

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	85

Interviewee Surname:	Feldman
Forename:	Gisela
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	18 September 1923
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	29 November 2004
Location of Interview:	Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	3 hours and 6 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 85

NAME: GISELA FELDMAN

DATE: 29 NOVEMBER 2004

LOCATION: MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: I'm interviewing Gisela Feldman and today's date is Monday, 29th November 2004. The interview is taking place in Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin. If you'd tell me first your name.

GF: Gisela Feldman.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

GF: Knepel. K-N-E-P-E-L. And my second name Esther. Gisela Esther Feldman.

RL: And do you have a Hebrew name?

GF: Gittel Esther.

RL: And do you know if you were named after anybody?

GF: Yes, after a grandmother.

RL: And where were you born?

GF: I was born in Berlin.

RL: And the date?

GF: 18 September 1923.

RL: So how old does that make you now?

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GF: 81.

RL: If you could tell me first of all about your parents and their backgrounds.

GF: Yes. Well, both my parents came from what in those days was the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and later became Poland. It was Galicia. My father came from a small place called Rzeszow and we were a very orthodox family. My grandfather never worked. My grandmother had eight children and ran a business with corn and hay. And my father came to Germany when he was fifteen years old. He was born in 1885. And it was very hard to find jobs in those days. And so he came to Berlin. And an older brother had already come to Berlin and started a business selling eggs, so my father had somewhere to come to. However, a few years later another brother had gone to England and my father decided to try his luck in England and found that the streets weren't paved with gold, his brother hadn't done very well, and whatever he earned he was gambling away, so it was a very poor family. So he went back to Berlin to work for his other brother. And a third brother joined them eventually, so there were three brothers in Berlin. My mother came from a slightly bigger place called Tarnów, and they all had Yiddish names, these places: Rzeszow was Reisha, Tarnów was Turne. And she also came to Berlin when she was about 15 years old. She was born in 1894 and she went to work for a family that had left Poland earlier and had already had an established business and she went to look after the children, like an au pair girl nowadays, I suppose. They eventually met through the egg business and got married in 1920. So neither of them were very young when they got married. And my grandparents on my mother's side came to Berlin after the First World War and there also started a kosher grocery store and again they were very orthodox. My grandmother wore a sheitl, my grandfather had a beard and peyos, but he worked and kept the family. And two more of my mother's sisters and two brothers came to Berlin with them. Another sister married a person in Rumania and so she didn't come to Berlin, and in fact she's the only member of that family who died of a natural death during the war. All the others were taken away to camps

RL: Right. And the brothers and sisters that came to Berlin, did they have families?

GF: Eventually, you mean?

RL: Yes.

GF: Yes. All three brothers were married. The oldest one had come first to start the business, got married. Did you want the people's names, or not?

RL: Could do.

GF: Her name was Tony, and she, they never had any children. Then my father was the one that came next. And I have a sister, so there were two of us. My sister was born when I was 2 years and 9 months old. And I can think back to the time my mother came home from hospital with this baby and a big feather cushion. And the youngest brother was

Tape 1: 5 minutes 22 seconds

married and his wife's name was Frieda and they had two sons. And one of the sons was a year older than I and the other one was my sister's age. My older cousin came to England just before the war to that uncle who by then lived in Leeds, and he guaranteed for him, and he came to England. Unfortunately he felt he had to be a hero and joined the Polish army. The British army wouldn't have him, but he had a Polish passport – and, in fact, so did I because although we were born in Berlin, you took the nationality of your parents – so he had a Polish passport and joined the Polish army and very sadly some of the soldiers said to him, “When we get to France we'll kill you Jews first before we do the fighting”, which was rather sad. But he was killed in battle. So although he was the only member of that family that got out of Germany, he also died. And so nobody of the family in Berlin got saved.

RL: You say that your father actually came to England for a short while. Did he tell you anything about it, where he went in England?

GF: Well, he went to ... my uncle first lived in Hull and he went to Hull to stay with his brother. But I don't think it was; he didn't stay for very long.

RL: Was your father in the First World War?

