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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Marston
<b>Forename:</b>	Ruth
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
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**Interview No.** RV243  
**NAME:** Ruth Marston  
**DATE:** 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2019  
**LOCATION:** London, UK  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Jana Buresova

*[00:00:00] This interview is with Mrs. Ruth Marston in her home, on the 4th of July, 2019. Thank you very much indeed Mrs. Marston for kindly agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Project. May we start by something of your early days in Berlin and your family background.*

Well, I don't remember an awful lot about Berlin. I remember a bit about the flat that my mother and I lived in. I don't remember anything about the school, I'm afraid; although, I went to school for a year, I can remember a- certain incidents. For instance, one thing I can remember quite well is being in a park, and I think, I think, at the time they had segregated benches or something, and somebody said something about this. I can also remember, but this is not very relevant, that I was going. I mean, children were much more independent in those days, they weren't so protected. I was going to have lunch with a friend, I suppose, after school or something, and I got knocked over by a car or a lorry or something. I wasn't badly hurt, and I was taken to a police station where I had to sort of reconstruct it with little models, you know what had happened. What really annoyed me about it [00:02:00] was that I hated spinach like most children do, and there was spinach for lunch. [laughs] I thought that was somehow adding insult to injury, but, you know, it didn't hurt me much. Let me see if I can remember. Yes, I remember quite a bit about one of my grandmothers. I saw much more of one than the other. They both lived in Berlin.

*What were their names? Can you remember?*

Yes, and I've got some photographs of one of them, but I haven't got any photographs of the Jewish one. Is this because as a Jewish thing you shouldn't have pictures? Well, it was

something, something like that which I heard once- anyway, but I have a few things, you know, few things about, about the Aryan one. I have some memories of her. She was a good cook, which I always remember. And she made me nice clothes. And I have somewhere, I got a photograph of the corner of her flat. I don't remember- hardly anything about Berlin itself. I think I remember about the *Straßenbahn*, which I believe they still have.

*Would you like to explain that?*

Oh, yes. Well, it's sort of trams, aren't they? That run-on on like, like railway lines in the street. Yes, I think they still have some of those. Yes, I can't remember. Oh, I can remember very clearly being taken with my mother, there must have been visiting permission occasionally to my father. And I can remember the guard standing at the door watching us, and we sat at a table. [00:04:00] There wasn't a screen, I don't think, but we sat at a table.

*Could we come back to that?*

Yes, sure.

*If I may return to your parents and your grandparents?*

Yes, sure.

*Your maiden name, where they were from, and what they were doing at that time?*

Sure. Well, my mother was a teacher. My father, as I say, from 1935 onwards, was a political prisoner. Before that, he'd done some sort of not very interesting job. Something- can't remember what it was. I didn't know at the time, I'm afraid I've forgotten that.

*Why was he a prisoner?*

Because he was a communist.

*Was he politically, closely involved or...?*

That I don't know, but I mean, there must have been a record of his membership of the party. His, his brother- no not his brother, sorry. My mother's brother was a communist.

*What was his name?*

His name was- wait a minute. It'll come to me. I know it. This is old age. Sometimes it's there, but you can't quite fish it up.

*It'll come back to you.*

Yes, it'll come back to me in the course of the conversation. And they...my mother met my father because her mother ran from home which was quite unusual in those days, run a business selling office supplies, and she did that from home. And my father came- presumably to buy some office supplies [00:06:00] for somebody or other, and that's how they met. The, the uncles, so my mother's brother, in fact, was sent by the party, as they did in those days, to Russia, and then the war broke out, and he was sent to the Gulag as an American German spy. He wasn't a German spy. I talk about bad luck in there, sort of a double whammy. And he was there for a very long time, but eventually, it is my uncle, my mother's brother, eventually, after, I think it was after Stalin died or something, he was sort of rehabilitated and got back to Germany and, and to Berlin and lived obviously in the east side. Well, not obviously, but he did. East side of Berlin. Yes, so that was his story.

*What were your parents' names? Where were they from?*

Well, my, my mother's name was, as I say, Henrietta Levine, and then Pickardt. My father's name was Joachim Pickardt, and they were German as far as I know, yes. My father, his mother- wait a minute, let me get this right. His mother was Aryan, but his father was Jewish, so he was a *Mischling*. [00:08:00] Have you read that book? Have you read *Mischling*? I'll show it to you. A very good book.

*Were you born in Berlin?*

Yes. Yes.

*What was the name of your school and how did you feel about it? Were you--?*

What? The German school?

*Yes.*

Well, I can't remember anything about it. It was called Theodor-Herzl-Schule. It was a Jewish school because there were various rules introduced, weren't there? Where you could work,

and where you could go to school and all that business. I really don't remember any of the teachers, and I don't remember. I must have learnt things there, but I don't remember what.

*Did you experience any hostility on the way to school?*

No, not really. No. I don't remember how far away it was or that sort of wiped out. I have the theory that coming to England and leaving everything you knew behind, and having to change your language, meant that you concentrated so hard on that, it somehow wiped out the other side- or something like that. There's something that happened, that there's a lot of things that disappeared.

*Do you remember where you last lived in Berlin?*

Yes. That one I gave you, I was in Eisenbahnstraße, but I only remember very little about it. I think there was a balcony, but that's about all I remember. I don't--

*Which part of Berlin was it in?*

Charlottenburg, but I don't remember the area or- not really. It is a long time ago, [laughs] very long time. Eighty years. [00:10:00]

*You started to say earlier about your father being in prison. Could we come back to that?*

Yes, sure

*When was he first in prison [crosstalk] ?*

Well, I'm pretty certain it was '35 when I would have been about three.

*You were born in?*

In Berlin.

*Which year?*

I was born in, when was I born? 1932.

