

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	113

Interviewee Surname:	Reich
Forename:	Rivka
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	4 August 1939
Interviewee POB:	Oradea, Romania

Date of Interview:	19 December 2005
Location of Interview:	Salford, Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	3 hours and 2 minutes

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

INTERVIEW: 113

NAME: RIVKA REICH

DATE: MONDAY 19 DECEMBER 2005

LOCATION: SALFORD, MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: I am interviewing Rivka Reich, and today's date is Monday 19th December 2005. The interview is taking place in Salford, Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

OK, so if you tell me your name.

RR: Rivka Reich.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

RR: Rothbart, my maiden name was Rothbart, Rivka Rothbart.

RL: And were you named after anybody?

RR: Yes, after my grandmother, great, actual great grandmother.

RL: And where were you born?

RR: I was born in Oradea in Romania, and in Hungary, in Hungarian it was called Grosswardein.

RL: And when were you born?

RR: I was born in August, the 4th, 1939.

RL: So how old does that make you now?

RR: Quite old. 66.

RL: So if you can tell me first about your family background.

Tape 1: 1 minute 20 seconds

RR: My father was born in the same town in Oradea, the Yiddish people used to call it Grosswardein, and my mother was born in St Nicola Mare, which was one time Romania and another time was a German kind of town, where they spoke German, not a normal type of German, like a broken German. My grandfather, they came from Poland, those kind of people used to, when Poland didn't have parnosa, didn't have what to live off so they came to Hungary, so my grandfather Rothbart came from Poland and they settled in Hungary and that is where they lived and where my father was born.

RL: Do you know what your grandfather Rothbart did for a living?

RR: He did the same, he had a soap factory, which my father later on took it over, when my grandfather became older he took it over, that is what I know of.

RL: How big a family was it?

RR: There were five children. My father's family there were one girl and four boys. My mother had two brothers but they both died at a young age.

RL: Did you know your father's parents?

RR: Yes I did. I still remember them even though I was four, four and a half when they were taken to Auschwitz, I still remember them.

RL: What do you remember about them?

RR: They were doting grandparents; my grandmother was a well built lady, very sweet. And my grandfather he used to come a lot to our house, he used to like my mother very much. My mother was always special and he liked her very much and he used to come and we used to go there playing in their house too, that I still remember. You know you remember things like they gave you a little doll or a doll's carriage or something like that. But clearer than that I don't remember so much. I don't remember really my uncles, but I do remember there was an auntie, I do remember. But when things became hard and the Germans started ... first in 1942 the Polish people who suffered in Poland, they came over to Hungary and they told my father "Run away, go away, because the Germans are coming and it will be terrible for Yidden." We didn't believe it. We thought "Hungarians will be different, they won't persecute us, they won't hurt us. They will be on our side. War is war but against Jews definitely not." But they were right. And later on when things became harder, I remember when we had to put the yellow star on, as a child I wore the yellow star and what else do I remember at that time? We could feel already the, being persecuted, you could feel, you were a Jew you mustn't go on this street, and mustn't go there, that I felt, as little as I was I still remember that.

Tape 1: 4 minutes 35 seconds

Later on I remember when we got from our flat and we had to go the ghetto. The ghetto was, we were very lucky, because the ghetto fell where, into, my father, the soap factory that my grandfather had and later on he retired, at about 60, in those days people of 60 were much older than people of 60 nowadays, so he gave over the factory to my father, and that factory, the ghetto was, a part of the town was cordoned off, and that was where Yidden were allowed to live. The ghetto fell into the; the factory, I mean, fell into the ghetto area. The back of the factory was the railway station where they took all the Yidden afterwards to Auschwitz, but that was our luck, that this factory fell into the ghetto area. So, we had to move into the ghetto, and my father, who washow could we get out, how could we? Even so, we thought, going to Auschwitz would be just hard labour; we didn't think further, we didn't think what was really happening to people. But my father was just different, he thought, we must escape, we must get away from here. At first we thought, people thought that they would go to Auschwitz and they would come back and they would find all their money, all their riches but they hid, my father and my grandfather as well, they hid their silver and their money, they put it into, they dug in the ground, in different ground, I don't know if you heard about this before, but they hid it there, but the goy ... when the SS came, they knew that the Jews did that, that they hid it, so, they interviewed him and they ... I don't know how to say it, they really hurt him, with the electric wires, they really, they were, afterwards, it was all full of blood, so he told them straightaway where the money was, where everything was, I mean, nobody wanted to be killed for that, that was the beginning of the terrible times.

And later on we were in the ghetto. And in the ghetto, my father was trying to think how we can escape, how we can go, and then he thought, in the factory, in the actual factory there was a loft, and inside the loft there was like a roof, there was one more floor, that you never used, but you could go up, and there, he thought maybe we could hide there. We had, already before when we were in the ghetto, and before already, Jews were not allowed to have any businesses, no factories or anything. Now we had a manager, a goy, he was called Appan and he was very nice to us and he was very good to my father and my father was very good to him too, and he said, "You know what, I am prepared to look after you, hide into this rooftop." We were only two children in those days. "Your wife and yourself and your two children, and I will look after you, I will bring food for you and I will look after you for as long as needed." My father told my grandfather about it, my grandfather was very upset about it, he said "What, why don't you come with us to Auschwitz, you will be able to work for us, we are elderly people and we can't work and you are ..." My father was a big robust person, tall, well built, "and you will work for us."

And my father said "no."

And that was the first time in her life my mother said to my grandfather no. He was terribly upset, "You are taking our son away from us." And it was very, very hard, but no, and that after... all the people came to speak to my father. My father was considered something quite special in town, he was very clever and very capable and they came all to him. "Herr Rothbart, Herr Rothbart, maybe

Tape 1: 9 minutes 0 seconds

you can think of something to save us, how can we get out of here.” And my father told one person, Schreiber, Yankel Schreiber actually, “I am thinking of going into the loft.”

“Can we come with?”

So my father said, he thought about it and he said, the goy who is going to give us the food, Appan, he knows only about four people. He said “Please, please.” Anyway, my father agreed to them, so they came, with six children, so there were eight people.

Later on, for bath and for this sort of thing, there was in the ghettos, very, very badly for bath, so my mother took us Friday afternoon my brother and me on a Friday afternoon before Shabbos, and she was running in the streets in the ghetto area, while we went for a bath in the Mikveh, and while she was running, there was Dayan Weiss, actually Berish Weiss, I don’t know if you know Berish Weiss here in town, his father was there, Reb Yankel Yosef Weiss, he was a big Dayan in Grosswardein in Oradea and he caught my mother, and he said “To where are you running? To where are you running?”

And she said “I am going for a wash with my children.”

He said “What are you going to do? What is going to be?”

So my mother said “Well we have got a ... we are going to hide.”

He said “I have got a hiding place here ... but I don’t feel so secure.”

He had only one child, an only child Berish Weiss.

So my mother said “You know what? You come with us.” That makes another three people. And it grew and ... and the Dayan Weiss came, the Schreibers came, and then there was a Mrs Fuchs who was a widow with two children, she came as well. Then my father, my mother looked after, in those days before the war, we were very well to do, we had nannies and maids and what not, and my nanny, the one who was my nanny came and a few other young men who were all begging to come and my parents agreed.

It turned out that at the end of the day we were 28 people instead of 4. Which was a tremendous thing, it was a small area, we could just, for lying down, we could just about lie down, we couldn’t walk around, and the facilities were just a bucket, and the only thing we survived with was what this fellow brought for four people.

We could hear from the window, still now I can hear it, the footsteps of the SS with the big boots, it was so frightening. But people laid down, because when people laid down they don’t move so much, so my father said “If everybody lies down you don’t, you save energy, and then they don’t hear you either”, at night especially. If somebody fell asleep, and if they made the slightest noise, that was terrible, so one of us was always up to see that nobody should make a noise and nobody should move, because at night obviously the noises are always amplified, and just below we could see them walking up and down and taking the people from the ghetto to Auschwitz.

We ate, I was, the Dayan, Dayan Weiss with us which was very special, and the, he brought, Appan brought, chazzer with whatever he had, and he said I should eat it, because I was four at that time. A four year old child starts crying or makes the slightest noise, everybody gets endangered, so I was allowed to eat, I was looked after to eat, the

Tape 1: 13 minutes 4 seconds

most important for them was that I should eat, but I don't know, Hakodush Boruch Hu definitely helped all the way, because I didn't cry, and if I wanted to cry or be upset so I cried in a cushion, and I never raised my voice, I had to learn as well to speak only quietly, everyone spoke only quietly, for quite a while afterwards I had no voice, because I cried in a cushion or if I made a slightest noise I made it into a cushion, I still remember what they used to cook, if he brought some beans, somebody would hold a candle with a pan over it and that is the way we used to cook the beans, you can imagine hours standing there, but whatever food they could get would keep us going.

RL: Did the goy know that there were that many people?

RR: No, he never knew. He came, he wasn't the only one. There were two or three workers as well helping. Before we went up, my father already promised them each a house, obviously it only worked with bribery. However good they were, however nice they were, money talks, and they gave a house, my father already before we went up gave a house, my mother's diamond ring was given away. We bribed them before we went up, because to promise them for afterwards, nobody knew what afterwards would be and like this, and still, they have really endangered their life as well, and whatever they got for it didn't compensate for the danger they were in, Appan particularly, he used to go into the office at night, particularly when the SS men didn't walk up and down, and that is when they went and emptied the bucket out. Or Appen used to, he never came upstairs to the proper attic, which was a very big thing, he came to the factory, so my father used to go down at night, to the factory, only he went down, and he used to take the food from him, and used to tell him this and that and whatever. That is the way we got the food, and every night he used to go down to empty the bucket and bring the food up, and the factory carried on, because it wasn't under a Jewish name any more, because Appan was in charge, he was, it belonged to him, so called. And during the day the factory went, and the workers did not know, besides three or four who helped Appan, he had to tell them, there was no other way, that there were people upstairs, but they never knew there were 28, they thought there were four of us. Only later on, when we came out, he said "Wow, you were 28 people, you must have starved." That is when he realised.

RL: How did they manage with food for four?

RR: It was just, everybody had just a little bit, a tiny bit, he was most probably generous and he brought quite a bit for four people, but they starved, they really, water we had, and everybody had just a morsel, and they didn't move much, and that was the biggest thing, because movement, straight away you use up energy, and you didn't talk much, and you didn't move much, and that was, and they were thinking all the time the next move, they knew very well that they couldn't be there forever. We were there for six weeks.

RL: And what did you do? What did you do, as a child do, during the day?

Tape 1: 16 minutes 52 seconds

RR: I don't remember what I did specially, those details I don't remember, I knew just that, I just see everybody lying, there were rats there, and you had to be, you know it wasn't very pleasant to have a rat crawling over you, but it couldn't be helped, you just had to.

And when they could see it was clear, or, during the day it was much better, really, they could talk more, very quietly though, so that the workers shouldn't hear, but as it was a factory they had machinery going, so that makes a noise, so that muffled the noise from upstairs, but I don't remember doing anything, any more than just feeling with everyone else that we should be able to survive, and of course we would plan all the time, what is going to be the next step.

RL: What did the adults do?

RR: Now the adults did do things. My father sent, we would try to make contact with, there was an underground, and with the underground and with the underground, we dealt with one of them, I don't remember any more the exact name. We have got a whole book about our lives so it ... he went out to make contact with the underground. Because Appan came one day, actually Mrs Appan came, his wife, she was very good to us too, and she said "You know my husband is very tense and is starting drinking, and he is going to pubs, and it is very dangerous, when a person drinks he can start talking, and I am very worried." So we realised things were bad. Then one day she came up and she said "I have got a very good idea", they both came up "My son is a sergeant and I don't know, in the N ... what do they call the Hungarians, not the Nazis, they were called the, the SS ... anyway I can't remember the exact name now, and the Hungarian SS, whatever, and he has got a farmhouse outside town, and you can go there and we will look after you, and that is after I have told him that we are 28, so he said and I will look after the 24 people. The four of you go there, and I will look after the 24 who stay in the attic. My father said "No, there is no way he is going to look after the other 24 if I go away, so I have got to look after everybody." What they did all day, they davened. Yankel Schreiber was very Chassidish, all those people who were with us were mainly Chassidish people, they were very frum people, and they did nothing except for say Tehillim all day, and Dayan Weiss, and he was the posek and in town he was the Dayan, he was the Dayan of the town. Grosswardein as it was called was a major town in Hungary/Romania, that area. And he kept the davening going. I remember my mother didn't stop all the time with davening. She was very special. Not only inside the Siddur, outside ... we didn't have so many siddurim, all this equipment, so she said all the time Gott Von Avrohom and that includes a lot. And, so when he, when Appan ...

RL: I was going to ask, what happened, say Shabbos?

RR: I don't remember a Shabbos how it was. I don't remember clearly, I don't think. They davened and most probably they put a shirt on, and they had a bit of bread or whatever he brought, they had a bit of bread, and that was what Shabbos was. I would

Tape 1: 20 minutes 47 seconds

think Shabbos they probably didn't go outside to empty the bucket, or they didn't cook anything, because he knew he couldn't bring any cooked food really, besides they brought chazzar which was good for me, but really I don't think they brought cooked food.

RL: And the only way to cook ... ?

RR: Was this candle ... this candle and a little pan. There was no other way. There was no gas or anything like that. And it had to be done quietly. I still see the ladies bending over that thing to boil.

RL: What kind of food did he bring?

RR: He brought dried food. I remember haricot beans, which took quite a while to boil actually, I don't remember if there was potatoes. Bread, mainly there was bread, maybe he brought fish, I don't remember clearly, I can't tell you clearly, my brother would know but I don't know enough about it.

RL: Was there any time that you had a fright? That you thought maybe ...

RR: Ahhhh ... the fright was constant. The fright was constant, when the footsteps of the SS of the, come nearer to us, or were talking, if we heard a noise, we were petrified, because there was a lot of, fortunately there were a lot of people hiding, all over, and they were all found, they were all taken to Auschwitz, they were a lot of bunkers, people were trying, from the ghettos, the same as we were trying as well, and actually the bunker where Dayan Weiss was, was found as well, it was taken away, the only bunker that wasn't was ours, in the whole town. So that was special, and the hand of the Aybishter was there, definitely.

RL: Could you see outside?

