

IMPORTANT

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AJR

Winston House, 2 Dollis Park

London N3 1HF

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Sex:	Female
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV164
NAME: Lilian Levy
DATE: 27th January, 2016
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 27th of January, 2016. It's Holocaust Memorial Day, and we are conducting an interview with Mrs Lilian Levy. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in London.

Can you please tell me your name?

Lilian Levy.

And when were you born?

I was born on the 14th of August, 1939.

And where were you born?

In London.

Thank you very much, Lilian, for having agreed to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices project. Can you tell me a little bit about your family background, please?

My parents were Hedy Allerhand and Adolf Dreifuss. She was born in Vienna. And he in Frankfurt. And... they met when she moved to Frankfurt as a young adult. And... they married I think in 1936.

And do you know why did she move to Frankfurt from Vienna?

I do know, yes. During the First World War, life in Vienna in Austria was very difficult indeed, and because Holland was a neutral country the family lived – moved and lived - in Holland ...quite freely, until the end of that war, by which time she was ...nineteen, I think. And... they went, they didn't return to Vienna. They went to Frankfurt. I don't know why, but... that's how my parents met, because my father was from there.

So she came with her family to Frankfurt?

Yes. That's right.

[0:02:00]

And can you tell me about the background of your father's family – did they come from Frankfurt?

They lived in Frankfurt. Originally from the Alsace. Surname was Dreifuss, which is very much a- a name from that area. And I don't know when they had come there. I think my father was actually born in Frankfurt. And the family owned a silverware factory. And... my father joined the firm when he was old enough. And that was his business. The silverware was for hotels and restaurants.

Do you have any memories yourself ...?

Of...?

Of, but you were not- at what point- when were you born?

I was born in London, when- just three weeks before the outbreak of war. And my parents had left Frankfurt by then. My father had been ...arrested on Kristallnacht. He was two weeks in Dachau, and apparently came back very emaciated and badly shaken by all that he had experienced. And he'd only been allowed to leave Dachau, because he was – he had

promised that he would emigrate. And he did have connections - business connections - in Holland, and said that he would go there. So within six weeks they had to leave. And they left everything behind. And... they moved to Amsterdam. My mother having lived in Holland during the First World War, felt very confident to go there, because everybody assumed that Holland would remain neutral in the Second World War as it had in the First. Which it did but of course... Hitler violated that neutrality.

[0:04:09]

And... the ultimate aim was to get to England. And they had their visas for England. My father was still busy in Amsterdam finishing things off. My mother came to England, and I was born at the Royal Free Hospital in August 1939. But my father, in Amsterdam, couldn't get over when the war started. And so on the very last day of air travel between Britain and the continent my mother took an aeroplane from Croydon Airport and went to Amsterdam with me, three weeks old, in her arms. And we lived in the south of Amsterdam quite comfortably and freely. We were free. Until May 1940. And then gradually things got worse in Holland. And finally they went into hiding in the North of Holland, or we went into hiding; I was with them...in the North of Holland in - I think it was in Hilversum. And the hiding place was a good one. And they would have been able to sit the war out there, but I think that my father couldn't take it - this isolation and this hiding. And he believed a report that came on the radio, an announcement by the puppet government in Holland, that anybody of British nationality should be - should make themselves known to the authorities because they were doing exchanges with German prisoners of war. On hearing this my father thought, his child is British, she's a minor, cannot travel alone - too young. So he reported to the authorities that this was a British child, and that he and his wife wished to take her to England. And the authorities said that what they should do is report to such-and-such a place. And it would be arranged. So the place to which they reported was the Schouwburg Theatre, I think it's pronounced, in Amsterdam. And it turned out that that was where transportations and deportations took place. And we were taken from there, from Amsterdam, to Westerbork, the concentration camp. A holding camp more than a concentration camp. And we were there for some weeks or months, I don't know how long. And then we were transported to Belsen. And we were taken to what was then called 'The Star Camp', which was meant as an exchange camp. I don't think many of those exchanges ever happened; there were perhaps three or four. And the Star Camp which was originally designed for about 2000 people, in the end

held 60,000, and it was, as one has seen on the pictures, a horrible place.

[0:07:52]

But the families were kept together, is that correct?

No, men and women separately, and the children with women.

But was it, because the Star was slightly different...?

At first it was, later it wasn't. And if I go back now to Frankfurt-am-Main? My parents had made friends with a family Seligmann, members of the same synagogue there. And the wife, had not been born Jewish, but had converted to Judaism. And they had a daughter, Karola, known as Lola. And they fled to Holland as well, when the Nazis came. And in Holland, the families met up again. And I was then three weeks old. Lola was then twelve years old. She's twelve years older than I. And there was little to do for young children. And so of course she and I became very close friends. I was a babe in arms and she, twelve years old, you know how they like little babies. And she became a very close, warm friend. She looked after us a bit. Tried to get us out of this Schouwburg Theatre apparently, at great danger to herself. And was unable to do so. Her mother, who had not been born Jewish, used to wear a Magen David - Star of David - took it off in Holland, put on a crucifix, and lived openly like that, hiding her husband in the attic. And her daughter seems to have gone unmolested. And they survived in Amsterdam and looked after me after the war to some extent as well.

[0:10:04]

Before we just get to the post-war... Did they have anything to do with helping your hiding situation or...?

No, but it was from them, it was from Lola that I heard that the hiding, hiding place that my parents had was good, and adequate. And that they would have survived in it.

So that's my question to you, assuming you can't remember...

Yes, I can't.

...How did you get this knowledge?

From Lola.

From Lola.

Post war.

Right...About your parents, about...?

Quite a lot of the history, yes.

You reconstructed?

Some of it, yes. And I do remember Belsen, but I don't remember prior to Belsen. I was about three, four when I went in. Four.

OK. We're coming to Belsen just in a – in a moment. Just so from what you've reconstructed about the life of your parents. Tell us a little bit about their pre-war life. You said they- Where did they get married? What community did they belong to? What friends did they have?

[0:11:11]

They married in Frankfurt, and I think it was a happy, free life, until all those awful events. My mother had a sister, Alice, married to Walter Deutsch. And they had a son, Ernst, Ernie, and I think they lived quite happily there in Frankfurt. A carefree sort of life. They were young; they were ...carefree. I think they had no material worries. And... it wasn't until the advent of Hitler that things became so terrible. I have photos of my parents from that time, larking around on a beach, and just having fun generally.

And were your father's parents still alive? Were they in Frankfurt?

Yes, they were, and my mother's mother was also alive. I had three living parents when the war broke out, and none by the end. Grandparents.

Grandparents.

...Sorry – grandparents.

Yeah. And you said they belonged to – Which synagogue did they go to?

I think it was called the West End Synagogue. It was the synagogue to which - of which Rabbi Salzburger was the minister, who later then became minister at Belsize Square Synagogue, which I then joined many years later. And my aunt and family were also members there. And they were married by Rabbi Salzburger as were... the Seligman's - Lola's parents.

And do you know whether they, did they think of emigrating at all prior to Kristallnacht or...?

I think they were not willing to emigrate if they didn't have to. But they did see the need for it after Kristallnacht, and they moved heaven and earth to get out.

[0:13:21]

And how, what visa, do you know, how did they manage?

Yes, they had an entry visa to England. Because... that was the trouble with leaving Germany; anybody could leave Germany. What they couldn't do was go in to any other country without the relevant documents. But they had entry visas to England.

Both your parents?

Yes.

And what held- What held your father up in Amsterdam?

He was finishing off the business transactions with his Dutch counterpart. The silverware factory had a branch or a... connection to a similar one in Amsterdam. And so they did business together, and he wanted to make sure that he left everything in good order. He couldn't have known that the war would be starting exactly when it did, and he assumed he would get to England in time. He had been, and he'd gone back.

He came to England before the war?

He came to England. Yes. And ...he went back, sometime between the time I was born and the time war broke out in those three weeks.

In hindsight it seems of course very tragic.

Yes, hindsight is 20/20.

Exactly. But at the time...

At the time it was clear enough to him; he thought he would have the time. Yeah, it's tragic if you think about it.

And your mother couldn't have travelled much later because it would have been impossible.

There was no transport...

[0:15:00]

There was no transport...

No... between Britain and 'enemy' Europe.

And in- When she stayed by herself here, those few weeks...

She wasn't by herself. My aunt, her sister, had come as well. So I think she had them to turn to. But it must have been very difficult.

Where did they- Where did you live, or do you know where?

They- Yes, they had a flat in Fellows Road, NW3. And they were members of the New Liberal Community - it wasn't a synagogue yet – it was...a ...friendship group, I think. And they met in the Hall of St John's Wood Liberal Synagogue. And... so either way, I would have ended up at Belsize Square. [laughs]

That's your aunt, or your parents as well?

All of them.

All of them. They immediately joined the synagogue?

Yes. Cause Salzberger, Rabbi Salzberger was there, and they had their connections to him. And it was familiar to them, and a sort of bit of home, I suppose.

[0:16:12]

Yes. We'll talk about that. So just to come back to Holland, and what you managed to reconstruct... in those years. So after you returned, you said their life was all right.

Yes.

Where did they live when they came back, from 1939...?

Till May 1940. They lived in the Courbetstraat, which is in the southern part of Amsterdam somewhere near the... Beethovenstraat. And that's where the Seligman's lived as well. Near there. And the friendship continued in Amsterdam. They had a nice flat there; I've seen it since. Then, soon after the German invasion, they moved to Hilversum, as I said, to live in hiding.

And did they have friends there, or...?

