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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	3

Interviewee Surname:	Milner
Forename:	Max
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	26 January 1918
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	19 January 2003
Location of Interview:	Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 3

NAME: MAX MILNER

DATE: 19 JANUARY 2003

LOCATION: MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 1 minute 35 seconds

RL: If you can tell me your name.

MM: My name is Max Milner.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

MM: Maximilian Meisner.

RL: Did you have any other names or nicknames?

MM: No, just Max.

RL: What about a Hebrew name?

MM: Mordechai, my father was Israel Zvi, so I was Mordechai Ben-Israel-Zvi.

RL: And when were you born?

MM: The 26th of December, 1918.

RL: So what does that make you now, your age now?

MM: 84.

RL: And where were you born?

MM: In Berlin, Charlottenburg.

RL: And were you named after anybody?

MM: I'm sure I was but I don't know who it was, because everybody in the family got named after somebody else.

RL: Can you tell me your parents' names and where they were born?

MM: My father was Isidore Meisner and he was born in Lemberg, which was Austria and then became Poland and changed the name to Lvov, and my mother was Anna Meisner and she was born in Berlin.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 53 seconds

RL: Starting first with your father's family, do you remember his parents, your grandparents?

MM: I never met them at all, because as far back as I can remember, his family was in Lemberg, and I think they died fairly young. He said he had cousins or other family, and he occasionally tried to trace them or send them money but otherwise I have no knowledge at all of what happened.

RL: Do you know what his father did for a living?

MM: No, I know his grandfather was a Chazan, because one or two tunes my father used he said he had learned from his grandfather.

RL: How many siblings did your father have?

MM: He had a brother, who also lived in Berlin, who unfortunately perished before the war; he was taken to a concentration camp. And that's all.

RL: Do you know what kind of religious upbringing your father had?

MM: He had a Jewish upbringing, but he told me that after his service in the First World War, there was somebody in his company who was very strict and wouldn't eat any of his food and had all his food sent to him in tins etc and after surviving the war my father decided he would become more Orthodox. An Orthodox household, strictly Kosher, waiting times after meat dishes of three/four hours, and my father went to the synagogue during the week as well, and he also officiated because he had a nice voice because he also did synagogue duties like a second Chazan, or blowing the Shofar, and a few other things as well, but at the same time, he was very proud that he was also modern, so I remember going to the opera, going to concerts, and theatres, and picking interesting places to go on holiday, and trying to see how they could manage with *kosher*, and also very keen on ballroom dancing, and I've got pictures of my mother and father, going to tea-dances etc. and he told me, as part of the parental education and teaching, there's no reason why the two can't be combined, so you can be an Orthodox Jew and at the same time take an interest in politics, or Jewish affairs but also in art and other matters and holiday places to go to as well.

Tape 1: 6 minutes 12 seconds

RL: Was your father interested in politics?

MM: Everybody had to be interested because Hitler was looming on the horizon from 1930 onwards, and I think a lot of discussions about what would happen to Jews in Germany – he was one of the first to decide there was going to be no future. So from 1930 onwards it was very clear that arrangements would have to be made to get us out and to get them out as well. And there was a day of boycott, I don't remember the day, it must have been '33 or '34, when my father actually, with us, moved out of Germany and moved to Switzerland together with a distant relative or friend, to see what happened. This must have been shortly after Hitler came to power so it was 1933, '34 or something like that, and we stayed there for six months, in a rented flat with the other family; it was very nice for us children, we used to go swimming and no school. And then he decided that it was safe enough to go back to Berlin. And my brother was the first to leave home. He was older. I had a brother and a sister.
Tape 1: 7 minutes 35 seconds

Brother was five years older, and my sister a year and a half younger. And my brother decided he wanted to go to Israel, and he went to a Hachsharah, I think it was in Lithuania, I don't know which organisation ran it, in order to learn farming and looking after animals and from there he left for some reason and went to another Hachsharah, in South Germany. And then decided it was very risky so he crossed over to Switzerland, and from there, he - that's my brother - he went to Israel and went to live on a Kibbutz.

RL: When was this?

MM: Probably 1935.

RL: And do you remember what the Hachsharah was called in South Germany?

MM: No.

RL: You don't know which one it was–

MM: No, it's quite a long time ago.

RL: Did other people do what your father did and leave Germany at that time? Or was he a little bit different?

MM: Well, he was – he seemed to see the writing on the wall. And I remember even later having discussions with people, there were very nice people, and some of them had the idea that you mustn't go to Palestine, and I said, then what? You have to wait for the Messiah? And they perished because they could have got out, but they didn't – they didn't think they should. And my father who had been in the, I don't think he was an office-bearer in the Zionist movement, but he had always been sympathetic, and we all felt there's some place to go to, and we discussed it and we said, what about going to America, and he said, No, no, it must be Palestine. And I was the next to leave, my father decided that a big family --- he had got rid of my brother, i.e. got him out of the country safely, to Palestine, and he fixed me up with a Jewish boarding school in Brighton which doesn't exist anymore, called Arie [?] House and there were quite a number of other German Jewish children there, at that school.

RL: And how had he heard of that place?

MM: Well, he made enquiries or something. There was a scheme whereby you paid to the Jewish authorities in Berlin, in Germany, a certain amount of money, which was limited, it was something like £10 a month, which is of course more money than it is now: the Central British Fund for German Jews (the British Fund) would then take £10 at this end, and then pay it directly to the school. So it was a way of legally transferring money which otherwise you couldn't do. Of course there were all sorts of money restrictions, currency restrictions. So that he paid for my board and lodging and teaching at school and I was there from – I left on the 30th of June 1936, and I took my London Matric in January next year, that's '37. And then – my parents were still in Germany so actually I went back to Germany, and then after some enquiries, my father decided that – of course I wanted to study engineering, electrical engineering. London was very expensive, and somebody suggested Edinburgh, so we wrote to Edinburgh University with all my certificates and all my details etc., and my father came with me, to Edinburgh. He couldn't speak any English at all, and the first morning we saw somebody in front of us who was obviously carrying a Tallit so we said, Let's follow them, and they actually went to Shul, so we went there and made enquiries, and discovered there was a Jewish widow who took lodgers, and I fixed up with her, and stayed with her and started at University in the autumn of 1937.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 48 seconds

RL: Can I just take you back to Germany for a moment; we'll come on to England a little bit afterwards. Coming back to your father, you mentioned that he was in the First World War. Do you know any details about that, what he was doing?

MM: Well, for some reason, I think it's to do with his birth; he was in an Austrian Army unit. Because I've got pictures of him and he got wounded. Luckily he was shot through his calf, and the shot of him is in an army hospital, and he doesn't wear a German helmet or anything and he got some sort of decoration. He didn't put much stress on it. I remember after Hitler came to power he had to go to some official place, whether it was the police, or whatever; he would put on a lapel badge just to show that he'd been in the First World War. I remember one occasion, it must have been about '35, there was in Czechoslovakia (which was the nearest place to Berlin if you wanted to go skiing) there was a Jewish Youth Hostel, so it was very pleasant to go there, we took the train and then we had to walk over the mountains to get there, it was very complicated. And walking over the mountains we got stopped by a German frontier policeman. He wanted to know where we were going, and we said the name of the area, and the area now is Sudetenland which became famous later on. And this German policeman said: "Excuse me sir, but I think when you get over to the Czech side, you should take that badge off, they might take offence". So he took it that my father was a German ex-soldier wearing his ex-army badge, and it would not be advisable to show this.

RL: What kind of education had your father had?

Tape 1: 15 minutes 41 seconds

MM: I think he must have left school early, at the age of 14 or something like that. And he came to Berlin as a boy, and he worked in trade, a gold and silver metal dealing business. And he must have done reasonably well because he could afford quite a bit of time; and he was very keen on social work, Jewish social work. And he formed a local society of - what was it called - the Yeshua Society for Religious Aid. Where the religious part came in I don't know, because people called him because they needed home [*sic*], or they didn't have food or they

wanted to bring somebody over, or they had – it was like a Jewish social work sort of place. Of course he wasn't the only one, he was one of the people who formed it, and then it expanded and but there was a constant stream, and he had the time, and he preferred doing this. He was also on the Synagogue council, and Gabbai, which is like an office-bearer in the synagogue, and…

RL: Which synagogue was it?

MM: Pestalozzi Street. And I've actually been back there and it got destroyed by the Germans during Kristallnacht. They burnt the synagogues and it has been reconstructed practically from drawings always the same; it was a very eerie feeling, I know I'm jumping, but the history of it was a very eerie feeling, because it looked the same but it wasn't the same, because it was different; and actually it was on a Shabbat morning service, and I could sit on my father's seat where he used to sit but of course nobody in the synagogue had any connection. They were all strangers, completely different, and it struck me, I'm probably the only one here who has been to this synagogue, been going to this synagogue as a boy, with my father, all these years.

RL: Do you think the reconstruction was done pretty much to plan?

MM: Well they didn't build the ladies' gallery, the ladies just sit on the side seats, otherwise it's –

RL: And what was the name of the synagogue?

MM: Pestalozzi Street, just by the name of the street.

RL: Right. Coming back to your father. Do you have any idea why he came to Berlin?

MM: Well, I think nobody wanted to live in – it must have been Austria when he left. Perhaps somebody advised him, he came to Berlin and found his feet and then he must have had some talent for business.

RL: Where did he run his business from?

MM: He had an office somewhere in Berlin itself.

RL: Was he just working on his own?

MM: Yes.

RL: Well, I've not asked anything about your mother's family. First of all do you remember her parents?

MM: Well, I don't remember my grandfather, although I was alive when he was still alive. But I used to see my grandmother regularly. What used to happen was that she stayed with us over Shabbat, so every Friday she came and went back either Saturday night or Sunday morning. And as she got a bit frailer I was given the task of collecting her, taking her on the underground or overhead railway, and taking her back again at the end. So I saw her every

week or weekend. The rest of the time she stayed with my aunt, and that was my mother's sister.

RL: How many siblings did your mother have?

MM: One brother and one sister.

RL: Where did they live?

MM: Also in Berlin.

RL: Have you any idea what your grandfather did for a living?

MM: [Shakes head]

RL: No. What kind of religious upbringing did your mother have?

MM: Traditional Jewish. You know, she lit the Friday night candles, and went to Synagogue, on probably– from home she would have gone not necessarily every Shabbat, but fairly regularly, certainly every Yom Tov or High Holy Days, certainly. And they seemed to be a very happy couple.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 25 seconds

RL: Do you know how they met?

MM: That I don't know. They never mentioned it, really it's quite interesting. There are all sorts of pictures I picked up in the end of places they went to together. My father was fairly tall, about 5 foot 11, handsome, and my mother was rather small. I don't remember any – I mean, there were plenty of discussions or disagreements, but no rows or anything.

RL: Do you know what kind of education your mother had?

MM: I don't know. She must have had a normal German education, perhaps a bit of Jewish as well, because she was very keen on reading. And boxes arrived every week from the bookseller, who got an idea of what she liked, and he would send six books, and she'd look at them, send four back and keep two or whatever; very keen on reading, and quite well-to-do, so she didn't have to – We had a cook: in those days you were able to have servants.

RL: Can you describe your home where you lived in Berlin?

MM: It was round the corner from the Synagogue. We'd lived in one place first, and I don't know whether it was an advantage but the balcony– but there was a balcony over the top of it, so you could build a Succah on the balcony, and I don't know how many rooms that had, but then we moved to another street, which struck me at that time to be quite a posh sort of street. But when we went back and I had my wife with me, of course she was quite horrified because in the meantime the street had come down, the house had shops at the bottom flat, our flat had been subdivided. I actually tried to get in and see if they would let me have a look round, but there was nobody there, and I tried the next day and there was nobody there either. But we went up in the lift, which I remember, but of course years later, it was still the same lift,

which was then pretty rackety, and the place looked crummy, that was the only way of describing it. And my son, who had been to Berlin in connection to some conference he went on, he wanted to know the street, and the number, and we had a look at the map which he got, and he went and had a look at it, and he also came back and said, 'It isn't anything like you told me, Dad. It's quite a different sort of place'.

Tape 1: 24 minutes 15 seconds

RL: And what's the number?

MM: Number 12, Schlüterstrasse. It was a big flat, I think it was three bedrooms, and a dining room and a sitting room, a huge dining room, not much shorter than this, and a big hall where people could sit, all the visitors who wanted to see my father; and he had an office as well, on top of the bedroom, so it was a very large flat really. And that's perhaps why it's now been subdivided into two flats.

RL: What district of Berlin was this?

MM: Charlottenburg.

RL: Were there – how many apartments were there in the block?

MM: Probably four stories high, and there were three on each. So, twelve apartments.

RL: And were your neighbours Jewish or non-Jewish?

Tape 1: 25 minutes 9 seconds

MM: Well I remember one neighbour was Jewish and another one across the gangway, and I think they were probably the only ones.

RL: How did you get on with the neighbours?

MM: We didn't have very much to do with them. We said good morning, and we were polite. I went to a Jewish school, and so all my friends were Jewish, and I didn't really meet any non-Jewish people unless I went to a shop, or the garage where my father had his car repaired and maintained, I knew the people there. Not much contact with non-Jewish people at all and no non-Jewish friends at all.

RL: What was the school called?

