

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	107

Interviewee Surname:	Adler
Forename:	Bella
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	6 January 1933
Interviewee POB:	Mattersdorf [Mattersburg], Austria

Date of Interview:	29 September 2005
Location of Interview:	Salford
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	1 hour 22 minutes

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

INTERVIEW: 107

NAME: BELLA ADLER

DATE: THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2005

LOCATION: SALFORD

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: This is the interview with Bella Adler and the interview is taking place on Thursday 29 September 2005. The interview is taking place in Salford Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin

So if you can tell me first your name

BA: Bella Adler. It was Sobelmann

RL: It was?

BA: Sobelmann

RL: And did you have any other names?

BA: No.

RL: Hebrew name?

BA: Baila

RL: And where were you born?

BA: In Mattersdorf, in Austria near Vienna

RL: And when were you born?

BA: January 1933

RL: Now if you can tell me something about your parents and the families that they came from

BA: My mother came from a family of four girls, my father had a brother and a twin sisters. He had six sisters altogether.

Tape 1: 1 minute 25 seconds

RL: And where were they from?

BA: Mattersdorf, Mattersburg, Mattersdorf, Mattersburg – it had both names.

RL: Did you know any of your grandparents?

BA: Umm, my mother's parents I vaguely remember 'cause we stayed there for 3 months before I came to England after we left Mattersburg, and my grandfather on my father's side came from Germany to Yeshivah there and then he got married there and stayed there and my mother came from Vienna, but she was born in Hungary.

RL: So your mother was actually born in Hungary?

BA: Yes,

RL: and your father was born, what part of Germany?

BA: Austria

RL: He was born in Austria, his father?

BA: His father was born in Leipzig.

RL: And do you know what your grandfathers did for living?

BA: The one where I was born, they had a grocery shop, grocery, and they had a warehouse for hay for horses next to the shop, and there was a petrol pump outside the shop.

RL: So was that on your mother's side?

BA: No, my father's side

RL: That was your father's side and on your mother's side?

BA: On my mother's side, my grandfather did a lot of learning and he also worked in a hardware shop for his brother-in-law, I think, I'm not quite sure. That was before my days.

RL: Where was that?

BA: In Vienna

RL: In Vienna...

BA: I've dreamt of going back there, I haven't been back.

RL: And do you know what kind of education your parents had?

Tape 1: 3 minutes 30 seconds

BA: I think they both had quite a good education, but what they did I don't know. Because I was born in '33 as I said, but I came to England in '38, which was the week before Kristallnacht.

RL: Had your father been to Yeshivah or anything?

BA: Yeah.

RL: Do you know which one?

BA: In Mattersdorf there was a big Yeshivah there, and that's where my grandfather went and where my father went.

RL: And do you know how your parents met?

BA: I imagine the old-fashioned way of being introduced.

RL: and where did they marry?

BA: In Vienna

RL: When did they marry?

BA: '31 I think, 'cause I was born in '33, I think it was the end of '31.

RL: And did you have any brothers or sisters?

BA: No ...My mother was very ill before I was born. But my grand father, one of the doctors wanted to, wanted her to terminate it, but my grandfather wouldn't allow it. So I came along.

RL: And, whereabouts were they living in Mattersdorf?

BA: They had their own bungalow, which was... For what I was told, was lovely. Umm there, it wasn't far away from my grandparents, 'cause in those days, umm you had to take your cholent to the bakery and you had to fetch it Shabbos morning.

RL: So do you have any memories of the, of the bungalow.

BA: Not very much really, because I was only...what, four or five when I came over here. So it's not very much. What I remember more is things that my parents told me. I do remember my auntie's house a bit, 'cos they had an old-fashioned coach in their garden, which I used to use as a play-room. You know the type of coach that the queen goes in. Well that's what they used to use...before they had cars, or vans or vehicles.

RL: Was that one of your mother's sisters?

Tape 1: 6 minutes 14 seconds

BA: No, my father's brother...

RL: Your father's brother...How many were in your father's family?

BA: He had one brother and four sisters, I think. Four or five sisters.

RL: So what kind of memories do you have of your time there?

BA: Well, I do remember that when, before my father came to England, the women were all taken away one afternoon. The Germans came along and took all women away and I was left in the bungalow by myself and my father had been to Vienna to try to get a ticket or visa to get to England or anywhere and he came back and found me on my own and the women came back two and half days later. They had been to kept in a, I don't know, I suppose like an internment place. And then my father came to England and he worked here three months before we were able to come to England, and my mother came as an au pair, and um this woman's daughter had just got married a few months before, so she said that she would sign to have me and that's how mummy could bring me with, but um, I'm upset because, I never knew their name and I don't imagine that they're about now, but I never knew who they were and I would have loved to know who they were.

RL: Now, your father, what work did he do?

BA: When he came to England?

RL: Before in Mattersdorf. What was he doing?

BA: Well, he was, I imagine, after he finished his yeshiva, he must have been working in his father's grocery shop and you know looking after the hay and the things for the horses.

