**IMPORTANT**



**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**
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# Interview Transcript Title Page

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**REFUGEE VOICES**

**Interview No.** RV241

**NAME:** Edith Jayne

**DATE:** 26th June, 2019

**LOCATION:** New Earswick, York, UK

**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

*Today's the 26th of June 2019. We're conducting an interview with Mrs. Edith Jayne. My name is Bea Lefkowitz and we're in York. What is your name, please?*

Edith Jayne.

*And where were you born?*

I was born in Vienna in 1936.

*Bea: And what was your maiden name, please?*

Kurcz.

*Edith Kurcz?*

Yes.

*Edith, thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for AJR Refugee Voices. Can you tell us a little bit about your family background?*

Yes. Well, I suppose, I was born in Vienna. I have an older sister. She was four years older than me. And my mother and father had met playing tennis. I suppose the relevant thing was that, relevant later anyway, that it was a mixed religious family, because my mother's background was Roman Catholic and my father's background was that he was Jewish. Neither family was terribly pleased when they got together, but they got used to it- because the families were more religious than these two young lovers, neither one of them was particularly religious. And it didn't make any difference that they were from two different religions as neither one of them was a, a communicant. That really only became relevant when Hitler came, so- which is a little bit further on in the story.

*[00:02:00] At that point, after they- when did they got married?*

In 1929.

*And where did they settle in Vienna?*

I'm not quite sure where they lived at, at first. My father was still doing his residency. I know where they lived when I was born. They had moved because my father got his first job. He had finished- when my sister was born, he was still doing his residency. And so they lived I think also in the 13th district, in Hietzing, but I'm not quite sure. But by the time I was born, they had moved to a new flat that had been built specifically as a doctor surgery and in a public housing development. And they had moved- I think- about less than a year before I was born and had- they were very proud of the fact that this was their new place and had architect-designed furniture built in, et cetera, et cetera, which was- I mean I saw some of these drawings because we had them along during the emigration and they were very proud of their beautiful designed flat, which we didn't keep all that long, because when Hitler came, we were thrown out that day. On the 11th of March, we no longer were residents in that flat.

*Just to be a bit, a bit earlier. What sort of friends did [00:04:00] your parents have and what's the circles? What did they do?*

Well, they have a lot of friends. I think similar to them, they used to go to the opera quite frequently and to the theatre and concerts. My father was very interested in music. My mother loved opera. So, you know, they, they went quite frequently out and did things with both friends of theirs and relations. So - my mother had two brothers who also lived in the area, although one uncle moved to Portugal and we come to that a bit later in the story. So, they had an- my father's family, he had -at that time I think- seven of his uncles and aunts were still alive. My grandmother on that side of the family, on my father's side of the family, originally there were 10 of them. So, it was a large family. So, there was a lot of family connections and they had quite an active social life.

*What about your grandparents?*

Both grandmas were alive and neither grandpa was alive. My father's father died when he was four years old of an industrial accident. He worked for the railways and he was killed in a railway accident. My mother's father died- must've been a year or two- before I was born. I never met either grandpa.

*You met the grandmothers?*

I met both grandmas. [chuckles]

*Did they get on or...?*

Yes, they did. I mean, they [00:06:00] vied for attention, but yes, they did. And my mother not surprisingly was a bit closer to her- it was actually her stepmother, because her stepmother brought her up. Her mother died when she was about seven. So- it was her stepmother who brought her up and we called her Malkig. I don't know why, Malkig.

*Malkig?*

Yes. That was some corruption of Korneuburg, because that was where she lived. I think my sister must've made that up, but we always knew her as Malkig. So...

*That was your mother's*

My mother's mother, grand- stepmother.

*Tell me what are your first memories or do you have any memories?*

I have no memories of Austria. I mean when I described Austria to somebody, I'd describe palm trees. Clearly, I was thinking of Portugal and not Vienna. So, so…

*You don't remember anything?*

I don't remember. We did have cine film and I've seen myself running around in Schönbrunn Park, and my sister and I playing and stuff like that, but I have no memories from that period. My memories start actually not in '38 either, in '39. My actual memory started when we picked up Omi, my father's mother in Portugal at the docks. I remember picking her up and that was my earliest memory. So...

*In Vienna, it's what you've reconstructed from out [crosstalk]*

That's right, from other things.

*Did your sister remember anything?*

Oh yes, my sister remembered. That's how she chided me when I sent her a picture of what I thought was our flat. And she said that doesn't look right. That isn't where we were. Of course, she was right. It had been bombed apparently and this was a new building. So- my sister was always right.

*She was a bit older?*

Yes, she was four years older than me.

*Did she go to school in Vienna before you left?*

No. We had a nursemaid who took care of us.

*Tell us a little bit. Who was the nursemaid?*
I don't remember her actually, but I was apparently very fond of her and she stopped working for us the instant Hitler came, because her boyfriend was a Nazi, so- and of course she couldn't work for Jews anyway. Being a nice Catholic young woman, so that was no, no, but yes, I loved her dearly apparently and I was bereaved when she couldn't come with us, because she didn't come with us while we were still in Austria, you know, to- because my parents, it took us about six months to get papers and everything to leave. There was a period of time when we were still in Vienna, although not in our flat, but she wasn't able to work with us.

*What was her name?*

I called her my Dittel. I don't know why, I think her name was Maria, but I'm not sure.

*My Dittel?*

Yes, and I was Dita. It seems like it was a corruption of the two.

*You said just to come back to the flat, this was a specific- this was a new worker's—*
*Hietzing was a sort of working-class district?*

Yes.

*It was one of these-*

Well, it was near Schönbrunn Palace. So, it was a mixture of working-class and quite near, quite upper class, but yes.

*They wanted to build this to- they wanted to attract the doctor to come [00:10:00] to-*

Yes.

*-be there in this--*

To work for the National Health Service because they had one that early on.

*What was your father- did he specialise in anything [crosstalk]?*

Well, his- I've got one of his *Rezeptblocks* [prescription blocks] and it was *Frauen- und Kinderarzt* [gynaecologist and paediatrician], but I think he actually must have treated men as well, because he was also the doctor of one of the local boxing clubs. So, I think he was a GP.

*Which boxing club?*

Well, it was Local District Boxing Club.

*So, did you live- so there was a practice in one part of the flat and another one you lived?*

Yes.

*Who lived in the flat?*

My mother, my father, my sister, and I. I think the nursemaid came on a daily basis. I must have - I think we probably had a maid as well, I'm not sure about that, to clean.

*You said they had, they lost the flat on the same day, did you find out why that it was so sudden? Was there any specific reason?*

Because he was Jewish and therefore his terms of employment were severed.

*Because he was employed by the government?*

Yes.

*Okay.*

Yes, so they moved into a hotel and they didn't take- friends of ours on this hotel, and they didn't take my sister and I, because there was what in those days was called [00:11:43] *ein Stundenhotel* [hotel which rents out rooms hourly - often frequented by prostitutes and pairs of lovers], and they decided that it wasn't appropriate for little children. So, we were boarded out with the grannies. We went first to my Catholic granny [00:12:00] and we stayed there for six or eight weeks until Raspenau, where she lived, was- needed to be *"judenrein"* [free of Jews], so we then moved in with the other granny in Stockerau.

*Where was the first, where did she live? In Raspenau?*

In Raspenau, these were suburbs of Vienna.

*You moved, and the grandmother, what happened to her? Where did she go?*

The Catholic granny?

*No, the Jewish grandma [crosstalk].*

The Jewish granny. Omi came with us in the emigration, I mean not literally with us, but she followed us both to Portugal and to America.

*But I meant in the first instance when you moved to the other grandmother, where did she go?*

She was living with her mother in Stockerau and she stayed there. She hadn't lived with us in, in Vienna.

*All right, I understand. Obviously, because it was a mixed marriage, was there any notion that it could pass over that your father was protected because he was married to your mother, or was there a plan to have a divorce or things like that or both?*

Yes, in a mistaken view that it might help, he became a Catholic as well. Needless to say, it didn't help.

*When? Do you have the papers or...?*

Yes.
*When did he?*

Shortly after Hitler came, you know. Because my Catholic granny knew the priest very well in Stock- in Korneuburg. She was a communicant and did actually go to church.

*The grandmother?*

Yes, and they had argued about which religion to bring the children up in [00:14:00] and no decision had been made, so when- so all of us suddenly became Catholic in 1938 including my father, so that was when I was baptised belatedly and my sister belatedly.

*Do you know what was the attitude, let's say of the grandmother- of the non-Jewish grandmother?*

I think she was open to anything that would help. I mean, they actually liked each other, the two grannies. They knew each other, you know, and there was a bit of rivalry for, you know, who was the better granny, but they knew each other and family celebrations would include both, birthday parties and things like that.

*Did they- probably celebrated Christmas and some of the Jewish holidays [crosstalk]?*

Yes.

*And- I know you won't remember it, so when did know or think that they first thought of emigrating?*

Well, they must have thought about it earlier, because my great- grandmother, the one that lived in Stockerau, my sister and my mother called her Frau General [00:15:35]. She had apparently very materialistic tendencies [chuckles]. She was a rather stern lady and in 1937, her neighbour's son came to visit and he grew up in Stockerau, but had emigrated to America in the 1930s, in the early '30s and lived in St. Louis, Missouri. And she had asked him whether he would sponsor children of hers, children's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren of hers should Hitler influence what happens in Austria. So, she was much more prescient than my parents were, because they didn't try to move money out or anything else ahead of time. And she asked whether he would sponsor our family, and the family that she had in mind was us, because we were the only ones that had a younger generation. My uncles and aunts did eventually have children, but none of them had children at that time, so they weren't breeding. So that- she decided that we were the ones that might be vulnerable and asked whether he would sponsor us to America, so we had visas to- for America.

*You had affidavits.*

Affidavits, yes. And, and m y fa- my mother, my sister and I had visas as well, but the- there was no Aus- Hungarian visa for my father, because of course in- when they were born, when my parents were born, it was Austria-Hungary, it was all one country. And it wasn't until after the First World War that it divided it up and it ended up that my father was born in the part of Austro-Hungary that became Hungary. That had a small American quota. The American quota system was based on how many of that country were in America in the 1926 census [00:18:00] and apparently there were very few Hungarians, but there were lots of Czechs and lots of Austrians. So that's how come my sister and I and my mother could have gone to America in 1938, but my father couldn't.

*So that was not an option for your family?*

That was not an option as far as my mother was concerned. She did not want to separate the family. She thought that we would have to flee somewhere else and she had a brother in

Portugal, and Portugal was a country that would allow refugees in, particularly if they had a sponsor. And my uncle who actually probably couldn't have kept us going because he was not a very good businessman [laughs], but he said he would, and therefore we got visas to go to Portugal.

*How come he was in Portugal, because he was...?*

He worked for the part of a family that did bijouterie [00:19:07] sort of what I call junk jewellery, so non-precious metals, and non-precious jewels and he was their representative for the Iberian Peninsula. And I don't know how long he'd been there, but they certainly as far as I knew, had been there for quite a while. He was the representative for the Iberian Peninsula. He was not a very good businessman, my uncle, dear person, wonderful, I remember him very fondly. He was little. I mean, as a grown-up, I towered over him, I think he was five-foot tall and my Aunt Bertha was even smaller, but they were absolutely charming wonderful people.

*Because they were not in exile, they didn't have to [crosstalk].*

No, they were there representing the family firm. And anyway, they were Catholic.

*Yes, that's what I mean. They didn't have to leave.*

No.

*So, it was a coincidence [crosstalk]*

It was a permanent placement or semi-permanent anyway that he, you know, lived there. They'd lived there for years as far as I knew- so before we came. So...

*But your parents felt that they had to get out of Austria?*

Yes, yes.