MM: Well, it was almost like a private school, it was called Jewish Primary School. Originally it was housed in the Fasanen Synagogue, in the Synagogue Fasanen Street, which was actually a Liberal Progressive Synagogue. And my father of course wouldn't set foot in that Progressive Synagogue. But they had extra rooms, and they were used – they built up a, a school, and you were supposed to leave, at the age of – we did four primary years. It started at the age of six and after, when you were ten, you moved to a secondary school. There were different types of secondary school. And the obvious place for me, where my brother had been to, was a grammar school. You had to choose there whether you did Latin, less science, or more science etc. But I never went to that school because at that time Hitler came to power,

so this primary school which had then moved to another street and had expanded, and later on changed its name to Theodore Herzl School, expanded and added two more classes because the children had nowhere else to go. And there was a Jewish Grammar school, a proper grammar school, where you learned Latin, French and English, not very much science, and you also had fairly advanced Jewish education, mainly Talmud, and Detznach as well. I was a bit backward on the Talmud, so I had to take extra lessons to get me up to date. And my Latin wasn't any good because I never learned any Latin. So I then was sent to that school, and that was very Orthodox.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 32 seconds

RL: Did it have a name?

MM: It's like 'Adassi-Yisroel-Schule', they ran it, Adassi-Schule, and the German word for Grammar School is 'Gymnasium'. And that was called Siegmundshof, which is just the area where it was. I think the standard of the school was high.

RL: Do you remember who the headmaster was?

MM: No.

RL: The first school that you went to, how big was that, the primary?

MM: Oh, that must have been very small.

RL: Do you remember who ran it, who the head of that one was?

MM: No. I dare say if somebody reminded me of the name it would come back, but I met one or two people once in a bus in Tel Aviv. Somebody shouted 'Max!' And I looked round, and it was somebody from my class. And the other school was strictly Orthodox, with all sorts of – I was caught taking my cap off. Now, my father didn't believe that you had to wear head-covering all the time, which is now the fashion to show that you're Orthodox. You put it on if you want to pray, and you put it on to go to Synagogue. And he wore a hat as part of his normal gear, but I used to take it off as soon as I'd got within a few hundred yards – and I was seen once, and I got ticked off, for some – I don't think it was the Headmaster, but a schoolteacher, for taking the cap off, I mean they knew that we weren't from that exact background – All sorts of other things – I don't know whether it's relevant, but it just sticks in my memory.

Tape 1: 30 minutes 36 seconds

I was very keen on Hebrew. And in the first school Hebrew was with the Sephardi-Israeli pronunciation. But of course we [homash?] and other things as well. But after I finished I enjoyed it so much I signed up for an evening class. And there we did some modern work, like a novel or a story, plus a bit from the Bible as well. And on one occasion – but at school we had to use the other pronunciation. And once it was my turn to read out a sentence I translated, and I used the wrong pronunciation. And I noticed, why's everybody so silent, and when I looked up I thought the teacher was going to explode. And he says 'Why are you reading like that? I want you to read it with a pronunciation used by your fathers, forefathers, and ancestors.' So he was very furious about that. But I just slipped into it, you know.

RL: Did you belong to any Zionist Youth group?

Tape 1: 31 minutes 45 seconds

MM: Yes, there was an outfit called Kadima, which was like Habonim in this country, with summer camps, and places to go to. We had weekends, and would go for trips and that, more or less identical, really. And then later on I switched over to Bnai Akiva which is here as well, but it was fairly laid back.

RL: What was the difference between the two?

MM: Well the Kadima accepted that people were Orthodox, etc. But they didn't put much stress on it. And so I think I had become a bit more Orthodox before I shifted again. And so I joined the B'nai Akiva.

RL: Was that a new movement?

MM: Well, it was started – Kadima had been in existence for a long time.

RL: And B'nai Akiva, when did you join that?

MM: I must have been 13 or 14, fairly late.

RL: And what kind of activities did they ---?

MM: Well, they did the same, except they did quite a bit of study of either Biblical things or – they just put more stress on having religious activities in the camp, they had service in the mornings and evenings as well. But in Kadima you pleased yourself if you wanted to pray in the morning it was your – there was perhaps a Saturday morning Shabbat service, it was just stricter.

RL: Did you belong to any other clubs?

MM: No.

RL: Did you do any sport?

MM: I mean, later on when Hitler came to power there was a thing called Kulturbund, Jewish Cultural Association. In order to offer something, not to kids but to everybody. And they had produced plays and maybe even operas etc, and they had an orchestra etc. Like a parallel organisation, because it became more and more awkward. So if you looked Jewish and you went to an ordinary concert or theatre, you could find yourself thrown out, or remarks being made and such. And also there were these Jewish actors and musicians, who had nowhere to go, and you had theatre directors and conductors, and we had a parallel cultural organisations that did everything. We had painting exhibitions as well, I don't remember those, but I remember the theatre shows and that was very well developed, and of course there was a lot of– one of the things was, the standard of cultural life among the German Jews was very high. A very large number had been involved with cultural activities in the general German world, and because they were now excluded from it, they formed their own, so their standard must

have been pretty high. I was only a boy then. They also had things like a children's show, almost identical; in other words, if you looked at your papers now, you would see at Christmas a show, and the other show was called 'Older Children' so we had the same.

RL: Did any of your family participate in any of that organisation?

MM: My brother, while he still was in Berlin, he was in Kadima as well, and so was my sister. And as I said my father must have been doing something for the Zionist organisation, and of course when it became unpleasant to go to the theatre, general one, then they would go to this Jewish one. They liked it before, they didn't have to support it specially – And of course nobody could anticipate how it was going to finish, they thought, well, we'll just have a separate existence.

RL: Did you play any musical instruments?

MM: No. We had a piano and my brother played. He was very keen on the piano. My sister played the violin, and she packed it in after a bit. I was too lazy, so my father said, if you don't practise there's no point in paying a teacher to teach you, so that stopped.

RL: What were your brother and sister's names?

MM: My brother is called Josef, and my sister is called Claire.

RL: And what about sport? Did you ever play any sport?

MM: Well, I played at school, because I liked football, and even at this very Orthodox school we had sport, of course, because it was compulsory; and sometimes I would stay behind, phone home to say that I'll come home later because we're having a match on, or we're staying behind; and I liked swimming, and my brother's a very good swimmer, and I don't know what other sports, I must have been very good at sports, but just for fun and pleasure.

RL: What was the atmosphere like in Berlin, before the rise of Nazism, between Jews and non-Jews?

MM: Well, it was difficult for me to judge, because I was a Jewish boy from a Jewish family going to Synagogue, going to a Jewish school, having Jewish friends, so I might be given an errand to do, I might have to go to the bank, when I was – I don't know how old I was, because I couldn't understand how when I handed over a piece of paper, which was called a cheque, the bank changed it into cash, because he took the cheque, and then he gave me so many marks you see. How did he do this? I mean they knew me, otherwise they wouldn't have – my father would phone up, and say, I'm sending my son down, I need whatever it is, and just in shops really, banks, post office –

RL: Did you ever experience any anti-Semitism before the rise of ---?

MM: It became very noticeable. Because my parents were very keen on walking. Not just walking, but really hiking, in fact, in the mountains. They would do hikes where you needed a guide; it wasn't safe to walk on your own. That was without us because we were too young. It wasn't rock-climbing, not rope rock-climbing, but you had to know where you were going, and how, etc. And there were quite a number of places that people used to go to in Germany

because there were plenty of resorts in the mountains, and plenty of Alps in Bavaria, and places nearer, where in a couple of hours you could be in a nice environment. But that was all out, because some of them put notices up, 'This place is *judenrein*', 'We don't want Jews', 'Jews are not wanted', or 'This place is without Jews'. And this is in 1930. It wasn't suddenly in 1933. In 1933 of course it got worse and you could see the signs later on that you see on television, or on films: shops marked 'Jude'. My uncle, that's my father's younger brother, he had a men's outfitter's shop, in a working class area. He managed for quite a bit, except he wasn't very successful, but as far as I know he never had this shop smashed until very much later, by which time he was already dead, he'd been taken off somewhere and never seen again.

RL: What is your earliest memory of Hitler or the Nazis?

Tape 1: 41 minutes 34 seconds

MM: Well, you had Communists marching. There was a pub near us, round the corner, and you could hear the noise sometimes, and I think this was a Communist pub, and Nazis would come and try and smash them up, or the other way round. All I know is that there was fighting and shouting and God knows what. I think there must have been at one stage – I was coming back from school, and there was a group of German boys who could see that we were Jewish, although we didn't wear yarmulkes, or anything, just by the appearance or whatever. And they were discussing among themselves whether they could get the doors open while the train was moving so they could chuck us out, which was pretty frightening actually, and we went to see if we could move through the train to a different compartment.

Tape 1: 42 minutes 39 seconds

RL: How old were you at this stage?

MM: I'm guessing now. Maybe 12 or 14 or something. And I remember my sister coming home once. She was waylaid by boys, but she didn't look Jewish, so whether it was because she was – Luckily she could see our garage, where my father was well-known because he had his car serviced there, so she ran into that and said, Can you help me? And so they chased the boys away and conducted her part of the way home.

RL: Did the rise of the Nazis affect your father's business?

MM: He retired actually, early, you see. I didn't mention this before. His business had been extremely – his business had been sufficiently successful, so he was only sort of part-timing, and as far as I know what he was doing didn't affect his business at all, he was dealing in precious metals and he knew where he could get it from and have it smelted down, and changed into bars and resell it to others. But I think he retired in his mid-forties, and he said, Now I can retire, I can do things I want to do, which is Synagogue work and social – Jewish social work. But then things must have got worse because he went back to doing some of his metal business again.

RL: So he wasn't affected in his work?

MM: Not as far as the business was concerned, as far as we could see. But otherwise everybody was affected. Then the discussion was going, 'what's going to happen?' At each

stage when Hitler got more power, or when he marched into the Rhineland, or he did some other things, what's France going to do? Is Britain going to do anything at all?

RL: How did the people in your locality, the non-Jews in your locality, respond to this, how supportive were they of National Socialism? Did you notice a change in the people in your area?

MM: Well, I didn't meet any, you know. I think what happened is that people were very careful because of all sorts of pressure being put on people. For instance, Hitler brought in a scheme where you'd have a special dish, one dish only and the money you saved would be given to a special fund for the poor. And if you gave this money you got a plaque on your door, and therefore no-one would come and bang on your door and say we want some money. So we did it, everybody did it, because it made sense to do this, otherwise you got into trouble, you might as well do that. It just meant you had to pay so much whether you had this one-day dish or not, or One-Dish-Day, as it was called. And there were plenty of flags hanging out, and once Hitler came to power there seemed to be more flags. And judging by the people who would line the route if Hitler came past on the main road, there seemed to be vast numbers. After all, at the beginning when he was elected he was democratically elected, his party got the biggest number of votes. So it wasn't a matter of gaining power by force or anything. The German people elected him.

RL: Did you see Hitler?

MM: No. I heard him on the radio of course. But I've seen more of him on British TV [Laughs]

RL: Were there any marches in Berlin, or rallies?

MM: Well, there were plenty of rallies, there were marches down some of the main streets, we kept well away, and the Olympics were held in Berlin, and then suddenly the rules were changed, and they approached– I think my brother– I forgot to mention that. I think my brother joined the Maccabi Sports organisation, and they were asked to go in for a test to see if any of them were up to Olympic standards. My brother did a race and he was quite good but not good enough, not up to the Olympic standard. And they said they'd take anybody, because it was a big show, so they said, "We're not excluding Jews or Gypsies or anything like that. They can appear with the German team."

RL: Do you know if any Jews did appear with the German team?

MM: I wouldn't know.

RL: You were in Berlin at the time of the Olympics. Can you describe---?

MM: I can't remember any of that. All I can remember is this bit that they suddenly changed: they changed the rules that the Jewish sport organisation was separate, and there were no games between the German clubs and Jewish clubs, like football matches or anything like that.

RL: And you remember nothing of that period when the Games were being played?

MM: No. Maybe one tries to forget.

RL: How did the Nuremberg laws affect you as a family? Did you have to make changes in what you were doing?

MM: Well, one of the things, now that you mention it – I mean, it was a minor thing. I couldn't go to the German Grammar School. That was out. If I'd been in a Grammar School I'd have been thrown out. We had a German maid to help in the house. And she had to leave because it was then considered to be either illegal or improper for German maids to serve in Jewish households. Unless you were over the age of 70 or so. I'm trying to remember when the Nuremberg laws came in. We were already restricted where we – for instance, going out. My mother was quite keen on afternoon tea, at one time she just picked her favourite places, and I think after a bit you cut that out. And going on holiday, or going anywhere, that had been difficult before already when you had those resorts clearly where Jews were not allowed, so the thing was, you tried to go to where there was nearest to go to abroad, either Switzerland, which took quite a long time, from Berlin particularly, or Czechoslovakia. And of course the restrictions on Jewish businesses, you read about it, and you heard of people disappearing. I mean I heard stories; one was fairly careful about talking - particularly while we still had a German maid. You never discussed anything other than chit-chat. We heard of people who had to disappear. I remember on one occasion, my father got a letter, or a phone request to turn up at Police Headquarters on a Saturday morning, which must have scared him to death. And he wasn't going to drive, so he walked there, and he also put on his lapel badge. It was something completely unimportant, but of course if you heard the word 'police', or if you heard anybody walking behind you, you didn't look round, but you took steps to turn round the next corner. I mean, if you looked round you might be accused of I don't know what. We were taught, just walk on and move round the next corner, away, etc, away from these marching footsteps. But you heard of people who had had to escape, stories of someone being arrested in the Underground, managing, because there's such a crush, suddenly making a dash for it, and of course they couldn't go home; or people being told, 'Don't go home, they're waiting for you'. And it must have made an impression on me, because I noticed in one house, in one street, I discovered that this house of flats could be accessed from two roads, because there was – on one side it faced onto one road, and on the other the block faced onto another. So it occurred to me that if you escaped into there you could go round and then come out onto a different road altogether. And this could be a very good place, if you ever got caught, to get away. So I must have had some good reason for working this out.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 33 seconds

RL: You've already told us how you left the country for six months at the time of the boy[cott] and then came back. Did you notice a difference between the countries when you lived in?

