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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Forename:	John
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	8 November 1930
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

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Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV193
NAME: John Izbicki
DATE: 26th September 2016
LOCATION: Kent, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]
[0:00:00]

Today the 26 of September 2016. We're conducting an interview with Mr. John Izbicki. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in Staplehurst, Kent.

What is your name please?

John Howard Izbicki.

And when were you born?

I was born on the 8th of November 1930 – three, zero.

And where were you born?

In Berlin.

Thank you very, very much John for agreeing to do this interview for Refugee Voices.

You're welcome.

Can we start please by telling- Can you tell us a little bit about your family background?

Yeah. What would you like to know?

You choose.

My... I was the only child. There was another which I didn't know about until many, many years later. My mother had gone on a holiday to Switzerland. And came back looking quite brown... and she'd gone to have an abortion. And I would have had - could have had - a sister, I think. But my parents both felt that in Nazi Germany, to bring up a child- it just wasn't- wasn't what they wanted. And so, she didn't believe in abortions, but she got rid of it. Anyway, I was- I had a fairly happy childhood. Mixed with unhappiness as well. My parents had a shop a few doors away from where we lived. And they sold... haberdasher from stockings to underwear, ladies' underwear. And they did a very good business. It was close to the Nordbahnhof, which was then called the Stettiner Bahnhof ...A station which we'll come back to a little later. And it was next door to a post office - large post office. Opposite a cinema and a hotel. And three doors also away from where we lived. We had an apartment in Berlin. People don't have houses, they have apartments. ...And we lived on this- in this apartment on... first- second floor up, with a balcony. So, one could see down into the road and see the trams going up and down. And it was very nice. I mean the Invalidenstraße was rather similar to Bond Street in London. It was quite a good place to be. And it was round the corner from the Jewish hospital. And round another corner from the synagogue – the Oranienburger synagogue which was a liberal synagogue. And we went there and I, I stayed with my mother upstairs. And my father prayed downstairs... with all the men. [half laughing] I used to run up and down between the two. But you know, it was- it was good. And every 8th of November, which was my birthday, I used to get fabulous presents. I once got a Punch and Judy show which my father bought and he showed me how these finger puppets worked. And I had great fun with that. And he also bought me an indoor swing which I- we managed to screw between a door and I used to swing in and out. There was a time when I suddenly had this stupid idea. How- what would it feel like if I let go? So, I did. And fell. And my nose didn't stop bleeding for ages. I was taken to the doctor which- who lived opposite. And... he put cotton wool in and all sorts of things and told me just, you know, "Take care" and, "Don't fall or anything." I never did.

[0:05:26]

So... Life was a series of lessons that one had to learn. Good and bad. That's about it. And my- my grandmother, my mother's mother, used to come and look after me quite a lot. And I adored her. And apart from me she had a canary, which she talked to. And he understood every word she said! - she said. And... Yep. It was that sort of thing. Now the other side of

the coin was of course the Nazis. And I was born in 1930. In 1933 Hitler came to power. And... the uniforms were superb. And as a little boy, I thought they were marvellous. And I used to stand outside and go, "Heil Hitler" with everybody else, when they passed. I didn't understand really what they meant. Or, that they really wanted to get rid of the Jews. And I was a Jew. And one day I had my afternoon nap. And woke up and went out into the road and it was empty. The trams had stopped... people were not there. I don't know where they'd gone, but they weren't there. So, I walked up towards the shop shouting, "I'm a Jew. He-hey!" "*Ich bin ein Jude*!" – which of course, you know, people laughed when they heard. But I didn't even know. And then suddenly this hand came and grabbed me by the shoulders and dragged me into the shop. My father said, "What are you doing?!" And I said, "There's nobody around." "Well," he said, "You must never say that again. Don't go around saying you're Jewish. Just be- be yourself, but... be quiet."

When was that? When that incident happened?

[0:08:09]

That was in- that was when I was about... four years old. And at the same time, they painted a large 'J' on my parents' shop window. Standing for '*Jude*'. And they put guards at the door. "*Kauft nicht bei Juden*." ...It was a nonsense - complete nonsense. We had a lot business- my parents had a lot of business with the Scandinavians. Because that's where the Stettiner Bahnhof came in useful, because they came in from there. And they- they came into the shop buying things whether it was a Jewish shop or not. And... I think they even bought more because of the forbidden fruits that the Nazis imposed.

So, when did that sign go up there? When...when...?

That went up almost immediately - the 1933-'34.

Yeah. So, the shop was marked...

Yep.

... clearly?

Yes. And it wasn't the only one. There was another shop opposite us – a... a leather-wear shop. And that was also Jewish and had '*Jude*' painted on. And... When the- when it was my birthday in 1938, and I was eight years old, on the 8th of November 1938... I had a watch for my birthday. I was very happy because I'd always wanted a watch. But I wasn't really happy because I couldn't play with a watch. It wasn't a toy. It wasn't a Punch and Judy show or a swing or a Dinky. So, my father was very apologetic and said, "Next year we'll get you a much better present." A day later...

[0:10:51]

Yes.

Next day, which was the 9th of November, the doorbell rang. And it was opened to a man called Schultz... who was in charge of some public relations for the household. All the apartments...

So that was a Hausmeister, maybe?

Hausmeister, that's right. And he was a member of the Nazi Party because he had a little... signet inside his lapel. But he was quite good chap. And he said to my father, "*Herr* Izbicki, tonight, seven o'clock, your shop is going to be done." "Done? What do you mean done?" "Shhh! It is going to be done tonight." "Come and have a cup of coffee." "No, no, no, no – no! You haven't seen me. You haven't heard from me. You don't know me." And he was away. And my parents closed the door and discussed this. And they agreed that what they will do is to get everything as much as possible out of the window. And take to the back room, which was a store room. Meanwhile, I was having my afternoon rest and woke up to hear a lot of glass being smashed. And I raced to the window and looked out. And I saw that the leather-wear shop opposite had been smashed- the windows had been smashed. And just then a woman who... was clearly quite old, and who... was obviously in pain from arthritis or whatever, walked past the shop. And as she did so she screamed, "Dirty Jews! They should kill the lot of you!" And the screaming went on... and on. And one jagged piece of glass which was just hanging by a thread... came loose and crashed down on her head and split it open. And there she was, lying in a pool of blood... on the pavement. She no longer screamed, but she was dead. And I think that at that moment I believed in God. And it's something I've never forgotten.

[0:14:25]

And were you with your grandmother? Who- who was with you when you saw that?

No- My, my parents were in the shop.

Yeah... Were you by yourself?

I was by myself in the apartment... And that's quite- quite usual, really.

Yeah...

I was able to look after myself that time.

But that must have been very scary to be by yourself and watch this...

It was- it was scary, and as I say, I- I've never forgotten that particular moment. ... And that evening my grandmother was there. And my parents were still in the shop; it was 'business as usual' as far as they were concerned. And it was starting to get dark at about six... and I walked to the balcony and stood there and looked out...

[sound break]

Please....

I've forgotten where I got up to.

That evening. Your grandmother was there.

Yes, that evening. I looked out from the balcony. And in Berlin things... Things went round very quickly. The gossip. The talk. And the streets started to fill with people opposite our shop. And they waited. And at seven o'clock- the Nazis are always very timely. If they say seven, it's not one minute past or one minute before: it's seven. I could hear them marching and singing... a sort of Horst Wessel-type song. And they marched to the shop... whistling. And threw the first stones and bricks at the window and the stones and bricks bounced back. It was a thick, curved window. And... nothing broke. So, what they then did was they went

two doors away to butcher's shop. And went in and said, “Can we borrow your heavy weights? And the butcher said, “What do you want them for?”

[0:17:24]

And they said, “Want to break the Yids windows.” He says, “In that case, you can't have them. Get out!” So instead they smashed his glass counter. And knocked him down, unconscious. And took the heavy weights and went back. And they smashed the window. And I knew my parents were in there. And they picked up glass and threw it through the window at - I presumed - my parents. And I screamed... and screamed and screamed. And it left me…with a hoarse voice that's been with me ever since. I call it ‘My present from Adolf’ and it is a papilloma on the vocal cords. I had several operations at the Jewish hospital. They'd all gone. Those who... those who were there. Emigrated to America or wherever. My father took me actually to a professor... who was known for his wonderful operations on ENT [ear, nose and throat]. And he had a look, and even brought in some students to have a look as well. And he admitted that he had helped Hitler with the same problem. Cause he was screaming as well I suppose, Hitler was, with those speeches. And he then said, “Are you getting out, Herr Izbicki?” My father said, “Yes.” “Where are you going?” So, my father said, “To Palestine.” - which at the time he thought we were doing. “Ah! I will give you the name of a colleague who is there and he will help you.” And he wrote it down... gave my father. And my father took out his wallet, started to... He said, “No, no, no. No- no.” [John becomes emotional] Sorry - this is always terrible. “You people have already paid enough.” And that was that. So... yep.

[0:20:35]

Now, did we go to Palestine? No, we didn't. Because visas, like buses, don't always come at once. You have to wait and wait and wait. And suddenly, three come along. And in this case it was the same. We had one for Palestine, we had one for America and one for England. And we picked the wrong one. We picked the one to America. I've always wondered what would have happened if we had gone to America. What would I have been today? A pauper? A millionaire? A billionaire? I don’t know!

What do you think? What do you think?

