

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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| Collection title: | AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive |
| Ref. no: | 24 |

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| Interviewee Surname: | Bodganow |
| Forename: | Fanni |
| Interviewee Sex: | Female |
| Interviewee DOB: | 20 July 1927 |
| Interviewee POB: | Düsseldorf, Germany |

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| Date of Interview: | 26 June 2003 |
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| Name of Interviewer: | Rosalyn Livshin |
| Total Duration (HH:MM): | 3 hours |

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

INTERVIEW: 24

NAME: FANNI BOGDANOW

DATE: 26 JUNE 2003

LOCATION: CHESHIRE

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: Can you tell me first your name?

FB: Yes, it's Fanni Bogdanow.

RL: And do you have any other names?

FB: No other names. No.

RL: Did you have a Hebrew name?

FB: No. No.

RL: And where were you born?

FB: In Düsseldorf. In the Rhineland, in Germany.

RL: And when were you born?

FB: On 20 July, 1927.

RL: And what does that make you now?

FB: I am 75 and 11 months. Or, to be more exact, 75, 11 months, and one week.
(Laughs)

RL: And your parents, what were their names and where were they born?

FB: My father was born in Smolevich, near Minsk, in Russia. And he left Russia at the age of 13 – I'm sorry – at the age of 18 in 1903 to escape from the then pogroms against the Jewish people in Russia. And he went from the frying pan into the fire. He went to Germany not foreseeing the fate, that 30 years later, with the advent of Hitler,

would befall the Jewish people first in Germany and then in the whole of occupied Europe.

RL: What was his name?

Tape 1: 2 minutes 18 seconds

FB: Brasha. Brasha Bogdanow.

RL: And can you tell me something about his family background?

FB: Yes. My father had the one sister and three brothers. The one sister he had, she came to join him in Düsseldorf after he'd gone there, but the others remained in Russia. And the brothers and sisters who stayed in Russia and lived this side of Leningrad, they were all exterminated by the Nazis when they invaded Russia. Every one of them was exterminated by the Russians.

RL: Do you know what his parents did for a living?

FB: My father's father died when my father was quite young. I'm not sure what he did.

RL: How did his mother manage? Do you have any idea? Did he ever talk about his background?

FB: Not really because he left Russia when he was 18.

RL: Did he tell you any stories about life in Russia?

FB: The only thing that I remember him telling me was that in order to go to work he had to walk through a forest for at least an hour every morning. But that's all that I can remember that he told me.

RL: What was his work?

FB: An engineer. A machine engineer.

Tape 1: 4 minutes 12 seconds

RL: And that was in Russia?

FB: Yes, and that's what he then did when he came to Germany.

RL: Do you know anything about his education?

FB: Well whatever the education was then, when they left school. I don't know, presumably the same age as in... I don't know, 14, I presume. Certainly there wasn't any secondary education.

RL: Do you know what his brothers did at all? Or anything about them?

FB: His sister, the one who joined him, she was a dress maker. But that's all I know. I don't know about the others.

Tape 1: 4 minutes 45 seconds

RL: Did you ever meet any other members of the family?

FB: Yes, my father's sister. Because what happened was my father's sister and my mother's brother, and my mother, they...on one occasion it so happened that the brother and sister, and brother and sister went on holiday together in the same place in Germany. And the two brothers decided to marry the two sisters! (Laughs) So they were married in 1924.

RL: What, at the same time?

FB: Yes. Yes.

RL: Tell me a little bit about your mother.

FB: Yes, my mother was born in Affaltrach near Heilbronn. And she had 3 brothers. One was called Samuel. He had one son called Erich. The other brother was called Ernst. That's the one who married my father's sister. And then she had another brother. He emigrated to somewhere, but they never found out where he went to. Now the brother Samuel, who had one son Erich, his son Erich - on the 9th November 1938 he was taken to Buchenwald. And within a month those German devils had exterminated him by throwing him from the top of a stone quarry to the bottom. His father and mother, they'd gone to France earlier on, and when the Germans occupied France, they went into hiding. And the aunt kept telling her husband, Samuel, not to go out in daylight. But, the aunt told us, that one day he did go out in daylight. He was denounced and deported, to where, she never knew, because he never came back alive. Somebody, in France, denounced him and he was deported. My mother, she...her father died when she was a little child of 3 or 4, and she was taken to an orphanage in Germany. And, because my mother had a beautiful voice, she told me that whenever a Jewish person died she had to sing at the grave.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 15 seconds

RL: What was her name?

FB: Her name was Johanna Selz - her maiden name, because Selz was the name of her father.

RL: Do you know about her father, what her father did for a living?

FB: Well he died so very young, I don't know what he did. No.

RL: What happened to her mother?

FB: Well her mother. She...I still remember her mother very well. Because...My parents lived at that time in Düsseldorf, and my mother's mother and her brother Ernst and his wife... and my cousin they lived in Affaltrach near Heilbronn. And I remember to this day my grandmother's words when we went to visit them, said 'If Hitler comes to power things will be very bad for the Jewish people' It so happened she died in 1933, before she could be taken off to a gas chamber. But she foresaw what was going to happen to the Jewish people, if Hitler came into power.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 39 seconds

RL: And did she remarry at all after she lost her husband?

FB: No, no, she remained a widow. She remained a widow.

RL: Were all the children put into an orphanage?

FB: No, just my mother, because she was the only girl. They boys were kept at home.

RL: Do you know what kind of education your mother had?

FB: Well whatever education they had in a Jewish orphanage. I don't know...

RL: And did she work?

FB: Oh yes, oh yes. She started work when she was 14 as an accountant in a firm in Heilbronn, and she worked there until she married my father.

RL: Do you know what kind of religious upbringing your parents had?

FB: Well they were both Jewish of course.

RL: And what sort of level of observance?

FB: Oh I wouldn't know.

RL: Do you know if they belonged to a synagogue, or...?

FB: Well there was a synagogue in Affaltrach, of course. And that's the only synagogue there was in Affaltrach. And that's where the Jewish people went to.

RL: And was that an orthodox, or a liberal?

FB: They didn't have such a distinction in those days.

RL: Right. And your father?

Tape 1: 11 minutes 15 seconds

FB: My father? He was Jewish but that's all I know.

RL: Do you know what happened to your father during the first world war?

FB: Yes during the First World War he was working in a factory, and my father and my mother's brother Ernest. That's the irony of it all; he was in the German Army, he won what was called The Iron Cross, in other words he distinguished himself. But that did not prevent him from being exterminated by the Nazis in 1941. It made no difference.

Tape 1: 11 minutes 55 seconds

RL: Can you tell me again how your parents met?

FB: Yes. It was quite by chance that my father and his sister – she was called Zilli – she and my father went on holiday to the same place in the Black Forest, in Württemberg and it so happened that my mother's brother Ernest Selz, and my mother went on holiday in exactly the same place! That's how the two lots of brothers and sisters met. And somehow the two brothers decided they'd marry the two sisters.

RL: Where did they marry?

FB: In Affaltrach, in the synagogue there.

RL: And what date was that?

FB: 1924 they married.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

FB: My earliest memories as a child, they go back to... I was born in 1927. I started school... In those days in Germany school children started school when they were 6, not as it is now, when they are 5. In those days it was at 6. I went to the school in... By that time, my parents had moved from Düsseldorf to Erkelenz. That was 1933. And already then, my memories are of morning assembly in the school with anti-Semitic songs. So from the age of 5 and 6 I was aware of the growing anti-Semitism in Germany. And it was drilled into the school children from their first day at school by having anti-Semitic songs every morning at morning assembly. And the teachers of course, instead of refusing, they joined in! If the teachers there had had any sense of decency they would not have made the children sing these anti-Semitic songs. That's my first memory, my most vivid memory, of the anti-Semitic songs that the children had to sing in morning assembly. I of course stood still and refused to say a word. I did not open my mouth, needless to say.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 46 seconds

RL: How did the children treat you on a personal level?

FB: Well when they realised I was Jewish, they shouted after me, 'Jew! Jew! Jew!' and started throwing stones after me. You see, anti-Semitism was drilled into the children at school! So they did what their teachers told them. And all their history

lessons were distorted. The Jewish people were presented in their history lessons as the enemy of the Reich! So it was drilled into the children!

RL: Did you have any friends?

FB: No. No...no.

RL: Were there other Jewish children in the school?

FB: No. Not in that school in Erkelenz. No, I was the only Jewish child.

RL: How did you manage?

FB: I took no notice. I just went on with my schoolwork and that was it. I couldn't hit back!

Tape 1: 16 minutes 0 second

RL: Did they physically harm you?

FB: No, they didn't touch me physically. But it was verbal abuse. Shouting after you, 'Jew, Jew, Jew!'

RL: How were the teachers towards you?

FB: Well, they didn't do anything to me.

RL: Did they treat you fairly in class?

FB: I have no idea. I've no idea.

RL: How long did you have to suffer?

FB: Well, my parents then moved from Erkelenz to Affaltrach in 1937. And, as you know of the 9th November 1938, well the day after 9th November 1938, all Jewish children were expelled from the German state schools. And I still remember, I was walking through the village and the school inspector said, 'Why aren't you at school?' and I said, 'I'm Jewish, and I've been expelled.' And he did not reply a single word! I still remember that. [Laughs]

RL: How did you get on in the new school when your parents moved?

FB: In Affaltrach?

RL: Yes.

FB: Well that was the same. All the history lessons were distorted. Every morning assembly began with anti-Semitic songs. It was exactly the same as in Erkelenz. Anti-Semitism was drilled into the children every morning. And all the history lessons were distorted.

RL: Did you have any friends there?

FB: No...no. No.

RL: And were there other Jewish children there?

FB: In the school in Affaltrach there was my cousin, Helga. She went to that school. We were the only two Jewish children there. Because by that time most of the Jewish people who lived in Affaltrach had managed to emigrate... so at one time there was a large Jewish community in Affaltrach, but after 1933, those who could, emigrated.

RL: Did your parents think of emigrating at that stage?

FB: Yes, they wanted to but it was impossible for them to get out.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 45 seconds

RL: Do you know what they had tried to do or what they had thought of doing?

FB: Well, after I came to England in a Kindertransport, on the 27th of June 1939, I wrote to the Home Office and I wrote to the United States Embassy to try and get a visa for my parents to come either to Great Britain, or the United States or what was then Palestine, but my childish efforts were in vain. The doors were closed.

RL: Had your parents tried before that?

FB: Oh Yes, they tried before, but in order to get to the America, there was a long queue in the visa system and their number was a long way off. It's not like nowadays, where all and sundry can go into the countries. In those days it was very, very difficult to emigrate.

RL: How did your father manage with his work? Can you tell me a little bit about his work and...?

Tape 1: 20 minutes 0 second

FB: Yes. Yes, he was a machine engineer until 1934 or 35 and that was the end. He was then pensioned off. Fortunately he got a pension from when he was working.

RL: And did he not work after that?

FB: No, no. I think it was...no, till 1937 he was working. Yes, till 1937. When they moved to Affaltrach.

RL: And was that with a non-Jewish firm?

FB: Yes, yes. They were machine engineering firms. They were non-Jewish firms.

RL: And how was he treated at work. Did he say anything?

FB: He didn't say anything. Didn't say anything.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 0 second

RL: Did your family experience anti-Semitism personally?