MM: Well, Lugano was a lovely spot, a sea-side resort, etc. And people were very friendly, you didn't have to bother about anything, you didn't have to watch who was walking behind you. You could just go down to the lake and swim, or do whatever you wanted to. It was quite clear that the oppressive atmosphere had been removed. Although you got used to it, it was there all the time and I remember my – I'm jumping a bit, but it's relevant: I arrived in Brighton, and the train had been late, and it was one o'clock in the morning. And I had a letter from the headmaster saying 'on arrival at the station, ring this number, and I'll come down and collect you, whatever time it is'. So – but how do you operate an English telephone? So I

was working it out, and a policeman turned up and he said, '-Any problems? Can I help you?' And he was so polite. A policeman! Absolutely astounding. And, Oh, he said, I've had some more boys like you, the headmaster will come down. Just give me tuppence, I think it was, and I'll ring the number for you and then you can speak to the headmaster. And I was absolutely amazed, and then I was told by the headmaster the next day that I would have to register as an alien at the police station. So I thought, oh, the police station, thinking of my father going to the police in Berlin. And it was nothing very unpleasant, they just asked a few questions, I had to sign, I had to bring a photograph with me to stick in the document, and that was it. I still watched, heard footsteps behind me, not people walking, but like troops, or two soldiers, or two policemen walking in step, and – And it took some time before – I'm in England now: these were the same policemen as the one who helped me to phone.

Tape 1: 56 minutes 10 seconds

RL: What made your father return to Germany having left it for those months?

MM: He left everything behind. He'd just gone because he thought the catastrophe was round the corner, and then he could see that things continued, laws were being formulated about 'you mustn't employ Jews, and Jews mustn't employ Aryans', and there was a legal system of restricting Jewish life and Jewish rights, but otherwise it was OK. He could go back, he wouldn't be arrested, and then he could take his time to sort out what can he get out. For instance, people who had official permission to emigrate were allowed to take furniture with them, and big crates called '*Lifts*', and people who were doing the packing, Jewish firms, they had an arrangement whereby if you wanted to send things out, yours would be tacked on to people who had permission to take stuff out. So our stuff gradually was reduced as it was being sent out with other people's belongings.

Tape 1: 57 minutes 37 seconds

RL: We just have to stop here because the reel's about to end.

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 1 minutes 3 seconds

RL: So you're saying that your parents kept adding things to people's *lifts* in order to get their possessions out of – Where were these *lifts* going to?

MM: I think they were going to Palestine. Otherwise you couldn't have dropped them off in the middle, as far as I know - I wasn't there at the time. A lot of it had happened after I'd left. So having got me out, my brother being Hachsharah, either in Lithuania, or in South Germany, later on in Switzerland, in 19– when we were in Lugano my father travelled over to Palestine, to see whether he could find his feet there. It was very hot, he said. Of course it was very early on as far as the Jewish state was concerned. But he said, 'Well, we'll probably settle in Tel Aviv and find somewhere. And so he'd been and seen it and therefore had arranged for – I think it was fairly common for people to try and – if they knew early enough; but if you were thrown out, you had no time to do anything. And this was the foresight that my father had, deciding from 1930 onwards that there was going to be no future, that this wasn't going to end up by some compromise arrangement whereby Jews might live a different separate life but otherwise would be able to continue normal living. And after '33 it

became more and more obvious and then this moving out must have been fairly late, because my father didn't leave til '38.

RL: Where did he go?

MM: Well, he was waiting to get his permit, which was called a Certificate, to settle in Palestine. And there were various categories, you either had to be a skilled tradesman, or if you were a businessman you had to have so much capital. It wasn't very much really, and then you had to wait, because there was a limited number. So he decided to go to wait in Nice. I don't know why they picked Nice, I don't know. So what they did was, having sent their stuff out, having sold off what they could from their flat, they then took a trip to Czechoslovakia, then they looked on the map and said, 'How do you get from Czechoslovakia to France?' I think – I don't know which countries they went through, and via Italy they ended up in Nice, and I was then in Edinburgh, and I came over, travelled by train to see them. And during that period there was the crisis with Chamberlain and Hitler. And then Chamberlain came back with this piece of paper, 'Peace in our time', and my parents decided I should go back to Edinburgh. I'd been there about three weeks, in Nice with them, and with them also my mother's sister and husband and the daughter: that's the one that joined up with the Partisans in Italy with her husband and he got shot etc, they were also in Nice. And so they left in '38 and they didn't say they were leaving, they were emigrating. They said they were going on holiday to Czechoslovakia and then moved on and on.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 14 seconds

RL: Coming back to you, why did they send you to England as opposed to Palestine or Hachsharah and then Palestine?

MM: It might have been more convenient, or easier, and then somebody must have told my father about – somebody else must have told my father, almost certainly, of this scheme, this Jewish school, and you can get money out officially. So my father paid it into the Central British Fund in Berlin, and then they paid out the equivalent to the school in Brighton. So he must have thought that's – he was sending me on my own, I was 17. It was not difficult to travel to England.

RL: What were you able to take with you?

MM: Just clothes mainly, that's all. I didn't have any – you were limited to the amount of money you could have. I remember that the train journey was very quiet. I travelled third class, or whatever, and the train was full and it finished up in Ostend, and we took the boat, the ferry from Ostend to Dover, or Harwich, I don't remember which, I think it was Dover. And the train was very quiet, and it was noticeable as soon as we'd passed the frontier, the atmosphere changed. But these were all German passengers, German travellers, but I felt a different atmosphere. People started talking to each other.

Tape 2: 7 minutes 19 seconds

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

MM: My parents packed it. The only thing I remember, I had a bicycle, I was allowed to take that with me as well. No, I'm sorry, that came later. When I went to Edinburgh. No, just

packed some – I don't know how many cases I had. I don't really remember the details, I remember arriving in Dover, and then looking for the train to go to London and then to Brighton. And ---

RL: How did you feel about leaving at this point in time?

MM: I think it felt different, it felt – it was a definite relief. It was quite obvious, because you'd got so used to watching where you were going, who was behind you, what you were doing, what you were saying; while you still had servants, if you were discussing anything at table, if you heard any footsteps of the girl coming back, you would change to, 'Oh, what did you do in your French class today?', or some – we knew why the conversation suddenly switched. And I mentioned the thing with the police of course before.

RL: The train journey itself, were there other Jewish people on the train?

MM: I travelled on my own. The only thing I remember was that there was a three on the door, so it was third class, and when I went in it felt like second class because the seats were upholstered, and German trains, and French for that matter, were wooden seats, so they must have made a mistake, which I checked again. But I remember these silly things.

RL: So you arrived in Brighton quite late?

MM: At one o'clock in the morning, yes.

RL: So – because you were delayed?

MM: There must have been a delay or something.

RL: And can you just describe those first few days in England?

MM: Well, the headmaster came, the policeman must have taken the phone off me, he spoke to the headmaster first, and said this is the station police, we've got a young man here, and he looked at my letter, he is called Maximilian something, and the head said, Well, you keep him there and I'll be round in ten minutes. And I was then more or less put to bed straight away, and at that moment I think I had a room which was just for me, because the others were getting up at the normal time to go to school. And someone came about 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock with breakfast, the breakfast was marvellous, because I'd never had cereal before, these cornflakes tasted - or I don't know what they were - tasted marvellous, but the drink that I got was undrinkable. It was tea, which I hadn't had before, my mother liked tea, but we had tea with lemon, this was tea with milk and very strong, so I poured it down the sink, but I enjoyed the cornflakes, and then I got dressed and somebody came, and took me down, and the headmaster had a word with me, and he said I will be getting some extra special lessons, because my English wasn't good enough, because at school I'd done French mainly, and I'd done only one year of English, so it was fairly primitive. And I was introduced to my classmates, and there were some of them in the same position as myself, and one of them is still a friend of mine: I saw him only at Christmas time. He also went to the same school, same arrangement, but when he finished he went to Dublin University. I never saw him until after the war at a Zionist meeting in Birmingham, where I got a job, and there walking towards me was my old school friend. So at various functions that we had, he'd be invited

too, because as far as their kids are concerned, we are like relatives really. So I've known him longer than anybody here, in this place.

RL: How many refugee boys were in the school?

MM: It's a guess, really, there must have been quite a few. Our class had about 12 kids, 15 kids. Maybe 4 or 5 Jewish refugees' children.

RL: Were they boys and girls?

MM: Yes, mixed.

RL: You didn't know the other refugees beforehand?

MM: No, I didn't know anyone. That school must have been recommended by somebody who knew my father. He recommended the school to other people who asked him. How do you get your boy to England? Where is he? It's a Jewish boarding school, there's this system: as long as you can afford the fees, it can be arranged.

RL: How big a school was it?

MM: Well, it went right up to sixth form. It had very young kids as well, whose parents had been either separated, or living abroad, otherwise why send your – if you are an English Jewish family, why send your son to a boarding school?

RL: Who was the headmaster?

MM: I can't remember – He was a headmaster and a principal. It was something with 'witz' at the end, not Aronowitz, I'll have to ask my friend in Birmingham, I'm sure he'll remember, because he went to one of the reunions.

RL: How did you get on with the other children?

MM: School life was excellent. I went straight into the top class more or less because I'd been near the end of my German school year and my main difficulty was lack of English. So I remember, for instance, doing French: we were given some new words, so I put the French word down, then put the English word down, and then put the German equivalent down. In order to learn.

RL: What subjects were you taking?

MM: At school? Well, I took German, and I remember it was the most marvellous exam I ever sat because it was dead easy, and I remember it was a three hour exam, and it was finished in 45 minutes. And I thought what can I do? If I leave now, everybody will be absolutely upset. So I decided to re-write it, in better handwriting, and why not use Gothic script, I might get extra marks for that. And I got an extra, a new, new paper to write the answers on. Then I did French, and Maths, and five subjects, Physics or something.

RL: What were your first impressions of Britain?

MM: Well, it was all strange and different. Well, the main thing really was that the pressure was off. As I said, it took some time, and I remember, and it must have made an impression on me, hearing these policemen's boots behind me. And the first thing was, 'Right, you don't run, you don't look round, you either go into a nearby shop and buy a newspaper or whatever, or you go round the corner and escape. It took some time to – and of course the visit to the police station, and they were perfectly polite; the headmaster came with me and they knew him: 'Oh, you've got a new pupil, alright. Sit down', very courteous, friendly. It was all very exciting. I remember one – the other boy's father turned up, and he decided to take us out on a Sunday. So we travelled from Brighton to London, and he took us out for a meal. And it all looked marvellous, and of course I hadn't seen anything of London because I'd just gone through a London railway station. And some difficulty understanding the London bus driver because he said we had to take the 27 I, or whatever it was. And there was an 'A', a 'B' and a 'C', but no 'I'. And it took me something to realise 27 'I' was a 27 A. And being a Jewish school, everybody very friendly, and teachers were very nice. One teacher gave me special lessons. I was exempt from the English class because I couldn't cope with it. They were doing the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. The best thing to do is Jane Austen, he said. So we'll do *Pride and Prejudice*, and I made a determined effort to learn English as quickly as possible. So while the others were playing cricket or football in the afternoon I would – I think I thought I ought to learn 30 new words each day. But at the weekend I'll revise them, in order to get up to a reasonable number. Fairly methodical: the German method. I remember one essay I had to write when I already could enter the school, something to do with the press. Some of the German teaching must have been imbibed by me, because I felt the press should write the truth, and therefore there should be some governmental control to ensure that only the truth was printed. Of course, who knows what the truth is - but that's now, not then. And the teacher wrote, 'Very good effort, you know, in terms of your English, very good progress, but, this is not the English view of press freedom'. You can't be in an environment – You knew that what the Nazis were saying about the Jews was all swindle and lies and hatred. But some of the other things, for instance the teaching in history: I remember once, it must have been the Jewish Grammar school, we were inspected, and the teacher of course was scared stiff. We have enough trouble now with inspectors, but these were Nazi inspectors. And so the inspector wanted to know from us what books we'd been reading. So he wouldn't want to know about Theodor Herzl, Jewish history, etc. What books of German Literature? So if you said we had a look at Goethe that he would accept, because that's fine. But one chap was very clever and said he'd just been reading, or started to read a book called *Pressure towards the East*, which is a German propaganda book about the need for German expansion. And they could only expand into the East, because the people who lived in the East were sub-humans, so it didn't matter about driving them out, whereas in the West you had France and Holland and these were accepted as being civilised nations. And he'd read it, and he said – the inspector said, what are the reasons for this? And he said, the population in Germany is so large that it must expand into other areas. And I think the teacher was absolutely in seventh heaven, because he got a good tick for this marvellous answer. He'd read it and he knew what was being said. So a lot of the stuff we then got was tainted, you know, like First World War history, which was of course not Germany's fault, and they lost because of various reasons: being betrayed by the people at home, the soldiers were very brave, put up a marvellous fight, and of course you had the unfortunate thing of America coming in in 1917. So it was a Jewish school, and you still had to [inaudible] that the books were set, you know, like history books, and then you had to sit an exam, so you just picked this up.

Tape 2: 22 minutes 20 seconds

And it was only gradually when we read on this side what the British books said, the British History class, that you got a sense of reality. But of course the Germans never got that until they got smashed.

RL: Were you aware of it at the time, or only here when you learned history here?

