

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
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Interviewee Surname:	Fraser
Forename:	Alice
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	11 September 1919
Interviewee POB:	Merzig, Germany

Date of Interview:	30 June 2020
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 7 minutes



REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV255
NAME: Alice Fraser
DATE: 30th June 2020
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

[Present also are Ronnie, Alice's son, and his wife, Lola]

Today's the 30th of June 2020 and we are conducting an interview with Mrs. Alice Fraser. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.

What is your name please?

Alice Fraser.

And where and- when and where were you born please?

I was born in Merzig in Saarland on- you want to know the date? - 11th of September 1919.

Alice, thank you very, very much for having agreed to do this interview for Refugee Voices-

You're welcome.

- in these difficult conditions. And I hope you're not going to be too cold. Any time you want to stop or take a break, you tell me and we-

Okay, fine.

Please tell us a little bit about your family background.

My family background. We were my Mama and Papa. And I had a sister Hannah, who is older than me. Or, she was- sometimes it was three and a half years, the way it, you know, sometimes four. And well, all I can say is we were a loving family. We- we had lovely parents. And we always got on with both sides of the family, Mama and Papa's. And we- they used to love having us for holidays. We used to go there. And it was just, in those days, a normal life. And I can't say any more.

Tell us about Merzig. What- what sort of place was it?

It was a very small town. And it was what you called a *Kreisstadt*, you know. There were local councils, they always council together. And we had a very nice community there, really, and a lovely synagogue. And, we were fairly orthodox. Well, my parents were very orthodox, actually. But, you know, it tapers off a bit on the children.

[0:02:51]

And who- was your father- had your father been in that place for many generations?

Yes, he was born there. And he- he always stayed there, where his siblings went somewhere else to Saarbrücken. You know. But we used to- they used to come to us and meet, you know, quite often, actually. You know. And we were a happy family.

And how did- do you know how your parents met? How did your mother come to-?

How? That I wouldn't know.

But she wasn't from Merzig.

She- she was born in Rodalben in the Pfalz, and near Pirmasens. That was the next big town. And my mother's eldest brother and the middle brother lived there. And my sister and I, we used to love going there on holidays, you know, and spent the summer holidays there. And then my Papa used to miss us. So he took one of those children home with him. So, you know. But we used to enjoy going there. Yeah.

So, also rural. So both were rural - rural places.

Yeah, yeah.

So you- where were your- what were the parents of your mother-? What did they do?

That I don't know. She lost them fairly young, I believe. And so did my Papa. They both died fairly young. In those days, they were- they lost them most of the- they left this, I think- what is it? The chest-?

TB? Tuberculosis?

Not that, no. The other one. What do you call it? Oh, I don't know. It wasn't tuberculosis. No. That I definitely know. But anyway, we were very happy, such a-

[0:05:20]

What was your father's profession?

He was a *Pferderhändler* - horse dealer. And, you know- and, we were very ordinary people. And, that's the way we were living, you know. And I- I can't tell you any more. No. We left Merzig to go, because my parents- my- my uncle stood guarantor for my parents. He lived in Luxembourg. And, he stood guarantor for Mama and Papa, that's right, to come to Luxembourg. And we were going on to England as domestic.

Just before we come to that, tell me a little bit about- you said it was a small Jewish community. How many Jews were there? I don't know if-

Well - there? I'm sure we were over 1000 there. Because we had a fairly big synagogue. It was a very nice synagogue. Yeah. And nowadays, I went back and had a look. They made a children's playground out of it. So, at least something, you know, children enjoy.

And you said your father was a horse dealer. What were the other people? What were the- were the-?

Oh, they had two people. They had material shops, you know. And I went- my sister and I, we both wanted to learn all about the materials. And we were going to have a shop- also a shop, you see? That was our ambition.

Okay.

And- and funnily enough, we both started off at- with the same firm. You know. Two- two days a week, we had to go to the *Handelsschule*. So, I enjoyed that actually.

Like an apprenticeship?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[0:07:54]

But just before we come to that, tell us a little bit about your schooling. Where did you go to school?

I went to school in Merzig. And I never came to the *Lyzeum* because by then Hitler already took over. And my sister went to the *Lyzeum*, I think, it was one or two years. She was- as she was older. And but by the time I came, nothing.

Were the- [sound break]

Yes, I asked you how many Jewish children were there in the school?

How many Jewish children? I was the only- in- the only one in the class. Well, we had a fairly- but I can't remember any other children, to be honest. I know. Oh, yeah. There were a few from the next little place. And were- they were very small places, around. As I say, Merzig was a *Kreisstadt*, you know, what- I don't know- can't think what you call it here, now. And oh, you fella.

So what was the relationship? You were the only Jewish girl in your class?

Yeah-

Was the- was it-?

No, I had no bother there. But obviously, when you go home, some of the boys now and then they, you know, who didn't like Jewish people, they would call you 'dirty Jew' and all that. I mean, if I reported it, some of the teachers would take note. But some of them didn't. You know. But, that's the- the only thing. It wasn't- well, I considered it wasn't too bad, you know. Because when you heard other stories we were very blessed in the way. You know?

[0:10:20]

And did you notice, because you must have started primary school let's say 1926-

Yeah.

[19]25? So did you notice the change?

No.

How did you, as a child, experience-?

Well, I- I never worried over anything, really. I just took everything as it came, you know. And the only thing, some of the- the teachers would say, "Your sister was so much cleverer than you are." [laughs] So- and I used to take it, you know, laugh and that's it. But, I never worried over it. And, I had a happy childhood really, until Hitler came, you know.

And what else stands out for you? Did you- did you do some- your father was a horse trader. Did you- did you do some horse riding or did you help-?

Well-

Your father, or-?

No, we didn't do any horse riding. Papa had a... a... a stall, what do you call it? A building for his horses nearby. You know. Only- I used to- he used to put me on a horse now and then. But not riding, you know. No. But I was more as a tomboy, you know, than studying.

So what was? What were the activities? What do you remember? What did you do? Swimming, or-?

[0:12:13]

Oh, yeah, I went swimming. We used to go swimming. And... Well, we- we did things that all children do. And especially if you were told not to do a thing, you went and did it. [laughs]

For example?

For example, one afternoon- my father had cousins- two cousins living in Merzig too. And they- we used to be in touch, very much in touch. And one of them had a, a - a daughter who was two years younger than myself. And one day she came and she had an umbrella given to her, which was a lovely thing for me, you know? And my mother said- and she said, "Come and see it." You know. My mother

said, “No, don't go now, because we're going to eat soon.” And of course, what did I do? I went. And they had very steep steps coming out. And I was in such a hurry, trying to jump those steps and what happened? I fell on the pavement and the... stone cut me here. I've still got the scar. And of course, it was dripping with blood. So the wife of the- the cousin, she rang my mother and she said, “I- I, I think Alice needs the doctor.” So my mother had to take me to the doctor who stitched this up. And when I came home, my Papa was very, very cross with me. And I still had a hiding nevertheless. So- [laughing] but it didn't do much good. I didn't change. And, well, I was a happy kid. That's all I can say.

So, you had a lot of freedom?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. My parents were very good. And when we used to get a hiding, they said, “Well, you're going to have a hiding.” So we said, “Can Mama do it?” Because my Mama wasn't as hard as my Papa. Because, you know.

And what sort of place? Where did you live? What it a house, or- was it a flat?

[0:15:16]

No, we had a flat in a house. Yeah. And, well, we lived there all my life, 10 Neu- what was that? Neustraße. Yeah. And I don't know anything else, really.

So, your father had some stable somewhere, or-?

Yes. Up the road he had a stable. And he had the horses there. So, you know, life went on and, well, we never thought anything about anything until, of course, Hitler came, and then that ruined the whole lot.

Did your parents have- what sort of relations did they have with the population? Were they-?

Oh, we all got on very well with people, you know. Especially Papa being born in Merzig. And people, they behaved themselves too, you know, I must say. And the people, especially where we had the flat,

the people above us, they were very, very good to us. And we always stayed friends with them. They really were good. You know.