I don't- I don't- I just don't know. But we didn't go. And it was... then a question of where to go. We had booked the plane to New York for the 1st of September 1939. And on the 1st of September 1939 my father switched on the radio - which was going to be left behind, along with a lot of other things - and listened to the news. And the news said that Poland had declared war on Germany. And that the Führer had said that they would fight to the last drop of blood. Meanwhile, all traffic in and out of Germany had been stopped. No planes – none. So, my father then took the tickets and ran - and he did run - to the travel agency where he bought them and argued and argued for a long time to change them for tickets to England. In the end they did agree to give him tickets for England and take back the ones for America. But instead of getting a rebate, they charged even more. So, my father paid... and came back with tickets to England. And that night, with the air raid sirens blaring - which was new to me, this air raid sirens - we walked to the Stettiner Bahnhof, just along Invalidenstraße. And got on a train to Cologne… where we changed for a train to Holland- to Flushing [Vlissingen]. But after a short while, the train stopped. We had reached the German border. ...And the police came on board with Gestapo – "*Heil Hitler*". And my father had told me, "If you're asked any questions do not answer. Tell them to ask me, Daddy – Papa." And this is exactly what I did. This German Gestapo officer bent down to me and said, "*Na, Junge.* [Hey, boy]." What nice things have your parents packed for you?" And I said, "Ask my father. Ask Papa." So, they did. And the papers were correct. The visa was good. We had the tickets and at last they left but we looked out of the window and there were a lot of men and women and even children standing outside on the gravel, who'd been taken off the train, obviously for some mistake that they had.

[0:25:32]

And the train went on... and again, stopped. And again, police came on board. [with emotion] But they saluted! Took our papers. Stamped them. "Have a good time in Holland." We had... We'd got through. And then we got off again at Flushing... and caught the ferry to England. And the boat went. And it was the night. And I was on the deck together with a lot of others watching what's going on. And the horizon was filled from one end to the other with ships: battleships, destroyers... all sorts of fantastic ships. British ships. And we stopped and stopped and stopped. Nothing moved. Eventually the captain came on the loudspeaker and said- apologising for the delay, but he was- he had spoken a long time with the shore- the immigration people, who had at last agreed that the boat could come and dock at Harwich.

So, we did and we went off, the boat, to freedom. And we were introduced for the first time... to queues. And we stood in a queue at the immigration people. And at last we were- it was our turn. And my father was interviewed. And he was asked, the name, the age and the family. And nationality.

[0:28:08]

And my father said, "*Staatenlos*." Stateless. Which was true! We didn't have a... a state. "Can't have that. Where were you born?" So, my father said, "I was born in Leczyca in a part of Poland which at the time had been annexed to Russia." "Oh! Russian." He stamped our passports, or papers and handed them back. "Have a good time." They also confiscated a Leica camera - which I still have today - and they promised to send it back. After all these things were done. And they were as good as their word. A Leica camera and one or two other things which I can't remember what they were, came back in the post registered to us and we had a Leica camera.

After the war?

After the war, yes. Yes, the British were as good as their word.

So, your- your parents, they had German citizenship or did they not have German citizenship?

No, they didn't have German citizenship.

They didn't?

No, no, no.

So, your father never took it when they were...

They were '*Staatenlos*' – stateless.

But while they were in Germany- so they didn't take out...

They were Jews.

They didn't take out German citizenship?

No.

Right. Let's- we have- you have crossed many years in, in a short time, but let's just go back before we come to England. Back a little bit about your parents and their background and where they'd come from before they came to Berlin.

[0:30:00]

Right. Well... My father... had come from Poland. And had dug his way out of Poland into Germany... under the snow. And he moved on foot to Kolberg [present day Kolobrzeg, Poland] ...where he met my mother's sister. And took her out and had a very good time with her. And then… she introduced him to the family in the house. They had moved from- my mother and her mother and her brothers and sisters had moved from... East Prussia to Germany - to Kolberg.

Where is Kolberg roughly? Where...?

It's- it's on the north of Germany by the sea. It's a seaside resort. Quite nice. And... when he was introduced to my- [laughs] my mother's family, he met my mother. Dropped a sister like a shot and took my mother out. And eventually he said, "Let's get married. And... let's do it in Berlin." He'd gone to Berlin to have a look at it. He, he had worked in a number of places, including a shoe factory. And they said to him, "Can you design shoes?" "Yes, of course," he said, not knowing what the hell- design shoes. And he learnt how to design shoes and, and was taken on as a designer of shoes.

Where, in Kolberg?

In Kolberg. But then he moved to Berlin to the city... and found not the shop but an apartment. And we- well 'we'- he and my mother moved there and got married at the Oranienburger temple.

When? Which year did they get married?

They got married in 1925 or '6. Which gives a bit of time for my birth.

Yeah...

[0:33:15]

So, it...

And did your mother want to move to Berlin? I mean, did she...?

Oh, she was- they fell in love the two of them. They had a very good life together. And... My father opened a 'stand' – stall...

Yeah.

...in the entrance to the house. The apartment house where we lived. And we lived down in an apartment at the back of the house. And he opened this and he was up there; at six-thirty in the morning it was open. And people bought haberdashery from the- from the stall. And he did so well that he then found an empty shop a few doors away, next to the post office, which he rented. And opened the second shop. And then my mother was in charge of the shop and he continued with the, with the stall. And then he had to give up the stall because he was doing too- the shop was doing very well and he went into the shop. And that is how that started. And that is when my mother went on holiday to Switzerland. Another thing which I remember. She didn't tell me. She told my first and late wife about her abortion and that to a Catholic woman... Anyway.

You said- what did your- when your mother worked in the shop, your father used to call her...?

'*Fräulein*'.

Tell us the story please...

[0:35:25]

Yes. He, he- he called her '*Fräulein*' – 'Miss' because that showed that she was employed at the shop, and that, that there were other things, you know, other people around there. It was- it was… important.

Yeah. And did they- I mean it must have been an interesting time to come to Berlin in the '20s?

Oh, yes!

Did they talk about it? Did they...? What did they do?

Well they certainly loved it. And every week... they would go to... the Kurfürstendamm, the main street in Berlin. And they went to have '*Kaffee und Kuchen'* at 'Dobrin', I think was the name of the café. And I was with them and I had my cake. And a drink of some sort- probably orange juice or something. And then stretched out on the bench... and fell asleep while they- they were talking amongst themselves. So that was a sort of routine. And I never found 'Dobrin' again, but there was 'Aschinger' and other restaurants and cafés which I knew or got to know.

And what- did the family, your mother's family also move? Or what sort of friends did they have?

Yes, they- they eventually moved from Kolberg to Berlin. Where, as I say, my grandmother came and lived with us. And Hetchen – Heti, my mother's sister, got married to... a lovely guy called Benno. Benno Itzig. And they had a baby who became my best friend Heini. ...No more. ...Anyway. We had great times together, played together... and they- they had- they had an apartment in a house which actually housed a synagogue.

[0:38:13]

The Oranienburger Straße?

No, no – no

No...

It was... further out. I can't - sorry - remember the- the actual address.

Don't worry.

And after the war, when I- one of the times when I went back to Berlin and I went to the street where they lived and I got speaking to the rabbi from that synagogue. And he came out to,to greet me and we stood at the entrance to the apartment house... sort of half on the street.

And while we were talking and chatting away, my eyes looked down. And in one of the bricks in the wall... [with emotion] were my signature and Heini's signature together.

Yeah...

Something else I never forget. ...Forgive me. So-

Did you have other cousins? That was- so it was one cousin?

No there was one other- one other cousin. A girl who is still alive and she is one month younger than I am. Liane. And one of my mother's brothers... married... out. And he married a Catholic called Mary - of course. And she became Mary Alexander. Alexander by the way is the name of my grandmother. And my mother's maiden name – Alexander – Selma Alexander. And Liane... was a sort of girlfriend I suppose, in my- in my youth.

[0:40:40]

And as I say, she's still alive now. At one stage her father... died... in mystery. Nobody knows how, other than that some sort of poison got him. Whether it was suicide, or whether it was murder, we don't know.

Which year? When- do you know...?

This was in 19... probably about 1940, '41.

Because was he sort of protected a little bit because he was married to a...?

He wasn't protected, but they hadn't yet got to the... solution.

Yeah.

And Liane was arrested because she was half Jew. Even a quarter Jew would have been arrested. And she was taken to the police station. And her mother, Mary, went to the police station and kicked up absolute hell: "Heil Hitler! What are you doing with my daughter? No of course we love Hitler!" And she said she was a good Nazi. Any mother would have done the same. And eventually they let Liane go. And she lived in Berlin throughout the war... with all the bombings. And her mother didn't die until... 1960-something. And Liane lived on

and she married a policeman! A very nice policeman, by the way. A very good guy called Wolfgang - Wolfgang Pirsch. So, she became a Liane Pirsch. And we still correspond. We still see each other when- when I go to Berlin. She doesn't want to come here because she doesn't speak a word of English. So, I say, "Well I'm here. I'll translate for you." "No, no, no..."

[0:43:29]

Was she in East Berlin or West Berlin? Where does she live? West?

She lives in West Berlin, yes. East Berlin? I could tell you lots of stories about East Berlin, but...

Later. A bit later.

Later- later, yes. ...We were of course in East Berlin, or what became East Berlin.

Yes.

Invalidenstraße...

Oranienburg Straße.

Oranienburger... It's all... that side of the wall.

Yeah... What about your schooling?

My schooling was- I originally went to a Protestant school nearby. But then, Jews were not allowed anymore. So, I had to go to a Jewish school. And I went to the... Jewish Allgemeine Schule in Berlin - not too far from where we lived. I had to take a tram to get there. And...I enjoyed- I enjoyed the school. And that was I think the first time that I did anything on stage. Cause I- because I was a would-be actor. And I played a little bird looking for an apartment with my little bird wife. We go round from tree to tree... asking for a room or a house or a flat. And of course, there wasn't anything for us. But I whistled my way through... and enjoyed that very much.

That was in this Jewish school?

[0:45:27]

That was in the Jewish school. Of course – and no room at the inn! Anyway-

Well it seems quite topical...

