

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Forename:	Lilian
Interviewee Sex:	Female
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Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

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Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

TAPE: 141

NAME: LILIAN HEYMAN

DATE: 4 DECEMBER 2006

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ

TAPE 1

BL: Today is the 4th of December 2006, we are conducting an interview with Mrs. Lillian Heyman, the location is London, and my name is Bea Lewkowicz.

Today is the 4th of December 2006, we're conducting the interview with Mrs. Lillian Heyman, we are in London, and my name is Bea Lewkowicz.

Can you please tell us your name?

LH: Lillian Rose Heyman.

BL: And what was your maiden name?

LH: Liselotte Rosl Lachmann.

BL: And where were you born?

LH: I was born in Berlin.

BL: And when?

LH: 6th of April, 1919.

BL: And how old are you today?

LH: I am eighty-seven and three quarters.

BL: Mrs. Heyman, thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for Refugee Voices. Could you please tell us something about your family background?

LH: My father owned a factory, he ran a factory of small leather goods, mainly purses and wallets. My mother was a housewife, she was busy with three girls. We had a nanny, to help her out, we also had someone else in the household to help. We had a happy youth, a very happy youth. I think my parents were very sensible people, progressive, I believe, and looking back, I think we were very liberal. And being three girls, we always had company, one

another's company, which was great, although later, of course, we all had our own friends and went our own ways, and I must say that I had a very happy and what I call a normal childhood.

BL: Where did you live?

LH: We lived in the area of Kreuzberg, which is now very large, much larger than I imagined. To me, Kreuzberg means the park, it is literally... Kreuz is a cross, Berg is a hill or a mountain, and it was a gentle hill, with a very beautiful park and I spent lots of happy hours there: learning to skate, sledging with my siblings, with my father... my mother wasn't that active. In summer, we played there, it was about a ten minutes walk, and it was a lovely area, a very healthy area to grow up in.

Tape 1 - 2 minutes 58 seconds

BL: Was it a Jewish area at all?

LH: No, it was not a Jewish area. I believe there was only one other Jewish family in our household. We lived on the third floor, no lift, which was difficult for my mother. And we stayed there... we moved when I was fifteen. We moved a little further up the main road, to the other side of the park, Kreuzberg, so we were still able to use it. But there we had a lift, we had two toilets, which was an advantage, I don't think we had a help anymore, certainly not a live-in help, that, we gave up when we moved to the new flat.

BL: Can you tell me something about your grandparents?

LH: Very little. My mother's parents I never met, they died before I was born. My father's mother died before I was born, but his father, my grandfather, lived until the age of eighty-six, and I was twelve when he died, and I still remember I insisted on going to the funeral and I was terribly upset to lose him. We walked, it was a walk of about twenty minutes, and every Sunday, my father took us three daughters to walk there to him. He had a housekeeper living with him, a very nice elderly lady, and they made us extremely welcome.

BL: What was his name?

LH: Otto Lachmann. To us he was Opapa.

BL: And what was his profession?

LH: He used to be a furrier, but of course he was retired long before I was born.

BL: And where was he born?

LH: Probably also in the area where my father was born, an der Oder, Neusalz, I reckon, I am not sure about that.

BL: And do you know when the family moved from Neusalz to Berlin?

LH: Well, my father certainly lived in Berlin when he married... I cannot give you dates.

BL: Do you know how your parents met?

LH: No, I don't know that at all, I don't know that. I just know they married in 1914, and their eldest daughter was born in 1915. No, I'm afraid I never asked questions.

BL: This was during the First World War, so was your father, was he in the army, do you know that?

LH: I don't think he was. I don't think he was.

Tape 1 - 6 minutes 9 seconds

BL: What was your father's profession?

LH: My father owned a factory, in partnership with someone else, the firm was called Tinner and Lachmann, it was not too far from where we lived, I think... I don't know whether he walked, also probably a twenty-five minutes walk, there were no cars around at that time, people didn't own cars. And I don't think I ever saw the factory, but apparently it went into liquidation when I was around ten, I believe. What the reason was I can't tell you either. Again, I never asked questions, which I am now, of course, very sorry about.

BL: What other things do you remember about growing up in Berlin?

LH: Well, one thing I remember very clearly, where we lived, it was a very wide street with a kind of promenade in the centre, benches on either side, and in the middle ran a tram, trams. And I remember at the age of ten, I was going to meet my sister somewhere at the corner to go, I don't know where, and I saw her and I shouted at her, and I don't think she heard me. And I wanted to cross the tram lines, didn't look to the left, and I was hit by the tram. I was caught underneath; I was in and out of consciousness. They had to get the *Feuerwehr*, the fire brigade, to lift the tram. I don't know how many people were involved, and I remember hearing lots of voices, people peeping underneath the tram where I was lying, I was caught. Eventually, they managed to get me out, I don't remember much about that, but they took me to hospital and my poor mother came to see me in the evening and it must have been a horrible sight for her. My head was bandaged, my leg was suspended from the ceiling, or from some contraption around the bed, and my left arm was straight out to the left. How I coped, or they coped with me, I don't know. I had a very deep indentation in my left leg below the knee, and I must say they did a very good job. I think I was in hospital for four weeks, at least four weeks. And I slowly recovered. When I got home, I had to sleep in my parents' bedroom, I remember the bed was there, a very large bedroom with flowers garlanded around the headboard, and there I was for..., in and out of bed. I must have missed a lot of school, at the age of ten you change into the grammar school. That aspect I don't remember anymore, but it still hangs over me, this horrible accident, and how lucky I was that I didn't lose my left leg. One can still see a slight mark on the left leg, but I recovered.

Tape 1 - 9 minutes 42 seconds

BL: What sort of school did you go to?

LH: I went to... it was called the Luther-Lyceum. It was a school for girls, I am not sure whether it went beyond the age of sixteen, I rather think it did, but I wouldn't be sure about it. It was a happy time for me, I think there were only three Jewish girls in my class, including myself, but I had lots of non-Jewish friends, I was not particularly friendly with the Jewish girls, and I must say I enjoyed school. I went for outings, you didn't wear uniform, of course,

but for outings we all decided to wear white blouses and navy skirts, we sort of concocted our own uniform, and I have happy memories from my school days.

BL: What about primary school?

LH: For primary school I went to a little private school which was very close to us. And I was probably taken there. I just remember being photographed with a large *Zuckertüte*, I don't know whether you know those. Children who went to school for the first day in Germany got a large contraption, filled with sweets, chocolates, the larger the better. I had a photograph taken on a balcony with that. I don't remember much about that school.

BL: Do you remember any of the friends you had?

LH: Not from the primary school at all, no, not at all. From the other school, yes, quite a few. And I had other Jewish friends, who didn't go to my school, but where I picked those up I cannot remember either. And unfortunately, they didn't seem to have survived. One was Czech, she came from Prague. I think her parents were separated, and she went to school in Berlin, and during the holidays I once went to Prague with her. She was a charming girl, and we visited Prague long after the war, and I looked for her name, there were quite a few Fallecks there, which was her name, but hers, Susie, was not mentioned.

BL: What was her forename?

LH: Susie Falleck. And another one from Berlin... Hannelore... Hanne-Ruth Kempin, no, Hanne-Ruth Levin, I haven't traced, been able to trace either. But I dearly loved her. So I am not in contact with anyone from those days.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 45 seconds

BL: What sort of circles did your parents mix with?

LH: My mother had a very good friend, who was non-Jewish but married to a Jew, her name was Rose Nathan. She was a great help to me, before I emigrated, before I even knew where I was going to. My mother was a great shopper, and particularly after I started working in a store, N. Israel, she decided to buy a trousseau for her three girls. I didn't want to know, I felt embarrassed, at the age of sixteen, seventeen, I didn't want to know about a trousseau, I wasn't interested. She wanted me to see sometimes what she chose or I should choose the initials which were embroidered on towels and sheets and so forth, and I didn't want to know, I wasn't interested. But towards the end, even before I knew where I was going, her friend organised with someone who worked at the station to send three crates for me to Victoria Station, before I even knew where I was going to, crates of linen, china, glass, all sorts of things which were in storage for years and years in England afterwards. How I managed to pay to redeem all these things from Victoria Station, I can't remember. My husband can't remember, he was a student, we didn't have any money, so I have no idea how we managed to get it out, can't remember. But she, she was a good friend, and she also was with my mother later on when she had to present herself to the concentration... to be deported... she visited her in hospital. We saw her here later on after the war, and she told us what happened.