Even when it-?

Yeah.

Became difficult?

Yeah. And they were actually, the man of that house - of the flat - he took our jewellery, one Sunday, over to Luxemburg. Because Luxemburg wasn't far, you see? So he went and left Mama's jewellery and, you know, and took that to my uncle so that we had something. Otherwise they would have taken it. But those people, they really were good. Especially he was fantastic. Yeah.

[0:17:36]

Ok, we'll come back to that. What happened once you finished school? How long did you stay in school?

How long did I? I think I finished school, fifteen. And then I went to the *Handelsschule* for- you know, to acquire how to run a business, and materials, learning about materials. Because I was really interested in that and we were supposed to get a shop, Hannah and I.

And you started working?

Oh yeah, I started working when I was fifteen.

And what did you do?

What did I do? I had to do all- when Hitler came and I had always go to the- on a Sunday collect the post, because I was the, the youngest, you know, of the people they employed. So I had to go to the post on a Mon- Sunday morning. And of course when Hitler came, they all suddenly arrived around the...

the- the council estate there, you know. And there was a big house and we lived nearby. And I had to go through that whole crowd - shouting, you know, and shouting. But I walked through it and nobody made any nasty remarks to me and all that. I must say that. They behaved themselves. And I walked through it, you know. And- and the same thing when I came back. I had to walk through it again. But I didn't feel very happy about it.

So tell us what happened. This was 1935?

Yeah.

There was the Saarland-

They-

Just explain a little bit what happened.

Yeah. Yeah. They went back to Germany, they claimed the, Hitler claimed that back again.

Because up till then it was what? France?

Well it- it was free, but we were under France.

Under the French- Yeah.

Yeah, but we had French money.

Yes. So tell us about it, yes? You had French money?

[0:20:16]

Yeah. And we spoke German. And- yes- I can't remember anymore. No. I can't-

Just say it.

Ronnie: The League of Nations Mandate.

OK.

Ronnie: They were ruled- the French ruled it.

OK. [inaud]

Lola: If we're speaking, when you walked across the square, why did you walk across the square if it was- if they were all there?

Because it was Sunday morning and I had to collect the post for the firm.

Lola: And what were they doing in the square?

Shouting.

Lola: Shouting what?

'Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler', or whatever, you know.

They wanted to be with Germany.

Yeah- Oh, yeah!

Ronnie: It was the day of the vote, or the day the vote had been announced.

Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. And but nobody accosted me, I must say. And- that's it! I can't think anymore, really.

So in the first- after Hitler came to power from '33 to '35, did- maybe your parents thought it was safe there because it wasn't Germany?

That's right. And my Papa thought he was a well-respected man. Nobody will harm him. But it- it wasn't the full Merzig people. It was the incoming people. And they didn't know anything. So, this is why, you know, we all went together to Luxemburg, thinking that we're safe for my parents. And us- we applied in the meantime in England for domestic- because I was too old and so was my sister. She is three and a half years older than I am. And I was too- one month too old for the Kindertransport. But I wouldn't have left my sister anyway, oh no.

[0:22:44]

You wanted to stay together.

Yeah – yeah.

But tell us about Kristallnacht. Were you in Merzig?

Yeah- no, I was in southern, uh, ...southern Germany with a Jewish family. And I looked after their children, actually. They had a shop and, two children. One boy and one little girl. And I looked after them, then. And I can't remember what year I went there. I- I was very happy there, actually. They were a lovely Jewish family.

You were their nanny, or?

Yeah, as a nanny.

Yeah?

Yeah.

And where was that? Where?

That was in Wangen im Allgäu and it was near Ulm, and- in between Ulm and what was the other one? I can't think now.

Augsburg?

Yeah...yeah. A little, yeah, round about there, you know. But-

And what happened on Kristallnacht? What happened? Do you-?

I was there. Well, [coughs] they smashed the shop windows, their shop windows. And- but I, when I spoke to my mother, you know, Hannah and I we both went home, because we wanted to know and see what happened to Mama and Papa. Because they took my father to the local prison. And we had a- a dog at the time. And that dog went every day to that house, and sat there from morning till night. And in the evening he came home again, because he knew that my father was there. Yeah.

He was arrested on Kristallnacht?

Yeah – yeah. But- and he, they sent him to Dachau. That's right. But he came back after quite a lot of weeks. I- I can't remember anymore how long.

So where did you- when you came back, was it immediately on the next day you went back to-?

Yeah. Merzig. And we stayed a while. Hannah, she lived with my cousin who lived in Wangen, you see? And...

[0:25:55]

And when you came back did you see what happened in Merzig? Did you see the smashed windows, or what-?

No I didn't go and look, no. No. Because it was enough to - for me with- knowing, you know, looking after my mother and all that. No. I didn't- I didn't want to know. But, shortly after that, the- the people, the Jewish people from Merzig they all left, more or less. There were one one or two still left.

After Kristallnacht?

Yeah.

And where did people go to?

They usually went to-

[Sound break]

Yes, so when you came from Wangen - what did you do regarding your father?

Oh, yeah, I went to the police. And, because they sent him- after they sent him to Dachau and he came back. But he didn't have his watch. They kept his watch and money, what he had on him. So, and as we needed money, so I went to the police and they said, "I'm sorry, we haven't got it anymore. The SS over the-" They called, you know- yeah, the- the SS, they had extra- oh, what shall I say? House where they had all the- the whatever they had, you know. They- in there. And I thought to myself, well, I have to go and see, and ask them. So, I went first to the police and he said, "Alice," and he knew me. "I- I can't do anything about it. You have to do it yourself." So, I thought, well, here goes. And I said to my sister, "Don't say anything to Mama and Papa. They only worry, you know, whether I come back or not." I said, "Don't." So, off I went. And I- to the house. It was on the corner, I can remember. And I went over and they left me standing there, but I said what I wanted. And they said, "Well, stay right and I'll see what I can do." They were quite normal to me, you know. And they brought the money and the watch

they gave me. And I said, “Thank you very much.” And I walked off. And, I was glad to get away. [half-laugh]

[0:29:17]

This was after your father had come back?

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

And what did he look like when he came back?

Well, he had his shave- his head absolutely shaven, you know, not- bare, absolutely. He looked- and his hair after that came up grey. Where before he was, he was still dark. But after that, he was grey. So, you know, you get on with life and do what you can.

And at that point was emigration discussed?

That's right.

Yes, so what- what possibilities?

My- my uncle from- he already lived in Luxembourg and he said, “Try England.” You know. So we did. But the only thing we- they offered us at the time was domestic.

And do you know, how- how did you manage to find the position or how- who sp-?

Well, we- we went to the Committee, and they found- tried to find us the- the people. Actually they were non-Jewish people, a very old couple who always had people from Austria. They always employed them.

But I meant in Germany. When you were still in Germany.

[0:30:55]

Well, no, that- the people in England.

Right.

They- these particular people, they were English people and an old couple, at least seventy-odd, you know. [half laughs] Nowadays that's nothing.

But how did they find you?

How I found- no, well I- mine was through the Committee. It was through- definitely through the *Jüdisches Co- Committee*, you know - Jewish.

Wait, I think your son wants to add something. Or your daughter in law- Yes?

Lola: Who found the Committee - Mum?

Who?

Son: Who organised it?

Lola: Who organised- who found the Committee?

Son: Who organised you going to England? Coming to England?

Lola: You didn't go straight to England. Where did you go next?

No. We went to Luxembourg-

Yes.

My uncle. Excuse me, can I go and spend a penny?

Sure.

[Sound break]

So we were talking about this time of Kristallnacht.

Oh, yeah.

And when you came back.

Yeah.

And got the-

And my parents, they lived in the *Gemeindehaus* from the synagogue just opposite. And of course it looked dreadful, the synagogue. It really did. But- well, we couldn't do anything at all. And-

Was the synagogue burnt down?

It- I think it had. I think it had.

And the Gemeindehaus was opposite?

Yeah.

And how come your parents lived there?

