

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Forename:	Ernest
Interviewee Sex:	Male
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Interviewee POB:	Eisenstadt, Austria

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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV228
NAME: Ernest Simon
DATE: 9th November 2018
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Jana Buresova

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

The interview is with Mr. Ernest Simon, on the 9th of November 2018, in London.

Mr. Ernest Simon, thank you very much indeed for kindly agreeing to this interview for the AJR Refugee Voices Project. May we start by going back to your early childhood, something about your parents and your early life in- in Austria?

OK. Well, I was born in May 1930, in Eisenstadt. Eisenstadt is a- the main town, it's a smallish town, I would guess about the size of Harrogate or Bath, something like that. In the northern part of Burgenland, which is the easternmost province of Austria. Province bordering Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia today. And Eisenstadt was a- a town which had been occupied by Jews for hundreds of years. Dating back to something like 1200 even, I think. And Jews were protected in Eisenstadt by the Esterházy family. Prince Nikolaus [I] of Esterházy in the 18th century already welcomed Jews to Eisenstadt and to some of the other smaller towns nearby, at a time when Jews were being expelled from larger cities like Vienna, for example, where they were simply not wanted. He protected them. Jews had to pay a sort of tax of tolerance or tax of protection which they were prepared to do because they could live there and lead their lives, lead their family lives, their religious lives. And Eisenstadt, in fact, was a city or town which had a *yeshiva*, which was well known and famous throughout Europe at that time. Anyway, as I say, I was born in 1930. My- my

father's name was Ludwig. He had been born in a town- a small place also in Burgenland in the days when Burgenland was part of Hungary. It became part of Austria in 1919 at the Treaty of Versailles. My father was born in 1901 in a place called Malomháza - Hungarian name - quite near to Eisenstadt. My mother, on the other hand was born in what is today Hungary, a place called, small village called Káld near Sárvár, which again, is near Sopron about sixty kilometres east of Eisenstadt.

[0:03:25]

What did your father do? What work? What profession?

My father was sort of junior manager in a- in a shoe factory in Eisenstadt, owned by a Jewish family. And he really grew up in the leather trade. I think he, he- he went into the leather trade really from the age of about sixteen. And- and just stayed there all his life, really. He was in the leather trade in Eisenstadt, and then subsequently in Leeds when we arrived in Leeds, but we'll come back to that later. The company that he worked for of course was then totally closed down when the Nazis arrived, but that's again, a later story- later part of the story.

Did your mother work at all, or not?

No, no. My mother I think was an old-style housewife, looking after the family. Her parents, as I say- What would happen is that my mother, when she became- when she got to the age of about nineteen or twenty, left Káld, the small town where she was born, and went to work in Austria. And that- she went to work in- in Baden bei Wien. And that's in fact in the end where she met my father, and they married in 1928.

Was your family Orthodox or?

Yes. The reason- yes. I wouldn't- I would say Orthodox in a- in a fairly modern way. Not in a- not in- not in a black hat sort of way, but- yes, my father was a- was a very Orthodox man. Came from a very Orthodox family. I mean, interestingly enough, I was- I've been able to trace my father's history. The, the, the family history back to about 1800, with the help of my father's sister. But again, that's a different story. My mother, my mother's history I've never

been able to trace really because it's very difficult for me to get any information in Hungary. I don't speak Hungarian and the problem there is more complicated. So, all I know about is my mother's parents and that's it. I don't know anything further back than that.

[0:06:18]

What are your memories of school days and then the rise of the Nazis?

Yeah, well, school days, I mean, in, in- in Austria, as you probably know, school starts- proper school starts at the age of about six, I think. Before that I was at kindergarten - a Montessori kindergarten. I was only really for school- at school for one year or so, until- before the Nazis came, because, you know, they came in March 1938. And by that time, I was just seven-and-a-half, really. So, I have a school report, my first school report, which is dated I think 19-1937. And that's about it. My memories - fairly limited, I must say. I mean, I remember school to some extent, but not very much. I remember kindergarten rather better, strangely enough.

Do you have a special memory of that time?

[0:07:40]

The- the memory that sticks out in my mind is that suddenly after March 1938, the children with whom I used to play, no longer wanted to play with me. That's - that's a memory that I really have. Clearly, they'd been told by their parents, "Ernst is Jewish. Don't play with him." You know, "Leave him alone." That's the outstanding memory that I have. Other than that, I- I must say, I don't really have many memories as a- as a school boy - as a junior school boy. No.

How did you come to come to- come over to Britain-

OK.

...and, what happened to prepare?

Well, what happened- yes. What happened then, of course, the Anschluss came in March '38. And the objective that the Nazis had at that time, was to clear Burgenland entirely of Jews. At that point in time, the killing machines, if you like, were not yet in action. What they wanted was to rid Burgenland first, and then Austria generally, of Jews. Get them out, get rid of them. And so, Burgenland in fact, was the first area where they tried this ethnic cleansing. And they forced all Jews to leave Eisenstadt and all the other small towns round about. So, by September of that year, 1938, we had to leave everything behind. We had to leave our home, leave our belongings, and go to Vienna. I mean we went to Vienna. My father managed to find a small flat in Vienna, in the Herminengasse which at that time was the- the Jewish quarter, the second district of Vienna. And we lived there. And then of course along came Kristallnacht, the, the- the November pogrom in November. And this is something that we experienced there. So, my father was busy trying to obtain exit visas. As soon as we got- we got to Vienna he was working very hard. He was actually imprisoned for a few weeks. We don't know why. Probably just because he was Jewish. Luckily, they released him. And- and then my mother and father obviously worked hard to find a way of getting me out of the country. Now-

[0:10:45]

Before we move on to that, may I just stop you for a minute?

Sure.

And ask, what was your reaction to Kristallnacht, and what were your emotions, your memories, of that period?

Well, the outstanding memory that I have of Kristallnacht is that we lived in, as I say, in a- on the second floor in a small flat in the Herminengasse. And there was actually a synagogue in that street. And my outstanding memory is actually standing at my bedroom window, on the night of the 9th of November - is that today, 9th of November? Yeah, it is, actually. On the night- eighty- eighty years ago, exactly – and seeing a bonfire in the middle of the street below my bedroom window. A bonfire of Sefer Torahs and, and prayer books, which the Nazis had built. And they were basically destroying the synagogue. That was my distinct memory.

What was your feeling at the time of your parents- that of your parents?

Well, my- my parents were obviously very distraught by the whole thing. You know, as a child you don't really think too much about these things. Obviously, I could feel that there was something very worrying and very disturbing about the whole thing, but I don't think I understood the deeper implications of all that. You know, I was only eight at the time. So, you know, that- that really is, was my outstanding memory. My parents had kept my- kept my brother and me indoors as much as possible. You know, they, they- they had seen what was happening to Jews in the streets in Vienna, and they didn't want us to be troubled by all this.

Could you describe what they saw? Did they tell you?

[0:12:45]

Well, you know the sort of stories that I've heard and that I've read about - I haven't experienced this myself - are these stories of- of elderly Jews being forced to kneel down and scrub the pavements and things of that nature. And the Nazis pulling their beards and cutting off their beards and things of that nature. Generally humiliating elderly people, elderly Jews in the streets as much as possible. This- I didn't experience any of that personally. I'm telling you what I read about and what I've heard from other people. That's- you know, as I say, my parents kept my brother and me indoors for as long as possible. Yeah.

Did you go to school or have any-?

No, no. Not in Vienna. No. No- No, we- my brother and I were kept indoors as much as possible. And no school at all. So really school for me finished round about March 1938, until I started school again in England.

What was your brother's name?

Kurt. Kurt. Kurt in- obviously in German. Kurt today. He is two-and-a-half years younger than me. Yeah.

Your parents had a great task trying to find a place for you on the Kindertransport-

Well, then-

...or their own visas as well.

What happened then after Kristallnacht, I think you- I mean I don't know if you want me to go into the background of the Kindertransport. There's a story here in the UK how it came into being. I'm sure that this already exists on your archive, so you don't need me to tell you about that. But basically, what happened, the Kindertransport idea was formed, and it included children from Austria. So, my father and mother obviously heard about it, and then made the effort to get me on the Kindertransport. Now, my brother and I have often discussed why just me and not him as well. And- and the answer is, we don't know. We don't know why our parents made that decision, if they made that decision. Because we never asked our parents. You know, it's the sort of thing you should ask your parents when you're- when they're still alive, but we only thought about it when they were dead. So, my brother has one theory about that. I have a different theory.

[0:15:26]

What are your theories?

My- my theory is that there was an organisation, the *Jüdische Kultusgemeinde* in, in- in Vienna, who were organising the Kindertransport arrangements. And presumably there was somebody there who was deciding who can go and who can't go. And it could well be that one of their criteria was: only one per family. I don't know. And that may have been what determined the thing. That was my theory. My brother's theory is quite a different one. He says, "No, no. They sent you away and kept me behind because they loved me more than they loved you." So that's-

What was your reaction to that?

That's my brother's theory. Well, I mean it's, it's- it's an amusing theory which he doesn't really believe but it's what he talks about. It's the sort of story that I sometimes tell when I'm talking to schools. I talk to schools quite regularly, and it's the sort of story which children love to hear. So-

They can identify with that.

That's right. That's right. That's right. So, they, basically they sent me - away. They put me on a- on a train on the 11th of January 1939. A train which left the Wiener Westbahnhof. The Vienna West Station.

Were your parents allowed on to the platform at that point?

Yes, yes. Yes – yes.

Because later they- they were prevented.

I know, but-

Yes.

My memory is that my parents were on the platform. My memory is that I had a- a number hanging from my chest and that my parents put me on the train, you know, and said, "Don't worry, we'll be with you soon. We'll follow soon. Be a good boy. Behave yourself." You know, the usual sort of things that parents would say in those situations.

Did you believe them?

