of porridge which I hated, but had to eat. I had to eat it in all the boarding schools, so every morning was miserable. I never touch it- never touched it since. But I give it to my grandchildren to eat. And they like- they used to like it. They don't any more, either.

[1:12:29]

Yes. And then, I can't remember any of the lessons. I know, they- they had- they had singing lessons. And I was tested and was told to be- that I was tone deaf, and didn't have to participate. And they then told me to, and I didn't know anything. I knew nothing, actually: no history, no geography. I knew- I knew basically nothing. And they had proper lessons, and I couldn't follow them. So, they- I remember they told me to go and get a- a history book and read a history book. So, I went to the library. I didn't know what a history book was. I knew nothing. So, I took a book, which was called '*William the Conqueror*'. And '*William the Conqueror*' was by- was one of those '*Just William*' books. You know? These funny books. And I was told off and I- and then the teacher said, "Well, read it if you want to." It was a- a children's book; it had nothing to do with history at all. No, I was really lonely there. I hated it.

It was lonely?

Very lonely. Very miserable. I had one friend, she was very nice. But she- she was- she was local. And she- there were several local children whose parents were working and who'd sent their children there. And she was there during the week and at weekends, she went home. Anyway, then I came back and went to the nuns in-

But that was very different from that – Stroatley Rough.

It was completely- everything was completely different.

So, Stroatley Rough-

And I was always- I was always the odd person out. I never fitted in anywhere - nowhere. And then- well, in the- in that Manor House School I- there were three Jewish children. One was very English, so English that she didn't seem Jewish at all. And then there was another one. She was called Sonja. And one fine day, Sonja came to- we had scripture lessons, lots of scripture lessons, also prayers, everything. And the scripture lesson- and Sonja stood up and told the nun who was taking the scripture lesson that her father said that all this was wrong and it was rubbish. And that Jesus Christ didn't exist and- da, da-da, da, da, da-da- And we were mort- mort- mortified. We just sat there, couldn't believe it. And she

went on and on. And that nun sat there and just glared at her, glared at her with this look of hatred. It was unbelievable. And then, when- when Sonja had finished, the lesson continued, and that was it. And a few days later, we had- we had dinner, we had dinner- dinner at school. And after dinner, we had to go out into the garden, and walk up and down until two o'clock and chat and talk and play or whatever we did. But when it rained, we had the- we had to be in the gymnasium, the gym.

[1:15:58]

And we walked up and down there. And as I was standing there, all of a sudden, I saw a commotion, and there, all - not all, but some of - my classmates had fallen on to Sonja's - Sonja. They pulled her hair, they pulled her leg, they kicked her, and she was screaming the place down in pain. And the nun who was supposed to keep a watch on us, didn't know what to do. She ran to the left, she ran to the right. She didn't know what to do. In the end, she went out. And then she came back with a bell and rang the bell, which meant recreation period was over, and we had to go back to our classrooms. And that was the- that was- to me, it was a pogrom. A little pogrom. It was terrible. And I came home and I told my parents, and my father just shook his head and said nothing. My mother tried to appease me and to calm me down. What could she do? Nothing. And two days- and the next day, Sonja came back to school. And she asked me if I would be her friend. And the next day, she didn't appear any more. She left. Yes. And then the funny thing was, we had a very- we also had some lay teachers, and we had a very nice literature teacher. She used to read parts of the texts to us and explain the meanings. And she read '*The Tale of Two Cities*'. And I always sat in the front bench, or the front desk, actually, because of my eyesight. And, and she was- she had something sort of noble about her and gave herself airs. And she always wore a- a red suit. It was a dress really, a- a wine red top, button down, and a skirt. And as he was reading this, and we were all listening, all of a sudden, her skirt fell down. And this was most hilarious, of course, but nobody dared to- and she was very good about it. And she had a petticoat on. She lifted it up and somehow fixed it and continued reading. And I admired her for that, but I thought it was hilarious.

[1:18:27]

Yvonne, how did your parents manage? I mean, did your parents find any work, any jobs? How did they manage?

Well, my father- well, when he came back from- I don't know what they did at the beginning. But- I never asked actually how- how we got to Highcroft Gardens I don't know, 'cause I wasn't there. But my father had to do war work. And he didn't like doing that. Somehow, he felt this, that not all Germans were bad, and he was very anti-war. And he didn't like the idea of- there was a little factory actually. It was a marketplace. I don't know where exactly it was, I think it's where there's now a- a garage. And they made parts for aeroplanes. And he had a- a job of turning a little wheel and he was the only one who had- who had this job where he could sit down. All the others had to stand with whatever they were doing. And after that, I don't know how long he did that. I know that in my holidays I went on my bicycle to the marketplace and picked him up after work and we went home together. And then he got a job at Bowman Brothers. It was a work- it was a- a furniture store, big furniture store in those days. Very big with va- various floors. And he became an accountant there. Most of the young men had gone to- had been drafted into the army, and there were two women with him. And they- the three of them did the accounts. And these two women, according to my father, did nothing but chat and, and drink tea. I'm sure they did a bit more, but that's- that was his account of what they did. And he was bored with them. And he did the accounts. And so Mr. Bowman realised that and he sacked one of the women. And then he sacked the other one too, because they weren't really needed. And so, my father did the accounts for the whole business. And then- and- and downstairs was the carpet department. And there was a refugee, a man with a wife and children. And it's a hard job selling carpets, you had to carry these heavy things and roll them out and that. And then in 1945 / 46 - I don't know exactly which year it was - some of the people who had worked at Bowman's came back from the army. And Mr. Bowman had promised to give them back their jobs, which is fair enough. And so, he called this man from the carpet department up, told him that this manager had come back from the- who'd- who'd had the previous- who had previously held his job, had come back, and he was very sorry, but he had to go. And he sacked him from one minute to the next.

[1:21:45]

And my father was livid. He was so angry, he was so furious. How could one sack a person from one day to the next who had a family to feed? And he went to Mr. Bowman, and he said he wanted a rise. "Oh," said Mr. Bowman, "things are bad. You know, we really can't afford it. I don't think I can do that. But I'll- I'll think about it." And my father said, "Yes, you think about it and I'll come and see you again tomorrow." And he came again tomorrow. And Mr. Bowman said, "I'm really sorry, but I can't afford to give you a rise." So Mr.- my father said, "Well, I'm very sorry, but I'm leaving." And he took his hat, and went. And my mother was livid - was furious. He came home without a job. But happier that he'd done it. And he was without a job for six months. Did a bit here and did a bit there helping other accountants, but he didn't really have a proper job. And a few days later, we used to read- he used to read *The Daily Telegraph*. And a few days later, there was an announcement in marriages and deaths section, to say that Mr. Bowman had suddenly - the owner of Bowman Brothers of Camden Town had suddenly died of a heart attack. And, well, that's a story.

[1:23:29]

So obviously, as a lawyer, it was difficult- that's a difficult profession.

Well, then he became a- he went- he got several jobs. He got several jobs. He worked for a lighter company who made lighters for the army. And when the- and then when, when the boys came back from- they didn't need lighters any more. So, that company disintegrated.

And your mother? Did she work?

Yes, my mother- my mother worked as a cleaner. She also worked making whiskey bottles. They had- soldiers had whiskey bottles in their back pockets. And the- these- these bottles were made of cheap glass and artificial leather had to be glued on each side. And it was a very cheap, artificial leather and it tore easily. And she didn't- and they had to have a seam on either side, the bottles, and it wasn't always straight. And I didn't know who this man was who - it was probably some Jewish man - where she did this 'home work' as it was called. And on Saturdays we would take two heavy bags to Cricklewood, and I would stand outside with this and she went upstairs with these bottles and came back with new ones. But she didn't keep that job very long cause she didn't do it well enough. And yes- and of course, she

kept the house. She cleaned the rooms for the lodgers. And what else- what else is there? She- she worked for the Warburg family as a cleaner in the- They had a household in Hampstead Garden Suburb here somewhere.

There is a picture of you in this- in the catalogue for Continental Britons with your mother in a hostel.

[1:25:35]

Yeah.

Wasn't she a cook in that hostel, or-?

Yes, she was a cook. Oh, yes. Yeah, that- yes, that came later. Yeah. I wasn't- I wasn't there yet. [laughs]

OK.

Yes, yes.

When was-

What- what- the Warburg, what was funny was-

OK.

Warburgs had this very nice house, and she had to do the cooking for them, so that when they came home at night, they just had to heat up. And one day, Mrs. Warburg left a message for her that she should do a jugged hare. And my mother never knew what a hare was to begin with. I didn't know what a jugged hare was either. Nor was she- just the sight of the hare made her feel ill. And she didn't know what to do. But that day, we- we also had a cleaner who came once a week to do the really dirty work in our house. And she happened to be there, and my- and she- my mother took this hare- I think- I don't know how it happened, but she took the hare to- home, and this woman did the jugged hare and she

brought it back. Yeah. This was a very nice woman. She was from the East End and she lived in a house which had no toilet. Only a toilet in the back of the yard- yard where she lived, she told us. Yeah, well then- where was I? I'm lost.

I asked you about the- the home when she became a cook?