MM: Well, I think this expansion to the east, I appreciated that it was a very clever reply by the other chap in the class, that he got us out of a difficulty. It wasn't a Nazi book, but of course it was in line with Nazi philosophy. And I remember thinking that he was being very clever. As far as the war was concerned, we read about some German General who laid down that for expansion into France - during the war of course - you have to strengthen the wing, there must be a wing movement the centre of which pivoted in some part of Holland, and sweeping round and reaching Paris. And he, on his death bed, said: 'Remember, the wing must be seven times as strong as the centre. That's my testament, remember that'. And of course nobody believed him, so they only had a ratio of three to one, or four to one, and therefore you could see that it wasn't successful, this first push - which should have finished the war in less than a year - dragged on because they didn't follow this brilliant general.

Tape 2: 24 minutes 32 seconds

RL: In terms of what you had learned about the First World War, when did you re-learn that, and what did you think about it when you re-learnt it?

MM: Well, I mean there's a lot of discussion, now even, what the reasons were for the First World War. I think at school the story we got from the books was that Germany was pushed into it, they had no choice, you see. And if you look at it from this side you can take your pick, either the war was wanted by all sides, or the Germans wanted it and the British had no choice but to respond, so things change. The main thing is really this attitude that there isn't one truth, like my original essay at school about the press. But I did learn because then I took my Matric, and you get five subject headings to pick like 'My last holiday', or something, and one of them was 'British Colonialism'. So I picked that and I wrote it with the most patriotic attitude you can imagine, you know. It was done all for the benefit of the native, look what they learned, democratic rule, democratic etc. I wouldn't call it malice aforethought, but that was done with the definite intention of making a good impression. One of the things I remember, by the way, is I don't know if you've ever seen a letter written by somebody from Germany who learned to write in German there. Their handwriting is different. And the school said, you can't have this. Because if you hand in a paper, the examiner would immediately spot that this isn't an English handwriting. It's still Latin script, but it's more angular, not Gothic, it's just – so we had to relearn how to write English letters so they would – What happens is that you don't put your name. Everybody gets a number for the Matric so it's anonymous, but the teacher thought that with my handwriting they would spot immediately that isn't an English schoolboy, it might affect the way he looks at it, writing in different letters etc.

Tape 2: 27 minutes 22 seconds

RL: How long were you at the school?

MM: Not very long, from June 'til February.

RL: And then after you had done the Matric you say you went back.

MM: Well, my parents were still in Berlin, I went back to see them. And then there was the thing of where to go to study, so I said, everybody goes to London. But the fees were enormous, for London, double, and then one friend of my father's said he knew somebody who had been to Edinburgh University, there was a Jewish community there, and it's a good University. There's a Jewish community and a synagogue, and a well-renowned University, so I arrived in Edinburgh. I think I mentioned this, how we found accommodation, my father went back - how he managed on his own without speaking a word of English, I don't know.

Tape 2: 28 minutes 16 seconds

RL: When you went back to Germany after Matric did you notice any changes there?

MM: Well, things had got worse in many respects. I mean, the laws had been tightened up, and I think my mother packed in her afternoon tea and going to cafes etc. You could go to the department store, shops where you knew people; otherwise you had to be very careful. There were all bits about people being assaulted in the street, particularly if they looked Jewish. And people – with [indistinct] or beards who looked Jewish had a particularly miserable life, and they could be dragged away without any reason at all. And of course you then knew about concentration camps, you could read the papers about what was happening. So it was quite noticeable.

RL: What did you make of Edinburgh?

MM: The place was marvellous. And the University people were absolutely brilliant, because they had a chap called the 'Head of Studies'. We saw him, and discussed any problems you had, but he saw every new student that came in. And apparently my London Matric was considered by the Scottish Authorities not to be good enough. But I had a note from the last school I'd been to – I had some note to say that they'd let me in on probation if I managed to cope with the class, which I did. The main difficulty was if I didn't understand the English. I mean, I passed the Matric, but end of June to sitting the exam in January doesn't exactly make you a fluent English speaker. And I remember – Oh yes, I was allowed to take in a dictionary, because they weren't English exams. They were exams in Physics or Chemistry, or Mechanics, or something about a problem with a capstan. Luckily I had a dictionary with me and I could look it up, during the exam, special permission. So they were very, very helpful with any problems that I had, and the main problems came in when the war broke out and jumping up and down.

Tape 2: 31 minutes 22 seconds

RL: So how long– when did you start University?

MM: In '38.

RL: And were there other refugees?

MM: There were other refugees in Edinburgh, and then a whole lot of kids arrived from the Kindertransport without parents or anybody, and somebody outside Edinburgh had offered his home for these kids to be brought up together. So they weren't farmed off to individual

families. They all stayed together. Now, when they first arrived they couldn't speak a word of English or anything. So whoever received them – I heard they were looking for somebody to help, so I went down and said, I can volunteer, I could speak German. So I helped them, and why not run some lessons to get them going, and I did this for quite a bit. And there were plenty of other refugees. There was another lecturer in zoology, who was also a Jewish refugee, but he'd got a job as a Lecturer, he was actually employed by the University, and when it came to internment, he was also interned in the same camp that I was. Now, I don't know if you want to jump ahead on this or –

Tape 2: 32 minutes 59 seconds

RL: We'll come back to it, I think. The Kindertransport group, how big was it?

MM: Well, the ones I saw, I saw only small groups of only about 12, because they were teaching 50 kids, so whether they split them up and other people were helping out – I knew other refugees were helping out as well. In other respects – people might go down and help with a – this was when they were still in Edinburgh. Then they moved just outside Edinburgh where the facilities were. I don't know who paid for this, I doubt whether it was the Edinburgh Jewish community, they weren't very advanced or far-sighted at the time, and there was a Jewish Students Society which I joined.

RL: Did you have much contact with the Jewish community in Edinburgh?

MM: Well, I went to Synagogue, and so I was introduced.

RL: And how did they receive you?

MM: Oh, very friendly. And my landlady, my Jewish landlady, told me someone had enquired, a woman's daughter had enquired, 'Who was this new arrival?' And when she said he's a penniless Jewish refugee from Germany, she lost interest. That wasn't what she wanted at all. So, it was quite a – It was a big change, not so much Edinburgh, which is full of interesting places, places to see, and books and things that happen etc, but there were a lot of American students studying medicine, because they were excluded from American universities where there were restrictions on the number of Jews. But if they got a degree at Edinburgh, they could then practise in America, so they met Jewish girls in Edinburgh, and I'd met some of these at the Jewish Students Society, but the community was very – how do I put it? Compared to what I'd been used to, we had a very high standard of general education, general interest, these were all, at that time – it's changed of course since then, because it's two generations later, with very limited horizons, very limited education. The main object really was to survive, to make a good living. I suppose I was a bit of a snob as well at that time, because I found that the level of conversation was very limited. If it wasn't sport, which I could understand, what did they talk about? Different people, who married who, who did what, etc. Not unusual but the – it had been the practice in German Jewish society, if you talked about Jewish things, you had a lot of German Jewish thinkers, who thought about what do we do with the Jewish religion. Do we need to change it? What of it has got to be continued, what of it was unnecessary garbage that needed to be taken out? So people– there were those who decided, for instance, that we needed a Progressive Liberal or Reform Judaism. The Orthodox of course had their thinkers, they wrote books, so even that was on a high intellectual level. And here nothing was on an intellectual level at all, so although I made some – a nice couple and their children whom I met, and there was a Jewish Society, other

Jewish Societies, and I joined those, and a friend that I'd made, introduced me – oh, we met somebody, a girl, somewhere in Edinburgh we stopped, we met in Edinburgh, she stopped, and we said hello, and he introduced the girl, and he said, She's a civil servant. I didn't know what it was, I said, 'Does she serve in a house?' I was very polite, or – and the civil servant, the former civil servant is now in the bedroom or in the kitchen. And I heard her speak at the Jewish Literary Society, and then she decided to start Habonim in Edinburgh and asked me to help. And I was a bit slow in coming forward. She sent me a rather sarcastic letter: either you're willing to help or if you are not willing to help, please let me know. I actually kept this letter which I discovered, at one of our – it was our sixtieth wedding anniversary, you know and I had to make a speech, and I fished this card out, which I'd kept all this time, and I read out this snooty letter, and then she asked me, would I give her Hebrew lessons, and we never got very far with Hebrew lessons. I must have been teaching her something else – [Laughs]

RL: What was her name?

Tape 2: 38 minutes 51 seconds

MM: Ruby Ockrent. Her father was a very great Zionist. There is a whole history there with her family. Her mother was a poet in Yiddish, wrote Yiddish poems, which is very unusual. Came from Russia and left Russia to join the family in America. Went to visit an uncle in Glasgow on the way there, and while she was there he said, 'Why not stay on for a bit' and while she was there she met a young government civil servant who was my father in law and they fell in love and she stayed on and married. And she spoke Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew. When I met her, her English was absolutely perfect. And the interesting thing is she never went to school. And people talk about degrees and whatever, and whatever subject you wanted to talk to her about, she would know, because she'd been reading, she knew all these languages, so she was truly educated, without a degree, and without any qualifications. My wife mentions this quite frequently when people come up and said, 'Ah yes, not only has she got an A-Level, but she got a 2:1 or whatever.' I mean, I'm going off the subject. Anyway that was life in Edinburgh.

Tape 2: 40 minutes 38 seconds

RL: And at University?

MM: University was lovely, I made lots of friends there, then when war broke out, they rounded up those aliens who were under a cloud of suspicion, because there were a lot of real Germans living here, and there were also of course English Nazis who were also locked up. And my future father-in-law, he was a fairly high civil servant, and in fact he finished up during the war as Commander-in-charge of manpower for the rest of Scotland, deciding who could be called up and who was required to stay in their jobs and he spoke on my behalf to a tribunal and I was exempted as being a true refugee from German oppression. And the trouble was that because I was a sort of top class refugee I was allowed to stay in Edinburgh, which was a prohibited zone, because of the Firth of Forth. But other people were told, 'You can't stay in Edinburgh', so they were moved to another University like St Andrews where there were no military problems and then when the Germans broke through, the British government suddenly panicked and started interning everybody. I had a knock on the door, or the landlady had, and a policeman came and said I needed to go down to the police station, and you'd better take a suitcase with some stuff with you and I said, 'For how long?' And he thought, oh well, overnight for two days or three days. He thought it was like normal arrest when you then

get given bail or whatever. So I was then kept in some place in Edinburgh, a school that they took over for a limited period, and from there we moved to Huyton, where there was a new estate that had been built. And been completed. And it needed a bit of paint, but the streets had names and numbers, it was fenced off, and it was used for people to be interned while someone decided what to do about it. Now, this was 1940 and I was to sit my finals in June/July, and this was April/May. So this is where it comes in with the University. The University applied to the Home Office for me to be released on the fact that I was a genuine refugee, only to sit the exams. And it was refused. So then they said, Well, there is a Lecturer also interned. As far as they're concerned, he can be the invigilator. And they will send the exam papers to him. And he will then note the start, like an ordinary invigilator: the start of the exam– ten o'clock is the start of the exam, then finish one o'clock, and [he] checks everything is OK, seals it, and then sends it back, and that was refused. They said, you don't know what could get into the paper. They said, Well, we're sending it. These are University exam papers. So then they said, Well, why don't we send it to the camp commandant? And he will give it on to this Lecturer. And that was refused. So I never sat my finals. I didn't sit my finals. So then the University Senate, about two or three months later on the application of the Director of Studies of my faculty, decided on the basis of the papers and the exams that I had passed up to that date and they let the lecturers know that I would have got at least a 2:2, if not more. So they decided to give me an honours degree, unclassified, with a proviso that it wouldn't be less than 2:2, without an exam. So that's why, the highest regard– they tried everything under the sun. And I was interned from what, May til October, by which time– But a lot of people were moved out to the Isle of Man, one lot was sent by ship to America, the ship was torpedoed by the Germans, you'd be afraid seeing it on television, the soldiers were told they are taking German internees to America. And obviously they must be Nazis. Otherwise why would they be interned? So they didn't treat them particularly well. I saw a recent film about German Jews who were taken to Australia. Now the Australians weren't told that these were Jewish refugees, and they expected dangerous Nazis. Marvellous film of the Australians gradually discovering– Well I managed to get a job in the camp with the captain in charge of Intelligence. He was Intelligence Corps. Now, I didn't know what he was doing. But I told him, if you want it, we'll give you a list of the people who are suspicious. Because there were real– there were Germans there who had never taken out British nationality, they were coming over like you might go to Australia. But they never bothered. So these were– but some of them had sympathies with the Nazis because that's where they came from. Others who were extremely doubtful characters. I wouldn't have let them out. So he asked me to tell him who they are. And then there was a whole group who stuck to themselves and who were ultra-Orthodox. And when they arrived, somebody said, 'the real Nazis have just come'.

Tape 2: 47 minutes 7 seconds

When I went to see who was arriving, there were all these people– coming from Salford 7, Broughton Park, so it was a mixture really. But because of this job, I managed to stay on in the camp. I didn't want to go to the Isle of Man. And I also managed to correspond more frequently with my wife, because I was given the task of taking the captain's mailbags down. Well, the mail bag went fully closed, so I could write a letter and slip it inside.

Tape 2: 47 minutes 55 seconds

RL: When did you get married?

MM: We got married 1942. Yes. We just had our 60th wedding anniversary.

RL: So she wasn't your wife at the time that you were interned.

MM: No. No.

RL: How many were taken from Edinburgh? You know how you say you were held in Edinburgh for a short while. How many of you were there?

MM: Oh, it was quite a lot. Must have been 150 or more.

RL: And did you all go to Huyton?

MM: No, a large part went to Huyton, but from Huyton they split up again.

RL: And how many were in Huyton, how big a camp was that?