FB: Oh very, very much so. On the 9th November 1938 my father was taken to Dachau concentration camp. And that day, not only my father, but throughout the whole of Germany, all Jewish men and boys were taken to concentration camps. And the German devils knew exactly where the Jewish people lived. Because before that all the Jewish people had to register as Jewish, so they knew where they all lived, you see. And I shall never forget that day when I came home from school, on the 9th of November 1938, I could see that my mother had been crying. Then she told me that they had taken my father away that afternoon. Not only my father, but my uncle and all the other Jewish men who still lived in Affaltrach had all been taken away. And my cousin Ernest, as I mentioned earlier, he lived in another part of Germany so he was taken to Buchenwald. All the concentration camps, they were in existence already in 1938. And that night, when only women and children were at home – a night I shall never forget - the Germans, with their pickaxes. I'll just come back in a minute. According to history books, only synagogues were burned down that night on the 9th of the 10th 1938. But history books I'm afraid, have got it slightly wrong, because that night of terror was far, far worse than anything that they describe in the history books. It wasn't only synagogues that were burned down. They broke into all the Jewish homes, because they knew exactly where all the Jewish people lived. With their pickaxes the German devils broke open the front doors, they hacked out the windows, the window frames. They slit open the feather beds, because in Germany you had feather beds at that time. Not a piece of furniture was left standing. Not a cup or a saucer was left whole. It was a night of terror which to this day I have not forgotten. And then the next day, all Jewish children, by decree, were expelled from German state schools. And as all the Jewish teachers had the day before been taken to the concentration camps, the Jewish children were left without schooling. That's my most vivid memory – the 9th of November 1938.

RL: What did you and your mother do, while this was going on?

Tape 1: 24 minutes 6 seconds

FB: Well it so happened that that day, - because my cousin's father, that's my mother's brother – he had also been taken to Dachau, the same as my father. So my mother and myself, that day, we slept in my aunt's house in Affaltrach. Now my parents, they had a flat in the ground floor of the Synagogue because at one time there used to be a Jewish school in half of the synagogue. On the first floor there lived a non-Jewish family. So the synagogue in Affaltrach was not burned down, because the non Jewish family lived on the first floor and they didn't want to burn the non- Jewish people. But they completely destroyed everything in the synagogue with their pickaxes. The Holy Torah was completely destroyed. Nothing was left standing in the synagogue. And they went into our flat. The entrance to the synagogue was on the right, so our flat was on the left. Every thing in our flat was completely destroyed.

RL: And the flat that you were staying in?

FB: In my cousin's house, they broke in. It so happened that my cousin and I, we were sleeping up in the attic. They didn't come into the attic, but we heard everything that was going on below. And we saw it of course the next morning.

RL: And what happened to your father?

FB: My father and my uncle... My father was released from Dachau at the end of January 1939, just a fortnight before my uncle – that's my mother's brother Ernest. But when he came back from Dachau, we could hardly recognise him. He was completely emaciated. His hair had been cut off by the German devils. And he was telling us what it was like in Dachau. When the prisoners arrived in Dachau, for the first three days, the Germans showed them big cauldrons of soup and then before their eyes, they poured the cauldrons of soup down the drains. So for the first three days the prisoners had nothing to eat. And after that, for breakfast, they had a piece of bread and water and for their lunch they had a watery soup. And that was the end of what they had that day to eat. And they were forced... It was November and December getting very, very cold. Snow came through the slats in the barracks where they were housed. It was very, very cold. Their own clothes were taken away from them. They had to wear garments like blue and white striped pyjamas. No warmer than that. And each morning they had to stand in the cold and snow for roll call. It was a...a life of terror in Dachau.

RL: Was he physically attacked at all?

FB: No but he was completely emaciated by the time he came back home and was released.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 29 seconds

RL: How did he get his release?

FB: Well they gradually released the Jewish people from concentration camps. Not all of them. As I mentioned, my cousin Erich, who had been taken to Buchenwald, within a month, he, and other prisoners there were thrown from the top of a quarry down to the bottom and they were exterminated in that way.

RL: How did you learn of that?

FB: Well my parents found out about this afterwards.

RL: Did your father not have to show that he was going to emigrate at all to get released?

FB: No, no...no. My parents tried. They got a visa number which was so far off. If - and I have to say this with deep regret - if the countries of the so called free world at that time had allowed the Jewish people in, there probably wouldn't have been a holocaust. But the doors were shut for the Jewish people. Sad it is to say, but it's got to be said.

Tape 1: 29 minutes 50 seconds

RL: You mentioned where you were living.

FB: Yes?

RL: You say, in the ground floor of the synagogue. Can you just describe your home and the synagogue and the area?

FB: Yes, well as you go into the building of the synagogue, the entrance to the synagogue was on the right, and our flat was on the left. And then on the first floor was the flat where the Germans lived. Because at one time, when there was a large Jewish community in Affaltrach, the flat at the top was the flat for the Jewish teacher...And the big room at the bottom which my parents then had as their flat was the school room. That's how it was in the olden days before 1933.

RL: And can you describe the flat? How many rooms? What it looked like?

FB: Well it was one big room - two rooms – one which my parents used as a living room, the other which they used as a bedroom. In the corridor there was a sink, with water. And the toilet - we had to go upstairs to the first floor.

Tape 1: 31 minutes 21 seconds

RL: And where did you sleep?

FB: In the same bedroom with my mother and father, of course. There was no other bedroom.

RL: You were an only child?

FB: I was an only child, yes.

RL: And the synagogue. Can you describe that?

FB: Yes, well, as in a normal synagogue, the women were separated from the men.

RL: And was there a rabbi?

FB: Oh, yes. Yes...

RL: Do you remember who it was?

Tape 1: 31 minutes 57 seconds

FB: No...no. After most of the Jewish people who lived in Affaltrach had emigrated, there weren't even enough Jewish people to form a Mini there.

RL: Did they not have services at all?

FB: They did at the beginning but afterwards there weren't enough people there. So the remaining Jewish people in Affaltrach went to the synagogue in Heilbronn.

RL: How far away was Heilbronn?

FB: Heilbronn was on the train. And there was another synagogue in a small town halfway between Heilbronn and Affaltrach. But it's Heilbronn that the Jewish people from Affaltrach went to – to the synagogue there.

RL: So did you do that? Did your family go there?

FB: Yes. Yes.

RL: When would you do that?

FB: For the Jewish high holidays. We only moved to Affaltrach, as I say, in 1937. Before that, my parents lived in Erkelenz where there was of course a synagogue and there was a synagogue in Düsseldorf.

RL: Where did you live in Erkelenz?

FB: In Erkelenz we lived in a flat. A normal flat, but that's all I can remember.

Tape 1: 33 minutes 27 seconds

RL: How big was the Jewish community there?

FB: Oh, I don't know... Big enough to hold services in the synagogue, enough for that, but that's all I can remember.

RL: Were there Jewish shops, a Jewish butcher?

FB: I don't think. Not that I'm aware of. Not that I'm aware of. Of course, what I can remember about Affaltrach after November 9th 1938: A few days after all the Jewish men had been taken away to concentration camps, all the Jewish people in Affaltrach had to leave wherever they were living, and they were put into what was called a Judenhaus, a Jew house, which was a house which belonged originally to a family called Levy. So, all the Jewish people were put together in one place. And that of course happened all over Germany where the Jewish people were forced out of wherever they were living and were put into a little ghetto of their own.

RL: Did you and your mother have to go to this?

FB: Oh yes. Yes, yes. It so happened that it was opposite the synagogue so we didn't have to move very far. But all the Jewish people had to move into there.

RL: And how many were there?

FB: Not many because most of them had emigrated by then.

RL: Can you give us some idea of number?

FB: Oh, not very many. Maybe 3 or 4 families. That was all that was left. Not many were left. Because those who could, they had emigrated.

RL: And how was life organised in that house?

FB: Everybody, all the women did their own cooking. There wasn't a question of joining up or anything like that. There were of course...in Affaltrach were some Jewish shops, and on the 9th November they were of course all broken into and looted. Because there was at one time a large Jewish community in Affaltrach and one or two of the Levy families still had their shops there. But on the 9th November their shops were broken into and completely looted.

Tape 1: 36 minutes 14 seconds

RL: Before that period, who would you say that your parents mixed with ? Who were their friends?

FB: I can't say that they had many friends. I don't think they did. Not that I'm aware of

RL: What would you do in your spare time? For leisure?

FB: I don't remember being aware of any leisure because in those days schoolchildren had to do homework when they came home from school. My mother used to take me out for walks. I still remember my mother playing football with me! (laughs) I still remember that.

RL: Did you ever go to the cinema, or...?

FB: There were no such things as cinemas in those days!

RL: What would one do?

FB: Go for a walk because in Affaltrach you were surrounded by beautiful forest, you see. So what one did for recreation you went for a walk into the forest. That was one's chief recreation just to go out into nature and have a walk away from people. Into the woods.

RL: Did you used to go on holidays?

FB: No. You see, when we lived in Düsseldorf and Erkelenz our holiday consisted of visiting my aunt and uncle in Affaltrach. So we went on the train to visit them. That was the holiday. Not going away on holiday as people do nowadays.

RL: Were your family interested in music?

FB: Well my mother had a beautiful voice. And as I mentioned earlier, when she was in the orphanage, whenever in the vicinity a Jewish person died, she always had to sing Hebrew songs at their grave because she had a beautiful voice.

RL: What about playing an instrument?

FB: No. No.

RL: Did you used to go to any concerts or anything like that?

FB: No. No.

RL: Did you have a Hebrew education?

FB: My parents sent me to Hebrew classes. Yes.

RL: Where were they?

Tape 1: 39 minutes 10 seconds

FB: It was a private teacher who gave the classes

RL: How big a class was it?

FB: Well as there were only two of us by that time in Affaltrach, my cousin and myself. It was just the two of us in the class. We were the only two children.

RL: Do you have any memories of celebrating any of the festivals?

FB: Yes, well, my parents always went to the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I remember that vividly. And of course what I also remember from after we'd been expelled from school like all the Jewish children, on the 9th November 1938: After the Jewish teachers were released from the concentration camps, my cousin and myself, we went to the Jewish school in Heilbronn. But after a few weeks, suddenly, the schoolroom was three quarters empty because three quarters of the children, with their parents, had been deported to the Polish frontier. That was early 1939. That is perhaps my most vivid memory: seeing the schoolroom two-thirds empty.

RL: Was this very unexpected?

FB: Well, for us children it was, suddenly to see all the other children being deported. That was already the beginning of 1939.

RL: This tape is just about to come to an end..

End of Tape 1.

TAPE 2**Tape 1: 0 minute 45 seconds**

RL: Ok. You were just telling me how a lot of the children from the class suddenly disappeared one day.

FB: Yes

RL: Did you know what had happened?

FB: All we heard that they'd all been deported with their families to the Polish border.

RL: Did you hear anything after that?

FB: No. No. We don't know what happened to them. They probably were all exterminated.

RL: Coming back to your life. Did your father belong to any clubs or societies?

FB: No, no.

RL: Was he active in any way at all?

FB: No, no, no.

RL: And did you belong to anything at all?

FB: No, nothing at all.

RL: And did you used to go to a library and take books out?

FB: No. No. No. My father had a huge collection of books at home, because he was a very avid reader. And... Oh yes, I must tell you this. On 9th of November 1938 when the Germans broke into our flat, they stole all my father's books *except* the works of Heinrich Heine. Not the works of Heinrich Heine, because Heine was a Jewish author. So they didn't want those books. Now my father was a very avid reader. He had a whole lot of books. All the classics. So I didn't need to go to a library. The library was at home!

RL: And did you read?

FB: I read, yes. Yes, and my father, when he took me for a walk, that's how I was first introduced to the plots of Shakespeare's plays, because he used to tell me the plots of Shakespeare's plays. He'd read all Shakespeare's works in translation. Yes. That's how I first heard of Shakespeare from the summaries my father gave me of his plays.

