

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Jacobi
Forename:	Gabriele
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	30 September 1919
Interviewee POB:	Ratibor, Germany

Date of Interview:	1 November 2004
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Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Anthony Grenville
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**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 80

NAME: GABRIELE JACOBI

DATE: 1 NOVEMBER 2004

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE

TAPE 1

AG: I'm doing an interview with Gabi Jacobi on the first of November 2004 in London, my name is Anthony Grenville.

First of all, Mrs Jacobi, I just like to thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us.

GJ: You don't have to thank me. I'm very honoured.

AG: Well. Could I just start by asking you to state for the film your name at birth, please?

GJ: Well, the full name is Gabriele Jacobi.

AG: Was that your name at birth?

GJ: Gabriele, yes.

AG: ..and your family name?

GJ: Dienemann.

AG: And when were you born?

GJ: The 30th of September 1919.

AG: And where were you born?

GJ: In Ratibor.

AG: And, for the film, where is Ratibor?

GJ: Ratibor was in Upper Silesia, where my father was the rabbi of the Jewish community.

AG: Right, right. Could you start by telling us a bit about your family and your family background?

GJ: Well, my father was rabbi, who left Ratibor six weeks after I was born, and I travelled to Offenbach in the luggage net.

AG: The luggage net of a train?

GJ: Of the train, yes, it took I think – I don't know how many hours. The community, the Jewish community of Offenbach was a very flourishing community, we had wonderful support. It was a Jewish community of about a thousand people, and a very beautiful synagogue, of which you may see a photograph, which I've kept for you. It was not destroyed in the Kristallnacht and it was only at the instigation of the then very kind mayor that it was not destroyed. Inside it was a little bit damaged, but outside it was in perfect condition. My father was - there was also a very small orthodox Jewish community, mainly people from the east, Russia, Lithuania, et cetera. They had a little room where they prayed, they had nothing to do with the liberal side of the community.

AG: Your father was liberal?

GJ: My father was liberal, and he was not only liberal, he was one of the leading liberal lights. He founded the international liberal association of Judaism. He did a lot of outside work, giving lectures, writing. He was co-editor, then, of the very well known Jewish monthly or bi-monthly *Der Morgen*. He was a very active man, well supported by his wife, who in her own right was probably more intelligent than he was. He, I think, relied on her greatly, but she was always in the background.

AG: I didn't actually ask you what your father's full name was.

GJ: Dr. Max Dienemann.

AG: When was he born?

GJ: He was born in a town called Krotoschin, which was well known, which was then East Prussia. He was born in September 1875.

Tape 1: 4 minutes 12 seconds

AG: Could you tell us a little about his career?

GJ: I think he went to the then Jewish seminar, I don't know where it was, whether it was in Krotoschin or not and was ordained there and his first position was in Ratibor, where he stayed till he was called to Offenbach.

AG: Did he serve in the first World War?

GJ: No, no. Not at all, no. He was actually applying for a job at one of the big synagogues in Berlin, I think in the late '20s or early '30s, gave a sample sermon there, was offered a job but I don't know which synagogue it was, but it was one of the big synagogues. But as it meant travelling by tram or by bus to the synagogues and he said he couldn't possible walk it on a Saturday he did not get the job, and I think Baeck got the job instead. So I always feel that he should have been the Chief Rabbi [Laughs]. Baeck was a great friend and there were many rabbis who were in and out, of the neighbourhood, who were coming in and out of the house. On hospitality, staying weekends, etc.

AG: Did you know Leo Baeck?

GJ: Oh yes, yes.

AG: What were your impressions of him?

GJ: Yes, he was, obviously – a lot of charisma, there's no doubt about his charisma. But I didn't think he was any better than my father. You can cut that out.

AG: [Laughs] We'll leave it in.

AG: Did you know Rabbi Salzberger?

GJ: Yes, he was a great friend. In fact, all the rabbis in the neighbourhood, Königstein.. can't think of all the names around there – were in and out all the time.

Tape 1: 6 minutes 28 seconds

AG: what was that like for you as a young girl?

GJ: I was too young to appreciate it. In fact, that was my great regret that when I became an adolescent, by that time Hitler had come to power and life was really not normal anymore. He was put into a concentration camp in 1933, a local concentration camp called Osthofen, because they thought he had said something in one of his sermons, but he was released within a fortnight.

AG: Were you aware of any change in him as a result of this experience?

GJ: Not really, no. He had very good relations with both the catholic and the protestant colleagues. But I didn't realise there was any change in him.

AG: Could I ask you about your mother? What was her name, what was her maiden name?

GJ: Her maiden name was Hirsch. She was also born in the minutest little village in East Prussia. Her father had, I think, a store in the town, he was the local money lender, it was on the frontier with Poland, this particular – Gollub was the name of the village, G-O-L-L-U-B.

AG: Never heard of that.

GJ: It was a small town. But there was a lot of smuggling going on between Poland and Germany, and I know daily he wanted to know the rate of exchange between the Polish currency and the German mark, because he was the, sort of, the money lender, the banker. He was a very rich man although it was a small town, and, I shall never forget, he gave a million marks to the German government as *Kriegsanleihe*, War Loan, which of course we never, never got back. But when that particular town, that particular part of Germany became Poland, the German government did give – or the Polish government – did give a *Wiedergutmachung*, similar, history, it repeated itself later on. They got a certain amount of money in 1923 or 1924 for what they had lost. They lived with us from 1918 onwards when they had to leave, when that became Poland, and they came to Offenbach and lived with us. Till they died.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 36 seconds

AG: What were their first names? The family name was Hirsch..

GJ: Hirsch. Rosa was my grandmother, Simon, I think was his –

AG:. And I didn't ask you what your mother's first name was.

GJ: Mali, Mali Hirsch. You want to know a little bit more about my mother?

AG: Yes, please.

GJ: She was really a remarkable person, who only came, I think, into her own after my father died. To give you an example, Bernard Berenson, you know Bernard Berenson? Published an autobiography, I think in the late 40s, early 50s, and somebody gave my mother that to read, as a present. By that time my mother had – I must first say my parents left – no, wait a minute, I must go much further back. My father got into a concentration camp a second time during the Kristallnacht. We managed to get a visa for him to come to England because my husband had good relations in the Foreign Office, and he came to England, on condition that he left within 3 months. He went to Israel; he left to go to Israel, but died within a fortnight of arriving there. And my mother stayed during the war with my sister, who by that time had emigrated also to Israel. After the war, my mother went to America, and became great friends with a lot of the German community, for instance the head of the German department of Chicago University.

AG: Do you know who that was?

GJ: No. I don't know. I only know that, for what it is worth I tell you, she taught German to a young man, who was very short of money, it was organised by the head of department, who had to have German, a knowledge of German, because he studied history of art. This is a man called Allan Fern. Allan Fern won a Fulbright scholarship to come – he got his PhD, he got a Fulbright scholarship to come to London and my mother sent him to us saying this young man is very intelligent, I think he will go far. And no doubt he did, because he became one of the directors of the – oh, what are these museums called in Washington- there are seven of them? Anyway, he was director of the museum of portraits, the equivalent of our Portrait Gallery, and was one of the very, very big shots in the art world, now retired. Anyway, my mother got this book by Mr Bernard Berenson in which he wrote, incidentally, he was born Jewish, in Lithuania. He said 'I knew nothing about Judaism, I wish I did know a little bit more about it.' And my mother being my mother, wrote to him: "if you want to know I will let you know". And they had, over a period of 3, 4, 5 years a wonderful exchange of letters. My mother visited him in his wonderful villa in Tuscany *I Tatti*, twice, and this exchange of letters was not only on Judaism, it was on all sorts of things, art and what not.

Tape 1: 13 minutes 40 seconds

I eventually let Sotheby's auction it. I don't know who bought it, but it was a good price. They said it was an unknown purchaser – or not unknown – an incognito purchaser. So we don't know where it's gone to. So this is a little bit to give you an idea of my mother. She wrote a very nice book of my father's life, which she published herself, and with the money from Germany as *Wiedergutmachung*, she became free to travel and she was a quite remarkable person.

AG: Going back to your childhood, what do you remember of the family home?

GJ: Extremely harmonious, with the grandparents living there. It was, you know, everybody – we had the Friday evening and Saturday of course, service. Just a harmonious home. They were very keen on my education, I, you know, got dance lessons and fencing and what not. Fencing was a big thing in Offenbach because one of the women in Offenbach, Helene Mayer, won, I think, a gold medal or a silver medal at the 1936 Olympics. She was, I think the father was Jewish, a doctor, already perhaps not a practising Jew. But one of my memories was that the director of the Lycée, of the school where we went to – I was in the bottom class, Helene Mayer was in the top class, and we gave an exhibition fencing. So, that was –

AG: Did you have brothers and sisters?

GJ: I have two sisters, one is 12 years older, one is 10 years older.

AG: What are their names?