[0:17:32]

You know, I- I think I probably did. I was a bit trusting sort of child, I think. But as child- The, the- being put on the train, there were mixed feelings in a- in a child, in, in, in me, I think at that time. I mean, a mixture of fear, anxiety, but also a certain amount of adventure. I mean, at the end of the day, I'm going to a country that I've never heard of before to a

language that I had no idea about with a lot of other children, playmates, possibly. And it- it was a- an adventure, maybe, you know? So, from that point of view, yes. Yeah.

Was there someone with you? Did you feel safe? Were-

No.

In terms of adults?

Well, there were adults on the- on the train, yes, looking after the children. But nobody from my immediate family or nobody from my acquaintances, no. I mean, I don't know how many- how many children were on that train at that time, possibly a couple of hundred, I don't know. But you know, we were in, in- in carriages with- with other children, all ages, boys and girls. And my- strangely enough I have very little memory of that actual journey. I must have slept, or, it's- it has been driven from my mind. I'm not sure which. But the actual memory of that train journey itself, just doesn't exist. I remember arriving in the Netherlands because they woke us up and there- there were ladies got on the train, and- and gave us sweets and chocolates. And gave us drinks. That I remember. I remember also arriving at Hook of Holland and getting on the ship. And I remember the overnight crossing, because I was terribly seasick. That I do remember. It was a rough crossing. It was January. And- and then arriving at Liverpool Street Station, yes, I remember that. Now, according to my papers, apparently, I spent the night in some sort of hostel in the East End of London. I have no memory of that. Absolutely none. And nor do I remember how I got to Leeds. I imagine it was aunt who came to London to collect me. My father's sister, Gisi, had actually gone to England some months earlier on a domestic service visa. My- she- Gisi had lived with us in Eisenstadt, and she was very close to our family. She was unmarried and she had gone to England on a domestic service visa to Leeds, and was working in Leeds in domestic service. And it was she actually who found foster parents for me, in Leeds. And later, and I'll come back to that in a minute, employers for my parents. Again, who came to England some weeks later as domestic servants, with my younger brother. Yeah? So, as I say, I have no memory of how I got to Leeds. But I assume that it was my aunt Gisi who came to London to collect me, and took me to Leeds - to the foster parents.

[0:21:26]

How did they treat you? Were they kind or-

Oh, absolutely.

...did they take advantage,

No, no, they were excellent-

or exploit you?

Really lovely people. Jewish- Jewish family in, in a- in a- in an area of Chapeltown in Leeds, which at that time was the area occupied by Jews, to a great extent. I remember distinctly that I lived in number 56 Sherbrooke Avenue and that I went to Cowper Street School. And I quite distinctly remember my first day at school wearing Austrian school wear which was knickerbockers, you know - plus-fours if you like - quite unknown in England, but typical winter school wear in Austria and obviously making me the centre of attention in Leeds- in, in the school - Cowper Street School. Which was a school occupied or visited by many Jewish children. And you know, some of the children that I met there, are still my friends today, living in Leeds. Yeah.

Were you embarrassed that you were the centre of attention or were you teased?

Yeah, well to some extent but I mean, you know, I couldn't understand the teasing 'cause I couldn't understand the language. But I was very lucky that one of the teachers were Jewish and spoke some Yiddish. And of course, Yiddish and German, there are similarities and so we understood each other. So at least for a few weeks, he was my entry to the world, if you like. But you know, a child earns- learns a language very quickly. And within weeks I was speaking enough English to get by.

[0:23:22]

And your foster parents, did they speak Yiddish at all?

They did yes, yes. Yes, they did. It was a- a really sort of Jewish family. They had their own children, a bit older than me. And they looked after me extremely well. And my brother lived a few hundred yards away in a, in a home of a relative of my foster parents, so we saw each other quite regularly.

What were- what was the name of your foster parents?

Morris. Mr. and Mrs. Morris.

Did you get to see your parents very much?

Well-

Where did your parents stay?

Then what happened, you see my parents, as I say, managed to get visas- because my father had been trying to apply United States, England, or Palestine, whichever came first he was going to take. And luckily enough as I say, my aunt helped them to obtain this domestic service visa for the UK and they came to work for two doctors living in Yeadon, near Leeds. Now they were quite near to Leeds so we did see each other every now and again. Obviously not every day but maybe once a week, every ten days or so. And so, we did see each other.

What was the work that your parents did for the...?

[0:24:54]

Well, my mother was cook. These two doctors were both unmarried, and so, in a sense they were looking after their household. My mother was cook and general factotum. My father was- did all sorts of general housework and, and handywork in their home. You know, I think it was a, a marvellous thing, really, that these two doctors were prepared to take a couple of refugees like that. And-

How did they cope with the language?

Not easy, because my mother was no linguist. And she had great difficulty. My father learned English but very slowly. You know, when- when you're an adult it's not easy to learn a new language unless you make full time effort at it. And- and they had no time to do that, but you know, slowly they came along and I suppose my mother learned the important language of cooking and- and that was it. Yeah. So, this went on for about six months or slightly longer until the war broke out. And then in September, as war broke out, I was evacuated to- to Lincolnshire along with all the other school children from Leeds. At least from our class, from our school, we all went to a small village called Branston, near Lincoln. And I lived with a farming family, who obviously didn't speak any German. And so, my English improved very rapidly, and my German deteriorated.

Did you regret that or did it trouble you at the time?

No. You. I didn't even think about it, you know. Well, the time when I did regret it was after I'd been there for about three or four months, my parents came to visit. And this was a sort of difficult situation because at this point in time, my mother, my mother's English really was practically non-existent still. And so, she spoke to me in German, which I understood perfectly well. But I replied in English, which she did not understand very well. Hardly at all. And after a few minutes she just burst into tears that she couldn't communicate with her son properly. And, you know, she more or less insisted that I come back to Leeds as quickly as possible which then happened, actually. I stayed in Branston only about six months and after that came back to Leeds. And then lived not with Mr. and Mrs. Morris anymore, but in a children- a refugee children's home, which had been created in the meantime, in Leeds. In- in Stainbeck Lane in Leeds, and this was a home for maybe forty or fifty boys. All-

[0:28:26]

Were- were they all Jewish?

All Jewish, yes, it was strictly- a strictly Jewish home. I mean, quite Orthodox. And, I mean, it could well be that the children had come from non-Orthodox families, but the home itself was run on strictly kosher lines, and you know, we- we used to say the, the- the prayers before and after meals and- and things like that. So, it was very- very Orthodox in that sense, yes. And so, my brother and I stayed there for about a year, year-and-a-half. And we were in

fact the youngest in the home. Many of the children, or most of the children were older than us. Yeah. And in the meantime, of course then my father- was then suddenly interned to the Isle of Man as an enemy alien.

Was that 1940?

Yes, yes. You know, at the time when all the other Jews from- men, particularly men but some women as well, they were interned either to the Isle of Man or Australia or Canada. I'm sure you know all this. And he went to the Isle of Man. Was there for I guess about a year. And in- my mother then continued in her work as domestic servant and my brother and I were in the home in Stainbeck Lane in Leeds. And- but then he was released, came back and started to work in war work. Munitions production in a- in a factory near Leeds. But then gradually - and again, I have no idea how this happened, but - they must have gathered, or borrowed money to either rent or to buy a small house. This was- must have been about middle- middle or end of 1941. And then suddenly we were living together as a family! From this point on, yeah.

[0:30:47]

Did that take a lot of readjustment on your part, getting together, or...?

No not really. I mean I-

The language question?

No, because by this time, you know, the thing that- the thing was happening at home. My brother and I used to speak to our parents in English, and they would reply in German. This was the way that we spoke for a- a few years until my- my mother- my mother, then in- her English improved quite- quite quickly later on. Always, obviously, with a strong accent, but never mind. You know, she spoke English. My mother spoke Hungarian as a first language, she spoke fluent German and English, yeah.

Were you- would you consider that it was a close family unit?

Oh, yeah, absolutely – yes. I mean, we were- it was a- you know, we were very close to our parents, my brother and I. And we were very, very well looked after and- so, you know, we both- both Kurt and I went to Cowper Street School which was quite near to where we lived at that point, within quite easy walking distance. And- and then you know, then the time came for me to take the 11-Plus examination to get to a grammar school. And I failed that. Now, the net result of that was- in those days you could pay to go to a grammar school and the grammar school that was nearest to us was Roundhay School at that time. But they wanted fifteen pounds a term, which was a lot of money, you see, for my father. Whereas Cockburn High School in South Leeds only wanted five pounds a term. So that's where I went. So, every day I found myself going from North Leeds to South Leeds on tram, on bus, on bicycle as I grew older. And- you know, that- that was it, really. So, I went to Cockburn High School. My brother, a couple of years later, went to Central High School in the centre of Leeds. He passed his- he, he is a bright guy. He's brighter than me, academically. And he passed his 11-Plus. No problem. Of course, he'd been to England longer by this time. His English was better. So, you know, from that point of view it was perhaps a little bit easier for him. But anyway, I then passed an examination a couple of years later, which obviated the need for my parents to pay any fees.

[0:33:36]

How did your father manage to finance your education?

Well-

What work did he do then, at that stage?

He was still- he was still at that point working in- in munitions. But then, I'm not sure exactly when, but round about the middle of the war, perhaps towards '42, maybe '43 he then started his own little business. My father was a- as I said, he was in the leather trade, and he started the manufacture of high-class ladies' handbags. Which he was very good at. And so, he made handbags and- and built up a clientele. And I think that's really how we managed to finance our lives. And also, I think at this time my mother was going out to work as well. She was working, I think, in a shop as a shop assistant. And- and, and also, we took in lodgers. That's right. We took in lodgers. Because after a while, we moved away from Shepherd's Lane

which was- but even in Shepherd's Lane we had lodgers, upstairs in the- in the top floor. And that was a way of alimending the- the finances of the family. But then later we moved to a- a larger house, where again, my parents were able to take in one or two lodgers and that helped the finances. So that was it.

And-

So- yeah, go on?

When did you leave school?