*And what did they manage to take with them?*

Quite a bit of goods.

*Was there a lift arranged, you know- a...?*

Yes, we had a delivery of- I think my father even took his piano to Portugal. Certainly didn't come to America, but I think it came to Portugal with us. I don't remember that terribly well. Most of the furniture had been built in, so we couldn't take that, but we took all our goods and China and stuff like that. So yes, we went with quite a bit of clubber [00:21:12].

*Tell me a little bit about the journey. I know- even if you don't remember it from your reconstruction.*

We went by train, including both grannies came to the border of Germany with us- to Paris. When we left, we left in July, early- late June or early July of 1938 for Paris. And at that stage, we had visas to go to Portugal but no transport, so they looked for transport when we were in Paris. And eventually, got some transport [00:22:00] going on a ship, which was way oversold. And the cabin that we had was actually occupied by somebody else. Not unusually, shipping companies were making a fortune by not very noble dealing. And I spent the time on the boat in a, in a gentleman's cabin who had left his wife behind and her name was Edith. My sister spent time with a German family, whose six-year-old, she was six, my sister, was a bedwetter. My parents spent the time in the lounge, so- and it was apparently a rather turbulent crossing through the Bay of Biscay and everybody was seasick. I don't remember this. So, but my sister does.

*Where did you leave from France?*

Le Havre.

*From Le Havre to?*

To Lisbon. And then it went to South America, and most of the refugees were going to South America.

*But you disembarked.*

We disembarked in Lisbon.

*You have no recollections of that journey?*

No, I don't.

*I wonder whether your parents, because they were in a mixed marriage, so to speak, whether they felt then danger. Do you see what I mean that- whether that [crosstalk]…*

..

Yes. More in danger?

*Because the theory it was, you know, against race laws. If you didn't get divorced, that would- maybe push them to emigrate. I don't know.*

My father had no job and we had no place to live. So, you know. There was not much point in staying. [00:24:00] So, you know. What would we live on? So, you know. I'm actually thankful that it happened that way, because it would have been harder to get out. Although my, my- with bribery, see we had a fair amount of money. Not all of which was liquidated immediately, although we couldn't take it out. So, because my, my Omi followed us, the Jewish granny, in 1939. And she could, we could still get passage for her and a visa to go with bribery, because there were a number of people who were either- my father knew because they'd been patients or whatever or were, could be bribed to issue visas illegally.

*When did she come out?*

She came out in 1939. And I do remember her coming. I don't remember which month. It was sunny, but of course it's sunny in Portugal a lot of the time. Because I actually remember

going down to the- to pick her up at the key side. It was terribly exciting, and that's when my memories start.

*And she came also on the boat from France, on the same route?*

Probably. More than likely. So...

*So, she followed you a year later?*

Yes. A little over a year later.

*So, your parents, you spend the time from the Anschluss till July, so four or five months in Vienna, then you left?*

Yes.

*And then your grandmother came. In the first time, did you move in with your uncle or what?*

Yes, we moved in to a two-bedroom flat. It was bit of a squash. [00:26:00] So, so and my father was able to get employment almost immediately as a doctor. They wouldn't let him practice privately, but he got an employment with HIAS [Jewish American non-profit organisation that provides humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees], the Hebraic, whatever it is, the assistance for, whatever it is.

*HIAS, which is still ongoing, still ongoing- going strong in America.*

As a doctor, because Portugal had a series. It was a stopping off place of people emigrating all around the world. People who walked over the Pyrenees and et cetera, et cetera. And they very often needed medical treatment and/or needed medical advice or in order to get into the other countries have treatment. So, he had quite a busy time and was busily employed the whole time we were in Portugal. We did move into our own flat once he got the employment and knew that we could afford housing. So...and-

*It's quite extraordinary that he managed to--*

Yes. We were lucky in so many ways and the fact that he had a transportable career. Because I mean- a lot of our, my- other refugee friends had parents who were accountants or lawyers, and a lot of them could not pick up the threads in another country. Although I mean, why accountancy can't be transferable, I'm not quite sure, but it wasn't in those days. So many of them ended up in New York owning factories of varying kinds, went into manufacturing. For a while they did all kinds of portable jobs like selling door to door... [00:28:00] jams of homemade stuff and et cetera, et cetera.

*So, tell us a little more, what other memories have you got of your time in Lisbon?*

Very happy memories actually, because my uncle and aunt were lovely, open-hearted, fun people. My father was a six-footer and my Uncle Otto was five foot, but the two of them got on well, and Otto was a wonderful influence on my father. He lightened my father's touch. And we spent a lot of time going to the beach, sightseeing, doing all kinds of- I mean, they didn't have much money, but public transport was not expensive. And so, we did a lot of journeys to Cascais, which was just a railway trip down. And Sundays, we went usually to a beach somewhere. We went sightseeing, went on boat trips. We had a very good time, and I loved the zoo. I'm one of the few people that as an adult the first thing I wanted to see when I went to visit my cousin Paul years later was take me to the zoo.

*In Lisbon?*

Yes, in Lisbon, because I remember it from childhood. And they had a children's park, and for our birthday party, my mother rented one of the little houses and we had our birthday party with friends coming to visit us in our house in the zoo. We were wearing dirndls. I forgot that we- oh, clothes has- has a story, because we couldn't take out [00:30:00] money out of Vienna, we could take out goods. So, my parents bought- we went to Bittmann, which apparently was a good children's outfitters, and got clothes for us that the age we were two years older, four years older, six years older. So, we were in the same bloody clothes on pictures way into, you know, our American era. I was dying to have the equivalent of Marks & Spencer clothes like all my friends, but instead I hand these lovely mocked-smocked

dresses from Bittmann. So, you know, you can't please children, because they want to be like everybody else instead of these really very beautiful clothes. And my mother was a seamstress. She was- she had been to *Handelsschule* [commercial college] and, and had passed her exams and was very good. Our Singer sewing machine moved with us to America, her machine, and she did make our clothes if we had run out of these Bittmann ones that she had bought.

*Bittmann?*

Yes, it was a very fancy- apparently, it still exists in Vienna.

*But not all dirndls, some dirndls. Did you have dirndls for every size?*

No. I think we've ran out of dirndls after that size. Although, I think, actually we did wear them again once in New York when there was some- when there was an Austrian- one of the Austrians must have been- it wasn't the König. It must have been whoever they threw out after the First World War came to visit, and we did get out these dirndls again, which I thought was really bizarre, but anyway, because by that time I did not feel the slightest bit Austrian. [laughs]

*Maybe your parents still did.*

Yes, yes. I'd never seen the Austrian flag. It was the first time I'd see the Austrian flag.

*In America?*

In America.

*But your parents had managed in Portugal, they...?*

Yes, yes, we had quite a good time in Portugal. They managed quite well, both financially and emotionally. So - and the reason why we left was because the American Consul in 1941 thought that Salazar who was the dictator in Portugal and Franco who was the dictator in

Spain, would allow Hitler to come through the Iberian Peninsula. He thought there was a very strong risk, and he thought, "Therefore, it was dangerous for Jews to remain in Portugal." That's why he issued my father with an illegal visa so we could go to America in 1941. And we left in May 1941 for America.

*Do you think, otherwise, your parents would have stayed in Portugal?*

Possibly. I'm rather glad that they did go to America [laughs], because I quite value my American citizenship as well as my British citizenship. So...

*You said your mother was a seamstress, but did she help you father in the practice as well in Vienna?*

No, no.

*Later in America?*

In America. Yes, yes. She supported us when we got to America, because my father couldn't practice in America. Because in America, the system is that you have to be licensed by the state and you have to pass the state exam. [00:34:00] And although the University of Vienna had an extremely good reputation worldwide, for the time that my father had been there, it wasn't an automatic thing that you showed them your diploma, you know. You had to pass the New York state exam. That's true for dentists as well and all the licensed professions, beauticians, et cetera, is all state-mandated. And it took him a while before he could pass his exams. For one thing, you have to learn everything in English, and that's not every, you know, 206 bones in the body and what they're called, and every organ, and the names of operations, and Lord knows what else. So, he joined the group of doctors in America who was studying for state boards. And he also spent a lot of time in movie houses just learning, listening to English.

*Speaking of languages, which language did you speak to your parents in Lisbon?*

German, German. My picture storybooks were all in German.

*They kept the German-*

They kept the German.

*What about Portuguese? Did you pick up some Portuguese?*

I picked up some Portuguese apparently, yes, because, you know, we had a maid. I had to speak to her and other people, et cetera, et cetera, but the language in the family would continue to be German and all my picture storybooks were in German.
Bea: What about school? You didn't go to school?
Edith: I didn't go to school, but my sister went to a Catholic Germ school- German school run by nuns. That was the only German-speaking school in Portugal. And that's where she became a fanatic Catholic. She had her first communion there, and they did [00:36:00] indoctrinate her. So...

*That way, you were all Catholic because you had all--*

Well, we were officially Catholic, but my mother used to go to church as in when she felt like it, you know. She was not really a strict Catholic, neither, I don't think was my Catholic granny, you know. They wore their religion lightly, shall we say. So - my *Taufpatin* [godmother]. My godmother was a Catholic. And Hilde is actually officially one of my names. That was my Taufpatin- birth. What do we call it? Godmother.

*Godmother. That was still in Vienna when you were "getauft" [baptised]? [ 00:36:55]*

*Yes.*

*But - so she went to Catholic school and- your sister?*

Yes, the whole time that we were in Portugal, and then we got to America, not speaking a word of English.

*So, by then you had German and some Portuguese?*

Yes. I found that a bit spooky. We went- there was a German-speaking summer program in the neighbourhood where we lived that a lot of us went to. And when I went to Vienna, relatively recently, it wasn't an AJR thing. It was this Vienna welcome, where they invite people that they threw out to come back. And I met some people there who had been at the same public school in America, and had also been in this summer camp thing which was German [00:38:00] speaking. Bu something spooked me there and I had a- my eyes had a-- I think my father decided that it was probably some sort of reaction to- I was scared of going to it. I don't know who spooked me there, but in any case, my eyelids were shut every morning and pasted shut with some, whatever. And I didn't want to go and I'd scream and et cetera, et cetera, and because Omi hadn't yet come and my mother immediately took a job as a factory hand, somebody had to bring in money. So, she took a job as a chocolate cherry dunker in a factory and then in a dress factory. My mother was a very practical woman. And yes, she had been a *"Frau Doktor"* [here: wife of a doctor] and with a status, but she was perfectly willing to go and get a factory job because if you don't speak the language, you can't get much else. So, she supported us on her $14 a week or whatever she was earning as a factory hand in a factory. So that was mother's take on it.

*Just slightly before, in Lisbon, you said so the grandmother joined you, only joined you, and she lived with you?*

Yes.

*So, she, she was taking care of you.*

Yes, but she stayed behind when we went to America, because she didn't yet have a visa or we didn't have enough money for her travel. I'm not sure which.

*Tell us a little more- but you said your father managed to get the visa, the Consul, American Consul gave him a visa?*

Yes.

*You said it wasn't a proper visa. Tell us a little bit [crosstalk].*

Well, he borrowed something from 1947. So, some Hungarian who might have gone [chuckles] in 1947 couldn't, because he borrowed a visa. I mean that was the illegality. It was a visa for another year, not for the year that we were using.

*Right. So, you took another quota?*

Yes, yes. So...

*In fact, some children also left from Lisbon, unaccompanied children at the same time or it was just you?*

Yes.