I don't think so. I don't think they knew anybody.

And 'in hiding' meaning...what was the hiding place?

I don't know.

You don't know the details.

No, sorry.

So you just heard that it was...

Yes, from Lola. All my information comes from her.

And that your father then decided...

That as I was British he could safely come out of hiding.

But in fact, were you British...I mean it's an interesting question whether it could have been relevant. Or, as a minor, your British papers...

I think it could have been, had these exchanges really happened, but they virtually didn't.

Yes, I think it wasn't a vain hope. And he just couldn't take... such a way of life.

[0:18:15]

Yeah, but that's what I mean. What the hiding- I mean were they literally in a house, or they had false papers? Do you know, or...?

Your guess is as good as mine.

Fine, so Lilian what are your earliest memories then? What can you remember?

Well I remember playing with Lola. And I don't remember the transport to Westerbork, and I don't remember Westerbork really either. I do remember the transport to Belsen, which was not one of those cattle trucks as one sees because all ...trains were ...co-opted for use for these transports, which were being done by the tens of thousands. And in fact I apparently travelled on a - a normal train. And we went into Belsen, and my father was separated from us, and I was with my mother. And I do remember various things about the so-called washing arrangements. Showers which I don't remember really using more than about once or twice. I certainly remember the food... what there was of it. It was dreadful. It was water, a turnip boiled in water, and that was known as a soup. And this one piece of turnip, and a piece of black bread - very hard. And that was the day's ration. My parents gave me theirs. It wasn't enough to keep body and soul together, but I took theirs because I was hungry and I didn't know any different. And... they starved to death. My mother in December, no, no sorry, my father in December '44 and my mother in January '45.

[0:20:25]

What else do I remember? Well, something that I've not spoken of before; I don't know whether you want to record it. Just very recently, about five years ago or so, I heard the complete tape of ...Richard Dimbleby going into Belsen and describing what he saw. It's a very harrowing tape. But what struck me, which I'd never heard before, was a bit of the very end where he said that the corpses lying around in this ...camp, many of them had a gash in the side, and why? Why did they have a... Apparently the liver is the very last part of the human body to die or to lose its function. And people, starving people, had cut open corpses to eat the liver. Liver is something that I have always enjoyed greatly and I do not remember eating it there. But the moment I heard that, I stopped eating any kind of meat, liver... It's just too awful to contemplate and it's something that I have lived with these last five years with a terrible feeling of 'Did I do that or didn't I?'. I just don't know.

But it's the harrowing...the idea of it that's the...

Awful. Awful.

Mnn. But you have no memory.

I have no memory of it; maybe I didn't. But it's an absolute possibility because the food there was so awful, and at the end I don't think there was any of it. But, I finally may have done out of sheer need. And I wouldn't have known not to; I was a child.

But what you remember is that absolute starvation – the starvation.

Total. Total. I ended up... very emaciated, but a big belly - swollen belly. ...There were lice everywhere. And the children's heads - everybody's heads - were shaved in order to try to stop the spread of the lice. But they did spread, and typhus became rampant - para-typhus and typhoid.

What about the smells and do you remember...?

I do not remember the smells, no. They must have been awful, but then I probably smelled just as badly as anybody else and so I might not have noticed it.

And were you together with your mother? Do you remember who you were with?

Yes, I was in the barracks for the women. They did have a so-called hospital barrack, which my mother was put into when she was - because not only was she starving to death, she also had breast cancer for the second time. And I remember sitting by her side... just being with her, until I was taken away because - she was no more. I remember the staff were... pretty awful to her. Brutal, because she was no longer continent, and there was a mess everywhere. I can't see that it mattered; the mess was terrible anyway. But I remember her being told off. That would strike a child. I was then six. No sorry, I was...I was five. I was five at that time. The washing facilities, so-called, we were terrified of those showers, the children. Because people had come from all over the place including Auschwitz, and word had got round that the showers did not give off water; they gave off gas. Well that wasn't the case in Belsen, but the word went round. I'm sure there were a lot of awful rumours all the time, and I had a deep fear of those showers.

[0:25:12]

You mentioned other children. Were there any other children?

Hundreds! Hundreds of children running around, could- being a danger to themselves like little wild animals and a danger to everybody else. And what I don't remember but I have learnt it since and I will tell you how later, was that there was one man in there, a Mr Birnbaum, Mr Birnbaum who had been a teacher in Berlin. He was in Belsen with his wife and his six children. And as the war was progressing and in fact reaching its end and people were dying left right and centre, he gathered orphans as they became orphans. And my father, realising that he wasn't going to survive... went to see this Mr Birnbaum and asked him to look after me and after the war to get me to his sister-in-law, my aunt in London. And he gave as many details it could. He also gave him a book of addresses and names, and... apparently they took that from Birnbaum; he never had it. So after the war he had a lot of difficulty finding... relatives for people, including for me. And... this Mr Birnbaum was very worried about all these children; he had by this time about fifty children in his care. Six of them were his own children and the rest of us were orphans. And he went to the authorities in the camp, and said that he would like to start a school. School. And they mockingly said, "Yeah, sure, you do that. You can have your school in the room at the end of that barracks there. But you have to clear it first." He didn't know what that meant. So he went to look and he saw that that's where corpses had been stored, piled high, because they couldn't be buried quickly enough. And so they were just put in there until burial could be organised. So he organised a work party amongst the inmates, and they cleared that room. And we fifty children had our schoolroom in there. And I remember that he taught us- He'd been a teacher of religious instruction in Germany, in Berlin. And he taught us Jewish studies and my time in Belsen was approximately the most religious time of my life, I would say, which is quite an irony. But it kept us out of harm's way, because we were locked in there, and couldn't get under the feet of guards, who - who would shoot or set dogs on people if they felt like it.

[0:28:32]

What do you remember, what were you taught? Do you remember any of the...?

Well, the *Shema* and the *Ma Nishtana*, and things like that.

So he carried it out as if it was...?

Like a proper Cheder.

Like a Cheder. No, it's just quite...amazing. And did he – I mean I don't know what you found- Did he stay religious, I mean he... despite let's say, the circumstances?

Extremely. Extremely religious. And I met him many years later but that's a whole story in itself. And I wanted to thank him for what he had done for me, saving my life. And he said, no, he had not saved my life; it had been God's intervention and that God has used him only as an instrument to save my life.

So he took care of the children in the day, but what about night-time?

We were in the women's huts, the barracks, which were totally overcrowded. You'll have seen the way the bunks were. And I remember them very well. There was one bunk per person. By the time I got there, there were hundreds sleeping in these things so, with such close proximity no wonder that lice spread fast. And disease generally.

So who were you with at night-time?

The Birnbaums.

They really took those kids in?

Yeah, they did.

And was it still- You said you were in the Star Camp...

Yes.

So did you stay in that?

[0:28:32]

Yes, I did. I don't know why they were there. But I know some other people who were there: The Oppenheimer-s, because their youngest had been born there.

So you were there because you had British...?

Yes, and so were they.

Yes, because I know in Belsen there was the Albala camp. You know there were- and there was the Star camp was for... There was also for people with Spanish citizenship. I don't know whether you came across anyone...?

I don't remember any of it. I'm so often asked do I remember Anne Frank. No I don't. She was in a different part of the camp and older than I by ten years. And she wasn't famous at the time.

No. No...and even from Amsterdam.

No...

You were too young anyway to...So that's interesting about the Star camp that you were there. And the condition must have been slightly better.

At first, but it deteriorated very rapidly and the starvation was the same as you see. My father was not ill; my mother was actually ill as well. But my father simply starved to death. So... there wasn't anything there.

No. And he met Birnbaum there. And did you- do you remember meeting your father at all in that time or did you not see him?

I do remember seeing him. Yes. But I didn't meet him; I sat with my mother and after she died I remember going to the barrack where- the so-called hospital barrack, and the window was too high for me. I sort of tried to look up in the window to see what had happened to her. I hadn't understood. But... because she was dead she was never coming back. I hadn't understood that yet. It soon came home to me.

[0:32:09]

*And do you remember how did you, I mean as a child it's... unimaginable how one can...
How did you react? Do you remember what did you feel?*

I remember being told by Mrs Birnbaum that my mother had died. It was occur- a common occurrence in the camp, and... she said, "*Jetzt musst Du sehr stark sein, gutes Kind!*" You have to be very strong, and brave. And ...so I took that to heart but I don't think I understood what she said to me, because I went back to look in the window to see where she was. I do remember that. [pause]

And life went on, and I mean thank God for the Birnbaums who...

Absolutely. They survived the war and all six children and they...[pause] Towards the end of the war, the Nazis wanted to get rid of all the evidence of what they had done when they realised that the war was ending. And they got trains organised to ship people out of the concentration camps as fast as possible. These trains left...oh, frequently. I don't know exactly how often. And I was shipped out on I think about the 7th, 8th eighth of April. Belsen was liberated on the 15th. I wasn't there anymore at that time; I was on this train which was travelling across Germany to the east. Nobody really knew where. It was... I suppose it was heading for a concentration camp in Poland but they'd already all been freed. So I think nobody knew what was going on actually; it was just pure chaos. And that train had all these 50 children on, the Birnbaums, and we were bombed from the air. Because the British Air Force was flying overhead, and saw this train and they thought these were troop trains, carrying

German troops. And we were bombed and a lot of people died then too but that I survived as well. I don't remember any of this. I do not remember the train journey. I do not remember the bombing. I don't remember the hospital in which I was finally delivered, because I was very seriously ill by then. I think I must have been close to death.

[0:35:08]

Was it starvation, or...?