GJ: Dora and Paula. Dora married a doctor in Breslau. And he was a doctor at the hospital of the town, lost his job of course. And wanted to emigrate – did emigrate to the United States, except that he, as he was born in Poland, he was on the Polish quota. I don't know if you know the quota system, but it looked as if it would be 15-30 years before he could ever emigrate. With the outbreak of the war the Polish quota went fudge? And he managed to go to the States in 1940. He also went to Buchenwald during the Kristallnacht and was a doctor there, and did help my father greatly to survive this. The only thing I remember about this is that my father came home after a fortnight, after we had secured the visa for him, we had to leave Offenbach within three days, so we had to leave a lot of good stuff behind, all the little silver we had. And he said "*Ich hadere mit Gott.*" To translate that into English: "I'm cross with God". And he didn't survive, he survived for three months here, where he stayed not with me, I was by that time married, he stayed with the honourable Lily Montagu, who was the co-founder of the international Jewish organisation, with my father. And this is where he stayed.

Tape 1: 17 minutes 55 seconds

AG: You were talking about your older sister and her husband, what about the second sister?

GJ: The second sister is 10 years older, the older sister is 12 years older. She married a man who was a magistrate. You know the career of a man who studied law in Germany was different, you could either become a judge, in which case you started as a magistrate and gradually went up, and he was a magistrate in Halle. And she married him very young, and of course he lost his job in 1933 and they emigrated to Israel, then Palestine of course, where he became finally a sergeant in the Palestine Police. He joined the Palestine Police, had quite a career. Interesting enough, his loyalty, of course, was to Britain, and when the Stern Gang did not like this he was blown up in his car, and then the British authorities shipped him immediately to England because his life was not safe.

AG: Because, from what I know of the Palestine Police, it was not renowned for sympathy towards the Jews.

GJ: No, not at all, not at all. But, I mean what could they do, they were terrorists. The only thing is, you know, their terrorism paid off.

AG: So you were really rather the baby of the group?

GJ: I was the baby... Probably a mistake, or probably the desire to have a son, neither of which I know. [Laughs]

AG: What sort of home did you live in?

GJ: We had a very good, very large German flat with a big dining room, my father had a big study. My grandparents had their own.. It was a large house right in the middle of Offenbach, next to a catholic church, so we heard the church bells in the morning and in the evening. Normal, a normal Jewish upbringing.

AG: And, I assume of course, that you observed the usual Jewish..

GJ: Oh yes, yes, as I said, Friday evening and Saturday my mother went to synagogue every Saturday, my grandfather, who was rather more, or rather non-liberal, rather more orthodox, he went on Friday evening and Saturday to the orthodox part of the community.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 0 second

Yes, we had a kosher household, I wouldn't say strictly kosher because I don't think we changed everything at Pessach. When the laws came in that the ritual killing of animals was not allowed anymore, my father did say, yes, if the animals are stunned then we would be able to eat...

AG: I'm interested about relations between the larger liberal community and the smaller orthodox...

GJ: No relations that I know of. They were very small, they had their own part of the synagogue, I really don't know anything about it.

AG: What was the sort of attitude towards orthodox Jews predominantly from the east?

GJ: Well, not very friendly, I don't think so.

AG: Was that reciprocated?

GJ: Yes. Actually now, while we are at this, Offenbach now has as many Jews as when my father was the rabbi. And the authorities in Offenbach built a very nice synagogue for them. The old synagogue although it still exists is now a theatre, but they build a very nice - I was invited to the *Einweihung* or whatever that is, you know, the first service.

AG: Consecration.

GJ: Yes, that's it, consecration. And of course all the Jews are orthodox and they're all from the east, mainly Russia, Lithuania, Poland.

AG: What did you feel about that?

GJ: Well a certain amount of pride that they survived and kept the tradition. Yes, as far as one can enjoy a stay in Offenbach. I went three times back to Offenbach, one for this, the consecration. If I say Again 'ordination', remind me. The first time we were invited with my only sister who was then alive and very much the honoured guests, the second time for the synagogue opening, and the third time it was the Offenbach – I think it was mainly the mayor – wanted to honour my father a little bit more than they had already done so. I must say the first invitation was on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his death.

AG: That would be – that's relatively recent then. That would be in the late 1990s

GJ: Oh no, 60th anniversary of his death, he died in 1937, 1938.

AG: Yes, that would be 1998.

GJ: '98 yes.

AG: That was the first time that you went?

GJ: That's the first time I went, then I went a second time, I went a third time. Because the third time, to honour him, they named a street after him, and I've got picture there, that's the whole, the MP of the town and also, you know the Land..

AG: *Landtag*? The Parliament...

GJ: And the mayor and all the dignitaries, we walked along the newly named Max-Dienemann-Weg, of which I have the picture.

AG: That must have been quite an event for you.

GJ: That was quite an event.

AG: Were either of your elder sisters still alive then? Did they come?

Tape 1: 25 minutes 35 seconds

GJ: She was not well enough to come to..., but her daughter came. I went with my niece.

AG: Perhaps we'll come back to that, you told me to say again the word 'ordination'.

GJ: Ordination, yes, because my father was the only rabbi then to ordain the first woman rabbi whose name I have forgotten, unfortunately, but I can find it out for you.

AG: When was this approximately?

GJ: Must have been in the 1930s, and there is a very nice plaque in Berlin where this woman was born, and that my father ordained her as the first woman rabbi. She herself had to – was in the concentration camp, where apparently she did wonderful work. There is a very nice little book about her, I don't know whether you know about it, I will try and find it for you.

AG: Coming back to you, could you tell me a little about your – the beginnings of your education?

GJ: The education, I went to – well, I was very lucky, I was born in September, so I went to school when I was five. I only had four years of the *Grundschule* or the *Vorschule*, then went to the German, to the girls' high school.

AG: Did that have a name?

GJ: *Hochschule für Mädchen* I think, something like *Mädchenschule*, I think, a lousy school, except for one or two - I had a very bad education, very bad.

AG: Why, what was wrong with it?

GJ: Oh, very bad, very provincial, very old, it was not a very good school. It had a very good – it had one Jewish teacher who was very good – history – and it had a wonderful gymnastics teacher. And gymnastics was my life, swimming and fencing and all that – that was wonderful. Of course I went up to *Untersekunda* when I was 14, couldn't carry on anymore in there, they wouldn't allow me to carry on, but I went to Frankfurt to a school, the *Humboldtschule*, where the director was a woman who was *strafversetzt*. Do you understand that?

AG: I do.

GJ: She was a well-known socialist, an MP, and she became head of this particular school and she took me on as the one Jewess, and that is where I made my *Abitur*.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 30 seconds

AG: What was her name?

GJ: I'm sorry, I see her in front of me but I can't remember..

AG: It will probably come back to you in the course of the interview. Were there – in this *höhere Schule für Mädchen*, how many Jewish girls were there?

GJ: Perhaps 4, 5.

AG: So your parents very much didn't send you to a particularly Jewish school?

GJ: No, there was a *Philanthropie*, which was a big Jewish school, but they didn't, they sent me to Offenbach to this school. There were a few Catholics, too, but not many Catholics, because, you know, on the catholic holidays the school had always made an excursion into the local mountain range, the Taunus. But not a good school, no, not to be recommended.

AG: And were you an academic child?

GJ: No, no, not at all, not at all. I just – I managed to go from one year to the next year to the next. French was my good subject, and there was a good teacher, I think science was also quite good, but otherwise I'm not academic.

Tape 1: 30 minutes 1 second

AG: And before 1933, when you were still at the höhere Schule, how were your relations with the other, non-Jewish pupils?

GJ: Very good, very good. We went swimming together, we went to the swimming club, absolutely, you know, normal. I remember nearly every day of the week we went swimming in the then still clean Main – now you couldn't swim there anymore – and afterwards we would have an ice in a nice ice cream salon, no absolutely as if they were normal, you know.

AG: And did you go to their homes or did you ever come to yours?

GJ: No, yes, I think they did, yes.

AG: When did you notice this begin to change? Did you experience any change?

GJ: I didn't notice any change, I was only, you know, told by the headmaster that I'm sorry we cannot keep you here, and then luckily enough, through relations of a cousin who knew the principal of the *Humboldtschule* did I get into the *Humboldtschule*.

AG: But your parents' lives must have been changed fundamentally by the coming to power of Hitler.

GJ: Yes, of course it was, fundamentally, you know, well as every Jewish family it was - had to be more careful. I think we had no more contact with non-Jews in the town. We did have some contact before, but not anymore afterwards. But, you know, I was too young to take all this in, I was 14 years old, 15, too preoccupied with going to a new school, which was in Frankfurt so it meant travelling. Yes, I cannot tell that there was – there was tension, but not excessive.

AG: Could you tell me about how you got on at the new school in Frankfurt?

GJ: It was just normal. As I was non-academic it was very hard for me, because it was a higher standard than the school had been in Offenbach. And I just managed to make the *Abitur*, which was very essential for me, because when I came to London, emigrated in other words, I needed the *Abitur* to be able to go to the college for teachers. Studied home economics for teaching and again I was very lucky, it was a wonderful principal, who said 'I will try and see that the Minister of Education – board of education – recognises this *Abitur* for you to come to this college.

AG: Not bad going for a non-academic person, if I may say so!

GJ: Well, I must say tell you my mother came with me to England, where we had friends and relations to find out what I could do after I had done my *Abitur*, which was at Easter in Germany..