BL: You said you lived in Kreuzberg... was it so mainly because your father had the...

LH: It was close to his factory, yes. It was not the area where most Jews lived, it certainly wasn't the area where my husband lived, or where we very often went to join sports clubs, my middle sister and I, and most of the things took place in the West End, so we travelled by tram.

BL: What sports clubs did you join?

Tape 1: 15 minutes 45 seconds

LH: Well, before 1933 we were in a German sports club, doing parallel bars and quite strenuous exercises, enjoyed it, but then we had to leave, and we discovered the Jewish sports club, which was wonderful. We both joined the handball group; we were very active, usually on Sundays, and swimming. We were both very keen swimmers and competed: when she went without me, she'd come back and say she can do a summersault backwards, so I went soon after and had to compete with her to do the same, and usually managed it as the younger one. And there we met lots of people, it was a wonderful life.

BL: What was the name of this group?

LH: JSG. Jüdische Sportgemeinschaft.

BL: So you said every Sunday you would meet?

LH: Every Sunday, sometimes in the evenings, too. And we had lots of friends there, lots of boyfriends. And I met people here, in Leeds, later on where we lived, a friend Erica [...] and her husband who was a well-known swimmer, and another man, one was a runner who happened to be a distant cousin of my husband's too... so somehow you got together again.

BL: Which years are we talking about? When did you join the Jewish sports group?

LH: Well, that must have been after '33. Yes, for a long time we were members of the sports group. And later on, when I came over here and had my first position in a household, I even got one of my... she wasn't a great friend, but I knew she wanted to come, had to come out and was willing to do domestic work, and my employer got her over as well. But that was almost the end of our friendship...

BL: What was her name?

LH: What was her name? Grete Sabbat.

BL: Did you go to a synagogue? How religious was your household?

LH: We went to the synagogue for the High Holy Days, all dressed up, walking a long way to the Potsdamer Platz or Lindenstraße. Lindenstraße was our synagogue, but for the High Holy Days very often you had an overflow, and we were very fortunate to go to the philharmonic hall in Berlin, where accidentally, I was taken to a concert, a beautiful concert, when I was about twelve. We all went, the whole family went, and the soloist was a young boy, standing in front of the audience, in front of the large orchestra in shorts, and his name was Yehudi Menuhin which was very exciting. I was just about two or three years younger than he. My mother often went, my parents went. My mother loved the opera, and she took one of us along, and we went to my first opera. She took me along to Wagner's Meistersinger von Nürnberg, which made a big impression on me. Ever since, I've been an opera lover.

Tape 1: 19 minutes 53 seconds

BL: So you said you went to the synagogue, what sort of synagogue was it?

LH: A liberal synagogue, men and women sitting together, as I say, in the Lindenstraße.

BL: Was there a choir?

LH: I believe there was, but I wouldn't like to swear to it.

BL: But on High Holy Days you went?

LH: Yes, yes. My mother certainly fasted, but we didn't, we weren't obliged to.

BL: So your household as such wasn't a very religious household?

LH: No.

BL: Did you have a Bar Mitzvah at all?

LH: No.

BL: Did you have any religious instructions in the school?

LH: Yes, Fräulein Meyer... they took place in the afternoon, after school was finished. Yes, I learnt Hebrew and I can still read it. I cannot remember how many girls participated, but it must have been for a number of years, we had religion instructions in the Lyceum, in the upper school.

BL: Did you experience any anti-Semitism at all in school, or anywhere else?

LH: Not in school, not where I worked afterwards, the only anti-Semitism I experienced was, I had a very Jewish-looking boyfriend at one time, and my mother was worried about that. And I was approached when I walked with him, and I was shouted at, "How can you, a non-Jewish girl go with a Jew, if we happen to catch you again, you'll get it", or something to that effect. It was very unpleasant, and I don't think that was the reason why I broke with him.

BL: But apart from that...

LH: Not in the school, no, not where we lived, I can't say that.

BL: Was politics ever discussed at home, was it an issue?

LH: Yes, it was, and I remember clearly on the day Hitler was elected, I went to a birthday party of a non-Jewish friend from school. We listened to the news and heard that Hitler was elected, and I was terribly depressed and worried. I knew how my parents would feel, and we were all very worried. We realised that we'd have to do something, although one didn't think of emigration at that time, we hoped it wouldn't last for very long. But at the age of fourteen, then, I was fully aware of the consequences.

Tape 1; 23 minutes 26 seconds

BL: How did 1933, how did it affect your father's business, or by then he didn't have it anymore?

LH: No, it must have been just about that time when it finished. I just don't remember exactly when he gave up the factory, or the factory gave him up.

BL: What did he do afterwards, when he...

LH: He went as a traveller for leather goods, too. He was away a great deal, and very often when we were small, we were usually sent to holiday homes, children's holiday homes, that's where I met my husband. I have one photograph; I must have been about six, five or six, a group photograph of all the youngsters who were in this home. I was sitting right in front, in a vest and knickers, next to me a little boy, and we became friendly with him. Years after, when I was perhaps sixteen, seventeen, we gradually discovered we were in the same holiday home, sitting side by side. But later on I went on holidays very often with my mother, without my father, and my elder sister.

BL: Where did you go?

LH: As children we usually... either we were sent to the Baltic Sea, or even with the parents as small children we went to the Baltic Sea, then of course to the North Sea, where I met my husband in a children's home...

BL: What was it called?

LH: Rosenhof.

BL: Was that a Jewish children's home?

LH: It was, it was always Jewish homes, strangely enough. I was very happy, all three of us went, we were three sisters, so we always had each other's company, or looked after each other, although we were usually grouped according to ages. And we always enjoyed it, usually stayed for four weeks, which probably gave my parents, certainly my mother, a rest. And later on, I remember, once the three of us went with a friend, and the friend was supposed to have a chaperone with her, so we were allowed to go with them, with a chaperone we managed to dispose of, and we had a very good time, us four youngsters meeting all sorts of other young people. This was also at the Baltic Sea. But the first time I was taken to the mountains I never wanted to go to the sea again, and I think we've managed to pass this delight on to our families: both children, our son and our daughter and their children, too. We all just love the mountains. We used to do a lot of walking, not strenuous climbing, but going up... it's the ideal holiday, and we still love going to the mountains, although I can't walk very far. It doesn't worry me to see the mountains from below; it looks very beautiful, just the same.

Tape 1: 27 minutes 7 seconds

BL: Where did you go on your first trip to the mountains?

LH: To Czechoslovakia. I can't remember the name of the place now, but that was it. And then my mother took me to Switzerland and I had to go back because I was employed then. She let me travel back on my own over night, and I cried the whole time to leave the mountains. I stood at the end of the train, and I just didn't want to leave.

BL: So how long did you stay in school, and what happened after you left school?

LH: I left school when I was sixteen, with the qualification you got at that time, probably similar to the GCSE now. I wanted to go to art school, I had always been sketching... evenings, my spare time... sketching, reading, sketching. And I wanted to be either a designer or an illustrator. But there was one college, Reimann-Schule, which my parents refused to let me go to, it had a bad reputation for flirting. You didn't have to go to the Reimann-Schule to flirt, anyway. But no, that was out. Then my mother suggested, why don't I apply for training at this store called N. Israel where she was a good customer. It had a commercial school attached to the store, and I think I went for an interview, applied and went for an interview, they accepted me, and I started after the holidays.

BL: Which year was that?

LH: 1945.

BL: 1935?

