

**IMPORTANT**

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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	RV238

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Treitel
<b>Forename:</b>	Renate
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	6 August 1931
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Berlin, Germany

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	18 June 2019
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	London
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	1 hour 47 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES**

**Interview No.**            **RV238**  
**NAME:**                    **Renate Treitel**  
**DATE:**                    **18<sup>th</sup> June 2019**  
**LOCATION:**                **London, UK**  
**INTERVIEWER:**    **Dr. Bea Lewkowicz, also present and contributing, Jonathan Treitel, Renate's son.**

**[Part One]**

**[0:00:00]**

*Today is the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. We are conducting an interview with Mrs. Renate Treitel. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.*

*What is your name please?*

Mrs. Renate Treitel.

*And when were you born?*

Sixth August [19]31.

*And where?*

Berlin, in a- in a nursing home.

*Mrs. Treitel thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices Archive. Can you tell us a little bit about your family background?*

Which family?

*Your family.*

Ezra [inaudible] family? My father's family? My mother's side - her family? There's quite a lot of family.

*Right... So, tell us a little bit about your grandparents.*

Which ones?

*Well start maybe with your mother's, then your father's.*

Well, one or the other. In the case of my mother's family, it's an interesting story, if it's true, I don't know. I was contacted by- my mother had two parents in Kassel. Her father had a draper's shop. A shop selling women's clothes, children's clothes, that sort of thing. Ribbons. And- there were eight children there. Cousins, they would be. Eight children there, children would be cousins of my mother. Most of them went to America in the war. And during the war my mother used to get parcels from America from these cousins. It was very nice. Food and clothes and things. But after the war, the correspondence ceased. And we heard no more. And one of these cousins wrote me a letter about my mother's father- what was he called Jonathan?

**[0:02:45]**

*Jonathan- JT: Your mother's- your mother's father?*

She was not- Rosenthal, that's right. Rosenthal. And... in Poland, there had been a Jew who had fallen in love with a local – well, they said, princess, but I'm not too sure the word princess is right. Maybe it was only a lady or a- something else. But anyway, he'd fallen in love with – I don't know- an Aryan girl. Her father was absolutely furious and said, "Get out,

both of you.” Particularly as she was pregnant. And, “Get out. A good place for you to go is Kassel in Germany. There are a lot of Jews there.” And so, they went. And somewhere along the route they got married. And I don’t know if this woman converted to Judaism or not, but anyway as far as things were concerned, she was the mother of the - my mother’s father.

*That’s how they came to Kassel?*

They went to Kassel and he has his elder brother. He had a brother who was a year older. And he had a shop for drapery and whatever it’s called. Women’s clothes. Not men’s, but women’s things. Children’s clothes. And...

*So, did they both come from Kassel, both your parents?*

No, my mother I’m talking about.

*Sorry?*

My mother.

*Your mother, okay.*

My father didn’t come from Kassel, he came from Berlin.

*Okay.*

And he still- that is where he was born. Round about 1901. My mother went to school in Kassel and she studied to be a dentist, qualified, and then she was introduced to my father somewhere. Someone introduced them. And they got married in the flat in Kassel in 19-

**[0:05:31]**

[sound break]

When we-

*Ok, one second.*

When we-

*...One moment.*

*JT: Was that- in fact was that Konrad or Leo? Was that? That was Leo, right. Yeah, Leo. He - the private detective.*

No, the thing is that after my parents- my mother died, we found among her- she left behind a house, she found- we found- we found in a writing desk a letter from a detective in Berlin, written to her father, saying that my father was a good earner, he had a good job as a civil engineer. He had only one fault. He smoked heavily, but other than that he was fine.

*He was what?*

He smoked a lot.

*Oh, he smoked.*

Heavily. But that was all. And we thought that was quite amusing that our mother had a letter and that she'd kept it all these years.

*So, when they were about to get married, he must have employed a detective.*

Her father must have.

*Yes. So your mother came from quite a big family in Kassel?*

Yes, a mother and father and a brother.

*Mn. But there was other family around there as well?*

I don't know. I wasn't there living in Berlin.

*I know but you said there were other siblings of the parents, of your mother's parents.*

Yes, there were. I'm sure there were. Cause one of them wrote to me this story about a shotgun wedding.

*And- but they managed to get to America, many of them, you said?*

Most of them.

*And how come? Did they have- how come they managed to go to America?*

I suppose they took a boat.

**[0:07:30]**

*Yeah, but it wasn't that easy so did they have some-*

I was four years old. Some of them came before I did, some came after. I would hardly know how they made their arrangements.

*Okay, but maybe your parents talked about it. But-*

Why should they?

*So, tell me then what are your first memories? What are- what can you remember?*

Well, I do remember visiting my grandparents in Kassel. And on the ground floor was an umbrella shop with umbrellas in it. And that I played with some bricks and built houses that belonged to my mother as a child. And I slept in her cot.

*So, would you visit Kassel often? Did they visit- did they take you to visit the grandparents?*

I don't know. More than once. Maybe twice.

*And of Berlin, do you remember...?*

Pardon?

*Do you have any memories of Berlin?*

Well, lots and lots because we went several times to visit it after the war. And my husband was my guide. And because he lived until he was seventeen in Berlin, he knew it very well.

*But you, do you have any memories yourself of pre-war Berlin?*

Well....

*JT: Do you have any memories of Yom Kippur for example?*

Pardon?

*JT: Do you have any memories of going to shul on Yom Kippur, for example?*

No, I didn't go to *shul*.

*JT: But you described you could see [inaudible].*

My parents went to synagogue on High Holidays. I didn't go. But I collected them with the maid. Everybody had a maid, and pushed me in a pushchair or pram. And I stood there in the streets looking at all the legs coming down. It was a long staircase from the synagogue and I watched the legs coming down and the shoes, till I saw my parents.

**[0:09:50]**

*And which synagogue was that?*



Which synagogue was it?

*JT: You were telling me before it was Fasanenstraße.*

What?

*JT: Fasanenstraße.*

Fasanenstraße.

*And did you live near Fasanenstraße?*

Yes of course.

*And what was the address, you said before. What- where did you live?*

Hunderteinund- what was it I said?

*JT: I thought it was-*

What?

*JT: I thought it was hundertdreiund- Kantstraße, no?*

Kantstraße, yes. But I couldn't- Kantstraße.

*JT: Hunderteinundfünfzig.*

*Hunderteinundfünfzig Kantstraße.*

Yes.

*JT: OK.*

My father helped to build this block of flats.

*And what was it, a flat? Did you live in a flat?*

Yes.

*And do you remember the flat at all?*

There was a swing in it - outside- one of the rooms had a swing outside. And I was told when I was quite small, I got lost, 'cause I went all the way down the staircase on my bottom to the ground floor.

*And did the maid...?*

And that I had a favourite toy. A stool- stool thing that you put your feet on, covered in a pillowcase, and I carried it and pretended it was a doll. And then I banged my head on it and there was a doctor in the house who kindly bandaged or stitched it – something.

*And did the nanny, you said you had a maid or nanny, did she live with you?*

Maid.

*Did she live with you?*

Of course, she had to live with us. Where was she supposed to sleep? In the street?

*And tell us what was your father's job at the time?*

What?

*What was your father's work?*

The same as he was all his life. He prac- his father was a civil engineer. His grandfather was a civil engineer. He was a civil engineer.

*JT: His grandfather was an engineer? I didn't know that. His father was a civil engineer.*

And his father was a civil engineer.

*JT: His grandfather was also a civil engineer?*

Yes, he was.

*And where did he work?*

I don't know. I- he must have worked in an office somewhere.

*And were they relatively well off your parents?*

I don't know what well-off means.

*Well, were they comfortable?*

**[0:12:28]**

I don't know. I wasn't starved.

*Okay. Well, they had a maid. And your mother did she- she didn't work?*

No. She was a lady. Ladies don't work.

*So, what was her pastime? What did she do?*

Went out to tea with other ladies in restaurants.

*And did you go sometimes as well or did...-?*

Pardon?

*You were not taken? As a child, did you go as well?*

Of course.

*And anything- do you remember about the restaurants, or...?*

No. We did it in London as well when we got here.

*And you said they went to synagogue. How religious were your parents?*

Not very. They tried out a few synagogues in London. I went to Hebrew classes at Kinloss Gardens. And... once or twice a year we went to Alyth.