Starvation and para-typhoid. And... I've been told that the train was stopped finally, and the driver got off and fled. And there was the train stuck, and the Russians came to liberate us, 'cause we were in the east by now. And... they took all the children... I suppose the adults too - to a hospital in Tröbitz. And we were- we were kept there until we were fit enough to travel back to Holland, which is where we had all come from.

All the other children were also Dutch?

We were all from Westerbork. And all to Belsen, and then... back to Holland after Tröbitz.

So did you actually- what was the language I was going to ask you - at that point? So you spoke...?

We only spoke Dutch.

Only Dutch?

Yes.

Did you have at that point any German? Did you speak German?

Not at that point, no. I had spoken Dutch with my parents as well. I imagine. Because they didn't want to speak German in Holland. Not that I remember that.

So at that point you were a Dutch child?

Yes, yes absolutely. None of this do I remember. I first came back to life when I was deposited in an orphanage in Laren which is in the northern part of Holland, I think. North- Anyway, it's in Holland somewhere. And... the Seligman's dressed me and Lola came to visit me. By this time, she was... eighteen- eighteen, nineteen - and engaged to be married to someone called Adriaan Van Driem, who was 25 years older than herself and a violin player in- the first violin in the *Concertgebouw* Orchestra. And he was a very flamboyant artistic type character. He was lovely but a difficult personality. They wanted to adopt me, but my

aunt had been traced in the meantime and had got me new documentation, birth certificate. And so it could be proved that I was British. And it took a long time. I was with, in the orphanage and visited by Lola and Adriaan and Seligmanns.

And they'd survived in hiding in Holland?

[0:38:04]

That's right. Yes, they had. Ad wasn't Jewish... her fiancée. And they looked after me, but I stayed in the orphanage. And then finally, in January 1946 I was taken to London to be with my aunt. And I was accompanied on my journeys by my father's former Dutch business associate - a Mr Otterbeek whom I never saw again after that. And I was taken to live with my aunt. Now she had a very sick husband, and did not feel able to- He did not feel able to look after a child. And apparently a difficult child. I don't remember being difficult but they said I was and I must have been.

In which way?

I know I had a lot of nightmares, and probably tantrums. I don't know.

Which wouldn't be surprising given the circumstances.

Yes. And so my aunt had me adopted – put me up for adoption. And six weeks after I arrived in London, I was adopted into a family that had been German Jewish and had left Germany in 1933. It may be interesting to note that I flew to England just about today, 70 years ago. Because it's 70 years since I arrived. It was good to live with my aunt at first, because I only spoke Dutch, and now she and all her family had lived in Holland as I said during the First World War so her Dutch was good. When I went to live with my new adoptive family, the Davidsons they only spoke German or English, so I couldn't converse with them. So they set me little tasks to do like polishing the silver or cleaning the shoes which was not at all to my taste. But they organised a governess for me to teach me English. My lovely Miss Pettelson, she was so nice. And she had a – a fiancée who was still in the Army and she was looking forward to getting married. She used to tell me about him, not that I ever met him. And...we

used to walk around Swiss Cottage where I lived with my adoptive family and playing ‘I Spy’ and that’s how I learnt English.

[0:41:11]

Where did you live?

In Regency Lodge which is the block of flats in the central island reservation of Swiss Cottage area.

And you said before that the Seligman’s, that their daughter wanted to adopt you. Did you know that at the time?

No.

No, so you found out later.

Yes.

So I guess you didn’t have much say in what was going to happen to you.

None at all. None at all. I wasn’t asked. I wouldn’t have understood. I didn’t know. No. I don’t think I would have cared actually, at the time.

And I just wondered, because your aunt must have known that she couldn’t really keep you. But did she- Who initiated you coming to England?

She did.

She did.

I suppose she wanted me to be near her. But it was not possible for her to keep me. She kept up contact with me after I had been adopted, though my adoptive father wasn’t very keen on that. He felt that she had relinquished rights – all rights – when she gave me up for adoption.

But she used to take me every week to Belsize Square Synagogue, to the services, and he couldn't very well forbid that. So that's what she did and that's how I grew up to be in Belsize Square. My adoptive mother was a gentle, kind woman, but was not able to show love. She couldn't be demonstrative. And my father certainly – my adopted father - also certainly not. And so it was somewhat Prussian household. Very... straight-laced, stiff. Everything had to be correct and one did things according to the rules and for outward show. And that's how I grew up. They were actually I believe...I was going to say 'too old' for the job. They did a wonderful job in adopting me. They gave me a wonderful home and they bought everything for me that money could buy, including a good education. But I think they were too old to understand what a young child, traumatised child, had gone through. And so it was a restricted upbringing in the sense that my emotions were not allowed to run free. And I have to admit that it wasn't until I married that I really felt released from that sort of confinement.

How old were they when they adopted you?

I was six. My mother - as I called her then - was fifty-eight, and my father sixty.

And they had an own child?

They had a daughter of their own, with the same name as me – Lily. I was Lilian and she was Lily. And... she was 20 years older than me so she was 26 when I came, and had already left home. She was working as a dentist in Harpenden.

And was she involved? Were you close to her at all or was she...?

Well, she was a distant presence. Also bought me anything that could be had. She went to America in 1946 or '47, just for a visit, and came back with the most beautiful dolls' house for me, which was totally unavailable in England at the time. And so that sort of thing, they were very generous.

They were well off. What was he doing, how did he...?

[0:45:04]

My adoptive father was a paediatrician in Germany but had, had to retrain when they came to England in 1933, because they – the doctors were told that their German qualifications did not count in England. And he had to retrain without any English, because he didn't speak much English then. And... so he did his studies in Latin which was fortunate... because he had done that the first time around as well. He didn't resume work as a paediatrician; he became a general practitioner. He was already too old when the National Health Service came in in 1947 and never joined it - wasn't allowed to. And therefore cursed it forever after. Did not approve of it.

Did he have a private practice?

Yes.

And where was it?

His practice was in Regent's Park. Park Square East. In years - later years – actually, at the time that I came it was in Park Crescent. He then moved to Park Square East in Regent's Park. Had the whole house, and he sublet to other dentists, including on the second floor my sister. She had her practice there. She became my sister and... the only sister I ever had. And... She lived on the top floor of that house. When she married and had children I used to go and visit them there.

And you said it was for them difficult to deal with...emotionally. Do you know, who organised the adoption and did they have any support? You know, at the time, was there any...?

I'm amazed at how easily it was done, but I suppose the need was so enormous after the war that... I think standards were allowed to slide. Today, such an adoption would not have been possible. So is that right, or is that wrong? Well, I needed a home and I got one.

And who organised it, do you know?

Yes, I do.

How was it matched up, or...?

[0:47:15]

My- in my birth father's business there was a partner. The business was jointly owned with a family Meyer...which I hardly know anything about. And they had come to England as well, these Meyers. And... I don't think her husband was alive any more but she, Mrs. Meyer, "*die lange Meyer*", because she was so very tall [half laughs] played bridge with Davidson's and knew my aunt as well. And she did the arrangement; it was done privately through her.

Right. So that means probably there was no agency, nothing involved, they didn't check- there was no...

Not that I know of.

...procedure, or anything like that?

I only heard all of that afterwards anyway. I didn't know this was going on.

Yeah. And do you remember when you came to England, what were your first impressions as a child?

I was happy to speak Dutch with my aunt because nobody else did. She sent me to a little local primary school, of which I do not have many memories. And... it was nice! The food was so nice. Real food! Which I enjoyed very much. I'm still interested in food to this day as a result.

Yes, so food was a big part of – it was a big thing, because you had years of not having it. Not having the right food.

Quite so.

Mnn. And how did you manage getting into this English- into the school and what....?

Well, the governess Miss Pettelson was with me for nine months and in that time I learnt sufficient English to be able to go to a primary school. And my parents got me into a - a little state school called Barrow Hill in St John's Wood – nice little primary school. I think I was there for... a year or so. My English was improving, and then my parents applied to South Hampstead High School. And I took a little test. And I don't think I could have done very well in it because my written English was virtually non-existent. But they gave me a place as a...as a trier - a try out. I think it was their ...way of trying to do something for the situation. And so I went there from the time I was seven, until I was ...eleven. Then I passed the Eleven Plus and went to grammar school in Parliament Hill Grammar School. And from there I went to the French Institute in South Kensington to study.

And what was it like? I mean you had a very... particular background as a child. Did you talk about it with the other children? Did they understand where you had come from? Did... Or did you not talk about it at all?

[0:50:40]

Nobody talked about anything after the war. My adoptive parents took the attitude that they didn't want to remind me of bad things and of hard times. And they didn't ask anything at all. And I was, I was okay about that really, but I did want to know what had happened. I didn't want to tell my memories; I wanted to have my memories fleshed out. And I asked my aunt, because she had been in touch... with my birth family, and with Holland for as long as she could. I have letters - Red Cross letters, and things like that. And whenever I asked her in later years, she would say, "*Nein, mein gutes Kind...*" "We don't talk about that, dear child. That's too awful." I knew I had been in a concentration camp; I didn't know its name, and I asked her. "I can't express the name; it's too awful," she said. So it took me many years till I discovered and she never told me anything. And that was the general situation; she was not unique. My adoptive family was not unique. Nobody really talked. ...Not until the sort of 60s, 70s, did things become a bit more open. And suddenly by the 1980s there was a total explosion. And interest was enormous. So much so, that it went too far the other way. One hadn't – One had wanted to talk a little bit about it; one didn't want to talk this much! So... I actually didn't talk much about it, and certainly not to other people.