LH: '35, '35, that's right, of course. Yes, I started in the department for handkerchiefs, for a week or two, then shirts for a short while, but in the morning always school. I learnt how to distinguish between linen and wool and cotton and artificial silk, and it was a very good school, and I made a good friend there, too. She became our, when we got married she was our - what do you call it - witness, yes, that's right. She just celebrated her 90th birthday and she doesn't like to talk about the past. I stayed there... I ended up in the department for import and export, checking bills with a calculator, with a calculator that was an enormously heavy machine, terribly noisy. Imagine, twenty calculators working in one office, it was a racket. The owner, Wilfried Israel, was very approachable. He had dual nationality, German and English, he was born in London, his mother was English.

Tapel: 31 minutes 2 seconds

And whenever we wanted to talk to him, we made an appointment; you were able to see him. And my mother, having been a good customer there anyway, she decided, as I said, to buy our trousseau, she got a reduction because I was an employee there, and I think the man who dealt with personnel, personnel manager, he felt that she was getting too much, buying too much for the reduction she was getting, so I had to get in touch with my boss, and there was no problem, you know, 'Very welcome'. He also... Well, we get to 1938 now, to the Kristallnacht, crystal night. I didn't know what had happened during the night. I went to the office in the morning, not knowing what had happened. And I got to the store, it was a beautiful store, it was the Harrods of Berlin, and I wanted to go across, I think to my office, and things were flying from the atrium - you had to go through the atrium - left, right and centre furniture, glassware, light fittings, it was dangerous to go, it was horrible. You didn't know what was happening. Somehow we were advised to go get our coats and get out. And when I got downstairs, our small wardrobes, there were small wardrobes downstairs, I think metal wardrobes for each employee, then from left and right people told me, 'We knew you were Jewish, you watch out, you'll be the next'. And I remember going home down the

underground, it was quite a longish journey, and arriving at our station, Tempelhof, and going along a long corridor, and I was terribly upset and worried about what I would find at home. It was perfectly peaceful at home, but I just couldn't grasp it at the time, except that I think that my father went into hiding, he wasn't... I think my mother must have known where he went to, we didn't know.

Tape 1: 34 minutes 0 second

And that was practically the end of the job, but we were still in touch with my employer, he was a very caring person, and he said he'd get me to Australia if I can get out, to England for instance. He couldn't help me to get out to England, and it was then that I wrote to Ernest who was studying here, 'Could you possibly get me a job, put an advert in the paper and get me a job as a domestic?', because I knew that was the only way to get into England. Now what I didn't mention is that earlier that year, 1938, I got engaged to someone else. He also went to England, shortly after, to Manchester. It was in February, my sister got married in January '38. She left Berlin highly pregnant, waiting for her visa to America, to go to Italy where her husband had an uncle. They were going to wait the time there for their, what was it called, the American affidavit. I was terribly upset about my sister going, we were very close. And when my fiancé went to Manchester, I was full of the intention that I should go after him. But by July I felt that I had made a mistake, I didn't think it would work out, I didn't feel like being a married woman, so I applied for a passport, with a J in, of course, got permission to travel to England, to Manchester, to settle things, to see, you know, whether there's any use to carry on. And we decided there and then - I think I spent two weeks here - to finish it. That's why I wrote to my husband. You know, this was in July, but of course I was jumping, going ahead, already. Kristallnacht was in November, so that's why I wrote to my friend, longstanding friend Ernest could he do something, put an advert in the paper, which he did.

BL: So in 1938 you were already here in June in Manchester for two weeks?

LH: Yes, but I had to go back again. Everybody thought I was stupid, but there was no way I could have stayed. I only had a temporary passport, temporary permission to stay in England...

Tape 1: 37 minutes 24 seconds

BL: What did your older sister... who got married, the middle sister or the older sister?

LH: The middle sister.

BL: And what happened to your older sister?

LH: My eldest sister she worked for a time, in an office, also leather, I think my father must have initiated that, a large well-known leather shop. But then when we had to give up the maid, she stayed at home helping my mother. She was very close to my mother. But she also got a position as a domestic in London, and she came over shortly after me. I came in February '39, and she must have come about a month later.

BL: And you said you had to give up the maid. Was it a Jewish maid, or a German maid who worked for you?

LH: Yes, it was a German maid, we weren't allowed to have maids under the age of 45, I believe that was the limit at the time. So, well, since my middle sister left, that was before already, my mother had to cope on her own, with the help, later on, of my elder sister.

BL: And where was your father at that time?

LH: Well, he was working; he was travelling a great deal.

BL: Did your sister get married in view of emigration, or... was your engagement and the marriage was it to do with emigrating?

LH: Yes, her husband had a very good friend in New York who gave the affidavit. I managed to see her again in London, her baby was born then, and I think we had two or three days together in London before I took up my position in Rickmansworth, near... what was it called? Not Rickmansworth, Heronsgate, that's right. It was hard work.

BL: Just before we get on to that... So when you wrote to Ernest and he put in the ad, what happened? He put in the ad...

LH: He put a long advertisement into the Daily Telegraph, I've got it upstairs, it was not hundred percent good English...

BL: What did he say, what did it say?

LH: 19 year old German Jewish girl seeks position in England. Fond of children, Viennese cooking, versed in tailoring, which wasn't true, and dressmaking. What else? Oh, shorthand typing. I was the ideal person to have, and we had about three or four replies. He gave his address in London and my address in Berlin. I think they wrote to him, there were two or three replies from outside of London, and this was the nearest to London which suited us best. And that's what he accepted.

Tape 1: 41 minutes 2 seconds

BL: And then when did you leave Germany?

LH: In February '39.

BL: And how did you leave?

LH: How did I...?

BL: How did you travel?

LH: Well, we lived practically opposite the airport in Berlin. I've got a photograph showing more or less, on the first of May, wonderful flags with the, with the Hakenkreuz. So it seemed the obvious way to travel, being so convenient. My parents took me over to the airport and I don't remember how much luggage I had, I think I had a typewriter and probably a couple of cases, because a lot went beforehand already. And I remember I had a new handbag which my father's employer had given me, a beautiful handbag, and they cut the lining to make sure that it didn't have anything hidden in my handbag. I can't remember how well I was searched, but I remember once I got through, I was able to walk to the end of the field, knowing it so well.

There was a, what do you call it, a *Zaun*, a fence, and my parents were standing there, and my mother wore a fox fur, a silver fox fur, and she said, 'Would you like to take this with you?', and I said, 'Yes, why not, it may come in handy to sell', which seems unbelievable, that we were able to do this, and I was able to get away with it. I wouldn't wear it, didn't want to wear it, but I eventually sold it for five pounds. I got on the plane, howled the whole time, I was terribly sick in the end, and I think I was the last one out of the plane. And my husband received me at Croydon Airport.

BL: What were your first impressions when you came to England?

LH: Freedom. You didn't have to look over your shoulder all the time. He was so supportive, too, although he was busy with his studies. He hired a car to take me out to Hertfordshire with all my luggage. The rest, as I said, I don't know how I paid for it. Three crates and a piece of trunk came later, were stored in the garage. And I was told before, they wrote, that they have a cook, they have a maid, and the man was a QC, and it sounded as though I'd live a wonderful life, I wouldn't have to do anything, hopefully help him with his correspondence... but the cook was dismissed soon after, so was the maid, and the lot was mine. I had to cook, yes, I forgot to mention, of course, that I took these courses in Viennese cooking, very intensive course, wrote down all the recipes. I didn't have much experience, my mother didn't let me cook, we had someone to help her.

Tape 1: 45 minutes 10 seconds

BL: Where did you take the course, in Berlin?

LH: In Berlin.

BL: And who ran those courses?

LH: A Viennese woman, must have been about four or five students there, and apart from doing this, learning to cook, I took classes in dress-making, shorthand typing, English, of course, and window dressing. So it was a very busy time.

BL: When was that?

