IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV306

NAME: Ivor Perl

DATE: 7 October 2024

LOCATION: London

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[00:00:00]

Today is the 7th of October 2024 and we're conducting interview with Mr Ivor Perl. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. Can you please tell me your name?

My name is Ivor Perl, used to be Yitzchak Perlmutter.

And when and where were you born, please?

I was born in southern Hungary in a place called Makó, M-A-K-O, near – very, very close to the Romanian border.

And which year? When?

In 1932.

Ivor, thank you so much [overtalking 00:00:41] for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive.

Right.

Maybe unusually, because it's the 7th of October today, maybe we start actually from today. I don't know. How do you feel about giving your testimony on this day, today, a year after what happened in Israel?

To me, I feel very, very, very sad and scared, not for myself because at my age I'm – I don't care. I'm not saying I don't care, I haven't got that much longer – but for the future. I never thought – I never thought that before I die, I leave this world, that I'll see the same thing rising over and over again. Not necessarily the Holocaust as such but the killing, the killing that goes on, which I feel very, very sad for society, for humanity.

You mean in the Middle East and also in Ukraine, the war?

Well, in – Middle East obviously an awful lot to me because of being Jewish and being – I wanted to come – I wanted to go to Palestine after I was liberated in Germany, so obviously that is involved [ph], but in world in general. But I keep on saying that to children – as you know, I go around talking to children of my predicament in the Holocaust. **[00:02:06]** I say to them, how many Jews died in the Holocaust? There's a – there is a discussion, 4, 5, 6 million, that's it, it doesn't matter, take the middle one, 5 million. And then I say, now, how many people died in the Second World War? And this is what I – I can't understand how people don't seem to realise that 5 million Jews died but nearly 60 million people died in the Second World War.

And why is it important for you to make that –

It's important because I feel as though it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter the killing. The killing should be the one. It's not who and how many. If people still solve the problem purely – over and over again, including what's happening again, purely by killing, and I would have thought that possibly the Holocaust might have taught the world a lesson. I hoped it would have done but I'm very, very – how shall I say – scared for the future of the children and society.

And have you personally felt an increase of anti-Semitism? Have you had bad experiences? You go out and you give talks –

No. That's a very –

Last year?

That's a very, very good question. I mean I've lost my family, I was in the camps, but actual personal anti-Semitic feelings, I didn't have much in my life, just because I wasn't in – I wasn't involved. I mean I was – well, I had to go to the camps, I didn't lose anything. Just because I myself didn't suffer, it doesn't mean to say the suffering is not there.

No, but I meant – I meant recently.

But the feeling, the feeling is there when I go out in the street, even now.

What feeling?

A feeling that here we go again. This is how the First – the Second World War started. **[00:04:03]** It started – the Second World War started in Spain in 1938, '39.

The Civil War?

That was happening in Spain, a Civil War, there was a test between Russia and Germany, America and the West. The same thing is happening all over again, but Ukraine and the Middle East, the dates are different, the places are different, but the result and the problem is exactly all over again.

So your theory for the world –

Very much, yes. I don't – as I don't fear – not saying I don't fear myself, it's a bit – but I don't. I don't fear for myself. As far as I'm concerned – as you know, I'm ninety-two. It's not a

question how long I'll live now. It's how I live. So as far as I am concerned, I don't even consider myself an irrelevancy [ph]. But I can foresee that people haven't learnt much about in the past and it's coming all over again. It might be a bit pessimistic. But I would call it a realist. Like I say, I want to call it a glass is half empty. I might say, but unfortunately, both sides are true. A glass is half empty as well as half full.

Yeah. And as somebody who has been so active in Holocaust education as you, do you feel particularly that notion that people have – nobody has learnt, or – you mentioned that –

Like I did – well, I did ask before, when I go to be interviewed by – who should I say now- people like you taking – can you show me, show me in black and white what has the world learned from – for the last hundred years of history, because there were two world wars in the last hundred years. **[00:06:03]** And what's happening? What has the world learned?

And what do you think?

I – the only thing I feel they've learned is how you can kill people quicker. The First World War was the gas, the bombs, the Second World War ended up in the atom bomb and the next one could be the hydrogen. So what does the world learn? I might sound pessimistic but I call myself a realist.

Okay, so I think it's good we started with this.

Yeah.

So from this perspective, we're going back now, to your life, Ivor, so thank you for sharing your thoughts. I thought it was important because it is the 7th of October today.

Very much so.

Tell me a little bit about your family background, please.

Well, I come from a very religious family, a very religious family, and I was – five brothers, four sisters. I can't remember my – I mean the custom was people used to have a lot of children but as they grew up, they sort of seemed to leave the nest and start their own life. So although we had a family of eleven, I can't remember often that we were all together. Very rarely, in fact.

And in the hierarchy, where are you on the hierarchy?

I'm on seventh. Seventh of the nine children. But –

So you're on the younger side of the family?

Yes, yes. But I mean the history of Hungary, I don't know whether it's relevant or not, but it goes back – the Jews go back to Hungary about – over 800, 900 years. Now, I'm convinced – I'm not a historian – but I can – I'm sure I'm right that 90% of the time there was anti-Semitism in Hungary all those years. But we knew we were Jews, they were gentiles. So, as far as I'm concerned, as far I saw, I seem to look back upon my life as fairly happy. **[00:08:03]** Of course I had to be careful because I wore a *payes* and called a dirty Jew, but somehow or other that was part of life.

So you had peyis. So, did you – were you Hasidic?

Yes.

And which Hasidic sect?

The Belz. Belz Hasidic.

Belz Hasidic.

I mean as – I don't know if you know, there were seniors [ph] and there is the hierarchy, there's Satmar, Belz, Bobov, Vizhnitz, Ger, Lubavitch.

Yes, so tell us about –

So there are an awful lot.

Ivor, so tell us about the Belz Hasidim because not everyone will know about it.

Well, the Belz Hasidim – well, this is – I would say about – in the hierarchy the most – no, how do you call that, the Satmar – what do you call them?

Well…

That were the Satmar then the Belz. Belz was also a very, very strong Hasidic community.

Convict – not conv – with conviction or with –

Yes, of a religious way of life. And my studies consisted usually six and a half days a week and I reckon about twelve hours a day or more, fourteen hours a day, two thirds, one third secular and two third religious.

And tell us, what was the difference between these Hasidic sects, apart from the leadership, that it was the Belz rabbi or the Satmar rabbi or –

I – do you know, the – you're asking questions I've never been asked before. I never thought of that, other than, how shall I say now, that looking back now, that I thought that was a wonderful way of looking forward. I mean the Hasidic way of life was very, very family-orientated. Obviously, there are restrictions, like any strict religious organisation. **[00:10:00]** But looking back, I found it a very, very – quite a happy life.

Describe a little bit about where you lived, what –

Well, we lived in a town, it's Makó, southern Hungary. Our father was in the wholesale vegetable business, kind of- like not unusual in those days. And my day consisted of getting up about five o'clock in the morning, going to Hebrew classes till about eight, having a bit of breakfast, go back to secular classes till twelve, then lunch, and going back again for Hebrew classes again till about four or five o'clock in the afternoon. But it was very restrictive but I, looking back, I think it was a – I don't know if happy is the right word – yes, yes, it was quite a happy way of life.

And Ivor, which languages did you speak?

Now, that's a good question. That – being Hasidic, which you know, so we spoke Yiddish to our father and brothers and Hungarian to our mother and sisters. Now, why and how and when, I'm afraid I can't – I don't know why.

Is it maybe because the girls were not sent to yeshiva and that's why they didn't speak Yiddish?

Yes, yes, it could be. But all I can say is as far as the household is concerned, the woman is considered the queen of the household. It's not that they were second, er, second, er –

Best?

The best, second best. But why –

But they didn't speak – so in the house you spoke more Hungarian than Yiddish?

Yes, yes.

That's interesting. And did the girls – were the girls sent to school? I mean what –

Er, yes, they sent to school but of course the segregation, there was a girls' school and a boys' school. **[00:12:01]** Although, mind you, the secular education I think we had together,

although one side, the girls, the other side, the boys. But the Jewish education was only boys obviously, with the Hebrew study, education.

So were you – by the time you grew up, were some of your sisters already married?

No, funnily enough, my young – my eldest brother was twenty-one, so all –

So nobody was married, pre-war?

Nobody was married as yet. Nobody was married, pre-war. We were too young. But the custom was as soon as a child got married, they seemed to – I haven't sort of traced it back – they seem to have gone to – away from the family, go somewhere else. I don't know why, how, when, but…

And in the – in your city were there all Hasidic or were there also more secular Jews?

No, I would say about fifty/fifty, or sixty/forty. 60% of Hasidic, 40% Neolog, which you – which is called the Reform.

Okay, so that's interesting. There was a – were there two syna – or more synagogues?

More. About four synagogues. And of course, one circle [ph] never went to the other one. Of course we all [laughs] – in fact the Neolog, the Reform synagogue, was always – a beautiful edifice and they had an organ and as a child, we were always dying to hear the organ play but the teachers and our parents used to say, whenever you go past the Neolog, the, you know, they are not a religious synagogue, don't go straight, you have to go around the bell [ph] [laughs].

They didn't want you to even look at it?

Yeah.

Which shows there was a big rift between the Neolog and the –

Yes, yes, yes.

All over that – Hungary and Slovakia I guess.

Yes, the same. But looking back now, at my age now, it looks like it's very hard to mix the two together, although I don't know, maybe you can do. **[00:14:02]**

And how did your parents manage financially, with such a big family?

I've never been asked that question and I never thought about it. But all I can – when I think back about Hungary, I think back, a parcel of life, that my life, looking back, was a happy one. What I mean a happy one, considering when you had to go to *heder* or school, you were scared you're being called a dirty Jew or anything like that.

So that was a day-to-day occurrence?

That was a day-to-day occurrence but used to play with children and their parents were usually quite happy.

Did you share a room with your brothers?

Yes. Not only a room, but a bed.

So all the boys were in one room or –

Yes. No, but I mean all I remember is my two sisters, three sis – and the two – and three boys, that's all we were, six. The other three were – well, some of them were always sort of old enough to go away to further afield. But I haven't gone back into it in detail of why, I just accepted it. That was part of life. I should imagine like a bird has got two – you know, a lot of, er, a lot of, you know, a lot of – what do you call them now?

Feathers? No.

Not feathers but – extra birds. The older ones just fly away and they start again.

Yeah, yeah. So, you were – there were six siblings when you grew up.

Yeah. Yes.

Hmm-hmm, together. And what about, Ivor, your parents? Do you know how they met? Or how –

No idea.

But your mother probably moved to the city to marry your father, or –

No, my mother I think came from outside of – called like Hárshfalva [ph] not in Makó. **[00:16:01]**

Repeat it again.

Hárshfalva.

Hárshfalva.

Which I tried to look up after the war and that place didn't exist anymore, so either it was gobbled up by somebody else or – I'm not quite sure where – but –

But she came from there, and moved?

Yes. But, you know, surprisingly enough, maybe it was just me, that sort of thing never occurred to us to ask, oh, where did you – from – where do you come from, and, you know, it was just sort of so secondary. At least –

Because you wouldn't ask it as a child. These are questions you ask later, isn't it?

Exactly, exactly.

And you were young.

Of course. Well, I was only twelve when I was taken to Auschwitz, so, er, no, you're quite right.

You couldn't – couldn't –

No. And that surprisingly enough, as you talk about that, I feel very, very – not sad, sad is more than – or hurtful as well, that I haven't got many memory of my family. Out of my whole family, I think I've only got three photos, two of my – two brothers and a sister. And I feel very, very hurt. Yes, hurt is the right word to use. Painful.

No other objects?

No, no.

Yeah, so it wasn't only murder, it's a lack of anything tangible to connect you.

Exactly. Exactly. But I think, you know, now when you go, even when I used to send my children, I used to give my children a hug, oh, give me a kiss, have a nice day. We didn't – I don't think people living in that part of the world at that part of the time had – could afford that luxury.

What do you mean by that?

About giving a child a big cuddle and a kiss, have a – you know, enjoy the day, or – and I mean like that. The anti-Semitism and the way of life were so constant. **[00:18:00]**

Do you think they had to struggle?

Yeah.

Their life was a struggle.

Exactly. If anything, I thought to myself a number of times coming home from school or *heder* or, you know, just studies, having my *payis* pulled or called a dirty Jew or something like that, I never spoke about it to my parents.

No. You accepted it.

Accepted it. And I thought to myself, they have enough problems as it is, without me –

Were you particularly close to any of your siblings? Or –

Well, the closing is, er, surprisingly enough – you're asking questions that I've not always [laughs] been asked. There was a lot of hand-me-downs. But of course the children used to grow up so quick and the money was so hard to come by, so nothing unusual of going hand-me-downs. But when I look back, I look, as I said before, quite – quite happy – not happy. Well, for – yes, happy times. They were.

And was there a particular sibling you were close to, or –

Er, the one I was close of course was my brother that – who survived. He was two years older than me. While – we became close because we went together to Auschwitz and we survived together and he looked after me. I mean he saved me from the gas oven twice, literally. Literally, I was in the gate of hell when he saved me. But other than that, the older brothers

and sisters were somehow different. They used to go away. Once they were about twelve or thirteen, they used to go away, study somewhere else. I'm not quite sure where. ut the love was there.

Yeah. And was there – did you have any – did your mother have any helpers in the house, or –

Yes. Yes. Funnily enough, we had a gypsy woman – they were called gypsy. And –

Who lived with you? ***[00:20:01]***

Yes, lived with us. Although, when you keep asking me that, lived with us, I'm thinking to myself, we didn't have a mansion, so I don't know how, where and why, but we all managed. We all managed.

Was it a house or was it a flat?

No, a bungalow. It was a bungalow, a separate one. But of course the place was built – was completely – we had – we were lucky because we had running water between us and our neighbours, and we had a well as well. 'Cos most of the place where we were, we – you had to have a well for the water. But of course, we had luxury, we had running water, run through the two hou – the two sort of properties together. But –

And a well in the garden, or –

And a well in the garden, yes. In fact, that used to be our fridge. I [ph] used to buy melons or anything you wanted to keep cool, you used to drop it in the – keep it in the well to keep it cool.

Yeah, so there was no sanit – it was fairly simple.

Yes. Yeah. And the sanitation was very – very good. It was a shovel, back garden. And I said, we had electricity and running water which was very exceptional.

Yeah. And where was your father? Did he have an office for his business, or –

Yes. They had an off – a warehouse in town, the town centre, which is another story. I took off a day once from school, I went over there for the whole day, not telling my parents where I went, and I went back in the evening, on the way home it was pitch black, of course no street lighting, and going past the school, the *heder*, a big commotion going on. What's happening? I was scared to show my face. And I heard my name mentioned a lot. They were looking for me because nobody knew where I went for the whole day. **[00:22:00]** At eleven years [ph], at that time where people, I – when I think back, I must have been –

And did you get a telling-off?

Well, I had – my father came and smacked me and my mother came and cuddled me. But I mean I can't – I – this – looking back now, I can imagine what it must have been, especially thinking back, in 1943, '44, children disappearing for a whole day, what, how and why.

And your parents, because you were so young, what – how would you describe them, your mother and your father? What do you remember about them, as people?

[Sighs] God, you're asking questions. At the time I felt very, very close to my mother, obviously, I mean – but I must have been – how shall I say now, I'm scared to use the word. I must have been a bit of a bastard, looking back now, 'cos I remember crying and sulking and I want certain things from my mother. But I think we never had the luxury of looking upon those days. I think they were more concerned about getting up in the morning, surprising as it might sound, trying to get through a day without too much pain. I think all the – all the sides of – not – what's the name, the luxury of a modern life, it didn't exist.

Yeah. And for you, I mean Hungary was an interesting situation –

Well, Hungary was an Axis power of Germany.

Was an Axis power of Germany. So was there any particular time when you felt any change or – in your childhood, things getting worse, or was –

Well, very much so. **[00:24:04]** But no, the – things happened very gradual. But what I do remember, the peasants demonstrating outside the town hall, saying – demonstrating in the town hall, saying, why don't you bring [inaudible] the soldiers, Hungarian soldiers, back from the Russian Front, 'cos they're being massacred by the Russians. And they said, we can't bring them back because we haven't got the infrastructure to bring back the soldiers from the Front. Now, as a young boy, when I was in a camp I thought to myself, how did they find infrastructure to take 400,000 Jews to their death? And a kid, as a child, I thought to myself, how can somebody hate us more than love one of their own life? Or why didn't they have – couldn't say they didn't have the infrastructure to bring them back from the Front. I said, well, it's illogical.

Hmm-hmm. So there wasn't a sudden – it was a gradual change for you.