GF: No. No. He had a Polish passport, he lived in Berlin, so no, he wasn't, no.

RL: And he continued just working ...?

GF: Working, yes. Eventually he got his own business. In fact, we've got a photograph of the shop amongst the stuff you've got.

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

RL: Do you know, I don't know. I really don't know. I do know that he came, as I say, from a strictly orthodox family, and his parents only had a Jewish wedding. They didn't have a state wedding. So on his birth certificate; in fact, he is named after the mother. And it says on it – I've got it somewhere – it gives him the mother's name, but it says Mr. Knepel admits to fatherhood. And it also gives the name of the midwife on it. But eventually the whole family changed their names to the father's name. But that's on his birth certificate. So he was illegitimate actually [Laughs].

GF: So what was his mother's maiden name?

RL: Irom. I-R-O-M.

GF: And what were your grandparents' names?

RL: You mean first names.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 37 seconds

RL: Yes.

GF: Oh God, I've forgotten. I've made a family tree and then I've forgotten. My grandmother on my mother's side was Rachel and my mother's father's name was Isaac. And on my father's side, I've forgotten.

RL: OK. And your mother, do you know what kind of education she might have had?

GF: No, we never really talked about it. No, she came to Germany at the age of 15 and we never really talked about it. I mean, they could all read and write and take part in life, in the community, but otherwise I don't really know.

RL: So what kind of place were you living in, in Berlin? Can you describe your accommodation?

GF: Yes, I can. You see my parents got married in 1920 and it was the aftermath of the First World War and it was terribly difficult to get accommodation and in fact my mother told me that they had to have an official marriage, but they didn't live together for 3 months because you couldn't get a flat until you could show that you were married. So they waited for their flat and then they had their chuppah, their Jewish wedding and moved into that flat. It wasn't a very particularly nice flat, but you had to take what you could get and of course you didn't buy flats, you rented them. And I was born when we lived there and so was my sister. And I remember, as I say, my mother coming home with the baby and a big feather cushion and also I remember having a doll's pram the same colour as my sister's pram. And we both pushed our babies proudly along in the same coloured pram. But my mother helped in the business, so we always had what you called a maid in those days. It was a bit like an au pair girl except she did all the housework too. And then we stayed there until about 1932. And then we had the chance of getting a much better flat and you had to pay what you called key money in those days. The people that were leaving the flat could ask for you to pay to be able to take over their flat. And in fact it was the flat of a Jewish family who'd obviously seen the writing on the wall and decided to emigrate early, because if you went out in the early days you could still take all your possessions with you, your money and things. And this woman had worked for a store called Karstadt, and they were the first ones to put up a sign to say "Jews not wanted in this shop". And I've been back to Germany since and I cannot get myself to go into that store because I always remember that.

RL: So the first apartment that you were in, what part of Berlin ... Do you remember the address?

GF: Yes, Liegnitzerstraße. It was East Berlin at the time, during the war, not during the war, after the Russians took part of Berlin.

RL: And what floor was the flat on?

Tape 1: 12 minutes 29 seconds

GF: Second.

RL: How big a block was it?

GF: I think it had four floors, but I really am not certain.

RL: And were there other Jewish families ...?

GF: No, in fact, the area where we lived, there were very few Jewish families. In fact, I went to the state school, my sister and I, and we were the only Jewish children in the school. We had quite a long walk to the synagogue, but obviously we walked and strangely enough our rabbi was the father of our – Jakobovits - of the previous chief rabbi.

RL: Which shul was that?

GF: No I've forgotten. Koltzbusser Ufer.

RL: So being one of the only Jewish families in the area, how did you get on with the non-Jewish neighbours?

