

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Morris
Forename:	Vera
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	24 February 1925
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	7 December 2015
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV160
NAME: Mrs Vera Morris
DATE:, 7 December, 2015
LOCATION:, London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 7th of December, 2015. We are conducting an interview with Mrs Vera Morris. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. Today is the 7th of December, 2015. We are conducting an interview with Mrs Vera Morris. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.

Can you please tell me your name?

My name is Vera Morris.

And when were you born?

24th of February, 1925.

And where were you born?

In Berlin.

Mrs Morris thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for Refugee Voices. Can you please tell me about your family background?

My family background? Well, my parents and my sister and I lived in Berlin until 1934, when we emigrated to London. So I reckon I'm one of the lucky ones who got out early from Germany. And I've lived in London ever since, most of the time, with breaks for university and other than that, in London.

Can you look at me please? Tell us a little bit about the milieu of your parents and possibly grandparents if you remember them.

Oh, I remember my grandparents well. The Heller grandparents, that was my maiden name: Heller. My grandfather was already a very sick man, and sitting in the corner to be respected; that was the main image of him. My grandmother came from Hungary, and I was always aware of her Hungarian accent. She tried very, very hard to get close to her grandchildren, but never quite succeeded. My other grandparents, my mother's parents, were much closer. I adored my grandfather. My grandmother was a pretty terrifying person, who eventually came to live with us in London.

What were they called?

[0:02:37]

They were called Bilchovski. And my grandmother Bilchovski came from Poland, from Lvov. And she had a different accent, but... that was far less part of her.

And where did they live in Berlin?

They lived in the- near the Kurfürstendamm, in the usual kind of ...flats that all the family and friends seemed to live in with very large rooms, and ...in very comfortable style.

And where did you live?

We lived near the Tiergarten. The exact address was Tirpitzufer *Ecke* [corner of] Bendlerstraße which was surrounded by buildings like the War Ministry, and some other government buildings. And so that was when Hitler came, we had Nazis in uniform around the house, from the very earliest time. So I was very much aware of that.

What do you mean, that you - you saw them?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Quite a lot.

And why specifically were they there?

Because of the Ministry buildings which were taken over by the Nazis.

And so it was in close proximity.

Mn-hnn. And also in school, I was in the same class as some of the military leaders. It was a state school with a very, very mixed ...clientele. So I was in the same class with people like the daughters of Keitel and Nehring, and things like that. And one of the earliest things I remember is that I was no longer invited to the birthday parties of that particular group. Although in school, we were still on reasonably good terms.

What was the name- where did you go to school?

I don't remember. It was across on the other side of the, the Spree, the river, and it as a dreadful place when looking back on it, but I liked it!

Why was it dreadful?

Well, you know, the classrooms were ...four or six in a row, on the same desk, you know, not individual desks, but great long benches. And ...no books. No pictures. No nothing.

So, stern?

[0:06:24]

Very much so. The only thing that was impressively good was the gymnasium. That was ...well-equipped and ...modern. But I, in a sense I was lucky because the class teacher and

the headmaster of the school were ...clearly anti-Nazi. I don't like to think what happened to them eventually.

How did you know that they were anti-Nazi, or how did it manifest itself?

It manifested itself, well, my - my mother became quite friends with my class teacher and it was perfectly obvious that she was very unhappy with the situation. And the headmaster refused to implement some of the early rules like Jewish children sitting in the back row and things like that. He just flatly refused. How long he could carry on like that, I don't know.

Before we speak about the 30s, I wanted to ask a little bit about your parents and how they met? Do you know?

My parents? Well they were just in the same circle of friends and acquaintances in Berlin, and... I really don't know the details of their courtship.

When did they get married?

They got married in '20...'23.

And by then what was your father's profession or your mother? What were they doing when they married?

[0:08:29]

When they were married my mother was a student in Jena, which she loved. But she gave it up when she - my father proposed, and came back to Berlin. My father was already working in a small company, but I don't know the details. And when then later became Director of a bigger international company with branches in America and in England.

And what was the company called or what did it produce?

It was working in the building trade providing big... schemes with concrete, the machinery for producing concrete, and pouring concrete. And ...state of the art developments. He was

not a technical- He was not on the technical side. I mean, he'd studied law, but he was the Director of the firm in Berlin until he was sacked in '33. And the American headquarters of the whole - whole business arranged for him to have a job in London. So they – they had time to come and organize things in England before we actually moved.

Who was he sacked by? The head of the company in Germany, or?

Well there was an order that there were no to be – to be no Jewish Directors. Now I'm shaky on all this, because I've never followed it up in detail. But it was part of the pattern.

Yeah. You never spoke to your father about it?

Not in detail. No.

And you said your parents mixed in the same circles, so what circles were they? Their friends and...?

Well their friends were mainly professionals of one kind or another. ...They were doctors and lawyers and a lot of businessmen. Bankers. I don't think any of the women worked after they were married. And ...life was very comfortable. I mean we had two servants, a cook and a housemaid. Plus...a woman who came in to do the laundry once a week. My parents travelled ...quite a lot. There was no feeling of shortage about anything, and I think their friends must have been the same.

[0:12:19]

And you said your sister, you had a younger sister?

I had a younger sister.

And were you close to her or...?

She was always a very sickly child, so I was – I felt very protective towards her. But we were very close, but in an uneven sort of way.

Did she go to the same school?

She didn't go to school at all in Berlin because she was not of the age. In Germany school started at six and she would have started school just a month before we emigrated. I was told to try and teach her reading, so that she wouldn't miss out on that. And, so in fact she learnt to read German just before we emigrated.

Because you taught her?

Basically because I taught her, yes.

And what other memories do you have of your childhood? Can you describe your own- was it a flat where you lived?

We lived in a flat, yes.

What did it look like?

Well it was, again, it had big rooms, big furniture. I mean that chest is just a small sample. We brought most of our stuff with us. And it was difficult finding a house which my parents could afford, which was big enough to take their huge, heavy furniture.

Biedermeier?

Biedermeier is the smaller size version of it. [laughs] I've got some Biedermeier bedroom stuff. Yes.

And the servants, did they live with you or they came during the day?

Yes.

They lived with you?

They lived in, yes.

And who were they? Were they Germans?

[0:14:25]

They were German. And one, the cook was with us for a very long time. I think all the time that I can remember. Maria. And the housemaid was called Grete. And she... one day came home and told my mother that she'd joined the Nazi Party. And my mother said to her, "But Grete why did you do that?" Because you know, my mother was on very good terms with the maid. And Grete said, "Because he promised me a husband." So here was a woman probably in her late twenties, not married, and became a member of the party because Hitler had promised her a husband.