AG: Before we go on to England, I'd like to – being an orderly soul – I'd like to deal with the remainder of your time in Germany, please. At what stage did your family start thinking of getting you out and possibly getting themselves out?

GJ: Oh, last year of my school.

AG: Which was?

GJ: This was in 1936/37.

AG: You said that your father was sent to Osthofen already...

GJ: That was in '33. A second time at the *Kristallnacht*, but then I wasn't living there anymore.

AG: So you stayed on for four years after he'd been arrested the first time.

GJ: Yes

AG: And what were things like then?

GJ: Tense. But, you know, I mean, there was no question, ever, of emigrating. Because, you know, my father said 'I'll be the last, if ever'. Astonishment that a cultured German nation could behave so badly. And that was it. I tell you what, of course then came a law that German households could not employ a domestic servant under 55. And we had a wonderful servant then who was over 55, who came when she wasn't needed for harvesting. Yes, and that was – these small changes.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 9 seconds

AG: That was part of the Nuremberg laws, I believe..

GJ: Yes. The Nuremberg Laws.

AG: And did your parents then decide – well, tell me how your parents and you arranged and decided about your coming to Britain.

GJ: Yes, OK, I will tell you. I came to London as soon as I had done my *Abitur*, which was April/May '37. There was an office called Woburn House, I don't know whether you know of this, who helped people like me. And my mother took me to Woburn House and she said, well, my daughter is very clever with her hands and, you know, something like that. What was offered to me was a position in a big laundry. And my mother - I can still see my mother: 'What, my daughter a washerwoman? Out of the question.' And we never set foot again in the Woburn House. But then with the help of Lily Montagu we got the connection to this principal of the domestic, home economics – it was then called domestic science, it is now it's home economics – training college for teachers.

AG: Where was this, and what was this called?

GJ: It was called National Societies; it was church, but not catholic, protestant. It was where you live, in Fortune Green Road. It became then a hospital during the war, for wounded, it's now torn down, but I lived in Cholmley Gardens.

AG: Good Heavens! This is, for the time, where I live. That quite put me off my stride.

GJ: I'm sorry, well, it was a very nice college and I was very happy there. However, after I'd been there for one year I married.

AG: One thing, I know I was going to ask you, could you tell me what this international organisation was that the honourable Lily Montagu and your father had set up?

GJ: For the promotion of liberal Judaism. I don't know what the exact – I should have prepared myself a bit better. I was looking out for my mother's biography of my father, unfortunately I gave it to a friend, I will get it back, I don't know, by that time it's too late probably.

AG: Not at all, these sort of things, the details, one can always read up in books. It doesn't matter. Anyway, go on. I mean, I must ask you what Cholmley Gardens was like...

GJ: Exactly as it is now, no change. Except that higher up was this big building, which was the college.

Tape 1: 38 minutes 18 seconds

AG: Ah, I know, there's flats there now. I know where it is. Yes. Oh, right that was where it was. I mean now almost all the flats are owner occupied.

GJ: Yes, but then it wasn't.

AG: It was rented?

GJ: It had a wonderful system, I mean, some young girls were resident, but the first year were in digs, and that was in Cholmley Gardens. Everything was new to me of course. The key to the flat was through the letterbox, you had to put in your hand in the letterbox, fetch out the key to get into the house. And, of course, we only had allowed one bath a week. And, and the English system which I also didn't know, in your bed the upper sheet became the lower sheet and you had a clean sheet once a week. [Laughs]

AG: Yes, English hygiene. Was it easy for you and your mother to leave Germany in 1937?

GJ: No, my mother didn't leave, only I left.

AG: No, but she came with you to England I mean.

GJ: Yes, once it was arranged that I would start in September it was financed to a certain extent by Lily Montagu. Didn't cost a great deal, but anyway, I got a little pocket money from them.

AG: Did the British authorities give you – you must have needed some sort of entry permit.

GJ: No, no entry permit, I was a student, no difficulty. I went back to Germany in the first year for the Christmas holidays, tried again at Easter, but was not let into Germany. And there the Dutch Jews were really marvellous, they looked after me and paid for my return ticket and sent me back to England.

AG: Why didn't they let you back in again?

GJ: Jewish. I didn't have a "J" in my passport, but they realised I was Jewish and wouldn't let me in.

AG: How did you come over in 1937, with your mother, did you come by..?

GJ: By boat to Harwich.

AG: What were your first impressions of England like?

GJ: Wonderful, wonderful.

AG: In what way?

GJ: In what way, I don't know the Lyons Corner House made a great impression on me. No, I was free, you know, the feeling of freedom was – I stayed with friends of the family, and it was a sort of a different – I could feel it was a different atmosphere.

AG: But your mother went back.

GJ: My mother, of course, went back, yes.

AG: What did you feel when you were on your own in England?

GJ: Well, I went back with her and then came out over again in time for the new term, for the first term.

AG: I see, so that would have been what, in the autumn.

GJ: Autumn of '37.

AG: Could you describe the scene when you left to come to England?

GJ: I can't tell you. I only tell you that my mother said that I clenched my fist all the time, that I must have been very nervous. But I survived. You know, when you're young you take things in your stride.

AG: You'd have been 18 then.

GJ: 18, yes.

AG: What was the course like at the college?

GJ: Well, it was divided into two things, It was the technical course for home economics and also the teaching part of it. So we had teaching practice in the local schools. It was quite good, not very good. I really learned much more afterwards. I will tell you what I did afterwards. I should have learned more, but it was not – the science was excellent, the technique of teaching was very good, but I think hygiene, food technology and all this could have been better. But perhaps, in retrospect, I realise that – for me at the time it was wonderful.

Tape 1: 42 minutes 45 seconds

AG: How did you feel you fitted in?

GJ: Well I had to learn English, yes, I didn't speak English very well. I mean I had learned English at school, but I had a very good friend at the school who took me under her care and..

AG: Who was that?

GJ: Someone called Turner, Audrey Turner was her name, but I lost sight of her.

AG: Was she Jewish?

GJ: No, no.

AG: How did you make friends with her?

GJ: She was a colleague in the – I sat next to her in the bank [bench].

AG: I see, it was a school friendship, a college friendship.

GJ: Yes, and also there was a very good – the English teacher was very kind to me and became a great friend of my husband as well. I remember reading something and I said “butcher” instead of “butcher” and she was horrified, she said ‘oh my god, what do they take on these days!’ and I went afterwards to her and said I’m sorry, I’m not English and then she became very nice to me and the great howler I made became an entrance, and a beginning of a friendship between her and my husband.

AG: What was her name, do you remember?

GJ: Northrop.

AG: Were there other foreign or refugee girls?

GJ: No, no.

AG: You were the only one?

GJ: I was the only one.

AG: How did the others treat you?

GJ: Normal, as, you know, wanting to know why I came, and when I explained they couldn't understand it. You know, very few people knew about what's happening in Germany.

AG: Were there other Jewish girls?

GJ: No, no.

AG: They were all good middle-class British..

GJ: All good middle-class, yes, and don't forget it was a Church of England college.

AG: Yes, of course, yes.

GJ: You had to, you know, they didn't pay anything, or paid very little, but they had to agree to teach for two years in a school.

AG: And how was your life outside the college? I mean did you share the flat where you lived in Cholmley Gardens?

GJ: No, I only went there at night and slept and came back. I had all the meals in the college.

AG: Did you have any.

GJ: Saturdays and Sundays I went to my friends who were Jewish, you know, where we had stayed with my mother. He was – the man who owned the flat was a journalist for a Dutch newspaper. He was the best friend of my husband's. This is where I met my husband.

AG: Ah, perhaps tell me, do you know the name of the gentleman who introduced you to your husband?

GJ: Yes, he was Schindler, and he was a great friend of the family. My sister married his brother, you know, that was the magistrate who went to Israel that was his brother. And we – my husband worked for Reuters at the time and he often did the night duty for this Mr Schindler who worked for the Dutch newspapers. They were both financial journalists.

AG: Could you tell me your husband's full name for the film, please?

GJ: My husband's full name is Hans Gustav Jacobi. He was born in Berlin, he was not Jewish. He did his *Abitur* in 20, I think, 1920. He often told me about the First World War, that he never, never, never had enough to eat, that all the time he went hungry and that idea of not having enough food, he kept it all his life. He worked as a – no, he went to university. Then the inflation started and his parents couldn't afford it anymore, so he worked for Wolff's *Nachrichtenbüro*, which was the equivalent of Reuters, Jewish owned, but of course in 1933 it was taken over by the Nazis. He started there in 22, 21 or 22. He was – left, he could have gone back and work for them, but by that time he didn't want to, he was very English and didn't like the Germans.

Tape 1: 47 minutes 44 seconds

AG: When was he sent over to England by the ...

GJ: He was sent over in '29, '30, I do know exactly, 1930.

AG: Did he also have political convictions that might have made it unpleasant for him to go back?

GJ: No, no political convictions, just anti-German, terribly anti-German, although he had a cousin there whom he liked very much, but he never went back. And a sister he had. But one interesting thing – can you cut out things?

AG: We can't. We can't, so if there's something you don't want to say, don't say it.

