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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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Forename:	Walter
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	27 October 1923
Interviewee POB:	Vienna, Austria

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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV188

NAME: Walter Kammerling

DATE: 12th September 2016

LOCATION: Bournemouth, UK

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 12th of September 2016, and we are conducting an interview with Mr. Walter Kammerling. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in Bournemouth.

What is your name please?

Walter Kammerling

And when were you born?

27th of October 1923.

And where were you born?

Vienna.

Mr Kammerling thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed for the Refugee- AJR Refugee Voices project. Can you tell us a little bit about your background please? Your family background.

We were a family of five. Fairly close family. I was the youngest one. I had two elder sisters. One was born 1920, three years older than I was. The other one ’21, two years older than I

was. I was maybe - as I said, the youngest, and unfortunately was quite spoiled by my sisters and so on, which made me rather immature when I left Vienna. We were- we didn't have a lot of money. We had a - a fairly small flat, but we were very happy. And father, when I was young, he had a chocolate factory. I remember that, because of the chocolates he brought home. But then, due to unfortunate circumstances... that had - went bust and he, in the latter days, he was just a travelling salesman. But he was always full of- had his head full of new things and so on, and unfortunately could never come out with it.

And which area of Vienna? Where did you live?

The second- second district, which was the well-known district where a large percentage of Jews lived in there. And that goes back historically because there was the ghetto, et cetera, et cetera. And I lived in that district.

Do you remember your address?

Oh, yes. It's Vienna 2, Ausstellungstraße 7. And we lived on number 7 in the first floor.

And can you tell us a little bit about the- the area and what you remember from... from growing up?

[0:02:39]

Well, I remember it very well because... I went to the primary school there. *Sternschule, Volkschule*. And actually, before that, we went to the *Kinderfreunde*, which was the Socialist children's organisation. And we spent- I remember most of the holidays- school holidays with them, somewhere in, in, in the Prater, which is a district, Hauptallee, sort of green, we [inaudible] were there. And... as soon as I then went to the grammar school, it was in '33 I think, I then went to the *Sperlgymnasium* which was a bit further away. I had to walk, when I walked, about fifteen, twenty minutes, I think. And that was very good and I quite liked it there. And right up to 1938, when the whole thing collapsed.

Can we just go back a little bit? Can you tell us a little bit about your parents' background and the grandparents, and where they had come from?

My father was born in Vienna, but his family actually came from Poland. And I think it was Jezow , because the name Jezow- I remember when I was, a few years ago I was asked by somebody in the synagogue here, whether I had relations from Jezow, whether I was born or whether I- my family came from Jezow. And that's the first time I heard that name again. And I said, "Yes, why?" And it turned out that his mother, before she married... Kriegsberger she was courting a Kammerling. And I had to work out how that- who that could have been. It could only have been a brother of my grandfather. And that was an interesting case because Herta worked in the day centre. And one- a lady died and she went up to the Shiva, and the chap came out with the wife's birth certificate. And when she saw 'Jezow', so she was quite interested. She read it through, and right at the bottom she saw it was signed by Kammerling, as the... Registrar of the Jewish Community. And that must have been the chap Koenigsberger was talking about that his mother went out with. It was very odd holding that document in my hand, because I had to... ask him whether he could show it to me. And holding it from somebody, a relation of you, you never knew existed. And his handwriting. And the interesting thing is, his handwriting is similar like my father's and similar like mine. And it [inaudible] a bit. Unfortunately, we had to give it back, so that is...

[0:05:44]

And did you meet your grandparents? Did you...?

My paternal grandparents, yes, I knew. They were- they both were alive when I was there and they were still alive I think at... my Bar Mitzvah. I think so. And…But...Yes, she was, because I remember when I went to the grammar school, it was '33. That was just the year my grandfather died. And my grandmother died a little bit later. My maternal grandparents, I only knew the grandmother. They lived in the same house as we did in, in- in Vienna. My grandmother. She lost her husband. He died... He had an illness and he died just ...I think about three months after my sister was born in 1920. As I said I was born 1923, so I never knew him, but I knew her. And my uncles, my mother's brother, who were much younger than she was – there was a large age gap. Mother was born '94 and uncles are born... 1909 and 1913. So that is about nineteen years to the other one. So, they were more brothers than uncles. And they lived on the third floor and they were always- every day we were together. So... And yes, it, it, it was a very happy situation. Though...one uncle who studied law, he

was rather depressed, because, due to the prevailing anti-Semitism- he always wanted to be a judge, and he knew in Austria it was quite hopeless to be a judge. And... they, afterwards both of them ended up in America. But that's... That's when we carry on a bit. That was later on.

[0:07:50]

And do you know how your parents met?

Oh, yes, I do. They actually went to the opera. And right in the *vierte*- fourth gallery. Right up in the- in the gods. And you had to rush up there. And... my mother was somewhat small, and my father was taller. And she was sort of complaining- had big people in front. And they were doing this …And father just turned up, picked her up and put her in front of her. And that was the start of it. And... Yes. And then they got married. They actually got married, I've got the photograph somewhere. And they got married during the war; they were married in 1917. And father was in uniform. And... And... I... That picture of 1917, it started to fade very fast and I think I caught it before and had it re-taken. And some of the details may have been lost but, they're all-it's all there.

And when did they get married?

In- on the 10th of May, 1917, in Vienna. ...I actually, when I was in Vienna once I went to the to the Kultusgemeinde, the - the Community there, and I could see the entry of their marriage, and both my grandfathers were witnesses. Nathan Wolinsky and Heinrich Kammerling. And my mother... was born in Russia. And- In a very small town with a very long name, Mokrakaligorka. That's somewhere between Kiev and Kharkov, as far as my mother told me. And they came... about the turn of the century. And I have a picture, among my pictures, of my mother and her sister when they were little girls. And the interesting thing about that picture is though it's well over a hundred years old, it's absolutely not faded, it's as good as the day it came out. While, for instance, the photo of, of, of the wedding – the wedding photo of my parents – is almost, the original, you can almost- hardly see anything. Yes, and they came to Vienna and so I forgot... partly from Russia and partly from Poland.

And what was their religious background? Of both families?

Well, they- their parents- their- my- my parents' grandparents, I think, were very religious. And that simmered off a bit. We kept- I mean I remember Pesach. We went to our grandfather – that's the paternal one of course - and had the odd Seder there and so on and we kept that. And for Pesach father brought home a full case with eggs, because a lot of eggs were eaten, and so on. We kept that. We kept the High Holy Days. Mother lit the Shabbos candles. And... we were not kosher. But father was a very great Zionist, and it's- but of course it... He never could develop anything. It was...

And were they socialist inclined?

Socialists. Yeah. Yeah – yeah.

Because you were sent to a socialist kindergarten? Tell us a little bit about that...

[0:11:38]

Yeah. Well, it's- It's *Kinderfreunde*. They were, very, very known in Vienna...

I meant about your parents'...socialist commitment. Did they do anything...?

I- No, I don't think there was any commitment there. I know, as far as I remember, my father bought a paper which was called the "*Der Sozialdemokrat"*. And obviously- and this was delivered sort of once a month or so. I don't know. And he was a socialist but... it's not really... My uncles sort of... in the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, had very left inclinations. Probably somewhat communist, and there were big arguments between my father and uncles.

Aha...

But, 'big arguments'. Not in any way nasty ones, but one kept on about it.

What did they say? Do you remember? What were the arguments?

Well, the father is not communist and the other uncle- one uncle wanted it, yes, "this is all...", that and that. You know, I – I must admit. If I think about my time there, I - being the youngest one - I wasn't disciplined very much. I hope I wasn't too bad but I don't- I don't know. But I found, thinking about it all, that I was extremely immature. Even if I compare myself to other people my age who were there. Who... I met Otto Hutter here, and I found that he himself basically organised his Kindertransport. I was told by my parents, by my mother, "You're going to England". And that was it. And I was- the whole thing is almost in a daze. I remember it all, but... not- not to such an extent that I – I took active part in things, if you see what I mean.

Yes, it wasn't...

[0:13:45]

I started to grow up... by force, after I left Vienna.

Mnn...

Because it was fairly sudden. Father went to hospital, because on the... 10th of - of November, the famous November pogrom which has- which the Nazis gave it euphemistically "*Kristallnacht*". I must admit this is one of the expressions I don't particularly like to use because it's- it has romantic connotations and it was absolutely not romantic in any... any stretch of the imagination. It was very nasty. It was father, on the day he was in bed; he had his first severe attack of angina. And on the 10th of November, somebody came to the door to arrest him. I was in the other room. We had two rooms. Father was sort of in one room. And my sisters - and my mother was there. And... the chap sort of took the prescription he saw and he... realised I think the...the issuing doctor was non-Jewish, so he accepted that. But he took my sisters. And we didn't know what it was. And also, from the next room where I was, I saw through the curtain, just across the yard, there was, there had been a large Jewish flat, which had been taken away by the Nazis in the very early days. And the they had a local party organisation there. And Erika and Ruthi, my sisters, they were scrubbing the floors there. And I saw that through the window. And we didn't say anything. They…as I said, they didn't see me, so I don't know what they would have done. Whether they would have arrested me or not, I don't know. But many years later, when Erika, she - she came to

England. And she retired in Bournemouth. And I asked her once, I said, "What happened when they took you?" And she just shook her head and said- didn't say a word. So, I didn't pursue it any further. But... it was that pogrom which, Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Shops were... looted again. Things were taken, things smashed. Things were…All the synagogues were burnt, and in Vienna there were all together I think about something like ninety synagogues and, and prayer houses. And there is only one that was not set alight. And that is the one which the Germans gave instructions not to touch because they had all the records, that one. It's the one they're using now. Now there is the one left. All the other ones are gone.

[0:16:53]

And where – sorry to interrupt you – but where did you go? Which synagogue?

Well, synagogue- we, we actually didn't- during the year we never went. And on the High Holy days there were too many people to - to be housed in a synagogue. They... They hired big halls and I know we were in Prater... *Marokkaner*, a large *Kaffeehaus*. We always were there at this... Yes...

Where was it again? In Prater?

In Prater.

What was it called?

In Prater. I think it was called the "*Der Marokkaner*".

Aha... Kaffeehaus?

It was... a- an enormous large hall. It was full of people...there. And you walked there. But we did go to the- what they called the *Jungendgottensdienst* we had to go, because we had religion in school and and so we went there. Actually, that's where I also had my Bar Mitzvah. It's- it turned out it was the same synagogue - the Stadttempel – where my parents got married.

And where was that, the Stadttempel?

In 7th Bezirk. Seventh district. And that of course was burnt down. That was [inaudible]. They- now they have... published books where they recreate the - electronically - all the synagogues they destroyed, but it doesn't really help much. And I know I went- on the way to school, I passed the Turkish temple. A Sephardi one. And I actually went there once, to join the choir but I only went there once and then- then unfortunately the '38 came, and that's it. And all these are destroyed.

But you had a Bar Mitzvah in which year?

In '36.

Can you tell us a little bit about it? What...?

[0:18:40]

Yes. It's- it's- I should have read there, and I started correctly and then they found it would've cost an enormous amount of money, we didn't have that, so I only said the Bracha. So... I thought of it when I had my second Bar Mitzvah here. And I sort of read, read the portion and said something about it. And it was interesting because I used the- the synagogue had scrolls, some of the Czech scrolls which were saved. And we had one in the reform shul. And it was... only a small scroll, but very clearly written. Though the scribe said it's not kosher, so I read from this scroll and had the other scroll open so the- make it kosher. And I found that was very appropriate.

Yeah... Because the scrolls came from...

Yeah. Yeah – yeah....

The Czech...

And then - and it's, it's- it's sort of the communities that do not exist anymore.

So, you had a second Bar Mitzvah here in Bournemouth?

Yeah – yeah.

When was that?

Well, I was just eighty-three, so it was 2006.

Yeah...

Yes, and it's- I was at that time I was fairly active in synagogue. I was- I was -I think always at all functions. I was teaching. I - I started teaching myself Hebrew. Because we were taught Hebrew. And I... got up early before I went to work and studied half an hour before. And when I then asked our rabbi, he was a... Dutchman – Soetendorp - when I asked him something, he said, he was quite astonished, he said, "You are here already? You can do that?" So, I had a teaching in cheder [religious school], and I enjoyed that. I was in cheder. I was librarian. I was warden. I took services. I... prayed from the Torah.

So, you got very involved...

[0:20:50]

Extremely. And I was on the Council. And I was for nine years I was the life President. But when we had another Rabbi, I could not possibly agree and I had to resign from the library And, I, I- we stayed members, but I don't think I have been to a service since... the last nine years or so.

Let's go back- let's go back to Vienna.

Yeah.

Tell us a little bit about your school and your friends and your social life...

Well, you didn't have social life. It was sort of school friends. Of course, they were all Jewish because in our class, I remember there were- of thirty-five students there were five non-Jews. And it was very… It's, It's- It's- yeah, there is one, you saw on the- oh, I showed you a photo. In school. He was sitting in front of me in the, in the, in the class. And... Lixl Schwarz. We were very good friends. We walked- he also went to the *Sperlgymnasium* but there he wasn't in the same class; I was in a parallel class. And we became very close friends. And he came, there was another one... Manuel... Alfred... Eickmann. Manfred Eickmann, yeah. And Gerstenhaber]. And... it is interesting. When we went- When we came back to Vienna, after the war, Lixl also came back – Lixl Schwarz - and we both looked for one friend we both had. He was one of my best friends in the *Volkschule*- in the primary school. And later on, I think he was one of- a good friend of Lixl. And we looked for him and we just couldn't find him. He just- obviously he couldn't get on the Kindertransport and he- he went the way we would have gone. And that was very sad.

[0:22:52]

What was his name?

He was Julius Gerstenhaber.

Mn-hnn...

And... It's, it's- it's sad and, of course...going- I mean, after Hitler came to power you still had to go to school. To school is, is, is almost like running a gauntlet, because you had loads of – of Stormtroopers [SA] – that's the Brown-shirts. And, and the Hitler Youth in their little black shorts and white shirts. And they were sort of roaming the roads and when they met Jews, they were beaten up or so. And when you walk you try to be as inconspicuous as much as you possibly can. You hear screams behind you and you, you know that people are in anguish and pain, and you don't even dare to... walk fast or slow, or don't dare to look around because then you'll be there and so on...

And did something- Did you have...personal...?