RR: Yes, there was a little, there was one window, you couldn't see out, but the daylight entered, it was in the roof, like a, like a panel of glass in the roof, that was where we could see.

But hearing, we could hear very well, and we could hear the footsteps, but, I don't know, in those days we heard this one was caught and that one was caught, but I think we might ... I think that we did hear that people were caught. We sent downstairs somebody who contacted the underground people, because we had to have, I mean, we had to have, two went down, one got caught, he never came back.

RL: What was his name?

RR: I can't remember. I know he was caught and I was very sad, and we were petrified
Tape 1: 23 minutes 30 seconds

all the time. There was not a time when we were not, we never could relax, we were always worried, when we heard even the footsteps of Appan bringing food, when we heard the knock "Oh! Is it him or is it the SS coming?" The first knock, was always, that I remember very clearly, was it him or was it something else. First they checked it, the fright was indescribable.

RL: How did you cope with the stress of it?

RR: It was very hard. I think I coped because my parents were very loving, and that is the only way I can think of, because otherwise it was very hard, my brother said that he suffered a lot from it and I imagine everybody suffered, all the others suffered as well, but our suffering compared to what other people suffered in Auschwitz was incomparable.

RL: How aware were you as a child of the whole situation of what was going on?

RR: I was quite aware, amazingly, I think I was aware, for a four year old I was quite aware because I can still recall it, I can still feel the things, I never liked to talk about it for years, and my mother, my mother actually did talk about the war a lot, because she kept saying "We have to talk about the miracles we had, and we are so lucky we are saved, we are saved for something, not just for nothing. There is a purpose in life why we are saved." She never took it for granted and all her life she had a purpose in life, she helped people, they helped my parents, both of them, they helped people, whatever, not committees, in those days there were not committees but all their life they helped, all the war victims, all people who are victim of anything they were there to help until their last days.

RL: How did everyone get on together? With being in such a cramped space?

RR: I never recall my father saying that there was any quarrel, but I imagine you can't always get on, it is just impossible, they must have been some disagreement, some people didn't agree so much with the other one, but the fact that my parents were such loving people, they loved people, and they were so kind, they were kind before the war as well, and they did tremendous, and they were very ... that I think helped, just for their sake, but everybody was very frightened, everybody was wondering what was going to be tomorrow, what was going to be today. So, quarrelling and fighting, just I don't think came in so much to it. Obviously somebody could disagree, Yankel Schreiber was quite, he was quite, he was more than frum, he was very, very frum and he had a lot of chumras and things, but on the other hand my father says that his Tehillim saved us. My father had to think, had to organise. I am sure he said Tehillim as well, but how much I don't know, but he was worrying on one part, but he was very happy that people were saying Tehillim and davening for us because he knew that was the only thing that was saving us.

RL: Did they have their Tefillin with them, the men?

Tape 1: 27 minutes 4 seconds

RR: They must have had. Because that they had in the ghetto as well. They took up there what they could from the ghetto, Tefillin and a Siddur they must have brought up with the Tallis. How much they used it I don't know, but they must have.

RL: What else was brought up? What else do you remember being in the room.

RR: We did have covers. I don't know ... in the ghetto we had covers, we had duvet covers and we had cushions. So that was brought up, they lay on the floor afterwards and they covered themselves or their cushions, that they had, because the factory fell into the ghetto area, that saved us. Because Hakodesh Boruch Hu did all of that but obviously that was our wonderful part. Because we had to smuggle everything in, but you could smuggle it in easier than if it had been in a different area, because we could walk around in the ghetto, so they went to the factory and that is where they ... brought it up.

RL: When you moved into the ghetto? What did you move into? Before you went into hiding, where were you living?

RR: Before we moved to the ghetto?

RL: Before you went into hiding?

RR: In the ghetto?

RL: What kind of place were you living in at that point?

RR: I don't remember so clearly, I don't remember so clearly the ghetto. There are some things you remember clearly and some not, the ghetto I don't remember so clearly, I don't remember exactly. The rooms, we were squashed together, we were already badly treated. Before the ghetto we were invariably wearing the yellow star, and obviously in the ghetto we had to carry on wearing the yellow star. It was pretty horrible.

RL: What do you remember about life before the ghetto?

RR: Life before the ghetto ... I was a very spoiled child. That I do remember, and I had a nanny, which nowadays one doesn't have much. And I, I was a girl born, there is six years between the two of us, so a girl born after six years was a big thing, so I was quite spoiled, but my mother kept telling me I was a good child. I must have been a change, my brother was very lively, I remember getting dolls and a dolls pram and I was, I always spoke, in town I always spoke Hungarian, but the better people, they had, my nanny spoke German with us, that was considered higher class, so we spoke German, but at home I was with the nanny. What else can I remember ...

RL: Can you describe the home?

Tape 1: 29 minutes 55 seconds

RR: The home was ... in my child's eyes it was very big, but later on when I went back to see it, it wasn't so big. We lived in a flat, in 21 Zolfa Utca, they weren't only Yidden living in that flat, in that block, in those days there was like a courtyard in the middle, I mean in Hungary that is the way they were made, I don't know if they are still like that, but in those days that is the way they were built, and there were flats all around the courtyard, and we lived on the first floor, and all I remember is four rooms, which could be some bedrooms and some dining and lounge as well. And there was a little hall for the maid, the maids were near the kitchen, a little hall they lived, and we had a cook as well, and there was no washing machine or anything like that, so one day, for two days a week the washer woman came, and then she came a week later to do all the ironing, and that stayed after the war as well, that is the way they carried on, but before that ... I remember being spoiled, yes, I loved being spoiled, I loved being spoiled, I think it helped me all my life.

RL: You haven't really told me about your mother's family.

RR: My mother's family, this is true, my mother, she was born in San Niklaus, two parents, she had an older brother, and then she was born and a younger brother. She told me before that she was very spoiled as a child, but unfortunately she lost her father when she was nine years old. He had pneumonia and in those days they had nothing more than aspirins, and in three weeks he had passed away, he was a young man, he was ... forty two. Something of that age, forty two, fifty two he passed away. And unfortunately two of the brothers died as well, one of diphtheria and one from a heart condition, so she was left an only child, my grandmother never remarried again, they, they dealt in feathers, in those days feathers were a very big thing, there was the feather and there was the skin of the animal, which was dried, they had big garages where they dried the skin of the animal, and then they sold the skin as it goes for shoes or whatever, and the feathers were very much used because it was a very cold country, and cushions and duvets were all made of real feathers, and it was proper feather, and my grandmother, after my grandfather passed away she carried on the business, which was, they were very well to do, but she looked after all her family. There were some people in her family who were not well to do, who had, who didn't have means, and my grandmother kept them all, she was a very, very kind lady. But she never spoilt my mother, she always told my mother, because she was an only child, she made sure she didn't ... clothes for children were sort of, the suit from the father or the clothes from the mother were somehow turned inside out and made into children's clothes, and my mother used to wear the clothes from her cousins, so that she shouldn't be different. But on the other hand she used to play tennis, but in those days, it must have been in 1926, or 30, 26, 20 or 26, tennis was not a usual game, but because she was very frum, they were very frum, she made her own tennis court for my mother, my mother had her own tennis court and tennis dresses, which were long, not short, so she played tennis and played the piano.

RL: What kind of education?

Tape 1: 34 minutes 14 seconds

RR: She went actually into a Catholic school. A very religious Catholic school, and during the lessons, the religious lessons, she went out, being amongst nuns all the time, she was always very frum, she was a special neshoma, she was a special neshoma, we always think she was.

RL: And, you know you said they were all Chassidic ... what were ... ?

RR: They were Chassidish, my parents were not Chassidish from home, they was ... it jumped, my grandfather Rothbart was Chassidish when they came from Poland, then they weren't any more, they were Ashkenaz, they were Ashlenazish, and my mother as well, but then later on my parents became more Chassidish, and that is where my brothers and my families are very Chassidish.

RL: Which particular dynasty?

RR: Satmar. Satmar, and there was Klausenberg there was a bit of variety, they were all a little bit different.

RL: And your father you say originally from Poland was Chassidish, do you know which ... ?

RR: His grandfather ... I don't remember, no I don't remember, no I don't ... You know you are always sorry. Why didn't I ask this? Why didn't I ask that? He did speak a lot about his family, that is why I can tell you so much about it, but not this ... no ...

RL: What kind of education did your father have?

RR: My father had, in those days, in those days he had schooling, which in those days people didn't have so much, he went to high school which in those days and he did learn and then he learned chemistry, learning how to make soap and candles and all that, he had, he had to learn it, he studied that. And he went to cheder as well, in the evenings he went to cheder also, but he wasn't only in the Yeshiva, no.

RL: How did your parents meet? Do you know?

RR: It was very simple. There was an auntie of my father who knew my mother. Because my mother came from a little village really, and she knew my father was very special so, she was looking, so she said "I have got a nephew who is so special ..." And that is the way it came about.

RL: And when did they marry?

RR: They got married ... oh, which year ... my mother was 20 when she got married, they got married in 30, 1930.

Tape 1: 36 minutes 40 seconds

RL: And where did they live after marriage.

RR: After marriage, straight away in Grosswardein, straight away in Oradea. She moved there, it was very hard for her and it was very hard for her mother, but she was a very good wife, and in those days you didn't stay, you followed your husband, that is what everybody had to do, but my mother always said she never knew how to cook, so my mother said my grandmother, every few months she used to send up a lorry, a van I should imagine, full of food for her, I mean she had a cook, but still, you know, you couldn't get anything then, you know tomatoes, everything was with preservatives, everything was home made, there was no such thing as buying, and she used to send her up every few months, and that is the way she carried on, and she had a cook as well. She did help in the factory as well, she went to help her husband, mind you she didn't have so much to do at home. My brother was born after three years marriage and then six years later I was born.

RL: Did you know your mother's mother?

RR: No, I don't remember her, no. She was niftar, she passed away in 1942, I was two and a half or something. No I didn't know her, I always said I could recognise her in the street because my mother used to tell us so much about her, but no, I don't recall her.

RL: What sort of stories did you hear?

RR: All about kindness, about goodness, that is all I know about her, how nice and how good she was. And I went actually to her kever, that is where we have the pictures, and on her tombstone it says that she helped everybody, and her goodness was very strong, very special.

RL: And she never came to live ... ?

RR: She used to come; she never came to live with us. She came to us, to visit us and to see, but then she was ill and my mother went to her in Budapest, when she needed to have a specialist or a big operation, they went to Budapest, and that is where the last year of her life, the last year and a half she was quite ill, and my mother ... she never moved into us as such, but my mother, she was a lot in Budapest and my mother went with her. But we used to go a lot to her. I used to stay a long time with her, about three months at a time in San Niklaus.

RL: Do you have memories of that?

RR: No, impossible. My brother would have. Yes, he does have. It was a farm, so of course there were chickens and all that. And we used to play, we were from the town, it

was a city, it was called a city, and we, we went and played in the farm, and that is what they used to tell me about.

Tape 1: 39 minutes 34 seconds

RL: Coming back to your home. How old were you when you moved into the ghetto?

RR: I was born in 1939, in August, and that is when the war broke out. The ghetto started, they were taking the, I must have been just four, four, yes. The Jews were taken in '43, beginning of '44, in '44 already they were taken to Auschwitz. So it must have been the end of '43.

RL: And before you moved into the ghetto can you tell me a little bit about your life. Who, who did you play with? Who were your friends?

RR: I don't recall. I don't think you played with ... you didn't go so much to play with children, you had a nanny, who took you out, who talked to you, told you stories, so you were just brought up a bit like royalty (laughs), on your own. Before the mother took the nanny she made sure that she was from a frum home, only a Jewish nanny, and not just plain Jewish, she had to be frum and she taught me about yiddishkeit and speaking, she wouldn't take a non Jewish girl. But I, the maids were non Jewish obviously, and the cook was Jewish. Everything had to be homemade in those days, nothing was bought, so of course the cook was busy all day making jams and everything.

RL: Do you have any memories from those days of Shabbos or Yom Tov or .. ?

RR: No ...

RL: Nothing ...

RR: No ... no ... I am not going to tell you I have because it is impossible. It is more or less impossible.

RL: How long were you actually in the ghetto before you went into hiding?

RR: I don't recall, a few months I think, I think only a few months. It was enough ...

RL: And what do you remember from the ghetto? Anything?

RR: No, I don't remember the ghetto so much. The ghetto assumably I played with children ... the ghetto ... no, I don't remember.

RL: So then of course you were in hiding, and we have spoken a bit about that, haven't we. Is there anything else that you recall?

RR: Of course I recall when we had to go away from there and how we had to leave.

RL: Do you remember going into there? When you finally made the journey into the hiding place? Do you remember that?

Tape 1: 42 minutes 10 seconds

RR: Going up the steps, going up the steps, yes that I remember, going up the stairs. But as a child you felt, you had the feeling, I can still recall the feeling of fright, continuous, I don't know if in English there is an strong enough word than fright, moired, in Yiddish it is moired, this terrible fright that a child can feel from the adults, even if, I don't know if they spoke in front of me or if they didn't but you could feel it, you just could feel it, from the time that you put on the yellow star, you were already frightened, and that fright stayed on a very long time, after the war too.

RL: Did you take anything up there with you? Any sort of prized toy or possession?

RR: I think I did. I had my doll that I did take up. I don't think I took anything else, there was no room for anything else to take up.

RL: Where you the youngest child?

RR: In those days yes ...

RL: In the hiding ...

RR: In the hiding, yes.

RL: How old were the other children who were with you?

RR: The other ones were all ... oh, one was about three or four years old, the next one was the Schreiber child, the others were six, seven, eight years older, one was nine years older, that is the way it went. But I was definitely the youngest by, it is called by far, three or four years is a big difference by far, yes. But we still keep contact together with each other, yes. The special bond that was formed there in the bunker stayed on, with most of the people, not everybody but most of them, and they have got a lot of appreciation to it, with the Schreibers, we still talk about it, and with Berish Weiss. It is very, very, how do you say that, close to us, yes, we go to each others simchas, however, we are much older, both of us, we come together and all of a sudden all the years go, fall away, and we feel ourselves as we were then, two young people going through the same thing.

RL: How old was Berish?

RR: Berish was 12 or 13, nearly 13 in those days, which is six, seven years older than me.

RL: Yes. How many children were there altogether?