GJ: Perhaps it's quite interesting. It speaks for the Germans. A friend of mine said: "Gabi," – that was four years ago – 'You should have a widow's pension from your husband, who after all must have paid social security then.' So I wrote to Germany and, lo and behold, they had all the details of his and his employer's contributions from 1921 to 1930.

AG: Goodness. And I hope you get a nice widow's pension.

GJ: Not a nice, I get a little pension. But without computer they had all the details.

AG: Lucky they weren't destroyed in the war, actually.

GJ: Yes, I mean it is wonderful. Miracle.

AG: Yes, yes. Deutsche Tüchtigkeit. Well. What sort of man was your husband as a person?

GJ: What sort of man was he? He was a lot older than I. He was 16 years older than I am. In fact, when I wasn't allowed into Germany I came back to England and this friend of mine, a friend of my brother in law and my sister, was in – Easter, it was Easter, they were away in Bournemouth, and I had nowhere to go. But I had the key of my husband's flat. Because my husband, who met me every Sunday to have lunch at his friends' and he had lunch, he played tennis with Mr Schindler and then came to lunch. When he heard that I had so little pocket money, he said: "You can wash my sheets – my shirts – and I will pay you so much." Anyway, I had a little bit of extra money, and I had the key of his flat.

AG: Where did he live, where was the flat?

GJ: Belsize Grove, 43 Belsize Grove. Those blocks of flats have a court –, there's three blocks of flats. And I went there, I was alone. They were – he was in Bournemouth, and I had tonsillitis. I picked up an awful tonsillitis, and I lay in bed when he came back. And he sort of shook his head, "now what do I do with you? Either I marry you, or I adopt you." Well, he married me. So, that is the story of my love-life.

Tape 1: 50 minutes 58 seconds

AG: But actually, that must have been quite an unpleasant experience for you, you were turned out with nowhere to go.

GJ: Oh it was terrible, terrible. I had very little money. I mean, I really had just enough money to get to the flat of my husband, went to bed, and didn't eat anything till he came back. It was very unpleasant, yes.

AG: Did you generally feel rather isolated in London; I mean it was a very large, foreign town?

GJ: You know, you don't feel isolated when you live in a community from Monday to Friday, and then went to Jewish friends..

AG: Yes, but it was the weekend, so you couldn't get back in.

GJ: Yes, the weekend, I went every weekend away.

AG: And, well, perhaps you tell me about how you got – where and when you got married-

GJ: Well, by that time of course we were already great friends my husband and I, and we got engaged, and we married the following August.

AG: So that was 1938.

GJ: That was 1938. I was then 19 years old, you know, and married very young. My parents, my mother knew my husband, my father didn't, so the first thing we did when we got married, and I got a British passport, as soon as the marriage certificate –

AG: Ah, your husband had British nationality.

GJ: My husband was by that time – had British nationality, and I became British citizen, and we went to Offenbach for two or three days to – for my father to meet my husband.

AG: How did it go?

GJ: Oh, very well, very well. My husband, he was an exceptional person in many ways, he didn't like fools, didn't suffer fools gladly, but when he had friends he was marvellous. He was absolutely, hundred percent bilingual. No accent, spoke English probably better than most English people, spoke German. And he gave a radio commentary... simultaneous translation when Hitler, during the Prague crisis, when Hitler gave one or two speeches and it was transmitted as simultaneous translation by the BBC. And then the BBC said to him, when war breaks out, which no doubt it will, please come and work for us. And more or less the first week when war broke out he joined the BBC.

AG: What, the German section?

GJ: As... in the German section, then in what's called "central desk", which was when the BBC had more than one news bulletin, German, French, Italian, etc. the news stories were written at the central desk and then sent out to the editors of Germany, Italy or whatever. So he - and there he worked till he retired in 1965 or '66.

AG: So he worked for the German section of, what ...?

GJ: No, he worked as general journalist in the overseas service or then European service, which is now the Overseas Service.

AG: And what was your parents' attitude to the fact that you married someone who was not Jewish?

GJ: I think they were so glad to get rid of me.

AG: [Laughs]

GJ: .Or to have me settled, that they didn't mind. No, they did not mind at all. I think she has something to tell you.

AG: Yes, it's just that the tape's coming to an end, so we have a break there.

GJ: Shall we have coffee now?

AG: Could do, yes.

TAPE 2

AG: Gabi Jacobi, time 2. I think we were just talking about your husband and your marriage.

GJ: Yes.

AG: Where did you actually live when you got married?

GJ: We lived in Belsize Lane. Right through the war, till we bought a house in Luton, where I worked. But by that time my husband was due to retire, but the BBC extended his service for another two years, so I commuted to Luton for all that time and he commuted for two years.

AG: You set up home in Belsize Lane, was this a house or a flat?

GJ: No, it was a flat on the first floor and at the end of the war the maisonette above it became empty and we moved up to the second floor, till I moved to Luton.

AG: And could you tell us about your early married life before the war? How did things work for you?

GJ: Well, my husband was insistent that I would finish my studies. So I went to the – I then became a day student, I wasn't any more a residential student. And, well, I studied and was a housewife at the same time. And also very – well, a life in wartime, with rationing, with walks on the heath and – yes, it was very nice, my husband's work was very satisfactory to him, and we liked living in Hampstead.

AG: Hm. Did you have connections with other refugees?

GJ: Oh yes, quite a few friends. Yes, a lot of friends who were refugees, but who, you know, were in the rag: trade or in – I'm trying to think now. We didn't have many friends, my husband wasn't one for making friends, but we had some friends, yes. Mainly from the BBC.

AG: People from the German section?

GJ: From the German section, yes.

AG: Do you remember any of them in particular?

GJ: Ehh, well one was a wonderful, very funny man called Avrach, he painted this picture there, and he was..

AG: What was his name, I didn't..

GJ: Josef, Joe Avrach, A-V-R-A-C-H. And we were great friends. I saw the widow yesterday. Sigler, who were shirt manufacturers, but he was a translator then. He was interned – he was

not interned, he replaced internees, because he had a Greek passport, but we became great friends too. My family by that time were either living... my eldest sister, who was on this Polish quota came to England – we also got a visa for them – on condition that they would emigrate to America as soon as the quota was ready for him. And he got actually a little research fellowship at one of the – he was a doctor, I told you – at one of the hospitals and he left for America – his quota eventually came through – on the first day of the Blitz. So we had, you know, quite – almost one year.

AG: Did they stay with you?

GJ: No, no, we had too small a flat at that time.

AG: What happened to your parents, and how did you find out about what was going on with them? Especially, I'm thinking of the Kristallnacht.

Tape 2: 4 minutes 24 seconds

GJ: Well, I told you that my husband had a good connection with somebody from the Foreign Office and we got a visa for him to come out. And he had to leave Offenbach in a great hurry, three days, five days. He didn't stay with us, he stayed with Lily Montagu. And for three months he was living with them here before he emigrated to Palestine.

AG: Where did she live?

GJ: In, oh, wait a minute – St John's Wood liberal synagogue is where she worshipped, and she lived in Bayswater.

AG: How did you find..

GJ: Mattock Was the Rabbi then.

AG: Ah, Israel Mattock?

GJ: Yes.

AG: And how did you find out about *Kristallnacht* and about your father being arrested?

GJ: Oh, I think my mother wrote to us or we telephoned. And... yes, I mean, there was communication by telephone, we could.. and it was lucky that we knew somebody who.. but also Lily Montagu helped as well.

AG: Do you know who the gentleman was in the Foreign Office?

GJ: No, no idea, no idea anymore.

AG: And how long was your father, you said he was in Buchenwald?

GJ: In Buchenwald for a fortnight.

AG: He was not a young man..

GJ: No, he was in his fifties. He was bit of a broken man, he had dicky a heart. He was a bit of a broken man then. And as I said he died in Palestine within a fortnight of arrival.

AG: And he came – did you come and meet him when he came here, I mean how, how did it work?

GJ: Yes, well, we met him, but he stayed with Lily Montagu in her home, so he was very comfortable.

AG: How did he look when you saw him?

GJ: Oh, aged, very aged, very... you could tell that he had suffered.

AG: And did he then take a ship to go to Palestine?

GJ: Nothing. Well, you know, he had no chance to do anything in Palestine because within a fortnight he was dead and my mother than lived with my sister.

AG: Did your mother come over at the same time with your father?

GJ: Yes, they came over together, yes.

AG: And your mother then lived with your...

GJ: With my sister in Palestine. My sister was then left alone when the British authorities sent her husband back home. This, she says, was her greatest regret that she did not stay in Palestine, because she was a great Zionist. But followed her husband with the children. Didn't like it in England at all, but her husband had a very good job, he was in the ..., number two, not the first one, number two, for the restitution of heirless property, in, you know, all the ones where, you know, hospitals, where the heirs could not themselves..

AG: Communal properties. Yes, what was his name?

GJ: Schindler.

AG: This, this, could you tell us a bit about this organisation, I think it's very important for the AJR and the restitution.