*So, on your boat, were there any of these unaccompanied children for example?*

I think so, but we did have a whole lot of- I mean they may have been there, but I didn't know it, because we were separated into male and female dormitories. There were no cabins in this. It was all for refugee transport, and so I didn't necessarily know who was connected with whom as it were. We did have, however, dixie cup fights, dixie cups are paper cups in that sort of shape, cone-shaped, on the boat between the Nazis and, and the refugees. Because there were a lot of Germans on board as well whom we called the Nazis and it turned out that they really were Nazis, because it was quite exciting on the ship going over. Never quite knew whether, whether this was chance or real, but we stopped to pick up ambergris, which is a product of a sick whale, partway across the ocean and took it into oil drums, but it smells to high heaven. It's an expensive product that they use in, in perfume manufacture. And- although it stank, but anyway, so we took this on board near [00:42:00] Bermuda and then they docked in Bermuda to get rid of these oil drums full of ambergris. While we were in Bermuda, they came on board and took off pretty much all the German contingent because they really were spies [chuckles] including the children... so, the ones who were our enemies in these fights. So, it was a very interesting voyage. [chuckles]

*Who took them off?*

The British, British MI5 I presume came on board and interviewed everybody, us as well, I mean my parents, they didn't interview the children. So, so there were really German spies onboard. So, we had quite an interesting journey [chuckles] to America.

*You lived in Portugal within the German-speaking-*

Community.

*-community, whether it was refugees or German-Austrian posted for other reasons in Lisbon?*

Yes. And my father, because of his job met a lot of refugees who ended up in America and whom we met again walking on Broadway, who then became patients of his once he qualified [chuckles], so, so this ex-Portuguese refugees, so, yes, so because that was a fairly common route.

*Yes. Do you remember then the voyage- from this voyage [crosstalk]?*

Yes, that voyage I remember greatly.

*Go on tell us- as much as you can from the beginning.*
Well, it was just very exciting [laughs]. So, we had our first cornflakes and the reason why we ordered them every morning is because they serve them with fresh strawberries and cream. [00:44:00] We ate the strawberries and cream and left the flakes, [chuckles] so we thought this was wonderful. And we also had the first corn on the cob and the waiter have to show me how to eat it, [chuckles] so, because I thought you held it [chuckles] sideways. I'd never seen that before. Yes, it was, it was quite an exciting adventure for children anyway. I had started bedwetting in Portugal. On this whole immigration, I found not an easy thing and that continued until I was 14. So, it was a bit of a bother, and usually relatively easily contained while we were at home, but again difficult like- on the journey, you know. My

mother would have to change the sheets, because we were in a triple-decker thing and I can't remember whether I was above her or below her. But in any case, [chuckles] my sister and my mother and I were next to each other in one way or another on that trip. And I continued bedwetting. So that was, I suppose, my body's way of expressing the angst that was there through this whole immigration.

*Although you were with your parents and sister?*

Yes. It still cropped up and has continued to do so at times in my life when I'm stressed. And I think had something to do with later times when we were posted to Brussels, which was a disastrous time, which we- I'll come to later. [chuckles]

*Continued immigrating in different ways.*

Yes, yes. I found immigration to be a difficult time. So...

*Although you're saying you were actually excited going to America.*

Oh, yes.

*But it was a change?*

It was a change.

*It was a big change.*
I remember being terrified of my first day of school, because what frightened me was [chuckles] how would I let them know that I need to go to the toilet? So- and luckily, when I did start kindergarten I had two lovely teachers. It was a double class with 2 teachers, 50 children and 2 teachers. And the teachers were kind and gentle and accommodating and sweet. And somehow- I mean, you couldn't do it nowadays, they sat me on their lap and would teach me English. I had to name things and that they considered that part of their teaching duty. And they must have said something to the other kids, because I was never treated as a class idiot, you know. They were told to name things for me. If we were playing

picture dominoes, they were supposed to ask and what is that? I would say, it's a pear or they would say, it's a pear, and I would follow them and say, yes, that's a pear. Well, I could see that it was a picture of a pear. I just didn't know that it was not a Birne [00:47:35] but a pear. But I picked up very quickly. My sister and I, I think, picked up English within three months, we were speaking to each other in English. That was speeded up actually by Pearl Harbor Day and America declaring war on both Japan and Germany. [00:48:00] And we then didn't want to be speaking the enemy's language. You know, I couldn't explain to people easily that Austria and Jews, you know, we're not actually the enemies [laughs]. We were on the same side, but you know, so we didn't want to speak German in public. So i t was a big impetus to learn English quickly, and we did so.

*Why did your parents decide to go to New York or how did that...?*

I don't think they ever considered anything else. I'm not quite sure why. I think they- it being a big city and a lot of refugees settled there. So, I mean, when we arrived, a friend of ours, Himmel- Frau Hingel - Himmelreich [00:48:55] who then changed her name to Hamilton had taken a flat for us. We had met her in Portugal and she came from Vienna as well. And she had taken a one-bedroom. Well, it was a one-room flat, so four of us [chuckles] lived in a one-room flat, but at least we had a place to stay.

*Where was it, so where?*

On 73rd Street between Broadway and West End Avenue. Around the corner from the hotel Ansonia, made famous in the movie with Walter Matthau [chuckles] some years later, but anyway. And in those days in 1941, a German was as common on Broadway as English was, because it was a hive of refugees so, and Czechs and Hungarians and other nationalities.

*Did you arrive on Ellis Island?*

No, and that was because, because we had this hiatus in, in Bermuda, we arrived too late in New York to dock. It was a Saturday, and Saturday and Sunday it cost too much to dock, because the longshoremen get triple overtime. So, we docked there, and then sailed in on a Monday morning. So, we were later than expected docking in Hackensack, New Jersey. Then

took the- there's a train that goes back into New York City. And they had- this friend had rented this flat for us, so we got there. And my mother started looking for a job, and her first job was in a candy manufacturer. She was dipping cherries into chocolate.

*And could your parents - could you bring something on that trip, or did you have to leave most of the furniture and other things behind?*

We took pictures, but no furniture, the furniture was left behind. So that and that has been with me forever, and a few other things like that. We had- and our duvets and- but duvets weren't American in those days, we had our duvets along. We took a lot of goods, that sort of goods, but not heavy items. And the piano and furniture stayed behind. I don't know whatever happened to it. I suppose it was sold. I don't really know. And so, we, we were furnitureless and that became a bit of a joke later with [00:52:00] my sister, because we bought furniture from the Salvation Army. And she said it was a good two years after that she discovered it was a religious society. She thought it was a furniture shop, so- because they sold used furniture, which was what we lived with, you know, when we first arrived.

*Your mother started working and your father started to requalify?*

Yes, she started working. Yes. There was a doctors' group that got together, and with a tutor who must have been a refugee as well and knew the equivalences and was teaching them, you know, the names of varying things.

*How good was your parents' English at that point?*

My father knew a bit of English. Why he didn't teach any of us, I do not know. And retrospectively, I get angry that he didn't, because he did have some English. But he didn't spread it. My mother knew no English and she was very disappointed, because the dress business, she wasn't learning English either because they were all Puerto Rican, Italian, or some other, Yiddish. So, she learnt some- she could talk to the boss in German, because he understood Yiddish. So, it was run by a Jew. So, yes, my sister and I took it upon ourselves to teach my mother and also my granny who followed us to America, English.

*How did she manage to come in?*

We got a visa for her as well, and she followed us once we had accommodation. The reason why she didn't come right away is because we knew we didn't have accommodation, or money to pay, you know, so- for accommodation. I don't think that my father earned enough in Portugal to give us much in the way of reserve. So, I mean, we left- we lost a lot of money in Austria, because they didn't move any of it right ahead of time.

*And then she moved in with you, your grandma?*

Yes, once we had a flat, you know, rather than this one bedroom, living room, dining room, kitchen, et cetera.

*Where was the flat, where in New York?*

On the West side, on 77th Street between Westend Avenue and Riverside Drive. That's where we met the Preminger's. We met them in Central- Riverside Park when my sister and I were playing in the park and Eve was playing in the park. And my granny and Kate, who's Eve's mum, both talked German to us, and they happened to be sitting next to each other and started talking German to each other. And we found out we were living in the same building and we made a lifelong friendship.

*So, this is Eve Kugler?*

No, this is Eve Preminger.

*Preminger?*

Yes. As in Otto Preminger, the film director. That was her uncle. So, so, so. I'm still friendly with Eve, or at least I saw her two years ago in London. I haven't seen her since. But I mean, we used to visit each other. We were best friends in pub- primary school, so, because they lived near us. My father delivered her brother. I mean, he was their family doctor.

*How do you spell Preminger? [00:56:00] P-?*

P-R-E-M-I-N-G-E-R.

*So, they, in New York, you moved in the refugee circles?*

Yes, and bought things at Schaller &Weber in York- in what's called Yorkshire [Yorkville]. I mean so, it's on 82nd Street on the East side. There was a little quarter that was German speaking. And there was a German speaking newspaper that my granny used to read.

*Called the?*

What was it called? The *Arbeiter*? That doesn't sound right.

*Aufbau?*

*Aufbau.* Yes. That's it, *Aufbau.*

*Which is still going.*

Is it?

*Yes, in German. It's quite interesting. Yes.*

We could get the right paprika to make things, you know, on the East side.

*Foods, we didn't discuss foods. What was the food you were eating?*

Oh, food. Granny, my grandmother was the cook, and it was German diet. It was Austrian diet, absolutely.

*Such as?*

Such as schnitzel, which was my favourite. We did have Rote Nudeln [red pasta] as well, and chicken and goulash and... Mother found that you could make goulash as well when we had very little money, with chicken gizzards, which they gave away at the rotisserie chicken place. So, my mother was very ingenious. My granny used to make friends with the green grocer, and he would save her vegetables that were going off and fruit that was going off. So, we had endless fruit salad. I never had whole pieces of fruit for the first year we were in America. Because it was all these bits and pieces.

*Had to manage in the hard financial times?*

Yes. We were never hungry, so you know, but it was touch and go, living on $14 a week that my mother brought in.

*And do you think that they received any help from any organisations?*

No.

*From HIAS or anyone?*

No. I don't know if there were organisations that we could applied to, but no, no, we didn't receive any help. So...

*Was there any correspondence with families still in Austria? Was there family left behind?*

Yes. There was family left behind, not many, all of my uncles and aunts, so my grandmother's generation got out all over the place. Two to South America, three to America, one to Shanghai, one to Palestine, so yes. So, because with money, with bribery, you could still get out.

*So, you've got family all over the world?*

Yes. Did have, yes. They've died out, and a lot of them didn't have children. I don't know why, but anyway, of my father's generation. Yes, so he was one of the few that did have a family.

*Who stayed, who was left in Austria or...?*

My great- grandmother, *"Frau General",* as we called her. She thankfully died. I think actually, this was interesting. She was a diabetic and my Catholic grandma used to get the [01:00:00] insulin for her and bring it to her. And she died in 1943 just before she was supposed to be transferred east, I presume to Auschwitz. Now, whether or not, it was because she couldn't get the insulin- she died in her bed.

*Is there a grave for her? Is she buried in Vienna?*

She must be. So, I mean, it was my Catholic granny that would send us the news. She was the only one that was left of that big family. Everybody else got out.

*And were you in touch with the Catholic grandmother?*

Yes.

*Yes. What happened to her during the war?*

During the war, she had some privation and the worst time was because she was in the Russian zone, so it was after the war. She suffered quite severe hunger. So, I mean we sent, you know, care packages and the like, but there was still very little food. The first time I saw her, which was in 1956, she was still in the habit of not leaving her house without having a *Semmelbrot* [bread roll] put in her handbag just in case she got hungry because food was very scarce in Vienna at the end- at the very end of the war and in the Russian zone, particularly, they were hard pressed.