*Did you go with your mother to see him? Were you allowed to?*

Well, I can remember this one occasion. They must have had, they did have visiting, because in the correspondence, which I still haven't still sorted out, I've got quite a lot of correspondence. They were allowed to visit. I think- not only my mother, but I think- possibly his mother, and possibly his sister. I've got all this down, but I haven't sorted it out. Perhaps about once a month, I'm not quite sure. I can remember this one occasion of going with her and the guard being very visible, watching us. A big old fat man.

*Were you frightened?*

No, but I've realised that- it was a sort of atmosphere. There were other people being visited as well in the room, but it, it stayed with me. There was a certain, slightly threatening atmosphere, yes. Not that I thought he was going to hit us or anything, but you realised there is something not quite right about this.

*Were they aggressive? [crosstalk]*

No, no, no. Not at all. No, no.

*[00:12:00] Any idea how long roughly you were allowed to be there?*

I would think perhaps an hour. Something like that.

*How did your father look?*

**Ruth:** Well, you see, I didn't really know him, because I was so young when he went. I, I, I couldn't answer that really. He didn't look ill. He had had TB in the past, and on his- on the telegram, where they informed- the hospital- it's my mother or his mother that he had died, they said that he died of TB. I have evidence that this is probably not true, or in fact, it isn't true. There is evidence from someone else who was a co-prisoner, but even if he had died of TB, they should have treated it, you know. He'd been in a sanatorium, as they did in those days, among the pine forests. I've got photographs of that. Whether he recovered or not, anyway it's immaterial really. One way or another, they killed him.

*How was he arrested? Was he arrested at home? Was that as upsetting or?*

I couldn't tell you. I really couldn't tell you. I don't know that. Because for one thing, I would only have been three, but I really, I've got no- no evidence on that at all.

*It must have had a drastic impact on your mother. What- [crosstalk]*

Much worse for my mother. Much worse for my mother. It was a good marriage. I mean- she's recovered as one does, but yes, it was much worse for her than for me. [00:14:00]

*Did she get very depressed that you would have noticed, or perhaps you were not aware?*

Well, I mean the thing about us going to England was that the, I don't know what the exact translation of *Rechtsanwalt* [lawyer] is. I don't think it's exactly barrister, it might have been barrister, solicitor. I mean the legal system is a bit different now anyway. He said to her before we went, that they couldn't do any more to get his release in Germany, and she might have more chance from abroad. Otherwise, she wouldn't have emigrated. She would have stayed there, so we- so that's why we emigrated when we did. So, she- I mean, so very tough for her, she had to leave him there and do her best from England, but- it couldn't. Then, the war broke out, and so on, and so on.

*So, when did she hear of his death?*

Well, I've got a, I've got a telegram somewhere, but I haven't looked it out. I've got so many things that I ought to sort out.

*Of course.*

But there was actually a- I've got a proper telegram with- I may have it in one of those folders on the table there. I've got the telegram with the swastika on.

*So, we can check the date.*

Yes. I think it may be in that folder I've got on the table in there.

*Do you have any idea roughly when it might have been?*

Yes.

*Which year?*

Yes, I know the date. Wait a minute. I think it was '41.

*That must have been a terrible shock for her.*



I was a bit bad for her, yes. It was.

*How did she arrange to come to Britain? [00:16:00]*

Well, she had a - as I say, we didn't come on the Kindertransport, which everybody always thinks she came on. She had a friend in Berlin who had, I don't know if she'd married an Englishman or whether they had gone to England ... slightly earlier, before the war. And the friend, now let me get this right- somebody called Margot Hitlin. Hitlin is not a very English name, is it? Perhaps they went to, I don't know the details of that. Anyway, they were in England. And this friend had got in contact with these people in Croydon, a group of women I think it was, who had rented a house with a specific purpose of allowing refugees to live in the house until they could find some sort of employment. And of course, the employment was restricted at the time. You had to do either domestic work, for which they were totally unsuited the Jewish intellectuals. My mother knew ancient Greek, but she hardly knew how to boil an egg, because she'd always had someone living in to do that sort of thing. I always think that's a funny side it. And they weren't all refugees, one person was an evacuee or something. And so, that's how we came over.

*There was something special about this house, wasn't there?*

Well... what was special about it was firstly that they [00:18:00] very kindly allowed, they must have- they must have fed us as well because we had no money. I was so, so young obviously, I didn't know about all that, but the idea was very much that it would be a sort of staging post, until these various people could find other- possibly employment, possibly residential employment, or friends or whatever. And you know, so they dispersed quite, quite rapidly actually.

*Any idea how many people got there, roughly?*

There were some men as well actually now I come to think of it. They were women and children, and some men. I find that very hard to say. It would be under 20, probably about 12- something like that. I'm guessing. It wasn't a big house, it was a semi-detached sort of Victorian house in East Croydon.

*Where did you go from there?*

Then you see because it was near the airport, we had to leave there, and one of the people involved in renting this house, was also our guarantor, Quaker. I can't speak too highly of the Quakers, wonderful in every respect. And she, as I say, it just so happened as it does, that she had a sister who, also a Quaker, who lived in a huge house in Sussex. And my mother and I, and another [00:20:00] two mothers and their children had what, what used to be the servants' east wing. Talk about landing on your feet. Lovely place. Beautiful.

*Did she work in that house or did she...?*

No. Then she looked around for a job. I don't know how she got this job but she got a job as, I think, assistant matron. She wasn't officially meant to teach, although what happened in, in there and in another school was that they did give her a bit of teaching. You know, they were private schools. The school she landed in was Aspley Guise, yes, I've got some pictures of it, another wonderful place. Four acre walled garden. And it was that the head was a communist and there was that sort of, you know, link about.