Gradual. Well, first of all, you are used to being called a dirty Jew, I know I could call them *goy*, I actually called someone, I said whatnot, but we lived together. And then suddenly when – I mean when Germany occupied Hungary, I mean when Hungary was fighting with the Germans, we had a lot of anti-Semitism. There were very, very few specific anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic rules, the laws. But soon as that – what happened was, the leader of Hungary could see that the war was getting – was being lost by then already, they wanted to make peace overtures with the Americans and the Germans found out about it, overthrew the Hungarian government. From the following morning, edicts started coming out against the Jews, gradually. **[00:26:02]** You mustn't marry non-Jewish – the Jews mustn't marry non-Jewish people. Well, so what? Nothing unusual. And then you must be home by seven o'clock. Well, I – then you mustn't go from a certain street. Gradual, gradual, gradual, until the noose.

This is in 1944?

1944.

Ivor, just before we get to '44, so I didn't ask you – I normally ask that question. What's your earliest memory of growing up? You remember what your earliest memories are?

The earliest memory, yes, walking with my mother. I'm not sure where, I'm not sure how, but feeling very proud. But funnily enough, that's scene comes in my mind but I cannot remember why, why we were walking along.

Just walking side by side?

Just walking. And also, the other thing was about walking with my father to the synagogue and we had to walk through a school field where the Hungarian army was bivouacked and thinking to myself, I was absolutely terrified walking through, through the army, you know, the Hungarian army. But until then- I think I was more involved in growing up than thinking. I mean suffering – suffering was nothing unusual, or being persecuted. It was all part of life.

Especially you were so visibly Jewish.

Yes, yeah.

Probably different from other people.

Very much so. Very much so.

That's why you had that – you were attacked and things like that were –

But anyway, but this is what I'm saying about what has the world learned from it all.

Yeah. Yeah. So it was – you were – for you, that childhood was obviously a normal childhood.

My childhood – yeah, exactly. Exactly. I considered it normal. **[00:28:00**] But come on, what was normal? If I, you know, if I had a stone thrown after me- dirty Jew, to me that was normal.

Do you remember the synagogue? You said you went to a synagogue.

Very much so.

Tell us a little bit about it.

Well, there were three synagogues there. In fact, have you heard of Dohány Street? Dohány?

Yeah.

In Hungary, in Budapest. We had a smaller version of that in our town but that was the Reform, the Neolog. So weren't allowed to go there. But as far as –

You had to go around it.

As far as we were, it was a – you know, a very, very holy place but was very, very basic but looked upon as a very, very warm place to go to.

And women as well, or –

Women as well but of course they had to have the upstairs.

The gallery.

Gallery.

And did you like going to synagogue?

Yes. I used to love – I used to like it. I used to like learning.

And I assume Shabbat was a big thing there [ph].

The *Shabbat* was very, very – was very, very warm and loving and a special day. But I think I was fortunate that I was young that I never realised what was happening around me.

Yeah. You were not aware of the [overtalking].

We – I mean you were aware – I was aware of my parents reading the newspapers and reading – this is another bit as an eleven, twelve-year-old boy, that- we didn't have radios, we didn't have televisions, we didn't have newspapers, it's all I had in my own little circle and being, you know, as I said, being used to anti-Semitism, it's just part and parcel of life.

What about friends? Did you have friends?

Friends, we only had Jewish friends. But we used to play football with non-Jewish friends. And funnily enough, the same boys we used to play football with, when the time came for us to be herded into a ghetto, they were one that herded us into a ghetto. **[00:30:01]** And after the war my brother who was two years older was a – I mean had two years at that time was an awful lot. He spoke to the boys we used to play with. They went back to Hungary. He said, how could you do that to us? They said, well, we didn't know what was happening. All we were told along was the equivalent of the Boy Scouts. The sergeant used to come along, tomorrow, turn up with a stick and we'll give you ten shillings. And they turned up and their job was to herd us into the ghetto.

Yeah, the same boys, you said.

Yeah. Yeah.

So football. Any other things you did? Did you –

Well, we played chess, swimming, but I think that's about all. I didn't have much time because any spare time we had was always taught – in learning, you must – you are never allowed to just walk about doing nothing. If you have nothing else to do, you had to pick up a book, a prayer book or a learning book, a Talmud or something.

And did you keep all this learning until now? Can you – your Hebrew reading must be –

Yes. Well, I feel very strongly that if a situation comes where you can have only one education, the Jewish education or the secular, I'm not so sure if I wouldn't pick a Jewish education. It would do humanity much better than secular education. But of course, I'm biased [laughs].

Yeah. So, for you, you value that.

Yes.

You value – you're happy you had that background.

Yes. Definitely. But of course, we went – bringing – jumping forward an awful lot, we went to America once through a tour, we met two ladies, American lady lawyers, and we were friendly with them and we stopped every night in the hotel. **[00:32:01]** We stopped one night in the hotel, swimming, and she – when we went swimming with my dear wife and she said, oh, both of you are very good swimmers. She said, very nice. She said, ah, I wish I could swim like that. So, I said to her, you know what? I wish I could give you that knowledge and have the knowledge what you have got about education. I didn't have education. But what she said was, and I always remember that, and she said – and it's so true – she said, Ivor, you had better than education, you had experience of life. And having said that, I used that quite a lot because I was saying that who was the most famous doctor during the war?

Mengele?

Mengele. Doctor.

Yeah. And you are obviously of that generation whose education was completely interrupted.

Yes, yes.

In that age. So, let's –

And this is – that's what I said when she said that to me, oh, you – oh, your lovely swimming, I wish I could do that. So, I said, I wish I had what you have in education. But when – then what she said, she said they realised that's quite true. I mean you could teach a donkey – sorry, a monkey, a dog, teach them things. But learning from life is a lot more useful.

And you had to do that at an early age.

Yes.

So Ivor, so then tell us, so what happened after the Germans then occupied Hungary, what happened to you?

Well, the first – as I said, the first thing that happened was you were – decrees started to come out, that the fascist party took over. And decrees started coming out. You had to wear a star, you couldn't do this, you couldn't do that. But as a young boy, it might sound silly but it was- not an adventure, it's not the word, but sort of something was happening, something other than going to school, or something was happening.

Interesting, something different. ***[00:34:01]***

Something different. Of course, then the people who were able to work had to go into a labour battalion and before that you had to go into a ghetto.

What about the labour battalion? In your family, did people – all the –

My father and my two brothers were in the labour battalion.

And where was that labour battalion?

A good question. Tell me about it. I don't know. But all I know is that they – when we were taken to Auschwitz, they were in the labour battalion. And we were walking along in Auschwitz, my brother and I were walking along, and he said to me, look, *Apako* is here. He said to me, my father – our father is here. I said, hey, how comes? He turned up from the labour battalion but we – maybe he spoke to my brother – he was two years older than me – but he never said anything to me about it, no when or why, where they went, what they did.

So you re-met your father?

Yes.

After he went back from –

In the camps. In Auschwitz itself. [Sighs] But I'm afraid that having been taken to Germany to another camp, we used to have roll calls every morning and they said, you stay here, you stand there, you stand there, and we used to go out to work and one day they took my father to another and came back from where he went. I don't know. We've got the date of his sort of passing away but not the when or why, I've got no idea.

What was the date? What was the date?

10 December.

'44?

'44.

So he didn't come back from a work assignment?

Work, yes.

In – this is still in Auschwitz?

Which was nothing unusual. I mean you used to have roll call, *Appell*, every morning, or evening as well, and you stand there, you stand there, start marching off different places.

In Auschwitz?

No, no, that was only after Auschwitz.

After, okay.

They were taken to Auschwitz for say– Auschwitz was purely a extermination camp. **[00:36:00]** There was forced labour there but very little. The main job of Auschwitz was for extermination. And from there we were shipped into Germany for labour battalion.

But with your father?

With my father and my brother.

Okay. Let's just go back a little bit because we need to understand the ghetto. What happened to you before the deportation?

Well, before deportation, all I remember it was just sort of different edicts keep – kept on carrying out. And as a young boy, you never realise the severity of it all. I mean to show you how – how was it, when I first went on the cattle truck I laid down on the floor and I said to myself, I could see the trains running from the railway lines, clickety-click, click, and said, oh, wow, wasn't that an adventurous journey?

So you were lying on the floor, looking down onto the tracks?

Yeah, through the cracks in – of the cattle truck.

This is from where to where? From –

That was from our place, we were taken to Szeged to the ghetto, and was taken to Auschwitz, which was about four or five days.

So from Makó – so the ghetto was in Szeged?

Ghetto was in Szeged. And – no, funnily enough, Makó didn't – well, Makó only had a ghetto for a very, very short time. The Germans took over. The Hungarians tried to make peace with the Allies and Germany found out, occupied Hungary within a week.

And was it where you lived or was it somewhere else?

No, where we lived.

So your house was part of the –

No, no, no, no, no. We had to leave our house, as I told you- and go to – you could go somewhere if you had relations, or they told you where to go. So we had relations we can go to and before we went, we had to write out the inventory. **[00:38:03]** Every household had to write an inventory what possessions you've got, and don't you dare do anything about it when you leave. How many belts you had, how many coats.

Because they wanted the things [ph], the – yeah.

And if you did any damage, you were severely punished. But of course as a young boy, to me it sounded –

So could you take – when you, on that first move into the ghetto from your house –

You were only allowed to take a –

Could you take anything? What did you take?

Technically one suitcase. Or two suitcases between a whole family.

And what did you take? Do you remember anything?

Oh, I can't remember.

Siddurim or probably, I don't know, your father must have thought maybe – what was considered important, then?

I can't remember. I mean as I saying that – the children were not involved as they are nowadays.

No, no. And who – at that point you said your older siblings were not there anymore, so –

No, my –

Who had to move?

I was to move with three of my sisters – no, four of my sisters were with us, and my brother.

Alec?

Alec. And another one, David, the eldest one. But surprisingly enough, I've got a photo in here. He was a rabbi at twenty-one and when he went to Auschwitz, I heard later on that he worked in a *Sonderkommando*. Have you heard of that?

Yeah.

And I thought to myself, if there is a God, that was a bit of an irony actually because it's – I think he became a rabbi, passed the *semicha* to be a rabbi when he was twenty-one or twenty-two. **[00:40:00]**

Hmm, but he was forced to work as a Sonderkommando.

Yes, yes.

Which was – tell us what a Sonderkommando is, or was.

[Sighs] Well, the *Sonderkommando* – I mean what happened, they used to be taken to Auschwitz, segregated. Those that could work were [clicks fingers] – I'll make it very, very short. Those who were able to work were put to one side, those who were not, were – just went to the gas chamber. But what happened after the gas chamber? Who took the dead bodies from the gas chamber to the crematoria? The slaves.

Sonderkommando?

The *Sonderkommando*. But the *Sonderkommand*o were not allowed to live more than four months – no, four weeks. Every four weeks, they themselves were put in a gas oven. I mean, you know, you're mentioning things which is – can you imagine?

No.

It's – it is, that's what I say, no, in fact, I read a book – as you know, I wrote a book – not I wrote – my wife told me a story, darling, why don't you do something useful? I said, what? You've got a computer, nobody knows about your life story, including your children, write your life story there instead of wasting your time.

And you did?

And I sat down at the computer and I said, well, I can't spell. So, my dear wife said, it don't matter, the computer has got spell check. But, you know, I realised that. Oh, right, what shall I say? I don't know. She said, just sit down there. I sat down there for half an hour, not knowing what to write. As I started typing, suddenly it all came out.

And how old were you when you did that?

[Sighs] About forty. Forty or fifty. **[00:42:00]** No, fifty. Until then I lived a life of denial. I thought the best way forward for me, get up from the dust, dust myself down, try not to think too much about the past because I didn't want to hurt the children or the wife. But afterwards the children kept on telling us, why didn't you tell us about it? We said, because we didn't want to hurt you. And they said, they didn't want to ask us because they didn't want to hurt us. But we didn't have the luxury of therapy in those days. Was it the right way to go about it? I don't know. I don't know.

That's what so many people did.

Yeah.

Yeah, not to talk about it. We'll talk about that a little bit later. Let's just go back to – you moved in to the ghetto. Was it to your aunt's house or –

To – that's right, yes. To the aunt house.

She lived in the –

She lived in an area near the synagogue but it was part of the ghetto. [Sighs] Now, how, where or why, I can't – I don't know. I mean obviously they had to ask the family. I'm not sure. The details, I can't – I haven't got any idea what happened.

And how long did you stay there?

Only about a week. A week or two weeks. And we were shipped back – from there we were shipped on to Szeged, which was the nearest town, from about sixteen miles away, in a brick factory, for – where all the Jews from the ghettos were put together before shipping them off to Auschwitz.

So they were assembled there.

Assembled.

And they get – the entire family went to Szeged?

Not the entire family. As I said, the elder brothers and my father were in the labour battalion. The sisters and the younger brothers, yes, we went, we were all together.

[00:44:00] *So the – they were taken to the labour battalion from the – from –*

No, beforehand.

Before, yeah.

No, beforehand. The edict come out that all the people who were born after certain days, you've got to report to here for some – you know, report to an area. And from there, shipped out to do – I think at the labour battalion to the army – attached to the army.

And many men didn't return from there?

Most of them never returned. Either died in the army itself or if they did return, they were returned to the ghetto – to the camps. Not the ghetto, to the camps.

So in Szeged, what did you find in Szeged when you arrived?

Well, Szeged was a brick factory. But even this has got a story to it because when we were told to go onto the cattle truck to Szeged, people rushed. And my mother said, don't rush, we have plenty of time, we wait. But of course, by not rushing, by waiting, all the good places – well, not good places – it was a brick factory – were taken, and we had to be bivouacked just outside, outside a block. It poured with rain overnight. So we thought to ourselves that Mum said, well, in future, if you have to go somewhere, we'll be the first ones to go. And literally enough, four days afterwards they said that three trains are leaving Szeged. We didn't know where, didn't know how, didn't know why. Right, I said, we're going on the very first train, dying to get onto the first cattle truck. And you know what happened. The first train ended up in Auschwitz, 90% of the people or more that were there died. And the other two train, I think after that either the Allies or the lines were bombed, they couldn't go any further so they went into Austria. Yeah. Although they weren't killed but they were not – they were not killed but they were – of course they were in a ghetto – in a camp. **[00:46:0**2] But they survived. So –

But you were on that first train?

Exactly. In other words, the fact that we rushed, took it easy the last time, we rushed this time and we paid the price for it. But life depended like that quite a lot, not knowing how, what decision to take- to make you survive.

And that's where you were looking down in that train, to Auschwitz, you were looking down?

That's right, to Auschwitz, when were going – yes. But of course, we arrived at Auschwitz, men, children and women one side, and ladies one side, men, working class men, able-bodied men, on the other side. And I went with the able-bodied men and I could see my mother, I don't know what- I run over to her and she said, no, you can't, go back, Ivor, don't come here. Go back, go back to your brother. Of course, it's the last time we ever saw each other. But on the other hand, I am alive because I spoke Yiddish, which is very akin to German. Now, as soon as we arrived in Auschwitz, I had no idea what – and all you could hear, people working outside on a ramp with the Polish – the, you know, camp workers. They kept on shouting us in Yiddish, eat all the food. And the children, if asked how you are, you must say

you are sixteen. Now, being – having learned and spoken Yiddish, we understood what they were saying.

What did they – do you remember what they said in Yiddish?

They said in Yiddish.

What did they say?

Alt. alt. De Kinder müsse bis sechszehn Jur alt alt. Eat everything. Don't save any food. And the children, if asked, they must say they are sixteen. I've no idea why. Get off and start marching. They said, women and children on one side, I started running over to my mother and she said, no, darling, go back to your brother. **[00:48:00]** And of course, you could see a German officer in his white gloves pointing left and right and left and right, point, point, he stops me. He said, *Wie alt bist du?* How old are you? I said *sechzehn*. I think – I can see for a millisecond I can see his still eyes [ph]. He says, all right, go on, go to the right. And one of the things when I say now, when I tell children my story, I say to them the first thing, I said, you know, at the moment we've got a problem with obesity and children are overweight. All I can tell you is I'm here because I was overweight for my age. I was twelve years old but I was – I could have been taken. Well, the fact I'd said I was sixteen, I couldn't be taken any more.

You were big?

Yeah.

And maybe from all the studying, you were [laughs] –

Well, [laughs] and food. And food and everything, and sports. But –

But you understood what you had to do in that –

No, I didn't. I heard what I had to do but I didn't understand. You know, this is what I'm saying. I said, all right, whatever he says, all right, what shall I tell him? So, I tell him I'm sixteen. But I didn't realise literally ten minutes coming in front of Dr Mengele, asking me how old I am. But, you know, I don't know if it's anything relevant or not. There were discussion every Holocaust Memorial Day between two professors asking how did people survive. After an hour discussion, I said I come along, I go in there and won't say where, I won't tell them anything who I am. After an hour or so of argument they came to the conclusion, nobody survived without luck. Nobody. I thought to myself, how bloody right you are. **[00:50:02]** But not everybody that had luck survived. Now, what that extra thing was he said he called it the X factor and they've got no idea what that was. But not everybody survived.