RL: Right...And as you say, so what made him leave at that point. What made him leave, do you know?

BA: Well, I suppose things were getting hot, there were Germans moving in. Probably they found that there was going to be war, or whatever, I don't know what went on, I was too young to understand all that.

RL: And do you remember the journey across, do you remember coming across?

BA: No, but my mother told me that she was lucky that she got across because when they stopped her at one of the stations from Vienna to, going to France, I suppose to get across or, there was a young soldier who got on, and he says: 'I don't want you to say that we're all rotters because the child is asleep', because I was lying on the '...' in the train, on the bench. 'Because the child is asleep we won't make you to get off.' So my mother always told me that I saved her life.

RL: And how did you, where did you travel from? Do you know what route you took?

Tape 1: 9 minutes 39 seconds

BA: No, It was from Vienna to Dover, and from Dover to London. I know that from being told.

RL: And your father was already there.

BA: Umm-hum.

RL: So what are your memories of arrival, the early?

BA: I don't know very much, I just know that my father volunteered to go in the, he was in the pioneer corps and he was on the last ship home from France, and he wasn't allowed even to contact us but he had some coppers on him and at one of the stations he asked these voluntary, women's voluntary workers who were offering teas to the army to phone my mother to say that he was in England and as soon he would be allowed to contact her he would and a few weeks later we were allowed, they were stationed in Devon, and we were allowed to go down to Devon to meet up with him. And a later on he came, he came to London, and then the bombs were, it was the time of the bombing, and, when we were bombed out, we went from London to Bletchley, from Bletchley to Milton Keynes, from Milton Keynes to Bedford. And from Bedford we went back to London, when the war finished. Don't ask me the dates because I don't know them off by heart.

RL: So first of all, was your father interned at all at the beginning...

BA: ...no, my uncle was, but my father was working in a factory that made things for the army. I don't remember what sort of equipment he could have been...mummy was machining the sort of like the rain macs and capes and things like that for the army.

RL: How long did she stay as au pair?

BA: Oh, I don't know.

RL: Do you remember anything about where you were living when you first came over?

BA: No...

RL: ...you don't remember anything about the family that you were with?

BA: No.

RL: How long were you there?

BA: I don't know. I just know that where we lived in Downs Park Road, near Hackney near Ridley market, Ridley Road Market.

RL: And after she had finished being au pair we did she go to live?

Tape 1: 12 minutes 26 seconds

BA: She must have lived in Downs Park Road...

RL: ...that was where she went after that, so was that like a rented place

BA: Yeah, '...'

RL: Was it a house or...

BA: No, we lived on a top-floor in a flat.

RL: And did you start school?

BA: Here in England, I went to a school called Sugden Road, I remember, but don't ask me where it was. It must have been somewhere in Hackney.

RL: And how did you find that?

BA: I don't remember.

RL: did you know any English at that stage?

BA: No, I must have picked it up at school.

RL: Did your parents speak English?

BA: No. Not at the beginning

RL: So how did they learn?

BA: I don't know.

RL: And how long were you at Sugden Road School?

BA: Until we got bombed out and we went to Bletchley.

RL: What do you remember about the bombing?

BA: Well, you used to hear the sirens and the bombs falling, we sat in an air-raid shelter in the back of our garden and father made bunk beds in it, so we used to go down there every night, or if the sirens went.

RL: And did you see much damage as the results of the bombing?

BA: Yes because at the end of our road there was one of these big warehouses, I don't know what factory, or whatever it was had an air-raid shelter there and was...a bomb fell on that and there was limbs went in all the garden and different bits of limbs of

the people who were in there in the air-raid shelter. And there was one man who was sat at the door with safer, and he was left whole.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 50 seconds

RL: So at that point, you say you decided to leave London, well for Bletchley?

BA: It must have been soon after that. I don't remember exact date or anything. In Bletchley we didn't live very long 'cos we couldn't find accommodation. We went to Milton Keynes which had 5 farms and 30 odd houses and my father went to work on a farm, so I used to go half past eight in the morning round the farm 'cause he was there in time for the milking, where we got the fresh milk for breakfast. There was a school there and a little post office. And once a week a lorry used to come around selling things but that was on Shabbos, so of course we couldn't buy anything.

RL: So how did you get your provisions?

BA: Well, there must have been, I think, Newport Pagnell was the nearest place and I think they used to go there to do shopping. That I don't remember either.

RL: And how was the school there? How did you get on in the school there?

BA: Fine. The only thing I didn't like, because I wouldn't go in a religious in morning, so I was made a late monitor. So I used to have write down anybody who came late and of course ones that came late they didn't like me for it, did they.

RL: Were there any other refugee children at the school?

BA: Not in Milton Keynes, but in Bedford there was a couple but I don't remember much about them.

RL: How did you get on with the other children, besides those not liking you for being a late monitor?

BA: Fine, fine. In Bedford we lived opposite a park and we lived in a same house as Dayan Rappaport, who was one of the, who had a big position in London at one stage.