Because the, the flat– we didn't own the flat at the time. And they wanted them out. So, you know, it was the only place. When everybody left Merzig, they went to- to France, because they thought they were better off there. But my Papa used to say, "They won't harm us. They won't harm us. I'm a true," you know, "Merziger." And where did it get him? Nowhere. Because, people from outside came.

And did people function in the synagogue at that time? Was it-

Yeah, well they used to- used to get together, the ones who were left, you know. But I don't- in the end there was no *minyan* or anything. It was burnt out. And the- that house, that was the only thing what was left.

And what, was he arrested along with other men? Why was- or was there particularly a reason?

[0:33:59]

Well they- they all went, actually. There was only one other – Frenkel - who left- who didn't go. He was single and lived with his family. And- but he had a non-Jewish friend, woman friend. And he went to live with her in the end. You know. Yeah.

And did he stay there?

He stayed.

And survived?

Yeah. Yeah, he survived. Because after the war, we went- my sister and I, we went back once. And we went- went with the- this other Frenkel, by name, you see? And my Papa swore he never would talk to him, but we thought, well, forgotten, forgotten, you know. And we went to see him. And he lived with this German woman and she protected him. And, you know, he was very surprised that we came, actually. But I mean, my Papa was gone-

[0:35:20]

Why, was there a fall-out?

Yeah.

Why?

I don't know.

Ah - something.

We don't- we never found out. Yeah. No doubt-

OK, so then, your father came back and you organised to go to Luxembourg.

We were then- when he was back we went back to- I went back to- to Wangen, to my job, you know, to - a nanny. And my sister went to her cousin, went to our cousin. They- they lived in the same place. And he still, funnily enough, the fellow he was a dealer with, not with horses. He dealt in- in cows, you know.

Cattle dealer?

Yeah. And they were still there. And my sister stayed with them. And-

And then did you all go to Luxembourg together, or did you go separately?

Yeah, no, we went to Luxembourg together. And, of course at the border, they absolutely frisked us. We more or less had to un-strip completely, you know. But only Hannah and me.

They took you out?

Yeah, but not my mother, you know. Only Hannah and me. And then we were rather afraid, because- that we- we might not come into Luxemburg because we had no permit, nothing. And my uncle, who lived there, he said, "Don't worry. I have everything arranged." And when- then the Luxemburg police came in, or whatever, you know, the border police, and looked at our passport, they said, "OK", you know. Obviously it was him. They probably, you know, gave money to, or whatever.

They knew about you?

Yeah. Yeah.

So did your parents just book a ticket?

Well, we always-

Train ticket or- towards Luxembourg?

Well, we had only a short stay, about three days, you know, at the time. Because we came- our permit to England was the beginning of April. And this was end of March, you know? So we had only one- I think one or two days in Luxemburg, with our parents. And that was the last time we saw our parents. So- yeah.

[inaudible] to take? Do you remember what you were able to take out from Germany?

Well, I only remember that we each one of us could take eating- silver, you know, fork and knife and spoon. I don't think anything else. I don't know. I don't think a serviette, or, I can't remember. Yeah. One- one spoon, one fork, and one knife you could take. And I don't think you were allowed to take anything else. You know.

And what were- do you remember the feelings when you were leaving? How did your parents feel and you two?

I was- in a way, I was glad to get away from it. On the other hand, I felt sorry that this happened, you know, to- to the place where I was born. I never thought I would leave. But, you get over, in cases like this, you get over anything.

[0:40:10]

And were you scared when you came to the border? Was there fear?

Oh, I was- I was not scared, but I was - what shall I say? I can't think of the the word now. But I was wondering whether they made a lot of fuss, you know. And stripped me and God knows- well, they did strip me.

And do you think you were targeted with your sister because you were-

Yeah.

- young? You were women?

Yeah. Well, they left mother alone, but Hannah and me they stripped com-

Meaning you had to undress?

Yeah.

What did it mean?

Yeah. We had to completely undress. Yeah. But, if that meant that we can go, you know, we still had to wait for the train after that. One train we missed, because they made us strip.

And your parents were waiting for you or-?

Yeah. They- they wouldn't go without us. Yeah. So, anyway.

And when you came to Luxembourg you said, so they let you in?

Yeah. They- somebody, well definitely, he made it- you know, he looked at the passports and he said, "Thank you." And that's it. And didn't ask how long or what. He just let us in. So.

And where did you go from there? Where-?

Well, we went to my uncle's. He had a house at the time there. It was a big house. And in the right place and everything, you know. He- he knew people around him. And, they helped him a lot there.

[0:42:23]

And how did you- what- did your parents have any means of income at that point?

Well, my uncle had a stand credit. Well, what do you call them, creditor? You know. He promised to look after him, which he did, I must say. And he left for France. And from France he went to America. And- but he- well, when we arrived, after that he went to the South of France, 'Free France' it was called. And he went then after a while still to America. You know. But my parents, they were taken when the Germans walked in, they- they were taken straight away. And, we never saw anything. We only know from other people that they were first in- in Poland, and from there, they were shifted, well shifted, well, they had to walk apparently to Auschwitz.

And when was the last time you heard from your- when was the last communication?

About- in '42, that was the last letters.

From where?

From Luxembourg, you know.

They stayed, they were there till 1942?

Well they said they were going, you know, but, after that: no communication anymore.

You said before that you had neighbours in your- in, who helped you.

They were very good.

So, what did they do? You said they managed to bring some money out to Luxem-?

No, well, money - we didn't have anymore, not much anyways. But our jewellery. The man he took it on a Sunday. He travelled by train, he travelled to Luxemburg and left it with my uncle. And he came back in the evening. And we worried over him, you know. He was a very good man. He really, that family they really helped us.

What else? What else did they do?

[0:45:13]

Well, when for instance, when other people came, friends of ours, came and on their way emigrated, they came to us and stayed with us a night or something, you know. And then I usually had to go and sleep with these people. You know. And they never, ever refused, I must say. Yeah. And that's the story of my life.

So, in Luxembourg, you spent a month in Luxembourg, roughly?

No, we didn't. Only a few days.

A few days. But you said you arrived late March?

Late March, and beginning of April-

April – sorry.

We came to- to London where we were met by these old dear English. And she looked just like the old Queen Mary.

So, tell us about your journey from Luxembourg to England, please.

Well we, we- we left from, from – where did we- from? Dover, I think. No. We arrived in Dover, I think. And I can remember my cousin, she had a friend who married an Englishman. And she went once to London. And she said, “If ever you are in trouble, just say ‘Sorry, sorry’ and the English people will forgive you.” Well of course, she didn’t remember anymore the word. So we were stretched out there, you know, lying and sunbathing like this. And then suddenly a boy came along, hopping over us. And he just slightly knocked on our legs. And he said, “Oh, I’m dreadfully sorry”, you know. And Hannah and I we cuddled each other, “That’s the word! That’s the word!” You know. And that’s all I can remember. But when we came to London in Marylebone we saw the- the- our boss, you know, more or less. And she looked just like Queen Mary.

[0:47:47]

What was her name?

Mrs- Oh boy, now it’s gone. It was on the tip of my tongue. Oh! What was her name, now? I can’t think of it now.

Don’t worry.

But, you know.

They picked you up from the station?

She st- in Marylebone, I can remember, Mrs. Cullen.

Cullen?

Yeah. That's it. Mrs. Cullen. And she looked – the, the clothes she- her hat, and just-

And Alice, could you speak some English when you came?

Oh, no, she insisted on talking German, because she- she spoke good German. And, well, she obviously had a- an upbringing you know where just- everything done for her. And, well, I can't say it was a very happy stay for us.

So, Alice, sorry to interrupt. So, did she want you because she liked speaking German?

Yeah.

She liked that-?

Well, that's why she always employed Austrian girls. She always employed Austrian girls. I don't know why exactly, but, you know.

So, she didn't take you in because you were Jewish?

No, oh no!

No?

No. That didn't come into it at all.

Did she have any understanding that you were Jewish?

She-

That you had come from a situation?