*How did you find out that it was communist because by that time it was a question of "reds under the beds" in this country too?*

I'm not, I can't, I am not sure- that might come back to me. The school was officially run by committee of parents and teachers, but she was a communist. And I recently got in touch with- I can't quite remember how, with her grandson, who has the same name. And the school is- the school, which is in Muswell Hill, is still running.

*Do you remember the name of the school?*

Oh, not half. Fortis Green. Know it?

Yes.

Muswell Hill. [00:22:00] Tim Tudor-Hart is the one I'm in touch with.

*Wasn't his mother?*

Beatrice. Wonderful woman. How did you know about that? Through one of the other people you interviewed?

*No, a slightly different channel. Did you ever know Hetty Bower in Fortis Green?*

Yes. I know the name, but I can't remember much about her.

*She was the house warden of a Czech refugee trust fund hostel that took over a school that had been vacated during the war. There were Czech and ethnic German refugees there. And she was a communist though she didn't say during the war.*

It all sort of ties up, doesn't it? Beatrix was so fantastic. I've got her book, one of her books anyway.

*That's tremendous, yes. What were your memories of that particular place and the people there in general?*

At Aspley Guise? I've got quite a lot of memories of that because first of all the environment was so amazing. They grew their own... They had of course, in those days, conscientious objectors were allowed to work. Well, I mean, you must know this. They were allowed to do agricultural or horticultural work. We had two gardeners and they were both consciences of course [conscientious objectors] and I used to trail around after them. I learned quite a lot of gardening that way. [00:24:00] And so they, they had two huge greenhouses and grew a lot of their own fruit and veg. I mean that was already there, they didn't plant it, you know. Also, a kind parent. They had a field that was like a paddock and the kind of parent gave us a Shetland pony, as - gave the school- as one does, you know. And so, we...at that time I knew how to saddle and ride and groom a Shetland pony. Luckily, they are very small and we were all very small. So, you know, they were - you went up miles up high. And I can remember parts of the house- sort of visual memory, very well. And... some of the teachers, I can't- I must have learnt a lot there. I don't remember the lessons but I must have learnt stuff there. And then - yes, I do remember a lot of that about Asp- Fortis Green School at Aspley House. I've got some pictures in a, in a book. Later on it became a rather posh hotel, and there's some very nice photographs.

*Were you accepted by the other pupils? Or did you speak any English before you came to Berlin?*

I don't think I can have done because you wouldn't - I wouldn't have learned English at school, would I at six? But you pick it up very quickly if you're immersed in it, don't you as a child. And no, no, it was fine. It was fine. I mean, it might have been very different if I'd gone to an East End state school, [00:26:00] but I didn't. I can remember some of the pupils, a few

of them. I mean, it is a very long time ago. But- no, no, no discrimination. And you see we were - we didn't- we hardly saw anything of the village that we were in or anything. We would sometimes go for a walk half a mile away to some woods, but because we had this huge garden, we didn't need to go out much. And probably the only bit of the - I'd say - outside world that we saw were some domestics who would come in and do some domestic work or something. So, it was a very protected environment actually if you think about it.

*How did your mother react to it all?*

Well, she coped with it, I suppose, is the word. Also, because- the- as I say, she was totally unsuited to being an - you now- assistant matron, but she was good at relating to the children. That was her forte. So, people would forgive her, you know, some of her mistakes on, on the others. You know, they had to do things like look after their clothes which were all marked with caches, name tapes and I suppose when they were ill, I suppose she had to look- no, we did have someone who was qualified, if they were ill or someone who's a qualified nurse. And because the- the other staff were people with whom she would have had a lot in common, that was a great help and they were a huge support, [00:28:00] Beatrix in particular but others as well. And then at one stage she got two of her friends to get jobs there which is very good. Also, two - they were, they were both immigrants as well, yes, from German background. Don't know how she managed that but I suppose they came to visit. I don't know, it somehow happened.

*People did help each other, didn't they?*

Yes, well it somehow happened.

*During that time did she receive any correspondence from Germany, either from your father or family members?*

Yes, I think there was some correspondence that must have come, I think, via Switzerland. Not direct obviously. Yes, there was correspondence. And I've probably still got some of it but need sorting out.

*Did she get upset at all when she received the letters and was reading them or did you notice a change?*

Well, I don't, I don't remember that because I wouldn't necessarily have been on the spot, would I? You know. It was a big house and a lot was happening. I slept in the dormitory and she had her own room. I remember her room quite well.

*Were you able to spend very much time with her as she was matron or?*

Well, no, assistant. Goodness, she wasn't a matron. Well, she'd have a day off. I think we must have done things then, but I can't remember what, that was the main thing, yes.

*Where did you go from there?*

Well, let me think. From there because I was too old for the school, you know, we were there that length of time. She was still working there. [00:30:00] I was allowed to continue to live there and I went to a day school. I must have had some private tuition because I passed whatever the exam was, the equivalent of the 11 plus, you know. And I went to school at a school called Bedford Modern School for Girls, and I had to wear a uniform which was a bit of a shock. And I went by train every day from Aspley Guise to Bedford which was, I don't know- how many miles? Seven, 10 miles or something. Steam train, I remember and I hated it because it was the total opposite to everything I'd had before.

*All the freedom?*

Yes, and also the number of people. And you had to keep changing rooms to go to a different lesson, I wasn't used to that. I had a very cosseted time in a way and I, I really didn't like it there. Now, why did I leave there? I was only there for a year. That will come back to me.

*Which year would that have been?*

Well, that would have been- if I was 10, it must have been '42 to '43. Yes, I can't remember- there was a good reason for my leaving there. It might come back to me in the course of the afternoon.