LH: This was after Kristallnacht. When I gave up the job, I knew I had to prepare myself thoroughly. Anyway, the woman, the lady of the house was Canadian, there was one little boy and she expected a baby, and the man, the QC, very nice people. Fortunately, they had enough money to put up with my expensive Viennese cooking, never occurred to me that one can use ten eggs instead of twelve, but it worked, somehow, except I remember when the second siren went in London, some relations evacuated themselves to Hertfordshire, and I had, suddenly had eight people to look after. And washing up - evening meal was the main meal - washing up until twelve o' clock midnight or something like that, so it was not funny. I didn't have much time, my parents were very unhappy that I had so little time to write to them, I was just too tired. But another incident, I should have mentioned, I was told before that I would have my own bedroom, bath and sitting room, and when we arrived with all my luggage, my host and Ernest were taking up my suitcases while I talked to the lady of the house, and suddenly discovered the bath was in the bedroom. It wasn't a bathroom, it was just a bath in my bedroom. The sitting room was the butler's pantry, full of bottles underneath the table, a very shabby chair... I had very little time to use it as a sitting room. And then this other girl came over, eventually, I can't remember how soon after, and she had to do the rooms, she was

responsible for cleaning the house. And I felt that she ought to help me a little with the washing up, drying and so forth, so we weren't great friends for very long. And after nine months I decided I had enough, I couldn't cope anymore. I think I only stayed there because of all the luggage I had. And I went to another house in Kent, a doctor's family, a doctor and his wife, no children. A beautiful house, I loved the house, very modern house, beautiful parquet floors, it didn't occur to me that I would have to look after them, polish them. They didn't want, didn't like continental cooking, I had no idea how to make chips; bacon and liver was not something I had ever heard of.

Tape 1: 49 minutes 15 seconds

BL: What did you cook? What could you cook?

LH: I could cook excellent continental meals.

BL: Such as?

LH: Goulash, red cabbage, fricassee, anything continental, which, fortunately, my first family were very happy with, but it was not appreciated there, so I didn't stick there too long.

BL: So when you came to the first family, they were English, half Canadian, half English?

LH: She was Canadian, he was English, yes.

BL: Was it a terrible shock to sort of suddenly be in this position?

LH: Well, I had to make up my mind: this is what I am here for. It got me out of Germany, so I just had to get on with it. What I didn't realise was that the day before I left, I had given notice, can't remember what it was, a week's notice or a month's notice... it was discovered that the shelf above the kitchen where the pots were stationed was full of dust, and my madam discovered this, apparently a day or two before I was due to leave, so I worked for... until about two o' clock in the morning to scrub those shelves. I agreed; it never occurred to me that it might get dusty and needed attention... So it was, is still on my mind, now, as a joke, as an amusing interval, but it wasn't, I didn't appreciate it as such at the time.

BL: Did you feel that they had any understanding of where you were coming from?

LH: Yes, they must have done, because I had a lot of new clothes with me. My third position was with a very simple family with two children, and on my day off the woman always said to me, 'I feel awful to let you do domestic work, I can see you're not used to it, you're a lady'. So they knew, of course they knew. But I didn't feel sorry for myself; I felt that I was happy, glad to have got out. I desperately wished that my parents could do the same, which unfortunately didn't work although my brother-in-law's friend in New York was willing to give them an affidavit, too. There wasn't enough time; there were too many applicants to go the States. They tried to go to Shanghai, nothing worked, unfortunately.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 38 seconds

BL: Did you stay in touch with your parents?

LH: Oh yes, we stayed in touch after the war via America, where my sister was, and later on through the Red Cross, twenty-five words, which of course took a long time to get from one end to the other.

BL: You said your sister also came to England...

LH: My eldest sister came to England, yes, she found a position here.

BL: Where was she?

LH: I think her first post was in Pinner, I can't remember how long she stayed. Then she went to a Jewish family in Hampstead. They were very nice people, but by then I had moved myself to a hotel post in Gloucester and got her over. Oh, I heard from her people in Hampstead, they weren't very happy with her, she was acting strangely, and I had to go down and see her, see them, speak to them. And I, after my last post here, the people with two boys, they evacuated themselves; I couldn't go to the coastal area as a German Jew, German. Yes, I was out of work for a while, and somehow found a job, illegally, working for a frame-maker to get his accounts right. I didn't do accountancy, just used my common sense. And he was very happy; I got everything very straight for him. It didn't last long this job, it was... , he was worried because he knew that I wasn't allowed to work for him. And from there, a friend of mine, German-Jewish friend who I met at the sports club, she took a job in a hotel in Gloucester and wrote to me, 'Why do you have to stand the air raids in London, I can get you a job here in a hotel', which she did. And I moved to Gloucester, and got my sister up there, too.

Tape 1: 55 minutes 32 seconds

BL: Just before coming to Gloucester... you said when you changed jobs, how was it possible to change jobs, how did you find your next jobs, you know, your domestic jobs? Did you put another add, or...?

LH: I don't know whether I put an advertisement in, or whether I saw an advertisement, I can't remember, but it must have been through the paper, the newspaper. I can't remember how long I stayed in my second job in Kent, it was hard work, it was a bitterly cold winter, I had to sift coal, cinders, bitterly... standing outside in the bitter cold, it was horrible. And they were very... the woman was mean, very mean. I remember they had people in for Christmas, and she asked me, 'Do you think six sprouts each is enough?' I remember that clearly.

BL: And how did they treat you?

LH: As a domestic. I can't remember him very much, he was a doctor, he was busy, I don't even know whether his practice was in the house. It was a large house, beautiful house, but I wasn't happy there, didn't stay very long. And then, while I was in Gloucester, in the hotel job, I saw an advertisement - by then it was 1942 - I saw an advertisement in the paper that a firm wanted a window dresser, and I applied and wondered... And I heard they wanted me to dress a trial window in Bristol. I've never done any window-dressing, never practically anyway, I had been on a course. Anyway, I went to Bristol, they gave me all sorts of things, it was a large window, and I remember I dressed it very artistically, didn't know the firm, didn't know what they were after, had no idea what sort of window-dressing they expected, and I got the job. I was absolutely delighted, and I got permission to do it. No more housework, it was

absolutely wonderful! And I managed to convey this to my parents, and my mother was very pleased, she said, 'At least we didn't waste money on this course'.

BL: We just have to change tapes...

END OF TAPE

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 58 minutes 18 seconds

BL: This is Tape 2; we are conducting an interview with Mrs. Heyman.

You were telling us about the hotel in Gloucester. Could you tell us a bit about what you were doing there exactly?

LH: Well, I was a chamber maid. Occasionally, I had to help out in the dining room, which was fun because you got a tip there from the people who had their meals. I had my friend there, I had my sister there. I think by then my husband was in the army, he was in Gloucester occasionally, too. Life wasn't too bad.

BL: Because you were also together with your sister?

LH: With my sister and with my friend, friend from Berlin.

BL: That's interesting, because you said in the first position you had a friend but that didn't really help.

LH: That was a different friend, that was a different friend. This friend was also from the sports club, she was in the handball team, a tall girl, powerful girl, and you always tried to be on her side, not on the opposite side.

BL: And what was her name?

LH: Elisabeth Fleck. She later married and was called Sontag, and she also went to California, lived in California, and we kept in contact until she died about two years ago.

BL: Throughout the whole time, did you have any contact with any other refugee organisations in Britain?

LH: No, no. The Woburn house, yes, I must have had very loose connection to the Woburn house, kept in contact, but how and why, I don't know. As a refugee, of course, you registered with the Woburn house.

BL: And you also mentioned that you couldn't work near the coast, do you remember, were you tribunaled?

LH: No, I was not tribunaled.

BL: Did you receive a category of A, B, C?

LH: No, I don't remember that.

BL: So you were not interned?

LH: No, I was not interned.

BL: And when did you get married?

LH: In 1942.

Tape 2: 2 minutes 55 seconds

BL: Can you tell us a bit about this?