GJ: Well, he was very successful, particularly successful for himself; during the *Wiedergutmachung* he got the pension of a High Court judge. My husband burst out laughing when he heard this, but still, he managed. Otherwise I know very little about it. My sister would not follow him to – she would not live in Germany. She stayed in England.

AG: Oh, I see, he went back to Germany.

GJ: No, no, she stayed in England.

AG: Yes, but he...

GJ: He had to live in Germany. Hamburg ... the headquarters was in Hamburg, I think. But she would not go with him. On holidays perhaps. And the two children were educated here in

England. The eldest daughter became a physiotherapist and the younger son went to school here in England.

Tape 2: 9 minutes 0 second

AG: Do you remember what school, what sort of school?

GJ: I don't know, it was a private school somewhere.

AG: And the reason, why did she not like England? Was it because she was a Zionist and wanted to be...?

GJ: Well, she wanted to stay in Israel and would have like to help Israel. She came to England, she would not go to Germany. Out of the question. So she lived – well, she went on holidays once or twice a year to see her husband, but I don't think it was a very good marriage. Then. It became, afterwards, a better marriage, when he had finished his very successful... collected a lot of money for hospitals and retirement homes and what not.

AG: Well, exactly, I believe, that the AJR's retirement homes were largely financed through the central British funds with money from...

GJ: Absolutely, completely. And also in, I know my elder sister, who then finally ended up in Chicago, where he became a, lived and practised as a doctor, there was a wonderful retirement home which was with that money.

AG: well, we've jumped rather ahead, I still, I'm still interested in what life was like for you as a young married woman, and fairly recent refugee in England before the war.

GJ: Well, before the war of course I was in the college. I married within my first year of study. Then I became a student housewife, which was...

AG: Yes, did you finish, you finished your...?

GJ: I finished my studies, yes.

AG: What did you get at the end of that?

GJ: This was called a diploma in home economics, teachers' diploma in home economics. I did not like, although I was supposed to teach in schools and I was helped by the fact that most schools were evacuated. In fact I helped with the evacuation of some of the schools, of the children. What I mainly did during the war was giving lessons. I was employed by the LCC as a visiting lecturer in dressmaking, knitting and what not, and worked for two years in the shelter of the Tate Gallery. Because the LCC organised classes, where there were people who stayed the night, also in the Underground. I never taught in the Underground, I only taught in the Tate Gallery, two or three times a week.

AG: This was to people who were seeking shelter there from the bombing?

GJ: Yes, yes, and they thought I was tremendously brave to go out at nine o'clock. [Laughs]

AG: You probably were. What sort of people were you teaching?

GJ: People who were afraid of the Blitz. Working class, mainly working-class.

AG: How did they react to you, after all you were plainly not English?

GJ: I doubt whether they realised it.

AG: Ah.

GJ: I taught them knitting, I taught them dressmaking, I taught them make-do-and-mend, and that sort of thing. Keep them entertained.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 32 seconds

AG: Ah. And did you teach at schools as well?

GJ: No, I didn't teach in any school at all. But after two years a job became vacant in Richmond technical college as a dressmaking teacher, and I was full time, and then I gave up the shelter classes and became a full-time teacher at Richmond technical college in dressmaking. Dressmaking, make-do-and-mend, how – what to do with rations, that sort of thing.

AG: What, how did you find that teaching out in Richmond?

GJ: Oh, after all, this is what I was trained for. I always liked teaching adults, I didn't like teaching children. I had a wonderful principal, and she supported me greatly. It was a very good job.

AG: I'd be very interested to hear about your recollections of the war, I mean, do you remember the outbreak of war, the declaration of war?

GJ: Oh, very much so, very much so. You know, it was a relief that it finally happened. We were all pleased that it ..., and we were all prepared for a Blitz of course. And, didn't happen for a year, there was no Blitz, you know, but it was normal life. After all, the first year of the war I was still at college.

AG: Ah yes, yes. So you got your diploma in 1940.

GJ: 1940, yes.

AG: Hm. You mentioned that some of your husband's colleagues were interned. Could you tell me about what you remember of the period of internment?

GJ: No, I can't tell you anything about it, but what I must say is that the last year of the war – the last year of my studies, which was the first year of the war; I was evacuated with the college to Bournemouth.

AG: Were you?

GJ: Yes, so I had again to leave my husband. No, I was again a resident student and lived in Bournemouth. Which was very nice, lovely town. And noticed very little of the war.

AG: Did you, or your husband, encounter any hostility, because I mean, I know we were British citizens, but...

GJ: No, no, not at all, not at all.

AG: I mean you had arrived fairly recently from Germany.

GJ: Yes, not at all, no hostility whatsoever. Never encountered any hostility whatsoever.

AG: Any anti-Semitism?

GJ: No. Neither.

AG: What about when the phoney war ended and the Germans broke through and occupied France?

GJ: Yes, well, by that time of course I was living again in London. It was exciting times and, you know, my husband was right in the middle of reporting on it. We lived from day to day, we tried to eke out our rations. No, I don't say, eke out is wrong. The rations were plentiful. [Coughs] Sorry. To my knowledge, I never bought anything on the black market. As we didn't drink tea, my tea ration went to people who gave us something else. You know, London was afloat with coffee, because coffee, London was the international market for the distribution of coffee. So we were sitting on masses and masses of coffee and this is when England began to like coffee.

Tape 2: 16 minutes 13 seconds

AG: Hm. And could you describe the atmosphere, say in May, June 1940, when the war really hit home?

GJ: Well, you came out of, you know, you hoped that you wouldn't be hit, and when you came out in the morning you looked around what had happened. And you rang up friends. But we went out in the evening, to cinemas, to theatres. We took little notice of the blitz to be afraid of, I must say.

AG: Did you have near misses in raids?

GJ: No, we never had our windows smashed, nothing at all. So we were very lucky.

AG: Did you ever fear in the summer of 1940 that Britain might be invaded?

GJ: Oh yes. I was afraid that we would be invaded, and of course I was much more afraid in '42, when I was afraid for Palestine, that the Germans would get to Palestine. That was an anxiety.

AG: Do you remember, for example, listening to the radio and listening to Churchill or ...?

GK Well, we listened to all the speeches of Churchill, we were great admirers of Churchill. But I don't anything – there's nothing special during wartime, that I had near-misses, or were

afraid of the bombs. We just took it for granted, there were bombs, you went into a shelter when you were in the street and otherwise you were home and hoped for the best.

AG: What was the mood like amongst the people, say you went into an air-raid shelter, or, you know, you mixed with other people?

GJ: Backbone, British backbone. [Laughs] And ‘bloody Germans’ and that was it. We will win.

AG: People believed in 1940 that.

GJ: Yes, yes. I think, and of course the mood still changed more after Pearl Harbour, when America became our ally. And then things moved up. Montgomery won, you know.. some of the many battles that he fought.

AG: Yes, because of your family in Palestine..

GJ: Yes, we were afraid that Israel – Palestine – would be overrun, and that was a worry.

AG: Yes. Do you remember the battle of, news of the battle of El-Alamein.

GJ: El-Alamein, yes, very much so, yes.

AG: How do you remember it?

GJ: Well, my husband had to report on it and he came back and described in detail what he..., and we avidly read the newspapers.

AG: You make...

GJ: I’m sorry; it’s a pretty dull life!

AG: [Laughs] It’s very interesting, on the contrary, I mean, you just decided to get on with it, as if it was, the bombs were a sort of inconvenience. I doubt that most people, well, that my generation would be able to react with quite that sort of sang-froid, really.

GJ: Well, it’s just, if it happens it happens, and you were prepared for it to happen. But all my friends were very lucky; we didn’t lose any friends who were killed by the bombs or anything like that.

AG: Did you have friends or acquaintances in the forces?

GJ: No, not at all. Not at all.

AG: Didn’t join the Pioneer Corps and all these things that refugees sometimes did..

GJ: No, not at all.

AG: And how long did you stay at the college in Richmond?

GJ: Till about 1946.

AG: Oh I see.

GJ: And then I decided, oh wait a minute, I missed out one interval, I – no, didn't miss out, while I did the shelter classes, I worked for news information in the BBC. This was giving background information to the journalists who wrote the stories, you know, when did Hitler say, or Göring say, 'No bombs, no aeroplanes will ever fly over England?' that sort of thing. Newspaper cutting library and giving information. But that then did not become a reserve job. I then had to look for a teaching job, and it was then that I went to the Richmond College. And I knew that that was my career, in technical education. And my husband quite rightly said "if you want to have a real career, you must have some trade experience", which I didn't have, I only had domestic dressmaking, or anything like that. I veered towards the fashion side, and I got a job, various jobs, as a machinist, as a cutter, you know, to find out about the rag: trade. Finally, had for a couple of years my own business, making dressing gowns and leisure gowns.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 58 seconds

AG: Where was that?