Tape 2: 2 minutes 45 seconds

RL: What kinds of books would you read as a child?

FB: Oh, whatever we had to read at school. I can't remember. I can't remember. My real life started when I came to England. because as you know, within 10 days of the events of the 9th November 1938 both houses of Parliament voted unanimously to bring 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children to Great Britain. And wonderful British families, very, very many of them non Jewish, spontaneously opened their doors – their homes - to the Jewish children. And, as soon as my mother heard of that wonderful offer, she immediately put my name down. And within a short time, we had a wonderful letter from Mr and Mrs Clement who at that time lived in Horton Green, near Denton. They wrote to my mother to say they wanted to take me into their home. And they sent us photographs of themselves and of...They had at that time two little boys, one aged 2, Richard, and one aged 4, Charles. So they sent us photographs of their family, and photographs of themselves. He was a school teacher at that time, and he lived in Horton Green near Denton, which is outside Manchester. It was the most wonderful, wonderful thing that the British government did. They saved the lives of 10,000 Jewish children by opening their doors to them. No other country in the whole wide world made such an offer, neither America nor Canada nor Australia only Great Britain. Great Britain was the only country in the whole wide world. The world must never forget this wonderful, wonderful action on the part of the British government. In Germany, they murdered Jewish children; in Great Britain families opened their homes to them to save their lives. Great Britain is the best country in the whole wide world! We must always, always remember that!

RL: When you got this letter, how did you feel?

FB: Well, my mother felt a great sense of relief to know that her child was going to find a place of safety in Great Britain.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 36 seconds

RL: What arrangements were made?

FB: Well, then we had to send a medical. That was part of it that we had to send a medical report to say that we weren't suffering from any infectious illnesses. And transports started being organised gradually. I came on the transport on the 27th of June, 1939. And...we went...I still remember saying goodbye to my mother. Her last words were, 'Farewell my dear child.' We went on the train through the Hook of Holland. And when the train, with the children, arrived - had crossed – the Dutch border the train stopped at the first station in Holland. And wonderful Dutch ladies, who knew there were these children on the train, came onto the train, with refreshments for the children. It was suddenly like going from hell to heaven, to be crossing the border into Holland and to be suddenly welcomed with joy by complete strangers! The difference between that and Germany is inexplicable! They were wonderful Dutch ladies, because they knew the train was coming with the children. It was just unbelievable to be suddenly... to be surrounded by love and affection by complete strangers, after being persecuted in Germany.

Tape 2: 7 minutes 19 seconds

RL: What were you able to bring with you?

FB: Well, my mother made sure I had clothes to fit me in every size for the next few years! (laughs)

RL: Was it mainly clothing?

FB: Yes. Yes.

RL: Anything else?

FB: No, just clothes. Yes.

RL: Can you describe the whole journey?

FB: Yes. Well, we went through Holland to the Hook of Holland where we got on to the boat, which took us to Harwich, and in Harwich we got on the train to London. In London we were taken to a hall, and I can't remember the name of the hall, but in that hall we were collected by the people to wherever the children were going. And it was Mr Clement's sister who picked me up in the hall and put me on the train to Manchester. And when the train arrived at Piccadilly Station, Mr Clement was waiting there for me, and took me home on the bus to Horton Green. And they'd prepared a lovely room for me. A lovely room all to myself, which was so wonderful, suddenly to have a lovely bedroom of my own! They were an absolutely wonderful family, Mr and Mrs Clement. They were a Quaker family, but they made no attempt to convert me. Far from it! For the Jewish high holidays, for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover, they always sent me to Jewish families in North Manchester. They were wonderful people. Wonderful people.

RL: How many people...how many children were on that transport?

FB: Well, all together from when the transport first started, to the last transport in August 39, there were 10,000 Jewish children.

RL: I mean on your particular...

FB: I can't remember – there was a whole train load full, a whole train full.

RL: What was the age range of the children?

FB: The youngest were little babies of 2. Parents parted with their children however small, because they wanted to save their lives.

Tape 2: 9 minutes 51 seconds

RL: Who looked after them?

FB: Well they came to families.

RL: But I mean on the journey ?

FB: On the journey? They... there was no one, just the children. Just the children

RL: Did anyone accompany the children?

FB: No, because no one else had visas. Only the children were allowed out, you see. But my father and mother, during the darkest days, when my father was in Vailsburg and my mother in Belsen, they said the only thing which kept them going was that they knew I was in safety in England. It made all the difference to them. However hard it was for them to part with their only child, they knew it was the only thing they could do: to save their child's life. And how right they were!

RL: How did you feel on your own, with no adults accompanying you, going to a strange place?

FB: Well we understood. After all, we'd witnessed the 9th November 1938. We'd witnessed being expelled from the German state schools. We'd had other children throwing stones after us shouting, 'Jew! Jew! Jew!' We knew exactly what life was like in Germany. We knew that we had to get out. We knew that was the only thing. But once I... As soon as I got to England, the first thing I did, (and Mr Clement helped me to write the letter, because my English wasn't very good at that time) I wrote to the Home Office and to the American Embassy to try and get visas to get my parents out. And every night I cried myself to sleep. And when Mrs Clement heard me crying she used to come up to the bedroom and put her arms around me. Because... I knew that I had left my parents behind in the land of the devils. And I knew that. I remembered what my father looked like, after Dachau. So, I knew that if they couldn't get out... In fact, most of the children... Three years ago there was a reunion in London of the children from the Kindertransport. Most of them to this day do not know where their parents met their end. My cousin, who came on a Kindertransport 3 weeks before me... to a family called Rhodes, who at that time was an MP, she was with that family in Upper Mill near Oldham and she never saw her parents again. In 1941 her parents were deported to Riga. And as we found out since, the whole transport, on arrival, were shot in cold blood. So she left her parents when she was a little girl of 12 and she never saw her parents again. And that was the fate of most of the children on the transport. They never saw their parents again.

Tape 2: 13 minutes 22 seconds

RL: Did you know any of the other children that you were travelling with?

FB: Not that I was travelling with. But there was at one time a meeting of children, and one of the children who had come on one of the transports, was the son of the teacher in the Jewish school in Heilbronn. His parents, as my mother told me, were later also deported. And they never came back. So that little boy never saw his parents again.

RL: What was this meeting?

Tape 2: 14 minutes 15 seconds

FB: Oh, just of children... Which meeting are you referring to?

RL: When you met the little boy?

FB: Oh that was oh, back in, maybe in 1940. In the vicinity of Manchester.

RL: And who called it?

FB: I don't know, can't remember. Just a meeting of the children.

RL: The children on the Kindertransport...?

FB: Yes, who lived in the vicinity of Manchester at that time.

RL: Do you remember anything about it? Where you met or who was in charge of it?

FB: No all I remember is meeting the little boy whose father had been deported. That his father had been deported my mother told me later. So that little boy never saw his parents again. And he was the teacher of the Jewish school in Heilbronn.

RL: What were your first impressions of England?

FB: Suddenly, to be surrounded by love and affection by people. It was like going from hell to heaven to come to Great Britain. For the first three months I went to the elementary school in Horton Green. And in those first three months Mr and Mrs Clement started preparing me for the entrance examination to Fairfield High School. Because in those days you had to pass an examination to go into a high school. So they started preparing me, and I sat for the entrance examination in December and I started at Fairfield High School in January 1940. And one of the girls who were at that school (She still lives in Manchester. She's a friend of a neighbour who lives down the road) and she told us that before I arrived at the school the head mistress told the children that a refugee child was coming to the school. And the children just all fell over with affection and kindness. It was so different from anything that one had experienced before! Suddenly to be surrounded by love and affection by the other children. What a difference between that and Germany. The difference couldn't have been greater! It was just wonderful! Just wonderful!

RL: How did you manage with the language?

Tape 2: 17 minutes and 8 seconds

FB: Well, I'd already started learning a bit of English before I came to England because as soon as my mother knew that I was going to come to England on the Kindertransport she arranged for me to have English lessons. But then when I came to Mr and Mrs Clement they sat down with me every day to teach me English to make sure that I would be able to pass the entry examination to Fairfield High School.

RL: Did you make friends at school?

FB: Oh yes, everybody wanted to be kind to the little refugee child. They just surrounded you with love and affection. Everyone!

RL: What happened with the outbreak of war?

FB: I still remember, to this day, hearing on the radio, 'This country is now at war with Germany.' And my first thought was, 'My parents won't be able to get out now.' Because by that time my efforts to get visas for my parents had failed. And my father, and I can tell you the date if I look at this sheet, which date was he taken to...? I can find the date for you. Yes at first, I got letters through the Red Cross from my parents. And then on the middle of June 1941, letters from my father stopped coming, because he had been taken that month to the prison in Heilbronn. And for no other reason than that he was Jewish. And from there he was transferred to the concentration camp at Vailsburg near Weißenburg, in Bavaria on the 8th of October 1941. And he was to remain there until he was liberated by the Allied forces on the 26th of April, 1945. And what my father suffered both in Heilbronn and Vailsburg was comparable to what he had suffered previously in Dachau. He was beaten both in Heilbronn and Vailsburg so that, as he told us later, that his back and arms were black and blue. And not only that, but the eardrum of one of his ears burst, in being beaten. They suffered constant hunger, because what they had to eat there was no more than what they'd had in Dachau. And equally, dreadful was, my father said that on one occasion he had the indiscretion to tell a guard in the camp at Vailsburg that he had toothache. So, one of the guardians in the camp in Vailsburg summoned a dentist from Weißenburg to come up to the camp. And that dentist, either of his own accord or on the instruction from the guard drilled holes in every one of my father's teeth, and did not put any fillings in. He was a Nazi beast, that dentist! And part of the camp in Vailsburg, was also for Russian prisoners of war, and my father said, the German devils shot numerous Russian prisoners of war. The only thing which kept my father going while he was in Vailsburg, or kept him going and the other prisoners, was the sound of Allied planes flying over because they could distinguish between the sound of the Allied planes and the German planes. And when they heard the Allied planes flying over, their hearts were filled with joy, because they were convinced liberation would come eventually, when they heard the Allied planes. It was the sweetest music to their ears, to hear the sound of the Allied planes.

Tape 2: 22 minutes 35 seconds

RL: Was he working, did they work in that camp?

FB: No, he was starved to death. And when the American soldiers were approaching the camp just before liberation, the German guards, in attempts to hide their misdeeds, made the prisoners, however weak they were, forced them to march out of the camp. And my father was left lying for dead in a ditch. And he would have died there if it hadn't been for a wonderful American soldier who saw my father lying in a ditch, and picked him up and took him to an American military hospital. It was that wonderful unknown American soldier who saved my father's life. To the end the Germans were utter devils, to the very, very end. That wonderful American soldier, to whom I shall be forever grateful, he saved my father's life.

RL: Coming back to you. Did the outbreak of war make any difference to you in England?

Tape 2: 24 minutes 0 second

FB: The only difference it made, was knowing that now I wouldn't be able to get my parents out. You see, if you had been a Jewish man, aged 16 or over, you would have been interned as an alien. But little Jewish children, they made no difference to them. And it so happened that where we lived in Horton Green near Denton we were far enough away from Manchester, that the children living in Horton Green weren't evacuated. The children who lived actually in Manchester and in the big towns, as you know they were all evacuated. In fact I heard on the television only the other day one boat full of children who'd been evacuated, the boat was torpedoed by the German devils, although they knew it was full of children. I don't know if you saw that on television?

RL: No. Did you find that attitudes changed towards you at the outbreak of war?

FB: No. No, because they knew I was Jewish, and that I was a victim of the Germans.