Once or twice, I was beaten up. But then of course I was also once told to - to scrub the streets. And...

By whom? By the...?

[0:24:03]

The Nazis.

Yeah...

Yeah. And it was a young man. He- he obviously was Hitler Youth. But he wasn't in uniform. He only had the- the armband, the Hitler Youth armband, you know, red, white, red, and a white...square in the centre, *Hakenkreuz*. And he wouldn't let us do it kneeling down; we had to do it crouching down. That was his very special fun, you know? And... An old chap next to me fell over, and he sort of started kicking him and abusing him and shouting at him. And when I quickly looked up, I – I saw a smile going through the crowd, watching. And there was one lady right at the back. And that sticks in my mind. She held her little girl up, so that she could see better how that old chap was kicked. And I smiled. And that, as I say, sticks in your throat a bit.

That stays with you...

Yeah, that stays with you. And... so and one tries to get out. I know that in summer- or in summer '38 of course first, this Jewish students, or rather, non-Jewish students were sat in front. And we had to move at the back, so that we don't sit together. And then they- We were designated basically a Jewish school, so...

So, at that point how many Jewish students– This was now in the gymnasium...

The *Gymnasium*.

How many Jewish students were there in your class?

Well, all together, of – of thirty-five, or thirty-six, were about thirty Jews...

Oh, that was in the Gymnasium, not in the Volkschule...

In the *Gymnasium*. The *Volkschule* was - was not as bad – not as bad - not as strong as that. But it were, I should imagine about forty percent non-Jews. And it was a fairly Jewish district and so on.

[0:25:56]

Yeah... And you must- where were you during the Anschluss? Do you remember the Anschluss?

Yes, I remember it was- don't forget it, before the Anschluss, the Anschluss was accelerated by Schuschnigg, who was the Chancellor... wanting to put an end to the pressure from Germany. He was calling a referendum which was supposed to have taken place on the 13th of March, which was a Sunday. And I remember that at the time, because in 1934 Austria stopped being a Republic as such, and became a *Ständestaat* [corporative government] which it means basically is a- is a one-party government. And the other ones had to go- become illegal, and the Socialists and the Nazis became illegal, et cetera. And that referendum should- the Austrians should decide do they want to be Germans or Austrians. And I remember when we - at the beginning of the week, the whole Austria was almost in an election fever. At the beginning of that week, father and I we went downstairs and father met somebody, a neighbour. And they started talking. And the neighbour says to father, he doesn't 'think Herr Hitler will allow that, will stand for that'. I... It didn't really mean much to me but I know that I had a fear. And I hated that. And I was hoping- I hope he's wrong. Unfortunately, he wasn't wrong. And on Friday... twice during the- in, in school, twice we were interrupted - the lessons. And somebody came in and said, "The importance of voting for Austria...", et cetera, which was ridiculous because we couldn't vote anyway. And... we got home. And on that Friday night, at about eight o'clock or so Schuschnigg came on the radio. And he said it was his final speech. He said that... he had an ultimatum from Germany. If they do not- if he does not agree to the- being annexed, [inaudible] And he wanted to protect war and sort of said, "Ich weiche der Gewalt". "I yield to force." And finished with the words, "*Gott schütze Österreich*" – "God protect Austria." That was the last you heard of

him. And they played the - the national anthem which, incidentally, is the same tune as - as the German. But it's much softer somehow. You could recognise it was the Austria national anthem. And that was the end of him.

[0:28:34]

Where did you listen? Did you listen to this... Schuschnigg?

At home...at home.

In the radio?

In the radio. And we were just... stunned. It was- funny enough my sister - she was at the time seventeen - and she burst out into tears. And so, we didn't realise how, how - how true that all was because overnight... Jews became outlaws. But in the truest sense of the word. Everything that could be done, was done. While in Germany, the oppression went up slowly... gradually. In Vienna it was digital; it was over-night. And they were far worse than the - the Nazis ever were. And you can ...see that if you just take statistically, officers represented about eight percent of the German Reich, while amongst the war criminals there were well over fifty. Fifty percent. In the concentration camps guards - a large proportion of guards were - were Austrians. Hitler, Eichmann, Kaltenbrunner, Globocnik, Seyss-Inquart – They- they're all- they're all there!

Yeah... Yeah.

And... And they showed the Germans how to do it... properly. And... it was absolutely frightening.

Why do you think that is, or was?

[0:30:02]

Well... look. One has to bear in mind... I know, maybe I'm slightly biased... being a part of it, but it was at a time of a terrible economic... crisis. There was a crash, the Wall Street crash in

‘29, followed by world-wide unemployment problems. Germany had enormous problems – unemployment problems. Austria had enormous unemployment problems. And when Hitler came to power in ’33, that seemed to... put an end to the unemployment there, because he put Germany on a war footing. And in wartime there is no – there is no – no, no unemployment. And he helped. And - and there were a lot of Nazis. And there was also a very strong Nazi Party – illegal Nazi Party - in Austria. And in ’34, when... there was the Austrian mini-war, that *Putsch* they had there, when the right-wing government took over, they may be not democratic! But they were Austrians; they didn’t want to be Germans. Because the Germans wanted to take over. And the Chancellor at the time was Dollfuss- Engelbert Dollfuss. He was murdered, and they, as I said they tried to take over, but they weren’t successful. And... Bear in mind ’34 is one year after- after Hitler came to power in Germany. And it didn’t work. And this is when Schuschnigg took over and he was constantly under pressure from the Germans to say ‘yes’ to it, and he didn’t. The funny part is that Schuschnigg, after... when he left, he went to America and he was... teaching. And he taught about democracy! I mean, they put an end to democracy! But, as I said, they did not want to be Germans and and, and, and a number of – of the ones that stayed Austrian were- were- went to concentration camps, et cetera. It’s only sad to - to realise that in, in- a, a great number of Socialists went over to the Nazis. And the anti-Semitism, you see, is still there.

[0:32:32]

Yeah.

And I, I mean, if I jump ahead now. When- after the war, my wife and I went back to Austria full of enthusiasm to build up a new Austria. And we soon realised that it wasn’t like that. The Allied troops weren’t regarded as liberators; they were regarded as occupiers. It was an army of occupation. And the anti-Semitism was slumbering. And not even so- it was quite open, sometimes. And as I mentioned before, that…one of the things that makes me realise that I wouldn’t like to bring our up kids there- bring them up in, in Vienna. Because we had two sons. We have two sons. And at work, it was AEG, quite a large work. It was, funnily enough, it was, I think the Russians were controlling it at the time. And one or two colleagues were discussing another Jew and one mentioned- said something like, “He- another one who fell through the grate.” “We have to design better grates so that they can’t fall through.” And so, I knew...that’s not for me.

And you came back to England...

And we came- we then decided to come back here. And the funny thing is you know, when we came here, it was almost more a feeling of coming home. Because when we left- when we left Vienna, I was a very young fifteen, and my wife was only twelve. And we had our formative years here in Britain. We basically grew up here.

Your teenage years.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It's the - the period when, when the youngster gets to the age... where they can talk to parents as one-to-one. And this is something I could never do. Because when I left, I was too young to, to do it. And then when I was right, they weren't here anymore. And that is the part I really miss. And I, I... it, it's- It's when we got back first, we were only- it was only eight years after we left. It's... You recognise the smells, the sounds the, the whatever it is, the views and- but you always will have the memories...

[0:35:14]

Yes...

And I know I tried... to go to the place where we lived. And I managed - managed to go on the first floor. I managed to go halfway up the floor, and it was extremely painful... because every step, you have a memory. And half way up I... realised, "What will I see there? The door I know? Who do I know? I don't want to know". What's important is the family that's not behind there. And they're not there. And... I never went back to that place. And the interesting thing is that... when we stayed in Vienna, and we stayed for eleven years, the Vienna before and the Vienna afterwards are two different things.

Mn-hnn...

And I felt- I know in London during the war, there was the London Zoo. And I remember we went there once, and that American bison. And there in front it said, “Extinct in the free range”. And that’s how I felt in Vienna. Because my background wasn’t there. It was a Vienna, but it was a different Vienna.

Yes...

In Vienna, there was... ten percent Jews, and that was gone. The culture, it was gone. It was all... it, it- the language was slightly different as well. It was all so... And I felt sort of “extinct in the free range”. There is no- it’s...it’s... So, I’m... a Vienna Jew, but... that Vienna isn’t there.

Yeah... Yeah...

And... But... we were there, and then eventually we said, “No. That’s no good.” And we came back here. And here we- did feel like coming home.

[0:37:00]

We will- we’ll come back to that but just to go back to the thirties.

Yeah...

What effect did the Anschluss have on you- on your life?

Everything. I, I…It’s... The first thing that came that we weren’t allowed to - to study. We- there was a decree... that Jews had to be excluded from the, from- from studies. I’ve got a book upstairs which gives a photo of the decree. And in that letter, they said the of course students, the Jewish ones, will be taught by non-Jewish teachers and those teachers will have a very hard job. As if they’re so very stupid, I mean considering that... that out of the lot that came out of that time, I think four or five Nobel Prize-winners.

But you went back to the school, to your gymnasium?

...No.

...after the Anschluss?

No.

No.

Oh! After the Anschluss, yes.

After the Anschluss...

Yes, that was, don't forget the Anschluss was in March.

Yeah...

And the end of the term was in June, July.

Yes...

And that time we went back. And we sort of finished this, and that's it. I mean, we were out.

And what was the atmosphere then in the school? Did people discuss leaving? Did people...? What...?

Well, we- everybody... dreamt of getting out, and... just looking for, for exits wherever. Long queues in front of the- of different embassies, to, to get a visa for this- and now father came home and he said, quite happy, he got a visa to Colombia. And they started packing and everybody got ready sort of. It didn't last- about half a week or a week, when Dad came home and said, "This chap is- was a fraudulent...thing. It's nothing. It's not going." And my two uncles, in summer, they just went and tried to get over the border... to Switzerland. And they weren't stopped. And I know that... they sent us a telegram to my father, to come immediately. But of course, we couldn't leave grandmother there. It's- it's- One hasn't got

much, but you hang on. Surely, they'll do a lot, but they won't kill us. And that where we were wrong. They will kill us. And... I mean, let's be quite honest. He actually said so. I think I heard that – that talk by - by Hitler when he said, "And should there be a war, that will be the end of European Jewry." And that's exactly what is was!

[0:39:48]

Yeah. And did you see Hitler marching into Vienna?

Not much. You know, I saw him once. I was- we were living in the second district, and not far from the northern railway station – Nordbahnhof. But I would have to cross a big street – Lassallestraße - and it was around the 10th of April when he came, when they had the thing and he was going through there. And I just sent- they sent me to post a letter there. And of course, everyone was very excited - Hitler. And so, I could get through. And... But when I came back, they already closed it, and I couldn't get through. And I stood there. Nobody took any notice of me, thank God, because they were all so excited: 'Führer comes!' And 'Aah!' And then when he did come, you just saw him standing there, still, and sort of, his hand forward and, and, and moving in the car. And, but the crowd was screaming to such an extent... that it was- it was frightening. Because what frightened me more, was that... you felt you want to scream with them! You hated the man, but I didn't. But... you were- you were afraid a bit. You are- you are sweating and, and you want to get home, and... It's... And as soon as it was over and they opened it up, I got through and went home. But it's- No, it's- It's a frightening experience. Yeah. But as I said, it's... When, when... after November pogrom, it was actually only about eleven days after- after that happened... Britain decided to let children unaccompanied... through. And that was- it's- you know it's the only country that did that. Neither America nor any other country did that. And... But for each child, fifty pounds had to be collected. And all the Jewish organisation here, and of the churches, the Quakers especially, a lot. And they also collected the money. It was a lot of money! But they collected it in and I was told I'm on- I'm on the transport. And of course, as it's only up to sixteen... I think sixteen. Ruthi couldn't go, she was seventeen, and Erika, because at the end of the year, she was eighteen. And... So, Erika, when I left, because I went on the Kindertransport, when I left, after I left, I was already in Northern Ireland, when I learnt that Erika is going to come to England. But Ruthi couldn't, because she was too young for that and too old for the Kindertransport. She stayed in Vienna. But of course... I had letters in

Northern Ireland from home. And... However, there was no chance that they could come. And... later on, when I went back to Vienna after the war, I found a, a box which father left with books and documents, et cetera. And a copy of father sending a sort of a CV, what he wanted to do. And because it's mentioned there, he has his son in Belfast. So, it was obviously written in the beginning of '39. And Erika couldn't manage to come on the 4th of July to London, while I was in, in Northern Ireland already. So, I didn't see her until '42.

[0:43:50]
[short break]

We were talking about the Kindertransport. But just before we're getting on the Kindertransport I wanted to ask you whether you had any special interests or hobbies in Vienna.

Not- not really. But I- I had a- I know I had a box camera. And I – I did my own developing sometimes and printing and sort of playing about. When you sort of want to have it light and things, so you have it at angles, and this is closer to the- and so on. And... it's…I quite enjoyed this. And of course, I remember it from my Bar Mitzvah, I got an electrical... ...sort of a... putting together that I could [inaudible] and, and, and different things. And I quite enjoyed that. But of course, when I left, it- that was only about two years afterwards, I left that to the son of our... concierge. He was quite nice, Atlas, I don't think he was really a Nazi, but he - he was OK. But unfortunately, in Vienna you see, when I talk to schools now and I meet people from Germany. And I realise when they talk about their non-Jewish neighbours - which they sometimes knew, sometimes they didn't - how helpful they were, how they warned them, 'don't go over there', 'there is something there', and so on. And I compare, that in Vienna that was completely impossible. You couldn't go to anybody. And...

So, it was hostile, or...?

Yes, very hostile.

But in your house, for example, were there non-Jewish families? Were there- who lived- who else lived in the building?

Oh yes, there were non-Jewish families there. I know, actually the interesting thing is, we were quite friendly with- Oh, as we were very young. And they were very strong Nazis. And- but she was extremely good to us. But somehow, I don't know... I can't remember seeing her afterwards. I know where they lived, just on the same floor...I fell down there. But, no. No, it's, it's, it's... basically rather unfriendly. And the anti-Semitism- it was actually interesting because when I was working in Vienna, in our office there was one. I know he was- he was non-Nazi but sort of *Christlichsoziale,* a Christian sort of Conservative. And he says, "But look there are so many doctors! For a non-Jew it's hardly worth... finding a job because they're all in- it's all in Jewish hands." And he was right. It was all in Jewish hands. And when I talked about it, I realised that this could be taken as a - a degree of anti-Semitism. Because if a Jewish and a non-Jewish doctor apply for a job, and they're equally qualified, invariably the non-Jew will get it. For his self-preservation, the Jew has to work a lot harder. But when you work harder in your studies, you raise the standard. And this is why, for instance, there were so many Jewish doctors there. Because they worked harder. You had a very similar thing in the Soviet Union. You had five percent Jews. But in the academic community there were fifteen percent Jews, for the same reason! In other words, it's, it's the- the- that anti-Semitism that forces a Jew to be better to get a job. It's self-preservation. Otherwise, what do we do?