[0:35:17]

So, school, I- I was at Cockburn High School for six years from 1942 until 1948. I did- I did very well in my school certificate, got very good results in school certificate. Got somewhat less well- less good results in higher school certificate, but nevertheless, good enough and went on to Leeds University to study a B Comm- Bachelor of Commerce, which is basically economics, economic history, a bit of accountancy, languages, Spanish and French at that time. And really had- but I lived at home at university. My brother- a couple of years later my brother being two-and-a-half years younger than me- my brother, a couple of years later also then went on to university but he did medicine. Again, at Leeds University, and he also lived at home, which was I think fairly typical in those days. You know, you had to be a fairly wealthy family to be able to send your children to live in another town, unless you got a very good grant or whatever. Yeah. So, Leeds University finished in 1951. And then I went straight into the Air Force to do my national service.

Were you reluctant to do it, or...?

[0:36:54]

I was quite excited about it all, quite frankly, you know. I thought the idea of spending a couple of years- I- I was dead keen to- to fly, you see? I- I wanted to be an either pilot or navigator. I was twenty-one at the time. And at recruit training, my- which was in Lancashire- can't remember the name of the place, but in Lancashire not too far from

Blackpool was where we did our recruit training. And there, my objective was to get on to air crew. Pilot or navigator. Until about halfway through recruit training, I heard that the services, Army, Navy and Air Force, were running a Russian language course. Remember this was the Korea War. The height of the Cold War, really. And the government here suddenly discovered that they had nobody of military age who could speak Russian. So, they set up joint language- joint Services Language School at Cambridge University and at the London School of Slavonic Studies. And so, when I heard about this, I applied for this. And of course, by, at this point in time I was already speaking German, French and Spanish, so I was an obviously candidate for this and I got on to the course quite quickly. So, we did a- two months of advanced, or, yes, preliminary Russian at Coulsdon in Surrey. And then at the end of the two months we had to do an examination, and of the top 150, one hundred were sent to Cambridge University fifty were sent to London University to do work as interpreters- to be trained as interpreters. And- so I spent the- my- my, if you like, almost my entire two years' national service learning Russian. You know, at Cambridge, we were living in a- in an- in an officers' mess. We were all officer cadets, and so we were living in an officers' mess in Newmarket, just outside Cambridge, and came in every day to do our studies in the School of Slavonic Studies in Cambridge, under a certain Professor Elizabeth Hill – Elizaveta Hill, she called herself. And so that really was a year of- a year in Cambridge, at the end of which we were then sent on to Bodmin in Cornwall, to do advanced Russian. This time, military Russian. How to interrogate prisoners of war, how to interpret at conferences. How to describe the principles of flight in Russian, the principles of the internal combustion engine. You know, technical Russian. This- this was really- this was the end- so my- and then suddenly in August 1953, my period of two years was finished, and that was the end of my Russian, really. [laughs] Yeah.

Did you ever make use of it after that?

[0:40:38]

Well- yes, I mean, in- not- not in a very serious way. But I went to- subsequently I went to Moscow a couple of times working for ICI there. And didn't really have to use it professionally, but found it was very helpful to order breakfast and, and a meal and to buy some caviar. Yes, yes.

[inaudible]

That's right, yes. But, I mean, since then I've tried to bring it back to life a little bit with some colleagues with some friends. But it's very difficult to do that unless you have a recognised teacher who can- with whom you can work. So, it's been very difficult. No, I can read Russian, I can understand little bits of it. But you know, if you don't use a language, it goes. And I found that very quickly. I mean, the same with Hungarian. I learned, I- Hungarian, as you probably know, is the most difficult language in Europe. And when I was sent to work in Hungary, I went to the Berlitz School in Brussels for three weeks. I had two Hungarian ladies just for me, for three weeks. I even had to have lunch with them to get to know my Hun- some Hungarian, to be able to speak when I arrived there. Well, you know, at the end of it I learnt about 125 words. I managed to put a few simple sentences together, but I discovered that when I got there, people spoke either English or German or French and I could speak all those so - we got by. Yeah.

Could you trace your professional career, after your national service?

Yes, sure.

Briefly?

[0:42:34]

Well, I came out of the Air Force in August 19...53, and I then joined the Bellow Machine Company in Leeds. Bellow Machine Company makes- or made, they don't exist anymore I don't think- they made machinery for the textile industry, for the garment making industry. You know, Leeds at that time was the centre of the garment making industry in England. Burton's was in Leeds. And this was an enormous factory. And many, incidentally, many of the refugee children that came on the Kindertransport, those who were above the age of fourteen or fifteen, who never had a chance for any sort of education, they went to work in Burton's in the factory in Leeds, many of them. But- so, I went to work for the Bellow Machine Company. And they wanted me to help- because of my language skills, they wanted me to try and help to set up an export business. Well, I worked for them for... nearly a year. And then I had a- another offer of a job from somebody, another company, which offered me

fifty percent more money. And too good to refuse. So, I moved to this company - was called Evans of Leeds. Evans of Leeds were manufac- no, not manufacturers. They were dealers in earth moving equipment. Bulldozers. Cranes. Excavators. And they were particularly strong- at that time there was the East Africa Groundnut Scheme in operation. And Evans bought quite a lot of second-hand machinery from that scheme, reconditioned the machinery, and then re-sold it as reconditioned. And the other thing that- they were agents also in the United Kingdom for an American company of earth moving machinery called Pawling and Harnischfeger - P & H. And so, I was handling that part of the business for them. Again, they wanted me because of my language skills and- and they were hoping to set up some sort of export business. And I worked for them for about a year-and-a-half. And- and then I decided that I was too honest for this particular business. That there was too much shady work going on in that sort of reconditioned machinery. And I really felt that this wasn't me. And I applied for a job as a management trainee with Marks and Spencer's. And I- I got that quite quickly. So, I worked as a management trainee for Marks and Spencer for about two years, in Harrogate store and in Leeds store. And you know, I- I found Marks and Spencer a wonderful employer. Really good. I found the job interesting. And you know, I- I was living in Leeds and travelling to Harrogate each day, which, that was easy; I was going against the flow of normal traffic. However, strangely enough, then I was working in the Leeds store, and one day after about nearly two years with Marks and Spencer's I was walking round my department with the manager of the store, a certain Mr. Keane, a very experienced long last-long established Marks and Spencer employee. And we were going through my department and I- at that time it was women's lingerie. And after a while he suddenly turned to be and he said, "Ernest, how many languages do you speak?" So, I said, "Well, I speak French, German, Spanish and Russian." So, he said, "Why are you selling knickers to Yorkshire housewives?" You know. A question which caused me to think. And three weeks later I was working for ICI. It was- you know, I- I decided that there was really an awful lot behind that question which I ought to think about. And so, I wrote a letter to ICI Fibres in Harrogate and said who I was, what I'd done, what my background was, and could they make use of someone like me. Within a week I had an interview with the director in charge of the export department at ICI fibres. And within three weeks I was sitting at my desk. It was as quick as that. I mean, it was amazing really. So, I was working- I worked for the export department of ICI Fibres and with all my languages - German, French, Russian, Spanish - they got me to work in Scandinavia. You know, typical ICI. But- it was alright, it was good fun. And then of course they- they decided- well, we haven't talk about my marriage. I got married in 19-

Oh, we'll come on to that.

[0:48:14]

Oh, right. I got married in 1954, yes. So, but anyway, I joined ICI in 1957. So, up to then I'd been, as I say, working for Evans and then for Marks and Spencer's and in 1957 I joined ICI. And- in the export department, primarily concerned with Scandinavia. And spent many trips going to Scandinavia visiting customers, visiting agencies, and so on. And- and then one day my export manager said to me, "Ernest, would you like to go and spend a couple of years in Switzerland?" So, I said, "Well, I have to ask my wife." At that time, I was married. So, my wife and I went and had a- a quick visit to Zurich, and to have a look and see, and we liked what we saw. We were single- we were not yet with child at that time. And so, we said, "Yes, please. We'll go." And so, they sent me for a two -year secondment to Zurich which turned out to be five years. And that's where our son was born, actually, in 1964. Yeah, we went in 1960. And Martin was born in 1964. And I was basically looking after the marketing of synthetic fibres in Switzerland and Austria. So, I had regular visits to Austria. Out of that, in those five years, I actually spent six months living in Vienna because the company wanted me to do a specific job for six months in Vienna on the- on the Austrian market which I did. So, we lived in furnished- in a furnished apartment in the centre of Vienna for six months.

[0:50:24]

But you also went to your home town?

To Eisenstadt? Oh, we did, indeed. I mean, we went to Eisenstadt quite regularly. It was not far from Vienna, easy to get there by train or even by- well, today even by tram, almost. But by train it was easy. And, we visited Vienna a few times with- with friends.

How did you feel when you first went back?

That's- that's- that's an interesting- I- I was quite excited. Excited to find what I would see there. And- and what I saw there, actually by that time already I think the- the building in which we had lived had been torn down and had been moved and changed into a- a shopping

centre or something of that nature. But I found it quite an interesting town. I didn't know any- we found one Jewish family there, a Jewish shop owner. Cause my mother was still alive in those days, and I said to my mother, "Do you know anyone in Vienna- in Eisenstadt, from the days gone by?" And she said, "Well the only one I can remember is," - I think the name was Schneider. And they had a shop in one of the main streets of Eisenstadt. So, we went to visit Mr. Schneider, an elderly gentleman - and had a chat with him. But he was the only Jew who'd gone back to Eisenstadt. And today, there are no Jews there at all. That's- there are hardly any Jews in Burgenland. You know, they'd just been driven out.

Was it very painful going back?

[0:52:21]

You know, I- I didn't feel it as pain, quite frankly. I mean, I was too young when I- when we left, so I didn't feel it as pain. My- I think my- my mother went back as well, subsequently, and she found it more painful. My father- I don't know if he ever went back. My father died quite young. He was only fifty-four when he died. And so, I'm not sure that he ever went back to Eisenstadt. I know my parents used to go to Austria on holiday, but they went to Bad Gastein, which is quite a long way from Eisenstadt. And I don't think they ever went there. My mother- when my father died my mother went to Vienna a couple of times to visit her brother who lived there. She probably went to Eisenstadt with him. And I think she also went to visit Mr. Schneider. But she really had no contact. I don't think she- I don't think she enjoyed going back to Eisenstadt.