LH: Well, we were just friends, Ernest got me over, he put the advertisement in the paper. We were good friends, we had always kept in touch, since I was twelve and he was thirteen and we met in this children's holiday home. We kept in touch; he was more keen than I was. I remember I seemed to have known when he was going to cycle to us, which was quite a long distance from his flat to ours, I stood on the balcony and saw this pink shirt coming around the corner on the bicycle, and told my sister, 'Tell him I'm not in'. I was not terribly keen at the time. I got keen when I heard he went to England. He came here to study when he was eighteen after leaving the school. I don't think we were in correspondence very much then, but when he came to visit his parents, I met him, I made sure that I looked nice, I remember borrowing my elder sister's coat, why, I don't know, because to me it was something different and new. And I remember he met me at the station, he was standing at the bottom of the stairs, I hadn't seen him for quite a while, and it was nice seeing him, but that's all, I can't say I was terribly keen. Then we made an excursion somewhere to a lake, a day excursion, I think we took food along, which was also very pleasant, but didn't attract me. We were friends, which was nice. And then, of course, I got engaged, I don't know whether I told him this, I don't remember, but I do remember, because his parents knew, that he had advertised and I went to see them just before I left Berlin, the one and only time I saw them... he never met my parents, unfortunately. They were very sweet, but that was the only time I saw them, I didn't meet his sister, his elder sister, I met the other sister later on in Israel, of course. And he was so supportive here, and gradually we became close.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 53 seconds

BL: What did Ernest's parents tell you, do you remember, when you visited them?

LH: Well, it was all very formal. I think I took a book out for him, I don't know whether that was a present of mine, or whether they sent it. I think it was a present of mine, they didn't give me anything to take out. I didn't stay for long.

BL: What about your parents? Did they approve of your engagement, what was their view of...?

LH: Yes, I think they were very happy that there was a chance for me to get out, to get out of Germany. And I felt more sorry for my parents than for myself, when I came back from England after seeing my so-called fiancé, that the deal was off. I felt sorry for him, for them, to tell them that, you know, I'd have to make other arrangements, find other ways. I remained friendly with his parents, strangely enough. They managed to get out to England, and I

remained friendly with them, they were very nice people. But we finished on friendly terms; both agreed that it was too early to think of marriage.

BL: So when you decided to marry Ernest, did you manage to tell your parents about this?

LH: Yes, in a Red Cross note, in 25 words. And I think they were very pleased. Ernest's parents I'm not so sure whether they were pleased, they thought we were both much too young, particularly he was too young, but I think they came to realise that with similar backgrounds... And I think they realised he was in the army, he somehow managed to convey this to them, I think they came to realise that, probably, it was the best for us.

BL: And can you describe your wedding?

LH: Our wedding was a very simple affair. It was wartime, my husband was given 48 hours leave from the army, he was still a private, his old uncle was a witness, and my friend from Berlin was a witness, and the four of us went to Kempinski, to what used to be a very exclusive restaurant, but at that time you paid five shillings for a meal, per person, that was the limit, except that there was a fee, I don't know what they call it... We had some wine, and it all went well, except that my poor new husband had a terrible tooth ache. We went to..., we had a honeymoon I think one or two nights in... what was it called? On the Thames... what was the place called we went to? [LH asking her husband] He doesn't know either. Virginia Water, very nice hotel, but he was suffering from a terrible toothache. We went there by bus, came back by bus, and he had to go back to his regiment. But it was pleasant, it was nice, it was June, July, in the summer, it was all a simple, very simple but for us pleasant ceremony. Simple, no religious ceremony.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 12 seconds

BL: What about your sister? Was she there as well?

LH: No, no. I don't know why she wasn't there, I really don't know why she wasn't there, she was still alright then.

BL: So when you married, were you already in the hotel in Gloucester, or were you still a domestic?

LH: '42? No, I was a window dresser, I was a window dresser. I had a bed-sitting room in Ealing at that time, I got married in Ealing, and I think I also had a bed-sitting room in Sheffield, I had to travel backwards and forwards, and to other destinations, too.

BL: So what was the company, when you got this job as a dressmaker, as a window dresser, sorry, what was the company called?

LH: Wilson's London and Provinces. I worked for them from 1942 until 1945, three years, enjoyed the job, and they seemed to be happy with me. Soon, I had to start training people; I dressed windows, maybe one day in London, the next day in Sheffield, in Leeds, in York, in Bristol, in Birmingham. This was wonderful for me, getting to know the country. I loved seeing art galleries everywhere, did that either during lunch hour or in the evenings if I stayed overnight. It all went pretty well, but in the end... They expected me to start my job at 9 o'clock in the morning, even if I had to travel a few hundred miles in between, and I felt as long as I finish the window, it doesn't matter what time I start, if I get there at ten and leave at

four or five, but they didn't like it. So in 1945, they dismissed me, and I was out of a job, but I was as happy as a lark. Peace was declared, I remember celebrating with another Jewish-German girl, who still was a nanny in Sheffield, she looked after three children, one of whom... four children, one of whom was the father of Sophie Rayworth, who is the announcer on the BBC.

Tape 2: 13 minutes 28 seconds

Very nice people, I was often there, my husband met the family, I was delighted. By then he was an officer, came with his stick, very impressive, and I was without a job not for very long. Ernest's cousin was the manager and director of a fashion firm called Etam, and I spoke to his wife, and she said, 'Why don't you apply to Etam, get a job there?' She said, 'I can't do that; you have to write to Fritz, a formal letter, and apply'. So I applied for a job as a window dresser, and I had a favourable reply that I would train as a manager, and that's what happened. I trained in Sheffield, in a shop there, a very nice young manageress for a couple of weeks, I can't remember how many weeks. And my first assignment was one of their largest shops in Newcastle. And at that time, of course, we had coupons, clothing coupons, so we had to count coupons in the evenings, and they had to tally with whatever you had sold. And I was there counting until one or two in the morning. Sometimes Ernest helped me counting, or if I was one or two pence out, he said, 'I give you the one or two pence', but that wasn't the point, 'That doesn't help me, it has to tally'. And I got a terrible cold there. I could get rid of it but when I had it again the following year, I suddenly realised it was not just a cold; it was hay fever, so Newcastle gave me hay fever. But from Newcastle I was sent in my own branch in Leeds, and I moved to Leeds, and stayed there from '42 until '48. Is that right?

BL: From '45 to '48.

LH: '45 to '48, that's right.

BL: And the name of the business was Etam? How do you spell that?

LH: E-T-A-M. They were all over England. They started off as a stocking firm, and expanded to underwear, housecoats, blouses... strangely enough, the whole family worked for Etam: my daughter worked for Etam, managed the store, several stores, was moved. My son as a supervisor in Ireland, and I believe in England, too. I was very happy there; it was a nice job, I made friends.

Tape 2: 16 minutes 41 seconds

BL: Just to go back to your earlier job, it must have been unusual to travel so much, between '42 and '45.

LH: I loved it.

BL: Was it difficult? It was wartime, there must have been blackouts, and...

LH: Yes, there were blackouts, there certainly were blackouts, but I was so happy, I was so happy to have got out of the domestic affair, and to do something which I enjoyed. And to have been given responsibility, I thought it was great.

BL: Do you remember, did you have any difficulties at that time as a German-Jewish refugee; did you ever face any anti-German, anti-Jewish feelings?

LH: None, none. No, never came up.

BL: How good was your English?

LH: That's a good question. We advertised... at the time when I applied for the domestic job - pity I didn't bring the advertisement out - 'good English spoken', or something like that, it certainly didn't sound like it was perfect, it was good, it was reasonable, I could make myself understood, but I'm sure it was pretty broken English.

BL: When you had your first domestic job, did you manage to understand what they were telling you?

LH: Yes, I think so, yes. Explaining the Austrian recipes to my employer wasn't always that easy, she didn't always quite grasp what I was trying to explain to her, not knowing the expression 'falscher Hase', for instance. False hare, didn't make sense to her, and then she said, 'Oh, I know what this is'. What was it called, meat roll. Little things like that. And then I had to explain to the butcher who came to the door what kind of cut I wanted, well, they cut it very differently in this country from how they did on the continent, so that also took some explaining.

BL: But on the whole, you managed ok?

LH: Yes, yes. Long hours I had to put in once the family and friends moved in, squeezing innumerable oranges in the morning. There were no juice extractors, no mixers, everything had to be done by hand. It took time, effort, and strength, energy.

Tape 2: 20 minutes 5 seconds

BL: When you worked as a window dresser, were there any other German-Jewish refugees?