[0:47:41]

Yeah... They were in a vulnerable position.

Yeah.

Yeah...

And, and that is-but of course the whole thing is - is quite different. It, suddenly everything changed and...

But you also said your father had a chocolate factory?

Oh yeah. Yeah, he had a chocolate factory.

And what was the name of that?

Alba. And they made wonderful things, he did. I know he did...

What did they make?

They made, actually they made these wafers. The *Manner Schnitten*, you know, that...

Yes!

He did those.

Did he?

Yes. He did chocolates. He did Morello cherries in liqueur in chocolate. He did the little pralines... in chocolate and so on. And I remember once we went to the... Schönbrunn. It's the zoo. And we had some of these pralines, and we threw them to the monkeys. And the monkeys opened it, they ate the, the sweet stuff out and threw the chocolate back! It was quite funny. And yes, and unfortunately, he lost that... because he had two companions, business companions, who actually robbed him. And I remember once he said, he came back on one Sunday, he had to do something there. He was doing the whole technical stuff on it. And... he saw that they took the whole store out, and sort of cleared it all out. And they went bankrupt. And that is a pity. He always wanted to get back to it but of course...

He couldn't.

It was very hard.

Did they have a shop as well, the...?

[0:49:11]

No, they – they...

They supplied.

They supplied. Supplied. And he invented a few things sort of, the ice chocolate. It's a chocolate... cube, which when you- when you tasted it had sort of a cool thing about it. I don't know what he did. Some stuff he put in there. And he also made cough sweets. And... an interesting thing, our grandson, our eldest grandson, he has- now, he does... make spirits. He has Kamm & Sons. He has some...some- and he bought- he made Kamm & Sons; it's a sort of... dark but with ginseng and other things. And when he once gave me that, and I tasted it and said, "That's funny," I said, "tastes like - it reminds me of the cough sweets of my father." And that fascinated him, because he's- he's on the same- inclined to play about and now he's going to do a gin which is Kamm & Sons. And... Actually, can you see that? I think behind there. With the bottle. Could you bring the card over? Yeah. That is…That is the one. That is- that is Alex's.

Yeah?

That is Alex's.

Aha. That's what he makes.

Yeah, that's what he makes. And he's working very hard. And he's- and he's very lucky, because our eldest son, that's our grandson.

Yeah...

Our eldest son, his father, he's a... a management consultant, and a very good one. And he's retired, he thought. But he's now on the Board of Directors of [his] my son's business. And he told him he ...put him straight. You see, and Alex doesn't realise how lucky he is to have him, frankly, yeah...

Aha... But that – that business folded and then he became a travelling salesman...

He then he finished up as a travelling salesman.

And your mother, did she work?

She worked, yes. She worked in, in offices. And... well, basically in offices. My eldest sister, funnily enough she went to the same place. She worked there as well... as a... typist and, and short hand, et cetera. And she's the one who came over on a domestic permit. Ruthi learned... tailoring. And she was very good at it! A lovely girl. And she... heart of gold but she unfortunately couldn't get out.

Yeah... So, tell us about the first time. When did you find out that you were supposed to go to England?

About a week or so before I went, my mother said father was in hospital. "And," my mother said, "you're going to England next week." And so, we just got ready and I... I...

And what was your reaction?

[0:52:28]

Nothing! And this is what I don't understand. I was- I was completely- I was in a daze, I think. And much later on I realised how immature I must have been! I was- the first time it really struck me, was when I was in, in Dovercourt there and I felt I wanted to tell Mum something and go next door. And realised there is no next door. I can't go; it's, it's... it's another room ...and father and… And when I said goodbye to my father, he was in hospital there. I also, because... he was in the Jewish hospital which was still operating then. With- with angina. Obviously, the stress was too much, you see... I suppose. And when I said goodbye, my father was in tears. I'd never seen him cry. And it really choked me that I, I - I felt I didn't really want to leave his bedside. And it was a cousin, she just got me under the arm and said, "Walter you must go-" and so on. And I – I still to the day ...the threshold ...door. And I saw and I hardly moved, and she just pulled me away and that was it [inaudible]. And I... I think I must have got out of the trance when I was in England, because I remember my - my sisters and mother seeing me to the station. ...But I can't- I can't remember much of my reaction.

Yeah. You can't remember the feelings...

[0:54:08]

It was- I felt... I know it's, it, it, it wasn't a feeling I started to develop later on, when I realised, there is no next door. That there is no- we won't be together now, and so on. And it was- I was a bit- bit awkward. And when I came back from Norther Ireland, you know. Because... it- it was hard to place boys of fifteen and so on. So, they ...we- a group of us, three of us went to Norther Ireland. A lady came to pick us up. We were taken care of by the Jewish community in Belfast. And they organised the farm. I think that. I don't know if they hired it or bought it. I think they must have hired it, because it's gone back to the, well, owner. And on that farm, there were- there were sort of a number of groups. There were children. And there were the Chalutzim. And there was also an Austrian there, but mostly German... Jewish... very religious ones. And the farm was run on a religious basis. And every Pesach, the, the... rabbi came out from London. Rabbi Schefter. And sold the whole farm to the one Jewish man - non-Jewish man there – for half a crown. Not half a crown- Sixpence or so. He lent him the shilling or gave him the shilling, I don't know. And so it was, as I said, it was run on, on... strictly orthodox lines.

Was it the Bachad or... who ran it?

I think it was Bachad [religious Zionist movement]. Maybe it was Bachad. There was one Austrian. The rest of them were all Germans. They, mostly when they went to... to - to Israel. Actually, it was that group that started Kibbutz Lavi, I think, amongst others.

Which is the Bachad...

Yeah. Yeah...yeah. They started it...

But just to wind back a little bit. Do you remember anything of the journey?

Very little. I remember my first ...travel over the- on the boat. When suddenly you're standing and the- and the... the floor goes down. It comes up and …

Were you with somebody you knew?

No.

No...

I didn't know anybody. And I - I wasn't even keen to make friends with anybody. I – I- I was- As I said I was in a daze.

Yeah...

And I should have been far more aware what happened, but I think that was... basically my immaturity. Because I was sort of- they let me get away with anything, I suppose. And I- if I think back of, of, of that time, I don't think I... I- I particularly liked myself. But it's...

[0:57:21]

What did you get away with?

Whatever! It is... Cause... I, I didn't- it, it's- I was spoilt by my sisters of course. I was always... a little boy. And you- We've seen a picture of what I looked like, so...

OK, we'll look at it later... But where did you arrive in England? Where?

In Harwich. Harwich. From there we were moved to Dovercourt, which is not very far from there. Which is a... holiday camp. I think it was a was a Warner's holiday camp, which was used to house thousands of children.

What can you remember? Can you describe it for us?

Yes, we were- we were in- there were these, these chalets. And there were four beds in the chalet, two bunks on both sides. And they were either for boys or four girls. And I remember, behind us were girls, and they made a bit of a noise. And funnily enough, there was one girl I remember, and I even started to correspond with her. And she's- she's back in Vienna now.

Her husband is a- he's an atomic physicist. Very nice guy. And I don't know, he must be still alive, thought, Otto. Yeah. But I... didn't make any friends there. It's, it's, it's...it's- We went to, then to- In February- March we went from Dovercourt to Northern Ireland, where - where the Community drove us.

But it must have been cold in Dovercourt. Or was it...?

It was fairly- It, it was- not too bad. I – I don't remember it was- I remember there was a little bit of a flood...but it's- also in the camp, that's the part that's next to the sea. That was- water was higher than it should have been.

And when you saw that all the other children were being sort of taken, was there a feeling of...

No.

... despair or...?

No. Not at all. Not at all. I can't remember any of this. I, I was just let it happen, you see? And I...

And when you were told to go to Northern Ireland, was that something...?

Nothing. No.

Right. And how did you then travel from...?

A... lady came. I don't know- a very nice lady. And she went in to the train. In London we waited outside, in - was it a museum? Yeah. And we went in shortly and then she came and fixed that up and we just left on a boat and...

Another ferry?

[1:00:17]

Yeah, another ferry. And that's... And I know it's- every time we went over the Irish Sea, because even when I went back, it was very rough. We never had a smooth Irish Sea crossing. So, it's... But it's...I - I was rather... sort of took it as it came. I wasn't very... I must have been... No, it was... That's it. But then I was on the farm and I- my sister came, then. But I was already on the farm. And then Erika came. She landed in, in London on the 4th of July. And we were only in contact with letters; once or twice we phoned. And I think it was she who found me the job in - in Carshalton. In '42 I went there to, to start off. And I wasn't- there only a few months and then I went to London. Found myself a job there, in... war work. War work, in a munitions factory. And started there. And I had a... a short experience, that the room I wanted suddenly was gone, because I didn't find it the evening before. And it was a very dark night. It was a mog... smog, fog - the lot. And I just knocked next door and they put me up for the night. I know where I stayed, the husband was working as a conductor. And he came in the next morning very, very annoyed... because he came home about two or three o'clock... and he couldn't find his house. So, he just... sat down and slept in front of one house, leaning against it. In the morning when it was light, he realised he slept against his own front door. And he would just have to put the key in and walk in and then... Yes. And then... sort of when I came back from, from Northern Ireland I was hoping that Erika and I could move in together, and we... could take up where we left off. But she was working in a hotel. She couldn't do that. So... I was basically on my own. It's funny! If I think about it now, I don't think there was one time when I felt sorry for myself. I just- that's it, so you just carry on and see what's happening.

[1:02:49]

And were you in Northern Ireland, were you- Was it a good situation there?

It was- it was basically a good situ...

What did you have to- What did you do there?

Farm work. On the farm...

So... tell us... What sort...?

Well... The- it's, it's that type of work that put me off gardening. ...When you go on a January - cold, wet January - and you get a big bag, and you are told to pick up half a hundredweight of brussels sprouts. And you can't do it with gloves, because it's all wet and it's all... And it's- and you pick it up, and you have- the bag's half full, and you think, "Well that's probably half a hundredweight." And it's so light. And the weight of brussel sprouts is... enormously low. And... I didn't like it at all. And, oh, when you for instance you have to weed out the carrots. The carrots are only about – the plants – maybe an inch high. And the weeds are about three inches high, and you can't see them. And after four hours your back's breaking and you look up, and you've only done about three metres or so. And you still can't see the end of the field. I didn't like that at all. I liked the - the harvesting. That time. I liked the work with the chickens. That's OK - with animals. But on the whole, I was- I was quite happy there. I – I don't think I grumbled sort of, "This is terrible." So, it's was not. It's... It was OK.

And how many young people were there, your age?

[1:04:21]

There must have been about thirty or so.

So, there were the young people and then there were...

The- the Chalutzim.

And the Chalutzim were over eighteen, or...?

They were... Some of them were over eighteen. Some were seventeen, but eighteen and above, basically. And there were two or three families and the people that were in charge of us. Doctor Kohner, he was a Czech... lawyer - solicitor. He had... two little girls, four years and three years, I think. Dinah and Ruth. Very bright one. Dinah became a doctor and she- unfortunately she crashed with a plane – in a plane when they were to go- they did some voluntary work for South America. And they crashed there. Later on, I got in touch with Mrs Kohner - she was still alive. And she lived there and I, we went over to visit her once or

twice. And she came here once. And... I also met some other people Edita Jacobowitz. She - she also came here, and here and David Hurst. Her son David became an actor. He's now in Berlin, I think. And I was in touch with one girl that was also on the farm. She went back to Germany. She passed away ...last year, I think. I never met her again. And…But Edith Jakobowitz, when I saw her and talked to her and so on... This is when I realised that though we lived and worked together and... joked and whatever it is, we didn't know each other. Nobody really opened up. It was like – like- like wounded animals licking their wounds, you see? Cause we all were in the same position. And... I know, Edith Jakobowitz, her brother Gert. When I left, he was about twelve. And in 19....was it 2007, I think- when was the first...? The trouble with the...? With the bus...the buses were blown up in - in July, I think- was it 06 or 07? Anyway.

Yeah...

That year, two days before, there were a number from the Kindertransport. We got to... Prince Charles. And I met somebody up there, and I heard him talk and he said he was in Northern Ireland during the war. And I asked him what's his name, he said, "Jakobowitz". And I said, "Gert?" Yes, it was him. And he- at that time he was a retired professor from Glasgow, I think. And he was in radiology. And due to the work, he did only two or three years later he passed away. That was Edith's brother.

[1:07:25]

Yeah...

Now she's housebound. She's living in Maidenhead. I must give her a ring.

Can I ask you something, you said there was this- The distinction between chalutzim and you?

Yeah...

So, were you- could you not become Chalutz, or did you not want to? Or was it...?

I didn't want to.

No...?

There was one boy, Robert Müller, he became a Chalutz. He went over to the- to them and sat on their table...

What did that mean? Did they sort of live separately?

No. Well, yes. They lived- we were in the dormitory, and they were- they lived in sort of- I think in rooms sort of, in the house or in one of the houses of the farm. You see? They lived there.

So, it was a sort of separate?

No. We lived... We were together.

Yeah...

In the- In the, in the Chader Ochel – in the dining room. They were sitting in the next table; we were sitting here.

Aha...

I think I got some pictures somewhere... It's...

But you were not interested in that aspect of…

Well... I wouldn't quite say so, because it was in, on the farm, that for I think for some time I started to lay Tefillin.

Aha...

And of course, laying Tefillin, you see... Excuse the expression, I was a bit 'ham fisted'. So, when it dropped them, I would let them fall. It means when you dropped them you can't- you have to fast for a day. Not twenty-four hours – only 'til evening. So, I didn't even bother to go down to breakfast, because I - I fasted, you see? And I- for some time I lay Tefillin, yeah... And…but it's not ...Some, some of them were very much against – against Chalutzim. There was no reason!

So, there was a certain anim- not animosity, but...