[1:27:10]

Yeah, well, then we were- no, no well then- No, we lived in Highcroft Gardens, and the people upstairs were my relatives at first. One of the- one was- were relatives: my mother's cousin and her husband. And then there was a couple who were both divorced but the divorce hadn't come through. And they were waiting for a visa for America. And when the visa came and their number came up and they could go, they left and we had new tenants – well, lodgers. And we had one lady who, who then married a greengrocer and left. And then we had various couples. And then the owners of that house- we didn't own that house. We only rented it. The owners of the house after the war 1940... forty... When was the *Währungsreform*? Forty- '48. My father went back to Germany '47. So '46 we were- these people wanted the house back. They wanted to throw us out, do it up nicely and sell it. My father wanted to buy it, and Bloomsbury House was willing to help him finance it. But they didn't want to sell it to us because we were sitting tenants and they could sell it better with us out. So, we had to find a place to live. And we found a house in Middleton Road here, down the road here, which had a cellar and a- and a- and another storey upstairs. A very big house, which they worked out they would be able to let a lot of the rooms. And it was near the underground and near the bus station; it was well situated. And it belonged to a couple and they were- and through the agent Ellis, we decided on a, or they decided on a price. And when that came to- when the- when they were going to sign the contract on the Monday morning, they'd asked the owner whether he would allow them to come around on the Sunday to show it to their daughter which was me. And I was really excited and we went there and rang the bell and nobody answered. And nobody answered? Why? What was going on? So, we went home again. And the next morning, the agent phoned and said that the house was actually in the name of this man's wife and the wife was in Canada and she had sent a telegram to say so she decided she didn't want to sell. And we had to be out on a certain date. So that- what we gonna do? So Mr. Ellis found a- a house for us, which was difficult to sell, which was opposite what was that- what is now the Jewish Care Home in Golders

Green Road? That corner house. Clifton Gardens, I think it's called. So, we moved with all our- the- the proviso was we had to show it- when- when they had a client, we had to show it to the client. And if we were not in, the agent had a key and he would be allowed to show it. And, and he would try and find us another house. That was the thing. In the meantime, my father had taken up contact with Germany. He'd had enough, more than enough. He didn't know what to do. He'd taken up contact with Georg August Zinn, who was at that time the Justice Minister of Hesse.

[1:31:30]

And was it the initiative of your father?

Hm?

Was it the initiative of your father?

Was it-?

The initiative of your father? Or was he approached?

I don't know. I don't know that. I don't- I don't know. I don't know. I never- I never asked him. Yeah. Anyway, he'd taken up contact and- and... Oh, yes. And then what was my mother going to do? It was thought best that my father goes back on his own, to see what- what the situation is and whether they could possibly live in such a country again, after all the- all what had happened, et cetera. And I was supposed to do my School Certificate, which is O-levels. I still had a year to go. And so, we were- the B'nai B'rith Lodge had a hostel in Teign- Teignmouth Road in Willesden Green, and they needed a cook. And they had a kosher kitchen. And I think my mother knew bits and pieces of the kosher kitchen, but not properly. And she took on this job and I moved in with her. And we had a room together. The house was falling to pieces; when it rained, we had to put a bucket in the room so that the raindrops would go in the bucket. And, and yes, I- I still went to the school. And she- and in that hostel, the girls lived in the hostel. They had rooms there, they shared rooms, I think there was six- six girls or

something. And they were all Kindertransport children. They were older than me, by several years. And the boys, who were also older, they al- already had jobs somewhere.

[1:33:39]

But they were still- they had bed and breakfast places where they lived. And they would come in for the- for- for dinner at night. They had to sign in if they were going to be there that evening, and my mother had to then cook for so many people. And- and they took large- she had made masses of sandwiches which they took for their lunch, and they all got a sandwich and - kosher sandwich. And an apple.

Was it a kosher home?

It was ko- it was kosher, yeah.

With- who ran it?

It was- the B'nai B'rith Lodge were the-

B'nai B'rith Lodge, you said, sorry.

It was run by that woman on the picture *Fräulein Doktor Falz- Falck- Falck.*

Falck.

Yeah. And there was another woman there, Frau Levine, and she did the cleaning, and my mother- my mother did the cooking.

So-

And then my mother became ill. And now what? My father was in Kassel getting- and he had to- he had to get used to doing the law again. He'd been ten years in England, or roughly. And so, he was very busy

with that. He was also- had had to find a flat. And then we sent all the furniture across to that flat. And my mother was taken ill and- and she was so ill, that Dr. Kohnstamm- well the National Health started then. That was a miraculous thing. And so, because- we weren't insured and we had no money, and she was hospitalised. They thought she had a tumour between her heart and her liver. And they couldn't operate, but they weren't sure what it was. And so she was sent to hospital and she went to Hammersmith Hospital, where she stayed for weeks. And I was sent to the only relatives I have in England, which is the- Hannah, my- my mother's cousin, or- or the Sterns. Harry Stern and Lotte Stern. And they took me in, which was very kind. And they had a daughter, Hannah, who was about my age, a bit younger.

[1:36:15]

Because you were still only-?

I was- I was six- I was fifteen- fifteen, four- fifteen. Fourteen- fourteen, fifteen.

Yeah.

And so, I moved- was sent there. I still went to the school, but I lived with them. And every Saturday I went to the hospital to visit my mother. And I remember one day, Lotte came with me, and we both went to this Hammersmith Hospital. And when we came out, it was thick fog. And we had to go on a bus and that- and then- and then on a trolley bus that took us to Golders Green. But we never got to the trolley bus because the bus stopped. And the driver said he couldn't see. He couldn't go on, he couldn't see. And we couldn't see either. It was one of those pea soup fogs, which was made up of fog itself, which is really normally white. And the- the chimneys were blowing out this, what's it called?

Soot, or-?

[1:37:22]

What do you call it?

Soot – smoke.

Hm?

Smoke?

No. You know, when you burn fires, and what comes out of the chimney. Not ash, but-

Soot?

Hm?

Soot or smoke?

Smoke. That's the word I'm looking for, yes - smoke. And the smoke mingled with the fog has a sort of yellowish green colour. And you literally can't see a thing. And you just about see your hand in front of your eyes. It was called a pea souper. Because that's what it looked like. And the- the driver said we should try and hold on to the houses along the road, so that we could go in a straight line because when you walk in fog, you don't know whether you're walking straight, or whether you're walking in a circle, or you don't know where you are. And somewhere there would be a railway station and we could catch a- catch a train. And we- we did get home, but it was a nightmare, which we never forgot. Anyway, then my mother was taken to another hospital where they thought- they thought instead that she didn't have what they thought she had but they thought she had TB. So, she was there for also a long time. I think it was in Uxbridge or somewhere. And then they decided it wasn't that either. And they sent her to another hospital. I suppose by that time they thought it was cancer but they didn't know that it- I don't know whether they knew the word 'cancer' in those days. And she had radiography- radio-? Radi- radiology. No. Treat- treatment. Radio-, radiology, isn't it?

Mn-hnn.

Radiology. And she also was in a- in a hospital in- in- I think it was near Pinner somewhere. It was also a makeshift hospital with bed, night-chest, chair, bed, night-chest, chair, and a stove in the middle. And I also went every Saturday there. And she was- the treatment was- was so... intensive, I suppose, that she could just about open her eyes when I came. And she couldn't- she rubbed my hand, she said, "rub my hand" and the nurse said I should go home. She was having treatment and- and she was getting much better, but I must go home. It was too strenuous for her. Yeah. And then- then came Christmas, and just before Christmas, my Aunt Lotte - I called her 'Aunt' – Aunt Lotte got breast cancer. So, she went off to hospital. And they found a friend of the family to look after Hannah- Onkel Harry. My Uncle Harry and Hannah and myself. And my- my father came for Christmas to visit his wife. And it was most depressing. He had a furnished room, with a gas fire, and we couldn't invite him to our place where I was living because this woman couldn't cope with so many people. So, he had to eat out. And I- I- I didn't see him every day. But people invited- they were- people were very nice and they invited him in and all that.

[1:41:22]

And then- then one day, we went to that restaurant in- in Hampstead- in Finchley Road. What's it called? You know the one... Cosmo. Cos- Cos-

Cosmo?

Cosmos. Yes. And we met a- a relative of- of the Sterns there. And he said to my father, and I say it in German, he said, "*Sie sehen aus wie ein geplatzter Wechsel.*" Which means, "You look like a- like a bit of exchange that has- has not materialised. Or-

Ein geplatzter Wechsel? Yeah...

Wechsel, yeah. I'm not quite sure how to- how to translate that. Anyway, we had a meal there. It was very nice. And when it came to payment, the waiter said, "The gentlemen who's just left has paid for you." And I thought that was extremely nice, and I've never forgotten that.

So, another- who didn't know your father, or-?

[1:42:29]

Oh, he did know him, but not- he was- he was not- not related to us. He was related from the other side. And - yeah. But I thought it was an extremely generous and kind gesture.

And at that time your mother was still in hospital?

Yes. And then, and then it- then he had to go back to work. And I remember taking him to Liverpool Street Station and seeing him off. Yes, and then- and then - I don't know - things went back to normal, so to speak. And then at some- some stage my mother was discharged, but she wasn't allowed to fly. And she wasn't allowed to- to go to Germany because she didn't have any papers. We were... what we were...

Stateless?

Hm?

Stateless?

Stateless, that's right. We were stateless. So, she had to apply for papers. And so, during that time, she was in a- in a furnished- I think she got meals there as well, a sort of furnished lodgings. And as soon as she was able, and everything was settled, in the spring of 1949 she joined my father in Kassel. And they had a maid and she was well looked after and they had much better food in Germany than they had here, which was absolutely a disgrace. And we won the war here and they- they were living under more dire circumstances. Anyway, that's how it was.