GF: Very well. I mean, I have photographs of playing with the children in the street, even after 1933. In fact, when Hitler came into power, eventually we had an SS man standing outside the shop telling people not to buy from Jews, and most of the customers still came. They were very brave people. They wouldn't pay any attention to this man standing outside the shop. And across the road from us we had bakers, a catholic family, and you know they get up very early and one morning they were looking out – they lived above the shop – looking and seeing somebody trying to daub their shop, because they were friends of the Jews, they threw buckets of water over them. So at the beginning people were quite brave. We didn't shut our shop till 1938. By that time my father had been beaten up a couple of times and it was very difficult to get wholesalers to deliver to Jewish shops. My mother used to get up 5 or 6 in the morning and go to the wholesale market and get stuff for the shop. But eventually things got quite difficult and, of course, I also left the state school to go to a Jewish school. However, when the Nazis first came into power, I was always a blue-eyed blonde and the teacher wanted me to be secretary for the Hitler Youth. And I declined, but then when it came out that I was Jewish he told all the other children that I was no different from anybody else, they had to still treat me in the same way. So that was very brave of him.

RL: And did they?

GF: Yes, they did. But then schooling became difficult, you know, you weren't after a while not allowed to go to state schools, so since by that time I was eleven and had to

change schools anyway, I went to a Jewish school. But the teacher's instructions, "Your daughter will have to go to University", little did he know how impossible life was going

Tape 1: 15 minutes 50 seconds

to get for us. And I think that's always been one of my greatest regrets that I missed out on education.

RL: And so how friendly were you with the children? Would you visit their homes, would they come to yours?

GF: Yes. But we mainly played in the streets actually, you know. In those days kids played in the streets. Now you're afraid to let your kids go out but it was nearly all taking part in the street. Even in winter we got our sledges out and went to the park and so on, or the tennis courts in winter were flooded and became skating rinks. So there was a lot of outdoor life.

RL: And did you belong to any clubs?

GF: No, not really, no, no, because once I went to the Jewish school we had all these sort of sports at the school, after school hours, so life was quite full.

RL: Did your parents belong to any clubs or societies?

GF: No, no. ... ours was just very much of a family life. You know, any spare time the brothers and their family spent together. Every Sunday in the summer if the weather was fine, they'd call each other and arrange a picnic out in the outside, you know, we used to take a train and then a boat across a lake and have our picnics there and put a hammock up between the trees and played in the sand. And you had a very strange thing, which I don't suppose you've heard of anywhere else, you would take your own coffee and milk. And an outdoor restaurant provided the hot water and the cups and saucers. And there was always a sign – I won't tell it to you in German – it was: "the old habit isn't going to be broken. Families can boil their coffee here." And all they did was provide the hot water and the crockery.

RL: Would you go away for holidays?

GF: Yes, we always went to the seaside and rented a house. And the wives and children went because the husbands couldn't close the shop. So the wives and children went and took their help with them and the husbands all came on a Sunday to visit. And then when the wives got back, the husbands went on holiday, normally to a spa to take the waters.

RL: So where would you go? Which seaside resorts would you go to?

GF: Kolberg und Swinemünde.

RL: And how long would you go for?

GF: About 3 weeks.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 47 seconds

RL: Coming back to your father's business and the shop, can you describe that and where it was and, you know, describe it.

GF: It was on Reichenbergerstraße and it was just an ordinary grocery store, but the old-fashioned type, of course, where you had barrels of butter and you ground your customer's coffee and you had sacks with all the cereals, and if you bought eggs you had them candled first, you know, you held them against an electric light to see if they were alright so you didn't sell any bad eggs. You know, if you hold an egg up to the light you can see if it's good or not, if it's fresh or not. And once we kids got a bit bigger we enjoyed doing that and ladling the butter out of the barrel and so on. And a whole counter of different cheeses and things.

RL: And you say in the early days these were all delivered to the shop?

GF: Yes, and of course you also had to have ice delivered for the butter because we didn't have refrigeration.

RL: Who would work in the shop?

GF: My father and my mother. Just a small family shop.

RL: And you say that in 1932 you moved house, you moved apartment, where did you go to?

GF: On the same street as the shop was. In fact, it was only about six doors away and it was a flat on the second floor, a much, much nicer flat than we had before.

RL: Can you describe that apartment.

GF: Yes, it had four rooms, kitchen, bathroom, very nice balcony, where we used to grow plants and a few herbs like chives and things, and that's it.

RL: How was it furnished?