RL: Did they ever ask you about what life was like in Germany, or did people not talk about it?

FB: They might have done. I can't remember to tell you the truth.

Tape 2: 25 minutes 56 seconds

RL: If you could take me through your school years and also life at home with the family?

FB: Shall I tell you first about my mother?

RL: And then we'll come back to your mother.

FB: Right you are. Well, I remember vividly my days in Fairfield High School because I was learning English, Latin and French all at the same time. That was my most vivid memory, learning three foreign languages at the same time.

RL: Did you do any out of school activities?

FB: Well, we had in those days Sports day, of course. No I think most of the time we were just kept at our schoolwork in Fairfield High School. It was a very, very good school in Doyleston. We went on the bus to school from Horton Green to Darliston and the teachers were all absolutely wonderful to me. I think I must have been the only Jewish child in that school. I wasn't aware of any...And they were very good, when they had religious classes, I didn't have to attend those because they didn't want to do anything to convert. They allowed you to remain Jewish. That was the wonderful thing... So, when the others had their religious classes, I was allowed to do whatever I wanted to do, which I thought was really lovely on the part of that school.

RL: And you say that the family you were with sent you up to North Manchester?

FB: Yes, for the Jewish holidays.

RL: Do you remember where you stayed?

FB: Oh dear, all I remember is going on the bus, but...Mostly it was with Jewish families. But on one occasion it was in a home for Jewish children. But mostly it was with individual Jewish families, but what they were called I don't know. But they were very, very nice. How Mr Clement managed to arrange that, I don't know. But they wanted me to remain Jewish, so they made sure that for the Jewish holidays, I was with Jewish families.

RL: Do you have any memories of that time, of going up to the families?

FB: Yes. Yes, we went to the Synagogue there, of course, in Cheetham Hill. I remember that, yes. Yes.

RL: Did you make friends with any children in a similar situation to yourself?

FB: Well, we met quite a lot of the children. Yes. There was another child there who'd come to the Jewish home just for the high holidays, because she'd been given a home by a teacher at Manchester High School for Girls. And the teacher also sent the child to North Manchester for the Jewish high holidays.

Tape 2: 29 minutes 24 seconds

RL: Did you make friends on those visits?

FB: Not on a permanent basis. No, just for the high holidays, and we were there for Passover. It was wonderful.

RL: What about at school? Did you make close friends at school?

FB: Yes, there were several girls who used to invite me home to their parents. Yes. I remember them very well. Yes.

RL: Did you come across any anti-Semites?

FB: No. None whatsoever. None whatsoever. No. No.

RL: And when did you finish school?

Tape 2: 30 minutes 20 seconds

FB: Well, I took what was in those days called School Certificate. And I had a wonderful...We had to leave a card at the school with the subject so they could put on the results, the head mistress, and on the bottom of my card she put, 'You have beaten the school record.' Which was wonderful! And I wanted to stay on at school, because I wanted to go to university. But the family I was staying with felt they

couldn't afford to keep me on at school any more. So I had to leave school because in those days you had to pay school fees to go to a high school. So the family I was staying with, they weren't very well off because school teachers in those days didn't have a very high salary, and by that time the family I was staying with had another child – a little girl – who was born in February 1943 and then in 1944 - November - they had another girl. So I had to leave school when I was 16 after taking School Certificate. But as I was determined to get a university degree, I started working for an external London degree. I was working at first in Staley Bridge public library, and when I'd earned enough to pay for an extra-mural course, so I registered with London - because in those days you could do an extra-mural degree - , with London University. So I registered for that. And then I took a correspondence course. As soon as I'd saved enough money I started paying for the correspondence course. And on my way to... I used to get up at 6 in the morning and on the way to the library, by bus, I used to start doing my school work, my academic work, on the bus. And my lunch hour I spent doing academic work. And my half day on Wednesday I did academic work. And Sunday..., in those days you worked in the library all Saturday, on Sunday I was doing my academic work. At that time I was still living with the Clement family in Horton Green near Denton, but then they moved from Horton Green to Suffolk, and I got a job in a boarding school in Glossop. And that was a very pleasant job because part of my job consisted of teaching children to read English and taking them for walks. And so I had quite a lot of spare time to get on with my academic work. And then in December 44, I had by chance to go and see Mrs Pogmore at the Refugee Children's' Movement in Brasenose Street in Manchester. And I was telling her that I was working for an external London degree in my spare time. And she said, 'Why don't you sit for the entrance scholarship examinations to Manchester University?' And she made arrangements for me to see Miss Crumb who was at that time the adviser to women students at Manchester University. And I was then registered at the university to take the entrance scholarship examinations. And on VE day, on the 8th of May 1945, I sat for the first of the five papers for the entrance scholarship examinations. And when we came out of the Whitworth Hall and saw the whole of Manchester covered in flags, that was the most wonderful, wonderful sight anyone could have, to see the whole of Manchester covered in flags, and to know that the Allies had won! It was absolutely wonderful! And it so happened I was very lucky, I got three entrance scholarships to Manchester University. Not just one, I got three. And in October 1945 I started as an undergraduate in the French department at Manchester University. And one of the scholarships I had was the Ashburn Hall scholarship so I didn't have to look for a flat or anything. I was living in Ashburn Hall. So I was very, very lucky! Extremely lucky!

Tape 2: 35 minutes 40 seconds

RL: During the war years did you experience any bombing?

FB: Yes, one day it was very sad. When we went to school, one of the children at the school had lost her father that night in a bombing raid on Manchester. You see, the children in Fairfield – the girls at Fairfield High School – came from all around the district. And we were told that one of the girls, her father had been killed

Tape 2: 36 minutes 22 seconds

in the bomb raid, yes. And Mr Clement of course, he worked as an air raid warden during the war, all whole time. Because he was too old to join up, but they were air raid wardens instead then. But I still remember that poor fellow girl at school, losing her father that night in the bomb raid on Manchester.

RL: Did you find the way of life in England different to the way of life you were used to in Germany?

FB: I tell you what was the first thing that I noticed. (Laughs) The different way in which Mrs Clement cooked her vegetables from the way my mother cooked them! (laughs) That was the first thing I noticed!

RL: What was the difference?

FB: Well, my mother always cooked a variety of vegetables, and Mrs Clement felt cabbage was very good for you, so we had cabbage every day! (laughs) I'm sure she was right. But I just noticed it because it was different from what my mother had done, you see.

RL: What else struck you as being different?

FB: Well, what struck me first when I came on the train to Piccadilly Station, was seeing all the...all the chimneys! Because in those days everything was heated by coal, so you saw everywhere the chimneys, you see. That struck me, the first thing you see: all the chimneys. Strange things to be noticing, but looking out of the windows in the train, you saw all these chimneys as you were approaching Manchester. I don't think they're there now. I'm sure they're not.

RL: What about the houses? Were they different?

FB: Oh, yes! The house that I lived in with the Clement family, for the first time, that was a wonderful experience, to have a bathroom in the house with hot and cold water! Because my mother, for a bath, she always had to heat the water in a tub, you see. And there, in the Clement family there was a bathroom with hot water flowing into the bath! It was a complete change!

RL: What about culturally? What differences did you notice?

Tape 2: 39 minutes 20 seconds

FB: Well, what really got me absorbed in studying was that Mr Clement, every day after he came home from school – because he was a school teacher at Audenshaw Grammar School, he was a history master there - after we'd had our tea, he sat in a chair and he started writing, working on the history books he was writing. Because he wrote several history books, you see. So I was used to seeing him studying. And I think that really somehow passed over into me, seeing him study. Because that's what I wanted to do, to study, you see. That made a big, big difference!

RL: Right, so we'll just take a break here.

FB: Oh, right!

End of Tape 2.

TAPE 3

Tape 2: 0 minute 25 seconds

RL: You were just telling me how your love of learning had come from witnessing...

FB: Mr Clement writing history books every day when he came home from school. After we'd had our tea, he sat down to work on the history books he was writing.

RL: Did you have any contact with any refugee committee in Manchester during this time?

FB: Well the only contact I had was with Mrs Pogmore when I went to see her in the Refugee Children's Movements in Brasenose Street, when she suggested that I should sit for the scholarship entrance examinations at Manchester University.

RL: How did you know of her? How did you make contact with her?

FB: I don't know. Somehow, we all knew that she was in Brasenose Street. I don't know what made me go there on that occasion. It just so happened that I had to go and see her in December 44.

RL: Do you know what you had to see her about?

FB: No. But she then arranged for me to see Miss Crumb, the advisor for women students at Manchester University. And it was arranged then, that I should sit for the entrance scholarship examinations.

RL: Was that the first contact you'd with her and the committee and Mrs Frogmore?

FB: Mrs Pogmore. P-O-G-M-O-R-E, her name was spelled. Pogmore.

RL: Is that the first contact you'd had with her?

FB: Even that I can't remember. That's the only vivid one that I have in my mind. I don't know why I had to go and see her. For some reason I did. It was very lucky, because I didn't know anything otherwise about entrance scholarships. It's thanks to her that I then got to Manchester University.

RL: What date did you start university?

FB: In October, 1945.

RL: This was after the war finished.

FB: Yes, I sat for the first paper of the entrance examination on VE day, on the 8th of May 1945.

RL: When did you find out what had happened to your mother? First of all, were you in contact with your mother throughout the war?

Tape 3: 3 minutes 2 seconds

FB: Well, you see, what happened to my mother was this. After my father was taken... incarcerated in Heilbronn, my mother had to undertake forced labour, and the forced labour that she had to do consisted of looking after old people in Jewish old persons' homes, and she was put in sole charge of the Jewish old people's homes. And each morning and evening a member of the Gestapo would arrive...would come to see if she hadn't attempted to escape, if she was still there and hadn't tried to escape. And...Looking after the old people was not very easy because they only received a fraction of the rations that the German population received. They had no meat, no eggs, no flour, no cheese, no butter or margarine, no milk, no cooking oil, just a few vegetables. And she had to prepare meals to feed the old people on that. But the stay in each old persons' home for my mother was only of short duration because after a few weeks the old people in the various homes were deported to Theresienstadt. So, each time one of the old people's homes had been emptied, my mother was moved on to another home. And the deportation of these old people was absolutely horrendous. In the old people's home in Eschenau – Eschenau which was quite near Affaltrach - the old people were too weak to walk to the nearest railway station. So what the Germans did, they threw them - literally threw them - one on top of the other - into farmers' carts used for carrying manure. That's what the Germans did.

RL: How did you hear about this?

Tape 3: 5 minutes 38 seconds

FB: Oh my mother told me all this after she was liberated. That's how I know all this. It's all what my mother told me. And in Budenhausen, which was another place where my mother had to look after the old people, when the townspeople heard that the following day the old people would be walking to the railway station on their way to be transported to Theresienstadt, the townspeople of Budenhausen, by way of farewell, dug holes in the road along the route that they knew the old people would be going to the station, because they wanted the old people to fall and break their limbs. It was only because my mother was observant and noticed the holes that the old people didn't fall. The German population was just as devilish as the others. And when no more Jewish old people's homes were left, my mother was taken by the Gestapo to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The last railway station before Belsen was Celle and from there my mother had to walk to the camp. She was escorted by a Gestapo man. And her first thought when she arrived in Belsen was she thought she would never get out of there. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire.