GJ: That was in Mornington Crescent, in 255 Eversholt Street. And then it was a question of the lease – at the time when we took 255 Eversholt Street it was going to be destroyed. It's still standing. And then they realised I would have to have a longer lease, and I said no, that is enough technical ... knowledge of technical education, and I got a job at Watford Technical College, again as a teacher – dressmaking. And after two years at Watford technical college, there was a job advertised in Luton, Luton College of Technology. They had had – a new college, built immediately after the war – they had had a general inspection, and they realised that the, what was called the women's section, in other words dressmaking rooms, bakery, home economics, kitchen, all that sort of thing, was not used, and they insisted that the principal employ a head of department for this. It also, at that time, Eastex, which is Alison Goldstein, Eastex perhaps means nothing to you? It's a big firm of – still exists – of clothing, wanted to have their machinists trained and their cutters and so on, and they approached the technical college. These two things came together, and they advertised for somebody who had trade experience in dressmaking. So I had absolutely no competition, in fact, I was the only one who applied – no, there were two people who applied. And I got the job as head of department. And there I was very, very lucky, because Luton was a prosperous town, very prosperous, plenty of money for education. Had a wonderful director of education, who was a German specialist, and became a friend of ours. And..

Tape 2: 24 minutes 14 seconds

AG: What was his name?

GJ: Oh, wait a minute that I will remember at the moment.

AG: When it comes tell me.

GJ: Yes. He wrote *The Essentials of German Grammar*.

AG: Oh.

GJ: Can't remember the name.

AG: I came across that in my school days – it's not Corbett, is it?

GJ: Corbett, yes, yes, Corbett. There, very good.

AG: Thank you. [Laughs]

GJ: And he, he was, Director of Education at the time. And there was plenty of money to expand, and when I started we had one full-time lecturer, who was my competition for the job, who just taught adult recreational dressmaking. And when I left in 1969 we were 50 teachers. And expanded like anything. I was build... - we moved to another college, and that is now Luton University, and we had, I had under my fashion department a catering department, hotel reception, hotel housekeeping, hairdressing, all that sort of thing, so it was a real success story. This is my success story.

AG: That really is quite something, considering you maintain so hard that you were un-academic. So were you actually, were you the head of department?

GJ: I was the head of department, but I was helped by choosing my staff very well. There was a German woman, who was school meal organiser at the time, who joined me to start the catering department, and we had a wonderful teaching restaurant with a very good reputation.

AG: What year was it that you started this in Luton?

GJ: Oh my god, must have been '52, '53, '54. We had a very good – we had a fashion department, again, where a friend of mine left the rag: trade and joined me, I had a very good hairdressing department, full-time hairdressing and release, day-release hairdressing, hotel housekeeping.. By that time, of course, I was in another college called Barnfield College, just the name of the street.

AG: In Luton?

GJ: In Luton, yes. And it was just expanded, and we had plenty of money, and, you know, when, I remember, when I went to the principal and said “well, where would you like me to go?” and he threw me out of the room and said, “If you don't know where to go you shouldn't have had the job”. So I had a free hand. And I was really lucky that Luton was such a go-ahead education department, and that it was the time of technical education, where money was no object. This now could not have happened anymore.

AG: Hm. And what sort of – how many students would you have had, I mean roughly speaking?

GJ: Oh, we had full-time and part-time, day release.. . a hundred, two hundred students. We had a flourishing four-year fashion course with, together with the arts department. The art department taught design and my department taught the technical side of dressmaking. And students got wonderful jobs, in Covent Garden, Aquascutum, really wonderful. Because we had such good teachers. The restaurant had a very good reputation. When the queen came to open the library [Laughs] I was told to do the lunch for her.

AG: What did you do, do you remember?

GJ: The only thing I remember is that we also ran a course of wine appreciation for adults in the evening. And Hallgarten was very supportive, and I told Hallgarten that we were entertaining the Queen, and that I had to submit the menu, and also what wines. And he said “I will send you the best wines I have”, so the Palace was told that the wine would be different, and they said no, so all the good wine went to the other people and the Queen had the not-so-good wine, because that was submitted to the palace for.. This was, I think, looking back, my great success story.

Tape 2: 29 minutes 17 seconds

AG: And you, you started it in '52, you were still pretty young.

GJ: Yes, well, pretty young, yes. Yes, I left in '68, and, well, if I go in chronological order, perhaps I should say that another little success story is: There is such a thing as the Winston Churchill travelling scholarship. I don't know whether you ever heard of it, no? I think a grateful nation wanted to honour Churchill, and rather to build a monument, which they also did, they collected money and they invested it, and they would give something like 15, 20 travelling scholarships with various headings, which were each year changed, and one year it was consumerism. And I applied, and I said I teach a lot of consumer education, and I got this scholarship to go to Germany, to France, to the States.

AG: Which year was this? Approximately, was it '50s or '60s?

GJ: '79 – must have been '72-'73.

AG: And did you go to Germany?

GJ: I went to Germany to study – I had to do it in my holidays – and the good thing of this scholarship was you did not have to write a report on it or anything, you just had to convince the manager of this, who was a colonel, general, wonderful man, that you would be able to use what you have learned. So I mainly went to Cornell University in the States and to the various big stores in America, to find out what they did for their consumers.

AG: What was that like?

GJ: Most interesting. That was – I learned an awful lot and I really became a good consumer, and I gave lots of lectures on what to look out for, consumer.. And then, you know, consumerism also blossomed forth, you know, at that time. People didn't sit back and let things happen; they fought back where they were badly treated.

AG: Were you able to see your relative, your sister?

GJ: My sister, I stayed with my sister in Chicago and I stayed in New York with friends, so that was the one nice thing in the year. And then in '68 was I in '69.. in '78.. '77 was international women's year, and the Swedes in their generosity gave ten million dollars, or twenty million dollars, I can't remember, anyway, at that time a fantastic sum, to the ILO to administer, and it was to build two colleges, two technical colleges in India, Bangalore and Bombay, and to improve the existing one in New Delhi. And it was a wonderful document, twenty pages, what should be done with one international – with international staff to help the Indians. And the head of the... head of the staff was me, head of the international experts, was

me. I was sort of headhunted, because, I think, we'd had an inspection and I think they asked the Ministry of Education whether they knew of somebody who could teach exactly the subjects which I had in my department.

Tape 2: 33 minutes 30 seconds

AG: So did you spend time in India?

GJ: So I was called for an interview to Geneva.

AG: Oh right?

GJ: And I, yes, I was offered the job. It was a three-year contract, which meant I had to leave Luton. I was at that time 59 years old. And this is where I made a great mistake, I should have asked, to begin with, for a year's sabbatical. But I was so enamoured by a three-year contract that I gave notice and left. And had another interview in Geneva before going, and another one in Bangkok for the eastern part, and then went to New Delhi with my husband. The salary was wonderful. One stipulation, you had to take twenty percent of your salary in Indian rupees, the rest could go to wherever you wanted it. And I had a wonderful life, had a servant – I went with my husband – I had a servant, we had a lovely flat. Professionally, it was a complete and utter failure.

AG: In what way?

GJ: Yes, I will tell you why. The Indians were not interested in education for women. The headmaster of the college which I was to improve objected to anything and everything I wanted to – they still had, you know, treadle machines, and I said we should buy power machines. Various things, you know, which was impossible, to persuade him to improve the teaching. My deputy was the man who was supposed to improve the teaching and he was very good. And we had a dressmaking teacher, who was quite good. A lovely staff, a wonderful staff, but a complete and utter failure. And after one year I had to write a progress report. And my deputy, who was used to ILO language, and said 'Gabi, you write "we haven't achieved much, but we are hopeful, we think the Indians will eventually come "' I must say I was allocated an architect to design the two new colleges to be built in Bangalore, and on paper I designed two wonderful colleges, but they never could find a space to build. And it wasn't – they didn't have to spend a penny of it. So I wrote a progress report as my deputy suggested, and I wrote a second report and said "we are wasting our money; I think it should be wound up, the Indians are not particularly interested in teaching women". And I asked my husband which report shall I send in, and of course he was honest as he was, he said "you send in the true report". And after three months I was out. And my – the head of the college was appointed as my successor, and – never built, the college was never built, I don't know how the money was spent at the time, but this – I was not the only international expert, there was another one, lived in the same square where we lived, a good friend of mine. They had a project, cooperatives, that worked quite well. And there was another project on water purification – didn't work at all. So that was it. So I came home.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 40 seconds

AG: Had your husband gone out to India with you?

GJ: With you [me], he liked it very much, and we had a wonderful servant, and we had a really marvellous life, but if I – I cannot report one single success. Perhaps one, I think, one success, the embroidery teacher was the obligatory lower caste employee. She was brilliant. And I could persuade the principal that she was worth promoting, and that was about the only success, she was a wonderful teacher.

AG: What was life like for you in Bangalore?

GJ: No, we stayed in New Delhi, we stayed in New Delhi. Well, we lived in a lovely flat, you know, almost like an English square, with lots of trees. We had a mango man, who came three times a week and had wonderful mangoes. I taught our servant to cook, or rather my husband taught him. It was a lovely life, except that I came home disgusted every day. And in the end I was quite happy to – I made a lot of money, but that's it.

AG: What did you do when you came back to England?

GJ: Oh, I had various, various jobs. One was a quality controller of a big factory.

AG: Where was that?

GJ: Here in London, you know.

AG: What was the name of the factory? Where was it, do you remember?

GJ: Well, it was in Margaret Street.

AG: That's Margaret Street off...