No, no. She never understood that we came over as a refugee. She never did. We tried to learn English. And we found an English teacher. And when she found that out, she went to see the person and she stopped us. Yeah! She didn't want us to learn English. Yeah.

Why?

She wanted to talk German, you see? She was not a Jewish person. She didn't understand.

And at that point Alice, did you have any contact with any refugee organisations or anything?

Well, not with the organisation, because these people lived in- in Gerrards Cross. And what I found out later on, that was the money... bit, where people lived. I mean, the house was lovely. It was a beautiful house, and it was near a park, three steps away from a park, you see.

And what were you expected to do and- you and your sister?

[0:50:54]

I was a house parlourmaid. Hannah was to cook. And I used to- Hannah used to look from the- cook from the cookery book because neither of us knew what we should do. So, and I was supposed to do all the dirty work. And believe me I had to do the dirty work.

Such as?

Oh, I don't want to talk to - that. I really don't. Because I was disgusted that people these days do that still when the toilet is just around the corner, you know. And I did say- I had the nerve to say once, "Why don't you use-?" You know. "It's so near." "Oh!" She said, "No! Why should I?" And, well, I've never forgotten that. I wouldn't put anybody, if I were ever in that position, I would never ask them to do anything like that. Terrible.

So, you had to clean the, not the lavatories, what is it called, the-?

The bucket.

The buckets, yes, yes.

Yeah.

Ronnie: Night soil.

Night soil. Yes. And was she married? Was that- you said-?

Oh, yeah! Yeah.

And were they-?

[0:52:30]

Her husband- her husband was a local magistrate. They were very well to do people, you know. But I was absolutely- and the daughter, she was married in London. And, I think one of the grandchildren. Because they all came after the war was announced. She gave us notice to leave.

Once the war was announced?

Yeah. Oh, yeah. We had to go, because the daughter came with her family and she brought a charwoman with her, and we were surplus. So we- we came to London, and went to the Jewish Refugee Committee in Bloomsbury, and we had to find ourselves some jobs. And, which we shouldn't have done. But we had to eat, you know. So, we were- and we found ourselves a- a room. And from there we used to go and work, until we got interned.

Just- just to come back. So, in- in the- so you were with this family from early April till September.

Yeah.

So, half a year, more or less.

Yeah - yeah. Yeah.

And was your sister, did it help you that you were together?

Well, yes, I think so. Because- well, nobody ever- when we came to London, Hannah went to an English Jewish family, which was nice. And the parents of them, they were Dutch - originally Dutch people. And I stayed there for a while until I found myself a job, you know.

But were you relieved that you could leave there?

Well in- in a way, because- because it was so kind of these people to take us. We had to sleep on the floor. There were no other ways, you know. Because they only rented a flat in Hampstead, West Hampstead. A beautiful flat, it was. But no- only, you know, one bedroom there, for the servant more or less. But- and that's why we had to sleep on the floor. And that we were grateful to do because we wouldn't have known where to go! And then suddenly one person told us, "Try the Jewish Refugee Committee." And we went there and then eventually, you know, they found us.

[0:55:55]

Can I ask you, in the- in the first position, did they give you enough food, for example? Did you have enough to eat?

I don't think anybody worried over that, really. We had to see to all that ourselves. Nobody asked us, "Would you something- like to eat?" No, we had to find all our food.

So, you were treated like domestic-

Oh, yeah.

- servants?

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Did you have any personal discussions or- with- did anyone take an interest?

No, we had to- we had to go back to the Committee, you know.

And you said she stopped you- the English lessons.

Oh, yeah.

So, you couldn't have any English lessons?

No. No. But by then you help yourself, because, I used to try and read the papers. *The Daily Sketch* on the back paper, had three parts- parts there. The one was English, the other was German, and the other one was French. And I read every day that ...part of English, you know. And this is how I taught myself, more or less. And the dictionary. The little dictionary from Woolworth's which cost me sixpence, I've still got.

[0:57:30]

You taught yourself?

Yeah. So, you know. And then when you eventually got a job. And this is how you- you pick up people, you know. In those days I couldn't afford lessons.

And did you have Sunday off? Or did you have to work every day?

Oh, I had to work every day really, because I, you know, I had to supply myself with everything, really. And make money. Because otherwise, you know. I don't think of anything-

[sound interruption]

[0:58:20]

Well, we first had to go to the police station, and tell them that we wanted to move, you see? Because that was after the tribunal, you got A, B or C. A was direct internment. B was you had to report to police first. And C you could travel free.

And you got?

And we got B, because I think the- our boss, the- the- she. Because we had to take a letter, and so obviously she must have written something in there. So that we got only the B, because when we came back to the police station, and the policeman said, "What? They only gave you B? How ridiculous!" He- he really, he was so surprised. And so that's why I- I'm sure that the lady of the house did that. You know? She said something which must have influenced them.

So, you were called to a tribunal?

Yeah.

And where was the tribunal?

I think that was, what's the- it was not in London. It was near Gerrards Cross. The other side. I- I don't know anymore.

So, when you wanted to leave Gerrards Cross you had to re- first go to the police station?

We had to go and get the permission. Yeah. And that policeman, he said, "So ridiculous", you know, he couldn't understand it. So, but what can you do? So.

So then you came to London?

Then we moved to London, and Hannah was friendly with this girl who worked for the Jewish Dutch people and who lived in West Hampstead.

[1:00:34]

Right.

And we went there, and from there we- we tried to look for jobs.

And did you have to register with the police again?

Oh, yeah.

The West Hampstead-?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. We always did, because we were very conscious of that. Because they were very good to us, the police. Oh, I'm dying.

And were there other restrictions on you because you were category B?

Well, we didn't do anything else, you know, really. Only looking for jobs. That was the main interest. Because after all, we had to, you know?

Would you like to have a drink?

Yeah, if you don't mind.

Sure.

[Sound break]

So, we are in London, you are with a family in West Hampstead. And what happened from then?

After that, we got ourselves a- a room in Kilburn with Jewish refugees. And we worked from there.

Was it a hostel? In a hostel?

No, no. It was private. We paid them. And- and then in the end she asked me to- would I help her, you know. So, I stayed there and helped her. But I- I wasn't all that happy. But I did.

So, that was another domestic-?

And Hannah- yeah, she went to a- to the woman, she- she stayed with first. Her parents were Dutch. They came over as Dutch refugees but years ago, in, you know. And they lived in West Hampstead. And from there what else did we do? I can't remember.

[1:02:55]

Anyway, how long was it till... till you had to go to- till you were arrested, let's say?

Yeah. Well, that was in '41. I was in Golders Green with a couple. I had a room there. How did I get to them? I really can't remember that.

Was that before internment?

That was before,

OK.

Because I got interned from Golders Green.

OK. So you were in Golders Green-

Yeah.

- working for a couple?

No, I rented a room there,

OK.

-with this couple. Ex-refugees too. He worked for the butcher. What was his name? Hoff- Hoffmann? Something. I don't know. The kosher butcher in Golders Green. And, I got interned from there. And I can remember the police station was only across the road, more or less. And I can remember, I said to the policeman, "Will I see my sister? Is she going to be interned?" So he said, "Yes, I'm quite sure you will see your sister." So, well, I didn't see my sister until we came to the prison for the night. What was it? Pentonville, I think. And-

Royal Holloway? Not Royal-

Oh, Holloway.

Holloway Prison?

Probably Holloway, you know, or Pentonville. One- one of those ladies' prisons. They dumped us there. And then I- well, we went in to the dining hall. And you were- well, it was a long, long room, and long benches, and long tables. And I was sitting there. And I thought, well, I'm going to try and find my sister. So we had a whistle. So I whistled. And a whistle came back! It was absolutely the other end. And then I- we stood up. You know, whistled. And so once we knew we are there, we would meet. And we did.

What was the tune?

[1:05:38]

What was the tune? I can't remember. But I don't know whether I can whistle it. [tries to whistle] No. I can't anymore.

But you had used it before? There was a- you-

Yeah. It was- well, I don't know it was just, you know, a whistle. I never gave it any thought. But that way we found each other. You know.