So in school did people think those were your parents or was the adoption also not talked about?

[0:52:45]

No, it wasn't talked about. And... other people thought it was my grandparents. When my mother came to fetch me from school, they thought it was my grandmother, and I didn't disabuse them of that idea. I was embarrassed when they came.

But when you were with them, did you know your story? I mean even...?

Well, I know as much as I am telling you.

Yes.

And I will tell you later what I picked up and what I – what I remember. The whole Birnbaum incident, I had no memory of because I was so ill at the time.

But did you know, for example that your parents had died?

Yes. Oh, yes.

So you knew that your parents...?

Well I remembered my mother dying.

Yes.

I didn't remember my father dying, because he was in the men's section. So by then he didn't - we didn't meet any more.

Yes. No I ask because it could have been that you repressed it, that memory. But you knew that from the past.

Yes...yes.

And tell us a little bit about your adoptive mother; what was she like?

She was a nice lady, an artist. A very good artist actually. And she'd actually never done a day's work in her life...of any other kind. She'd never looked after a child either. Her own daughter was born after 10 years of marriage, and they had a governess. A housekeeper-governess for her. So... when I came they had a governess for me as well, so. But she was much better with older children. She was artistically interested, and... She fostered that in me too and I'm grateful for that, because she took me to galleries and aroused an interest in it which I have to this day, and is still very fulfilling, to me, even now.

And did they have- what circles did they mix in? Did they have refugee friends or did they...?

[0:54:52]

They had ...been- in Germany, their circle of friends had been exclusively Jewish. Although I don't think they ever attended any synagogue. They didn't really know they were Jewish I don't think. And only because of Hitler that they left. My sister, as she became, was fourteen in 1933. And ...she was in school. And in the April, there was some awful business going on, and she was bullied. And she came home and told her parents about it. And it was then that they decided they would go. Which I think was brave, and also that they didn't go to France, because my parents – my adoptive parents – both spoke French, but not English. So there was some foresight in coming to England instead. ...And then... after the war they didn't talk about it. But their friends were also exclusively Jewish. And nobody kept anything. But they couldn't forbid my aunt from making me keep something. I – my aunt had a number of items that had belonged to my mother, and she gave me those, including a watch, beautiful little gold watch. And my adoptive family had it restored, and... it worked beautifully. And I was so proud of it, and I loved it, and I wore it to school. And I had to take it off for gymnastics, my favourite subject, I was so bad at it. And... I put it in the locker and somebody- I told somebody about it. And she got it out and stamped on it. So I do still have it, but it's broken. And I've tried to have it restored but it doesn't...won't do. My aunt also had a ring of my mother's, which she gave to me. And I ...I was very pleased to have that. A sort of tangible piece of her, but it wasn't a ring that I could ever have worn. It was sort of old-fashioned. So

when I married, my husband had it re-designed for me. Well, actually I did the design myself, and he had it made according to my design. And this is it. Made out of the same material. It's the same band and it's the same stones but in a different setting.

And you've been wearing it...

Ever since. Mn-hnn.

So was that important for you to have a tangible connection?

Yes. Yes, it's silly I know. But it was.

That must have been quite bad in the school if someone stamped on it.

Dreadful. Dreadful. I think she was even a Jewish girl, actually.

And she just did it...

Just out of spite. Nothing more.

So it seems that your adoptive parents, they...they didn't deny your background. And I guess your aunt was there as well, so...?

Yes.

So were you close to your aunt? Was it something you were looking forward to that contact, or...?

Well I quite enjoyed going to the synagogue with her. And she used to buy me a little present; she didn't have much money. She used to buy me a little something, a necklace or a piece of chocolate or something. And I was eminently corruptible at the time. And...yeah, my father couldn't stop her doing it. Though I think he would have liked to.

So tell us a little bit about Belsize Square Synagogue, and your memories of Belsize when your aunt took you, for the first time.

Well my aunt took me in 194...7 I suppose, '46, '47. And the – I remember the services, but the first actual function that I remember was the Seder night which was held at that time... in Kay's Restaurant, in Maida Vale. And it was for all the people who didn't have a Seder at home. And my aunt took me to that. And I knew the Ma Nishtana from way back, and... I said it. Said the Ma Nishtana. And couldn't work out why people were sitting there with their eyes streaming with tears – was I not doing it properly, I wondered. But I think it was just the emotion of it, 'cause they knew how I had learnt it.

[1:00:00]

In Belsen?

In Belsen, yes. ...At Belsize I went to the annual Hanukkah bazaar; that was good fun. And I went to children's parties, organised by the Women's Society at that time, which we don't have anymore. And... I just sort of grew up there and... my aunt prevailed on my parents to send me to the Cheder, where I learnt... absolutely nothing. And I didn't like it, but I enjoyed seeing other people. And I met there... children with similar backgrounds, or at least refugee backgrounds. And then, skipping a few years, they started a Youth Group. The Phoenix Youth Group. And anybody from the age of thirteen could join it. ...And I did. And that was like a revelation. The children were all of similar backgrounds; there was no need to talk about all these experiences. But... everybody just knew. We had great fun. We laughed a lot. We played a lot, and... it was just very enjoyable. A year or about two years after I joined it, the leader of the club wanted to put on a drama play. The membership was quite large, and he was always looking for things to do. And... But he wasn't very good at organising such things. And he had a friend who he said would organise a play for us. And he got this friend in. And... you're pre-empting me. It's Herbert Levy, this friend of his. And he did plays with us. And he- we entered a drama festival. And I became the Secretary to the Director when I was fifteen and very self-important. And... he became a club leader as well, and we did plays every year with him. They were of a very high standard, very good indeed and very enjoyable. And a lot of the young people who joined in, have gone on to work on the stage

either as actors themselves, or as dramatists or as producers. It's amazing how many of them did, under Herbert's influence. By the time I was eighteen I wasn't just his Secretary any more. We began to get a closer friendship than that. We married when I was twenty-one.

Where was the Phoenix? Which years roughly did you go to the Phoenix?

The Phoenix was from 1953 until 1961, but by that time I was more in a leadership capacity. We carried on until after we married, and then handed it over.

[1:03:26]

And when would they meet, the Phoenix?

On a Saturday night. And there was always a good programme on; we weren't just left to run riot. And then on a Saturday – on a Sunday morning, we didn't go to Cheder anymore. We went swimming, at the Swiss Cottage Baths, and then on to the Dorice coffee bar. And we drove them mad with being noisy kids in the basement.

So that was the routine. So that was the sort of week-end almost, programme.

Yes. I loved it! Really loved it. And so did all the other kids. In the end there were... just so many of us.

Were there any other child survivors like you or were they mostly refugee children?

Most of them refugee children. There was one who had no connection at all, and felt a bit out of it. One child, one girl, came and joined the Phoenix. And she and I looked at each other, and we said "We, we know each other. How do we know each other?" We went through our schools and where we might have met, and nothing fitted. So the club leader overheard this, and he knew our histories. And he said, "I can tell you where you met; you met in Belsen." And I did, that was indeed where we knew each other from. She was the youngest British-born of three children. Her older brothers were not; they were German born. And the whole family had been in Holland and had also gone to Belsen. And the three children survived but the parents did not. Those were the Oppenheimers. This was Eve Oppenheimer. And then

there was Paula Dannheiser, as she was called- at that time, who had lived in hiding in Holland. And she was a member of that club. Actually I'd met her before the club, because... my aunt and her aunt, to whom she'd also come, knew each other and realised that we could talk together both speaking Dutch. And we've been friends ever since, to this day.

And did you continue speaking Dutch?

[1:06:00]

At that time, yes. Yes. It was our first language.

And did you pick up German as well, in this ...milieu?

I did. And I studied German; it's now fluent. But at that time I didn't want to speak German. But I – I did learn it.

Mnn. And where did- you said you lived in Regency Lodge. And where did your aunt live?

At Wembley Park.

Right, so she moved outside the...?

Yes, they lived there, I think, from the word go. I think that was their first and only place. I think. Her son, Ernie, at sixteen, was to be interned. And he had the choice of whether to be sent to the Isle of Man, or to Canada. And he chose to go to Canada. This was in 194...2, I think. 1942. And... he didn't come back until after the war, and then only on a visit. He made Canada his home. He married a Canadian girl. And went to university there; he became a Professor of Geology at the University of St John in Newfoundland. I was going to go and visit them there once but I never did unfortunately. Should have done.

They didn't have any other- did they have any other children?

They had two...

Your aunt.

My aunt had just the one son, Ernie. And, and there was I, as the only child on my side.

And did you stay in touch with your aunt until she died or...?

Indeed, I did, yes. I looked after her...at the end, because she was... She was very ill – dementia to some extent. But yes, I looked after her. And... I looked after my adoptive mother as well, after my f- adoptive father died. I was married by then, and she came to live with us. She lived- I married in '61. We moved to a larger house in '66, and she moved there with us. And she died in 1972, so we lived with her for that time. So she had the joy of seeing her grandchildren arriving.

[1:08:27]

And how did she... How did she view your marriage to Herbert? Were they supportive or...?

No. But then, they were so typically Prussian, that nobody was good enough for them. It wouldn't have mattered if I'd married the King of England. [half laughs]

And after you finished school, what aspirations? What did you want to do with your life? Did you have any ideas, your feelings, experience? Did you have any...?

Well, I went to the French Institute to study languages. I did English, French, German and Spanish. And did- I wanted to become an interpreter. But you absolutely have to be bilingual to be an interpreter, and I wasn't. Not that bilingual. So I became a translator and did secretarial work with languages, which I quite enjoyed. I worked in Brussels. I worked in Vienna, and I worked in London.