What do you think it was?

X factor? I was young. What could have been? No, the only thing I can say is that once having gone through the first hurdle, there are a lot of hurdles to overcome in the camps itself, obviously I had to have something in me but what it is, I don't know. I don't know.

Yeah. And Ivor, it – yeah, sorry.

But as I was saying, that anybody who tells you otherwise, anybody who tells you they survived because of him, I wouldn't call him a liar but I wouldn't believe him. I don't believe him. If anything, the – more the Hungarian Jews came in towards the end and the stronger they looked, the happier they looked, the less they survived. They're the one who died first. So what made you survive? I don't know.

Yeah. And you arrived on this – in Birkenau, wasn't it?

Yes.

In the "Rampe", because they – I was in Auschwitz this summer and I – actually I didn't know that they built –

A special camp.

Special "Rampe" –

That's right.

In Birkenau.

Yeah.

Because until then it was outside.

That's right.

So you must have arrived literally –

Yeah, towards the end.

In the middle of this – Birkenau.

Yes. But the problem is that- I mean can you imagine, a carload arriving in a place like that, there are dogs and everything else- What goes through your mind? **[00:52:05]** What are you looking for? Well, you can't start admiring well, where am I, how am I? Things you normally–

Very fast.

Exactly.

Very fast.

From then onwards it was just a question of looking the right thing and doing the right thing to survive.

And you were with your brother. So, once you were separated, you were with your brother.

Yes, yes. And as I mentioned, that he saved me literally from the jaws of death a couple of times.

And did you stay together with him the whole time in Auschwitz and then later?

Yes. And afterwards as well. And in fact, my brother died about fifteen years ago and as I was shovelling-in the earth onto the coffin, I never had that, and as – and like somebody said, you must have thought the same thing, you were doing it for the whole family. I said yes, exactly what it was. Yes.

Because you never buried anyone from your family.

No. No.

No grave.

No. And one thing [sighs] people never ask me, my children never ask me, does a day ever go by without the Holocaust coming into your mind? Very, very rarely. Very, very rarely. If anything, having moved over here – I moved over here to Golders Green because of the religious Jewish people here. But I didn't realise that it's got a two-edged sword – what's the word – two sides to the sword.

Yeah.

Yes, they all reminded me of the family I had back home 'cos I also know and I keep on thinking that was my mother, that was my sister. **[00:54:05]**

Because here you see Hasidic –

Exactly.

Or religious Jews.

But –

So you look at them and it triggers a memory.

Exactly. Exactly. At first it was wonderful, yes. But of course, now it sort of, er, it has a downside [ph]. But on the other hand, you know the Grenfell Tower? I don't know if it means anything. I was saying the Grenfell Tower, seventy people died, they got burned. I said to myself, you know what, that was an accident and look at the commotion that goes on. Auschwitz was daily, hourly, people put in there to be burned. How can you not be affected by it?

Yeah. Even after all this time it doesn't go away.

Exactly. No. No.

And Ivor, when you arrived there, do you remember – you said it was all fast, it was – do you remember smells or looking or anything, noticing anything?

No, no, no, no. It's a good question, yeah, I keep on saying. No. All these things were happening so fast and to a twelve-year-old boy, can you imagine? The other things, other than looking, but yes, we were walking along and we saw a chimney. So we didn't know [ph], we asked somebody, who – what did they say? Oh, that's a bakery. Or we saw – we were walking along and one side said, next to us was a twins – a twins, a camp – a block with twins, only twins. And walking along and a wire fence and you could see all the – all dressed very nicely, all – I said, how is the food? Oh, beautiful, lovely, everything. So, I said to my – well, my brother said to me, why don't we go to the guards and tell them we are also twins, to

go in with them and get food? **[00:56:09]** First of all, I mean I was two years younger than him. He was tall and normal and I was a bit short and fat. He said – I said, you know what – and any misdemeanour was treated very, very harshly. If they found out that we were doing it purely to get food, you know, we would be punished, and no, we won't go there. But sure enough, two weeks later there was a whole commotion going on at night-time. The whole block was taken into the gas chamber.

That of the twins?

Of the twins. Of course, they were the block, the twins' experiment – for experiment.

Mengele.

Mengele.

Yeah. But when you were taken, you didn't have a number because – tell us the story about the–

Well, the number. It brings back sort of a bit of a painful memory for me, that we were – we were queue – they were saying that tomorrow morning, all those who came from Hungary or came from the transport, must go outside to queue up for having a number tattooed on your arm.

So that transport from Szeged?

From Szeged.

What was the date? Sorry, I didn't ask you. Do you remember the date of –

No.

No. Okay. '44?

Yeah. No, ’44 – the dates –

In the summer, or was –

It was the end – yeah, the summer, in July. June. June, July, yeah. That was summer.

Okay, ’44.

And right- you had to queue up as I said, to have the number tattooed on your arm, you were given a number. By the way, you were given a number, a *kapo* – I don't know if you know what a *kapo* is. We went to the block and then a *kapo* stands up and he says, anything I say, you do, or you get punished. You get punished. No question I ask, anything is – well, anything I say, you – excuse the expression – if I say, shit, you jump on the shovel. **[00:58:04]** Anyway, why was I saying that? I don't know. I've forgotten how –

About the number.

Oh, the number. So, we're queueing up, there's about fifty people in front of me, of course queueing and queueing, and suddenly an SS guard said, no, you’ve got to come back tomorrow, we ran out of ink. We go back tomorrow, the same thing. There's about ten people in front of me, this is – they couldn't write- couldn’t make a story. Ten people in front of me, air raid siren goes. And the rule was – I’m saying the rule, what they said, as soon as you hear the air raid sirens, you disappear. You don't go back to your block. You disappear under – you got to go undercover. You mustn’t be allowed [inaudible]- presumably when the, you know, the planes used to fly over, taking films and – I don't know. I don't know why. Anyway, so we went into a children’s block. And when we came back from the children’s block they said, look, there's too much going on there, the Russians are coming particularly close to – from the Eastern Front, the Americans are bombing us, you're going to be shipped into Germany and you'll have a number tattooed in Germany when you get there. Now, as efficient as the Germans are, or have been, they forgot about putting my number on there. But – now, this is – I only said it once before or twice before. When I came to England ten years

afterwards, I was going to have the number tattooed myself. I thought, you know, I'm not a fully paid-up member until I have that. But I don't know why, and thank God, I didn't do it.

You felt you needed it somehow?

Yes. Yes.

To validate your experience [ph].

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

'Cos in a way it was a good thing not to have a number, in some way. ***[01:00:02]***

Yeah, a lot – er, definitely, definitely. But –

You felt – you wanted to be like the other survivors, or –

Yes, yes. No, no, I'm not a fully paid-up member. What a stupid thing to say but –

But you didn't do it, you said.

No, no.

What was the number? Did you have a number?

No. I can't remember my phone number, I can hardly remember anything else. I remember four or five numbers. And in fact, which is stupidly – guess what I do now and then? I use it on a computer or somewhere else.

As a [laughs] –

Because I don't remember numbers. I don't – I'm telling you, I don't remember my phone number.

But that number, you remember.

I remember.

What is it?

1-1 –

Don't tell it to us if it's a – if it opens all your email.

You could do that. It's in a book. 1-1-2-0-21, *hundertzwölf, null einundzwanzig*. But amazing.

Say it in German.

Hundert und zwölf, null einundzwanzig. 1-1-2-0-21.

And that was used during Appell or-

Yes.

They called you up with this number, hence you know it in German.

Yes. Now, and of course why did they give us number? Why not a name?

Tell us.

Dehumanise us. We're not human beings. That's all part and parcel of easier to get to things.

And Ivor, how long did you stay there before you went to the next camp? Let's say, from – you said June, July.

Date – no. Yes, dates, obviously I've got no idea. But I think it must have been about a couple of months, that's all, maybe fewer, because the Russians are coming closer and closer there as well. **[01:02:05]** And we were shipped back into Germany, which is – it was a satellite camp of Dachau, of Allach.

And of course called Kaufering.

Kaufering.

Yeah, Kaufering. Just to stay a little bit more in Auschwitz, Ivor, as a twelve-year-old, seeing what you must have seen, how did you deal with what you were seeing there? And what were you seeing there?

[Sighs] Well, we were seeing there the chimneys and the barbed wires and the women on one side and- which was – I mean especially as a young boy, that, you know, there's something – it became quite normal, nothing unusual. And I think what they did intentionally was so, so – how can I say- so perfect, the first thing they took away your dignity, you're not- they did whatever they wanted to do and you had to do it. And anyway, sorry, I'm digressing. What was the question?

What you saw around you.

[Sighs] Too much to comprehend. It just felt- hundreds and hundreds of people, dogs, guards, and all I do remember, walking along, I did the – you know, it was in the summer, in the spring or summer and quite nice weather, just looking down at the ground, scared to look at anybody else.

Keep your head down.

Keep your head down. Because if you looked at someone, anybody, like a *kapo* or anybody else wrongly, they'll ask you why and you get punished.

But at that point you were not put to work or –

No.

Did you have to – so –

No, no. And you didn't work in Auschwitz, no.

So how did your father get –

Auschwitz was purely, purely an extermination camp and a selection camp. **[01:04:00]** Those who were able to work were put one side and those who were not, as you know, were exterminated. And people were like in a hangar or in a warehouse, waiting until people, you know, phoned up and said you needed 200 slaves here or 200 slaves there. I think if you were in Auschwitz you couldn't have been there for too long.

Yeah, you were sent to other places.

It was – possibly.

And food was –

Three or four weeks– food. We had to queue up, coffee, one slice of bread, black bread if there is one, and lunchtime, some sort of soup, if you were lucky, with a potato in there. But in the end, I remember – not in Auschwitz because I was – it was afterwards when we were in Kaufering or Feldafing- Kaufering, walking along, I could see grass. It looked like an onion. I remember picking a leaf out and eating it 'cos it felt – it just felt I needed some sort of nourishment. But the actual day-by-day, the hour-by-hour, I don't think I can remember much about that, of course other than if you were – if you did any misdemeanour you were

punished severely. It's as I said in my book, when I had to stand and start fighting with my brother because we were arguing, as brothers do.

Yeah, tell us about that story.

Well, he looked after me quite well obviously, I mean because he – but as brothers. I don't know why, I don't what, we were suddenly arguing and a *kapo* comes over there. **[01:06:01]** What are you doing? I said, we're not arguing, we're brothers. He says, no, you're not, you're arguing. I'll tell you, come here, I'll show what happens if you argue. Face each other. And we had to face each other. He said, now, hit him. I tapped him. I said to my brother, now, hit me. He taps me. He said, no, that's not hitting. I'll show you what hitting is. And we had to stand there, hitting each other, blood coming out, until he was satisfied. You know, the – like I said to you before, they dehumanised us, which we were, and things happened there which you couldn't believe. You just couldn't believe it happening. You couldn't make up things that were happening there.

Like what? What other things?

Well, the thing that, er, what about toilets. What about when you go into the bunk beds, when you – whenever you entered into the block, in the barrack, there was about 400 or 500 people there, three tiers. Everybody wanted to go to the top. Why? If I ask you why did they want to go to the top, like, can you imagine, you weren't allowed to go out. What happens if you – you couldn't hold back your ablutions or whatnot. You know, it's – I think I made a comment once, that anybody who talks about the Holocaust, it's impossible to exaggerate because the actual thing that happened was far, far worse than even you can imagine. You used to go to bed at night-time, a person next to you, you knew he died. **[01:08:03]** How did you know he died? The fleas. The fleas were leaving the body. Because, you know, fleas live on warm blood. You know, it – I don't know. But on the other hand, I'm sure, this I must have been taught time and time again. Different places but the story's the same.

I was going to ask you, that kapo, what nationality? Where was he from? That kapo, the man – you – that story.

Oh, I think Polish. But –

Because what I was going to ask you, did you meet anyone from your city? Did you meet anyone you knew?

No, no.

But you said your father arrived there at some point.

Yes. Then eventually once we heard, we were walking along one day and my brother said to me, look, *Apako* is here, Father is here.

And could you recognise –

Sort of. But he spoke to my brother. I was only twelve years old. I don't know how, but I don't want to say it, I don't know if it ashamed or what [ph], and I felt, why don't you tell me something, Dad? I don't think they spoke much about – about – anyway. What could we have spoken about? But –

You felt – it was a bit resentment that he didn't speak to you? Or –

Well, but on the other hand, possibly he wanted to protect me, that they didn't realise a young boy of twelve, working there. But –

But your brother became a sort of father figure for you. ***[01:10:00]***

Yes.

It felt almost in the camp.

Oh, yes. Yes.

And there was one point you became very ill. Was that in Auschwitz or was that later?

No, that was already in – I had typhus. I don't know if people know what typhus is. It's an illness from – disease from impurity, from an unhealthy – what's the name? I ended up in a hospital block.

Where?

In Kaufering.

So, this was after you – after you came.

In Dachau. No – yes, yes. Yes. And of course you used to have a hospital block, I don't know why, but once you went in there you couldn't come back. I had hallucinations and I remember thinking about I'm drinking soda water, I don't know why, because it – for temperatures or whatnot. And my brother came along with another man and said, come on, Ivor, let's go. I said no, I can't because it's – you were absolutely terrified of doing something against – he said no, you must come out from there. So, another – somebody else, a Polish man, put me on his shoulder and they took me away from the block. Because most – every single time a doctor used to go by to the barrack and you had to undress – not undress yourself. Do you know when you're dressing, you have to pick up your clothes to see how much fat or something which you've got on your body. And those who didn't have enough energy were told to go obviously to somewhere where the following morning they were taken to the gas chamber. So, if he wouldn't have taken me out from there, I would have obviously been also one of those numbers.

But he took you out.

Yeah.

He knew it's not good to stay there.

Yeah.

This Kaufering –

Well, I don't – I don't think [sighs] –

Or knew, getting in –

I was going to say, I don't think they knew. **[01:12:06]** We didn't know about gas chambers. But we knew that once there, that, you know, that obviously things are not going to be easy or whatever it was. Oh, well [sighs].

So coming – so how did it happen that you were deported from Auschwitz to Kaufering?

Well, I presume – what happened was that first of all, from what I know after, I was reading about it, that people from outside the camp or in Germany wanted new slave labour, died, whatever the reason, to replenish the old ones. And they said they want 100 labourers or whatnot. And I just mentioned, one day we started walking and onto another train and we went – ended up in Germany, which was a satellite camp – that was a satellite camp of Dachau.

Right. And it was in Feldafing, you said.

In Feldafing. No, no, no, er, Allach. Feldafing was afterwards.

Because Feldafing was a DP camp.

That's right. That's right. No, it was Allach. It was a satellite camp of Dachau. Dachau had I think ten or twelve satellite camps. This was about eighty miles outside Dachau.

And who was on that – you went with your brother?

Just with my brother.

And your father?

And my father.

The three of you.

The three of us, yes. And then from there, while we were there, every morning we had to go to *Appell*, to roll call, as I mentioned to you once before, but we had to go to different work and come back. We don't know which – never – most of the time we would go separately, not in the same group. Well, my father went to a different group one day and just never came back. We didn't find out till after the war that he died. **[01:14:02]** I'm not so sure where or when or how, but we never saw him again.

So you were not together, the three of you?

No. We were together sort of when we – when we left Auschwitz, we were together, when we arrived in Allach we were together, but once we started, you know, being – going out distributed to work somewhere else- that when everyone come back to our block and then one day he never came back, which was nothing unusual in those days.

No. And what work – what did you have to do in Kaufering?

My brother went into a farm. He was lucky. And also in fact, he never – he went to a farm and I didn't see him for about a week but he was lucky, he went to work on a farm and had wonderful food. I didn't have any. I stayed behind and I think I went to work in – in underground, building a concrete underground I think for protection against – I'm not quite sure- a big- in a cave in a mountain.

And you were together with other prisoners, slave labourers.

Yeah, yeah.

Mostly Jewish, or –

Oh, no. They were all Jewish. They were all Jewish. No, no, in fact [ph], there were sort of gypsies as well, there were some – a few – or communists, but very, very few. Very, very few. Mostly Jewish ones. And in fact, when we arrived in the place where we – there was a railway track and the railway turned up with sacks of, er, not concrete – what's the word, now? Cement. And we had to unload a cattle truck of cement. Of course, I had to go there as well and I said, I'll be – they put [laughs] a sack of cement on me and I dropped on the floor with a sack, a sack of cement. **[01:16:01]** And people said to me, no, no, come on, young boy, go on, you go over there, hide over there.