And when they came to- did they come to the flat to arrest you or what happened?

Yeah, they came, two police- well, not policemen. They were detectives in plain clothes. And, I put a nail file in and everything, and they took it out again. And anything what is- no scissors or anything. So, I only had a little case. That was all I could take.

And how did you feel at that point when they came?

Well, I wasn't very happy. And- and I said, "All I'm interested in is that I see my sister. You can send me anywhere else," I said, "I don't care. But I would like to be with my sister." So they said, "Oh, you will meet your sister some time. Don't you worry." And- and I did, in the end.

And were there- how many women were there on that first night?

Oh, there were loads, loads, loads. I mean, that Holloway Prison, that dining room was absolutely full. You know? And we all had to sleep on the floor, because they hadn't provided us with anything. Nothing at all.

And were they mostly refugees, or were there also some Nazi sympathisers in, in, in the-?

Well, I know there was one where we were billeted in- in the house. And just opposite us, there was one woman they took away.

[1:08:04]

That was later on the Isle of Man.

Yeah, on the Isle of Man.

But in Holloway itself?

No – no.

And how long did you spend in Holloway?

Only that one night, because we went from there to Liverpool, and- then from Liverpool we went all to Douglas, Isle of Man. And from there we- they split us up again. That's why we ended up in Port Erin. And that was- they used to have a, a guest house more or less, you know. And of course we were- [half-laughs] we were billeted there. And when we used to get a- a pudding, a royal pudding, right? We used

to exchange that for something else. And we had quite a lot of takers for that, because Hannah and I we just didn't care very much for that pudding. But I remember [laughing] we used to get quite a bit for it.

You sold it, so to speak?

Yeah.

Alice, one second.

Ronnie: Sorry.

[sound break]

So, Isle of Man, the- the trip. So, was it - once you were with your sister you were not so worried about it?

No. No. We settled -

You were fine?

We settled down. And another two girls- well, one was a married woman, and the other one was a young girl like us. And we four stuck together. And we got a room for us. And there were four people slept in that room. It was a fairly biggish room, but nevertheless. You know? But we stuck together with those two girls.

During your time?

[1:10:13]

Yeah – yeah.

Can I ask you, I- in some accounts there were accounts that when you- when people got to Liverpool there was a very hostile reception. Do you remember that, when you arrived in Liverpool?

Well, I don't, no, not really, anymore. No.

Do you remember anything else from the trip? Did you know where they- where they were taking you?

No. No, nobody told us. Nobody told us where we were going. We were just told, "Get your things together" and that's it. And we had to sit there and wait for them to go off. And, they didn't tell us that we came to Port Erin, and to who- nothing.

And what was your impression? So, when you arrived in Port Erin, could you- were you allocated the boarding house-

Yeah.

-or could you choose where you-?

No, no you couldn't choose. You were allocated. And some people were very lucky. And of course we weren't all that lucky. Those people were very mean, and we always had to do our duties before we left, you know, to go off to do what we wanted to do. But we always had to either peel potatoes or something, you know.

And who was the- who was the owner of the guesthouse? Was she-?

Well, the Port Erin people. They used to run boarding houses.

And the lady lived there?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

And what was she like?

Well, shall I say, very businesslike, they were. They weren't very friendly. But they may have got the best out of it, you know. And they took as many of- as possible.

[1:12:13]

And they- did they cook for you?

Yes. Typical English cooking. And as I say, when we used to get a boiled pudding, Hannah and I we used to stand up: "A pudding is going. Who has got something else to offer?"

You exchanged it? So what was the food like? Not good.

Well, we didn't like the pudding.

Because you know that's quite interesting that in contrast to the men's camps- in the men's camps they did their own cooking.

Yeah, that's right.

So, did they have better food?

Yeah! That's right! But oh, no, not this one. They tried as much as possible to get the most out of us, you know.

You mean financially?

Yeah – yeah. And then we had to peel potatoes, clean the veg, you know? Before we used to go up- because I used to go swimming a lot, because just being on the beach, you know, opposite the beach.

And Hannah and I, we were the only ones who still went swimming in October, I remember. You know. Yeah. We used to enjoy that.

What other activities? What did you do during the day?

Well, I can't remember anymore. I know there were quite a few. I started knitting. Let's see, yeah, that's right. I started quite a lot, because I knitted a- a- a cardigan. Yeah. I did quite a lot of knitting, I remember. And what's the- what else? Oh yes, they started then PE lessons, you know, which I went to. I don't think Hannah went. She- she didn't want that, you know.

And did you meet the other women from the other boarding houses?

Yes, well more or less from our house, they went. And-

And where- was the barbed wire not- not in front of the boarding house, but was- the whole of Port Erin was barbed wired, or-?

No, that was alright. I mean, it was-

Did you see any barbed wire anywhere?

No, no, no, nothing, really. And the only time we were confined to our rooms was when the men came to visit their wives. And they all were marched along the main street. And you can imagine all the- the women calling out. [laughs] But we weren't allowed outside. And we saw them coming in, and it was fun.

[1:15:23]

And then they were marched back, or- or could they meet their wives?

Yeah, they could meet, yeah.

So, you said one of the four people, she was married. So, did she have a husband-

Well, her husband was already in America.

OK.

So, she was waiting to go to America.

And what was the atmosphere like? I mean, were people upset that they were there? I mean, among the four of you, how-?

Well, we didn't try to let it get to us, really. Because we knew you just couldn't do anything. I mean, once the war was declared, it was just impossible.

But did you feel it was unfair that you had to be there, or-?

Well I don't think I particularly worried anymore. Because I couldn't do anything about it. So, you had to accept it.

'Cause I sometimes think in some way it must have been also better because you were together with other refugees.

Oh, yeah. I mean, we were very lucky. One girl, she wanted to go to America like us. And- she was supposed to marry an Orthodox fella, you know. But with us, we didn't worry over that. So-

What about food? And were there people kept kosher, and, that kind of thing?

No – no, no. Nobody ever thought of that, I don't think so. I don't know! There might have been, you know, because we were all in different houses. And I remember now, my husband - that family - was in

the best house. They had a lovely, lovely hotel, actually. You know? What was a- used to be the main hotel.

What was it called?

What was it called? No. At the moment, I just can't think.

Was it the Ballaqueenie?

No-

No?

No.

[1:17:55]

That was a family camp.

No it wasn't a family house.

Aha.

It- it was really a fairly biggish hotel. You know. But it was the best one there.

And yours? Your guesthouse was-?

Ours was just a guesthouse. A normal one. And- but they were fairly mean.

And do you remember were there any cultural activities or concerts?

Well they- they came- no, no concert. Culture wasn't very much there. Nobody seemed to bother, you know.

And you were not allowed to go to the other side of the island?

Oh yes, you could. You could walk about, you know. After a while, you know, you could walk about anywhere.

Could you go to the shops?

Well, I never saw any shops! I never, ever saw any shops of Port Erin. I think they were all were scared stiff that- that they might get robbed or something, you know. But I never bothered anyway. But probably other people did.

And you said, so- just tell us- to go back to this- you said somebody was arrested or there was a Nazi sympathiser, or-?

Yeah, they- they just took her. Because we suspected her straight away, funnily enough. Because somebody told us that there was a woman in the house and she flicked the lights. And- and we thought it was her. And it was her. And they- she was taken away. What happened after that, I don't know.

She flicked the lights as a- she was giving out-

Some-

Symbols or some-?

[1:20:02]

Yeah. Probably. What happened on the island, I- I don't know.

And was she a refugee or was she a German or-?

Well- well, she was a proper German.

Right.

Yeah.

And were there some proper Germans in the- in your guest house?

Well, she must have been. You know. She- actually, she came from Austria as far as I remember. I don't know anymore, I- honestly. But I know they took her away. That's all I remember

Did you spend a summer there, the winter? How was the winter?