MM: There were several streets, and I mean you could have a whole story just on Huyton, which started off as a housing estate. Now there were two pianists called Ravicz and Landauer whom you may remember as very popular on the radio. They started giving concerts. Then a group of musicians from Huyton, a quartet or whatever, then somebody decided you need somewhere to sit and drink, so they opened a Viennese Café, and they found a painter who put wall-paintings on, and you could go there and have– I don't know how they got the ingredients, but I think some of the guards were quite keen to come and eat there as well. I mean, the guards were strange. You don't get picked for guarding prisoners of war or refugees if you are fit, six foot tall, etc. These were all the lowest grade of fitness. And I think we had a number of football matches against them, you know, friendly matches. And there was an internal organisation whereby you vote, like a proper parliament, like a committee, and the head of the committee would meet the camp commandant and discuss things, etc. And food, of course, was very strange because they decided we liked herring. So 200 barrels of herring arrived, and we had nothing but herring. Which made life very monotonous. And somebody thought of the idea that– we still had some money, but perhaps we should have camp money or something, because if you go to the café, and have a piece of scone or a piece of cake, cream cake with your tea or your coffee, how do you pay for it? And I think some of the– camp commandant's people must have got a– first, a bit of a surprise and then they got the point of it. Just one other thing I remember, is that there was a– they sent one load off to Isle of Man. To the Isle of Man, and they were all collected and marched out through the gate, and then taken by truck to Huyton Station, and then by train to Liverpool docks. Now somebody at Huyton station went down to the loo. And when he came back up to the platform, the platform was empty, the train had gone, so he enquired when was the next train to Liverpool docks, so they told him, 'about 20 minutes', so he waited and got on the next train. And when he got to Liverpool Docks he asked where do the ferries go to the Isle of Man, and they said well normally they go from there, but this lot, it's a special lot, you can see them, it's all guarded by the police, 'Oh, he said, that's my lot'. And they wouldn't let him join them. So he decided– They said, 'Get away, these are all enemy aliens, these are Nazis. If you make any more fuss we'll have to arrest you.' So he decided to go back to the camp. He got a train back, and when he – of course there was a guard outside, and he approached the guard, and the guard called the guard commander, and he said, 'I want to get in' and he said, 'You can't get in, don't be stupid'. He says, 'I belong there anyway', and the guard commander fetched the commandant, the commandant fetched the top representative of

the inmates who said, 'Oh well, it's very easy, and gave his name and explained what had happened. So that was this fabulous tale – And what was even funnier, I think the second story is not really true.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 59 seconds

Then when he was allowed in he said, 'Oh, by the way, I've got a message'. There's another chap called, say, Charlie Cohen, he went to London, to see some friends and he said he'll be here tomorrow or the day after, and he hadn't enough money. But I don't know whether that's true. But the other story is true. So then the commandant decided this is ridiculous, and they gave people a chance to volunteer for the army. So I volunteered for the Pioneer Corps. We– they opened the gates, they didn't want us to be allowed out to look like prisoners, so we formed up inside the camp, and the truck was waiting you know, a good 200 yards outside, and we marched and from there we then became members of the army. This was when– in October 1940.

RL: Can I just ask you, before we move on to that part, who was the camp commandant? Do you remember his name?

MM: No. I had nothing to do with them, really. I don't even remember the captain's name where I worked, as his runner, or whatever.

RL: Were there synagogues there, houses, religious ---?

MM: Oh yes, there were synagogues for those who wanted to go.

RL: How did you get on with the guards, and was there ever any trouble with the people guarding you?

MM: No. I remember talking to them, when we went to – and there were two teams playing, and I was waiting for my team, or whatever. And I chatted to him. And he said, 'Why are you interned? He said, 'Why aren't you fighting for the Germans? I said, 'We hate the Germans, we want to join the army to fight the Germans'. In fact, one of the – when we – one, what's his name, an Irish name, a captain in the Pioneer Corps, he couldn't understand it at all, he had all these soldiers who were Germans, and he said, 'Why are you fighting for us?' I said, we're not fighting for you, we're fighting for all of us, not just for you'. He said, 'You should be. If you are prisoners of war, fine, you should be interned, but you are wearing a British Army Uniform.' I mean, the crazy thing was that we were still German nationals, the Germans had probably decided by then we weren't fit to be German, but as far as the German government were concerned, we were Germans. Now the odd thing is, we were treated like ordinary British soldiers, so we would apply for and get 48 hour leave, or annual leave or whatever. Now, if we stayed in a hotel, everybody had to register, and one of the questions was 'nationality'. Now, I could just imagine, you arrive in British Army Uniform, and you didn't give your address because it might be secret, but you said which regiment. And then you put down 'German'. Well, the girl at the hotel would have a fit. So somebody gave me a tip: 'You pretend to be stupid and you don't write the nationality, write H.M. Forces'. And I did this right through the war, wherever I went and stayed in a hotel, and I remember on one occasion the girl sort of turned the paper round and read what I had filled in and she could see that I wrote H.M. Forces. And *she* crossed it out and she wrote in 'British'. Now this didn't happen in America. My cousin, who volunteered in America to join the American forces, the

Americans said: 'If you are fit enough to wear an American Army uniform, you must be fit enough to be an American citizen' and they examined him, whether he had knowledge of the American constitution, gave him lessons, etc. and then he had to swear an oath of allegiance, as *I* did on joining. In fact I've sworn an oath twice. Once when I joined the British Army, and then when I became a British subject.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 0 second

RL: OK, so we'll just call a halt here, and–

End of Tape 2.

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 1 minute 0 second

RL: Ok, you were telling me that you were marched out and taken off in a truck to the Pioneer Corps. Can you tell me about the early stages and–

MM: Well, the Pioneer Corps, the unit we were in, was entirely made up of refugees, all the same position; not necessarily from Huyton, but some had come from somewhere else. And in fact some of the non-commissioned officers like sergeants etc, had been there longer and had been promoted to sergeants. Some of them were very funny people whose English was excruciating. 'Don't talk in front of my back', that was what they said. The other thing I remember which perhaps is relevant is that some of them had retained their Teutonic habits. In other words, when I later on was transferred to an English unit as opposed to a refugee unit, if they were short of corporals or lance-corporals, and if the sergeant-major said, 'We need some lance-corporals, anybody who also wants to be considered for this, step forward,' nobody would step forward. No-one. But if you'd been trained in Germany, you certainly stepped forward. So I don't know how many stepped forward. And I remember this because it struck me. And also of course the school I'd been to had been Jewish, but an Anglo-Jewish school, with a relatively small number of refugees; and in Edinburgh I'd mixed with Scottish people. So I was in that Pioneer Corps and we moved around quite a bit and the main thing we did is loading equipment, building equipment, barbed wire, and all sorts of stuff that had to be moved around, guarding places: fairly boring and uninteresting stuff.

Tape 3: 3 minutes 29 seconds

RL: Where were you stationed?

MM: Well we trained in Bradford. And then we– where did we move to? Very small places in the Midlands. Mostly in– not tents, but proper houses. And as I said, the officers were English. They tended to be past their prime - who would want to be an officer in the Pioneer Corps? – including this one, I can't remember his name, who, thought it was ridiculous to have Germans in the British Army, and kept on making the same point. And on one occasion a friend of mine was on guard duty, and this captain came back dead drunk, and he asked me to come down and consult him. And I said 'He should be arrested', we don't like him. Dead drunk, so we thought it will be hushed up, and we will get into trouble, so we'd better keep quiet about it. And that went on til– I don't know, that was October, perhaps the next summer. Then a note came out to say that they were trying to sort people out and moving them to more

suitable regiments. So as I'd been studying electrical engineering, they moved me to the Ordnance Corps, which dealt with British Army equipment, proper equipment, not just barbed wire: searchlights, gun controls, anything that the Army uses. And also did repair work and I then– I think at that stage I moved to Woolwich, near [the?] Arsenal, where they were repairing Army equipment. And we actually had a mixed repair unit, civilian girls, who had been recruited, and taught how to do this repair work and I was in charge of checking that the equipment was properly repaired. And it wasn't very exciting work, but it was near London, and we could go into London at the weekend. We were supposed to sleep in barracks, but we found some ways of getting round this. And at one stage we moved down to Greenfield, where there was a – a place outside London, again doing repair work.

Tape 3: 6 minutes 36 seconds

RL: Were there other refugees in this unit?

MM: Yes, but not very many. It then became a British Army unit with several people in there who were German Jewish refugees. I'm trying to think – Well, life was fairly free, it was a matter of just finding how you could wangle the army rules, get yourself more leave, so I managed to find where they kept the spare blocks of pass forms, and then I went and had a rubber stamp made, with some fictitious army unit. And I nearly fainted when the chap said, 'How are you going to pay for it? Shall we send the bill in to your unit?' So I said, 'No, we'll pay cash, and I'll recoup it with petty cash.' And so we gave each other passes that could be used outside. When you were in London and you weren't supposed to be, you could show this pass, and one of us promoted himself to Lieutenant Stephens. I don't know who I was. I signed his pass and he signed mine. And also made friends with Jewish people in London, there was one very nice couple; I don't know what happened to them. They got so friendly that they more or less gave me a key and said, "We won't be home. Just make yourself at home." They had a marvellous record collection, they were very keen on music, and they said 'Pick what you want'.

RL: What was their name?

MM: Oh, heck. I thought of it the other day. I think my memory is one of the things that is suffering from old age.

RL: The people who did this and went out on these – was it just the Jewish contingent or the non-Jewish?

MM: This – Oh, I had a friend who was Jewish, but everybody else did it. Somebody reported that the camp seemed very quiet at weekends. You weren't supposed to go to London unless you had a special pass. Then somebody from the Woolwich Railway station reported there were large numbers arriving on the 5 o'clock train in the morning. Well, of course they got back in time. And there was a raid one night when they all turned up, when the military police turned up. I think I was there for some reason. The week before I'd been away, and there were two beds occupied in our dormitory. So they all got punished. That was just part of having several good weekends. The punishment was nothing.

Tape 3: 9 minutes 39 seconds

So then I was sent on a training course by the army on new American anti-aircraft equipment. And this was electronic as opposed to the mechanical they had. They had mechanical things that they used before that. The object was that how do you aim the gun so that when the shell, which doesn't fly in a straight line but has a trajectory, reaches a certain point, the plane that you've been following is at the same point. It was quite a complicated calculation etc. And the Americans had developed this thing they called a predictor, which was really a computer, did exactly that, but was very large and very complicated, and we were instructed on how the thing worked, and how you repaired it etc. And of course by then radar was being used as well, which is a separate subject, so the information from the radar cabin came straight to the command room where they had these predictors. And I remember, I finished the course, and went on leave– I had been married by then, we've gone up to 1944, we got married in '42, and in 1944, on the 6th of June I was standing – Oh yes, the training was at Bury, here, near Manchester, and so I went there and was given digs, and my wife came down, we had a weekend together, I think it was at the Midland Hotel, and they used some college buildings for army training purposes etc. And I finished the course and got seven days leave on D-Day. That's why I remember that day, 6th of June 1944. And I was standing on the station and there was the paper: D-Day, the headline. And after I finished my week's leave, I was sent down to near Folkestone, a place near Hythe. And by then they had installed anti aircraft guns and these new predictors, and I was one of the first people trained in how to use them. I remember, I was told where to report, and I got there, and the moment I got to the guard, it was, 'Oh, right, don't do anything. Our equipment is not working'. And I went straight there. Now, because of confidentiality, my papers had been taken away from me, with all the diagrams, all the technical stuff, which you need. So I arrived without anything, and there was an electrician. And he said, 'I don't know how to repair this, what's wrong with it?' And they were all standing round and saying – Oh yes, I forgot to mention: the V-1 Doodlebugs had started arriving. And they fly in a straight line and therefore if you've got the right equipment, you can shoot them down. If you have a plane, it can dive and do this. And so the predictor could predict, because if this plane is flying in a straight line you could predict where it will be in 5 seconds or 10 seconds, and therefore if the equipment was right you had to shoot it down. You had no excuse not to. And they were all standing there because they were saying, 'If we don't shoot the next one down, and nobody else does, because there are not that many sites, it will get to London and somebody will get killed'. You can't avoid it, because it stops and hits a house or building and people will then be killed. So you have got to get it right and it was the only time in the army where I really did something that I felt was worthwhile; because by getting this one working – and as soon as that was finished I thought I'd go back to my tent and lay my kit out.

Tape 3: 14 minutes 19 seconds

Apparently the word had spread that a specialist had arrived and I was taken to the next site. And there was a period where I remember I didn't go to bed for 36 hours. I remember going to one place and the captain says, 'What do you want to get this equipment going?' By then of course I had my papers. But still, it took time, and I said, 'Well, I'm absolutely dog-tired. Get somebody to make me the strongest coffee he can think of to keep me awake, and don't ask me how I'm getting on, because it just interferes, and I don't want anybody standing around, except the people I need to operate the equipment, because I might say to them 'switch to A, or do this or do that', and I remember working there, it must have been three o'clock in the morning, practically dropping off on my feet, but it was worth doing, and I got it going, and they said, 'What would you like for breakfast?', and I was the honoured guest. What would you like? Four eggs, or – 'How many eggs do you want?' You know, and I was sitting there

eating my breakfast, and I could hear the alert going, and then firing, and then somebody came and said, 'Don't go away, we've just been credited for shooting one down'.
Tape 3: 15 minutes 40 seconds

So, what more do you want? It was absolutely brilliant. And that went on for several months. Working on these– So it got a little bit easier, because they trained a few more people. When I first came I had to look after 12 sites. And on one occasion they didn't have a car, so they came with a huge lorry, a five-ton lorry to fetch me. So that was– that's the army bit I remember, as being of exceptional value.

RL: What unit was this?