Did she want to go to Germany?

No, of course not. But I had no option. I was very young for my age, and I was also very difficult. Anyway, so then what-

How about your mother? Did she want to go?

Not really, no. But on the other hand, the- the situation was such they had nowhere to live. Things were so bad that she- she agreed to it. There was no op- there was a feeling that they had no other option but to do that.

And for you? What- would it have been possible-

[1:45:03]

I didn't want to go.

To stay here?

I would have liked to have stayed here. Yes. But I would also miss my parents too. I was very, very homesick for them. And I'm sure my mother was-

Did they- after your mother went back, did you stay here?

I stayed. I- I stayed until the summer of the same year to do my School Certificate, which I passed. I just scratched through it, actually. I didn't concentrate properly; I was- my thoughts were elsewhere. And but during that time, between waiting for my papers, and the end of school, I was sent to a family of Quakers, where I had been sent to many times before in the holidays. They were extremely nice people, they were called the Fosters. And they lived in Brookmans Park at first, and later moved to Guildford outside Guildford, to Wonersh Park. And they were Quakers and conscientious objectors. And so- and they had a dog. And the idea was, that I should learn to- not to be afraid of dogs. And this dog had been bombed out, so to speak. His family- the family he was with were bombed, and he'd survived. And they'd picked him up in a dog's home. So, he was not a very happy dog. And I was not a very happy

child. [laughs] But we didn't make friends. But they were very nice to me. Very, very nice. And they had a little boy, John. Later on, they had two more children. And I stayed with them until I went back to Germany.

One second, Yvonne. We need to stop for a second.

[sound break]

Yvonne, you were talking about the Quaker couple-

Oh yeah-

That's what we were talking about. And you said that you visited them throughout or what-? When did you start - staying?

[1:47:00]

Well- well, there was a woman who went round Bloomsbury House looking for difficult children. And she was called Suse Bach. She was a physio- she was a- And my mother sent me to her to try and- I don't know- I don't know what she really did. I don't think she did anything much. But anyway, I went there and she somehow knew these people, or, of these people and the problem of the dog. And it was through her that I was put in touch with these people. They were very nice. And had a lovely house in Brookmans Park to begin with.

Where did they live?

In Brookmans Park, it's near Potter's Bar, up that way. Very countrified. He went to work every day on the train. I once asked him what he did for a living and he said "Something in The City."

And did you stay with them or you just-?

I stayed with- no, I stayed with them. I went on- They put me on the Green Line in Golders- my parents put me on the Green Line in Golders Green, and this Green Line went as far as Barnet. And they picked me up at the- and that was the terminus – or terminal. And they picked me up there. And we usually had a tea at the Express Dairy, which was there as well. And then we went home. That was a treat. And yes, and had a beautiful garden and I played with their child and- I didn't- didn't do much else. He was a beekeeper as well. One day when bees flew into the house- but he managed to get them all out again without any stings, which was brilliant, actually. And yes- and I stayed with them until my papers came through and I was allowed to travel. And then I was given strict instructions that I was to take no money with me, and that they needed the- the English money to pay for my father's life insurance. And one couldn't just send money across in those days. So, I was to bring no money and I would fly to Frankfurt, and they would put- pick me up at the airport. And if they're not at the airport, then I should go with a bus into town and wait there at the- the office of BA at the time- BEA at the time. And- and my father would- would probably pick me up there. So- so Lotte and Mrs. Bach - Suse Bach - took me to the- to Victoria, I think it was, where I got on a- got on a bus and went to the airport, which was a different airport, Northolt, I think. And I'd never been to a- to an airport before and never been on an aeroplane before. And I nearly missed it because I didn't know- I was told to wait. And I waited and- and then I heard a "Last call". And somebody said, "What are you doing here?" And anyway, I got to Frankfurt and there was nobody there. And then I went to the town office, which is opposite the railway station. And there was nobody there either. And I sat down with my huge suitcases I could hardly lift. And I sat, and I sat, and I sat.

[1:50:40]

And finally, I thought, what shall I do? And my parents had no telephone. And it was up after the war, and everything was destroyed. And I just didn't know what to do. And in the end, I went and told one of the girls that was working there at BA – BEA. And she said, "Well, you're sixteen now, and BEA only is is has to look after people under age- under sixteen. So basically, you- we have no responsibility." But seeing the situation as it was, we decided- I had a letter given- sent to me by my mother: "In case anything goes wrong, you- you should go to this address *Fräulein* Urban. She is a social worker, and she's a friend of friends, and go to her. So, we looked her up in the phone book and she didn't have a

phone either. But I had the address. So, this woman from BA- BEA took me in a taxi to this place. It was in a- a house standing in the middle in the middle of rubble, all rubble all around. And anyway, this woman, *Fräulein* Urban wasn't there. She'd gone to look after somebody in the- in the Tessin. But there- her landlady said she wouldn't mind taking me in for the night. So, I slept on Miss Urban's bed. And I think she brought me some roasted potatoes to eat. And the next morning, the girl from BA- BEA picked me up again and asked me whether I had any ideas what I ought to do. And I remembered that my father had put me in touch with a girl in Kassel, whose father was a *Oberstaatsanwalt*.

[1:52:52]

And I'd written her a letter once or twice, but didn't- it petered out. But I remembered the name. And the girl looked it up in the telephone book and he had a phone. And she phoned him up. And there was a big to do, and they got a- he was working in the same building as my father. I got in touch with him and then there was more big to do, and what to do, and not- not to do. And then they said that BA should pay for the fare, and he would send them a cheque or whatever. And I was told to- when I get- I should get off at Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe, where the train stops for three minutes. And if I missed it, then my father would get on a train in Wilhelmshöhe and go to their main station, and we would meet there. But if I could, I should get off at Wilhelmshöhe. The train was incredibly long, very, very full, with people standing in the gangways. And- and I was I think in the last- in the last carriage which was- and I hadn't- hadn't got a clue where- what the station would be in front of- before Wilhelmshöhe. Anyway- and I had- and the suitcase was up in the- the rack above, when I couldn't lift it, it was so heavy. Anyway- and I couldn't see the signs when we- the train stopped because it was the last carriage and there were no more signs. Anyway, I asked somebody whether this was Wilhelmshöhe, and they said it was. And I somehow, I don't know how, I managed to get the case and go past these people in the- in the gangway. And my father was just getting into the train when I got out of the train. And he saw me and then we met up. And he felt rather awkward about the situation. And I felt very embarrassed about it, or very miserable. And the sun was shining. And we took a taxi to the flat. And then my father said- and I'll never forget, "Isn't it lovely here?" And I thought that... [ironic half-laugh] And I- I said, "Yes." Anyway.

[1:55:20]

But how come? How come they didn't pick you up or they didn't know that you were arriving, or-?

I don't know. I- that's a mystery to me. According to Suse Bach - and she did this - she said that she'd given one of her clients a letter to post to my parents and they never received it.

OK. So, they didn't know that you were actually coming.

No, they were- they were going- in- at the theatre that evening. And they had no idea.

And Yvonne, did you speak any German when you came back? What was your language?

Well, my German was- was limited, very limited. But I- after I'd got back from boarding school, German was spoken in the house. All these lodgers were German speakers, Austrians as well, but German speaking. So, I had a sort of 'kitchen German' as I called it. And I did actually get a credit in German for my O-levels, although I never had a lesson. And the reason I did so badly in that, was because it was written, the translation I had to do was written in Gothic. And I couldn't read Gothic, Gothic script. And I got in- into a mess with it. Anyway-

Yvonne, I wanted to ask you also- it was after the war, had your parents- when did they find out what happened to their parents and the rest of the family?

Yeah, they found that in- in the course of time. Yes. Yes.

And what happened to them?

They perished.

On both sides, or-?

[1:57:09]

Well, my grandparents Goldschmidt had died in the early 20s. My grandmother died in 1925. And my grandfather died a few years before, so they were not in the picture. But Tante Minna was. Tante Minna, she went to Riga.

Yes?

And my grandmother died in Bonn in a- in the *Bonner* ghetto, and her husband died, so the black book says that has all the names, in Theresienstadt. Yeah. But it was never discussed. These- these subjects were, as far as I was concerned, it was not discussed in my presence really.

So-

What I also disapproved of greatly - and I must say that this Manor House School - was when all these things came out, these stories about Belsen and-

[coughs] *Yeah?*

- and the rest, and the kids in- after lunch, between lunch break and school again at two o'clock, used to play 'concentration camps' and think of tortures and things that they could do to each other sort of as a-

In the break time?

Yeah. And the nun who had- had to keep- keep a watch on us, didn't bat an eyelid. Yeah.

And Yvonne, what did you feel? I mean, you went to many places, many schools-

I felt-

How did you identify yourself? Do you see what I mean?

I was always on the wrong side of the fence. Always. And have ever- have been all my life. That's just the way it is. I desperately wanted to be English when I was at the school, and I would have liked to have stayed in England, but it didn't happen. And gradually I got used to being in Germany but I never identified with that either. I mean, I like- I like the countryside. I like the woods and fields. And I like the *Kaffee und Kuchen*. But as far as anything else was concerned, I never really felt that- I never felt at home anywhere. And the only place I really felt at home was at home, in the four walls of my parents' house.