*Are you aware or do you recall at all your mother's efforts on your father's behalf?*

Well, no, because I was too young to know what was going on, but the stuff in the letters, some of which I'm translating slowly [00:32:00], I must get a move on with all this. I'm translating it for my daughter's sake really, and my grandchildren, you know, they should know. There, there were things - various options being looked at. One strangely enough, well,

perhaps it isn't strange, seems strange to me now was that he should go to China. I don't know why, but that, that was definitely an option. It didn't come off, but that was one of them. No, but I mean, I wouldn't have known about that, I was too young. I wouldn't have understood it anyway. I mean there was- she was very good at keeping alive a sort of picture of him and the possibility that one day we would all be together, you know, she was good at that.

*Did you actually have a photograph of him to know what he looked like?*

Yes, I think so because I've got some old photographs - really old photographs, little black and white.

*Because you were not allowed to bring very much when you came over in 1939.*

Yes. I can remember very vividly, we had a trunk - what was called a trunk, and it had wooden bands on the outside, really great, big heavy thing. And the, the top lid all came up. It was solid as anything. It was as if you were, I don't know, going to go on a world tour or something, really heavy. And I think that was about all we were allowed to take. And for some reason, they were allowed to take linen. And I think I still might have one or two things that are left over from that time. Because- I think at the time that my mother got married, [00:34:00] when you got married, you were given lots of linen, it was sort of like a dowry almost. Yes.

*Do you remember or would you know which year she got married?*

I should do. I should do. Again... it was a few years before '32, that's about all. It might have been '29, might have been, I couldn't swear to it.

*What was your initial feeling coming to Britain, and who met you?*

Yes, it's a good question. I honestly don't know. We must have gone straight to this house in Croydon because there was nowhere else to go. So, I assume we just went there. There were other people there with similar backgrounds. That must have been quite supportive for the adults. You know, they weren't there on their tod in, in somewhere. Certainly, my mother could speak some English, she must have learned it at school, or I don't know, something like that. So, they weren't totally isolated, you know.

*Could you trace your journey from Berlin to Britain?*

I honestly don't remember- except the boat. I remember the boat.

*From?*

Across the channel from wherever we were in Germany. I don't [00:36:00] know where. I think it must have been Harwich. Yes. I don't remember the other bits at all. As I said, I don't remember the packing up. I can remember that I could take- I wasn't a great one for dolls, and interesting enough, I had a boy doll with a, with a sort of celluloid head. I remember him. I remember we were allowed to take him. And...no, I don't remember the other pictures of the journey at all.

*Did you miss your German friends when you were here? Did you miss home?*

Do you know, I don't remember having many German friends. I must have had one because of this one I went to have lunch with, when I was run over. I think I probably missed one grandmother in particular, but there was still some contact through these letters via, you know- it must have been Switzerland. And... Do you know about "*Stille Helden*" [quiet heroes]. I'll show you a book on that. I am glad, I can tell you something. On the table, I've got a book from an organisation called "*Stille Helden*". And my Aryan grandmother, yes, my father's mother, is in there. I got this book suddenly and I thought it'd been sent to me by my- what is he- my cousin who lives in Germany. And I sort of wrote and said, "Thank you for the book. Very interesting." He said, "I didn't send it to you." But they had somehow traced me as a, a, a descendant [00:38:00] because this grandmother, this- I'm going to get muddled up if I'm not careful- the Aryan grandmother had sheltered a Jewish woman for years in her flat, which was, as you know, extremely dangerous. And "*Stille Helden*" is an organisation of German people who did this. I've got a book about it and, and, and her name and everything. Very interesting.

*Indeed. I'd like to come back to that aspect on your family later. What did you do when you left the Bedford Modern School?*

Yes, I'm trying to think why I left. Oh, I know why I left there. It comes back, you know. It takes a while. It's because these children, at the school where I was living, not, not where I was a pupil, were all under 10. As they do at that age, they kept on getting infectious diseases like measles, chickenpox, possibly whooping cough, and then I would have to miss six weeks of school. And so, this wasn't doing my education any good, so I obviously had to go

somewhere else. And I then went to - where did I go after there? I then went to a boarding school to get out of this, you know-

*What was the name?*

I think the school I went to then was called Stroatley Rough.

*Oh yes.*

You know about that?

*Yes.*

I remember that quite a bit.

*Gerta Mayer was there.*

Dr. Levine, Dr. Levine and what's the other one called? [00:40:00] A woman who was into music? There were two of them. I can't remember her other name.

*That was a school in-- [crosstalk]*

In Haslemere. Interviewer: -predominantly German-speaking? It called itself an international school. No way was it an international school, it was nearly all Jewish refugees from Germany and, and related places, international, nonsense. Interestingly, they actually expelled me after a couple of years. Yes - I had- it's ridiculous, they hadn't done- I hadn't done anything awful, like dealing drugs or, or you know, smoking in the bedrooms. I just - I was was about the age of 13 by then. I was at the age where you're rebellious and you're challenging authority. And I was very cheeky. I remember, I used to be sent out of the classroom and had made to stand outside because-- I was playing them up, you know. That's their job, they should have been able to do that. I was rather worried about what my mother's reaction would be. But in fact, looking retrospectively, I don't think I realised it at the time, I think she was slightly proud of me because she'd been rather, rather challenging too, you know, in her youth. I think she thought, "Chip off the old block." [laughs]

*Given that so many of the pupils or the majority of pupils there were German-speaking Jewish girls-*

They weren't all Jewish. They weren't all girls, there were boys as well.



*Oh, were there?*

Oh, yes. [00:42:00] Stroatley Rough was, was mixed, yes. And they weren't all Jewish.

*Did you speak in German at all because a lot of people were reluctant to speak in German during the war.*

Yes, you were advised not to. I've got a fascinating thing issued, little thing, guidance for refugees. And it says quite rightly, "Don't speak loudly in German on the street." Well, obvious, but obviously you needed saying. I don't think we spoke German, I think we spoke English.