And did she stay with you, or what happened?

Oh, yes, she stayed with us till the end. Because that was the only facet of the Nazi philosophy that she believed in. But we also had a - a woman who came in two afternoons a week, because school was only in the morning. So in order to give my mother a chance to do her own thing, two afternoons a week we had a young woman who had some sort of qualification to look after children. And one day she took us to a Nazi parade, my sister and me, with promise – with threats - not to tell my parents. And you know she was- She was wearing a sort of brown jacket but it was- just a brown jacket. But when we got to the parade, out came her armband. And the next day the cook came to my father and said, "You know that she took the children to a Nazi parade?" So the story that my father told me afterwards was, that he called her in and said, "Here's a month's wages, and I don't want to see you again." So she demanded three months' wages... and my father paid it. And she went to the phone in his presence, and rang a number and said, "You needn't come tonight." Which meant that the... party members were due to come and take him off to the... woods outside Berlin and bash him up, which was happening more and more.

This was when?

'33.

This was after Hitler came to power?

Just about the time Hitler came to power, a bit- you know, very soon after.

Hmm.

So- But I didn't know anything about that.

No, so that was my next question. It's a difficult one, but as a child, were you aware of a danger? Of a fear? How did you feel as a child? You were...

I was fully aware that these were people who hated the Jews, and who were prepared to do very nasty things.

[0:18:29]

So when you went to that Nazi rally, were you scared? Do you remember it?

It's difficult to say what I remember, but of course it was exciting. And I was scared because I knew it was wrong.

Yeah. ...Tell us a little bit about your Judaism. Did you ever go to synagogue or did you ever...?

My parents... were very proud of being Jewish, I think like a lot of the Berlin Jews, but would not have anything to do with synagogues. They'd both been Bar and Bat-Mitzvah. In fact, much later my mother used to tease Michael's mother, because she, my mother, had been Bat Mitzvah, which in England at that time of course was still unheard of.

In which synagogue, do you know? Where was she Bat Mitzvah?

Well it was a Liberal Synagogue but I don't remember which one. 'Liberal' in the German – right?

Yes, different, yes. So you as a child, did you celebrate any Jewish festivals or, ...?

I... Not really. I knew about them but ...I, I didn't – We didn't celebrate any of them. So I had to learn a lot when I married Michael.

Right. Any other- Did you have any hobbies or any other things? What were you like, as a child?

I loved skating. In the winter went skating in the local- in the Tiergarten. There was a lake there, which seemed very big. But when we went back there a few years ago, and I took Michael to the Tiergarten, it wasn't a very big lake. [laughs] And, spent a lot of time in the zoo, because my whole family were shareholders. I don't know, it was like the arrangement that all members of the family had a- an entry ticket. And there was a big playground in the zoo. I mean the Berlin zoo was beautiful. So I remember spending a lot of time both in the Tiergarten, which of course means 'Zoo' really, and in the Zoo itself, in the children's playground.

Mnn. So when, for you, when did things change or when did you feel something was changing?

...Well as I said before, I was conscious of this change vis-à-vis the group of children in school that I'd been friendly with. I was conscious of some of my parents' friends planning to leave, or actually leaving. One lot to England, one lot to Palestine. I was conscious of the tension. But it's very difficult after all that time to - to remember the details.

Of course. Of course, but you said you remember seeing the military...?

We were aware of the Nazis in uniform around us for the last year or so that I was in Berlin. They seemed to be everywhere. But that's just because of where we lived.

Yeah, and had about a year. The Nazis came to power in April, '33. And when you left in...

[0:23:23]

Oh, November '34.

Yes, so you had... more than a year: one-and-a-half years.

Ja. Well the last few months, weeks we lived with my grandparents near the Kurfürstendamm. And... There we had an English girl coming in to teach us English. And one of the things I remember was that she had brought an English book... about a school child in England. But it was so old fashioned, that it was completely inappropriate. I realised that even at that time.

In which way?

Well, you know it was a sort of private dame school, and I thought that it wasn't going to be quite like that. We're going to have a drink.

[Short break]

[0:24:36]

We were talking about you as a child, in Nazi Berlin. And I asked you whether you felt a change, and things changing. And you said you were not invited to birthday parties anymore. And you saw there was a Nazi presence. What about- There was a boycott of Jewish shops. Do you remember that at all?

No. ...I don't think there were any Jewish shops anywhere near where we lived.

And do you remember your parents discussing emigration?

Yes. They made us aware of it many months before we left. I, we, I was bound to find out because of you know, children do find out. And... It was in the air.

And do you remember, did you have any preferences? When England came up, or did your parents have any preferences of where they wanted to go?

They wanted to go to England. England had, you now, to them was a country of freedom. They spoke school English, and although they - they spoke much better French. My mother was absolutely fluent in French, but they still - England was the place they wanted to go to.

And what preparation did they take?

Well they came a few months before we actually emigrated, and found a school for us to go to. They enquired about the school system, and were told that the best bet would be a convent school, because convent schools were cheap compared with the good private schools. And would make sure that we learnt proper English, as opposed to the State schools which at that time had huge classes. And you didn't know what you'd pick up [laughs] in the way of English. So there I was, when we came to England, faced with... the nuns, and the regime of a convent school. Which was... a bit of a shock.

[0:27:42]

So tell us a little bit about leaving. What do you remember about leaving Berlin?

[Laughs heartily] The main thing I remember was going to my old school to say goodbye to the teacher. And the teacher decided to make a little sort of ceremony of it, and tell the class that I was leaving the country. I wasn't the first, but I think I was the second child to be leaving. The first one had gone very quietly without any, you know, had just disappeared. But in my case, the class sang, "*Muss ich denn, muss ich denn, aus der Heimat heraus?*" i.e., "Must I leave my native country?" And I didn't realise until many years later quite how ironic that was.

That's what they sang for you?

Pardon?

That's what they sang for you?

That's what they sang for me, and that I remember very vividly. But apart from that, it was excitement. And my parents did a terrific job in making it a very positive experience.

Although for them it must have been incredibly difficult. They had very, very little money. They had lots of- we'd taken all our goods, and indeed my sister and I had a trousseau, you know, new tailor-made coats. Everything you could think of because they could spend all their money in Germany, but couldn't take out more than a few hundred pounds. So money was very tight for many years. My mother had to learn to cook. She'd never been near the kitchen before, and suddenly she had to do everything. It was a bit of a disaster at times.

[laughs]

What about your grandparents?