RL: How long were you in Milton Keynes, would you say?

BA: About between, two and three years.

RL: And was your father with you the whole time at that point?

BA: Yeah, because he worked on a farm.

RL: Was that the part he hadn't yet joined the pioneer corps?

BA: No. He was in the pioneer corps before that...

RL: He was in the pioneer corps before that

BA: Before we were bombed out. He came back before the actual bombing. I was in Devon; I can't remember the name of the place.

Tape 1: 17 minutes 40 seconds

RL: Right, and after that he took work. What kind of Jewish life was there? Was there any Jewish life in Milton Keynes for you?

BA: No.

RL: So how did you manage when it came to Yomtov?

BA: Just carried on in our own way, didn't we. In Bedford there were a few Jewish people there. And when we were in Letchworth where, the Jewish schools were evacuated, which is the Avigdor now, was I think, it was that school there were, and any of the Jews, any of the girls who came over or any of the children who were evacuated in Letchworth.

RL: Right, so was that near you?

BA: Near Bedford.

RL: When you went to Bedford, what school did you go to there?

BA: Community school, and later to, I suppose it was called higher school, I don't know, I don't remember.

RL: And what was your father doing there in Bedford?

BA: In Bedford, there he was working in an aeroplane factory.

RL: And your mother?

BA: My mother...She used to, somebody opened a kosher shop there and she was a shop assistant there, with kosher meat and other kosher items, you know, cheese and things like that. They were probably brought from London, I don't know. We didn't own the shop but she just worked there.

RL: Did the shop have a name?

BA: Ah, probably did but I don't remember it.

RL: Was your mother working in Milton Keynes?

BA: No. I had a cousin. My father's cousin's daughter came to live with us because they had only one child and they were in London so they asked could she stay with us because there was so much bombing going on in London.

RL: So did you ever go back to London on visits, whilst you were living in these places?

BA: No.

Tape 1: 20 minutes 10 seconds

RL: And in Bedford, was there more Jewish life...

BA: Yes ‘

RL: ...so what kind of things?

BA: We used to have a Cheder on Sunday morning. But there weren't very many people there. It was, what is his name, Rabbi Goldman I think, Goldberg or Goldman. He came.

RL: And what about services? Was there any minyan at all?

BA: Yeah, In Bedford there was, because of this Dayan Rapaport. We used to live in the same house and he, any people who came, or any army if they were based anywhere near they used to come in and they had a minyan there.

RL: Where was the minyan

BA: I don't know. Not faraway from us, it was within a walking distance.

RL: And did they have a sefer torah?

BA: Yeah.

RL: How many Jewish people, would you say, were there?

BA: Possibly in Bedford, there must have been at least fifty, sixty families. Not all on the same degree of.

RL: Do you remember any other families by name?

BA: No.

RL: What would you do in your spare time, you know when you weren't at school, how did you occupy yourself?

BA: Well, once I had finished school and done homework, there wasn't much time left really, was there.

RL: Did you belong to any clubs, any hobbies?

BA: As far as a few of us who were there, occupied each other, and there wasn't any clubs there really. As I said, there was a Cheder....

RL: How long were you there until?

Tape 1: 22 minutes 38 seconds

BA: In Bedford, until after the war had finished, 'cause I know, I went back to London when the war finished, I was, I went to Buckingham Palace, when the Queen came out on balcony.

RL: What was that for?

BA: When the war finished, there was a procession and everything.

RL: Right, So you were actually there at that point, back in London?

BA: No. We went back for that.

RL: What do you remember about that?

BA: All the excitement. Everyone was happy and the street parties and things like that, which we didn't join in but we go around just to see what it was like.

RL: And then where did you go to live, when you went back to London?

BA: Stoke Newington. And then Lordship Road, which was not far from there. And we had a Shul quite near.

RL: What was the name of the road?

BA: Lordship Road, it's still there now. The Schonfield Square is still there now. And there used to be the Bearstead Hospital opposite where we lived, that's where one of my children were born.

RL: And what school did you go to when you came back to London?

BA: The Avigdor

RL: And how did you find it there?

BA: Fine.

RL: Was it different in anyway to schools you'd gone in...

BA: I suppose it was because we were with Jewish people. They were all Jewish, it wasn't mixed school, it was just Jewish.

RL: And what did your parents do now they were back in London?

BA: My father worked in the East End as a Maschgiach in a bakery and sometimes he was a Mashgiach at weddings.

RL: Who was he working for?

Tape 1: 25 minutes 2 seconds

BA: The Beis Din

RL: And your mother?

BA: Mother was ill already then. So she didn't do work.

RL: And at the Avigdor School did you, where there any sort of extra curricular activities at all, or were there any clubs in London that you...

BA: Yes, I went to a Beis Yaakov Girls which was mainly on Shabbos, but occasionally they had some activities during the week.

RL: Where did they meet?

BA: In Manor Road, which was round the corner from Lordship Road or Lordship Park.

RL: And were there other refugee girls that went there or was it mainly English born ?