Did your parents or your family in general lose a- a great many family members that perished?

Well, my father's side, nobody, to my knowledge. I mean, my father had two brothers and one sister. The sister I told you about, Gisi, came to England. Subsequently emigrated to the United States and married in the United States. And died in her eighties. So, that was her. My father's younger brother, Sandor - or Alexander - came to England before the war, and joined the Pioneer Corps in the Army. Unfortunately, the result was that he'd actually left his wife and child in Hungary. What had happened was that my aunt Olga, his wife, and the child was Claire - Kláry - who now lives today in- in Jerusalem, they'd gone to visit her father, my

mother's- my grandfather. And then they couldn't get back, because they couldn't get back to Eisenstadt. In those days, 'cause the Germans in the- in the meantime had come and made Jews very unwelcome in Austria. So, she couldn't get back, so she was stuck in Hungary. And she spent the war years in hiding in Budapest with my cousin, Claire. But OK, that's that side. So, my father's family, that was Sandor, he came to England, joined the forces. And my father's elder brother, Moritz, tried to get to Palestine illegally in those days, illegally. And was caught by the British and was interned to the Island of Mauritius, [half-laugh] and spent, I think, a couple of years in Mauritius. Subsequently then managed to find his way to Israel, and married again, 'cause he'd lost his first wife through the Holocaust, but then he married again in Israel. And but then died basically of old age. I don't know what age really. I can't remember that. My- my mother and my father kept in touch with him quite a lot. I mean, my mother went to Israel quite regularly to visit them after my father died. But I- I actually never met him in Israel in those days. I was- busy with my own life and never went- never really went to Israel until much later in my life.

[0:56:42]

And on your mother's side?

And my mother's side there were- it was very bad, actually. My mother was one of thirteen- was one of twelve siblings. And so, she lost at least two brothers and possibly three sisters in in the- in the Holo- in the camps.

Do you know which camps?

We think it was Auschwitz, but we don't know. It just- I mean, it's something which I guess I could find out, but I never did. Anyway, they- they were- they were murdered. And my grandparents, I think they lost their lives in a transport to Auschwitz. You know, I'm sure you know the history of Jews in Hungary better than I do, but up to about 1943, Jews in Hungary were reasonably safe. It was only when- when Horthy decided that the Germans were about to lose the war and he was- wanted to join with the Allies. At that time, the Germans then sent in the troops, including Adolf Eichmann with his Sonderkommando, and that's when the Jews began to suffer in Hungary. That's when they were sent to the ghettos in Hungary - the famous, was it called - yellow houses, I think, in, in- in Budapest. And from there, on to the

camps. That was what happened to some of my aunts. Now, so they- my mother's side suffered quite badly. But they- she also had other sisters who- and brothers- who actually managed to survive and who lived on. My- my aunt Regine for example, who was in Auschwitz, who was one- on one of these death marches, she survived, came to live with us for a while in Leeds, and then emigrated to Israel, and lived to the age of about ninety - in Israel. And died- died actually before my mother, yes. Yeah. And then there were- another aunt, Olga, who spent time in in Budapest, the war years in Budapest. She also then came to Leeds. Re-joined her husband. Came with her daughter Claire, and made a life in Leeds. Sandor died quite young as well. I think he couldn't have been more than about fifty-five when he died. And so, Claire and her mother- well, Claire married quite young. And she then moved to Israel with her husband in- in, in their late years when they were both- they were both in their seventies when they moved to Israel. Yeah.

[0:59:50]

And you, yourself have been to Israel?

Oh, many times. What happened was, that- my brother was a doctor, a GP, in England. And he was a GP in Preston. But he was also very interested in anaesthesia. So, once a week he used to work doing anaesthesia for a friend of his who was an eye specialist in Preston General Hospital. And when the Yom Kippur War started in Israel, after that, he and his wife became very committed Zionists, and they decided to make *Aliyah*, and live- go and live in Israel. So, in 19- it was 1973, I think, they moved to Israel. And first of all, they went to a- *ulpan* to learn the language. And then he went to work in Rambam Hospital in- in Haifa, as an anaesthetist. By this time, he'd studied anaesthetics in, in greater detail. So, he worked as an anaesthetist in Rambam for a number of years. And subsequently, he- was appointed as the head of the department of anaesthesiology in- in Nahariya general hospital in the north of Israel, which is a- quite a big hospital. Looking after a whole area, wide area, including many Arab territories. So, my mother lived in Leeds on her own because by this time my father had died in 1955, and so she was on her own. And round about 1977, '78, my brother- my brother- my mother suffered quite badly with rheumatism. So, he said to her, "Look, why don't you come and live in Israel? The weather is better for you there. You'll have less problems with your rheumatism and I'll be there as well. You see?" So, she did. She emigrated from Leeds to Israel at the age of about seventy-six, and lived in Haifa in a small

flat in Haifa, for a number of years. And subsequently went into a- an old age home. First of all, looking after herself and then as she grew older, she was more in care. And my mother died at the age of ninety-nine so you know, she had a long life there. She died in 2002.

[1:02:45]

But you visited-

And- and we, you know, at this time my wife- my- my wife and I were living in various countries, you know, with Switzerland and then we moved to- to Germany and then to France and so on. But I'll come back to that. So, during this time my mother used to come to us regularly and spend a few weeks with us. And we would go at least twice a year to Israel, to see her and my family, my brother, and so on. So-

How did you feel in Israel? How did you react to that?

Very comfortable. Very comfortable. I was always very happy there.

Did you consider staying there?

Well, I would have done but my wife found the heat unbearable. You know, it's- it's one of those things, you know. If you, if you can't stand the heat then you know it would make life too uncomfortable. And in fact, that was the main, one of the reasons why in the end my brother and his wife came back from Israel to live in Leeds, because she, my brother's wife who'd- in the meantime has died, she found the heat absolutely intolerable as she got older. So, they came back to Leeds. But, you know, I- I- I loved Israel. My mother was- was very happy there, really. She never really got to grips with *Ivrit*, but her argument was, "Look, I can speak German, Hungarian and English. If the other guy can't speak one of those languages, they're not worth speaking to." That was the way she- that was the way she looked at things. And I think she had a point. But-

Could we come back to your wife,

Yes.

And that part of your personal life?

Ok, so.

How- how did you meet?

Anita- Yes. Anita lived, was a, was a- is a Londoner. Grew up in London. Was born in London - grew up in London. Her parents are Continental. Her mother was of Russian origin, her father of Romanian origin. And her grandparents, whom she knew in London as well in Leeds, were also typical Jewish immigrants from the eastern European countries.

Were you conscious of that similarity in terms of your backgrounds?

[1:05:22]

Yes, I mean, we- we enjoyed the same sort of food, for example. You know. So, Anita went to study in- in Bradford. And at a- at a college where she was training to be a teacher. And I at that time, was in the Air Force. Every Yom Kippur- after every Yom Kippur in Leeds there was a dance, a- at the Jewish Institute there. You know there is a photograph I showed you of the football team. That was the football team of the Jewish Institute in Leeds. And, so after every Yom Kippur there was a dance there. I was home on leave for Yom Kippur, and due to go back to my camp- I think I- I think I was already- I was still at Cambridge at that time. I was due to go back the next morning. So, I really hadn't intended to go to this dance. But a number of friends phoned me up and said, "We hear that there's this bird from London, going to the dance." [both laugh] So, this attracted my attention. And so, I went to the dance. And apparently, a number of her friends had said, "There's this guy- this unattached guy in the Air Force who's going to be there." So, there was a sort of a- a plan to bring us together from friends, you see? And they- and they succeeded. We- we met at this dance. We hit it off and then we really courted by correspondence for a while- while I was in the Air Force and she was still at college. And then subsequently we married in December 1954, on Boxing Day, in Leeds. And- and then, by that time, we had a small flat in a- in a house in a sort of north Leeds in the Mooretown area of Leeds. And that was really the start of a- we had lots of friends. Friends which she had- because, her step-mother- her father had remarried. Her

stepmother came from Leeds which is why she actually studied near Leeds in Bradford. So that on Jewish holidays she could come to Leeds and spend those in Leeds. And so, through her stepmother's family, and through all my friends whom I'd made in the meantime, we had a lot of friends in Leeds. And all our- some of our friends, most of our friends actually got married in the year that we got married in 1954, but in the earlier months. And so, we were a number of young married couples all mixing together, enjoying life. We had no family at that time. Our son wasn't born until quite a bit later. And then, as I said, in- by 1957, I joined ICI. By 1960 we moved to Switzerland. And our son was born in Switzerland in 1964. And so, you know, we had a- a Swiss baby, so to speak, yeah. Yeah, and- and that- that, that really was the start of various countries, really. Shall I talk a little bit about that, or?

You were in Hungary-

[1:09:21]

Yeah, well that's towards the end. Yeah, before that we- we, we were in Switzerland for- originally for two years, and it turned out to be five years. After about four years, I was on a visit to Harrogate and my boss said to me, "I think you should come back to Harrogate to the export department." I said, "Yeah, with pleasure. To do what?" And he said, "I'll find you a job." So, he said- I said, "Well, when you find me a job I'll come back. In the meantime, I've got a job which is very interesting and very useful." So- but then suddenly ICI set up a new business in Germany. The headquarters- at that time the European Union was being formed. I'm talking now about 1971, something like that. No, sorry, 1966. I moved to Switzerland in 1960. I moved to Germany in 1966. And in 1966, it was the very start of the European Union. And ICI Fibres- the patents for Terylene were running out. And the- so the manufacturers of polyester fibre in Germany, Italy, France, Holland - all had the rights to compete with their production of polyester fibre. So, ICI decided to set up a company in Germany to sell polyester fibre. And then in the meantime, ICI bought British Nylon Spinners. So, they already had a factory near Heidelberg, a nylon factory. So, it became grad- it became quite a- a very big business. And one day I phoned up the ICI Fibres general manager who'd been appointed to do that job, and a man I knew quite well. And I said, "Can you use me at all in this new operation?" He said, "It's strange. I was just about to phone you to ask you to come." And so, he- I was appointed as the European marketing manager for the ICI Fibres business.