My grandparents refused to move. Well, the Heller grandparents- my grandfather Heller had died. My grandmother Heller was already very sick and old, and died soon after. My grandfather Bilchovski died a couple of years after we emigrated. And my grandmother Bilchovski had to be dragged screaming and shout- sort of really, made it extremely difficult. But eventually she came to London. Came to live with us, because again, there was no money to do anything else. And made my life, the only really miserable time I can remember. Because she was- she and my mother had never been on good terms. My mother's sister in America was the darling child. And she just made life hell for us, for a year, and then she moved out and found some lodgings somewhere.

[0:31:35]

When did she come to England?

In '39, a couple of months before the war.

So let's go back again to your...[interruption]

Yes, I was going to ask you about your actual journey if you could take us through.

Well we went from Berlin to Brussels. And we stayed in Brussels for a few days, and... my parents showed us the museum in Brussels and so on and so forth. There was also an aunt of my mother's lived in Brussels, in a very old house. And... a terrifying experience going to this very old house with a very, very stern old man, my great aunt's husband. And ...I remember being absolutely scared stiff. But we were only there for a week. And then we had

a horrible, horrible sea crossing, in the winter, to England. And then we went straight to a boarding house near the school where we were going to go. And the next day we went to school...at the convent.

And where was that? Where was that?

In Finchley. Finchley Central. And the school was at the Manor House, where the new North London is now.

In the same site?

The building that's still there. It's a big, old brick building. ...That was the school.

And what were your first impressions? Do you remember?

Well, my first impressions were the difference, you know here were these light classrooms. Small classes. Very disciplined children. Very happy! Everybody was happy in the school. And... writing with paper and pen, instead of slates. And ...the, the total difference in every way. The children were very puzzled, inquisitive, but very kind and helpful. And I had two tiny dictionaries, only about matchbox size. One German-English and one English-German. And I had one in each pocket. And when I was really stuck, then the English-German one came out. And my sister was in the infant class. And at home she refused to talk any English at all. So after a few weeks my mother was very worried about that, went up to the school to talk to her teacher. And the teacher said, "She's such a nice girl, but if only she'd stop talking in class." But at home she wouldn't speak English until she felt completely confident, and that took several weeks, months!

[0:35:28]

But you managed with the language?

Well I [laughs]... One incident I still remember. That was very near the beginning, when I was desperately trying to copy off the board something to learn for homework. And because I didn't understand the language – of course it took much longer - so it was- I got a few words

and then missing words, and then I got a few more words and so on and so a very disjointed bit of writing. And I showed it to my mother and she said, "You know, this is the story from 'Struwwelpeter'." Do you know 'Struwwelpeter'? And she got on the phone and rang my father and said, "Go find a copy of 'Struwwelpeter' in English", because we knew it off by heart in German, so I could do my homework. [laughs] But I picked it up very quickly. And I was in a class with children a year younger, in order to give me a chance to, you know to – to not to have to cope with difficult work as well as the language.

And the boarding house you were staying in was near there?

Yes, that was just for about five or six weeks.

And then?

Until our luggage arrived, or our furniture. And then we had two – two separate loads. So for a time, we were eating out of beautiful china, sitting on packing cases because the furniture hadn't arrived but all the trimmings had. You know it was a complete sort of random muddle. But after about three months we were well and truly settled.

Where did you move into?

Our house. We were in a house near Henley's corner. Between the school and Henley's Corner, Windermere Avenue, if you know it. And it had a garden! We never had a garden before.

So were you happy to be there?

We were blissfully happy, my sister and I. We thought it was a great adventure. And it was to us it was really...pretty well all positives. And as I said before, my parents managed somehow to share that feeling, and to hide...what must have been a very, very hard time.

But it sounds that they were open enough to also talk about things?

Yes. But not about their difficulties. Their personal difficulties.

So tell us a little bit about your father. So he- what did he manage to do? What position did he get in England?

[0:39:03]

Well he first of all worked with the firm, the parallel firm, for which he'd been a Director. But he was virtually the tea boy, because they didn't really have a job for him at all. He was paid, but you know, the American headquarters had arranged that they would support him until he found his feet. And then he met up with somebody who had built up a company supplying material for the – for the pottery industry. Wedgewood and, well Wedgewood at the top of the heap, but all the big pottery firms. And he gradually learnt the trade, and build up his own company. And it was always himself and my mother doing the clerical work and sometimes having clerical help, on a very small scale. But enough for us to live, eventually, comfortably.

What was it called?

I don't think it had a name. It was his company. Heller Company.

And what was it? Supplying potteries, or...?

Pardon? It was supplying raw material of various kinds from things like transfers for cheaper kind of decoration of... tea sets and things like that, to big machinery for making... different kinds of commercial pottery and so on. So he used his skills as a- to organise the trade, rather than on the technical side. A lot of travelling to Stoke-on-Trent and back, because that was the centre of the pottery trade.

And did he complain or did he accept it?

He never complained. Not to us- my sister and me. My mother helped him a lot with the bookkeeping.

What happened about internment?

He was interned. We were ...we were evacuated, my sister and I, as I said before. And we. And they got us back, they fetched us back to London because there was a real risk of the men being interned and the women and they were afraid of the family being split completely. So we came back to London, and very shortly after we were back he was rounded up. But he was... fortunate in that he found himself in the same camp with several friends. And he was then fortunate in another way, in that they had a doctor was appointed to give them medical check-ups. And the doctor let it be known that if they smoked a lot it would help, so the doctor discharged almost all of his particular group on the basis of poor health. So he was only interned for, I think it was six weeks. But my mother's hair turned white during those six weeks. A lot of the business he had built up, what with the lack of ordinary business during the war and the break... of six weeks, his business suffered a great deal. And financially things became very difficult again. By that time, I was aware of it.

[0:43:48]

So when was he interned? Do you remember?

When? ...I seem to remember he came back in September...

1940?

1940, yes. Yes.

And which camp, do you know?

Several racetracks- he was moved around quite a bit. But not the Isle of Wight, thank goodness.

Isle of Man?

Isle of Man, yes.

Yeah. Just to go back a little bit about your evacuation. How did that happen? Did you have to be evacuated, or did your parents choose...?

No, the school was evacuated... as a unit, to a manor house – in, which county was it in? Dorset?

Michael Morris: Cirencester. Near Cirencester.

Yes, a beautiful place. Which has now become a... a prime example of Arts and Crafts movement open to the public twice a week. And we've been back to... look round it. And we had a very happy time, and beautiful countryside. And lovely weather – the first year of the war.

So it wasn't a traumatic affair for you?

We were with friends; with teachers we knew... with people we liked. And, except for listening to the news, and hearing what was going on when Belgium, Holland, France all collapsed, personally it was... a very happy year.

But also by then you had been in England for five years.