BA: Mainly English. There was a few, but it was more English. There was, those who were born sort of after the war who went to the club by then...old enough to go.

RL: Who was in charge?

BA: There was somebody called Schwab who is now a Nussbaum in Gateshead. And then Dayan Dunner's father, Rabbi Dunner.

RL: What kind of things would you do there?

BA: Where?

RL: In the Beis Yaakov?

BA: Well, there were lectures or entertainments or you worked with things or you helped with things, you helped with wedding receptions and things like that.

RL: And then what age were you when you left school?

BA: First when I left Avigdor, I went to, I wanted to learn sewing so I went to a college where they taught you to sew. But then I also went to do an NNEB course, which was a nursery nurses' course which was a two-year course, which was three days in a nursery and two days in a college.

RL: Which college was that?

BA: First it was in Camden Town, and then it was somewhere else, but I can't remember where it was...Holborn I think. But exams I remember taking, and that was in near Great Ormond Street.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 16 seconds

RL: And where did you work as part of that? You know, you said you worked part-time?

BA: In a non-Jewish nursery, where they had babies from six week to five years.

RL: And how did you find that?

BA: I liked it. That's what I wanted to do.

RL: Did you know any other people on the course?

BA: No. And when the exam after the two years happened to come out on, Rosh Hashanah So I wanted to give up, but my mother wouldn't let me so I had to do another three months. There was another exam in December, so I took the exam in December. And then I worked in the Yesodey Hatorah, which is Stamford Hill, school's still going now.

RL: Was that a new school at the time?

BA: No. It was a few years old, but don't ask me how old. But it was Rabbi Pinter who was a headmaster there. I think one of his sons is running it now.

RL: How big a nursery was it at that time?

BA: I don't remember. We had three groups that were divided into age groups. And that was probably from about two and half to five. That was part of the school but the nursery was separate.

RL: Were there other people with you in the nursery?

BA: Yeah.

RL: Where were you living?

BA: Then in Lordship Road.

RL: So you were still in Lordship Road. And did you do anything at that point in your spare time?

BA: What do you mean about spare time?

RL: When you weren't working, weekends...

BA: Once a week I went with one of my friends, to evening classes to try to keep fit and did some needle work, I liked sewing. I went to a sewing 'cause I like to make things.

RL: Did you belong to any groups at that stage?

Tape 1: 30 minutes 52 seconds

BA: I was at Beis Yaakov.

RL: You were still going to the Beis Yaakov Girls, still belonged to that. Was your father active at all in the community – in London?

BA: I suppose yeah, some things, but he didn't have all that much time with my mother being ill so he used to help her quite a bit.

RL: What shul did he belong to in London?

BA: I don't know what it's called but it's still there, it's on Lordship Road.

RL: Who's the rav there, or who was?

BA: At the time it was Rabbi Baumgarten and now it's Rabbi Feldmann

RL: And did you use to go there to that shul

BA: Uhhh.

RL: What kind of people went there? Was it a number of refugees going to that shul or was it mainly English?

BA: No, it was more foreigners than English people.

RL: Was the Rabbi Baumgarten?

BA: He came from Vienna

RL: What language did you speak to each other at home?

BA: German and Hungarian.

RL: Did you understand Hungarian?

BA: Yeah. Because my mother was born in Hungary before she lived in Vienna, and she went to visit her sisters and I picked it up, so she carried on speaking to me, so, I had it as an extra language.

RL: Did you ever use English at home with your parents?

BA: Yes.

RL: So did you use all three languages?

BA: Umm.

RL: What was the predominant language?

Tape 1: 33 minutes 19 seconds

BA: Don't know, I suppose mainly German. It's not the same as, it's like here if you speak something like Manchester or something Newcastle, it sounds different, doesn't it? That was the same, German sounded different and, some like German German but if you spoke German, you could understand it.

RL: And then how did you meet your husband?

BA: We were introduced.

RL: And where was he from? Can you tell me a little bit about him?

BA: He was born in Australia, in Melbourne. His father was originally from Gateshead 'cos his father was one of the founders of Gateshead. He wasn't the founder, but he was amongst the founders of building up Gateshead and he went to New Zealand – my father-in-law – and there because when it came to Simchas Torah and he was dancing with the sefer torah, they made fun of him, so he didn't like it so he went to Australia and my husband was born in Australia

RL: When was your husband born?

BA: '33

RL: Do you know why the family had decided to go to New Zealand?

BA: I don't know. The father had just wanted to...well, we always used to tease my father-in-law that he would be the first Rabbi on the moon 'cause he used to travel a lot and go to all places. He went to Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Austria, he was, he took up positions, 'cause he was a Rabbi, he took up positions in all different places.

RL: What was your husband's name?

BA: Akiva Moshe Adler

RL: So when had the family come back to Britain?

BA: My father-in-law was sent two of his boys to Gateshead Yeshivah that was my husband and younger brother. And then I don't know why he decided to leave Australia, but he came back to England. And then commute here until he passed away.

RL: Where did they come back to – which town?