Tape 1: 44 minutes 49 seconds

RR: Altogether were nine, not young ones as such, but children, younger ones, there were nine people. Berish Weiss was an only child, and we were two, and Schreibers had six.

RL: Did they have any seforim to learn from?

RR: I don't recall, I don't recall, but I just, I just don't know. I think learning didn't come as much in it as davening. It was the only thing we had, it was the only thing we felt we could do. Of course we tried to do something, everything was nissim, but you can't just leave it, you had to do something as well, so we tried to get in contact with the underground as well, and that is how we managed to escape from there. But, davening was number one.

RL: You say you had water. From where was the water?

RR: The water was from the factory. The water came up from the factory so we brought it up and emptied it out. We had to be very scared, careful with water as well, specially my mother Oleh Hashalom, she used to wash her hands a lot, they were, after, we always had to be careful not to use too much of it.

RL: I mean how many rooms were there in the loft?

RR: All I can think of is two, there was a big room and a little landing outside, near the steps, where you could, where there was this little light that you could cook something, that is what I recall, and the steps in front. Maybe there were more, but I don't recall that.

RL: When you needed to use the facilities? The bucket?

RR: The bucket, yes ... there must have been little potties as well that were emptied into the bucket, like pot potties, but I don't recall anything. You know some things, you know they must have been done, but you don't recall exactly everything, only the older people recall that.

RL: Where was that kept? Do you remember?

RR: It was in a side somewhere. There must have been a little hall or something somewhere to keep that. Because you couldn't make brochas, you couldn't say anything with that there, they must have covered it up ... I know when you compare to what people went through in different camps, how long they were there, six weeks looks just nothing, but it was six weeks, and six weeks have got seven days a week, and 24 hours a

day, so it was quite something. And the biggest nes is that we were the only bunker where more or less everybody stayed alive, which is a tremendous nes.

Tape 1: 47 minutes 55 seconds

RL: So how did you eventually ... ?

RR: Because they were looking for bunkers, they were looking all over, the Nazis didn't do anything else, they were looking for bunkers.

RL: How did you eventually come to leave?

RR: We had to ... we could see, when Appan started drinking too much and he could say move into my son, then my father said this is SOS, this is, and eventually we made contact with the underground, and we paid a lot, a lot of money, for people to take us at night, by then the SS weren't there any more, all the time, because everybody was taken to Auschwitz, to take us over to Romania, to Bucharest, because in Bucharest there was no, there was bombs, but it wasn't, it wasn't as bad, so the preparations, we had to disperse and could only take a number of people at a time. I don't know if you can see, but I am ginger, and ginger people were Jewish, so we had to dye, my brother is ginger and my mother was ginger and I am ginger and we had to dye our hair. The only way we could dye, Appan brought up black shoe polish. It was shoe polish, they put it on our hair, so it couldn't be seen that we were Jewish. My father was worried, my father made sure that everybody should go first, and we go last, and he said "If I go first maybe they won't look after the rest of the people." So the first lot, and he paid a lot of money, Schreibers paid as well, everybody had to pay for it. And they went group by group and walked at night, and we had to hide during the day, because we had to cross the border, and I still remember, my father carried me all the time on his shoulders, I think for two days, for two days we walked, two days and two nights, we walked until we came to Bucharest. We got lost, it wasn't just us, we had, we had a lot of adventure, and some people did get lost, I think one or two people did get lost by going the wrong road or being found out. It was terribly dangerous, that crossing, to go from the hiding place, from Grosswardein, from the factory to go to Bucharest was very dangerous. And we did get lost on the way, and we had to find again and we lost our guide, the guides as well were in danger. Whatever, they were peasants, the guides, they were Romanian peasants, it wasn't simple at all, after two days we came to Bucharest.

RL: What can you tell me about those two days?

RR: Those two days, whatever fright we had on the hiding, we had even more there, because we did lose the guide a few times, and that was terrible, then we found each other. During the day I remember hiding in farm hovels or places like that, and at night we walked, I don't think I walked much, I think my father carried me or somebody else maybe as well helped him mainly.

RL: What did you eat?

RR: We must have had food with us, a bit of bread maybe or something, or a bit of water we had. Appan knew about it as we left. He did say all the time “Oh, how you

Tape 1: 51 minutes 52 seconds

must have been starving.” When he heard we had been 28, he was quite shocked, but I think he was quite relieved when we left, because he couldn’t take it any more, the pressure of his own personal danger, if he was found out he would have been killed on the spot, so that made him, whatever he got, money, didn’t pay for the danger he was in.

RL: So you had to cross a border?

RR: We had to cross a border that was terrible. That was, crossing the border from Hungary into Romania, that was the hardest part, all in the forest, all in the fields, the guards were there, the police, the SS with dogs, whatever, it was terrible. That I remember the fright. I remember getting lost and then found again and, we all said the nissim, the miracles of crossing, it was a big miracle and then we got to the other side.

RL: So you were not detected.

RR: If we had been detected we would not be here, because people who were detected were taken to Auschwitz, and especially a child of my age had no chance at all.

RL: Did you just travel at night?

RR: We just travelled at night, because during the day you could be found out, you could be seen. At night, more the guards slept a bit, or they weren’t as alert, they were more, and it is easier to detect people in the day than at night.

RL: How did you see?

RR: We followed the guide and that is why, my parents, my father was just carrying and nervous and davening, and my mother did not stop all the time saying Gott von Avrohom, now Gott von Avrohom, I don’t know if you know it, it’s a special tefillah, a special blessing that we say when Shabbos goes away, that, the G-d from Avrohom, Yitzchok, Yankel should look after us, we should have a good week, a good year, a good month. And then she said the names of everybody, that we should be looked after, and she said it continuously, as long as she was awake, non stop, that is the tefillah that came easiest to your mouth, that is what she could say in Yiddish, that was the tefillah that she could remember and this was like her talking personally to the Aybishter, and she felt that she was talking to him and asking him to save us, and he did ...

RL: And when you arrived in Bucharest?

RR: When we arrived in Bucharest we went ... I don’t remember so clearly Bucharest as I remember this part, in Bucharest we stayed in a flat, and then we went, the war was

on there as well, but mainly sirens and bombs, but we weren't as worried about bombs as we were about the SS. The bombs we said ... well ... when ... but I remember going into hiding into cellars or all hiding places when the bombs came, that I remember, I

Tape 1: 55 minutes 6 seconds

remember my mother falling down the stairs, rolling down, she broke her nose, but we didn't go to any hospitals or anything, we just ... and she was expecting my brother, that I remember.

RL: Did you meet up with the others in Bucharest?

RR: Yes, we were together with, with Berish Weiss, yes, but we didn't stay together any more, we stayed in different places, it was impossible, but I remember Berish Weiss's mother there, but I know she was very ill and she passed away there, in Bucharest.

RL: Were you in touch with the Schreibers?

RR: Yes, but afterwards, I don't know in Bucharest, but after the war we all went back to Roman ... we went back, where should you go ... we went back to the place that we know, we went back to Grosswardein, to Oradea. We actually got back into our own flat.

RL: That is another little story. We will just stay in Bucharest for the moment. We won't ...

RR: I don't remember in Bucharest meeting Schreibers, we must have, but it is not vivid in my mind.

RL: And were you sort of hiding in Bucharest?

RR: No, in Bucharest we were not hiding, no, we were not. Everybody was the same, there were plenty of Yidden there, no, we were not hiding, we were just hiding from the bombs. There was just war.

RL: So, what do you remember about the place?

RR: More than going and hiding, worrying about the bombs, I don't remember so clearly anything there so much. Life was obviously, I do remember I had no voice, it was six weeks after I couldn't speak, it was just whispering. But I don't remember more than that.

RL: It was just the four of you?

RR: Just the four of us. It was already near the end of the war, so we stayed there only a short time.

RL: So when would you say you got to Bucharest? When would it have been?

RR: I would say a month or two before the end of the war.

Tape 1: 57 minutes 27 seconds

RL: And how long would you say you were there?

RR: A few months. Not so long.

RL: And did the war end whilst you were there.

RR: Yes.

RL: I think this tape is about to finish, so we will just stop there.

TAPE 2

RL: This is the interview with Rivka Reich and it is tape 2.

So, we had reached the end of the war and I just had one thought, one question I wanted to ask and that was, you know you said that, when it came to leaving the bunker your father had to pay for that. Where did the money come from? How he had access to ... ?

RR: I don't know exactly, they joined, or they had, they had some means, some places where they gave it, I am not quite sure, but I know they did pay a lot, or they had more property that they sold. They were very well to do before the war so, it could be like that, people still had some money in some places I presume. Even so, I told you, when he was beaten up to give his gold and silver to find where he had hidden it, I think he must have had still some money somewhere, I think so ... I can't remember exactly where, but I know he did pay ...

RL: So we reached the end of the war. Do you remember the end of the war?

RR: I don't remember as such the end of the war ... I remember things that changed my life. I know that my parents had to go, I was in Bucharest, and from Bucharest afterwards I had to go to Temesvar, and with my brother, together. At the time I didn't know why, my parents wanted to rebuild their life back to Grosswardein and to Oradea, but they sent us to Temesvar because my parents had relations, there was a cousin there, there were different cousins, so that part I remember, but it was terrible for a child who had just gone through a bunker and then in Bucharest, bombs, which was still frightening but not as bad, no way. And then being taken away from my parents, and I went to stay with some cousins of my mother, which I will always remember, I always told her, "Why did you let me do that?" And she said "Why did I let you do that?" But you know in those days they had to think about survival, again, how can they rebuild their life. And I went to a house, it was a cousin of my mother, and they had a girl of my age, and they thought it would be very good for me to be with a girl of my age, by then I was already

five, five and a half or something like that. I must have been five and a half by then. But there was a grandmother there who was blind. And they went out all day, and the little girl must have gone to a school where she had always been, and I was left with the blind

Tape 2: 2 minutes 50 seconds

grandmother, that was again a traumatic thing for me. I remember I was always crying. And I remember my brother, who stayed with a man, with a cousin, I remember I couldn't stay with him because he was a man, he was a bachelor and I had to go into a house where they look after children. He used to come and visit me every day and talk to me every day, and visit me every day, and I was petrified, and I still remember the little corner I slept to stay with a blind grandmother. Everything was a bit delicate, and there was nobody there, people didn't think to explain things to children because they were just trying to survive. To explain things to children, was something that they just didn't have the time for, they were just saying how, what are we going to do next? How are we going to survive next? So a child explanation didn't come into it, love, yes, but they had to send me away and my brother as well, so that is why we went to Temesvar for a few months.

RL: How had that family survived?

RR: They were Romanian, Romania did not, were affected, if the war had taken longer, they would have been affected, but thank G-d it didn't take longer, so they weren't affected and that is how they survived. Temesvar was the same as Bucharest.

RL: What did you do during your time there?

RR: Mainly being very sad. I played with that little girl. I always felt that they didn't like me as much, obviously because that is what I remember. Because I missed my mother terribly, I missed my parents very badly. I felt very miserable, terribly home sick, and I found it very hard. I can still see the grandmother sitting there and they were most probably very nice to me but I don't remember as such, they didn't know where I had come from, they didn't know what, that I have gone through a bunker and running off ... they, like you hear stories, you read so many times stories, it doesn't really affect you, you read a story, but when you live the story it is a different story, it is a different thing altogether. But from there after a few months, I think we were four or five months there, then my parents took us back to Grosswardein. Even the journey going back there, we had a car accident on the journey, we landed up in hospital ... it wasn't smooth ... but ...

RL: Were you hurt?

RR: Pardon?

RL: Were you hurt?

RR: Yes, we were hurt, not badly, thank G-d, Boruch Hashem, but we were hurt. But afterwards we could carry on our journey and we went to Grosswardein. At the beginning

it wasn't so brilliant, because all the communists, were already coming there as well. The Russians, we thought, or whatever it is, we thought they had saved us, one room was

Tape 2: 5 minutes 50 seconds

given over to them. That I remember clearly, and you was still scared of them as well. They had this mania, they had never seen watches, and they had this thing of wearing watches on the arm. They didn't know that one watch did the same job as four. But, they are distinct, they took watches and they were wild, even so we had a captain or something, they were there for a short time, I think for a few months, but it was still scary to have in your flat a group of Russian soldiers living with you.

RL: How many were there?

RR: I don't know if I can recall how many. But they were coming and going.

RL: Did you have much contact with them?

RR: No, I personally didn't have so much, besides the fright, the scare of being frightened stayed on, obviously, I still had it very strong. It stayed on for a number of years. Until they went, we were so relieved when they left, it was terrible, my parents tried very hard to be nice to them. We had to be nice, whatever you have gone through, they made you feel that they had liberated you, which we don't know ... you know, history doesn't always tell it the same way, but in those days you felt they did, and you had to be nice, and we were very glad when they left, but after the war we tried to put the pieces together. There were a lot of broken people around who came to our house, it was terrible. That I remember, people coming, eating, a lot of broken people in our house, they had lost families, lost wives, husbands, all coming, all needed money. The hospitals were all full of people who were mentally disturbed.

I remember my mother preparing baskets for one of the Schreiber girls. The Schreibers were wonderful people as well, amazing ... they didn't have a day or a Shabbos where they had enough food for everybody who came to eat in their house. And then they used to come to us, and one of them, Fradel, she is not alive any more, she was a Berger and she used to take baskets, there were a few of them took baskets full of food to these mental homes, for the people who came back from the war who were mentally disturbed. It was amazing that there were people who were not mentally disturbed. And slowly we put our life together. It was a hard ...

RL: What did your father ... ?

RR: My father found again the factory. And again Appan worked for us. We carried on our friendship; we were friendly all the way with Appan until he passed away. And for the ladies who helped us, my father made sure that they had the property that he promised them. My mother was telling me that it was quite traumatic when they came to see us and they were wearing my mother's diamond ring, you know, it was something, it was only a diamond ring, and she didn't care any more, but still afterwards ... she was

wearing my ring and more than likely it belonged to her but my father made sure that what he promised them that they got it. There was no such thing as promising and not

Tape 2: 9 minutes 29 seconds

... he kept his promise, and later on when they had hardship my father always sent parcels to them. When we weren't there any more, with Appan, we always sent coffee, whatever we could give him, we did. But the factory opened up again ...

RL: Had it closed?