Oh yes, we felt completely at ease, and at home. We missed being naturalised by weeks. You couldn't apply for naturalisation till you were in the country for five years, plus time you'd been abroad. My father had been abroad quite a bit.

In that time?

During the five years. So... we couldn't apply before the war. And then, of course, they wouldn't accept any applications. Very, very few people, with very special needs were accepted. So eventually after the war he was naturalised. By that time, I was over twenty-one, so I had to go through it myself.

So how many years did you stay in the school - in the convent school?

I stayed for till I was sixteen and then I moved to Henrietta Barnet. And from Henrietta Barnett I went to Cambridge.

[0:47:22]

So you think that the reason why your parents wanted you back from the evacuation was that they were worried that your mother would also be interned?

Yes.

And if the kids were there they wouldn't intern her?

Well you know there was... obviously great concern about what would happen with the internment and they didn't want us split in all directions.

So if the school was still evacuated, which school- what did you do when you came back?

The school- a few children were not evacuated with the school. I suppose about – I can't remember what percentage. But there were still enough children remaining behind in London for them to open up. A sort of school back in London. And the number of children coming back from evacuation grew, and other children joined the school. So I was back at the convent.

Did you have any negative experience... because you were a refugee or you were German or you were Jewish, or... in that time?

Only one, one stands out in my memory. And that was ...must have been when we were fifteen, sixteen-year-olds. And we had one, we had a lot of Irish teachers, but being a Catholic school a lot of Irish nuns and, and lay teachers. And one particular teacher - I can't remember her name - in some context that I can't remember, made a very snide remark about Jewish children and that Hitler perhaps had some right ideas. I can't remember the exact details. And one very, very quiet, very tall girl, called Margaret stood up, and said- told that teacher off. Told her exactly what she thought of her and what the war was about. And that

was quite an experience. The sort of thing you don't forget. But other than that, we got great support from the nuns. That particular teacher was not a nun. But ...And great kindness.

[0:50:57]

Were there any other refugee children?

Yes. Quite a number. There was the Kahns, and the Kosher Kahns, two separate families.

[laughs] And... a number of others.

And did your parents have any contact with fellow refugees?

Oh yes. Most of their social contacts were refugees. And the neighbours also... were very helpful. And particularly when the internment started, one or two families really went out of their way to... support and help.

And did your parents join a synagogue or the AJR?

Yes, they joined the AJR. I can't remember at what stage, but pretty early on. But not a synagogue.

And they were happy to be in Finchley, your parents?

Yes. One of the reasons they didn't join many of their friends in the Garden Suburb was an interesting one. It was because the houses in the Garden Suburb, the rooms were not as high as the older houses in Finchley.

And they couldn't accommodate the furniture?

Yes. [laughs]

And they needed a bigger house?

Not a bigger house but an older house with higher rooms. It was only a questions of sort of six inches this way or that. But it was critical.

So they had some friends in the Suburb?

They had friends and my mother's sister was in the Suburb for a short time. They then went off to Los Angeles after a year or so, but they had various other friends.

[0:53:27]

Was there any family left in Germany? Did you have any contact?

There was family left in Germany. The closest family was the widow of an uncle of my mother's, who was not Jewish. And her son. And her son turned up after the war, he linked up with us. And we saw him several times until he went to Australia, where eventually we saw him again, when we went there for a holiday. But other than that, the, my grandmother Bilchovski's family from Lvov, several of them disappeared and we don't know what happened to them. But the ones with whom my parents were in close contact, all got out. Scattered all over the world. South America. North America. Australia. Africa. South Africa.

And were you in touch with them? Was your mother in touch with them?

Yes. Yes.

And you said you were in London then from 1940. Did you experience the bombings? What was the situation in - in Finchley?

Not directly, but certainly the bombing was going on. And... I remember on a couple of occasions having cousins and second and third cousins or children of friends coming to stay with us on Army Leave. And experiencing the sound of bombing for the first time, having been in the Army, away from it all, which was rather fun. No, they, obviously the bombing sort of interrupted schooling and... collecting shrapnel was the big exercise after a raid.

[0:56:11]

Tell us about that.

Who had the biggest bit of shrapnel- had collected the biggest bit of shrapnel on the way to school.

Was there an air raid shelter where you were?

We had- towards the end when things got really bad, we had one of these indoor shelters. You know, like a cage. I don't know if you've ever seen pictures of them. Well they were a big heavy sheet of metal... Somewhat bigger than a big double bed, with netting all round and very, very strong pillars holding up this...at about so high. And many nights we slept in there.

You used it? The whole family?

Ja. Yes, but – no, 'many nights' is an exaggeration – some nights. But it was there, taking up far too much space. And at school certainly I remember going down into the cellar ...during raids. But most of the raids were at night.

And where did you find yourself when the war ended?

When the war ended, I was in Cambridge.

But it didn't have any effect on your directly?

No.

No. So when you finished school, what were your plans? What did you want to do?

I wanted to teach.

[0:58:11]

Which subject?

Science. Which I knew nothing about, but because I knew nothing about it, I wanted to study it.

And what did you study?

I wanted to study natural sciences. I mean, once I went to Henrietta Barnet school at sixteen, I was doing science subjects there. And then got into Cambridge.

And what did your parents...did they have plans for you? Did they encourage you?

They very much encouraged me.

In a specific direction, or...?

In the direction – I think we agreed on that. I think my Dad would have been very pleased if I had shown, well I did show interest in his work, but I, I think he would have been very pleased if I had become his associate. But he didn't put any pressure on me.

And then you went to Cambridge?

Ja.

To which college?

Newnham.

And what was that like?

Well, I enjoyed it! It was...It took a lot of adjustment at first, because a lot of the other students were from other parts of England, and that was a new experience to me. And I learnt ...a lot about ...the great difference between people living in London and people living in the North or in the West - in the smaller towns or in no town at all. And ...I very much enjoyed

the life out of college in the lectures, the parties, the social life... And the studies. Most of them.

[1:00:40]

Were you naturalised by then or not?

I was naturalised... No, not till the year I did my teacher training in London.

But at that point did you feel English or what did you feel you were, as a student?

I felt English.... not completely. But in my relationship to other students...I felt at home.

Yeah. Did you have an accent? No. So did people ask you...?

At one stage I had a slightly Irish accent because I had so many Irish teachers.

Yes?

But then but that was superseded by a Cambridge accent, to the fury of my sister. I was totally unaware that there was such a thing as a Cambridge accent.

So nobody would say, "Where are you from?" or nobody would recognise you as a refugee?

No.

And was that something you would discuss or you...was your background...?