In England or in Germany or both?

Both. Yeah.

So, when your father took you there and you arrived. What do you remember feeling and seeing? You said there was-

Well, it was a very beautiful flat. I mean it was a bit different to the- to the hostel where rain water was- you know? It was beaut- a beautiful flat. It was a- it belonged to a butcher, who people said he hadn't given his clients enough meat and made a lot of money that way and bought this house. And there were two flats there. They lived in the bottom flat. And we had the top flat. And right at the top were two rooms for maids. And they had a goat in the garden - or not in the garden actually, in the garage, a goat - that supplied their milk and kept chickens. Yeah, I felt very lost, completely lost. And then my mother, she's- she thought, you know, you come back to Germany and things go on the way they did before. You make a- you have to make a- a bow when- as a young girl, when you shake hands, a *Knicks machen*. And I- I just couldn't do that. That was just impossible.

[2:01:05]

Because you'd been quite sort of independent in some ways from your parents, to come back at this age. How did you then manage?

I was lost. I was - just lost. I did what I had to do. We went for walks. I went for a walks with them. And then I started the school.

And what was that like?

That was ghastly, actually. A very mixed crowd of people. Simple people, better class people. A great mixture. And some of them had-

Yeah?

[They-] a lot- most of them had been in the- well, they- the age difference was diff- I was the youngest in that class. I was sixteen then.

Right.

And the oldest when we started the school year was twenty-one. He'd been in the army. And he- he was not a boy anymore. He was a man. But anyway, it was a funny mixture. Mainly boys and six girls. One of them wore a dress or skirt rather with a- the top of the skirt was embroidered with swastikas all round. It was a sort of red and blue check dress, and the red and blue she'd made swastikas with embroidery silk. They had a chicken farm in- somewhere in one of the villages.

I mean, was there some awareness of your own background? Did they know-?

[2:02:50]

Well, everybody knew I was Jewish. I was the only Jewish girl in Kassel. Yes.

And people knew that?

Hm?

And people knew that?

I think so, yes. They definitely knew that, yeah. So that sometimes the teachers had to stop themselves when they were going to make a joke, and they suddenly remembered that they couldn't make that joke because I was there. Yeah, we had one- one of the boys was a Baron - Freiherr von Kaltenborn Stachau. He was a rather stupid boy, but he was good looking, and he thought the world of himself and had brilliant manners. He would come and visit. One visited in Germany- between 11 and 12 [o'clock] one could come and visit, so you always had to be dressed and ready for the possibility that somebody might turn up. And he lived across the road. His father was a- an army man, retired. And he- he used to come sometimes on a Saturday or Sunday morning to visit and he would give my mother a kiss on the hand and bow, and then make polite conversation. And I hated these vis- [laughs] these visits. Anyway, he- they were well connected. And he- there was a lot of goings on of- re-education was important in those days and if you had the right connections, you might be able to be sent to America to a college or somewhere where you would be taught democracy. And he managed to get such a place. Now, he had an uncle in America. I don't know, he must have been there a long- long time. He had dropped his 'von'. He was just called Kaltenborn. And he was known by everybody in America who listened to the news because he was a po- political commentator from- from Europe. And he went to visit, he went to America to this college. He visited his uncle. His uncle closed- banged the door in his face and – didn't want to have anything to do with him. And then he went to this college, and he was supposed to stay there for a year. And instead of staying there for a year, after two or three months, he suddenly turned up again, with his bride. The bride was wearing a red coat, and she was going to learn singing in Salzburg. And he brought her to school and showed her off, and suddenly she disappeared, and was never seen again. And that was him.

[2:05:43]

And then we had this man- Dietmar. Dietmar's father was a forester, and he came from a middle-class family, and he'd been in the army. And it was not allowed at the school to smoke - was forbidden. And he was used to smoking so he used to go to the loo, and smoke there. But one day the headmaster came by, and he could smell the cigarette, and he waited for him to come out. And he shouted at him, "What- What were you doing in the lavatory?" And he said, "I had to go to the- I had to relieve myself." And he

said, "No, you were not relieving yourself. You were smoking! Admit it! You were smoking!" And then, we all went back into class, and the headmaster came after. And he had to stand up straight in front of the headmaster. And he went on screaming, "What were you doing on the lavatory? What were you doing? What were you doing?" And he kept saying, "I had to go, I had to relieve myself!" And then he got so worked up he screamed, "Number one or number two?" And he didn't reply. And then he was so angry, he stormed out of the room. And everybody was stunned. Unbelievable. Otherwise, nothing particular happened in that school.

But did you feel any-?

I felt-

I mean, it was quite-

I felt very lonely.

Yeah.

I did make friends with one girl who was a class higher than me. And one day she invited me to tea. And I thought she was rather nice, and I did go. I didn't usually like to go anywhere, but I went. And she showed me a secret- a great secret. I think she did not know I was Jewish. A great secret. She showed me a picture - a big picture - it was hanging over the buffet in her room, of her father in- in all his finery, in his uniform. Apparently, she'd lost her father and all her brothers in the war. And, well, it was very sad but I just- I just couldn't take it. And - I never went there again.

Because it was just not- shortly after the war. I mean-

Yes, I know. It was too close. It was too close to me. What I remember of Kassel was that it was completely destroyed.

Yes?

And on- what? The day when you visit the tombs? I think it's called *Buß- und Bettag* in- in the evangelical part of Germany, the Lutheran part. People go to the cemetery and put flowers on the graves. And a- a whole area in- in town was full of flowers which had been put on the ruins, because of- people had suffocated in the cellars. They had no graves or their graves were underneath all the rubble. It was somehow-

And Yvonne, how did your parents manage? I mean, your father-

Well, he- he

Went back and- and spent-

My father was a *Kasseler*. And he- he loved Kassel. Kassel- And he knew everybody more or less in the- who was in the legal profession.

Yeah, but what I was going to ask you-

And he knew-

Especially in the legal profession-

Yeah, well, he knew-

There were lots of Nazis and-

Yes. Yes.

Lots of people still practising.

Yeah, of course. Well, he didn't mix with those. He knew who to mix with. And he knew whom not to mix with. And there were a few of us who- a few people who came back.

Were there other people?

Yes. They- there was a group of, of- a group called the ISK – *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kulturbund*, they were called.

Yeah?

And they were under the- their- the philosopher who founded this, was a man called [Leonard] Nelson. And he had a whole way of life, and no religion, and-

[2:10:10]

ISK?

ISK.

Mn-hnn, and your parents-?

My parents were not involved in that at all.

Aha. You-?

I was not involved in it either. It was in- it was before the war.

Okay.

Yeah. And they- there were a lot of Jews in that. And there were also a lot of non-Jews in that. They believed in free love, and all that sort of stuff. And when Hitler came to power in January '33, they had

to move, they were in danger. And so, they- some of them, or one of a couple, the Lewinskis, they moved to France, where they- this group was also vegetarian, that was also one of their things. And they opened a vegetarian restaurant in Paris, and lots of refugees went there. Many of them had no money to pay for the food, and they helped them out as much as they could. And they- ISK also had a school for the children of these people. And this school, also left Germany and went to Denmark, where Danish ISK people found a place for them, where they could settle. And they had to make their own beds and do their own cleaning, the children had to do- and peel the potatoes and all that. And then it became dangerous, war was approaching and the parents couldn't pay the rent anymore. Because the Germans were coming into- well, the invasion was imminent. So, the parents left and went south to the south of France. And the children went- came to England, with their teacher. And the boys who were thirteen, fourteen they cycled to the- to the port and came on the boat to England, and then cycled to somewhere in Wales where they settled. But then there was the internment. And interned were not only Jews, but Germans. The teachers were Germans, they were not Jews, they were Germans. They were interned as were the older boys who were over sixteen. And so, the whole thing fell apart. And some- some of the ISK people - English ISK people - took some of those children in, and they survived the war that way.

[2:12:45]

And did they come back to Kassel?

Hm?

And did they come back to Kassel?

No, the Lewinskis- [Erich] Lewinski, he was a solicitor. He- he came back to- he went to- he- he was in the south of France. And he, and there was a- and American ambassador or- in- somewhere in Marseille, I think, or wasn't ambassador, he was a cons- consul, he was head of the consulate in- And they- the Americans were giving visas to some people, some refugees. And he had to distribute them. And he didn't know whom to distribute them to, because he came from a mid- mid-west town in America. He had no idea about Europe. Whom- whom- how should he select them? And Lewinski managed to get in touch with him. And they- they had a group of people that sat together and decided who was- who they

should save and whom not, basically. Who was- who was important, and because they- because they were musicians, or because they were philosophers, or because there was some- something like that.

[Sound break]

Yeah?

And, so yeah, they came back also in '46, '47.

I have to check that up. I haven't heard about it.

What?

The ISK.

ISK. Yeah. I've got a book here somewhere.

Interesting. So, there were other returnees, so to speak, in Kassel?

Yes, well, just a few. And this woman that I- in whose bed I slept in Frankfurt, she was a member of that.

Of ISK?

Yeah.

Okay.

And the man she was looking after in the Tessin was also a member of that.

But your parents were not, but they- so they knew some people?

Yeah.

And was there a Jewish community in Kassel?

No. I think when- before I got there, there were some people from- from a concentration camp, whose- who were there for a short while and then they left? No. We were the only Jewish family. And there was one lady who's- who owned a big factory. And she came back. She'd been in- in France during the war. And then there were a couple of people who were in mixed marriages. And they were there.

