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<b>Ref. no:</b>	108

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Barrett
<b>Forename:</b>	Norbert
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	7 November 1921
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<b>Date of Interview:</b>	10 October 2005
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<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Rosalyn Livshin
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**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

**INTERVIEW: 108**

**NAME: NORBERT BARRETT**

**DATE: 10 OCTOBER 2005**

**LOCATION: PRESTWICH, MANCHESTER**

**INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN**

**TAPE 1**

RL: I'm interviewing Norbert Barrett and today's date is October 10<sup>th</sup> 2005. The interview is taking place in Prestwich, Manchester, and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

RL: If you can tell me your name?

NB: My name is Norbert Barrett.

RL: And do you have other first names?

NB: Yes I have got a first name, Horace, which originally was Horst. It was changed in the army, so was my surname.

RL: What was your surname?

NB: My surname was Baumgarten.

RL: And where were you born?

NB: I was born in Hockenheim in the Province of Baden, in Germany.

RL: And when were you born?

NB: I was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, 1921.

RL: How old does that make you now?

NB: It makes me 83, almost 84.

RL: If you could tell me first of all about your family background. Something about your parents, and their families?

NB: My family background. I don't know a great deal about my father's family background. There was only I believe, my grandfather alive just a week prior to my birth. He died then. And I was given the name of Norbert because he was called

Norbert. Everybody else on my father's side was more or less not alive any longer, except he had a sister who...was an artist ... on the stage, actually. And she worked with a daughter of hers. I don't know much about it except they moved later on over to Paris and the daughter got married and they moved to Algiers, because this is where their business was.

**Tape 1: 3 minutes 3 seconds**

We had contact with them. In fact she invited my sister to come to Algiers to get out of Germany. On account of that my sister had been given a passport but the French wouldn't give her a visa. My mother's family, I know much more about that. She was the youngest of 12 children, whereas I was the youngest of 6 children. So consequently some of my cousins could have been my uncles, or even further than that. You know, it was a funny state of affairs, because... One of my cousins was a headmaster in Heidelberg. And we...I addressed him with 'du' when 'sie' was the usual thing for a headmaster you know, but he was on my level, so possibly at the time they could have been 30 to 40 years old some of them. I remember one uncle who was carrying on the business from my mother's birthplace. Birth house. They were...they had land. They were looking after the land, they were dealing in cattle and he was a shochet.. That was in Munzesheim by Bruchsal in the province of Baden. My family lived there for near enough, for well over 400 – possibly close on 500 years, so I was told by my mother. I used to go on my annual holidays to their house. They had a big house. Plenty of room, and I was always made very welcome because I enjoyed helping on the land and in the farm, with the animals, bringing the chickens to them to be shechted where the Jewish people lived, carried on the kosher tradition.

**Tape 1: 6 minutes 0 second**

RL: Did they grow crops?

NB: Oh yes, they grew all kinds of crops. Vegetables and crops. But the main business originally was cattle dealing. This in point of fact was carried on even under the Nazis' very own eyes when it was forbidden to shecht. He had hidden knives, and we children of course in those days when I was possibly about 13 or 14 when these laws were coming into force. We weren't allowed to go into the barn where the shechting took place. We were told just told, 'Take the chickens back to such and such a village or town'. We had a little box at the back of our bicycle where we hidden them or rather where we brought them in and taken them back. And it was a regular thing! Of course it was a very dangerous thing to do, really. But we had to carry on as much as we could in our tradition. To have kosher meat and kosher chicken or poultry of whatever it might have been. I enjoyed that part because it was slightly dangerous and we did a good deed for everybody concerned. These uncles... There were two uncles living in Mannheim. Obviously they all came out of the same village originally. These are the only two uncles that I knew. 'Cause again everybody dispersed, or my mother had no contact with any of the other...she did have a sister living in Bruchsal but then again, that sister married out of the religion and we had very little contact.

**Tape 1: 8 minutes 47 seconds**

The other two uncles I just mentioned. One of them was dealing and wheeling, you know, wheeling and dealing. And they were making a decent living but not like the one I'll just come to - Sigmund Durlacher. Sigmund Durlacher had made contact, so I've been informed, with the French occupation forces, which was... When I say Occupation Forces; the French occupied German territory right up to the river Rhine and bridges, after the First World War. And he had made contact with these people, and he was given the opportunity to purchase footwear because everything in Germany was at a standstill. Footwear was very hard to get hold of. But this particular uncle had no money, so he asked my mother to lend him money to purchase the footwear. And eventually he finished up with a number of very large footwear houses, and was a multi-millionaire. I mention that specially because later on when my mother was purchasing her own house, he wouldn't give her any capital to help her out with. It wasn't him; it was his wife who stopped him. He did have three children, two boys and a girl, and I think they all went to live in Palestine which is now Israel. The former uncle, he had one boy and either two or three daughters. But they possibly finished up in America, if at all. Oh his name was August. It just came to me. Like the month.

RL: Was he the shochet?

**Tape 1: 11 minutes 50 seconds**

NB: No, no the shochet was a different person all together. He was left in the grandfather's house. I never knew my grandfather. In point of fact I never knew any of my grandmothers or grandfathers because of the age gap. The 12<sup>th</sup> child and I was the 6<sup>th</sup> child. So there was a big age gap. The older generation had died off long – before I was born.

RL: What happened to the sister who married out?

NB: Well, I know she had two daughters. One daughter came to see us occasionally when there was racing on in Hockenheim and occasionally when I went cycling down to my uncle, I used to stop in Bruchsal, where they lived, and just make myself known. She was literally the spitting image of my mother. She was a little older of course, as my mother was the youngest. I was always made welcome, but it was just a matter of having family, whether or not she married out or not, she was still my auntie.

RL: Did she survive the war?

NB: I've no idea. I couldn't tell you. There was no contact whatsoever. And that's about all I know from my mother's family. There were, yes, I mentioned to you before, I had a cousin who was a headmaster and another cousin who carried on some business in tobaccos, and cigars, selling to outlets.

**Tape 1: 14 minutes 0 second**

RL: Did any of your mother's family survive the war – her brothers?

NB: Well, I shouldn't think so, because first of all they were all much older.. or somewhat older. And I'd never known any of them to be able to emigrate. They might have done. One or two might have done, but I don't know. But they would have been taken to Camp de Gurs in the Pyrenees as internees. All Jews from the Province of Baden were taken to Camps de Gurs in the Pyrenees from which the Germans demanded they be taken back to Germany and then sent to Auschwitz. Obviously my uncle who had the shoe business, his children, at least two of them I know, because I visited them during my stay in Egypt with the army. They were in Palestine and they obviously have survived and have families of their own. But I have no contact whatsoever.

RL: What kind of education did your parents have?

NB: Well as far as I know there was no higher education... apart from elementary school. Higher education was an expensive pastime in Germany, as in most countries. You went out and got work, or did some wheeling and dealing or followed in the father's footsteps or the parents' business. Although there was no higher education as far as I know, they were very well educated, basically, and we could ask our parents anything we wanted and we could get an answer.

RL: What kind of religious upbringing had they had?

**Tape 1: 17 minutes 8 seconds**

NB: Well my father had literally no – not much Jewish education, but he was a Jew nevertheless. Which, obviously he came into the same category as anybody else. But my mother had a very strong Jewish religious education. Her brother, who still lived in the grandparents' house, he was a shochet. Possibly my grandfather was a shochet as well. I think he was. And they were running the local little shul, which again was just about a minyan and that was another reason why during the Holy Days I went up to see my uncle because they wanted a minyan man as well. And so I was also there. Of course it helped that one of my cousins, boys, who was also about my age, was also Bar Mitzvah-ed. So we had a good time together. There was a second boy but he was a little younger – about 2, 3 years younger. But it helped to get a minyan together with all the various people from around the villages nearby came into the little shtetl as it was.

RL: What did your father do when he left school?

NB: Well to my recommendation, or - to my remembrance of what he used to say to me, because he was always at weekends cleaning his suits and pressing them down and ironing them – looking after them. Well he learned it in the shop where he worked, so he must have worked in a men's outfitters, at first. He was grooming himself because he was a commercial traveller and he had to look smart.

RL: Was he involved at all in the First World War?

**Tape 1: 20 minutes 10 seconds**

NB: No, no...not in the least. Because he and his mates or friends started an acrobatic team. First there were two and occasionally there were three. And they called themselves The Oclanis. And I asked him, 'Why Oclanis? And he said, 'Well there was a drink going which was advertised on the posters which was called Sinalco.' They didn't know which name to use and they can't use someone else's name, but it spelled backwards. They took the name of the drink, and it was spelled backwards. And my father and his pal- I don't think it was the three of them - came to England to work as acrobats. What do you do when you're a young person; you want to get out in the world and see something and do something different. And of course war broke out - 1914-1918 war. And being of German nationality he got interned. And he was five years on the Isle of Man. And that was his war effort.

RL: And then when he returned to Germany?

NB: When he returned to Germany he looked up his sister who had taken up lodgings with my mother. His sister being an artist on the stage, looking for temporary accommodation, she was working in Mannheim and Heidelberg, possibly Karlsruhe as well, and my mother, having been widowed and having 4 children to look after and the business, took in my auntie. And she had no husband either and she had a daughter, and she took in those two ladies as lodgers. And...So my father looked up his sister, and I don't know how it came about but eventually my mother and father got together and married, she having been a widow.

RL: So what was your mother's story? Who was her first husband?

### **Tape 1: 23 minutes 15 seconds**

NB: My first husband...I mean my mother's first husband was a Hungarian, by the name of Fleischhacker. And he was a representative for Singer sewing machines, selling them to retail outlets, whatever, you know, retail manufacturers. And they lived at first they got married and they lived in Karlsruhe where the machines were manufactured. That's the capital of the Province of Baden. How it came about, I don't know, but they moved over to Hockenheim eventually. And he died in Hockenheim. And he was buried in Hockenheim. I was looking for his grave, but it was... I knew it was there, but I couldn't find it any longer. Just recently about a month ago now. I was there between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of September.

RL: What did he die of?

NB: I have no idea. Oh yes, I bet your pardon. He died of a heart attack. Having been Hungarian, they persuaded him to take on German nationality. It would make life much easier, having a business and whatever, the children; it would make life easier to be a German national rather than a Hungarian, although his wife was a German national. He died of a heart attack during the war because he was quite a bit older than my mother. They sent him papers for joining up, which affected him so much that he had a heart attack and passed away in 1916.

### **Tape 1: 26 minutes 8 seconds**

RL: What children did they have?

NB: They had 3 children at the time. And they enquired about the 4th child which was on the way, my mother having been pregnant. And she was born in 1913, so she was alive when her father died. But later on the Nazis disputed that because she was not on the application form of the naturalisation papers. They said any children born after this date will be automatically a German citizen. And the Nazis made her stateless. She had a terrible job having been made stateless. And she married and it smoothed itself out.

RL: And what children had your mother had, if you could go through them?

NB: My mother all together had 6 children. The first one having been born in 1901, called Fanni. Second one was Erma born in 1902. The third one was a boy, born in 1907, and the 4<sup>th</sup> one of the first marriage was born in 1913 called Gerda.

RL: And the boy was called?

NB: Herbert. Herbert Josef actually. Because it was Josef Ben Samuel. His fathers name was Samuel. Sammy.

RL: And they were living near Hockenheim?

**Tape 1: 28 minutes 30 seconds**

NB: Well first they were in Karlsruhe and later, obviously yes, they all moved. And... my sister Gerda was born in Hockenheim. The other 3 were born in Karlsruhe.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

NB: I can remember as a little boy, having always been pampered by everybody. Because with so many girls about... My brother had taken up residence in Mannheim. He worked in an office for tobacco importers. And he also played the violin in a band. And he decided it was better for him to live in Mannheim. Rather than backwards and forwards with the railway, which was a 22-mile trek. But I remember everybody making a fuss of me because there were so many girls about and I was literally the only boy. And the Jewish community was very small, and also making a fuss of me. And even my sister who came to live in England. Even in her latter days, she still said, 'Oh, he's been pampered. Everybody made a fuss of him, and that's why he is the way he is!' Nonsense. We are what we are.

RL: Were you the first child to the second marriage?

NB: No I was the 6<sup>th</sup> child of my mother. I had a sister born exactly 12 months prior to my birth, on the same date, within the hour, and we were brought up as twins.

RL: What was her name?

NB: Her name was Ingeborg Charlotte. We just called her Inge.

RL: Can you describe your home?



**Tape 1: 31 minutes 39 seconds**

NB: I don't remember much of my first home. That was in the Karlsruhestasse, where I was born. I do remember I was very friendly with the owner of the local newspaper and printer. And I was always given strips of paper and cut offs to play with or to scribble on or do paintings on or sketches. But there again, everybody liked me. Everybody gave me things. I was a likely lad. And I think even today I'm a likely lad. Everybody likes me. There are not many people who take a dislike. I remember, and there was a photo, but I can't find it any longer, where I sat on a stone in front of a shop which my mother was running. She had all types of fruits and delicatessen. In those days of course people used a lot of paraffin, even that was sold. We kept it outside of course. We were surrounded by mostly non-Jewish people, because there were only a few Jewish families in the town. I remember one particular Easter time, when the children – the Christian children had to look for Easter eggs. And I was asked to go and find Easter eggs in the garden which still had snow on top. And I was the one who found the most of them! Just boiled eggs with fancy pictures on them or paintings.

RL: What kind of home were you living in then? Can you describe the building?

**Tape 1: 34 minutes 17 seconds**

NB: Well this first home. I don't remember much of the home itself. I remember the two display windows of the shop, where I used to sit on the stone. I think it more or less was a border stone. A square-ish stone just like a little seat. I remember that. There was a photo about, but I can't find it any longer. With me sitting there like the lord of the manor, you know...

RL: And then from there, where did you move to?

NB: My mother and father bought a property in the town, but a little bit further out in a street called Schwetzing Strasse, named after the town of Schwetzing which was a sort of sister town to my own town - same sort of size. They had a castle in Schwetzing. They were well known for asparagus because they had a market there – to sell –market gardening merchandise which was locally grown and of course all the asparagus more or less went to this market garden. But later on I remember the part of the town hall was taken over – the local Hockenheim Town Hall, was taken over and all the asparagus was sent there and they sent them out all over Germany, France, rather than selling them locally. It's - asparagus only grows certain times of the year, round about May, for a very short period. But it's big business. Apart from the tobacco that was grown locally.

RL: How old were you when you moved there?

NB: Well I had my Bar Mitzvah there. So I must have been 10 or 11.

**Tape 1: 37 minutes 4 seconds**

RL: What kind of house were you living in?

NB: It wasn't an elaborate house, but it was in a nice position, and my parents knocked down a window – or had it knocked out – to make, to put in large display windows. Two large display windows, because they opened up a retail business there. Or rather they transferred the retail business from the Karlsruhestrasse to the Schwetzingen Strasse. We sold all sorts of what they called colonial goods – consumer goods, anything that people really, were in need of. Not necessarily green groceries, but potatoes were sold, because greengroceries, most people grow their own but, there again, chocolates, sweets, coffees, teas, anything that a housewife would look for. I don't think we sold any bread or buns because we had a local baker to do that. But, we did sell some garments; mostly children's garments, as a side line. I...I still see the shop in front of me with all the various things in it. It was a good business. Unfortunately my mother had to close it down eventually, because my uncle did lend her some money, then his wife demanded she wanted the money back and the capital wasn't there, so she said, 'I'll close the business down.' And my father, who was a commercial traveller for bakers' and confectioners raw materials, apart from flour and yeast – that was a government controlled commodity – but it was big business as well. He carried on travelling. Included in that are margarines and fats and oils, you know, all types of things. My mother later on carried on selling wines. We had a large cellar and we always had barrels of wines, which I as a young lad literally got down myself when they arrived in the wagon. They just dropped them into the yard and I had to get them down into the cellars. There's a knack of doing that. And you used ropes of course and tied them up and then let the weight of the barrels let them go down the cellar steps. And we carried on for quite a while selling alcohol selling litres and half-litres - whatever people wanted - in a jug.

**Tape 1: 41 minutes 15 seconds**

RL: This is from the house?

NB: Well yes. We...It so happened we had a double house there. One going one way and one going another, leading onto another street. And we sold it from the back house, where eventually we lived ourselves, because my brother came back and lived in the front part of the house. And the upstairs was made into a cigar manufacturing room. He was given a concession eventually to manufacture cigars. You needed concessions. And you were only allowed to use so much tobaccos. Imported tobaccos. And you were restricted to how many cigars you could manufacture. But we didn't actually manufacture cigars. We manufactured Schweitzer Stumpfen [?] which is a terrible cigar. Not the usual type one has in mind. And ... that's how we carried on.

RL: Was it quite a large house?

NB: It wasn't that large but it was large enough, yeah.

RL: How many rooms did it have?

NB: Well the back house had one large living room, kitchen, two large rooms upstairs. And on the roof we had a big stair case going up into the top, where we kept all sorts of, well, lumber, you can call it. And I had someone build me a - I don't know what to call it - it's like a room itself and I opened up the roof for some pigeons. I kept pigeons in there. I had a lot of pigeons at one time.

RL: What would you do with them?

NB: Well, we used to sell them, eventually. People could eat pigeons. You can eat pigeons. It's ok. But we used to sell them, when they were ready, for the oven.

RL: Did you ever eat them?

**Tape 1: 44 minutes 37 seconds**

NB: I can't remember if we had our own pigeons... Of course, by that time we couldn't get anything kosher killed so... You know the shochtim weren't allowed to do anything so we had to eat whatever we managed to get hold of. In the back house we had a yard and I kept or my mother kept a chicken in there and we had our own eggs, and occasionally our own chicken.

RL: Can you tell me about the Jewish community, where you were living?