GF: How was it furnished? Well, it had a sitting room suite to sit on and the dining table in another room and you had no central heating, we had no central heating – I think very few people did in those days. And you had a tiled stove in the corner of the room which went almost up to the ceiling, which you heated with coal and it threw out a lot of heat and there was a little door in it where you could bake apples or keep fruit hot in.

RL: And did the maid actually live in?

GF: Yes, she did. They were usually girls from the country who came to work in the big city and they'd probably also send some money home.

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RL: Was your father involved in any kind of activity apart from his work?

GF: No.

RL: Was he interested in politics?

GF: I can't remember discussing it very much. You see, I think when I was about ten Hitler came into power and on thinking back I feel our parents protected us. We never talked about the situation. What they did between themselves I don't know. But they never sort of talked about the worry about the situation.

RL: Did you get newspapers?

GF: Yes. But don't ask me the name of the newspaper.

RL: And did you have a radio?

GF: Yes. And a telephone.

RL: What kind of religious upbringing did you have as a child?

GF: Well, I would not travel on a shabbat, I would not handle money on a shabbat. Obviously we had a kosher household and, as I say, I went to a Jewish school, we went to synagogue regularly, walked a long distance, but went there regularly, yes.

RL: Do you have any memories of any particular festivals or any family gatherings?

GF: Well, for us the highlight was Friday night actually. You know, we always had our Friday night. I always tell this funny story, you know, when you say a prayer you must not speak in between, and my father could never find the salt for the Challah and he thought if he said it in Hebrew, then it would be alright in the middle of a prayer, so he kept saying "melach, melach", and we'd pass him the salt. And Pesach we always spent you know with family, with one or the other of the family.

RL: Did you ever visit your parents' home towns?

GF: I never went to my mother's home town, never went to Tarnow. We went to my father's home town, in 1936 I think was the first time, went twice to Rzeszow, to meet the rest of the family. My grandparents had died by then but my father still had two sisters living there and a brother, and so we went to meet the family. But even then we were aware of the anti-Semitism. My sister was walking through the street and they were shouting "Jew, Jew" in Polish, you know. So we were aware of it even then, yes.

RL: What did his family do for a living there?

Tape 1: 25 minutes 10 seconds

GF: One of them had, was selling milk, I think, and the other one had a grocery store, and one of them was still in the family home that was selling grain and so on, living in the countryside outside Rzeszow. And he had four boys and the fifth one born during the war actually, but everybody disappeared.

RL: Was there any survivor at all from that Polish branch of the family?

GF: No, none at all. I had letters; we had cards from my father until about 1940. You see, my father was deported to Poland. I don't know if you know that in October '38 anybody with a Polish passport that hadn't been to Poland, and the Poles threatened that they would take away their Polish nationality and the Germans didn't want to be left with all these people, they rounded them up in the middle of the night to send them across the border to Poland and so my father and his two brothers had been rounded up in the middle of the night – it was the 28th October, very vivid in my mind, because I was then, what 14, in my fifteenth year and there was a knock in the middle of the night and there were two men just came in and told my father to get dressed and take his passport. Of course, my mother didn't know what to do and my sister panicked, she started shouting, she was only twelve. And they said to my mother, "If you don't keep her quiet, we'll take her away as well." And I don't know what made me do it, I went into the kitchen and made sandwiches for him. I don't know, I suppose you feel food is the only thing you can provide, and I made a parcel of sandwiches for him and then I rushed out of the house and to go to a phone across the road to warn my uncle, but there was already a strange voice answering, and so they were taken to Poland. And we heard from my father until '40 or '41 through Switzerland – we had family in Switzerland and family in Rumania and you could still send mail via these addresses and in fact I have one post card from him which I think historically is very interesting because it gives the sender Oliza Krakowska, Rzeszow Germany, formerly Poland. So they had to consider themselves living in Germany once the Germans had marched into Poland.

RL: So did he remain in Poland from that point of being taken?

GF: Yes, yes, yes. And in fact my husband went to Poland some years ago to see if he could find any trace of anything because they had opened the archive for people to look at things, and a lot of people had been taken out into the woods and shot, and so on. So we have no idea what happened to that family. And my mother's mother, I have a card from her, in 1943 I think, from Theresienstadt and she writes: "I am here all alone, I don't know what happened to the others." So that was in 1943.