At the time, when?

It- they were short – sort, short internships really, in Brussels in 1950... 58, in...in Vienna in 1959, and then thereafter in London.

So just to come back to your time at the Phoenix. You said there was a feeling of freedom and of meeting like-minded people. Tell us a little bit more about it. Just to get to understand.

Well, the club leader at the time, was a school master and he ran it rather in schoolmasterly fashion. And there was always a set programme, and there were debates, and serious-minded stuff. And then the last half hour of the evening's program, was given over to... table tennis and suchlike. And refreshments and so on. And generally having fun with other people. But it was- It was all a bit serious. And it wasn't until Herbert came, that the thing lightened up a bit. First of all, he was doing the drama. And then he realised these youngsters needed a bit of energy release. And he organised- We had ...a half-hour of dancing at the end. Pop music and dancing. And oh, the Beatles were in, and all that sort of thing. And the leader, Charles the leader at that time, didn't think that was really very nice. But the kids all enjoyed it. And , so it all lightened up a bit. We had ...a hat debate. You know, you picked a subject out of a hat and you had to spout for a minute about that.

[1:11:45]

For example, what topics were debated at the time?

Oh... 'My favourite subject at school'. What I think of the current political situation. What is my favourite colour? All sorts of stupid things.

Like a youth movement?

It was a youth movement, yes. And we did outings, and that was organised by Herbert as well... because he was- he was just a lot more carefree than his friend, Charles Goodman.

And did your parents, your adoptive parents, did they support that? At that point or...?

Yes, well they didn't stop me.

Right.

I think they were pleased to get me out of the house on a Saturday night and a Sunday morning.

And did they, they didn't join any synagogue?

My father joined when I got married... because he had to. And then I think he stayed a member because by this time he was oh, seventy-five or so. And he, I think, was preparing to be buried which he was... by them.

And who married you in the synagogue?

Rabbi Kokotek.

Tell us a little bit about Rabbi Kokotek.

He had come from Liverpool... in 1956-57 – '57. And he was quite a breath of fresh air because Salzburger was by then getting on a bit. And... but he was very suitable for Belsize in as much as he could still deliver the sermons in German. Rabbi Salzburger always did the sermons in German. Rabbi Kokotek continued that for some time. And then gradually he introduced English. ...I think once a month, at first. People didn't like that at all. Far too much ...confusion about that. His English was not perfect, and we kids at the back, used to giggle about any grammatical errors. We were very naughty. There was a choir at the synagogue, made up of former opera singers who had been- who were refugees. Had been opera singers in the- in Germany and Austria. And at first, it was an extremely high standard. Lovely voices. But they all got older and more croaky and in the end it wasn't so lovely anymore. They got fresh blood in the end.

[1:14:22]

Yeah. So you joined you said just towards the end of his life - your father - Belsize Square.

Yes.

And what I'm thinking about Belsize what's interesting is that you had Rabbi Salzburger then, who married your parents. But your parents were not there, I mean...

That's right. He had married my parents. He had married the Seligman's who lived in Holland.

Did you stay in touch with the Seligman's?

Indeed, I did. And...Lola was a dear good friend always. They had very little money so she couldn't come. I did go to visit them. Lola was married in 1947 I visited them. She'd been married and had a child ...very soon after. So I was there when their baby was just a few months old. And then I didn't see her again until about 1951 I think it was, when she came with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, in which her husband was playing. And she accompanied him and I saw her again then. And then I visited again, in 1957. I visited them, in Amsterdam.

Were you at this point considering at all going to Holland, or leaving England? Or were you kind of settled in that way?

I was settled. I had been very proud of the fact that I was British, 'cause it had been a big thing in my mind when I was little. And that sort of stuck with me. So, I wouldn't have left England. No- I'm- I'm British.

You had a very positive connotation with being British.

Yes. Yes...yes.

That's interesting. Tell us a little bit more about what happened. Where did you settle with Herbert and...?

[1:16:20]

Our first home was in Hendon, in Watford Way. And our first child was born there. And then ...just before he was born, my adoptive father died in the November before... he was born.

And... so my adoptive mother continued to live in Regency Lodge. And we decided that we needed to move when we were thinking of having a second child because the place was a bit small. And we were looking round for something a bit bigger. And it was all expensive and we couldn't really afford it. And... my mother was rather going downhill a bit. And so... my sister suggested that if we would like to look for a bigger house, it- If my mother were to pay the difference between the price that we were looking at and the price that a bigger house would be, that she could join us in, she should live with us. My sister suggested that because she had had her own mother-in-law living with her for many, many years. And I think she'd had enough of that. And... so that's why she suggested that it would be my turn, and I absolutely felt that that was only right and proper. But -I felt it was my duty - but it wasn't Herbert's duty. So I felt badly vis-a-vis him and he was so good about it. "Absolutely not. I owe it to them too," he said, "because they've made you what you are as well." And he was very, very good with her. ...Far more patient than I, actually. Because she did get old and frail. And by this time I also had a new baby, girl. So two very young children and an ailing old mother.

Not easy.

It was - was difficult.

[1:18:44]

And where did you move?

Sorry. To Golders Green. We had a bigger house there, and... the children went to nursery school and then to the local school. And my mother had a lovely room in the house. The house had been built by an artist, in 1911. And she had the room that had been his studio which had a beautiful sky-light at the top, wonderful light, and she could paint in there. But unfortunately she had lost the knack of painting. And so all these lovely pictures that she had done, she then over-painted. So, we hardly have anything of hers left. Only these canvases that she over-painted. And... my sister and I got rid of them because it's too sad to see when they're like that.

And then so that's where you lived.

We lived there. She lived there another five-and-a-half years. And ...my daughter was five-and-a-half when she died, and my son was eight.

And were you close to her or you... more at the end or not. Or did you feel some sort of resentment, or...?

[1:20:08]

Resentment. Life was hard! 'Resentment' isn't the right word; it was very difficult. And I wouldn't recommend the generations to live together if it can be at all avoided, partly because one becomes so... one begins to live apart, because life is so different for a young person or an older person. She was very good with the children in the only way she knew how. Showed them her art books, and her picture books, and ...was very sweet with them. But it didn't last long at any time because she didn't know how to. But she was fond of them and she once said something that touched me very deeply. She'd already forgotten so many things. And my son, Andrew, had gone up into her room to read with her, to look at her picture books. And ...when she came out with him, she said to me, in German of course because we all spoke German, "He is so like Heinz." So my son is so like her husband, which of course was not the case... because he was no blood relative to Heinz at all. But... she saw this in him, and had forgotten that it was impossible. And I was very, very touched by that. It was very moving for me.

And, raising your children. How did you want to raise them? What sort of identity? What did you want to transmit to them?

I wasn't too worried, one way or the other. But Herbert was very keen that they should have a Jewish upbringing, so we used to take them to synagogue. It paid off handsomely with Andrew, because he became very interested. I think Hilary less so, but she's very knowledgeable. And keeps things. And I think has tried to do the same with her children. So one just does what one can.

So you were quite active in Belsize Square Synagogue?

Yes, but largely to a social extent rather than a religious one. Certainly for me. But Herbert and Andrew used to go to synagogue every week. And he, little fellow, with his tallit. And he loved it. Still does. [half-laughs]

Yes, so you kept that on.

Yeah.

And you said before that you... you were quite proud of being British. So how would you define yourself in terms of your identity?

British, Jewish, you know, how they used to do it in Germany. They are Germans of the Jewish persuasion. I suppose that would define me, British of the Jewish persuasion as well. I don't know, really. It... one turns out as one does. With the events that happened to one. And through having been married to Herbert I was very involved with the synagogue, and I'm content there. It doesn't make me a deeply religious person but I – I am a Community person. Very much.

[1:23:45]

And where would you consider your home?

Oh, London. Nowhere else. Yeah. Definitely London. I've been very happy in Holland; I've been back so many times. And I love Holland, but I, this is home. I don't speak Dutch anymore. All forgotten, would you believe? Just a few words. I can sort of pick it up when I hear it but I can't speak much. Amazing, isn't it?

And have you been back- have you been to Frankfurt?

Once. Just once. For many years I wouldn't go to Germany at all. I wouldn't do anything- wouldn't have anything to do with Germans, or with German products. Wouldn't buy anything that had a German name on it... And...

I'm so sorry, could we stop please? [pause]

We were talking about Germany and your relationship going back to Germany. And you said that you really didn't want to go to Germany. Or you didn't use any German products. What happened? How long?