RR: Well it closed, well it carried on all the time but not under proper ownership, but he took it over. Appan gave it over to ... and we worked there. And the workers did carry on working, I don't know how long they carried on working, the whole thing ... we only stayed two years afterwards because the communist came in afterwards.

RL: What had happened to the flat?

RR: The flat? The Russians must have lived in it. Because the flat we got back, more or less as we left it. Six years ago I went there, the flat looked the same as when we left it, they hadn't done anything to it, but in those days we got it back and we rebuilt our life, obviously a lot of people were missing, it was awful, but we were very thankful for everybody who was alive, and we tried to help.

RL: Were there other members of the family who had survived?

RR: None of my grandparents, no, one brother survived, later on he came back, he was in Siberia, he only came later on to Grosswardein. But, my grandparents didn't survive, aunties didn't survive, cousins didn't survive, two, one or two cousins survived, the rest didn't survive, it was awful, but you had to carry on. You were broken hearted about it, but you still had to carry on to survive. This was the thing of the whole thing ... was survival ... [Phone rings] ... oh the phone ...it was quite, but my brother was born in April 1945, it was a tremendous event. Is it disturbing you?

RL: We will just let it stop ringing ...

RR: In April 1945 ...

RL: Where were you living at that point?

RR: Back in Grosswardein. It was a tremendous event, a child being born, it gave hope for everybody, because people lost their hope, how was it going to carry on, and this child was born, it was a tremendous thing. He had a bris, everybody attended that bris. People cried, people still .. couldn't ... I remember, I was six years old, the joy, and the emotional part.

RL: How many Jews had come back?

Tape 2: 12 minutes 40 seconds

RR: I don't remember how many. A lot had come who weren't from there as well, because it was a bigger town, the little villages like Margareten and all the little villages around, the non Jews were not very nice to them, and they could not rebuild their life there, so they came to the town which they knew from before the war, but they had never lived there actually, and they came to live there. And the Vizhnitzer Rebbe came there, it was a tremendous thing, and before the war as well the Vizhnitz was there. Grosswardein had the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, The Beis Yisroel the Vizhnitz Rov was called I think. And my mother was very close to the Vizhnitzer Hoif it was called, it was the dynasty, a hoif it was a whole dynasty, and we were very close, and still to this day we are close to Vizhnitz, and he was there, the Vizhnitzer Rebbe and he had his own story as to how he survived it. And Dayan Weiss, Dayan Weiss was tremendous, a tremendous prop, he had remarried, he was the Dayan of the town, and they rebuilt the town, it is amazing how, Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave them the strength, the Koichos to do it, because when you think about it today you just don't know how it could be, it was super human, and a lot of men who came without their wives, and the other way round, and they married, they found each other, and they built up homes. We again, my mother, had to cook, we got again a Jewish cook, and they carried on their good work of helping people, a tremendous amount of help had to be given and a tremendous amount was given. And there was a Jewish school ...

RL: Did you still have your nanny?

RR: Pardon?

RL: Did you still have your nanny?

RR: Yes, she lives in Eretz Yisroel. Yes, she was a very, very special lady.

RL: You were saying about a Jewish school?

RR: Yes, they built, they made a Jewish school in the yard of the Shul, there was a school there before the war as well, and they made it again, and there were children in school, there were refugees, and they were from different towns, and Boruch Hashem, thank G-d, there were a lot of people who managed to be, who were saved and they all came and made a school. There was cheder, there were Rebbes, they made life again, as best they could. It was a bigger town, the smaller towns didn't have a chance, and the bigger town had it.

RL: Did you attend that school?

RR: Yes I did, I did.

RL: And what are your memories of it?

Tape 2: 15 minutes 40 seconds

RR: And in those days already, because of the war, the Hungarians lost, so we had to speak Romanian, before the war everyone spoke Hungarian, after the war it was Romania, so we spoke Romanische in school itself, I mean the teaching was in Romanian. Yes, I was a little girl, and I went to school. I was very happy to have normality. To have school, to have friends, to play, to ... yes, I enjoyed that, I remember ... yes.

RL: How big was the school when you attended?

RR: In my eyes it was a big school, how big it was really ... I don't know ... maybe about 100 children. Not more than that, it was a high school and everything together. Unfortunately that didn't last very long either. Because two years later we had to run away again, but that part was a pleasant part, that little bit, was very good.

RL: So what, would you, what would you do in your spare time?

RR: I don't know, playing, we did a lot of playing. I think we had to play ourselves out from that time when we couldn't play. Yes. But we were not with adults together, we were half adults already, we became adults before our age. And I think everybody did. All the children did, because I wasn't the only one.

RL: Did you used to talk to each other about what had happened?

RR: Yes, a lot. I didn't like as a child to talk about it, but my mother did. She said we have to remember it and we have to talk about it and she always talked about it. It was so deep in her, and in both of them, that we talked a lot about it, and that is why maybe it is so much part of me. I didn't like it in the beginning, I couldn't stand it, it made me very nervous. And then, afterwards when other people came to tell their stories, that was my bedtime story time, when everybody told about Auschwitz and about different camps, that is where we heard a lot of it. That is when we said we were very lucky, we were nothing, we did not go through anything compared to what other people went through, but we could feel for other people because we had went through this ... terrible times, we could feel how terrible that could have been, but nowadays when people read books, it is, they cannot possibly feel it.

We had wonderful neighbours called Fuchs, she was Fuchs before the war, she had two children, and her husband was taken away in already 1942/1943 to work in a labour, forced labour, my father Oleh Vashalom promised her "I will always look after you." And he did, to the very end, he looked after her from when the war broke out, she came with us to the bunker as well with her two children. After the war she got married and my father further looked after them, she was Grossman afterwards.

[Phone rings] I am sorry.

Tape 2: 19 minutes 20 seconds

We always kept contact with them. They were very kind to us. She was my mother's best friend and she was really wonderful to us, Later on in life when we had to run away, she looked after us, so we had, they were both very good to each other.

RL: What other memories do you have of life there? You know, in the two years that you were there?

RR: I have very good memories of that because I just found that it was, it was very nice, with the Schreibers two doors away from us, with the Grossmans who my folks were very friendly with. The children, we played, we didn't just make jam, they used to make jam outside in the courtyard in summer, so we used to queue up with our bread for, to put fresh jam on it. We used to go to school, we used to go to Shul, we used to go to the market place shopping, it was pleasant; it was very good for us. We used to go on a horse and cart, I still remember when I had my tonsils removed, but I didn't go to hospital, but my parents were too frightened, they were frightened to let me go into a hospital, we did it privately. How they put me to sleep ... without injections, just with, what do you call it, they just put it in front of your mouth and it put you to sleep ...

RL: Like ether

RR: Yes ... and obviously in the middle of the operation I woke up, I do remember, but it was a pleasant life, I do remember. I had my little brother who I absolutely adored and we were a lot together, we were always together. That I remember as a good life.

Then suddenly when we had to run away, that was again hard.

RL: How did that come about?

RR: Because then the communists came. And they were getting, it was getting harder and harder. You were not allowed any more to own a factory, they took everything away and they were, and my father had a position, he was in the kehillah he had a position, and he had a factory, and there was everything against capitalism. So, besides taking the factory away or putting it into a different name, you weren't allowed to own anything, they were, they were not very good to us. In the beginning everything was fine, you managed to live, everything was all right, but we could feel the danger coming again, and they didn't want people to run away. My father went to Bucharest to get a passport, when you got a passport, where do you want to go? So he got the passports, even so he got arrested for a day when he came off the train. "Where do you go? It was already getting ... communism was already very hard to cope with. We didn't suffer much of it, because we managed to run away, in the middle of the night, I still remember it now, in the middle of the night, motzei Shabbos, Saturday night, we just left, my father, he had prepared us already, he knew that we had to leave, we had everything prepared, we are leaving, and as we were leaving, we had a huge chandelier in the dining room, it fell

Tape 2: 22 minutes 56 seconds

down, it was the most amazing thing. We took whatever we could with us, and the Grossmans came with us.

We took a car to cross the border. Now the border was the other way round now, now it was going from Romania to Hungary, and ... and crossing the border, just as we crossed the border, and we came over to the Hungarian side, they looked at us, what they didn't do, the border police, they still, they were terrible, they looked through every little thing, the hats, the shoes, they took us to pieces, that they didn't want us to take any money with us. Well, we had a bit, sewn into the jackets, sewn into coats, a few diamonds here and there, whatever my father could put together, but money as such we didn't have very much. We left behind again, second time in our lives, all our belongings. And as we came across, I remember that very clearly, crossing over the Hungarian border, there was a little house which said Hungary, well, in that house when we saw the police running, coming after us, we were saved by an hour, an hour before they would have, half an hour we would have been caught. You never know, they could have sent us to Siberia, anything, we just, and then we were in Tokaj. Tokaj was Mrs Grossman, Mrs Fuchs who married Mr Grossman, her brother had a house in Tokaj. Tokaj I remember smelled of wine, Tokaj wine, the famous Tokaj wine. And we stayed there for three months and then the Joint started helping us, we had ran out already of our money, we just couldn't do anymore and then they helped us. And we went from Tokaj, Tokaj is here we played around, we had no more schooling, I mean my schooling stopped for quite a while. We were again trying to survive; we were again planning what to do next.

RL: What kind of a place was that?

RR: It was a small place. A small village, a small town, it is known for its grapes and its wine. Tokaj, you must have heard of Tokaj wine. It had grape vines all over, that is what I remember, but Jews lived there.

RL: And you were staying with ... ?

RR: We were staying the Grossman's brother, Mr Grossman, we stayed there for three months, they were very kind to us. But she felt that my father had been always so good to her, that she kind of repaid, but it wasn't just repaying, there was this wonderful relationship we had together. One always helping the other.

RL: You just played the whole time that you were there?

RR: We did nothing, school never came into the question, we never knew when we had to go further. My brother learnt, with the Rebbe, but, and my little brother was about three years old. No, he wasn't even three, he was two years old, two and a bit. From there we went to Prague. I think a lot of people went to Prague, and that picture that I showed you is in Prague actually, and there was where people were getting at a chasunah,

Tape 2: 26 minutes 20 seconds

people were ..There was still a lot of broken people who got married. In Prague there was a lot of people who were all doing the same as us, refugees.

RL: Do you remember the journey to Prague?

RR: The journey, going to Prague, I don't think I remember so vividly, which way we went, I don't recall the journey clearly, no. I do know that Prague, we stayed a few weeks in Prague and then the Joint took us to Karlsbad. That was in Czechoslovakia as well, it was a bath place, it was a place where people drank waters, and that is where we were for eight months, we had in a hotel room, a hotel I mean, in a room which was running water, and they had like a soup kitchen where we ate, we didn't eat in our premises, and we went to eat there. My father, my mother at that time was quite ill, she had kidney problems, her physically, mentally she was a very strong person always, but physically at that time it took its toll, she had no strength. I imagine now, thinking back, I imagine it was all the emotional factors, but in those days you didn't think of emotional, but in those days you just thought of the physical, she was not well, the kidneys did not work, she couldn't work. Besides, she was a very spoiled person, she was spoiled from her youth, she had cooks, she had all the time she had people doing things for her. Besides those six weeks in the bunker. Washing clothes, to have her sit down by the sink, and on one of those, I don't know what it is called, one of those, I don't know what it is called. It is in museum's now, it was an iron thing, we had to wash the clothes out, she couldn't do it. My father had to do that, and he definitely never worked physically in his life, the Hungarian men were very spoiled. They were used to ... that is the way the Hungarians were and it was very hard for them. And we again, with all the kids we had met, from all the countries, from all the different parts, it was like a, from all different parts of Hungary, of Romania people were there. And what did we do, people used to come, people used to come for holidays there, a lot of holiday makers there, not like us. And they used to come to the waters, there were all different drinks, the doctors used to prescribe all different drinks, so we used to work there, help to give them the drinks, something to keep us occupied. It wasn't a brilliant idea to leave us completely loose, but there was no option. I was eight years old, they had no option. They were again thinking "What next!" We never knew where we were going to go next, and where we were going to get a passport to, and which countries would let us in.

I forgot to tell you, in Hungary, I think already in nineteen forty ... six, forty seven, my parents were planning to go to Eretz Yisroel. This is the country, we are going to go. We had furniture made, because they said that the furniture was specially ... and we were just on the boat to go, and that is when the war broke out in Israel, so we had to replan, that was our replanning.

RL: So what was your father doing while he was in Karlsbad.

RR: He was very busy, to plan and to think. The men talking together, they were learning and davening together, all this took some time. But, work they couldn't do, because they were in transit, everybody knew they weren't staying there, it was just a

Tape 2: 30 minutes 13 seconds

place to be in transit. Where to go? Which country would let us in? It was very hard. We had ... nobody wanted us ... truthfully no country wanted us. Even in the countries that later on let you in, they let you in under duress, people suffered a lot. They suffered a lot in war, and afterwards for being unwanted, and that is why we were there. So we were talking a lot about the war. People spent their time talking about what they went through in the war, what they went through after, and what shall we do now. Upbringing they didn't think about so much, they couldn't. They were happy we were healthy, we ate, and we were normal and we were fed ... that is what ...

RL: What kind of feelings do you have about that particular time?

RR: I found that it was very hard on me again, on all of the children who were there. I found that nobody was ... I played with the other girls, with the children, but nobody really had time to care for us, and I found that really very hard, I found my mother wasn't well, my father had to work hard, I mean to do the ladies job, which wasn't his type, and I was busy looking after my little brother a lot. I found it was very hard, yes.

RL: What happened to the nanny?

RR: She went to Eretz Yisroel. She had to run away as well but she didn't come with us any more, she went to Eretz Yisroel. We went, we were mainly with the Grossmans, and then with Weiss, later on my father met up with someone called Weiss and we met up with them as well, and we met up with people who were in Grosswardein, in Prague we met up with a lot of different people, we made connections with, with some of them we had connections here too. But people had babies there, some people had babies, it was very difficult conditions, we only had a hotel room, it was very hard. The hardship carried on still for a while, eight months is a long time,

RL: So did you rely on all your food from the soup kitchen?