BA: Manchester.

RL: So the family was actually living in Manchester?

BA: Yeah, but that time we were married already. When he came back to England.

Tape 1: 36 minutes 17 seconds

RL: So was Akiva at Gateshead yeshiva when you met him?

BA: No. He worked from Gateshead, but he went to Sunderland yeshiva, and there he slept with Dayan Ehrentrau for three and half years in the same room. We're very friendly actually with Dayan Ehrentrau and his wife lived round the corner from me in London.

RL: Mrs Ehrentrau.

BA: Rebbetzen Ehrentrau

RL: Rebbetzen Ehrentrau. So what was he in Sunderland Yeshiva, where was he when you met him? What was he doing at that point?

BA: He'd already moved to Manchester and he was working, he had a job, I can't remember. And then when we came to work, to live, here, we had a flat and eventually we moved to this house.

RL: So, when did you marry?

BA: Now, it would have been fifty years

RL: So...19...

BA: ...'54. Could it have been?

RL: Yeah, could be. '54. And where did you marry?

BA: In London.

RL: Which shul?

BA: The shul that would have been in Lordship Road.

RL: What kind of a wedding did you have?

BA: An outdoor chuppah, reception and a dinner in a restaurant which was a Kedassia restaurant, in Tottenham Court Road, in the West End.

RL: And where did you first live in Manchester?

BA: When we moved here we had a flat in Wellington Street for three and half years and then we moved in here [Salford].

RL: And what was Akiva doing in Manchester, what was your husband doing?

BA: He made coffee tables, he made handbags, he made pictures, framed pictures and sold them and coffee tables. What else did he do? Hula hoops! When they were in!

Tape 1: 38 minutes 49 seconds

RL: Was this his own business or was he working for somebody?

BA: His own.

RL: Did he have names? Did the company have name?

BA: Eagle Products.

RL: Eagle Products?

BA: Eagle is Adler.

RL: Were there any other members of his family in Manchester?

BA: He's got two; I've got two brothers-in-laws living in Manchester.

RL: And you say his father, his parents came back and came to Manchester as well.

RL: And what shul did you belong to?

BA: Machsikei Hadass

RL: And how did you find the Manchester community after you know, having lived in London?

BA: Well, I find they were much warmer here than in London. One of my daughters who lives in London, she's walking in the streets, she's very friendly and she used to greet people and she says "Good Shabbos" to somebody and when this woman got near she said "Ooh, because this woman answered her, she had been living there a few months and she says," Oh, I've cracked it at long last," and then this woman said "oh, I'm sorry I thought you were somebody else," so she was a bit deflated, wasn't she. So that's the difference between Manchester and London.

RL: Did you join anything in Manchester; did you join any groups at all?

BA: Yes, of course, my husband did a lot of work for Manchester.

RL: What kind of things?

BA: Anything and everything.

RL: Such as?

BA: Well, he helped with opening Machsikei Hadass bakery, he helped with the Shechita, he helped with Burial Board, helped with buying the plots in Whitefield for Machsikei Hadass, Beis Olam.

Tape 1: 41minutes 23 seconds

RL: Were these separate committees or is this part of the MH community... Was he on the shul committee or was this a separate?

BA: No, no. On the committee.

RL: Were you involved in anything communally?

BA: I used to help, I used to help with the girls. But I was the only child and I had two sons and seven daughters, so they kept me busy!

RL: When were they born?

BA: Well, the first four I had within four years. Then there was a bit of a break and then I had another boy and four girls – five girls. and then a boy, and then two more girls

RL: What are the names?

BA: Well, all of them you want to know? Dovid is the oldest one, Sureli, Pearly, Rocheli, Chani, Yanki, Rivki and Chayele. Is that the lot?

RL: We'll see...no, that's eight, we'll miss somebody.

BA: Chavi, have I said?

RL: Chani ... go through it again.

BA: Dovid, Sureli, Pearly, Rocheli, Chani, Yanki, Rivki and Chayele.

RL: That's only eight. I think we've missed one of the middle girls, might be another girl in the middle there, 'cause you've got two girls in the end there.

BA: I've got Sureli, Pearly, Rocheli, oh I've left Esti out, before Yanki there's Esti. I haven't left her out but...

RL: That's it, we've got them.

BA: I'll get told off when she sees it!

RL: What school did they go to?

BA: The girls went to Bnos, it's on Leicester Road and the boys went to Cheder in Wellington Street.

RL: What made you to choose those schools as opposed to maybe to other schools?

BA: Well, the first two went to Latham House, not Latham House..

Tape 1: 44 minutes 49 seconds

RL: Broughton Jewish, Cassel Fox?

BA: No, it was Rabbi Roberg was...They went there and then they went to Jewish Day, and then when Bnos started, they went to Bnos.

RL: Who started the Bnos

BA: It started in somebody's house with about four to six girls.

RL: Do you know whose house that was?