Oh, it was very cold. But, I can't remember, we'd- we- from there, yeah, we had to go to the- we had to go again to... and be examined, you know. Being category B we had to report, and we had to- so they said, "You can't go to London. That's out." So, we had to go to Manchester. We arrived in Manchester, which we didn't particularly like. But we had to. And they put us in a hostel. One large room, and we had to sleep together there. And the mice, that was awful. And I just couldn't stand it- I'm that scared of mice. And I went and saw the Committee- somebody from the Committee. And I was lucky enough to find more or less the head of the Committee. And I said, "I will not go back there and have another night there. I'd rather sleep in the street, because I'm just tired, sick and tired of the- the mice. And I'm that scared." So she said, "Hang on, and I'll try and get you somewhere nice." And she rang this Mr. Nahum and she asked for Mrs. Nahum. So he said, "Well my wife is away at the moment." And she was Irish. And he had a- they had a- a very big mill – Nahum. And one of his sons is- was, I found out later on, from the television, he turned out on- what is it, that program? Well, anyway, he was a- he had something to do with pictures. And he was very knowledgeable. And-

[1:23:30]

So, when were you released from the Isle of Man?

Oh, about '41. Yeah. It was in- in '41, but I can't remember the month.

Together with your sister?

Yeah.

And the other two people?

And the other two people- well, the one she went to America. And she found her husband. And the other one came with us. So, when, then we- we took- hired a room in Alice Gardens. The full first corner house there on Alice Gardens, we found two rooms. And the woman, she was a- a widow and had a daughter. And they were very friendly with the police. And there was, you know, something going on anyway. Which didn't interest us. She- they could do whatever they like, but-

But you said you stayed with the family first in Manchester?

Oh, yeah. With Nahums.

By yourself?

No, with Hannah.

Ok. [Inaudible] you took the two...

I was- I was the house parlourmaid and Hannah was the cook.

So again, as domestics?

As domes- domestics. And Mr. Nahum said, “You girls are silly to go to London.” You know. “Why don’t you stay here?” And we said, no, we wanted to go- there was nothing really to come to London for. But London-

[1:25:24]

And what was the background of this Mr. Nahums? Jewish family, or-?

Yeah. They- they were. Well, he- they were very well to do people.

Were they Sephardi?

Yeah - yeah. And they had a beautiful house really, and the setting in there, it was absolute gorgeous.

Were they nicer? Did they understand something about being refugees, or-?

Oh, yeah. He was very good to us. Better than she was. And because she was only concerned- her thirteen-year-old son, he used to love coming in to the kitchen and talk to us. And she thought we’d do something to him. And she- she said in the end to the boy not to go in the kitchen at- anymore. [laughs] And, well, she wasted her time, anyway. But we had no designs, you know. Anyway...

How long did you stay there?

Oh, we stayed quite a while there, actually. Yeah. And Mr. Nahum said, “You girls are silly that you go to London, because here you are much safer.” Which- he was right.

And why did you want to go to London?

Everybody went to London. Hannah had a friend there, and, you know, And she- she said, she was working for this Dutch - originally Dutch - people, you know, the Jewish people. And she said, “Come.

At least we are together.” You know. So, that’s why. But for no other reason, really. But we should have stayed really when I think about it.

So, the room you rented on the corner, that was back in London?

[1:27:34]

That was back in London, it was just Alice- 1 Alice Gardens.

Where is that?

In Golders Green.

Golders Green.

Yeah. Just opposite the police station.

And then, what work? How did you-?

Well I went- I found a- a Jewish couple and very religious. And I didn’t particularly like it, but I- I put up with it. But, I can’t remember what else I did after that. Honestly. Sorry. I really don’t know. Do you?

Ronnie: Munitions.

Oh! Yeah-

OK. War work.

Yeah.

Did you do some war work?

Because my sister, she- I was doing- yeah, Hannah got rather nerve, the, you know, with her nerves, at sudden, you know the air raids and all that. And Hannah didn't like that. So, I tried to always be with her when there was an air raid. And that-

Which she suffered-?

From the nerves, you know. And, because I can remember I did ask once, "Can we move somewhere else?" And they said, "No, you can't", because we were restricted. We were- had B, so we had to stop where we were. And, so we- we did. And then I- we lived in 1 Alice Gardens. And from there, I- I met my husband once in Oxford. Because I went on holiday there. And, I had friends who lived on the farm, and that's why I could go on holiday. They had, you know, they had one room, so they said, "Yes, come, by all means."

[1:30:00]

What farm? The-?

Well, a proper farm.

OK.

He was a – what did they call them, the girls, they-? The Land Army.

Land Army. Yeah?

But what the men, I don't know. But he worked on the farm, you know. And that's why he got that little house. The house went with the job. And- yeah. And I went there. I went to Oxford, and I met my husband. And he carried my case to the coach. That was all I wanted. And he said, "Can I see you

again?" I said, "Not until I come back to London. Not while I'm here." So, he said, "Fine." And I gave him my address in London. And that's how we started, you know. And in the end - yeah.

[sound break]

Perfect. So you said you met your husband. And was that at the same time when you were starting to do war work? You worked in ammunition?

Yes, I worked in munitions then already. And that was in Golders Green. The street where now the kosher butcher is-

Mehadrin?

No. Was it - Hoffmann or something, I can't-

Right.

You know. I know he was a Ger- German butcher. And a German Jewish, you know.

There was a butcher's shop?

Yeah.

Where? Where the ch-? Where...

About what, four houses from the police station roughly, like that. And after that I was- I was working in munitions.

[1:32:12]

Doing what, Alice?

Batteries. We fired them in the- in big ovens. And it was hot. But it wasn't too bad. We were told at the time to wear masks, but you can imagine, the mask and the fire. That was a bit too much. So most of us- I always never wore the mask. And it didn't hurt, apparently, you know. Well, I'm the example [laughs]. Well, actually we were quite a nice crowd. Nice people. We had one Irish, and- Irish girl and a woman, English woman. And the other one was an English woman in the afternoon. She was- she wasn't married, but the other woman, the English woman was married with a son. She invited myself and Hannah for Christmas. And I thought that was very kind. And- Oh, yeah, there was one more girl there. We were quite a nice crowd, you know.

Did you ever experience any anti-Jewish-?

No.

Anti-German-

No.

Or anything?

No, not with the people I worked with. Absolutely not. No. And we were- no, we were a nice crowd, I must say that. Yeah. And that's it.

Ronnie: Can we- can we [inaudible]

OK. So just tell us, so you met your future husband?

I met him in Oxford. And then he came- he wanted to see me during that week I stayed there. I said, "No, don't, and- until I come back to London." And he called on me and, and that's how I started, you know. We- we liked each other and- and that's that. And he always says, I invited him for dinner. And that Saturday we only could cook on one ring, and had to make dinner the main meal, vegetable and

everything on that thing. And of course I made a pudding. Chocolate pudding. And that burnt on, and I've never forgotten. Well, I offered it to him and I said, "You- you don't have to eat it." You know. But it's never been forgotten. So, you know.

[1:35:23]

When did you get married?

We got married in Sutton, in 27th of June '43. Yeah. So-

And did you live together? Yes.

Yeah. Well he- well, he was in the Army, you see, and he only came now and then. Wherever he was, if he was near London, he used to come in the evenings. And that was fine. But it only- always was only for a few weeks, you know. Because they shifted them around. And, yeah. But we were free. That's all that mattered.

And he was a refugee as well?

Yeah - yeah.

Where was he from?

He was from Königsberg, and he came over with his family. And, he- well, apart from his family, the whole family is from- from that family. They had one- yeah, one father. He went years ago to America. And he started a- a fruit, tinned fruit business. And he made loads of money. And he booked his seat on the Graf Zeppelin. And you know what happened to that. And that's what happened. And through that, they all had money, we all got money. And that's how they started off, that family, you know. And there were quite a lot of them, because there were five, ten brothers but from two wives. And some of them talked to each other, some of them didn't. You know. But on the whole, they got together.

So, was that nice for you, that there was family?