So that's what I was going to ask you also. Did people, being so young, did the other prisoners help you?

Yeah. I mean there wasn't a lot of love. I mean obviously we looked at each other as brothers or friends but I think, I'm ashamed to say, that most of us just looked after ourselves. But – and yeah, 'cos I remember one time when people told me, they said, go on, you hide there in – there was a hole in a mountain, so people went in there to – who wanted to shirk from work. And I'm there once and all of a sudden it was pitch black inside and a voice comes, a German voice comes and says, come on, out, *raus*, everybody out from there. If you don't come out from there, I'll throw a hand grenade in there.

Sorry, I –

Because there was a number of people shirking, hiding, so those who – that are in there, hiding in the hole, come out right away. If you don't come out, we'll throw a hand grenade inside. So of course we ran out. Of course, as we went out, we were punished but I can't remember exactly what, but – but I didn't feel that [ph] kindness. I don't have much – I don't remember much kindness.

No, because every –

I mean we helped each other but that – but certainly from – not from the guards. The only kindness I remember receiving as we were – when the Americans were coming to – were closer. **[01:18:00]** So were in Allach, we were walking – we were marching towards Dachau which was very near there and we stopped, it was winter, and my brother and I- we were given a loaf of bread between the two of us. We accused each other of eating more than we should – I'm not quite sure what – and we started arguing and rolling in the mud and all of a sudden we could see a German boot and a butt of a gun there and we thought to ourselves, well, we're going to get killed here now, and he spoke to us in Hungarian. Well, we couldn't believe that. He says, what were you doing, fighting? He said not fighting, he said we are brothers, we were arguing, we were just discuss– he says, no, I'm Hungarian as well, I heard you. And he said, don't fight, you'll be free in a week's time, you'll be liberated and you'll be sorry that you fought with each other. That's the only bit of kindness I remember receiving in the whole time I was in the camps. I'm talking about from other than your brother or friends.

And who was he? Hungarian –

No, he was – yes, yes, Hungarian, and he –

In the SS?

In the SS. There was a Hung – you know, the SS battalion had Muslims, a Muslim brigade. Do you know that?

Hmm-hmm.

Nothing unusual. There were Hungarians, Czechs, and all those ones. But, er –

Yes, a small –

But nothing – but nothing that happened seemed sort of surprising when I look back upon it.

And Ivor, how were the conditions in Kaufering compared to Auschwitz?

In one sense it was worse. First of all, the – in Auschwitz we had a barrack, a proper barrack, and here it was just under – half underground, half – I don't know if you've seen that or not. **[01:20:09]** And how shall I say, now? It's – it was just very, very subhuman, nothing human as far as I'm concerned happened or wanted – all you wanted to do is try to put one foot in front of the other one and not to get punished because whatever you did, whatever you did – I mean whatever they thought you did- was wrong.

Yeah. And did you ever encounter in Kaufering any German civilians?

No. No.

So it was SS.

No. But the only way you counted civilians when you used to march past villages, when you used to go to march for doing some work in a field or anywhere else. Most of the time they used to throw insults at you, spit at you. Very, very rarely did they throw you some food or anything like that.

And it was late in the war. I mean it was –

Yes, that was already, er, I think in March '45.

And did you have any inkling that the war was coming – or about the situation?

A very good question. How did we know that the war was coming to an end? The camp – there was a lot of people, I mean people who were professors and doctors and people who were prisoners in the First World War as well. And they said, you know, the word's gone out, the war is going to end soon. I said, how do you know that? He said, the same thing

happened in the First World War. The more the Germans were losing, the harder the punishment we're getting. And the punishment was coming much quicker and harder than normal. **[01:22:00]** And they said, well, they didn't know how soon or how or when but it was literally days after that we were liberated. And also, we were marching from Kaufering – or from Allach into Dachau.

So you still managed – not managed. So, you came to Dachau before liberation?

Yes.

I mean when it was still –

Lit – well, we were there for about – suddenly, after marching for a week or something or other, we stopped outside the camp. Apparently, what happened afterwards – well, I hear it was afterwards – that the general who was in charge of our transport was supposed to take us to the Tyrol mountain to be executed. I don't know why Tyrol mountain. And he went past the Germans [ph] to Dachau and he went to the camp commandant and he said, look, as far as I'm concerned, the war is going to end soon, I don't want to be accused of massacring, I'm not taking this group any further than here. So, this is what we know. This was afterwards. I didn't know what was happening, then. We were waiting outside, what happened, suddenly they said, if you're marching, stay, bivouacked outside the parade ground. So, the commander, the commandant of Auschwitz, said I'm full up, I've got no room but if you want to, bivouac them outside in the parade ground.

In Dachau?

In Dachau.

And that's what happened?

And that's what happened. To –

So if he had followed the commanders, if he had followed it –

Yes.

You wouldn't be here today.

No. No, exactly. If we were taken to the Tyrol mountain, we – and to – was it – and that same night or two nights later, shells started falling on the camp itself and it fell on a wire and it started running through the wire but even then when we started running, a machine gun started opening up and everybody started running back again to the camp. But an hour later the same thing happened again, another shell fell near a fence and this time people started running and the guards also ran away as well, so we just went through the wire. **[01:24:10]** And there was a, er, anti-aircraft battery near a camp and near there, there was a dead rabbit there so I picked up the dead rabbit, took it to a shed somewhere and had the first piece of – it was the first bit of a meal [ph] that we had for over a year. But that's another story.

Before you encountered any Allied troops?

No. And in fact, when we went past the anti-aircraft battery there was a block outside for the – I presume for the German soldiers and we were in there and suddenly in the middle of the night there was a knock on the door. We were absolutely terrified, we thought the Germans were coming back, and looked outside through the window and said no, they're not Germans because they knew it from the First World War, they were Americans. Opened the door and they looked at us and of course, they said sorry to disturb you and they went on, further on.

So at that point did you understand that it was over, or –

Well, [sighs] we knew something happened. I mean as I said, I was only a thirteen-year-old. But people who were – there were some people there who were prisoners of war in the First World War, so they knew, they said no, said they're not German, they're Americans.

Because also Dachau was – I mean you ended up in – it was the first concentration camp in – wasn't it?

Yes, that's right.

It opened in 1933.

That's right, that's right.

So that's where you ended up.

Exactly. The first one. And by the way, where was the first concentration camp ever built? Who by?

I think I know the answer. South Africa?

That's it. **[01:26:00]** By the British.

I know.

That's right. But of course, it wasn't as – it wasn't the camp that were – of the camp of the Germany, but yeah, you're right.

But you actually didn't go into Dachau, you were outside Dachau.

Yes, we were in – well, the only thing, inside in the parade ground. We didn't go inside Dachau itself until after the Americans came and then we made room for us in the camp itself.

They asked you to?

Yes. But for the first day or so, just we had to – we'd be – we – you know, blocks outside, outside the camp.

And just to come back to the rabbit. So, you literally took this rabbit and did what with it?

Well, we walked past that anti-aircraft battery and possibly from the shelling, there was a dead rabbit on the floor and of course there were four of us, me, my brother and two elderly Polish Jews, who were more mature, and said, why don't we take it back to the hut, we'll skin it and –

And did you?

And we did. And of course, when I mentioned before when we were in that barrack there, middle of the night there was a knock on our door, we see the Americans there, and they saw who we were and said, no, it's all right. And we were so pleased to see the Americans, we offered them a bit of the dead rabbit there and they said, no, no, no, thanks, no, no, no, no [laughs].

But did you cook it? How –

Yes.

You managed to cook it?

There was a fire. There was – obviously there was a fire – a – what's the name – fire there because of the barrack was there for the German soldiers, for the battery. I made a fire and of course the – I mean not me – I was too young to do anything else.

And your tummy managed to deal with the rabbit?

Just about, just about. But having said that, there were quite a number of people died after liberation because their stomach couldn't control – couldn't digest the food. **[01:28:04]**

Yeah. But you were okay?

I think so. Well, I'm here [laughs]. Yeah. But I remember eating at the first – I can't – and not only that, I remember dropping on a bed and falling asleep, and the first time I slept in a bed for nearly a year. And I remember the, you know, the feeling was absolutely delightful.

This was in Dachau?

Yes, that was in – you know, when the – when we were liberated, when we went past the anti-aircraft block and having stewed the rabbit, ate a bit and said, come on, why don't we have a little sleep, and feel asleep.

In freedom, so to speak.

Yes.

Or without the fear.

Yeah. Yeah.

And what were you feeling when you saw those Americans? Did you understand?

No. I hadn't the foggiest idea. I didn't even know where America was or how America, what. And in fact, if I may just digress slightly, that we were being looked after very well by UNWRA. And one day they're saying that the boys and girls who were coming to England, we had to stick together because of the documentation and whatnot and the Zionists were making – trying to make sure they only go to Palestine, not to England. Anyway, so they had to keep us together for quite a while. They used to take us out for a while during the day to keep us together, near the Tyrol mountains, beautiful scenery. And they said, one of the drivers tomorrow will be a black driver. Now, I don't know if I should say this or not. I said, what do you mean, black? He says, you know, black. I never heard of black people in

Hungary. And when what's her name came, you know what I did? I scratched his hand. I didn't believe he was – you know, there were black people in the world. **[01:30:00]**

You'd never come across anyone, yeah.

No, no. That was only the first time. But we had a lovely journey up into the mountain.

So this was already when it was a DP camp, or –

Oh, yeah. Yes, yes, this was about – it must have been about a month, about four, five weeks after liberation.

What I was going to ask you is did you realise, you know, at some point obviously they stopped the deportation from Hungary. Did you know about that?

Not only we know about it, we had a cousin – an uncle – an aunt who married a Polish Jew and suddenly an edict came out that all non-Hungarian had to go back wherever they came from. And suddenly we said that the [inaudible], that the uncle – the auntie who married a Polish Jew, left with the whole family, which we never heard from again.

That was when?

That was – this was in – the whole thing was gradual.

But I meant that, you know, the Hungarian – Horthy at some point stopped the deportation. Did you know about that?

No, we didn't know about that. But you know what happened. It looks like you know more about it nearly as I do, that apparently, that that's why there were three transport that went from Szeged to – two of them went to Terezín but the first one that Horthy was told by the people already, you know, we know what you're doing, if you do that, you'll be responsible, so he tried to stop that.

And eventually he did.

Eventually he did.

But that didn't have –

Well, no, no, he was overthrown. No, when he went- he still – he wasn't – he was an anti-Semite. Not that he loved the Jews but he wasn't going as far as killing the Jews.

Well, also by that point they had received this Auschwitz report, you know, written in April '44.

That's right. And, that's right.

[Inaudible] Slovak Jews [overtalking].

Exactly, exactly. **[01:32:01]** Until they said that, you know, if you do it, that's when – but –

And that leads me to the next question. At that point of liberation, did you hope you would see your family? Did you have any hope for anyone, to see –

Oh, good question, good question. Deep down, deep down, you essentially [ph] knew. But what, you didn't quite know what. When we were liberated, we went, my brother and I suddenly he said, well, look, it's nice weather, why don't we go back to Makó to find out who – if any family are alive? So we said, well, where is Hungary, where is Makó from Munich? He said, well, we'll walk and we'll ask people. So we started walking, we had no idea where.

You're fourteen, he is sixteen?

Yeah. I was thirteen, not fourteen. Thirteen and fifteen. And we started walking from Munich, near Munich. Fortunately, some other people came back towards the camp and they

see two young boys going and they say, where are you going? We said, we're going home to Hungary. He says why? I said we come from there, we want to know if the family survived. We said, where is Hungary? Where is Makó? He said no idea. We'll ask, we'll ask, we'll – he said don't go there, you don't know what's happened, there is UNWRA in the camp, they're the United Nations, they'll help you. Go there and find out if anybody survived before you go any further. I said all right, we're going back to the camp. We went back to the camp and enquired about our family. They said come back tomorrow, we are trying to find out for you. We went back the following day and they said, look, as far as we know, none of your family survived. We've got no record whatsoever. So, then we thought, what's the point of going back to Hungary? So, where do we go to? So, I said why don't we go to Palestine? **[01:34:00]** But of course Palestine was under the British Mandate at the time and we couldn't go there either, so we ended up coming to England. And we came to England because I was the youngest boy there. What happened was, the people in the world could see what happened to us, so America, Australia, Canada, South Africa, everybody quite happy to open the door. But we said no, we only want to go to Palestine, we don't want to go anywhere else but Palestine.

So did you have to register for coming to England? How come you were chosen, or –

But – no, then but the British said, I'm sorry, you can't go to Palestine, there's a Mandate, but what we will do, we'll give you a thousand visas to get a thousand children to England. And the rest you know. They could only find 730 children out of a thousand to come to England, of which 500 went to Windermere and 200 went to Southampton.

The boys?

The boys, that's right.

So that's the story. So you came with the other unaccompanied minors.

Yes, exactly.

So everyone was under eighteen and had survived.

That's right. Exactly. And of course, the rest is history. But as I said, they looked after us very, very well, gave us all the education that we needed, helped us with everything, and they're still there for our help and when – if and when we need them.

Ivor, I think we should have a break now.

[Sighs]

[Break in recording]

Yes, Ivor. So, we almost got to the end of the war, you're coming to England. But just before we are getting to England, I have a few – just a few add-on questions.

Things to fill in.

Fill in. About Auschwitz, because now the film about Hess, you know, and the commandant. Did you ever come across Hess in Auschwitz?

No. But, you know, funny enough, when I am interviewed, I said about pointing left and right, I said we – which was a doctor. **[01:36:06]**

Yeah, Mengele.

But how do I know? Or I will say differently, does it matter?

Exactly.

Does it matter?

Yes. Because there's – how can you know?

No. But talking about Dr Mengele, 'cos I mentioned before this saying about education, there's the answer to the problem. I wish it was true.

Because he was an educated doctor.

Because – exactly, he were – the Wannsee agreement. Have you heard of the Wannsee agreement?

The Wannsee Conference?

The Wannsee Conference. What was the agreement there?

Final solution.

Exactly. Until then they were killing Jews by gas and whatnot, there were trucks, and they wondered what – which is the best way to kill, and how many – of how many German officers to – how many German people took part in there? Eighteen. How many were professors and doctors, and most of them lecturers? Twelve.

Yeah. Yeah, so we know education doesn't save you from prejudice.

Exactly, exactly. If anything, all education can do, can enhance, can make everything quicker for the end. But education per se on its own is not the answer.

And Ivor, I wanted to ask you because now the eightieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is coming up. Have you got any thoughts about that? I mean do you – would you like to see it commemorated in a specific way, or…?

I think I've said it twice before. You're asking questions I've never been asked before. Well, that is a very hard question to answer because I hoped – I hope – and I hate talking about the Holocaust and going around to the children, talking about it. **[01:38:00]** But I feel that

you've got to, otherwise how will we know [ph]. But on the other hand- when people like I talk about this thing, it's – we're not telling stories. It's not like Shakespeare, you're repeating the same play over and over again. We're living, we're actually living the whole thing through again and again and again. And what for? What for? Saying why [ph], saying that people should know. But I say, I wish [sighs] before I go up, down, whatever it is, or sideways, I would like to see some sort of benefit. But if you're asking me what that would be, I don't know.

A benefit of –

But the only –

Learning about the Holocaust?

I've been documented as saying that the Holocaust will never happen again. But all it is, it'll come in a different overcoat. The same thing will happen again. It might be a different – named differently, different countries, different people, but it'll be there again. Again, and again and again. Now, how one stops that, I don't know.

So you feel that marking the eightieth anniversary in a way is going to be – it's overshadowed by –

Very much so.

Current events.

Very much so. Very, very well put. And – but the only thing is you'd have thought that commemorating the eightieth anniversary would be an opposite thing, to commemorate someone, that something nice would be happening in the world. But [sighs] I know people say to me, I feel that the glass is always half empty with me. I says, I'm not always, but I'm afraid it's also true.

And is that – would you go to the commemoration yourself? ***[01:40:00]***

I would [sighs] – it depends what. Depends what. I feel as though if I go, I'd have to go, not because I want to go, I'd have to go. But I think I would've liked a bit more, you know, just turning up, saying, oh, he's one of the survivors. And when I'm asked quite – a number of times lately, quite often, I say no anymore 'cos no, I don't want to talk about it. But on the other hand I feel as though, you know, Ivor, there is a truth, why did you – why did I survive? I don't know why but I think to myself, I might as well do as something useful in my life, hopefully, hopefully, talking about something horrible as the Holocaust, people will begin to listen and to learn. But I must say, I'd like to see a bit more proof of that.