NB: Well the Jewish community wasn't very large when I sort of...grew up, because first of all ...people who established the cigar manufacturing business – I wouldn't say established it but expanded it with a sort of Jewish type of brain behind it expanded at such a phenomenon that there were large buildings as big as mills around the Manchester area – some of them established - where cigars were manufactured. Not only in Hockenheim but also in the neighbouring town Schwetzingen and other towns as well. And, people were affluent, sort of, because cigars were sent all over the country and even abroad. But once most of the Jewish population have established themselves and became affluent, they moved into the big cities. It was the thing to do – to move out of the village. You were looked upon as someone a bit inferior if you kept living in a village rather than living in the city. There were more opportunities cultural obviously because we as cultural people had to go backwards and forwards to the cities to join in. I mean we had monthly railway tickets - not daily or weekly - monthly. It was always a ticket for a whole month – for all of us who were travelling. People who became affluent always decided they wanted to live in the city and they would be on the spot. Within walking distance of whatever they wanted to do.

**Tape 1: 48 minutes 20 seconds**

RL: How big was the community in Hockenheim?

NB: In Hockenheim there were just under 30 souls left, when I sort of grew up. And...It was remarkable. The rabbi who looked after us came from Heidelberg and sometime before long, before my Bar Mitzvah, they used to be able to take the little Sefer Torah out of the ark put it in the corner, call it the Bar Mitzvah boy and say they were waiting for me to become Bar Mitzvah-ed so they had a full minyan.

RL: So why did they do that, with the Sefer Torah?

NB: Well they had 9 men so the little Sefer Torah was the 10<sup>th</sup>. There were boys there, but they weren't Bar Mitzvah yet! So the rabbi said, 'Well put the little Sefer Torah in the corner and call it minyan man!' We did things like that. Maybe not

exactly to the law and the rules, but this is how we did things. We could twist little things around to suit ourselves.

RL: How regularly did you have services?

NB: We had once a week, Shabbas night. And Shabbas. And then the Holy Days.

NB: But one or two other boys grew up, in the community and it was a bit easier to have a minyan. And not only that, our readers who were of course mature readers and were getting on in years, and they decided that they needed some extra help.

**Tape 1: 50 minutes 44 seconds**

And brought in a younger person from one of the big cities to lead the service. So that's when I decided to go and stay with my uncle in Munzesheim 'cause I liked the companionship. They also needed a minyan man. And...I was getting fed up with having Maftir every week. I say, 'I want something different!' Well we didn't read Maftir ourselves, that was the readers job. We didn't learn to read the Haftorah because everybody who was employed in Germany as a teacher, or a chaplain, whoever took part in synagogues and churches, they were all employed by the state and pensioned off by the state eventually. So we always said, 'Well, it's their job, so why should we be doing it? They're getting paid for it!' So we never learned to read Haftorah, which I was very sorry about later on, when I had no time to go for lessons. And now, when I have time to go for lessons I became a bridge player and I'd sooner play bridge.

RL: Was the minyan in a building? I mean was the shul a separate building?

NB: We had a lovely shul. I've got a photo here actually; I can show it to you afterwards. There's a booklet here. I'll show to you afterwards but there is a photo here.

RL: Do you want to hold it?

NB: I was just given it recently, last month. It's also in a booklet which...in this booklet as well, which was... I should have had this booklet when it came out but it was never sent to me.

**Tape 1: 53 minutes 40 seconds**

RL: OK. Do you remember the rabbi's name?

NB: Well the last rabbi, yes. But not the rabbi before. The last rabbi was called Pincus and went to Sao Paulo, Brazil. And he got himself a job there and obviously was able to emigrate.

RL: Was your father involved in the Jewish community in any way?

NB: No. Because...To be quite honest my father was working all week in the big towns, Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, which is across the river Rhine, big town by itself...

Heidelberg and various other places around there, but on a Saturday he worked the local area. The little villages around. It wasn't necessary, because every penny counted. We still felt the impact of the First World War, although we were quite well off but we had a house to up keep and pay off. As I mentioned my mother had to close down the shop because my uncle withdrew his money or rather his wife pushed him to do so. Yet he made his million out of my mother's money.

RL: Did your mother have help in the house?

NB: Occasionally we had someone coming in but rather than having help in the house, she was helping other people. Having been brought up with a family of shochets and this that and the other, she was always able to dress the poultry, geese, chickens, ducks, whatever came along and she showed people how to do it and helped them. The farmers and farmer's wives, you know didn't know how to go about it, a lot of them.

RL: What exactly did that entail?

NB: Well you get a chicken , or poultry of any sort, after it's been killed and you take the feathers off and clean it out and throw away what's not wanted, what can be used like there's many parts of an animal what can be used to make soup with. So yeah. She always had people coming in 'Show me how to do this. How to do that...'

**Tape 1: 57 minutes 19 seconds**

RL: Were they non-Jewish people?

NB: Non Jewish, yes. The Jewish people normally knew what to do with a chicken, etcetera.

RL: This film is about to end...

NB: Yes. I noticed...

**Tape 1: 57 minutes 38 seconds**

**End of Tape One.**

**TAPE 2**

RL: This is the interview with Norbert Barrett and it's Tape Two.

RL: So I was asking you about your father and if he was involved at all in the Jewish community. And you were saying he was involved with the Jewish cemetery?

NB: No. Not really. You must have got it wrong somehow.

RL: All right... what was it you were telling me about the cemetery?

NB: I was touching on the cemetery, but I was talking about the cemetery for some other reason. Nothing to do with my father.

RL: Nothing to do with your father...right.

NB: Because obviously my father came from Cologne. He had no relatives buried in the cemetery. In fact I had no relatives buried in the cemetery except his father was buried in Mannheim. And I've never seen his grave in any case.

RL: Did your father continue with his athletics – or his acrobatics, at all?

NB: Yes, after he'd taken up residence in Hockenheim. He carried on for a number of years. I've got various postcards. Dozens actually, from all over the show, going into Poland, Czechoslovakia, possibly France, Luxemburg – all over the show where they still carried on, after he got married. But later on he took a full time job as a commercial traveller and stayed at home because my mother wanted to see him at home.

RL: Did he belong to any clubs or organisations?

NB: Yes, he belonged to the local Turnverein - that's the sports section of the physical...what can I say...it wasn't part and parcel of the football club or the hunt ball clubs which we had it was just keeping physically fit. I participated with them all of the time, but my father sort of gave them demonstrations, and, he also was involved in the yearly, sort of, tea parties or boozing parties and they had to give a show. He had a permanent place among all of the locals where this took place... And he got one more man involved in the activities and as I was big enough he always was taking me along and showing me the ropes, and helping me along. And I became a real daredevil. There wasn't anything I wouldn't do.

### **Tape 2: 3 minutes 55 seconds**

RL: What kind of things were you doing?

NB: Anything that had to do with danger, I was in the forefront and sorting out how to get around it and how to do the thing. Making a handstand on a bicycle and going along the road with it – that sort of thing or jumping from the barn. Learning how to fall, which stood me to good stead even in latter years. When I fall I don't normally hurt myself.

RL: Did you put on shows, would you join him in the displays?

NB: Yeah, once a year there was always a big show and I was only little. I was always very little in point of fact so for my Bar Mitzvah I had to have a little stool to be able to read the Sefer Torah. I couldn't reach. I grew later on; I shot up a little bit. I'm still small today. In point of fact I'm shrinking. But I was always a very little boy; I could hardly look over the table in my mother's kitchen. I had to stand on tiptoe to be able to see what was on top – what I could pinch from the goodies that were prepared.

RL: Did the girls ever do any gymnastics, any acrobatics?

NB: Well yes. The girls were of course older, and they had their friends with them. I can always remember at home they came once or twice a week and my sisters and their friends, that was the last two sisters and their friends they were always doing things in that respect because the physical evening they had – we had one evening per week – I think it was Thursday evenings when everybody went to the Turnhalle and did physical exercises on the rings, on the bars, and whatever...

RL: Did you play any games?

**Tape 2: 6 minutes 55 seconds**

NB: I could never score a goal. I was...in front of an empty goal I couldn't score a goal. But I decided I was better off stopping them. And I became a goalie in the football team. And I was a terrific goalie I must say so myself, although I was little. And I had bow legs when I was little, through some lack of vitamins we had during the First World War and I let the ball right through my legs, through being bow legged, but they more or less straightened themselves out later on. I was also involved in playing hunt ball in – still is, today, on the continent. Otherwise I was involved in anything you can imagine. Later on during my army days I became one of the men involved with playing hockey, which I didn't play in Germany. And I did a lot of cross-country running. At one time I was a champion cross country runner in our company.

RL: Did your father belong to any other organisation?

NB: Nothing political. Definitely not. He kept away from politics, but he used to go up to the Town Hall occasionally. And this is when I remember when he came back from the Town Hall he explained to me that they're going to get some money into the town, because in general things were hard. There were still some poor people around. These were still restrictions from the First World War. Instead of making life easier for people they made it harder and of course the general public...the war finished long time ago, but they still bear the grudge because they couldn't work the way they wanted to and export to get money into the country.

**Tape 2: 9 minutes 53 seconds**

So towns were suffering. And my father came back from the Town Hall and he explained to me that he suggested to build a motor racing circuit for motorbikes, because he was a motorbike enthusiast. I remember very clearly, he always used to put me on a motorbike with him. It was an old Harley Davidson with a big bucket seat - there was plenty of room. And the best of my memory was when we went up on our main corner in town, that's the Karlsruhe Strasse which came to literally a T-junction, not quite but literally and he had to swerve around and there was black ice and we both fell out of the bucket seat of the Harley Davidson. But he suggested to build this motor racing circuit which was eventually built. And out of it came, after the war the Formula One motorcar racing, world renowned. There's no financial interest on our part. It's just that it was my father's idea. And when I saw the Oberbürgermeister Schrank [?] eight years ago, he presented me with a plaque, through that. And it's hanging outside in my hall. Not everybody gets that plaque.

**Tape 2: 12 minutes 0 second**

RL: Now if you tell me something about your experience of school...

NB: School, yes. Certain subjects I absolutely loved doing. Other subjects I hated or disliked or wasn't interested.

RL: Which school did you go to?

NB: First of all we went to the local elementary school till the year of 11. Then I transferred to what we call Higher School, which is like a grammar school, and it was called the Oberrealschule in Schwetzingen because Hockenheim didn't have a higher school. Not as a grammar type of school. But I only stayed there one year because this was already under the Nazis and things were getting bad and financially bad because it had to come out of private sources...And, we just couldn't earn the money any longer.

RL: How did you get on with the non-Jewish pupils at school?

NB: Surprise, surprise, I had no enemies. And I had a lot of friends even among the sons of high ranking Nazis. The thing was always.. 'Oh, we don't mean you. We mean the others' when they talked about the Jews, or were Jew baiting. It was always 'Forget about it', or 'It's not your type.'...But a Jew, is a Jew. If they hurt my brother, they hurt me as well.

RL: Did you ever have any trouble?

NB: We did have trouble, yes, with some. There have been times when I was on my own fighting sometimes 15 to 20 boys on my own. You learned to look after yourself.

RL: Where would that happen?

NB: Usually on the streets. You couldn't do it on the school playground. Calling me names, chasing me. All I needed to do was kick one or two in the groins and the others would run off. They were frightened of me. I could be vicious. They made me that way. They soon learned not to chase me.

**Tape 2: 15 minutes 38 seconds**

RL: Were these boys from your school?

NB: Well they were all...Possibly not from my own class, they were from other classes. They were Jew baiting. That's what had been taught them. 'Anything they could do. For instance, I leaned the bike against a little shop that was always selling materials for schools, you know, writing, etc. I was always on my bike. And when I came out, the tyres were flat. The tyre was even cut with a knife. So I was going to get my own back as soon as I saw someone's bicycle leaning against a shop, I went and cut their tyre. And whose tyre did I cut? It was the local priest's! He fully understood.



He gave me a pat on the back and said 'Well done, son. But don't do it on my bike.' What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

RL: How were the teachers towards you?

**Tape 2: 17 minutes 16 seconds**

NB: I had no problems with my teachers except one teacher - he wasn't actually an anti-Semite. He kept on calling me...He didn't mention my first name as everybody else did, Horst, which was my calling name in Germany, Norbert being my middle name. And he kept saying Jacob, Isaac, any sort of Jewish name he used to call me out meaning me, because I was the only one. And I complained. My mother went to see him and said, 'His name is Horst. It not Isaac, he's not Jacob.' He was actually a good friend. I've got a book of his upstairs which he wrote. And he was for a number of years my teacher. My...this class went on and on, year after year with the same teacher. Then eventually as we got older we were given another teacher. Oh incidentally his name was Ernst Brauch. That book is upstairs. I can show it to you afterward. The next teacher was called Schneider. He was in the SS. Black uniform. We were the best of pals. Why? Because whatever difficult subjects he gave me in math, I could always find the answers before anybody else, and called it out to him. And he sort of recognised that there was a boy, although he was a Jew, but he could beat the lot of them. And...I had no problems with him, although he was in the SS. In fact he liked me for the work I'd done. He taught us everything, actually, not just mathematics, but his pet subject was math. Because I excelled in math he thought the world of me, actually, but he couldn't show it. People very often had to join the party to get on with their own life under the Nazi rule. What they felt inside was something quite different. You can only judge that by having lived among Germans whom you've known. And you know what they're really like. A lot of people had to join the party and had to give a Nazi salute because if they wouldn't have done, their life would have been very poor indeed.

RL: How many teachers belonged to the SS?

**Tape 2: 21 minutes 0 second**

NB: I couldn't tell you. Obviously a lot of them belong to the SA - the storm troopers. That's the brown uniform. But the black uniform was something quite - that's Himmler's gang. Whatever suited them. But if you didn't belong to the party, or if the boys didn't belong to Hitler's Youth, you were an outlaw. That's how it's been put by the Nazis. And they knew about it because you simply didn't get a promotion or you got the sack even...you know for not following out the party rules, the party regulations.

RL: Did you notice any change in attitude in the school before you left?

NB: Well I wasn't in school before I left. I left the school when I was 14. I left Germany when I was 17.

RL: But I'm saying whilst you were at school, did you notice any sort of change taking place?

NB: Yes, very much so. The Catholics sided with us. Because the Catholics were chased, if they didn't chase the Jews, they chased the Catholics and if it wasn't either of them, it was the cyclists. They always found something wrong with the cyclists. Either the bell wasn't in the right position or the rear light, the cat's eye reflector wasn't exactly 50 cm from the ground. Stupid things of that nature. They always found a reason to fine people, or to... But it was usually was the Jews and if they eased up on the Jews it was the Catholics. So the Catholics sided with us, and my pals became [...] normally all Catholic boys.

**Tape 2: 23 minutes 38 seconds**

RL: Did your parents encounter any anti-Semitism?

NB: Well, they would have done, yes. But very little. In point of fact, the man who helped my father in acrobatics, in the local physical sort of, club, he became the foremost SA man and he became an instructor for the Hitler Youth. He didn't mind us. He was friends with us. But he had to join something or else he couldn't get his jobs. He was a painter and decorator. And he was the one who climbed up the water tower to put the Nazi Flag on top of it, on the outside. And on the lighting...you know...what do you call it...the conductor, the only way how he could get up. And it was put to me even 8 years ago when I went to Germany, after a long, long time to Hockenheim. He says, 'You know, he learned from your dad how to climb that tower.' Someone remarked on it. I said, 'Yes I know. Without my dad's instructions, he wouldn't have been able to do what he did do.' Of course my father didn't tell him to climb the tower. He had to show something. Yet when you knew these people, to us they were neighbours, friends, helping us even though he had a Nazi uniform on. When people talk about the Nazis, the Germans... They did this. They did that. Well. What can you say? We know the harm they did. We know the damage they did. We know the holocaust they caused. But if you didn't belong to the party then you were ousted – by themselves. If a schoolgirl or schoolboy reported, 'Oh my mother shopped at such and such a place or she went to see so and so.' And if that person happened to be in a public position in an office, or in a place which belonged to the state or in the town, then you were ousted.

**Tape 2: 27 minutes 4 seconds**

They lost their job, because they sided with the Jews. We're getting the wrong idea every German is a bad 'un...People are people. They've got to preserve their own selves, or tried to, when things were bad. And things were not good, financially. You get different aspects of people. Same as I've been back to Germany, just lately. People said, 'How can you go back?' Well in the first place there are very few people left of even my age, and we were only boys or girls for that matter... The old Nazis have died out, there's not many left of them. Possibly you get some still today – you will do. We heard about it. They are within this country. The National Front. How can you kill it off? You can't. You can just put it to people the wrong they do and how wrong they are. You look all over the world; it's the same thing in any country. Look at Ireland, how stupid can you be? People still fighting each other because of a different way of going to church. Catholics versus Protestants. Why have they got to do it? It's stupid, absolutely! We were in Germany, I remember. There was no such thing as Jew or Catholic or Protestant. We were in the same clubs. In the same...We

did the same things together. In that little booklet I have got you've got a photo there from the Oderwald club. Nobody asked whether you were a Catholic or a Protestant or a Jew. On a Saturday I went to the synagogue, on a Sunday one lot went to the Catholic Church the other to the Protestant Church or Methodist! It didn't occur to anybody till the Nazis arrived and created havoc.

**Tape 2: 30 minutes 7 seconds**

RL: What was that club that you mentioned?

NB: The Oderwald. The Oderwald, it's a mountainous region with a lot of trees, mainly fir trees... It's similar to The Black Forest, Schwarzwald, only in a smaller version, and it sort of borders onto the valley of the Rhine. It's between Mannheim and Heidelberg right going up north and in, deeper into the land as well.

RL: Did you belong to that club?

NB: Yes, well my sisters... mainly my sisters belonged to it and of course I came along with them.

RL: And what would you do?

NB: We just set off either from home and start walking or had a bus and go to a certain town and then set off from there, literally all day we were wandering. You know a hiking club. And then we finished up in a restaurant somewhere or in a beer bar or wine cellar or finishing up and then we came home. We usually had a sheet with everyone's name on and I don't know how many signatures you had to have - you got a badge after 12 months if you did so many hikes with them. Older people used their walking sticks, and had their badges on their walking sticks. This goes on today, still. That's...it's very healthy that to go out at the weekend and do some hiking...we have it here - The Wayfarers, don't we? Different version, but same thing. You meet people. See people.