I never, I never made a secret of it. You know, if it was relevant... I told people. But... I was very fortunate in that people that I didn't have an accent although I was told once that I sounded just like Mrs. Thatcher [laughs].

What then happened when you left Cambridge??

When I left Cambridge I trained as a teacher at King's in London. And then I got a job in a grammar school in London. But at the same time I was studying psychology, and very quickly decided that I was really more interested in helping the small minority who needed ...something different.

What attracted you to psychology?

I'd always been attracted to it in a distant sort of way. But of course in Cambridge psychology wasn't really respectable. But I had read quite a bit about it. And... certainly my mother encouraged that.

[1:03:45]

And as I say, once I started teaching, I found that I was- I found it more satisfying to try and help those who were falling behind... than the very bright ones who were probably brighter than me anyway. So... I went to Birkbeck, which was after school as it were. It was three times a week- twice or three times a week in the evening. Made good friends with one of the men studying the same way as I was, only he was concentrating on physics and I was concentrating on chemistry, insofar as we were concentrating on a particular subject. And so in break time we used to- he would help me set up the next lesson, the next physics lesson at school, and I would help him setting up the next lot of chemistry.

Yeah.

So we helped each other. And it was a very interesting course, because people came from industry, from all sorts of ways – all different professions and so on. Very worthwhile. And then I got a job... No I was- got a studentship in one of the very early centres for training educational psychologists.

And that prepared you really to work...in a school?

Yes, the next thing was that I joined, I got a job in the Inner London Education Authority, which was really spearheading the whole field of educational psychology. And I was with them until I retired.

And what was your main interest, or what was your field specifically?

Well, the way it was organised in London was that we each had a group of schools. And covering those, all age right from the pre-school through to sixteen, eighteen year-olds. And visiting the schools, when, when asked by the Head Teacher usually, to help with individual children, to diagnose if I could. To meet the parents if it was important. And to advise the teachers how to help the... child. And also working closely with a team of teachers who were particularly trained... to get children over particular hurdles, if you like.

And so how many years did you work for the...?

Good question. ... Well, I worked, I only worked part time. I never worked full time, because while I was still training we had our first child. And we agreed that that was more important than my career, as it were. So part time, I managed to fit in with domestic help and so on. How many years did I work? I gave up- I resigned when I was sixty. About thirty years.

[1:08:42]

Hmm. So tell us, you said you- when did you get married and when did you have your...?

Well, we got married in 50... '52. '52. We had our first child '53, and the next one three years later. And we met at the London Jewish Graduates' Club. Which was a sort of loose association that met roughly once a month, sometimes over- to see a play together. Sometimes on a picnic, sometimes on an outing. Very varied. But the whole...

Michael Morris: Lectures we had

Pardon? Sometimes lectures. Don't think I ever went to any of those. But Michael lived near Henley's Corner, so we came home together on a number of occasions. And I maintain, though he denies it, that the proposed on the top of a bus, coming home. So we've had many arguments about that. However, whichever way.

And you were still living with your parents?

I was still living with my parents, and Michael was in digs, as I say, very nearby. And...

And where did you set up home once you married? Where did you live?

In Finchley Central. We never moved far. We found a small house just... Do you know Finchley Central? Just off Long Lane and Vines Avenue. And... we were there for about four, five, - Seven years? And then we found a much bigger house in Woodside Park – Westbury Road. A big house with a huge garden, where we had a very happy time. And then when both the children were married, and the house was big and the garden far too big, we downsized. And we've been here ever since.

[1:11:50]

So for how many years have you been here in Mill Hill?

About twenty-six or twenty-seven years.

So you managed to have the children and to work at the same time?

Yes. I was very lucky in that when...when I increased the amount. I mean I started work a half a day a week and when I increased that and really needed regular help, somebody applied for the job. A lady called Mrs Todhunter, who turned out to be an absolute treasure. We remained very close friends really until she died. My son... I think at one stage was almost closer to her than he was to me. And till she died, whenever he came home to London his first call was to Mrs Todhunter. She was a lovely lady. A refugee. But had married a Quaker and become very involved in the Quaker movement. And that helped me a great deal in continuing to work. And of course because I was working part time, I could juggle with the work, so that I was free during the holidays, doing more sessions during term time, and ...[interruption]

[1:13:54]

We just need to cut.

We were talking about work and having children. And one thing I wanted to ask you, since you worked in education, what were your aims for your own children? Did you have any specific idea for how you wanted to raise them or...?

The main thing was that they should be happy. Beyond that...I don't know, I think both Michael and I together formulated ideas as we went along. But we never had an ultimate goal for them. We were waiting to see how they would develop. And take it a day at a time.

And do you feel it helped you, your studies or your- since you were dealing with children, did it influence the way you raised your children or vice versa?

[1:14:59]

It did influence me I remember in one particular respect, and that was when they were tiny babies. And you know the way people say, "Oh! Isn't he advanced?" And, "Oooo! Can she do that at this age?" And I would know that they were just average for years and years in most respects, but say, "Yes, of course." But yes, there was that period when I couldn't share the great enthusiasm about their being 'so different' from other children.

And in terms of identity did you have any ideas about how you wanted to raise them? What identity did you want to transmit?

The identity that they should care for other people. I think that was almost always important. But that they should be... happy in themselves and feel good about themselves. But I don't think we ever formulated ideas in so many words that I remember. I think we were, well I personally anyway was very ...conscious that I'd had a very happy childhood. So ...that gave me a model, in some respects. But I don't remember ever sitting down and thinking, "This is how I want my children to be." Although it must have been there somewhere.

And what do you think are the ingredients of a happy childhood?

Trust. Being able to rely on one's parents. ...Having friends... and feeling - feeling successful.

And can you tell us a little bit about your own social circles? Who did you – who were your friends, and about your also your involvement in the synagogue?

I think I want notice of that question. Who were our friends? To a certain extent our friends were also members of the synagogue, but that was only a very small part of it. A lot of them, one way or another, were associated with our university- study, the time we were at university. To a certain extent they were the children of our parents' friends. And to a certain extent they were new friends we made, for instance when we moved to our house in Westbury Road, and the children - our children - were small, we met several other families who were in the same position living very near, being restricted by having to look after the children at nights. And we met quite a lot of people whom we had some vague contact with before. And who've remained friends.

[1:19:39]

Did you have other refugee friends like you, people from your own background- similar to your own background?

Yes, partly, well, one particular one whom I had met in Cambridge and who is still a close friend. Others who Michael had met at college and later on at work. Now we're talking about the refugees. Work-wise there were none, but we met some through family connections. And the friend of a friend - and so on. So we had a number of refugee friends. Some who had married out, as it were, married Christian, English people, or Scottish people. Others who had married other refugees. And some ...yes, that about sums it up.