*That's later. We'll talk about it a bit later. But in Berlin, so when was the first time- did you- Can you remember anything mentioned about emigration or did you notice a change? Did you feel as a child- did you feel any different with the- you were born already in the 30s but did you- could you feel a difference in atmosphere in Germany?*

I don't know what atmosphere a four-year old child sees.

*So that's why I'm asking you. Did you pick up on anything, or...?*

I know nothing.

OK.

The only stories I have, which are much more numerous, are of my husband's, because as he was older, he had much more to tell.

*Right.*

And there were also a great many books one could read.

*But do you remember leaving Berlin?*

Hm?

*Do you remember leaving Berlin?*

Yes.

*So why don't you tell us about that?*

We stood- we were on an upper floor, so we stood at the front of our block of flats with our luggage to go to Holland on holiday. And a ground floor lady came out and spoke to my mother. She had a lot of boyfriends who had Nazi uniforms on. And she said, "Oh, what a lot of luggage! Where are you going?" My mother said, "Never! We're going to Holland on holiday." "Where?" "Scheveningen." "Which hotel?" "I don't know." She was very keen to know where my mother was going. My father had in the meantime gone round to the railway station to get a taxi. And when we got to Holland my father didn't stay long. He went to London and got us a room in a boarding house. Rooms for us. And started his new job. And we stayed and had a holiday in- and on my birthday went in a toy shop. I wanted a kite. They were up in the ceiling. But I was told I'd be better off with a doll. So I got a celluloid doll. And in England when I washed my hair, I also washed my doll and then we both dried in front of the gas fire and the doll went on- in flames. So, it lasted about a year, that doll.

**[0:16:24]**

*So that was your fifth birthday you then had in Holland?*

My fifth birthday in- in our new flat. And-

*So, do you know what made your parents decide to leave in 1936?*

Hm?

*What made them decide to leave in 1936? Was there...?*

One very good reason was that Hitler threw them out.

*Yeah, but many people didn't leave, so why...?*

My parents were thrown out. If all the other Jews who stayed behind were not thrown out, I wouldn't know. I was not, at four, very interested in politics.

*No, but I wondered whether your father lost his job?*

He did- of course he lost his job. He was a Jew, his partner was a *goy*, therefore he lost his job.

*Right.*

But... *Telegraph* or *The Times*, one of those papers, had jobs on the front page and he got one. They wanted it very much in England because he knew about - what's that concrete they used to have?

*JT: You're talking about something like reinforced concrete or precast concrete?*

Precast concrete. And it was at Bauhaus. We were interested in these things. And translations from German. Still, that was good.

*So, you said he found an ad in a newspaper. Was that still in- in Germany?*

Yes, of course.

*So, he wanted to- so he- well, he didn't have- he wasn't working?*

**[0:18:08]**

Yes. He had to work. We had a car. Sometimes drove around in it.

*So, let's just go back to your father. So, he lost his job, and then he started working for who?*

Uncle Martin I think he was called.

*His uncle?*

His uncle, yes. Proper- proper uncle.

*Okay and then they both?*

He stopped- the uncle then moved his practice to London. Nothing to do with my father. I know- Christmas 1939 we went to lunch at my uncle's. He had an aunt - Tante Alma and Onkel Martin.

*So, he came before your father came, or after your father came?*

I don't know.

*Right.*

But he had a flat in- what was the name of that block of flats in Child's Hill? Quite an expensive flat.

*So, once he got a job in England, did he have to wait a few months or did he leave...?*

I don't know.

*Okay.*

He didn't- my parents did tell me everything.

*Okay. So anyway, he got it and then- but when you went to Holland he already knew- you already knew you were going to England?*

I didn't know anything, but my parents may have known.

*Yeah. They didn't just go to Holland. They knew they were en route to England - probably.*

**[0:20:11]**

Yes. And while we were there, we had a- the head waiter called my mother over. This neighbour downstairs, the one with all the Nazi boyfriends, had rung up and wanted to speak to her. And my mother told the head waiter she wouldn't speak to her on any account and they were never, ever to put us through again. In later years my mother said to me- she told me the story, she said, "I think there wasn't anything bad there, it was just that she thought maybe my parents had money, and she could offer to bring it over to England or something like that."

*Who was that, a neighbour?*

Person who lived on the ground floor and had Nazi boyfriends.

*Okay. So, you sailed to Holland. Do you remember the journey?*

Not particularly. How many four-year olds have gone over their journeys?

*So, what were your first memories in Holland?*

That on my birthday we had ice creams. And that there were fireworks on the beach.

*And that was in Scheveningen?*

Yes. And we met - what were they called? Jonathan? ... They lived in Corringham Court. And played with John... you're not-

*JT: [Inaudible] The family name?*

Karna was their eldest daughter.



*JT: Was it Hackenbroch or-?*

Hackenbroch. That's right. While we- and we met the Hackenbrochs. And she said to us, "I'm living here at the moment with my daughter, but I'm intending to go to England. My stepson is already in London. I'll give you a salami to give to him. And he might become friendly with you." And so, we got to know the Hackenbrochs. They're a Jewish family. Orthodox. Living in Corringham Court, which is near the Heath. And we- they were very ...family [inaudible]. It was a four-room flat. And there were a lot of them there, because there was this lady that went to Mrs. Hacken- I don't know if she was called Hacken- she had married a widower called Hacken[broch], and she lived in this flat. Oh, her son was the one who had all the money and a business in England. And he brought over from Israel two nieces who had lost their parents. And they went to Henrietta Barnett- older than me – they went to Henrietta Barnett School. And they ran the local Bnei Akiva which was at Dunstan Road every Saturday afternoon. We used to meet there.

**[0:24:00]**

*But that's a bit later. How long did you stay in Holland? For the summer basically, or...?*

Two weeks, four weeks.

*But you said your father already went to London, and you stayed with your mother?*

Mn- I suppose.

*And then- do you remember the journey to London, to England at all – from Holland?*

No. Not in the slightest.

*And anything- what do you remember for your first impressions in England?*

Pardon?

*Your first impressions of England?*

Well, no more than impressions of any journey anywhere.

*Anything?*

No!

*Okay, what about language? Did you learn some English? Did you speak only German with your parents? Did they...?*

I suppose I spoke German with them. But I went to school - very quickly learned English.

*So where did you settle when you first came to London?*

In a boarding house at- behind John Barnes [department store].

**[0:25:04]**

*So, near Finchley Road.*

Yes.

*And what sort of boarding house was it?*

Clean, dirty, large, small, what would you like?

*However, you remember it.*

Well, I don't remember it, do I?

*Okay, what- it is difficult, because this interview is about your memories. So-*

The memory of a four-year old child is difficult to remember.

*Okay, so-*

Though I do remember that we had a party in the synagogue for children on some occasion or another. And we all had to wear white starched aprons and [inaudible]. And we all had long spoons and we stood at a large bowl and sang a song. But I don't know-

*And which synagogue was that? Where was that?*

The one in Berlin, what was it called again?

*JT: Fasanenstraße?*

Yes, Fasanenstraße.

JT: I think there's a photograph of this, probably.

*What is that? Just- a ceremony?*

There was a lot of entertainment.

*So that's still in Berlin.*

Mn,

*What about London? Did your parents join a synagogue when they came?*

Not the same day.

*But in due course.*

I suppose so.

*All right. So, you don't remember anything from the boarding house? Who else lived there?*

Yes, these people. The Plauts. They were there.

*JT: Oh, the Plauts were there.*

Mn. And the son was not a very good son. He was known to steal things.

*And you knew them from before, the Plauts?*

Well, my parents got to know them, 'cause they also came from Berlin. And were very Orthodox. Not my parents – they were.

*So-*

And later on, the Plauts were friends of my parents. And they were also friends of my father-in-law. My father-in-law came from Kas- wait a minute - from Berlin. And he was a lawyer in Germany, but the Plauts were- had a business making cellophane wrappings, employed him as a bookkeeper. And-

*And did you- do you think your parents had any help from a refugee- organisations at that point? Were they helped by anyone?*

**[0:27:55]**

I don't know. If so, I didn't have anything to do with that.

*Ok, but you started going to school very soon?*

*JT: You mentioned- you mentioned that your father got some help-*

When I got five.

*JT: You mentioned that your father got some help from the Royal Society?*

From whom?

*JT: The Royal Society?*

Royal Society?

*JT: The Scientific Society? He got a fellowship, according to [inaudible]?*

Maybe he did.