RR: We were not short of food. The Joint did look after us, that is all we had. I mean people from America gave money to the Joint to keep us going, because there was a war afterwards in Eretz Yisroel, but there were a lot of people, unwanted ones, but Boruch Hashem Hakodosh Boruch Hu looked after us. It is nissim how we carried on, and we always say it is nissim how we are. That we are all, Boruch Hashem my family Boruch Hashem turned out frum, and ehrlech is as well a very big thing. And more, we became frummer. There were people who lost their yiddishkeit, and we Boruch Hashem, increased it, which is a very big thing. If we find people who before were much frummer than us, and as life went, they couldn't keep up with it, got lost, they lost it, and Boruch Hashem, Hakodosh Boruch Hu looked after us, my parents, if not for them, for their encouragement, and them wanting to get frummer and frummer, otherwise we would not be the way we are. Where we are.

RL: What happened from Karsbad?

Tape 2: 33 minutes 46 seconds

RR: From Karlsbad we got papers, at last the papers, just the transit papers, not staying anywhere, to go to Paris. I remember that train journey, was a very long journey through Germany. I remember the hatred in their eyes, because the train stopped very often in different places, oh, the Germans still hated us a lot, even so a lot of Jews still went to live in Germany in those days, but we felt the hatred. I think we took two days or something like this in the train. We came to Paris. We notified someone who we knew distantly; who wasn't from, my father knew a lot of people in Grosswardein. He was good to everybody, no matter if from, non from, it didn't matter, he was kind to everybody. He knew somebody who did live in Paris, so he sent him a telegram, or a letter, in those days it was telegrams, that we were coming, the Joint had given us a hotel to stay in. Could he pick us up from the station and help us, a little help, we knew nothing. My father knew a bit of French from his school years, my mother too. We arrived there, in the middle of the night, again, completely ... refugees is an understatement, destitute, no money, no nothing, and the Joint gave us this hotel room which was terrible. I mean Paris, anyone who knows Paris knows that there are elegant hotels where people can tour, and there is a lot of rotten places. Even French people used to live in those hotels, they were rotten places, and we were saying ...

[Pause for coughing in background and telephone ringing]

RL: So you were saying you arrived in Paris in the middle of the night ...

RR: In the middle of the night ... and this person was very nice, and we went to the hotel where we stayed. Were we disappointed? No ... just, we were used to being already like that, used and not used, considering my mother when she came even the second time, when she had a maid, and a nanny, and cooks, and a washer woman and again an ironing woman, and she was a lady, she was a Rothbart, she was a somebody. It was hard, it was very, very hard, and we came to this room and there were mice there, and it was pretty horrible, and we cooked in the room and Mrs Grossman ... [Phone ringing] ... Mrs Grossman was very kind to us, she said always my mother, when we came out the second time from Romania, my mother said "I can't face it, I can't, I've never done". She knew it's going to be hardship. "I have never done anything physically in my life, I can't cook ... I can't, I can't." She felt physically she can't cope any more. Mrs Grossman said "I will do it for you, please come. I will do it for you." And she kept her word. She really kept her word. They came to Paris and we were in the same hotel place together with her, and she really cooked for us and looked after us. We were there for only a short time in this hotel and then we changed to another one. Near Strasburg Saint Denis. It was better but the French were awful, they could see we were refugees, they knew we didn't eat treif, we couldn't go eating in restaurants, and they didn't let us cook in our hotel room, so we cooked, we had little, electric, not even electric, electric or little gas cookers, and we cooked at night, and we opened all the windows so they couldn't smell the cooking, and we quickly hid the thing under the bed. And the rest we

ate in the day, and if they smelt cooking they came, and they screamed, and they were looking everywhere, where is the cooker. We were refugees, they didn't like us, the

Tape 2: 39 minutes 24 seconds

French never liked refugees and they really were not nice to us. And then my father tried, there were people who were better off than we were, there were people, the whole building lived in Rue Dieu and there the whole building was frum Yidden and then it was easier because there they had a communal kitchen, at least they could cook. It was a wonderful thing to have a communal kitchen and there they could cook. It was a wonderful thing to have a communal kitchen, and now a communal kitchen would sound terrible, but they could cook, no one to stop them cooking. I remember the first Pesach, once Yom Tov comes, we ate at people called Hoffman, very Chassidish, very ehrlich people, my parents always chose to eat only by very frum people, and they cooked for us for Pesach. I remember, we couldn't go easily, but I remember my parents bought the food, and that was already hard.

Then my father got, I don't know from the Joint or somebody lent him money and we moved out from this hotel, and we moved to Rue de la Victoire with the Weisses, we were very friendly with the Weisses, they had only one child, and we were three, and we moved to a flat. Actually with this Weiss family we stayed together for four years, not in the same flat, but in one flat, two families, one kitchen, not a proper bathroom, a sink, more like a shower behind the toilets, and we lived together, never an argument and we worked together, my father and him worked together, they worked together for 35 years. When we moved to Rue de la Victoire then my father had it easier, he started working, we were not allowed to work in Paris. You had no permit to own anything. You, so he started off, with somebody else's name, or how, he wasn't the type who could go and be a worker for somebody, so first he made Neshoma Lecht at home, he knew, because he learned science, chemistry, he made at home Neshoma Lecht .

RL: Yahrzeit Candles ...

RR: Yahrzeit candles, and he made it in the kitchen, he poured the wax, I still remember the wick and the wax pouring in, and when it dried my mother went, as she was, to the pletzel, that is where all the Yidden used to shop, and used to sell it from shop to shop. Then my father had, he started doing candles, and he started, he had a tiny place, where he worked very hard physically, on his own, no workers or anything like that, he himself, making candles. He used to make the candles, put them together in a box, and my mother again went to the pletzel and sold it from shop to shop. We lived on that and on the Joint, we definitely didn't have a lot. But we were happier, but we still struggled a lot, we wanted to go away from there, we applied, people applied, that is the time, in 1952, 53, from 1949 we were there. We stayed there, but a lot of people applied to go to Canada, to get the Visas, to go to Canada, it was terrible, they didn't let you, a lot of people tried to go to America and till they got a VISA it was so much hassle, they made people suffer, literally suffer. Because you had to go and have your chest x-rayed a few times, and they always found something wrong on the chest, things like, in the American people were absolutely perfect, and they don't have any blemish, they are really healthy

specimens, but they did make people feel bad that because they didn't want tuberculosis, not everybody had tuberculosis, a few people had it, those people went into sanatoriums.

Tape 2: 43 minutes 43 seconds

But a few people, they could see just a little bit on the chest, a little bit on the bronchials and they were refused, they had to apply again and again, and the same was with Canada, even worse I think. And my father was planning "Where shall we go? Shall we go here? Shall we go there?" Everybody was planning where to go next. We didn't think we could stay there, we stayed, but a lot of people went, so slowly people got a VISA and they went away, but we stayed on, and my father did those candles and the Yahrzeit lights and then he found, he used to, it was physically very hard. And slowly that didn't work any more so well, so he tried some business, travelling different parts of the world, to Spain, to see where he would have any contact. He was a businessman, he was a very good businessman, for him to do this was very hard, it was like slavery, but we had to eat, so he slowly tried to find something else to do. We moved away from, in Rue La Victoire, and we had my father doing this Yahrzeit light. Once by mistake, he didn't put, we cooked with paraffin, and he didn't put it far away and it went on flame, and my mother was doing this and she burnt her face, and by a miracle she remembered that her grandmother told her when there is fire just take a cloth and put it over, and she put it over her face, and she went to a doctor, and she had to be ... but she was badly burnt and the scars stayed all her life. But just to tell you, to what extent our life was hard, inAs children, we felt it was hard, I didn't go to a Jewish school in Paris, because my parents didn't want me to go to a mixed school, and there was only mixed schools, the frum school. My father said you are better to go to a goyishke school, at least you know you are Jewish and they aren't, and you won't copy anything. Still from home that is the way we were brought up. So we went to a goyishke school. Shabbos was school day in France, to go to a school and not to go Shabbos, it was very hard. We gave presents to the teachers, they would not understand us, they did not want to understand, they did not want to understand that we were religious and had Friday afternoon off, and Shabbos for some reason in those days were the hardest exams, and that, well, I had to live with it, I suffered with it, I did ... but we had to live with it, we gave presents, whenever, in those days stockings, nylon stockings were the big novelty, my father got it from somebody, we gave the teacher or the headmaster, headmistress a pair of nylon stockings and then she left me off for a while, and that is the way it went, for all of my school years in France.

RL: Did you understand French?

RR: No, I learned it as I, you know I was a child, a child learns quickly. And Boruch Hashem I have got a gift for languages, because I speak quite a few, maybe it is because ... I pick up languages quite easily, I won't say I speak it perfectly but I speak it.

RL: And how were the other children towards you?

RR: So so. Not brilliant.

RL: Were you the only Jewish pupil?

Tape 2: 47 minutes 16 seconds

RR: No, at one school we were two or three of us, and later on just myself.

RL: Did you suffer anti-Semitism?

RR: Yes, I did. I looked different. I was dressed differently. In school there was some Jewish children who didn't keep Shabbos, or didn't look like I did. I wore stockings ... yes I suffered from it. I was very happy to leave school. We suffered from the goyim as well around us. The people who lived downstairs, they always complained we made a noise, too many people; of course our flat was a very well frequented flat, a very well frequented flat, because all the rachmonuses came to us. So they complained too much coming up the stairs. We bribed the concierge all the time; we were always frightened of the concierge. It was tough. Later on, Boruch Hashem, my father went into textiles and was better, financially definitely better ...

RL: What kind of textiles?

RR: First he was in quilted, quilting, in those days he did a lot of quilting with lining, and then he did sticking together, foam back with cloth, and that is what he did until the end.

RL: At school did you make any friends?

RR: Nothing substantial, none, I kept more with the Jewish girls together, we used to meet once a week on Shabbos and for different, no, not very much. Some of them were nice to me because they had to bring the homework, I used to go to their home motzei Shabbos or Sunday to get the homework and work all day Sunday to make up for the day of Shabbos. And the same for Yom Tov. I was very happy at home, so I didn't care but at school, I didn't like it.

RL: Which Shul did you go to?

RR: Basfroi, at one time to a Russian Shul, and then to Basfroi. My father couldn't, Basfroi was dilapidated and later on he, he was a very good business man and he made a transaction with the builder, and he gave him some of the plot of the Shul, and for that he built a beautiful Shul, which is still in existence, Basfroi Shul, it is still used, I don't know by how many people, but it is still used.

RL: What area was this in?

RR: It was in Paris 11, 11th ...

RL: And did you have any Hebrew education?

RR: Very little, I learned to daven, translation a bit, I went to some Sunday school, and
Tape 2: 50 minutes 23 seconds

that is as far as it went. But yiddishkeit was so imbued at home, that Hebrew education as goes, we knew that Shabbos was something very special and to keep the mitzvos was very special. Yiddishkeit was at home, it wasn't lessons. But, I always say that Hakodosh Boruch Hu helped that generation, because they had so much hardship, so much to survival that he helped them to bring them up without too much psychology, just by living. Because it is unbelievable at how little they were able to give us but how much we got.

RL: When it came to Shabbos and Yom Tov ... were you able to ... ?

RR: Yes, Shabbos and Yom Tov was at home, I mean, everything was at home, nothing was delivered. We didn't have a car, we used to go shopping and bring, the kosher stuff was about half an hour with the bus. We had to go and shlep it from the pletzel, but we had to, Shabbos was fantastic, and during the day was beautiful at home, because we had always a lot of visitors. Not visitors, somebody who you would invite, please come for Shabbos, no, people came for Shabbos. They said, "Madame Rothbart, I am coming." "Yes, come." There were four, five, six, seven, eight people, whatever number, we didn't make fancy cooking. There was food to eat, not so much of the fancy side, there was fresh, good food. Every night there were people knocking at the door, every single night. They came regularly every night, not just once a week. They knocked or rang the bell, about 9 o'clock. The table was, my mother always laid the table with bread, in the evening it wasn't, the main meal was lunch time. Whatever, cheese, sardines, fruit and vegetables and they always came and my mother used to beg them "wash and sit down to eat", and they would stay for two or three hours, each one telling their life story over and over again. It was mainly that, and asking advice from my father, my father used to fall asleep, if he was very tired. But afterwards he used to go collecting for this one, always this one, he was always helping people. We had visitors; we lived with this family Weiss for four years, afterwards. Even in those days we had people staying with us, people who had trouble with the police, people who had trouble, people who worked on the black market with things. They weren't allowed to work, how should they survive? They used to come to my father, "Mr Rothbart, can you help us? The police are looking for me." My father said "No problem, stay in our flat. Where is your case?" What they are smuggling. "Put it under my bed." Very often I woke up with somebody in my bed, very often, we never had such a thing as my bedroom or things like that, never. It depends who stayed with us. We had people staying four months with us, people staying six months with us. We had a life of chessed, but not chessed like, it was a different chessed to now. You didn't think you are doing chessed. You just helped because you helped, that one needed help, it was the normal thing. You helped somebody who needed help, it wasn't thought out, it was a different type, you give from yourself and you didn't think about it, you didn't begrudge it, no. They did it all their lives. They built up Paris, later on, everybody left Paris, most of the refugees left, some people stayed, but the minority,

and then we didn't have a Rav, and my father with Mr Weiss together bought Rav Rottenberg to Paris and built up a Yeshiva and a Kollel. What Paris is today is my father, Oleh Hashalom, with Mr Weiss, doing, yes. It was all these wonderful schools, Rav

Tape 2: 54 minutes 40 seconds

Rothman, Rav Katz has got in Paris, and a lot of people are there, mainly I think from South Africa origin, but there are hundreds of children at school, if not for Rav Rottenberg, not Rav Katz it wouldn't have existed.

RL: What was the Jewish community like in Paris when you were first there?

RR: At first it was very good. Because there were a lot of refugees, but there were people from France as well, there was Rav Munk, in Rue Cadet, and there was Rav Stern in Rashi Shul. And Rav Rubenstein in Rue Pavee, yes. But there was the Klausner Rav was there as well with the refugees, and later on the Margareten Rov And that kept people's yiddishkeit, that kept people going. Later on this one left and the other one left, it was harder, but that is when they came the time when my parents, when my father and Mr Weiss, there was no Rav, there was no shechita any more, they brought Rav Rottenberg ...

RL: Where was he from?

RR: From Antwerp.

RL: Antwerp ...