No. No, there wasn't. No there was not really. There wasn't. On the contrary, I got on very well with them. I remember once they produced a play... and they asked me to play with them. And I said to him, Shimshon Wuhl, I said, "Why do you ask me? You've got so many people here." He said, "They can't speak German properly! They've all got terrible accents!" And their *Hochdeutsch* [High German] wasn't as good as my *Hochdeutsch*.

[1:09:40]

Aha... And what was the play?

Jakobs Traum... *Schlaf ich, schlaf ich, ich will nicht träumen* ...Something like that.

You remember it, yes?

Something like that.

Yes?

Yes, and- we got on well.

Was the adults- you said there a sort of leader, or...?

No, no. There was- there was one, Mundheim. He was sort of a- he was an engineer and he... very German. Very straight, and... He had- he had size-sixteen shoes, I remember. There was only one... shop in Belfast that had his last. He had to go to, to, to Belfast to, to buy shoes.

But he was very, very good. And he- I remember there was one couple. They were married the second Alma Bamberger. And they celebrated a... anniversary. And Mundheim made a poem or rather once sentence. And it's still in my ear when he says, „*Auf dass sie ewig grünen bliebe, die schöne Zeit der jungen Liebe*.". Yeah. He was a nice guy.

Mn-hnn.

[1:11:09]

But of course, it's... I realised that the years go past and I – I could have be on the farm, but what happens then? So, I went to London.

You could have stayed there?

I could have stayed there, yeah. Yeah.

Because it seems that... Do you think it was easier to be together with other refugees than be by yourself, or...?

It's interesting when you say with or without refugees. Thinking back, I don't think there has been a time in England where I was, where I wasn't together with people where, who didn't speak German. And I wonder whether this is the reason that I never got rid of my accent. Because I remember years later, I thought, my English is pretty good, and I heard myself talk on a tape. I nearly left the room, I was so embarrassed. Because of course you never hear yourself... properly. When you hear that... that's what you sound like. And pfff... [Bea laughs] It's... And it's- I know when a friend of mine once said, jokingly, but of course there is much truth in that. He says, "Walter, you have a beautiful accent! No trace of English." [both laugh] Then I realised... So, I live with that. But it's OK. Yeah.

What other things do you remember from the farm?

It was- it was quite nice. I remember that ...The old man was once very annoyed. Because you know, they were not allowed to break an apple off the tree on Shabbos. So, one chap went down with a chair, put the chair under... ate it there, and left the core hanging on the

tree. And the old man saw that core hanging on that tree, and he was furious! [Bea laughs] But... Yeah. But it was... it was quite alright. I, I think I was quite happy there.

And did you have contact with the local Jewish community at that point?

[1:13:03]

Well, they came and visited us, but not- we didn't really have contact there. They came and- and saw some of the people in charge. When we were in Belfast, there was once chap who came from... it was Alex Berwitz, I think. And he... he prepared plays with us and so on, you know, et cetera. But you know it was a good- it's interesting, I spent my first Pesach in... Belfast. They took from the farm, youngsters, to invite them. And there was one actor, Harold Goldblatt. And I was- he, I was there with him. And only a few years ago, I made contact with the ... his son. And we saw him- Ivor - Ivor Goldblatt. We saw him a few weeks ago; he visited somewhere in Bournemouth. And he's retired now. It's- it's- Yes, I still remember their address, actually. Yes. Yes. I don't remember what I had this morning, but I remember that.

Was it a sort of culture shock, or was it...?

No. No it wasn't. No, I don't think it was.

And how difficult was it to learn English?

Well, I learnt it in school. And I could- you see this is the problem. I could make myself understood. People understood what I said. I had of course problems coping with the answers. Because when you learn a foreign language, you do not know, where one word finishes and the next one starts. And... I had the same thing when I went in France... in the Army. I tried to learn French, but again, I could make myself understood. And, and- I- then I obviously learned it so well when I said, "I don't speak French" that they didn't believe me, and they carried on. But it's, it's...

And did you have any contact with your parents from the farm? Did you...?

[1:15:03]

Yeah... Letters. Letters- letters. Right up to the 16th – no – 3rd of September. That's when war broke out, and everything stopped. And I... Then it came completely to a stand-still. And you see I was... immature. I didn't even realise that I could have tried to contact them through the Red Cross... and I didn't. ...And I'm sorry about that. And... sort of when we- when I came then to London and eventually a friend put me in touch with the War Workers' Hostel. And I joined, and in the end of course became a member of Young Austria. That's a youth organisation. And this was a bit of luck, because there I met Herta. And... she then of course... the rest is history. So, it's the best thing that ever- ever happened to me. And so, it's this and then the other good things to both of us. Both of our sons and grandsons, it's wonderful! And it's... I still... And then of course when I went back to Vienna, I started to... try and make up what I've lost. I, I got working. There I did actually the engineering work. But I didn't have all the exams. I did half the exams which I needed for the- for the *Diplom* – diploma. But I covered it two- two and a half years; it was a ten year course. And the professor didn't make it easy for you. There is always a [inaudible] one- one who sort of said, "Oh, you're trying to make yourself- make it easy for yourself and work and study." He hasn't got a clue! It was nigh on impossible! But there was a little bit of anti-Semitism in there as well. I realised that for a while. And- but... after a few... remarks. As the one I mentioned to you, 'It's another one who fell through the grate'. I realised, no, we don't want to bring up kids here. Especially when there are grandparents in England. Herta's parents were here.

When did... Yeah... We'll talk about Herta in a second. But just to go back- when you left the farm, what were your options? What did you think you could do?

[1:17:31]

Well, I- I wasn't thinking of how many options there are. I knew I was going into, into, into... war work... and try and, and study. Because I- I think I did then further – the GCSEs. I think I took some. No that was a matriculation one actually. Matriculation one, and that isn't work and, so I- I mean I did a few, and then, but when we- as I didn't finish it over in Austria, I did get a- not a degree, but the permission to wear the title "*Ingenieur*". Not "*Diplom-Ingenieur*", but in general. And I got that. But when we got here, then I quickly started to ...to try to join the- the institution, electrical and mechanical. And... For the mechanical, then I

started to work in a drawing office in... in, in... finished up in air bearings. And I… I- for the- for the institution, for the... the Mechanical Institution I wrote sort of a dissertation on the design of air bearings. And... did actually...

What are air bearings?

[1:18:49]

Air bearings. You know when you go to the dentist and [makes the sound of a drill]?

OK...

That came out of our office.

I see.

Yes. And that was very interesting work. And I became Chief Engineer there. I was there fourteen years. Then I fell out with my boss, because he wanted yes-men and I... He couldn't get it from me. But he did something stupid, and I pointed out to him, "That's very stupid." And I could have stayed there, but I still had twelve years to go. So, I, I- as I loved my work, I was not prepared to, to, to forgo that. So, I switched over to, to rolling mills. It's another firm in Bournemouth that made rolling mills and worked there. And was very- I had- that lasted for a few years, and was very happy too. So... And, and was it...? Last year I got from the Electrical Institution the Fifty-Year-Needle.

Aha...

And... mechanical and so...

Was it a membership?

Yeah. Yeah, membership. It's- I carried on. And after I retired I, I sort of did different things. I took up baking... and I started to, to bake things. And... when- was it? No, it wasn't Liesl, it was a friend of Lizi who gave me a recipe for a poppy seed cake, and it came out beautiful!

And they went, "Bleagh". So, I went down to Waterstones and asked for a book on- I wanted to know why. A book for the physics and chemistry of baking. They didn't have it. Herta thought it was very funny. So, she told our other son and his wife and Max then treated me to a birthday present. A course at Bristol University, a day course on the physics of the Black Forest Gateau. [Bea laughs] And, and now my cakes don't drop down anymore. And when I was sort of - after I retired – I think seventy-two years... Yes, I was just about seventy-two. Seven years after I retired, I took up singing... and I've been singing in the, in the Bournemouth Festival since 2000. And then I took up Yiddish. And I went and did- went to the Yiddish Song School in London. The, this, you know, the Ot Azoy And Goldene Parve and I...

So, very active...

Hopefully, yes. And... sort of the synagogues, well, I'm not very active in the synagogues now. I was very active in the- in the Reform.

Yeah...yeah...

There I was- as I said, I was Life President there, but now I couldn't take that.

[1:21:49]

But let's just- just go back to the forties, the early forties again, when you were doing the war work. So, you first went to- from Norther Ireland you went to...

Carshalton.

Carshalton. What were you doing there - first of all?

I- lathe work. Lathe. A metal machinist. In that I was that also when I then went to London, and worked with Opperman's Precision Engineers. Also, lathe – there was lathe and lathe and milling machine.

And what did you have to do specifically?

You would get a drawing and have to take it to a certain size and make certain [inaudible] and so on. And... And then I – I then got myself from there ...Yes, that year. That was before. Yeah. that's right. And after the- when was, I came out of the Army...

Yeah...

I did a government training centre in Hounslow. And that was on a drawing office... a draughtsman- as a draughtsman.

Right...

And- but before it finished, I had the chance of being repatriated to Austria...from the Army. And we took that. And I think that was about June – June '46, we went back. That's when I went back. And then we stayed there till '57 – eleven years.

And did you go back because also of your work in Young Austria? Was that the idea...?

Yes – yes.

Tell us a little bit about- what was the...?

The idea was to – to help to rebuild 'the wonderful new Austria'. Free and democratic and... wonderful. And in reality, it was the old, anti-Semitic, Nazi Austria who had subdued their attitudes and you had the... same things.

So, you were repatriated from the Army?

[1:23:49]

Yeah. Repatriated, yeah. And we made use of that and went back. And quite a number of people went back. And... I don't think many came back here. They got too much involved, and so on. And I know Lixl when I spoke to him and he said to me, he's dead now, he said,

"Stop talking Walter, because if you carry on, I'll be at your door one day and say, 'I've got enough too'." Because he realised what's up. And I...

Tell us a bit about Young Austria. What do you remember? Where was it and what sort of meetings?

Oh well, there - there were different groups. Right? There was a- I was- first it started in West Hampstead. And then I went to the... choir... and the players' group. Otto Tausig ran the players' group. He was a wonderful chap, Otto Tausig. He went back to Austria and became a *Burgschauspieler*. And he did a number of things. And it was wonderful! On, on, on Sundays there were excursions... *Ausflüge* ...through Richmond, to, to Epping Forest and so on, and... And as I said, I met Herta there. And [inaudible].

How did Herta come into that, to...?

Well, she, she came here- her story was slightly different because she came with her little brother. And it was her aunt who put an advert in the JC and they found two [inaudible] who were in Liverpool. And Herta and Otto came to Liverpool. And then later on they were evacuated and so on and Herta went to London... and joined- she joined the...the Young Austria before I did. I joined it in '42, and she was there before that. ...And that- and quite honestly, that... Young Austria was our life!

Yeah.

We... As soon as we came back from work, there was either a *Heimabend* or something else happening, or – or some other function or god knows what.

What was a Heimabend for example?

[1:26:10]

Heimabends were the, were the... find somebody has some project and they discuss it and bring it to this, or a performance of something, or doing something. There is always something. The... And it was, it was- it was sort of... As I said, it was our life. And that was at

a time when people, at that time, did not leave the place where they were born! And no one- I was working in North Finchley and I'd mentioned to the chap next- on the next machine, I said, "I'm going down to Marble Arch; we have a meeting there." And it turns out – he was about early twenties – he's never been to Marble Arch in his life! I don't think he's ever been out of Finchley! Maybe out of North Fin-! People didn't move! Where they were. And what was brought home to me, when we came up to Glasgow, to the- into the Army. This was the Maryhill Barracks, you know the...

Yes...

And they were all Scottish, the permanent staff. And the Sergeant Major came in and, and, and thundered... what he wanted us to do. And I was the only one who understood him! And as soon as he left, all the English boys came to me and said, "What is it?" "What is it?" "What is it?" And I said, "He wants it done in ten minutes." And I found it very funny... because I was a bloody foreigner, but I moved about. And therefore, I got used to the Northern Irish accent, to the London accent...southern England and so on. And you get the different... regions. And it's, it's, it's - yeah, it was quite a...

You managed.

Yes, I managed quite well.

And you were not interned because of your...

No, we were- actually we were in, in, in Northern Ireland, all of us went to a tribunal in Newtownards– that's where they had this. And they found out sort of that it's far more important that we do what we do. Because we- every day we delivered eggs to the egg market and brought the milk and butter and so on. And it's far better we do this than sit in the Isle of Man twiddling thumbs.

Yeah...

So, we were not interned at all. We had a tribunal and everybody was sort of quizzed whether they are a spy or so.

Yeah... Did you know what - what classification you got? No...

[1:28:36]

It's in my- in my book there, probably. I don't think I got a- yes, but- but it says it. I just saw it when I showed it to you.

And how difficult was it to join the British Army?

That wasn't difficult, because in '43, it was decided that the- we could join carrying arms. Before that we couldn't. You could have joined the Pioneer Corps, but I- I, I didn't really feel like that. And when they decided we could join the Army and Young Austria said we should join. So... A lot of us youngsters, boys and girls, went. And- and I went and I was called up, and that's it. And then I... sort of, as I said, on- on vacation leave I could manage to twist Herta's arm till she said, 'Yes', and we got married! And that was it. And that's, as I said...

You were quite young!

I was twenty-one. I was... a mature twenty-one. Mind you if I think, it was actually only about six years... after I left as a... rather immature child, Vienna.

That's- what made you want to marry so- then- that...?

I wanted- because I wanted to be with her!

Yeah...

It was- I can only ask myself, why not? Why, why so late?

Why? What did Herta want to do? Get married later, or...?

Well, she was very romantic. She thought we would get married in Austria. And I said, "No let's get married now." And she agreed.

So, were you on leave when you got married, or...?

Yes. Embarkation leave. It was- it was the leave you get before you're sent overseas. And so, we got married... and it was about three weeks later, we were sent away because I remember on the weekends we were stationed in Norfolk. I- we went home. And sort of- I spent the weekend with her... and went back to... And we should have left about lunchtime so that we reached there. But we didn't do before eight o'clock in the evening, so hopefully we'd get a lift from the liberty truck...

Yeah...?

...which brought us. Because it was twenty-five miles to the camp from Norfolk. And I was lucky; on the...the last weekend, I got the liberty truck. But... most of them didn't. And they arrived sort of half way through the morning. And I was just going to- on the parade ground it was half empty, and he knew- they knew what was up. And we arrived there. And they're just going to... be sent over- overseas.