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 35 seconds**

RL: This was a non-Jewish club?

NB: Oh yes, as I said before, there was never a query whether you were a Jew or this, that or the other. We just mucked in together. And the same with school. We weren't any different.

RL: Did you have any Hebrew education?

NB: Oh yes. Hebrew education was necessary, but to me it was taboo, for the simple reason. Our Hebrew teacher came on a Wednesday afternoon, when the school was not operative. So we had to spend our spare Wednesday afternoon. He came on a Sunday morning, maybe some of the others went to Sunday school but Sunday was not a school day. So Wednesday afternoon and Sunday morning was taken away from us, that's why Hebrew education became taboo with me...I started to dislike it because my free time was taken away from me. Except - later on, when the Nazis

were very strong and we met up usually not in school on a Sunday. During the week on a Wednesday he was able to use the school rooms - as I mentioned before, all teachers and all chaplains and anyone who had anything to do with education or religion were state employed. My teacher was state employed, so he could use the school rooms. But on a Sunday, we normally went to someone's house. If it was a nice day maybe sit in the garden - they had a summer house there. Something like that. Maybe half a dozen of us were educated by him. And... There's still one girl - she's my age - Edna Reich - in New York. She wrote in that little booklet, greetings, same as I did, at the time. And...

RL: Who was your teacher?

NB: My teacher, I can't think of his name at the moment. He came from Schwetzingen. He lived in Schwetzingen. We didn't have a teacher locally any more. The original teacher died he was before my time. His widow still lived in the town. But our new teacher came from Schwetzingen. He was a very lovely man; very nice, very nice to the children and to us all. Never shouting or screaming, always being...

**Tape 2: 36 minutes 0 second**

RL: Was there any Zionist activity?

NB: Well all the activities we had. There were a few bits and pieces, came through one of my older sisters who belonged to a Zionist organisation in Mannheim. She worked in Mannheim. So she poured a lot of ideas back to us and put it into practice about Zionism, Judaism, and certain things. We made Hanukah parties, bits and pieces, but not like after my sister started taking a hand in it. She transferred what she'd been taught in the big town to us village folks. We lit candles for Hanukah. If I didn't have a candle, at one time I didn't have a menorah. Before I made my own, we used shells of walnuts. We made wicks out of cotton wool, and put oil into the shells, and lit them.

RL: Where did you do that?

NB: At home! My mother taught me that because there were so many children there. Everybody wanted to light their own menorah. And they didn't have menorahs for everybody, so the boys made their own menorahs... And later on - I did have some pictures somewhere again, but I can't find them any more. I made my own menorah. In fact I've got menorahs here I've made. I possibly can dig one out. I went to work in an engineering college. And it was a Jewish undertaking. Jüdische Anlernwerkstätte, and for Hanukah we made menorahs, out of metal. And I did have a photo of two menorahs I made. I will definitely be able to show you one... I think on the sideboard, I made.

**Tape 2: 39 minutes 18 seconds**

RL: So was that your first job after school?

NB: It wasn't a job. It was a college. We were educated equally to a high education. The Jewish Gemeinde that's the Kehillah in Mannheim, the authority of the Jewish

community, decided as boys- I don't know about girls, but – as boys can't get a job, or not so easily, and it's futile to go to offices or business the way things are, the best is to teach them something they can do with their hands. So when they eventually manage to get out of the country they can earn their own living with their own hands. If they have brains enough they can always earn their living with their brains afterwards. But as long as you can do something with your hands, whether you're a baker, a cobbler, a glazer, an engineer, manufacturing or making furniture. You know. Showing a... doesn't matter, as long as you can earn your living once you're out of the country.

RL: Where was this college?

NB: Well we had various in Germany. There was one in Frankfurt, possibly one in Berlin, I don't know. But ours was in Mannheim.

**Tape 2: 41 minutes 10 seconds**

RL: And how many people would attend?

NB: Well I was very, very lucky. I finished my elementary school at 14 which was the usual thing then. And within a few short weeks I was able to join the college, which had to be paid for. We had higher education. We had higher education half workshop, half college. I used to call it technical school. And as things were bad then financially, to earn money, we had very little reserves and still a mortgage on the house, they decided they'd pay for me. And all my higher education was paid for. I walked out with first prize. I've got a little Siddur and a Haggadah, which was given to me then, with an inscription, from 1938. And when I ...They only wanted 2 ½ years. The normal apprenticeship in Germany was 3 years, after that you became an improver, but the college said, we only need 2 ½ years to finish the studies. I finished, and they said to me, 'If you haven't got a job to go to we'd like to you come and help with the new intakes. I was already helping them in any case, because mathematically I was top notch. With my hands I was good because I was always working in garages with technical things. It was a natural thing for me. It was just showing them how to go about using tools, lathes, that type of thing - drilling machines. Welding, you name it, soldering, blacksmithing. And literally I could have finished within 18 months, because I was helping the new intakes.

**Tape 2: 44 minutes 10 seconds**

RL: How big was the college?

NB: Well let me put it that way. It was an old cinema...quite big, belonging to a Jewish person. I don't know what happened to the cinema. I think they built a new one. He said, 'You can use that cinema and make it into a workshop.' And they had another place on the other side for woodworkers. The funny part was, when I joined the college, I put my name down for the engineering side. And I arrived, they said, 'No. No. You're going to the woodworkers.' I said, 'No way. I'm not going to woodworkers; I want to go to the engineering side.' And the head of the college who was an appointed head - he wasn't a local man. He came from the north of Germany somewhere. And he liked engineering. That was his forte. He says, 'This boy, if he

wants to come to the engineering side, let him come to the engineering side.' He liked the idea that I was so keen. And that didn't stop me from learning things for joinery. It came naturally. So whatever I did, they liked what they saw. I took to it like...like a duck to water. They couldn't understand a young boy knowing so much. I've never been out of garages and places. I like nuts and bolts. Except certain things you have to learn; how to cut a thread with the tools that's given. I'd never done that; how to calculate things; engineering terms.

RL: So what did you do when you left?

NB: So, when my time came, when I left. When the year came to an end and I was given the prize they said, 'If you haven't anywhere to go we'd like you to come here and carry on helping us. We can't pay you. It's not a paying job, but we'll pay your expenses.' My expenses were simply train fares. So what did I do? I pocketed the train fares and went cycling to it. That was my pocket money. They didn't mind. They said 'You can please yourself. We'll pay your train fares and if you use a pushbike, that's ok.' And of course it collapsed on the...Kristallnacht. The whole thing.

### **Tape 2: 47 minutes 51 seconds**

RL: What was your experience of Kristallnacht?

NB: Well, first of all we could see this big fire going from our house. And we couldn't understand what was burning. And somebody shouted, 'It's the synagogue!' you know, that place I showed you in the picture. In fact I had a report last month from a lady who observed it all. It was a school colleague of my sister, so she must be a year older than me. She wrote a whole article about it. They observed the whole lot. We only saw the flames, but I set off to go to the college, as usual. Then they said, when we got into... nearer towards the college, it's a suburb of Mannheim, called Mannheim Neckarau. Again you'll see it in the little book. They said, 'You better not go because they smash everything up. Your best bet is keep away from here.' And we went, well I went right into Mannheim, and everything was chaotic there. All the Jewish shops smashed to smithereens. So I thought, 'I better go home and see what's happening.' And I went home and there were two SA men standing in front of our door guarding it. And someone said, 'You'd better keep away because they're taking all the Jews away - the men.' And they'd been searching the house high and low. They planted trees originally in Hitler's name in certain areas in every town - usually the market place or something like that. And they were cut, the saplings, only young trees, with a little note left attached to it written in blue or red markers - you know we didn't have markers as we have today - the oil crayons. So they found the crayons in our house. And my brother being in business he had to have all types of things for making parcels - you know, you write with crayons on... They said, 'Oh, well you must have written the note,' you know. Cutting the...what they call 'Hitler Linden' [linden trees] it's a certain tree. What do you call it in English? Willow? Eventually would be a big willow tree.

### **Tape 2: 51 minutes 54 seconds**

And ...so they took him away. My brother of course was 14 years older than me and he was established already in business. We manufactured cigars ourselves - or he did,

which I learned as well - this trade. It was Schweitzer Stumpfen [?] we manufactured, not cigars as such. A plain cut at both ends, and a special type of smoke. And my father didn't come back either from Mannheim, from his travels. And just by sheer chance he happened to be in a Jewish shop, you know – selling his...taking orders for baker's and confectioner's raw materials. And they went in to go after the Jewish shopkeeper, and somehow or other they must have cottoned on that he was a Jew and they [grabbed] him as well. And they finished up in Dachau. It was a terrible ordeal when it was in middle of winter there, in November. Ice cold, you know, freezing cold. And being let...They weren't prepared for staying in a place and being outside all the time with very little protective clothing. Anyway they eventually both came back home again. But...My thoughts got interrupted a little...What was actually...? You wanted to know what I did afterwards...

**Tape 2: 54 minutes 25 seconds**

RL: I'd asked you about your experience of Kristallnacht.

NB: So I took the train back home. But I couldn't enter our house because they said, 'If you go anywhere near it they'll 'chap' you as well!' So I managed to escape being caught by them till – I don't know how many hours afterwards - till the coast was clear.

RL: And then what?

NB: Well. I can't remember exactly what happened. But...Within...What sort of day it was? Whether it was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday...I can't remember. It wanders off. They said, 'You'd better go and clean that place up.' You see the German law was such; everybody had to clean their pavements and the gutters. And you daren't leave any bit of dirt there. You were fined! That wasn't just the Nazis - that was the German way of doing things. That's why you find everything in Germany clean, because it is the law. Or it was the law then, possibly still today! But under the Nazis, it was more strict than ever. And someone warned us or one or two people and we said, 'Well we can't go and clean it up. You think your Horst can go and do something?' So I went up with brush and shovel on the Saturday and cleaned the place up before there were heavy fines.

**Tape 2: 56 minutes 40 seconds**

And possibly more people would have been taken into custody... there was a problem...although it was the Shabbos, but it couldn't be helped. Further than that, I just can't remember much more about it except my brother's business, cigar manufacturing business, of course he couldn't carry on he wasn't there. His wife was there who knew how to make cigars, but she also needed help. She had a young family to look after. So I started getting busy myself. And having learned how to make the cigars and how to pack 'em, how to prepare the raw material the tobacco, and went selling off the cigars to get some money in.

RL: Now this film is about to end so we'd better just stop there.

**Tape 2: 58 minutes 9 seconds**

**End of Tape Two****TAPE 3**

RL: This is the interview with Norbert Barrett and it's Tape Three. Now you said you wanted to tell me about the Siddur that you were presented.

NB: The Siddur and Haggadah.

RL: The Siddur and Haggadah that you wanted to share with us...

NB: The Siddur and Haggadah were given to me as The First Prize. There's an inscription in both of them but in the Haggadah a larger inscription. 'The First Prize from the college - technical college in Mannheim – Mannheim Neckarau' - because it's a suburb of Mannheim. But the story I was going to tell you was such that: originally when I made an application to get some restitution money from Germany which is similar to a pension. I got a very small amount, monthly amount, which was actually a pittance. And then...I just happened to be invited to come to my home town. That's another story altogether. We possibly will come to this about why I was invited. That's 8 years ago. And the Oberbürgermeister Schrank at the time, who's now in retirement, asked me what did I want to do actually. I said really speaking I want to see someone at the Labour Exchange or the insurance people who deal with pensions or the restitution money. And he said, 'How are you going to get there?' I said, 'Well there's a train going. I can take a train from Hockenheim to Mannheim where the office would be.' He says, 'No fear. My driver's downstairs. I'll tell him to take you whenever you want. Make a day of it. He'll stay in Mannheim and bring you back whenever you want. And I'll tell you where to go to.' And he told me where to go, and whom to see. My wife was with me at the time as well. I had this little Siddur with me, and of course having had this – by this time already this small German pension or we call it restitution money I have got an insurance number from Germany. And I had that with me as well. And when it came to my turn, we had to wait quite a long time. I was called into an office, and there was a young lady sitting there.

**Tape 3: 3 minutes 32 seconds**

She spoke a perfect German, obviously. But her features were a little bit I thought, like Negro features. Slightly you could tell, you know. And to this day I don't know whether she had any Negro in her. It's a possibility that her father could have been an American soldier, at the time stationed in Germany or from the German colonies before the war – which they lost in the First World War. Anyhow, I didn't query that, but I thought, 'She looks a nice, decent sort to talk to.' And I gave her all the details and she said, 'Actually, this is the wrong office.' I said, 'I'm not in Hamburg where I should be, where my office is. I'm not in Berlin, I'm not in Bremen, I'm here, and this is a branch. I wonder if you can do anything for me.' She says, 'I will do my best, but I can't give you any reassurance or nothing. Her expression was 'Ich bin keine Zauberin' 'I'm not a magician.' I says, 'But you never can tell. You might be able to do something for me.' I gave her the whole story and I showed her this little Siddur



with the inscription. At the end of my apprenticeship this was given to me. That's what it means. She asked 'Is this name, the man who signed it, is he the boss?' I said,

**Tape 3: 6 minutes 0 second**

'Yes, he was.' So that put a case to it. And within a few weeks I was granted full German pension, with back pay, what I didn't get before. So now, I'm on their books, will a full pension. And I also obviously get my English pension. So I'm not badly off financially. I can live with what I get. But this is all behind that. This young lady put the case in such a manner. She was so sympathetic to me. She said, 'I'm not giving you any reassurance whatsoever but I will do my best. I'm not a magician.' And it was all done over the phone to the office in Hamburg where my papers are. So I can sit back and I know my money's coming in every month. What annoys me is when I go to Europe, Spain on holiday, I've just been to Germany...I've got to buy Euros. And my Euros, they come in and I've got to sell them, and it costs me. I've got actually two pensions now.

RL: Just coming back to...

NB: Obviously the German pension is somewhat cut because I was only an apprentice. But I worked in Germany, that's the main thing. And that was the proof of it, that little Siddur. I've used it very often when I go to the cemetery or when I've...

RL: Would you like to hold it up?

NB: ...been lighting the candles and saying the Brochas. You can see where it's worn out, you know.

RL: Do you want to show the front page?

NB: It's a bit blurred there because...The stamp's quite blurred. Now this Siddur is still is being printed in Switzerland today. I saw a Galach once in Karlsruhe. He knew my sister. And he said when he saw that, 'I've got the same one, in a larger format, but it's still being printed,' he said, 'in Switzerland.' That came with the. That came as a First Prize with the Siddur. I'm very proud of this. I never expected anything. Because we had boys 2, 3, even 4 years older than me with very high education in the trade. And I beat 'em, without knowing that they're going to give a prize.

**Tape 3: 9 minutes 48 seconds**

RL: Ok, so we're going to pick up the story where we left off. You had gone through Kristallnacht, and you had started selling tobacco - the cigars...

NB: Well, we were manufacturing and selling them and I was manufacturing them while my brother was away in Dachau in the concentration camp, in order for his wife to go shopping and buy food for herself and the family, of course.

RL: How long did that go on for?

NB: Luckily not too long but quite a few weeks.

RL: And what brought it to an end?

NB: Well they released the people eventually. Some never came back because...some were elderly and possibly died of heart attacks or even starved with cold. Very hard surrounding where Dachau is in winter, and by the end of November, it came into December I think, it's winter. I can assure you.

RL: So when did they come back?

NB: I can't exactly tell you how many weeks they were. It was quite a few weeks.

RL: And what were they...What kind of condition were they in when they returned?

NB: Well you could tell that they were haggard. They were worn out and... But we were pleased to have them back, and of course none of them could carry on any work. My father couldn't travel any longer because he wasn't given permission. He needed a permit as a traveller in Germany. I possibly think that could be the case still today. I don't know. But the Germans were always like that; whatever you do you have to have a permit.

**Tape 3: 12 minutes 3 seconds**

RL: So when did you start to think about leaving the country?

NB: Oh, before we even started my college work, because it was a foregone conclusion that we can't live here any longer. We've got to get out. But in the meantime, if we can attain some knowledge of some craft, it was better to have a hand work something that you could turn into a wage... you know. Earn money with. You can always use your brains if you've got brains. But you can't always use tools if you haven't learned how.

RL: What steps did you take to try to find somewhere to go?

NB: Well in the first place most people had friends and relations somewhere abroad, mostly the United States. And we unfortunately didn't have anybody there. So consequently we never gave it a thought that just by luck, it could happen that we manage to go to the United States. We said there's no sense registering in Stuttgart. That was our place to go to. And you needed a number to be on the list. And when they called you that your number was up then. And if you didn't have some friends you could stay with you were just...you just lost it. You had to have then, someone who vouched for you and take you in, in case that you haven't got a place to go to or can't support yourself. But this went on for many, many years before. I left in 1939.. I can assure you that from 1936 to 1939 that's a long, long time once the Nazis were in power. For instance we all knew that the Nazis would not relent. This was only going to get worse from day to day and week to week. And we had to get out and we pursued then a policy of trying to get out under any circumstances or with any way you could. Even at the time we made applications, not for myself, for my brother, to go to Shanghai, which was a dead end place. But it's better to go to a dead end place and be safe. Shanghai did let people in actually, but you couldn't just walk away.

**Tape 3: 15 minutes 31 seconds**

The hardest I should say, was to get a passport in Germany. You could only get a passport if you had someone who said you could come to them. And they will look after you. On account of that, you might have got a passport. In my case, it was that I got, after dozens and dozens – I should say a few hundred applications here, there and everywhere – an application must have come through to the Home Office here in England. And they sent me a trainee permit to carry out my training. And at the end of the training I have to leave the shores to my chosen country. It's in my passport. I can't find it just now. I don't know where we've hidden it. But that was an issue from the Frankfurt Council.

RL: Did any of the rest of your family receive any...?