LH: No, completely English. It was excellent. I went to book train times, changing here and there, it was good exercise.

BL: And when did you change your name from Liselotte to Lillian?

LH: Very soon, because seeing Liselotte written down was read as 'Lise-lot', and I thought that's no good, I can't have that. I was also known as Lilo, which helped, but Liselotte I gave up very soon, I became Lilo which I was in Germany already anyhow. And then when Ernest changed his name and I acquired British nationality, I felt I have to give it up. I regret now having changed it to Lillian, it sounds a bit old-fashioned now.

BL: So when did you get British citizenship?

LH: When Ernest got naturalised, it seemed to be automatic, more or less.

BL: So around '47?

LH: After the war, yes.

BL: So when you worked, again, between '42 and '45, were you a recognisable refugee, did people ask you where you came from; did they ask you any questions?

LH: Yes, and I hated to admit that I came from Germany. And I was delighted when people thought: 'are you Irish, or Welsh?', which I couldn't, I had to deny, and I had to usually admit that I came from Germany, but I still dislike it, when anybody asks me 'where do you originally come from?'. And I say 'I come from London', and they say 'yes, but where do you come from originally?', I still dislike admitting that I come from Germany.

BL: Why?

LH: Well, because of their record. It's changing now, it's changing, I mean even we have come to terms with a new generation of Germans, we've been back to Berlin a few times, and we're friendly with a number of German women, who are all very understanding, very different to what we've experienced.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 15 seconds

BL: So then after the war, when did you find out what happened to your parents?

LH: I think I managed to get in touch with my mother's friend, good friend, whose husband survived, Jewish husband survived. Apparently he was also taken, he had to present himself to be evacuated, what they call evacuated, and all the women, German women who were married to Jews put themselves together and demonstrated, she was one of them, and they released their husbands. But I think he died soon after from ill health. But anyway, she came to London and she told me what happened. My mother took tablets, they didn't work straight away, and she had to go to the hospital, the next Jewish hospital, which was close, pretty close by... She visited her there, but she didn't know about my father, we heard this from the Red Cross, eventually. And my sister took this very badly, in 1948. First time I went to California to visit my middle sister, she was... she must have gone back to this family in Hampstead, and I know that she had left there, to go to a Jewish home for disturbed women, I don't know, I can't remember where it is, somewhere in Willesden, it was. And I was very worried. We lived in Leeds then, of course, and I went to see my sister, and when I came back she was transferred to a mental hospital, Napsbury, and there she was for many, many years before she was transferred to Hendon, to a small, pleasant home where I could see her frequently. My sister's husband in America, whom she married in January '38... I wasn't very happy when I was there. She had a second little boy, he was only a few months old, the elder boy was about six by then, delightful child, but the father kept shouting at him, and I was very unhappy about that. And the marriage, I knew, wasn't terribly good, and I had taken six weeks leave, and I wrote to my husband and said 'I don't think I want to stay here for six weeks', I believe in the end I did. He became very ill and died from cancer, and she soon after married her doctor who was divorced, and it was a very happy marriage. And I visited her once or twice, and she came over here.

Tape 2: 27 minutes 10 seconds

BL: Where did you go to in America?

LH: Where? California. She lived in California by then. The trouble was I couldn't fly, I had a phobia of flying, and my husband had to pay up and I had to cross the Atlantic on the Queen

Elizabeth, third class It was wonderful, and I managed to get into the second class during the day, and came back on the Queen Mary. I crossed the state of America by train, east to west, I think it was two nights and two days, two nights and three days, I'm not sure. I stayed in New York with my brother-in-law's friend who gave him the affidavit, I didn't know them. I had a few days in New York, they made me very welcome, very nice people. And my sister wrote 'why don't you get in touch with our cousins, my father's cousin, he used to be an ENT specialist, he took my tonsils out when I was about six, I remember that very clearly. I didn't know where they were, she had kept in touch with them, and I went to see them and they were terribly nice, delighted to see me, 'Our daughter has just moved to Leeds', and I said, 'Leeds, that's where we're living', and when we came back I made contact, we were absolutely delighted to see each other again. I think she had one son by then, and we became great friends, and she introduced us to a friend of hers, she said, 'You must come for dinner, meet a friend of mine'. And the friend had been in the sports club with me, in the Jewish sports club with me, I knew her very well, and her husband went to the same school as Ernest. So the four of us were very happy, lived very happily in Leeds, exchanging baby clothes when the next baby was born, and they moved to Welwyn Garden, we soon after moved to London, and that was lovely, to have a relation, fairly close relation, although we weren't that close in Berlin.

BL: What was this cousin called?

LH: Inge... her maiden name was Kossmann, and she was called Pickard, she married a Peter Pickard. They had two sons, both of them emigrated, one to Australia and the other to New Zealand. We're in touch again with the one in New Zealand; my daughter met him this year. He's coming over to visit again next year.

Tape 2: 30 minutes 32 seconds

BL: You said your sister went to this home for distressed women. What were her symptoms?

LH: They all seemed to have something similar.

BL: Can you describe it?

LH: Psychiatric, psychiatric cases. My sister always hoped to save enough money for my parents to come over, share a bungalow or something like that. I mean, you didn't have... the pay was pretty low as a domestic, I couldn't save much money.

BL: Did she stay a domestic the whole time?

LH: Yes, yes.

BL: Did she stay with the family, or did she change families?

LH: No, she came to the hotel in Gloucester, too. I think she helped in the kitchen mainly, yes, and after Gloucester she moved back to London to work for this family in Hampstead, a Jewish family.

BL: But basically, when she found out what happened to your parents...

LH: She couldn't take it. I managed to get a pension for her, a good pension for her, because I claimed - which to my mind was perfectly correct - due to the circumstances we had to endure. And they eventually agreed.

BL: In that particular home, were there other refugees, any other German refugees?

LH: In the first home? I really don't know, I really don't know. No, no, no. Possibly, possibly there were other refugees, but I really don't know. When I went to see her, I wasn't very happy with the whole setup there, and she wasn't there for very long. She was moved to the enormous hospital in Napsbury, in which she wasn't very happy either, but she wouldn't be very happy anyway. I had her here occasionally for meals. She was very jealous if I had my daughter here at the same time, so I had to stop it. She came once when my grandson was a little boy of about two, an adorable little boy, she was very jealous, we paid too much attention to her and not, [correcting herself] to him, and not to her. So I'm afraid my grandchildren still say, 'We never got to know our auntie Irene'. It was difficult to explain.

Tape 2: 33 minutes 51 seconds

BL: Did you talk about the past? Was it something she talked about?

LH: Did she talk about the past?

BL: Did you talk about it together, or...?

LH: It was difficult to approach that subject with her. She sometimes said about 'Mutti did such and such', or something like that. At first she lived in the past, but afterwards she got too muddled. She was a good pianist, all three of us had piano lessons, my middle sister and I were too lazy to practise, but she persevered, and she was a very good pianist. Played with my father who played the violin, and sometimes they played together, but it wasn't for us.

BL: You said you later found out what happened to your father. How come your parents were separated, your mother stayed in Berlin and your father was deported... I mean separated in terms of deportation.

LH: Yes, my father must have disappeared, as he often had to, I don't know where to. He had a good friend, a non-Jewish friend outside of Berlin, I don't know whether he went there, and he apparently also had to live in hiding for quite a while. And my mother had to report to the central station, and he got to know, somehow, and he presented himself when he heard that my mother had to go there. He presented himself to be with her. But by then she was in hospital, and he was deported.

BL: And did she die in that hospital?

LH: Yes.

BL: And you said her friend managed to visit her?

LH: Yes, yes, because she was non-Jewish, she was able to travel freely, apparently. I was surprised that she was able to visit her in the hospital, but she obviously did.

BL: When you eventually found out about your father, what did you find out?

LH: I think we wrote to the Red Cross, the particular address in Germany, and they found out, I think, the date, the number of the train, and I believe he was gassed soon after arrival.

BL: How did you cope with this when you found out?