[1:37:46]

Oh, I tried to do my best with all of them. It- I wouldn't let it interfere, really. No. So, my in-laws, my mother-in-law, she- she could be... nasty. But, listen, in the end, there was a time- I didn't go there for two years because my mother-in-law was nasty. She really can- could be nasty. And- and as I say, I didn't go there for two years. And after that, in her later years, when I did quite a lot for them, she said, "Well, Alice, I'm very sorry that I was so nasty to you." But, at least she admitted it, you know.

OK, I know because you're getting tired and we want to sort of wrap it up. Just maybe tell us what happened towards the end of the war, and when did you find out what happened to your parents.

Well, my- I found out that my parents were killed in Auschwitz. And, that of course, shook me no end. And-

How did you find that out?

I think through the Red Cross. I'm sure. Because it must have been on the Saturday morning, and I came in from work. We used to have to work half day in munitions. And, I found out. And I remember, I cried all day. I've never forgotten that. And so, that was the last thing I ever heard then from my parents, you know, what happened. And, well, after that I got married. And my in-laws didn't agree with it at first, but, you know, my husband stood his- stood up and he said, "I want to get married. That's it." And he was in the Army. And we got married and we were happy ever after. Thank God. We had seventy-odd years. Hah.

That's amazing.

That proves- that says it all. Yeah. Seventy-two years.

And Alice what happened to your sister then once you got married? What was she-?

[1:40:44]

Well she- what happened actually? She stayed on there. Oh, yeah. In- she met her husband who worked in the same place where she did. And he was a me- mechanical engineer. And eventually he started off by himself. And he did very well. She worked for him. She did the office work and he- he- he did very well. And Ronnie went to live there with them and eventually they bought a very nice- the house was nothing special, but the position, Totteridge Lane, you know. And- yeah, and they did very well and had a swimming pool put in and everything. And we all used it. And we were quite happy.

And what was your husband's profession?

Well, he went in for architecture, because before the war he started at the college in Westcliffe. And- and then the war broke out. And then they took him back as he was a- a former pupil. And that's how we came to live in Westcliffe. We stayed in Westcliffe. And, well, for the first five years, I was very unhappy. [laughs] And then when it reversed we moved to London, I missed Westcliffe. But for- for the first five years I was very unhappy there. But, I had to.

Because you lived in Southend, yes?

Yeah.

Southend.

Yeah.

Did you know Otto Deutsch from Southend?

Yeah, I remember him.

We interviewed him.

[1:43:10]

Did you?

Yeah.

Yeah. Oh, yeah, I remember him.

Yeah?

He would- tried to do everything. He wanted to be the man, actually. He used- in the end, he used to do the- the lights for Yom Hashoah. And-

So, is that where you had your children, in Southend?

I had Ronnie, yeah, Ronnie was born-

Bea: [inaudible]

Yeah. No, Ronnie was born in London, actually. In Hampstead. What was that hospital?

Ronnie: Royal Free.

Lola: No, it was not the Royal Free, it was the Hampstead Hospital.

No, no.

Bea: Hampstead Hospital?

Lola: Yeah.

Ronnie: Yeah, yeah. Hampstead General.

Bea: Hampstead General?

That's it.

Yeah? In 1947?

Yeah.

And then when did you move to Southend?

Well, Ralph couldn't, nobody accepted his- him- here. Because he didn't have enough- I don't know what they wanted, anymore. Really, I wouldn't know. I can't think anymore. So, that's why he tried Southend and they said, "Yes, you are a former pupil. We take you." And that's how we came to Lon- to Westcliffe. Yeah.

And when did you move to London, then?

Oh, only fifteen years ago now. [laughs] And I'm still not quite happy. [Bea laughs] I- I reverse everything.

And Alice, how do you think your experiences have impacted your life?

How? Can I say? I- if I say it, I know my son and daughter-in-law's impression. I am more tolerant. I'd better look at that: I'm more tolerant. No reaction. What-? I can't see Lola's reaction.

[1:45:23]

Lola: Well, if you're asking me for an opinion, I don't know how tolerant you would have been without it.

Well-

You think you're more tolerant?

I think so. I think so. It's taught me, you know, quite a bit.

And do you sometimes think what would have happened to you if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

Oh, I don't know what would have happened. I would have had a shop. Materials, with my sister. You know. The usual. Get married. Look after your par- your parents and all that. But I couldn't do either.

And you said you have- you went back to-

We went back once.

Only once?

Yeah – yeah.

And what was that like?

It was- I swore that I would never go again.

Why? What happened?

It was just so...it was a horrible experience. It was- I can't describe it, honestly. I can't.

Which year? When was it?

Oh, I can't remember.

And was it shortly after the war?

They made a reunion, my class. And they wrote to me. And- the family said, "Why don't you go? Why don't you go?" So, I went. And- Oh, they couldn't do enough for me. I'll say that. But it was a horrible. I- I- I had nothing more in common with the people, you know. And I suppose resentment. I don't know. But I never went back again.

[1:47:30]

Have you got family buried there in the cemetery? I mean, grandparents?

Well, grandparents, yeah. They- I went actually to look at- they started to renew it. But then they found a lot of broken stones and all that. And I looked at them. I think we found some of them, you know, of my grandparents. But, it was a horrible experience. So, I've- never went back again. So. And that's the story of my life.

And what do you feel about Germany today?

Today? They're doing very well. I take everything what they can get- give me. And- but otherwise, I still haven't forgiven them, the Germans. It's somehow, I don't want to make it too obvious, but I- inside me, I- I can't forgive them. That's-

And Alice, how would you define yourself in terms of your identity?

My identity. Oh, well I- I like to be as British as I can. Yeah. I like that. I like to be and- and that's really my one and only wish, really.

And what does it mean?

What does it mean? Freedom. You can think what you like. Well, and you can go anywhere you like, do what you want to do, and that's what I like about England. So. I could have gone back to America, because the Americans wrote to me and said, "Would I like to..." "Can give me the- the quota..." or whatever, you know, I can go back. And I wrote back to them, "No, thank- No, thank you. I don't want it. I stay here." And I'm glad I did. I'm- I've absolutely no regret not having gone to America.

[1:50:23]

You're happy you stayed in Britain?

Yeah, because I think living here is not as harrassed as they- as the life in America is.

And Alice, did you talk about your past to your son and to your family? Or is it something-

No.

- you do more-? Or you don't want to do, and you have-? [Bea laughs]

No, I never did, did I?

Ronnie: No.

No. I never did.

Ronnie: You only started once your- once your grandchildren-

Yeah.

Ronnie: Went to sch- were at Jewish school- primary school.

Yeah.

Lola: I didn't hear what the question was-

Ronnie: When did you start talking about-

[cross-talk, inaud]

Bea: Maybe we just- one- because maybe you could come on, and you could just talk a little bit.

Lola: It wasn't her grandchilren, it was her great-grandchildren.

Yeah.

Bea: And you didn't- and was that a decision on your part or you think-?

[inaudible]

- not to talk about it?

I- I just didn't feel like talking about my past. I just wanted to wipe it out, more or less, you know. I was happy as I was. And- and I was grateful, more or less. Mnn.

And your sister? What did-?

Hannah got married too, but she married out, and he was a lovely fella. He was a very generous man. But- and they- they started off a factory, you know. He was a mechanic. What was he? What was [inaudible] I can't remember.

[1:52:25]

Ronnie: He was an engineer.

Yeah, but in what- it was.

Lola: They had a little en- mechanical engineering business.

Ronnie: - mechanical engineering business.

Bea: Alice please turn a little bit to us. Yeah. Perfect.

A mechanical en- engineer.

But I meant, did- did your sister talk about the past? Did- how did it affect her?

No – no.

In a similar way?

Yeah – yeah.

She dealt with it-?

She didn't either, you know. No. But she was happy, and he was a lovely fella, he was- you know. So, and they did very well. They were very kind to Ronnie when- after all, while Ralph was studying, so we had only the grant to live on. And I went out and did people- cleaning, so that I could fit that in while Ronnie was at nursery. And that's how I-

You worked for a school as well? For a school?