[2:15:30]

And any other family members at all?

No.

Did you-

From ours?

Yes.

No.

Nobody.

No. No. [pause] Yeah. And that was basically it.

And did you stay in touch with some friends from England? Or did you-?

I did invite a couple of girls once for a holiday.

[sound break]

Yes, so we were talking about other people in Kassel.

And where did we get to? Yes, that's – that's Lewinski. He then came back and he became *Landgerichtspräsident*, a judge in the lower court. And he was very hospitable. He invited all the artists from the theatre and everything. And he was very active politically in the Social Democratic Party. And then there was Nora. She was his secretary at one time, or worked in his office. She was also a lawyer. And she- she had a son who was born in- in-

So, at that point, Yvonne, did you think you wanted to go back to England? Or what were your aims? What-?

My aim was to go back to England, yes. But I had to learn something first.

So, what did you learn?

[2:17:13]

Well, I learned all that I had to learn to be a secretary at the *Wirtschaftsoberschule* in Kassel. And then I got a job. But then I went to the university for a while in Frankfurt. But the point was, I was only allowed to study economics because I'd only been to that kind of school. And I really- it didn't interest me at all, to be honest. And so, there was no point actually in going on. And I got myself a job at EL AL. Well, EL AL wasn't EL AL in those days. It was just called that, but they didn't fly to Germany in those days. But they were making contacts. The idea was that once Ben Gurion and Adenauer came to a decision about restitution, then they would- they would get- they would be- be the carriers for air freight. And ZIM would be the carriers on boats. And so, they had to get in touch with forwarding agents like Kuehne & Nagel and Schenker and these people. And that was basically what they did. And the only thing that they sent over to Israel every month, or every week actually, was the *Jüdische Allgemeine Zeitung* and kosher salami. Now, the problem always was, whether the EL AL plane that was leaving

Zürich, or Paris, would have enough space to accommodate these items. Because we would have to send them either to Zürich or [inaudible] And otherwise, there was not much doing. But it was a terrible time.

We haven't discussed the topic of Israel Palestine. Was that- were your parents interested in-?

Well, everybody was interested in it.

Yes.

But they were- my parents were not Zionists. No. And I was really not interested that much either, because I was too mixed up. I was going to go to Germany while- while this was going on in Palestine, and- I don't know. And I took- I took an interest too, and of course those kids in the hostel took an interest in it. And they wanted to go there and have their own country and be free and-

You did?

That's what they wanted, but there's only one I know. Vera. She was- she called herself 'Aviva' all of a sudden. And then one- first thing she wanted to do was go to Israel.

[2:20:03]

But you- you didn't- you didn't think you wanted to go?

What? No. I- I was, too- I was- would have been afraid to go on my own. I wasn't adult enough.

Well, you had a difficult experience.

Yeah.

But at- just to come back, before we go on, I wanted to ask you something because you, you said that in England, you were- they thought you were sort of classed - when he went to the Quaker community - as a sort of 'difficult child' -

Yeah.

Why? Why was that? Or why do you think-? Not why was that, but-

Well, I suppose-

What were you doing, or were- you know-

I- nothing particular. I- I was always told I was difficult. I had friends. But I didn't trust my friends too much because when you have- you're in a convent, you're not with Jewish children. Although I- I didn't even know I was Jewish, really. I didn't even know what it meant. But I did know that when I was- when I used to go to school, the kids coming out of some of the houses, they would call after me, "You're a bloody German Jew!" and, "You're a Jew, and Hitler was a Jew!" And, and so on. They hadn't got a clue what they were saying. But I always wondered what that was. What was it to be a Jew? I never really knew.

But you experienced some discrimination in England.

Mnn.

Being German, being Jewish.

Yeah. And I didn't trust people. Because when- when you're friendly, it's all fine. Lovely, lovely, lovely. And as soon as you have a dispute of any kind, then you're 'a bloody Jew'. So, I lost trust in people, I suppose. Yeah.

Well, not surprisingly, because you-

Yeah.

Of your experiences that you had- were sent away also by yourself.

Yes-

So as a child, you probably didn't know what's next or what to expect.

Yes, exactly. You couldn't trust people properly. And at the hostel, they were much older than me and they had had different experiences. And-

[2:22:22]

Yes, so, that's the other thing, Yvonne, I wanted to ask you. Did you think or compare yourself to, for example, the experience of the- some of the Kindertransport-

No.

- at the time? Did you think-

I didn't even know there was such a thing.

Right.

I didn't- I had to find that out much, much later. No, I was- we didn't- we weren't very clued up. And that was not just me, but others as well. And lots of things were kept from us. Mind you, we saw what went on in Belsen. We had the *Picture Post*, a magazine with pictures of-

Yeah.

-all these atrocities. We knew what was going on, but it was not- we didn't speak about it.

Yes. But did you understand- you said for example you went to The Cosmo. So, did you understand there were-? The ref- I mean, the refugees and the way they were meeting, and-?

No, not really.

No?

No.

Did you go to any youth movements while you were in England?

Yes, I was sent to one. It was a communist one. And we all went to the Isle of Wight, and had a lovely time.

Free- Free German Youth?

No, no. I can't remember what it was. Anyway, I didn't stay there very long.

And do you think-?

And I went to Alyth Gardens. Alyth Gardens Hebrew classes.

Oh.

Yes.

When was that?

That I enjoyed, not the classes, but the company. [half laughs]

During the war?

Yes. Yeah. And then I remember also, at the end of the war, or right- right at the very end, a boy came to the classes. He already had stubbles on his chin, and he looked very weird. He wore stockings and shorts and he looked exactly like the boys that you see on that statue in Liverpool Street Station. But he looked- he looked so weird. He was- he- he frightened me a bit, by his looks. And one of the girls whom I did- I didn't know that at the time, she was a Kindertransport. And she lived in Hendon with a family- Jewish family who didn't allow her to mix with other children. And she was all over this boy. Wanted to know what he'd been through and whether he- what people used to ask, "Did you see my mother?" "Did you see my father?" "Did you see my brother?" Yes, that was very sad.

[2:25:05]

And do you feel in- in your time in England, and you were in contact with let's say, Bloomsbury House, did you receive any help or something which helped you to deal with all these experiences, or-?

Well, I was sent to Suse Bach. But as I say, it didn't- didn't do much.

Did she help you?

No. She didn't. But I was sent there and I went there every week.

Where was it? In Bloomsbury House itself?

No, no, she did it from home. She lived here- around here too.

Where did she live?

Around here.

Golders Green?

Yeah.

And was it a sort of, what, one hour a week or-?

Something like that, yes.

And what did you talk about with her?

I can't remember. I really can't remember.

So that means- what's interesting for our purposes, that Blooms- Bloomsbury House had somebody who could talk to people if they thought that that would help.

She went around trying to find clients.

Right.

So, I was told. Yeah.

Okay, well- so, just to come back to Kassel and your- not Kassel. We've left. So you, you went to Frankfurt, you said you started studying.

Then I- I stayed for half a year at EL AL.

Yeah. At EL AL, yeah.

And then- and then I went to- Oh, yes, and the- the atmosphere in- in Frankfurt near the- near the railway station was terrible. And we saw lots of cripples. I remember seeing this man without any legs

on a wooden board with four wheels underneath, selling lottery tickets, or [inaudible], or matches, or shoe laces, or whatever.

Yes?

Frankfurt- Frankfurt was in the American zone. And there were a lot of American soldiers there, and so there were a lot of women trying to pick up- be picked up. They were middle-aged women and they looked very miserable. And they had-

Frankfurt was not- which- which zone was Kassel?

I think Belgium. But there were also Amer- I think, Belgium, yeah. And in Frankfurt, they also had a synagogue for the Americans- American soldiers-

And did you go to Frankfurt?

And their wives.

To the synagogue?

I went there, yes, and that's where you met sort of young- young people. And that was quite nice, actually. I went there on Friday nights.

And where did you stay when you were in Frankfurt?

I had a flat, or a room. I didn't have a flat; I had a room.

Where?

Where? In Niederrad. Frankfurt Niederrad. There's a- a- a hospital there for the mentally ill. And it was around there.

Mn-hnn?

Yeah.

And then, once you were at EL AL what happens then? What happened then?

[2:27:13]

Well, I was just saying the atmosphere was so awful. There were few Jewish people there. There was one very nice girl called Sabine. She- she sometimes came in, and- with her mother. The mother was rather vulgar. And why she came in, I don't know. But in any case, the- the boss at- at EL AL once took this girl out. And found out that her mother was a- had a- had a room somewhere. And she was a- a whore, basically, for Jewish soldiers. And her daughter was being in- in- in- told, did the same! And we were absolutely horrified. She was from Israel.

So how long did you stay there, in Frankfurt?

We lived in- by that time we- My father had been promoted from a *Oberlandesgerichtsrat* to a *Senatspräsident*, so he was a President of a Senate in the Court of Appeal. And- and he'd moved to Frankfurt. But at that time, you couldn't get any- any housing in Frankfurt 'cause everything was destroyed and in ruins. So, at first, he took a- you could only get a flat if you paid key money. And key money was this money paid to the agent to the- on the black market, so to speak, which he refused to do. So, he had a furnished room for a while, quite a while, and then he got a flat which belonged to the civil servants. And he got a flat through- through them. And that's where my mother then came to Frankfurt.