*JT: Basically, I believe they gave fellowships to refugees or money for refugees.*

*He received something. Some help.*

*JT: Yes. Yeah.*

*And what about your school? Where were you sent to go to school?*

Well, for the seventh time I will tell you it was Henrietta Barnett school. And you seem to have forgotten.

*I haven't forgotten, because you said- first of all we weren't filming, so now we're filming. But before you said you went to a local school.*

For a few weeks or a month until they finished building it. They had built it already but in the grounds they extended it.

*But when you lived near John Barnes?*

I didn't go to Henrietta Barnett school.

*That's what I'm asking you. What- where did you go?*

Whatever the local *Volksschule* was.

*And did you manage with- with English?*

Perfect.

*So, you didn't-*

I got invited to other children's parties. It was very nice.

*Okay, so you didn't feel excluded or you didn't feel-*

No, why should I?

*And how did your parents manage in the early phase when they came? How did they...?*

There were loads of German Jewish refugees in Hampstead. I'm sure even they manged.

*And with English? How did they- how was their English?*

A bit embarrassing.

*Why?*

Because I was a little girl and my English was better!

**[0:30:11]**

*And did you continue speaking German to them or English?*

Whatever came first.

*Right. So, tell us- you said before you were evacuated. Can you remember that?*

Yes. In the- when all the bombs came over, my friend Yvonne-

*Yes, please.*

My friend Yvonne had been evacuated to Lady Margaret School – LMS, and had a red beret with LMS on it. And she was- they took in refugee children that school. And her parents must have recommended it to my parents, because my father took me to Euston Station and there were lots of people with luggage there. And I had LMS on my beret, same as the porters had. Only that was LMS for the railway. And I was terrified in case somebody would stop me and want me to take their luggage ‘cause I had LMS on my beret. But they didn’t. So, I got to boarding school for summer out in the country. And my friend Yvonne was also there. And there were two girls there, sisters, from Vienna, whose parents were blind. So, the girls had a braille machine. They wrote letters to their parents and their mother sent them. They must have been- the parents must have been put in some kind of hostel in London. And the parents sent the girls knitted things that they’d made for them and letters. I thought it was very exciting.

**[0:32:26]**

*And what was it like for you? Were you happy to be there, or were you worried to be separated from your parents? What...?*

No-

*Was it like?*

Very happy to be in a boarding school. And over Christmas and I got a very nice present. My mother wasn’t good at presents but this was very nice. A games box with lots of different games in it.

*So, this was the winter of 1940-1941?*

Mn- I suppose so. And then came Pesach and I wasn’t sent home because I had the flu. So, they left me in the school and all the other children arrived in London including Yvonne, my friend. But her mother didn’t collect her because her mother had said to the school, “I don’t

want Yvonne back. You keep her over the holiday.” But they ignored that and sent it back. So, my mother, knowing Yvonne, took her and looked after her till she delivered her to her mother. A week later I was sent home. I had chilblains. And lice. And worms. All the usual things.

*And then you didn't go back? You stayed.*

It was rather dirty. I didn't go back. Yvonne didn't go back either. Besides it was by this time summer, and the bombing was less heavy.

*But then you were interned again, not interned, sorry, evacuated again?*

Yes. 1944. A bit later. That was- as I say, a lot- my mother had a lodger, woman, who worked for the, the - what's it called, Jonathan?

*JT: [inaud]*

*Salvation Army?*

That's it, Salvation Army. And her mother lived in [inaudible]. So, I was sent there for a few weeks. And as I said, her mother was a very good cook.

*Mn, but that was later in the wartime?*

That was after they'd landed in Normandy.

*Right. And this woman was a lodger of your mother. So, your mother had some lodgers in the house?*

One at a time, now and then.

**[0:35:24]**



*Right. So, let us just go back to after you stayed in the boarding house, then where did you move with your parents? Where did your parents move?*

14 Clarendon Court.

*And which was in - Temple Fortune?*

Yes.

*And why did they move there? Did they have friends there or was that...?*

They moved there because my mother's doctor practiced near there.

*That was a doctor from Germany?*

From Kassel. And he then became our doctor. And after the war- he then was in the army. And then after the war, he made it clear to everybody he'd like a wife. And there wasn't a single girl in Ber- of the right age, whose mother wasn't sort of knocking at his door. But he wanted a girl who was German, Jewish and a doctor herself. And so, he married Ellen who was all those things. They had a practice. She had the women. He had the men.

*In Temple Fortune?*

In Temple – no, no, a bit nearer. In [unclear].

*And tell us, you said your- your parents furniture arrived at some point?*

My what?

*Your parents' furniture. The lift-*

Yes, well, they couldn't get a flat if they had no furniture.

*So, they managed to- before they left Berlin to pack everything?*

I don't know.

*You know what arrived? What arrived, and?*

Furniture. I don't know.

*A lot?*

Enough.

*So – what? Tables and- what did they bring?*

**[0:37:23]**

I don't know. I had a bed. My grandfather from Kassel visited us and sent us a grand piano as a present because he couldn't send silver or money or anything like that.

*He visited you and went back to Germany?*

He wouldn't stay. And just when we arrived in England in the flat not in the flat in the boarding house, my grandmother died of diabetes. My mother sat *Shiva* for her. And her suitcase. And he took a Jewish housekeeper, my grandfather. But fortunately for him, early in the war, she found him dead in bed one day. The best possible thing that could happen to him. And he was buried in the cemetery for Jews in Kassel. And the housekeeper was sent to a concentration camp.

*And what happened to your parents- to your father's parents?*

To what?

*Your father's parents, what happened to them?*

My father, he came to London.

*Your father's parents.*

Oh. My father's- father was born twenty-two years before the century and died twenty-two years after the century. He had been forced to be in the Great War in Germany. And when he came back, he was never very well. And my father became a civil engineer himself and supported his parents. And then his father died quite young. Twenty-two years before the century born, died twenty-two years after the century.

*And his mother?*

**[0:39:41]**

Oh, his mother was foolish. This uncle Martin who came to England paid for them- paid for his relations to go to Shanghai. One of few places they could still go. But his mother- he has sent tickets, not my father, but to my grandmother and - she didn't go. She had another son, a younger son than my father, who was sleeping around with German women. A very foolish thing to do. And she was so worried about him she used the ticket to go to Shanghai bought it- and sold it, and bought one so that her son could go to Shanghai. And she, my grandmother, my German grandmother, stayed in Berlin with her other daughter and grandson. [coughs] So they were- nobody would speak to her husband anymore this daughter, 'cause they said, "You shouldn't have let your wife stay behind, and your child." And... this [coughs] Got to have water.

*Yeah.*

The sexy son lived in Hong- Shanghai and after the war he was put into a lunatic asylum or a hospital in Berlin. And another aunt, Dora, who lived in Israel, and she sometimes went on holidays and visited him. But it didn't help the grandma. They got somewhere to Poland in the- she, her daughter and her grandchild- son, all murdered. And this worthless son stayed alive.

**[0:42:24]**

*So, did your parents correspond with people during the war? They had relatives in America-*

Yes, they sent food parcels, so they said thank you. But this- after the war it stopped.

*Yes. And what about internment? Was your father interned?*

No.

*And why not? You said there's a story-*

Ask him. He's buried in Golders Green. You can dig him up and-

*JT: You told me a story before. I don't know if it's true, but you told me a story.*

There's no story. My mother, father and me went to Golders Green police station and they said, "Sorry, we can't..." to my father, "We can't take you today, we're too full up." And they never came back for him. So. He worked first for Hardie James and Co., and when the war started, he decided it would be better if he did war work. So, he did war work which was working for the Great Western Railway.

*Until the end of the war?*

Yes. And then he had- started a practice of his own.

*And where was his practice? Here?*

In, in- yes, in Muswell Hill, I think.

*And tell us a little- you- that you said there were lots of German Jewish refugees in this area: Golders Green, Temple Fortune.*

Yes, of course.

*What- what- did they have businesses? What do you remember? Did they go- were there specific restaurants? Or- can you describe a little bit that milieu?*

Not at all. My mother didn't go to restaurants in Golders Green and her friends were a lot older than she was, because all women of my mother's age were working, because they needed the money. Except for my mother, she was a lady, and ladies don't work. Except for a few lodgers, she was lady. And so, her girlfriends were mainly older women, with whom she went to restaurants, afternoon tea in the school holidays- and then I would come along as well. One of them came from Australia. She was there. And she bought me very nice children's books.