It was topical...

...for that time.

Yes - yes.

Yeah... And how- we didn't talk about your religious upbringing. How religious was your family? You said your parents were married in the liberale synagogue...

That's right. And they were... They were Jewish in mind and body. But religion was of a very much secondary nature. Except - and it's what I still do! Except for Yom Kippur. Always went to shul, to the synagogue, on Yom Kippur. And fasted. ...And drank nothing but water. If that. And Rosh Hashanah which is about to happen at this time, was also kept. And we also kept, in a way, Hanukkah. And we had a... Things on the balcony, you know... made- they turned it into a sort of little... house with leaves and... Yeah? Great fun.

That's probably Sukkot. Sukkot.

Sukkot – Sukkot, yes. Not Hanukkah - Sukkot. And... And then we'd invite people. We always invited someone who was too poor or hungry at Pesach. And my father would do the Passover meal and, and the prayer. And he would stop and do it in German and... Hebrew. And I would say "*Ma Nishtana ha-laylah ha-zeh...*" - "Why is this night different from all other nights?" And we had, as I say, one person who was invited to sit with us and eat our meal. And my mother made wonderful meals.

What did she cook? What did she make?

She made… chicken of course. It's the only time when I actually enjoyed [laughs] egg in saltwater. Normally I would never dream of eating such a thing. But there I always will have it. And... she made a good chicken soup... with noodles. Lokshen – a lokshen soup. And then chicken with potatoes and all the trimmings. And it was very good. And then a huge pudding.

And of course, a matzoh would be taken round and eaten. And I still like matzoh. I have it with butter, or butter; I can't have- I can eat beef, but I can't have its products. So I get goat butter, which is excellent. You can get it from Waitrose – about the only place who sell it.

[0:49:27]

So did your parents speak- they spoke German. Did they speak some Yiddish as well?

No.

No...

No, they didn't speak Yiddish. And they would not even claim to speak Yiddish. It wasn't the done thing...

No...

... to speak Yiddish. They spoke German... and they understood Yiddish. That's why my father went on foot to the East End from Hampstead- from Belsize Park, to the East End.

So, their parents maybe spoke some Yiddish, or they must- I mean, they grew up- they heard it...

They heard it spoken by… the more orthodox Jews.

Yeah.

The Chassids. But they wouldn’t- they wouldn't speak Yiddish.

No. And you said you remember going to the Oranienburger Straße?

Yes.

To the synagogue?

Yes.

And do you remember the music and the atmosphere and the... What- what else do you remember from...?

It was a wonderful atmosphere, because I was upstairs with my mother looking down on the men below. And yes, there was music, there was singing, which you wouldn't get in a… Orthodox synagogue. And I'd go running down to see my father during the- during the service. And I listened to the boring old rabbis having their... their speeches and sermons. But it was good. And many years later... when the Kristallnacht came... and I- have I told you about the Kristallnacht?

[0:51:32]

We have talked about Kristallnacht, but not in relation to the synagogue, actually.

OK. Well at the same time, synagogues throughout Germany were set on fire, including the Oranienburger Temple. However, something which is very rarely publicised - it should be - is that it was set on fire and a Berlin policeman decided to call the fire brigade and ordered them to put out the flames. Which they did and saved the synagogue. ...He was an amazing guy. A man- a Nazi policeman [Otto Bellgardt] who saved the synagogue [declaring the synagogue was a protected historical landmark]. ...Now the synagogue had a golden dome, which it still has today. And after the war- many years after the war it was reopened as a museum. And I was amongst the many who were invited to the opening of it. And I went. And there was a beautiful service and looked around the museum. And I came to the entrance of the synagogue where they had erected some photographs. Big, huge... in glass- on the glass. And I looked at the photographs and my heart leapt and missed a beat or two, because there on this photograph, third row on the right, was my father. He was a ghost... but the sort of ghost I like to have haunt me. And that- that was the synagogue.

[0:54:17]

Do you remember doing other things in Berlin? I mean you were in Berlin of course already in Nazi time, but the hobbies you had, or... as a boy?

Well I used to play with- with other boys... who were quite friendly. I really didn't know if they were Jew, non-Jew. It didn't enter our minds. And I used to go to a park nearby, which was quite close to what is now the *Freie Universität* – Free University. And there was a sandpit. And I used to play with sandcastles and so on. And one day I was approached by some boys - not my age - and offered a part to play in their- in their game. They were playing

‘cowboys and Indians’. And I was to be an Indian... of course. And they as cowboys would capture me...which they did. And they tied me - quite firmly - to a tree. And there was- there was like a small forest at the end of this park. And they said they would come back and rescue me later. And they galloped away on their horses. And I was there, left waiting for the rescue. And I waited and waited and waited and waited... nothing. Eventually I started shouting, “Help” - nothing. The bell went and the carpark was closed. And I was there tied to the tree all night. I fell asleep - tied. And in the morning at about... half past six, seven o’clock in the morning a little girl came. She was among the people playing this game. And she untied me and said that she wasn’t- didn't exist. I mustn't telling anybody. And meanwhile, my parents got very, very frightened. Had called the police in. And the police were looking for me. They didn't find me. And I walked home - or ran home. And my father didn't know whether to hit me or- or kiss me. Luckily, he kissed me. And I told them the story about my ‘cowboys and Indians’... escapade. ...I never went to that park again.

Which year was that?

That was in... about 1937.

[0:58:15]

But was that- do you think it was an anti-Semitic incident or was it...? Do you see what I mean?

Possibly yes – yes, it could have been. I mean nobody actually used the word ‘Jude’. But, as I was picked out, I think it probably was. But I don't know. That was just one of several strange... happenings.

What were the others? What...?

There was another one which took place in the post office next door to the shop. There was a long passageway from the front door to the actual post office. And that was taken up with photographs and pictures and... There was one big... display of photographs from films being shown across the road at the cinema. I couldn't go to the cinema as a Jew. Jews were not allowed. And so, I made do with seeing the photographs which would flip over so you could see them round and round and round. And one of these times when I was looking at the pictures I was grabbed by the shoulders, by an evil-smelling man who said, “You! Stay here.

Don’t move. I'm going in there. And when I come back, I will slit your throat from ear to ear with this knife.” ... I didn’t dare move! He went. And I thought, “What should I do? Do I wait here and have my ears- my, my throat cut? Or do I run?” I decided to run like mad, and I ran out of there and into the shop – screaming. My father went to look for this man. The man had gone by that time. But that was the sort of thing that one had to put up with.

[1:01:00]

Any other... persecution? Or something you felt or you saw or you...?

Well there were other smaller pieces of persecution. Where I'd be saluted “Heil Hitler”, I didn't salute back, by that time. And so, they would come and wrestle with me or punch me or give me black- I came home with black eyes now and then. But one other one that I remember which has nothing to do with persecution... was a holiday. The school went on a holiday.

The Jewish school?

The Jewish school.

Yes...?

And we went away for I think a week! I can't remember where, but it was- it was near the seaside. And parents gave their children some money... to buy sweets or whatever on, on the way. And I was given five marks, which was a lot of money. ...And the other children had money as well. And they gave their money to the teacher. We were on a train. The train went. And I couldn't find my five marks; it had gone. I must have dropped it, lost it. Somebody else must have picked it up. So, I was the only child who didn't have any money for anything. So, when children were asked, “Do you want an ice cream?” “Oh!” - hands went up. My hand went up as well. I didn't get an ice cream. Didn't have any money to pay for it. My father came to visit me... and was told the story about- that I didn’t have any money. Which my father immediately corrected. And he had bought a bag full of peaches. And we both went and sat down on a park bench. And eating peaches and the juice running down. And we were laughing. We laughed and laughed as we ate. I don't know what we were talking about. I don't know what the jokes were if there were any. But we laughed; we were so happy. And it

was good, the peaches - they were good. And that's something I always remember as one of the better things that happened.

Yeah...

[1:04:26]

The other thing that happened which was not so good, which again wasn't persecution, it was just an awful mistake, was the canary. My grandmother's canary. And we'd put it out with its cage on the balcony...for the fresh air. And that was fine. Except, that on this particular day the sun was shining not just with heat, but it was hot, hot, hot. And the poor animal went to the water, but the water was hot. And eventually it- the canary died. And my parents- well my grandmother wasn't there at the time. She'd gone to visit friends outside Berlin. And my father went racing around pet shops, with the dead canary, and said, "Have you got one like this?" And of course, they did find one. And he put it in the cage. And my grandmother came home... went to the cage: [in a high voice] "Oh hello...!" No. No reaction from the bird. "Strange," my grandmother said, "the bird is..." "Oh..." they said, "Well it was a hot day you know and, and the bird is perhaps a bit- gone a bit loopy." She understood... but didn't actually appreciate it. And, well, that was that really. And then later on she was taken to… an old-age home in Berlin before we left. And we went to her seventieth birthday party at the old-age home… Was it seventy or eighty? Seventy. And we had a very nice time with her, for the day... eating cake. And then we left. And that was the last we ever saw of her. She ended up in Theresienstadt, which was said to be one of the better camps, and was meant mainly for the aged and the very young. And they didn't take away your jewels and things like that at Theresienstadt. And we had a note from her, smuggled out by another relation. And it said, you know, "I'm well..." et cetera. "Yesterday I gave my wedding ring in exchange for a raw potato. It was lovely."