And were you not worried of being captured, or...?

[1:31:19]

This is why she- yes, I was worried. But this is why I changed my name.

Tell us a little bit about that...

Yeah, well, it's... The idea was, if you get captured, and your folks are still there... you can't- it's- you could endanger them. And so, I chose a... different name. And... there was a question of getting a name with a 'K'; I wanted to keep the 'K'. And Herta, at the time said, "Why- why not Kerrison?" I said, "Why?" Said, "There is a nurse, Kerrison. A Scottish nurse. She's a very good children's nurse. And she just gave a good talk." And this this was the- and as Herta was...sort of working as a children's nurse...she- I said "Yes". So, my name was Kerrison.

When you joined?

When I joined- and when I married.

When you married?

Yeah. Our marriage certificate is... Kerrison and in brackets, Kammerling.

And when did you change it back?

When I got out. And I go to the police station to get my Alien's Registration book. And I said, Kammerling, and I had to... argue half an hour with the policeman there. He wanted me to, to, to stay to...to Kerrison. "Won't cost you anything." I said, "No, I don't want- I want Kammerling." But you know it's- it's the same thing if they have it, it doesn't... I...

How come- You know, because...I actually had- most people I know who changed names, stuck with their name... and didn't change it back...

I didn't want it!

You wanted your...

I wanted Kammerling! My, my parents... are Kammerling. And grandfather and so on are Kammerlings, so I wanted Kammerling. All right, so...

You didn't mind to...

Not at all.

... to sound different?

Look... 'sound different', it's... You sound different anyway! But I didn't realise that at the time.

Yeah...

I only realised much later that I sound different, really...

So, did- was that already- did you have then the plan already to go back to Austria? Or when...?

I think I...

Was that the...?

I... I think yes, I did. Though Herta was far more keen than I was, I think. But I was also keen.

You both wanted to.

Yeah, yeah... Yeah. It's... No, it was- it was our life, Young Austria.

And there, most people, as you said, went back.

[1:33:34]

Yeah...

Yeah...

Well... a number of them. Richard Grunberger and Liesel they didn't go back.

No...

They stayed here all the time [inaudible].

Yes...

And... I don't know how many actually went back and then decided no, anyway. But I, I, I felt, "Why should I? It's, it's… I don't want this."

Yeah...

I mean I would have to give up... basically give up my Judaism al-altogether, and I didn't want to do that either.
And it's, it's... I, I always thought doing this, it's almost betraying the parents. They died because they were Jews. And I sort of say, "No, I don't want to be a Jew now." It's no, I can't do that.

Speaking of your parents, when did you find out what had happened to them?

I found that out when a friend of mine... One I knew from kindergarten still... gave me a book called, "*Totenbuch Theresienstadt*". And in that book are all the names from Austria - Austrian Jews that went to Theresienstadt. And in Theresienstadt they kept meticulously records. They had the date of birth, and when they arrived and when they were sent to and et cetera. And there I found the names of my parents. And there I found that they went to - to Theresienstadt in September '42. And in... September '44, end of September 29th of September, father was sent... to Auschwitz. That was then, so I know...by the first of October he was dead. And I- also in Vienna I found cards which... father and mother wrote from Theresienstadt, to friends in Vienna who sent them parcels. And that gives impression as if they live a normal life. Because the address they went are written- The way the addresses are sent, as you know it. It's a street, the house number oblique, the number of the flat. I noticed first that ...parents have different addresses. I realised obviously mother must have been with the women, and father with the men. And ...so I thought well, when you read it, it reads as if they live a normal life. And father writes mother "had a... stomach upset" and, "she's all right now", and this and that and the other. Nothing from Ruthi; Ruthi didn't write anything. But it was only last October, that we actually visited Theresienstadt.

Yeah...

[1:36:37]

And it was absolutely shocking because... they- we know that in - in 194...4, there was a - a Red Cross inspection of Theresienstadt. And I met a young lady in Vienna who was in Theresienstadt, who told me she was with my mother. She knew my mother. And... that inspection, where the Nazis planned the route, on that route they planted flowers... park benches. Roadside cafes. They have sign posts up, "To the Library." "To the Playground." There was no playground. But it's for, for the- for these people that come. And they came, and they actually – well, whether they did or whether they pretended to believe that it is so, I don't know. But as soon as they were gone, all the people... or rather a large amount of people from there were sent away. And... I mean Lixl gave me the book, and I realised that Mother and Ruthi were on the penultimate transport to Auschwitz, which was on the 23rd of October '44. In... Yes, there was only one transport after that. And then there were no other transports. And the SS I think stopped gassing in November. So... they just whether they then would have had their - their fate sealed on the, on the death marches, I don't know. But... it, it, it was so very final. And that girl that I mentioned that knew my mother, she gave me, she had one of the notes, the - the concentration camp notes. I've got one. And she gave me one. And that was another one of these pretend things. To pretend it is normal. Where- where they had money. Because... it falls down on all accounts. First of all, people hadn't got- didn't have much money. Secondly, the shops were only open when they were at work. Thirdly, the shops were empty... so, what to buy? But to give the impression is there. And on the money, they have a picture of Moses with the Ten Commandments. And I looked at it with a magnifying glass. They got the... right beginnings of the first three commandments as they are, in Hebrew. And the whole thing was an eye-wash. Because when you visited, I realised that they weren't- they weren't- the streets as we knew them, as they were there- there were big barracks block. In that they had the, the, the bunk beds. And the bunkbeds- there were supposed to be six on one – on one bunk, and they had about twelve or so, if not more. They didn't have any, any, any mattresses or straw. In winter they froze. In summer they sweated. There was nothing there. The food they got was, was a certain amount a bread a day... which was largely sawdust. Two glasses of water. One brown, one for coffee. One green one for soup. And that was it.

Yeah...

[1:40:07]

And... And the parcels they... accepted there, which were sent back to the, the- the people that sent it... they never got. And it just carried on like that.

So, did you find out during the war, what happened to your parents, or was it after the war?

No. After the war. After the war. It was that 'Death-book Theresienstadt' that showed it to me. And when we went there last... October...

Yes?

.... it really confirmed what we feared.

Yeah... I'm asking because I wanted to know whether your decision to go back to Austria was also linked with the idea to look for your... parents.

Yes, to some extent it was. I left them there and wanted to know what happened. And... they were living in one of the... so-called 'Jews' flats', you know, where they had one flat for ten families or so. And that was because – those were in the Second District. They had to move to - to a place further to the centre of the Second District. And it was closer to - to our school. And only a few years ago, when we were invited by the commune- the communal authorities, to visit Vienna, they placed us in a – in a hotel just a stone's throw from, from the grammar school where I was.

Yeah...

And it's the first time I visited it; in all the years I was in Vienna I didn't visit it. And they had a notice there, that it was used as a collection camp for Jews before they were sent away. That means my parent could have been a few days in there as well. And if I think that they may have been in a classroom where I was ...there and it- it's- it's unthinkable. And the whole idea is so painful.

Yeah...

Because it is so unnecessary. It needn't have happened. And if father could have got a... a job here... well... And he...He would have been a great- of great service to the country. I know that. And it's- but it didn't happen, so father was just fifty-four when he was murdered. Mother was fifty. And Ruthi was a - a month before her twenty-third birthday. And just because she was... too old for a Kindertransport, and too young for the- for a domestic permit. And there was that - that horrible gap from seventeen to eighteen...

Walter, I suggest we take a break now, because I'm aware that...

[1:42:49]

I'd like to go back a little bit to the time- to the...to the Second World War and to the Austria Centre and what... what the atmosphere was like. And you said- People said you should join the British Army.

No, well they called up... sort of said, "Join the Army." And... yes.

Because the idea was to liberate...

Yeah... yeah.

...Austria. And ...and...

Everything for the war effort.

Yeah. Yeah. And among the members at that time... What were the discussions? What were- Can you just...?

Everybody was keen to, to, to join up, and... sort of... free Austria and help to rebuild a... free democratic wonderful Austria.

Were there any – not conscientious objectors but - people who opposed joining in the Army, or...?

No, I didn't- I don't really know of people. I think probably Richard – I don't think Richard Grünberg was very much in favour of it.

Mn-hnn. So that's what I'm trying to get. What were the debates, and what...? Do you remember any...?

I don't think- there weren't any– there weren't big debates, no.

So, it was socially, it was very important socially to meet...

[1:44:04]

Yeah... Yeah. It was our life, you know, sort of the family we didn't have!

Yeah. Yeah. And was it the same age group? Were people...?

Yeah, more or less. Cause... There were some older ones. The ones who started the movement. They were not just…a question of Jewish; they were basically political ones. And they sort of influenced the trend of the whole movement.

Yes, so what were the...Were there tensions between the sort of political ones and Jewish refugees or were they...? - Not...

No, no they weren't. It was the whole thing. They were all of one opinion sort of, to everything and... being extremely left.

Yeah...yeah. And tell us a little bit about once you joined up. What- what were your experiences? And did you experience any...sort of anti-refugee feeling?

No... None at all.

Or anti-Jewish feeling?

None at all. Except the one I just mentioned.

And go ahead, what was it...?

Yeah, that was that Sergeant Major. When I... walked over the parade ground. And he saw me there, on a Sunday morning, and he shouted, "Why aren't you at church parade?" And when I said, "I'm Jewish", so, he raised his voice even more, and shouted, "Why aren't you in Palestine, with the rest of them?!" And that was the only anti-Semitism I experienced. I didn't experience any other one at all.

And where was your training, then, for the Army?

Well, that was- the, the training was sort of all over the place. I know I was in Bradford, in, in Norfolk. In Norfolk we, we had our last... the camp was there. And... it was pretty tough training. You did everything at the double. But I don't think I was ever as fit as I was then. I know when... just in- at the end, the whole platoon went to the cinema. And it was a good few miles away. And we had to be in by 11:59. And so we all... ran back, double back. And not one of us was out of breath. And we all... got there and this was wonderful. But of course, that leaves you, that fitness, when you stop doing that. Everything you did at the double. You ran there even if you had to wait there ten minutes, but you still had to run there.

And when were you... shipped out, so to speak. When were you...

Well, I...

...deployed?

[1:46:52]

It was... after the embarkation leave so we got married on the 11th ...of November. Must have been the beginning of December. Went to Holland. Belgium first. I remember went to... was it...Brussels? Or was it? Yeah...yeah. And we went there... I think because... we were moved, actually because in Pesach time we were in France... and in Amiens. And they had Pesach- it was together with American... thing. So that it was, it was- it was all very... nicely done and,

and, and- and unfortunately, with my sciatica they, they went for- my unit was shipped out. I was in hospital...with a- with a severe sciatica. And- which I got there. And the first sciatica pains I when had before I was twenty-one. No.... yeah it was before I was twenty-one. It was before I was married. A week before, sort of... I had the first pains. And, and, and that was quite nasty. And that was- I had that right till the end. And even when I got back to Vienna, it once came on again. And I rang them, but they sent me to a spa... And... the doctor there when I said it's getting worse, he said he was very pleased because it's the reaction pain. I got back to Vienna and the reaction pain was so strong that he put me into the hospital with that. And... said to me, "-have that for the rest of your life", but I'm glad to say I haven't had it for a long time, so…

Excellent. And did you work as a translator, you said?

No, I didn't. I, I- I said I wanted to but I couldn't even do that.

Tell us the story about that...

Well, it's, it's...When I went there every day, it was a reinforcement holding unit. And I said, "When- can I join my unit?" "Yes, it's- It's almost in the post. Yes." And then I saw the officer and told him, "Look if I can't get out, I speak German. I'm Austrian. So can't I get out at least as translator?" So, he carefully put down, "He speaks, English, Austrian and German." And I... tried to convince him that it's the same language. So, he said, "Oh, dear!" And I said, "But it's the same..." He said, "But it must be different." I said, "Yes, like English and American, the dialect." But no. And when I then left it a few, few months after that, I actually left the unit and came back to England here, he was the education officer. He was made education officer, to which...sort of, I thought, "Oh well..."

And when you were repatriated were you repatriated from London together with Herta, or...?

[1:50:07]

Yes, yes, yes, yes. We were all together. We went via Paris and then on to Vienna. And then Vienna we made... contact at the- wasn't Young Austria. It was the *Freie Österreichische Jugend* or something, FOJ.

Yes...

And then they... I didn't feel like going and saying, "I need a job." So, I tried to find my own jobs. And I found- I went- went with the...Allied Commission for Austria. And I worked there... as translator.

What was it called? Can you repeat it?

Allied- Allied Commission for Austria.

Allied Commission for Austria. Yes?

Yeah. ACA. And I worked there... and it was quite interesting.

And what was the- What did the Commission do?

Well, I know I did some translations. I had- they used me as bookkeeper. So, I, I had to read up how to do bookkeeping. And I remember when I once I spent hours trying to find some missing- it's only a few things, but you know when- as a bookkeeper, it must be correct. Because even the smallest error could be a - a conglomeration of a number of bigger errors. And so- till I found it. And I found it because I wrote it all under the date and added the date too... Of course, it was wrong. But it was- it was an interesting thing. ...But of course, as soon as I got back, I tried to catch up... on what I've lost. And I did my- Did a matriculation course. Passed this, and then enrolled at the technical university- *Die Technische Hochschule*. And in... electro-technical *Maschinenbau* [mechanical engineering] and I wanted to do *Elektrotechnik*... which of course it was very hard. I did – did attend one or two lectures. but of course, I had to work.

Yeah...

And... I then found work with AEG. And that was wonderful. First in the, in the, in the drawing office and then I was transferred in to the design office. And I designed a complete series of electric motors...cage rotors, slip ring motors and so on. But it's- it's a very

interesting thing, because... when I saw for instance when I had a slip ring motor, a big one I designed. And I read in one of the books I had there, that instead of using six slip rings you can introduce five, and one slightly larger than the other. And I tried that one, and it was a terrible uproar, because the chap from the drawing office came, he says, "We never did this before! I never... One way...!" And anyway, the other one said to me, the head of this... small motors division, said, "Look, if it works, nobody will say anything. If it doesn't work, even the man at the gate will say, "He's a stupid fool. Even I could have told him that." I stuck to it and it did work. And he was right. Nobody said anything, but I was quite pleased that it did work. And it- but it was fascinating. I really liked it.