**[0:45:14]**

*And did, did your you- parents go to a synagogue? To Alyth or to Munk's or to- anywhere? Did they go to-?*

Oh, yes.

*Where did they go to?*

Well, they went to Alyth now and then. Occasionally to Kinloss.

*But you were sent to cheder in Kinloss you said?*

Yes. And my best friend, one of my best friends. was Ruth [inaudible], daughter of the butcher, she went to Bnei Akiva and I went with her.

*And did you enjoy that?*

Yeah, very much.

*And did your parents have English friends at all or was it mostly German Jewish?*

All German Jewish. Maybe Viennese. Not often.

*And your friends as well?*

Well, I had school friends. And then these at Alyth Gardens in the youth club.

*Yeah? And what was that like?*

All right. What should it be like?

*So, were your parents, sort of more Reform? Did they see themselves as affiliated to the Reform?*

A little bit more than I was. My father and me - no. My mother - yes.

*So, no contact to English Jews, you said?*

Pardon?

*No. So, English Jews? English Jews?*

I had one or two girlfriends. And then when I started studying, I went to various youth clubs. The graduates and... the one at...what's it called? Not Alyth Gardens but the other one in the West End.

*JT: New London Synagogue?*

*West London Synagogue?*

That's right. And then I also went to B'nai- B'nai B'rith. That's right.

*There was something called The Hyphen. Have you heard of that? The Hyphen?*

**[0:47:42]**

Yes, I went there once or twice with my husband actually. But they were all older than us.

*Yeah, what was that? The Hyphen? Because I heard about that-*

Well, that was just a youth club. Some young man founded it and thought it was very clever and had meetings there. And my husband and I went once or twice and were meeting a few friends there.

*Was that here for the younger refugee generation?*

Mn.

*Well, clever title, Hyphen, I thought.*

It wasn't quite us.

*Right.*

We were professionals. And we were not very- they weren't our type, really.

*Right. And how do you feel were you- because there- some people think, you know, were you treated, were the German Jews treated by English Jews? Do you think there was a problem or...?*

No, none at all.

*So, in this time when you were- went to school, and- did you have any bad experience being a German Jewish refugee?*

No – never.

*And did you experience any anti-Semitism for example?*

Not that I know.

*Okay. So, when you finished school, what did you want to do? What were your aims?*

Get married.

*That was the expectation at that time?*

It was my wish as well.

*Yeah? What about studying or working or...?*

I studied to become a chartered accountant.

*And why chartered- why to be a chartered accountant? Was that something your parents decided, or did you?*

My parents had a friend whose daughter was studying. And so, we got to know how to set about it.

*And you started working as a clerk?*

Yes.

*For whom? What was the name? Where did you start working?*

**[0:50:00]**

Do you remember? I don't. Where I worked? It was in Hanover Square.

*JT: You told me the name but I can't remember.*

The firm had an office in Hanover Square.

*And did you enjoy it?*



Quite.

*But you say at the same time you were looking for a husband?*

Well, I went to different youth clubs.

*Yeah.*

And then my mother- parents belonged to the Bnei Akiva, not Bnei Akiva - B'nai B'rith. Belonged to B'nai B'rith and so they had a youth club as well and I went there.

*And where was that, the B'nai B'rith youth club?*

That was in the same building as the – [inaudible] Gardens was in the West End.

*And that's where you met your husband?*

No.

*No? Okay, so, where did you meet your husband then?*

Oh, very nice [inaudible]. My mother- parents paid rent every week for the flat. And you could buy houses and with tenants and you couldn't charge them over a certain amount. A limited amount. So, my parents bought a house for sale that had a family living in it. And it was cheaper that way. And then - the family didn't want to buy the house. They could have bought it because the owners wanted to sell it, but they didn't want it. And in fact, they soon moved out because they already had a hol- a home at the seaside that they wanted to live in. So, the house was then free and my parents could sell it. And they- but they didn't. They moved in themselves. Much better. And so, we moved into a house in Hendon. And it was opposite Vincent Court which was a block of flats in Hendon. And my father-in-law became seventy. And he belonged to a lodge. And so, did my parents. And somebody at the lodge gave my father a book for old Doctor Treitel as a gift. And on Sunday afternoon he had a birthday party for his children. His wife was dead. His children and friends. And my father

came home and said he'd had a nice time and he hadn't met them before. "And I've asked the oldest son to come over one evening for a cup of coffee." And my mother and me said, "Well, if you say that, you must do it." So, he rang up and Kurt, my husband, called over for a coffee one evening. We had never met before, but we had a lot- though he was nine years older than me. We had- we had a lot in common. We knew a lot of people – same people. And we'd done various things the same. And he later on showed me Berlin. He was working in the wool trade - rag trade. Because he had to leave school before he could do any exams. In Germany he went to the American School because he couldn't stay in a German school. And then when he came to England, he worked in the rag trade [inaudible], 'cause he could have done something better than that.

**[0:54:24]**

*So, did he work in a shop or what-?*

No, in a... business where they made coats and things. I don't know [inaudible]. My father died five days after we got married. And then we moved over to my father-in-law. And we three managed a savings for a house. And he got his German compensation, my father-in-law. And we had our first baby. And we bought a house with the money from my father-in-law. This one. And - that was lovely. I had a baby. I couldn't go to work anymore. But we had lots of rooms to sublet, which we did.

*You- you were subletting rooms you said? No.*

Yes.

*Yes. So you had lodgers?*

We had to. Because I couldn't go out to work. And they had au pairs to look after the children.

*And did you have- did your mother get any compensation from Germany?*

I'm sure she did, from what I heard. Anything that I was entitled to, she took for herself. She saw to it that I didn't get it.

*Did you get any compensation?*

A very small amount. Not much.

*And did they go back to Berlin at all after the war?*

Pardon?

*Did they go back to Berlin after the war?*

Oh, yes, my husband took me around and showed it to me.

*But your parents – your parents?*

No, my husband, I said.

*I know, but did your parents ever go back?*

Did my parents ever? My mother- my father died just after the wedding. I think my mother went back once to visit somebody in Kassel who was her friend [inaudible] before the war. And my mother behaved so badly, they threw her out.

*JT: You- you went to Kassel after the war? Right?*

Pardon?

*JT: You went? You visited Kassel yourself?*

*Did you go to Kassel after the war?*

No, I don't-

*JT: You just told me before you did. You don't remember it? Maybe it was before the war you visited. OK. You did visit- you did visit Kassel, yes?*

Yeah. Before the war but not after the war.

*And what were your parents' feeling towards Germany after the war?*

I didn't ask for their feelings.

**[0:57:31]**

*But I mean did they, did they, did they ever think of going back or going some other place?*

Whatever for? Would you like to give me a good reason why they should want to go back?

*JT: Did you not tell me your father beaten by Nazis?*

Pardon?

*JT: Your father was beaten by Nazis.*

No.

*JT: You told me before. In Germany. Before the war.*

Maybe.

*JT: You don't remember.*

No.

*JT: Well, you told me this on a previously. Never mind.*

I may have told you, but I can't remember.

*What about citizenship? When did they become British?*

Pardon?

*When did you become British, or when did they become British?*

As soon as possible, naturally. It was all - time limit.

*And did they ever think of going somewhere else? Did they ever think of going to America, or...?*

Why?

*I don't know - they had family in America. No? They were happy to be here.*

My father was a civil engineer. He was accepted by the civil engineers of England. What should he do over in America? Become a beggar?

*So, he was happy? He wanted to be here?*

Wh-?

*He was happy to be here?*

He was happy here. He died very young, but then he had a woman like my mother as his wife, it's no wonder. She used to throw his food out of the window and have screaming fits. She was not a very pleasant person.

*And how did she manage then after your father passed away?*

Well, she had compensation - from my father's family and her family.

*JT: And she- she remarried.*

Hm?

*JT: And she remarried.*

And she remarried.

*Who did she marry?*

We don't know quite, do we? A Mr. Cohen.

*JT: Mr. Cohen, yes.*

*Somebody English or another refugee?*

Viennese refugee. It didn't last long because she was such a nasty person. But, after a few weeks or months he left her.

*But was that already, you were already married by then?*

Yes. I liked him. We liked him. He had a daughter but we never met her. Anyway, he left her and then he died of a heart attack. He didn't belong to a synagogue but some Jewish organisation arranged for him to have a proper Jewish wedd- funeral.