[1:08:28]

And she died of starvation. Heini. I- I wrote away to Yad Vashem and asked whether they had any details - anything. And they sent me a whole list, which I still have somewhere... up in my terrible study. And it's amazing the detail that they give. What date, when, where and what date. Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt and so on, all listed my mother's younger brother, Georg. There was a woman that he had met and they fell madly in love. She

was Lotte... and she was a Protestant. And she wanted to get married. But he refused. Not because of the Jew bit and non-Jew bit. He refused because he didn't want her to suffer trouble. And he went to Holland, thinking that he'd escaped. And there he met a woman – young woman. They fell in love; they got married. And Lotte... Lise got married in Berlin… to a lovely man who had lost an arm in the war. And he had a bad limp. And he was a very nice guy. And he ended up in… selling - not selling - punching tickets at the metro- the tube – U-Bahn. And they lived in East Berlin and I visited them after the war. And it was an awful story. Her mother and her sisters and brothers were living in West Berlin. A matter of a few hundred yards away from each other. And her mother got very ill. So she asked whether she could go and visit her. She was sent to a doctor. Had the doctor found that her head was hanging off, they would have let her go. But the doctor didn't find anything desperate with her. So she was kept. You stay here; you mustn't even want to see your mother. She was working at a baker's, her husband punching the tickets, retired. Her mother died. “Please, can I go to the funeral?” They sent up a *Volkspolizistin* - a woman police officer - who persuaded her that she shouldn't even want to go. But her husband who had retired, being no more use to the DDR, he could go in her place. So, like The Queen sending Prince Philip, she was able to send him to her mother's funeral.

[1:13:16]

And how was she related to you?

She wasn’t related.

Oh- sorry.

No, she wasn't related. She was a girlfriend of my uncle.

She’s- right...

Georg...

Who he didn’t marry...

Whom he did- he did not marry her. ...But she always- although she married a good guy, she always regretted not having married Georg. Always. She’s dead now.

You stayed in touch with her? You stayed in...?

Yes. Yes.

Yeah... So, to come back to your story, when was the first time you heard the word 'emigration', or when was it talked about or...?

I'm afraid I don't know the answer to that one. I mean I must have- I must have heard it several times. And I know that- I knew... that we were planning to get out of Germany while it, while the- while the going was still reasonably good.

So, you said your grandmother was- went to an old age home. Was that also in preparation- that your parents knew that they had to leave?

They had to leave and they would send for everybody else.

Yes.

Alas- that wasn't to be.

[1:14:38]

But did you know, for example, for the seventieth birthday did you at that point did you know you were leaving?

Oh well, yes. I knew that we were leaving on that birthday in 1939.

Yeah. Tell us a little bit, because your parents - or your father - managed to get three visas. How did he manage to get the American visa?

Well he applied for every one- every visa possible. And as I say, they- they all came together.

And the British visa was possible because...?

My father's brother, who lived in Israel - Palestine as it then still was - had guaranteed his right to be in England by depositing a thousand pounds in the Bank of England in my father's name- or for- for my father. And he later withdrew it. Which, fair enough, when- once we were out. But my father would never, ever accept charity from anyone. And I was quite

honestly, I was... very disappointed, if not horrified, at some of the reactions of British Jewry to refugees...

Then, or today?

Then.

Then. Yeah...

I remember we went to- when my father was looking for a job we went to a... address in Golders Green. And... we were- we'd come in. The- the man my father had come to see wasn't there, but he would be coming back. "You can sit there in the hall." They never offered- she never offered even a glass of water. It was a very hot summer's day. Nothing was offered. And the man came and he couldn't help. So away we went... again. Walking back to Belsize Park Gardens.

[1:17:11]

Mn-hnn... Just to- just to go back a little bit to Berlin... So, you... got the visas. Then your parents- why did they decide to go to America? Was it because it was the furthest away, or...?

No, because America was- everybody wanted to go to America.

Yeah...

A good place to be! It's where all the films were being made and - ooh, you know - great. America was just the place. But why it was just the place, ooh – I've no idea.

And you packed- What- do you remember what you could take, for your luggage? Did you have to re-pack the luggage? What happened when there was a change of plans?

We took the clothes we were standing up in, plus things like two pairs of pyjamas, a pullover... some shirts, some short trousers - that was just me. And that was in a rucksack which I carried on my back. My parents had their clothes in suitcases. No wheels in those days; they had to carry them. And that was that. But there was nothing in them that could be considered illegal.

Any valuables? Did you...?

My mother packed some costume jewellery... but nothing of any value.

And was there a ring? There was something in the book about a ring - your father... Do you remember that?

Oh gosh! Yes, of course! The- the ring.

The ring.

Yes. He had quite a few gold coins melted down and built into a... a ring - which I still have, and which I will never sell. It's bloody heavy. [laughs] But, you know, it- it will fit my finger, and...[laughs]

[1:19:35]

How did he manage to take that out?

It was a ring! You know - that was his ring. I mean, if they did... If the Gestapo had taken it- it would have been theft. In those days it still, you know, you mustn't... do things wrong.

So was he wearing it when you were on...

He was wearing it.

...on your journey?

Yes. Yes. He took it off when he could. [laughing] Immediately.

And the idea was to- to use it in case...?

That's right. I mean he would sell that and with the money he would manage to buy food or whatever. But luckily, he didn't need to sell it. And we had... On one occasion I know that my father took- we took a taxi somewhere. And my father said, “I must give the taxi driver a good tip.” And he took out the biggest coin he could find, which was a penny. And he really didn't know. He was totally ignorant as to you know, the money and... And the taxi driver

seemed to understand. And... there were a lot of good people in London. Especially Cockneys. I mean, they were- they were fabulous.

Just to go- to wor- to go back to Berlin a little bit. What- what were your feelings on the 1st of September? Just... Do you remember?

Well, I mean, I didn't have anything to regret. We didn't have a cat or a dog, you know, to say goodbye to. I wouldn't have liked to have said goodbye to anything like that. So we just... marched off to Stettiner Bahnhof. And... I was aware that we were going on a train. You know, this is for an eight-year-old, a train? Good! Trains are good!

And you were close to that- that was the Bahnhof you lived- it was a close...

Yes. That's right.

So, from Stettiner Bahnhof to Cologne that was the first part of the-

Yes.

And did you have to stay in Cologne or you moved on...?

No, we moved straight away on to another train which was going to Holland... Netherlands.

And that's when you crossed into...

Yeah.

I think we should have a short break and then pick up from your arrival in Britain. Is that OK?

Yeah. Sure.

[1:22:13]

OK. Now let's start again from the journey and from your arrival in England. You arrived on the 3rd of September...

Yeah.

...1939. What was the atmosphere on the boat? You said you could see the- the war ships.

Battleships. Fantastic atmosphere. We kids on the deck looked out. And it was late. Middle of the night. But it was exciting. To a child this is very exciting stuff.

And what- what were your first impressions of arriving in England?

Complete tiredness. ...I fell asleep very quickly - middle of the night. Well, early morning actually. And then when we got to the hotel... I went fast asleep. I did not hear Mr. Chamberlain. I did not know there was a war on... until I woke up. And the next thing I can remember, is bombs dropping on London. And us, sitting – lying - in the Anderson shelter... which we had in the garden.

But first you were in a hotel...

Yeah.

...for some time. Then you said they wanted to go to the East End, your father.

That's right.

But then returned. And then you were in Belsize Park – in Belsize Park Gardens.

Belsize Park Gardens.

So please tell us a little bit about that time in Belsize Park Gardens and the family who... rented you the room.

[1:24:25]

Well, if you recall I- we- we became Russians in a matter of seconds at the immigration. So therefore, we were no longer enemy aliens; we were ‘friendly aliens’. And therefore, we could do things that German nationals couldn’t possibly do. We could rent a Radio Rentals radio. We could have a camera. We could do things, you know, of that nature - and we did. So, we had this Radio Rentals radio. And every evening we listened to the English news in German. And everybody in the house - there were quite a few - came up the stairs to our attic

to listen to the news in German. And we kept up with it, in that way. There were three of us in the room... and I shared the bed with my father and mother. ...Quite cosy.

And who was the family you were renting the room from?

Well, our immediate... landlord was Herbert Sulzbach.

Can you tell us a little bit about Herbert...?

Herbert Sulzbach and his family... came from... Frankfurt. They were bankers. They were very well off. And he was an amazing man. He called me 'Horstchen' and patted my head, often. And he himself had a remarkable story that- one day we came back to the house - in Belsize Park Gardens - and it was empty! Apart from us. Everybody had been shipped off to the Isle of Man. They were enemy aliens... including Herbert Sulzbach. And he was there for a goodly part of the war... and joined the Army. The only... corps that he could possibly join which was the Pioneer Corps or the 'Shit and Treacles' as they were known. They did all the dirty work: digging of trenches, sweeping... But he was a very intelligent guy and his intelligence was recognised. He was then put in charge of denazification of some of the officers that they had captured. And when he left the Army - at the end of the war - he was a captain. And he announced the fact to anyone, including his, letters the letters he wrote to newspapers it was always in brackets, 'Captain Herbert Sulzbach'. And he did denazify a lot of these German officers. And when the Germans reopened their embassy in London, they appointed him as Cultural Secretary. The only Jewish ex-German refugee who had a position of that nature. And he held that till well after his resigning age. ...And we would meet from time to time and he would tap me on the shoulder and say, "Ahh, Horstchen..." And he would tell people, "You know, this young man, I knew him when he was so high? And he's all right." And he would, as I say, pat me in a very friendly way. And when he died at the age of eighty-something - says he, being eighty-something - a lot of the ex-German officers who were Nazis whom he had denazified, came to the funeral. He was very popular.

A special person.

Yep. ...And I- I've always missed him. He was a very good guy.

[1:30:11]

John, due to time constraints, can you just briefly describe to us what happened to you- so after- and your parents, once you were in Belsize? Where did you go to school?