Yeah. But you said now you say no, or sometimes or often. Why – do you feel you've talked enough?

Both.

Do you see what I mean? Is it –

Both, for two reasons – for three reasons. Number one, I feel that I've talked enough. Number two – or number one, even, I find now that my concentration and recollection of things are not as clear as they should be, that I won't make a good job of it. And number three, I've got a granddaughter who belongs to the – a generation – the generation. She's made a forty-minute documentary about my life story, and me in it. That I could cope with. But to go around to saying to children and all again, I find it – I found it quite sort of difficult.

Yeah. But you've done it for so many years.

I've done it for so many years.

So you're –

And now when I'm asked, I say, I'd rather you find someone else. But if you can't find someone else, all right, I'll come along. But I think to myself, after eighty years, hasn't the world learned yet? **[01:42:04]** It seems as though it hasn't. Or let me put it differently, it looks like humanity cannot solve problems other than one way. And I don't have to explain what it is.

No, no. And you said you hate to talk about it but nevertheless you did talk about it. But did you feel it's a duty?

Exactly. Exactly. Well, no, normally especially if you go on a stage you are looking forward to it or – but I'm not. I feel it is a duty and – and the only one thing I can say- I never spoke about my Holocaust for a long, long time. VE Day. Do you remember VE Day? Victory in Europe, [inaudible]. And when I made – when I spoke about my experiences, and we had a *kiddush* afterwards, a celebration, friends, friends, not only – all strangers but friends, you know, Ivor, we know about the Holocaust but we never knew you were a survivor. And to actually meet someone and hear someone talk about it means so much more than just by reading about it. That's when I feel that, you know, Ivor, you can't run much longer. I do what I have to. But if the choice is up to me, I said, no, I'd rather not.

And do you feel it has changed from when you started talking? You said it's more difficult now with age to remember something. But you also find it more upsetting or less up – you know, do you find it – has it changed you, actually the talking, has that changed you? ***[01:44:05]***

No, no, it hasn't. The only thing it has taught me that possible – that humanity has to have some sort of outlet. And that's why somebody mentioned about the football hooliganism. He said, little do you realise that how lucky England is to have hooliganism in football. Why? He said because otherwise where would they let out their frustration and everything else? So it looks like humanity especially when they've got – there's no national service either, that humanity needs to have some sort of outlet. But how? I mean in the olden time there used to be the marathons – not the marathons. On the Roman –

Oh, the gladiators [laughs].

The gladiators. Now, what was the gladiators? Just with –seeing [ph] blood.

Yeah. But you are happy also for your granddaughter to take this mantle on?

I'm proud of her. I'm proud of her. But talking about grandchildren, I'm not so sure if it's the right subject to speak about but like I said, I'm going to tell you anyway what I feel, that I feel very, very, er, I'm not quite sure what term to use.

Worry?

Yes, worry is the right word. Very worried for the future, for the – for civilisation. I'm not talking about black, I'm not talking about white, I'm not [ph] talking about male or female, civilisation per se, because all you can see is that the humanity advances, the only thing that advances, which humanity is, you know, how you can destroy things easier and quicker.

Yeah. ***[01:46:00]***

No, that's the good news. What's the bad news? [Laughs].

Yeah. But do you think when you – you said you didn't talk and at some point you started to talk.

Yes, I never spoke –

How was it at the beginning for you? Do you think that helped you at the beginning, or, you know –

A very, very, very, very, important question. As I said, for fifteen years I never spoke about it because I thought to myself, knowing humanity, what it is, the best thing is, get up and you've got to do the right thing, I mean I've got to do the right thing and hopefully my

children do the right thing. But I – I'm beginning as a [inaud] the whole interview that I hope, or I wish I could see some proof that humanity is changing.

Yeah. But I meant for your – not in terms of education, for yourself, you know, to talk about your family and the people who you've lost, you know, whether – did that bring some form of closure to you?

I – for the first few years when I spoke about it, how shall I say now, I didn't mind. I didn't want to but I thought I had to. But now, no, people ask me and I say, rather leave me out, find somebody else. But I have to be there if nobody else is there. I said it's part of my duty.

So I'm sure in January when there is the eightieth anniversary, you will have a lot of requests because there are not so many Auschwitz survivors.

No, no, that's true. Well, you know, you want to use the Oxford expression, they're scraping the barrel [laughs]. It might sound just [inaudible] but it's – but the only thing I can say – I keep repeating myself time after time after time – I would like to see some sort of benefit. **[01:48:04]** Of course though being Jewish, the anti-Semitism around the world, it's rearing its head again.

Yeah. Okay, now, but let's come back to now after the war and how you ended up – how you came to England.

Well, I came to England because – I was saying, I did say before that after we found out that none of our family survived, so my brother and I said, well, there's only one place we can go to, Palestine because of course that was in 1945, what other country – the other countries might not – might have wanted, might not have wanted, but the only place to go was Palestine. But of course it was under British Mandate, so you couldn't go there. But what the British government did say to the committee, the Jewish Care – or Central British Fund, they're prepared to give a thousand visas to – for children, survivors, to come to England and on condition they won't be a burden to the country. And we undertook the – Jewish Care undertook a guarantee they will not be of any burden to the country. And the first country that

left from Germany came to England. And as we were the youngest survivors, we had the first opportunity to choose any country we wanted to go to. Now, where should we go to? In the old days you used to go to the rabbi because in the olden days the rabbi used to have all the answers. So where do we – there was a Klausenberger rabbi in the camp. He said, what shall we do? So, the two brothers. He said as far as he's concerned, the first transport that leaves Germany, no matter where they go to, you must leave, must leave this cursed country Germany.

This is the Klausenberger rabbi who was in the Felda – in the DP camp in Feldafing?

Yeah, in Dachau. **[01:50:03]** In the – in Feldafing. And he said that, er, and being the youngest one, we had the first choice. And the first choice came to England, so we came to England. But I must say that the minute I arrived in – to England, I felt – I literally felt I arrived in heaven, or the nearest thing to heaven. Tremendous love, people said you can do anything as long as you say you're sorry. I said, what? This is impossible. How can you – how can do that?

[Laughs] But did you have any English?

No. No, not at all. Not a word of English.

In Feldafing, in the DP camp, did they teach you Hebrew? Did you – was there some schooling in Feldafing?

There was schooling but it was very, very – it was after the war and everything was such a hurdle and the realisation of what happened was so enormous that education and everything was secondary to the actual looking-after – and looking after survivors and what to do with them, and how to handle us.

I mean were there some teachers? Do you remember anyone, you know, taking care of you?

Yes, the Central British Fund.

And did they have some specific people? Do you remember anyone?

Not until we came to England.

In –

But they had sort of committees, obviously, but individual, one-to-one, we did not have until we arrived in England in 1945.

But did you meet – were there any other children in the DP camp?

Yes. Oh, yes. But –

And I know there were lots of weddings, for example, in the DP camps.

Er, now, that –

Maybe a bit later.

Now – yes, I was going to say, that came later. I mean you're talking about four, five weeks after the liberation or – no, five weeks. May, June, July, August, about four or five months – four months afterwards. It was still quite raw. Everything was very, very fresh, any –

Yes, you had four months there, four months. ***[01:52:02]***

And the first thing was purely just to survive and see.

Yeah. Because I know that some people there were quite – the DP camps in Bavaria grew because people thought it's a good thing to be in American zones.

That's right. That's right. But even apparently – I'm not so sure if it's true – that how was Dachau liberated? That there was a detachment of troops in Munich because that was near Dachau. I don't know how they didn't know that but according to what I hear, a detachment or a platoon of soldiers started fanning out and looking and they came upon near Dachau about ten cattle trucks of dead people and they phoned up the officer and the officer said, what's going on? He said, well, there's a camp near here. He said, the first thing to do, close the camp, don't let anybody out. Why? They said the people will take revenge. So they thought they've got to let them be human beings again before you open the gate. So they said for two weeks they wouldn't allow – the people went out but had to have a reason for leaving, otherwise they wouldn't allow you out. Made sure you got food and everything else.

And do you remember that?

Pardon?

Do you remember? You remember –

Yes, yes, very much so.

You couldn't go out?

No, well, I didn't – I mean to me, I didn't know why, how or why or where, yeah, but very much so. But we were looked after very well.

So there was some sort of provision made for children like you.

Yes, yeah, but I mean once the gate of hell, like I said, like once the war was over and they opened the – opened like Auschwitz and Dachau, the people, I mean knew about it or rather couldn't believe it. **[01:54:09]** I mean there's programme, news programme, about – the British newscaster went to Dachau – not to Dachau, to Bergen-Belsen.

Yeah, yeah, Dimbleby.

Dimbleby. They couldn't believe it.

No, no. And you said there was a rebbe who survived.

Yes.

So what about immediately after, about the religious aspect of things? Did people try to kind of –

[Sighs] Well, religion per se, I must say that I felt a bit relieved not being sort of so – so sort of curtailed. But –

Was anything kept in Auschwitz?

No.

Do you remember any celebrations?

No, no, there was a synagogue there, there was a rabbi. Everything was there obviously for people who wanted and who were.

Post-war?

Post-war.

Yeah. And in the camp itself, during the war?

Well, the during the war, no. No. No.

Because sometimes one hears that people even managed to do something on- [overtalking].

[Sighs] All I can tell you is what happened. We were taken to Auschwitz by train and the cattle trucks. After three days in there people started, you know, they've got windows at the top with barbed wire, started looking. I said, what are you looking for? There were five planes flying very high, trailing with vapour behind it. And guess what the rabbis were discussing? This is a sign from God. You know. In other words, how hungry we were, to looking for any excuse for any good news. **[01:56:01]** God is showing us a sign, yes, it's good times. I'm not quite sure what. But life was very raw, very raw.

So post-war there – so in the DP camps they did establish a synagogue and –

Oh, yes.

And other facilities?

No. No, no. Yes.

But you were not drawn to these things, or –

Er, I was but not – it's from choice, not from necessity. And of course, it's like finding freedom the first time. I didn't have to do it. But of course, afterwards when we came to England, there was the rabbi, a famous rabbi, going around collecting children who were in the hostels.

That's later. But –

Although the food was *kosher*, there was a – but it wasn't a Jewish upbringing, so he made a special provision for children who had come from a religious family to go to there, you know, to the hostel where it was run by the rabbi, which turned out to have an awful lot to do with the Jewish education as well as a secular education.

He was the Liège rabbi, you said. Or who was that?

Yes, yes.

Liège.

Liège rabbi.

Lièger rabbi.

For Liège.I think he came from [inaudible] Belgium I believe. He was a very famous rabbi.

And what was his name? Do you remember?

I think Weingarten.

Weingarten, okay. This was post-war, he –

Yeah. I think Weingarten.

So what I was going to ask you, what about the bar mitzvah, your bar mitzvah?

Well, my *bar mitzvah* unfortunately was on the 4th of February. The 4th of February we were still in the camps. Now, I wasn't quite certain the exact day it was but I remember standing next to the barbed wire and the sun shining, with the birds flying overhead, thinking, please, God, let me get out of this hellhole. **[01:58:00]**

So you remember your thirteenth birthday?

No, we didn't know – we did not know the time or the date.

But you knew in February –

But we knew it was February, we knew it was, you know, you knew that – you didn't know the exact date, you didn't, but you knew it was sort of the beginning of February, the middle of February or something.

And were you aware that this should be your bar mitzvah?

Yeah. Yes.

You were thinking about that?

I was thinking about that and thinking that how I would love to have commemorated and celebrated it. I did have a second *bar mitzvah* afterwards, when I was seventy years old.

Where?

But – in – when I was involved in a synagogue. But it was very, very nice but didn't quite replace the actual thing it would have been. But –

And can you describe the physical journey from Bavaria to England?

Well, the physical journey was we, er, I suppose I can say so, that the Zionists were insistent that young children without parents can only go to Palestine. Of course, Palestine, was under British Mandate, they made sure that no way can you go there. So, we had to keep us separate to make sure we don't sort of lose [inaudible] had to have documentation, they kept us together. And anyway, the question was?

The journey. The journey from Bavaria to England.

Yes, well, that was also – we were collected in the middle of the night because they didn't want to – they did not want to know people who were going to – to stop us were asleep. We arrived in Munich airport and we couldn't get onto the plane, a commotion going on, because England was fog-bound, so the plane couldn't take off. So there were people standing over

there. Now, what can we do with – was it 100-odd children or something, 120 children? **[02:00:05]** What can you do with them? You can't go back to the camp because once you go back to the camp, you'll never be able to go out again. So there was a nunnery near there and apparently the nunnery had only two priests to help us. That's the first time I saw a nun.

In Munich?

In Munich. And they looked after us so well, lovely hot baths and everything, so I didn't want to leave there. So we were there for two days and afterwards the planes could take off because England – they lifted the fog and we arrived in England. That was in November 1945. Was it November '45? I'm not sure.

From Germany?

From Germany.

Why did you – did the authorities of the camp – why did you say it had to be sort of secretly? Who was against it?

Well, the Zionist groups, yes. The – well, from the Zionist people you could see where could Jews go, they said you can go anywhere with parents that they want to go, but children who are orphans, you've got nowhere to go, you don't know what to do, you should only go to Palestine, which we were quite happy to do. In fact, we were sorry we weren't allowed to go to Palestine. But of course, they said no, you can't go there because of the Mandate.

Okay. So, you had to do it – it had to be done clandestinely.

So we had to – clandestine, yes.

Because they were in charge of the camp, or the –

Well, no, they weren't in charge but any demonstration, they can – or anything they didn't want to happen, all they've got to do, they have a demonstration.

I understand.

And I should imagine documentation in those days must have been very, very – quite stressful or long [ph].

But your brother also, the two of you decided –

The two together, yes. So, we stayed overnight in a nunnery which was wonderful, lovely hot baths and, you know, the – and then when we came to England. **[02:02:03]**

And how was the flight?

The flight was quite [inaudible]. Nothing – I can't remember much about it.

I mean it's [overtalking] had never been on a plane.

First time, the first time I'd been on a plane. Yeah, the first time I was on a plane. But no, we never knew about it. But they looked after us very, very well. No, the only thing is we used to live in a hostel and we had food, like everything, what's the word, quite sort of – not rationed but given to us. No, how shall I say, now. We had food three times or whatever it was. And the butter used to be on a plate. Each plate had a pat of butter on it and – but then they said, well, look, now the butter is not what – it is rationed but you don't have to put a pat – a pat, you know, a bit of butter on the plate, put the butter on the middle of the table. And we objected to that. We said no, because if you have the butter in the middle of the table, we'll run out of butter and you won't have enough butter for all of us. So, they decided to go on strike. And people came to me and said, Ivor, are you joining us on the strike? I said what's a strike? I never knew what a strike was [laughs]. They said, well, you know, we were given butter, we want it still back on a plate, we don't want it separately [laughs].

So you, when you arrived, you arrived in where?

We arrived in Southampton.

Airport?

Yes. And the hostel. There was a hostel on the – I must say, I'm not ashamed but I'm sorry I didn't sort of go into it, or what, where or why. I don't know if you know anything more than I do. The – most of the boys went to Windermere and 200 or so went to Southampton.

And the 200 Southampton, were they all Hungarian or were they –

No, no, no. **[02:04:01]**

No?

Oh, no, no.

So Polish –

Various. Various age and various – yeah.

So were you on the younger side of the boys who came there?

Yeah, very. I don't think there was more than about two or three of us who was of my age.

Yeah, because most people your age had very slim survival chances.

Exactly. I mean as I said, the only reason I survived was because I was much sort of, er, not a beast, is not the word [laughs].

Pluckier?

Yes. Bigger [ph] for my age. But very few youngsters survived.

Yeah. So you arrived in this hostel. The hostel was run by…?

The hostel was run by *madrichim*. What do you call, you know what *madrichim* are?

Yeah, youth leaders.

They're youth leaders who were here, who came – Jewish youth leaders who came here from Germany or from before the war. And they looked after us. No, I must say that we were looked after very, very well and I – the only thing I don't think we had which we should have had is possible mental health – mental help, phys – er, social, physical and love. But, you know, possibly, er, in those days there wasn't much – what's the word now – room for pandering [ph], what I call pandering [ph] about.

Although in that film, in, you know, on Windermere, there is a whole thing about art therapy that was –

Therapy.

Art therapy.

That's right.

Was –

No, that's what I thought. That's what I was looking for the word, it was therapy.

There wasn't?

There wasn't, no. There was therapy in a sense, yes, there were teachers, they were teaching us, and schooling as well. But I mean you could go if you wanted to. I liked – in fact, I liked studying. But it wasn't sort of compulsory.

And did you go to school in Southampton?