**[1:00:21]**

*And when you got married, did you get married in a synagogue?*

Unfortunately, not. My father-in-law wanted a certain rabbi, friend of his. But he'd just gone to Israel on holiday, so he didn't marry us. And so, he had another friend who was a rabbi and was a Reform rabbi unfortunately. And so, he- we married in a registry office and then we married with this Reform rabbi.

*And why do you say 'unfortunately'?*

I don't- don't like the Reform.

*Why?*

Just don't. Don't like their attitudes.

*And did you join a synagogue with your husband then after you got married?*

Regularly. First to Munk's in Golders Green and then here.

*Dunstan Road?*

Mn.

*So, tell us a little about Munk's synagogue. Because there were many refugees in the Munk synagogue.*

They were Orthodox. It was an Orthodox synagogue, very Orthodox.

*And Rabbi Munk, was he from Germany? Who was Rabbi Munk?*

Yes. He was from Germany.

*Can you tell us a little bit about him?*

Pardon?

*Can you tell us a little bit about him?*

I don't remember him. I'm told he was a very good rabbi, but I don't remember.

*Where was he from, from Berlin?*

I don't know. I was rather young. I didn't know about those things.

*But he had founded the synagogue when he came?*

Yes. And I still have- we have or still have acquaintances from there.

*So, most of the Orthodox German refugees that- in London, they would go to that synagogue?*

If they were in Golders Green.

*Yeah. Did you ever have any contact with Belsize Square Synagogue, which was...?*

Yes, sometimes.

**[1:02:34]**

*And how did you want to raise your children? What sort of- religiously and from an identity point of view? How did you...?*

Dunstan Road.

*Did you send them to Jewish schools, for example?*

Yes, two of them went to - what was it called? [inaudible]

*JT: All of us went to Menorah Primary School.*

You went-?

*JT: All of us- we first- well, primary school to begin with, we all went to Menorah Primary School.*



All of you went to Menorah Primary, and you and Richard went to the boarding school.

*JT: Oh, Carmel College.*

Carmel College.

*JT: And I also went to Hasmonean and-*

Later, on to Carmel College.

*JT: My other brother David went to Hasmonean.*

*Right. So, you all- sent them to- also- not also, but yeah, Jewish schools. Was it important? That was important for you?*

What?

*The Jewish- the Jewish aspect of their education?*

Oh yes, Menorah Primary was a very good school. Very good education. Caroline went to Henrietta Barnett like I did - afterwards.

*And Carmel College was a boarding school?*

Yes.

*And do you think it became more important to be Jewish while you- when you had a family?*

I would have preferred it. Do you have any children?

*Yes, I do. I'll tell you a bit later, but let's finish your interview first. So you got married, you had children and you lived here in Golders Green.*

Mn.

*And your husband also was a refugee. So, you said you went together to Berlin with your husband?*

Oh yes, several times.

*And when was that?*

Pardon?

*When was that?*

After the war. We got married in '55.

*And how did he feel about Germany? How did he feel about it?*

I can't remember.

**[1:05:10]**

*And what was it like for you, to come to Berlin?*

Interesting. Sightseeing.

*How did you feel to the German- to the people you met?*

Nothing.

*JT: You were invited back by the City of Berlin.*

Pardon?

*JT: The City of Berlin invited you and-*

Oh, that's right, the City of Berlin invited us.

*Yeah. And what was that like?*

Interesting.

*And did you, how was your German? Did you keep your German or did you- forgotten...?*

Well, I- I had a German father-in-law, and a husband who knew fluent German, so I did alright.

*But did you forget it, because you were four years old or did you always speak German?*

I usually spoke it at home, from time to time.

*JT: But not with your husband. You- you almost never spoke German with him.*

I didn't speak much German at home.

*And to your children? Not?*

Not much.

*JT: Never – never.*

*And how do you feel today in terms of your own identity? How would you define yourself?*

English.

*And do you see yourself as Continental at all, or...?*

Not particularly.

*English. And what- what is important to you from your background, from your German Jewish background? Is there anything?*

Well, most of our friends are German Jewish.

*And why- why do you think that is?*

Well, they just happen to be. But by now, most of them are dead.

*Yeah. And do you sometimes think how your life would have been different if you hadn't been forced to- to emigrate?*

It might have been, but I never thought about it.

*And what impact do you think did it have on you, the fact that you left Berlin?*

None whatsoever.

*You don't think it had any lasting impact on you?*

**[1:07:53]**

No. I did have a penfriend who was a cousin of my father-in-law's. Cousin – cousin to my father- but unfortunately, she died rather young. But we visited her quite often. She came from Berlin as well.

*And do you have any sense of nostalgia or anything towards...?*

Pardon?

*Do you have a sense of nostalgia, anything you...?*

Why? What nostalgia? For what?

*JT: You, you eat German foods, no?*

Yes, we do tend to eat German food.

*So what sort of food, for example?*

Go on, Jonathan. You-

*JT: Well, you eat [inaudible] What do you like?*

*What do you eat? What do you like?*

Salami. Smoked salmon. Croissants. What else?

*JT: You used to make all- you used to make various kinds of German cakes and so on.*

I've stopped baking, but I used to bake.

*Bake. What did you make?*

Plum cake and-

*JT: German- that means the German kind-*

German kind of cakes.

*So, the food, you kept the food that- that tradition up?*

Hm? Mostly.

*But I assume you kept a kosher house?*

More or less, yes.

*Was that both important to you and your husband or...?*

Well- we were accustomed to it.

*Yeah.*

*And did you talk about your past to your children at all?*

Jonathan. You're the only child here.

*JT: The answer is yes.*

*Yeah, we'll talk- wait a second. I- if you talk, we'll come to camera, but just- I'm just - we'll talk to Jonathan a bit later, but now to you, did you talk to your children? Do you remember your talking about it?*

**[1:10:05]**

I suppose I did.

*Do you think it had any impact on them at all?*

Well, Jonathan's been back to Berlin a few times.

*Okay, we'll ask him. At the end of the interview, we can bring Jonathan in, and then he can tell us about his experience a little bit. Is there anything I haven't asked you which you'd like to add? I mean, I would like to know how you feel about Germany today.*

Hm?

*How you feel about Germany today?*

Nothing in particular.

*How would you feel if any of your children would get a German passport or...?*

If they wanted to, they should. Haven't you got one?

*JT: Yes, I have.*

*What about you? Would you get one, or-?*

*JT: You have one.*

*You have a German passport?*

I do, but I haven't renewed it.

*Aha. Why did you get one?*

In case I wanted to travel on the Continent. We did a lot of holidays, my husband and me, but I won't be doing it again.

*Where did you do your holidays?*

Mostly cruises.

*Right.*

And we liked that.

*And you're a member of the AJR for many years, or-?*

Oh, yes.

*And did you go to- did you attend the AJR meetings, or...?*

Sometimes.

*But you- you anyway had enough German Jewish friends?*

Oh yes.

*And – yeah. Is there anything else, Jonathan you think I...?*

Jonathan anything you can think of?

*Yes, we will bring Jonathan in in a second.*

*JT: All I can think of- [inaudible] questions that are relevant. You don't remember your father being attacked by Nazis? You told me about this. You remember any of this?*

I don't remember.

*And how do you feel towards Britain? Towards Britain?*

OK.

**[1:12:35]**

*And do you have a message for anyone who might watch this interview, based on your experiences?*

None whatsoever.

*And do you think- did you want to do this interview, or...?*

Yes, I was prepared to do it and I'm not that interesting a person.

*But do you find your memories are coming back, or do you find it's the sort of past you've kind of...?*



Well, it isn't me- I have all my memories. They don't come back. They are there.

*But you- so you don't have any traumatic memories, because you can't remember anything bad happening to you as such?*

Can you remember me saying anything bad? I know Kurt after the war he went back to Berlin to see his friends, what were they called?

*JT: Which friends?*

The ones who kept the silver- family's - during the war. They kept Kurt's father's silver.

*Yes?*

And after the war they sent it in a suitcase to England. And- he went, Kurt went to Berlin for a short holiday after the war, and knocked on their door and it happened to be the old man's birthday. And they were all- none Jews at this tea table of course, except for Kurt. But the host was an older man. He became the mayor of the area afterwards. He said to Kurt, "And how's the *mispocha*?" And Kurt thought that was very amusing.