We had a- friend, an Austrian friend, called Helene Burg. And she suggested that I should go to school, which was fair enough. I couldn't speak any English. And she took me to Bartram's Convent School on Haverstock Hill... which was a nice place. A lot of nuns. And I always remember one story there that, a nun who came to us and said, "Now, I want you to write your four times table." And we had slates. "And the first person to come out with the right answer, will have a prize." So... And I took my slate out and rushed out and said - [indicates handing over the slate] And quite honestly, she didn't know whether to laugh... or send me for a cane or whatever- or they didn't have a cane, I don't think. ...She laughed. I had written T A B E L - T A B E L - T A B E L - T A B E L. Four times 'table'. But it was a good school. Nice- nice school but the, the kids were not all that good really. There was a lot of bullying... and I was in for bullying. But I was used to that from the Nazis in Germany.

But bullied as a- as a German? As a refugee? As a Jewish boy? As a...?

As a foreigner. And quite often as a German foreigner. "Get back to where you came from." I said, "I don't want to do that. It's Germany."

[1:32:26]

And John, at what point did you change your name from Horst to John?

We became naturalised British... quite a while after the war. It was about... 19...'48 - '48, '49. And there was an amusing thing here. You could change your name, but, you could do it either by deed poll which cost you a lot of money – which we didn't have. Or, you could take your- your identity card and- to the food office, where it would be stamped. And you could change your name there free, as long as the name you changed it to had the same initial letter. Now we tried Izbicki, and Ibbotson, Ibbert... Isaacs... Israel. No. We kept Izbicki. My father changed his name from Luzer to Leonard - L. My mother kept hers; she didn't want to know anything about another name. So, she remained Selma. And I changed my name from Horst to Howard. And I named it Howard in respect of a man at the Committee of Friends who... who did a lot for refugees. And he was a very nice guy...

A Quaker? Quaker?

Quaker, yes. Society of Friends. And he- he was particularly good to me. And when he died, of funnily enough a similar situation in his throat as I had, I decided to name myself Howard because his name was Mr Howard. His surname was Howard. So that was that. And I've remained Howard John officially. And even now when I go on a plane, the name has to be as in the passport. So, it's Howard John. I can never get used to it that people call me, "Ah, Mr. Howard?" [laughs]

But how did you get to John?

Oh, John! Ah! John, sorry. Yes. When my mother and I self-evacuated to Steventon near Abingdon in Berkshire we stood outside the station in the pitch black. It was very late and the train had been very late because it was war. And suddenly a voice came behind us, from a policeman. "Hello, hello, hello. What are you doing here then?" I said, "Please..." - I was able to speak some English then – "please, we must see Mrs. Rogers." "Mrs. Rogers? Ooh she'll be asleep by now. You come with me to the station." "But this is *doch*, the station." "No, no, no, no - the police station." "Police station?" [takes frightened breath] We were immediately afraid; 'police station' meant something terrible. Anyway, he took us to the police station. And they opened a cell. 'They'- him and another policeman. And made up a couple of bunk beds in the cell, "Go on, you can sleep there. We'll wake you in the morning for breakfast." So, we did. We slept... we'd a wonderful breakfast! Bacon, eggs - the lot. Really good non-kosher breakfast... During the war! And the police sergeant, as he was, was just about to go off duty and go home. And he turned to me and said, "By the way, what's your name, then?" Says, "Please Sir, it is Horst." "Horse? Horse? That's not a name, that's an animal!" So, I, "Oh..." He says, "Why don't you name yourself like my little- my boy? My boy's called 'John'. Very good, that name." And ever since then whenever anybody asks me my name, I say, "It is John Izbicki."

[1:37:47]

So, you moved with your mother? You were to that- you were billeted to a lady?

Yes.

And what happened to your father?

My father was billeted in London because he had this job. And then...

What did he do? – Sorry.

He got a job sewing button holes in uniforms and greatcoats which were being sent to Finland. Cause the Finns and the Russians were at loggerheads. And... so he was doing that. He'd never done any buttonhole... He was a- he was a businessman. And... he was paid remarkably less than the rest of the people there. He was told not to tell anybody what he was being paid. “Shh- We don’t want people to know.” So, then this firm evacuated itself to Llandudno. And he- my father called us to come to Llandudno, because it was much better than being in London. Meanwhile, how- the day after we left the empty house, it was bombed. Nothing left of... number 56 B, I think.

Belsize Park Gardens?

Belsize Park Gardens. It was- it was down. “Somebody up there looks after us.” And we then went to Llandudno where I went to several schools. A couple of primary schools. I didn't pass my 11-Plus and I went to a secondary modern. But they quite quickly said, “This boy shouldn't be here.” And they sent me to John Bright’s County Grammar School in Llandudno. And I had a lovely time there. My father, meanwhile, was in Manchester working for the ROF factory in Risley. And... One funny story there was that the, the other workers talked to him quite a lot. And one man one day said, “’Ere, Len. Have you had your pie? And my father said, “What...?” “Have you had your pie! Your pie!” “No,” he says, “I, I, I do not like pies.” “No, your pie! Your pie!” Pay. So, he understood... and got his pay.

[1:40:50]

And did your mother work at all in Llandudno?

In Llandudno she got a job as a cook... from ten in the morning till well after midnight. So I was on my own and took myself to school and so on. Weekends I had lunch and supper at the restaurant. Granville's Café, in Mostyn Street...

But you managed to take care of yourself?

Oh yes - yes. And I had a good friend, Michael Myers, who is now in Canada and has been many years. And we were good friends - best friends. Yeah - good. So, then we came to Manchester... and somebody said, “Manchester Grammar”. But we couldn't afford it. So

eventually I was tested for North Manchester Grammar... and got in. And that was a state school. And... did all right, until I went to university. And that was Nottingham. I picked Nottingham because it had- a lot of women. And they were very beautiful. And... it was a good- it was a gorgeous campus.

And what did you decide to study?

[1:42:25]

I studied German. That I thought would be easier, but it didn't- it wasn't at all easy. And- and philosophy. I studied German and French to start with. And my French was I thought better than the one spoken by the lecturers there.

And had you kept up your German? Did you continue to speak German with your parents?

Very strange- very funny, because my mother and I would have long conversations - and my father - in German. They would speak to me in German and I would answer in English. And it was a dual conversation and rather funny.

So, you studied German and philosophy?

Then I changed it from French to philosophy - German and philosophy.

Right...

And I'd- I'd gone to France for French Studies at the Sorbonne... And...

That's much later. Where were you when the war ended?

...When the war ended, I was in… Nottingham. And Manchester. We lived in Cheetham. And then moved to Prestwich - you know, one up. And that was- that was good.

Because my question is, how did the end of the war affect you? And when did your - especially your mother - find out what happened to her mother and her brothers and sisters?

[1:44:08]

My... My mother was a remarkable woman and she took everything to heart. And she always thought that her mother would still be alive and that her brothers would still be alive. We'd heard about... her elder brother. And we'd heard about Georg, who went to Holland and married there. And they had a baby whom they called... Christina, after the princess of the Netherlands. But even in Holland they weren't safe. And they all died one way or another, except for Mary and Liane. They were the only ones who came out of the war alive and safe. And we still correspond.

And how did your mother deal with that- with that news?

[1:45:34]

She dealt with it like any woman of staunch feelings. And she took it. Cried herself silly. And then helped others with their applications for restitution. Wrote letters for them - in German.

And did you- did your parents ever go back to Germany?

Only once and that was for the marriage of Liane. They went there, but they didn't want to go to Germany at all. I did, because... I'd got jobs in journalism. And eventually I was called for an interview at *The Telegraph*. Oh, I started in journalism in Manchester- *Manchester Evening Chronicle*. And at the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* I was asked what name would I write under. And I said, "Well, John Izbicki." So, they said, "If- if you have more than one story in the paper we'd like- you don't want the same name, and- what would you call yourself?" "Oh - John Howard." I never used John Howard at the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*; it was always John Izbicki. When I joined '*The Telegraph'* I had more or less the same question asked. And I gave the same answer about John Howard. I started off as a reporter... taking fifteen hundred pounds drop in salary. I was with a thing called '*World Medicine*' and I [laughs]- I got all the problems that we were writing about. And I was terrible. Terrible. I had- you know, "Who have I got?" One day I was- we had the cover of a secondary syphilis hand. And I looked at my hand and I went, "Oh! Good... how can I have it? I don't know! How impossible? It's impossible! I couldn't possibly have syphilis!" And... after a while I recognised that I'd been digging the garden at the weekend. And there were three little blisters. And they were nothing like the syphilitic- syphilitic hands- blisters. And so I thought, "Enough's enough. I've got to get out." And I applied to all sorts of jobs. People

don't think they- that anybody from a magazine can work on a newspaper, cause of the deadlines. They didn't realise that one's deadline on a magazine is just as bad, if not worse. Anyway, I was a general reporter. And obituaries, short obituaries. I could just see the dying saying, "Who is doing the obituaries today? Oh, Izbicki!" Cause I had loads of obituaries to do. And I then was picked up by Blake Baker, who was the industrial correspondent, as his number two. So, I was with industrial and labour relations for quite a while. And I was sent to Birmingham on a story. I can't actually now remember what the exact story was but I do remember that I found another story alongside it which I thought a damn sight better. And I wrote it and sent it. And in those days, you phoned your stories over and dictated them. And I had a telephone call... at my hotel from the night news editor saying, "Jolly good story that, John. We're going to splash with it." – Headline. So, I said, "Oh! Right! If it's that good, am I going to get a by-line or am I going to still be 'Daily Telegraph Reporter'?" "Ooh," said Harry Greenslade. "I don't know about that. I'll try and find out." So, I told him the story about John Howard – John Izbicki. And he called me back in about half an hour after that and said, "John. Is it 'Howard' with an 'a' or an 'e'?" So, I spelled it out to him. He says, "Right. John Howard." And I wrote under the name John Howard for the *The Daily Telegraph* for about six months. And it was then that Blake Baker wrote to the managing editor saying that he can't have a chap called John Izbicki writing under John Howard on his team when I meet - you know - high ranking union officials and so on. And a memorandum went round the office from Pau- Paulie. *Subject: John Izbicki. John Izbicki who has been writing under the by-line 'John Howard' will in future be by-lined by John Izbicki, Industrial Staff, until further notice.* And that... was that. And I wrote- I got back my name and I really felt... chuffed.