That lasted a long time and was really quite obsessive, I feel. My mother-in-law, Herbert's mother, had ...had happy memories of Germany, because she was born in 1900, and wanted to go back to visit. So, the first time that we really went back was when she wanted to go and she was too old to travel alone. And we went with her. You asked me whether I had been to Frankfurt. That was the only time I went to Frankfurt. And, on our way to Bad Orb, which is a spa near there. And it was near enough after the end of the war for there still to be people around, who would have been active during the war. And all these people strutting around the spa town, taking their daily constitutional, it didn't take much imagination to see them goose-stepping actually. Herbert and I were really quite appalled, and well, felt very uncomfortable there. We had actually been before to Germany. That was the only time we went to Frankfurt. But he had a cousin, who lived in Germany, in Berlin, in East Berlin. And... they couldn't come to England, she and her family. So, we went to visit them. And... we crossed over, went to the West and crossed over at Friedrichstraße or Checkpoint Charlie or one of those. And stayed with them for the day and then came back to West Berlin at night. And... we very much enjoyed being with them. But not with all the people that one sits next to in the train at that time. You just didn't know who it was. Well, that carried on like that, until about 1994. And at that point, Herbert had reached retirement age, and was doing voluntary work with Anne Frank Exhibition; he was the principal guide for them. The Anne Frank Exhibition took a volunteer from *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste* – Action Reconciliation Services for Peace - a very cumbersome name, but a very wonderful organisation that had young volunteers at that time avoiding military service. They didn't want to do conscription, but they had to do some kind of voluntary service of some kind. And they joined this organisation and were sent to countries that had formerly been affected by the Nazi era. That included Israel, even though Israel hadn't existed at the time. This ASF, this group of young people, they had a volunteer always at the Anne Frank Exhibition. And from 1994 onwards, Herbert met these youngsters, and he brought some of them home. And... we made friends with them, and told ourselves that we were being silly about Germans today. What- These people in 1994 were aged twenty. What responsibility did they have? Even their parents, were kids, at the time. Just don't ask about the grandparents. ...And we made friends with them, and gradually we acquired a whole host of nice young people some of whom are still

friends today. And I really feel that through this organisation, through ASF, they – they have given me a clearer sense of how to be with German people, and have released me from a lot of problems that I had with anything to do with Germany. And my relations are much more normal now. I can- I've been on holiday in Germany. Herbert and I went on a cruise down the Rhine, which was very nice. And... it's just a regular, normal relationship now.

[1:29:34]

Which- you said the problems you held before. How did it manifest itself, apart from not going to Germany? Your feelings?

Horror about anything to do with any German product. The German language. When I was little or younger, anyway, I wouldn't speak German. I always answered in English. I'm talking now when I was sort of ten, eleven, twelve. Then I took German at school when I was about fifteen. My German was good, because I heard it all the time, but I refused to speak it. It was just ...an antipathy. A relationship of antipathy.

Did you feel hate, or did you feel anger or what...?

I think more than anything, fear.

Fear?

Yeah. Just didn't want to have anything to do with it; it reminded me of everything I didn't want to be reminded of. And what- the reminding that I got was nameless, so to speak, it was just a feeling. So the whole thing was fear, connected with the German language, because in Belsen I- the language we spoke was Dutch. The language of restriction, was German. All these men with their high boots, shouting at us in German. I must have understood what they were saying, cause I, I'm still here.

Yeah, and you didn't- you, in a way, didn't have any positive memories.

No. Not at all. But I feel totally normal about it now. And I'm glad about that.

And what was it in the relationship with the young people which...?

[1:31:20]

Well, we- Herbert and I discussed it a lot. I was very fortunate- we were both very fortunate to be married to each other, because we kept each other sane. We could bat off each other, so to speak. And we told each other that: It is silly; these young people are doing a decent job because they have their convictions and they feel they ought to do some kind of retribution. And they're too young to have had any input of any kind. We have to be sensible. I mean, some people were nicer than others, but that was just human nature. But with some of them I'm still friends to this day, and they're not youngsters anymore. 'Cause it's been a long time. But it's- they've given us lovely friendship.

And while Herbert was doing talking and guiding was that something you were doing at all? Talking? How did you talk about your experiences?

I tried. I- after the 70s the... atmosphere was much more receptive to people talking. And I also tried to talk; I felt I had something worth talking about. But I found I couldn't do it. I was just too...too restricted about it all. I didn't want to speak; I didn't want to recall those feelings. It's feelings; it's not so much memories and experiences. It's the feelings. And... so I did try at the Anne Frank Exhibition, but I stopped. Stopped within a couple of weeks. I supported Herbert strongly in what he did; I thought he was doing a very good job. And any backroom help that he needed, I was always willing to do it. But I couldn't go out and do it myself.

It was too upsetting?

Yeah...

Mnn. And what about your children? Did you speak to your children? What did they know growing up?

Not a lot. We didn't speak about it. Though in fact my mother-in-law, their grandmother, did talk about it quite a lot. I think Andrew was less interest-, no, Andrew was aware of everything. Hilary wasn't interested at the time; she was little. And it wasn't until the

exhibition actually came to Belsize Square Synagogue and I think that was in about '94, '93, and I gave documents to the display that we had there. And Hilary saw those, and she was bowled over by it and said, "Why have I not seen these before?" "You never asked." At that time. And then since then she's really taken the whole subject on board.

[1:34:04]

I would like to go back now... to Mr Birnbaum.

OK.

I knew nothing about him. I didn't remember him. I didn't know the name. I told you, I was desperately ill, I, when I first met him, and I have no recollection of him in the concentration camp. Nor on the train that I was travelling on. I knew nothing about how I'd got to England. I was in touch with my aunt when I was in England, and whenever I asked her anything, she wouldn't speak about it. So not until she died, in 1981, and her son came over from Canada to go through her papers did he and I discover that she had never thrown any piece of paper away. Everything had been kept. And he found in there, a letter, written by a Mr Birnbaum, in 1945. It was addressed to Mr Dreifuss – Mr Dreifuss in California... and started off in German, of course, "I was with your brother in Bergen Belsen." My father had had a brother... who died in the 1920s. I think possibly from that flu epidemic that was raging at the time; so there was no brother. I don't know where Birnbaum had got that address, but the man he addressed the letter to was my father's uncle, whom I never met and I never knew. He had fled Germany at some point, as well, and he apparently wrote back that there was no way that he could take any responsibility for an orphan child, but that the child's aunt lived in... London. So anyway, this letter addressed to this Mr Dreifuss, had reached my aunt in London. And it - it describes in detail... the life of the camp, and how it was that he took hold of me and became my guardian so-to-speak. And that was the first time I had any idea about any of this, 1981. We also ... When I read this, there was also a letter, which my aunt herself had written. And it had come back to her. She had sent it to Mr Birnbaum in about 1956 or '57, wanting to tell him what had become of me, 'cause she was proud that I had grown up nicely and was doing ok. And that letter, which she sent to the last known address that she had in Holland for him, was returned to her. And it was written across in Dutch, "Gone to Israel"- "Moved to Israel". So... my next step was to write to Yad Vashem, in 1981. And I

wrote that I was looking for somebody who had been in Bergen Belsen, and had taken charge of orphan children there. His name was Birnbaum, and I had been one of those children. And that I was trying to trace him; did they know where he was. And it was through them that I got in touch with him. And he wrote me a letter. Now that was amazing, that letter. Just to get that. The first I knew of him! He wrote that he had had a lot of children to look after. That I had been the youngest of his charges. That he had tried for years to find me, and couldn't because of the change of surname. And... Then he mentioned his daughter, the youngest of his children, Suzy, who's five years older than me. And so what was our first journey after we got this letter? Herbert and I and the children we went to Israel. Never had, I'd never been there before. This was my first visit. And we went to Nahariya, where he was living. And there he was, there they were, the two of them... looking a lot healthier than the last time I had seen them. And unrecognisable. I would not have known them in the street, but as they said who they were, I knew at once. I recognised them at once.

You did?

Yes. Oh, yes. And it was a wonderful, warm reunion, really. Very close, very lovely. He had had a contact with all the other children. I was now the last one that he hadn't had contact with. And... I told you that he had wanted to- that he had rescued me and kept me alive and didn't want to be thanked for it. God had done it; not he. He had only been the instrument. He was a devout Orthodox Jew, and his best friend was the Chief Rabbi of ...Jerusalem, of Israel, Rav Kook, who actually helped me get some documentation afterwards when I had to prove my Jewishness, would you believe? And. So that was a wonderful reunion. And I corresponded with him from 1981 until he died in the early 90s. Died a natural death at an old age. So... that was gratifying. And his wife soon after. And in fact I'm going to Israel shortly and I shall see Suzy again.

[1:40:40]

Amazing.

Mnn.

And how old was he when you met him?

What?

In Israel?

In Israel he must have been about...Let me see. In Israel it was '81, so he must have been about seventy-eight or seventy-nine by then.

And you said he'd been in touch with all the children? He'd managed to...?

All except one. One...three. All except for one family, two brothers and sister I mentioned the Oppenheimers. And he asked me to try and find them. Well I'd met Eve and I got in touch with them and said that Mr Birnbaum who had saved us, wanted to be reunited with them. And they - they weren't interested to know, because they said he hadn't done anything for them. They were older than I, and they'd looked after themselves. I don't know how true that is. Birnbaum seems to have felt some kind of ...responsibility for them and that he took care of them. They didn't think so, so they didn't keep up contact.

And was it ever acknowledged? Did he ever – ever receive anything for this? For what he did?

We tried... at Yad Vashem. And you know like the *Righteous of the Nations*. They don't do that for people- for Jews.

No, so there is nothing to...?

Nothing, no.

Because it seems an extraordinary thing!

Absolutely, it is. It leaves a lot of questions as well, of course, but... we'll never answer them. The unknowns.

So you could fill in a lot of your gaps in a way.

Yes, and I spoke about my... my father. I don't think he remembered my mother, 'cause she was ill for so long. They must have come after us, because you couldn't have survived for very long in Belsen. They must have been fairly healthy when they came. There are, I have a photo of them immediately after the war. They didn't look healthy at all but obviously not yet at death's door.

[1:43:07]

And where had they come from?

Berlin.

Berlin.

Yeah.

And his children are all in Israel, or...?

Yes, yeah. Twenty-six grandchildren.

Mnn. Amazing. OK. What I wanted to ask you, what impact do you think did this ...experience of ...you know concentration camp, of the separation, have on your life?