*When did your mother see her mother again first time after the war?*

In 1951- I'm trying to think when they went, 1951. [01:02:00] That was funny. My sister and I did tease my parents. They went back on what I would call, "We did very well in America, thank you very much and up yours," to all the, the Austrians. My mother got her first mink stole. Why in August do you need a mink stole? I don't know, you know, but anyway. They had 14 pieces of matched luggage because they went on the Queen Mary and it was just this, you know, ostensive, show off.

*Glamorous.*

Glamorous, yes to show.

*To show off to Vienna.*

Yes, to show.

*What did they- but you can go?*

No.

*What did they report from that trip?*

They had a wonderful time and they went to Bad Gastein and they went here, there and everywhere. And they showed off that they'd done well in America, so, which they wanted to do, so. I suppose I can understand. I thought it was a bit childish, but still, still.

*At that time, they had American- were they naturalised?*

Yes, we became naturalised Americans in 1947, all of us.

*Was it important?*

Yes. Extremely important. So. For one thing, I wanted to vote. I mean, as an 11-year-old I couldn't. Yes, it was very important to become American. And we were quite patriotic. After all, the Americans did help defeat Hitler. So, so.

*Did you still speak some German? Did you continue-*

Because Omi lived with us and was never good in German, I retained German. It's at eight -year-old or nine-year-old level. You know, I can't discuss philosophy or religion or [01:04:00] any other higher order things. But-

*You continue speaking German till now?*

Yes. I've retained German because of Omi. So.

*You said that your parents were not particularly religious, what did they do once in America? Did they look out for the support of any organisations or your grandmother did you go to-*

No.

*-the synagogue or-*

No. Synagogues were quite expensive in America. I mean membership cost several hundred dollars which was surplus to- as far as we would say. I mean, my sister and I didn't have enough money to join Girl Scouts. So, so that would have been considered- now I know that religion isn't in the same category, but there wasn't spare cash for that sort of thing. Clearly, it never meant much to my father.

*They didn't look into that?*

No, he knew he was Jewish. I actually went to a bris that he officiated there, so [laughs] he knew how to do it. And somehow, he must have had-- he had a bar mitzvah. I know that, but

neither parent was particularly religious. My mother would go- at Christmas, we would go to church with her, and at Easter, and that was about it.

*In New York?*

In New York.

*So where did you go?*

The local church. Our public school had a strange sort of thing in that if you belong to a religion, you could go for religious instruction for an hour a week in school time. And so we went to the local Catholic Church, which was run by Irish Catholics, and was really not very highbrow to put it mildly. We did nothing but talk about sin and [01:06:00] forgiveness and whatever. And I gave up on Catholicism when I worked out that no matter what I confessed on Friday night, I always got six Hail Marys and six Our Fathers to say as penance. Whether or not I was mean to my mother, I think if I had murdered somebody, I would have got the same and I just decided I don't believe in this so I stopped going. I told my sister that a three-hour Good Friday service she'd have to go on her own because I didn't want any more of this malarkey. And I'd never been taken to - the neighbourhood where we lived was a peculiar neighbourhood in so far as the main streets like West End Avenue and Broadway and Columbus Avenue and Central Park West and Riverside Drive were middle class Jewish and the side streets and Columbus Avenue and Amsterdam Avenue were working-class Irish Catholic or Italian Catholic. And there was nothing much in between, you know, and because the school streamed by exam results, I was always in what the Jewish lot. So, all my friends were Jewish, nominally. I only had one practicing Jew who actually celebrated and taught me what to do at Passover, you know, because I was with her mother when they were going through their books, getting rid of the crumbs and stuff like that, so I had minimal sort of- most of what I learned [01:08:00] about Judaism was when I was an au pair [01:08:02] for a rabbi one summer on Fire Island, so I know how to keep kosher, so, et cetera, et cetera. But most of my Jewish friends in both in public school and in high school were non practicing. They would do things like go to Chinese restaurants and have barbecued spareribs which were not pork- because they said so. So, I think it was a sort of light touch Judaism or Catholicism.

*Did your father start working as a doctor?*

Yes.

*When?*

In 1942. Sometime in 1942, he passed his exams I think it was- we were there for about 14, 15 months, something like that. And we then moved to West End Avenue and had a ground floor flat, which was office cum home. It was together, a bit like in Austria, which was why ground floor and it was in a 13-story block. So, we never saw the sun because it didn't get to the ground floor. So, but anyway.

*Then things got easier financially?*

Not immediately, but after a while, yes.

*With the GPU?*

Yes. Because the American Medical Association was vehemently against socialised medicine, he was tithed $400 a year by the American Medical Association, which you have to belong to if you're practicing, [01:10:00] to fight against socialised medicine which he wanted because he'd been part of it and he thought it was a good thing- so but anyway, that was- most of his patients were fellow refugees.

*Because there was a, such a - where there must've been all kinds of refugee restaurants. Do you remember some of the cafes and restaurants?*

Well, we didn't go to many of them, but Florence Bakery, which was near us, which was, yes. The first time I went to a bakery in Stamf- not Stamford Hill, but down the hill from Stamford Hill, what's it called? Anyway, in that district of London.

*Stoke Newington.*

Edith: Yes, well, there. It looked just like Florence Bakery. It was the same stuff. So, yes, the patisseries are similar, their *Konditoreien.* And they have the same stock so I felt very at home.

*So, your father had his clients- patients?*

Yes. Our first American friends, my parents'- I mean, weren't until 1951. We made friends with our dentist and they were Americans, and that was really the first American friends that my parents had. So - other than that, it was all the refugee community.

*And were your parents tempted to go elsewhere after the war, or no?*

No. They were established in New York.

*And did the end of the war have impact on- in any other way on your lives?*

Well, we tried to find out what happened to-- well, we did have relations, it turns out that were killed more than likely in Auschwitz. I've never been able to find out from the Hungarians. My father's family, as I think I mentioned, my father's father... my father was born in Hungary, in the Hungarian part of Austro-Hungary. His aunts and uncles remained in Hungary and he used to spend most of his summers going there because they lived on a farm and it was, you know, a nice holiday for a child. And we maintained contact with them. Throughout the war in 1944, we still heard from them and they said they thought that they would soon be moving to Budapest- so we thought- and we never heard from them again. Whether or not they were the ones that were shot on the Danube in Hungary in 1944, or the ones that were sent to Auschwitz, I don't know, but it's 44 aunts, uncles and cousins were wiped out.

*On your father's side?*

On my father's side.

*Where did they live in?*

In Bezkow? [01:13:29] which is in part of Bohemia, I think. So. My sister knew more about the geography. She remembered going there, I never did go there.

*Your, your father tried to find out what happened?*

Yes. We never found out what happened so. And none of the other relations knew either so we surmise that that's what happened to them. So, they ran a farm and because it was a productive farm, they were allowed to continue to farm because there was hunger in Hungary so, so as long as they were productive, but then the Nazis put more pressure on them to send them the Jews, not just to gather them up. And, so I think they must have been in that last contingent that came from Hungary, in July, I think it was, 1944. So.

*Do you remember finding out and hearing about the concentration camps and that sort of thing at all or?*

Well, we did find out from, from others, yes. Fairly recently, I read a very interesting - listened to a very interesting TED talk by a Hunter College High School graduate who joined Eve Kugler's Hunter College High School Holocaust Survivors website who talked about the New York Times knowing- that Arthur Sulzberger knew about it in 1943 and didn't let it be published in the Times because he thought there would be reverberations on the Times because he- he was Jewish, that it would not- in any case dirty, I think, because it would have been good to know. My parents did hear via a rumour that there was trouble and that it was unlikely that anybody who had stayed was still alive, [01:16:00] but we didn't hear officially. We did then try through Red Cross and other channels to find because my- I had relations as well on my mother's side that might have been trapped in the Czechoslovakia because there was a partly Jewish side of that family as well. The bijouterie makers. [01:16:28] Apparently my grandmother and the one who died on, on my mother's side also came from a mixed family.

*What's happened to your mum's brother. Did he stay in Lisbon?*

*Yes.*

*Throughout the war?*

Throughout the war.

*And afterwards?*

And afterwards as well. He unfortunately died in a car accident in the mid-'60s. So, he was run over and died but my cousin, I was in touch with until last year, he lived in Lisbon. I went to visit a few times, he came here, well, not here, but to London because he used to, he continued working for the same glass frame makers thing and when Epiphany comes on, on the 6th of January, Paul used to come. There was a meeting of the firm and so he used to come and visit on the 6th of January. He was a lovely man, my cousin.

*You kept in touch with him?*

Yes, I kept in touch with him, and we used to Skype. And thankfully, because when he died, I hadn't heard from him about three months and it was because I Skyped that I found out what happened to him because he was the last one alive who knew about me as it were in his family. He [01:18:00] didn't have children and his wife pre-deceased him. And so, the woman who was administering his affairs, as it were, found my name in his Skype account, and when I Skyped, she Skyped back to say that he had died, otherwise I wouldn't have known.

*Yes, so, you are in America, we are in the post-war period, maybe you could tell us a little bit about your own development in terms of your education and plans.*

Well, I went to PS9 Manhattan. They are very - unlike England, they don't have fancy names for their schools so PS stands for public school and a New York City had 625 of them so they're numbered one to 1 to 625 and PS9 was the one I went to. And it did me very well, I went through eighth grade there. It was a good school, I had a good education. I would say I thrived there. It was based on John Dewey's discovery learning, so it was quite a progressive school. And I got on well with my teachers and I loved school. I did well so I suppose that

started me off on a career in education. Home was a bit different- home was slightly more dangerous because I never quite knew what was going to go on. My parents had a rather tempestuous marriage. [01:20:00] And I remember coming home from school and ringing the doorbell and not quite knowing what it was going to be like inside, so I'd have a little bit of a knot in my tum as to what was going on inside. Mostly it was okay, but every once in a while, there were vibes, so and very good for somebody who ended up being a social psychologist, so because I learned to read vibes of other people very well. Which comes in useful if you do consultancy in schools because I could walk into a staff room and be able to tell what the relationships were like just by where people were sitting and how they were-- body language. So, it's very, very interesting.

*Do you think your parents' relationship was shaped somehow, or influenced with the strains of...?*

It could be. Certainly, they took to change and things totally differently. My father took to his bed with depression, and my mother, you know, got on with it as it were. She just accepted it as being, you know, another hurdle and why not just try to climb it? She was, I think the more adventurous of the two.

*And your father?*

He'd go into a depression and take to his bed, so. And or take it out on the rest of the family by going into one of his dark moods. So. It was sometimes a somewhat dangerous place, or I felt it to be somewhat dangerous place.

*Did they resolve it or how did they...?*

Eventually by separating. Yes, but that was 25 years later. [01:22:00] So, so, so. I think there were different temperaments and no, they didn't resolve it well. My sister took after my father, and I think I took- well, that was one thing. We were brought up that I was my mother's favourite, partly because my sister was so obviously my father's favourite, and so that caused friction between us.

*Between you and your sister?*

Well, between the family altogether. Yes, yes. So, not the best way to bring up children.

*How was your sister adapting to America?*

Well, I think we both adapted quite well. She certainly did well at school. We both hadn't been there very long when we started getting the blue ribbon, which- they gave the blue ribbon for the top performer in the class, and we regularly got those. So, yes. My sister has a or had, she just recently died, a mind like a steel trap. She had a much better memory than me, always, and was a very good student. So, if you play trivial pursuits or something like that, she was a much better partner than I was.

*And what career or what path did she choose?*

She became a professor.

*In what field?*

Psychology. Child psychology.

*That's interesting. You both, in a way, ended up in somehow related fields?*

Yes. Similar anyway, yes. I did once teach a summer school at the University of Kentucky which is where she and Jim were based for most of their career. [01:24:00] It was very odd because I got an honorary professorship because I never acquired that. I was a senior lecturer, but I never became a full professor. So, for six weeks of summer school, I attained that red qualification too.