NB: Yes, my second sister, the second, Erma, had been given a permit to come to England as well or to the United Kingdom or to Great Britain or whatever you like to call it - as a domestic servant, which she gladly took. Even though she had a fantastic job looking after a whole typing pool – shorthand typing in a big firm, and teaching them as well. But she took this domestic position, as a domestic servant – gladly, just to get out. And we were all in the same frame of mind. Young and old alike. It's just a matter of luck and to have someone somewhere that will vouch for you. I think I mentioned previously that my own full sister had been given an invitation to go to Algiers to my auntie on account of that she had been given a passport which was unusual for someone to have that passport and nowhere to go to because they refused the visa., because they had too many refugees already in Algiers from other countries around in that area. She eventually perished in Auschwitz.

RL: What happened to the other sisters?

**Tape 3: 18 minutes 40 seconds**

NB: The eldest sister, Fanni, who was married, lost her husband. And she came back to live with my parents. I only found this out about 8 years ago through someone who knew her. And she must have gone to Auschwitz with the rest of them or to...first of all to a Camp de Gurs, in France, as mentioned beforehand, and from there, sent to Auschwitz. The...the second sister to perish, Gerda, was married, and lived in Heidelberg with her husband, by the name of Kauffman. They also finished up in Camp de Gurs and then were sent to Auschwitz later. And my full sister, who had a passport, as I said before, she finished up in Auschwitz as well.

RL: And your half brother?

NB: My half brother lived in Germany, because his wife was not Jewish. And first of all, not her family, but his school friends were looking after them for a long time. And then when things hotted up during the war they hid them. And he finished up being hidden as a diphtheria case in a hospital by one of his pals. That was in Karlsruhe itself, where he was born.

**Tape 3: 21 minutes 5 seconds**

Eventually the French came up from the south and managed to relieve all and sundry in that area and he was then saved. But prior to this he worked as a night porter. And one of the Nazis realised that my brother must be a German, because his German was too good to be a foreign worker who usually took up jobs of that nature. And when they caught wind of it they said, 'You'd better come into the hospital and we'll put you into the diphtheria department, where they won't enter.' And that's how he was saved. We had friends, all around. And I can merely reiterate that although Germany did a terrible, terrible bad thing, not all Germans are bad. It's the regime that made them bad.

RL: How did you prepare to leave Germany?

NB: How did I prepare? In the first place, we were always hoping that something of the nature of my training permit would come, so all our minds were set on getting out, or getting away. Therefore you concentrated on preparing all your personal belongings or whatever you had to be ready within earshot, which actually happened. Within a few days of me getting this trainee permit I went to get my passport in Mannheim and within a day I went to Frankfurt to get my visa, and again within a day or two I was off. Everything was prepared. Just to lock up the suitcase.

**Tape 3: 23 minutes 53 seconds**

RL: What did you put in the case?

NB: All my personal belongings. Underwear, socks, any trousers, and jackets I had; coat; whatever I wasn't wearing. And then I had a trunk prepared as well. I was fortunate. I had nothing in my case that I shouldn't have had. But in my trunk I had things hidden. My mother devised a system whereby she could hide things, although they could have been found, but nobody thought about it. In Germany in those days, possibly today, a lot of country folks will always do their own knitting. And when you make a garment, or socks which were always hand-knitted, or gloves, you always leave a little ball of wool, for mending. And in order to make a nice little ball of wool, you put a little piece of paper in – whatever, newspaper, what... My little bits of paper were banknotes. So I managed to get out a little bit of capital, from Germany rolled up in the wool – in the darning wool. And when eventually my trunk arrived, which took a long time, I had to open up all the little bits of darning wool to find out what monies I'd got. It was not a lot, but it helped me along. And that's the only thing I took out that was forbidden.

RL: Did someone have to supervise the packing of your...?

**Tape 3: 26 minutes 22 seconds**

NB: Yes. All the cases, not necessarily the hand luggage. But, it was advisable to get the hand luggage sealed as well, with proper seals by the customs and excise people. Families of course had what they called big trunk – a big wooden thing like a – you see them today on wagons – a big wooden containers where they put all the household goods in. They were sealed up. I helped some people to load these trunks up. Local people. And I helped to put things in as well, because once it was sealed, then they

wouldn't open it again. If they needed something putting away I found ways and means of slipping it in as well, for people.

RL: Can you describe the day of departure?

NB: I can. I would just like to go back to when I received my passport. I went on my own to the passport office in Mannheim... There was no need for anybody else to go with me. How old was I? 17. Or just turned 17 in November. That was in April - 17 and a half or thereabouts. And the official who signed my passport must have been a right basket because he was watching me, or they were watching me in the office all the time. And his way of trying to making me laugh at him or make me make fun of him because they wanted a reason for not giving me this passport and possibly putting me behind bars as well. He went backwards and forwards when he signed this passport either two or three places and went over his signature time and time again, very carefully with his pen. There was no need for it... He was just making out that it's not good enough.

### **Tape 3: 29 minutes 26 seconds**

And normally you would start giggling about what a ridiculous attitude as that. And they were waiting for me. And I had a heck of a job holding myself back. But I knew what it was about. Although I wasn't warned, but I realised, they are just making such gestures, that if I fall out of the normal way of things they can 'chapp' me, delay my departure, or even take my passport away altogether and say, 'Well. You can't have it.' And that's why I wanted to go back to when I got this passport. Eventually he got fed up with going over and over and over and over again with his pen. And I just was ice cold about it. It took all my energy and my willpower not to laugh at him and make a laughingstock of him. But he...he...it was quite obvious what they wanted. They wanted me to make him a laughingstock. I don't know if they done it to anybody else but this is what happened to me and I will never forget it. It was too serious a thing for me to lose that passport once it was written out. Whatever's in it. I don't know if you've ever heard of that before, but...So you know you get some chazers who have ways and means to make me lose my passport or maybe even put me back behind...

RL: And then coming on to the day of departure?

NB: Day of departure. Yes, my sister, my elder sister who lived in Mannheim. She had a flat there. My second sister already had left Germany just a week before I left. We knew the routine. So there was only my second sister. My first sister in Mannheim and then my parents came with me and my own sister, my full sister. My brother and his family were left behind at home. So we went to Mannheim. My sister took us out for a meal. And then we went to the main station, the Hauptbahnhof in Mannheim from where the train was coming up from Basel going to the Hook of Holland. I'd seen this train for years and years, day in and day out when I used to go to the college. And how often have I prayed, 'When will I get to that station to take that train?' The time came. I can't tell you. I have tears in my eyes now... To have to say goodbye. It was a goodbye, never to see them again...We were sad. We were very happy that at least one of us could get away. It was a very, very moving day.

**Tape 3: 33 minutes 50 seconds**

I don't know what my family felt like after I left them. It took a while for me to come back to reality that I'm on my way to Holland, to get a boat. And eventually I did relax on the train. I had, possibly I had sandwiches with me, I can't remember. My mother would always make me something on a journey or for going to work. It was very traumatic. I can't help having tears in my eyes over it... Literally, apart from my sister who had come away a week before, I'm the youngest and I'm the first one to be able to get out. But if it wouldn't have been for, I think, the Jewish community in Mannheim, I possibly wouldn't have had the opportunity, because the idea was by hook or by crook, our star pupil has to get out. And to this end they did everything for me they could.

**Tape 3: 35 minutes 44 seconds**

Prior to this – I haven't touched on that yet. There was an offer possibly, within under a year and a half it started being in the college, some papers came through that there's a chance for boys and girls – but we didn't have any girls in our college - to go to Australia on a Kindertransport. We had a few days to think about it. I had a word with my parents. I said. 'Look, I have no one in the world who can vouch for me. Who can take me in? I'm going to join that Kindertransport to Australia. I'm going to put my name down.' And the whole family was in agreement. They said, 'You're quite right. It doesn't matter how far, as long as we could save you. We wish it could be your sister as well.' That was done through the...Jewish authorities in Mannheim. They did their utmost to get me out. The secret to this was that I was accepted. It was all done through Berlin. Now we lived a long way off from Berlin. Phone calls were expensive. You couldn't journey. It was a day's journey to go there and find out... It's not like going to Frankfurt which was just a hundred kilometres from where I lived. That's possibly nearer 500. Anyhow, I made the application and eventually we had a paper coming in. There's a chappie coming to Frankfurt to Jewish Community such and such an office, and he's a representative of the Australian undertaking of this Kindertransport and he wants to review the applicants. And I went again on my own to Frankfurt. It was a full day's going there and going back and waiting, this that and the other, etc. As soon as he saw my papers and saw what I'm doing, he said 'Yes, we want people like you. You're on the list. Prepare all your things to emigrate.' So I sat back, papers came in that I'm accepted. 'Prepare all your things to emigrate.'

**Tape 3: 39 minutes 5 seconds**

So he asked me before about packing. All my things were prepared... Everybody in Mannheim said 'When are you going? When are you going?' I said 'I haven't heard. I haven't heard.' So eventually they phoned through to Berlin – that could have been 6 months or even after - and said, 'What's happening to the Kindertransport? We've have a chappie here who's on it.' The word came back that my name had been crossed off. Someone else had put his son's name on it, in my place. I lost my chance. Not by default. Can you imagine how I felt not being able to get out of this hellhole, when there was this chance for me? Of course Kindertransport, they only went up to age 16. So I must have been just under 16, when the application was made, and I had a place to go to...to save my skin.

RL: How was...?

NB: So therefore these did their utmost, any opportunity they had they sent me application after application to fill in. They couldn't do anything about it in Mannheim. And I was too old for a Kindertransport then. Sorry?

RL: So they sent you the application for this trainee permit?

NB: No that came direct to me from the Home Office. But they sent me the application form for the form to fill in. The training permit was only a small little...smaller than a postcard. In pink.

RL: How did the journey go?

NB: Fine. Beautiful. I befriended one or two people, talked to one or two people, who were in similar boats as I was. Waiting to get over that border... the guard; you never knew whether you could trust people at all, in Germany, unless you knew them. So we had to keep ourselves sort of below, low key. Just talk to each other a bit. And as soon as we crossed that border, the guard came and he said, 'You can relax now. I can send your telegram home.' They just changed! They weren't the same people. Because the SS had to get off before the border. The guard could go on to the Hook of Holland. They were Germans yes, but they were different people as soon as they crossed the border and were not under supervision. They gave every help they could. I can only reiterate, not all Germans were bastards. There were plenty of them, who appeared to be Nazis. I know, from my own skin.

**Tape 3: 43 minutes 43 seconds**

RL: Where did the train end?

NB: Hoek van Holland.

RL: And where did you go then?

NB: Harwich.

RL: How was the crossing?

NB: A bit rough, but we didn't mind.

RL: What were your first impressions of England?

NB: Well the first thing we knew we were free people but it doesn't leave you - you still look over your shoulder. It took years for me. That's a personal thing. Any time you saw a uniform, even a fire-fighter's uniform, any uniform, you shudder. It took years to get rid of that. Believe you me, it took literally a lifetime. Because you've not learned that a policeman is a friend. You've learned the opposite, that the policeman is your enemy. When this is so impregnated in you, then anything with a uniform on, you can't trust. As I said, the guard in the train, you couldn't trust. As soon as we were over the border, he became a mensch. But it takes...it never leaves you.

RL: Can you take me through your arrival in England, and where you went and what happened?

NB: Well I arrived in Harwich. In Harwich, there were some representatives – I don't know how many, possibly a few - from the Jewish Aid Committee from Bloomsbury House in London. And...They guided us, put us on the train to London, and we should go to such and such a place. You know, gave us instructions. And I landed up somewhere in the East End there was a hostel. And the first thing. Strange country, strange houses. Everything was strange, you know, and I was only then 18 – no, 17, 17, beg your pardon.

**Tape 3: 47 minutes 0 second**

So I was very young. And, but obviously you wore clothing to the area that you come from. You wore the type of clothing everybody wore. And I had a hat – and it was very fashionable then for young men to have a hat. A Tyrolean type - it wasn't Tyrolean but it had feathers and things like this you know - it was a fashion. And there were people immediately remarking as soon as I got to the hostel. It must have been run by pretty orthodox people, you know. I don't know because it was some strange people as far as I was concerned. I wasn't used to all this garb people wore, all this orthodoxy, because we just didn't have it. But they objected to me wearing this hat, because it wasn't a Jewish type boy's hat – you know. And I was so proud of – it was a new hat, and there were all these little feathers from when you go hunting you know and bring back. You don't have to do it yourself. You wore a little momentum from when you go out and shoot a pheasant and you know... And I couldn't understand it. I said to myself, 'Here I'm just saved out of the hands of the Nazis and my own people are objecting to what I'm wearing. What difference does it make? You know! And it took me a long time to realise the different clan of people. You see they're under the eastern Jewish influence, eastern European Jewish influence, and I was under the western influence. Everything we did was according to Frankfurt you know – which is a different way of doing things. In fact I've got books upstairs which...this is the Frankfurt Rites and this is the Polish Rites or eastern Jews rites. There was a difference even in praying! It was all strange to me. It was strange going into homes - Jewish homes where we'd been eventually allocated a room to live when I came to Liverpool. I lived in Liverpool then. And it was so strange that I couldn't stay. And I finished up with a hostel where there were boys from the Yavne School of Cologne. The girls came to Manchester and the boys came to Liverpool. The school was called the Yavne.

**Tape 3: 50 minutes 27 seconds**

RL: What was different about the home that you couldn't get used to?

NB: Well, we lived an ordinary life like everybody else did -as I said, early on. We went on the Shabbat to the shul, the synagogue to pray, and they went on a Sunday to the church to pray and otherwise we were mixing together, wearing the same type of clothes.

RL: So the home you went to in Liverpool. How did that differ?



NB: Well the furniture. The way they behaved, and there was a working class type of environment which we weren't used to. Although we were working with our hands, but we didn't class ourselves as working class. We were a middle class family. And most Jewish people were middle class or even a bit higher. People, before the Nazis, they put the Jews – most Jews - on a pedestal, you know. And we were running the towns, the little towns and the little villages. If anybody wanted something and they had no money, they came and asked a Jew, can you help us? And of course this helping business came to such a crescendo that eventually the Red Cross Society asked my mother to join the committee. The local Red Cross were under the auspices of the International Red Cross in Geneva, and she became a committee member. I was only little but I remember she always took me with her. And I was there with everybody, helping others. And I learned nothing else than to do good for other people. If it's in my power. Farmers came to our shop, said to my mother, 'You know we're short handed. We could do with someone else helping us.' Like in harvest time and so forth. Especially when they were harvesting tobacco which had to be fed on big long needles on strings, which were hung up under the...the roof and the tiles were propped up so the hot air could get in and then tied off to be ready to be made into cigars. There was so much work to be done. And my mother always said 'Why don't you ask Horstle?' They always called me Horstle. 'He'll only be too pleased to help.' But they always said, 'But I can't ask him!' He's too much...too high up. You know, they always put us on a pedestal. 'Ask him. He won't offer, but if you ask him, he'll do it.'

**Tape 3: 53 minutes 52 seconds**

And they asked my mother because having then been made a committee member of the Red Cross, any query they had, any problems, they could come and ask. And I've heard it myself. I was in the back rooms. She said 'You'll have to ask him. He won't come to you, but if you ask him, he'll help you.' And this was impregnated in me. And today, I'm jumping now. Today, for the last 5 years I've been a member of the Fed helping people. I've always helped people. Even in my business times. If I heard someone wanted something lived out of town a business shopkeeper needed something from a wholesaler in Manchester. 'I'll get it when I go into town.' I don't have to make money on that. My money came from what I sold to them. But more good you do for people, the more good they do to you. And if it's not other people it's the Almighty that gives you nachas. It's a heart that's...it's impregnated in you.

RL: So you're saying that the family you came to in Liverpool was very different?

**Tape 3: 55 minutes 40 seconds**

NB: Entirely different. The way they lived. There are so many differences. They took...there were 3 boys in their house they took in. We lived in one room, not very savoury. The kitchen wasn't very savoury. The tables were not clean. You know. We all were not used to that. I mean some of these boys possibly had maids, kitchen maids, house maids, you know in the homes, the big palaces they used to live in, in the big cities. As I said, once they were affluent, they left the little small towns or villages. They still had their business, but they made big money so they lived it up to whatever income they had. It's quite natural isn't it? And well in the small towns and

villages the sanitation wasn't the same as it is today with running water. But... And in the home itself... it's...ok. We boys we got our heads together, we just can't stand the way they lived. We were used to something a bit better, and where can we find it? The others found their own better way of doing things and I finished up going into the hostel, which was ok. It was a very orthodox hostel. I didn't mind. And...Obviously I went to work. Most of them had their schooling in the hostel, because the teachers were with them, one or two of them.

RL: I was just about to say this film is about to and end. We'll come to....next.

**Tape 3: 58 minutes 29 seconds**

**End of Tape Three**

**TAPE 4**

RL: This is the interview with Norbert Barrett and it's Tape Four.

RL: So you went into this hostel. Can you tell me a bit about it? How big it was, and...?

NB: The hostel was in Liverpool in Leonard Lane. Just outside Sefton Park. And it was the boys' part of the Yavne School of Cologne. And the girls' part came to Manchester. They had a hostel at the corner of Waterloo Road and Cheetham Hill Road. And In Liverpool were the boys. But there I met the head of the school who just happened to have brought in another lot of youngsters. That was his job. He did not rest to bringing people out either to Manchester or to Liverpool to these houses to form new schools. His name is – or was – Dr Klebansky. I never heard of the man before, and I didn't know him but I met him there and I got to know him. But he went back to Cologne again to bring more youngsters out. And he did that once or twice still but eventually he was caught up, the war broke out, and he never managed to get out. He could have stayed in England, but he said no, his job is to get the youngsters out as much as he can. And he finished up where everybody else finished up, in the camps.

**Tape 4: 2 minutes 14 seconds**

RL: How big was the Liverpool hostel?

NB: There were over 40 boys there. It was quite big.

RL: And what kind of ages?