Michael Morris: Friends we've had have been our family.

Definitely.

Michael Morris: Particularly my family, but also yours.

To a very large extent Michael's family. A lot of Michael's cousins with whom we're still friends. And to a more limited extent the next generation also.

And your own family as well?

Yes.

Your parents - were they important – were they very close to you?

Very. Yes. Definitely.

Did you see them on a daily basis or...?

Not on a daily basis, no. [Michael comments, Vera laughs] But there were frequent phone calls. Sometimes more frequent than I wanted. And very much more on my side than on Michael's.

Yeah.

[1:22:02]

Although the next, our own generation, it was Michael's brothers and sisters, Michael's cousins. Because in fact I only had second and third cousins in this country.

Because I was going to ask whether it was important to have friends from a similar background or whether it's something - not important to you?

To a certain extent, but it's not of major importance, no.

Which leads me to the next question. How would you define yourself in terms of your own identity today?

I would define myself as British as opposed to English. And British with a different background from the 'strictly' British. There's always the underlying little bit. I'm not quite like others.

In which way?

In which way? I want notice of that question.

How do you see yourself as different?

[pause] An awareness of my own history.

And what to you is the most important part of that German Jewish history?

Well, having had the experience of this ...very profound change, which I consider was a change for the better. And I think, through that, feeling more empathy with other people who had the same sort of experience for whatever reason.

And how do you think did it affect you in the long term, this uprooting at a young age, and change of culture?

[1:25:00]

That I can't answer.

Or to turn the question around, how do you imagine your life, how different would it have been if you had not been forced to leave Germany?

Had we- had life continued as I think it was, and I stress, I think it was, before the 30s... or before the mid-30s, I would have been less aware of problems in the world in general, and in... and the existence of people living in poverty, people living under stress. In other words, emphasising to only a, a limited extent the people living a very different kind of life from my own. Which doesn't mean to say that I do a lot about it. But I can envisage what life must be like for a lot of other people.

[1:27:08]

Is there anything, when you think about Berlin, anything you miss at all? Which leads me to the next questions, which is: have you been back to Berlin?

Only once. For many years, I didn't want to consider all the invitations from the Mayor of Berlin to go to see and feast, and generally be treated as an honoured guest. I couldn't face that idea at all. But... some years ago when we were on a group journey to various places in Germany, ending up in Berlin, I was glad of the opportunity. And in fact, when I got there, I found that it was – it had no emotional impact at all. I was pleased to see some of the places I recognised. I wouldn't mind at all going back again for longer, but...as I say, it had no emotional impact.

Did you go and visit your house, or...?

I visited the corner where it used to stand. Did not go - I think I would have recognised the street in which the school was. We went to the area where my grandparents lived, although I didn't remember the exact address. And I was very disappointed about one thing, and that was the Nefertiti statue, because she was moving house at the time. And she had been my first imitation of beauty in human beings, when seeing that statue when I was I suppose seven or eight. And I was really looking forward to seeing that and we couldn't.

[1:29:44]

Where was it when you left, where was it?

It was in one of the museums; I can't remember which.

So you couldn't find her.

It wasn't that I couldn't find her, but she was moving house; she was moving back to her original- one of the big Berlin museums. But I can't remember off hand which one it was.

So that was one of the things you wanted to do when you went back.

That was one of the things I particularly wanted to do.

What other things did you want to do?

Well the other thing that we did was that we went to the area where we used to live and we went to the Tiergarten in particular. And that was really the only ambitions I had before we went, of what I wanted to do.

And like you said, it wasn't – you were not – it wasn't upsetting or...?

No. Much to my surprise. I didn't find it upsetting.

And how to do you feel about Germany today? How do you...?

[1:31:00]

I feel that the Germans are really working to face up to what happened. And I appreciate that. I'm sure it's not true of all of them, but some definitely are. Through Michael's work, when he was having to work with German trade delegations and things like that in the Civil Service, we on several occasions met German couples of our own age, socially. And a number of times, I became aware of their struggles. Michael would always say on these occasions, "Of course, my wife used to live in Germany."

Michael Morris: "...was born in Berlin."

Was born in Berlin, and the message was clear. And on more than one occasion people came up to me afterwards after the formal part of the event whatever it was, wanting to talk.

Wanting on one occasion to say... how they were struggling. On another occasion, having a long discussion about the book, 'Hitler and the Pink Rabbit', and things like that. And that made- convinced me that there was a lot going on. People of our generation really struggling, as they've shown in their action too. Not the least of which is that I get a pension.

Yeah. Do you still speak German with anyone?

Surprisingly I find that if I have to, if I'm, if we're abroad or something, I understand a lot. I find it difficult to read the newspapers, I have to do that, because of these ghastly words that they use - you know they compound words. But speaking is limited, the vocabulary I have is the vocabulary of an eight-year-old or a nine-year-old. So I can carry on an ordinary conversation, in probably very old-fashioned German. Although I have not used German to any length at all for... getting on for eighty years. Because in, at home my parents made it a policy that as soon as my sister and I started talking English with each other, we only spoke English at home. It gave them the chance to improve their English, and they saw no point in our continuing to speak German

[1:34:40]

So in the house you spoke German with your parents?

At home we spoke German.

English! Sorry. English.

Yes, we're both getting into a muddle. We spoke English.

And your parents, did they speak...?

They spoke English with us.

And together?

Together, it depended on the circumstances. Certainly I mean their- they were very literate in German - in English - although they had an accent, but they were fluent and grammatically correct. Isn't that right?

Michael Morris: Pretty good. They had an accent.

They had an accent, yes. Which I didn't notice, of course.

No. Is there anything – we have discussed many things – which you would like to add, which we haven't discussed yet?

Well... I'm sorry I can't– my mind is racing and I can't think of anything at the moment.

So I think what we'll do, we'll just take a break now and we're going to ask your daughter to join us and we'll just film a little bit of a conversation with you and her.

Very good.

Vera could you please introduce the person sitting on your left?

Aviva is our daughter, the older of our two children. Her full name is Aviva Judith Shavitz and she lives in Edgware. And we're fortunate because we live near each other because we chose to live near each other, we can see a lot of each other. Which certainly nowadays is entirely to our benefit.

OK, Aviva if you wanted to add some things that might trigger your Mother's memory?

Aviva: Yes, I was going to ask you Mum if you can remember about being the first person in the family to fly in an aeroplane?