In Germany?

No, in- in Europe. In- in- in the six countries of what was then the- it wasn't called the European Union in those years. It was the-

Economic Market?

Economic-

Market?

Market - that's right. There were six countries you know, Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Italy - that's five, someone else missing. Ah- Luxembourg. Not- not to forget Luxembourg. There were six countries where the European economic area in those days, and ICI set up, deciding that they would compete with their former licensees in those countries. And I was marketing manager with a team of, I don't know, a couple of dozen people working for me in Frankfurt as the headquarters. But I was doing quite a lot of travelling in those days. So-

Did you hesitate to take up the post?

[1:12:48]

That's- that's a question which I've been asked many times. And we actually thought long and hard about it. I spoke to quite a number of Germans about all this, and obviously my wife and I talked about it quite a lot. I talked to my mother, to my brother. In the end, I decided that I would take it up because basically I felt that you couldn't go on treating Germany as a pariah country for ever and ever. By this time, Germany had proved that they were desperate to renew their lives, to- to make to make a new life for the country. They were- they were one of Israel's most favoured allies in, in many ways, economically, commercially. And there was, there were quite distinct signs that there were moves towards a new democratic way of life. And of course, the other thing was that the majority of people with whom I would have to have dealings, were people of my age, who were too young to have had anything to do

with the atrocities of the Nazis. You know? They were people who were born after 19- many of them after 1945, or who were youngsters during the war. And so, I felt that there was no reason why I should not do this.

You didn't harbour a resentment against them?

No, no. No- no. In fact, we- you know, as I say, our son was then- gradually grew up and he was twenty months when we moved to Germany. So, he went to kindergarten, and actually spoke German almost better than English, because- he actually spoke both languages fluently as a youngster you know, four or five years old. He spoke German with his toys and he spoke German with all children, and he spoke English with all adults. And it was quite amusing. One- one period- we went to England on holiday, and we left my son, Martin, with my mother, who at that time was living in Leeds, while Anita and I went for a few days in- to Scotland. And my mother took him to a kinder- he was about four years old then. My mother took him to a kindergarten in Leeds just to be with other children. And apparently what happened was that he insisted on speaking German to all the children. I mean, even though he spoke English perfectly well, but children were German-speaking. Adults were English-speaking. That was his attitude, so. Anyway, so- yeah, where were we? I've lost track, now. Sorry.

About your son. What did he do in later years?

[1:16:00]

Ah. Well, he- he went to- he went to Carmel College. He went- well he started off going to International School in- in Frankfurt, which was not good for him. It was- he- he was the sort of child who couldn't really manage in a large school like this. And then I was moved to France. So, he came to the English School of Paris. And within weeks had forgotten his German; he was speaking French. And then after two years in France, I was asked to go and work in Belgium. And so, I- at that point in time we decided we couldn't go on changing his schooling constant- because I didn't know how long I was going to stay in Belgium. I had no idea, because ICI could- could easily have- have moved me somewhere else. So, we decided to send him to boarding school in England. And we sent- we sent him first of all to a lovely little prep school near Brighton, called St. Aubyns. And this was a small school. I mean,

really upmarket. Only about seven or eight children in a class and you only moved to the next class when you were ready. It wasn't to do with your age, you now, really looked after the children very well. And then when he was thirteen, we then sent him to Carmel College, a Jewish school, Jewish boarding school. And he stayed there until he was eighteen. And he enjoyed that. He'd never, he never sort of said, "Why are you sending me away?" you know, he enjoyed boarding school. Cause he was an only child so in a sense he had company there. And then from the age of eighteen, he didn't really know what he wanted to do so he actually then went to what had been- what became a new university. Huddersfield Polytechnic was reclassified as a University. So, he went there to do textiles and marketing, taking a little bit after his father, you see? And didn't like it at all. So, in his second year he dropped out. He said, "I can't do this; it's not for me." And- so he then went to spend nearly a year in Israel, working on a kibbutz, and then working also in Ashkelon in an- an English organisation which was helping poor families, immigrant families. And he was- he worked for them, helping school children there, and so on. So, he enjoyed that. And then the question came up, "Well, do you want to stay in Israel or to come back to Western Europe?" And he said, "Well, I don't want to do military service." So, he came back to Belgium. And he then went to college in Belgium to study travel and tourism. A very, a very good college course which he had to do in French. And he did it very well, and he, he you know, at the end of that he came out with distinction to that and went into the hotel business after that.

[1:19:50]

Did he stay in the hotel business?

He stayed in the hotel business more or less his whole life then, afterwards. Yes, in various hotels in- in Brussels. Cause then, yeah, while he was actually studying, at this college, while we were in Budapest.

Could we just-

Yep.

...come back to Budapest?

Yeah.

Your son's life was tragically cut short, wasn't it?

Yes, yes. Yes. What happened was that- well, he married, you know, he- he met while- after his studies he met a Belgian Jewish girl, Patricia, whose parents were also of Continental background. Father Romanian, mother Polish. And they married. And they never had any children. Now, he was working in a hotel and she, Patricia, works- still works in a- in a bookshop in- in Brussels. And they- they lived a you know, a happy life really, no problem. But then suddenly his illnesses started. To say- I'm trying to think of the timing. Yes. At- I can't remember exactly when, but he applied for a job at the European Patent Office in Munich, as an accountant. He'd studied- ah, yeah- he'd studied accountancy as well. That's right. And he did accountancy part time while he was working in the hotel business. Because he suddenly found that he enjoyed working with figures. Working as an accountant. And he did very well with his studies. And then he applied for this job as an accountant with the European Patent Office in Munich. So, they interviewed him, invited him to Munich. And they said, OK, he came back to Brussels. They said, "We need to have a medical examination." So, he then went to have a medical examination with his own doctor. And the doctor said, "I can hear something strange in your heart." And he came back to us, told us about this, so we said, "Go and see our doctor." And he went to see our doctor and the man said exactly the same thing. So, then we said, "Well you'd better go and see a consultant and see what the problem is." So, he went to see a consultant at Leuven University - Leuven University College. And it turned out that what he'd had, what he had was a faulty mitral valve, which needed to be repaired. So, he had an operation - open heart surgery - to repair this valve. But in the meantime, they had said to him, "Well once you're fit, once you're fine, apply again and we'll have a job for you." But his wife didn't really want to go to Munich; she didn't want to leave her parents and she was happy in Brussels. So, in the end, they never went. So, he came back. Another few years. And then, a different sort of heart problem. This time the aorta valve went wrong. And he had more open-heart surgery to repair the aorta valve. And you know, by the time he was fifty-one, he was really not able to work anymore. Maybe fifty- maybe- no, maybe the end, maybe he was fifty-two already at the time but- he was then breathless, couldn't breathe properly when he- any sort of effort. And he really wasn't able to work anymore. So he was being looked after. Medical attention was very good, the hospital was very good. And his treatment was very good. But then, one day,

suddenly, you know, we had a call in the morning to say that he'd simply died during the night.

When was that?

That was in July... sixty- 19- no, 2016. Two years ago. July 2016. Yeah. So-

That must have been a tremendous shock to you.

Yeah, well it was absolutely. I mean, we knew he was ill but we didn't realise he was that ill. And so, this was all very sudden. And- OK, we- Patricia his widow is- kept good contact with us. She was here for a week - last week, actually. And we see her. We go there and she comes here. We see each other regularly. But you know, they- she has no children. She is basically on her own. So, I hope, for her sake, that she might find somebody else. You know, she's not yet sixty, quite a young, active woman. And that's it.

[1:25:33]

From a religious perspective, do you feel bitter about your loss, you and your wife?

No – no, no. I mean-

Or turn against-?

Obviously, no, no - no. I mean, clearly, we were very sad, and we still are very sad and we miss him. But this has nothing to do with religion, you know, this is- this is life. This is the sort of thing that happens. And, you know, he had fifty-two years and- my father died when he was fifty-four, you know, it's – it's one of those things. Yeah. I'm lucky. I'm eighty-eight. And my wife is eighty-six, so we're lucky. And my brother is eighty-six, so, you know.

That's a very positive attitude.

Well, you know, you have to be positive, don't you? I think you make- you make yourself miserable if you- if you think negatively about things. And so, we try and remain positive. Yeah.

You've certainly had many experiences, including your time in Hungary.

Yes. So, let me tell you a little bit about that. So, I was in charge of the fibres business at ICI Belgium for Benelux, working in Brussels, in the ICI office in Brussels. And one day I was in the car park talking to one of my friends whose job was, among other things, as the sort of central focal point for the ICI business in the various eastern European offices. East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia and so on. And Yugoslavia. And he said to me, you know, he was a friend of mine, whom I'd known since 1957. He and I shared an office in Harrogate when we both joined ICI. So, we knew each other very well. We knew each other's wives very well. And he said to me, "Ernest there's a job going in Budapest for a manager there. Would you be interested?" So, I said, "Well, what's the grade?" So, he told me what the grade was. So, I said, "Well that's my grade now. Why would I go? There's no improvement in my grade." He said, "My answer is very simple: money." He said, "The job in- in eastern Europe is very well paid. Not only because you get a normal salary but your expense allowance- first of all your salary is quite legally paid off-shore. So, it's not taxed in the usual way. It- and on top of that you have a very generous expense allowance. So, you can save quite a lot of money in that job." So, I said, "OK, I'm interested." And- so I applied for the job and I got the job, basically. And then before accepting it my wife and I went and spent three days in Budapest just to see that she would like it. And, you know, we spent time with the- the man on- on site who was the manager at that time, whose job I was about to take on. And, you know, we- we saw, we went- we flew in, of course. We didn't go by car. We flew in, and that was fairly normal.