[1:53:35]

Can I ask you, when you decided to go back to Austria, what was the reaction of Herta's parents who were in England, and of your sister? What happened to...? Can you tell us a little bit about it?

They- they would- they were much against it. Of course, they said, "What do you want to go back for?" And this, you see and of course in our youthful non-understanding of things we said, "We go." And we went. And it was a good experience, but... when, when we realised what happened there... Quite honestly, when we went to... Theresienstadt not very long ago, last October, I found a book there. Which I have mislaid somehow. It is in German about- about Theresienstadt and... they write about the- how the Jews who came back to Vienna were welcomed... by the Austrians. They weren't actually.

What happened to you when you came back? Can you recall your first days, or...?

Well, when we went to the, to the [inaudible]. And they put us up with one chap who was still in the Army. And he was- he had an Army place and we stayed with him for a few weeks. And then we found something, a little flat... in the Third District. And then eventually another friend of ours, who was also in the Army, we had a flat with him. A larger flat where there were two families. And we stayed with them. And then they moved. And we could exchange that flat for two flats. And there was one smaller flat, and we had the smaller flat. And we stayed in that flat right 'til we moved out, in the Third District. And... both our boys were born in Vienna. One in '48, when I- I'd just- I... Just when I started... '47 I actually

enrolled at the university. But of course, I could not attend lectures. It was '*Werkstudent*'. It means working and- and it's almost impossible.

Yeah...

Because I had to make a living.

Did you reconnect with anyone- any of your friends? Did you find people you knew?

No. No. I didn't. I didn't find anybody. I found- as I said, Lixl, who was also over here. He was here in the Army, and he went back. And... It's- The friends we had were basically... friends we had from... previously who came- were here, and went back.

So, from people who were in England and came back from exile, so to speak...

[1:56:18]

Yeah. And of course, being sort of red-hot, we joined the Communist Party...

Yes...

And... But... it was- we started to worry about it- first big problem was when Stalin died. And we heard what Stalin was, and we didn't want to believe it because it was- he was such a brave man. And there was actually... he was the head of the Austrian Communists, [Johann] Koplenig. He came to where we worked. And we asked- there were three of us there, and we didn't want it to be true, and he said, "Yes, that's how it was. We knew it, but nobody said anything." And then there was the Hungarian thing... uprising.

Yeah...

And then we realised, "Sorry, that's not us. We don't want that."

So, in those- in the time in- when you were in Vienna, you were actively- you were involved...

I was- yes, we were active, yeah. But it's...

But you had a circle of friends, and...

Yeah... yeah.

Yeah...

And it was- the interesting thing was mostly people that were in England with us. These were our friends. We had others as well, but it- it's not very many. There is- I made friends with one chap... I met at one of the early lectures, when I could get- and he's- he's Austrian, and his father, was, became a minister. He's a socialist. He was the Chair of the Socialist Students in Austria. Very decent, very straightforward guy; we're still- we're still in contact with him.

But you also managed to get all the letters and things from your parents...

Oh, that I got- that I got when I visited a – one- a friend we had. And she said that she'd got that box. And I took that box. And there were the letters and there were books, some of the books from- one I showed you.

When did you receive all that?

A few months after we arrived there. And it's interesting Bea, she- she told me that they were socialists before. And she told me that they were anti-Nazis, et cetera and explained to me and then I realised they were. They were very much against Hitler, but only because he never kept all his promises. He promised them so much, and look what they got. They got all that trouble. And so, I withdrew from there more or less because I didn't feel like arguing with her, because... she kept those books, and...

[1:59:02]

So, at that point you knew what had happened to your parents?

No, I didn't. I didn't.

No. So you received it- You didn't know...

I received it. I didn't know- she said the, the, they were- they were away… They don't know... I think Fred found out they were in Theresienstadt, but that's all I knew. But any- anything special, it's not there, but then once Lixl came and- and gave me the book, "*Totenbuch Theresienstadt".*

Yeah...

And there I found exactly when and what happened, and... Up to that time, I was hoping that they somehow were in the East and, and, and - and returned and I'd see them again. And I only missed it by few months. And... actually- basically a few weeks. But... so... when I saw that, I realised that ...I found also the cards which... they were kept by somebody. It was- it's actually a distant relation of ours, who was married to a non-Jewish woman. Menkes. And that saved him. He had to work in, in, in, in- under terrible conditions in Vienna, in, but- by being married to her, that was a safety. And I don't- he died before I, shortly before I got there. She died in hospital. And... she gave me those cards. She had those cards. And I got this, and I realised- I read there that Ruthi married Kronfeld. And when I asked my uncle who was in the American Army- he was in intelligence I think - and he found out somehow who that Ernst was. Father only says, "On the 25th of June, Ruthi married Ernest." And then I found that Ernest in that same book, and realised that he had the consecutive number to my family, the transport number. So, they came together from Vienna. And there- and I saw that he and my father were on the same transport to Auschwitz. So, I know they can't- they couldn't live together. And they... hardly could meet or so. And...

Do you think they married because they thought it was better to be married? Because some...

No, they wanted to be married! No, it's not- there is no- it wouldn't be that. It wouldn't be that at all, because they couldn't live together anyway.

Yes...

And so- But I do hope she had a... a few moments of happiness somewhere. I don't know. So... I – I don't even know whether my mother and my father met a lot, or so. I- when we were there, I realised that their barracks were not far from each other … the next street….

[2:02:02]

When were they deported to Theresienstadt?

To Theresien- in September '42. And father and Ernest went on the as it said on the 29th of September '44... to Auschwitz. Which means by the 1st of October they were there. My father was just about fifty-four. And Ruthi and mother went on the penultimate transport to Auschwitz. That was on the 23rd of October '44... or 25th of October. And when we went to Theresienstadt, we also learnt that Herta's aunt, and her cousin Peter, who was two years when Herta left in '38, were also in Theresienstadt from '42. But she died in... in '43. So that means Peter was only so old. And he was on the same transport as, as mother and Ruthi. So... that means he was murdered just about a couple of days before his eighth birthday.

And what about your grandmother? You had a...?

Yes, the other grandmother. We learned that she died in – in December '39. She had cancer, I think. It's... I... well, I'm pretty certain that father and mother realised they couldn't leave grandmother alone in Vienna. So even had... made an effort to cross illegally into Switzerland which... my two uncles did. They wouldn't- couldn't take her.

Yeah... And what happened to your sister who became a domestic in England? What happened to her?

She- she was a domestic here for a long time, and... till she eventually then got a job as a secretary and, and- and she was quite happy. And she retired to Bournemouth. And she moved not far from here, just around the corner there, as a sheltered housing. And unfortunately, in 2001 she passed away. She was just two days after her eighty-first birthday... 2001, yeah...

And where did she live before she retired?

In London. London. We're in- in contact with her son. Her son and his wife. And, and, and her granddaughter was with us not last week but two weeks ago for a couple of days. They were all at, at our... wedding. And when we celebrated our, our ninetieth birthdays, mine three years ago, we – we celebrated by having a family party. And they, all the family together and that's wonderful. Because when Herta left Vienna, her mother was pregnant. And... Erik was born the day that Otto arrived here. Otto became a film producer. Unfortunately, he died in 2000. He died sort of one day before Richard Grunberger ...and he had a heart attack. And he is- his- he has a wife and daughter. They are the only ones in the family that are sort of- she, she, *die Luise ist das*, [inaudible] ...Tough luck. That's her loss. And the rest is wonderful. Erik, the one that was born... who came...

[2:05:54]

On the day...

On the day they arrived here, on the 12th of January in '39. And... He- then they lived in Bournemouth. And they are- they've got three daughters. One, she was- there's a picture here. She's- she's a judge.

Yeah...?

She's been made a judge just a few months ago. She was first a... a QC. And now a judge. And ...And the others, the other are all very efficient, lovely girls. Not girls, they are all women now.

And if you compare your experience of emigration to your sister, how would you compare it the two of you, in terms of... I don't know, coping, and...

She, she- I think she... She wasn't a fighter. She did not try to improve herself. While I... I don't think there was… any time when I didn't study something. And as soon as the, the OU started... I started to- to enrol. And I found it become- it became addictive. I got my degrees and I enjoyed studying!

Yeah...

And I studied right up till I retired. And then I switched from the engineering subjects to music. And I only gave that up a few years ago, because the only one they had was the- was a full-credit course and a full-credit course... there is no shortcut. You've got to work twenty-five hours a... a, a week, whether you like it or not. Otherwise, you can't do it. And when you're married for sixty years and so on...

Yeah...

...This is prime time. And when I was working, I could work in the evening when Herta went to bed and in the morning before- before she got up and so on. And with a half-credit I would have done it. So, I said no. Maybe they'll come up with half-credits again. But it's only a few weeks ago I opened the website and I have look and I found the prices now, they charge. When I started, it was accessible. Now, I wouldn't pay that.

Yeah...

It was thousands per year to, to, to do that! And when I did it, it was just a few hundred and that... spread over the year.

[2:08:21]

And when you- when you- you said before it was when you came back, you decided to come back to England...

Yeah.

... in '57.

Yeah.

And how easy or how difficult was that?

Not really. It's- I started- tried to get a job, tried to get a job but it didn't quite work. That's why... I went into my father-in-law's business and he had... sausage skins, which is gut cleaning and it's... I didn't like that at all. But I- as soon as... as I could, I started to go back to what I did. And then started off with a - a ...local- he called himself a consultancy but he was basically a... drawing office. And I worked there three years. And it was very interesting because I... I know when I had to design different things there. I, I had to do contactors you know for aircraft... things. And... it's sort of electric pneumatic circuit. And there is a certain similarity between, between electric rotors when you ought to have the, the, the pneumatic circuit. So, I didn't like that, while before, Rotax, the company we were working for, they designed sort of roughly what it should be, the coils. And then they spent a year in the lab to test it, where it overheats and what they chopped here and there. And anyway, due to my experience of designing electric motors... I sort of did the same circuit and knew where the hot spots are and what I do about that. I did this. And... I know that the day when the chap come from Rotax, my boss had me in there, and he gave me a telling off that I wasted my time. Why didn't I do it this way and this, the way they'd done it all the time. And the first thing when Mr Brown came, he said, "I want to congratulate you, because by doing it this way, you saved us a year's work in the lab." My boss didn't say a word. But as soon as I could get away from him, because obviously he had a permit and, and he wouldn't let me go. A permit is finished.

Aha...

So, after a few years I found my own job. I went to a drawing office and... a neighbour then said, "Look in, in, in that firm, A M Bearings. There are vacancies." So, I joined them and became Chief Engineer and I loved it. And then I was there fourteen years, right up to my retirement. No! I wasn't, in fact. In fact, I was – yeah- fourteen years, I've forgotten when it was.

Yes. And you changed...

Yeah – yeah. And so, I just found myself another job in drawing mills and, and, and- and continued loving my work.

And at what point did you become British?

[2:11:41]

I think after we were here some years. What was it? ...I think in ’67 or so, I applied for- And then pretty soon I got it and then our boys automatically became [inaudible] became [inaudible]

Was it important to become British for you?

Yes. I think if you decide to be here, I think it is important- it is important. And... the interesting thing is you see, our sons. True, one was only two, and he’s got, funnily enough he has a touch of an accent. The other one was eight, Peter... when we came, he couldn’t talk a word of English. And they put him into the... classes with sort of ‘Noddy’ books. And he- the first year he learnt English and the second year he was in a normal class and he was first in English!

So, they managed to...

Oh yes. And he speaks without an accent. And he forgot all his German, but when he studied, he then went in his holidays he did seven weeks’ work in Graz. And he came back and he spoke German - fluent. But I doubt he does now... because he’s got nobody to speak to.

Yeah, and did you- what language did you speak in the family, or...?

We tried to educate them bilingually... but we gave that up, because he developed a tic. He started this and we said no way. So, we just spoke English. And now we speak both languages. But I think I’m, I’m, I’m rather pedantic because I’m very much against mixing them together. Because it can too easily happen and you use the German ending with English words and vice versa. And that’s no good. At least keep the... sub-clauses clean, or whatever it is. Alright, you have to think a little bit harder, but...

Yeah... yeah...

And, but we speak both, English and German.

And when you came back, it was clear you wanted to come to Bournemouth? You didn't consider going to London, or...?

No, no. Of course not. Because Herta's parents were here. And give the kids their grandparents, while they can.

Yeah...yeah. And you said- what were they doing? What was her father doing, you said...?

It was... sausage casings.

Sausage casings?

Sausage casings. It's guts. You clean the guts and you know what they keep in guts. And so I tried to get out of it as soon as I could.

But he managed to- was it a successful business?

Oh, yes, yes. He- he- sort of a one-man business. Yeah, it was one-man. He didn't have any...

And how- why were they in Bournemouth? Why did they come to Bournemouth?

[2:14:34]

They were in Salisbury first. And that's not very far. And... Mother-in-law she came to Bournemouth, and she loved it! And she said, "Let's move to Bournemouth!" So moved to Bournemouth and so... So, we were lucky; we came to Bournemouth straight away. And Bournemouth, it's- it's, it's a blessed place, you know! When the whole country is suffering under snow and ice, and God knows, we've got sunshine sometimes.

You were happy that you came- that you settled here?

Oh yes, yes. And it's- actually... we were in a bungalow first. And then in '64... Herta's mother died. And her father lived the other side of the golf course- there is a golf course

there. And Herta was going over there, looking after him and so on. And we tried to then change to something. And as it happened, the grammar school is just across- at the back there. And it's the day- it's the year Peter did the sixth form there, and Mark started in the first form. So... they didn't have far to go to their school you see, so...

And you moved here...

We moved here. Yeah. And Herta was close to- to her father. And he died in '70, and mother died in '64, so... But it's... and Erik is- lives in Christchurch, not very far from here.

So... stayed local...

Yeah – yeah.

Walter, how would you define yourself in terms of your identity, today?

Now you - you must tell me what you actually mean. Do you mean just basically 'white, British'? I think that would be...

OK, or the other way, for you, what's the most important part of your Austrian heritage? Viennese heritage?

Look- I know I'm basically a Viennese Jew, but displaced. Very much displaced. And... I feel very British when I go to Vienna. Though I can- I can switch languages immediately because I did some translations afterwards. I did technical translations and god knows what. And the most difficult ones, is if you have to translate patents, because every word has to be translated.

Yeah...