[1:52:03]

Were you pleased about using your proper name?

Oh yes - yes. That was my- that was my real name.

Yeah.

I was considered to be 'John'. And I considered myself to be 'John'...Izbicki is who I was.

But something we didn't talk about - we don't have time here - is also you were- you were in the British Army?

Yes.

Maybe just tell us a little bit – a very little bit about it.

I did my National Service. And they offered me Intelligence Corps and said I could go to... wherever it was, to learn Russian. And I refused. I'd had enough of learning. To this day I kick myself. I wish I had done that. But I didn't. And so, they put me into the other 'Shit and Treacle', the RASC, the Royal Army Service Corps. And... I was sent to Egypt. And in Egypt we all queued up, all us new subalterns. I was a subaltern by now. And everybody got a job from the Brigadier, except me. He said to me, "Oh, you're the young man who wants to do anything except soldiering!" "Oh, no Sir, no." And we talked. It was because I'd filled in so many forms I got fed up. ...And I was sent back to the transit camp not knowing what the hell I was going to do. And I was there about three weeks, sunning my knees. And eventually I was called to see the Brigadier and the Brigadier says, "I've got a job for you. Go and report to John Stubbs and he's the Head of Public Relations in the Canal Zone." Which I did. I became his number two... and worked as a public relations officer of the Army. And that's more or less how I ended Egypt, except, I made a lot of friends including very senior Army officers. And... when the Canal Zone closed, during which time I also had- did a lot of defending of court-martial people- got one of them off and two of them just with very light sentences. And I was sent at the closing of the Canal Zone, to Libya. And was at a camp - RASC camp near Tripoli. I had a great time! Great time.

[1:55:15]

But then one day, another Captain came to visit me and he said, "Oh by the way, I thought you might like to know, you turned out to be number three on Nasser's blacklist." They thought I was a- an Israeli spy...[laughing] which I wasn't, I can assure you. But that's what they thought because I was doing quite well and... talking to their officers and so on. The news must've got through somehow.

And at that point did other- did other people know? Did you have an accent? Did they even know that you were a refugee, or could you pass as British, so to speak?

Oh, I, I- I passed as British.

Yeah...

And I would tell people “I'm British” which I was...

Yes.

...because I was naturalised. But no, they, they- they were okay. And it- it’s rather funny because… I kicked off the Army National Service at Aldershot. And I was with a lot of other, newers - newer beginners. And when I was in Libya as Assistant Camp Commandant, lo and behold I was given a squad to look after. And they were the people I was with in Aldershot in the beginning. So- and they were very good. I was- I was rather worried. I thought, “Oh, my ...they’re going to take the piss.” But they didn't. They- they really were very nice.

Thank you, John.

Saluted me and everything.

So now due to time constraints, maybe you could summarise the highlights - highlights of your life as a journalist and also then after - I'm very sorry for this.

I know.

Yeah... so your highlights as a journalist. Highlights of your career. Tell us also what happened in your personal life, please.

[1:57:24]

A highlight of my journalistic career was the night, I rescued Margaret Thatcher – and I'm not a Tory - who had given a speech at a conference of the National Association of Headteachers in Scarborough. And I’d gone out to add a couple of lines by phone for a cross-reference to the story I did inside. And when I got back, I found the press - my colleagues - were all around, surrounding her. And Bruce Kendall then of the *Daily Express* had really dug into her. And I could see as I walked in – she wore a ballgown - the ballgown was shaking because her knees were trembling. She was actually afraid of the press. And she- she was then Secretary of State for Education. Not, not, not Prime Minister yet. And I felt desperately sorry for this woman. I went up to her and I tapped her gently on the shoulder and she looked round. And I said, “Do you dance?” “Oh, yes!” I took her out to the dancefloor because it... after the conference they have a dance. And we danced and you know, “Do you

come here often?" sort of thing. And I said, "Have you seen Scarborough? Have you been to Scarborough before?" "No – no." "Oh! I must show you. Let's go out." And I took her outside... from the hotel, across the road, to the wall and the sea. And the moon was on- the moon was shining. [half-laughs] And I showed her the vista. Beautiful. And she liked it. And I- I love Scarborough. But, sexually, I mean no. No, no, no, no, no way – ever. And then one little man from the NHD came running out saying, "Oh, Mrs. Thatcher, Mrs. Thatcher, you are supposed to give out the prizes at the..." Dragged her around. Dragged her in. And of course, everybody knew that John Izbicki had run off with the Secretary of State. [laughs] Oh, dear. Great. I mean that was- that's still a highlight and that's in the book.

[2:00:21]

Another highlight... ...I wrote quite a lot- I- I- when I first went to Paris for Kemsley Newspapers- *The Empire News– Empire News, Sunday Graphic, Sunday Times,* I met a guy on the boat going over. And he was going over to a christening of a ship - an oil tanker - for a man called 'Getty'... Paul Getty. And it sounded like this man was worth knowing. And he said, "Oh, you'll find him- he'll probably be at the George V." So, I gave it a couple of days and went over to the George V Hotel, and asked for him. And the reception called him. And he says, "Where are you?" I says, "I'm down in reception." "I'll give you five minutes." And he sort of blew up, you know, he didn't want press to know where he was and... And about fifty minutes later I came out having had lunch with him – sandwiches. And he'd told me everything. His many women. His... millions. And I actually wrote a story which started off, "How would you like to be a millionaire forty times over?" And then about three... about 2000 words. ...Didn't appear. The one that got away.

Was that story?

That story never got published. Never. And about three weeks later... *Time* magazine - or *Newsweek*? - *Time* magazine had a front page on Paul Getty with a picture of him. I had a phone call from the *Sunday Graphic* saying, "Didn't you do a story about Paul Getty?" And I said, "Yes...". And they made me dictate it all over again. And it got about...three paragraphs. [laughs] And Ian Fleming was my boss. And he called me over and I thought, "Oh, this is the sack." Because a lot of stories I did never got in. And while we were talking, he was doodling. And in the end, he said, "Well now. ...I thought of giving you a small raise. How about that?" And he showed me the money and it was like two thousand pounds more than I

was actually getting. And I wasn't getting the sack; he thought I was doing quite a good job. And I said, "Why don't I get used?" ...and- you know. Anyway. Ian Fleming and I weren't exactly buddy buddies but, you know, we knew each other. And he was a good boss. ...Highlights.

And you were the education- what was the...?

I was the- I was the Education Correspondent of The Daily Telegraph for... eighteen out of twenty-three years with the paper.

[2:04:12]

So, did you get to interview the Education Ministers, or...?

Oh yes. All of them. All of them.

So, who? Give us some names. Who did you interview?

Well... Keith Joseph. This is where I get the names, you see, names... Most of the people became Secretaries of State under Margaret Thatcher's prime ministership, were Education Secretaries.

Keith Joseph. He was Jewish, wasn't he?

Yes - yes. And he and I became very good friends. Although one doesn't have friends really in - in the press. But- and- and he suffered from a throat problem. He couldn't swallow properly. And he just... was sick quite often. But he, he was, he was, he was a nice guy. And who was it I went to? I can't remember the name! Awful- who said... when I went in for an interview of him...

Yes, what did he say?

... he said, "How many education secretaries have you interviewed? And I said, "You are my eighth." And he sang! [sings] "Oh, Henry the eighth I am, Henry the eighth I am, I am..." [laughs] He was crazy, but he was okay. And he was the last one I interviewed. I can't remember his name!

He must in the book. Sorry I can't remember.

Yes, he is in- he's in the book.

And what was your own- did you, working in this sector, did you have an own view on education?

Oh yes. Yes. I thought that comprehensive education would be alright, but it's not a case of just taking a nameplate down and putting a nameplate up. You've got to work at it. It's got to be worked. And is beginning to happen now that comprehensive schools are doing all right. And now they're starting to bring back grammar schools, which is nonsense. And it will not give the people who really need education properly, a chance. And yes- yes, I do feel strongly about that.

And what did you- after you retired from journalism, you continued...

[2:07:04]

Yes, I did. I- I- don't get rid of me that quickly. I, I- I did a weekly column in *The Independent*. And then... ...I changed jobs. I resigned from education at - I was on *The Telegraph* - because I could no longer really stomach Max Hastings and one or two others who'd taken over. It was great under... under Bill Deedes, and under the then owners the, the Lord... names again. Sorry, I'm- I'm really going... barmy. But when Max Hastings took over and Black took over, things sort of went down the drain. And I was offered the chance of another job... by Jerry Fowler who was then the Secretary of State for Education. But he was- after, after he was Secretary of State for Education, he was- he was the... principal director of one of the polytechnics. And he was Chairman of the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics. And he... as well as another chap... it'll come to me...

Don't worry.

... offered me the job of Director of Public Affairs for the polytechnics in the hope that I would help them become universities. *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*: I agreed... and I did it. I helped them become universities. I didn't make them become universities but my purpose was there to help. And they became universities. I did urge them, or urged some of the directors of polytechnics, "For god's sake, when you become a university in name, don't try

to ape Oxbridge. Be yourselves. Continue doing what you're doing. But don't try and ape them." Empty words... empty promises.