Yes. **[02:06:01]** But I wanted to learn. I remember going to the library when I was in Staines because I wanted to learn English, I wanted to read – I wanted to know what it was all about as well, so I was –

How did you manage with your English?

I don't know. I don't – truthfully, I don't know. But I wanted to learn English very, very well. But no, you're – now, you're saying something, I'm – this 19 – about 1946, beginning on January '46. I must have – I obviously I could read and understand more than I could speak.

Yeah. 'Cos it's a difficult age anyway, to come to a new country, even if you didn't have such a difficult experience.

Yeah. Exactly. But I always liked learning. I remember the teacher on – like on a Saturday, on *Shabbos*, we used to have a meal and the teacher used to take us for a walk and started talking about the Romans, Romans in occupying England and to me it was all completely – I was absolutely – absolutely astounded to hear all that. It was wonderful.

You liked it.

Yes.

But Ivor, so you went to Southampton. Then you said this Liège rabbi came and took the boys–

But – yeah. He – well, there was a rabbi who also came from Liège just before the war and he wanted to make sure that boys who came from a religious family – although the hostels we stayed at were all *kosher* and Jewish culinary, but that's all it was. There was nothing – no further studies at all. So, he formed a special hostel for boys who came from a religious family.

In Southampton?

In Southampton.

What was it called, that special hostel?

The Liège Rebbe.

The Liège Rabbi Hostel?

Yeah, yes.

And how many boys were there?

Oh, not many. Maybe twenty. But I think there were one or two other organisations also taking Jewish, you know, I'm not sure. **[02:08:04]** That I'm not sure of.

And you and your brother, both?

Me and my brother, yes.

And were you happy about it?

Yes. Yes, quite. First of all, it wasn't quite as strict as it was back home. But no, I think it was rather quite looking forward to it. But of course the schooling was only for a couple of hours per day, or wasn't too long.

The religious one?

Yes.

And could you read –

And then we had to learn secular – we had to learn English as well as Hebrew.

And the Jewish things, were they similar to what you've learned?

Yes, very similar.

'Cos you said before you [overtalking].

Yiddish.

Yiddish. But what about that nusach? You said you also –

No, no –

Knew some were Sephardi nusach.

No, no, no. The *nusach* were the Ashkenaz. But a *nusach* is only the very, very slight, very slightly different to the Ashkenaz. But the bulk of the Jewishness were the same.

But you said in Hungary that your nusach was –

Sephard.

Was Sephard.

But in there, do you know, I can't remember if it was Ashkenaz. I think it was Ashkenaz.

Yeah. But it was similar enough.

Yes, yes. But it was quite sort of tip-top *kosher* and thing.

And you said –

I like studying.

Yeah. And you said there wasn't any therapy. Did you feel there was enough support? I mean you – I don't know how you felt at the time, you know, this age, you knew your family hadn't – your parents had not survived, your siblings not survived.

Do you know, that's a very, very deep question. A very deep question. How can I put that? The therapy was there if we needed it. But it wasn't like a National Health where I can go, phone up a doctor every five, ten minutes, or phone up. **[02:10:00]** It was there if and when someone needed it very badly. But they didn't expect you to pamper you, so if we got any – they expect you to stand on your own feet and get on with life.

And were there cases of people who couldn't cope at all? Do you remember if –

No. There's only one case I remember, a boy, I don't know what, he had a – also had a brother with him. He was nearly blind. Now, I don't know how he survived the camps. He was determined, he was learning, learning quite well as well. But other than that, no. No, there was no therapy whatsoever, not as far as I know. I feel as though whenever I needed a doctor or something, I don't know whether [ph] somebody came along, when I went to someone, it was there. But therapy per se, it did not exist.

No, no. But your thinking of the time was to learn English and to integrate or to –

Integrate.

Was – what –

No, not only that. I started – first of all, I wanted to have an anglicised name rather than Isaac. So I thought, which one is – and my name was Isaac, Yitzhak. So how do I anglicise it? How does Yitzhak go in English? So, there was a boy there from Newcastle, English boy, his name was Yitzhak, and he was called Ivor. I said, well, if it's good enough for him, it must be good enough for me.

So you changed it.

I said Ivor, yes. I took it. And now, what about Perlmutter? So how do I – because I thought I'm going to- I can't have Isaac Perlmutter, not English enough. So I thought, well, I just – why don't you shorten it? I don't want to lose Perl altogether, Perl – some association with Perlmutter, so I thought Perl is not an unusual name. So, I said, all right, I'm Perl, Ivor Perl, but without the A. **[02:12:00]** P-E-R-L.

You kept that original Perl.

I kept – original, yes. Perl.

And your brother also changed his name?

No, he didn't.

That's interesting.

Not only is it interesting, we never, ever discussed it. Never, ever discussed it. But all I remember thinking to myself, well, I don't want to change it for the sake of changing but if I'm going to go into business, an Englishman, and I can't – I'd like to be – I'd like to feel as little opposition as I possibly can, [laughs] however it was.

So you did that early on?

Early on, yes. But of course, after a while I wanted to join the army because I felt as it was an adventure, I wanted to feel an adventure, so I couldn't join the army because I wasn't British, as an enemy alien – or not an enemy, an alien, so I had to get naturalised, thinking I'll be able to go the army. So two weeks before I became a naturalised British, the National Service stopped.

[Both laugh] So you didn't join the army?

The adventure I'll have, which I thought I'll have in the army, never materialised.

And then you were sent to an ORT school.

Yes.

Tell us a little bit about that, please.

The ORT is the organisation through – Organisation Rehabilitation through Training. And that was a secular education, part time, and, er, what's the name, work education.

Vocational? It was a vocational school?

Vocational, exactly. Vocational training and the other part.

And they were actually all over Europe, this – the ORT schools.

I think so. The ORT, yeah, the ORT school was over Europe. **[02:14:00]**

And who made the decision to send you there?

Er, that's a good question. I think I did. I think I did and I thought – and also, what do I study? I wanted to do bookkeeping or lawyer or something else like that. But I had to do something about – mechanical, so I thought I'd do electrical engineering.

And where was it, the ORT school?

Kensington. The ORT school was in Kensington. I think South Kensington.

So you moved to London?

And then – that's when the Liège rabbi came into being, he said children who are very young shouldn't go right away to work, they should go and study first. And then when I left ORT school I went to Staines, to the Orthodox –

Yeshiva?

Yeshiva.

Okay, so he – they took you out of the ORT school?

Yes.

To go to yeshiva?

Yeshiva. And after *yeshiva*, I don't know how it was, how I became now.

And your brother as well? Both of you were there?

Yeah, both of us. But when we came to London he went into watch-making business and I wanted to be my own business. So what did I do, then? I think I acquired a business when I was about seventeen.

Where?

In London, making covered buttons. I don't know if you know that. Do you know when – you know when you make dresses you have buttons?

Yeah.

Now that you've got emerald [ph], you know, button, a polyester quality [ph], you know, plastic buttons, but in those days they didn't have plastic, so you had to make it with the same material as the dress is made of.

Yeah, textiles.

Textiles.

Yeah. So that was your business?

That was my first. **[02:16:00]** And I had no idea what to do.

How did you acquire it? How did you – where did you have the money from, or –

I borrowed it from my brother. I was very – no, you're talking about £30, £20, £30, nothing [laughs] – nothing –

And how did he have the – what did he do? You –

He was a watch – he was in the watch-making business. He was making –

So he was in the watch –

Yes. And [sighs] –

In Manchester or in London?

In London. And I think I borrowed it from someone as well, £50. I borrowed £50 from someone, that's all.

And where did you stay? Did you have –

In a hostel. I stayed in a hostel by this Rabbi Korn.

You continued to stay there?

Continued, yes. Yes.

And the hostel was in…?

In Hackney.

In Hackney.

Amherst Road. 167 Amherst Road.

Amherst Road. And that was a boys' hostel?

A boys' hostel, yes, of course, religious also.

Religious, okay. Survivors or –in others?

Er, yes, the survivors. Yes, there were only survivors there, because they themselves were, you know, refugees themselves. There was a Rabbi Korn.

What was the name?

Korn. K-O-R-N. Rabbi Korn. And I think he had some help from the, er, the Bloomsbury – do you remember them, there was a Bloomsbury –

Bloomsbury House.

Bloomsbury House.

Yeah. He and his wife, you said?

Yes, that's right, he and his wife.

And how many boys or –

It must have been about eight or ten boys.

So quite small.

Yes. Oh, yes. Yes, it's just a nice three-floored house in Amherst Road.

So they took in boys to help – to help –

Yes, to – boys who came from a religious family, who lived – who wanted to stay in a religious home.

Did they have their own children as well?

Yes, but they were two boys and a girl but they were very, very grown up. They left, you know, at home. They were quite sort of mature.

So again your brother stayed there as well?

My brother stayed there as well. **[02:18:01]** He was there for a few years, until I get married I think.

From there?

Yes.

So you manage to have enough money to get into this buttons business.

Well, you say enough money. You're talking about pounds, not hundreds [laughs].

So it was money just to buy I guess, how to buy –

In fact, I borrowed – I went out with my dear wife and I borrowed from her father £100, can you loan me if I open up a business. And when I look back on, I think the lack of education helped me because if I would have realised the hurdle I had to overcome, I would never have gone on that journey. But fear, fear or not succeeding never occurred to me. It just didn't occur to me. I think I was too ignorant [laughs].

And how well-received did you feel by the English Jews? By – or did you not have so much contact with them?

No, no, no, on the whole, very, very – very well for the first few years. I remember we came to England in '45, we walked out to London over *Shabbos*, to stay in certain, you know, for Saturday. Most of the time I was always very well-received.

And did people understand where you had come from? Did people understand?

They did, and they – yes, yes. And of course, we spoke Yiddish. Because we didn't speak English by that time. We had to speak English and Yiddish. But on the whole, we found it very, very helpful. Very helpful. And of course, the – what's the name school – Jewish Care, the Central British Fund, we would never have managed without them. **[02:20:01]**

Yeah. So, does it mean – did you have a social worker assigned to you? Did you have somebody assigned to you?

Er, I have a feeling we did have someone assigned to us, but not as far as I know.

Did you ever check your papers?

No.

Ivor?

No.

You should check.

The only thing is I think my son tried to check the papers, some of the papers, and on there it said something about a cheeky boy or something or other [laughs]. Because I remember we were – that's right, we went to Bloomsbury House asking them to lend me the money to buy the button business. They said, he had the cheek to come and ask us for the money [laughs].

But you got it? You got the money?

Yes, I – but –

So you had support there.

I found- that in life in general, my wife, my dear wife had it- was the same- because I remember I used to be in a clothing [ph] – she used to make her own wedding dress and brought home – er, make a dress for my daughter – someone [ph]. It cost about the equivalent of over £100 a metre. And she came home from work one day, she was cutting on the floor. I said, well, where is the pattern? She said, pattern for what? Well, if you make a sleeve, how

do you know where to cut? I said, well, suppose you make a mistake? She said, well, I'll alter it. And I thought to myself, you know what, that's what life is- not being scared to do something. And I found in life in general it's very, very true. In fact, so much so that statistically – possibly you can corroborate that – it's showing that most people don't do things. You know why don't most people tried not to do things?

Fear?

That's it. Fear of failure. **[02:22:00]** That's right.

So you didn't have that fear?

[Sighs] I think I was too stupid [laughs]. No, I must say, failure very, very rarely crossed my mind. I said, well, all I've got to do is work harder or do something else. I'm joking and said I'm stupid but that's what I meant.

So Ivor, at that time did you meet with the other forty-five – I mean the other boys in the – did you go to the Primrose [ph] Club and –

No, I didn't. I found that I tried to – well, how shall I say now – as little as possible to do with the past, not because I was ashamed or whatnot, I thought that's not the way forward. The way forward for me is to get up, dust myself down and get on with life. In fact, I belonged to the AJR and I went for the meeting there once, the first time I went to the meeting and they had a – I've got a book, of the AJR book there. And I went – and the meeting and I mentioned – they said, what do you think? I said, I think the book is very, very wonderful, except for one thing. It's all about the Holocaust sadness. Why didn't you put a few stories in about life, and different life? And they told me off terribly. They said, how dare you say this is, blah, blah. I said – but that's what I thought it was in life. Don't forget it but don't continue only on that route.

Don't dwell on it.

Don't dwell on it, yes.

So you were not looking for contact there with the other boys or with the other survivors?

No, no, no.

So, in Hackney did you join any other English youth, Jewish youth –

Well, no, no, no, but I joined a club, a Jewish club and I used to go to the *shul.*

Which club?

Victoria Boys' Club.

That was, what, a Jewish boys' club?

Yes, a Jewish club.

Shul in Hackney?

No – yes. Yeah, a few *shuls*. But I didn't belong to this, I just went. **[02:24:01]** They used to have *shtiebels*. Do you know *shtiebels*?

Yeah.

That's where I used to go to. And gradually –

Right. And how did you meet your wife, then? Because you were young –

Well, I was in partnership with a friend of mine and he had a cousin who used to sell plastic bags, I need someone to make plastic buttons for him. And my partner approached him and we used to do business together. And then one day he said, Ivor, he says, would you like to

meet a nice Yiddish girl? A nice Yiddish girl. I was shy, very shy, to say the least [laughs]. And I said, well, I'm too busy making a living in a business sense. And he said, look, what can you lose? Just come along for a *Shabbos*. I went along for the Saturday and there were three girls there, you know, the eldest one was twenty, the next one was eighteen and the next one was ten. I thought I was going out with the eldest one. Oh, and I met the middle one [laughs]. But I think I had help, a sort of – what's the word – help from people and just carried on myself, carried further.

And what was her background? Did she have parents? I mean she –

Yes. And in fact, I am – and I think you see the – have you seen her?

Yeah.

I am what I am because of her. And one thing that she had, which other thing [ph], I said that before, which was the secret to life in general is, not scared of failure. So I said, all right, if it doesn't work, you'll have to do it somewhere else, some other ways. And most of the time, most of the time, I only could see the benefit, not the fail – the shortsightedness of it.
[02:26:08]

And what did her parents say about marrying a young survivor like yourself?

No, no, that I don't know. All I do know is two things. After I'd written my book there was a woman I'm friendly with, she's a bit of an authoress, she looked through the book, she said, well, you know, it needs padding up, it's a bit – I said, well, it wasn't written as a book. It was written purely for the children. But she said, you know, your mother in law must have had a heart of gold. I said, what do you mean? Well, now that you have elder daughters as well. She says, can you imagine somebody bringing in a boy from the camps, no benefit, no money, nomad [ph], and she actually took you to her heart.

And did they take you in?

Yeah, very much. In fact, so much so, that she was the one who pushed me, asked my daughter to marry me [laughs]. She said, well, Ivor, no, no. I said, what do you mean? She said, what are you waiting for? [Laughs].

Yeah. So, was that important for you to have a family?

Oh, very much so. Very, very much so.

So you became part of a wide –

Very, very much so. And also, because she came from a family which I used to know, sort of nice Jewish background. But also she was also a first bra-burner. Do you know what I mean by that?

No.

How do you call it?

Oh, a feminist.

Cameraman: Women's liberation.

Women's – feminist –

Bra-burner.

Yes, feminist.

Feminist [laughs]. A very strong feminist. But I say, you know, her father was obviously Jewish [inaudible] *shul* [ph]. I used to go to synagogue but she had the Jewish heart. I used to have, you know, the Jewish from my mind but she's from the heart. **[02:28:02]** I don't know if I make sense with that or not.

Yeah. What do you mean by it? Explain it.

Well, religion is from the heart. You can't – it can't be taught. But I've got religion from having been taught like that. But she – in other words, she objected because being religious, the women used to sit separately to the men and she was very, very much against that. So, if she want – if she ever did go to the synagogue, she'd only go to the forum [ph], where men and women sit together. But she had a very strong Jewish heart.

So where did you – did you first live together with her parents? How did you manage?

Oh. No, no, no, we had a – her father was known in the community and they knew the butcher's shop in east – in Fieldgate Street in east London and there's room, a couple of rooms above that, so we managed to get that. Of course, we're talking about 1953 when accommodation was unbelievably impossible to get.

There was – there was a synagogue in Fieldgate Street, isn't there?

Yes. Yeah, but not there. The synagogue was around the corner but there was a – no – yeah. Yes.

And that's where you started your married life.

That's where we started.

And your shop was where? Your – or did you have a shop, or was –

A shop. The shop next door was a grocery shop.

Your button business?

Pardon?

Your button business?

Oh, no, no, but there was also in Brick Lane – not Brick Lane.

Yeah, so really in the East End.

No, well, there I had to sort of – I went into business without knowing, without saying- all you had – all I had to do was roll up the sleeves and start going and looking. In fact, then we went into the dressmaking business after making the buttons and belts, I went into Windsmoor. **[02:30:00]** Have you ever heard of Windsmoor?