And even if- if, if the Germans have one sentence that long, a whole paragraph, I could make twenty-five sentences, but everything has to be in it. And I enjoyed that. And... by knowing German you, you automatically have to know grammar. Which, in English, being the way English is, it's very hard to, to, to find out which is when you start from genitive, dative,

accusative. Now you mention that, people don't know what you're talking about. And then of course you have things like - I know it was Maggie Thatcher who once said- on television she said, "When he visited my husband and I..." Which isn't really 'I', it's 'me'. Because it's accusative and not the nominative. But... when people say- when they want to say 'I' they say 'me'. And one knows that when he said, 'me' then it should be 'I'. So, in order to avoid that, you said 'I' when it should be 'me'. And I, I, I like it. I like grammar. It's- I bemoan the fact that I speak English with a terrible strong accent. That is... I've given up.

[2:18:28]

And where would you consider your home, today?

Here. Definitely here. Definitely, because... as I told you, so "extinct in the free range". You see, because that isn't- it doesn't exist anymore.

What, the...?

The Vienna- the pre-war Vienna I knew.

Yeah...

And afterwards it's a completely different one... And...

And what do you miss? Is there anything you miss from that Vienna? From your Vienna?

Yeah, home. It's... I feel sorry that, of course I never reached the time when you come from, from the unknowing child, to the... adult, when you talk to your parents on a one-to-one basis. I never had that. And that- I miss that. And we never had any – any real discussions about things. And so... that is all missing. You see, and- and of course when you feel sorry that you never said- all the "thank-yous" I didn't give, all the "please" I didn't give. The things I took for granted. And, and I never told them I loved them. I know, no fourteen-year-old will tell his parents you love them...

No...

But it's- I, I miss that. I... never showed them any affection, I think. And I feel terribly sorry because…I can't make it up.

Yeah...

And that's it, and then... In life the best thing one has is a good family. And I, though the first years were hard and tough and... things happened that shouldn't have happened. But I'm extremely lucky in having found Herta. And it's now- In November it will be seventy-two years... and she is great.

[2:20:32]

That's wonderful.

Yeah. She hasn't changed at all.

Probably neither have you!

I don't know...

What impact do you think did this- the displacement- your displacement have, on your life – on your later life?

Well, it's, it's, it's made me what I am today. I don't know what I would have been otherwise. So... But this would be whatever I am, whatever I would have been, because...the life forms you into – into something what you are.

Yeah... My next question would be, what do you think would have happened if you hadn't been forced to emigrate... if you'd... stayed in Vienna?

I feel certain I would have met Herta. Even if it would have been on a holiday in Switzerland, or whatever. I don't know. But...

And professionally, you think you would have been an engineer?

Yes, yes, yes, that I would have. Of that, I'm sure. Cause I like it; it's great. And I was very- I was I, was very lucky because I had a job which I loved, all, all my years. And you know I think how many people go to work in- go in there on Monday morning - roll on Saturday. In the morning roll and the evening, you know, when they retire, they finish up having lived - wished their life away.

Yeah...

And no, I- I enjoyed that.

Particularly in your age group, many people missed out on education - when they came.

Well, I tried to catch up.

Yes...

It was- it was very hard, because I had a family. And... it's- it's... This is when I went to the OU.

Yeah... And do you think your experiences have shaped you're your parenting, how you... are with your family, and...?

Definitely, but it's not so much my experience as it's my wife. It's- it's- she made it quite clear from the beginning, "You don't hit children. You don't prove a point by hitting children. All you prove is that you're stronger". And that is not an argument. And... so... it's... I think it's, it's... whether we like it or not, our life, our... people we're with. They make us what we are.

[2:23:12]

Yeah. And did you talk about your experiences which your children? With your sons, did it come up, or...?

Yes. I did. But Peter once said to me he wants to come to the- to one when I talk. And so, he – he went there. And he - he listened. And Max once came and said, I should give him the talk so I gave him the whole thing. I gave him the talk. And yes, they're interested and they know. And it is important.

And when did- Tell us what- I know you're-you give a lot of talks. When did that start? When did you start?

Oh, a long- it's, it's... I think somebody once asked me from a local school, "Would you mind talking?" I said, "Not at all." So, I spoke. And after I'd been speaking to some school, then somebody from the Holocaust Education Trust - I think he has connections with - said, "Would you mind talking for them?" I said, "Not at all." So, I – I went to London. I saw – who's that - Peter Jackson. I told him what I would say, and then he made a memory stick of all the documents I sort of... would use. And I just hoped the... the, the accent. I did- For years now I spoke much more, because there are some more people that are speaking, and... I don't know what happened. But if they didn't ask for me personally, I didn't get it. And these last years I spoke a lot less than I did the years before. But now I've got one coming up, a local one coming up. It should be on the 10th of October, and that's a local school.

And what, when you give your talk, what's the main message you want to bring across, or what's important for you?

[2:25:00]

The important things that I want to bring across, is, is, and I finish off with that, actually - Don't give in to peer pressure. Keep your- keep your judgement. And if you feel there is something wrong, trust your judgement. And there is something wrong, do something about it. Then I quote Burke, you know which one, the one that's- "For evil to succeed, it only needs good people to be quiet... to be silent." And- and then I make them aware that it's- it will be only a few years before their generation will be running the country. You have to make the decisions... and don't say it doesn't matter. It does matter. Even it means swimming against the- the stream. And I tell them sometimes the story of a colleague at AEG. A very nice guy. And he's not extremely sort of outstanding personally, but he's… he's a funny guy.

And he told me, he said, when he joined up... or, when he was called up... shortly after he joined, there was a group coming from the Waffen SS and they wanted volunteers. And they came on a hot summer's day. And they put them all... in a class - a school class. The light full on. The windows closed. Central heating full on. And he said, "Within the first half hour most of them signed, because they wanted to get out of the heat." And I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I - I didn't want to sign. I didn't want to join." I said, "So what did you do?" He said, "I just sat there sweating." "And what happened then?" He said, "Well, once half past four, all of them went home except one who stood behind me, asking me to – to, to sign up so that he could get out of the heat." I said, "Did you sign?" He says, "No!" I said, "What happened then?" He says, "Well... at half past five we both went home." And he never signed. And... in my mind that chap was a hero. He- he, he was not, he didn't give the heroic impression of sort of... But he was. He was he was lucky, because if he would have had an NCO who was a Nazi, he would have- get a posting to the Eastern front and... never return. A one-way ticket. He didn't.

And is that the story you tell in schools here...?

I... well...

And in Austria? I wanted to ask you, do you go to Austria as well?

No.

No.

I- I, haven't- well, if they would ask me to speak there, I would speak there, yes.

But you haven't...?

I haven't been asked. I speak in - in schools here.

Have you gone back to Vienna...

Yes – yes.

... on an official...trip?

[2:27:42]

No. No, no, no. Only once we were invited by the- by the *Gemeinde* to, to sort of the welcome service for ex-Austrians. And this is when they sent us, put us in a hotel just around the corner of my- of my school. The grammar school. And it's the first time I looked at it, because when I was young, I didn't look at it. And it's interesting. When we went to Vienna, the two- Vienna before the war, and the Vienna when we came, are two areas they didn't even meet. I only tried to go to, to the- our flat once. And I never went there again. And I never went into the areas which I knew from before. I didn't even go to the- to the grammar school...

Yes...

And I only saw that when we visited Vienna, when we were invited just around the corner.

You were trying to build up a new life-

Yeah!

... in a way.

Yes, because- because it wasn't the old one. It was completely different. People were different. It was all- the whole... atmosphere was different.

So only much later... did you go...?

Well go… to visit the people.

Yes.

It's nice, the countryside is nice and so forth. But the people are the same. I'm afraid.

And how do you feel about Austria today?

We've got friends there... good friends. Actually, the chap I was in the worker's hostel with. And I knew him before I knew Herta. And Herta knew him long before she knew me. He passed away but their children... Children! She's, she's- she must be in her fifties or so. She's a doctor – a paediatrician. And her husband is also a doctor. He's a- he's a gynaecologist. They're coming over on- over Christmas, and I think on the thirtieth they'll come to Bournemouth, stay here for a few days. And visit -and Peter Proksch, that's the chap from the... from the university. He…And we're in contact with them. And... but I still, I've got a double... nationality. So, I shall vote, put my vote down for the new president. But this is- it's a very tough line. The daughter, Lixl, the one I mentioned to you, she phoned me after the President, or the election of President and, and the super-right nearly got it. And she- she never did before. And she, she said, "I- I just want to talk for a few minutes." An hour and a half she talked to me. And she wanted to justify that she voted for Hofer, which was the ultra-right-wing. And she said, because it's the... the, so many Muslims there are, and, and she's dead afraid. And you see you meet so many...women completely... only sees eye slots [slits] and... and, and wherever you go, and... And it seems that the ultra-right is the only ones who... can afford to be politically incorrect and say "We don't want 'em" and so. And it's interesting, because this is the general move to the right.

Yeah...

You had that in France, you have that in, in, in - in so many countries. And in Austria. And she wanted to convince me that's not the case. Mind you when I- when I vote, I shall not vote for Hofer.

[2:31:36]

Will you vote?

Yes, I will vote. Yes.

Postal vote.

Postal vote, yeah. But not for Hofer. I'll take the other one. He's not much better, but... But it's, it's- you know, "one is better, one is worse", it always reminds me of that story about the chap who dies, and he's a terrible person. And in the eulogy the rabbi says, "Doesn't anybody know anything good about him? We have to say something good about him." And nobody says anything. Then one pipes up and says, "His brother was worse!" And that is what we go through in an election. You see? And that's... there you are.

And what do you think today, I mean, about the situation today with the unaccompanied children? Do you see any parallels to the Kindertransport?

No. None at all. None at all. Because when the children come... it's- there are some who really have come from war zones, some – quite a number of them - come for economic reasons. And when they come, they do get, obviously they support and so on. But within a week or so, the whole family is there. And if I compare that to us... we couldn't get our family there. And for each one, fifty pounds had to be paid. Do you know what fifty pounds was then, at that time? Fifty pounds. If you just think it in terms of price of a bungalow. A price of a bungalow. It was £200, £250, something like that. It's twenty to twenty-five percent of that. And the money was collected and was deposited. And... I think, one should help as far as we can, but don't let's go over the top. And, and, and do it sensibly.

Yeah...

And I feel rather embittered if I know that- I know that our parents were in, in, in danger of their lives. What happened proved it.

Yeah...

And I know they would have been an asset to the country when they- if they could've come. All- that's always been working out. And it's, it's- I don't know, it's- you- I find myself in a, in a quandary about it all. In a deep quandary. I mean, it's... it's... you know when father-Herta's parents came. What would they get? I think a shilling or two shillings a week or so to, to cover them for...

Yeah...

And then... No, it's not the right... It's- one has to be very careful who comes in. And not say... that's it. You just... open... I think, help, but not sort of open up, without looking.

[2:34:49]

And are you involved in a local AJR group here in Bournemouth?

Herta is. I'm with her, sort of, yeah.

Yeah? And is it important to have contact with other refugees?

Yes, it is. Yes, it is. I think it is. It is. Because you see the trouble is, actually- that's what is so worrying, that all the elements, the froze of the first... disaster of ours, are with us today. And when I saw the faces - because there were a few scenes at the last Gaza conflict - of crowds shouting, "Kill the Jews". I heard- I knew the tune. It was a different language but it was the same thing. The faces had the same expressions there. And I realised that nothing has changed. And I also realised if I think of the Èvian Conference...

Yeah...

... where thirty-two states, I think thirty-two states, all broke their hearts about the fate of the Jews, and not one took one person. And... it is that global anti-Semitism that is still with us. That we have to be quiet. And one couldn't shout it.

Yeah...

But as soon as [inaudible]to shout "kill the Jews" it was shouted. And that is very bitter. And it's, it's the global attitude... somehow, and very worrying. When you think about the war crimes that were committed at- in, in, in Gaza, were all committed by Hamas... and nobody said that. Israelis warned them, when they were going to drop bombs. But they wanted it. How many of the tunnels they built with the money they got for rebuilding Gaza, were used as shelters, because they would be ideal shelters. Not one! And didn't anybody say anything.

And you find that it's sort of... that, that latent anti-Semitism and that sometimes not so latent anti-Semitism. Look at the Labour Party.

Yeah.

They still pay lip service.

And what do you think should be done about it? Or what...?

Well, officially, a lot should be done. From the BBC, from the government, and nothing is done. Nothing is done.

And what- I know I asked you for the message when you give talks, but what do you think, based on your experiences, would be a message for somebody who might watch this particular interview?

[2:37:42]

Well, the message is, "Don't... go with the crowd. Don't... say- because the peer pressure is in a certain way, and the peer pressure is sometimes very strong. If you feel you have to swim against it, it may be unpleasant, but swim against the stream. Stand up to it. Do what you think is right. And... for God's sake, don't start making decisions based on prejudice." "It is possible that - it's very likely - if you see somebody and you know that type, you don't like him because you know another one like that, he does this. Give him a chance." [recording break]

We're talking about the message you would have for somebody.

Yeah, well. In other words, live your life so that you can look back and say, I've done the right thing. Even it means swimming against the stream. It may be difficult, but it's worth it.

Mn-hnn.

And I often say, “Well, it’s tough. Don’t- don’t think it’s not tough.” I wish them luck. I wish them strength.

Yeah. Thank you, Walter. Is there anything I haven’t asked you, or we haven’t discussed? Anything else you would like to mention?

I don’t know. I have so many things. It’s- it’s... And the important thing is always, always keep – it’s nothing to do with this – always keep busy. Always have a project, because once you stop having a project, you stop being. There is something in... just carrying on. The same thing, you see...we try to walk a bit. And it’s getting more difficult. I remember - and it wasn’t so long ago - when I was running up the stairs. Now I have difficulty to get up the stairs. And... when you stop walking when you’re twenty, thirty, forty, no problem, you can take it up again. When you stop walking at my age, you stop, and that’s it. And I don’t want that. So... it’s the- only- the only thing is it’s getting tougher you see. But there you are. Look, I can’t really grumble. As I said, seventy-two years we’re married now. It’s wonderful.

Was it important for you, that you had a similar background, or that you...? Was that...?

[2:40:22]

I did not think it, it would have been, at the time. Now I think it probably was. But at that time, you just - no, you want to get married. That’s it. And I still feel that way now.

Yeah, well, you’re a very lucky man.

Yes, I am! I realise that. I’ve got a wonderful family and it’s great.

And how many grandchildren have you got?