MM: That was REME, sorry I left a bit out, the Ordnance Corps got split and the technical people, they formed the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers, and it was just a matter of being transferred and changing the badges. I was a staff sergeant by then and, well, it was very, very exciting time. The – of course as the Allied armies progressed, they would list V1s. V2s couldn't be caught by anybody. You had to find the site and then bomb the site that was the only thing. During that period of course there was no leave, no Saturday or Sunday, it was seven days and nights, and where are we? '44. And then the Germans started attacking Antwerp, I think. They captured Antwerp. The British Forces then captured Antwerp. The V1s. So we were sent over to Belgium. This was January '46, '45? I'd do the same thing in Belgium, except that we were billeted with private families, Belgians, and at a – similar sort of work, moved around, stayed with some people, but so friendly that they wrote to me after the war, and we wrote to them to say that we now had a child, the lady there knitted some – Except in Belgium, if it's a boy it's pink, so a whole lot of pink wool, beautifully knitted garments arrived. So I had a very nice time in Belgium. I think perhaps in connection with this film is the fact that at a later stage, Jewish orphans were being collected by some other people. And so homes were formed.

Tape 3: 19 minutes 6 seconds

And there was also a Jewish club, in Belgium, and other clubs, army clubs etc, and so when it started I went down, and we also had, say, services for Rosh Hashanah, I mean the army was very good, when there were Jewish Festivals, mainly Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they said members of the Jewish faith would be given time off if at all possible. On the other hand you were expected to volunteer for duty on Christmas Day, or if you were in a Scottish unit for Hogmanay, which seemed only fair enough, you know, to pay back. The club had people in there like a Canadian Jewish girl, and some people from America, American soldiers, and on one occasion we all decided to walk through Brussels. Mixed, you know, United Nations. And we went to the Eisenhower club, which was meant for all nationalities serving in the Allied forces. But we could see there was a group of British soldiers, there was a group of American airmen, there was a group – We were the only ones mixed, of different nationalities. And different – We just said, let's go, where are you going? We'll come with you.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 30 seconds

RL: Where were you when the war ended?

MM: I stayed in Belgium, and I was then – when the war ended I didn't know, I was in Germany, going round with a unit, looking for sites where they could move REME companies to, and I saw Hamburg, all smashed up in fact, from the outside. They cleaned the streets, by the time we got there; there was a lot of rubble around. But the fronts of the houses were all standing, and when you looked around, it looked like a film-set, a theatre set, where the front is there, but nothing behind it. Because in the theatre you don't need it. But here, because it had all been bombed– And that was Hamburg.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 34 seconds

I think I had two trips to Germany, mostly as an interpreter. And I remember telling the Burgermeister to take the swastika down.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 41 seconds

And then the word spread that we had arrived. So somebody arrived, and brought somebody else, and he brought somebody else, and it turned out that he was– what was he speaking? Some East European language and he brought somebody else who could speak Polish and the Polish chap brought somebody who could speak Polish and German, and I then translated the German into English. Very slow, laborious. And he said he'd been a slave-worker, and took his shirt off and you could see – to show us the marks on his back where he had been whipped by the peasant for whom he was working, and he said they'd given him some sort of a hovel to live in, but now they had chucked him out of that as well. Now what was he going to do? So we marched down to the German farm-house late in the evening, we knocked on the door, the chap opened the top part of the door, it was like a horse-box door, and he said, he can't give him any accommodation because he's got all these refugees, German refugees from the East, would come. I said, 'Well, which is the best room in the house?' He said, 'It's the one next to so and so'. I said, 'Right, clear it out, and I want him to move in there, and he will let me know, tomorrow, and the day after, although we weren't going to stay there, whether you carried out my command.'

Tape 3: 23 minutes 19 seconds

So, he said, 'Where do I put the others?' I said, 'You just move them together. He's worked for you for four years without getting any pay except being beaten.' 'Oh, he was lazy and idle'. I said, 'Forget that.' He said, 'Why are you interested in the Poles?' I said, 'We are all allies.' And he was just going to close the door, and he said, 'Oh, by the way, excuse me, but can I be paid?' I said 'How do you mean?' He said, 'Will you pay me for giving him the best room in the house?' I said – I don't know why I thought of it, because normally it takes me a time to think of anything - I said, 'I can't pay you in gold or silver, will you accept payment in lead?' Now I had a Sten gun, I don't know if you've ever seen one, and the magazine is about that long [gestures], and you used to tuck it inside your uniform in the breast-pocket, so a bit sticks out, so I said, 'Oh yes, just a second, I'll pay you in lead.' And I showed him the bullets, you see. And clipped it onto the Sten gun. And he said, 'Oh no, I just asked'. So my corporal said to me: 'Excuse me, staff, shouldn't we make sure that he doesn't forget?' I said that might be a good idea. 'Just lend me the gun, and he took the gun, and he said, 'Just to remind you', and he put a shot through the fellow's roof, just to remind him. So that's one of the experiences in Germany.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 0 second

RL: Were you aware at that point of what had been going on in the concentration camps?

MM: Only partly, only as far as other people knew as well. I knew about – there was a – I met some people who were in the Jewish Brigade. I met them at the Club, in Brussels, the Jewish Brigade, which I at the time hadn't joined because they said, 'We want you because of your technical –' The Jewish Brigade was an infantry unit. And they said, You know, we won't transfer you, because we need your technical skills, etc. but I used to meet them quite frequently, and without giving too many details away, there were quite a number of things I could do to help them. Because they were collecting equipment, not just for the Jewish Brigade, but also for their relatives back in Palestine. And I was able to be quite helpful because I had access to a lot of places. And by that time of course my parents were living in Israel, and I then discovered that I could actually swap leave in Edinburgh for leave in Israel, Palestine. It turned out that my next leave was just after my demob. which meant I would have had to postpone my demobilisation. And as I'd been in the army for five and a half years I'd had enough, so I didn't bother with that, so I demobbed, came back to Britain–

Tape 3: 26 minutes 42 seconds

RL: When were you demobbed?

MM: 1946, it must have been the summer. And I was still a German subject, although I was told I should apply for British nationality. But it takes time to come through, I mean, that's the odd bit about my wife, because when she married me I was German. And she was British, and her father was British-born. And he was a senior civil servant, and she had been in the civil service. So when she married me she became German as far as the Home Office was concerned but not as far as the German authorities were concerned. Luckily they put a bill through parliament whereby she could reapply for British nationality. So she is now British by birth, and by naturalisation. But after that, when she was German, we went– I got leave, and we went to some marvellous place in Scotland on the coast, which was completely restricted, and I could put down 'HM forces', but she put down 'German', and we sat down for a meal in the restaurant of the hotel, and somebody from the hotel staff came: 'Excuse me, could you come to the office, it's rather urgent. And there was a policeman, and he said, 'Excuse me, have you made a mistake?' I wasn't bothered. And he asked me, he said, 'Have you got your book with you?' I said, Yes, here it is. That's your proof. And he said, 'You put down German, is that correct?' And she decided not to be cooperative and said, 'Yes'. So he said: 'Where were you born?' –'Edinburgh'. –'Where was your father born?' -'Edinburgh'. – 'What's your occupation?'-'I'm a civil servant and I work in the Department of Health.' So he was completely–-'Do you know this is a restricted area?' –'Yes.' 'Do you know that enemy aliens are not allowed in the restricted area?' She said, 'I'm married to a soldier. It doesn't apply to me'. He went to phone up Glasgow and they put him right. This is a small place, how would the local bobby know these crazy rules? So when we got back to the dining room, they served us the next course, but the word had spread that 'the police are after them'. Well, you know, they kept their mouth shut, and my wife said, This is getting very unpleasant, let's go somewhere else. So we told them, we move out the next day and moved somewhere else. And of course after that she became a British subject. It was easy, I was HM Forces, and she was British. So that was the end of the war, and in order to get my professional qualification, apart from the degree, the membership of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, you were supposed to have two years' practical experience, and in my case I certainly had plenty of practical experience, a year is plenty.

Tape 3: 30 minutes 25 seconds

and I was told it's no good applying to Mehovic[?] in Manchester, because they wouldn't take Jews, and that's after the war, and BTH in Rugby, another big outfit, but try the GEC. And I had an interview with them, and they said– I told them– I had an interview with the personnel chap in charge, he said, Well if you served in the army, this is ridiculous, you're just the sort of person we want. We'll apply for a work permit for you, and no doubt you'll get it. And it came through more or less automatically. And in the meantime I applied for British naturalisation, but they took me, although on paper I was a German subject, and Jewish. But the GEC didn't bother about me being Jewish, and it was a very good training ground because they did everything under the sun. And after I finished my apprenticeship I stayed on, worked in the development laboratory and then changed and took a job in Manchester with a firm now defunct called Ferranti, who had a factory in Holly Wood which is on the way to Oldham.

Tape 3: 31 minutes 43 seconds

RL: Where was GEC?

MM: In Birmingham. GEC had places all over the place, but their main heavy stuff was in Birmingham. And I had no problem in terms of– In fact, after I joined they decided that apprentice pay should not apply to people who had already served in the Forces, so you got a supplement, and you got a supplement if you were married, it was very–

RL: How long were you in Birmingham?

MM: I joined in '46 and I left in '51, end of '51. I arrived in Manchester and stayed in digs, and then we moved to North Manchester, where my wife had a distant aunt, not really, by marriage, but she more or less adopted us. She was married to an uncle of my wife, and she was a most kind lady.

RL: What did you think of Birmingham?

MM: Birmingham had a relatively small Jewish community. They've even got a smaller community now because a lot of people have moved out. And that time a lot of people moved in. And a lot of the congregation are not local, not born locally, so a lot of the congregation were looking round for friends, and it was therefore very easy to meet somebody and then they'd say, 'Will you come along next Sunday, we've got friends up.' And you'd make friends with a lot of people. And I thought, Well, Manchester is much bigger, there are so many Jews, it will be much easier to make friends there, but in fact that's not correct because a lot of people were very happy with their vast number of relatives and didn't really want to make new friends at all, at least that's what it looked like to me, although we joined whatever there was available. I joined the Hebrew-Speaking Society. I didn't mention it because it didn't matter, but I was actually a fairly good Hebrew speaker, I was going to the Jewish school, and enjoying Hebrew. So I joined them, I was a member here of a Jewish Society, sorry, not of the Jewish Society, of the Zionist organisation, and I worked at Ferranti's. There were a few Jewish people there, not very many, one chap, that stuck out, Mr Syons [?] who's now no longer alive, he was in charge of the patent and legal department. He asked me to

come over and meet him, and he said, It's Pesach next week, or next month, he'd bring in some matze, he can hardly sit in the dining room eating matze, so he takes a trip out in the car, and would I like to join him? A very nice person. He also asked me a technical question about using a microphone. He was a patent agent and trained in law, and wanted to know from me are there different types of mikes, and can you use a– A synagogue in London wanted to know from *him* whether you can use a mike in amplification in the synagogue on Shabat, so he wanted to know how does a mike work, because if it makes sparks, which reminds you of fires, then you can't use it on Shabbat.

Tape 3: 35 minutes 33 seconds

I said, Well there's this type and that type. Well, we did make friends. We've only been here now for ten and a half years, in this flat. So I actually I worked with Ferranti's on lots of technical problems, some of which we couldn't solve, which still upsets me to this day. And just when I had – I was I think Deputy General Manager of the Transformer Division, which at some time had 1500 people working for them. The worst job I had was: it was decided that we had to make people redundant. So I had three redundancies and finished up with a thousand. One of my jobs was to deal with the redundancy organisation, fairly unpleasant. As somebody said to me, 'You get paid for the unpleasant jobs, not going round complimenting people on their good work, you don't get paid for that', and Ferranti got into great difficulties and in the end the Transformer Division packed in altogether and because I'd worked there for so long I was moved to Head Office in Manchester and they looked out for something to give– to do– and somebody thought of – And, ah, yes, at that time the Labour Government wanted workers to participate in the management. So I was given the task of organising participation. And it's the only time when I moved into an office which was blank. There was a pad of paper there, and pens, and that's it. You see, normally if you take over, if you get a job as a secretary, you might have an overlap with the previous secretary, and even not, you know what a secretary does, and somebody says, Oh, well, my appointments are here, this is the filing system. If you take over as an engineer, the same thing happens. This was a blank office, it was quite exciting because I made enquiries, and I found some other people were doing it and I had interviews: I travelled round the country to find out how they were doing it, and one of the things, for instance, was – our newspaper was terrible, the staff paper, full of technical things, and of no interest to anybody. And I think there was an exhibition of staff journal, that Marks and Spencer's had or Sainsbury's or whatever, for their staff. And they were all displayed, so I could go there and read them and look at them. And I came back, I said to the Publicity Manager, You've got to change all that, you've got to have a bit about technical new developments, and a bit about employment. Make it like a thing– Fairly obvious what to do about that. And then I had to organise how far can you get people to participate, because somebody's got to take a decision, and if it's a financial decision, it's hardly possible for somebody who's from, say, the Trade Union side. We had a lot of problems dealing with Trade Unions, and I had a Communist shop-steward whose proudest moment was when she got the Glasgow trams out on strike. And an International Socialist, a Socialist Worker type, who was worse because he used to give me private lessons: 'Can I come into your office, Mr Milner?' And 'This new scheme that you brought about new targets, we could do this on our [indistinct], dead easy. But why should we? What we really want to do is destroy British industry. Because without destroying British industry people won't follow us. We won't get enough people voting for us at the polls'. I would get private lessons on the object– He said 'We can't– and what happens is, if things are bad, then the bosses will just pay a little bit more, and everybody will forget about changing the regime. And therefore – So I was trying to get rid of this chap. And the only time– Oh yes, when I

was doing my Citizens Advice Bureau work, which I did when I retired, I went to a tribunal, I think DSS, some social benefit, somebody– I spoke on behalf of a client, and who should be sitting opposite me but my Communist shop steward, she's now one of the panel. Anyway, I did this participation and I quite enjoyed it. There was quite a bit of travelling around, negotiations etc. And I also learned quite a bit about personnel work, because I had to see how these places are organised. And then I discovered people were paid different rates for working away from home. And I decided that that was something that needed to be organised, so that– I think it started off with somebody from our Edinburgh factory meeting somebody from the Manchester factory at some site where they were installing equipment. And one was getting x pounds a day extra for working away from home, and the other was getting 2x a day. And that was part of it, quite enjoyable, etc. I remember when I warned you that this interview might take rather a long time, when I had my farewell party, the staff manager said, Well, this is the longest list of jobs that I've ever seen in anybody's head because I moved around from so many different – which I've left out because it would have taken me far too long. And when I retired, just before I retired, my boss, who was the Director of Personnel, said, "They've had a request for setting up these new employment tribunals to decide whether people had been fairly or unfairly dismissed. Would I like to be nominated to sit on one of these? And it's paid." And it was very well paid, because when I did it was £75 a day or part of a day, which was a lot of money then. So I said, 'Yes.' And then I did some consultancy, being sent out from some government department to see firms where they had difficulties - due to this participation work that I had done - trying to show them how they can get their workers involved. And some of them took to it, and I got a nice letter back saying we followed your advice, and we now have a better atmosphere and, we think, a better work environment. And another place I went and they had some internal fights which I didn't know about, and they chucked me out. But the main reason was not that they didn't like me, but because they were fighting before I arrived, and they should have said, 'Don't send him'. And there were one or two other jobs which I could have taken and which I didn't–

Tape 3: 43 minutes 34 seconds

RL: And when did you retire?