*JT: Their name was Horlitz, I think?*

Hm?

*JT: Horlitz? The name?*

Horlitz. Their name was Horlitz.

*And as he [her husband Kurt] was older, how do you think his experience affected him? Do you think it affected him more than you?*

I don't know.

*He left Berlin as an older – as a teenager.*

[1:15:15]

He was quite happy in England. And when we got to know each other, which we'd never done before, we had a large number of things in common. A lot of people, class... we were married sixty-two years.

*Long time. And how do you find today, is it difficult to live by yourself or...?*

I've got Marion.

*Yes.*

When my husband wasn't too well, I was- we were told I should take a carer for him, which - he only lived to ninety-five.

*Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add, which I haven't asked you? Do you have any regrets, anything you feel...?*

I don't think so.

*What about your grandchildren? Are they interested in your history?*

I suppose they are. That's how it goes. My daughter has three very nice children.

*And do you feel people in this country know enough about the history of the German Jews?*

Pardon?

*Do you feel people know enough about the history of the German Jews and the Holocaust?  
Or you think more should be done?*

I don't know whether people know or not. It's only very recently that they've started to bring it out.

*You feel there's more interest now than before?*

Mn. Certainly. And when I can get hold of books, I read them.

*And in Dunstan Road Synagogue were there any other refugees in Dunstan Road, or was it more English?*

They're mostly refuge- mostly English weren't they- aren't they? They're mostly English in Dunstan Road. When we first came here, they wouldn't have us as member: "We've got enough German Jews." So, we knew people in Munk's.

*Did they say that? The synagogue?*

**[1:18:08]**

Yes. When we bought the house, we asked if we could come in. "No."

*What?*

"We have enough German Jews." And so, we'd got in with a lot of people from Munk's and they invited us with open arms to become members. And also recommended the Menorah Primary School, which was a very good school. And then, one day - the last Chief Rabbi, not the present one, but the one before, what was his name? Lord?

*JT: Rabbi Sachs?*

Pardon?

*JT: Rabbi Sachs?*

Sorry?

*JT: Rabbi Sachs?*

Yes. Lord Sachs. Became the- became rabbi here and although we weren't members very often on a High holiday or a Saturday we went here, because it was such a good service. And then I said, "We really ought to pay them. We can't just go."

*And then they accepted you?*

And then they accepted us. Which was useful for burial.

*So, they were not so keen on so many German Jewish refugees?*

Pardon?

*They were not keen, initially, on German Jewish refugees, in Dunstan Road?*

At one time they were very full and they didn't want any more.

*But you said before, also there was, when you went to Henrietta Barnett, there was a quota for Jewish girls?*

They once had.

*So, there was a quota here for German Jewish refugees then, in Dunstan Road?*

I suppose so. I don't really know.

*JT: But you might have been imagining this.*

I might have imagined it.

*Well, in any case, you didn't feel welcome there.*

Not at the beginning, but later on it made no difference.

*Ok, if there is nothing else, so what I suggest now we bring Jonathan in and then maybe look at some photographs.*

**[1:20:34]**

Yes. That's fine.

*Is that all right?*

Yes. Jonathan where do you want to sit?

*JT: Where shall I sit?*

Do you want to talk?

*JT: I can.*

*Mrs. Treitel can you please introduce the person sitting next to you?*

Hm?

*Who is the person sitting next to you?*

Jonathan.

*Your son?*

Yes.

*Okay. Jonathan, I'd like to ask you because you were sitting in on this interview, maybe what- what from your perspective whether you'd like to add something, or...?*

Jonathan Treitel: Well yes, I can say- okay- so, my parents are both German Jews but quite- quite different in their attitudes to Germany, because my father was – perhaps- perhaps

because he was older when he left or just had a different experience, my father was quite-thought himself as really quite German and sympathetic to German – to Germans. And my mother has always had a rather antagonistic attitude towards Germany. When they did visit- I went with them when they were invited by the City of Berlin, and I mean, once she was there, she- and I went with them again later. I mean, she quite enjoyed going to Germany and she certainly quite enjoyed eating German food and so on - and was, you know, happy enough to speak German. When I grew up as a child we lived very much within a German Jewish bubble. And there was a sense that there- England was a very distant country. I mean, far away from any- we had, you know, it was- it was a strange, exotic place. My mother had told me before that her father was beaten up by some Nazis when she was a child. And she didn't tell me any more details than that. I know that- that whenever say my father was even say five minutes late home from work, my mother would become extremely anxious that something terrible had happened to him. So, you know, one perhaps can draw, you know, draw some connection. Again, I rememb- [inaudible] when we went for example on a family holiday to Austria and my father was quite happy speaking German, my mother- and I think perhaps passed for a German. My mother would make it clear that she wasn't German and would perhaps- perhaps even deliberately not speak correct German to the Germans. Which is how she sort of defines herself but obviously nevertheless, very much as a German Jew, and not a- not a German. I'm trying to think what else one can say. Any more-

**[1:23:14]**

*Do you think that religion helped them to settle here in England somehow?*

JT: I think it- well it became a sort of- we had some kind of identifying link. Munk, again, certainly in the case of my father who put a great effort into- into – you know, studying Jewish- things to do with Judaism once he got to England. In the case of my mother, she didn't, you know, study it as such, and, you know, but having- going to- having the Community at the synagogues and so on was important to her. It gave her a- just sort of a sense of- sense of definition. You know, as- as she got older it's something to hang on to. It's something which sort of gives a kind of framework perhaps to her life.

*And you said you lived in this German Jewish bubble. So, you know, were you aware that your parents were different or was everyone different?*

JT: Well, everyone was different. I was very well aware that we were- that we were- obviously we were a small minority within England. I mean even English Jews seemed quite- a little strange to us. And I, well until- well, until the age of ten I was at a Munk school which was Jewish. I went to Menorah Primary School where just about all my fellow pupils were, you know, children of- of refugees. And hardly anybody who wasn't. Then I went to Hasmonian and I met, you know, English Jews – but even so- and at Carmel. But even so, I didn't meet anybody who wasn't Jewish until I, you know, went to university. No, it was- that's just- that was- that was my childhood and the childhood I think of many- many children of refugees.

*And do you think it had an impact on you as children, your parents' experience in some way, or....?*

Well, I think so. There was- there was- I think there was a certain, you know, fear. A sense that the world is an unstable, dangerous place. And that, you know, you may have to move possibly.

*And you- you lived in Germany? In Berlin?*

**[1:25:26]**

JT: I- Well, not lived there. I've spent quite a lot of time there. I've actually- I've been actually teaching. Well, I've been teaching there. Stanford University in America has a programme in Berlin. And I've been teaching- and I- I went to Stanford myself. I did my PhD there. And I've been teaching a course for American students in Berlin called *Refugees and Germany*, which includes- includes the history of people such as my parents, and also includes refugees from the Middle East et cetera who are arriving in Germany nowadays. I've taken- I've taken American students. I've taken them, you know, among other things, I've taken them out for a walk and shown them things connected with my family, you know, in Berlin.

*Recently?*

Recently, yes. I did- I did it last autumn and I'll be doing it again this autumn.

*So that's something you were looking for? You –*

Yes, I mean, something – I mean, you know, among other things, yes. It's some, you know, it's some connection.

*So, do you speak German?*

I speak German very badly because I didn't learn at all as a child, so the German that I have is the German I've taught myself.

*And do you have a passport?*

JT: And I, yeah, I have a German passport. But as I say, it was my father first who felt he wanted to. And then, and then, you know, his wife came with, you know, got a- got a passport too. I had it- I assumed they heard through the AJR or something it was possible to do so. And then they did so and then- and then once they had become German citizens it was then very easy for- well, actually my- my younger brother David became a German- got his passport and said to me, "Why don't you get one?" And I said, "Well – yes."

**[1:26:57]**

*And since you're teaching this course, do you feel there's enough done to- for the history of the German Jewish refugees in this country? Compared, for example, to Germany?*

JT: I think, well, I mean, it's a question of how much should be taught. And I think, you know, compared to, you know, it is taught quite a fair amount compared to all the other topics that one might possibly want to teach to, you know, to British school children. It's- yeah, I mean, as, you know, as the actual refugees become scarcer, the question is how one communicates it to people, you know, in the generations to come – is, is worth an open question. And I mean it's one thing to teach people the facts and another to teach them sort of the textural life, which is not always easy- easy to communicate.