LH: Well, it was pretty awful, but I had my husband. My sister didn't have anyone. And my sister in America, strangely enough my sister in America, she died a few years ago, not long before that, or even after she died, I got lots of letters which my parents sent to her, which I hadn't seen before, that was pretty tough, too.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 43 seconds

BL: Did you talk about the past to your children at all?

LH: A little, very little, very little. I think they didn't like to ask, it was a touchy subject. I'm not too happy to talk about it.

BL: But you raised the children, when were your children born?

LH: 1949 and 1953. Yes, we were very happy to have the little boy first, a daughter second. They were both caesareans, and I remember when I was in the lift, coming out of the operating theatre, and I was told 'you've got a lovely little girl', and I was so happy, I closed my eyes and went back to sleep. I wanted a boy and a girl, it's exactly ideal.

BL: In 1949 were you still in Leeds or you moved to London?

LH: No, we were in Leeds. Both were born in Leeds.

BL: And when did you move to London?

LH: End of '53, or it could have been '54. Yes, I remember my daughter was in the back of my car in the carrycot, just, she just managed to still fit in the carrycot, and we moved into this house, so we've been in this house a long time, and managed to have a children's birthday party for my son, I think the day after we moved in.

BL: Why did you choose this area of London?

LH: We liked the green in the back. And it's still green, although my husband declared there and then 'I'm sure there'll be flats there in no time'. Fortunately, it still hasn't happened. It's not convenient here, I must say, it's a long way to the shops, but as long as I can drive I don't mind it. The school's near by, we liked the modern school, infant school nearby, which my son attended, I think, for less than a year, but he was taught the wrong language we didn't care for, so we moved him to a private school nearby. But we liked the green area, it's not so built up. My husband didn't mind his journey, long journey to Paddington, and I learnt to drive so I could go shopping with comfort, although I had to push a pram uphill for quite a while before I got around to learning how to drive.

Tape 2: 41 minutes 4 seconds

BL: So when you came to London, did you work or did you raise your children?

LH: No, I didn't, I didn't work ever since I had my first child I gave up work.

BL: What sort of identity did you want to transmit to your children?

LH: That's a difficult one to answer... what sort of identity? To be normal, a normal family, a settled family, a happy family, outgoing, which my husband is not, but certainly my daughter is, my son also. I'm happy to say that I think we've achieved it.

BL: How would you define yourself in terms of your identity today?

LH: I'm extremely grateful that I found sanctuary in this country, extremely grateful, again and again. And I've got a happy life, I feel extremely lucky and fortunate.

BL: Do you feel at home in London?

LH: Completely, completely. But I don't get to London anymore, don't get to town anymore. I don't miss it. I used to go regularly once a week with a friend of mine, also German, one friend who I only met here by coincidence. Every Wednesday we used to go, either to an exhibition together, shopping together, have lunch, complain about our husbands, our families, our teenagers, and it was very nice. Unfortunately she developed Parkinson disease and eventually died, too.

BL: What do you think is the most important aspect of your continental background?

LH: I think to have been lucky enough to have parents to bring me up in a mannered way and give me a cultural background. I'm grateful for that. Freedom... they gave us a lot of freedom, although we didn't think so at the time, we always had to be home by eleven o'clock at the latest. And as one boyfriend put on a tape - tapes didn't exist at the time, a disc, 'Why do you always have to be the first one to leave a party?' my father stood in the door and happened to [hear]. I was listening to it, I didn't know this was on as he had interviewed all his guests. This was also a distant relative of Ernest, one of my boyfriends, and my father just grinned, he thought it was funny. I thought it was funny, too, and I was glad he heard it. They were strict, but they were liberal at the same time.

Tape 2: 45 minutes 17 seconds

BL: Was it important that your husband had a sort of similar background to yours?

LH: Yes, very important.

BL: Why?

LH: You feel you have a lot in common.

BL: Is it sort of a bridge to the past, or is it...?

LH: Yes, I think it played quite an important part there, too. And I think this is what his parents eventually appreciated, too, or came to see why we got married so young, and in those dreadful times.

BL: What impact would you say did it have on your life to be a refugee, to be a domestic, to have had that experience of being uprooted?

LH: To be a domestic? I think my husband would say it was excellent training. It didn't hurt me, it was tough, but it didn't hurt me. You were young, you had to cope, I coped. I was happy to get out of it, of course.

BL: And you said you don't like flying, do you think it has something to do with that flight you took from Germany?

LH: I don't think so. I think I did fly once or twice and I was always terribly ill, terribly sick. In fact, the last time we flew I was expecting Jeanette, we had our son with us already, he must have been about two-and-a-half, we flew to Switzerland, and I was terribly ill flying over, and I refused to travel back by air, so we had to change him on to my husband's passport, he was on my passport, he had to go to the, what was it called in Zurich? I had him changed to my husband's passport, and I went home, by train and across the channel, and I got home a day later than they did. And since then, I couldn't, I think it was thirty years before I could fly again. I took classes, I went to a hospital to get myself cured, and it worked, it worked for me, it didn't work for many of the others, I think it was about ten of us. I was delighted, so we flew.

Tape 2: 48 minutes 17 seconds

BL: Do you think your life would have been very different if you hadn't been forced to leave Germany?

LH: I'm sure it would have been, I'm quite sure it would have been, but I cannot imagine how, how different. I think you appreciated things so much more having gone through these times. You felt more deeply, I feel. You were so aware of things you probably would have taken for granted at home.

BL: Like what?

LH: Achieving to buy our first house. You've worked for it, you've paid it up because we took up a mortgage, but everything was so new, and you coped, and it was so gratifying. At home, you probably would have had help, would have come so much more easily, and you wouldn't have appreciated it the same way... couldn't, couldn't possibly. You stood on your own feet much younger than you would have done at home you would have been cosseted.

BL: When was the first time you went back to Berlin?

LH: I didn't want to go. It was after Czechoslovakia was invaded by the Russians, my husband decided he wanted to see Berlin again. I couldn't get myself to go, but then in the end I said, 'Well, I come along', and we went by train through Holland. Where the East Germans came in it felt just like the Nazi period again, it was dogs outside, everything was dim, going through the Eastern sector, and you saw these towers where they overlooked the zone. Then arriving in Berlin with bright lights, in West Berlin with bright lights, was quite extraordinary. And I went to my flat, the first flat where we lived, us five as I was young, for fifteen years. And I stood outside the door and I desperately wanted to go in, but I really had to give myself a push, rang the bell, and a foreigner opened, a young woman, probably Turkish because this area, there are a lot of Turks there, and I told her that I used to live there,

as a child so many years ago, and she let us in. Something, it did something to me; it helped me immensely, contrary to my expectations. The large rooms contained small modern furniture, which looked lost there. We had enormous, heavy, beautiful furniture, and yet it helped me. And we went to the second flat, which I only occupied for barely three years. First, the woman didn't want to let us in because it was spring cleaning time, she said, 'Come back later', I said 'we are leaving'. I think in the evening it was. 'Well, perhaps at three o' clock.' And we went back, but it wasn't the same. I was pleased to see it, but it wasn't the same, didn't give me the same satisfaction as the first. And I came to terms somehow. I still didn't like the Germans, but we went back two or three more times, with my daughter and son-in-law, they wanted to surprise us. We found out before, and it was lovely.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 56 seconds

BL: Have you got anyone buried in the cemetery?

LH: Yes, my mother. Yes, we went to... Yes, my son met us; I don't know whether that was the first time. It was very difficult to find, we had this position, and between my sister in America and myself we had a stone fixed there and inscribed. Unfortunately, it's a flat stone, and it was completely overgrown, we had to dig it, literally dig it out, my son helped. And my father is mentioned there, too.

BL: Which cemetery?

LH: Weißensee.

BL: And you found it?

LH: We found it, yes, we found it. That was another heart-breaking experience.

BL: Is there anything else you'd like to mention, which I haven't asked you, or which you think is important? We haven't discussed your painting at all. Maybe you could tell us a bit about that.