MM: I retired in– end of '83. So,'84 I did this for about two years, travelling around, and for about 3½ years I sat on an employment tribunal, and also, I always wanted to do it – give advice, so I joined the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and I'd contacted them before but I didn't have enough time, so as long it was anything to do with employment I wasn't allowed to give any advice because we had a conflict of interest. And I was going to sit on a panel afterwards and decide– So I enjoyed this work, so that at one point they said, Well, we want younger people to do panel work, and I then changed over and I represented clients in front of tribunals, including Jewish clients, but the amazing thing is, one client I finished with about two years ago, and I had him for a year. And he never said – I mean, I knew he was Jewish and he never said a word or anything. And I had a girl with an Israeli husband, and he'd died, and there were lots of problems, and when we finished, I said, Well, you know – She said on the phone, 'Thank you very much for your help'. I said, 'Well, you know that if anything else crops up you can always come back to me, you know where I work, and at the same time it's now coming up to Rosh Hashanah, let me wish you a very happy new year. And there was a deathly silence, but I didn't see her, because she was at the other end of the phone. Why that should be so, I don't know.

Tape 3: 45 minutes 27 seconds

RL: Did you join any refugee organisations?

MM: I joined the AJR very late. I thought – First of all, I didn't join AJEXS. I had five and a half years in the army, what do I have to do with going on parades and these other things? Then they wrote to me and I said, OK, it's wrong of me. I didn't even collect my medals either. Not that I have any bravery medals or anything, it's just really for service. So I joined AJEXS fairly late, and I joined the AJR – somebody told me they were running a trip to this Bet Shalom place, near Nottingham, which you've probably been to, so I wanted to see this and went down and they said, 'Why don't you join?' And I decided I ought to join, although I wouldn't say I'm a very diligent member. I think if I was more interested – Basically, there's a feeling on my part, I've had enough, I've done all this. If they want me to sign a petition it's alright. When there was a march in Manchester I don't know what it was, something to do with Israel, and they asked people to go down to carry a banner, and I went down. In fact, I remember my son coming with me, both, it was a rather nice project with your son, and joining a demonstration. So I only joined them fairly late. I think it's my duty. I think I would put it as my duty. There were other things that I joined rather for pleasure. So I'd take a class at Manchester University in Medieval History, that's for pleasure, or a language class, I speak several languages anyway. But AJEXS, which is the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen, they had Jewish refugees, and– I suppose in a sense if they're running homes for people who need it, or advice centres and of course some other things, if someone has to speak– But I thought the problem of Jewish Refugees had been settled. There are all sorts of other refugees now, refugees arriving in Israel. So if somebody asked me to join an association to help Russian Jewish refugees, or you know people here who – or from Birmingham and who used to go to Russia to make friends, I fully see what they're doing, and why.

Tape 3: 48 minutes 19 seconds

RL: You mentioned your son. When was he born?

MM: He was born in 1948.

RL: Is he your only child?

MM: Yes, only child.

RL: What kind of education and career did he go into?

MM: At one stage we thought in Manchester there are all these Jewish schools. He'd go to a Jewish school. But then the Jewish School was at Halfway House, and we were near Moor Lane, so it would have meant, take him there. In fact the people we bought the house from, they changed house in order for their kids to be near King David School. So he went to the local primary school, which was a Church of England School, which had a Hebrew–Jewish religious lesson, and I taught him at home, although I don't know if he learnt very much. He says he did. So he went and had classes, Jewish classes, except the girl objected to wearing a school cap, and you had to wear a yarmulke for religious education. And he, being an argumentative character, if he can wear the cap at Shul, why can't he wear it? So she allowed him to wear it. And then she had a system whereby you got stars when you did a particularly nice piece of work, and once you had x number of stars you got a bar of chocolate or something. And she wouldn't give him any stars. So he said, 'Why, I've not one mistake, I've

got it all right'. And so she said, 'Well you're not wearing a yarmulke'. So he said, I'm not going to her class any more.

Tape 3: 50 minutes 15 seconds

We don't go to – well, I belong to a local synagogue, and we joined the synagogue when it was coming up for his Barmitzvah. Except that we discovered we had joined a Reform Synagogue– my father said he wouldn't set foot, because he is still Orthodox. So the local synagogue said he could have his Barmitzvah there, and they were very nice about it.

RL: Which one was it?

MM: Holden Road, the one in North Manchester.

RL: Steen Court?

MM: Steen Court. Very nice synagogue. I wouldn't say I'm a – regular attendant.

Tape 3: 51 minutes 4 seconds

RL: Did your refugee experience affect your religious beliefs?

MM: I don't know what – I suppose there was a time when I, you know, thought about it and found various reasons for glossing over, or explaining the difficulties, that may be the Jewish belief – and then when I moved to Edinburgh I got very friendly with Ruby and I said, you know, if this goes any further – and somehow mentioned that I would want a Kosher household, and went to Shul in Edinburgh, and dropped off in the army not because of difficulties, but I think a general point suddenly struck me, Why am I doing it, I mean I'm Jewish and that's one of the difficulties in passing it on. It's easy to pass it on if you do it out of belief rather than out of tradition. So I go to Shul, Yarzeit, only on special occasions, or Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah etc. and they say they would be quite pleased with me because if I prepare myself I can read out of the Torah, read out in the proper way, and also my knowledge of Hebrew helps as well. In fact, I was quite active in the Hebrew Speakers Society in Manchester. They had a University Lecturer who ran it and another lecturer as well. And they moved off to – One died and the other moved off to America – to Israel. And at one stage I was the chairman, the secretary first and then chairman. And it sort of gradually died out. Other people tried to revive – Because, you see, the people we had were people who had learnt Hebrew in their childhood. And a lot of them went and moved over to Israel. Then I thought, there must be people who go to Israel for one or two years, take a course, learn Hebrew and, like, you wouldn't like to forget your French knowledge, because you've learnt; and if you meet once a month for a friendly atmosphere, maybe a speaker on some interesting subject, just for practising your Hebrew – The Israelis didn't want to come because they didn't want to learn Hebrew. It was purely for people who wanted to learn Hebrew. And I used to say as chairman, the advantage of me being the chairman is that I make mistakes, so you could see that I am not frightened of making mistakes and therefore you can get up in discussions and it doesn't matter, or you can ask, what does that word mean.

RL: What level of religious observance did you keep at home after marriage and when you came to Manchester?

MM: Well, we didn't have a home until I came out of the army. By which time I didn't keep any – we had no Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippour or Pesach or Seder or something. But one time we even went to Shul for Purim, and Simcha Torah, and when the boy was small we tried to do a bit more, but not much really.

RL: Did you ever talk to your son about your experiences, about your past?

Tape 3: 55 minutes 3 seconds

MM: Well, he knows – he's met my father and mother. Because they came over here from Israel and we went over and visited in Israel, and so he knows, and they're Orthodox. He knows we cleared out of – left Germany, he knows about the Nazis. I think he knows about the experiences of some of our relatives who were killed or – because he knows they existed. I think you tend to talk less than you should do. At one stage he knew more about either, say, my army experience, like the V1s. He was very interested like all boys would be. 'What did you do in the army, Dad? Or he might ask about once, or well he knows that I played football, it's not quite the same thing for – He probably knows much more about my background.

RL: Do you think your refugee experience affected in any way your relationship with your son?

MM: I don't think so. No I don't think so. I would classify myself as an Anglo-Jew who happens to be born in Germany and has a funny accent, and I think in other respects I'm assimilated to Anglo-Jewish life.

End of tape.

Tape 3: 59 minutes 0 second

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 1 minute 0 second

RL: I was just thinking back and wondered how your parents got from Nice to Palestine and when that had happened?

MM: Well, I saw them during the September crisis with Chamberlain. And they then got their Certificate or permit to go to Palestine and they had to go from Nice to Marseille and take a boat from Marseille to either Jaffa or Haifa. And they had a lot of people they knew there so they sorted themselves out relatively quickly. This must have been early in '39.

RL: What happened to them during the war and then the war of independence?

MM: Well, they stayed on in Tel Aviv, my sister stayed with them, my brother joined up with the Haganah, and I think he'd joined up before the war in the British Army, and he could speak– he was much better at languages than me, and he could speak Italian, and Hebrew, which he'd learned, and French, and they had Italian prisoners, so they wanted somebody to look after them or keep an eye on them and do the interpreting, so the British Army moved him somewhere in Egypt. He wasn't in any front line or anything.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 1 second

RL: Did your parents continue to live in Tel Aviv?

MM: Yes.

RL Were you in contact with them during the war?

MM: Yes, you could write to them.

RL: When did they come over to England?

MM: Well, after the war they wanted to meet my wife, their daughter-in-law, and of course at first they thought I was being premature, I should wait til my sister gets married, I was too young or whatever, and as Palestinians, they could come to England. They said, Well, there's austerity, there's no point in coming to England. In fact, they used to send me parcels when I was in the Army. I remember getting a superb Christmas cake, which was baked in Australia and ordered in Palestine. And it followed me around, because I moved addresses, and because it was a fruit cake it lasted forever. It was superb. So, no trouble about communicating. My mother had a friend whose niece was hidden in Holland. There's been a lot in the papers about the Dutch collaborating with the Nazis. But she was hidden by farmers, in Jutland and other places, and they were very religious. They took their religion very seriously. And she was hidden right through the war, and moved from one house to another. And at the end of the war, when she was released, or the end of the occupation, she got in touch with her aunt, who she knew lived in Tel Aviv, and the aunt said– told my mother, whom she was friendly with, all about this. And my mother said, 'Oh, my son is stationed in Belgium, so I got a letter and I asked for leave, and went to the kitchen and kitted myself out with tinned butter and all sorts of other goodies, and cigarettes, to be used as currencies. Because the bridges were down, it took quite a long time to get from Brussels into– to Amsterdam. And she had arranged for somewhere for me to stay. And I found where she was staying, and I said, 'It's a lovely day, why don't we take a walk?' And she said, 'If you don't mind, unless I have to– I'm still scared.' She'd been locked up all through the period of the occupation of Holland. And the only time she was taken out was when she was moved from one farmhouse to another one.

Tape 4: 5 minutes 54 seconds

And she couldn't get herself to go out into the open. It stuck in my mind. But that's a separate tale. Because in fact – I'm sorry I lost touch with her because it had a very happy ending. Her fiancé had got to America. And I said, Why don't you get in touch with him? And because he'd been in the American army, she could be considered a GI bride. So she got permission to go over there, and then she sent me a letter which I should have kept, where he was Kantor and preacher at a small Jewish congregation, and of course as far as the people there were concerned this was a fairytale. She arrived, and the only clothes she had was the stuff I'd bought for her in Belgium where there were no difficulty about buying things, there was no rationing or whatever. Officially there had – but you could buy anything you wanted. So that was what she had, which was nothing. And of course they took her out and said, you can't go out like that. And decked her out like a princess and she had a marvellous wedding.

Tape 4: 7 minutes 10 seconds

RL: Now I had asked you when your parents had come to visit you.

MM: Ah, well, we first met after the war: we met in Czechoslovakia. It's the only country which would allow visas for Palestinians. So they could only come to Britain, so we went to Czechoslovakia, and there was a Jewish hotel, Jewish restaurant, and there'd been a lot of Jews living there, and they'd come back and they'd opened it up again. So we stayed in an ordinary hotel with my parents and could eat in the kosher restaurant. And there even were some Hasidim people turned up as well, so we'd go and listen to them etc., and so that was in '47. And then when in '48 my son was born, my parents came over then, and then my mother came over on her own and stayed for quite a long time because my brother had been killed in an accident, and so my father thought she should come over there, and perhaps her grandson would give some comfort to her. So she stayed for several months.

Tape 4: 8 minutes 45 seconds

RL: When did your parents die?

MM: My father must have died in about nineteen seventy something,'72. My mother lived to the age of 91, and so that must have been in the mid-eighties. She used to come over on her own often.

RL: What does your son do? What is his occupation?