NB: Most of them were younger than I am. One or two had started work. I remember one boy getting up very early about 4 o'clock. He had started working with a baker. He became a baker. One or two boys became very prominent in England. There was a boy called Weinberg. He became a prominent man and wealthy. There was another boy... I forget now his name. They were very prominent people, influencing the government and all sorts. It was a high education they had there. People like myself - I don't think there was anyone else, as an outsider. It just suited me to join a group of

people whom I could converse with. 'Cause my English wasn't so brilliant that I could freely converse. Also, mannerism and customs were more equal to my way of life. Although city people are different from people from a smaller town – a smaller area - but that didn't matter. I had already contact with a lot of city people through my work at the college in Mannheim-Neckarau. And of course I had contact with Heidelberg people; a couple from Speyer which used to be a very, very prominent Jewish area in the olden days. Not in my days. Had a tremendous big bath there, for the ladies, which is open to the public today. It's fantastic. I don't know if you know Speyer or heard of it? If anybody said the name Spiro, they possibly come from Speyer. You've heard of the name Speyer haven't you?

**Tape 4: 5 minutes 28 seconds**

RL: Yeah.

NB: They possibly come from Speyer.

RL: Back to the hostel. You say you went to work from there.

NB: Oh yes, I had my job. The people who vouched for me could take me on. But it was a cabinet maker's factory. What did I know about cabinet making? Oh it's all nuts and bolts for me, you see?

RL: So what kind of factory was this? Who were the people?

**Tape 4: 6 minutes 0 second**

NB: My principal boss, with his two sons, was running the company. His name first name was Reuben and his surname was Zeffert with a Z. He was... I think he was a Russian Jew, actually. But he started this, I don't know how long or when... They were very affluent, these people. I would have loved to live with them. They were my cup of tea. Having said that, he was the president at that time of the Chidwall shul in Liverpool, as well, which was not very old then – the Childwall shul. And I was invited to share the Shabbat with them, and every Shabbat I went up to their home in Five Ways and had a lovely time with them because, first of all they had a girl with them. She came from Czechoslovakia - Jewish girl. Classified as a refugee as well, but of course she was of Czech nationality. But they had two sons I mentioned before, who worked with their father. But the family came together and made a Shabbat in their home. One son who lived very close by and he had two children. He had a baby, and one toddler. And the other son had I also think, two children but they were a little bit older, not much. And I had a roaring time with them. I enjoyed myself, especially as the girl who came from Czechoslovakia spoke German and she could speak to me if I didn't understand anything. Excuse me... you can't stop it can you? It's my mobile. It's all right. It's possibly the Fed.

**Tape 4: 9 minutes 5 seconds**

RL: This is the interview with Norbert Barrett and it's the continuation of Tape Four. So you were telling me about the family and your boss, and how at home you were with them. What was the work actually that you had to do in the firm?

NB: When they found out that I'm actually an engineer they let me mess about with the machinery a bit. But in the first place they said, 'We'll put you together with our veneerer.' The veneering was done mainly by hand. They did some veneering by machine but it never comes out the same as when you hand veneer. The job, it's a marvellous job, if you know what you're doing. The veneerer was – well everybody was English, but the veneerer had a father who came from Scandinavia. So he had a little bit of an alliance with me because he wasn't quite English although he was born in England. We had a good time together - he taught me a lot of English. I had a little red book, - a hand book - a little phrase book. He always managed to show me what to say and how to say it, and...This is how I basically learned English. But what I mainly learned was hand veneering. And this came to good stead for me earning a bit of real money.

**Tape 4: 11 minutes 25 seconds**

Because in Liverpool we had a number of very small Jewish cabinet makers who couldn't employ a veneerer because you need to be larger than just employing one man full time. But they wanted one or two, or sometimes three or four panels, of a wardrobe, or sometimes bed panels, to be veneered. To explain: Veneer is a film of high quality wood being put over some plywood or something, even cardboard if you like, you know, to make it look the Real McCoy. And it is a specialist job. And on a Sunday morning one of my friends who came from nearby where I lived, he also learned joinery in the same college where I learned engineering. He came to live in Liverpool roughly about the same time as me. And he said, 'My boss could do with someone doing some panels,' and if I am willing to help him out? I said I would only be too pleased, because it would earn me some extra money. And I earned quite a bit of money through that apart from the money I earned from my boss.

**Tape 4: 13 minutes 18 seconds**

RL: What did you get paid from your boss?

NB: I can't just remember, but I had enough to live on, to pay the hostel, my dues, and treat the other boys to sweets and chocolates and things at the tuck shop nearby, at weekends. On the other hand, one kind gentleman had...he was the owner of the cinema. He sent us a ticket to the hostel – a permanent complement ticket...I think it was up to 10 people who could go into the.....if there was room, and sit where you like. By the time all the boys had seen the cinema and of course I had no time to go but there was one, possibly two ladies I took with me when I got the tickets. And they came in free of charge as well. It was a Jewish firm from Breslau who then lived in Berlin later on. And later after the war after my demob, I got to know them again. That's a different story all together. But one of the daughters of that family was my future wife's best friend. I could tell you the story now, how I got to know them if you'd like to listen, but his is jumping a little bit.

**Tape 4: 15 minutes 20 seconds**

RL: Go on then. We'll go back afterwards.

NB: When I got demobbed, I came to Manchester. And I've missed out why I came to Manchester but we'll come back to that. And I again couldn't find anything that suited me to live. Someone said, there's room at the hostel in...off Cheetham Hill Road, Smedley Lane. And the house belongs to Laski's. Mr Laski was an MP... Neville Laski, prominent MP. And his sister still lives in the house. He of course comes there occasionally, but he lives in London. But there's boys there who came out of the camp. And it's run by refugees, like yourself. Females, of course, and there was one male member there. His wife was the matron. He himself didn't bother with the hostel. He was a traveller himself. It turned out to be that he was my instructor when I'd joined the army. So when I came to the hostel they allocated me a room. There were three boys in the room already. And as I knocked at the door, this tall boy opened the door and he said, 'Hello, can I help you?' I said, 'Yes I've been allocated to come into this room.' And I looked up and I says, 'I know you.' I says, 'You're so and so from Mannheim.' He was one of the second intakes in the college where I taught in Mannheim-Neckarau already. He said, 'Don't worry. It's a bit cramped here just now but there will be room soon because I'm going out; I'm getting married next week.' I said, 'Anybody I know?' He says, 'You won't know her. She didn't live here. She came from Liverpool.' I said, 'Well what's her name?' Ellen Felplung (?). Blooming Heck! I says 'I used to take em out. I used to go to the parents house! I used to go out with a sister called Ilse and Ellen. Ilse got married to the baker called Jacob. Herbert Jacob, if you've heard of him. He used to have a few shops around here. He said, 'Good Lord. It is a small world isn't it?' He says, 'I'll tell the parents when I go back tonight.' So he told them, says, 'You'll have to ask him to come to the wedding!' I said OK. His name was Hirschhorn who became later a professor in America. Anyhow, after the ceremony, he said, 'You got to come back to the house.' Obviously they had this celebration in the house. The he put me to one side and he said, 'You see that young lady in the corner? She's lost her mother and she's on her own now. Will you look after her?' And I looked after her, and you know what? I'm still looking after her!

#### **Tape 4: 20 minutes 4 seconds**

RL: Coming back, yes. How did we get onto that?

NB: I'd taken them out to the cinema with complimentary tickets. These two ladies. Because when I had time I could take them out. It didn't say 'Only boys from the hostel'. It was a complimentary ticket. And I had it in my pocket and I could take a gang with me if I wanted to.

RL: Were you in touch with your parents still at this point?

NB: In Liverpool, yes. Oh, yes. When war broke out we were still in touch but only via the Red Cross. And I even wrote to Camp de Gurs in the Pyrenees because I knew they'd been taken there. We knew everything that was going on in fact so much so that I got a load of the boys together and said, 'Would you be willing, if they allow us, to go to France with a boat down into the Pyrenees and with wagons and get them out?' And we could have done so but they wouldn't allow the wagons into France and they said it's impossible, we can't do that. We would have been quite willing, a gang of us, because I was among, at the time in the Pioneer Corps, among all my own friends, refugees.

RL: When did you join the Pioneer Corps?

NB: That's another story. We're going back to Liverpool first.

RL: We are in Liverpool. So at the moment we'll take the Liverpool story through. So at the moment you're at the hostel and you're working with the cabinet maker.

**Tape 4: 22 minutes 11 seconds**

NB: Now then. Everything went fine. Everything was ok. I was happy with the family. I was happy with what I was doing. Not really because it wasn't my real job, but I was working, I was earning my own money. I was earning my own keep. But the war had started. And all the boys including myself, we weren't sad at all. In fact we were jumping for joy, we were joyful. This is the start of the end. However long it's going to take, at least something is moving. We didn't know how bad it's going to be, or what's going to happen. But we knew now there's movement there. A bit of paper...Chamberlain is no blooming use to us. You know when he was stood on the platform of the bloomin plane, I don't know if you remember that – Chamberlain who came to Munich – bit of paper 'Peace in our time.' That's no bloody use to us. At least we are at war. Them against us. And we were all jumping for - not pleasure, but for knowing that something's got to give. And the war started. Everything was in clover as well. We had a very hard winter, that winter. Didn't matter to us, we were used to hard winters. I was sailing through like anything through the snow. They were up in arms in Liverpool. Never seen anything like it! Us boys, we took it in our stride. You know – it was no problem. And anyhow, the war started in earnest. We got – had the forces going over to France. And everybody else joined in with it, you know. And of course then Dunkirk. They had to evacuate, right. But after the evacuation of Dunkirk, they saved most of the army that was there. What happened to the government? They were teetering. They collapsed. They didn't know what to do. 'We've got German nationals living on the coast line. They'll be flashing to the U-boats, you know, this type of thing. We'll have to get them away from the coast. Any Germans had to leave the coast, 25 miles at least, inland. That was the order of the day. And this is after we have all been to the Tribunal, not once, but twice. First we got restrictions lifted up to a point, and then more restrictions lifted. And then Dunkirk came, and we all had to scarper! And I came to Manchester. The whole hostel was sent to Manchester. So I went with them, although I wasn't a member of the school. I was simply a lodger. So we came together. And we stayed in the Jewish Working Men's Club. Put up some temporary beds in a big hall they had – was it Empire Street – near the prison.

**Tape 4: 26 minutes 32 seconds**

RL: Was it Derby Street?

NB: Could be Derby Street. Yes, Derby Street - down near the prison because air raids started to sound. They said, 'If you go over to the prison they've got an air raid shelter there.' So we used to run across to the prison from there. It was just around the corner. So we found ourselves in prison overnight! And within a week they said, 'We found a place for you all. You can go to Castleton Fold Farm where there's already

boys and girls working on the farm. They're working on Hachshara and you can join them. You don't have to stay here.' It was only a temporary thing in the Working Men's Club in Derby Street. And we went over. I went with them.. And after 2 or 3 days, I can't remember, under a week, the police came. And they had a list full of names, anybody over 18. Half the boys were interned. And we were sent to an old mill in Bury somewhere. And again it was rough, very rough. There was a court case after the war about it.

**Tape 4: 28 minutes 15 seconds**

RL: Can you describe what it was like?

NB: Well first of all we were all sleeping on the floor. We were given straw mattresses, you know, what do you call them – I keep forgetting the names of things... just a bit of straw in a case, you know. And there was toilets. Maybe a couple of toilets for I don't know – maybe a hundred people there - I don't know how many they rounded up. Washing facilities were literally nil. It was bad. And of course dirty as well, it was an old mill. They just had to put us somewhere. And ...so we objected to it badly. But within a few days they moved us out and sent us over to Huyton where they had built, next to an army camp, they put a barbed wire across and wired it up and made it into an internment camp. And then after another week or so we had a tremendous downpour of rain. We were under water and all sorts, you know, living under canvas, the youngsters. The older ones were in the houses. There were new houses literally not finished yet, you know. One of the team of the piano players was there. The Rawicz and Landauer. One of them was Polish and one of them was Austrian so one of them was interned. He was playing all day long on his piano. Do you know anything about Rawicz and Landauer? They were a team. They had pianos back to back. And played without seeing each other. Of course the piano was hiding them. And they were in tune with everything they did. It was quite a known team on the radio. Television wasn't there yet. They were well known. I think it was Landauer who was the Austrian boy. And he was entertaining us. And we had other entertainers. Ray Martin. He was there as well. He became well known. He was only just fiddling about - messing about with a guitar, you know. So anyhow, within another week they came around and said, 'Look, we've got transport going to Canada, and another going to Australia.' Now put your names down wherever you want to go to. Who comes first can go to Canada. And if you don't, then we send you to Australia. And I said 'I'll go to Australia. I've been wanting to go to Australia for a long time!' And by hook or by crook I'll get there.

**Tape 4: 32 minutes 7 seconds**

And sure enough the Canada lot went first on the Arandora Star. Our lot went second on the Dunera – A boat called the Dunera. That's why I'm called the Dunera Boy. That was another horrendous journey. The Canada Transport was torpedoed and sunk. I think everybody was lost on that. The Australian boat had a couple of escapes. There was a U-boat following us at one stage, firing, but it didn't hit us. And then the captain and his crew, they were wary of this U-boat. And so the U-boat had been shooting another torpedo. And he had managed to turn the boat away from the torpedo and it sort of glanced up a bit. And the torpedo exploded and all the lights went out on the boat and it shook us up a bit. But it didn't rip us or anything, to

pieces. We were lucky. But in the meantime, the guards who were on the boat or our boat anyhow, had made a fuss of a number of prisoners of war. At the front of the boat with a small department there with German prisoners of war. The reason they made a fuss of them, they were German enlisted men, these men were enlisted men on a par with each other. And we were the bloody Jews whose fault it was there was a war on! So once again we got it in the neck from them! We didn't have proper bunks, we only had hammocks to sleep in. We didn't have our luggage which we'd brought with us. It had to be piled up in the corner. And before we could get the luggage back, the guards went through it bit by bit. Papers, books...whatever. Clothing. You name it. But as we were brought up in Germany, everything you had, had to have a name in, had to have a name stitched in. So papers were mostly in German, because you just managed to get out of Germany not so long since. Clothing. A lot of clothing had German names on, and the U-boat managed to pick up some of the debris that was thrown overboard, you know, and had a look at it, and they didn't know what to do. Because... 'Why the heck?' All this stuff, flotsam and that, came out. 'There's something wrong there. Why are there German names?' And they wired to their headquarters I don't know, wherever it might have been, Bremen or Hamburg. I don't know. And a wire came back: 'Do not sink this boat...there's German nationals on that boat. Follow it through. Wait for it to come out of its harbour after it's unloaded its cargo', which was human cargo, 'and when it comes out, sink it, if you can.' So the Germans saved us again. They made sure that nothing else was happening to the boat because there was German nationals on the boat. They assumed that. There were. There were, but the main German nationals of course, were the Jews. So we landed in Australia.

**Tape 4: 36 minutes 56 seconds**

NB: How long was the journey?

RL: About 6 weeks. We stayed for a day here and a day there. Sierra Leone. And we were out by Cape Town. We saw the Table Mountain. We all crammed out to see it, but nevertheless, it was a horrendous journey because we were treated worse than dogs by them.

RL: Can you give some examples?

NB: Well, They were going through all our stuff first of all, and knocking us about as well a bit. And the food wasn't anything to write home about. This took quite a while, you know? In point of fact, so much so that there was a big court case going on after the war about it; a very big court case. Apologies left right and centre, from the government, from the this, that and the other. They didn't know what to do. But it was the guards who were at fault because they looked on the Germans first of all as equals to them. The English – Tommy was a conscript. And the fault that they had to be conscripted? The bloody Jews! That lot ! Them! You know? So eventually it quietened all down. We had some very good people on the cases. In fact some of our own became barristers and judges.

**Tape 4: 39 minutes 20 seconds**

RL: How many people were on the ship?



NB: Well not to miss exactly the number. Or rather I have to miss the exact numbers because I haven't got the figure just here. It's somewhere in my archives. The boat was built for roughly about 1,400 or 1,500 troops. It was called HMT Dunera – His Majesty's Troop Ship, when the King was on it, and there were 2,600 crammed up. Not everybody had a hammock. You were lucky to have one. Some had to sleep on the floor. Can you imagine?

RL: Did you have a hammock?

NB: Yes.

RL: Did you manage to get your possessions back?

NB: Up to a point. But...I mean you only took a suitcase with you to see you over for a short while.

RL: Had they gone through your case?

NB: Everybody's case.

RL: And were there things missing?

NB: Oh yes.

RL: What was missing from your case?

NB: It was jetsam to them, and they picked up the flotsam. Jetsam and flotsam!

RL: What was missing from your case?

NB: I know from my case I had two pillows in that weren't even mine. They were my friend's pillows. He always had to have two pillows. He was a real mummy's baby, you know. He had to sleep on two soft pillows and he had no room in his own case. I put them in my case, cause we were together you know? These we couldn't find any more. I can't remember what was missing. I think it was maybe some underwear. Maybe some footwear or another pair of trousers, a jacket. Whatever, you know. You take what you think for a few weeks, you know?

RL: How many went from the hostel on to The Dunera with you?

NB: Well not too many because they only took the boys over 18.

**Tape 4: 41 minutes 47 seconds**

RL: How many was that?

NB: When Dunkirk happened, I was 18 then, I think. I was 17 in Liverpool and then 18 in the November. And of course that was in the middle of the next year so I was only just 18, 18 and a half. I was one of the older group. There might have been one

or maybe two. But...One ginger boy came along with us. Some of the boys I'd just got to know, they didn't live in the hostel, but from this particular lot I don't, there weren't very many. Maybe 2 or 3. I don't know.

RL: And from Huyton where you were taken. How many from there?

NB: Well, Huyton was the camp.

RL: Yes. How many were taken from that particular camp?

NB: Well, a whole load full. They were all in Huyton. I think we were all in Huyton. There might have been some coming from somewhere else, from London or somewhere from another internment camp. But it was horrendous. I fell ill actually. I remember when we got to Sierra Leone. And we hadn't seen for a while, for quite a long while, any land. And I wanted to see it. I was flat on my back. I had a tremendous... I don't know, I felt very weak. I had flu and all sorts. And the boys lifted me up to the porthole so I could look through the porthole to see a bit of land.