LH: Oh, I took a painting, it was one of my daughter's A-level subjects, and she produced a lovely painting for her A-level work, and I thought 'Hm, I think I can do that, too'. So when she moved out, my son was out already anyway, I took up painting. Firstly locally, watercolours, but I always wanted to paint in oil, and I went to a studio in St. John's Wood for many, many years, together with half a dozen others, mainly Jewish, strangely enough, but not the instructor. And every Thursday... I can't find time at home to paint, I just can't, there's always something: telephone, or cooking, or... too much to do at home. So I felt I had to take myself out. And I thoroughly enjoyed it, had quite a few exhibitions, one on my own in Hendon Town Hall, sold a few paintings, it was very encouraging. I exhibited paintings at the Italian restaurant in Golders Green, became friends with the owners, and I did it for a long time, but then I had to give it up because my right arm is getting very weak, I can't keep it up. So no more painting...

BL: Anything else you'd like to mention? Maybe what was the address, you didn't say the address in Kreuzberg, what was the actual address of the flat, do you remember?

LH: Yorckstraße 80, Yorckstraße 82.

BL: And the second flat?

LH: That was in Tempelhof, Kaiserkorso 3. Second flat, I don't think there were any Jewish people in that house.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 31 seconds

BL: Anything else?

LH: Well, my sister's family, my sister's son, daughter-in-law and their two sons are very dear to me. She died, her husband, second husband died, but my nephew, he loves surprises. He appeared here on my 80th birthday, my son and daughter-in-law invited us for, I can't remember whether it was lunch or dinner, my daughter and family were there, and suddenly the phone went, my son answered and he said, 'It's for you'. 'For me?' I said, 'Who knows that I'm here?' 'Well, it's your nephew from America'. And this was shortly before my birthday, and I answered the phone and he said, 'Look, I'm travelling, I won't be here on your birthday, so I thought I'd give you a call today to wish you all the very best'. We had a small conversation, I put down the phone, went back into the living room. Suddenly a side door opened and he walked in, he had phoned from upstairs. Of course, I was in tears again; I am very fond of him. Unfortunately, his younger brother died from a liver problem, I can't remember, he must have been only in his middle or late twenties, and that was terribly sad. I went over with my son to see him before, we were hoping he'd make it, he had two transplants, didn't make it, and that was a terrible incident for us all. But she married, she was happy with her second husband, and, again, they came over, we visited them, they came over, and my nephew came over again for our 60th wedding anniversary, and I hope to see him again for our 65th wedding anniversary next year.

BL: Is there any message you might like to give to anybody who might watch this tape?

LH: How grateful I am to have found, to have come to this country, constantly in my mind.

BL: Mrs. Heyman, thank you very much for this interview.

END OF TAPE 2

TAPE 3

BL: This is Tape 3; we're conducting an interview with Lillian Heyman. Please describe this photograph.

Picture 1

LH: Well, this was taken on the Baltic Sea in Arendsee. It's my mother and father, my father holding me as a year-old. My younger sister, my middle sister on the left hand side, Gerda, was three, and Irene, the elder sister would be five.

BL: Thank you.

Picture 2

LH: Now this picture was taken with my grandfather, probably on his birthday, I can't tell which birthday, with myself probably four or five, my middle sister on the right seven, and my eldest sister nine years old.

Picture 3

This picture was taken for my grandfather's 77th birthday. I was three, my middle sister five, and my eldest sister seven.

BL: Where are you in the picture?

LH: In Berlin, in Berlin. Oh, I see, at the photographer's.

BL: Yes, but are you on the left...?

LH: Oh, I'm on the right.

BL: On the right.

LH: Yes. My eldest sister is in the middle.

Picture 4

This picture was taken, as far as I can remember, in Wiesbaden, a German spa, taken around the early thirties, of my mother.

Picture 5

I believe this picture was taken in the early thirties, probably also taken in Wiesbaden, of my father.

Picture 6

This photo was taken in 1931 on the island of Norderney, where my husband and I met as twelve and thirteen year-olds. Actually, it was an excursion to Holland.

Picture 7

This photograph was taken of the whole family, probably in the early thirties, on the Kreuzberg, our local park, where I would be around twelve or thirteen, my sisters fifteen and seventeen.

Tape 3: 2 minutes 48 seconds**Picture 8**

This is the department store, N. Israel, where I worked from 1935 until early 1938, after the Kristallnacht, when it was internally destroyed very badly. The owner was Wilfried Israel, together with his brother whose name I can't remember. Wilfried was a very humane man, a real gentleman. He kept in touch with all his, many of his Jewish employees after the war, after we stopped working there. He came to England, in fact he was British-born, he had an English mother. But unfortunately, his plane coming back from Lisbon, where he must have attended some sort of a meeting, was shot down, the Germans believing that the plane contained Winston Churchill. And another person who was on the plane at the same time was Leslie Howard, well-known film actor. It was very sad for his former Jewish employees who knew him well as humanitarian.

Picture 9

This was the view of our balcony. We were very close to the aerodrome, and this was taken on the 1st of May, when there was a parade on, probably a large gathering of Nazis with Hitler speaking. I left Berlin in February '39 from this airport, Berlin Tempelhof.

BL: Which year was the picture taken?

LH: This was taken 1935. 1st of May, 1935.

Picture 10

This photograph of my parents was taken in 1939 after all their three children had left already. My mother, of course, was made to work in a factory. After I left, they had to move into a two-room-flat with my eldest sister before she left for England herself. And they probably had to give up the second room after my sister had left, too. So it was a very tough and worrying time for them.

Picture 11

This is our wedding photograph taken on the 2nd of July, 1942, not dressed in white, but for war time this wasn't too bad.

Tape 3: 5 minutes, 51 seconds

BL: Where was it?

LH: The wedding was at the Ealing registry office, and it was taken somewhere in Ealing too. A very simple wedding, just the two of us, and two witnesses, an old uncle and an old friend of mine.

Picture 12

This is my sister Gerda with her husband Victor and their two sons, Francis the older one and Raymond, the younger one. Her husband died ten years later and unfortunately, her younger son Raymond died at the time he was about twenty-four, from a liver disease, which was very, very sad for us. They lived in California.

Picture 13

This is my elder sister Irene on her 80th birthday, which she spent here with me. She wasn't very well, unfortunately, she had been in hospital for many years, but she enjoyed her day with us.

Picture 14

This is our daughter Jeanette and her husband Mick, living it up in California, in my nephew's boat.

Picture 15

Our grandson Robbie, with his sister, our granddaughter Danielle. The dog is the puppy, the second puppy, I think, called Freddie.

Picture 16

This was taken on our 60th wedding anniversary celebration with our son Larry and his wife Kim.

Picture 17

This is the whole family gathered together for our 60th wedding anniversary. Its children, grandchildren, nephews, and the nephews' daughter and son, and children of an old friend of ours who unfortunately died. It was a great happy celebration and get-together.

BL: Mrs. Heyman, thank you very much for this interview, again.

LH: Thank you.

Picture 18

These are the handball teams of the JSG, Jüdische Sportgemeinschaft, parading for some occasion, I cannot remember what the occasion was.

BL: Which year?

LH: This must have been about 1936.

Picture 19

This is the advertisement Ernest put into the Daily Telegraph at the end of 1938, after Kristallnacht, which eventually resulted in me getting a post in Hertfordshire, Chorleywood.

Tape 3: 9 minutes 3 seconds

This advertisement appeared in the Daily Telegraph at the end of 1938:

‘Betweenmaids, generals, Laundresses, etc.

German-Jewish girl, age 19, still in Berlin, requires position immediately in English household as general servant. Qualified for every domestic work, fond of children, specialist in Viennese cooking, skilled needle worker and versed in tailoring, Apply, Lachmann, Berlin-Tempelhof, Kaiserkorso 3, or, Heyman, 8, Highfield Court, London, N.W.11.’

BL: And the date must be January '39, because it was after Kristallnacht, wasn't it?

LH: Yes, Kristallnacht was November '38 and I asked immediately for an advertisement, and since I came over in February, it must have been end of '39, the advertisement, because I appeared in February 1939.

BL: Mrs. Heyman, again thank you very much for this interview.

LH: My pleasure.