Tape 3: 7 minutes 45 seconds

That was the 26th of September 1943 when my mother was taken to Belsen concentration camp. The way in and around and the ground around the barracks was deep with mud. Inmates were housed in...in barracks. My mother's bed was a wooden plank. Her pillow was her shoes. Her bedcover was her coat. And there were rats that came out each night and jumped onto the inmates. And many a time my mother said, she had to shoo off the rats. But she said the rats, they were better than the Nazi guardians in the camp. And the food, as in the successive camps, where my father was, was no better. It was bread and water in the morning and some watery soup at midday. And nothing more. And morning and evening, the inmates had to stand in the freezing cold for roll call. But the physical deprivation that they had to suffer there was nothing compared with the constant anxiety as to when one's last day would come. In the barrack where my mother was, there were 50 Polish Jewish doctors, with their wives and children, including a little baby girl born a few days earlier in the barrack where my mother was. And the last day for those doctors, with their wives and children, came within a fortnight of the birth of that little baby girl. That was before the gas chambers were functioning. The doctors had to dig a ditch and then the doctors with their wives and children and the little baby in the mother's arms, were stood in front of the ditch and shot in cold blood by those German murderers. They didn't even spare newborn babies.

Tape 3: 10 minutes 10 seconds

RL: Did your mother write this down?

FB: No she told me all this after I saw her again.

RL: Right.

FB: But before we go on, do you want me to tell you something about the yellow star that my mother had to wear?

RL: Ok.

FB: Before she was taken to Belsen, beginning November, 23rd 1939, all the Jewish people who were still in Germany had to wear, on the outside of their garment, the yellow Star of David. I think you've got it there. (She shows a photograph). That was by official decree by the Ordinance of November 23rd, 1939, which proscribed the distinctive sign for Jews and Jewesses in the German Government General established in former Poland. 'On and after December 1st, 1939, all Jews and Jewesses living in the territory of the Government General, and who are 10 years of age or more must wear on the right sleeve of their clothes, overcoats or mantles, a white armband not less than 10cm in width, bearing the distinguished sign, the Star of David.' My mother kept the Star of David. We've still got it. But of course the Jewish people having to wear the Star of David does not date for the first time from November 23rd 1939. As a distinguished scholar called Guido Kisch has shown in his book called 'The Yellow Badge in History' He showed in his book how on November 11th 1215 at the 4th Lateran Council it was decreed that all the Jewish people, I'll read out the words in his book: 'In Canon 68 of the Conciliary Decrees ordained the Jews and Saracens of both sexes in every Christian province and at all times shall be marked off in the eyes of the public from other people through the character of their dress.'

RL: I think, if we don't read too much because this is meant to be your personal recollection...

FB: Yes, but it's just very interesting to see how the persecution of the Jewish people was not only in Nazi Germany, it was already in the Middle Ages.

Tape 3: 13 minutes 32 seconds

RL: You were saying about your mother being in Bergen-Belsen.

FB: Yes. Yes...

RL: Did she have to work?

FB: No. They didn't work there. No. No. On the 29th of January, 1944, my mother and some other women –how they were selected, she never knew - were packed into a cattle truck and moved on. And after a journey lasting 3 days and 3 nights they arrived in France. And they were incarcerated in the so-called transit camp in Vittel. In that camp were imprisoned also British citizens who had been caught up in France after the fall of that country. The British prisoners were able to write letters and one of them wrote to the family – to Mr and Mrs Clement. And that was the first time I knew that my mother was still alive. My mother was not allowed to write to me, but this wonderful British man wrote to the family I was staying with and told them about my mother. And so I knew that my mother was still alive. But at the same time he had told Mr Clement that my mother was very ill, and that there was no news of my father. And something my mother told me later; the Swiss Red Cross sent food parcels to the British prisoners in Vittel, but not to the Jewish prisoners. So the British prisoners – and this is characteristic of the wonderful generosity of the British people –they shared the food in their parcels with the Jewish people.

Tape 3: 15 minutes 51 seconds

This is characteristic of the wonderful kindness of the British people, that they shared the food in the parcels with the Jewish inmates in the camp. Wherever you go it's the British people who've got hearts of kindness. The world must never forget that. They're the most wonderful people in the whole wide world. But what my mother witnessed in Vittel, although it was a transit camp! And almost daily transports from there were going back to the death camps, going back east to the death camps. And many of the Jewish inmates, rather than going back east, my mother said, took their own lives. And I can't even describe what my mother must have felt. But what distressed her even more than her own suffering was one of the transports that she witnessed. Passing through Vittel there were cattle trucks. And through the slats in the cattle trucks, could be seen the terrified faces of little children. What the German occupying forces in France did, they were deporting the little Jewish French children to the death camps. Wherever the Germans went in all the occupied countries, they sent the Jewish people to the death camps.

Tape 3: 17 minutes 52 seconds

My father never saw his relatives again who lived this side of Leningrad because there also the occupying German devils murdered his relatives because they were Jewish. The liberation for my mother came on the 23rd of October 1944. But it was not without a struggle that the camp at Vittel was liberated. It had first been liberated by the Allies, and then it was retaken by the Germans. But finally the camp was liberated. But the German guards in addition to being devils were cowards, because by that time the German prison guards, attempting to hide their identities, removed their uniforms. My mother told me all this when I saw her and my father again for the first time in 1947. In fact, my mother and father and one aunt were the only ones who survived the Holocaust. My cousin Helga was never to see her parents again. In December 1941 they were deported to Riga. Her father sent one last postcard to my mother, saying they were on the train to Riga. That's how we knew where they had been taken. And as we found out later, all the Jewish people on that transport, on arrival in Riga, were shot in cold blood. They were lined up against a ditch, and shot in cold blood.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 0 second

And as I mentioned earlier, my mother's brother, Samuel and his wife, the parents of their son Erich who was murdered by the Germans in Buchenwald in November 1938. They had managed to get to France before the war. But after the occupation of France they went into hiding and, as the aunt was to tell us later, she kept telling her husband not to go out in daylight. But one day he was careless and went out and he was denounced and deported to where, the aunt never knew, because he never came back alive. And as I mentioned earlier, by the outbreak of war, my father still had two sisters and a brother and their families living near Minsk in Russia. They were all exterminated by the advancing German troops. One old lady, a Mrs Levi, who my mother knew, had been taken to Theresienstadt. She never came back, nor did her daughter and grandchild. And as I mentioned earlier, one of the teachers at the Jewish school in Heilbronn, a Mr Kahn, whose son had also come to Great Britain on the Children's Transport, was deported to another camp and he too never came back.

RL: You mention meeting your parents for the first time.

FB: Yes, Yes. The first time that I saw my parents again, was in August 1947. That was at the end of my second year as an undergraduate at Manchester University. And in the summer term, we, the students at the end of our second year, went on an exchange visit to French families in Strasbourg University. And when I told the lady there, she got in touch with the right authorities in Paris, because it so happened she was working in the Town Hall in Strasbourg, so she knew where to write. And she managed to get me a visa to visit my parents for 10 days.

Tape 3: 22 minutes 50 seconds

RL: Where were they living?

FB: They were living at that time in a displaced persons' camp in Bavaria. It's thanks to that lady that I got a visa to visit my parents. My mother had tried before then to come and see me in Strasbourg, and she got as far as the frontier, in France, and then she was turned back. And when I told the lady that, and she told them that at the

Town Hall, they said, if only my mother had told them she was coming, they would have made sure she could have got into France. But I then saw my parents for the first time in August 1947 for 10 days. And it was then that they told me something of what they went through. That's how I was able to tell you what they went through in the various camps. But they only told me a fraction of what they went through, because they didn't want to distress me.

RL: How did you feel on seeing your parents again?

FB: It was an unbelievable joy to see them again for the first time. I hardly recognised them at first because they'd changed so completely, but it was wonderful seeing them again. But it was hard leaving them behind again, and only being able to see them for 10 days. That was very hard, but that was all my visa was for – for 10 days. So, that's all I could see them.

RL: Where did they go after the displaced persons camp?

Tape 3: 24 minutes 53 seconds

FB: The camp where my father was, was Vailsburg, near Weißenburg. So they then got a flat in Weißenburg. And my father... my mother came to live with me in Heald Green after he died. But I must tell you something about the last illness of my father. He developed a blood clot in his left leg and he was taken to hospital in Weißenburg. That was in April 1959. I was at that time living in a hall of residence in Fallowfield in Manchester – in a university hall of residence. And I had a telegram from my mother saying, 'Come quickly, your father is very ill.' And that was the first time I ever went on a plane. I went to Ringway, It was a very small airport in those days. And I just got the first plane to the nearest station. I visited my father in hospital every day. And then, on the Saturday - he died on a Tuesday - and on the Saturday I noticed that his leg was looking a lot less discoloured because he had been given an anti-coagulant injection. And then on Sunday I noticed that his leg was much worse again. And I asked them in the hospital in Weißenburg if he'd had his anti-coagulant injection, and the reply was, 'We do not treat patients on a Sunday!' All I can assume, it must have been an old Nazi doctor. I have since written to the hospital to ask if they had his hospital records, but they haven't. If they had, I would have taken them to The Hague! I can think of nothing else except that that must have been an old Nazi doctor. Because then he died two days after that on the Tuesday, on 16th of April 1959.

RL: How old was he?

FB: He was 73.

Tape 3: 28 minutes 9 seconds

RL: Did they not consider moving?

FB: Oh, yes, well my father wasn't well enough before to make the journey to England. Because my father, apart from having very severe angina, he also had emphysema. And I don't know if you remember – no, you won't remember Manchester in those days. Smog! Do you remember the smog in Manchester before

the smokeless fuel came in? And there, in winter, it was impossible to breathe. So it would have been impossible for my father to live in Manchester because the air was so thick with smog! But after he died my mother came to live with me in Heald Green and she chose the bungalow where I live here now. Because at first we lived in another part of Heald Green, in a bungalow which we rented from the university. And when she saw this estate being built she said, 'We're having this bungalow.' And she chose this bungalow for me. So I shall stay here for evermore, because my mother chose it!

RL: What did your parents do in German after they came out of the DP camp? How did they manage?

FB: Well they both got compensation pensions eventually from the Germans.

RL: And how did they find life there? Did they talk about it?

Tape 3: 29 minutes 53 seconds

FB: Well, one interesting thing that my father said. Because before he was in that hospital in Weißenburg on the last occasion, he'd been in that hospital in Weißenburg before. And he said he would never let my mother go to that hospital. And in fact, later when my mother with her high blood pressure had to go into hospital, he made sure that she went to the hospital in Nuremberg, because my father was already aware of what the doctors were like in the hospital in Weißenburg. And I'll tell you something interesting as well. I went to a conference, to an international Arthurian conference in Bonn. Oh, I can't remember, it's quite a number of years ago. I flew on the train, I'm sorry, I flew on the plane to Düsseldorf and from Düsseldorf I took the train to Bonn. And on the train I made it my point of telling the Germans about the Holocaust. And not a word of regret! And that is what shocked me more than anything else, that there was not a word of regret. But in the train carriage I made them listen to what I had to tell them.

RL: How did you feel going back to Germany?

FB: I did not like it. I only stayed at the conference for the shortest time possible, then I came back to Manchester. I did not like it at all, especially after being so aware in the train of the complete lack of regret or anything.

Tape 3: 32 minutes 22 seconds

RL: How often did you visit your parents?

FB: Oh after, after 1947 I visited them once a year

RL: And how did you feel going back there each year?

FB: All I wanted was to see them, you see? That's all I wanted. To see them.

RL: Did they have friends there?

FB: There were a few Jewish people there. People who like my father had been in the camp in Vailsburg.

RL: How did they find life there...after?