Which year was that? When did he move?

About '51, I think.

[2:30:35]

And how was your father treated by the- by the non- by the German law profession? Did he feel-?

I - I think he- he settled in very well. I mean, he also knew how these men and women had behaved in- in the Nazi period.

Yeah.

He knew that- he knew who- who he was talking to. And he knew who he was not talking to. He felt very comfortable.

He didn't have any problem?

No, none at all, I don't- well, I don't think so. No. And he loved Kassel. He really loved it. He liked Frankfurt too, but when he retired, he- he wanted to go back there and he died there.

What about you? Did you like Kassel?

No. It was deadly. [laughs] No.

So, you didn't have any- when you came back, did you have any positive feeling of-?

Well-

Possibility of connections?

None at all. No. I mean, the- the area's very nice. The- the countryside is very pretty, and all that sort of stuff. But otherwise, no. But Kassel had a very good theatre and I learnt a lot and saw a lot and- that was my education, basically, going to the theatre and going to concerts, which I had never done before. And seeing operas for the first time.

So, when your parents moved to Frankfurt, did you move in with them? Did you live with them?

[2:32:05]

No, I had a- I- no-

You didn't stay-?

No, no. I had this flat. This was- room- in lodgings in Niederrad. And then I went to- and then I took a job as an au pair in Besançon.

Okay.

Which is in the region of the Doubs. And that was a disaster too. The people didn't know I was Jewish. And we hadn't mentioned it, actually, I think. And they had one little boy who was one year old. And they- he was a, an inspector, who had to inspect the school. We lived in- within the- in the school, with a separate sort of, little flat. And she worked at a girls' school, she was a supervisor, that's all. And they were very poor. And I think they had-they'd got married because she- because she became pregnant and the in-laws hated her. But they had no money. And they paid very badly. And when I got to Besançon there was some Jewish festival, and I decided I would go out to the synagogue and see what- if I could meet somebody- some people. And there were only three people there. A- a, a mother and daughter, and another woman, and- as far as the women were concerned. And we got talking, and they invited me to dinner that- that same evening. So, I went there. And the girl was very nice. And they were very pleasant, very hospitable. And I went home and I thought, that's nice, I've got some- got to know somebody. And she was very lonely; she was the only Jewish girl in Besançon. And her sister, she had a sister, but she was already in Paris. And she desperately wanted to go to Paris and get out- get away. And then I never heard from them again. And when I did see- it's a very small town, Besançon- and when I- I had to take the baby out for a walk every day, from two to three, according to my watch, I had to be punctual. And- and I met her one day, this mother, and she just turned away like this. Didn't want to know. And I'm thinking, what have I done wrong? Anyway. Then one day, I walked past a little shop with- tailor's shop, and in this shop was this other woman and her father. He was the tailor and she was

the unhappy daughter, basically. And he called me in and he said, "You must understand Madame," What was her name? Madame - anyway, "She's had a terrible time during the war. And when she heard that you lived in Germany, she was so shocked. She didn't want to have anything to do with you. And she did not, or doesn't allow her daughter to meet up with you." And then one day I met the daughter, and she apologised, she said her mother had forbidden her to, to get in touch and that's why- I must understand. And so, I had to understand. Yeah.

[2:35:45]

And then I went to Paris and I had a nice time there. I went to the Sorbonne, and I did a course on *civilisations françaises*. And I learned all about his- about the French history, French art, French literature, all these things. That was very nice. I had a lot of friends. And then it came to the summer holidays, and my mother said I should get- I had a job on the side, filling out bills of exchange for some Jewish family. Didn't get much pay, but I got something. And they said- my mother said I should- the other German girls were all getting jobs for- as an au pair during the holidays. And they would go with a family to the seaside or somewhere, and look after the children. I should try and get that as well. And I tried. And I phoned people up and they said, "What's your name?" And I said, "Goldschmidt." And they said, "*Vous êtes juif, Mademoiselle?*" "You are Jewish, Miss?" And I said "Yes." "*Ah, je regrette.*" "I'm very sorry." And I didn't get a job. And one woman she- she was desperate because the girl that she was going to employ had suddenly quit. And so, she thought about it and she said, "Well, if you don't tell my husband you're Jewish, I will- I will take you." And I didn't want to go there. So, I came home. And instead of sympathising with me, my mother told me off for being so impossible and never- all the others did it, and I didn't. And that was it. And then I came back to England. And I got a job with the Gerson family. They're removal people now, have a big place in Totteridge. But in those days, they had an office in Lower- off- off Lower Regent Street. Oh, no, I didn't do that at first. I came- Oh, no, I came here, and I hadn't got a job, and I wasn't allowed to get a job unless I- I could-

[2:38:05]

[Sound break]

Yes – East End-

Yes. Yes- yes, I- I- I stayed there for a short while, but I just didn't like it. And it was really depressing. I had a room in West Hampstead, which was horrible. And West Hampstead was a very dismal place in those days, it was not- not as flourishing as it is today. It was grey, grey, and then we went to the East End which was even greyer. And the job was awful. And I had hay fever, and all the dust from the letters and stuff. And she wasn't particularly nice. And I- I got really depressed, and I left. And then I tried to get a job, but I realised I couldn't get it without a permit. And for some reason, I can't remember why, I was called to the to the Home Office. And I was told that I- and by that time, I had a German passport. And I wasn't allowed to work in England. And he asked me why, and asked me about my past and this and that. And he was very nice. And then I got a permit to- to work here. But every time I changed my job, I had to go the police station or wherever. I can't remember where.

But you wanted to stay in England?

Yes. And then I got a job with this Pall Mall Safe Deposit Travel Bureau run by the brothers Gerson which was just- just off Lower Regent Street. And I stayed there for a while. I was looking after- doing air tickets and that sort of stuff. And then I changed, and went to another firm, and another firm, and another firm. And then I met Manfred at some stage.

How did you meet Manfred?

[2:40:05]

I met Manfred at- at the- at the 'Jewish Grads Association'. 'Jewish Grads', it was called. And it was a- Jewish graduates actually, who met once a fortnight, or, I can't remember exactly, on top of the Dominion Theatre in- in Tottenham Court Road. And they had a lecture there, and then you, you would pair off and go to a coffee bar somewhere. Not pair off, but, you know, in groups. And it was there that I met him. And- and then...

Which year as that, Yvonne?

It must have been- I got married in '59. It must have been '58. Yes. And his family lived in Purley. And so, we got married in- in Epsom, which is the near- nearest place, there.

And he'd come to Britain? He was from Berlin?

He came on a Kin- Kindertransport from Berlin with Maccabi Hash- Hatzair. And he went first to Harwich and then to Wales, to Gwrych Castle.

Was he in Gwrych Castle?

Yes.

Oh, I didn't know that.

Well, he didn't like it very much and hated it, in fact. His father was here. And his mother was in Germany, with the- with his sister. And he came on the last Kindertransport from Berlin. And his sister was supposed to come as well, but when they got to the railway station, the person there said she had to stay behind, she would go on the next transport. And the next transport never- never happened. And she- they went then to Belgium and were caught and ended up in Auschwitz.

Who said she couldn't go on the train? The- the official organisat-?

The official at the railway station.

[2:42:25]

I think the last Kindertransport left actually on the 1st of September.

Yes.

Is that the one?

Yes.

Just about managed to get through, leaving on the 1st.

Mnn. Yeah.

And Gwrych Castle was actually also run by Bachad- you know, the-

Yeah- Oh, was it?

The religious Zionists.

Yeah, I know.

I wonder whether they put together the Hashomer Hatzair with the religious side.

Well, he wasn't Hashomer Hatzair.

He wasn't?

No. I went to the- that was the- you- you asked me whether I went to a Jewish club once and I said the city I went to a communist- they were communist. They were Hashomer Hatzair. I couldn't remember that. Manfred was Maccabi Hatzair.

Maccabi Hatzair. So that's probably why he went to Gwrych Castle.

Yes.

Which was Bachad. The-

Yeah, I know.

Religious side.

Yeah – yeah. But he wasn't religious.

So, he didn't like Gwrych Castle.

He didn't.

Because- maybe because of that.

I think in general he didn't like it. I don't know. He was also not an easy boy. And his father got him out of there. And he went to Hindhead, and then went to Stroatley Rough School. And then his father took him home. He had- he had a new wife. Well, he didn't have a new wife, he had a new girlfriend at that time. And they lived in Kensington, and he was a painter. A-

And what was his name?

An artist. And- and he went to school, in Kensington and he did his matriculation. And then he worked for Lyons Corner House, or Lyons, the factory of Lyons, making Swiss rolls or something. And then, and then he needed- he joined the army.

And what was his father's name? The- that painter?

Alva. [Siegfried Solomon Alweiss]

Alva?

That's what he called himself, yes.

And was he successful at the time? Did he manage?

No. No – no.

And when you met Manfred, do you think it was important that you had a sort of shared-

Shared background-

Background?

Yes, that was very important to me. And I hadn't found anybody. I'd found other people but none with that sort of background. And he'd enjoyed his- he'd had a lovely time as- in the army. He also went to the theatre, went to the opera, had lots of girlfriends, and had a good time. And for him, Germany was in that sense, fun. Or, had been fun, for-

[2:45:09]

But he was stationed in Germany?

Hm?

Manfred was stationed in Germany?