[2:10:20]

They then, when, when, when they did ape, or try to ape, they said, "It wasn't me. It was the governments. They insisted." But they- they were doing a great job as polytechnics. They were doing, you know, vocational work... and taking people in whose qualifications were negligible. And that I suppose is- is another highlight of my career. That I did help. Although I didn't particularly agree with polytechnics becoming anything but polytechnics! But people like Singapore started to refuse to send people over to study at polytechnics because they felt that it wasn't right. And when they became universities, Jerry and I went to Berlin ...to give out the prizes. Oh, yes- sorry. When they became universities, I phoned Jerry and I said, "I just had an idea. Why don't we, as polytechnics, give a prize of a free course...a year's course to people in *Fachhochschulen* [advanced technical colleges] in Germany." And he said, "Great! You've earned your first month's salary." You know, and- And we did that. And we got in twenty-eight prizes. Two didn't and one of them was North London and another one was I think Liverpool I can't remember exactly. But North London was one of them. And funnily enough when I changed my job again, I thought that was it – finished. At the age of sixty-six, I was chosen to be the Director of Public Affairs at the University of North London – ex- Polytechnic. I'd written so many rotten pieces about North London Polytechnic when it was a poly, that that was rather- it's- it's rather like [Boris] Johnson becoming Foreign Minister after all that he said and did. And that was... It became quite fun. ...But I'm glad that I'm no longer doing any of those things - especially north London. I don't want to know!

[2:13:44]

Do you think it developed in a... positive way or negative way?

It's developed in a non- a non-positive way.

How would you like to see it develop, the university system in Britain?

I'd like them to be... 'excellence to the fore' for vocational work, so that you go there with great pleasure to study... a vocation.

John you mentioned that part of- as part of your [ ] you went to Germany and we didn't cover that, that you also during your studies went to Germany. So, I wanted to ask you a little bit- what was it like to you- for you to go back to Germany?

Well, yes, I did. ...Very strange. One of the, one of the jobs that I applied for when I didn't have a job, was the Institute of Journalism in Berlin. And... I heard nothing from them. Nothing at all. Then came *The Daily Telegraph.* And I was on *The Daily Telegraph* for about two or three weeks... when I had a call from the Institute of Journalism: Could I come for an interview on Monday or Tuesday- whatever it was? And I said, "Yes all right." Anyway, I went. Liked the people I spoke to. And I was with them about two hours... And I had very dirty looks from those who were waiting to be interviewed outside. And they offered me a job! And I regretfully had to turn it down. And I said, "Look I can't join *The Daily Telegraph* and then three weeks later un-join them." So, I said, "Look... But if you like, I would gladly come over and do a session of lectures to the- to the groups that you have." They only went for senior journalists in developing countries. And we'd have up to about twenty at a time from various parts of the world – India, Pakistan, Malaysia and so on. ...And Robert Lochner, who ran the place and who was the man who started up RIAS [*Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor*] radio in the American sector, introduced me every time as [chuckling] 'one of the men to know'. And I did that for about twenty years, believe it or not. Every year- I used to take holidays from *The Telegraph* to do that.

[2:17:14]

And what did it feel like to go back to Germany? I mean did you come there as a British person, or...?

I came as a British person, yes. And the first time I went, I was sitting- I went into the restaurant of the station- station restaurant at... Düsseldorf or Dortmund? I don't remember exactly. And I ordered one of my favourite dishes: *Bockwurst* with *Sauerkraut* and potatoes… And started to eat. And I noticed that people were staring at me in a very odd way. ...You know, is my face dirty, or...? I didn't understand it. Anyway. A few days later I again was in a restaurant and I was ordering something similar. And I was with another chap - a German. And again, people looked at me. And I said, "Look, why are people staring at me like this?" And he said, "It is because you are- you're cutting your potatoes with a knife." Cutting my potatoes with a knife? I'll continue cutting my potatoes with a knife and let them

continue staring. It was very strange. Very, very odd. And the oddest sensation I had, coming back, was that here... we were still rationed. All sorts of things were rationed. In Germany the windows were filled with goodies.

When was that? When was that?

That, that- that first visit was in 19...50... '51 I think - yes.

So, did you go to the- did you go to see your flat?

Oh, yes. Yes, I did.

What did you find?

[2:19:46]

I went to see my flat. The, the- the house had been bombed but it had been built- built again. And.... I knew that there was nobody there in the flat where we lived. But I did knock on the door of the flat opposite. And this little woman opened the door. She was very frightened... "*Ja?*" And I said, "Forgive me interrupting you, but we lived in the flat opposite. And I went to England. So, I'm not from the Stasi. I'm not the Gestapo or anything like this. May I have a look at your flat?" And she... [mimics her hesitation] I said, "Look, there's a bathroom on the right. There's a sitting room in front and kitchen..." And then she let me in. I got it right. Cause all the flats were the same. And I had a very nice time there. And I went out on the balcony and had a picture taken of me on the balcony. The old house – new house. Fascinating. And of course, going through Checkpoint Charlie was awful. You know, I- I was always worried that they would start searching me... for no apparent reason. And... And then from *The Telegraph* I applied for a visa to go to Germany- to go to the DDR [GDR]. And I got it after quite a long while wait. And I did a trip in East Germany lasting just over three weeks. But I had to have not only a chauffeur-driven car - for which we paid - but also, an interpreter. And I said, "Do you think I really need an interpreter as well? I speak German." And they said, "Oh, yes. He will help you to get into the places where you can't go." Right. Okay. And I always thought this my interpreter was a *Stasi* [secret police]. He wasn't, as it turned out, it was the bloody chauffeur! [both laugh]

How did you find out?

[2:22:34]

The reason- the way I found out was that one day we went to a farm... where they were doing insemination of pigs. And they let me look through a microscope and the window to see this- this thing. And I gave my notebook to the chauffeur to hold while I was doing the... And as I looked around, he was going through the notebook. And that's how I knew. And - yep. And he was quite a wily sort of person.

And tell us a little bit what happened about your private life. What- what- Did you get married? When you got married...

Yes. I got married to a girl that I knew at the university, but didn't take out at the university, although I took out lots of girls at Nottingham. But I liked her. And when I was in Paris, first time around, I had a phone call and it was Maureen. And she said, "You won't remember me but..." and then said "Nottingham". Oh of course I do! Of course, I do. But I didn't. Didn't know her from anywhere. So, I said, "Well look... would you come and have a bite to eat with me tonight?" "Oh yes please." And the girl was hungry; she was starving virtually. And I knew I wouldn't recognise her if I went out in the street somewhere. So, I said, "Oh look I've got a little story I've got to do- finish. Come up to the office." My office was in Place Vendôme, right above the National Westminster Bank, as it was then called. And she came... dead on time. And I took her for a goodly bite to eat at a- at a restaurant near where I lived. And I noticed- I knew that she was hungry, the way she almost finished hers before I'd even begun mine. So, I said, "Would you like another?" "Oh, yes please. It's very- very good." So, I ordered her another- another steak. And she was ravenous. And it turned out that she had come over to act as a secretary at this... yacht magazine place. And... they didn't pay them… till the following month. So, she was without any money. And she lived at the... oh god... the- the university...

Halls of residence?

...halls of residence outside the- near the Place Luxembourg. And I took her back to her place in a taxi. I don't do things first night. And dropped her off there. Gave her some money to buy some breakfast and then took the taxi back and I said, "Look, will you let me know when it comes to 'x' francs?" "Why? *Pourquoi*?" And I said, "Because that's all I have. And you can have that which I've got." [sound] Anyway, he took me back to the hotel, and took what I

had. Because I had- I'd got rid of all my money that night. And... that was that. And we- we got together after a- a few weeks. And... I knew that this- this was it. And we loved each other and we got married in Paris... at the Catholic Church. Saint Joseph. And also, at the British Embassy, because she was actually working at the British Embassy after I made a fuss and she got a job there. And she was in charge of... the applications from men and women who were...

[2:28:03]

Who needed help...

Who needed help. Who were poor. And we came back to England.

And you had a son?

Had a house. We had a son. Great. Wonderful. But then in 19...79... no... '77 she became ill. We were on a cruise. And I sent her to a doctor who gave her all sorts of medicaments to get rid of what they thought it was and it wasn't. And she had to have a... search... examination. I had a telephone call from the surgeon wanting to see me. And he says, "I'm afraid that we spotted a tumour." And she had cancer of the bladder. And she was in the Middlesex Hospital for three years- getting on for three years. Fed intravenously. And it was terrible. And she- she died in 1979 - nearly 1980. ...And that was that. And Paul didn't cry. We had a dog. And when the dog had to be put down, and I broke the news to Paul then he cried and he cried, and cried. And I think he cried for both dog and mum. It was dreadful. I met June about three years later... at a dinner party. We were sitting next to each other at the dinner party and her husband was sitting at the other end of the table. I found out later it was all a put on- a put up job by David Luczak and his wife who's now dead also, unfortunately. And... June- when June got her divorce, I- we got married. And I took her to France... with the kids- two children. And… Anna was superb and she picked up French 'like that'. Real born linguist.

[2:31:23]

So, you spent quite a lot of- of time, again, in France?

In France and my second tour in France.

Yeah.

Yeah. And I was then, not only, but also- not only just a journalist in France. I was also the Manager of the Paris office for *The Daily Telegraph*. And I have somewhere a picture of me on *The Daily Telegraph* balcony... looking out. That was no longer in Place Vendôme, that was in the Rue de Castiglione. It was just alongside...

So how many years was that- was that stint for the...?

Three... What- how long was I there? Oh, three years - just over. But I left... I left *The Telegraph* when it- when it came to retirement age. And as I say at the age of sixty-six, I was... brought into- to the... north London.

What sort of identity did you want to transmit to your son and to your stepchildren? In terms of- what sort of identity did you want to transmit to them, or what was important to you in the education of the children? Being involved in education, was there anything in particular...?