#### **Tape 4: 43 minutes 51 seconds**

They were good to me the boys, eh? And then we... I was all right again down in Cape Town. See the Table Mountain. We landed in Sydney Harbour. And from there they took us to a place called Hay. Inland. It's the last stop on the New South Wales railway. Right inland. And it was a little oasis there. A little small town with a sort of park in the middle, you know? But soon, first of all we only had one camp. The second camp was only halfway up. So we had to wait a while before the second camp was finished. Alas we were the second lot to get into the camp, so we weren't allocated a hut because they were all out of huts! Obviously, we had to wait till the other camp was finished. These boys – you saw the picture I showed you from...yeah, got a photo there was taken in the army with some boys... There are three brothers there. One lot of twins and then another brother. They came to the second camp when it was finished. And we were allocated the same hut. That's why we were so friendly. They came from East Prussia. Don't know if you know East Prussia was on its own. The Danzig came right up and divided Prussia from East Prussia. It's like the Gaza strip, it's on its own. It was on its own then, you know. And they were very good boys. Very, very good. They actually came from a farming family. Farmers. And they did farming here. But another one, we had a doctor with us in the camp. I mean in our hut actually. And another one was – he was a brother of this doctor's best friend who wasn't with us. But his brother was with us. And...I later learned that this doctor had a friend also and the people I used to deal with my bridge cards in getting all sorts of books and things about bridge. They had a business supplying these materials. All types. It's a big business today... They were related to them. Cause they had the same name. It's a small world isn't it?

RL: It is. What were conditions like there?

#### **Tape 4: 48 minutes 3 seconds**

NB: Well at first. Well it was all right, it was warm. There was plenty of good food. We of course had to have our own cooks – our own men cooked. Kitchen staff – we

provided the kitchen staff. There was a place which was allocated as a shop. There was nothing in it, but it was run by some of our boys. Especially two boys they were working in a bank and they were running the shop. You could buy all sorts of whatever it was. We even had our own money printed, with our internment number on it. We all had one note with our number on it. We kept that note.

RL: Have you still got it?

NB: It's somewhere in the archive. I don't know where. I've got so many things that...but I kept that note. I did it on purpose as a memento. And...then the workers in the camp were paid for by the authorities. It was only a sort of... token amount, but we earned a bit of money and we could purchase things that you couldn't get normally, you know even if it was only toothpaste. This type of stuff, you know. Soap they would provide, but if you wanted a decent soap, you had to buy it. All sorts of little things that was necessary for your daily living. And you had tobaccos. Your smokes. If you needed any sunglasses, which was necessary to buy, you had to have a bit of geld!

RL: What work did you do in the camp?

NB: I was always in the kitchen. We had no electric potato peelers so I did a lot of potato peeling. I became an expert at potato peeling. Some people just did the drains, some just the washing up. I did some washing up. The main thing was that you earned a bit of money. It didn't matter what sort of work you did. But...Sooner or later they got to know what type of people we were. I'll come to another funny story in a bit. And they were very amicable, the Aussies. Very friendly. So much so we had working parties going out. And the guards who were with us, there were always two guards, sometimes only one, but usually two. What they did do, they did their own thing and they said to one or two boys, 'you boys look after the rifle here.' And gave them the rifle and they would go to see Anne-Marie around the corner. That was a lot of fun. Once they knew who you were, you know. We weren't any danger. We were on their side, you know.

#### **Tape 4: 51 minutes 35 seconds**

RL: What happened to the German prisoners of war?

NB: Well they had camps. Special camps. And then first of all we were working outside for them also. We were also moved about a bit. At one stage we were building internment camps for prisoners of war. We were thinking it was Japanese prisoners, you know. We were building, putting the posts in and the barbed wire. Not for us but for those to come. Again once we were settled, the guards wouldn't look after...wouldn't take the gun with them when they went to see Ann-Marie or whatever. They said, 'Look after my gun!' It was a laugh!

RL: What did you do for entertainment?

NB: Well we had plenty of entertainers among our lot. First and foremost, I was going to touch on that. First and foremost we had not only graduates from the different universities, especially Oxford and Cambridge; we also had a lot of undergraduates,

people who were studying. People whose parents who could afford to send their boys to the universities, which wasn't an easy thing, you know. There were a lot of graduates. And these graduates taught me bridge, believe you me. And I play upside down bridge, you see, because I learned down under. When they sometimes say, 'What system do you play?' I say, 'Upside down.' 'What's that?' I say, 'Well, I learned down under!' But the funny part. There was a lot of funny occasions. I was going to tell you something, if forgot now my train. It'll come to me again.

RL: I had asked you about entertainment.

**Tape 4: 54 minutes 13 seconds**

NB: Well yes we had boys who could really entertain us in all sorts of ways; singing and music and this that and the other. And people thought of all sorts of things. Like one chappie who was a teacher. He got himself a log of wood. We had always plenty of wood to fire in the kitchens - the ovens. It came in in wagon loads and we always had loads of wood there. And he found himself a nice piece of wood and he started hammering away. Made himself a beautiful violin! Beautiful violin! And he played! Beautiful. Hacking it out week after week, making it. Thinner and thinner at the top and then shaping it. Now the funny thing there I was going to say, among the Austrians, the old people especially. I mean I was one of the youngest you know I was just 18; of course I had 19<sup>th</sup> birthday there and all that. But there were some people in their 40's and 50's even. Especially among the Austrians, everybody that went to college got a doctorate there. He was called 'Doctor This' 'Doctor That'.

**Tape 4: 56 minutes 0 second**

You know, not a medical doctor. Whatever, if you were an accountant you had a doctorate, if you were a bookkeeper otherwise, you still had a doctorate. You got a doctorate for anything. Once you got your degree that was your doctorate. I don't know if you're aware of that. And of course there were so many doctors. And it is politeness on the Continent to address you by your proper name, and by your acknowledged level of knowledge if you passed your exams then you're entitled to be called a doctor, or Frau Doktor or Fräulein Doktor if you're not married, you know. And of course there were so many doctors that it became a farce. Because, every second person - at least every second person - if not 2 out of 3 had a doctorate. And if they didn't have a doctorate they were studying for a doctorate. So the thing was when you saw someone in the morning you say, 'Guten Morgen Herr Doktor'. You had to acknowledge that they were a higher being. So everybody became a doctor! And I became a Dunera Doctor! Guten Abend, Herr Doktor, Guten Morgen, Herr Doktor! Wie geht es Dir, Herr Doktor? And so forth, you see? And that was one of the funny parts, you see? And funnily enough, one of my bridge players who is a medical doctor here - prominent medical doctor, retired - he calls me 'The Professor' because of the way I handle bridge and tell him about bridge. And I told him how funny that is because I used to be called 'Herr Doktor'. You see they didn't want to miss out saying just good morning to someone. And if he was a real doctor he would be insulted not being called 'Herr Doktor' you know. That was the thing that with us continentals that once you reach something then it's like, in England you wouldn't take much notice of it. My wife doesn't take much notice if my name appears in the paper or if I get a mention with names in. But I live... More to the south you go, what

you've earned, you keep. If I've earned something. It's like with these things. They called me... The boys called me Diplom Sckosser. You know, you become a Schlosser – that's an engineer. Because I got a diploma from them so I became a Diplom Schlosser. It's like a doctorate, you see? They always call me the Diplom Schlosser, you know.

RL: Ok, so this tape is finishing.

**Tape 4: 59 minutes 23 seconds**

**End of Tape Four**

**TAPE 5**

RL: This is the interview with Norbert Barrett and it's Tape Five.

RL: You were just remembering some of the boys – was it from Liverpool?

NB: Yeah.

RL: Did very well later on. What was the name of one of them?

NB: Yeah. Well, this is my problem. I have literally forgotten the names of them. One I remember was Weinberg...he was a very prominent man later in life.....there were at least two more very prominent people.

RL: You mentioned someone called Schneiderman?

NB: There was a boy called Schneiderman but he wasn't very prominent. He just – he did well in business, but...

RL: Did they come with you to Australia?

NB: No, he didn't come to Australia. I think he was a bit young and he wasn't interned. If I could just give you a bit of a comparison. We all know about Robert Maxwell, how well he did. That he became a bit of a rogue afterwards, was different. But we had people who were in such a position, later on in life, who did very well for themselves. Perhaps they didn't join the army like Robert Maxwell did. But I'm merely trying to give a comparison of the type of thing that people achieved in life. A prominent position which literally the whole country knew about, you know? It's very difficult after so many years... You know your brain starts freezing up a bit.

RL: We're going to go back to Australia. We were in Australia a minute ago.

NB: Yes.

RL: Did you stay in Hay?

**Tape 5: 2 minutes 12 seconds**

NB: Hay? Hay was different, no.

RL: Where did you go from...?

NB: Well, we had...I just have to think about it. We went to another place after Hay. Of course first of all... Let me put it another way to you. We were there for quite a while but, after complaining and after the government realising they made a terrible, terrible mistake, with what they did to us; they sent a man out. A military man by the name of Leighton. He was a Captain Leighton, to sort us out. And the main aim was to make good what they'd done wrong, and invite us to join up and help in the war effort by joining the army. The stipulation was that we could only join the Pioneer Corps, the reason being that the Australians wouldn't set us free in Australia. Their own government was in, that is to say after most of us had left Australia eventually, the government changed and let people come in and join the Australian Army. I would have gladly done so. Maybe not everybody, but I would have gladly joined up with the Australian army rather than going back to England. Anyhow this Captain Leighton came in, his orders out and tried to get us to enlist. But the first thing he noticed when he came in... His own nephew was in with us! He was locked up with us in the camp- his own nephew who'd come from Germany! This is what a farce the whole thing was, you know. Anyhow, he did very well. He got most of the young boys to enlist. Not only to get out of the camp. I mean there was nothing wrong with being in the camp because we had the Life of Riley there.

**Tape 5: 5 minutes 02 seconds**

Those boys like myself who had very little capital; we earned a little bit of money to have the extras. Food was given free. Sleeping accommodation was free. We had a sport field; we had every sort of sports equipment. The Jewish population of Australia was helping us, sending parcels in. So – what did we want to come out for, you know? But we also had a conscience. It is our war at the end of the day that, we can't let someone else do the fighting for us altogether. And most of the boys, the younger especially, enlisted to go to the Pioneer Corps. But for starters, how do we get back? We can't get into the Australian army. We've got no transport going except for the odd boat with a few berths. So the first thing they did, they divided us up. They split the camp up. Those who joined went into another camp. So the crowd together who signed up that they wanted to join the army, to denote that we were joining the army. The others were left behind. And...so bit by bit, they found three berths here, half a dozen berths somewhere else. In my case we had 30-40 berths on a boat. That was one of the Stirling Routes. My boat was called the Stirling Castle – I came back with. There were a number of boats with the name Stirling on it, and... The Stirling Line they called it. And...so bit by bit we came back.

RL: When was it that you joined the Pioneer Corps? What date? What year?

**Tape 5: 7 minutes 28 seconds**

NB: Again I couldn't tell you exactly. If I had my army book but I just couldn't find it. But I'll tell you. In 1939 to '40 I was in Liverpool. Then nearly a year and a half in Australia – '40 to '41. So we joined up at the end of '41. And... I came back. We came back just before New Year's Day, I think it was '42. No, '42, no '41. Because I

was 5 years in the army and got demobbed at the end of 46. Now go back 5 years, that's... End of '40- yes, because when we were at Ilfracombe where we had our training, because we didn't celebrate Christmas but we were there at New Year. And I was just 5 years in the army.

RL: So can you take me through your army service?

NB: Yeah. First and foremost we could only join the Pioneer corps and there were already companies in the country with only refugees or similar cases. I remember we had one Italian boy who had escaped or run out of the country as well. We had a few Polish boys as well, which had nothing to do...they wouldn't have been interned, because they didn't have any nationality. So, and we had one or two Czechs as well. But again they wouldn't have been interned. It was just us and the Germans. And then we had at least two Hungarians. Again they wouldn't have been interned. But they had joined up, so all together we weren't kept in one crowd which would have been very nice because we knew each other from a long time ago. Except those other nationalities that came in later. But it wasn't to be. We were allocated different companies all over the country. In England, in Wales and in Scotland. And so first of all we were sent for training to Ilfracombe where this husband of the matron of the hostel I was at, he was Instructor Sergeant or Corporal – I think he was only a Corporal, that's right...

**Tape 5: 11 minutes 0 second**

RL: What was his name?

NB: He came from Frankfurt...and...Oh my wife would remember what name they were. Mrs So and So was the... I just can't remember the name but it will come to me as well... I just can't remember what we called him. Anyhow, they split us up, half a dozen here, half a dozen there and so forth, and... I got allocated to a Scottish company near Glasgow. I'm just not quite clear how it went. I was in the 246 company or the 249 company. Yeah I think I went to the 246 company first and then the 249 company - again then they split up. At Glasgow and then part of the company went to Edinburgh, near Edinburgh. We were working as Pioneers building and making, concrete mixing. All sort of things that is necessary for the type of work the army needs. It was...I'm not quite sure whether I was in Glasgow or Edinburgh when... yes I was in Glasgow when word came through, 'Have you any specialists among you?'

**Tape 5: 13 minutes 27 seconds**

First of all they want to know does anybody know how to ski: 'We need some ski instructors.' Because the war was going on. Germans were in Norway and the areas in Austria and Bavaria and all that full with snow in winter, they needed people who could ski and infiltrate possibly. So they found a few and they sent them over to Norway to teach the English boys. Not our boys, the English boys, to ski. But they needed our boys to teach them because they were used to skiing in winter. And they had a good time in Norway and they came back again, only to see us actually, they didn't stay with us anymore. And they went back again and that was one thing. And then they came, 'Does anybody else have any speciality or experiences?' And I put

my name down as, 'I'm a fitter. I'm an engineer fitter.' And they sent me down to a place called Donnington – that's in Shropshire near Wellington, not far from Shrewsbury. The reason why I was sent there, Donnington became the Woolwich arsenal. Woolwich arsenal was the real arsenal for armaments, but it was bombed out by the Germans and they moved it to Donnington. And they said, 'We'll send you there. You'll have to make a trade test.' But wherever soldiers go to they always have to take their whole peckel with them. You know. Whatever they possess, so that you don't have to go back and pick it up again, you see? And as soon as I passed my trade test they said, 'You're staying here. We're not letting you go now.' So I passed my – they start with a 3<sup>rd</sup> class trade test. So I was in, in engineering, with armaments.

#### **Tape 5: 16 minutes 20 seconds**

We did all sorts of field guns, from the smallest to literally the biggest. I worked on from the smallest to the medium sized. Biggest was another department again, but I could have worked on them as well. You can't do everything. The same as I didn't do any Bofors guns. Bofors were anti-aircraft guns. Again I could have worked on them, but it never came my way. Once you know one type of mechanism, you can transfer your knowledge to the types as well. It's like a hunt gun. Literally all types are the same, just differently made a bit. And then I applied to make my second class trade test because it means more money. Tradesmen got more money. And I passed my 2<sup>nd</sup> class trade test, and then one day, not far away from passing my matriculate I found a notice on the notice board - 'We are running short of armaments artificers', which is a 5-year course in peacetime. And we arrived at the conclusion that we can... that people with knowledge of the job. This was meant for the workers in the workshops, you know – can apply to become a Leading Artisan which is the same course as Armaments Certificer's Course but we can't call you Armaments Certificers but we will call you Leading Artisan if you pass. And it only lasts 6 months. So from 5 years they brought the course down to 6 months, but they're only using people who've already got the knowledge and can actually provide the knowledge and give it to others as well. I applied. In the meantime I took a leave. We only got leave every 3 months, and my sister lived – my half-sister Erna lived in Oldham. Hollingwood actually, near Oldham. She moved into Oldham later on. And she worked in a rewinding mill run by Austrians. They were there a long time, you know. They owned the mill. Artificial silks they were rewinding from one bobbin to other bobbins. It's a process, you know. But she couldn't work in the office like her old job yet because they wouldn't allow it till later on. A year or two after you know.

#### **Tape 5: 19 minutes 44 seconds**

Or three years after, I don't know. She worked very hard. She worked on shifts as well doing this rewinding business because I used to see her on my leaves. So while one day I was on holiday, I wasn't at home with her. I happened to be in Manchester. I don't know did I go to the Ritz or to the Palace or to...you always went dancing, you know. A past time. And the police came, 'Do you have such and such a person here?' 'Oh yes, what's the matter?' 'Oh got to go back. He's been sent on a course. She said, 'He won't be here today. Might be here tomorrow.' So sure enough I came during the night or middle of the night. Police wants you – you've got to go back to your unit.' So I went back, he says, 'You're already a day late. You've got to go over to Croydon to start this course. So I went over to Croydon and again I passed that no



problem and I was promoted immediately to Staff Sergeant! It's 3 stripes and a crown. You become a warrant officer immediately. And I said, 'What's happening now?' 'Oh, well you're not going back to your unit. We're sending you on embarkation leave.'

**21 minutes 29 seconds**

Now whilst I was on the course, the war in Europe had just finished but the war in Japan was still on. So most of my mates and friends were trying to get to Malta or somewhere like that but of course it was out of our hands where they sent us to. They'd most likely send us to Japan or somewhere like that. Where do you think I finished up? Egypt! The war had finished but there was a lot of work to be done. They'd taken away most of the senior staff and of course the new ones had to take over, because the war had finished. They needed them more in the Far East, but we were the newcomers – we had taken over. So luckily I came out of the war zone. So this is how I managed to get into Palestine backwards and forwards – during my stay in Egypt. Met some of my old school pals, because we had one company with REME in Tel el Kebir where I was stationed. And half of them were my school pals from the college in Mannheim. And I got to know a lot of other boys, you know. Like this boy through whom I met my wife, you know. People I knew.

**Tape 5: 23 minutes 14 seconds**

RL: What work were you actually doing in Egypt?