FB: I'll tell you something very interesting. The Jewish people who had been liberated from the camp in Vailsburg - there was a UNICEF in Vailsburg, sorry, in Weißenburg - the Jewish people were given food - bread, etcetera, from the United Nations. And one day, that dentist who had tortured my father - he was the dentist from Weißenburg - he saw my father carrying a loaf of bread and he said that he was hungry. And my father, in his generosity, gave him half a loaf of his bread! Despite the fact that that dentist had tortured him! And I thought what a difference between my father and that dentist!

Tape 3: 34 minutes 15 seconds

Just occasionally you could find a righteous German. My mother told me when she was...' Before she had to undertake the forced labour, she had to be examined by a doctor to see if she was fit to work and in Buchau am Federsee, which was one of the places where my mother had to do forced labour, she had to see a German lady doctor called Doctor Elisabet Klauer. And that doctor told my mother that she is going to write in her certificate that my mother is fit to do all work, because if she were to say anything else, she would be condemning my mother to immediate extermination. You see, now the Germans say they knew nothing about what went on. But this lady doctor, she knew, and she knew the only way she could save my mother's life was to write that she was fit to do all work. Occasionally you could find a righteous German, and this Doctor Klauer, she was one of them. She was a wonderful doctor. It's thanks to her writing in her certificate that my mother could do all work, that my mother was able... her life was saved. That doctor knew that if she said anything else, she would be condemning my mother to immediate extermination. And I'll tell you something else, how the Germans knew what was going on. After November the 9th, 1938, the next day, a little boy of 5, said to me, 'You won't see your father again.' He must obviously have heard his parents talking, and the Germans knew then what went on in the concentration camps.

Tape 3: 36 minutes 46 seconds

RL: How aware were you in England of what was going on in Europe, with the Jews?

FB: Well I knew what had happened to my father. And I knew what happened on the 9th November 1938. And I knew how the Jewish people were being persecuted before then because I knew what went on in the schools...

RL: I mean during the war. How aware were you of what was going on with the camps and the extermination?

FB: Well, that was not on the news in this country, you see.

RL: When did you find out about it?

FB: After the war when my mother and father told me. But I think they must have known something in this country, because the wonderful thing is, the Allied planes flew over the concentration camps, and they did not drop bombs on them because they didn't want to harm the Jewish people in the camps. So they must have known something. But the planes just flew over and didn't drop bombs on the camps. And as I said whenever my father and the other inmates heard the Allied planes flying over the camp in Vailsburg, their hearts were filled with joy because they thought liberation would come eventually, when it was the sweetest music they ever heard, the sound of the Allied planes.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 32 seconds

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

FB: Well, I'm sure you can guess. I'm sure you can guess!

RL: What about the...the younger generation?

FB: Well I'll tell you an interesting anecdote. My mother was still alive then.. .and a German Arthurian scholar, who at that time did not know I was Jewish, and with whom I'd been corresponding. He came to Heald Green, to this bungalow. And my mother made us a lovely meal, and after the meal, I told him about the past. And I never heard another word from him. All correspondence ceased. He never wrote again after that. You can draw your own conclusions.

Tape 3: 40 minutes 4 seconds

RL: So, just bringing myself up to date with your life. You were going to Manchester University. If you could take me through that period and then what happened?

FB: I was an undergraduate in the French department. And after I'd taken my degree, I took a teaching diploma. And for two years I was teaching in Stratford High School for girls and then I decided I wanted to continue my with academic work. And I got a research studentship to Westfield College in London where I started working on my Manchester MA. And then I had a year in France with a French government scholarship.

RL: So when you went to Westfield College in London, what were you doing there?

FB: I was awarded a scholarship there. So, I was staying in Westfield College and I had the British Library at my disposal, which was wonderful, with all the medieval manuscripts there!

RL: What was your subject?

FB: Medieval French literature. That's why it was so wonderful being in London with the British Library and all the medieval manuscripts there, you see.

RL: Where were you living there?

FB: In Westfield College because the scholarship gave me free accommodation in Westfield College.

RL: How long were you there?

FB: I was there for a year. And then I had a French government scholarship so I was in Paris for a year, which was equally wonderful because there was the Bibliotheque Nationale with all the medieval manuscripts there. And then I got a research studentship at Manchester University. So I came back to Manchester University. I had a research studentship there for the next 3 years. And then I was awarded the Leverhulme Research Fellowship at Liverpool University. And through a bit of good fortune, the year I finished my doctorate, there was a vacancy in the French Department at Manchester University. And I've been there ever since, first as an assistant lecturer, then as a lecturer, then a reader, then as a professor. So I've been very, very lucky!

RL: What was your subject for your doctorate?

FB: It was The Romance of the Grail. I'll show you the book!

RL: No you can't, you can tell me.

FB: No I can't. It was called The Romance of the Grail. It was the study of a late 13th century version of the story of the Holy Grail and the death of King Arthur, which I enjoyed greatly.

RL: And in the French Department at Manchester University, was it medieval...?

FB: Medieval French was one of the subjects the students had to do at that time. Yes. Because... I had a wonderful professor there at that time, called Professor Eugene Vinaver, who, incidentally, was born in St Petersburg, and he and his family left Russia, also before the First World War and they went to France. And then he came to Great Britain. At the outbreak of war he managed to get all his relatives out of France because they were Jewish. He married a non-Jewish lady but all his relatives were Jewish. And if he hadn't got them out of France, well we know what their fate would have been, but he managed to get them out to England. And he was a wonderful medieval scholar. He inspired me greatly in my work. And so did another one, Dr. Whitehead, who lived in Norden. They both inspired me greatly in my work.

RL: What made you pick French in the first place?

FB: Well! I don't know why I chose French in the first place. Because what I was very much interested in was Latin as well. Yes, and Mr Clement said it would be much easier to get a job later teaching French rather than Latin. So I chose French rather than Latin!

Tape 3: 45 minutes 30 seconds

RL: And throughout your working life, have you ever met any hostility at all?

FB: None whatsoever, none whatsoever. The only thing which shocked me -you will have seen it on the television in February 2000, or was it 2001? - were the anti-Israeli demonstrations outside the University. Did you see that? You saw that. That deeply shocked me. That really deeply shocked me.

RL: Have you noticed a sort of change recently?

FB: No. No...no. I mean I personally haven't noticed anything. But when I saw that on the television... And the other thing which shocked me – you've probably heard that on the news or in the papers - was that woman in UMIST who broke off all relations with the Israeli scholar.

RL: Can you explain it a bit before the camera?

FB: Yes, well I can't remember the full details. I can't even remember... oh, Mona something. I can't even remember her second name. She had on the editorship of the journal she was publishing an Israeli scholar. Oh, Mona Baker, she is called, Mona Baker from UMIST. There was a lot about it on the news and in the paper - that's how I found out about it. She expelled from the editorial board of her journal the Israeli scholar who was there before on it. And that reminded me of Nazi Germany, when the Jewish children were expelled from the schools. But there it is. When I heard of Mona Baker's action and the demonstrations – you saw on the television the demonstrations – yes? That shocked me deeply. I just couldn't believe it. But then there's a lot of anti Israeli feeling, isn't there?

Tape 3: 48 minutes 11 seconds

RL: What are your feelings about Israel?

FB: Oh my love is with Israel of course, especially when you think that so many of the people living there are the offspring of the survivors of the Holocaust. All my love and sympathy is with them.

RL: Have you ever visited the country?

FB: No I've never been to Israel. Have you?

RL: Have you ever wanted to?

FB: Well I certainly wouldn't like to at the moment. I wouldn't feel safe!

RL: Not something you did ever, in the years before?

FB: No. No. I don't know what's going to happen there, I'm sure.

RL: In terms of your work, you mentioned that you're writing books and papers. Have you written many books? You can't unhook but you can tell me...

FB: Yes, oh, yes, yes. The first book I published was called *The Romance of the Grail*, and then I published an edition of a new part of the work. And in 2001 the last

of the five volumes of *The Post-Vulgate Queste del Saint Graal* came out. They're sitting on the shelf. Five volumes. And now I'm working on another book and a whole lot of papers I've got to write.

RL: What's the book you're working on now?

Tape 3: 49 minutes 55 seconds

FB: It's on the quest for the Grail. But what has shocked me deeply, and I was never aware of it before I started looking at it, is the evident anti-Semitism in some of the Grail romances. In one writer, Chretien de Troyes, in his story of Percival, which is also a story of the Grail, he says there the Jews should be killed like dogs. That was a 12th century writer! And Robert de Baron in his version of the Grail is equally vehemently anti-Semitic. And in the prose version of *Queste de Sainte Graal* that I'm editing now, I was shocked also where the synagogue, that's the Jewish people, are represented as the enemies of the new law. Well, they turn history around; they say the synagogue attacks the new law, whereas it was always the other way around. The vehement anti-Semitism in the Grail romances shocked me deeply! That's why I started reading the background literature, when I became aware of the anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages. Jewish doctors weren't allowed to practice in the Middle Ages. It was like reading about Nazi Germany except they didn't have gas chambers. As I said they even had the yellow Star of David that they had to wear. It's just...

RL: Do you think anti-Semitism is present in present day Britain?

Tape 3: 52 minutes 11 seconds

FB: I personally have not been aware of it. Have you been aware of it?

RL: It's not for me to say!

FB: Not for you to say. No, I personally have not been aware of. No, I personally haven't. But then I'm not in contact with many people.

RL: Are you still teaching at the university?

FB: No, I spend all my time doing research now.

RL: When did you retire?

FB: When I was 67. Since then I spend all my time doing research.

RL: You don't have contact with students any more?

FB: No. I go to international conferences and give papers at international conferences. And one thing was very interesting; about four or five years ago I went to a conference in Poitiers. When I go to conferences I always go to libraries so see if there are medieval manuscripts there. And in one library I went to in Poitiers, a wonderful librarian, he showed me the monument that's been erected to the Jewish people that all around the district of Poitiers had been collected there and sent off to

the death chambers. He was not Jewish but he was very, very pro-Jewish, and in his library he's collecting all the information about the Holocaust that he can. A wonderful man, that librarian! It's he who showed me around. They've got a big monument to a rabbi there – the Rabbi of Poitiers who was taken off to a death camp and never came back because as you know, in France all the Jewish people were rounded up and taken off to the death camps. They were collected at Drancy and from there, sent off, never to come back. Wherever the German occupation forces went, the fate of the Jewish people was the same.

Tape 3: 54 minutes 14 seconds

RL: Have you had much contact with the Jewish community in Manchester?

FB: Not really. No. You are the first Jewish person I've seen for a long, long time! The other Jewish person I saw was in hospital when I had my bypass surgery. A Jewish person came to visit me.

RL: And going back over the years, did you have any contact initially?

FB: No, I've never met many Jewish people. There used to be... yes, a Jewish lady who lived in Heald Green. But she then moved south to be with her daughter. But that was the only Jewish lady we knew in Heald Green.

RL: When your mother was here. Did she make any friends in Manchester?

FB: Not in Manchester itself. I mean, she knew all the... at least all the neighbours. The people around here knew her. Because even now people tell me that they knew my mother. She died 25 years ago on April 11 1978 and people still remember her. Because we always went for little walks together, and so people still remember her.

RL: What did she do while she was here, your mother?

FB: Well, until she was 84, she looked after me. Made my breakfast, and when I came home from the university, my evening meal was waiting for me. She looked after me. And then the last 4 years of her life, when she was very weak, I looked after her. And she used to say to me that I looked after her as well as if she were a baby. We knew two Jewish people then, because when my mother first came to live in Heald Green with me, for the first fortnight or 10 days, because we were renting a bungalow in another part of Heald Green. It was January 1963 and everything was frozen. So we stayed in the Morris Feinmann Home in Didsbury. Do you know the Morris Feinmann Home?

RL: Yes.