BA: Not quite sure, but the headmaster was the Rabbi Liebermann at one time and then there was Mrs Ebbing was the head mistress there. And now I think there's Rabbi Spitzer there a headmaster now for the seniors, and for the juniors and infants it's Rabbi, he's from Switzerland, Lehmann, I think.

RL: So when you sent your children, was that just the very beginning of the school, when it first opened?

BA: Ummm.

RL: And how many children were there at that point?

BA: Can't remember.

RL: What are the families who sent their children at that stage, who else was sending?

BA: Well, from Machsikei Hadass.

RL: Was it mainly people from Machsikei Hadass?

BA: Mainly

RL: And what about the boys, where did they go?

BA: They went to a Cheder, which was on Wellington Street number.10. Number 11 or number 10? Number 11, Wellington Street

RL: And who was in charge of that?

BA: Rabbi, Mr. Waldman. I think his son does it now, I'm not sure who's the main one in charge.

RL: Did they learn secular subjects?

BA: Yes they did, and the senior ones are in...what's that called when you come from Broom Lane, New Hall, bottom of New Hall.

Tape 1: 47 minutes 26 seconds

RL: Right, I don't know what it's called, is it a school, on New Hall? Was that there then or...

BA: ...No, but it's quite a number of years now.

RL: So did any of yours go there?

BA: The boys went there.

RL: Boys went there. Was that a senior school?

BA: Ummm.

RL: So was the Wellington Street a...

BA: ...junior and that was a senior.

RL: And who was in charge of that on New Hall?

BA: I don't know. At the moment I think it is Rabbi Israel. I'm not sure.

RL: But in the time when your boys went '...'

BA: I don't remember.

RL: How big a school was first the Wellington Street and then New Hall? How big were they?

BA: I don't...I was too busy with other things to keep a record of the amount of children who were there!

RL: What language did they learn in?

BA: English and Yiddish.

RL: Did the children know Yiddish?

BA: The boys did, and the girls not as much.

RL: And then where did the children go when they left school?

BA: Sem and Yeshiva.

RL: Which Sem and Yeshiva?

BA: Mrs. Royd started a Sem. You know Dr Royd, his first wife she started a seminary which was in the corner of Holden...was it Holden Road? You know where the hall is now opposite is all pulled down now. Now the sem is on Leicester Road.

Tape 1: 49 minutes 40 seconds

RL: But then it was in the corner of Holden Road.

BA: I think so.

RL: And how long did they go to sem for?

BA: Two years.

RL: And which Yeshivas did they boys go to?

BA: The older one went to Manchester and Gateshead, and the younger one went to Gateshead.

RL: How long did they stay at Yeshiva?

BA: Well, they both got married at the ages of 19.

RL: Who did they marry?

BA: One married a girl from Antwerp and the other married a girl from London.

RL: And where did they go to live?

BA: They live here in Manchester.

RL: And what did they do after marriage?

BA: The older one does jewellery and the other one is still learning half day and does a bit of property the other half day.

RL: And the girls, what did they do when they left sem?

BA: Most of them, they worked for the brother a bit or they helped in a bakery a bit and one of them went...what do the other do, I think they all more or less got married after they left sem. So they all got married quite young.

RL: And where do they live?

BA: I've got three girls living here in Manchester, three in London and one in Antwerp.

RL: And do any of them work now?

BA: Yes. One of them does Sheitels and the London one is an importer of Sheitels for Europe and one of them teaches in Lubavitch and does labour support, and the other one's husband's got a book Seforim shop, so she helps there, besides looking after her own children, and being very good to me, and the other one who teaches and does labour support is also very good to me. What else do you need to know?

Tape 1: 52 minutes 50 seconds

RL: And that's how many women? One's a teacher, one helps her husband, and one import sheitels, one helps her husband in a seforim shop, I think we've missed one or two.

BA: Right. One of the girls in London she likes computers and now she teaches computers and the younger one used to work in side by side, she did a course in helping. I wouldn't say problem...you know children who have difficulty, and she's very good with that. She went to Chush in America she did Binoh work, she is now in charge of teachers in juniors in Yesodey Hatorah but she worked in side by side and she also helped people who didn't know where to turn for help you know to go to social services or who to turn to or who to ask, or what to do. She's very good at that.

RL: Are they all married, and what grandchildren do you have?

BA: I don't count them!

RL: Do you have any married grandchildren?

BA: Yes, a few.

RL: And great grandchildren?

BA: Not old enough, the oldest great grandchild is nine, I think.

RL: and where are your grandchildren living?

BA: Some here, some in London, some in Israel, some in America, or Canada.

RL: Did you take out British nationality?

BA: Yeah, I become British because my father was in the Army and I was under-age, so automatically I became British.

RL: And how what you describe yourself in terms of identity and in terms of what you identify with?

BA: What do you mean, what I identify with?

RL: Well, let's say in terms of nationality.

BA: Well, I've got a British passport; I've never had another one.

RL: But how do you feel yourself you know if you consider British, and you were born in Mattersdorf and Jewish, so I mean in terms of all these identities who you describe yourself?

BA: I suppose I'm more British than anything else.