RR: And he really built up, and he made a kollel, and whatever is there now, is, if not from my father and Mr Weiss's staying ahead and foresight, that, we need a Rav, they didn't think as far as how it rippled, there would be no Rav there, no heimishe Rav.

RL: Which Shul did he come to?

RR: He came to Rue Pavee.

RL: And was he the shochet as well?

RR: No, the shochet we had, erm, what was the name ... Reb Mechel Shochet, Reiss, he was shochet, he was chazzan, Reb Itzikel lived there as well, he was the main thing there, Reb Itzikel, he was the Pshevorsker Rav, Rebbe, later on he went to Antwerp, he was in Paris, he lived in Rue des Rosier in this pletzel, he was a Rebbe, he was tremendous, all these people gave so much for all the Yidden who were there, to keep them, to give them, financially, they collected money. Rav Itzikel used to collect the money and by night he had not a penny left, he did not know what the next day would bring, what he will live off himself, he gave it all on. And this is a fact I know, it is not just stories.

RL: And was he a Chassidic Rav?

RR: Yes. And now his grandson is Rav, is in Antwerp, he is Reb Leibish, he is called
Tape 2: 57 minutes 26 seconds

Reb Leibish Pshevorske in Antwerp.

RL: So this film is about to end, so if we just break off here.

TAPE 3

RL: This is the interview with Rivka Reich and it is tape 3.

So, we were talking about your life in Paris and your father bringing over Rabbi Rottenberg to be the Rav of the Shul. And what kind of organisations did Rav Rottenberg ... ?

RR: There were no organisations of any description. It was just, there was no Rav in Paris. The meat we got from Strasbourg, my parents wouldn't use the shechita ... there were ... there was Consistoire. Consistoire was a much more modern way, we didn't use Consistoire. There were some Ravs who used Consistoire yes definitely but we didn't use them as such. So, there were quite a few in Paris, we needed something, we needed a Rav, we needed a butcher shop, and Rav Rottenberg, he, he had some problems in Antwerp so they decided to bring him, and he was definitely the right person, because he himself, all his capabilities came out in Paris, he used all his capabilities, he was a very special person and he built up things in Paris things which were completely deflated, kashrus, schools, he made a kollel, he made people frum, there were loads of people, I mean baal teshuvos, there were intellectual people, they were looking for something, he took over Pavee, which was a very nice Shul. Rabbi Rubinstein was the Rav there before, obviously there was always a shortage of finance, and they went collecting and built it up and that is the way it flourished, at that time his children were little, younger, and slowly he built up schools, and first kashrus, mikvehs, whatever Yidden needed he built up and made it right.

RL: And what was the kashrus under. Did it have a specific name?

RR: No, it was under the Rav Rottenberg kashrus, maybe some name Yerayim or something, but there was Rav [...] or different things, but he was the first one in the frum kehillah, everyone would eat Rav Rottenberg's Hechsher now.

RL: And what schools did he start?

RR: He made schools amazing. He really did, all on the outskirts of Paris, in Paris itself, he made fantastic schools. He took children in buses, children can go by bus to school. Schools outside Paris, schools inside Paris, and obviously it was now I am talking about, in those days he did, he built up the schools and kashrus but to a smaller

degree, but now, his son, and his son in law Rav Katz and Rav Rottenberg, he, they made much more, they built up a tremendous lot of schools, but then this brings success, success breeds success and encourages other people to do it as well, so different

Tape 3: 3 minutes 12 seconds

Rabbonim came around as well, but the main ones were Rav Rottenberg and Rav Katz, who, Rav Katz did more the schools; they didn't work so well together, the son and the son in law, but they both built it up. And that is where yiddishkeit is now in Paris.

RL: What roll did your father have in this?

RR: He had the roll that he brought Rav Rottenberg and that Rottenberg started to build up the kollel, and my father still worked with him in schools. In the beginning of it my father worked very actively, collecting money, and keeping accounts, Rav Rottenberg couldn't keep accounts, but he used to go collecting with him, because obviously people were very impressed when they saw Rav Rottenberg coming. There were a lot of doctors and lawyers and people had finance and they were very happy to help him and then they joined his kehillah and then they made a lot of baal teshuvahs. They admired him and they had a lot of followers, it slowly built up, but he had a lot of courage, he had power, he knew how to do it and he was also very reliable. So that I find, in Paris, nobody owes anybody anything, but my father bringing Rav Rottenberg helped Paris to be what it is now. I know a lot of people go to Eretz Yisroel now, but there has been a lot of people become frum. I mean the yiddishkeit is much more than it was in my days, different, but much more.

RL: And, coming to your story, you have mentioned the school in Paris and your difficulties

RR: Yes, yes ... but people did go to Yiddishe schools, there was the Secretan, which was for, my brother went there, because when he went it wasn't mixed. First he went to a goyishke school, and he had to take his cappel off in school. It was very hard, so then we sent him to Secretan, he had to travel half an hour to school every day, minimum, by underground, which wasn't always so easy, and he was there until the age of 13, 12/13, and then he had private tuition, because again Yavneh was mixed, a very good school, a lot of wonderful people went there, but my parents didn't want it, not that they were better, they just didn't want it and my sisters, I have two little sisters, sisters younger than me ...

RL: Now, when were they born?

RR: They were born, now let me think ... now one was born in 51 and one was born in 53, which was a tremendous joy for all of us. It was a most wonderful thing, and for me to have a little sister, I had two brothers, I am very close ... and when we came to Paris my older brother went straight away to Yeshiva, in those days he went to Kappeln. Even to go, we didn't have passports, to go to Kappeln Yeshiva we had to sort of go on the border in a way that the border police shouldn't see him. Everything was hard for us. A

little thing as a VISA from Paris to Belgium was a difficulty. It was very difficult, and, so I was left at home with my younger brother and we are very close together, we are all of us very close together, we are very close, all five of us. But he went away, so when my

Tape 3: 6 minutes 57 seconds

little sister was born I was sure that there was nobody in the world as happy as me. There is eleven and a half years, maybe twelve years, between both of us, it was the most wonderful thing. Financially we weren't well off but Boruch Hashem we were happy. We couldn't even afford a cot when the baby was born so somebody kindly gave us a pram, of course a pram is a very big thing. We carried the pram upstairs and we left it on the second floor, and downstairs whenever we went out, we didn't have something downstairs, there was just the pram. And then later on we got an iron cot, an old fashioned thing, second hand somewhere.

My father was trying very hard, parnosa wasn't easy, no. In those days you weren't allowed to own a business, you had to have a Gérard, someone who works for you, who he, who under his name, a French person, the French were not very nice with the refugees. And two years later my younger sister was born, that was, that was the icing on the cake, it was absolutely wonderful.

RL: Had your mother got over her kidney troubles?

RR: Yes. My mother was never strong. We always propped my mother up, when I think back it is amazing what she did, with being weak, but physically strong working, she did her utmost, she wasn't physically strong. All my life I remember helping my mother, and so did my sisters too, we, but we did it so normal and naturally that it was, not that we were helping my mother, it was normal, like my mother had to be protected. So she has to be, that is normal, it was normal that when my younger sister was born that I should look after her or take her for a walk or buy clothes or dress her, it was normal. And when my younger ... in those days we didn't have disposable nappies, and we didn't have washing machines either, we didn't have a bathroom either, we had a place where we had a sink and there was some sort of a shower in the back of the toilet, so that was our sanitary ... We didn't complain, so washing nappies, it was normal to wash nappies by hand, I used to wash the nappies. My mother couldn't, and then we had someone who tried, who came once a week, who tried to wash the nappies, and boiled them, and ... like an old fashioned way, but never did I think "Why should I do it?" It was just normal. It was what a normal lovingly doing, a different life style.

RL: Were there other families with children of your age?

RR: Yes, Weiss, of my age, Weiss had one daughter who was my age, and we were, we lived together for four years so we were very close together, and Mrs Weiss had two sons, at the same time as my mother had two girls, she had two boys and eventually the youngest son got married to my youngest sister. And not because they met each other like that, because they moved away when he was born. I had other people as well, Shifra, I had people, by then I had already friends, yes ...

RL: What would you do when you weren't in school?

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RR: When we weren't in school, when we came home, school in France used to be still, still is I think, half past eight until half past eleven, and half past one until half past four. We used to come home at half past eleven and quickly ask my mother what shopping had we quickly to do, and we quickly used to run to the shops to buy it, because the shops used to close at quarter past twelve or something like that, half past twelve, and then we had to eat lunch and then go back to school. So the time was quickly, what can I help, eat quickly and go back to school. And in the evening we used to come home and we used to have a lot of homework. In France there was much more homework than England, there was a lot of homework to be done, and learn by heart, but if I had any spare time I used to go and take my little sisters out, to the park. I found it was the biggest joy, I didn't find, I don't know, I didn't have spare time for myself or anything like that ...

RL: Where were you living at this point?

RR: In Rue du Chemin Vert, Paris 11. In Paris actually we only had two flats, one in Rue de la Victoire and one Rue du Chemin Vert and that we stayed until I got married and my parents stayed till the end. We never bought it we only rented it, because we always thought we might be going somewhere, we might go, we didn't feel like it was a stable place for staying, but they stayed until my father took ill, they stayed there.

RL: And how big a flat was that?

RR: It was four rooms, whichever way you turned it was four. And we made a lot of it. We used it for bedrooms; whatever you wanted was a bedroom. When the Satmar Rebbe, the old Satmar Rebbe, he came twice and stayed in our flat. Which was a tremendous thing, the Satmar Rebbe; everybody knows what a special tzaddick he was. He never flew to Eretz Yisroel, so he came, it must have been in 63, I think it was in 63, he came to Paris and he was on the way to Eretz Yisroel by boat and he stayed in my parents flat, which was a tremendous honour, and my mother showed him, the walls moved, because at least 60 people came to see him, all the way up the stairs was full of Yidden, at that time the goyim were very nice, they could feel there was somebody special in our flat. He stayed with us overnight and then on the way back he did again. My family, my parents, always felt very privileged that they had him. He didn't go to everybody; they trusted my parents, kashrus and everything. Even so they weren't Satmar Chassidim as such but they were Chassidische children, my brothers became Chassidish. And slowly all of us does, I am not as Chassidish as the rest but I've got Chassidische grandchildren, but we are Chassidish inclined.

RL: How was your flat laid out? If you can you just describe it?

RR: The flat was, when you came in there was a square hall, and on the left hand side there was a little wash room which later on we put a bathroom in it, on the left hand side was the toilet and afterwards was a small kitchen, you couldn't eat in it, you could cook in it but you couldn't eat in it, then there was, the dining room was on the left hand side

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and from the dining room there came another room which was my sister's room, lounge, you name it, it was that, and then there was two other rooms, all the rooms were intercommunicating, there were two other rooms, my parents bedroom and the living room where we lived most of the time, and I gave to the yard....., and the dining room and the lounge whatever were at the front.

RL: So where did the children sleep?

RR: The children slept ... it depends who was there and who wasn't there, maybe in the back, front ... bedroom, front part of the house but the back room. But it depended, if we had more visitors then they had to go and sleep in the day room, there was no set room for any or us. My parents had their bedroom but if more women were staying there then the women went to sleep in the bedroom with my mother and my father slept in the day room with the men, they were marvellous, how they gave. They didn't feel that is my bedroom, I have got a bedroom, and from home they had, it isn't as if they didn't have, they were spoiled, it isn't that they didn't know at any time what luxurious living was, they did, but they didn't. They rose above it all, it didn't matter to them ...

RL: What age were you when you left school?

RR: I was 15.

RL: And what did you do?

RR: I went to Gateshead sem. That was the best thing for me.

RL: How did that come about?

RR: It was just by fluke. My father met, he was wondering what I was going to do next, I did not want to stay and study, no way, the way things were, I don't think I was cut out for it anyway. So my father met somebody who had a daughter in Gateshead, he didn't know exactly what a sem is, but it is a wonderful place he said, he said I am going to try and get in contact, and he gave him the phone number and I went, and it was wonderful. I was fifteen, I was the youngest there, girls came at 16, But it was very, I couldn't speak a word of English, but they were kind to us, there were other refugees as well, I still felt myself, in a way I was a refugee, and Mr Cohen was very good to me, and all the Rabbonim and slowly I learned English and I learned to translate, and most important I was with Jewish girls together, and that made me feel, I couldn't believe it was possible, after, and I didn't have to worry about Shabbos or about Yom Tov or about anything like that, that was very good. I used to go home quite a lot, before Pesach I used

to go home earlier than other girls because my mother needed my help. She was very machpid... her making Pesach, I don't know if there is any other person who makes Pesach. We were so afraid of chometz, not that she was so crazy when it came to spring

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cleaning, she was just frightened of chas v shalom of having chometz in the house, so we used to work a lot before Pesach.

RL: On what kind of things?

RR: Oh she used to, I can't tell you, the pockets were cleaned twice, not once, clean the pockets, we cleaned them and then we rechecked, every pocket had to be rechecked, because she was always frightened that *maybe* there was chometz stuff left. The floor was, we didn't have carpets, we had parquet, between the floor boards with a knitting needle and then hovering and cleaning it, it was just, she was very, very machpid, she never trusted herself, she didn't think she was doing well enough, because she was such a moired of an aveiroh, she really had all her life.

RL: When you went to Gateshead how many girls were in the sem at that time?

RR: Fifty, fifty girls, some of them are still here, Rosita Roberts, I don't know if you know her, Rita Mendelsohn, she was my T1, and Ettie Adler was in the same class as me, Ruth Hoff. They came from different backgrounds, I was again different, but I was very friendly with, I was friendly with everybody, because the Sefardishe girls I could speak French with, they were very special, the French girls I was good with because after all I did speak French. There was Hungarians, Hungarian girls I was good with because I only spoke Hungarian at home, the English girls, I wasn't so close, but, slowly, it was wonderful.

RL: And what did you think of England?

RR: It was a dismal place. Not like England now, it was a different place, dirty and ... but I was in Gateshead, I was amazed that one could go in a shop and one could buy a cake, I couldn't believe it, in those days we didn't have Rottenbergs there, we didn't have a kosher bakery or anything, it was like a dream, kosher chocolates, it was like Gan Eden.

RL: Which shop was there?