Yes, in Berlin. Well, he was stationed elsewhere as well. But finally, in Berlin. Yeah.

And what-

And he- and he was a- he then learned to become a- or, when I met him, he was already an accountant.
[to cameraman:] If we don't have birds, we have hammering.

Cameraman: Exactly.

We have to just ignore it.

And when you got married, did your parents come from Germany to the wedding, or-?

No, the wedding was in Germany.

Oh, the wedding was in Germany?

Well, yes. I- usually the wedding is where the girl is.

Yes, sorry, I thought you said Epsom.

Yeah, well, that was the Registrar office- registry office. We were married officially in Epsom, yes. And in- but we got married, or our Jewish wedding if you like, was in-

So where was it in Germany?

Remagen.

In- where?

Remagen am Rhein.

So, you got married in Remagen?

Mn-hnn.

In a synagogue?

No, in a hotel. And we invited the Rabbi. The Rabbi had also come back to Germany, and was another friend. Rabbi Geis. You know the one who'd been the rabbi in Kassel? He'd been in Palestine, and he came back. And he was then Rabbi in Karlsruhe. And, and he came with his family to the wedding, as did my cousin, Liesl, and her father, my- my father's brother, David. His eldest brother. He was - and Manfred's father and step-mother, so to speak. And an aunt and uncle of his who had survived the war in Belgium.

I did your parents approve of your choice?

[2:47:19]

I think they did. They didn't like the in-laws. But, but they- yes, they did, very much so. And then Manfred was doing very well at the- the- in this firm of accountants, but they were Qu- a Quaker firm, they'd never seen a Jew before. And when he reached the- basically the top and he should have been offered a partnership, that was out of the question. And they said he should try and get a job at Marks & Spencer, or somewhere like that. But he wanted to stay in the profession. And my father had a colleague, he was called Calvelli-Adorno. He was related to the Adorno, the man, and he- and they had the Jewish connection. And their- and his son had been in England during the war. They'd sent him to England, and he'd gone back to Germany and joined Price Waterhouse. I think he was actually a- apprenticed at Price Waterhouse in England and then moved to Frankfurt. And so, Manfred went to Price Waterhouse and asked them if they had a job in the tax department, and they said, no, they didn't, but seeing he spoke English and German, they might have a- a vacancy in Germany. And they offered him to go and have an interview. And he went to Frankfurt, very excited, and stayed with my parents and had the interview. And they offered him a job, which was where he earned at least three times as much as he earned here, with good prospects of partnership. And he- and we decided, should we, shouldn't we, should, we shouldn't we. And we decided to do it.

What did you feel like, going- going back again to Germany?

I didn't like it. No. I didn't like it. But I realised he- we weren't getting anywhere. He wasn't finding a sort of job he wanted and he wasn't going to find it either. And this was a- a brilliant job for him. And it

was. And then he- then we went back and he studied to become a *Wirtschaftsprüfer*, which is something similar to a chartered accountant. And he used to study in the mornings before work, go to bed early for a couple of years, when he passed his exam and became a partner.

And did you live in Frankfurt when you went back?

[2:50:03]

Well, we, originally, we started off in Frankfurt, and then he opened an office in Munich. And because he was a *Wirtschaftsprüfer* and a chartered accountant, they were able to open the- the office- to- to work- to open a new office, you had to have a German and an- and an English person. One with both qualifications. So, you needed two people, a German, and an Englishman, a chartered accountant and a *Wirtschaftsprüfer*. But as he had both, they only had to employ one, and he could open the office on his own, which he did. And then he opened an office in Vienna. And then at some stage, he was offered a- a job as head of the Hamburg office, which is a very big office and was at that time a head- the head office. It isn't any more, I don't think. And then we moved to Hamburg.

And in the meantime, you had two daughters?

In the meantime, I had two daughters, that's right. Really- and Denise was born in England. I went- came back especially to England to have Denise because I wanted her to become British. That was very important to me at the time, although she now lives in Israel, and- but anyway, at that time, that was very important to me. And I would have liked to have done it with Lily as well. But I couldn't because my mother was ill. She was in hospital and was ill for a long time with a liver complaint. And, so, I had Lily- Lily was born in Frankfurt, where we were living. And when she was a year and a half we moved to Munich.

And Yvonne, what sort of identity did you want to give to your children? Because you obviously had-

I wanted them to- I wanted the children to study in England. To go- to go through school in Germany, and then study in England which I was able to do with Lily.

Why did you want to do that? Why- why was that your idea?

[2:52:15]

I thought- I don't know, I- I had a- a liking for England and I thought it would- I thought the system was better at a- in- as in college. In Germany, these universities were overloaded with people and these were smaller groups. I thought the system was better, but I also wanted them to get an English education. I couldn't do it with Denise because she wasn't up to it. She wasn't bright enough to go to college. But I did send her to secretarial college in- in England which she pass- she did quite well in. And then she wanted to- and she worked here for a while. And then she decided to become religious. And then she went to Israel. And that's where she's been ever since. And she's very happy there.

And did you feel- I mean- raising children, they went to school there, you had friends, did you feel then you fitted in, in Germany, at that point?

No. I never fitted in. There was always a certain point where you couldn't go any further. It just didn't work.

And Manfred the same, or-?

He never said so. He did say so once to me, he said- I said, "You know if you get really very bad- if your illness gets so bad, that I can't cope with looking after you, I think we'll have a think about going into a home." And he said, "You know, I'll only go if you go. You know I don't fit in." That's the only time he ever said that. Because he didn't fit in here either anymore. Because he- and people didn't like it because he'd been in Germany. People didn't like German- people who went back to-

When you came back here and told people, yeah. So when- when did you decide to come back to England?

Well, when he retired, the question was Price Waterhouse would- would pay us to- to go back to the country of our choice. So, we- either to where we'd come from, which was England, or if I want- if you wanted to retire New Zealand or in Australia [Bea laughs] or wherever they would pay for the transport of all our goods and things. And they- and I think we had two or three – or I can't remember how many – years in which to decide this. And we thought about going to the south of France, and we thought of going here, and there. And in the end, we decided the best place to go is where we know people, and- And we decided to come back to London. And that's what we did.

[2:55:07]

So, when did you come back to London?

19- 19- When did the wall come down? 1988?

'88. [sic]

Yes- yes, and that's it.

And did you find you- you still had some friends here? You could-?

I did. Yes. I had Hannah. I had Renate Eichelgrün who was never my friend, but she's- she died last- a few weeks ago. I was always in cont- distant contact with her. She was never a friend. I never liked her, but- you know how it is. And then there was a- this Jewish girl that was in my class at the convent. And I'm still in contact with her. She's very nice. And that's about it. And of course, some of the older people. Suse Bach was here. And Hannah's parents were still here. You know? There were people, yes.

But you joined also- did you join Belsize Square Synagogue?

We joined Alyth to begin with.

Alyth first? Ok.

That's where I'd been before. But- but then we didn't like going up the hill and into the tent and all of this business. Anyway, we had a chat with the Rabbi Wittenberg because when we thought we'd join that synagogue-

Yes?

And he suggested- because Lily thought of joining that as well. And he said we- we'd be better off at Belsize Square, because that's where the Jewish refugees always went. And that's where we then ended up. Yeah.

And did you- was that a good choice for you? Did you feel-?

Well, we never went, basically. [both laugh] We went- we went on the High Holy days. And then we met a few people that we knew. There weren't all that many. But basically, we never went.

But I know Manfred belonged to the Association of Ex-Berliners, did he not?

Oh, yes. He did that.

Yeah.

And he was the accountant for them.

Yes.

That was also extremely boring. But we also met once a month and- for coffee and cakes, and somebody gave a talk. People enjoyed it, but they were all older than myself, a different generation, really. And I wasn't very interested in them.

[2:57:44]

And Yvonne, today, from your perspective, you've lived in Germany and England in Germany, back and forth. Where would you say is your home?

In Golders Green. [laughs] That sounds silly, but it's true. That's the place where I am most familiar with, which sounds- mind you, the Golders Green of today and the Golders Green of my youth is not at all the same.

And how would you describe yourself in terms of your identity?

I have none. I don't- that's- I don't have an identity in that sense. I mean, what- what does identity mean? That I feel German? I feel English?

British?

British? No- no, not really. No.

Neither?

No. No, neither. I mean, I like certain things in Germany. And I like certain things here. But I don't fit in either place.

What do you think for you is the most important aspect, let's say of your Continental background, or-?

Well, I knew things that people here didn't know about. And I- and that wasn't the right thing either. And I didn't know the things that they knew which I didn't know. I- I-

Such as what? What did you know about?

Well, literature, or odd- odd things. I- I- I knew what went on in Germany very well. I was always interested in politics and these things, but people weren't interested here. And I didn't know too much

about Mrs. Thatcher and all this. I mean, I did know but I wasn't into that. I didn't play bridge. I didn't go golf playing. I- I just- that's how it is.

In between?

But I was happy. I was quite happy. We had a nice home. The kids were nice. [hammering sound]

One second.

[sound break]

Sorry, what were you saying? You were-

We had a nice home. We had- we travelled a lot, saw nice places. And, from that point of view, I think I was very lucky. I don't think- I don't know what would have happened to us, had he- had we stayed here.

[3:00:22]

Yeah, do you sometimes think-? Think about that if you-?