GJ: Off Oxford Street. Very well known brand, can't remember now. But my difficulty was by that time we had bought a house in France. And we wanted to spend, you know, a lot of time – so I always wanted time off in summer, and so I could only have sort of small part-time jobs and –

AG: Where was that, where is the house in France?

GJ: The house in France is deep in the country between Bordeaux and Toulouse in a little town.

AG: What's the name of the town?

GJ: Well the nearest town, the nearest town is Cahors, Bergerac, Bergerac is perhaps the nearest, it is in the Lot-et-Garonne, bordering on the Dordogne. And it's a lovely house, we were lucky to have it, and this is where I now spend five months in the year.

AG: So you – but actually, you were one of the early, you must have been of the early settlers there.

GJ: One of the early, yes, yes.

AG: What was it like when you, when you went out there and got the house?

GJ: Well, the French.... as we could speak French very well and I had learned French, went to evening classes, we had prepared ourselves very well for this. They were very happy. It was a very large house we bought, and old presbytery, and one summer the local, the nearest village had an antique fair, started an antique fair, and they were looking for rooms, and I said I have plenty of rooms, can I, you know, do bed and breakfast, and I was inspected and I was found correct, and from then on we had a lot of French friends. We had nothing but French people who came, and so my best friend now is in France. Yes a lot of French friends.

Tape 2: 41 minutes 36 seconds

AG: And what are your relations like with the French?

GJ: Very good, very good, I belong – I sold now, after my husband died I sold this very large house and bought a very, very much smaller house, just one up one down, but in a very nice part of the village, and belong to the bridge club, and I play bridge twice a week. I have nice friends and it's a good life.

AG: We haven't really covered your, your personal life as opposed to your professional life after the war; perhaps we could go back and do that. You said you spend the whole war in Belsize Lane...?

GJ: Yes, the whole war in Belsize Lane.

AG: Hm, and did you – when did you move? And where did you move to?

GJ: Well, as soon as my husband – would have been in – he was born in '04, so in '64 he would have been 60. So in '62/ '63 we were looking for a house in Luton.

AG: Ah, to be nearer your...

GJ: ..to be nearer my work. Then he was extended by the BBC, he did – BBC retirement age was 60, but he was extended for another two years, so he commuted for two years, and – but I had commuted for many years to Luton.

AG: No particular pleasure, I imagine.

GJ: Yes, but the M1 then was a very lovely old street,

AG: Oh, you drove?

GJ: I drove, yes.

AG: Gosh. Hm. And what was life like in Belsize Lane in the post-war period?

GJ: Nothing out of the ordinary. Life became, theatres became normal, the National Theatre, the concerts, we played bridge. It was, you know, a very lovely life. In the meantime my husband got a sort of second job if you like. Germany recovered quite quickly, as you know, and through a friend, he had a connection with the Dresdner Bank, and they had an investment trust, you know, unit trust, investment trust, and quarterly reports, half-yearly reports, annual reports. So he translated all this into – from the German into English. And that was, you know, in his spare time, and that was well paid. And, yes, he could make use of his

bilingual knowledge. So I can't tell you anything exciting except that we enjoyed life, we had no children; we enjoyed life, because, you know, the National Theatre is something wonderful. And this didn't help very much very much when we moved to Luton. When Luton, which my husband called intellectual desert... ! [Laughs] And, we worked, we saved. We lived for the holidays in France, for our holidays. We went all over the place.

AG: When you were living in Belsize Lane, did you go down to Finchley Road, to the Swiss Cottage area, where there are refugee shops and cafes?

GJ: Not at all, no, not at all. And we always stayed on this side of..

AG: [Laughs] I see.

GJ: You know, there was no 268 bus, or you know, a bus which connected this side with the Heath side.

AG: So did you get over to Haverstock Hill more?

GJ: Haverstock Hill and the Heath side. And it's completely changed, Hampstead, you know, it's become very elegant, lovely shops.

Tape 2: 45 minutes 56 seconds

AG: What was it like as you remember it then?

GJ: It was, it was beginning to be run-down. And then one boutique started and then another boutique, you know, I was surprised, after we left it, it became really the artists' quarter, and it was, you know, quite different.

AG: I just like to ask you one thing, which I happen to be interested in at the moment. I found out that there was, at the end of the war, just after the war, there was actually a petition mounted in Hampstead asking for so-called aliens to be moved out. Of course that wouldn't apply to you as you were naturalised. I wonder if you remember that.

GJ: I have heard about it. Yes, I have heard..

AG: You remember it is was in the – it was in the columns of the *Ham and High*.

GJ: Yes, but I don't think anything came of it.

AG: No.

GJ: But, of course, it was the centre. Lots and lots of German Jews and Austrian refugees were there. There was a very good, very good restaurant, which served good coffee and German food.

AG: Which one was that?

GJ: My god, I can't remember it. I still play bridge with the owner... Cosmo, Cosmo. It's now an Indian restaurant, and it had very, very good coffee.

AG: Ah yes, yes. Oh well, because I play bridge with her, too, actually, as it happens [Laughs], so actually we're talking about the same lady. Where did you learn bridge, is this something you learned in Germany from your parents?

GJ: No, no, not in Germany, no, no, not at all. During the war. My husband really liked chess, and there was a little chess café in Hampstead, where, after his duty – the duty was from eight to four when he was on day duty – from four to six he played bridge – he played chess in this little café.

AG: Where was that?

GJ: Where the 24 bus terminus is.

AG: Is that down on South End Green?

GJ: South End Green, yes. There was a little chess restaurant where the chess players congregated and had chess – played chess. And he played for the BBC, too.

Tape 2: 48 minutes 1 second

AG: Oh did he? Oh, so he was a good player.

GJ: Yes, he was a good player, he was a very good player.

AG: Ah, how impressive. And when..., well, what happened to you and your husband, you moved to Luton, then you had your house in France...?

GJ: Yes, well we went regularly, of course, to France, to the – I had four – two months holiday in the year at that time. Now, teaching doesn't have anymore two months holidays.. greatly reduced. But two months holiday I had. So we had two months in ..., three weeks Easter. And before we had the house in France we travelled greatly inside France, we went to University Aix-en-Provence and the Sorbonne one year, which had one month French for foreigners. Residential. My husband spoke very good French. In fact too good, he was – well, everything he did, he did very thoroughly. I mean, he was no good dealing with the gardener, or the – whatever workman came, because spoke such an educated French that they wouldn't understand it. [Laughs]

AG: Hm. I also like to ask you actually when you started going back to Germany, when you first went back to Germany.

GJ: I went back for the 60th anniversary.

AG: That was the first time?

GJ: That was the first time, when Offenbach made the official invitation to my family, or my sister and myself, and also one man, who was in Israel at the time and who was quite well known in Germany. So there were three people, who were entertained.

AG: Was that a deliberate decision not to go back before?

GJ: Yes, yes. Oh yes, my husband wouldn't go back under any circumstances, although he forgave – as soon as he started earning money from them, he forgave them, but he wouldn't go back.

AG: And when did you find out yourself after the war about what really had happened to the Jews in... well, under the Nazis?

GJ: Well, we knew, my husband had friends who had – whose daughter also was killed. Well, we knew, you know. I don't know, this trickled through, you know, that – we knew what happened.

AG: Did you lose family members?

GJ: I lost, yes, my, I lost – cousin, two cousins- three cousins, who didn't survive, yes, who didn't even make the concentration – I mean, who might have made the concentration camp, but couldn't emigrate, you know.. A brother, an uncle, a brother of my mother's. And, yes, a fair number of my relatives. Of extended relatives.

AG: What were your feelings about Germany and the Germans after the war?

GJ: Very mixed, you know, because of my husband working for the Germans and making a fair bit of money, I – indifferent, you know, no hatred. I don't feel comfortable when I'm in Germany, I wasn't comfortable when I'm in Berlin, when I was just now, last week I was in Berlin for five days, I don't feel comfortable. Offenbach is alright, they were nice to me, and, you know, you had to forgive them, not to forget, but you had to forgive them. But when I see ... hear the German language ...always, you know, feel it. There is a wonderful monument to the deported of the county, Lot-et-Garonne, where I am, and I always take all my friends there to show them. It's a wonderful monument, it's a sarcophagus held up by hands with at the side all the names of the people of the county who were killed, and in front of it is soil from three or four concentration camps.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 47 seconds

AG: Where is this monument, in which town?

GJ: This monument is in Biron, Biron.

AG: Do you feel ever, or did you feel nostalgic for Offenbach, which after all..

GJ: No, not at all. I felt nostalgic, perhaps, for very nice cheesecake or the good sausages, but not for the actual, no. And Offenbach has changed to the better, it's become a very much more beautiful town. And, of course, it was Hessen at the time, and Frankfurt was Prussia.

AG: Ah, yes.

GJ: And in case – and when you went from Offenbach to Frankfurt, there was what they call a frontier, in the underground you had to pay to the end of Hessen and to the beginning of Prussia. Prussia, of course, was abolished by the – And it became to its great, well, sadness it became part of Hessen. But it did mean that it has a wonderful transport system. It's a completely different town now. It has a – Offenbach was famous for its leather goods. Everything to do with leather came from Offenbach. It has an internationally famous leather

museum. It has a *Ledermesse*, you know, once a year, which is very good – got good hotels. It is quite different now.