[1:29:24]

Which year was that?

Nineteen eighty-seven. So that was still very much during Communist times. And-

Did you feel that you were being watched the whole time?

Yeah, well, that's the interesting thing. I'd been warned that I would be watched. I'd been warned by the ICI people that my phone in the office, at home, in the car, would be bugged. And so, to be careful. You know- ICI was an important exporter from the UK to Hungary. The- the business- I'm not talking about the fibres business, but the total ICI business was about one third of total UK exports to Hungary. So, a significant amount. And we had an office in Budapest of about twenty-five people, all locals. Now, up to that point, the ICI business in Hungary and in all the other Communist controlled countries, were run by Communist or local businesses. So, the business- the ICI business was run by a company called Interexport in Budapest. A European- a Hungarian company, but clearly, you know, with strong Communist ties.

How did you cope with that?

Well, my job in fact- was in fact to take over from them. My job was to- ICI wanted to become an independent organisation, and by this time the Hungarians were allowing that to happen. So, I had to negotiate with Interexport [Kft.]. I had to negotiate with the government, with the minister of trade, with the minister of foreign affairs and so on, to make sure that they all agreed and were happy that this should happen. I mean, obviously ICI had to pay some sort of compensation, which they did and which we did. But in the end, we made it happen. That we took over this business, which became then a total ICI-owned affair. The employees which at that time were employed, if you like, as state employees, became employees of ICI.

[1:31:52]

Did any of them report on you, to your knowledge?

No – no. Well, I mean, not to my knowledge. Quite the reverse. In fact, I mean, one of the senior guys, one day I was- he was in my office- and there were three telephones in my office. I never discovered why there were three telephones, but there were three tele- and I picked up one telephone to speak to somebody and he said to me, "Don't use that phone." You know. Fairly obvious. So...

Were there any particular experiences that you had that are memorable, from your days in Hungary? Did it feel a special link, in terms of your family[inaudible]?

I was- Yes, I mean the experiences of a personal nature, yes, quite interesting. I mean, by this time my mother was living in Hungary- in- in Israel. So,, we said to her, “Come and spend a few weeks with us in Budapest.” And so, she said, “Lovely. Lovely.” Now interestingly enough, my mother had never been to Budapest. You know? She was born and grew up in this Káld which is the Austrian end of Budapest- of Hungary. Well away from- it’s two-and-a-half hours’ drive to Budapest from Káld, so she’d never been to Budapest. And so, at that time also in 1988, I think it was, when she came, there were no direct flights from Tel Aviv to Budapest. She had to fly via Austria. So, she flew to Vienna. We drove to Vienna to collect her. And we spent the night in Eisenstadt, in a hotel in Eisenstadt, to amuse her. You see? We said, “Well, nice hotel in Eisenstadt. We’ve got to spend the night somewhere, so why not there?” So, we spent the night in Eisenstadt. We then drove the next day to- to Budapest and she- she was lovely. I mean, you know, her first language was to Hungarian. So, she came to the office one day and met my staff and obviously enjoyed speaking Hungarian. And they were amused, because her Hungarian was a little bit as though Charles Dickens was speaking in English, you know? Old-fashioned Hungarian. A language develops and she had not developed with it. Because she left the country, for good, in 1928, and never gone, well gone back on visits, but never lived there, really. So, it was a long time since- it was- what? Sixty years since she’d been on a- on a permanent basis in Hungary. So that was one thing.

[1:34:36]

Then another thing, we said to her one day, “Would you like to go and visit Káld?” Which was her birthplace. So, she said, “Oh, yes please. Yes.” By this time, she was- must have been eighty-five. And so, we drove to Káld about two-and-a-half hours’ drive away. And Káld is a little village with one main street. And that one main street is [inaudible] tarmacadam. All side streets are just earth tracks. Worse in those days. I mean I don’t know what it’s like today. It was still Communist times. So, we drove around and we said, “Can you find your home?” So, we drove around about twenty minutes, quarter- half an hour, and she got more and more nervous, more and more upset cause she could not find her home. So then suddenly I saw an elderly lady. And I stopped the car and I said to my mother, ‘cause I

couldn't speak Hungarian, but I said to my mother, "Go and speak to the lady. Maybe she can help you. Maybe she knows. Maybe she's also from days gone by." So, she got out of the car. Spoke to this lady for about five minutes. And then disappeared into their home. And Anita and I sat in the car waiting. And she came out about ten minutes later, with the lady. And she said to me, this lady actually is relative newcomer to Káld. She's only lived here about thirty years. But her husband who is a few years older than her, remembers my family. Remembers exactly where we lived. Remembers the fact that there was a- a girl every year for about twelve years interspersed with the odd boy, you know? She remembered the fact that my grandfather was the village shoemaker. And so, my mother was so happy. So, this other lady then got in the car with us. We drove round and found the house where they lived. And you know, she went, drove back home a happy lady.

Oh, that's tremendous.

So that was a nice story. And- and you know Budapest itself was an exciting place for us to live really because Anita and I were treated almost as diplomats. Almost. We were constantly entertained at the Embassy, constantly invited to Embassy receptions. Because of the importance of ICI to British trade with Hungary.

Were you bribed at any time?

No, no. Not bribed. But just, you know, we got very friendly with the ambassador and with the senior staff at the embassy. And they allowed us to do some of the shopping you know they had special store, which allowed them to buy things duty-free and so on. So, they gave, they passed that privilege on to us to some to some extent.

Did your son take any interest in his family heritage?

[1:37:54]

Up to a point. Up to a point. But it's surprising - not in great detail. You know, he- he, he loved- he loved his grandmother, my mother. And he got on wonderfully well with her all his life, really. But he never knew his grandfather. My father died before he was born. I tried hard to do a sort of genealogical study of my family and discuss that with him sometimes, but

he didn't really take a detailed interest in that, I don't think- nor, nor did he, funnily enough, take any great interest in- in my own story. My Kindertransport story. I mean, he was interested but he- not as interested as some of the schoolchildren with whom- to whom I talk.

Yes.

It's quite interesting.

I was going to come on to your talks.

Yes.

You- you became a consultant before you retired.

Yes.

And you go into schools speaking about your experiences.

[1:39:04]

Yeah, the consultant story is a- is a different story. What happened there was, I knew that I would be retiring at the age of sixty. Cause at that time, that's what ICI management were doing. And ICI didn't want people to work beyond the age of sixty, basically. So, Budapest was my last posting. Because in 1990 I was due to be sixty. So, my sister-in-law's nephew, my brother's wife's nephew, is a man called Stephen White, who was- is- the senior partner in a major company dealing with negotiating skills training. And- and he runs courses together with staff. It's a worldwide company today. And in those days, he- he was still expanding quite a lot. So, he wanted to expand to Hungary. And also, he then said to me, phoned me one day, he said, "Ernest, you're due to leave ICI. Would you be interested in working for us as a part-time tutor?" So, I said, "Well, I've not been on your course so I don't know. I'll go on one of your courses." So, I put myself on one of the courses in Glasgow, cause the headquarters of their company is in Glasgow. And I found that I- I enjoyed it. I could do it. So, I said, "Yes, that sounds very interesting." And their courses are three -day residential courses, usually start on a Monday evening, finish on a Thursday. So, I then said,

“Well, let’s see if we can organise one or two courses for you in Budapest, while I’m still working here.” So, I went to Citibank for example, and put the idea to them- of a course. And it turns out that the personnel manageress had already been on one of their courses. So, she was hundred percent in favour that we should run a course for Citibank. And that’s what we did. We started on that. Stephen came with a tutor, and I sat in just to listen. And it was very successful. He then did another one. And then, basically, I finished and then went back to live in- I finished in- in Hungary, and went back to live in Brussels. And then Stephen said, “Well, we’re opening a business- we’re setting up a business in Germany. Could you do- could you run this course in German?” So, I said, “Well, I would have to sit in and listen to the language and see how it went.” So, I did that. I went and did- they’d already appointed a man so I went and sat in with him and listened to him during the course and said, “Yes, I can do that.” And- so they trained me. Sent me on one or two courses and trained me. And then I started to work in- in Germany on a part time basis. You know, travelling from Brussels to- to wherever it was, in- in Germany. And after about a year, Stephen said, “Well, we’re about to do the same thing in France now. Could you do it in French?” So, I said, “Well, my French is just as good as my German. Why not?” So, I sat in again on a French course. Listened. Found it was OK, acceptable. So, then I found myself doing courses over a period of two or three years, or longer, in fact, in German, French and English. Some were in English, some were in French, some were in German. And I found myself really working like twenty-five, twenty-six weeks in the year.

[1:43:22]

Did you find it very rewarding?

Yes. It was very good because, you know, teaching people to neg- you know, you’ve got a businessman and you say to him, “I can improve your negotiating skills.” And the guy doesn’t believe you. He never believes you. They all think- they all know-they all think that they are good negotiators. But then they sit in for three days and they work at this course, and they realise how they could improve. Cause the course is- is very clever. It’s, it uses cameras, which-we film them on, doing a negotiation. And then we play the film back to them, and comment on their- on their wording, on their use of words, on their- on their strategies, on their tactics. And they realise how much better they could be if they used the techniques properly.

Sounds like a very useful course.

It is very useful.

Did you find that experience of public speaking, so to speak-

Well, that helped-

...useful, when you were going into schools?

Yes, yes.

And talking about your experiences?

Yes- yes.

Would you like to say something about that aspect-

Yeah, well-

... of your activities?

Yes, with pleasure. So, when I came back to England, one of the things I did, I joined the AJR. Association of Jewish Refugees. And-

In which year? [pause] Roughly?