I think I learnt to be self-sufficient ...at a very early age, in an emotional sense. Physically obviously not at all; how can a six-year-old look after herself? I think... emotions were cut back, because one didn't want to have them. And then when I was adopted after the war into a household which also didn't show emotion, I think it was stifled completely for many, many years. And that's why I say, not until I married did I really feel a blossoming of my ...my warm, warmer feelings, I think.

So you managed to be sort of more self-sufficient in some way?

Emotionally speaking.

[1:44:36]

Yeah.

I think so. Though also very shy. Very insecure, unsure of myself. ...Unsure of any assets I may have had, in, whether intellectual or physical or anything. I didn't think very highly of myself. It took Herbert to do that for me.

Yeah, in terms of your confidence.

Yes. Exactly.

You had difficult experiences. So, the other question linked to it. How different do you imagine your life would have been if...

Had there been no Hitler?

If Hitler hadn't come to power?

Well, I would have grown up in Frankfurt. Believe it or not, I think I would have married Herbert, because, after I married, my mother-in-law discovered that we are related, Herbert and I, much like ...Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip are related; they have the common grandmother of Queen Victoria. He and I have a common – sorry, great-grandmother. He and I have a common great-grandmother. And... I do believe that somehow or other, we would have met in Germany as well. And we met in England instead. He was supposed to be going to America, and didn't go. Why didn't he go? Cause I was here waiting to grow up! He himself had come to England on a Kindertransport... and had... come alone, but he was very fortunate, his parents followed. So he had had a more sort of regular upbringing than I. What else would have happened to me in Frankfurt? It's difficult to know. I think...I would have grown up a more confident girl. My mother was a typical Viennese, light-hearted kind of woman. I never saw her light-hearted in the time that I was with her, but she had been, as a girl. My grandmother, her mother, had been a piano teacher in the Vienna... Conservatoire. And her daughter, my aunt, had taught there. No, had learnt the piano as well, and played

beautifully in Frankfurt. So, I don't think my mother was a great musician. I think she was musical, but I never heard that she played an instrument. ...I would have lived my lifespan in the same way, but it would have been a very different life!

[1:47:36]

Yeah. Tell us a little bit about your professional career, or what did you do?

I told you I learnt languages at the French Institute. And wanted to be an interpreter, a translator. Sorry, I wanted to be an interpreter, and couldn't, so I did translations. And I worked in London, in a manufacturing firm, doing their translations for them. I had worked in Brussels... in a bank, and I had worked in Vienna, in a *Maschinenfabrik*, doing their translations. That was jolly difficult 'cause I'm not technically minded. Then... I took a break from work, to have my children. I was off for about five years doing some translations at home at that time. And then when I was ready to resume work, by that time Herbert had started his own company. And I joined him in that company. It was wholesale and I helped with it. And we did that until we retired. Herbert was good at it, but did it with little passion. His passion was drama – theatre.

What wholesale? What was he...? What wholesale? What was he...?

Mainly hosiery.

Hosiery.

Yeah. And we got a reasonable living out of it, but our pleasures were definitely sought elsewhere. And then when he retired from that, I think that's when he found his, the most satisfaction he had in any job, which was as the principle guide of the Anne Frank Travelling Exhibition. He went all over Britain, Scotland, Ireland as well, with it. And met many people, told the story, his story, the story of Anne Frank, and influenced thousands of people that way. He was very, very good at it. And I admired what he did; just couldn't do it myself.

But you started working at World Jewish Relief.

I took a volunteer job, voluntary job at World Jewish Relief on the archive of the Jewish Refugees Committee. That was work which I found very, very interesting. The archive is held at the London Metropolitan Archives. And it's intact. It's a paper archive. It has now been digitised on to- first it was micro-filmed, but those micro-films are now rather decaying. And it has just recently been digitised. And at some stage I presume something else will have to be done with it, as computers become obsolete and go on to something else.

What was your job? What were you doing?

[1:50:52]

I was answering the queries of the people who wanted to know about their family histories. The World Jewish Relief had a strict... policy of not giving out data or information to anybody but the person named on the file. I think that is probably letting up now with the passage of time, but at that time they were not allowed to give out information except to the people concerned. So I had to find out what connection there was. If it was the person him or herself who wanted the material, that was all right. If it was a child, they had to prove that they were the child. And some things were actually very distressing, some of the stories, but I couldn't not send them; if they were entitled to see them, I had to send them. It was not up to me.

For example, what sort of distressing stories?

There was one family, that asked for the mother's papers from America. She had emigrated to America... sometime after the war. And in that file it showed quite clearly, that she had had a child before she ever went to America. I think the father is even named. And... she gave the child up for adoption. And I don't know whether they ever traced their half-brother or sister. But that sort of thing you just don't tell people, unless they have the right to know. It's nobody's business. That sort of thing. Or another example might be...you know these were the Kindertransport children; some or other of them were very disturbed. And so there was psychiatric help for some of them. Or...they weren't all angels. Some of them had a run-in with the police. That was all on these files. So it's sensitive material. But fascinating. Really fascinating.

Did you enjoy that?

Very much. Very much indeed. Yeah.

Because you found- You dealt with people who really wanted the information.

Yes. And I felt I was doing something useful, in a field that I knew plenty about.

And in a way, it didn't put you on the spot in some way?

[1:53:20]

Exactly. I was just the mediator. Occasionally people asked me, "Why are you doing this?" I would say something like, "I think it's worthwhile work." I wasn't going to go into it.

Mnn. But you obviously felt a connection?

Yeah, certainly I did. Of course I looked up my own family. There was very little about them. My parents' registration slips were cross-stamped, "Died in Belsen."

But you found yourself? You found yourself, or your parents?

No. No, not- not me - my parents. I don't think they had registered the fact that I was born.

And you were not post-war, wasn't in it because you came... you didn't come through...?

No. Post-war I wasn't in it, and my aunt, who was financially pretty insecure, applied to them for help with school fees. Cause one still had to pay, at that time. And she was refused on the grounds that I was not a refugee.

And you found that? You found that?

No, she told me that.

Oh, right.

No. I – I read it in one of the letters she left behind. As I told you, she left so much, and, that's where I have a lot of the information from.

And what did you do with all the...?

I have it all. I still have it.

What are you planning to do with it?

[1:54:51]

Well, I've translated it all... for my children. Their German isn't quite up to that. And they can have it, or if they don't want it, they can give it to the Wiener Library or wherever they think it ought to go. I certainly can't throw it out.

No. So at the moment you - you have it?

Yeah.

And now you're not working there anymore?

No, I was there for twenty years. And was always pretty worried that... there was no successor. If I wasn't there, there was nobody doing this work. They didn't have enough money to pay a member of staff, so we needed to find another volunteer. And they were a bit slow in doing that. And finally, I fell very ill at one point, and was off for about six months. And when I got back, the amount of work was just vast. It took me another six months to catch up on myself. And at that point I said, "You're going to have to find somebody, because I'm not prepared to carry on like this." So, they found a very nice young woman. Not so young, about six years younger than me. And... I trained her up, over a period of about six months. And was then due to go on holiday with Herbert... on one of these river cruises. And she said she was happy to take over; I didn't need to come back after that river cruise. Because... by this time Herbert was very poorly. He had become ill; he'd been ill for about

...eight years by then, and he needed me at home. And I left in the July, went on holiday. He died the following January. Last year.

So you left last year.

Yeah, left a year ago.

And... you're a member of the AJR and of Belsize Square, so you continue going to Belsize Square?

On and off, yes - yes I do. Yeah. I'm... trying to find some more voluntary work. I can't go back to World Jewish Relief of course 'cause others have taken it over. And anyway the digitised version of the archive is too complicated. I prefer to work from the microfilm or the ...papers. But... you know, other people are doing that now. So now I'm looking to see what else I can do. Herbert's been dead a year; it's time I did something.

And what kind of thing are you looking for?

I've been to the Wiener Library a couple of times to see what the work is there. They've got an interesting project coming up. And I've also joined the London support group of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at Sussex University. I've been to one or two meetings of theirs. Yes, and so it's all on a theme, I'm afraid.

[1:58:22]

You're staying in the field. [both laugh]

I am. Yes.

That leads me to my next question. How do you see the future of let's say, both Belsize Square or the AJR?

I thought they would both be dead by now...Certainly the AJR. But, no. Not at all. They have second generation; they have third generation. They even have a baby fourth generation now.

But... as for the synagogue, I thought it was destined to die with the German generation. But it's getting new members from all over. And that German connection is loosening now. Rabbi Kokotek was the last German-speaking rabbi we had. Then we had an Australian, Rabbi Mariner. We now have an American, Rabbi Altschuler. And... members are joining with no connection at all, so the bonds are loosening. But they still keep the Kristallnacht Service and Holocaust Memorial Day Service and so on.

Yeah. Do you see yourself as a refugee or as a survivor, or how would you describe yourself in those terms? Or has there ever been a conflict between this...two things?

No. I know it can be... "Oh, you're only a refugee. I'm a survivor." I've heard that. It's unbelievable! For me, it's... immaterial, how do I see myself. I don't know how others see me, but I see myself as a little English girl. I really did feel totally British... Despite German parents twice over, I still felt totally English!

Mnn. That's interesting. So, have you been to some sort of Holocaust centre ever?

[Whispers] No.

No...

I keep well away from that. What I have done, is been to some of the events that they've organised. Like last week there was a visit to Speaker's House at the House of Commons. Nicely organised. ...Very nice to be there, and see it all. But... the only thing I have in common with those people is a history. And that's not enough. I have to have more in common with people in order to... have friends. You know, similar interests of some kind. I don't know. Theatre, books... art galleries. I need more than just a common history. You can't talk about that all the time, and I don't want to.