RR: Steinhaus. And for two old pennies we could buy a big bun with tons of margy cream in, obviously we indulged in it, I went up two sizes, but ... but it was wonderful, a wonderful life, carefree, really carefree life. And we learned a lot, obviously, we were together with frum girls and girls who wanted to become frum, and it was tremendous. And I came back after three years, not fully three years because, when I was needed home, when my mother needed me I went home, so I was home a bit longer time, but we didn't go home for Chanukah, because it was too expensive, the journeys were too

expensive. I never flew, my mother was petrified of flying, it was always by boat, so Chanukah we didn't go home, we went home for Pesach and then at the end of the year.

RL: Where did you actually live in Gateshead?

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RR: In sem.

RL: In the sem ...

RR: In sem, yes, on Bewick Road and was it Ash, where was it already, Gladstone Terrace, that first time. They were little houses, Gateshead sem is made up, now as well, but now it is small houses all on Bewick Road. My time it was Gladstone Terrace and Oxford Terrace, I lived on Gladstone Terrace at first and that was ...

RL: Who were the teachers?

RR: Same nearly as today Rabbi Miller, the father of Rav Miller and Mr Cohen, who was very special, I liked him very much, Rabbi Sternbuch , Rabbi Schwartz, Rabbi Schwab, Mrs Sinason taught me as well. Mrs Kaufman taught me as well. They had a hard time, because they couldn't understand that I know nothing, I didn't know, I didn't know Boruch Ata, slowly, I learned it. Boruch Hashem they were very good. That time my mother had it a little bit harder because she had to cope alone with the children.

RL: Did you get homesick?

RR: Very, at first I wanted to go home. The first time I came I just wanted to go home. My mother kept saying just another week, another two weeks. We didn't speak on the phone, we only wrote letters, another week, another two weeks, try, try a bit, and in the end I didn't want to leave I liked it so much, but at first it was terrible, I was terribly homesick, it was a different life.

RL: What struck you as being very different? What stood out ... ?

RR: Well first there was much more normality there. My life at home was, still being a refugee, still difficulties here and difficulties there, and there I met people who just had, in Gateshead, who lived there, who had been there for generations, you know it is, it is a refreshing thing, most of the people I knew were refugees, all running, all trying to find parnosa, all, there there was a normal life, how very different. The yiddishkeit was much more, in Paris where I came from was pretty weak in yiddishkeit. They were all frum girls who were together and it was marvellous.

RL: So you say, were there times when the sem broke up and you were left?

RR: Quite a few girls were left, so we went to private houses and the sem paid for them, because the Joint did pay for me, a bit, because we couldn't afford the whole fee, so the Joint paid some of my fees, so they paid as well to stay with a family, we used to teach. We'd go to South Shields to teach, in cheder. We didn't mind it, everybody did it, the things that everybody did you didn't mind, the things that you do something that

Tape 3: 23 minutes 50 seconds

that makes you different, that is when you do mind, no I didn't mind it, it was very good.

RL: Did you come across any anti-Semitism there?

RR: Not that I remember, I didn't look for it, we didn't look for getting it, we got enough without looking for it. England in those days wasn't so anti-Semitic, no, I liked England, mainly because alright the town wasn't pretty, Paris was prettier, but I kept saying "What have I got from Paris?" It is pretty but I don't spend my days in the Eiffel Tower, or on the Champs Elysees. Certainly, four of us, how many, yes four of us live in England, two of them in England and two of us here, so we must have liked England and England must have liked us, I hope.

RL: Your time in Gateshead. Was it mainly spent in the sem?

RR: Well, no, not only in the sem. We went a bit to families helping, that was very hard. The kollel people in those days struggled very badly, it wasn't like, standards were different, that I found hard, you know, I couldn't believe it, it was hard, I admired the ladies who married kollel men, I was always wondering could I live, and then I decided no I couldn't because really we had very little financial help. You had to do with very little, you could only do, you had little, not like now. I don't know how it is nowadays for kollel women but I don't think to that extent, you know that for a cake you just put more water, more flour to make a cake, because you couldn't afford more eggs, yes, it was very hard, they were happy but that part. What else was there in Gateshead, no, it was yekkish, yes, it was very yekkish, but everything was a novelty for me so I didn't mind novelties.

RL: And then?

RR: I wasn't there to criticise them ...

RL: And after three years you say you went home ...

RR: I went home and then I taught at home, I taught in different schools, and then my mother had to go away for six weeks to Eretz Yisroel for shidduchim for my brother, not like nowadays like a shadchan, it was a different world, and I looked after my brother and sisters when she wasn't there. I had friends, from sem, and I had as well a girl, when I went to sem, when I went to the goyishke school in Paris, in one of the schools, there was a girl, I never knew she was Jewish, she knew I was Jewish I was wearing stockings and I looked Jewish. I never knew. She was in school, and when I went to sem I got the shock of my life, she opened the door to me, I never knew she was Jewish, she was Sluki,

Sluki's sister she was Suzette Harosh and we became very friendly together, so later on, when she came to Paris, her father was a war victim and didn't keep very much so when she needed to eat she used to come to us, and I had quite a few girls like this who the parents were not so frum, but for some reason they came to us, my mother welcomed

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everybody, they all have very good memories of my parents, and were nice to them, she was always welcoming everybody, not fancy, but was full of heart.

RL: Which schools did you teach in in Paris?

RR: I taught in, in which school, first in Secretan, I taught there most of the time.

RL: From what age was that?

RR: Firstly, I taught only girls, seven and eight year olds, and then I got married ... after three years...

RL: Was that a full time job?

RR: A few hours a day, and the rest of the time I helped my mother. There was always something to do, always some, I was never bored, to be bored didn't exist.

RL: If you wanted to enjoy yourself, what did you do?

RR: Then we went to friends, we went to friends, we went out together, in those days we went to pictures, thinking back it wasn't brilliant, but we did go, and we used to come together, we used to come together on Shabbos, we had to walk for an hour and a half sometimes to go to a friend and to get all altogether but it didn't matter. So what we walked, we picked each other up on the way, and we were together and that kept us going, that was our recreation and somebody said something about the sedra and we sang together and that was our break. During the week we didn't see each other much, everybody was busy, I was teaching, busy with home, and since my home was such a busy home it kept me busy as well.

RL: And then how did you meet your husband?

RR: Again, Dayan Weiss and Yankel Schreiber, they shadchanned it. You see, the Aybishter has got tremendous, Hakodosh Boruch Hu, has got a tremendous thing. How from being together in the bunker and being very good together afterwards, they brought us together, because Yankel Shreiber knew about my husband somewhere or other and he passed it over to Dayan Weiss and he suggested that I should meet Akiva Reich, and afterwards it all came about, it was a tremendous thing.

RL: Did he come to Paris to see you?

RR: First we met in London, because my brother lived in London already, and then we met a few times in London and then he came to Paris with his parents. It was so funny when they came. They had no idea what a flat is, they had no idea that, they said "How many bedrooms have you got?" And my mother said "Four".

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"And how many rooms have you got?"

And my mother said "Four".

They couldn't understand, and we didn't even try to explain, we just had a good laugh. They couldn't understand. There is four bedrooms and four rooms and it is all the same four. That was a different, a completely different way of thinking, Boruch Hashem.

RL: And what is your husband's background?

RR: My husband's background, he comes, his father came from Brod, and they came when he was about eleven or twelve or something like that, a Chassidish background, his grandfather and his great grandfather came from Brod to live here, because most probably the poverty was quite strong there, and his mother comes from Gateshead, she was the daughter of Lazer Adler, who actually did found Gateshead. He was one of the founders of Gateshead, and they got married, I don't know how that shidduch came about. My father in law was in Yeshiva in Manchester, and in those days there were a lot of people who were not quite Yeshiva type, a lot of people were a bit different, but he was frum and always frum and always kept to his yiddishkeit and he had wonderful children and grandchildren.

RL: What was his name?

RR: Hershel Reich, he worked a lot for Machzikei Hadass, he was one of the founders and a staunch supporter and fighter for it.

RL: And he was ...

RR: They were very nice to me, I must say when I came here, my mother in law, and my father in law was absolutely wonderful to me, I was very fond, I loved her, I must say I loved my mother first but she was next, she was so good to me, very, very good.

RL: And your husband's name?

RR: Akiva, Akiva Reich ...

RL: How many children did they have?

RR: They had seven, five boys and two girls, and he was the youngest boy of the family.

RL: And what did his father do?

RR: His father was in textiles, in those days most people were in textiles, after that they brought property, but most people were in textiles.

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RL: And your husband?

RR: Property, well he did it when, we were not newcomers to property, when we were first married he was doing management that is what he did straight away. When we got married he worked straight away. He worked; he was in property straight away ...

RL: Where did you marry?

RR: In London because in Paris in those days we had no hashgocha, no hall, everything was complicated so we got married in Stoke Newington Town Hall.

RL: And who married you?

RR: I don't, I think Dayan Weiss, he was at the chasana, yes, of course he came to the chasana with his second Rebbetzen.

When I came here to live in Manchester he was so good to me, he cared for me like a daughter, excellent, and Yankel Shreiber's daughter, he had a daughter in London called Fradel Berger, she is not alive any more, she was very good to me, when I had Chanukah holidays, once I stayed here, and once I went to London. She always welcomed me like I was a member of the family and until now her children treat me the same. So, it is nice they have got tremendous appreciation to my parents, tremendous. Appreciation can carry on if you carry on liking each other and loving each other and they did carry on, always the friendship carried on. I got married in London and I went out from their house, from Yankel Shreiber's house in Moseley Road and Fradel Berger made me the whole Shabbos sheva brachos in her house. The friendship and the knot is very strong.

RL: And where did you come to live in Manchester?

RR: In Manchester.

RL: Whereabouts did you come?

RR: First I lived in Bury New Road, 568 Bury New Road, next to Tabs, I lived there first and then Tabs moved there, I shadchaned the house for Tabs and then later on to 41 Old Hall Road.

RL: And what did you think of Manchester?

RR: You know what? I was happy here, straightaway, I really, alright there were some things that were English, fashion wise, daft things like that, dress wise, oh the French were more. Nowadays there is no different, but in those days there was a big difference, but otherwise I thought people were very nice. I liked it, it has changed a lot, but I

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Always found people were nice to me. I have just got very pleasant memories. I was always happy to live in a place where I could have a Sukkah, for us Sukkos in Paris was a hassle, the Sukkah was in Shul. We had to carry the food there to my father and my brothers and if we had visitors we had to carry there. Sukkos for us as ladies was very hard, we never had like a, a proper Yom Tov table together because my father shlepped the food to the Sukkah. Here I had a Sukkah, I really liked it, I still do.

RL: Did you know anybody here when you first came?

RR: I met maybe Sybil Konig, I knew her, from sem, and Rosita, Rita Mendelson and Rosita Roberts, I knew her. But, we were different, from different Shuls, I was friendly with some and I got friendly with others, mainly with older people, because my generation, I still think, my generation, here in England maybe some survived, but Manchester also had a lot of refugees, but a lot of my generation did not survive. There is not many people born in 1939 who survived, because it was terrible, in those days, nebach, in those days most people went to Auschwitz from 36 onwards, born in 41, 42, there is a big gap. There weren't many of my age group, mainly older, and I got friendly more with the older generation.

RL: Which Shul did you belong to?

RR: Here, we always belonged to Machzikei Hadass, we always belong there Boruch Hashem.

RL: And what did you do when you arrived here? What did you do during the day?

RR: I don't know. At first I taught, and then I became pregnant, and I wasn't feeling well so I gave up.

RL: Where were you teaching?

RR: It was Broughton Primary, and then I stopped completely, and then I was busy, I was a lot involved with my parents in law, with my mother in law. I lived in Bury New Road, and she lived first in Bury New Road and then in Deanery Gardens with her, I went every day to see her, and sometimes when they were babies I went twice a day, I didn't do so much work in those days. I was busy just going there and seeing to the children, Boruch Hashem, one came after the other, so, Boruch Hashem.

RL: How many children did you have? Do you have?

RR: Kneine Hora, nine. Boruch Hashem.

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RL: And what schools did they go to?

RR: The first three went to Jewish Day, and the next lot went to the boys number 11, and the girls to Bnos.

RL: Why did you decide to change?

RR: Because, why, first when my first lot were born there was nothing else for the girls, and it was mixed. It was a bit of everything there, and a bit of different type of people, and in the beginning, as long as everybody else in the community sent to the same school it didn't matter, but when the others started taking out, the more heimishe started sending elsewhere, then it was better that mine went as well. But in the beginning everybody mixed with everybody, it was different, but as the town grew more schools opened up.

RL: And then, what about high school?

RR: High school the same thing, my three went, my oldest boy went to Jewish Grammar, my two girls went to Jewish High, and the two younger girls went to Bnos, and the boys went to Mechina. From number 11 to Mechina.

RL: Did they belong to any clubs or anything?

RR: Yes, they belonged to Pirchim Aguda, the boys, and the girls as well, the girls to Bnos Aguda.

RL: Where did Pirchim meet?

RR: They used to meet in Northumberland Street, number 17. 17 or ... 35 Northumberland Street.

RL: And Bnos Aguda?

RR: Bnos Aguda in Upper Park Road, it is still there.

RL: And when they left school what did they go on to do?

RR: Well, the girls went to sem, they all went to Gateshead sem. And the boys went to various yeshivas. Some went to Gateshead, first they all started in Manchester Yeshiva, not all, four of them, in Manchester Yeshiva. We were very close, my husband was very close with the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Segal. After that they went, some went to Gateshead, some to Lucerne, then to Mir, Beer Yaakov, Slobodka, different yeshivas.

RL: And what have they gone on to do from there?

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RR: From there, oh, most of them are in business, some in property, some in finance, some in teaching, one is in teaching.

RL: Whereabouts do they live?

RR: Four live in Manchester, three boys and a girl. A boy and a girl live in London, a girl lives in Antwerp and a girl and a boy live in Eretz Yisroel. Boruch Hashem.

RL: And your brothers and sisters, what happened with them?

RR: They, my oldest brother, he was married before me, he was in London. And my brother, next one, got married to somebody Taub from Antwerp, they settled in Manchester as well. The fact that we lived here, they came as well. They are very active in the community with Satmar, the Satmar Chassidim, they are very active, and my sister, my young one, married my husband's nephew, she is called Reich as well, she lives in London. She is Chassidish, she is Klausenberg and my younger sister she married Weiss, the one my father worked together, his younger son, and he is a Dayan in Bnei Brak, and he is with Rav Wosner's Kehillah. I don't know if you have heard of Rav Wosner he works for his kehillah.