[1:44:54]

It must have been round about 2003, perhaps. Roughly. And- you know, I- I talked to people there. I knew Michael Newman. I met Michael Newman, met other people there. And one day, one of the ladies, and I can't remember who it was, phoned me up and said, "Look we've had a request from a school, for someone to talk to do with the Holocaust." So, I said,

"Well all I can talk about is my experience in the Kindertransport." She said, "That's fine that's- that's- that's excellent." So, I prepared a talk, and went to the school and it went very well. And so, I developed this together with photos, together with a Power Point presentation which I think is very important because it- it makes it all much livelier. And- and then suddenly, there was a contact with the Holocaust Educational Trust. And they work all the time, as you probably know, with schools. And they are supported by the government. They are- I don't think they're funded by- I don't think they have funding help from the government but certainly they have a lot of help at government level. And today, it is an organisation which works wonderfully well with schools. If a school decides- and- and today Holocaust education, as you know, is obligatory in schools, in England. So, all schools, somehow or other, want to try and do it and if they can get hold of a survivor, all the better. It- it makes far more impact on the children. And so, the Holocaust Education Trust approached me and said would I like to try and do it in schools, working for them. So, I said yes. And so, I've been doing that, really, for the last - I don't know - ten years at least. Last year I think I did twenty-five different talks in the year. So, you know, it's like one every couple, or two every month roughly, on average.

Did you find the pupils very responsive?

[1:47:21]

It's very resp- I- I- I've said to the people who handle- my handler, who is Anna- Anna Lloyd, for example. I've said to her, I really think that I don't want to teach- to talk to children younger than year nine. That's thirteen, fourteen. Because I don't think they're ready to- to understand what goes on. There are other speakers who are quite happy to speak to younger children, but somehow, I don't feel comfortable. I prefer the older ones. So, I talk to anything from year nine to year twelve. I mean, next week, for example I'm- I'm at a school in Chichester. I've been- next week also I'm at Radley College in Oxford. I don't know- do you know Dame Helen Hyde? Dame Helen Hyde was headmistress at Watford Grammar School for Girls. And she is very, very active in Holocaust education. And she- she- annually, she runs a group of people who go to Radley College, which is a very famous public school, boarding school, and they get young- it's usually the sixth form that we talk to. But they invite some of the senior schools from nearby to come as well. So, there are usually something like ten or twelve survivor speakers who all speak to different groups at the school

at the same time in different areas. And then there's a major speaker. All the students get together in the hall, and there's a major theme for the whole thing, to do with Holocaust education, basically. And Helen Hyde organises that. Next week on Tuesday the 13th is the next meeting in Radley College in Oxford. So, I'm going to that. And then later in the week to Chichester, in the same week. So, busy next week. No golf next week. Yeah.

You're very busy indeed.

Yeah.

In between times, do you and your wife go to synagogue?

[1:49:46]

Yes, well, I do. She doesn't. She- she has mobility problems so she- she would find it very difficult to walk to the synagogue. It's only ten minutes' walk from here.

Which synagogue do you go to?

Pinner – Pinner, which is just more or less round the corner. Ten minutes away, but- so I go there most Saturdays. I mean, I'm not a terribly religious Jew. But I'm Jewish. I- I- I believe in- in my religion. I support my religion. And I want to be part of it. But Anita- Anita is- she- she finds it difficult to walk there. Yeah.

Yeah.

I'm often asked at schools, by the way, how do I feel about my Judaism. That's one of the questions which comes quite regularly. And it's- you know, it's- I'm not sure how they respond to the answer. But I- I always say, "Look, I think. I am a Jew. I believe in my Judaism. The fact that Jews suffered the way that they did suffer hasn't influenced me in any way against my religion as some people might have thought." And yes, that's it. So they seem- they seem satisfied with my answer usually.

When did you become a British citizen?

Ah. My parents were naturalised in 1948. So my brother and I, as minors, automatically were included in that naturalisation.

And you were a pilot officer during your-

Ah- I was even higher than that. I finished up as a flying officer.

Ah.

Yes.

Were your parents very proud of that and were you proud of that fact?

[1:52:00]

I think- they were, I think they were proud. I'm not sure about proud. I was pleased. I was pleased to have that. Yes. You know, I spent the two years learning Russian, and at the end of it I then had to do three lots of reserve training to revise the Russian. Three years subsequently to that so, 1952, '53, '54 I had to- no- anyway, some- somewhere like that, yes. Yeah. One year in Bodmin in Cornwall, and two years in Scotland, near St. Andrew's golf course. They had a- special schools there to help us to revise our Russian. And so, I had to do that. And of course, then we- we lived in an officer's mess and we were treated as officers, so that- that pleased me. But at the end of the day, it was hard work always doing these courses because they made us work really hard. Yeah.

How do you feel now about your Britishness? Is there a conflict- any conflict in terms of identity?

No. Absolutely not. I feel- I feel- I feel entirely British. I mean, I was asked some years ago whether I wanted to take out Austrian nationality. And, I mean, the answer was, from me, was a clear 'No'. Funnily enough, if I were, today, forty years younger and still working, I think I would do it today. Because of the Brexit story. In fact, my son was- had started things in motion in Belgium - he lived in Belgium - to become a Belgian. And this had- he'd already

talked to people, started to fill out the documents for this in- in Brussels. And then of course he died. But, you know, the Brexit would have made me change my mind for purely personal, for- for if you like, commercial reasons. Not for- not for any sort of theoretical reasons. But otherwise, I feel totally British. Yes, I mean, you know I grew up as an English schoolboy. I played cricket. I played football... I mixed with English boys and girls. I mean, Jewish, yes, but- university, all this kept me- made me- made me English. Made me British. And today, I- for me, German is a foreign language. I mean I speak German quite fluently. I speak French quite fluently. But, these are for me, foreign languages. My- my language is English. So, from that point of view I- I feel- I feel British, yes.

Was there any sense of alienation from your parents?

[1:55:27]

No. No, no. No, no. My- my- no, I mean my mother and father were very, very happy to be British- to become British and to live here. The fact that they went back from time to time to have holidays in Austria, that is because of their background. I mean, they enjoyed the Austrian *Gemütlichkeit*. The Austrian way of life. They enjoyed the life in a- in a spa town like Bad Gastein for a holiday. But they were very happy in- in Leeds. Most of their friends were Continentals in Leeds, you know. They had very few real English friends. I mean they were all either former Austrians or Hungarians or- or whatever, in Leeds. There were quite a- there were quite a number of them there, yes. Yeah.

Do you have anything else that you would like to go back to that comes to mind now, that you perhaps didn't say earlier, but you would like to now?

Such as what, I mean, I'm not quite sure what you mean.

Any specific points or particular memories? I mean, you don't have to-

No, no. No-no.

But just in case?

No. I mean- the interesting thing was, while working for ICI, while in Switzerland, as I said to you, I think earlier, they asked me to go back and spend six months in Vienna, to do a- to train some people there to do within the ICI business there. And so, my wife and I had these six months in a- in a furnished apartment in the centre of Vienna, for six months. And that we found very strange. This was early 1960s. And it was a- still a time when Austria was just recovering from Russian occupation, basically. So, life in Austria wasn't all that easy, in those days. And so that was, if you like, an interesting time. Meeting Austrians then, I met quite a bit of anti-Semitism there. In, you know in the textile industry. If you remember the textile industry in- in Vienna, in Austria, had been more or less in the hands of Jews before the war. Now it was not in the hands of Jews anymore. And some of the people in Vienna, particularly, and even in in the provinces. I- I worked a bit in the Vorarlberg which is the province near Switzerland where they have the cotton industry and also the embroidery industry, which was quite famous. We did quite a lot of work there. There was a fair amount of anti- Semitism, anti-Semitism I met there. So that was always a problem for me. How to react. You know-

[1:58:51]

How did you react?

Well, you know, I had to- it was a balance between on the one hand I was representing ICI and I wanted business. On the other hand, I was a Jew. And how can you react? Sometimes I made it clear that I was Jewish. Sometimes I just said nothing. I never knew quite where- what to do there, because it was a- a dual- I don't know, a dual responsibility in a sense. How would you- how would you have reacted? I don't know.

What form did the anti-Semitism take?

Words, just words, you know. About Jews. You know, they- sort of old-style Jews being- running the world, running business, lending money, doing shady things - things of that nature. Typical- the sort of thing that they had learned during the Nazi time. And they- you know, Austrians, basically, particularly in the countryside, they were very much under the influence of the Catholic Church. And the Catholic Church at that time has a lot to be- had a lot to answer for, in terms of anti-Semitism. And I think... Austrian- particularly the- the

simpler or the yes, the simpler Austrian person, less well-educated Austrian person, was easily influenced by church matters. And so, you know, you never knew quite how to deal with that. The same is true in Hungary, by the way.

I was going to ask, did you experience anti-Semitism elsewhere-?

[2:00:44]

In Hungary from time to time, yes- yes. Yes, definitely. Again, words, you know? What they- I don't look Jewish, so they- they said things to me not thinking that I was Jewish. And, and you know, you never know quite how to react to these situations. And when they found out that I'm Jewish then, you know, they were a bit embarrassed, usually.

Did you experience any anti-Semitism in this country?

Well, the only anti-Semitism I really experienced was during my Air Force time. During my recruit training. No, there you have very ignorant drill sergeants and drill corporals who have a couple of hundred young recruits in their hands and they- they dominate. They want to dominate. And many of those tended to be anti-Semitic. You know. But they discovered quite quickly that I was Jewish because on a morning you tended to have a parade, and then you say, "Fall out, Christ- fall out Catholics and Jews." And nearly- nearly every time the parade has a short religious service, which is intended for Church of England. So, the Catholics and Jews were marched to the side of the parade ground, and the service was held there. And then, "Fall in, Catholics and Jews." So, they quickly found out who were the Jews and that was always quite interesting. So- the only time I really discovered anything like that was from some ignorant drill corporal. But other than that, no, no. Not really. I mean, school, we were the only- there were very few Jewish children in Cockburn High School because it was in a part of Leeds where there were very few Jews. University, definitely not. No. No. Now, now and again, of course you hear anti-Semitic voices, but that's part of normal life in this country.