Yeah. And you're not looking- you said you're still doing the talks for the Aktion Sühnezeichen [Action Reconciliation Service for Peace]?

[2:01:36]

I do speak to them once a year. Now Aktion Sühnezeichen is an organisation to which I feel very warmly. And Herbert and I both appreciated very much what they did. And so we'd become involved with their work and admire what they do. And Herbert and I both used to speak to them once a year. Because the volunteers come for just a year, so each year it's a new bunch. A new group of people, and I've got so many friends there now. And the... since Herbert died, I've done it on my own. And... it is the only group that I will speak to now because I know other people go into schools. And somebody told me recently he goes every week into a different school. Good for him; I couldn't do it. ...I found it very difficult, in fact it was just yesterday I spoke to my ASF youngsters. And it was all right, but I always find it quite difficult. They're they only ones I'll do it to because I feel that they have given me a lot, over the years, all the different young people, to normalize my state of affairs.

Yeah. So it's not something you want to- It's too painful to...

Yeah. Yep.

Mnn. Lilian is there anything I have not asked you? Is there anything you would like to add... which we haven't discussed, which is important?

I think it was quite comprehensive.

I mean one of the questions I would like to ask is, what, from your background what is the most important thing for you... from that continental Jewish background?

Well, is it continental? Is it Jewish? It is... love and warmth. And is it from that background? I don't know. I didn't get it from Regency Lodge. So where did I get it from? Way back, I presume. And on my husband's side of course they were a very warm close family and welcomed me with open arms. I think that's... that's about it.

Mnn. And is there any message you have for anyone who might watch this interview?

[2:04:21]

Well I've so often heard, "Let it never happen again." But it does. It keeps happening again, wherever it is, all over the world. And... So I suppose it ought to be talked about. But even with all the talking that one does it does happen again. I think human nature must be pretty awful to let these things happen all the time. At the moment we have a refugee situation coming from the Middle East, Syria and so on. And I think peoples' reactions have been less than warm and whole-hearted. I think we could afford to be more accepting, and perhaps that is my own view, or perhaps it's because of my own experience. I'm not quite sure which. But I just wish we could be more receptive to other people who have trauma and need us.

OK. Lilian, thank you very much for this interview. And we're going to look at some of your photos and documents now.

Fine.

Thank you.

[2:05:25]

[End of interview]

[Start of Photographs]

[2:05:50]

Who is in the picture please?

That is my mother and her sister. So Hedi and Alice Allerhand. Hedi was then about two years old approximately, and Alice, Liesl was nine years older than her so she was about eleven there. Looks older but wasn't.

Where was it taken?

In Vienna.

Which year roughly?

My mother was born in 1905 so this would have been round about 1907.

Thank you.

That was my mother taken in Frankfurt. And I think it must have been taken round about 1923, '4, or '5. When she was perhaps somewhere between eighteen and twenty.

This picture is of my mother, who was a milliner and had her own studio, where she designed and made hats, which seems to have been a big profession at that time. And it shows her 'Studio Atelier Allerhand', so 'Studio of Allerhand'.

[2:07:18]

This picture was taken in 1934, and it is my parents ...my, on their engagement day. My father on the far left, my mother on the extreme right. And their parents in the middle. The old lady on the left is my mother's mother, then comes my father's father and his wife, my father's mother.

This is a picture of my parents on their wedding day, in June, 1936 in their parents' home in Frankfurt. Weddings were held at home, and the *chuppa* was set up at home. And the minister, in this case Rabbi Doktor Georg Salzburger, came to the house, to marry them.

This is a picture of me when I was a few months old. Not yet a year. It was taken in the early part of 1940, and it was in Holland.

And was this picture sent to your aunt? How did you manage to get hold of this picture?

I think probably Lola had it, in Holland, and gave it to me after the war, I imagine.

This is a picture of me in Holland, when I was I think approximately two years old... If I was two, then it would have been in '41.

This picture is in the garden of the Seligmanns' house in Amsterdam. And must have been taken towards the end of 1945, the autumn I suppose. Picture of me reading to my dolly. I don't suppose I could read by then, but I was pretending.

[2:09:24]

This is a picture of me and my aunt, taken somewhere near Wembley Park, where I was living with her, at the time. That would have been in 1946.

I was seven or eight years old, if this is in 1947. It's taken outside Regency Lodge, and I am in my school uniform and still clutching my doll.

That's a picture of my adoptive mother, taking me from Wembley Park Station where my aunt lived to go and visit Swiss Cottage. It's probably after I arrived, before I was adopted, in that short space of time until I went to live with them.

I visited Lola in Holland, in 1947. This is Lola with her baby, Adrienne van Driem, born in February of that year.

This is a picture of me and my class, at South Hampstead High School. I am sitting on the first row of chairs, the second child in from the left. And I'm displaying in my hand a present that had just been sent to me from Lola, which was a pair of silver Dutch clogs keyring.

My parents and I, in 1951, on our way to my sister's wedding.

This photograph was taken in 196 ...sorry, can we start again? This photo was taken in 1960, and is of a play which Herbert co-authored with a friend. And he himself has taken a small part in it, and the other youngsters on there are members of the Phoenix Youth Group. He himself is in the middle, playing a very funny bijou part.

What's the name of the play?

"Project Mum".

[2:12:07]

Taken on our wedding day, in March 1961. On the far left are my parents, and on the far right are Herbert's parents. My parents were called Frieda and Henry Davidson. Herbert's parents were Arthur and Rose Levy. Next to Rose Levy is my aunt, Liesl Deutsch. Next to my mother, Frieda Davidson, is the best man, Charles Gutman. Bride and groom in the middle: that was Herbert and me. And then there were my three nieces who were my bridesmaids. My sister's three children.

After we married, Herbert and I bought our first house in 1961 in Watford Way, in Hendon. And this photo was taken in the garden of that house; it's of my parents and me.

A picture of me, with my first-born just when he was a few weeks old. Andrew. And it's taken in our garden in Watford Way, in Hendon.

This is a picture of Herbert, taken in the garden of our newer house, in Golder's Green. It's taken in the summer of 1967 and is of Andrew, who was then three, and of Hilary who was then a few months old, and Herbert.

This is my daughter and her family, all together. My lovely family. Hilary is on the left, next to her is her daughter Rosie, next to Rosie is her, Rosie's father Mike, Hilary's husband. And then their son, Zack, on the far right. Taken last summer, in 2015.

[2:14:27]

A picture of my son, Andrew, taken last summer also, 2015, and... I think he looks so much like his dad there; it's a lovely picture.

We married on the 19th of March, 1961. And on the 19th of March, 2011 Herbert and I celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary. And this is taken in – at the party – in Hilary and Mike's garden. Our children and grandchildren gave us a lovely party, and we had a lovely time and were very happy there. It lasted another two years and then it was over.

This picture was taken some time in 1945, after the liberation of Belsen. I don't know exactly when it was. It's a photograph of making Kiddish for Shabbat. First time ever after so many years. Mr. Birnbaum in the middle, his wife next to him. Two Oppenheimer boys in the front. At the back, two of the Birnbaum's six children. And the women have their heads covered because they had been shaved, in order to avoid the fleas from the typhoid.

A photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Birnbaum, taken in Israel in better times; they're looking much healthier there. And they had emigrated to Israel in the 50s. I think this picture must have been taken in about late 60s. There was no correspondence between Britain and the mainland Britain during the war, other than through the auspices of the Red Cross. The Red Cross had these pre-printed forms, and one was allowed to write twenty-five words only – of message. This message was sent from Holland, to my aunt in London. My mother wrote in February, 1943. The translation of it is: "Received your November letter. Heartiest congratulations to Ernst. Mother's whereabouts and fate unknown. Just received news that father-in-law died. Mother-in-law's address Theresienstadt L203. We three are well. Much love, Hedy."

[2:17:21]

My mother wrote this card in January 1944 when she was in Bergen-Belsen. And she sent it to an acquaintance in Switzerland, who then forwarded it to London. And she writes in there that, "We three are well. We arrived here recently and we look forward to hearing from you and to receiving parcels." I think she probably meant food parcels. And she signs it, "Hedy, Adolf, Lili."

It's the same card, reverse side, which my mother wrote to Switzerland. I don't know the people that it was addressed to, but they forwarded it on to my aunt in Wembley Park, in London. And that's how we have it today.

This is the letter that my aunt received from California. It had been written by Mr. Birnbaum to my father's uncle, who lived there. And he forwarded it to my aunt. It describes the conditions in the camp, and the circumstances under which Mr. Birnbaum took charge of me. And ...what became of me, and how he feels about it all.

In 1958 my aunt wanted to contact Mr Birnbaum again, and to write about what had become of me. And she was very proud of what I had become and wanted to let him know. And sent the letter to the last known address she had for him, which was in Amsterdam, in Holland somewhere. And the letter came back with- on the envelope it said, "Gone to Israel". And that was the beginning of my search for him, in Israel, in 1981.

This is the envelope of the letter that my aunt wrote to Mr Birnbaum, which was returned to her, and it says at the bottom in Dutch, "*Vertrokken naar Israel*" which means, gone, removed, or gone away, to Israel. And it was that that sent me off on my trail to find Mr Birnbaum, which I did, in 1981.

Lilian, thank you very much again, for sharing your story with us. Thank you very much for this interview.

You're welcome.

[2:20:53]

[End of photographs]