*Did you have any lessons or classes in German?*

Because you see, you see by that time, I'd, I'd been in England for, if I was 11, I'd, I'd been in England for a few years. Oh, we had German lessons, yes, but our normal- I think we just spoke English all the time, no. And, I mean, the good thing about it, there's always a good side to these things, was- that when it came to exams, I could always get a distinction in German, partly because my oral German was so good, you know, yes, so I took that always.

*Where did you go after you'd been in- [crosstalk]*

After I had been chucked out there? Now, that's when the, the Quaker friend. . I'm trying to get the order right, was such a help. He recommended a school or he knew somebody or something. And I went to a school called [00:44:00] Sherwood School in Epsom.

*Then how did you get home then?*

Which was another "progressive" school as Fortis Green was. And I - so I was a boarder there and I was there for about two and a half years and took- what is now GCSE was then O-Levels.

*Yes, you could.*

Yes, equivalent of O-Levels, yes. Then I was going to stay on there to do A-Levels, whatever the equivalent, high school cert is called. And that wasn't very successful because I was the only one doing it. And I was partly- I was partly meant, to be doing that and partly I actually did some sort of domestic work to help pay for my keep. And that really didn't work out very

well. Not having a peer group from and sort of thing, it, it really wasn't going very well. Also...I and this shouldn't have happened, I realise now from my adult stage. I was seduced by one of the people working there, an adult, he wasn't a teacher. But he was, he was, he was, he was another conscientious objector and he was sleeping there. Well, that shouldn't have happened, I realise that, but it didn't do me any harm actually. And so, I left there and [00:46:00] through this Quaker friend of mine, of our house, he was in Cardiff and he was- he must have been lecturing there. Yes, economics was his subject. And he- this is why I am not against- it's what I call the middle-class network. He must have been something to do with the Library Committee. He got me a job in the, in the, in the university library.

*In Cardiff?*

At the university. I had no qualifications at all. I mean- I was mostly just carrying books from one place to another, I wasn't cataloguing, I don't think. It, it sounds bad, but it was great.

*Did you ever subsequently regret not going further with your school education?*

Well, I did- later on, you see. After that, wait a minute, where have we got to? Oh, yes, working in the library. Yes, and I lived in - this again was, was organised by the Quaker Walter Birmingham, he lived in an adult community in Bute Street, which was a very notorious place at the time in the docks in Cardiff, but- how many were we, eight, 10 adults. And they were- two of them were university teachers, one was running a youth club in the docks. I can't quite remember what the others were. And we employed between us a cook, housekeeper. [00:48:00] But they were all either- oh and there were one or two students, so there were sort of students, professionals, you know, that sort of thing. While I was there, and I was there for, I don't know, I was there for about a year, I think. I decided I really wanted to study properly. And so then- oh yes, I my mother was working in Haslemere in a residential school, but she wasn't living in the school. She had a certain arrangement the school made. She had two rooms in somebody's council house, and they paid for it, you know. It was only half-a-mile away, and a wonderful landlady, who- I can't quite remember the exact details, but she said, "well, your daughter could come and live here as well." So, we lived in these two rooms in the council house. And I went to a grammar school in a nearby town, again about 10 miles or something, you know. I went by- I went by train. In many ways, academically, that was the best part of the education. Mind you, I was old. No, I shouldn't say that because a lot of the early ones were very good too- in different ways. I would say some

of the schools I went to, I learned a lot of things that weren't on the curriculum, but I mean in a nice way. I don't mean the bad bits. The grammar school was good. The old grammar schools, they had lots to be said for them.

*What sort of work followed that?*

Oh, well, then I went to university. And... again, this is a bit--

*Which university? [00:50:00]*

University College London.

*And what did you read there?*

Philosophy. And again, looking, you know, in retrospect, I realised that I didn't have terribly good results in, in higher school cert, but why they accepted me- partly, not wholly but partly, was not on the basis of my brilliant mind, but philosophy was not a popular subject in those days, it was very, very much a minority subject especially in London. In Oxford, it might have been different. They wanted bums on seats, you know, and I was a potential bum on the seat. I had, I had a county major scholarship, I think it was called, which paid not only the fees but paid - you know- for your living expenses. You needed to get a job in the vac but then students did in those days especially in the long vac. We all went and got a job. So...

*In a way, you were going full circle politically perhaps?*

No. I didn't study philosophy because of interest in politics. No, I studied philosophy because in these- funny private schools, not funny they were good, I'd, I'd come across a lot of different opinions on things, no establishing ones- I hasten to add, and they were all very left-wing and so on and , and sort of non-religious and all the rest of it. [00:52:00] Well, conscientious of it, they're pacifist, that was one slight difference, you know. I, I wanted really to sort things out. I, I think that's the only way I can explain- and living in this community in Cardiff, there'd be a lot of interest in discussions because they were interesting people. And, you know, I wanted to, as I said, to sort it out somehow.

*You had all these diverse influences.*

Yes, yes. I, I didn't get the other end of the spectrum. I didn't get religious fanatics or anything like that, but yes, I think that was it.

*When you graduated, what did you do then?*

Oh, yes. I graduated in '53... And then I got married because the sort of thing, well, [unintelligible] from what I'm going to do now, quite a lot of us did that.

*When did you get married?*

In '53.

*Actually in 1953?*

Yes, September. At that time, when, when we were students, the men were mostly men who'd done national service. So, they were a bit older. They weren't raw 17-year-olds or 18-year-olds. And, and the other reason for getting married was that it was very difficult to live with someone if you weren't married to them, you know. It was frowned on, you couldn't get accommodation. [00:54:00] And when- just before in July '53, we had seen an advert in the Statesman, which of course we read at the time that a university chap wanted to let his flat for three months, so we- wait a minute, there's another bit to this story. Yes, that's right. And so, we applied and, and he said, "Yes." Ron, who became my husband said, "Look, we live together for three months. At the end of that time, you've got to-" I didn't want to get married. "You've got to decide whether we marry or not. "Which I thought was fair enough, three months is quite a long time, you know, living- we'd been together before but.