No.

Very famous shops. And I said to them, I'm looking for work. She said, why? Do you do this? I said yes, I do that. I said, yes, I do – I forgot suddenly what I was talking about. But they gave me – he practically gave me the first start in life, in business life, purely by saying, yes, I can do it.

And what did you do?

It was pleated dresses. Do you remember the crystal pleated dresses?

Yeah, yeah.

Nobody else wanted to do it. I said, yes, I can do it [laughs] and eventually became known as the king of the pleated-dress selling. But you know what cabbage is?

Cabbage? Yeah.

Yes. Do you know? The dressmakers used to have – they used to give you – what happened was in dressmaking, in the garment business, big firms used to get the order and give it to the

people like me who had – who didn't have the money but they had the factory space. So they used to give you ten rolls of material to bring me 200 dresses. But I'm clever, I made 220 dresses, so I had twenty more than I should have had. I just made a cabbage.

Okay, and that you could sell?

That I could sell. Then eventually people wanted so many, I thought to myself, well, I can't produce cabbage? Why do I have to [inaudible], making cabbage [laughs].

So then you had your own?

I had to have my own eventually.

And what was it called, Ivor, your –

It was called Ivor Gowns and they started making – manufacturing in outdoor work then they started making dresses themselves, used to call it roving manufacturing.

And all based in the East End?

Yeah, all based in the East End.

Hmm, an interesting time because it was a time when Jews were also moving out of the East End, wasn't it? After the war.

Exactly. That was the end of one, the beginning of another. I mean at first, for the first ten years of my life, when people used to say, Ivor, what are you making? I said, I'm making money. And then immigrants from Cyp – and then immigrants from Cyprus or Malta came along, competition, Pakistan came along, and then after that I started saying, I'm making dresses [laughs]. **[02:32:10]** The competition was very severe.

And how long did you have the business for?

Oh, all the time. In fact, it's still going now. My son-in-law is getting on with it.

Uh-huh. And still in the East End?

No, no. But I retired about thirty years ago. Over thirty years ago. But –

Yeah, so you lived through the changes there in the East End.

Very much so, very much so.

From a very Jewish area to different migration –

Yes, you're right. In fact, most of the customers, in fact, yes, were Jewish and people you bought the cloth from were also Jewish. But of course that's all changed very, very [overtalking].

Yeah. And did you say there was a Yiddish club I think, wasn't there, in the East End? Did you go?

Er…

Ah, what was it called?

There was. No, there was a Jewish theatre.

A Jewish theatre. But there was also –

A Jewish club. But we used to go the Jewish theatre. But not a Jewish club.

What was it called? They had sort of performers –

I don't know the club, which –

Not a club. They had sort of –

The Brady Boys' Club?

No, no, no. It was called something else. Anyway, don't worry about it. So, you –

There was a Primrose – Primroy's [ph]?

No, the Primrose was –

Was here.

Was here, yeah. But anyway, you had Yiddish theatre there after the war.

Yeah, the Yiddish theatre.

So the Yiddish – helped you in a way to settle in England.

Yes. But on the other hand, not many boys spoke Yiddish. In other words –

No, they spoke Polish.

That's right.

Yeah. Some Yiddish?

In fact, I was working on my way towards being an Englishman rather than Yiddish.

Yeah. Hmm-hmm. ***[02:34:00]*** *What about Hungarian? Did you forget that?*

No, Hungarian, I lost – funnily enough, you're asking me a very, very sort of, er, [sighs] not hurtful question, you know. Later on in life I had to go to Germany. Oskar Gröning. Have you heard of Oskar Gröning? The SS officer who stood for trial. I went along as a prosecuting – what –

Witness?

Witness – to Germany.

Tell us. I know who it is but tell us, please, for the camera. Who is –

The – Oskar Gröning. Oskar Gröning was an SS officer in charge of Hungarian Jewry selection in Auschwitz. And he – I don't- I was prepared to – was standing trial in Germany for his court or whatever. And they asked me as a Hungarian Jew would I come along to be a witness. I said, well, I'm prepared to be a witness but I don't want to go to Germany, I don't want to put my foot in German soil. I had a word to my children and they said, you know, Dad, it's – maybe you should go, especially as they said this might be the last time an SS officer is prepared to turn trial. I said, all right, I'll go along. Two weeks later I went to Hungary with my children. I disliked the Hungarian more than the Germans. Why?

Because for you the Holocaust happened there? That's one explanation. I don't know. Why?

But also, also – I also thought to myself, you know, Ivor, anti-Semitism is from the heart and from the head. The Germans were anti-Semites from the head. I don't know if I'm making any sense. But the East European, the Catholic countries, were and are anti-Semites from the heart.

Hmm, that's interesting. That's how you felt it?

Yeah.

So was that the first time you went back to Hungary? ***[02:36:00]***

The first time. That's the only time I went back to Hungary and the first time I went back to Germany, both places, I thought that – but when I was in Germany –

How was that? What was that like to be a witness?

Very, very – we were looked after very well, stayed in a four-star hotel, the sun was shining, went to walks and –

Where was the trial?

Er…

Frankfurt?

No.

No. Hamburg? Munich?

No. Near Hamburg. Near there. But anyway, it was quite sort of publicised. And –

And what was the conviction? What happened to him?

Well, funnily enough, I was asked that question, now that you have been stood as a witness, if you found guilty, he will be guilty because he didn't deny what he did. I said, okay, as far as I'm concerned, nothing. They said, what do you mean? Don't want to take punishment? I said, what punishment can you give a man of eighty-year-old, who came into a court, you know, hardly walking. I felt sorry for him. I said, what can you do? What should I give him? I said, the fact that he wants to stand trial and is saying that yes, this did happen and I took part in it, other than that, what else? I mean you cut him in what, in a thousand pieces, then what? Of course, he was found guilty but he I think he only got three years' sentence. I don't even know if he survived three years.

And was it – yes, so the trial was in 2015, in Lüne –

2015, in Lüneburg. Lüneburg. I said – at first, I said – when he phoned me up, I said – he said, is that so-and-so? I said yes. He said, you're a Hungarian Jew? He said, Oskar Gröning was part in charge of Hungarian Jewry's reception, would you come along? I said, well, I'm sorry, I'm prepared to help you with the prosecution but I don't want to step foot on German soil. **[02:38:00]** Anyway, I don't know if I mentioned that or not. Anyway, and – but my kids said no, Dad, you've got to go along, which I did. And I found they were so helpful. But the more – the funny part about that, the more helpful they were, the more annoyed I was. You know why?

No.

Because I said I should feel hatred.

And did you?

Pardon?

Did you?

No. That's what I'm saying. Even – the policemen there to guard me, and the SS officer comes along there with two nurses either side, I felt sorry for him.

So had you not gone to Germany before, on purpose?

No, no.

You didn't want to step –

I didn't want to go to Germany, in effect. But on the other hand, I went to Hungary and I think I'd rather not go to Hungary rather than Germany.

Did you go to your house in Hungary?

Yes, which was quite sort of an experience because I told you, I mentioned we stayed in the house we were [ph] built and the street was nearly the same as it was when I left forty-odd years ago. The first transport I saw was a horse and cart with hay on it. And we lived in a corner, in a bungalow. I turned up in a minibus, about seven of us there, dogs barking, nobody in the street. All you could see, curtains opening up all over, there's people there. And we went, we knew where the street was, and as we were walking around, there's a curtain opening up but eventually, eventually we knock on the door, she had to come, and she didn't want to let us in. I said, look, we know exactly what's going on. We used to live here. We just want to show the children where we were. We – no, we don't want the place back, we want nothing to do with it. She said no, because I got it legally. I said I want nothing to do with it, I just want to show my children where we were. **[02:40:00]**

And she did?

Yes.

And did you speak Hungarian? Did you manage?

My brother spoke more than I did. And I – yeah, a bit. Yeah, we managed Hungarian.

Because you were saying when I asked you about Hungarian, you talked about the trial. So you were not –

No, I mean the lawyer said this is – there's an SS officer, Oskar Gröning, prepared to stand trial for his – taking part in Auschwitz. So, I said, well, okay, all right, well, I'm prepared to be a witness but I don't want to go to Germany. And then as I said, my children said go, Dad, you've got to go, it could be the last time it'll be filmed or whatnot.

But then you went to Hungary? No?

No – actually I did – I did go to Germany then it so happens that about four or five weeks later, my children said, Dad, why don't you go back to Hungary? I said, all right, I'm going back there, which –

And what was it like for you to bring your children to Hungary?

Hurtful. More hurtful than in Germany 'cos I remember staying in Budapest – I don't know if you've been to Budapest – near the river there, a beautiful, nice sunny day with a restaurant [ph], and I'm looking around to the people and I thought to myself, are these the people that did all the dirty work on me? And it's like I said before, I said Hungarian did it from the heart, not from the head.

And that's what you felt when you went?

That's what I felt. Because in Germany I didn't – it was different. In Germany I didn't feel threatened, funnily enough, not because the German police were there, you know, looking after us, but I just, you know –

And have you ever been back to Hungary, over there [ph]? Yeah, so you haven't been back to Hungary at all [ph]?

No, no. I felt that I'd like to go back to Hungary again, this time without emotions. **[02:42:07]** Do you know what I mean? I felt if I go back, the first time was too much sort of memories. But no, I've got no inclination whatsoever. I don't have to go back.

You have no desire.

No. No desire.

Do you have any sort of nostalgia or any –

[Sighs] I've got happy memories of home but not – how shall I say now – not exactly happy memories of Hungary, as such. Does it make any sense to you?

Yeah, of course. Yeah.

And – I don't know. I don't know. But the thing that puzzles me [inaudible] of going back now right from beginning, that this feeling of here we go again, I would rather we were here before.

And in your town is there a memorial or is there any trace of Jewish life from before the war, currently?

Er, not as far as I know. They've got a synagogue which has been refurbished, quite a nice one, but other than that, no. In fact, when we were in – when we drove from Budapest to Makó the first time we were there, we drove past a number of towns and every – practically every town we went past, there was some sort of plaque that this used to be the, you know, synagogue, it used to be this or that. Because there was, you know, about nearly 700,000 Jews in Hungary in the 1940s, over 600. But…

Yeah. ***[02:44:02]*** *And Ivor, how – you have four children. So how did you want to raise them? What sort of identity did you want to give to the children?*

Now, dear, dear, dear, dear. You're opening a big kettle of fish there. I went to the synagogue, I was involved in the synagogue, I wanted Judaism per se but I didn't want to have any – I didn't want to harp on the Holocaust. I think- if there would have been therapy beforehand, I wonder if I would have a different life. Because I mean you had to get on – I mean we did go through a tremendous amount of burden and tribulations and as a thirteen-year-old boy you just had to get on with it.

How do you think – Ivor, how do you think the Holocaust impacted your later life? How do you think it impacted?

[Sighs] A good question. As far as I'm concerned, no, it was always there. But had it affected my children's life? Now, that I don't know. That's something which I feel I'll have that sort of query in my mind, was that the right way to have brought them up. Sort of – I didn't want to hurt them, they didn't want to hurt me. But I'm asking you, was that the right way? How can you tell?

Yeah.

And also their outlook in life, has it affected them? And well, it's only hearsay, what else would have happened? **[02:46:00]**

Oh, why do you feel that if you had therapy it would have – you would have benefitted? In which way do you think for you things – or you would have done things differently?

Well, first of all, exactly, would I have taken the same routes, including for myself.

What do you think you would have done, or what would you have done –

I must say, as I mentioned to you before, that three of my children married out. And I came to myself- do I behave the same way the Nazis behaved if my – if I was – that's assuming somebody were brought home and me, as a Nazi's daughter. Was that the right way to go? I don't know. I definitely feel as though – I – no, I can't. No, I think it's just purely conjecture- because when I talk to people who have become very religious or very the other way around, there's no rhyme or reason. I don't think there's rhyme or reason. I don't think there is one answer to all.

No. So you think you were more tolerant, or –

Yes. If anything, the other way. If anything, yes, you're right because do you know why? I'll tell you. When first Oskar Gröning came into the courthouse, the first thing that went through my mind? The very first time I saw him coming in, two nurse, one on the side, the side with a walking frame, I felt sorry for him. Is that – was that the right way to do it? I don't know. But that's what I'm saying. I don't know how I would have behaved and how the children would have behaved, had it been different. **[02:48:01]** Although I'm sure you know that better than me, that what is the percentage of intermarriage into Holocaust survivors, is there – do you have a statistic on there?

That's an interesting question. There are so many other factors, you know, it's very difficult to isolate because every – there are so many other choices and your own children's choices, very complicated to answer it.

But there has to be some sort of, er, because funnily enough, I – you know, we meet people here, a lot of us have got intermarriage in the family.

Yeah. So do you think it's a response to get away from Judaism because of the Holocaust? Is that how you interpret it?

Well, I can't – it has to be. There has to be some connection in that.

So do you feel your – the Holocaust impacted your parenting, as a father, your…

Well, I don't think you can escape, you know, you can escape as being a parent, whatever you are, altogether. There has to be some sort of connection in there. But how deep and how far, I don't know. I can't tell. But, er, I don't know.

Interesting. So, you think that – yeah. So, you – do you think sort of subconsciously that Judaism is associated with the traumatic thing, or negative thing?

The only thing I can answer you that is, supposing I'm an embryo in my mother's womb and an angel comes to me in there and says, Ivor, look – let's assume in 1932 – you've got a

choice. Do you want to come out as a Jew, living? I says, what price? Oh, you lose all your family and you have to go to the camps and they'll be chosen and killed and [inaudible] all your life. **[02:50:04]** Would I want it? I don't know. I don't – you know, I don't know – I don't know what to say. You know, if I say no, am I a traitor? But the only thing I'll say is very true is that there has to be a price for everything in life, isn't there? And sometimes, like I mean what's happening in the world now is what sometimes the pill is worse than the disease. So, if I go back now to being an embryo and said, Ivor, do you want to be a Jew, would you want to go through life again and go what you did? I would probably have said yes. I said what harm – what price would I have to pay? He says, well, you know, you'll be hated all your life, you'll be [inaudible]. Would I want it? But...

And how would you describe yourself today, in terms of your identity, Ivor? You said you're a survivor.

Yes. I think I'm becoming a humanist more than a religion. I mean like I said before that sometimes I think I'm paying too high a price for being a Jew. And if you'd ask me for if I was, you know, I had- any way of helping society, I don't know. **[02:52:02]** I suppose I'd have to go back and live life as a Muslim, no, or a Christian or what, or a gypsy, which one would have been better? I don't know. I think the question I should ask people like you, surely, no?

Which one?

About –

How to describe myself?

Yeah.

Well, everyone has choices to make, I guess, or society tells you, partly what you can be or [overtalking].

No, this is – no, this is what I said, this is what I said about price. I said like there's no difference in going to a shop, you fancy that, said how much is that? And the same thing I said in life as well, at what cost?

But I mean just to come back to your own family. Did you give them a religious – were you – for your own children, did you give them a religious upbringing or was it – did you want to keep them away from –

[Sighs] I would say both. I would say both. I did for a while and experimented the other way as well- and in the end, I thought I can't sort of forget my past. But if people ask me and say, would you – are you pleased you were being Jewish, aren't you proud you're Jewish, I said I'm proud of what I am and what I was born but would I be different if I'd been a Muslim or a – mind you, I don't know about the Muslim [laughs].

But you're more humanist? For you it's –

Exactly, exactly.

Rather than seeing yourself as tied to a specific faith.

Yeah. Exactly.

Although history –

Human rather than a Jew, a Christian or a Muslim or something. **[02:54:01]** But I don't know. All I know is Churchill. Churchill said that a long time ago, he said that Islam is a very cruel religion.

What about being British, Ivor? Do you feel British?

I used to until a little while ago. I was very proud of – as I said before, when I landed in England, I really thought I've arrived in, you know – wonderful, wonderful now.

And now?

But all I can say is what I said this before on record, that England is not the same England I came to.

So now you wouldn't necessarily describe yourself –

No, if you ask me what do you mean by that, I plead ignorance.

[Both laugh] And what about your home? Where is your home?

[Sighs] Now, now, wait a minute, wait a minute. Now you're asking a very, very dangerous question. Oh, that's a very, very dangerous question. Where is my home? Is this my home?

Is it?

I don't know. I live here and I – not love it, I like it. For what it is, it's absolutely wonderful. [Sighs] But, you know, I can't call it like a home where the kids come or the kids come here or the children, you know. There's something, something not adding up living here.

This is –

Although it's wonderful. I've never had – and I didn't have this when I had my home.

Yeah. This is assisted living, in a care home. Yeah.