RL: And what happened to her?

GF: .. no more trace. Everything ...none of those people survived. In about '40 or '41 my mother had a letter from her sister-in-law in Berlin, again via Switzerland, and she wrote

and said, "Heinrich", which was my mother's brother, "has been sent to a holiday place which he doesn't like very much." Of course, we realized that it was not somewhere he wanted to be. "If you could find us 100 dollars I might be able to arrange for him to go to

Tape 1: 29 minutes 22 seconds

a better holiday place." Who had 100 dollars in those days? So that's a price you put on life. So all that family disappeared, yes.

RL: So coming back to your childhood in Germany, how would you describe your childhood looking back?

GF: Well, until Hitler came into power, it was a very normal happy childhood. Mainly, as I say, spent within the family, because our boy-cousins were the same age as we were, we spent a lot of time together, but once it got to '33 there was a march in our street of the brown shirts and the Communists on 1st May, which was workers' day, and I can remember a man from our block of flats being shot. And I saw the body ... being carried out – I was ten – and from that moment onwards I felt that life would never be the same again. So that was really a turning point in that way. However, as I say, we still carried on playing with the children in the street, my parents never talked very much, but as time went on, I heard things at school, children talking about their fathers sleeping at different addresses so they wouldn't be at home, of fathers having been taken away. You see having Polish Passports; it was the German passport holders that were taken first. So we went on for quite a long time without having sort of family taken away, or having to think about these things.

RL: What was the Jewish school called that you attended?

GF: Grosse Hamburger Strasse. It was closed in 1942. It had stayed open until '42 and then the students were taken to the camps and some were hidden in Berlin, and it opened again 11 years ago, and it opened as a sort of experimental school. The first headmaster was not Jewish, half the teachers were not Jewish, half the teachers were Israeli, and they took anybody that wanted to come into the school. And I visited in 1991, '92, no a bit later than that even, and all the children wore yamalkas, the Jewish children and non-Jewish children, they had to say their prayers before they went into meals and after meals. And when I went there, there happened to be a woman from Berlin radio, she wanted to write a book about the school, and so when she met me there, she was very pleased to talk to somebody from the past. And she said to me "Does the piano mean anything to you?" And I said, "Not particularly." And she said, "But we had one girl here, one woman here who burst into tears, and why? Because the music teacher had made her learn to play the piano and that saved her in the camp. She entertained in the camp and she was saved because she could play the piano." And then I went back again last year to a school reunion, it was at the tenth anniversary of the opening of the school, and I really talked to quite a lot of the children and asked them, the non-Jewish children, why their parents would want to send them to the school. And they said, they had looked round at different schools and they had found the teaching was so good and they liked the ethos of the Jewish teaching. And again, they all wore yamalkas for meals, sang Hebrew songs, and then I was asked to give a talk to the 15 and 16-year-old children. Well, after 65

years away from Germany, it was a daunting task, but I did talk to them. I told them my life history and they clapped and they surrounded me afterwards asking all sorts of questions. So it must have been successful enough for them to understand what I was

Tape 1: 33 minutes 48 seconds

trying to tell them. And I think the saddest part about it all was that when we went to the school, we were told that we were perfectly safe, there are armed, machine guns on all the roof tops. Well, I wasn't worried until I was told that. And then when I sort of went round Berlin I noticed that there were armed guards outside all Jewish offices, all synagogues. And then a German person took me round and tried to sort of justify it all, "You know", he said, "Well you know it's Palestinians and the Middle East situation." And I, sadly, had this thought; I said to him, "Have you ever seen the need of an armed guard outside a mosque?" And he looked at me and he said, "You're right. They don't need to be afraid." I don't know what made me give that answer, but I felt one had to sort of look at it from the broader sense.

RL: So, coming back to when you were at school, how big a school was it whilst you were there?