Tape 1: 55 minutes 55 seconds

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

BA: No, because I grew up here. I was really brought up here and not anywhere else.

RL: And what about your Jewish identity?

BA: I'm proud of it, always have been. In fact, during the war somebody did ask me are both of your parent Jewish, and I said yes, but you don't look Jewish, so I said what am I suppose to look like?

RL: Have you ever met anti-Semitism in this country?

BA: There is quite a bit of it, isn't there? Just try to keep away from it.

RL: This tape is about to come to an end, so we will just stop here for a second.

[Change of a video tape]

TAPE 2

RL: OK, so this is an interview with Bella Adler and it's tape two. So, I was just asking you about anti-Semitism. Have you personally experienced anti-Semitism?

BA: Not really, because I suppose I don't mix with people who are for it. I mean, I've got somebody who's been working for me a long time and somebody once said "did you know Mr Adler," so she says "yes I knew him, it made no difference to him whether a person wore a fur hat, a black hat, a cap, or no hat, or was non-Jewish. If he needed help he would help him." So that's why I think I've never come across that sort of, those sort of problems.

RL: When did your husband die?

BA: I think it's about four and half years now.

RL: When did your parents die?

BA: I don't know, thirty years, must have been thirty years because my little one was one and a half, she's thirty one or thirty two.

RL: Because I know, you mentioned that your mother wasn't well.

BA: Yeah, my mother, as it happens, my father died first, and then mother came and lived with us.

RL: And you yourself, are or are not well now?

BA: I've been in a wheelchair for 21 or 22 years now, because I've got MS. They've taken my legs away, but left me with my hands, so God's good to me.

Tape 2: 2 minutes 20 seconds

RL: Are you able to get out?

BA: Yes of course. I don't like going out on my own. I know there's somebody in the area who's got MS, she goes out on her own but I would never do that, 'cause I think that if you're in a wheelchair you could be vulnerable, because, I mean I've never found anyone not nice to me, but they could be, couldn't they. So I go out even if it's one of the grandchildren but I won't go out on my own.

RL: What was your mother's illness, when she wasn't well?

BA: She had bronchial asthma, and my father, I don't know, he just, his time was up, G-d wanted him.

RL: Did you have much contact with the wider Jewish community in Manchester?

BA: What do you mean by that?

RL: You know, sort of the Jews living in other parts or belonging to other shuls or was your life mainly within?

BA: No, we came across other people and be friends with them, it doesn't make any difference between them.

RL: Did you come across with them in any particular places or circumstances?

BA: Well, if there was any lectures of interest and I'd go to them, I wouldn't think, you know, sort of it wouldn't make any difference to me.

RL: Were there Shiurim in Manchester when you first came here?

BA: Well, we used to have in Neshei where women used to get together every Tuesday night in different houses. I mean, there used to be talks and lectures and demonstrations of different interests. I liked flowering, doing t-cake decorating and things like that. And now we have a shiur in this house every week given by Rabbi Kupetz. Every Tuesday afternoon for all ages.

RL: Is that under any auspices?

BA: No. I don't know who started it, but they asked if one of my daughters would have it here, and I said why not. Half past three to half past four every Tuesday afternoon.

RL: And besides Neshei was there any other?

BA: Well we used to have, before the Beenstock was opened. You know the Beenstock home. We used have Senior Neshei on Tuesday afternoon, from half past two until four and have different people talking to them and different people giving demonstrations. We used to have tea with cake, but because Beenstock there's not as

Tape 2: 5 minutes 58 seconds

much need for it. Before that there was people who didn't have where to go or elderly people but now that they have this shiur, this is for all ages, it's not just for elderly people on a Tuesday.

RL: And did you have any contact, or did your family have any contact with any refugee committees or refugee organisations?

BA: Not really.

RL: Did you ever come across the AJR, the Association of Jewish Refugees?

BA: Yes, I was in touch with them

RL: How did that come about?

BA: Because I saw that advert in the paper. So I answered it and through that I have, what's her name, Barbara Dorrity coming to me every now and again, I don't know if you know her?

RL: Yeah.

RL: Did you ever apply for restitution?

BA: What, from Austria?

RL: Yeah.

BA: Yeah.

RL: Were you successful?

BA: I did get something yeah.

RL: How do you feel towards the Austrians and towards the Germans?

BA: Well, somebody once said to me “oh I wouldn’t take anything from them.” but I say, “I’ve lost enough, its better in my pocket than in theirs, so if I can get something why shouldn’t I get it?”

RL: Have you ever been back?

BA: No. I would like to go back. My oldest son went back a year or so ago, and he went to Mattersdorf but they’ve destroyed the cemetery there and they’ve used the stones as paving stones...When I wanted to go back with my husband we didn’t have enough, things were very expensive and we couldn’t afford to go, so I never went. Maybe now, I don’t know if I ever go back, maybe – you never know.

RL: Did you lose members of the family during the war?

Tape 2: 8 minutes 34 seconds

BA: [Nods]

RL: Who did you lose?