[2:32:52]

Oh, well, I mean, anyone who's involved in education makes a bad parent. [both laugh] They don't- they- it goes above them. No, it was no good saying you know, "You should do better in this, better in that." Paul doesn't speak any French. Anna does. She is brilliant. So is Patrick. They both speak French fluently because when we were in France, I put both of them into the local primary school. And the headmistress there always said to me – not always - often said to me, "Why do you not put them into the English school in Paris?" I said, "Because I want them to be with you and learn French properly." "But they do not speak very good French." "They will, Madame, they will!" What I said to her, "Don't be such a nihilist." "I am not nihilist!" I said, "Well. Then be more positive towards the children." And indeed... they were good, they were better and they were being protected by the other kids. There was no bullying. And I eventually sent them to International School in- in France. And they were excellent there. Did well. And they came over back to England with me - with us. And Anna was... Paul went- Patrick, rather, went to Alleyn's School. We lived in Dulwich. And Anna would have gone Allayn's as well, but she was interviewed by the head of Alleyn's who, at the time, had flu. And he was in bed in his pyjamas. And she said, "I'm not going to any school where the head is in pyjamas in front of you." So, she went to Jags – James Allen's

Girls' School. And did very well there... Italian being her main job. And when she went to university, she did Italian. So, she has loads of languages at her fingertips.

[2:35:42]

But Paul didn't come with you to France?

No.

No...

No, in 1991, a matter of two weeks or three weeks after his grandmother – my mother, there she is - died, he went to Australia. And when I phoned him to tell him about Grandma's death he said, "I'll get on the next plane." I said, "No, no, no, no, no. Don't do that. I think your grandmother would not have liked that. She knows what you're doing and leave it at that. Just think of her." And that's it. So, he didn't come.

And he's still in Australia?

He's still in Australia. Married, and not divorced exactly, but separated from his wife. But he's bringing the two grandchildren to see me.

Tell us a little bit about your parents and how they, you know, in the end how they lived out their lives here.

[sound break]

Your parents, please. What happened to them towards the end of their lives, and where did they live?

They lived in Prestwich, Manchester. And when my father died of a heart attack at the age of seventy-four... my mother went into a rest home in Southport. And she became very old and had dementia. I would visit her as often as I could. Take her out to lunch and walks and so on in a wheelchair. And I would say goodbye and drive back to London. And the moment I set foot in the house, I'd pick up the phone and I phoned her to say I'd arrived safely. "Oh, John! So good to hear you! Why don't you come and visit me?" And that was the same day, you know, I'd been. And... And one day she said that her sister had come to see her. And they'd

had a lovely time speaking together. And I wasn't going to say, “Your sister is dead, long ago.” “Very nice. Wonderful.” And I thought well, you know if she thinks she saw her sister and she's speaking to her, fine. But that was the beginning of the end. And she died- we threw a party for her on her ninetieth birthday, in Manchester. And it was up a long flight of stairs to the dining room. So, she was picked up in her wheelchair and taken up the stairs. And, oh, she was so excited to see all her old friends... whom she didn't really recognize. And that was taken at that birthday party with Anna over her right shoulder. Yeah. And two or three weeks later she died at the age of ninety.

[2:39:42]

And what effect do you think did it- did the emigration and the loss of her family have on her?

Oh, bad effect. Of course. Bad effect. ...When- when she died, I went to the man who owned the... the old age pens-

Old age home.

...old age home. And I said, “You know,” I said, “my mother and I never discussed death or what- what to do. And I just don't know whether to have her cremated or... or buried.” And he said, “Well, I'll tell you John. Hitler tried to burn a lot of Jews. Don't finish his job for him.” So, I had her buried. But now it comes to me. And I'm to have myself cremated. It's... In a way it's the safest and quickest way and I wouldn't know anything about it anyway.

What effect do you think did the emigration have on you and your life?

Memories... however bad, however good... have to be cherished. And I cherish my memories. And if it’s the Nazi period... I don't like that period, obviously. And anything that they have done, I hate. But I was asked a few days ago, do I hate the Germans? No, I don't hate the Germans. I hate the Nazis. Those who did it. But the young- the youngsters. They're nothing to do with it. And by God you go to Germany now, and you cannot move without seeing more and more memorial, statues, pictures and... “This is where this happened.” And, “This is where that happened.” They're trying desperately to get out of it.

And how do you think your life would have been if you hadn't been forced to emigrate? Do you sometimes think about it?

I'd have been a lampshade.

No, I meant if, if - if there was no Hitler?

Oh, if there'd have been no Hitler? I'd- I'd still be in Germany of course. There's no reason why we moved out. The only reason we moved out was because of the Nazis.

[2:43:18]

And would you have become a journalist, or you think something else?

I don't know; I was- I was eight-and-a-half when we came to England. I don't know what would have become of me. But I've always... enjoyed writing... and talking – obviously...

And acting?

And acting. I adore acting and I've done quite a bit of it. But there you are.

What do you think for you is the most important thing from your German Jewish heritage?

Well I think I've said that really – memory. That's the most important thing.

Memory.

And let it not happen again. I still do these reminiscences at the synagogue in... Regent? No. What's it called? Regent's Park Square? – Belsize- Belsize Square.

Belsize Square?

Yes. And I speak to students from various schools from that area.

You come for the Kristallnacht...?

Yes.

For the Kristallnacht or the Holocaust Day, or...?

It's Holocaust Remembrance...

Yeah.

And they're doing it over about three days, I think.

Yeah. ...That's a question I didn't ask you. Did you have any contact with Belsize Square Synagogue when you lived originally in Belsize Park?

No. No - none.

So how did you get to Belsize Square now? How...?

Oh... I- do you know, can't remember? It's...

Maybe it was the Oranienburger Straße Synagoge, because...?

Not really.

No?

No, no, no. It was- it was... it was here.... Someone... Someone wrote to me or emailed me and said would I- would I come and talk to them.

And you...

I said yes.

So, you do it every year?

I've done it now for about four years.

[2:45:31]

And it's important for you?

Oh yes. I think it's- it is important. It's- it's not for me but for them. Let them hear it... And it's lovely when afterwards they come up to you and they- they thank you for having spoken to them.

Yeah. And John how would you define yourself in terms of your identity today?

I'm a hack... [both laugh] ...I'm a journalist.

British?

Oh, British – yes, certainly. Oh, very much so. I'm- I love this country. And I love the Queen. I mean she- she does such a lot of good work. ...But I'm not a Tory. [laughing] No way!

And where is home? Where do you feel at home? ... You've lived in quite a few places.

Yes... Not London. Every time I go back to London - and I do go back to London a few times – it frightens me. The noise... the dirt. The... inability to breathe. Just crossing the road is dangerous. So, it's not - not London. I like Scotland. And I like Ireland. But most at home? ...Most at home is where I am. Although I don't like this house, I'm afraid. It's too small. Don't ever downsize!

[2:47:30]

Is there anything we haven't discussed? Because I know we had to rush it. Is there anything you want to say which I haven't asked you?

Read my book! No, there's not really.

Tell us the- the name of the book please, for anyone who...

It's called "*Life Between the Lines*". And I have to thank Anna really for having thought up the name. Because I was not stuck about the name for ages; couldn't think of anything really. ...I never wrote headlines as a journalist.

And did it take you a long time to write it?

Not really. Two years maybe.

And it's all in the book. So, there are many things we – we couldn't discuss here, but it's available, the book.

It's still available at Amazon - or me. [laughs]

Do you have- that's my last question for you, I promise. Do you have any message for anyone who might watch this interview in years to come?

My message would be: ...Think of the past. And don't let it become the future.

I think that's an excellent... food for thought. Thank you very, very much John Izbicki for giving me this interview...

You're very welcome.

... and for participating in the Refugee Voices Project.

You're very welcome.

[End of interview]
[2:49:27]

[2:49:40]
[Start of photographs and documents]

Photo 1

Who is on the picture?

That's me in Berlin, at the age of... oh, three or four –

1934, more or less.

Yes, possibly.

Thank you.

[discussion]

Ah...

So there if you could tell us all the names, from left to right...

Yes.

I think that's important.

[pause]

OK...

Here we go...

[pause]

OK...

[pause]

[2:53:06]

John, this one next? Would you like this one in?

Yep.

This is afterwards, right? This is the second time...

It's the second time, yes.

It's the second time. OK. Because it's a chronology. I think we have to have this photo. It's too good. Was this your... was this your official photo, or...?

No, no, no. Just...

Because, look, you have all the pens here...

Photo 2

I know... I was showing off.

It's brilliant. And it says: "John Izbicki, Education Correspondent. *Daily Telegraph* - copyright *Daily Telegraph*.

Well it's probably taken by a *Daily Telegraph* photographer.

Photo 3?

Oh, and here it says, "John Izbicka"... Look at that!

Well, that's a mistake for a start... That's me, 1959.

Cameraman: Sorry, one second.

Photo 4?

That's me. I was the Manager of *The Daily Telegraph* in Paris. Rue Castiglione. My second trip to Paris. And that was in 19...'75 – '76.

Photo 5?

And that's a *Daily Telegraph* picture of me.

Photo 6?

And this is my second wife, June, and me...in the late 70s.

Photo 7?

And this is the day of the other wedding... of Patrick and Mary. They're in the middle. And from left to right there's Tyler - my grandson Tyler who's now in Australia. And he's a lot taller than that. And there's my wife June. Me behind her. Then Patrick and Mary. And behind Mary is Paul my son. And next to him is Anna, my stepdaughter. And next to her is Sue, my son's wife. And she is holding Chloe - my other granddaughter.

John thank you very, very much again for doing this interview with us.

[2:56:04]
[End of photographs and documents]