MM: He is a lecturer at Glasgow University in – well, his subject was biochemistry, but he's actually doing plant genetic engineering, developing strain – disease-resistant plants, and he does all sorts of chopping up genes, putting other bits in, it gets very complicated when he starts explaining it to me.

RL: Is he married?

MM: Yes, he's got one son.

RL: Who did he marry?

MM: He married a – He couldn't get a job when he finished. But he got a PhD at Oxford and he had a choice of either going to the continent or to America, which was easier, because they speak English there and he was in America for quite a few years and he married an American girl that he met there. Not very far from Chicago. An agricultural area where they were dealing with the same subject he was working on. So he decided he could either go into cancer research, which he decided all the best brains in the world were working on, or dealing with foodstuffs, [which] is something that won't disappear. So perhaps there are less brainy people there, so he's working on that, he enjoys his – And he told me only a few months ago, if they didn't pay him he'd still go in to work, it's so enjoyable, which is very unusual.

RL: Is this a Jewish girl, or not a Jewish girl?

MM: No.

RL: You know you mentioned before that you consider yourself Anglo-Jewish, but you were born in Germany. Do you have any kind of Continental identity?

Tape 4: 11 minutes 27 seconds

MM: Something must be there, in terms of– It's actually quite a tricky question, but of course with – if I don't look at the people I met in Edinburgh, which were – actually surprised me immensely: there was really no-one on the level of the people Id grown up with, but now you've got Jewish intellectuals, and people who are interested in any subject under the sun. So it's just my age that's wrong.

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

MM: There must be something. It doesn't show or anything. One other thing is that because my working life having been spent in industry, and if there were any Jews there, there might be one in that office there and somebody else in that office. You know, just the odd – And once I'd left the Pioneer Corps, there were no other Jews in – there might have been, no doubt there were, but not with me. Where I was serving – In fact I spoke German in the army only when we marched into Germany, interpreting etc, and then I never heard any German again, and I don't speak German at home. I mean, in my technical work at one stage we decided to subscribe to a German technical journal which I would read. Except I couldn't understand it, because they were all technical terms I had to learn and I'd then translate. But the main question, there must be some– there must be some difference, you can't just wipe it out; maybe it's in the general outlook, in looking at things. My wife's sister's husband, my brother in law, he's an American, and he is a scientist at the Weizmann Institute. When I meet him, he's an American Jewish chap, and I don't think the German background comes up at all.

Tape 4: 14 minutes 29 seconds

RL: Did you keep in contact with other refugees over the years?

MM: Well there's the – my friend from school, school-friend, who now has grandchildren, in fact we went there over Christmas, and he's got a lot, and his wife came from Germany originally, so it's a different atmosphere, background, and they have – little things like habits, like you set the table, and the things you do there etc. My wife uses Scottish things like if you came in here on New Year's Day and didn't bring a piece of coal or an orange, there'd be hell to pay.

RL: Who would you say you feel most comfortable with, which group of people do you feel most comfortable with?

MM: I think probably it would be the Jewish people, because if you look at trying to make friends with some colleagues at work, and there's another story again, because engineers in Britain are not at the top of the tree, even – I'm talking now not about engineers as in the papers, but qualified, graduate engineers, whereas speaking to colleagues on the continent, not Jewish, they will tell me that you are more highly regarded with an engineering degree than if you are a lawyer, in Italy and in France. So, I had friends, but I never got really very intimate with the non-Jewish friends. But Jewish friends in Manchester, one or two of refugee background, and the rest are born here.

Tape 4: 16 minutes 39 seconds

RL: Would you say there is some kind of German Jewish heritage here?

MM: Well, there must be, must be, it disappears, I mean by the next generation nothing is left. It's also if you're for instance – even from the religious point of view – because if I go to a class like 'Medieval England', where Christianity plays a big role, because – and he quotes things and I quote things I know from my Orthodox Jewish, educated Orthodox upbringing, in the class, but so and so: the position of Satan or whatever, or Purgatory, because that existed in Germany but it didn't exist here.

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans and towards Germany?

MM: That's quite an interesting question, because I remember – because if you go abroad, wherever you go there would be German tourists, and of course you don't speak to them. But I noticed in one hotel where we went to quite frequently, the other English visitors all got quite friendly with the Germans, sitting at the bar and chatting to them. I always felt that if they were of a certain age, what did they do in the war? What did they do before? If they were 23 or 24 – In fact I was sent by my firm to the Hanover Fair, because they thought it's better than an ordinary interpreter if I actually know the equipment and can speak German, and French as well, which I had to mug up the technical things, that'd be a plus. And we had a German student, a lot of them do that, earn extra money for acting as interpreters, and he was very intrigued, because he could hear me speaking German, and although I can put on an English accent, so I can speak German with an English accent, he said, 'Your German is too good, I can't understand it. And then he suddenly said, Has it got anything to do with Hitler, by the way?' So he spotted the thing, so –

Tape 4: 19 minutes 27 seconds

The other thing that sticks to my mind is the Berlin local council sent me an invitation which they do in all towns, that provided that I pay for my own fare, and my wife's, we would be their guests for a week. They provide spending money and tickets for the theatre or Opera or whatever, and hotel accommodation. And so after a lot of thinking about it, which is common, which happens to everybody, whether to accept, I decided to go and just see these places again. And this girl who does this job does it all the time, and there is a certain amount of lack of sensitivity, because – she was quite – she spoke to us in English, because Ruby was with me, whose German isn't very good, just school German, and she speaks English fluently – that's the clerk, the girl dealing with it - and she has other people also having the same problem about deciding whether to come and how we feel about it, and I said, Well, it took me a long time. How do you feel about it now? I said, Well, it looks different from what I remember, a lot of it has been bombed and been rebuilt, and I also saw what Hamburg and other places like that looked like after the war, but the thing that struck me was that she seemed quite sympathetic, and then there was an Israeli couple who came at the same time. We met them, ah, yes, we both went to the same Shul. And they told us that they were also interviewed, and she wanted to know what's life like in Israel, because it was very difficult, and they said, 'Well, it's very hard.' '-Now with your professional qualification wouldn't you do much better in Germany?' 'Well, from a career point of view or earning point of view, I would do very much better in Germany, than in Israel. So she said, 'Wouldn't the best thing for you to be to leave Israel and come back and live here?' And he was outraged, this chap.

But you would forget what happened, I mean plenty of them do, and move back. So if I never see Germany again– I enjoyed driving around in British Army uniform, a sort of revenge feeling, and putting shots through their roof, ticking off the Bürgermeister, etc.

Tape 4: 22 minutes 32 seconds

RL: How did you feel, on that return visit, how did you feel being there?

MM: Well, I didn't feel I had any– You know, I went down some streets I'd been– I'd take every day to go to school, and I didn't feel that really I belonged there. You know, the house that I was brought up in looked entirely as I mentioned before, it had come down in the world; the synagogue I've already mentioned. That's the only thing where I really had a funny feeling about, but otherwise if I never saw the place again– You keep thinking, I read about, I haven't met very many young people, there was that student at our stand in Hanover, and from other people I've spoken to, and some of them I read about, volunteers, they go to Israel, work there, they have a hell of a job trying to make up for their background. You know, related to Hitler, it must be terrible. To that extent I have some sympathy for the younger generation. The older ones you don't know. My father had a– I didn't mention this, but in his business he had a partner – I only just remembered now - who was a German. I don't think he had any great political ideas. And my father went to see him after the war when he sought out compensation or – etc. And this partner said, 'Well, you know, you had to join the party if you wanted to get on. It was just the done thing, you know, like if you lived in Russia, you had to join the party'. So he had no – this partner had no bad feelings, except that things never happened to him.

Tape 4: 24 minutes 46 seconds

RL: Is there anything you miss about German culture or German food or anything German?

MM: Well, my wife says I have a liking for some German food, but other people eat you know– And we have pickled cucumber or [inaudible]. To some extent of course it's the things your mother cooked for you, irrespective of which country you come from. So–

Tape 4: 25 minutes 23 seconds

RL How do you feel about Israel, towards Israel?

MM: Well I'm a very loyal supporter, I don't necessarily agree with what's going on, it's a terrible situation. I wouldn't tell you anything new, but basically you can reach a compromise like I did with negotiating with the Union, apart from this one chap, who wanted to smash the place. All the other people I negotiated with didn't want to destroy the company, they wanted a better – a higher pay, so therefore you could reach a compromise, and they wouldn't ask the impossible, because they knew we were a private company, we couldn't do that. But the main Arab line is that they've never accepted it, they don't want Israel at all, it's not a matter of they want Israel provided it doesn't occupy more than so much. They don't want Israel at all. How they hope to get rid of it is another thing. But basically – Therefore, I feel that even without the settlements - which I think is a mistake which I think is more trouble and costs a lot of lives - you've got to protect it. They would still not be satisfied, if they'd accepted the original partition frontier, they still wouldn't. And that's why it's such a terrible situation,

because compromise is only possible where people have got something in common but it's disputed here in the middle, where you have to put a cut through.

RL: Did you ever over the years think of living in Israel?

MM: Yes, I made several attempts. I joined an organisation here, technical [Patwa?] I think it was called. Special association of technical workers, Aliya, or something. I went over to Israel, had various interviews, and nothing came of it, and then I was offered a job through my sister, who worked also in the Weizmann Institute, and they wanted somebody, and I had an interview in London, and I was supposed to get some extra training in America for six months, and they were going to let me know, and he went to America in order– for some other work, and notified people back in the Weizmann Institute. But somebody else who was then in charge decided why should this chap from England get this training in America when his own nephew Charlie could do with this job, because it seemed a very nice job, and even though he hadn't got my qualifications, after all, Charlie, he's a bright boy, so the job fell through. And it didn't fall through – I was offered – I had an interview, and I was offered the job, and in fact I had been in touch with my cousin in America about what sort of living allowances I should claim while training in America, and all this got settled, and he when he came back said, Well, sorry, that's Israel, and that's what happens in Israel. So I think we had three attempts.

Tape 4: 28 minutes 54 seconds

RL: Was your wife happy to– would she have been happy to have gone there?

MM: Yes she agreed with it, her family were strong Zionists, her father– it goes back I don't know how long, and the people who'd been in there, you know all the names that you read about had been in their house, everybody that went to England or Scotland, or Britain would stop off, and *they* moved to Israel, Ruby's parents. When he retired she was very ill, and they thought that the climate would be better - she had a lot of lung and emphysema problems.

Tape 4: 29 minutes 21 seconds

RL: What course do you think your life would have taken if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

MM: It's another one of these– I would have gone to the German Grammar School, and then to University, and whether I would still have picked engineering, I don't know. It would have been a better career than an engineer in this country, as I mentioned before. And my wife would have been known as 'Mrs Diploma Ingenieurmeister' because you have to carry the title to your wife, she would have been 'Mrs Doctor'

RL: When did you change your name?

MM: I didn't actually want to change my name. When I was with this anti-aircraft equipment repair unit, I was hauled in to the company office and they'd had an instruction from the War Office to say that anybody goes overseas with a German name - they didn't do it in America by the way, they said Germans here and Japanese and God knows what – The British army thought that if I had a German name and I got captured, I might have difficulties. So they suggested I should change. I was in the technical unit, whether it was only me – I don't think

it was just me, and then we were notified that it was accepted, that we shouldn't spread it around except notify our relations. My father was pretty upset, he felt that I should have kept the name, and actually when I was being interviewed I was asked are there any circumstances when you wouldn't change. I said, Well, this is a true German name, in fact one of the German top permanent Secretaries of State was called Meissner, spells it differently. It's pure German. But if my name had been Cohen or Abraham, I wouldn't have changed it. And apparently one unit which consisted entirely of refugees, a Pioneer unit, the Sergeant Major would have the roll-call in the morning, and used to stumble over the different names, Abraham, Bienenstock, so and so, and then they all changed their names, because the whole unit was going overseas. And suddenly Ginsburg became Gainsborough, and suddenly there was an Eden and a Churchill, and he couldn't finish, he collapsed - he'd been given this new sheet with all the names - and he couldn't help it, he collapsed in helpless laughter. Actually, at the end of the war I wondered whether I should change it back but by that time I had the– I don't know what had happened, but I decided to just leave it.

Tape 4: 33 minutes 8 seconds

RL: Is there anything else that you would like to finish off with or add? Is there anything you'd like to say?

MM: No, I think it's a – I found it actually – I didn't know what was coming, and I thought you might restrict yourself to how I got out of Germany, which in my case was painless because I came out on a train, like an ordinary passenger. I didn't have to escape, cross borders, risk my life or anything. So it's rather unusual to have looked over your whole life, including the period here. Thank you very much.

Tape 4: 33 minutes 48 seconds

PHOTOS

1. Our family in 1919. From left, Father with me on his knee, and brother Josef on my mother's knee.

2. Me, Maximilian Meisner, now Max Milner, on my very first school day in 1925, outside Jewish Primary School in Berlin, Fasanenstrasse.

3. Brother, Joseph Meisner, on right, with sister Claire in the middle and myself, Max Milner, on left in late 20s.

4. Class in Berlin of the Jewish Primary School, Fasanenstrasse in 1928, taken at the school. I'm in first row, in the middle.

5. Czechoslovakia, in Marienbad, Anna Meisner (Mother) and Isidore Meisner (Father), approx. late 20s.

6. 1944, myself Max Milner, as craftsman in REME, and Ruby, my wife, formerly Ockrent. Early 1945, Edinburgh.

7. Leaving certificate from Jewish primary school in 1934 [March]. I expected it would close but they added extra classes to it. Berlin.

8. Zeugnis. 1935, school report of the Jewish Grammar School, Adass Jisroel, in Berlin.