NB: I was in armaments. I was servicing the armaments. The main things on armaments - on the heavy gear of course, are the recuperators. You know when you get a shot from the barrel - the blast will push the valve back, but then it's got to be stopped and pushed back again. It's what you call a recuperator. That's sometimes it's springs on small guns, but on big guns, it's an oil filled component that does the job, cause you can't compress oil, like you can compress spring till you come to solid spring and it won't go any further. That was one job and of course there's more to it than that. There's all sorts. But of course we were also trained on handguns. All types of handguns.

RL: What unit were you with?

NB: REME. Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. Then they came out, says, 'Look we're not only short of senior ranks, which you've replaced now, but we're also short of officers. If you like, sign up for two years. You can stay here and you become a full Lieutenant straight away.' Now at that time the war in Europe had finished. I wanted to find out what happened to my people, which I couldn't do from far afield, unless someone. I had a sister here but she didn't find out. So I said, 'No. If I can find out get back to Europe maybe I'll have a chance. Maybe they'll send me to Germany because we're occupying Germany, you know. I possibly could have requested a transfer to Germany if I would have been in England. And anyhow, not only that but I'd found a Jewish girl in London and I had been writing to her all the time. I said, 'I'm coming back to you now.'

**Tape 5: 25 minutes 55 seconds**

And before I managed to get back she said she found another boy and she's getting engaged. So that was that. And... Had I known what I've known afterwards, that there was nothing I could do in Europe about my family apart from my sister in England I would have signed on in England because I had a very, very cosy life in the army. And I got promotion. And I soon would have had three pips on my shoulder instead of two and I would have been like so many of the Jewish men. I already was in charge of the workshop - in the workshop, not in the office. But it wasn't to be. But I would have gladly signed up because the pay was good as far as I was concerned. The promotion possibilities were there. They were very good for me and everybody that I came across, they enjoyed my company. I used to play - in Donnington - I used to play hockey for the army, for the Company and one of the majors that was there in Tel el Kebir, he was a Staff Sergeant himself in Donnington. This is how it went, you know. We all got promoted. And the same with the Lieutenant - he was in Donnington and knew some of them. He said, 'You got to join that team.' You got to join that team and I was playing for the army in Egypt - hockey. So we had privileges, loads of them. And I came back then to my demob and I mentioned before I came to live in Laski House in Smedley Lane.

RL: When were you demobbed?

**Tape 5: 28 minutes 25 seconds**

NB: The end of '46, towards the end. My leave ended with the end of '46 or the beginning of '47.

RL: Is that when you returned to this country or had you returned to this country earlier?

NB: No, no. I was sent back for my demob from Egypt. But if I would have signed on for two years I would have had another two years over there and not only that. During my stay in Egypt of course I was helping my friends when I used to backwards and forwards to Palestine, I could take whatever I wanted for them with me. And I didn't have to get out of the train to be searched because I belonged to the British compliment. There as Palestinians, as they were then, all had to get out and everything was searched through. So some of my boys said, 'Will you take my peckel and take it with you?' Some of them said, 'Can you take something with me and take it home to my family. I never asked what was in the peckel. 'Whatever you want, I'll take it.'

RL: And this is what. This was from... Who were the boys you were taking it for?

NB: The boys who I knew! They wanted to send... sometimes they made something out of woodwork and a display cabinet, all bits and pieces. They couldn't take that back. It could have been confiscated, you know.

RL: So they were in Egypt with you?

NB: Yeah. They were.

RL: But they lived in...?

NB: They had a Company of their own in Tel el Kebir. But I wasn't in their Company. I was with a British Company. But whatever they had in the peckel I never asked, they sent out such and such a thing for the family or whatever. I know because when we went through Al Kanta everybody had to get out. All non-British out. And everything they had, they had to go through it. Who wants to unload everything that you've taken time to pack together, you know...?

**Tape 5: 31 minutes 9 seconds**

RL: Did you ever have any contact with the Jewish community in Egypt?

NB: Very little. Occasionally when we went through Alexandria or Cairo, no Alexandria mostly we came across a Jewish shop, you know. But... They didn't make much fuss of us. The war had finished and they'd already seen a load of Jewish boys coming through by that time you know, all through the war. No I didn't have any contact except the contact I sometimes made with people in the town. Of course we were stationed outside the town, so... One annoying part was though... When my demob came through it was just before Passover. And I found out, my name was put forward to take all Jewish boys back to Palestine for the Passover Holy Days. I think it was Passover. It could have been Rosh Hashanah, I forget now, but anyway... I was supposed to be in charge of them. But the office said, 'No, he's a demob.' I would have loved to take the boys, being in charge of them, you know. And... But I was overruled from the office.

RL: Did you get leave for the festivals?

NB: Oh yes. I went to Palestine a few times, yeah. And the only place I never got to was Jerusalem. I said, 'I'll leave Jerusalem till the last.' The best to the last. And blow me my demob came before I had a chance to get back to see Jerusalem. I left it to the last for that reason. I mean there were other places I wanted to see as well. I wanted to go to Cyprus. We could go to Cyprus you know and all sorts. We could go up to Lebanon!

**Tape 5: 33 minutes 35 seconds**

RL: So when you went back to England, how did you go about finding out what had happened to your family?

NB: Well first of all I had my sister here who had some contacts. But she still didn't know except we never heard from them again. And then through the different committees. Jewish Refugee Committee or whatever. We sort of eventually found out, because we knew they were taken to the Vernichtungslager, you know, death camps – from Camp de Gurs, you know. While they were in France they were ok although I mean they didn't have a decent life, but they were still alive and had to mingle in with those already interned from France in the camp. There were already people there. And now I read an article – I think it was in Germany – about this camp. The food that was allocated to the people in the camp had to be shared out between the extra intake from the province of Baden because all the Badenens came to... were sent out to Camp de

Gurs. That's why they made this sort of thing in Baden where they pointed out about the towns that had Jewish families living there, and had a Jewish community, remembering the Jews with a stone setting and the other part of the stone which is going to be sent to Zimmer room. Starting with a letter 'Z' - Zimmer. Like the old people - zimmer. Zimmer is a room, you know.

**Tape 5: 35 minutes 50 seconds**

RL: Now when you returned to England what work did you go into?

NB: Ah. Well I came back to Manchester. I didn't have any work as yet because I was on leave; paid holiday. And so I wasn't in a particular hurry immediately to get work. Get myself sorted out, and then I got to know my wife through the circumstances I mentioned before. And of course her uncle, who I got to know, was Dr Lax. They're not alive of course. The auntie was Dr. Lax as well, but he was a medical doctor, she was a dentist. They're all Doctors. It's whatever you did. If you passed your degree in university you get a Doctorate. I passed a degree in the Dunera, you see. I get Herr Doktor as well. And her uncle, was doctor and she a dentist, were friendly, which people called what's their name again, Walter and Annie...my mind's going bad - really bad. Can I remember? It'll come. Anyhow, they had a firm called Measure Metres and True Metres - the 2 different firms. Able! The name is Able. They had a third brother who had a photographic business in Middleton. I don't know if you ever heard of it. They're not there now. And the two brothers...One was a business man and one was an engineer and they had started a business with the help of a Mr Heilbronn. He was... he capitalised in engineering. I'll tell you what in a minute.

**Tape 5: 38 minutes 50 seconds**

Mr Heilbronn was the uncle of Rose Heilbronn the QC. If you ever heard of her. Now Hilde's uncle was friendly with Walter and Ernest Able. No, Ernest was the photographic business. Oh, Adolf. Adolf was the second one. But we knew him. We were actually quite friendly with them as well. But Hilde's uncle were friends with Walter Able. And when they found out what background I had in engineering they said, 'You'll be alright with the Ables because they have an engineering business, manufacturing counting and measuring instruments. I'll give you a bit of an insight what they are. If you ever see people walking about with a little wheel, measuring the road. I made these things in the factory. Or little clickers to go through a turnstile like if you go on a boat people click you in. How many people go off and how many people go on, you know. These type of things we made there. And it was...they were all Germans the same as me. They were all German refugees. But this Mr Heilbronn was actually the uncle of this Rosa Heilbronn QC.

RL: Where was the business?

NB: First of all when I started, I started in Leicester Road. But they came...They had been in Park Place, down Cheetham Hill.

RL: Park Place is Bury New Road, I think...

NB: No...

RL: Oh, down Cheetham Hill, yes.

**Tape 5: 41 minutes 20 seconds**

NB: Down Cheetham Hill, towards the end on the right hand side. But I joined them when they had moved to Leicester Road. There was a school there, next to the park. In the end there was a school and there was an old house in between – where the toilet is. You know there's a little roundabout, there's a little toilet there. Behind there was a big house next to the bowling green and upstairs and downstairs in the cellars. Nice little factory. Then they bought a place in Radcliff, in Milltown Street where they still are at present. But I didn't move there till much, much later because I was in charge of servicing and repairs. After I got to know the machinery, they said, 'We want a permanent service engineer because you have to go to the mills and service the machines there and then, because some of them couldn't spare the machines. So again I travelled through Lancashire, through Yorkshire, even down to – through the Midlands, all sorts of places. Because some firms said, a number of machines, said, 'We can't spare them; can you not send a man down?' I remember I drove down. There was petrol rationing on and I had to get special petrol rationing because it was such a long way going down.

**Tape 5: 43 minutes 6 seconds**

RL: Did the firm have a name?

NB: Yes, the manufacturers were called Measure Metres. I mentioned the name before.

RL: Right.

NB: And the wholesalers were called True Metres. The same owners and directors. It's just two different names.

RL: Right

NB: They go under True Metres, but the manufacturers were called Measure Metres

RL: And did you work with this firm all the way through?

NB: For 16 years I worked with the firm. When I moved eventually over to Radcliff, they put me in charge of first, a man section. Not servicing and repairs any more. They had built up a service team then. And I had 40 ladies - I was in charge of 40 ladies, assembling and about, between 6 or 8 men, most of the time.

RL: And how long were you there?

NB: Altogether 16 years with the firm.

RL: 16 years? Right...

NB: Yes. And I first of all became not the foreman, we had one foreman, we didn't want another one, but charge hand. Because foreman is over the whole lot, you know. So I was in charge, you know. And then it so happens in life, our store keeper come buyer had left. They had another storekeeper and buyer, which was an older man, again an older man who lived I think in Huddersfield in one of the mills. And he...he was a bachelor, but much older than I am. And he got to know - I think it was a shidduch - a lady, again a German lady, who was friendly with him. And she was a single lady, and she also had a sister in Switzerland, a single lady. But he made a shidduch with her - he married her and they lived up in Whitefield and brought him into the firm. And when the storekeeper left they put him into the stores, and when he left, the storekeeper, first of all the storekeeper came from Nunns the motor business people. Oh...and he's still alive. He's 91 and sometimes rings me up. And he's from Germany but he's a half-Jew. He's not Jewish. His father was Jewish.

**Tape 5: 46 minutes 36 seconds**

And...so they brought him in and put him in charge because he went into another motor business, back again, but Mr Able himself got to know him when he used to take his cars in for service. He said, 'Why don't you work for me?' So for a long time he was in charge of the stores because that's what he was doing in the motor business. But eventually, this man had a heart attack and he couldn't work any longer, he was very ill. Possibly today he could have had a bypass or...in fact they sent him to Liverpool Hospital because he was that bad. They couldn't do much for him. The storekeeper who then was in charge. This man wasn't immediately put in charge but this man wasn't any good, so they asked me to take over. He said look, you know the thing inside out. You know the parts that are also required. Why not take the store over and do the buying, the purchasing. We not only made parts, we also purchased them because it came out much cheaper buying them than making them yourself. So I took over the stores and the buying and purchasing and still had to answer all the queries in the workshop because everybody knew me. Everybody asked me because they knew they'd get an answer to it - even the draughtsmen used to come to me and say 'How do you do this. How do you do that?' I'm not blowing my own trumpet but that's how it goes in this business. But I wasn't really getting remunerated according to the job I was doing and I was getting tired of it although they put me on superannuation, but they even...the bonuses, the monthly bonuses that we used to get for the production... [Interruption] She gets annoyed. Can you stop that a minute please?

**Tape 5: 50 minutes 0 second**

RL: This is a continuation of an interview with Norbert Barrett and it's Tape Five. So maybe you can just take me on to what jobs you did after this particular one?

NB: Well, after that...Having taken charge of the sorting and purchasing I sort of said to my wife, 'I can do better with my ability, whatever my ability, than being here and not being on a works bonus any more, which was quite a bit of money and having to rely on handouts, literally, because the boss used to say, 'Well when you go on your holidays come in and I'll give you your bonus.' I shouldn't have to beg for that. This should be automatic. If you don't get it on your works conditions at least you get it on your salary or come what may. Although I was put on superannuation but even that

had only started very shortly. I looked at it and I said, 'These people who come here, beautifully dressed, in a car, running their own business. I could do the same job myself, running around the country in a car selling things.' And I really thought I could break into engineering parts for an engineering firm. And...but I couldn't get any agencies at all in that respect. And I found something in the papers. They wanted somebody urgently. I think it had to do with – yes it had to do with Artemis Press books...Selling encyclopaedias and other books. And as I bought an encyclopaedia once, and I saw the man operating here and selling me – I wanted an encyclopaedia as it happens. This is actually the cabinet here. And you know the old fashioned big books. I said, 'Well, what he did I can do myself.' But I worked for them for a while. And I found another job. Someone wanted a traveller, again only on a commission basis, more or less on the local areas from here to Wigan or Burnley and those. You know.

**Tape 5: 53 minutes 15 seconds**

They were manufacturers and they wanted some...to take the garments around literally for cash and orders. And I thought 'It'll give me a start, anyhow,' which it did do. After some time I found one or two adverts and I followed and they didn't come to anything. Then a friend of mine said there's this Scottish knitwear house. They approached him but he couldn't take it. He was selling lace doilies, and Indian made stuff. He couldn't handle it. Cushion covers he was selling. He says, 'Is it any good to you?' And...I thought it over and said, 'I can have a go.' I chucked the other companies, and I started to go with that. And I worked for 26 years for a Scottish knitwear firm, on a commission basis only. And I built up a clientele from the Scottish borders right down to the potteries. And I couldn't even serve Yorkshire properly, only a smatter of it. Like I've been to Huddersfield, I've been to Halifax, I've been to Todmorden and you know, you couldn't go everywhere! It takes time! Eventually they got somebody else to do Yorkshire and Northumberland and anything below the potteries, you know. Then they started splitting up the area a bit more but for 26 years I worked with them you know.

RL: So when did you retire?

**Tape 5: 55 minutes 32 seconds**

NB: Round about when I was 70 or just above 70. I can't just recall it. I worked for them for a long time but of course people have come into the city who were undercutting everybody. Our Asian friends started undercutting us and started manufacturing themselves and making modern knitwear with modern yarns which superseded woollen yarns you know. So our business was drying up literally. And I always said I could start at home but would have to go far afield because we had so many wholesalers and manufacturers around here. They came from far and wide into Manchester, travelled up to Carlisle they said, 'Oh we go down to get our own stuff up in Manchester.' It was getting very difficult to sell as well, and so not only did I feel the pinch, the firm felt the pinch as well. But they had already expanded into Scottish knitwear selling into Canada and North America, which was still wanted there. And eventually they gave up the ordinary knitwear, and so I retired then. And I took on, actually, selling books, again on a commission basis – to schools. Half price books. And then I was headhunted by another Scottish firm to take over an English

agency. I said 'I can start it off but I can't do much because I've got another agency.' And I've got, I was so wrong taking it on because the books dried up and the other one wanted a full time agent...

RL: This film is about to end.

NB: Yeah.

**Tape 5: 58 minutes 11 seconds**

**End of Tape Five**

**TAPE 6**

RL: This is the interview with Norbert Barrett and it's Tape Six. I wanted to backtrack on your marriage. When did you get married?

NB: I got married in '47.

RL: And what is your wife's name?

NB: Hilda.

RL: And her maiden name?

NB: Levy

RL: And where is she from?

NB: Cologne.

RL: And where did you go to live after your marriage?

NB: Well we had two rooms and sharing a kitchen with a spinster in... down just off Cheetham Hill Road. Forget now. Forget now the name. Huckley or something. An avenue around the back there...going down towards Queens Road, on the right-hand side. A street at the back there.

RL: And from there?

NB: From there...someone...It wasn't too great there. So a friend of ours suggested we go and get two rooms somewhere else, and we literally had our own little kitchen there over the upstairs in Bellott Street actually, just off Waterloo Road we were.

RL: And from there?

NB: We bought the house. We've been here about 54 years now.

RL: And which synagogue did you join?



NB: Heaton Park.

**Tape 6: 2 minutes 10 seconds**

RL: Have you always been a member of Heaton Park or have you been a member of another one?

NB: No I've never been a member of another shul, but I've been a member of Heaton Park since before it was built! They were two big houses put together at one time.

RL: In the same location?

NB: Yes, same place. Two great big houses and then they put them together and made a shul. And whilst they were building the shul we went davening in the King David's school, over the high holidays.

RL: And what family do you have?

NB: I've just got one daughter.

RL: And when was she born?

NB: On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, '58.

**Tape 6: 3 minutes 2 seconds**

RL: And her name?

NB: Corinne.

RL: And where did she go to school?

NB: She went to the King David School, and then she went to Bury Grammar School for Girls.

RL: And after that?

NB: Liverpool University.

RL: To study?

NB: She got to know her boyfriend and she left the university because she came from Liverpool to study at the Toast Rack Catering, and she wanted to be with her boyfriend. And she finished up in a secretarial college. And then after she'd been married and had 4 children, she did an Open University degree.

RL: What in?

NB: History.

RL: Who did she marry?

NB: Michel Stoops the caterer.

RL: And where do they live?

NB: In Brooklands Road. Not far from here.

RL: In Manchester. And what grandchildren do you have?

NB: Four grandchildren. Three girls and a boy.

**Tape 6: 4 minutes 40 seconds**

RL: What are they doing?