*So, what were your plans after school, after graduating? What did you think you...?*

I originally wanted to be a lawyer. But... So, I went to university, I started off at Syracuse University. I tried to get into Cornell, but Cornell University had a Jewish quota in those

days, and it also had a New York City quota and I fell afoul of it in both ways, because my parents had not gone to Cornell and I did come from New York City. So, I didn't get into Cornell and my parents wouldn't allow me to go to San Jose, because it was too far away, the University of California, so I ended up at Syracuse University which offered me a full scholarship. But I didn't much like it there, so I stayed for two years and then transferred to Barnard as a junior. And that was a much better experience.

*Why did you not like it there?*

It wasn't very academic. I mean I had done harder work at high school, so I was bored. Curiously enough, I didn't particularly do well because when I was bored, I just switched off. We'd gone to an extremely good and very academic high school, the equivalent [01:26:00] of a girls' grammar school in this country.

*Which school?*

*Hunter College High School. So, and we had superb staff. It was one of the few places- Hunter College was a teacher training institution. And so, we had teachers at our school who had PhDs, and that was not unusual, and treated us as scholars. And it was a very good grounding for an academic career, and then Syracuse University was- we had graduate students teaching us in the first year, and it was a step backwards. And it was also going from an all-girls school to co-ed where men had more speaking time than women. And I didn't much enjoy that either, and went back to Barnard, was an all-girls, well, at that time, it still is actually, it's an all-women's college. It's part of Columbia University, but it is a women's college. Many of the staff were female, not all, but many of them, so we had role models.*

*You think it's an advantage, or it was for you?*

Absolutely for me, yes. It was. So.

*Now, do you still think it has something to offer?*

Yes. I mean there are advantages, I think, to co-ed in that you get to meet the other sex, not just in dating relationships, you know, which is in an everyday manner rather than as a date. So, but, yes, I think there's something to be said for single sex education.

*At Hunter College, were there other children with your background where-or?*

It turns out there were, but what's curious is that very few [01:28:00] of us talked about it at that time. We didn't find out about it until the Hunter College High School Holocaust Survivors website was put up, so and we were asked to contribute to that, and then found that some of the people that we were at school with were fellow refugees, and we didn't necessarily know that.

*Because by then probably you sounded American.*

That's right.

*You didn't have any recognisable sound. What about your name? Did your father ever change his name?*

No.

*No?*

No.

*By then in New York that wouldn't make - doesn't single you out?*

Not particularly. No. So, yes.

*By then also, you wouldn't consider yourself a Holocaust survivor, probably.*

Well, I never did- until it started now, because thankfully, we weren't involved in the Holocaust itself. I mean, some of my father's family were, but none of the immediate family, or uncles and aunts they all, you know, had managed to survive.

*At this time, did your parents talk about the past? Was the past sort of present?*

Yes and no. I mean, yes. Most of their friends were fellow refugees. I didn't notice that so much until retrospectively. You know, so. They didn't really make American friends until we'd been there 10 years. So. It was a very big refugee community in New York.

*It's interesting as you said there were people and you didn't realise that they had a similar background. Did you ever experience either antisemitism or anti-Austria-German sentiment in America?*

Not really, except we were loathed to speak German in public once the war started, [chuckles] once America... started being in the war, so after December, 1941.

*Which is interesting because, of course, it was the same for the refugees here, but almost immediately while you could stay in America, maybe for a year you could still speak German.*

Yes. Yes.

*I've never thought about that. It's interesting. Yes, so then you went to Syracuse, you went and came back, went to-*

Barnard.

*Barnard.*

I eloped to get married because my parents didn't like my boyfriend then husband.

*That's quite radical.*

Yes. In the middle of my, what was it, junior year at college.

*What was the background of your boyfriend later husband?*

He - curiously his mother was a second-generation German refugee, but much earlier of course, you know, in 1920s or something, so she did have that experience. He was born in and grown up in Wisconsin and his father was a worker at American Motors, which has since gone out of business, in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He had a sister and I did meet them both, [01:32:00] you know, their whole family. He had been married before and had a son whom we paid alimony for years. What else can I say about him?

*Why were your parents not in favour or they thought you were too young?*

That too. No, they- I think it was a bit of snobism, I think that he was working class, and that made a big difference to my mother so- particularly. I don't whether my father-- so they thought I'd married down. My mother was a social snob and she wanted to, I don't know- through her children, somehow, to gain- you know, we should marry up so that she could have better social status. I mean the first thing she used to ask me if I'd said I met a new friend in high school- we rarely met each other's parents because this was a high school in the middle of New York that was nowhere near where any of us lived. So, you know, the first question I was always asked is, "What does her father do?" It was an all-girls' school. "What does her father do?" I'd say, "I have no idea what her father does so how would I know?", I said. I don't ask that and it doesn't make any difference. That was always what she wanted to know, you know, where to put it in the pecking order. I love my mother dearly but I think that snobbish attitude of hers, I disliked. So.

*What do you think made you want to marry relatively young or elope?*

Well, that was because they didn't like my boyfriend and it made it difficult for us to go out. [chuckles] Had they been less obstructive I probably won't have eloped, but who knows? [laughs] Anyway. Marriage lasted for 17 years and we had two children whom I adore so- it was not the wisest choice I've ever made but you find that out afterwards.

*How did that impact in your plans and your studies?*

Well, to the extent that I had originally wanted to be a lawyer, particularly a civil rights lawyer because I was interested in that. And I decided that having got married and wanting to have children, this is not going to fit well with being a lawyer. It was rather silly because I think I mentioned the Premingers before to you. My friend, Eve, became a Justice. Actually, a Justice of New York State Supreme Court, so she did very well. She had children and a legal career and managed to always find jobs that didn't start early in the morning because she was not an early bird, and law doesn't sit until ten o'clock in the morning. [laughs] So you know, I could have been more adventurous, but I found that out afterwards. So, but anyway...

*So, you decided to become a teacher.*

Yes. I decided teaching would fit in with having a family, so- which I knew I wanted, and it did.

*You went to teacher training?*

Yes. I went to Teachers College, Columbia, that did a one-year- it was actually, whole year, including the summer program for an MEd, for a Master's in Education, and specifically in early childhood because it was always that era that interested me. And I still [01:36:00] find that fascinating.

*So, from zero to five?*

Yes.

*You think it's to do with your own experiences?*

Possibly. Possibly. Certainly, teachers have always had a great influence on me. I mean, I remember my kindergarten teachers and I remember my first-grade teacher and second grade teacher, Ms. Robinson, who was not such a good teacher and who used to bully the boys, and

then Mrs. Collins who I had for three years running. And I was her favourite so I had a good time with her. [laughs] So, so.

*You specialised in early childhood? But you were teaching - what age groups were you teaching and later?*

I taught kindergarten, so which is five-year-olds in the States. I only did that for two years and then I had my first child. So, I didn't have a long teaching career in America.

*And then you had your children? At what point then did you move abroad?*

In 1966 we moved broad. My husband changed jobs, he joined Union Carbide and they almost immediately sent us abroad.

*To where?*

Well, it was supposed to be Zurich. And I said yes because my uncle lived in Zurich, and of course Zurich is German-speaking, and I still spoke German because of Omi who lived with us. You know, I kept it up. I speak quite well, I don't read and write it well [01:38:00] at all. My other granny used to laugh at my letters because I've wrote them phonetically, you know, because I never learned how to spell in German, you know, and because I didn't read German, that wasn't very good. But speaking was fine as long as it wasn't about philosophy or taxation or whatever, you know. It's what you speak to your granny about as a child. So that vocabulary was good. So, yes, we never got to Zurich. In the interim, he was doing some training and visiting different plants and then they decided they would move us to Brussels because they had more room in their Brussels office. Why where the office was made a difference, I don't know, because he was consulting their factories and their factories were all over the place. But anyway, so they put us in Brussels, which of course is French-speaking or Flemish. And the kids and I floundered. And that's, I think, when the immigration, the earlier experience of not speaking the language came out and hit me. I didn't expect that, but I really floundered. I found it extremely difficult and I had no support network. I mean, in those days you couldn't ring up America easily, it was very expensive. You had to book the calls ahead of time. I knew absolutely nobody in Brussels. My next-door neighbour was very kind and

nice and was- spoke English because her husband had served a period of time at Stanford University, he was a professor. But that, that was all. You can't spend all your time with [laughs] your neighbour. [01:40:00] It was the grandest house I've ever lived in. It had- it was a mansion that had been built for himself by the director of the bank of... it must have been Brussels or Belgium, La Belgique. Anyway, his widow didn't want to live there on her own so she was renting it out. And I know this sounds silly, but I swear that place was haunted because we were the third family that had been there in four years and a previous family from Monsanto, the husband had a nervous breakdown. Another family was from the Dutch embassy, and he had murdered his wife. So, I swear that this place was haunted. Anyway, we had a miserable time there. And I announced one fine day that I couldn't hack it and I was going to take the children back to America because I just couldn't manage this. It was all a mistake, et cetera, et cetera. And when George told his boss, they had a con-conference, and said, "Well, what if we moved you to England?" Mind you, most of his work was in England at that time, so it wasn't that bizarre to say that. And I said, "Well, I'd give it a go." They sent us for a week's holiday before Christmas at the expense of the company to London, and the kids and I loved it. [laughs] And then they sent me over to look for a flat, and I found a very nice flat in February, and March we moved. So, this was a flat on the Exhibition Road which we never could have afforded, [laughs] [01:42:00] but anyway, the company paid for. And I had my first dishwasher. It was very exciting.

*You spoke the same language.*

And I spoke the same language. The kids just eyes opened wide, said, "They speak English here," and I said, "Yes, we're in England." "Oh." [laughs] So they hadn't, you know, somehow connected the two. We settled very well, quickly, the kids as well. So, Richard was still a bit troubled. He found the whole move as troublesome as I had, this was the younger one. He replicated my experience. He started crying, and he wasn't yet toilet trained, and had trouble with that. So, I think the move was as almost- as difficult for different reasons for him as it had been for me. In a funny sort of way, I feel slightly guilty about that. Although, obviously, I didn't intend it and wasn't expecting it, but that's what happened.

*That you'd taken him away- out of America.*

Yes, because he had suddenly lost his home. He used to look at the pictures of our old house and some of his friends, you know, in the photograph album. He was homesick and he didn't know what happened to his home. And we went back, because my mother had cancer, we went back that summer. And we went back to visit. We exchanged houses with people from our old neighbourhood, and they stayed in our flat in, in Knightsbridge and he saw that our house still existed. He somehow [01:44:00] thought it had disappeared and didn't know what happened to it and he was much more settled when we, you know- after that summer in America. He realised that it was just we that moved, but you know, the rest of the world still existed. I don't know what was going on in his head, but he was severely unhappy. So somehow, it wasn't Hitler and it wasn't immigration, but it was almost as disruptive to my younger one, as Hitler had been for me.

*You don't know what effect it's going to have on a child I mean, sort of immigration. But then did you find that once you arrived in England you could settle here?*

Yes, I made friends almost immediately. I joined the Americans in-- whatever it was called, the Americans in London or something, but also picked up local friends. I mean the kids in the playground, you know, started talking. I'm actually quite easy person to make friends, I always have been. So, I picked up friends through the children, you know, or the school or whatever.

*What school did you send them to?*

Ah, that was funny. I wanted to send them to the state school because I'm a believer in state education. The schools were full. I couldn't get them into any of them, so they ended up going to a private school, which the company paid for, but I didn't much like. I don't like the privileged whatever. I'm basically a Democrat in philosophy. So, I, I didn't like this, but our local school which was just down the road was full. And I was told by the head teacher, "You should have put his name down [01:46:00] when he was born," and I looked at her and said, "When he was born, I didn't know I'd be here." [laughs] So, so very snooty lady. So that was, so they had private school education which the company paid for, and continued afterwards because we moved to Dulwich but that's later, and they went to Dulwich College, which was a minor public school and had been- the year that Ted went was the first year that the Inner

London Education Authority didn't have automatic rights to send kids there so it was nearly a public, you know- state school, which I would prefer.