[1:37:08]

Yes, this was when Hitler had the bright idea of popularising aeroplanes, and flying in general. And there was a scheme to take school children for short flights for a pittance. And our teacher arranged for some in our class, whose parents agreed to it, etc., etc., etc., to be allowed to do this. So off we went to the airport in the middle of Berlin. I can't remember what it was called. And a plane took us round the area where we lived. I suppose it was a ten-minute flight, if that. But the result was that I was the first person in the family to have flown in an aeroplane. And it was very exciting!

Aviva: Thanks to Hitler.

Thanks to Hitler.

Aviva: And I also, we were talking at lunch about how you used to stay sometimes with Aunt Ulla near Hamburg on their country estate ... and you told us about what went on there.

Yes, this was my mother's first cousin. They were brought up almost as sisters. And she was married into a family which was very well off indeed. And they lived in Hamburg and had a big estate in- outside Hamburg. A place called Lauenburg. And we spent several holidays there. Including one while, at the time when my parents were organising things for our move to London. And during that time, a girl arrived, much the same age as I was. And we were told that we were not to talk about this girl. We could play with her of course and we could talk to her, but we were not to talk to anybody else about her. It was all very hush-hush. And we were told how much I don't know, but I do know that her father had had to flee, because he was a Jewish Deputy Principal of the German, of the equivalent of the Met Police in Berlin. Which was of course a very unusual position for a Jew to be in. And he had had to go. It was called the *Grüne Grenze*; he had to hop over the *Grüne Grenze* - the Green Border, i.e. the secret ways out of Germany. And this girl arrived and she stayed with us, and she was still there when Doris and I went back to Berlin. And she eventually came to Berlin herself. And we met up with her again, and we were in touch for many years.

Aviva: She came to England.

[1:40:35]

She came to England, sorry. I said Germany.

And how long did you stay there while your parents were preparing? How long...?

Oh, about four or five weeks or so. And I remember one thing about it that my older cousin Beate took me aside one day and said, "I'm not supposed to tell you this but you know, you're going to move to England." And I could honestly tell her, "Well, I knew anyway." It was nice to be able to tell a much older cousin. [laughs]

Aviva: And I was always told that your parents decided they were going to leave Germany very soon after Hitler came to power, but it took them quite a long time to find a country that would take them. And that before they were given the opportunity to come to England, they were offered a way of travelling to India. Do you remember anything about that?

Do you know I don't remember anything about that at all? All I remember was that they were not surprised, but very upset when the results came through about the election of Hitler, and the burning of the Reichstag, and those events. Even I, as a young child, was aware that this, that both of these events were very worrying, shocking events. And that after that, they planned to move from Germany, as quickly as possible.

Do you think that because of where you lived that your parents were forced even quicker into a decision, because they were so close to the...?

[1:42:18]

I've often wondered about that but I think- Well it must have had some effect, but they were both, I gathered from conversations long after, they were both aware of the underlying anti-Semitism in Germany. And ...that that was really the, the main factor in their... pessimism, which was by no means shared by everybody. Because a lot of people at the time, as one can read in... a lot of accounts, were still saying that Hitler was only a temporary blip. And of course... my parents and a lot of - I'm sure - their friends, hugely admired a great many of the old German writers, philosophers, artists, musicians – what you will. So to go from that and say that Hitler couldn't possibly succeed in the long run was a very natural reaction with a lot of people, which they did not share.

Aviva: You may have covered some of this before, but two things strike me from the period when you'd come to London right through to the end of the Second World War. One was, you talked about how hard it was for grandma when grandpa was interned. I don't know whether you talked about that?

We talked about that a bit in that she turned white in a very short time - overnight as it were. It was a terrible time.

Aviva: And the other thing was, you have spoken to me – and again, you may have said this - about how, despite the fact that your parents were having a very tough time, were worried not only about everything, but about money because grandpa was unemployed for much of the war, but that you never felt that, or hardly felt that; they managed to give you a sense of security which you really admired them for once you'd grown up.

Yes, well I did talk about that before, but I can't stress it too much, that they gave us a wonderful childhood in spite of, I could only start to appreciate it when I grew up how hard things would have been for them. I do remember one thing. I was aware of how much they missed going to the theatre and concerts, because in Germany that had been very much a - a hobby. And I remember being able to scrape together enough pocket money... to get in secret somehow, Doris and I between us, managed to get tickets for them to go to the Old Vic to see a Shakespeare performance. And I think that was the first time since they'd come to England, so it must have been several years after they came.

[1:45:55]

What happened to your sister actually? You didn't tell us. Did she stay in England?

She stayed in England. She unfortunately died very young. As I think I mentioned she was always a sickly delicate person. And she died... in her forties.

I wanted to ask you both whether, first of all whether you spoke about your history with your children, and second of all how it was growing up with that sense of history. But based on your questions it seems that you know quite a lot.

Aviva: Yes.

Sorry- the first one, did I talk about...?

Did you talk about... your past?

Yes, indeed! I hope I didn't run it down your throats, but I thought it was important that they should know, as a bit of their own history and... as my history. And my parents, who were very actively your grandparents.

Aviva: I think— I think it was my grandparents who talked an awful lot about – about life in Germany. They didn't particularly dwell on the Nazi era. But about their life in Germany, and then how it was when they came to England. So they probably talked a lot more about it than you did. Yes.

So you grew up with knowing that history?

Aviva: Yes, I mean I did get a bit confused sometimes, but... [they laugh] Do you want me to give you an example?

Yes, please.

Aviva: I don't know if you remember this, but family on my Dad's side - I must have been about ten; I can't remember exactly how old - they got an au pair. And the au pair didn't work out. And they were about to have a new baby, so at the last minute, they took an au pair from Berlin. And the family were all together in our house for an event. And there was much discussion going on about the fact that people from my Dad's family were having a German au pair. And it was seen very negatively. It was a desperate thing, because the first au pair hadn't worked out. And everybody was very critical. They didn't want this to happen. And I was quite confused and I knew that you came from Berlin. And I knew this au pair was coming from Berlin and I thought, "Well if they're so critical about this au pair, what did they think about when Mum married in to the family? Were you also one of these bad people from Berlin?" So I did get quite confused. So I remember that. [personal comment between Aviva and Vera] Another thing I wrote down from my memories was that my grandmother, your mother, was quite a tense person. She could get very tense. And they tended to worry a lot about things... and expressed their worry. Whereas I think Dad's side of the family, they also worried, but they didn't express it so much. And I remember we used to pop in a lot to see them, 'because we lived quite nearby. And I remember going round, and there was some worrying news item, and the first thing my grandmother said on the doorstep, was to tell Mum about this news item that she'd heard on the radio. And I remember you saying to them,

“Hitler is dead.” And I remember you used to say that quite often, [all laugh] when they got worked up about something. And... And it was that sort of atmosphere of taking any problem that came along and getting very upset and worried about it. Which as an adult, I wonder if that was due to their experiences and what they’d been through.