*Okay. Anything else? I think your Mum is quite tired.*

Well, yeah.

*Mrs. Treitel is there anything else you'd like to add or say to your son about- anything?*

Well, I do remember in Germany that they didn't have stockings for Christmas, they had a large slipper or shoe which they put in the wall. And into it they put some gift for the child. Like, certainly chocolate gifts.

*JT: Aha?*

*For Chris- Nikolaus?*

That's it. Nikolaus.

*Yeah. Sixth of December.*

That's it. I do remember that.

*JT: Yes, my mother, I think my mother- she made- I mean I think my mother didn't actually grow up eating kosher, but when she got married, she made the decision that she wanted to have a more or less kosher home anyway. And she, you know-*

More or less - what?

*JT: Kosher home. And she didn't, you know, and she, in fact, she told me actually - you went to a cookery class didn't you when you got married, to learn how to cook?*

Well, because otherwise I couldn't. But that was very enjoyable. For three years, round about the time I got married they had a cookery class here in Dunstan Road. And I used to go after work.

*So that you could- that's one thing actually I didn't ask you. Did you continue to work, after you had children?*

No, that was when we first got married and before I got married.

*And then afterwards, once you had children did you continue to work or did you stop working?*

*JT: Oh, you didn't mention, or you haven't described the whole-*

No, I always worked - but from home. I sat exam papers and marked exam papers.

*JT: Accountancy. It's to do with accountancy, or bookkeeping.*

Accountancy. To do with accountancy.

*What did we say?*

**[1:30:06]**

*JT: No, just saying it was a part time work. I mean, our- yeah. So, she gave up- you gave up full time work as a- as an- as a chartered accountant and just did some part time work from home.*

*Okay. Anything else?*

*JT: I'm trying to think. I can't think of anything. Alright.*

*I think we, yeah, we understand that the- your parents became more religious together.*

*JT: Yeah.*

*So, I think that's an interesting, that much, it's not that documented you know, the sort of more Orthodox German Jewish experience – today. I mean-*

*JT: Sorry? It's not...?*

*Of the refugees. It's not so well documented.*

*JT: Not? The Orthodox. Well, you have to go around Munk's and talk to people there. You know, and [inaudible] children.*

*Yeah.*

*JT: No, my, my, my best friend when I was at Menorah, he now lives in Bnei Brak and has innumerable children and has become much, much, much more Orthodox than his parents were.*

*Right.*

*JT: And he had Orthodox parents. But he's become, you know, ultra-Orthodox.*

*Which one was that?*

*JT: Leon - Ariele Engelhard.*

*Oh, Engelhard.*

*JT: Yeah, the Engelhards. They were good friends of my- I don't know how they met, actually. OK. I mean the Engelhards were- well- German- he was German Jewish and she I believe was actually English Jewish. And they sat next to us in Munk's. And he was a barrister. And- and I was sort of best friends with their- with their son. Leon as he was then known, now Ariele.*

*And do you remember Rabbi Munk?*

*JT: I remember him, as it were, standing on the bimah. I don't remember him as personally. I knew who he was. And I know-*

*And where was he from?*

*JT: He was from I think Frankfurt and then I think he was in Paris for a while or something. I'm really not sure. As I say, I really wouldn't have known that as a child. It's the kind of thing that I might know now. And the Community was formed because he was sufficiently revered. People got together and said, "Let's have a community and have him as our rabbi." And it was- it was- it was you know-, it was Yekke in its formality. That... in that it you know for example if you, you know, if you were leining, if you were reading from the Torah, and if you made a mistake somebody would very- shout out quite loudly that you'd made a mistake. They wouldn't sort of whisper it quietly in your ear. They would shout it out and you'd obviously have to go back and repeat it.*

*Yeah, that's another thing I was going to ask you. How different, you know, was that- let's say German Jewish Orthodox milieu- from the English Orthodox milieu?*

**[1:32:40]**

JT: Well, the English Orthodox is more, you know, well it's more sort of relatively speaking laid back, the English one. It was- you know, there was a sense of, you know, well, the tradition of the *Yekke*, the tradition of doing things properly by the- by the book. The, you know, certainly- I don't know. I- people- people would dress appropriately and so on. I mean, you know, even as a child I had a sort of I had a little suit which I would wear to *shul*. It wasn't considered- you know, even as a child I couldn't just show up in a- in a T-shirt, you know.

*So, decorum...*

JT: Yeah, decorum and- and doing things correctly and- and, and, and needless to say the people, everything was in the sort of in Ashkenazi Hebrew and- and well, different. It wasn't all- I mean, you know, actually I was- yeah, I've always- it was German or Ashkenazi or possibly, you know, could be slightly Litvak Ashkenazi depending on who actually was talking. But you know it was a [inaudible] Ashkenazi you hardly ever heard.

*And where is Munk's shul?*

JT: Munk's is- it's- it's- you go along-[inaudible] it's called. What's the name of the street? Ridings Street or something. You go along Golders Green Road near- near the library basically, opposite- down a side street. It's next to that church. St Michaels church?

It's near the church.

JT: Is that St Michaels church with the crucifix? Well, you go down there, there's a turning.

*And is it still there?*

JT: It's still there, yes. And it's now become- well, it still exists and I understand or I've gleaned it is now like much the community it's now become it's now become quite extreme – ultra- Orthodox. I don't know- I don't know to what extent it's still for the grandchildren or great-grandchildren of German Jews or what extent it's for anybody who's that degree of Orthodoxy. Similarly, the Menorah Primary School which I went to was at the time for- it was Orthodox. I now understand it has now become somewhat more ultra-Orthodox in the sense they now, you know, they- they check your levels of observance of all the parents-

*Which they didn't before.*

JT: They didn't-

*When you were there?*

JT: When I was there. If you- if your parents were from a known German Jewish family, then of course you would be accepted. Well, I can tell you- cause my- actually I do remember the story of my- my interview at the age of four, for the school. I was very shy and I said nothing at all. They'd asked me questions and I was completely silent. And- and in the end they said, "Oh, well all right. He's from the right family. We'll take him anyway." So they- it was a formality they would interview a child. But in- at least in the case, my case, it was- it didn't really matter.

[1:35:15]

*So, the- the word must have spread among the German Jews that that was a good school and that-*

JT: Well, it was a school which was somehow connected, it seemed to me in was connected to Munk's- Munk's shul. I'm not sure. Many people there went to Munk's shul. It was a school which I'm not sure who established it to be honest or whether it was established by German Jews or- quite possibly because, as I say, there were- there was a certain-

They bought all the houses in the street one by one, they bought up houses to make a bigger shul.

*Well, somebody has to do some research.*

JT: Somebody [unclear] Somebody else you're interviewing may know the answers. Well, actually when I was at Menorah, they- they got- they knocked down the old school and put up a new, more modern one. So, they obviously had more money and people were having larger families and then more children.

*And something we haven't discussed about- talked about is Israel- do you feel that there were some people in the second generation then went to Israel or-?*

JT: Yeah, well I visited Israel, there was- but people, yes, I mean there were- there were some who did, yes. I'm trying to think of people I know. I mean, well, say, then, my best friend at Menorah went because he was, I mean, people went, you know, some went to Yeshiva there and then- then stayed. But also, some who were- yes, I mean I can think of examples, there were- I'm not sure I can tell this whole story actually, to camera. I'll just say there was a- what was that name? What was the name of that- that- there was a man who- the man he was a- back then Munk's had a sort of- had a choir, male, only male choir of course, which has now become out of fashion certainly among Orthodox synagogues. And ultra-Orthodox synagogues no longer have choirs. But the choir leader, whose name escapes me right now, but he was- he was quite a good friend of my parents. And his wife and children just suddenly decided that- ok, the whole family- he was a solicitor. The family said, "OK. We're

all going off to Israel.” And this was something one did, but it was still considered rather odd. I mean, if one had a good job in England and one was sort of giving it up to go to Israel it was- it was, okay, it was you know, you can do it, but it would be a slightly eccentric thing for- for, for one to do among- among German Jews.

[1:37:23]

*Yeah. Your parents, they didn't consider...?*

JT: No, they never considered it. No.

*One thing I would like to ask which is- I find that most refugee families on the whole didn't have more than two children. Is it- was it unusual to have four children? To have a big family like that?*

JT: Well, I'm thinking- I don't think-

We were not unusual. The usual thing was six children.