Oh, yeah! When- once he went to school, I went as a dinner lady. See that the children eat. You know. Not the- the cooking side, that the children eat. And I did that for quite a while. That was in- in Westcliffe, actually. The Westcliffe School there. Yeah. And the Hamden Court Road School, that's it.

Alice, is there anything I haven't asked you which you want to add? Anything you can think about which we haven't discussed?

You more or less hit everything, but I can't think of anything.

Is there any message you have for anyone who might watch this interview later, based on your experiences?

Well, all I can say is, I can't see that anybody can learn anything of my- my experience. I don't know. I really don't know. I- I am no special person. I'm just an ordinary housewife, or, I was. And that's it. And now I'm- I have got a carer. And- and I'll- I hardly can do anything because everybody says, "Don't do that! I do it. Don't! Don't!" [half-laughing] And sometimes it drives me nuts. So.

[1:55:14]

But there you are almost 101. What's the secret?

There's not- secret at all. Absolutely none. I wish- well, I don't want to tell you what I wish myself, because you say, you are happy like you are. But, I don't mind going tomorrow, if it is, you know. But I can see it isn't going to be. So, I'm not going to be asked. So. I've got to live as long as I'm around.

OK, Alice. Thank you very, very much for this interview.

You're more than welcome.

And you did amazingly, in one go without stopping, so-

Well, thank you. Because I can't see how anybody can be interested in my life.

Believe me, people will be interested. I can assure you.

Well, thank you, anyway.

[1:56:43]

[Ronnie and Lola, Alice's son and daughter-in-law, are going to speak]

Bea: Alice, can you please introduce the gentleman to your right?

Ronnie: Who am I? - I am?

Who is this?

Ronnie: Who am I?

Right, yeah. Dear son.

OK. Hello, Ronnie.

Ronnie: Hi.

Just here you listened to the interview. And what I'd like to ask you is - you know, your mum said she didn't talk about it - at what point she started talking about it, and at what point you became interested in her story.

[1:57:11]

Ronnie: It- she first started talking about it when my wife Lola interviewed her for her thesis for her degree, as talking to a- about domestics. And then after that, the next time she talked about it was for our great- for our grandchildren's projects, family tree projects at school. As a child, I don't think I ever thought about it. Didn't- didn't particularly worry me that I hadn't- that I hadn't heard anything about it. And I only really, really came in, became interested in it probably in the last twenty years at the most, or was interested as to how- what had happened and how it had affected her.

And do you think it affected you in any way, her story? Her experiences?

Ronnie: I would- I may say no, it hasn't. However, there are certain other people who would say as a child of a survivor, that it has affected me. But it doesn't bother me either way.

Ok. I mean, were you aware of- both of your parents were refugees?

Yeah.

Ronnie: Was I aware of it?

Were you aware? I mean-

Ronnie: I never really thought about it.

Or, as a problem, or did you feel-?

Ronnie: No, I never really thought about it.

We always spoke English-

Ronnie: They always spoke English at home, because I didn't want to learn German. But no, it didn't really affect me. I knew- I saw my grandparents every week. So, you know, as a young boy growing up in Southend, what- it didn't really affect me.

You didn't feel different or-

Ronnie: No.

In any-?

Ronnie: No. The only- the only times that it would be noticeable would be at primary school because there was only probably half a dozen Jewish boys and girls in primary school. And even probably less in high school. So, it didn't really- didn't really affect- affect me.

OK, anything else you'd like to say? Your mother now has- has spoken recently, you said, in schools?

Ronnie: Yes. Um, she keeps saying this is the last time. And I think this is the fourth or fifth time she's now talked. And she did one for one of her great-grandchildren, Lily, Lily's school last year. And that was a- very nice for her. Nice- nice for Lily and for my mother.

[2:00:19]

Apart from everything else, those children, they all sent me a card, that big, with all their signatures and remarks.

Bea: That's nice.

And I thought that was lovely.

Ronnie: Yeah.

It was really nice.

Ronnie: And so onward to the next one.

And how do you feel that your son arranged this interview? [laughs]

I've really - and really - I've had enough now.

OK, so I- I'm very privileged that you managed- that for us-

You are lucky.

That we convinced you to do it.

You are lucky.

We thank you very, very much. Thank you, Ronnie.

Ronnie: OK.

And thank you for coming on. And we're just going to look at some of the documents and photos.

Yeah, ok.

That's it. Thank you.

Thank you very much.

Ronnie: Thank you.

[2:01:07]

[End of interview]

[Start of photographs and documents]

[2:01:11]

Alice, can you please tell us who's on this photo?

Can you what?

Who is on the photo? The photo you're holding?

Photo 1

I really don't know, now.

It's your parents.

Is it? [laughs] Oh, God.

It's your parents. When was this photo roughly taken? Lola, what do you think?

Lola: It was taken during the First World War.

Okay, it's your parents during the First World War.

Yeah, definitely First World War.

And just tell us their names, your parents' names.

Julius and Klara.

Julius and Klara –

Yeah.

Frenkel.

Yeah. Her name was really Sarah. But everybody called Klara.

Photo 2

Okay, thank you. Alice, who's on this picture, please?

You got me again. My Papa, Hannah, myself, and Uncle Emil.

And you're standing in front of-?

[2:02:19]

We're- well it is in Kreuzwald [today Creutzwald, France] and that is in *Elsass* [Alsace]-Lorraine.

Was it a holiday?

Yeah. Well, just, we went for a day, more or less.

Okay. And you're how old there? Maybe-?

How old?

Ten years old, or-?

No, I think I- Oh, I don't know. Hannah was about, what? She went to the *Lyzeum*- fifteen, sixteen, and I must have been about twelve.

Okay, thank you.

Yes, please. Who is that on the photograph?

Photo 3

My father. Papa when he came from Dachau.

1938.

Yeah.

With very short hair.

Yes.

Yes, please. Tell us about this photo.

Photo 4

We were going- we went to the police after we got married and wanted to go to Cornwall. So the policeman said to Ralph, "You can go, but she is not allowed, because it is protected area." So, instead of going to Cornwall, we went- in London every night and every day, we went somewhere else. And we thoroughly enjoyed it! We had a lovely time, in the end.

So you had a honeymoon in London?

Yeah.

So when was this picture taken, roughly?

That was that week, actually, when we were in London. The first thing- yes, that's right. We got out in Tottenham Court Road. And we walked along. And there was this- after the tube. After the tube there was this photographer there. So Ralph said, "Come on, let's have our photo taken quickly." So I said, "Okay." You know. We did exactly what we wanted to do. So we went in and that's the- the end product.

And your husband is in uniform.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That was good. That was really nice. I said, I enjoyed being in London because you never know London, really.

[2:05:06]

Thank you, Alice.

That was lovely.

Yes, please. Alice, tell us about this photo.

Photo 5

Oh, well, I was delighted that all my children- grandchildren. That Ronnie and Lola, first of all, we are on it. And then all the boys, the grandchildren, and then their families together. It really- that was the nicest photograph I've ever had. Well, each photograph has got something. But, that was really lovely.

So this is your 100th birthday, and your great-?

Great-

-granddaughter's Bat Mitzvah.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Well, not many people have that sort of photograph, or event.

Oh, I don't know. Nowadays you do find them now and then. I saw a picture the other day of a man of 105. And he was still driving his car! [both laugh] So, I thought, I wonder whether I could have done that.

You could take it up.

Yes, please. What are you holding in your hands, Alice?

Document 1

I'm holding my- my passport. And I think it's got my picture on it and everything what- I was born, and I arrived in England. They stamped it, and – it tells my story.

And your domestic visa-

Yeah.

- is in it as well, because-

Is it?

Yeah. Thank you.

[2:07:13]

Document 2

This is the- the page where I arrived in England on the 7th of April. And first time I stepped on English soil.

Alice, thank you. Thank you very much again for this interview.

You are more than welcome.

And now we are really finished.

Thank you. I thank you. Because I didn't think I was that important. [laughs]

You are. Thank you.

Thank you.

[End of photographs and documents]

[2:07:48]