GF: Well, we were about thirteen in each class, but we went to the age of sixteen, I suppose we would have gone, I really don't remember. But, of course, the boys and girls were divided in separate buildings. We just sort talked to each other over the hedge. And it's rather strange because I was in Israel two weeks, two months ago, and I met up with three women I was at school with in 1936, we hadn't met since, and one of them had put the school photograph and an advertisement on a magazine we get from Berlin about two or three times a year with all the news, and she wrote and said, "Are any of you still alive?" And she said, "There's one person I remember, and that's Gisela Knepel, because she was so blond." And so I wrote back to her, she lives in Tel Aviv, in Ramat Gan, and she arranged a meeting for four of us, which was quite strange.

RL: And did you remember her?

GF: Well, I remembered the names, but she had written to say where she was on the photograph, you know. It was a little difficult, since 1936. I had a different experience in 1960, 1950 I lived in St. Helen's, and I went to the market, and a voice shouted out, "Gisela, Gisela!" And it was a woman and her husband who came to St. Helen's market once a week and she had recognized me. And she had lived in Manchester, Paula Hurst, died just a few weeks ago.

RL: Did you have Hebrew lessons at the Jewish school as well as secular?

GF: I had Hebrew lessons at the school and my father also had a private teacher once a week for us. But at the school we learned what was then called the New Hebrew, which in fact was a Sephardi Hebrew. You know, with Palestine, and people going there, we were taught the New Hebrew, the pronunciation of what they called the New Hebrew. So it wasn't strange to me when I went to Israel, and so on.

RL: Was your family interested in Zionism?

Tape 1: 37 minutes 38 seconds

GF: Well, you know, we had the blue box where you put money in, but that was all , although I've learned since, that one of my father's ancestors, when he was about to die, went to Jerusalem to be buried there.

RL: How far back ...? Do you remember who ...?

GF: I don't know how far back. It would be, I presume, my grandfather's father's family. It would be quite a few generations back. I only found that out because I came across my father's family in Tel Aviv, and the woman was making a family tree and she'd researched into that. And that's how I know about it.

RL: So, you know, when in Germany, when shops were being daubed during the Thirties. Did this happen to your shop?

GF: No, our shop wasn't daubed. It was the baker across the road they wanted to daub the shop. But my father was beaten up a couple of times. And it was hard to get goods, so they decided to give up. But, of course, crystal night was the night when most of the shops were daubed and the windows smashed, and of course crystal night was supposed to be because of the German fellow that got killed in the embassy in Paris, and they talked about – is it Jocela? I've forgotten his name now – went to do that because his parents had been deported to Poland. Now whether that was the reasons or not, I mean historians begin to doubt it because it looked as though it was so pre-planned anyway that it couldn't have happened over-night, but I do remember crystal night very clearly because I wanted to go and see if my aunts were alright, and I can remember always walking on glass.

RL: So can you describe what you experienced of the night.

GF: Well, nothing happened in our area because there were no Jewish people, no Jewish shops. But my aunt, where she lived, there was already more of that. And I can remember when I walked to her seeing smashed shop windows, and things.

RL: How did you first hear of it?

GF: I don't remember that either. I couldn't have heard it on the radio, I shouldn't have thought. I just don't remember, no.

RL: So when you went to check up on your aunts, was this on the next day or was this in the evening?

GF: The next day, the next day, yes.

RL: I was just thinking back, of course, you had the Olympic Games.

GF: Yes.

Tape 1: 40 minutes 43 seconds

RL: What do you remember of that?

GF: Well, I remember, of course, Hitler's fury at having a black person winning there. And I still have a little sort of booklet, five rings of the Olympic Games. But that was in 1936, wasn't it?

RL: Any other memories of that period?

GF: No. You see, it's also very difficult to decide what you've read about since, what people have told you and what is your actual memory. And very often you are influenced by what you've read.

RL: What about marches or parades? Did you witness any of those over the Thirties?

GF: No. Only the one on the 1st of May, that stuck so much in my mind. After that not really, no, no.

RL: Did you ever see Hitler?

GF: In person? No. Now how would I have seen him, you see, we didn't have a television and yet I knew what he looked like. It must have been the newsreel in the cinema. Because it's quite right, how would I know what he looked like?