[1:49:45]

Yes, but interestingly, that only started - their expressing it - after I was grown up.

Aviva: OK.

And perhaps when they were older themselves, when they had more time.

Yes, quite. Yeah.

Thank you very much. Thank you Aviva. Thank you very much. We will now stop and then look at some photos. Thank you.

Mn-hnn.

So the last question I’ve got for you is whether you have a message for anyone of future generations who is going to watch this interview?

I think the message would be ‘Lest we forget.’ That...turning it slightly to a different aspect is that I was acutely aware of what was going on in Germany, because of my own history. Take one example this is diverting from your actual question a bit. I remember on one occasion talking to a teacher at Henrietta Barnett, within a group setting, and telling her a few of the things that I knew were facts that were going on in Germany. And she, making it quite clear that she didn’t believe me. Now, that made me feel that there was a tremendous importance in making- in doing what I could to make people aware, and nowadays to make people remember what had gone on. That it is possible... that such things can happen in civilised society.

Thank you very much for this interview and sharing your life story with us. And we are now going to look at your photographs. Thank you.

Thank you for a sensitive interview.

[1:52:38]

[End of interview]

[Start of Photographs]

[1:52:52]

Yes, please.

This is my family, my great-grandmother's family who lived in Lemberg, Lvov, and my grandmother is the girl on the right in the back row. Two girls in the back row, and she's the one on the right. Her sister Dola is the one kneeling in the front.

Aviva: No, that's Zinnia.

Zinnia. I beg your pardon. Her sister Dola is next to her, and she's the one who came to England as well, and whom I knew quite well.

And what was the family name? This family?

Thom.

No, of this family?

The name of the family was Thom.

Aviva: T H O M. That was their family name: Thom - Thom.

Oh, but I meant of the grandmother.

The grandmother was called Klara Thom and then became Klara Bilchovski when she was married. And the- A lot of the children were Leon, Leone, Leonora, Leoni; my mother was Leoni and my second name is Leoni.

Aviva: And you were all named after – the older man sitting in the middle is your great-grandfather.

Yes, he was Leon Thom.

This is a picture of the family in the summer holiday at the seaside, in Heringsdorf where we went several years. The people in the basket chair are my grandmother on the right, and her cousin Jula on the left.

Aviva: No, this is grandma and Jula. The little girls.

Sorry, can we start again?

Yes, please.

Start again. This is a picture of the family during their summer holiday at the seaside in Heringsdorf. The family went there for many years, and I remember going there as a small child. Now the picture is of my great grandmother sitting in the basket chair on the right. My great-grandfather, standing on the left, and their cousins... whom I don't know, the other adults. The children are my mother - my mother on the right, and my cousin - her cousin on the left of the two little girls. In the front.

[1:56:20]

These are my Heller grandparents, i.e. my father's parents. My grandfather Emil and my grandmother Alice. Alice came from Budapest. Emil's family had been in Germany for several generations. They lived in Berlin where this photograph was taken.

This is picture of myself as a year old, being held by my mother.

In Berlin, in our flat.

A picture of myself, aged four, almost certainly taken by my aunt Lily, my mother's sister, who was a professional photographer and took a great many of the family photos.

And what was her studio called? What did she call herself?

This would - She worked from home, and as an older child I was allowed to help her when she was developing her photographs. And I loved doing that.

Aviva: Her name was Lily Bilchovski.

A picture of me and my sister Doris. I guess I must have been about five and she must have been coming up three. The picture was almost certainly taken by my Aunt Lily – Lily Stegen who became a professional photographer. And the dress, the smocking on the dress was almost certainly done by my mother who made a lot of our dresses. Which was not at all the thing for ladies to do, but she loved making dresses for us.

This picture is again of Heringsdorf with me and my father. I remember many happy holidays there. I would think in '36... No, earlier –'24, '26.

[1:59:04]

My mother and father at a picnic, but I don't know when and I don't know where. However, it must have been in the... early 30s.

A picture of my sister and myself on our balcony in Berlin during the winter of 1933.

And what was the address please?

Bendlerstraße Ecke Lützowufer.

That's a picture of myself with a group of my classmates in 1930-31 it would be, with our teacher Fräulein Backwitz. Fräulein Backwitz used to take us on outings occasionally. Once

even to a residential sort of hostel for three or four days which was very exciting. This picture would have been taken either in the Grunewald or Wannsee but I don't remember what location.

And where are you in the picture?

I'm somewhere in the, amongst those children on the right. I can't tell. If you let me have a look at the picture, I can tell you exactly. [Bea: That's fine. Thank you.]

A picture of myself and my younger sister Doris, taken in 1936 in our garden, in London. And I remember that shirt with the peter pan collar. It had been made for me especially in Germany before we left. And it was meant to be part of my school uniform, but of course the school uniform was with the ordinary white shirt. And having to wear this peter pan collar with my tunic was a decided embarrassment for many, many months.

This picture was taken I think when I was in my 20s, but I don't remember any details about it.

This is my one and only wedding photograph. West Hampstead Synagogue on the 31st of April...

Aviva: March.

Sorry, the 31st of March, 1952.

And what is the name of your husband please?

[2:02:18]

My husband is called Michael, Michael Morris, and since then I've been Vera Morris. The girl behind, peeping out between the two of us, is Michael's sister Sasha, whom we see quite frequently. The boy peeping out behind in this picture is Peter, Michael's brother, and Alec, Michael's stepfather.

This is August 1956, in Finchley, in Vines Avenue, which was our first home, and Michael is holding our baby Noah, and I'm holding our daughter Aviva.

A picture of the family taken just after our silver wedding—

Aviva: Diamond.

Sorry start again, can we? ...A picture of our family taken just after our golden- [small interruption] ...sorry- diamond wedding anniversary, in '63, in Aviva's house. And people on it are Michael and I in the middle and our children and our grand-children. It was a very, very happy occasion, when we were all together, which doesn't happen very often.

Aviva: And it was in 2012.

Yes.

This was taken on the occasion of the wedding of our grand-daughter Zoa, taken at Kibbutz Tzora where our son Noah and his family live. And the picture shows our two great-grandchildren. The older one on the right is Ella – sorry, is Emma, who lives in the Arava, just north of Kibbutz Tzora. And Michael is holding Ella, who is only a few months old on the occasion of her parents' wedding. The date was 2015, in ...June was it? June. That's right.

Mrs Morris, thank you again for this interview.

I'm so sorry about all the muddle of dates, but that is not as it used to be.

It doesn't matter at all. Thank you.

[End of photographs]

[2:05:25]