*What sort of identity did you want to give to your children? How did you want to raise them?*

Well, I think as Americans abroad at first because I felt quite attached to America. I mean, they had taken us in and given me a very good education and a homeland. And, but, and I wasn't allowed to work in London because we came on my husband's green card. So, my passport was stamped that I wasn't allowed to work, so I did volunteer work and I also joined varying and sundry adult education things which were great fun. One was about discovering London and we went- we went to Oxford. The lecturer's daughter was an Oxford student, and they were doing Winnie the Pooh in Latin. [laughs] So, and we also saw that bizarre race that they have [01:48:00] where the boats from last year bunk the boat in front. And also, I thought this country was slightly barmy, but great fun. [laughs] So, and we did a lot of sightseeing because I thought we would just be here on a three-year assignment.

*You thought you're going-*

Yes. Yes. I thought we were going back. So, so we did sightsee quite a lot. We spent our first Easter on the Isle of Wight, the children and I. So that was fun. So, yes, I enjoyed our stay in London. The marriage then started having troubles, and that was, that happened for a while. And after the four years, I was allowed to work. So, my first job, I taught preschool playgroup leadership at once with Education Authority, one of their evening schools. Well, we met during the day but it was the, you know, evening, the equivalent of evening- adult education classes. They were a wonderful bunch of women. That- I learned a lot from them about living in the UK. [laughs] So they were smart, so, streetwise, and very nice. And I enjoyed that, and then, then I started looking for work, because I could then finally, you know, get back to work. I tried to get a job teaching, but in [01:50:00] those days, they didn't count American higher education as being equivalent to British higher education and they wouldn't classify me as a qualified teacher. So, I took a job instead, still for the Inner London Education Authority, but as a research worker, and spent about six or seven years doing that, so, which was very interesting, and I enjoyed that. We worked at County Hall and worked with politicians and the Education Committee. And that was quite interesting work. It wasn't

wonderful remunerative, compared to American salaries, but it wasn't bad for English salaries.

*But you decided you didn't want to go back to America after you separated?*

Well, I didn't have anything to go back to, we had sold our house. My mother by that time had died, I wasn't that close to my father. I had- I did vaguely consider it but the children by that time were happy at school and I thought we'd stay at least and settle and then maybe consider going back at some later stage. And by that time, I enjoyed my job and was doing well. Children loved school and were settled and as I said, I don't know what we'd gone back to because we'd sold our house in Larchmont in Westchester County. And I didn't have neighbourhoods or family or whatever to go back to. My sister said come and stay with her [01:52:00] but I wasn't really that keen. And at that stage, I think they were living in California, which I couldn't quite see myself doing so, so. And I had employment that at least paid my way, you know, so I could buy a house, and did. So...

*You said you bought a house and you, you were settled?*

Yes.

*What were the highlights of your career?*

Well, I think the work at the ILEA, the Inner London Education Authority, I think that was very interesting and I enjoyed that. I enjoyed teaching at Avery Hill, particularly I did some of the work with people who came in with no qualifications or odd qualifications because I suppose, there's a bit of me that always wants to help the slightly different. Maybe I considered myself one of those, I don't know, but I seem to have a penchant for it. And so, we did- I did some teaching on access courses for people who didn't have school certificates. And many of them were streetwise and fun to teach actually, because they lived a bit of their life first before they started training. So that was good.

*What subjects? What were you teaching?*

Mainly early childhood because that was my specialty, but I also taught statistics, which is an odd combination, but, you know, I had some background in that, and sort of sociology and social psychology. [01:54:00] Child development, that larger field, and supervised teaching practice, so- which was part of the role, applied work.

*Bea: Did you have time to do some research yourself?*

Yes, some interesting work on group work. Oh, and one time they had an initiative where you could go back and teach for half a term, we job switched with the teacher came to the, to the university and I came and taught. I taught nine-year-olds. I'd never taught that age before, that was an enormous challenge. And I was also trying to teach them design and technology, which is not my real field, so it was a heck of a lot of hard work. And what I noticed actually was that it dipped into different parts of emotions. I had a child who would come to me in the morning and say, you know, "Can't you talk to my dad? He's left mum and I'm so unhappy. Can you talk- " You don't have that with college students. So, and I found that actually quite difficult to deal with. And I said, you know, it's a totally different job and it's equally difficult but in different ways- to teaching adults. I enjoyed teaching children, although that age I still found difficult, especially things like supervising them on the playground, which I'm not that wonderful at. So, but that was interesting and challenging work. Things like children nicking each other's or trying to get each other's- [01:56:00] it was mainly a working-class school and it was about what sort of trainers they wore on the playground and this jockeying for position of what you wear, which can be so insidious and cause difficulties. It's not easy being a child at school and I'd forgotten that, so it was good to go back and get a bit of that. It was only half term, and that was enough. I prefer adults or very young children. I - someone said that I only teach people who don't have to be there. The pre-schoolers who don't have to be there because it's not compulsory, and adults. I don't teach those that have to be there.

*When did you become involved in the Holocaust education?*

That was - I suppose it was somewhere after-- must have been 2003, 2002, 2003, something like that. After I'd put something up on the Hunter College High School Holocaust survivors' website, the first Holocaust Memorial Day thing got arranged. I was at that time a representative on the interfaith forum in Kingston upon Thames, and the first Holocaust

Memorial Day was being planned and I was sent as a representative to the conference. So that, that must have been 2002, something like that, or 2003 and I've been at it ever since. Last year I gave up so this is the first Holocaust Memorial Day, the one coming up, that I will not have been [01:58:00] part of the group planning it. I've planned something like four or five in Kingston, and four or six- four, five, six, something like that in York. So, so, I got involved relatively early.

*That website was also a turning point then? Hunters.*

Yes.

*And who initiated that?*

Eve Kugler.

*She initiated the--*

The Holocaust survivors' website at the Hunter College one, yes. She, her son is a techie so he put it up.

*It's mostly the child survivors like you.*

Yes, yes. Well, it's now third and fourth generation survivors. So, you know, the second-generation survivors have put up things as well. It's an interesting website. It, it- it somehow ripples through generations.

*How, how would you say does it ripple through?*

Well, in one way or another. My kids make fun of me because they keep saying, "Mom, you're not a Holocaust survivor. " And I say, "I know I'm not, I never pretended to be, but that's the category into which we fit according to the way the government has, both in America and here, have designed things. That if you were impinged upon, if your life has been impinged upon by Hitler, it's- comes under that umbrella."

*Do you think it's- one should talk of second, third generation survivors?*

Yes, because I think it probably has echoes. Not in every family necessarily, but in many, yes. Either they're not being able to talk about certain things or denying certain things, or. I was gripped by that when I went on [02:00:00] a week's holiday that the Jewish welcome Vienna, Jewish Vienna, or whatever it's called, invited us to. I went with four other people from the UK at that time. And this other woman whom I spoke to, her parents were devastated by it and never really recovered. He couldn't work at his old, I can't remember what her father was, but in any case, he couldn't do it in this country. And her mother was depressed the whole time. It had much more effect than, than my relatively minor things of bedwetting. Being a bit angst provoking by being in a country that doesn't speak the same language. You know, that's relatively minor compared to her family. I realised that we got off reasonably lightly, much less those people who actually survived camps. I mean, I- Eric Hirsch is in my AJR Harrogate and Leeds and York group. And he, I mean, was in three concentration camps, including Auschwitz. Well, thankfully I never went through that. I know there's a big difference, you know, between my experience which was relatively minor, but it still had a hell of an effect on me, and did on many others like me.

*What do you think is the lasting impact of your experience on your later life and maybe or that of your children?*

Some political effects. I mean, I'm really quite upset about this whole Brexit business. A. I really want to- I feel European. I don't like the fact [02:02:00] that I now am not considered by anybody else's being European. So that is- I could actually reclaim, if I wanted to, my Austrian nationality. And I would do it because my children would like to remain European, to have the passport be European, as well as British. But- I mean they have American passports as well, so they're dual nationals and means you have to pay Social Security or income tax in both countries. It's a mixed pleasure, but anyway, I digress. So, the current political situation freaks me out, I have to say. I'm quite unhappy about it. I think that the fear of the other and the nastiness against refugees is dreadful. I am very upset about that. I do collect money for the- we have a refugee group in York. RAY, it's called Refugee Action York. I collect money for them regularly and also volunteer to work for that group. I think we

should have many more refugees and accept them, especially child refugees. I mean- why we don't take, I mean, Alf Dubs, you know, at least 1,500 that were pledged. You know, why aren't they here already? We've got rooms, schools have room. We could find them foster parents. Why don't we do something instead of just talk about it? Now, I'm really quite upset about the fact that refugees worldwide are having such a hard time. And- dying [02:04:00] in the Mediterranean in boats, et cetera, et cetera. It's- it's mixed up with climate change, I mean, and all that as well. More people are going to have to flee because more places are becoming unliveable. I am quite worried politically about what's going on in this country, certainly what's going on in America. I have a vote in both countries and needless to say, I did not vote for Trump. So, and - he scares me silly. I'm not happy about what's going on now politically in this country. It doesn't look very healthy to me. Democracy is a very tender plant and people are trampling on it. I'm dead keen on democracy and freedom, but it's not surviving very well in large parts of the world.

*So that's a political effect?*

Yes.

*What about other impact? You said your- you felt anxious or nervous in some situations or?*

Yes, I think the fear of the other I find difficult. Everybody recognises the minute I open my mouth that I'm not from this country. So, I get a lot of, "And when are you going home?" "Well, this is my home, you know. I've been here now longer than anywhere else." So, and I don't like to feel that I have to apologise for that. So, that's a bit of a sore point with me. But anyway, I think I've contributed to the economy here and to education. And-

*Did you ever try to [02:06:00] lose your accent? Did you have...?*

I don't think I know how [chuckles].

*Because you're in an interesting position, normally when I interviewed getting rid of a German accent, but you, you have an American accent, so that's a difference.*

I don't think I know how, to be honest. I mean the Americans think I have a British accent. So, you see- I think it's modified from what it used to be. So, which is why when I go back, they think that I'm speaking with a British accent, but clearly no Brit thinks that.

*Right. So, you're in between?*

Yes, mid-Atlantic.

*In terms of belonging, where, where do you feel do you belong?*

Yes, I feel I belong here. I've put down roots here. I like my new home here in Yorkshire. I didn't know much about Yorkshire. I knew some because my stepdaughter lived in Harrogate for about 10 years. I was familiar with that bit of Yorkshire, but I didn't know that much about this area.

*Is this from your second marriage?*

Yes, yes that's my stepdaughter, yes. And you know, it's where I spent most of my life. So, I mean, from that point of view, I feel European as well as American, because America took us in. So, I feel, you know, quite attached to it and thankful for the fact that they gave us refuge and gave me a very good education more or less for free. So, you know- with the exception of college, it was all free and college was mainly free, because I had a New York state scholarship. So, you know- we did well out of being in America.

*Would you consider taking up Austrian citizenship again?*

Not really. I, I mean- that was interesting. When I was in Vienna and met some of the people that I was at school with, we didn't know we were going to meet but we did. So, I spent time with them there. And we were standing in the, in the Hofbräu. There was an oom-pah band and one of my friends went like this and said, "I wonder if their parents were Nazis." And I thought, "Probably." So, you know, they've done it once they may do it again. I know what's happening in Hungary, you know, and has been for the last quite a- you know, nearly 10 years now. There's right wing narrow-minded nationalism is quite frightening.