RL: Did you visit the cinema?

GF: I did go to the cinema, yes. I even saw Shirley Temple in German.

RL: What else would you do for entertainment?

GF: Mainly with friends actually. We would meet in each other's houses and play together and outdoor activities, as I say, skating in the winter and playing netball in the summer. And I was in the school team playing for the school. And you made your own entertainment mainly.

RL: Did you ever go to the theatre or the opera, concerts?

GF: No, I didn't, no. You see, when I was old enough to do these things, life became very difficult. You didn't really go out all that much.

RL: Did your parents go to places of entertainment at all?

GF: Yes, I can remember my mother getting dressed up and putting make-up up [sic] and going to places, but I can't remember where they went going out at night.

RL: What about the Jewish theatre?

Tape 1: 43 minutes 30 seconds

GF: Yes, I can't remember going to the Yiddish theatre. I think my first experience was in London, going to the Yiddish theatre.

RL: So at what stage did your family begin to think of emigration?

GF: I think it didn't ... my mother didn't really take it seriously until my father was deported. And people often ask me why did people stay so long. And my theory is perhaps, if you were rich you went early because you could take your money out. If you were poor, you had nothing to lose. You had that little bit of security in the middle class and I think people didn't think that madness could last somehow and you wondered what you would do, by the time most people started thinking about it, you were restricted as to the amount of money you could take out and whatever you could take with you and you didn't really, as a shopkeeper what could you do if you went to another country? In fact, people used to take their children out of school early – I left school early – because parents felt they should learn a trade. If you had to emigrate, you could earn a living even if you didn't speak the language. And my parents took me out of school and I went to a dress-making school. So that was the preparation I suppose they thought about. Well, that was pretty late; I mean I left school at 14, so that would be in '37.

RL: So that was really before the Polish deportations.

GF: That's right, yes. You see, things became very difficult, I mean, to go to America, you had to go and get a number, you had to have someone to guarantee and the Polish quarter there was always a long waiting list since we had Polish passports. And the borders were closed. How many countries would take you? You know, when I think back, I don't know how much people abroad knew. But I have an acquaintance here in Manchester, about my age group, and she said to me one day, "Why didn't you just buy a ticket and come to England?" And I thought, well, how ignorant people were really.

RL: What was this dress-making school?

GF: Oh it was called Hirsch Zuschneiderschule and I only went there for three or four months and then I helped a tailor, a friend of ours who was tailor, and helped a bit. So, you know, I didn't become an expert in dress-making, but I had a little training, yes.

RL: How long did that go on for?

GF: Oh, I think I only went for three months.

RL: And then what did you do?

GF: Yes, I helped that other tailor, and I helped another family to look after the children and I occupied myself in that way. But then of course my mother was at home as well and, as I said ...

Tape 1: 47 minutes 2 seconds

RL: And at what point again did the thought of emigration come up and how did your mother go about ...?

GF: She heard – I don't know how she heard – that some Cuban officials were selling visas and you had to pay ... my mother paid with dollars, she had smuggled out some money into Holland and had the magic currency, dollars. And we bought these visas in good faith, so did lots of other people. And also there was a boat going to Cuba and she booked four berths on that. Because the people that had been deported to Poland were allowed to come back in transit if they could show that they had a way of emigrating. So my mother got these four visas and four berths on the St. Louis and we ... and in the meantime actually a German family wanted our flat. And normally we would have had to get out, but it went to court and amazingly enough the judge gave us an extra three months to stay in the flat. And then we moved in with our aunt while all this was going on. And the time towards our emigration was getting quite close, my father still hadn't come and, in fact, he cried on the phone to my mother and said, "Don't go without me, don't take the children, don't go without me." So it must have been terribly hard for my mother because she said, "I have to save the children, I have to go." Well, the Poles weren't terribly efficient; they sent the wrong brother back instead of my father. So eventually my mother made enquiries and there was a second boat going, but she couldn't get four berths on the second boat and she only got one berth, so she got a berth for my father on the second boat, hoping that by that time his papers would be sorted out. And in fact we had a lot of problems because we needed our passports renewing and so on. And in fact we were leaving on 13th of May, on 12th of May we still didn't have all our papers. And my mother was just going off to cancel everything when the papers arrived, and I followed her with the papers and everything was settled and we phoned my twelve-year-old sister to pack. Can you imagine a twelve-year-old girl, the responsibility to pack for leaving the country for an unknown future actually. So we left, the 12th of May was a Friday night, and although I had such a religious family, they came and saw off at the station and we travelled Friday night and the boat left on Saturday the 13th of May.