AG: What did you feel when you went back there for the first time after so many years?

GJ: Interest, interest, nostalgia, when I – the house where we lived was bombed, that doesn't exist anymore. The church was bombed too, that is newly built. I must tell you that the man who helped organise, I think, a fair amount in Offenbach, like the street that was called after my father, a man called Weinberger, he was a journalist, he was the anchorman of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in Offenbach. And he established a very good – while I was there, during the 60th anniversary, was the first meeting, to promote the interest of Judaism and Christians. And they meet every month and it's a very flourishing, very flourishing association. And that is really quite exceptional.

AG: Perhaps I could ask you to describe this event that you went to, to commemorate the 60th birthday of your father.

GJ: Well, it was – everybody spoke, you know, about my father, and, you know, I kept all the various – the MP spoke, the mayor spoke, of Offenbach, the new leader of the Jewish community spoke, you know, it became a Jewish community, who first met into a little, you know, room, before the German – the authorities built a synagogue for them, a very nice synagogue, by a very good architect. So, you know, it was nostalgic to hear everything about my father and how wonderful he was.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 30 seconds

AG: Did they put you up in style?

GJ: In a wonderful, yes, oh yes, they put me up in style, they took me to the theatre, to concerts, yes, they were very, very good. They paid everything.

AG: And who went apart from you, were there other family members?

GJ: I went with my sister. And my other sister at this time was dead, she was also invited, but she was dead. I went with my sister and that – I think she's telling you now, that..

AG: It's alright, just you finish what you're saying...

GJ: I went with my sister, and we were both very touched. And there were many people who invited us to their home to, you know, wanted to know about how I was, how was life, etc.

AG: Good. Well, I think that that is an opportune moment to have a break to change the tape.

GJ: Yes, I will (tape ends)

AG: Gabi Jacobi Tape three.

TAPE 3

I'd like to ask you about someone you mentioned to me as a friend of the family and that is Berthold Wolpe. Could you tell me what he did and who he was?

GJ: Well, he had two specialities, which he studied at the school of art in Offenbach, which was jewellery and calligraphy. Calligraphy was really his strength and, as I told you, he went to Faber and Faber, who employed him, and he redesigned all their printing, and a new, [Coughs] sorry, a new printing alphabet.

AG: When did he do this?

GJ: I think when he came over.

AG: So that would be...?

GJ: '35-'36. He was great friends with my sister. And this is the ring which he made for her.

AG: Oh right, can I take a photograph of that? We can't see it very well on the film, but we'll take a photo...

GJ: No, but you touch it, it's pure silver and it's a lovely, heavy..

AG: I won't, I won't, but I'll do it afterwards.

DG And – but it was mainly the calligraphy, because of Koch being the moving spirit in this college, and, as I say, there is a Kochschrift, which you find in various books, and he worked ..., as I say, gave lots of lectures, but if you find out more about him on the website. I went to my computer, but I threw away everything that I ...

AG: How did you come to know him?

GJ: Ah, he had a half-sister who was a dentist in Offenbach, who was my mother's best friend. And she came every day for coffee in the afternoon. She was a very good friend, a lousy dentist, but – terrible dentist, terrible dentist, but she was a very good friend. And she emigrated, she set up house here, and I was often in and out of their home in Bayswater.

AG: And what sort of man was Berthold Wolpe, how do you remember him?

GJ: An artist, a little bit, you know, not with you all the time, but a very nice, not exceptionally warm a man. I think he was quite a – you know, he was an artist, and that was – and, you know, he was so much older than I, he was a friend of my sister's, so I don't know so much about him.

AG: I believe that people like that made a great difference to British publishing, book illustration and book design...

GJ: Yes, he, absolutely, he was – made a terrific contribution, really, should be world – well, famous in Britain. So if you are – do a write up about him, I should go – there are two or three websites on Berthold Wolpe, yes. Sorry I destroyed it, but, you know, I'm one for destroying, not keeping things.

AG: Hm. Were there any other prominent refugees that you, that you knew? Or anybody interesting, anybody that you'd like to mention?

No, there was – I'm sorry, my sister would know a lot more. There was one man who owned a very famous factory for... what was it... trying to think... anyway, it was a factory, which – I don't know what it made, something which helped greatly in the war effort. And he went to Washington and pointed out to them: this must be bombed. And that night Offenbach was destroyed in the bombing, including his factory.

AG: I see, yes...

GJ: *Schmirgel*, I don't know what *Schmirgel* is in, you know, it's abrasives, and – it's certainly abrasives.

Tape 3: 4 minutes 24 seconds

AG: I know it's important in metalwork, it's vital, isn't it.

GJ: Yes.

AG: I see. A bit like, almost as important as something like ball bearings?

GJ: Yes. Guggenheim was a famous, he was the number one of the Jewish council, Jewish – *im Vorstand*, whatever it was, in – number one in the Jewish people. He became an *Ehrenbürger* of Offenbach and a well-known solicitor, but I don't he think he has anything important, you know.

AG: Oh well, it's all very interesting. I didn't ask you one question, which I suppose I ought to, and that is what happened to your husband, your late husband.

GJ: My husband died a normal death.

AG: When was that?

GJ: He died in '86. Mind you, I told you he was quite a bit – he was 16 years older than I was. But he had a very good retirement and particularly working for the Germans, made a lot of money. And he enjoyed India very much, and he enjoyed – but never wanted to move back to London, I had to wait till he was dead till I came back to London.

AG: And did you then come back to this flat?

GJ: '88, yes, in '88 I found this flat.

AG: Belsize Court. It is very much the former refugee area.

GJ: Yes.

AG: Do you have many friends?

GJ: I have a fair number of friends here, yes. But they have gone to Golders Green or Hendon, you know.

AG: Yes, even though this on the, not on the NW. Well, it is still NW3

GJ: It is. It is NW3 still. You are NW6.

AG: I'm afraid so, yes, yes. [Laughs] Not, not –

GJ: Well, there's nothing wrong with NW6.

AG: Yes, yes. I know, the Finchley Road is something of a dividing line.

GJ: Yes.

AG: Anyway, mustn't get into that. Is there anything else that you'd like to – you feel I've missed out?

GJ: I think I have talked more than enough about important and unimportant things, no.

AG: Hm. In that case, if – we'll send you, as I told you, a video copy, and if, say, your niece, or other family members were to see the video, is there any sort of message, or anything that you would like to say as a sort of closing statement?

GJ: No, no, no message at all.

AG: No message at all?

GJ: No message at all, no.

AG: Alright, well, in that case ...

GJ: Well, thank you very much for being such a good listener. And a good questioner.

AG: Oh, it's for me to thank you. Thank you very much indeed, it was a great pleasure. Thank you.

Tape 3: 7 minutes 27 seconds

PHOTOGRAPHS

AG: Who is the person in this photograph, please?

GJ: This is my father, and it's a very good picture. Because this is exactly how he was. How I remember him. And I think this must have been taken in the '20s.

AG: Do you know where it was taken?

GJ: No, I have no idea.

AG: Thank you very much.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph, please?

GJ: These are the people who got together to walk along the Dienemann Weg. I don't know whether you will also...

AG: We will.

GJ: ... On the occasion of the first opening of this *Weg* at the outskirts of a park, and it is myself, my niece, and the mayor of – the *Oberbürgermeister*, because there are two.

AG: What is your niece's name, please?

GJ: Hannah Lipson. And also the Member of Parliament for Offenbach.

AG: Do you remember the *Oberbürgermeister*'s name?

GJ: Reuter.

AG: And this was taken on the occasion of the opening of the Max-Dienemann-Weg?

GJ: On the opening of the Dienemann-Weg, yes, Max-Dienemann..

AG: And when was that?

GJ: '95, wasn't it, or...

AG: I think it was '99.

GJ: '99, '99, yes.

AG: 1999.

GJ: That was my second visit to Germany.

AG: Thank you.

GJ: No, my third, it was my third visit. The second visit was the synagogue consecration.

AG: What is the sign in this photograph, please?

GJ: The sign is the naming of a street, path, on the edge of a little park, which they named in honour of my father 'Max-Dienemann-Weg'. And the two people in it, I think, is the *Oberbürgermeister* and one of the members of his entourage.

AG: Hm. Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 9 minutes 53 seconds

AG: What is the meaning of this document, please?

GJ: It was given to me at the end of the first visit to commemorate two things, my father, who translated this. It is the last but one sentence of the Kaddish, my sister had the final one. And it shows the Offenbacher calligraphy of the wonderful college which they had there.

AG: Thank you very much.

AG: What is the building in this photograph?

GJ: This is the outside of the Offenbacher Synagogue, built in the, I think, 1920s Byzantine style. And the cupola, which is very impressive from the inside.

AG: And your family connection with it?

GJ: Because my father was rabbi of this, of the Jewish community and worshipped at this synagogue.

AG: And when was the photograph taken do you think?

GJ: I really don't know, but I think in the '30s, must be.

AG: Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 11 minutes 24 seconds

END OF TAPE