*Where did you meet?*

University.

*At the university?*

Yes, he was doing psychology. I went to some- I went to some psychology lectures because we had an optional paper and that, that was my option. Do you know about Sir Robert? No, perhaps you don't. Because there was a great scandal that I heard Sir Robert. It was a great scandal afterward, said he'd cooked some of [unintelligible]. He was a very eminent psychologist to do with intelligence testing, you know, which was just coming in then. There was a great scandal afterward because he'd cooked some of his results [00:55:44]. He was a very eminent bloke, I heard it.

*Was your husband Jewish or...?*

No, no.

*What was his background? [00:56:00]*

Very working class. His, his father was a- well, lower-middle perhaps. His father was a salesman to butchers- of butchers- what are they called? It's something like sausage raskin and spices, that sort of thing. Not the basic meat, all the other stuff that went with it. He was, he was a commercial traveler, they called them in those days, that's right. His mother was very dim. I mean, she really was dim. Not, not ESN, but she was- average if not slightly below. Nothing wrong with her but we didn't have a lot in common, to say the least. They lived in Bristol. His father, who was much brighter, but had missed out on education, because he had to leave school at about 12 or 13 to support the family, which, which they didn't have a compulsory school age, I think at that age, at that time. Anyway, that's the story I got. He had, he had to leave to go to work. I don't know details, but.

*And were they religious at all? Were they C of E [00:57:38] or- your husband?*

Never noticed any sign of anything. No, I don't think so.

Was there any antipathy on their part that you would use [crosstalk] ?

Well, they were a bit dubious, yes, to begin with, but I think that was due to their ignorance. [00:58:00] You know, perhaps they thought that he wouldn't be able to have bacon sandwiches or something like that at all or, or, you know, something like or, or that we would go to synagogue. It think, but, but, yes, that was just initially. They were a bit worried.

*And was there an element of anxiety because you were from Germany even though you were not Nazi?*

No, I don't think, I think that came into it, no. And because- you see because they lived in Bristol and we lived in London, which I always was pleased about, 100 miles between us and, you know, people didn't travel as easily then, they couldn't afford it. I mean, there was a lovely rail service, but they couldn't afford it. We didn't see a lot of them, I mean, Christmas or something, they would come to us or we would go to them or whatever, and possibly months in between, but- not much. The way people travel now, they'll go over to Japan for a wedding, just like that- amazing. We didn't go to some of our friends' weddings in England

because we, we probably couldn't afford the fare or the time. You know, get the time off or I don't know.

*Did your husband work as a psychologist?*

Yes, he did. As once called - I mean after psychology, you had to more or less specialise one point of your work and some went into clinical which he didn't. Some went into educational and some went into sort of industrial. And he was- what is now called- human relations then was called personnel. **[01:00:00]**

*And you worked at this time as well?*

Yes, I, I worked in a, a library. I've worked at either- either the institution of civil engineers or- which I mentioned before- or British shipbuilding. I can't quite remember which came first.

*When did you have your family?*

Only one. [chuckles] 1959.

*What was the name of your daughter?*

Melanie.

*Melanie. What sort of work does she do?*

Well, she's done quite a few different things, I'm pleased to say. But her latest, latterly- you know- fairly latterly, she trained as a teacher, and she did some teaching and then- the pressure was so awful. She'd, like some other of her friends, demoted herself to being a teaching assistant. What she's good at, which is, sort of in the family tradition is really emotional support of children. And she would be given one or two, usually one at a time, child. Not so much to support them educationally, but to support them emotionally. And the school realised that she was good at that. I don't know if they - sort of suggested that she **[01:02:00]** do some training or whether she- I can't remember that, but anyway, she has since then done an MSc in play therapy. She does a combination of- she still works as a, as a TA, I think. Yes, she does. She does play therapy with individual children. She, she, she did that quite late in her life and I said, "Well, you know what are your employment prospects?" And

she said, "Well, there are lots of ways in which you can be employed as a play therapist," which I didn't know, in schools in children's centres, privately, all sorts of things.

*Did they still use the Marian Low approach?*

I couldn't tell you. I don't know enough about it.

*She was a refugee who came here and established the Marian Low means of testing children and their problems and expressing [crosstalk]?*

No, you'd have to ask my daughter that. She, she trained at a place- she lives in Bristol, and the place was, I think it was University of West England or something like that. Just across the water. I can't quite remember.

*In terms of your own life- how do you identify yourself? Do you think of yourself primarily as Jewish or German or British?*

Certainly not German. No way. And - when they had this thing recently that you could get dual nationality, I wrote to the German- [01:04:00] I wrote to somebody, I can't remember who I wrote to saying no way did I want a passport from a country that had murdered two of my family. I mean however useful it might be. I have been back to Berlin to visit this cousin.

*When did you go there?*

Well, I went, first, quite a long time ago when my mother- my mother died in '93. And we went before then, I don't know, early '90s or something. I mean obviously, after the wall came down and everything. And, yes - to visit this, this cousin of mine. I've had holidays in Germany, one or two long- long before that.