Five grandsons. All boys. Three of them are here, that’s Max’s. And the other two are over there. That’s Peter’s, over here.

And a granddaughter as well?

Yeah. A great-granddaughter.

Great-granddaughter.

Ayla. She was here a minute ago. There she is. And this is Herta's ninetieth.

And do they feel, your sons, do they feel a connection to Austria or do they- how do they identify...?

Yes, I think they do actually. I think they do. Yes... They- they don't- because it's interesting. I found a book- book on, on patisserie. Viennese patisserie, in German. And though Max doesn't speak German, the younger one... he wanted it. So, I give it? He was very keen to have- you see? It's- because I don't think he'll bake a cake with twenty eggs.

And I was going to say, you said you took up baking...

Yes.

So, do you cook? Do you bake the Austrian...cakes?

Well, I did a *Mohntorte* [poppy seed cake]; that's how I started it, yes. As I told you, it's, it's- I had a *Mohntorte*- I had a recipe and it- beautiful it came out, and it was out and yeaghh...

Yes. But now you can master it...

[2:42:15]

Yeah. And then when- it was actually Di, Max's wife. She organised that... in Bristol. As soon as Herta told them about that I want a book on physics and chemistry of baking, which they must have found very funny for some reason, she– they organised for a next present I had was a Black Forest Gateau physical reference. It was lovely.

And do you find you and your wife, do you cook any Austrian food? Do you still eat...?

Oh yes, *Kaiserschmarrn*. The other day I made... *Marillenknödel* [apricot dumplings], and Herta usually has to get, get from our friend in Austria the powder that you make it, the potato dough. And I made a potato dough- it's a potato dough with potatoes, with egg, and then made it. And it worked - came out lovely. And actually, we've got some here, some, some, some apricots [inaudible] the *Marillenknödel* tomorrow, so... and with, with original potatoes. And Herta promised a friend of ours to make a *Kaiserschmarrn*.

That sounds excellent. [both laugh]

Well, and I do challah. I bake challah.

You bake your own challah?

Yeah...

Wonderful.

Yes, I quite enjoy it.

OK, well, Walter I just want to say thank you very much for sharing your story with the Refugee Voices archive. And we're going to look soon as your documents and photographs.

OK.

Thank you very much.

You're welcome. Do you want to do that inside or here?

Just one moment...

[End of interview]
[2:43:56]

[2:44:22]
[Start of photographs and documents]

That is when Herta was...

Yes please.

Photo 1
Yeah. This photograph is of my mother and my aunt. The one on the right is my mother. And that obviously was taken in Russia, so mother can only have been - what is it - about I don't know, five, six years. So, it was just about the turn of the century from 1800 to 1900. And the picture is obviously about something like 116 years old. It was taken in Russia, with all the elaborate lace they had to wear. And... considering the age of the picture, I think it is in a wonderful condition, because the, the modern pictures wouldn't last that long.

Photo 2
This is the wedding photo of my parents that was taken on the 10th of May 1917. Father, sort of the first, the last year before the war finished. Father was of course in the Army. And this is not the original photo, because that's faded too much. And this is a copy of that before it was so bad – badly faded. And that was only- as I said is, is taken... maybe seventeen, eighteen years later than the earlier photo. And you can see the qualities of the- of the photos. It, again, being the wedding photo of my parents, it was very- very... I value quite high because it was the beginning of – of their marriage. And unfortunately, it didn't last too long, because in '44 they were both murdered.

Walter, where did you get this picture from?

It was in the box that was- when I- when I- all these photos I have were in the box that my father left, before they were deported to Theresienstadt. They were left with a friend of, of the family. And these, where I, I got hold of all these photos.

[2:46:40]

Photo 3

This is a photograph of my father. Underneath it says, "Vienna, 7th of November 1918". It was just about four days before the Armistice was signed. And obviously it was taken when, I should imagine, shortly afterwards my father... left the Army, after the, after the war. But this is taken still in uniform. And if I look, compare that with the photograph, the wedding photograph, I think he must have been promoted because he's got three stars and on the wedding photograph, I believe there's only one star. So, I don't know the ranks in the Austrian Army at the time.

Photo 4

This is a photograph of my parents and my sisters on holiday in Austria, and that is what must have been summer, 1923, because they were expecting me. So, I'm on the photograph, but hidden by my mother. It was four months before I was born, or three months before I was born.

Photo 5

This was my first school photo. It must have been taken in 1929. It was- I'm... there. I'm just on the very left. And it was of the primary school. And I was just about six years old. And it was in Sterneckschule. The first one.

Photo 6

This photo is the last year in the primary school, before I went to the grammar school. It was also in the same school as the first one. The Sterneckschule. And it was the last year.

Photo 7

This is a photo of my sister Ruthi – Ruth - in front of our house in Vienna. I remember I took that early in 1938, oh, part of a spring-summer '38 before I left. And this is the house where we lived. And she was a lovely person. Unfortunately, she was too young to get a working permit, and too old to go to- on to the Kindertransport. So, she stayed in Vienna. Went to Theresienstadt and died in Auschwitz.

What was the address of the...?

Seven Ausstellungsstraße – Ausstellungsstraße Number Seven, and that's the house where we lived.

Thank you.

[2:49:58]

Photo 8
This is a photograph of my sister Erika. She managed to come to England. This was taken in 1939, in England. And... she was the only other one from our family that managed to get out. She- unfortunately she passed away in 2001. And we always hoped that we somewhere could get our parents and Ruthi out, but it - it wasn't to be. She was a lovely person.

Photo 9
This is a photograph that was taken a... few days actually it was taken on the Monday after Schuschnigg resigned and the Germans took over, in '38. We all had our photographs taken for the passports. And I- at that time I was fourteen. A rather immature fourteen. But that is apparent from the photograph itself, and not very happy at that.

Photo 10
This photograph was taken during the meal in the Challa ochel at this dining room, when we had our lunch. And ...our group was sitting- the boys were sitting together there, all. And I'm the last one facing the camera. And the others unfortunately most of them have died, so far.

What's the name of the farm, please?

The farm was- it was... I think it was called Tralee Farm or Goldin's Farm. And it was a farm where you had three different groups. One was the youngsters from the Kindertransport, the other ones were the Chalutzim. That was a religious group which used the farm as Hatshara as training to go to Israel. It was people from the farm who were also responsible for starting the kibbutz Lavi, a religious kibbutz in Israel.

When was it taken?

That must have been taken in 1941, '41, '42- something like that.

Photo 11

Yeah, this photo was taken when we first arrived at the farm. You can see there was still a tent behind there. And so that was taken in, in, in spring ’39. And... most of them, all the ones that were there stayed on the farm and worked there. And one of the three young boys in front, he became a, a professor of radiology. And unfortunately, he passed away about 1908, 1909 [2008, 2009] - Gert Jakobowitz. The other ones I- I know one went to America. I met him - Robert Sugar. And... I’ve lost- I never kept contact with the, with the rest of the people there.

[2:53:38]

Photo group- 12

These photos, the - the top left one is at lunchtime, when Fulli Budechevsky and Clara Nussbaum is, are dishing out the soup. And it is interesting, because both Fulli Budechevsky and Clara Nussbaum married people from the farm... later on. And... a child, a daughter of Clara- of Fulli Budechevsky once approached me there. I learned that they- who her parents were and they were actually both working on the farm. There is the garden frames on the top right hand side where we did a lot of work there. And the bottom left is Walter Tauber ploughing the fields with the horses there. And on the bottom right is Helga Dresner who is looking after the chickens. Helga Dresner married a German refugee and then went back to Germany. She only passed away I think a few months ago as far as I know. I got in touch with her over the phone, but I never met her afterwards.

Photo 13

Yeah. This one was taken actually during the Army training. And it was a- must have been a very enterprising photographer in Bradford who waited for the different soldiers to come out and then selling the photos. And I think it was Bradford then. So that was 1944... Summer ’44.

Photo 14

This is a photo of a Young Austria group. And Herta is actually the fourth from the right. It’s a photo which I carried with me all my way- all my time in the Army I had it with me, because... as I got married in embarkation leave, I was just newly married. And I was very happy to have this photo with me so that I could always have the picture of Herta with me.

Photo 15
This is our wedding photo. I was wearing a suit which I borrowed from my father-in-law. Everything I was wearing belonged to him because I was in uniform - and I didn't want to marry in uniform - except the tie, which was a birthday present from my fifteen-year-old brother-in-law Otto. It was a very happy day.

And the exact date?

On the 11th of November 1944. I was on embarkation leave and I was going to go- was sent overseas shortly afterwards.

Photo 16
This photo was taken with a self-timer on our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, before we went out to - to celebrate with our two sons. It's also a wonderful memory.

[2:56:50]

Photo 17
All right. This is our wedding photo. Well, it's a- it's a chuppa wedding. We got married in '44 in wartime in Salisbury, and we did not have a chuppa. We always wanted a chuppa wedding, so we thought it's a very good thing to have it on our 60th wedding anniversary. And all the family was there, and it was absolutely marvellous. Unfortunately, Herta's brother, Otto, quite on the- on the very right, and a distant cousin of mine, Ludwig... they passed away shortly afterwards. Otherwise, everybody is there and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

Who is- who is on the picture?

On the picture? Well, it's- there is- all the family is on the picture. There is, is my wife's brother. Her...two brothers, actually. And Erik's wife, two daughters. Son-in-law, granddaughters. Then our grandson is there, and our oldest grandson is holding our great-granddaughter Ayla, who was only a baby at the time. Sarah, who is also there, Erik's daughter - she's now a judge. And her two daughters, Hannah and Lottie. One is studying in, in Oxford medicine, and the other is studying in Cambridge. They are very bright girls, and

they're absolutely wonderful people. ...All our grandsons are there as well. And it's, it's a really family gathering and we- I think this is the best thing that can happen, to have the families together.

Document 1
This is my Alien Registration book, which at the ripe age of sixteen I had to report to the police. And this is the book and I kept it which is actually now quite a good reminder of when- what happened because everything we did had to be reported to the police. So, I... Of course, I can't help it from falling to bits. It's part of my Alien Registration book. Which has the photo taken shortly after the fall of Austria, and... representing the mood of the time in my expression. And I treat it with respect.

[2:59:40]

Document 2
This which one is that? Oh, yes. This is when everything we did of course was put down in the- in our Registration book. It's a wonderful record if you want to look for the dates. But there, when everybody was interned. The people from the farm were all together. We went to Newtonards, had a tribunal, and then they established that it was far more important that we carry on with our work, because we delivered food: eggs, butter, et cetera, every day. So, it was better to do this than to sit in - in an internment camp on the Isle of Man and do nothing.

Document 3
This is when I moved to London, and of course being an alien at the time every movement had to, every change in our positions had to be declared to the police. So, when I started in a munitions factory there, this was recorded here. And I started Opperman's Precision in North Finchley. And obviously this is in a book with dates and, and exact times what happened - so everything is there.

[3:00:55]

Document 4
This is part of the Registration book. Everything you do had to be registered, and you had to have permissions if you want to ride a bicycle. At first you don't get it but eventually I got it

because I remember I did ride a bicycle to, in order to... bring stuff from Donaghadee to Millisle, which is about three miles away.

Document 5
This is my Army pay book, which every soldier gets when you join up. And I had, actually I had two because the first one was in the name of Kammerling, and the second one was in the name of Kerrison when I changed my name... in the Army, just to protect either the people I left behind or myself, should I get caught.

Document 6
This... This is the page indicating in this book that I changed the name from Walter Kammerling to Walter Edward Kerrison. And the name Kerrison actually was chosen by my wife, when I asked her for a name beginning with 'K'. She suggested Kerrison because just the previous week she heard a talk by an Edith Kerrison, who was a well-known children's nurse in Scotland.

Document 7
This- this is the first page of my parents' passport. The red 'J' was a forerunner of the yellow star, which is meaningless but it should be humiliating and so on. And there is also the addition that every Jewish male had to have 'Israel' as a- as a first name, and every Jewish female, 'Sara', which was put in duly to, to have probably the same effect as the red star. Basically meaningless, but it's, it should show that they are masters and, and we are subdued.

[3:03:30]

Photos 18 and 19
Both these photos were taken at the same time as mine, and that was at the earliest opportunity to get passport photos after the fall of Austria. Mother looks rather sad, understandingly. And there is also the two on the other side, the names of the children there. I wasn't on it, because I had already left at that time. But Erika and Ruth were there and though Erika also had left when this was written in that passport, she still had to get the name 'Sara' though she was in England. And they knew full well that she would not return while they are in power. But they still had to put the 'Sara' in to Erika. And just- it was just to harass Jews.

Document 8

This is a card father wrote from Theresienstadt to a- I think it was a second cousin Philip Menkes, who was married to a non-Jewish woman and was thereby protected. He was still in Vienna. In Theresienstadt, the addresses they put on were very non-committal. They looked like normal addresses, but when visiting Theresienstadt we realised that it was- it was basically not true, because it was all in a, in a rather ugly big barrack which they were kept in. And when father wrote, it is written also as if they would have a normal life when he writes about mother, when he writes about himself, but which was all untrue. Because their life was anything but normal. Mother was in the female barracks and father was in the male barracks and they were horrible big places.

Theresienstadt, 17.7.1944
Meine Lieben,
Wir haben von Euch schon monatelang nicht gehört und sind besorgt, umsomehr als unsere Karte vom Dezember zurückkam. Wie geht es Euch? Wir sind gesund und hoffen von Euch dasselbe. Ruthl hat am 25. 6. Ihren Ernst geheiratet und ist sehr glücklich. Schreibt bald und ausführlich und auch ich werde öfters schreiben. Viele Grüße von uns allen sendet euer Max

My dear ones,
we haven't heard from you in months and are worried – even more as our postcard from December came back. How are you? We are healthy and hope you too. Ruth has married her Ernst on 25.6 and is very happy. Write to us soon and I will also write more often. Regards from all of us, yours Max

Document 9

This card father wrote in July; in September he was deported to Auschwitz. On that card he writes that Ruth married on the 25th of June her Ernest, who also came in the same transport from Vienna as my family. And he was on the same transport as father to Auschwitz. That means Ruth has been married for about two months. She obviously- they obviously couldn't live together, but I do hope they had a few moments of happiness, in that life of misery.

Walter, thank you very, very much again for sharing your story and your photos with us. Thank you very much.

You're welcome.

[End of photographs and documents]
[3:06:12]