BA: Grandparents. Grandmother.

RL: Do you know what happened to them?

BA: Yeah, they went to the camps.

RL: Do you know which camps?

BA: Not really. I think my grandparents were in Theresienstadt I think, but I’m not sure.

RL: How did you find out what had happened?

BA: Because some people who came back and new my parents told me.

RL: Were you in touch with them at the beginning of the war; was the family in touch with them?

BA: Maybe my mother was. I don’t know, I don’t remember, I was too young at the time.

RL: So how many grandparents did you lose?

BA: Three. Grandmother and my grandparents from my mother’s side.

RL: Was there any other family?

BA: Yeah, they had sisters, who didn’t get here. One of my mother’s sisters got as far as Dover but she was turned away, and we never heard anything.

RL: You never heard anything after that, so you don't know what happened.

BA: No.

RL: Did any of your mother's sisters come over?

BA: No. One of my mother's sister lives in Israel, I didn't meet her but I did go to Israel, but she passed away at quite an old age.

RL: So has she gone to Israel before the war?

BA: No, she to Israel afterwards, she went from the camps to Switzerland and from Switzerland to Israel.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 33 seconds

RL: So she survived in the camps. Was she the only one to survive in the camps?

BA: I think so...I have got some cousins in Israel which I've met when I've been over there.

RL: So out of your mother's family, was just this one sister who survived?

BA: Yes. And my father's brother, he lived, he came with my father and lived in London, but he also only had one child and he lives in London.

RL: What about the rest of your father's family?

BA: None of them survived. Only the one who came over when he came over.

RL: And did you find out what happened to them?

BA: Camps, but we didn't, you know...maybe if you'd dig deep enough, you would find if they had their names anywhere, I don't know – but it's not going to bring them back.

RL: So how do you feel towards the Germans for what happened?

BA: It's sad but what difference does it make what I feel, it's not going to bring any of them back.

RL: Did you ever talk to your children about your family background, did you ever discuss things with them?

BA: Sometimes, but, the thing is when I was younger I wasn't interested in Mishpochology and now when I am, I've got no one to tell me. So I can only tell them bits and pieces I remember and all that I know...which is not very much.

RL: And what about Israel. Have you visited Israel.

BA: Yeah.

RL: When was the first time you visited?

BA: When I was 18. I wanted to stay there but my father said that I could stay for a year but after a year I had to come back, so I decided that I'm not staying and I came back. But I've been there a few times.

RL: So when you went at 18, what was that. Was that just a holiday or...

BA: No. My mother went to visit her sister because, this was after the war and she wanted to see her sister.

RL: And what did you think of the place when you saw it?

Tape 2: 13 minutes 33 seconds

BA: I liked it. I'd like to go again, but the children are a bit nervous of me travelling.

RL: So did you go with your mother on that visit?

BA: uhmm. By boat!

RL: Where was your auntie living?

BA: In Pardes Chana...

RL: Sorry?

BA: Pardes Chana. It's near to Haifa. But I had a cousin in Bnai Brak and another cousin in Tel Aviv.

RL: Is there anything else you'd like to add, any message you'd like to finish with?

BA: I hope I've said the right things...It's what you were looking for and what you wanted, and I hope, it's not going to be really publicised.

RL: OK. Thanks very much.

Tape 2: 14 minutes 52 seconds

Photos:

BA: These are my mother's parents. My grandpa was called Yaakov, and she was called Rochel and this was at a sea-side resort, I think it was called Zemring, in Austria in probably in the 1920s....

BA: That is my father, it was taken I imagine early 1930s, just before or just after he got married

RL: And the place?

BA: I imagine in Mattersdorf.

BA: That's my father's father. It was taken probably in the 1920s, and his name was Dovid Shlomo Sobelmann.

RL: And the place?

BA: Place was probably in Mattersdorf.

BA: That's my mother. It was probably taken in the early 1930s, in Vienna.

RL: And her name?

Tape 2: 16 minutes 7 seconds

BA: Her name was Shaindel Bernfeld.

BA: That was my grandparent's shop and next to it was a place where they sold hay for horses and they had a petrol pump and there's my uncle and a couple of aunts and cousins standing on the right-hand side near the shop .

RL: Where?

BA: In Mattersdorf.

RL: When was it taken?

BA: 1920...late 1920s.

BA: This was taken in London in 1954, a few months before I got married. I was then Bella Sobelmann. I'm trying to think where it was...

BA: This was taken of my husband and myself in 1992 in Walthamstow after my niece's wedding.

BA: This picture was taken in early 1970s, with my husband and nine children.

RL: And names?

BA: Akiva Moshe and Bella Adler, Manchester.

BA: That was taken in the sukkah in the early 1970s with so many children here in Manchester.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 0 second

BA: This is a picture of my daughter's children taken here in Manchester about 1995.

[Microphone problem] Retake:

BA: This is a picture of one of my daughter's children here in Manchester in 1995, the name, family name is Silbiger.

BA: This picture was made for us by my children in 1990 as a Purim present.