*How did you feel going back?*

Well, I'm not so- I mean as far as the actual country's concerned, I'm not so impressed with all these endless pine forest that they're so keen on. I think they're rather dreary, but I - we had a holiday, this is a long time ago. I can't remember if my husband was still alive [01:05:35]. But anyway, it doesn't matter, long time ago and we went down the Rhine. And that, that- that was nice. Yes, that's good. There are certain things that really made me angry about the Germans. And I have a horrible- [01:06:00] impulse. If I - when I used to be able to walk around the west end, if there were German tourists, if they would ask me the way, I had

horrible impulse to tell them the wrong way to go. They're totally innocent, you know. I know that they didn't have a direct hand in anything. I know that is the argument about we know that this generation had nothing to do with it, but I'm afraid, I have a very primitive feeling and I think the same blood runs in their veins. And even if people didn't take a direct part in anything before, they let it happen. They stood by. When I see things on old news reels of the thousands of people, and Hitler, this mad man spouting hysterically to them and they're all shouting and saying "*Sieg, Heil*" [01:07:01], it really makes me sick. You know- that sort of mass... I mean I know some of the historical reasons why Hitler appealed, why he came to power and why they thought he was so marvellous. It still makes me sick, even now.

*Did you feel at all uneasy going back?*

No, no, no. I mean it's a long time ago. No.

*Did you go back at all to where you last lived in Berlin?*

Well, I'm trying to think. We, we stayed... let me think. We stayed in a flat... near where my- where my cousin lived. And... [01:08:00] No, I didn't.

*Did you lose many family members in the Holocaust?*

Well, as I say, my father was- no, not a lot. My father was killed because he was a communist. My Jewish grandmother died in Auschwitz. And the other Jewish- my Jewish grandfather, he died of natural causes before, you know, they could get at him. No, not a lot.

*Have you been to Auschwitz?*

I wouldn't go. Wait a minute. No, I haven't been to Auschwitz but my father was killed at Buchenwald. I had- I'd gotten some rather more distant relatives who got in touch with me quite a long time after all this, through my- it's terribly complicated. Through an aunt of mine. Anyway, they, they lived in Jena. He was a biochemist in- he was a professor of biochemistry in Jena. I went to visit them, but this was much, much later. And one day, I'm sorry if all these things are so bizarre. Well, I know, one day they said, like you say, would you like to go to the Tower of London? They said, "Would you like to go to Buchenwald? Just like that. So, I sort of gulped right and said, "Yes. All right." We went by car [01:09:58] I think and I could [01:10:00] remember this very distinctly. It was in the summer, lovely day. It's beautiful. You know, beech trees have this light green leaves. And as we drove there,



I thought these leaves should have shrivelled and died. I had this strong feeling. Anyway, we got to Buchenwald and there was a shop, which really shocked me. I wasn't going to go in there. It was a lovely sunny day, and I said to them, "I'd quite like to just have a walk around by myself." Which I did and there were two other people walking around. Have you ever been there?

*Not to Buchenwald. No, I've been to Auschwitz [crosstalk].*

And - so I walked around a bit and very few people. There were only two other people there. Then we came home. Yes. I'm not sure about this- visits to Auschwitz. Is it a good thing that people should go there? You think it is?

*I think it depends on the connections and how people feel about [crosstalk].*

They take children there, don't they? They take schoolchildren there. I, I, I can't quite make up my mind about it. Perhaps, it does drive it home better because it makes it real for them rather than just reading about it in the, in the books. Yes.

*What was the impact on you of Buchenwald when you were there and afterwards when you left?*

Well, as I say, I had this feeling that the leaves should have shrivelled up. It was- it was a [01:12:00] peaceful place. There was no regimentation about it. It was just grassy, you know, and there weren't lots of signs or anything. I thought the shop was appalling. I know museums have shops, but that really annoyed me. It was okay. It was okay.

*Did it haunt you afterwards?*

No, no. Not at all.

*What about your daughter Melanie, does she feel any connection with Germany and the Holocaust?*

Well, she knows, she knows my cousin because apart from us going there, he and his family have been over here.

*What was your cousin's name?*

Andre Reder [01:12:51].

*You were saying about her?*

Well, he's been over here and we've had holidays together. And I think - I'm trying to remember whether she's been over there with us, to have holidays with him- [01:13:09] possibly. And it- it just so happened that this year, a friend of hers from Bristol, who has, I think, a boyfriend in Berlin, went to Berlin and she decided to go with her because Berlin is very a trendy place now, isn't it? You know, people think, "Oh, it's all happening in Berlin." She went over and met this cousin again, who lives there and they got on really well, which it did before, you know, but that was a success. She did the sights of Berlin and so on. Yes, that was [01:14:00] sort of taking it up again.

*Has she been to any of the concentration camps?*

No, I don't think there'd be much point. No, I don't think she'd be interested really.

*Does she identify herself as Jewish?*

Not at all. Not at all - they're noticed. Now, the thing is, I've lately got to feel quite proud of being Jewish- born Jewish, but I don't believe any of the stuff. I don't keep the festivals or anything. I have a friend I talk to mostly on the phone because she lives up in North London. And you know, none of us get around so much anymore, who sort of reminds me, she, she like me, she's Swiss actually, is not a believer in any sense, but she keeps some of the festivals partly for her adult sons' sake because they are rather keen on keeping it. I mean there is this sort of mixture of it being a- it doesn't have to be a religious thing. It's more- and I can quite see why keeping the traditions and some of the festivals and even some of the food things is what has been a very cohesive thing for the Jews. Yes, I can understand that, you know, very much so. One of the things I still want to do, I want to have a walk around Stamford Hill because I've never been there. You know, I've heard a lot about it, but I've never actually been there. So - although, as I say, I reject all the things that belong to being a, a practicing [01:16:00] Jew, I have a lot of admiration and a certain pride in, in being born Jewish, because you're born Jewish, aren't you, which you're not in other religions. Well, I don't know, perhaps you are in the Muslims. I don't know much about them.

*Does your daughter regret that you don't keep up?*

No, not at all. I mean she was never brought up with any of it. No, it just got nothing to do with her life. That's all.