JT: I think you're talking about degrees of religion, because I went- 'cause I went to quite an Orthodox you know my Orthodox primary school, Menorah. And at Menorah most people had quite large numbers- large numbers of children. So, I remember you know, some boy had like, ten- ten siblings. You know. Among less Orthodox ones or ones who were- went to you know, didn't go to Munk's went to- you know, they would more typically follow more English example, having, you know, two children would be considered sufficient.

*So, in- in those circles people had larger families.*

JT: In those circles people- people had larger – larger families. Yes.

*Which is really interesting, because I think that's a big difference.*

JT: Yeah. So yeah, now you- now you mention it, now I think there were degrees of religiosity affected the number of children-

*And economically also-*

JT: Well, my parents basically had three children, and then – together- I mean, we three brothers, and then my sister came along, well, ten years later.

*Right.*

That was because my third- my third - one, two, three - third son said he wanted a sister by his ninth birthday, and I obliged.

JT: OK. It's a nice little myth, anyway. But no, basically you might say we were a family of three. So, three seemed an appropriate number of children for my, you know, my parents to have, and it turned out to be a family of four.

Which is very good cause the last one was a girl.

JT: Well, that's true, my mother did- very much did want to have a daughter. Well, there you are, she- she now has a daughter. And- yeah, sorry, you think of other things to do-

*No, I think we've covered-*

JT: I'm trying to think of other things. I'll tell you something that appeared odd. OK, when it came to- at school for example we had the option of learning- of learning German. And the other- or Latin. You know - the options. Or, I remember because it was German, Latin or Ivrit. You had to pick one of these options. And some picked, you know, obviously the children- some picked the parents decided for them. Some parents- of all these options- some parents chose Ivrit, those who were sort of Zionist. Some such- some well my parents were quite insistent, particularly my father, quite insistent that I learn Latin and not German. He felt the Latin was a, you know, every education- this is- again, this is a rather German thing. I'm not saying German Jewish, it's a German thing, that a proper education should include Latin. And that one needs, you know, Latin to get ahead in the world or something. Which is not untrue, of course. And not German. And I regret that. I wish I had learned, you know, German, in school. But it's interesting they- they didn't. Whereas other, you know, other



German Jewish children indeed chose the, probably most of them, I would say, chose- chose you know, chose German rather than Latin.

[1:40:25]

*And do you find with you and your siblings that it not affected you, but that some of you are more interested in this, in the background of your parents than others?*

JT: Well, I'd say we're all interested, actually.

*You're all interested?*

JT: Yeah, in different ways. I mean, I mean I'm the one who's actually- partly, I mean, my job, author, I have more free time and I'm not married so I've actually spent more time in Germany. I mean my sister you know, in 1989 when the wall fell, she flew over there. My brother collects, he actually is the one who keeps sort of the family documents. My younger brother David. So yeah, I would say- I would say we're all- we're all interested in varying- you know, we're all interested in, I mean, degrees. I don't think there's a huge difference in our degrees of interest. And- yeah. That's- ok.

*OK. Do you have any message or anything to add to your mother? Your mother said she didn't have a message.*

JT: I don't have any grand message. I mean I hope that whoever may be listening, you know, listening to this or watches, who knows, somebody may be. And who knows at what- what point in the future. Well, I hope they'll try and sort of think their way into this- well, the- well, obviously understand, you know, they probably, you know, I'm sure that the Holocaust is well covered, but the life of the refugees, which is a transient life because they existed and then they stopped, you know and they stopped being refugees, and their children eventually stopped being defined themselves as refugees. It's a transient life but it's an important one. And important- but compared to all sorts of other kinds of refugees or migrants, but just really irrespective of any comparison with anything else, is just, you know, it's worth- can I say, it's worth knowing about. Worth trying to- trying to imagine and- and picture again. And even if I mean you can go to the Freud museum which I've done which is Freud's house, and

when I walked in there it looked a lot like my parents' house. And I felt quite- I felt quite at home there.

Where?

**[1:42:30]**

JT: The Freud- Freud Museum. Freud- Freud's house - where Freud lived. And if people in the future can- they can't come to this particular house in Dunstan Road, but they can certainly go to the Freud house if it exists and they can sort of try and imagine there was a whole sort of milieu of people living that kind of life.

*So how would you like to see this legacy live on somehow, or...?*

JT: I suppose I would like people to be sufficiently interested, sufficiently fascinated- sufficiently to feel, you know, I don't know like people to think- think you know I wish I could have been there or I could have met these people, and if I can't at least I can try and use my imagination to try and understand what their lives were like.

*Yes. OK, well thank you very much Jonathan.*

*JT: Thank you.*

*Thank you Mrs. Treitel again. Thank you for this interview.*

Have you got any pictures?

*And now we can look at the photographs.*

In that case, could you open the curtains?

*We will now open the curtains because we finished this part of the interview.*

**[End of interview]**

[1:43:43]

[1:43:43]

[Start of photographs and documents]

*Yes please. Who is that?*

Photo 1

My grandmother Matilda Rosenthal. In Kassel in Germany, round about 1910.

*Yes please. What do we see there, on the photograph?*

Nothing.

*What is that? The house - what is the house?*

Photo 2

A block of flats.

*And the address, what is the address there?*

Fünf [inaudible] Straße.

*In where?*

Kassel.

*And is that where your mother was born?*

Yes.

Photo 3

Lotte Rosenthal, and she married a Mr. Eichelgrün. So, she became Mrs. Eichelgrün.

*Yeah, and when was that? In 19...?*

In [19]30.

*In Berlin?*

No, the wedding I believe took place in a flat in Kassel.

*OK. But the photo looks to me like they are sitting somewhere in Berlin.*

Hunderteinundfünfzig Kantstraße... was my home in Berlin.

*Yes, please.*

[1:45:22]

Photo 4

Ok, that's a photograph of my mother [Renate] as a baby circa 1932 sitting on the lap of her grandfather Samuel Rosenthal presumably in Kassel but maybe in Berlin.

Photo 5

That's- that is Renate being held by her mother, as a- when she was, when she was an infant therefore circa 1933, probably in Berlin.

Photo 6

Ok. This is a photograph of my mother, aged three, at kindergarten in- in Berlin. She is fourth from the right in the front row.

Photo 7

Ok. This is Renate with her father in 1934.

Photo 8

*This is the hotel in Scheveningen.*

Ok, this is the hotel in Schevening[en] where Renate and- and her parents stayed after leaving Germany and en route to England in 1936.

Photo 9

This is my mother Renate, with her parents, Leo and Lotte, in London, circa 1938, when she is seven.

Photo 10

Right, so this is a photograph of my mother with her- her classmates at Henrietta Barnett School in London circa 1944 when she would have been about thirteen.

[1:47:05]

Photo 11

This is a Jewish youth group to which my mother, Renate belonged, which was sort of connected to the B'nai B'rith youth group. The year was 1953. And my mother – sorry, the year is 1953. My mother is standing second from left.

Photo 12

So this is a photograph of my parents, Kurt and Renate on their wedding day in 1955 in London. And in that picture, you can see starting on the left you can see my father's brother Guenter, my father's father Theo, his sister Cecilia. And standing on the- flanking my mother are her parents, Lotte and Leo. And then along comes Flora who is my father's grandmother and two other relatives of my parents from Manchester.

Photo 13

So this is a photo- this is a family photograph of my mother Renate with her husband Kurt. Her- her children, all of them. Jonathan, which is me, Richard, David and Caroline. Also present are David's wife Rowena, and- and Richard's wife Terry and son, Alex. And Caroline is there with her eldest daughter, then an infant, Olivia. Taken in London. Taken in London and the year would be approximately ...1990. I'm not sure.

Document 1

This this is the marriage certificate of my parents, Kurt and Renate in 1955. And you will notice my mother originally called Renata Eichelgrün, her name had been changed by deed poll to Elgin. The reason why it was changed to Elgin is because?

It was easier to pronounce.

*And?*

*What was the inspiration for Elgin?*

[inaudible] a road by that name in St. John's Wood.

*And?*

My father had his own business and people didn't want to have a business with an owner called Eichelgrün.

*Mrs Treitel and Jonathan thank you again for this interview and for sharing your history with us. Thank you very much.*

*JT: Well, thank you very much.*

Thank you very much! Who do you work for actually? The AJR?

*The AJR.*

**[End of photographs and documents]**

**[1:49:53]**