Yeah, exactly. For what it is, it's second to none. But –

But where did you live most of your married life, where? ***[02:56:04]***

Most of my married life in Redbridge. I was there from 1956 – 1956 till 2000.

That was your home?

Yeah. 'Cos I was involved in the synagogue, involved in squash clubs and whatever it is, every Tuesday. But looking back, I had quite a good – quite a good sort of, er, quite a good start in life and carry-on in life, until recently.

So that was a big step for you to move from Redbridge to here?

For two reasons. Number one, because of my wife when she passed away, and number two, also it was a completely different life from Redbridge to here. But did I mention that I – why I came here?

No.

I came here because of what it is over here, you know, the fur hats with the white socks, the *shtreimels.* That's what I used to be.

But you said it's a two-edged sword.

Yeah.

It also makes you feel the pain.

Yes. And being like I said before, being – scraping the barrel and being the last one left alive doesn't exactly help you. Do you know what I've been saying?

Auschwitz survivor. You mean as a surv –

As a survivor, yes. In other words, you're the one carrying the bag – the flag. People are falling all over you, you've got to pick up and carry the flag.

You don't like it?

No. **[02:58:00]** I – as I was saying- I possibly don't like it might be too strong a word but I don't want it, but I've got it, nothing I can do about it.

And do you feel it's partly also – because I feel that sometimes that it's a – sort of people really – the Auschwitz thing. I mean there is something about Auschwitz.

That's right. No, no, definitely.

The other camps, this –

Yeah, yeah, you can't escape it. No, you can't escape it. But as I said, the only question is like – well, no question, like I said before, when we first started, is – we know the – what is the – I know the [ph] problem, what is the answer, is that- it's not so much- you know the problem.

Yeah. But do you've done so much, Ivor, so there is now – you've published a book. There is a film coming out, you've got a statue of your head there outside, so a lot has been done. And do you feel – how do you feel about – what's the word – maybe different people taking your story, like the film-maker or you had help with the book, you know, and – how do you feel about this, that your story is sort of represented in different ways?

Well, you feel very, very – what's the word now – pleased that you're help – you're doing something towards the betterment of it. But are you saying if – if I'm asked if I'd have a choice, would I have this or something else, I think I'd rather have something else.

Yeah. Yeah. Because it's a traumatic history.

Yeah. Yes. But it's as I said, you're born with something, you've got to, you know, you've got to live as that.

And do you sometimes think what would have been, what life would have been without the Holocaust? ***[03:00:02]***

Now, that's a good question. Many, many times. Many, many times I thought to myself, Ivor, what would you have been? And so far, I haven't got – and this is something which I've – it occurs to me quite often- but I've yet haven't decided – I haven't come across anything, yes, or I would be happy that – being that one, doing this, doing that.

Maybe you would have been a Hasid? Or –

Er, I've been a Hasid from the head, not from the heart. [laughs] But right, I feel, I don't know, I feel as though- there has to be more than one way of getting – reaching your goal. And not everybody who takes a different turning is doing the wrong thing. No, the question is when do you put your foot down to say, right, no, that's not for me, that's – you shouldn't do that. Because I have a trouble– are we filming? Are you still filming?

Yeah, we're still filming.

Can I say it?

I don't know what you want to say [laughs].

About – going back now, we never mention the most important thing [inaudible] about Arab-Israeli problem. That obviously as what I am, I have to be very Israeli and everything else and yet on the other hand, maybe the media is a lot to do with that. It's showing time after time after time, like we Jews used to be in the Warsaw ghetto. And you think to yourself, here we go again, like I said before, then what, now what?

Hmm-hmm. ***[03:02:00]***

Not- but what is the answer? That, I don't know. [Sighs] Anyway.

Anyway, I wanted to – we're coming to the end, Ivor. I – just a few more questions. One is, you didn't talk to your children about the past. What about the grandchildren? Because now your granddaughter is taking up the stories. Were they interested in your story? How did –

Now, you see the – I'm not so sure if I said that before, that we didn't have the therapy before, which I think we should have done. We should have definitely needed it earlier on. But now that we reached this situation, I'm not so sure if I want my children to harp on the Holocaust. I don't know. I don't know which is the right way forward. I try not to tell them much unless they ask. And they say they don't want to ask me because they don't want to hurt me. So how does – how do go forward, how do you move forward? And truth to tell, I'm not sure which is the right way forward because I think- the purpose of all this is for future to learn. Now, which is the right way forward? This shouldn't happen again. By not talking about it is also not right.

Did you ever receive any therapy? Did you –

I – many, many times I thought about going to therapy and I thought to myself, like I said, you need your head examined to go to see a therapist. But I think I would have liked to have had a bit more knowledge or education about reaction to it, yes. So, you know, Ivor, that might [ph] not the right way to bring up the kids or so, you know. I'm sure if I was to ask my children, they would say the same thing, I'm a good father but whether we're talking is he the best one, I don't know. **[03:04:04]** I don't know.

Well, yeah. Well, it's true for everyone, isn't it, as well?

But the only thing – before I finish – the only thing I can say is what I've been saying as well to my children, and I try to stick to that myself, I try to do the best thing possible. I don't always know the best way forward or what I'm saying is if I do something, I try not to be harmful to anything or to anyone. Unfortunately in life you've got to. Sometimes you've got to smack a child for doing [laughs] wrong, to make, you know, it's for their own benefit. But the problem with that is how, when or why. That, I don't know.

'Cos I was going to ask you also when you speak to schools, which you have done, what is your message? Or what is your message, the – main – most important ones?

The message to them, I keep on saying that love will always get further than hatred in the long run. In the short run, I don't know, maybe. But in the long run, I think talking and discussing and goodness will get you far better, far happier than hatred. And this is very, very true. Hatred not only – you don't only hate your, the enemy, eventually you start hating yourself. I mean I'm not talking about you, oneself.

Yeah. Yeah. And did you feel that happened to you, that you had hatred at the beginning and you managed to transform it?

I – my kids keep on telling me, many people keep on telling me time after time, Dad, you're far too easy or far too – thinking far too much the other people, the other person as well. And I think I do. But I think I do it because I feel as though, who doesn't want to be liked? We all want to be liked. **[03:06:01]** If the question is what do you about it, sometimes you don't know how to go about it. But hatred as such, I think you eventually end up hating yourself more or as much as anybody else, as anybody else.

So do you think you at some point made a conscious decision to forgive or to – I mean can you–

Yes. And in fact, I haven't mentioned it to you but we were liberated in Dachau, there's a rumour going around every now and then- every day, a jeep-load of people used to come back with the Americans, with some of the SS guard on there. Every single day. And every single day there used to be a gauntlet. Do you know what a gauntlet –

Yeah.

Four either side, the door was there, the jeep coming through there, either side a gauntlet, and people standing with sticks and stones, and as soon as the SS went by – and I never picked up one stone, once.

You didn't feel it was right?

Never. Never. And- at times I'm ashamed to say that. I'm not saying I was right. I'm saying, maybe what's wrong with me?

Well, it didn't feel right for you.

Pardon?

It didn't feel right for you. You didn't – you –

[Sighs] You know, the way [ph] if it don't feel right for me, does it mean to say it's not – it's right or wrong? Then who is wrong? The person who threw stones and the sticks at the SS, or me? Somebody's wrong, no? **[03:08:00]**

Yeah, I know that post-liberation, I know, because there was also the Jewish Brigade, that there were all kinds of plans, weren't there, to poison some of the –

Exactly. What did David Ben-Gurion say? You know, David Ben-Gurion, when he heard about, he said there is a Jewish Israeli – what's the word now, group, going about trying to be bakers and put poison in bread. And he said, don't do it. That's not the way forward.

Yeah. Hmm. Okay, Ivor, is there anything – we have discussed many, many things – anything I haven't asked you or you'd like to add?

Nothing. I'd like to hear actually a film made of children being interviewed after they've seen – or people who have seen the – not only me, the programme which you are making, the benefit of it. Or what's there to learn from it? Or how you should go about it, meaning the interviewers rather than the –

It's a big question, that maybe the answer, we don't have it so soon, you know, only with time we know how –

You mean there's no one pill to cure everything.

You know, we can't answer that exactly but can only hope that people in the future will come and listen to the interview and learn.

And I hope they learn something from it.

Ivor, have you got any message for anyone, based on your experience, who might watch this interview in the future?

Other than I keep on saying, time after time, [clears throat] and this, by the way, if this works in marriage as well as life, that love will get you further than hate in the long run. **[03:10:00]** And everybody, everybody wants love. Not everybody wants hate. But I think it's easier said than done.

Yeah. How is it done, that's the question, isn't it? Is it compromise?

No, now, all I can say is anything hard takes longer to – what's the hardest tree – what is the longest tree to grow?

The longest tree?

No, no, not tall. An oak. How long does it take an oak to grow? Years. But that's strength. You know, fir trees grow in no time. They don't last long. But anything worthwhile is worthwhile fighting for, worthwhile having. But, but, but- now the biggest question is, now, how shall I say that, don't make a battle of everything, choose your battles as well as your friends. Don't make a battle of everything. And I hope that people do listen and take notice because I think we're all on the same journey, to [inaudible] the same journey, different way, different routes, but we're all on the same journey.

Yeah. Just to say thank you, Ivor, for sharing your story with us. And –

Oh, I just hope that people listen and learn.

Good luck also with the film that's coming out soon.

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, yes.

And we're going to now look at some –

So what do you say, I'm going to get – you're going to send me the film about this?

Ivor, just one second of silence.

Right.

And then we'll finish. Just one moment.

[Sighs]

[Pause from 03:11:57 – 03:12:25]

Can I talk?

Soon.

[Pause from [03:12:28 – 03:13:00]

Can you please tell us, Ivor, about what are you holding in your hand?

In my hand, pictures of my brothers.

I think it's your sister and your brother.

Oh, sorry, yes, yes.

[Inaudible].

Wait a minute. Yeah.

Yeah. Okay, one second, one second. One moment, one moment.

Funnily enough, this is a picture of my sister and my brother.

One second, one second. If you hold it down a bit, down a bit. A little bit down. Ah, okay. Is that okay for you or not? Okay, one, two, three. Can you please tell me what you're holding in your hand?

I'm holding in my hand a picture of my brother who was – also I used to look up to him because he was strong in the family – and my eldest sister and she's wearing a dress with a collar, a white collar.

And what are their names?

Reisel [ph] and Mordechai. Reisel, she's wearing a dress with the white collar because we used to have a rabbit, especially rearing rabbits for their furs to make hair things out of it and she managed to make the collar of a dress from that, for the white areas. **[03:14:08]**

And how did you get these photos?

My cousins who survived the war back in Hungary sent them to me. I haven't got many photos left of my family unfortunately, which I feel very, very sad about that. But I have a

got a few, about four or five, of my brothers and sisters that my cousins who lived not too far from us –

And have you got any photos of your parents?

No. Unfortunately, no. I'm very sorry to say that.

Thank you. Can you please tell me what you're holding in your hand, Ivor?

Photos of my two brothers. One of them saved my life, this one, saved my life three times from the jaws of death. And this one was my eldest brother. I always looked up to him because I think he actually was ordained as a rabbi when he was twenty-one years old.

And what was his name?

David.

And who are the other two on the other side?

The other two there, one of them was me and the other one was my brother, Alec.

And which one are you? The smaller one?

Yes. My brother was two years older than me. And actually this one, that was taken in Manchester in 1946.

Thank you. If you give me that, just this – Ivor, can you please tell us about this photo again?

This photo was taken literally months before we were taken to the hell, to Auschwitz. **[03:16:05]** I think he wasn't at home often because he went to a theological college, *yeshiva*, and he became – he was ordained a rabbi at twenty-two years old.

And his name?

David.

And he was your oldest brother?

The oldest brother. And I always looked up to him, I always felt as though I'd like to follow him, in his footsteps. But I did not succeed.

Yes, please, Ivor. If you could describe this photo, please.

Oh, the photo is my brother, Mark, [Poti]. He was called [3:15:50[Poti Mochdre [ph]. He was always the one to go to if you were in trouble. We had friends who could sometimes help you out. I'm talking about from – not the financial trouble but trouble from non-Jewish people.

And where is he standing?

Pardon?

Where is he standing?

He's standing outside. It was a bungalow. That's the actual bungalow I used to live in, in Hungary, Makó, Nagy chillag utca [ph].

This is where you grew up?

That's where I grew up. And the garden you see, which I thought was practically about four acres long – four acres big, turned as you can see into much more than that [laughs]. But I remember we used to have quite a number of fruit trees, cherry, apple, pear, plums.

And how did you get this photo?

Also, the same thing, we had cousins who survived and they sent it to us. I'm afraid that the only photos I have are the one who – my cousin who survived sent them to me. **[03:18:00]**

So this is one of the few remnants you have of your pre-war life.

Yes. Correct.

Thank you. Yes, please, Ivor.

This picture is of me. Literally it was taken about three weeks after liberation in Dachau by the Americans. And the clothes what I'm wearing, they're all ex-Hitler Youth clothes because we were billeted in a place where Hitler used [ph] to be and there were some new clothes there. The cap, the jacket, and the T-shirt, all extra Hitler Youth wear.

And how did you get this photograph?

Well, this photograph – er, it's a good question. It was taken afterwards. I am – I can't even remember by whom and when and where but I know it was taken about three weeks after liberation. Three or four weeks after liberation.

And when did you make this into this little frame thing?

Oh, this was from my daughter. My daughter made it for my seventy-ninth or eightieth birthday. To my younger self- why do you keep asking all these terrible questions? That, well, I would give – I'm ninety-two years old. I'd be given more than years of my life to have some of them back again, to be with them more oft – to be there. Bringing back very sad memories.

Thank you. Yes, please, Ivor.

The what?

Please tell us about this photograph.

This photograph was taken about – it must have been about two years after I arrived in England. **[03:20:05]** We used to get a suit from Burton once every two years. And at that time, you could see we still wore hats because it used to be quite the fashion, wearing hats in those days. But I'm not so sure if we took – wore it because of a religious point of view or a fashion. I think in 1945, a hat was quite a norm to wear.

And this is which year?

That was about 1946.

And where?

In Amherst Road, Hackney.

And who is on the photo?

Me and my brother, Alec. That's the only two of us who survived.

And which one is you?

[Laughs] Can I have a look? The right-hand one.

Point him to us.

[Laughs]

Yeah. Thank you.

Cameraman: Hang on a second.

One second.

Cameraman: I'm just [inaudible].

Yes, please, Ivor. What do we see on the photo?

My wedding day. Both look very, very happy. It was a lovely day.

When was this?

1953.

And where?

January. Shoreditch Tunnel [ph]. **[03:22:00]** You know what Shoreditch Tunnel is? Don't you know?

Town hall?

That's it [laughs]. That's right, Shoreditch Town Hall.

Lovely, thank you. One second. If you put it back, Ivor. Yeah. If you hold it down a bit. Down. Yes, please, Ivor. Tell us about the photo.

Well, this is a lovely photo but I'm ashamed to say I can't remember what it's for. It must have been about twenty years ago, which would –

Who is on it?

There was me and my dear wife. Both of us seem quite happy, I don't know why, but – [laughs]

Yes, please. Tell us about this photo.

Well, what's there to tell?

Who is on it?

Well, these are me and my four lovely children – sometimes [laughs].

Okay. What are they called?

Starting off, the eldest, Rosalyn [ph], Michelle, David, and Judy, and me.

And when was it taken?

It was taken on my –

Ninetieth birthday?

Ninetieth birthday, two years ago. **[03:24:00]** [Laughs].

Yes, please. What are you holding in your hand?

This, I'm afraid – not I'm afraid – I'm delighted to say what I have this – and I showed it to my friends, I said it's a joke. And I said I want – that's exactly – that's why I'm asking, which of you sent it to me? They said, don't be silly, we wouldn't send you something like that. Well, it came- I was playing a round of golf – I never said what it was – I was quite in a bad mood and I had a look at this and I couldn't believe it. In fact, I phoned up the office themselves, they said I'm sorry, we can't tell you anything about it. I said, well, you must do because – he [ph] said what? He said it's for me and I want to know if it's a joke because I think my friends played a joke on me. So, he said, hold on a minute, he said, now, no, it's quite right, blah, blah, blah [laughs].

So how do you feel about it?

Better than receiving a penalty notice [laughs].

On this note?

No, no, no, no. I feel absolutely delighted. I mean whatever it is, you know, if you do certain things in life, sometimes it's because of you or what you – but this I think is something worthwhile. It's beyond being sort of yourself. And especially not being able – not even being born here, and to be honoured by the Queen was tremendous. Tremendous.

Ivor, thank you again for sharing your story and showing us your photographs. Thank you so much.

No problem. No problem.

[03:25:58]

[End of transcript]