Do you find the present situation with the Labour Party and the rising anti-Semitism here in Britain-

Yeah.

...disconcerting, upsetting, worrying?

[2:03:24]

I find it very worrying, I do. I mean, last... this year, in January, Islington Town Hall asked me to be their main speaker for their Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration event. In Islington Town Hall. Two of the speakers were Jeremy Corbyn and Emily Thornberry. They were both- they're both MPs for Islington, and so, they were at the same event. So, before the start of the main event, there was a coffee reception in the Mayor's parlour. And Anita was with me. And we met Jeremy Corbyn and Emily Thornberry; had a long chat with them. He was absolutely charming. Absolutely charming, and his wife also. She was there, and, you know, so friendly, so nice. She also- she seemed, you know, a really lovely person. And then you hear about all these things going on. I hadn't realised at that time all this story about his connections with anti-Semitism. And it gradually became clearer and clearer to me in the meantime. But it is very worrying. I mean- on the one hand, he sort of tries to make out that, yes, he's working very hard to clear the Labour Party of anti-Semitism. And on the other hand, he associates with people who clearly want to see the end of Israel. I mean, that seems to be his main thing. I don't think that he is against Jews. I think he is against Israel. And the two get linked. But his main thing in the past has always been to support anybody who is against Israel. And- and that's just very unfortunate, because, you know, Jews on the whole are- are linked with Israel whether they like it or not. There are many Jews who are perhaps- perhaps don't like it. But whether they like it or not they are linked and I think that's- that's- remains a problem.

Do you find the situation unsettling in terms of your being a British citizen on the one hand but also having been a refugee because of intense anti-Semitism?

[2:06:44]

No, I think-

Do you separate the two?

I think - I don't think the refugee part comes into it. I don't feel like being a refugee. I mean, OK, I tell this story. I mean I tell my- I associate, obviously. I associate myself with the fact that I am from Austria and that I'm a Kindertransport and so on. But my feeling is that I'm British today, you know, I, I- I hope I react like a normal English, normal English Jew would react. So, from that point of view, yeah, I- I feel, I feel upset that it is like that. I feel upset that the Labour Party which has always been a party very much favoured by Jews in the past, is a party which actually presents such a problem for Jews today. I find that- I find that very upsetting. I wonder what will happen in the future when Jeremy Corbyn no longer exists, or when he is replace by somebody else, whether the Labour Party will change. Or whether it is just Jeremy Corbyn and the extreme left which is working in this way. I don't know. Yeah.

If you were to think of prospective audiences of this interview-

Yes.

...family members-

Yeah.

...friends. Would you have a special message for them, that you'd like to record?

[2:07:41]

I wish you'd told me that beforehand. I would have thought about it. I think that- that the main message is that, you know, my brother and I really are two very lucky people in many ways. First of all, lucky in the sense that we got out and that our parents got out. When so many other people came- I mean, my brother didn't come on the Kindertransport but nevertheless, I mean, I include him with me in this. So many people who came on the Kindertransport lost their- their parents forever. They- they lost all their belongings. They lost their parents, never saw their parents again. So, from that point of view, we are very lucky people. We are very lucky that we both had a good education. We both had a- a nice life, on the whole. That- that we've managed- that we've succeeded in making a reasonable life for ourselves. I mean, neither of us is, is, is terribly wealthy, but we're comfortable. And- and we

both enjoy our golf, we both enjoy our good food, we both enjoy our travel and we're both lucky with our partners. You know- my wife- we've been married sixty-four years nearly, in- in December, next month. And my brother was also married a long time until his wife passed away a couple of years ago. But, you know, as I say, he has three children. He has grandchildren. He has great-grandchildren. I unfortunately have nothing. No children, no grandchildren, no great-grandchildren. But we make the most of it. And that's it. What else is there to say? I enjoy my golf. I enjoy- I enjoy my life, on the whole. And I- I like to be involved in education, in Holocaust education. As much as possible.

Speaking of education, did you ever apply, or your brother, for compensation for lack of education because of the Holocaust or property?

[2:10:04]

We both- we both get a pension from Austria. So, from that point of view, that is covered. And, yeah, on the- on the whole I think from a pension point of view the Austrians have been reasonably generous. I mean they were very generous to my mother, for example. I don't know if you're aware, but in addition to a normal pension, if someone gets old and is in need, they have what they call *Pflegegeld* – an additional amount of money which is paid out if someone is in need. Like my mother was in need. She had to live in a care home and had to have constant care towards the end of her life. So, from that point of view, I think the Austrians on the whole are reasonably- are reasonably generous. I also- I work with AJR. I'm on one of their committees. You know, one of the tasks that AJR has, is to handle the money from the - what's it called? The organisation which provides compensation and help? It's- it's headquartered in the United States. I can't remember the name. Terrible. Anyway. So, they have a regular committee of specialist social workers, together with usually two or three Holocaust survivors and I- I work for the Austrian group, so they have to be Austrian Holocaust survivors. And they help AJR to assess the needs of the claimants. People- very poor survivors who need help – financial help, in one way or another. And so, money is available, and money is handed out. And that's one of the things I find they do fantastically well.

And you serve on that committee?

Yeah, I serve on that committee. Not-

How long have you served on it?

[2:12:20]

Oh, about eight or nine years. Yeah. Yeah.

That's very worthwhile.

Yeah. And then one of the other things that I did for a while, AJR has a group of... befrienders, if you like. There are, again, some lonely survivors who need help and friends from time to time. So, one of the AJR management team, Carol Hart, looks after this group. And I used to work for her. Help her. I do it less now, because I'm too busy doing other things. But-

With schools?

Yeah, with schools and, and- and other things, yes. Yeah. So, there we are. That's it.

A life well lived.

Well, reasonably- Try hard.

Thank you very much indeed for your time and for sharing your experiences with us today for the AJR Refugee Voices Project.

Thank you. Thank you. Very interesting. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

OK. Good!

[End of interview]

[2:13:33]

[2:13:48]

[Start of photographs and documents]

Photo 1

So, this is Max Simon, my grandfather, my father's father, who lived in Eisenstadt, but who died before I ever got to know him because he died in 1928, the same year that my parents got married.

Photo 2

So, this is Klara Simon, my grandmother, who also died before I was born. My father's mother. I really don't know an awful lot about her, except what I have read in the genealogy. Yeah.

Photo 3

This is me, Ernst Simon - or Simon, Ernst - as they used to be called, on my first day at school. Probably aged six. And wearing typical Austrian school wear for this sort of period. Complete with satchel on my back. *When was that?* 1936.

Photo 4

So, this is again, me, aged about six, wearing typical sort of Austrian wear for boys of that age, *Lederhosen*. The leather shorts. You can see that from the braces, the leather braces. Unfortunately, you can't see the shorts, but I'm sure that the shorts were there too.

Photo 5

This is a- an enlargement of an official document issued by the government, British government, to allow me to come into this country in January 1939. The front is a photograph plus details of where I was born and where I lived in- in Vienna. And the rear of the photograph, which you can see in a moment, shows the date of arrival in Harwich, which oddly enough is two days after my departure from Vienna. Arrival date: 13th of January. Departure date: 11th of January. Which indicates that the journey itself took about thirty-six hours.

[2:16:16]

Document 1

So, this is the reverse of that previous document showing the arrival date in Harwich. Incidentally these are copies provided to me by World Jewish Relief who had a whole set of documents about me in my early days in this country.

Photo 6

So, this is a formal family portrait showing mother, father, my younger brother Kurt and myself. Probably round about the year 1941 - '40 or '41. Certainly, must have been taken in England after our arrival there.

Photo 7

So, I was a very keen footballer in my youth. This is a- photograph was taken when I was probably about eighteen or nineteen years old, playing football for the Leeds Jewish Institute. And the interesting thing about this particular photograph is that bottom left in the front, is Frankie Vaughan, the famous singer, who came from Leeds, or at least who studied in Leeds and who was a member of this team as well, and was a very enthusiastic footballer.

Where are you in the picture?

I am in the centre front, kneeling down.

Photo 8

So, this is a typical degree ceremony photograph taken in 1951, when I got my degree from Leeds University - degree of Bachelor of Commerce. In those days I proudly sported a moustache.

Photo 9

So, this reminds me of my two years of National Service in the Royal Air Force between 1951 and 1953, during which time I was being trained as a- as a Russian language interpreter. And these are two of my Jewish colleagues on the course. I was at Cambridge University and also at Bodmin, in Cornwall.

Photo 10

So, this is my mother and father, a photograph taken in the early 1950s when they were both in their early fifties. I think it's taken at the seaside, somewhere- probably in North Yorkshire somewhere. And, yeah, they look very happy there.

[2:18:58]

Photo 11

So, a typical formal wedding photograph of Anita and myself. Taken on the 26th of December 1954, when I was just twenty-four and Anita was twenty-two. So, very young, and very much in love.

Photo 12

So, this is again, on our wedding day, 26th of December 1954. Photograph of the family group. My mother and father in the centre. My brother Kurt and his wife Betty. They got married six months before we- we did. And of course, Anita and myself.

Photo 13

So, a photograph of a- a very small family. Anita, myself and together with our son Martin, and his wife Patricia. The photograph was taken at the home of friends of ours in Brussels where we were living at the time, probably around about the middle of the 1980s.

Photo 14

Our son Martin passed away in July 2016. This photograph was taken a couple of months before his death, and this in fact is just an enlargement of a snapshot. Unfortunately, he had a heart problem which troubled him for a number of years and in the end, it was just beyond him. So, he passed away in his sleep on- in July 2016.

Document 2

So, my father worked with leather more or less all his life. And this particular certificate [apprenticeship diploma] here is issued by the *Fachgenossenschaft der Schuhmacher* in Eisenstadt. Which is the trade association of shoe makers in Eisenstadt. It was issued to him

in 1927 to certify that he was now a qualified shoe maker and had been accepted by the industry.

[End of photographs and documents]

[2:21:24]