Well, I think about the fact that we- we really had a tough time. It was- it wasn't easy to be married, the shops closed at 5:30. And by the end of the week, we had nothing to eat. I had to cater, and I wasn't used to it. And it was- it was weekends, you had to do the chores. And it was much easier in Germany.

Yes. So, it was an opportunity?

It was an opportunity. And I was- what I also appreciated was that I spent the last years near my parents. And that was very important to me. Very important.

So, you wanted to be near?

Mnn.

Nearer to them?

And I wanted to be far away from my in-laws, who used to like to come every weekend, and come in the morning and stay till the evening. And this way, that couldn't happen. I shouldn't really be saying that. Cut that out.

And do- do you think sometimes what- what would have happened if you hadn't been forced to emigrate in the first place? If you hadn't been forced to leave?

I don't know. I have so little memory of that, that I- I don't know. I can't imagine it. I think it was not-wouldn't have been very nice either. It was a very Victorian upbringing.

And how- what effect, do you think did it have on your later life, your experiences of emigration?

[3:02:18]

Not- don't know- to be fearful, I think, to be fearful, because it might all happen again. Perhaps not to me, but to those who come after me.

I do you feel- still feel that?

I feel it very strongly at the moment. Yes. I have a feeling it's a repetition of what- what we've been through before, what I'm seeing now. Not the Coronavirus, but the political situation. Particularly also in- both in England and in Germany - and elsewhere.

Yeah. You're worried about that?

Mnn. Yes. ...Yeah.

Yvonne, is there anything else I haven't asked you?

I can't think of anything.

Maybe- one question I sometimes ask, you know, whether you think your own experience affected your own parenting and, you know-?

It probably did, yes. It made the children very aware of who they were. Of course, they went to a Jewish school and many of the parents were very strange. I think some of them had been through the camps. Some of them had come to make money in Germany, from Israel and elsewhere. There were a lot of very dubious types there.

So, you wanted to give them a Jewish upbringing?

No.

No?

Not really. But a- but the- I was afraid. Denise- Denise was very sensitive and very difficult. And to put her into a school with very rough children of thirty in a class, I thought she wouldn't- she wouldn't survive, basically. Jewish the school had a class of ten, or five. Some- some classes were five, some had ten children. But they were all difficult children, every single one of them.

So, when you lived in Hamburg and Munich, did you mix with the- other Jews from the community? Were you part of-?

In, in- in, in Frankfurt I didn't. In- where was I, in Munich?

In Munich and Hamburg.

In Hamburg I did, yes. They were eastern European mostly, from Czechoslovakia, from Slovakia, from Romania.

Yes?

There were also some Germans. They- and they liked to sort of live-in groups. The Germans stuck together.

Yeah.

But we didn't belong to that because we were younger. They were all older than us. And they'd been through the camps. And the- the Slovakian, and the Czech, and the Romanians, they didn't like Germans. So they were, they were brought up in Germany, so they were German. And so- and then a lot of them were Persian. And the Persians didn't mix with anybody.

[3:05:45]

In Hamburg, yeah.

Yeah, so.

It was unusual, wasn't it? In Hamburg.

Yes – yeah. Yes, in- in Frankfurt my parents mixed with Jewish people, there were quite a few there. But-

Where are your parents buried?

In Kassel.

In Kassel?

Mnn.

And Yvonne, how do you see the future here, let's say, of the AJR or of any German Jewish institutions?

What do I feel?

How do you see the future, now?

Of these associations? Well, I think the AJR is on a way- but I would have thought, but one never knows. We- we always thought they were on the way out, they'd done their duty looking after German Jews and the time comes when that finishes. And I would have thought that the newspaper would finish. *The AJR Information* or whatever it's called now.

It's still going!

It's still going, and it's- it's amazing. And I'm amazed that there's such a thing as a 'second generation'. I mean, my daughter, Lillian doesn't want to have anything to do with them. I mean the- I mean, she doesn't see the- see the need for them, let's put it that way.

Well, it's- it's interesting that some second generation are, you know, are very interested. And that brings me to almost the last question, Yvonne-

It's not that she's not interested in the past. It's just that she doesn't need people who-

Yes.

Yeah.

But did you talk about the past to your children when they-?

[3:07:25]

Yes.

You did?

I did. Well, I couldn't avoid it, even if I'd wanted to, because they went to this Jewish school. They saw the teachers with the numbers on their arms. And they would- you know what children are: "What's that?" "Why have you got that on your arm?" And they would tell them. And-

What about your own experiences? Did you talk to your-?

I told them. Yes, I told them. They know.

And Manfred? Did he talk about his family?

Yes, he did. He did talk about them. But his was as- was more painful. But although I lost family, I didn't really know them. Whereas it was his mother and his sister, and they were very close.

Yes.

So that was – tough.

Yvonne, is there any- have you got any message for anyone who might watch this testimony in years to come?

Well, just to say- just to say that I don't know whether all this is correct. I'm eighty- in my eighty-eighth year, and I'm sure I've made some mistakes and got things wrong. And I wish them a happy future.

Well just to say that you can't do anything wrong, because you know about your memories and how you remember them.

Yeah.

So there- but anything to do with your own experience? I mean, you think which helped you to- to get through that sort of certainly difficult times you had?

I think it's- it's always important to know what goes on around you. And to be wi- and to be wary.

Wary of what- of who or of what?

Of everybody- of everything. Be wary of- watch out what you do and be- be alert. Be alert, and know what the situation is around. Take an interest in- in the world around you, and try and enjoy life as much as you can.

Okay, Yvonne, anything else? From my point of view, I think we've discussed-

[3:10:00]

No, I don't think so.

...lots of things.

Oh, I just remembered the name of the man in Marseille. I think it's Varian [Varian Fry].

What's his name?

Varian, I think. It's in that book.

Okay, we're going to look at your photos and books now. So, in the meantime, I would like to say thank you, Yvonne. Thank you very much for this interview.

And thank you.

And I hope we'll manage to hear you despite the sound problems which are coming from the next door.

Yes. Okay. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure. And thank you also.

[End of interview]

[3:10:45]

[3:11:14]

[Start of photographs and documents]

Photo 1

Who can we see on this picture, please, Yvonne?

The Goldschmidt grandparents.

Thank you.

Photo 2

Who can we see on this photo, please?

These- these are my Bonn grandparents, Siegfried and Hedwig Stein.

Thank you.

Photo 3

Yes, Yvonne. Who do we see on this picture, please?

These are my four uncles: David, Henry, Julius, and Friedrich.

And when was this taken? Before your father was born?

It was taken before my father was born. That's why he's not on it.

So roughly in when? 19...?

18- 18 – 1890 – 1893, something like that.

1893. Thank you.

[3:12:10]

Photo 4

Members of my family.

Your parents?

My parents. Ju- Henry, Julius, Tante Minna. Tante Kläre.

And when-

Uncle David.

- do you think-? When was it taken?

No idea. No idea.

Thank you.

Photo 5

Yes, Yvonne, who was on this picture, please?

That's a picture of myself at the age of about four or five.

Taken in Germany?

I think so. Yes.

Thank you.

Photo 6

Okay, Yvonne, who is on this photo please?

It's a family photo. I think it's the 70th birthday of my grandfather Siegfried Stein, but I'm not sure.

And where was it taken?

I don't know.

Photo 7

Yes, please, Yvonne.

This is with my Stein grandparents, probably taken in Bonn.

Photo 8

Yes please, Yvonne.

This is Lady Margaret School –

Where?

In Peterborough.

And which year?

Oh dear. It must have been '40- 1940s. 1940. [phone rings]

Photo 9

Yes, Yvonne?

This shows Mother Mary Xaverine and my classmates at the Manor House School in Finchley.

Which year?

I don't know.

Thank you.

Photo 10

Yes, please.

My parents and I in our back garden at 19 Highcroft Gardens.

When was that, roughly?

I don't know. I must have been about ten. I don't really know.

Photo 11

That's- that's the school photo, in my uniform, and I must have been about twelve years old.

Photo 12?

Here you see Vera, Selma, and Norma - Nora at the hostel in- at 40 Teignmouth Road, Willesden Green.

Which year?

That must have been in '50- no.

'40-

'40- oh dear.

'48?

'48, yes.

Photo 13

This is- this is another photograph of the hostel, taken at the same time, and selected for the Continental Britons Exhibition and it's in their catalogue.

Who is in it?

Dr. Dr. Falck, Mrs. Levine and my mother, Lotte Goldschmidt.

Who was Dr. Falck, the-?

Dr. Falck was the- she ran the home- the hostel.

At the second lady?

[3:15:42]

She- she did- she did the cleaning. And my mother was the cook.

Okay. Thank you.

Photo 14

Yes, please Yvonne.

School dance at the Festival Hall in Kassel, in 1950.

With your classmates?

Yes, with my classmates.

Photo 15

Okay.

Manfred and the children, Denise, and Lillian, buying a car in 1968.

And where is that?

I don't- that must have been in-

It doesn't say. Munich or in Hamburg, or-?

[low discussion- location not stated]

Photo 16

1973. Manfred and I and Princess Margaret during the- her visit to the British Week in Munich.

Photo 17

It's a photo of my mother, Liselotte Goldschmidt, with a 'J' on it.

Document 1

Aliens Registration Book, which belonged to my father Ludwig Goldschmidt.

Yvonne, thank you so much for allowing us to interview you for Refugee Voices.

You're very welcome. Thank you very much for doing it.

Thank you.

[End of photographs and documents]

[3:17:31]