FB: Yes. And there, a Jewish doctor was Doctor Friedlander and his partner, Dr Kassen. So, those were the two Jewish people that we knew. And then when we moved to the bungalow, when we moved to Heald Green, we had Dr Friedlander for a while till suddenly he died, poor man, quite young. And then Dr Kassen came, and when my mother died, he arranged for...he arranged for a Jewish funeral for my

mother and found a Jewish rabbi to come. Because I wouldn't have known what to do about it, but he knew of course, which was very nice.

Tape 3: 58 minutes 35 seconds

RL: Where was she buried?

FB: In the Jewish Cemetery in Southern Cemetery, in the Jewish part of the cemetery in Southern Cemetery. That's where she lies. And I've had her grave made deep enough for my coffin to go on top of her coffin when eventually I shall be joining her in Southern Cemetery. My father is buried in the cemetery in Nuremberg, in the Jewish Cemetery in Nuremberg. There was no Jewish cemetery in Weißenburg, so he is buried in Nuremberg. But I've never seen his grave since he was buried because I've never been back, you see. I don't know what the cemetery is like there now.

RL: What contact have you had with the AJR? How did that...?

FB: Well, it was quite by chance that I was put in touch with the reunion of Kindertransport, and when the Kindertransport meetings came to an end we were joined with AJR. It was like that, all completely by chance.

RL: Can you tell me about the Kindertransport reunion?

FB: Yes there was a reunion in London, as I was mentioning, when was it – a few years ago.

RL: We might just have to stop it here, because I think this film's coming to an end.

Tape 3: 61 minutes 0 second

End of Tape 3

TAPE 4

RL: I just wanted to ask you... We talked about your academic life...

FB: Yes

RL: Obviously you were still living at the Clement family, when you started off...

FB: Yes, in Horton Green near Denton.

RL: The other question I had was, during the war you became 16, did you have to appear before a tribunal at all?

FB: Well Mr Clement came...went with me to the police station. What we had to do I don't know but Mr Clement came with me so there was no problem. I was a girl. If I had been a boy, it wouldn't have been the same.

RL: And it was just a one-off visit?

FB: Yes

RL: And there was nothing else after that?

FB: No. And Mr Clement came with me.

RL: And you were living with them when you started working. Did you have to contribute to the family funds?

FB: Yes, well, I was working in Staley Bridge public library. And the wage that we received in those days was 25 shillings a week. And I contributed to the Clement family 5 shillings a week. Five shillings was on my bus fare to Staley Bridge and 5 shillings for my lunches. We ate there in those days in what was called a British Restaurant. And the other money I saved up until I got enough money to pay for an extramural course. Oh, and with the first 10 shillings I saved, I bought a copy of Caesar's *Gallic Wars* in Latin, because that was one of the set books for the London extra-mural Latin intermediate course, Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. So that was the first money I saved that I spent it on one of the set books that I had to buy.

RL: Did the family give you pocket money before that? Did you have any spending money?

FB: Yes, thruppence a week. Yes. Of course thruppence was a lot of money in those days. You can't compare pennies in those days with pennies nowadays.

RL: Did you ever go on holiday?

FB: Now, that was interesting. The first year I arrived in June, 27th. And shortly after that, the beginning of July, they took me with them. I remember that distinctly. We went on holiday to a place near Llandudno in Wales. I remember that distinctly. Yes.

RL: What did you think of the place?

Tape 4: 3 minutes 50 seconds

FB: Well, it was the first time in my life I had been to the seaside! It was quite an experience to go to the seaside. It was lovely! They'd rented a bungalow near the seaside there, you see? Mrs Clement did the cooking. And we just spent most of the day by the seaside. It was lovely! It was the first time I'd ever been to the seaside. They just had two children then. Richard aged 2 and Charles, aged 4.

RL: How did you get on with the children?

FB: Oh, they were lovely! Later they had two little girls, one, Helen, who was born in November 44, and Beatrice born in February, 1943. And when Beatrice was a little girl – she can't have been more than 4 or 5 – she said to me, 'Our mother said you're our sister.' Wasn't that a lovely thing to say! And in all these years they've never once forgotten my birthday, the four children now, and the aunt before. The aunt died about 3 or 4 years ago – she was 93 or something... Neither the aunt nor the children

have ever forgotten my birthday, after all these years. Which I think is absolutely wonderful, isn't it? And they telephone me regularly, the girls. In fact Helen rang me only about a fortnight ago. Helen used to live with her husband near Sheffield but she's now moved down to near Salisbury which is rather a long way away. But Charles and his wife live near Oxford. So when I go to the library - to the Bodleian Library in Oxford - I stay with them, you see? They're a wonderful family. Their children are just as wonderful as their mother and father were. Absolutely wonderful!

RL: After... You said they moved away somewhere?

Tape 4: 6 minutes 11 seconds

FB: Yes, first of all they moved from Horton Green to Marple. That was the first place they moved to.

RL: And did you move with them?

FB: I moved with them, yes.

RL: Then after that?

FB: After that they moved to Stowmarket, in Suffolk.

RL: And where did you move to?

FB: Well, when I was an undergraduate at that time, so in the University Holidays I went to stay with them in Stowmarket, in Suffolk.

Tape 4: 6 minutes 37 seconds

RL: And whilst you were at University?

FB: I lived at Ashburn Hall, a student hall of residence. Because one of the scholarships that I was awarded was the Ashburn Hall scholarship.

RL: How much money came with the scholarships?

FB: Well, you had to pay university fees, of course. That came out of the scholarship. And I got my board and lodging at Ashburn Hall. And then Mrs Pogmore at the Jewish Refugee Children's Movement - she got also in touch with, I don't know with what she got, but she got in touch with a fund for Jewish students and I was awarded a grant from that fund as well. But Mrs Pogmore arranged all that. She was a wonderful lady!

RL: And how long did you receive that grant?

FB: Well, I had the grant first of all when I was an undergraduate. And then when I did my teaching diploma. All people doing teaching diplomas got grants from the government, because then you had to undertake to teach. That's why I taught for two years at Stratford High School. And then I got a scholarship at Westfield College,

London. I stayed at the college, free of board and lodging and got pocket money as well. I didn't have to pay for my board and lodging. What I got for my scholarship there was for me to buy books, etc. And then I got a French government scholarship. That was paid for by the French government. And then I got a research studentship from Manchester University. It was Manchester University who paid that. And then Leverhulme Research Fellowship - that was paid by Liverpool University. And then, I got my first job at Manchester University. So I've been very, very lucky, I must say.

Tape 4: 8 minutes 55 seconds

RL: When you were teaching at the high school, Stretford High School, where did you live at that stage?

FB: I lived in digs in Withington, and I travelled by bus to Stretford. I lived with a very nice lady. Oh yes, when my mother came to live with me, she stayed with that lady and me there. That was where she first stayed when she came.

RL: So you were still in the digs?

FB: In digs there. Yes.

RL: Had you moved back into the digs, or had you been in the digs all the time?

FB: No, no. when I was a research student, at Manchester University I stayed in the digs in... No, what happened, first of all I stayed in the digs in Withington, and then I lived in the university hall of residence which was called at that time **Domar** House. It doesn't exist now. And then when my mother came, my mother and I, we stayed again for about a fortnight with the lady in Withington. That's how it was, yes. And then, until the weather got better, and in the bungalow where we lived in Heald Green the water had stopped being frozen up, I stayed with her in the Morris Feinmann Home. And then we stayed in the bungalow in the other part of Heald Green until this estate was built in 68. And as soon as this estate was built, well, even before this estate was built, the estate agent took my mother and me around to look at properties. And the first thing my mother always wanted to know, 'Where is public transport? Where are the shops?' And if they weren't near, she said, 'That's no use.' And as soon as she saw this estate being built, she said, 'This is just right. It's just near public transport and near the shops.' So, she chose this one.

Tape 4: 11 minutes 8 seconds

RL: When you stayed in the Morris Feinmann Home, did you ever know people in that home?

FB: No, no. No, no. The only way I found out about the Morris Feinmann Home was because my late professor, Vinaver, his GP was Dr Friedlander, and that's how I found out about the Morris Feinmann home, through Doctor Friedlander. Otherwise I wouldn't have known about it. It's Dr Friedlander who told me about it and it's my professor who told me about Dr Friedlander. He was a Jewish refugee from Germany of course as well, Dr Friedlander.

RL: Have you belonged or do you belong to any organisations at all?

FB: No, no.

RL: Even academic...?

FB: Oh academic! Oh, yes. Yes. The International Arthurian Society, and The Ronceval Society which deals with the epic, and The Courtly Literature Society. Yes, yes. But these are all academic societies, connected with my work.

Tape 4: 12 minutes 20 seconds

RL: And... non academic? Have you ever been connected with anything?

FB: No, no, apart from the Kindertransport, of course.

RL: And we're about to speak about that because you went to that reunion. How did you hear of that reunion?

FB: How did I hear about the Kindertransport in the first place? Because I didn't know anything about the Kindertransport Society at first at all. It was, oh, quite by chance. Many, many, many years ago, God, when I bought a typewriter in Manchester, from...and I didn't know that at first when I bought it from the shop. The shop was owned by a Jewish lady and her two sons. And, she somehow knew about this and she told me about it, that's how. And how many years ago did I buy that typewriter? Oh my God. It must have been in the late 1940s. You don't often go into a shop and buy something and make a friend, but we've been friends ever since! And she even came to my mother's funeral, this lady. A wonderful lady. And it's she who somehow told me about the Kindertransport Society. I knew nothing about it. But she somehow knew about it because she's Jewish.

Tape 4: 14 minutes 10 seconds

RL: What's her name?

FB: Jackie Ray.

RL: You joined the Society?

FB: The Kindertransport Society, yes.

RL: And what do they do?

FB: Well, they had newsletters regularly, and then they had that reunion, to which I went, in London.

RL: How did you find that?

FB: Well, very interesting to meet all the others – at least I say all – it was only a number of the others. Ten-thousand children came in the Kindertransport but there

weren't of course 10,000 in the reunion. But they had branches of the Kindertransport in all the countries to which... You see a lot of the children eventually emigrated to the States, and to Canada, Australia, and Israel. They're scattered all over the world now. But it was thanks to Jacky Ray that I ever found out about it.

RL: And at the reunion did you meet anyone that you knew?

FB: Nobody that I know, no. Whether it's possible... No, I don't think Kahn's son was there. I can't remember. I don't think so. No, I didn't meet anyone that I knew.

RL: And is the Kindertransport Society still active?

FB: Not now. That's when they joined the AJR, you see?

RL: And you started getting newsletters from them?

FB: That's right. Yes.

RL: Do you ever go to meetings at the AJR?

FB: I've never been, no, because public transport is so awful and the meetings are usually in the evening or on a Sunday, and it's impossible to get back, you see. I don't like being out in the evening. It's not safe. So I don't go. Do you go to the meetings? Yes of course.

RL: I think it's mainly for refugees.

FB: Yes. Yes.

Tape 4: 16 minutes 22 seconds

RL: Do you get letters about the meetings?

FB: Yes.

RL: Yes, right. Socially what do you do?

FB: Nothing. I just get on with my work. Literally that's all I do. Get on with my work.

RL: Do you have a circle of friends?

FB: I wouldn't even say that. I have a colleague and we collaborate on a book together. But, I mean there are no people who I invite to the house, or anything. Just my colleague, who comes, she comes every Sunday when we work on the book together.

RL: Who do you feel most comfortable with?

FB: How do you mean, dear?

RL: With people. What kind of people do you feel most...?