*Are you a member AJR or anything like that?*

No, I'm not. I just I heard about this through my friend, Eva Holmes, who your organisation has also interviewed. And she just sent me this-- she sends me stuff that she read in the papers. So, she knows I would've want to read because I only take the Times once a week and I don't take AJR. She put a question mark on it and that's how, you know, I came into it.

*If you were to give a message during this interview for anyone watching the interview, either as a DVD or a memory stick, what would you like to say?*

I'd like to say that all this must not be forgotten. That's the main thing. Yes. And also, as I say, that it's a realisation of how much Jewish people have contributed to the countries that they've been to. They haven't come and just lived on benefits all the time, far from it. I mean, they contributed in, in the intellectual, artistic, [01:18:00] the scientific, all, all spheres, immense.

*Indeed.*

This friend of mine- another friend of mine, who's also Jewish- Swiss and who I've talked to mostly on the phone. She had two sons. One of her sons was controller of Radio 4 which I think is a terrific. I'm a great fan of BBC. He, he, he retired from it, but he was, you know.

*Do you feel that you've contributed anything?*

Well, I've- in a small sphere, yes, because I started in 19- wait a minute, 19, when was it? '63 as a part-time, and this again, wasn't- it was, it was partly chance and partly what I call the middle-class network. I started as a part-time play specialist in the Brook Hospital which no longer exists, a local hospital. And that was- interestingly that was through a rather Maverick paediatrician also Jewish, who was willing to do this as an experimental thing and pad by "Save the children fund". And I started that and through a progression of more and more people employing-- it was, you now, these, these- groups were often taken over by the Health Service which was "Save the children fund's" policy, a very good policy, that they would start it and if they thought- [01:20:00] if hospitals thought it worth, they would gradually handover and perhaps just be supervisors. Very good policy. Very farsighted, you know, to

sort look ahead like that. Anyway, it started with my doing that. And I mean there were other things happening in the field of children in hospital. It wasn't just that. There were some people called the Robertsons, they were very influential. And there was a foundation of what was then called Mother Care for Children in Hospital which later became National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital. They changed, don't they. I'm not saying it was just me. And - so it started off with that. It went on to- am I repeating myself? Have I said this before? It went on to lots of hospital starting a few schemes, a training scheme which I taught at a professional association. As happens, the training schemes have on the whole been amalgamated into existing academic courses, you know. I mean, when I look back on it, it was so wonderful. We went, we went for interview at this college. We started at Southwark College [01:21:29]. Now, we didn't start at Southwark College [01:21:31]. We started at- oh, God, where was it? I'll think of it in a minute. And they sort of said, "Well, what would you like in the way of guest speakers and what would you like in...?" They were asking us. We weren't- say we would like this and this. It was fantastic. And the students originally who came in these courses were [01:22:00] given the time off by their employers, and the fees was paid by the employers. So, you know, this is early days, but anyway, it started off with that. Then there was professional association. I was editor of the newsletter. I taught on the course and ended up, I think I may have said this earlier, talking to about 100 people at Friends House, other play, play workers in hospital. I mean, they've changed their name now. They now call them- they don't call them hospital play specialists anymore. They call them- what do they call them? Something a health play specialist or something. Anyway, they very kindly made me an honorary member, and I get the journal to sort of know what's going on.

*That's something to be proud of.*

It is and, as I say, it wasn't just me. It was all sorts of things coming together. It was a change in attitude. Also, the use of antibiotics made a huge difference, because unrestricted visiting was not possible really before that. Children in hospital had very restricted visiting from their parents, which, of course, is devastating for them- for both parents and the children, but with better infection control, they didn't have to be so paranoid about this. I mean hospitals are still a good place to catch things really. And they're getting worried now, aren't they, that antibiotics aren't working anymore. Never mind, they'll discover something else.

*Is there anything else that you would like to add or to go back to that has come to mind that didn't perhaps [crosstalk]?*

Well, I should probably think [01:24:00] of something tomorrow. [laughs] No, I can't. I'm not sure. I can't really think of anything.

*In that case, thank you very much again for kindly agreeing to be interviewed.*

Well, thank you. Thank you, it's been good. Yes, it's been good.

*Perfect.*

Good. Well, I think it's a good thing you're doing.

*Definitely.*

This is me aged, I would say, about two in 19- perhaps '34 with my Jewish grandfather who was blind in Berlin. The picture was in Berlin and he was a gastroenterologist called Max Pickhardt. This is the youngest one obviously, is me aged about six or something. My mother and my paternal grandmother. This one is my paternal grandmother on the ship on the way to Brazil, in the '50s. Yes, in the '50s to join her son, who had moved to Brazil, probably in the '30s because he was gay and the Nazis didn't like gays. He got out in good time and established himself there. And then my- his mother, the one in the photograph and sister, joined him there and lived there for some years. [01:26:00] This photograph, 1953 when I got married, it was taken in Haslemere, Surrey after, obviously, a registry office wedding. Not a very glamorous background, I think. What else can I say about it.

We both, we both wore suits because they could be, not recycled, but continue to be used for some years. We had nice new suit each. What else do you want to know?

*The gentleman concerned?*

Yes, my husband, Ronald Frederick Marston, who we'd met at university which is a very good place for meeting people, and he read psychology. I went to, I had a subit paper in psychology. So, I got to know a lot of psychologists, which was quite a good thing because the philosophy department was very small and somewhat limited for social life.

What, this pamphlet? I think I came across this pamphlet at a place locally called the Reminiscence Centre and then renamed Age Exchange, which has sort of things of social historical interests. And I found it very entertaining to read because of coming from that sort of background. Other people, they would just take it at face value, but I think, I think it's very good. [01:28:00]

*I'll keep a straight face.*

I'm not quite sure I know what to say about this. Speaking German in public. Yes. Not a good idea. Sorry, I haven't any thoughts on this. It just seems obvious. [01:28:28] **[END OF AUDIO]**