*But when- when did you go back to Austria for the first time? This was a later visit?*

This was a later visit, yes. The first time I went with my parents in 1956, I think.

*What was that like for you?*

It was quite interesting. Yes, that's when I met relations that I hadn't- I'd never met. Like my father's sister who came back from Palestine. She'd spent the, the war years in Palestine and came back to Vienna to live. And my mother's, actually- well, that was interesting too, my mother's brothers, so these were the Catholics [02:10:00] part of the family. They had almost as much trouble as we did, because my, my neph- my cousin was drafted into the Hitler Youth and had to lay tracks after the bombing. And my uncle was a forced labourer in a factory that was making bombs or armaments or something for Hitler. So, they didn't have a good time either even though they weren't Jewish [laughs]. So, so, yes, so. So yes- I don't know. When I think about it, I get slightly frightened that the future looks perhaps bleak. In- I seem to be mainly an optimist. I think this may pass, but I'm not sure.

*What can we do about it?*

Well, vote. I have voted in every single election that I've ever had a right to vote in. I've never missed once. Take part in political activity. Try to influence, my- we have a Conservative Member of Parliament who hears from me regularly by email or by letter and I get replies. I haven't convinced him of anything, but he's going to continue to hear from me anyway. So, yes, use the political processes and give money to- I mean, I used to be a great supporter of the United Nations and still am. I think the United Nations is probably what we need to work, but at the moment it's so emasculated, it doesn't do much [02:12:00]. Work for human rights. York is now a city for human rights. I'm a great advocate of human rights. So, work with pressure groups that do that and support refugees in the country. What else?

*When you, in your talks for the Holocaust education, what sort of main message do you try to convey? What is that main message?*

Well, my main message is, take part in political activity.

Yes, yes. And - beware of people with simple solutions and who whip up hysteria, the way Hitler did. Nigel Farage actually was a student at Dulwich College in the same year as my son, my youngest son. So- I'm not very keen on him as you might imagine. I think that that sort of hype about money for the NHS and if, if only we could get rid of refugees, life would be wonderful and we'd all have more, it's just insidious. So, it's you know- some stick to the truth and what's actually happening. Be kinder to each other. I mean, I suppose I joined Quakers when I was looking for- after my husband died, I was looking for a community, religious community, to join that would espouse peace and brotherly love for lack of a better phrase, it doesn't sound quite so stupid. And that was the closest I could find to my semi-political but also spiritual quest. That we should be nicer to each other. Even with climate change, there's enough on this earth if we don't slice the cake quite so unfairly. I'm a great believer in fairness. I don't see why anybody, the head of any organisation, needs a salary of £89 million a year. It's obscene. I just don't see why anybody needs to have six houses and three yachts. I think this worldwide... splitting of them that have and them that have not is insidious and is part of what's wrong with the world. I think there's enough there if we all take a small slice of the cake instead of trying to take enormous slices. And I suppose that's one of my messages, is something about fairness and equal rights and kindness and don't fall into blaming somebody- something. That was mainly Hitler's thing, wasn't it? That - you know- if we could only get rid of the Jews, the world would be wonderful. Well, life isn't like that. You know, you can't get rid of- first of all, you shouldn't get rid of a people, whoever they are, and why not learn to live together? Because there's enough to go around. There's more than enough to go around.

*So that's the [02:16:00] message?*

Yes.

*Do you find, do you sometimes think about what would have happened if you hadn't been forced to emigrate if you'd stayed in Vienna?*

Yes, I wonder [laughs]. I really don't know. So, I'd probably serve schnitzel more

frequently [laughs]. That's on one level. I don't know. I can't actually think of myself as anything other than being an American or an American Brit now. I can't imagine what it would have been like, because I don't really feel very Austrian.

*How would you define yourself today in terms of your-*

European, I think, and now, I'm British and American... of European origin.

*And what is the most important part of your background for you or has that changed- has it changed over time?*

I suppose family, friends and family. I've been very good at being able to make friends. I mean- I've once counted and this is something like my 46th or 47th home. I've moved a lot, so- but I'm quite a good homemaker and I settled relatively quickly. So I may have been uprooted quite a number of times, but I'm an inveterate gardener and I keep putting down new roots and they seem to take. So, I think I'll continue in that vein of putting down new roots.

*Where would you move next?*

[02:18:00] Probably to the Oaks, to the care home. [laughter] So, so, not very far, probably 50 yards away. No, I think I've settled here now. So...

*Tell us just a bit about this community, where are we now?*

We're at Hartrigg Oaks, which is a retirement community in North Yorkshire on the edge of York in a village called New Earswick, which was built in 1904, most of it anyway, by Joseph Rowntree for his cocoa workers, because the cocoa works is down at the south end of the village with a big factory there which is now- it was taken over by a hostile takeover. We have Margaret Thatcher to thank for that, but anyway- by Nestlé. It's no longer Joseph Rowntree. But Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust still exists and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which is a social enterprise foundation that does research on peace. They're both Quaker organisations, and- which is how I came to live here through the Quaker network, I knew

about it. And it tries to do research on- well, it started off that one of Rowntree's sons did a study in 1900, in 1900 which was published in 1904 on poverty in York. York had a lot of slums in those days and people were exceedingly poor. And there were families that were stuffed together, five in a [02:20:00] room and cholera was rife. I mean- conditions were not good. They didn't have enough to eat. There was quite a high death toll. And...he was quite upset about this, and one of his ways of dealing with it- the, the head of the company was to employ people in the cocoa works to make chocolates. The factory at one time employed 10,000 people in it, most of them living in this area, in New Earswick. And he built the workers' village. Each house had a fruit tree and enough ground to grow an allotment size. And... it's been going since then. More of it was built in- after the First World War, and then another whole lot was built after the Second World War. He also built the two schools. There's a primary school and a secondary school in the village and has been really quite influential in social-psychology and social work in the, in the wider sense, social policy. In trying to- I mean, they were- one of the foundation subjects was the minimum wage and, and the- what's the other one called? The living wage. They were in favour of having a living wage. It meant that our finances for that year were not very good here, because they hadn't factored in the living wage because they gave it to their employees immediately. They'd have to do it, as their research was what prompted it, but anyway. So, it is something about fairness and equality and using money to help rather than to aggregate. He put into the foundation- I think kept one-quarter of his wealth and the other three quarters became the foundation, because he just didn't think any family needed that much money. I would agree with that. They had quite a nice lifestyle without- so, so, there's only one meal you can eat at a time, which doesn't have to be lobster.

*It's a communal experiment.*

Yes, is one of their experiments. Yes. And the rest of the village is, was part of the other. They've come a little bit a cropper because of Margaret Thatcher's right to buy. And also, unfortunately, they had lower rents on their social housing than most other. And now, they've had to put it down because everybody's had to decrease theirs. They're losing money on their social housing, which seems unfair, because they'd already done it of their own free will before they were told they had to, but anyway. so that's a bit about, you know, the founders of this place.

*What was interesting, it was also linked to the Quakers. Did you, do you find that in the Quakers, you found a spiritual home?*

Yes. Yes, yes, I do.

*Because the Quakers of course, also played an important role in bringing some of the Kinder over to England.*

I know.

*In your own story--*

I know. [02:24:00] And particularly in York. York had a very active group and I did some research into it. And some of my friends at the meeting now, their parents sponsored two teenagers from Germany, which was really quite difficult because they had to put up 50-pound vouchers.

*And they come to the group now? [crosstalk].*

Well, the parents. Yes, she's still in my group.

*So, they're refugees or is it second-generation?*

Well, she is - it's her parents who sponsored the refugees, who paid out of their minimum wages.

*Were they refugees as well or were they British?*

No, they were British. Yorkshire people. Yes, York had a big committee.

*In your Quaker group?*

Yes. York had a big Quaker group that took in refugees and--

*I'll talk about it later because somebody has to do research looking for families who took in people, you know, because there isn't much research about that.*

Yes. Well, I can give you--

*So, part of- in your local Quaker group, you have people who took-*

Yes.

*...that's really interesting. Because we find that the Kindertransport there are some details which one doesn't know exactly. Like- you know, and it's [crosstalk]*

Certainly, the Schatzbergers who live close to here, who are in my AJR group, they got all their- I mean, when they move, they moved with their family. This is Rosl, not, not Marc. Marc came as a, as a Kindertransport. Rosl's family came as a family and was supported by Quakers in Manchester, who took them in and gave them- because, because they got them a flat, but there was no cooker, [02:26:00] and gave them the materials and the like, so yes.
Bea: Do you think the Quakers were more active here in the north than in London?

Yes, yes, or as much anyway.

*Or maybe in London there were more other organisations compared-- I don't know. [crosstalk]*

I don't know, but they were quite active. So- because they'd done it in the First World War as well with Belgian refugees, so yes. It was a very strong-

*What do you find particularly attractive in the Quaker movement or what attracted you?*

Well, I think the feeling of equality. Anybody can get up to speak. There is no pastor or priest or rabbi or whatever. We run it ourselves. We take it in turns to do all the jobs. And it's

seeking, you know, the good in other people, that most people have something good in them and to try to work on that. And that any dispute can be solved without war. There can be disputes of any kind that can be resolved without resorting to force. It just has to be worked at. And the Quakers are pretty good at doing that, usually quietly. Not only do we - meet in silence, which is part of a Quaker ethos, but- The Quaker has an office in Geneva and it's a place where peacemakers from other countries meet others quietly without press attention to solve disputes.

*Behind the scenes.*

Yes. I'm in favour of that. I can give money towards that sort of work. And one of my very dear [02:28:00] friends here who unfortunately died a couple of years ago was a peace worker in Northern Ireland for four or five years, working at Quaker Cottage in Belfast. And I think that's, that's good sort of work. That helps get over the problems, because people are still people, you know. The other is okay if you actually meet them.

*Do you find you're here with like-minded people?*

Some anyway, yes. It's a broad church. [laughs] You know.

*...movement, yes. Edith, we've discussed a whole range of topics. Is there anything we haven't discussed which you'd like to add which is important?*

Well, I suppose the business about identity, but I don't know. I mean, it's a very complicated issue and I don't know where my identity is. I mean, I know I have Jewish heritage and I ... treasure that. That's part of what I am. And it's for that reason that I joined this nascent Jewish synagogue movement here in York- who by the way are still meeting at the Friends' Meeting House. They will eventually- I'm sure- get their own building and build their own building, but at the moment--

*Who are the people involved in that, in the York, in the [crosstalk]?*

It's the liberal Jews. What happened was that Ben Rich moved with his family to here. And he's a cousin of Danny Rich, whom I knew. Do you know Danny? Yes, whom I knew from- he was the rabbi in [02:30:00] Kingston, Kingston. Well, it wasn't Kingston, but anyway. When I was working on the interfaith forum and he was also on the on the HMD, the Holocaust Memorial Day working party. Now, of course, he's head of the whole liberal Jews. So - his cousin moved to York and was astounded to know that there was nothing here and people had to go to Leeds. So, he started and they meet once a month at the Friends' Meeting House. So, and...

*Did you go to those meetings?*

I have been to a number of them. Yes, and they're quite good except, of course, I don't know Hebrew. So, I can't read Hebrew and I have no intention at this point- I'm bad with languages anyway, to try to learn Hebrew, but yes. They have an official category of membership called Friend, which I have joined- so. I get their emails and stuff like that. I go about twice a year probably, something like that, sometimes more, so, because, yes, I want to keep that connection open because I think that, that would be- the Orthodox is a bit much for me [chuckles].

*But the liberal that suits you?*

Yes [laughs], I can do that.

*Well, identity in your case is complex because you had- you moved before the war, during the war, after the war. You migrated. I don't know- how many years ago did he move here to Yorkshire?*

I came in 2011.