FB: Well, they're all very nice. They're all very nice in Heald Green, I can't say otherwise. And most of them still remember my mother, which is so lovely. That's what I really like, when they say they still remember my mother. And she died on 11th of April, 1978 of double pneumonia. We both had anti-flu injections that year. And yet we both got the flu and my mother's turned to double pneumonia which was very sad. She died in the ambulance to Wythenshawe Hospital on 11th of April. The next morning Doctor Kassen came to the hospital and picked me up. Because when my mother died in the ambulance she was taken to the mortuary in the hospital. And I must have been in such a state, because they didn't let me go home, they kept me in overnight. And Doctor Kassen arranged for a Jewish burial for her in Southern Cemetery. He arranged for a rabbi to come to the house and...

RL: Do you know who came?

FB: It was a Reformed Synagogue rabbi. I can't remember his name. But if Dr Kassen hadn't arranged it I wouldn't have known what to do!

Tape 4: 19 minutes 0 second

RL: Have you had any contact with synagogues in Manchester?

FB: Not really. Not really. No. Well, Jackie Ray used to take me to a synagogue for the Jewish festivals before she was herself not very well. She used to take me.

RL: Do you know which one it was that you went to?

FB: I think she took me to a synagogue in Manchester somewhere, but I don't know which one. Cause she took me in her car and brought me home.

RL: In terms of nationality, how would you describe yourself?

FB: Oh, British. British! I was naturalised British in June, 1947. That was the proudest day of my life when I became a British citizen.

RL: And is there anything that you feel...? Do you miss anything about Germany?

FB: Nothing at all. Nothing at all. Nothing at all...

RL: Do you feel you've got any kind of continental identity?

FB: No. Certainly not, certainly not. All I can remember is what they did. There are no pleasant memories of Germany. None at all, none at all.

RL: Would you say you feel at home here?

FB: Absolutely. This is my home. And the little bit of Great Britain is my mother's home forever in Southern Cemetery. I often thought of bringing the remains of my

father to join us, but I think it's impossible. I don't think too much would be left somehow because he was buried in 1959.

Tape 4: 21 minutes 20 seconds

RL: Have you visited his grave?

FB: No. No. Before my mother came, while my mother still lived in Weißenburg then I visited the grave, but not after my mother came to live here.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

FB: I think they're a wonderful, wonderful people.

LR: Do you feel different to them in any way?

FB: No, I feel British in every way. No, I wouldn't like to be anything else. In fact, the first time in her life that my mother felt free and without fear was when she came here to live with me, here in Heald Green.

RL: Did she take out naturalisation?

FB: No, she was too old for that. She was too old for that.

RL: How did she settle into life here?

FB: She was very happy here. She was very happy here. She looked after me until she was 84.

Tape 4: 22 minutes 34 seconds

RL: Did she speak English?

FB: Yes, but not very much unfortunately. I should have taught her more.

RL: What language did you speak in to each other?

FB: Oh, a mixture of German and English. A mixture of it.

RL: And was she able to communicate with the neighbours?

FB: I don't think she could hold lengthy conversations with them. I don't think so somehow. But she was, how old was she when she came? She came in 1963 and she was born in 1890, so she was 73 when she came. So she wasn't exactly a young girl when she came.

RL: Do you think your experiences have affected you in any way?

FB: In what sense do you mean?

RL: Psychologically, do you think it's had an effect on you?

FB: Well the first few years after I came to England, when I didn't know what was happening to my parents. I think I must have suffered from depression, because, although I didn't know what the word depression was, I still remember saying to Mr Clement (I called them 'Aunt' and 'Uncle' of course) 'I have a feeling something is going to happen.' That was my way of expressing my unease, because I was very anxious about my parents. I knew that if I couldn't get them out of Germany, I had no illusions about what could happen to them, so of course I was very, very anxious as a child worrying about my parents. I think that was inevitable. To have left your parents behind in the land of the devils, it just was traumatic leaving them behind. Although I was only eleven, I knew that if I couldn't get them out of Germany. I knew what my father had looked like after he came out of Dachau, so I had no illusions about what their fate would be.

RL: Has it had any long-term psychological effects?

Tape 4: 25 minutes 17 seconds

FB: Well, the interesting thing is, when I see on television films of the Holocaust, I inevitably cry. When I saw the film, I don't know if you saw it, of Anne Frank. Did you see that on television? And in that film, Anne Frank and her mother and father were taken to Bergen-Belsen and she died in Bergen Belsen. And on television you saw the barracks and everything, and I just visualised my mother being there, and I just couldn't help myself from crying. In fact whenever I see films on television of the Holocaust I cry, because I can't help but think of the past. Of course Anne Frank as you know, she and her parents had gone into hiding in Holland. And for a while they were safe in their hiding until one day, a Dutch woman denounced them. And you saw on the television, the Germans coming and taking them away... You know the story of Anne Frank?

RL: Oh I've seen plenty of films. It's just I didn't see that particular one...

FB: Yes...

RL: I was just asking if, psychologically you feel you still have been affected up to today, if it's had any long-term effects?

FB: No. Well, my GP – he's been retired for quite a while - he thought it would be a good idea for me to write down all my memories. That's how I first came to write my childhood memories of the Holocaust. Because he thought it would be good for me. That's how I first came to write it down, because he suggested it!

RL: Did you find it was...?

FB: Well, it was a good thing, and I'm so glad I wrote it all down, because now, the bulletin of the John Rylands Library is going to publish a paper as well of mine called 'Childhood Memories of the Holocaust of a Manchester Jewess'. Well, this will have a wider audience than what I say in that book. Because it's so important, I think, that the Holocaust must never ever be forgotten.

Tape 4: 27 minutes 50 seconds

RL: Can we move again to effects that your experience might have had on you. What about in terms of security? How secure you might feel?

FB: Well in Great Britain I feel wonderfully secure. But I would never, after what happened to my father in the hospital in Weißenburg...Whenever I travel...When I went to the conference in Bonn, for example, I jolly well made sure that I had travel insurance, because I had no intention that if I were ever taken ill in Germany, that I would go to hospital in Germany, cause I wouldn't trust them! No I would never ever go to a hospital in Germany, never, ever. Because I don't know what the Germans are really like now. There is just one man, who's been corresponding with me. He's a wonderful man. He's called Martin Witter. He's from Affaltrach, now it's called Obersulln. He's been busy with having a library with Holocaust memorials in the synagogue in Affaltrach. And he's written several times to ask me to come and visit, but I've been so busy with my work. They're collecting together all the archives that they can remember about the Jewish people who lived in Affaltrach and all the surrounding district, and he is collecting them together. He's one of the good, righteous Germans. In fact I've got a letter here from him written on the 14th of April this year. He writes to me regularly. Oh, he's wishing me a Happy Passover. So he knows when Pesach is!

Tape 4: 30 minutes 8 seconds

RL: In terms of 'Jewishness', you mention Pesach. What does being Jewish mean for you?

FB: Well, I feel very much Jewish, but I'm afraid I'm not Orthodox, I'm afraid. But I feel very much Jewish, and all my love and sympathy is with Israel.

RL: Are there any aspects of the religion that you observe or are close to?

FB: Well, I'm not sure. I'm afraid I'm not very observant. But I feel Jewish. I couldn't be anything else.

RL: Do you think your religious opinions have changed over the years or have they been very much the same throughout?

FB: They've been the same. They haven't changed. I've always felt Jewish. Never felt anything else.

RL: Your experiences haven't altered your religious...?

FB: Oh, no, no. Nothing could persuade me to change from being Jewish. And what was so wonderful was that the Clement family made sure that I should keep in contact with my Jewish origins by sending me for the festivals to a Jewish family. Which I thought was wonderful of them. When I was reading the other week about Jewish children... in ...was it in Holland?... where they never told the children about their past. That I thought was very sad. Where was it? In Holland?

RL: Has there ever been any prospect of marriage?

FB: No. No! I'm married to my work, as you can see!

Tape 4: 32 minutes 35 seconds

RL: Is there anything else you'd like to add, that we might have missed out on?

FB: I'm just wondering if there's anything we should mention that we haven't mentioned. Are there any other questions you'd like to ask me? Oh yes there's one thing I should perhaps mention. Something I could never understand and that was: the Swiss knew what was going on and they did not open their doors to the Jewish people in Switzerland. I've never understood that. And I've never understood why the world kept its doors closed to the Jewish people. I'm sure the Holocaust could have been avoided if the world had opened its doors and allowed the Jewish people to leave Germany. Something I can never understand, why the world was so hard to the Jewish people. Have you ever wondered that? Yes?

RL: Is there any message you'd like to give?

FB: Yes, the world must never *ever* forget what those Germans did to the Jewish people. They must never ever forget how they exterminated young and old. What they did is unforgivable. The Holocaust must never, ever be forgotten. It's so important that the world must remember forever and ever what those German devils did to the Jewish people. You see, what struck me the most was, in... I don't know if you remember, quite a few years ago, there was in the paper, cattle were being transported. And the people in this country objected to seeing the cattle in the trucks being transported. But in Germany, the Germans did not protest against seeing children being transported in cattle trucks. That is the difference between Great Britain and Germany. Great Britain is full of human sympathy. Sympathy not only for humans but for animals, but the Germans had no sympathy for humans. They transported them in cattle trucks worse than cattle, and nobody objected. When those cattle trucks, full of those little children, in France, were passing through Vittel, nobody protested. The terrified faces, as my mother said, of those little children could be seen, but nobody protested. They were sent off to the death chambers. The world must never ever forget what those Germans did. If the people had stood up and protested, one man alone could not have done what they did. They all joined in! That is what is the terrible thing. There must be an evil gene in the Germans. I can't think of any other explanation.

RL: Thank you very much.

FB: Well thank you very much. Thank you.

Tape 4: 36 minutes 52 seconds

Fanni Bogdanow Interview: Photographs.

FB: From left to right, the first person is my father, Brasha Bogdanow, next to him is my mother Johanna Bogdanow, and she's got me in her arms, Fanni, when I was about a year old. Next to her is her mother, called Selz, and next to her is my father's sister, called Zilli Selz, and in her arms, is my cousin Helga, aged two.

RL: Where?

FB: In Affaltrach.

RL: When was it...?

FB: In 1928.

Tape 4: 37 minutes 45 seconds

FB: This photograph was taken about a week before I came to England on the 27th of June 1939. On the left is my father Brasha Bogdanow. Sitting next to me is my mother looking very sad, because she knew I'd be leaving very soon. And next to her, that's myself, Fanni Bogdanow aged 11. And the photograph was taken at a photographer's studio in Heilbronn.

FB: This is the Star of David which all Jewish people had to wear as from November 1939. My mother had to wear this on the outside of her coat before she was taken to Bergen Belsen concentration camp. The word in the middle of the Star of David is 'Jude', meaning Jew.

FB: This photograph was taken in August 1947 when I saw my parents for the first time again, after the war. On the left is my mother, Johanna Bogdanow, in the middle is myself, Fanni Bogdanow and next to me is my father, Brasha Bogdanow. This photograph was taken in a studio in Weißenburg, where my parents were living at that time.

FB: This photograph was taken in 1957 when I received my Doctorate from Manchester University. My name is Fanni Bogdanow.

FB: On the left hand side is the younger daughter of Mrs Clement who took me into their family when I came to England, in June 1939. In the middle is Mrs Clement. In that photograph she is already in her 90s. And next to her is myself, Fanni Bogdanow. The photograph was taken in Stowmarket in Suffolk. In the end of the 1990s.

FB: This a photograph of my mother, Johanna Bogdanow and myself, Fanni Bogdanow, taken just a few months before my mother died, in April, 1978. In that photograph we are looking out of our bedroom window in our bungalow in Heald Green.

End of Tape