RL: So they all left Paris?

RR: Everybody left Paris, and nobody is sorry. My parents stayed on for quite a while after we all left, because they felt they belonged, they belonged, it is very difficult to cut your roots, but as long as my mother and my father were still in the business, they were trying to wind up the business, and he just sold the business, just a few days before he had a bad stroke. Until then they were busy with people, they carried on life, the same as before. But after the stroke we brought them here and they lived across the road from me, and that was marvellous, because I could go in a few times a day, when I had little children. I didn't have babies any more, my sisters had babies, and they liked Manchester, they always said Manchester people were wonderful.

RL: When did they come over to Manchester?

RR: They came over, how many years ago, it's now 22 or 23 years ago ...

RL: In the '80s, maybe 1982 ...

RR: I don't really know ... yes 23 years ago they came to Manchester. My father was very happy here, since he had the stroke he wasn't able any more to walk as before. People were very kind to him in Shul, and a taxi used to take him, and they used to help him put his tefillin on. He used to come back, somebody used to, Mr Joseph used to come

and learn with him. He was still active, his brain worked, well not like before, but ... and my mother, she was never a complainer, she was happy to have my father to look after

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him and never, never did I hear her say a word of complaint, that she was tired or, never, she always said that she should always have the seichel to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu. She was, she always said that, every day, we should always have the seichel, the brain or whatever to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for every minute, and that was what she was busy doing for everything.

RL: And when did they pass away?

RR: My father passed away nearly 19 years ago and my mother nearly 12 years ago.

RL: And were they both in Manchester?

RR: My mother went, my father was in Bnei Brak, and I brought him back because they said he was not well, he has got cancer, and we thought the treatment was better here, so we brought him back, and, he was nifta the next day, we brought him back, not from the, I don't know what. Hakodush Boruch Hu, at least he wasn't lying in bed ill, he wasn't well ... but.

My mother went to a holiday to Bnei Brak, it was winter and the weather is better there and she was at my sisters and she was well, reasonably well as she was, she had been well, she had seichel and she walked, she went for Megillas Esther to Shul, and she came back and she said "I am not feeling well", and she went into the bathroom and they found her, she fainted there, and she was nifta the next day, that was Purim. Boruch Hashem she didn't suffer, she was an able, with it lady, by her seichel, by her everything to the end. So I think that is a special gift that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave her.

RL: And in Manchester, have you been involved in the community in any way?

RR: I am involved in the community. I didn't do it when I had little children so much, but now much more, I am working together with three wonderful ladies, in the Kallah dress gemach, and I work together with Mr Gross in the MCT which is a charitable trust and we help people in need without them knowing it, and I am preparing receptions which I am enjoying very much as well, for weddings, and anybody can ask us and we are just happy to help and to do. I am not the main worker there, but I am happy to help.

RL: So that is like a wedding reception gemach?

RR: That is right, that is right ...

RL: And have you, I suppose when you married your husband you must have become a British citizen. Is that correct?

RR: Yes, it was very good feeling, because still then I still had this, what is it called, when you don't belong to anything, what is it called, I still have the card, it is an awful

Tape 3: 47 minutes 30 seconds

thing, you don't belong to any country, you are stateless, to be stateless is pretty awful, wherever you wanted to travel, wherever you wanted to go, you had to go to the embassy, get a VISA, you don't belong, nobody wants you. We didn't want to become French, because otherwise my brothers would have had to go into the army, and obviously my parents didn't want that. So I was stateless until I got married, and then I became British. It was a new world, some country wants me. It was a very good feeling.

RL: How do you feel towards Britain?

RR: So far I have only had good experience, so I feel very good towards it. I didn't feel anti-Semitism or anything against me like I did in other countries. What's now changed, I don't have so much to do with the outside world. And, I think Britain, the British have been very kind to us.

RL: In terms of identity, how do you classify yourself?

RR: That is a very good question, I don't really know. I belong a bit everywhere I think. I don't feel so out anywhere and I don't feel so in anywhere? I am not British, I am British, but I imagine I belong more here than anywhere else but when I go and travel somewhere and I meet people from different parts I can join in with them and I can connect with them, the fact that I have been in a few different places in my life.

RL: And how do you feel towards Israel?

RR: I love going there, it is fantastic. I prefer to be in Bnei Brak and Yerushalayim than be anywhere else, because then I can, I feel, I love Bnei Brak, my family laugh at me. I like everything is Jewish, everything is heimish, oh it is a wonderful feeling. Not only the shops, you go in the streets and find outer Yidden, you are all Yidden, and in Yerushalayim in some parts as well, yes I do like that. The other parts I get a bit upset, I just pretend it doesn't exist. I just pretend, I don't know, I don't go there, besides from when I come to the airport when each time I come to the airport I feel that, well they are not really Jewish, I rather think that, because otherwise it is painful.

RL: When was your first visit to Israel?

RR: When I was 19. My brother got married in Israel that was the first time I went, I went by boat, my mother was frightened to fly. That was in 1959, a few years ago ...

RL: And how did you feel going there for the first time?

RR: It was a tremendous feeling. To arrive by boat, at Haifa, this is Eretz Yisroel the land, we kissed the floor when we arrived, the ground, it was just tremendously elating. I

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found the old fashioned airport was much better than now, because you could, you found the land straight away as well, now you go through corridors and it has lost this part.

RL: Did you ever think of living there?

RR: No, I don't, I don't, I find the people who live there, I like to live where I belong in a way, if I wouldn't have children here, I most probably would have gone to where I have children, but since I have got children living here, then I feel I belong here, I am involved with the community and I know, I would go there, and I would be my children's mother, it is very nice, but I just like to be my own identity as well. A lot of people do it, everybody is an individual.

RL: How do you feel towards Germany?

RR: I will tell you something, first you feel tremendous hatred to them, because they really made us suffer, but I came to the conclusion that there are many others who did the same, they were not the only ones. Those who knew about us and didn't help us, and plenty other countries, so when you know a bit more, what's happened, then you think, they are bad, but the others are not much better, I don't know what everybody else feels these days. I buy German things, I don't care, because I think, they are just, if I buy from the other one, what is better. People thought at one time if they buy German things it is terrible, I just don't think they are any worse, the people who didn't stop them were just as bad ... all right they were the ones with the idea, but stopping them as well. That is very personal, and everybody has their own ...

RL: And, you have returned to your home town?

RR: Yes, I went back six, seven years ago, I went back.

RL: What made you go back?

RR: Because, I wanted to go, I will tell you the truth, my mother never went to the kever of her mother, first there was communism, and with communism they didn't dare go in. Some people were daring, but some people could have been kept, my father was on that list and she never went back. And later on when she could have gone back, then my father took ill, so she, and then she was too old and too nervous to go, and we always wanted to go to the kever of my grandparents. We haven't got from my father's side because they were niftar in Auschwitz, from my mother's side we had, and we wanted to go, and so that is where we went and going there already we went to Grosswardein as well, to where we lived. It was traumatic, it was something, but everything was there and at the end of the day what counts is the people. The Shul is there, the mikveh is there, the Vizhnitzer hoif is there, where the Vizhnitzer Rav was, which had a tremendous impact on our lives, but the people are not there, so this all reminds you about things, it really

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shakes you that the people were not there, it is a horrible feeling. To go to the kever of my grandparents was, I was very happy to do it, I would love to go back again, but not on my own.

RL: Who went back?

RR: Four of us and my husband? Two brothers and two sisters, my sister Marisa couldn't do it, and my husband went back, it is a different world, but they still hate us just as before, because when they opened, my brother, when they opened, we went into our block of flats, into a courtyard, and there was a balcony there, and somebody shouted down "What are you looking for?" And my brother said "Those who we are looking for, you have killed them. And they closed the door." It hasn't changed really ...

RL: Did you actually go into your old flat?

RR: Yes, we did. Nothing has changed. The colour of the walls is the same.

RL: How were you received by the people there?

RR: They all tried to say that they bought it. When we went to my grandparents house, "yes we bought it". They all tried to tell me that they bought everything, and that they have got papers to show. Otherwise we could claim it, we didn't claim, we didn't bother to claiming, but we could have claimed it, but they said "We bought it, we paid for it." We never asked we just said, "Can we look inside the house? Just for memories sake."

RL: Were there any Jews?

RR: Very few. Just now my granddaughter has been back, she just came back today, she went to Margareten with her father, a little bit near Grosswardein, she said it is less and less. There was hardly anybody in Shul, what would keep them there, some old people ... there are no young people left. The communists killed what was left of yiddishkeit.

RL: How long were you there for?

RR: I was there for two or three days, I travelled all the time. We took a driver and we travelled all the way.

RL: Did you revisit the factory?

RR: It was demolished. There was a block of flats there, we wanted very much to go but it was demolished. That I could have claimed was ours but there was nothing left to claim.

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RL: Did you receive any compensation?

RR: Nothing. Nothing.

RL: And do you feel that you have been affected in any way psychologically by your experiences?

RR: I don't feel, no, no I don't think so, I think I have grown from it. I don't think advise this from anybody, I just see things differently from other people do. I just see, I always tell my husband, "you suffered from the war, you had dried eggs or heard the bombs coming", we had things differently, I just find I just see things, yes ... I am more scared, yes I much more scared, I worry about things, I worry about the war, yes but not otherwise, I think otherwise I just see things differently, further, differently.

RL: Is there anything we have not touched upon?

RR: I think you have asked about everything.

RL: Is there any sort of message that you would like to end with?

RR: That is what my mother always said, we should be thankful for every minute, to have the brain, I don't know how, the seichel, you say it in English exactly, that we should have the brain sounds a bit peculiar, but we should have the knowledge to be thankful for Hakodosh Boruch Hu for every minute.

RL: I haven't asked about your grandchildren, so I think maybe we will just stop here and start a new film.

TAPE 4

RL: This is the interview with Rivka Reich and it is tape 4.

So you were just saying that you had so much pride.

RR: Yes, my father put a lot of pride into us, it is never too late, you haven't got money, nobody has got to do with it. You are not, such a thing as Rachmones didn't come into the vocabulary, the other people, a lot of rachmonus people came to us. And he would say "oh this is a rachmones, he is such a rachmones this one and that one who suffered from the war, were really affected by it, but we, we had everything. Even so I had one dress which I wore for Shabbos, I had one skirt that I wore for six years, we put such a big hem, we let it down all the time. It was perfect. I went to school in the clothes I wore, and my overall, everybody wore overalls in Paris. It was tattered, I was always

was nervous that there should come a medical, but we always knew it beforehand, then I put on my Shabbos clothes, but no pride was important, and I still think it is important, it
Tape 4: 1 minute 6 seconds

is very good way of bringing up. We never thought ... we thought we had everything; we most probably had, because we thought so ...

RL: And coming on to your grandchildren. Where are they and what are they doing?

RR: Oh, they are gorgeous. I have got some living here, and my daughter's first daughter, my first granddaughter got engaged and the chasana is here, after Shevuos. They come and go in my house as you can see. And my son lives a bit lower down. They come in and out. I have got another son as well. Close, but I don't live in their, I am not in their life all the time. I am here for them, we talk, but I have got my own life too. I find this is much better for them.

RL: Are you children all married?

RR: All my children, Boruch Hashem are married, and they all have, Boruch Hashem, children. It is a big brocha.

RL: How did they meet their prospective partners?

RR: All by shidduchim, but mainly they met people who I knew beforehand. Who had some connection beforehand, which makes things much easier. Quite a few machatonim, two pairs are related to each other, and one shadchanned the other, and some I knew beforehand, it makes it much easier, none are strangers, most of them I knew from before, we are more relaxed about it. Yes. Mainly, English shidduchim I made two, two in London, and one in Israel, and one in Antwerp, two from Antwerp. Two from Switzerland, where are the others from, two in Antwerp, two English, one from Germany, they are living there in Germany, very frum, Chassidish. And one from Israel, which we knew as well beforehand, so Boruch Hashem.

RL: Do you know how many grandchildren you have?

RR: I prefer not to count ...

RL: No...

RR: They should be all well, that is what is most important.

RL: Well ok, thank you very much.

RR: Thank you very much. Thank you Ros, thank you very much for your time.

PHOTOGRAPHS

This is a picture taken of my older brother and me in Grosswardein in 1942.

RL: Can I have the names?

Tape 4: 3 minutes 56 seconds

RR: Yes, the older one, my brother is Yona, and myself is Rivka Rothbart.

This is my mother Tzivia Wittenberg, taken in San Niklaus in 1929.

This is a photo taken in Prague in 1948, a whole group of refugees who were there, and we came to a chuppah from a couple who both lost, one the wife and one the husband. I am the first on the right, that little girl, it's me, and the fourth person is my mother with the turban on her head.

This is myself, in 1999 we went back to Grosswardein and I am standing in front of our house, 21 Zolfa Utca, Rivka Reich.

This is a picture taken again in 1999 when we all went back to San Niklaus to the kevorim from my grandparents, and in the maroon, the first one is myself, Rivka Reich, and my sister Hannah Reich, my older brother, Yona Rothbart, and my younger brother, Shalom Boruch Rothbart in San Niklaus.

This is a picture taken in 1990 in our garden with my mother sitting with us. My husband, Akiva Reich, Rivka Reich and my mother, Tzivia Rothbart.

RL: And the town?

RR: Manchester.

This is my father after, Zoltan Rothbart, after his stroke, at my daughter's wedding, sitting next to the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Segal, in 1982.

This is a photo taken in 1999, in Grosswardein in the Shul where my father and my grandfather Rothbart used to daven.

This is a photo taken in 1974 approximately, for the sheva brochas for my sister, Tzirel sitting in the middle in green, the first one on the right is Ava Weiss, our shitta's daughter, Mrs Weiss who then became my sister's mother in law and next to my sister is my mother, Tzivia Rothbart.

RL: And it was taken?

RR: It was taken in Lugano.

This is a photo taken in Bnei Brak in 2003 at the Bar Mitzvah of our grandson, Elchonon Blau. It is my husband Akiva Reich with myself Rivka Reich.

This is a photo taken in 19, in 1995 in Antwerp at my son's, Boruch Reich's wedding, my children, my son in laws, my daughter in laws and some of my grandchildren, with my husband and me, Akiva Reich and Rivka Reich.