*It didn't [02:32:00] worry to uproot from London?*

No, no. I thought it would work and it did [chuckles], so, so yes.

*What are your thoughts? Discuss briefly that impact on your children. Are they interested in your history? The grandchildren, do you find?*

The grandchildren, yes. And the first thing I ever wrote was when my step-granddaughter whom I've lost track of, but anyway, wanted to know about- asked me to write something about what I was, I did as a child or something like that, my background. The first bit of writing I ever did was for Sophie, so- which I've got still somewhere on my computer. And I sent it- I thought it'd be interesting, I sent it to both of my kids. And of course, my elder one, "Mum, how can you call yourself a Holocaust survivor?" I said, "Well, I don't. I'm just saying I fit into that category in the way that other people consider refugees."

*Do you think the grandchildren are more interested than the second? The third generation is more interested than the second generation?*

Seem to be. Yes, my kids aren't quite interested. I think you're right. I think it is probably third generation.

*So, you've written your memoirs down for them?*

Yes.

*Hopefully, you can also watch the interview once you receive it?*

Yes, yes. And I have one on the web from when Huntington School interviewed me. Did I ever send you that one?

*No. Did they come here to interviewee you?*

No, I went there. Huntington School is a mile from here.

*Oh, the local school?*

Local school, yes. They were doing a project, so, and so, they ask questions. It's easier when somebody asks questions rather than to speak.

*Yes, so we were talking about children and grandchildren. You said also you have a niece who is interested, your sister's daughter?*

Yes, she's interested.

*And did your sister talk about her past a lot? You said [crosstalk].*

Well, yes and no. She has in one sense. I mean, she's written three volumes of her life story, which she's given us all. And I must say I hadn't read it very closely, but still, because it's rather long-winded. So yes, in a sense she has. On the other hand, I suppose- factually she knows more than I, and of course she's a bit older. So, she knew some things that I didn't. They explained to her about Hitler, and although at four or five-year-old level, it means something different I'm sure, but still. Whereas, I mean, nobody ever tried to explain anything to me, because they assumed that I was too young to know. I didn't know what happened to the old home or why we no longer had it or why it didn't have a nursemaid or whatever. So, yes. And I think my son, my youngest son replicated that for, you know, he didn't know what happened to his family, and it had nothing to do with Hitler. It had to do with a father taking a job abroad and him being just at the age where he didn't understand that. Well, we couldn't explain it.

*Do you think that also [02:36:00] affected him in the long run?*

I think it did. So- he's much more cautious and doesn't take risks. He's a risk averter. I suppose even more than me.

*Do you think you avoid risks or...?*

Sometimes, but not too often, no. I think, I've taken quite a number of jumps into the unknown.

*Yes, because that's something which has come up in interviews about this risk aversion or taking the safer route or you know.*

Well, something that I know about myself is I'm uncomfortable if I don't speak the language. If I go- I don't want to go to any place where I don't speak the language, unless I'm with a group and have a translator or whatever. I just don't want to put myself in a situation that's going to give me angst. So, you know, it just seems there are lots of other places. Why go one step too far? I don't like if I can't read even the alphabet. I don't have the Cyrillic alphabet. Although we had neighbours who were lovely people from Japan, I've never been- I would have liked to go to Japan, but only with an interpreter- or a group. I just find not being able to understand what's going on around me still disturbing. So, so, I don't put myself in those situations.

*And how do you, how, you know with the new Holocaust monument which will probably be out up in London. How do you see the sort of future of Holocaust education? How would you like to see it as someone who've been giving many talks, you know? Which direction or how...?*

I'm not so sure the one that the Houses of Parliament is a good idea, to be honest. I wasn't much in favour of that one. I think unless there's a teaching element to it, I don't see much point to it. I've just been to Berlin for the first time. Some representations of the Holocaust I don't think very helpful.

*Such as?*

Well, the symbolism of blank stones, you know. I think the stones at Laxton have, have a different purpose. I can understand that one. But otherwise, sometimes I just don't understand what they're supposed to mean or represent to people.

*Do you think that Laxton got the rights on those?*

Yes, yes.

*They have a particular approach, isn't it? The memorial garden?*

Yes, yes.

*Different from the sort of big memorial organisation which you have, you referred to this, the German- I don't even know what it's called in Berlin?*

And the Stolpersteine [stumbling stones]. I think that's an interesting project. I was thinking of once getting in touch with them and putting one on. But I can't be bothered. [laughs]

*Where would you- for whom would you put it?*

On Märzstraße, us, Märzstraße 84 or whatever it was. [laughs] So, so.

*There is a - you could write to the artist.*

Yes.

*Well, it's interesting because now AJR is creating a sort of blue plaque scheme which is not Stolpersteine but it's, it's to commemorate refugees who've been here who- more public figures, you know. It's a different concept, but it's a kind of commemoration of some sort.*

I want to go to the one in Huddersfield, because I haven't been yet. Yes.

*So that's a new development?*

Yes.

*Do you think that's important for the North of England?*

Probably. Yes.

*That was created through a very active group I think of survivors, refugees.*

Yes.

*Is there- you've given already a message, but I'll ask you again whether you have a message for anyone who might watch this interview based on your own experiences?*

I suppose take, take an active part in political life. And, democracy is worth preserving, true democracy.

*Okay. Just to say thank you very, very much for sharing your story with us. And we're going to now look at some of your photographs or documents. So, thank you.*

*Thank you. [silence] [02:42:00] Okay. This, please.*

The top one is a picture of my father, it says "as doctor". As nearly as I could guess, that must have been- he graduated in 1929. That must have been 1930, '31, something like that. This is a picture of my mother, who was actually known as Mitzi to everybody in the family. And of course, aside from me calling her Mama, very few people called her Maria Elisabeth, although that was the name, Maria Elisabeth Rixner Kurcz. There is Mitzi looking very glamorous. She's a very good-looking woman, tiny. My mother was five foot one I think and my father was six foot.

*Where and when was it taken?*

Must have been taken in Vienna. This was, I think, before my sister was born. This is probably 1930. They got married in '29. It could even be 1929 before they got married.

*This, please.*

Now in the bathtub is my sister Lisa, and the baby laying on the ground is me. My mother's leaning over me. And Omi, my father's mother is sitting in the beach chair. And I'm not quite sure where that was taken. It could have been Vöslau or could have been [02:44:00] in Purkersdorf or one of the where - Stockerau, one of the backyards. I think it was 1936 or '37.

Because I was born in June and I can't tell how big that baby is. It's either summer in '36 or summer in '37. This is Malkig who is my mother's stepmother. In the baby carriage is actually my sister. What she's doing in my baby carriage I'm not quite sure. I know she must have run out of steam. And the little one outside is me. Big sister Lisa is the one in the baby carriage. Do you want me to talk about the bottom one?

*Oh, where and when. Where and when was it taken?*

The bottom one was-

*[crosstalk] the middle one.*

Oh, the middle one? [02:45:10]. Schönbrunn. Well, as I'm running around, it must have been '30- '37 or '38. Early '38, because we're wearing winter clothes. This is a picture of my grandmother, my father's mother, whom we knew was Omi. She's the one who came with us. Or rather, she didn't actually travel with us, but she followed us both to Portugal and to America, coming about six weeks after we did once we'd found a place for her, you know, an apartment or a flat or someplace where there would be accommodation for her as well. And she looks very glamorous there. I must say [02:46:00] I hardly remember her that way, because she was rather arthritic, as she got older and didn't look quite so glamorous, but she loved us dearly. And she was a really sturdy part of my growing up. And we could do no wrong, both Lisa and I. As far as she was concerned, we were wonderful. This is a picture of Lisa at the left, Paul in the middle and me at the right. I'm not quite sure where we were, whether this was in Lisbon or in Cascais. I can't quite tell, because we took a lot of Sunday outings and this might have been one of the Sunday outings, because what looks behind is like the railway siding of something. Or it could be the zoo, not quite sure. Anyway, we had a wonderful time in Portugal.

*This is your cousin Paul?*

Yes, my cousin Paul. I'm not quite sure. This is taken in Portugal. It's either Lisbon itself or Cascais, because we're on the- either on the river or on the sea, to the right there. And it's my mother, my sister and I all wearing the obligatory hats, not to have sunstroke. That's me, my

cousin Paul, my aunt Berthel and my sister Lisa, or Lieselotte as she was known then. She didn't become Lisa until America. This was the passport picture going from Lisbon to America, so it was taken in '41. Trying to think when- which month it must have been. Well, we took the journey the end of May, so probably it was taken April 1941. This was taken in Riverside Park in, at 79th Street in 1941 when we met up with Albert and- I can't remember what the sister was called. I think Lillian. Yes, it was Lillian Jaffe. They were refugees from Lebanon, whom we met in Portugal and then by chance met again when we got to New York. And so this was when we met them just walking in the park and re made acquaintances. This is a picture of me. How this came about was that New York Times photographer saw us walking on Broadway and took photographs of my sister and I. And I think we were walking with some friends as well, possibly the Jaffes. I don't now remember. This was an article and he recognised the clothes as being continental and therefore that we will likely to be refugees and started talking to my parents and said if they would like to have portraits done of Lisa and I, we could come to his studio. So, we did, and that's the one I've got as an account of that. I don't have a copy of whatever went into the New York Times Sunday magazine section, [02:50:00] but it was similar to an article that I saw recently in The Observer about refugee children in this country who are obvious because of their clothing as not being native. This was taken at 465 West End Avenue which is where my father had his office and we also lived there after he passed his New York State Medical Board and he could earn money again as a doctor in New York State. It was quite a long period of time when we had lived on mother's wages and he began to attract patients, many of whom we met walking up and down on Broadway in the large refugee community that we were living in in 1940- this must have been '42, early 1942. The bottom one, that's my cousin Paul and me, and we're sitting on the wall at Riverside Park or it could be Central Park, I'm not sure which. In any case, I think that's when he came to live in New York for some years before he went back when his father died.

*When would that be roughly?*

*1952, '3, '4, something like that. This was in Yugoslavia in the summer of '68. And it's Richard and Ted.*

*Richard and Ted are?*

My sons. [laughs] This is a picture of my sister and brother-in-law, and me in the middle visiting Charleston in South Carolina. I'm trying to think when it must have been, something like 1980, something like that. This is taken at Ted and Barbie's wedding which I can't remember the year, but it's at least 12 years ago in California, Santa Monica actually. We had this splendid wedding, so that's Richard, Bobby, Ted, my granddaughter Jessie and me at the right. And that was taken in a restaurant where the ceremony took place. I sometimes read this particular poem when I do a session with students or children. It's called Refugees and it's by Brian Bilston. "They have no need of our help, so do not tell me these haggard faces could belong to you or me, should life have dealt a different hand. We need to see them for who they really are, chancers and scroungers, layabouts and loungers, with bombs up their sleeves, cutthroats and thieves. They're not welcome here. We should make them go back to where they came from. They cannot share our food, share our homes, share our countries, instead, let us build a wall to keep them out. It's not okay to say these are people just like [02:54:00] us. A place should only belong to those who are born there. Do not be so stupid to think that the world can be looked at another way and then it could also be the world can be looked at another way. Do not be so stupid to think that there, that a place should only belong to those who were born there. These are people just like us. It's not okay to say to build a wall to keep them out, instead let us share our countries, share our homes, share our food. They cannot go back to where they came from. We should make them welcome here. They are not cutthroats and thieves with bombs up their sleeves, layabouts and loungers, chancers and scroungers. We need to see them for who they really are. Should life have dealt a different hand, these haggard faces could belong to you or me. So do not tell me they have no need of our help."

*Edith, thank you again for sharing your story and reading us this wonderful poem. Thank you very much. [02:55:23] [END OF AUDIO]*