NB: Well the eldest works for Harvey Nicholls. She is in charge of a department there. The second one is at Birmingham University - art and music. The third boy is possibly finishing now at King David, and they were looking at the University of Birmingham if it's any use to him on a technical basis. He's very good with computers and such like. And the third one is going to Bury Grammar School - I mean the fourth one is going to Bury Grammar School.

RL: Did your daughter belong to any clubs as a youngster?

NB: She used to go to the clubs, yeah.

RL; Which ones did she...?

NB: Well she used to pal up with her friends and used to go to Jewish clubs.

RL: Did you belong to any clubs or societies after marriage here?

NB: No not really. The only society I belonged to Ex-Servicemen's Association. I'm a past Chairman. I'm still a Vice-Chairman.

RL: What about any clubs? Do you belong to any clubs?

NB: Never belonged to any clubs. I never had time.

RL: And since you retired?

NB: Well I joined, after giving everything up, or it's given me up, one of the two, I joined the Federation.

RL: And what do you do for them?

NB: I do everything. Take people out. Shop for people. Take them shopping. Take em to the doctors. Take them to hospitals. And...I get a buzz from it, as I mentioned earlier, that I was brought up to help people in different capacities.

RL: You mentioned also bridge.

**Tape 6: 7 minutes 36 seconds**

NB: Yes, I learned bridge in Australia. I play a lot of bridge. And this is my main pastime.

RL: In terms of nationality how would you describe yourself?

NB: Well when you talk about nationality...I have been German. And I've taken on the British nationality. I'm British. Being Jewish is not a nationality. I haven't got the Israeli nationality. We never come to this sort of thing. But of course...I've taken a British nationality which I got through my service, free or charge. During the time when there was a power cut when we had a terrible winter once, before your time, and I travelled down to London to get my nationality there, through the services.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

NB: Well, I can't help myself. I do feel different. I feel I'm European, having been born in Europe. Now having joined the European community, I feel happy about that, and I'm waiting for the time when I don't have to sell my Euros and buy Euros when I want them. When we have our own Euros and the currency is the same all around. We should be. People making fortunes out of exchanging money. If we belong to a Union – which is a...it's a union for trading with each other, why can't we have the same blooming currency?

**Tape 6: 10 minutes 2 seconds**

RL: What does your continental identity mean to you?

NB: Well people never let me forget that I'm not English or not...I'm British, yes, but not English. When they hear me they say, 'Oh yes, you're not English are you?' So obviously I always get reminded that I'm not English. I can't be English; haven't been born here. But I'm British and I feel British. I've allegiance first of all to the King – I had to swear allegiance to him when I joined the army. I've allegiance to the Queen. But ... I possibly have more allegiance to this country than some of the Britishers. But that doesn't stop my being Jewish and having allegiance to my Jewish brethren. I can't be ultra-Orthodox. I've never been brought up to be ultra-Orthodox. I keep my Yomtovs; I'm in shul every Shabbos. I may not go at night, but I'm in shul every Shabbos morning. We keep a kosher household as much as we can. And...We live different than what I used to live. But we're slightly different from the average Britishers obviously, because we have a European background. I look at Europe as a different aspect altogether. Not this is us and them is them. We are Europeans and I'm part and parcel of Europe.

RL: Have you ever experienced anti-Semitism in this country?

**Tape 6: 12 minutes 16 seconds**

NB: It does arise occasionally. In certain ways. Sometimes people don't really mean what they say. I'll give you an incident. When I was travelling I had a customer near Bolton somewhere. Farnsworth. No, not Farnsworth; forget it, doesn't matter about where... near Bolton near Oldham. No it was Farnsworth, I bet your pardon. I keep on mixing the two names up. It doesn't really matter where it was. There was something going on from the Town Council they promoted. When you put up new signs... They make the displays nice when people come into the town. Make it more prominent, more elaborate. They helped with putting signs up, you know, or it must have been something of that nature. And because a Jewish owner had the first sign up... so one came into my customer, and talked to her, and he said to her, 'You see, this Jew's got his sign up already!' I mean, he doesn't mean any harm by it, but people who don't realise they mean any harm by it, they take offence! Its like if you were a coloured or black person, and you say, 'This schwartze...' You got to understand when people don't mean it. What he meant to say is he possibly got has his hand in it, he can promote his being there more so than the others, and he's possibly got privileges, you see, now? I didn't take any offence, although it was offensive. There's ways and means you sometimes find out that there is anti-Semitism. It goes against the Jews. It goes against the Indians, Pakistanis. It goes against coloured or black people. Same thing.

RL: Do you think that your experiences have affected you in any way? Psychologically or in any other way?

NB: Well it's bound to have affected me. It's bound to have affected me. It doesn't leave you. I gave you an incidence earlier on about someone with a uniform. If I see a uniform today still, I don't shudder like I used to do, but I shy away at first. Then say, 'Don't be silly, he's only doing a job', you know because you had to be frightened of a uniform under the Nazi rule; very much so.

#### **Tape 6: 15 minutes 59 seconds**

RL: Do you ever have any nightmares, or...?

NB: No. No. Not that I can recall it.

RL: Did you ever speak to your daughter about your experiences?

NB: Not much. No. There are certain things that sometimes come up, in the open. Like...A little thing. Well two or three of my grandchildren had a tutor. And this particular tutor, who was a, or still is, I don't know, she's still a prominent member of the King David school, had a little monument of Charlie Chaplin in the hall. And every time I came in I said, 'Hello Charlie' and every time I go out I said, 'See you again, Charlie.' Now, there was a reason for that. And I never mentioned anything to my daughter. And now if you go in there now into the dining room there on the windowsill, there's Charlie Chaplin. And one day Charlie Chaplin wasn't there any more. And I was very sad not to see him, and I said to the lady concerned, I said, 'Where's Charlie?' 'Oh, I've done away with him.' And I said, 'Why?!' 'Oh I didn't like him any more.' I thought she was pulling my leg. And she'd put him away because the grandchildren were making a mess of him, you know. A very nice statue, lovely statue. Beautiful. And must have been quite expensive as well. So I was very

sad and I came to drop my granddaughter – at her home. And my daughter said, ‘What’s the matter Dad, have you been crying?’ And I said, ‘I haven’t actually, but nearly.’ And I told her about Charlie Chaplin. She said, ‘What’s this with Charlie Chaplin?’ I said, well my father had an album when he worked on the stage, in England. And they always had an album where all the friends put their names in and wrote something in. And there was a picture of Charlie Chaplin with a little bit of something in it and his signature! And every time I went in gave me a reminder of my father and gave me a connection, you know. And when the teacher said, ‘Oh I done away with him, I didn’t like him’, it hurt me! And she never even knew anything about it. And my next birthday she bought me Charlie Chaplin and he’s there on the windowsill! You see things like that; I hadn’t talked to them about. And there’s loads of little things. I put two and two together. She didn’t like Charlie any more – she didn’t like my father any more. She didn’t have to like him - she didn’t even know him! But it went deep, very deep. And there’s loads of little things. You forget about them. All of a sudden it comes out.

RL: Of course you went back to Germany recently.

NB: Yes.

RL: How did that come about?

**Tape 6: 19 minutes 42 seconds**

NB: Well in the first place I went back 8 years ago. Because I helped out with the Anne Frank’s exhibition. I literally became ‘Mr Anne Frank’ because I was not running the show, but first of all I could speak German. but this wasn’t the reason. The reason they asked me to participate because I’ve got a similar background to the Franks. They came from Frankfurt originally. I knew situations what happened. I could sort of fall in line with the situations, you know, and speak from a standpoint to anybody who came in, not just Britishers, foreigners as well, who I could relate to why and what for and this that, and the other, being one and the same type of person that the Franks were in the family. And, I was a guide, and I said, ‘I’ll do five days or half days.’ And when I started, after a day I realised there was more to it than 5 days. Because everybody literally – except for one person who came from Berlin - they were just amateurs so to speak. They had no...They were just doing a job because they belonged to a club or association who sent so many people in... some doing 3 days, some doing 5 days or half days, you know. But I was one who had the background, together with one other man, who’s since died now. And not only that, one day, there was a shortage of ...first of all there was always a shortage of guides. The guides had to know the ins and outs. The others were stewards, for stewarding people about. Stewards came running up to me.. ‘Norbert, Norbert, you’ll have to come, there’s a couple here from Germany, they don’t speak English’. They came to look at the Cathedral and then they found the exhibition of Anne Frank, and they couldn’t speak English. The daughter could but the daughter wasn’t there, actually. The daughter happened to be in Manchester University for a few weeks.

**Tape 6: 22 minutes 35 seconds**

And...So I got to know them. And as soon as they opened their mouths and spoke to me I says, 'You speak German like I do. Where do you come from?' She says, 'Bruehl. You won't know it.' And I said, 'Won't know it?' I says, 'I'm only about 3-4 miles from there.' And it is. The tennis player came from Bruehl. What's her name again? She lived 2 doors away from them. She married Agassi now. Oh, what's her name? Anyhow, she said, they said to me, 'Do they know you live here?' I said, 'They should do, because I've had connections with the office because I wanted a birth certificate'. Anyhow, they got in touch with Hockenheim, and it's about 5, 6 or 7 kilometres, which is only about 4 or 5 miles from my home. We lived on that side. The other side of Hockenheim would have been a bit further you know, but... And so Hockenheim wrote to me, they'd like to hear from me, but who was my teacher, whom did I go to school with and this that and the other? I gave them details, and of course I could have made up the details. And they invited me up to Hockenheim. And when the Oberburgermeister got to know me and everything, he said, - he gave me this plaque which is outside - he said, 'My mother used to come and collect for insurance in your home.' This sort of thing, you know. So...

**Tape 6: 24 minutes 46 seconds**

RL: How did you feel going back?

NB: Well I have been back to Germany a few times, because I went to Karlsruhe, because my sister, she finished up in Karlsruhe. She and her husband... He was with the Control Commission at first and... after his demob from the Pay Corps he went to work for the Army Kinema Corporation in Germany. So I used to see them in Germany. Didn't make any difference to me. But then she settled in Karlsruhe, still working as a teacher in the school of languages at one stage. But...Then Karlsruhe invited me. So I had connections going back and forth. And I've no qualms going backwards and forwards. Now, eight years ago I was in Hockenheim, after these people arranged it. And this time it was about the setting of the stone and unveiling it.

RL: And that was the recent visit?

NB: Yes, that was just a month ago.

RL: Ok. And how do you feel towards Israel?

**Tape 6: 26 minutes 26 seconds**

NB: Well, I don't live there. Only if I've family it's only cousins or second cousins or their children. Israel is not my home. It's where we originate from, from that area, yes. But it's not my home. I haven't a base in Israel. I do visit Israel occasionally, very occasionally. Obviously I've got allegiance to Israel in some respect. As I said, it's not my home. I don't live there. I wasn't born there. Except that my forefathers came from there I don't know how many hundreds of years back I don't know. As I said before at the time when I left Germany my mother said, 'We lived in this village for nearly 500 years.' - the family. Our family must have come from Spain originally, when they were thrown out from that area.

RL: Have you been in touch or are you connected with any refugee or Holocaust organisation?

NB: Yes, first of all I'm a member of AJR, together with my wife. I'm a member through HS of the Rep Council and I'm on the Holocaust Committee there.

RL: Of the Rep Council?

NB: Yeah. The people who run the Holocaust Memorial Service. Yeah.

RL: Ok. Is there anything else that we might have missed?

**Tape 6: 28 minutes 37 seconds**

NB: Well there's only... we can bypass that. There is only the various accolades I've been getting, and write-ups and things like that. And getting... Sometimes I talk to people... you know, they ask me to go and give them a little talk. This was sometime back now in the year 2000 it started up. They were the first people. They asked me to talk to them about some of my experiences, you know. That was a recent one. This one I talked to them sometimes. And then I had been made one year Chazzan Torah, from the shul, there's a – what do you call it on the wall – a certificate on the wall.

RL: And you've been given an award by the Fed as well?

NB: I've been given an award from the Fed. First of all they nominated me for...that was another one...they nominated me – there's the nomination, unfortunately it's got some tea on it - for the Salford Volunteers, you know, part of Salford. They gave me a certificate, but they spelled it wrongly - they sent me other one...that's why I've got two. They say this one, that was spelt wrongly. They sent me another one later, you see, made it up. And then I've got one, together with another man – I think they had to nominate him as well - we became joint Volunteers of the Year and we got the Villeroy Boch cut glass. And there's an inscription in. And it's a certificate there. And occasionally my name appears in the paper someone decided when they print this thing out they want people who've retired, they want to know what they do, you see.

RL: What paper's that?

NB: That's from the Rep Council as well.

RL: Is there any message that you'd like to end with?

**Tape 6: 31 minutes 0 second**

NB: Well if you look at my life, excuse me...

RL: We'll do the photographs when we finished.

NB: If you look at my life, and the way I've finished up since I retired, helping people. I think everybody should do good to others, whether they're asked to do so or not. If they see there is a need...like I've got a young couple next to me. They're not

Jewish. When he goes through doing his privets, he'll cut mine as well, having said that I'll do the same to him. I used to cut his before he even asked me. It's no problem to me because having been an athlete all my life and then engineering, I have powerful muscles which I like to use in any case, not to finish up not being able to do things. And I do all my privets this side by hand nowadays, doesn't take me long. It's a knack of doing it and also it takes a little bit of strength. The garden itself, when he cuts his lawn in the front he cuts mine, but I have to cut my own at the back, and I haven't had time for weeks on end to cut mine...cause it's normally wet when I cut mine.

RL: You were just giving your last message...

**Tape 6: 33 minutes 48 seconds**

NB: Well people should be more tolerant to each other, and should help each other. As I said, when they see a need they shouldn't wait to be asked. You can always ask, 'Is it all right if I give you a hand?' But they should offer, and if I...I'll give you an incidence. Last Sunday we had a meeting – our monthly meeting - of the Rep Council which was at the Nicky Alliance. My car was parked in our shul car park – Heaton Park Shul. I see the office light is still on and it's nearly half past twelve. I go in the office. I see the girl is still there and she only lives up the road. I say, 'When are you going home?' She says, 'In a minute.' I says, 'I'll give you a lift.' I've done that before. These little things give me a buzz. If you can help someone...If she would have lived a mile out of the way I still would have given her a lift if I know she wants to get home... make some lunch for herself and her husband. These are just little things as I mentioned before. If I go to the supermarket, and something drops on the floor, I've seen people walking over it like nothing happened. I'll pick it up. At least I've saved it. Alright, a big firm like Sainsbury's, or whatever - Morrison's, or QuickSave or even Tesco - it doesn't hurt them if they lose a little bit. But...having had a business ourselves, it does hurt when some of the profits gets wasted. And I don't like seeing waste. It's the same as collecting the papers and everything else. I think everyone should put their mind to it and save whatever they can in order to help ourselves in order to survive and have things at a reasonable price. And human beings should help each other as well. And all I can say is that I'm sorry we got interrupted so rudely before. I don't like that.

**Tape 6: 36 minutes 34 seconds**

**Norbert Barrett Photographs.**

NB: These are my parents. Ludwig Jacob Baumgarten and Rosa Regina Baumgarten. It was taken approximately 1935, in Hockenheim.

NB: This photograph is a... the Ladies Guild of the International Red Cross in Hockenheim. They were attached to the Geneva Red Cross – International Red Cross. My mother is sitting in the front row, second lady from the right. Again her name is Rosa Regina Baumgarten, and it was taken roughly in '31 / '32.



NB: This is a photograph of my sister and myself, taken in 1924. Both my sister and myself shared the same birthday and we were brought up consequently as twins. She was born in '20; I was born in '21. Birthday being the 7<sup>th</sup> of November.

**Tape 6: 38 minutes 15 seconds**

RL: And the photograph was taken in?

NB: In Hockenheim. Taken in Hockenheim. Taken in the area possibly where I was born in Karlsruhe Strasse, looking at the age of myself. Ok.

NB: The photo shows my father and the Trio he worked with as a young man, as a trapeze artist, dating back to 1920/21. It must have been round about that time, and it was taken in Hockenheim in an atelier which is a studio.

RL: And which one is your father?

NB: My father is on the left. The tall one with the black hair.

NB: This is the Karlsruhe Strasse in Hockenheim and I was born in one of the two houses you can see on the right hand side of the street. In 1921. I can't give you any details now. The shop still on the right still exists. The shop on the left doesn't exist any more. There's a different shop there. And the whole area's changed as well.

NB: This photo shows my sister, Inge, with three of my nephews, in 1938. The three nephews from left to right are Dieter, the little one is Ute in the middle and the taller one is Rolf. Thank you.

NB: Now this is an army photo of some of my pals when we were sent abroad. It could have been Brussels. I'm not quite certain. I'm kneeling on the left hand side. There're three brothers on the picture as well. And...The fourth one is a chappy who was with us together...all together in Australia. And he lives in London now. I can't think of their names just now.

**Tape 6: 41 minutes 28 seconds**

RL: When was this taken?

NB: It was taken in sort of 1943 or thereabouts, possibly.

NB: This photo shows me working in an engineering place called Measure Metres in Radcliff a sister company of True Metres manufacturing counting and measuring instruments. I worked for them for 16 years. It was possibly taken in 1948, could have been a year or two after, even. Thank you.

NB: This is a photo of my daughter and her family at the graduation day, in 1997. Myself and my wife in the front left, with my youngest granddaughter on the left. My son in law Michael Stoops, next to him our oldest granddaughter Lara, and next to her our second granddaughter, Danielle, and my grandson, my only grandson, Simon, and my daughter of course, with the gown and Certificate.

RL: Where was it taken?

NB: It was taken in Preston, at the Open University.

NB: This is depicting me lighting candles at a stone remembering our synagogue in Hockenheim at the corner of the entrance to its original path, now next to the new Town Hall. I was invited to unveil this stone and to commemorate the Jewish community, and was made extremely welcome, together with my wife, Hilda.

RL: And the date?

NB: The date was the 11th of September this year, 2005.

**Tape 6: 44 minutes 18 seconds**

**End of Photographs.**

**Norbert Barrett.**