RL: What were you allowed to take with you?

GF: We had a wooden sort of, big case I suppose, the size of the room, and we just took beds, and some carpets, and bit of china and crockery. You see, we had a customer who worked for the custom and excise office and he was horrified at the way things had gone. And he offered to stamp the cases so that they wouldn't be examined before they were sent off. And it was real cloak and dagger thing, because as my sister and I were playing in the street, he would say, "Tell your mother to meet us tonight behind the phone box." And my mother and I would go at night and meet him behind the phone box and he said, "Anybody you know who's emigrating let me know when and I'll stamp the boxes so that

they won't be examined." I don't know if you have heard of a famous collection of books, Hildesheimer, and he wanted to send books to Palestine then, and that box was stamped by our customer and the books went off to Palestine. And after the war actually the man wrote to us and we sent food parcels and also a letter to say that he'd never been

Tape 1: 51 minutes 50 seconds

a Nazi.

RL: What was his name?

GF: Riemer, Mr. Riemer.

RL: So did that mean that you could take valuables with you?

GF: Well, my mother took our silver candlesticks and some things, you know, which you probably wouldn't have been able to take. But the main thing is the books to go to Palestine and some things other people had. But we didn't have an awful lot when we arrived in England, no. But then that says that we were the lucky ones that came to England. If I tell you the story of the St. Louis, yes ...?

RL: Right, so I think we're really up to that unless there's anything else about your childhood that we've not touched upon.

GF: Well, the schooling, I suppose. I had a very happy time in my Jewish school. I had a choice of learning English first, and then French, or French first, and then English. But as luck would have it I chose to learn English first. And so I'd four years of English before we came to England, which was a great help actually. And, we had, of course, a lot of ivrit and all the other subjects because as I say originally this school was founded by Moses Mendelssohn, because even then he had the idea that Jewish people should not just study Hebrew, they should learn all the subjects that everybody else was learning. And it was called a 'free school', meaning 'free' because he didn't have to pay any fees. He wanted people, however poor they were, to be able to go to school. It doesn't mean 'free' that the teaching was ... that you had the freedom to teach any subject you wanted. It was a free school as far as fees were concerned.

RL: Who was the headmaster of the school?

GF: I have got all my reports. I could tell you if I looked at my reports. But I can't tell you off-hand, no.

RL: And did you put on plays, school plays?

GF: Yes, we did. And then I have photographs, actually we all knitted hats and scarves and all the girls lined up to have the photograph taken in their hats and scarves. I've got that, and of course I've got the school photograph of my German school, and the school photograph of the Jewish school.

RL: Did you keep in touch with your non-Jewish friends from the previous school?

GF: No, I didn't, no.

Tape 1: 54 minutes 43 seconds

RL: So once you went to the Jewish school ...?

GF: That was ... I still played with the children in the street, but once we left Germany, I never kept in touch with them.

RL: But whilst in Germany ...

GF: I still played in the street with them, yes.

RL: Who did your parents mix mostly with? I suppose you said before, family; you met a lot with the family.

GF: Mainly family actually, yes, because my father had the two brothers, my mother had two sisters and a brother, a married brother who never had any children actually, and the sisters never got married. In fact, one of the sisters before the war committed suicide because she felt she couldn't live in a world like that. I mean we children weren't told an awful lot about it. But we know she drowned herself.

RL: Did she have family?

GF: No, no. She was single.

RL: OK. What about ... are there any memories of different customs or a different way of life that you had there that you didn't have afterwards?

GF: Yes, you know, actually the Jewish Museum in Berlin are going to put on an exhibition and they asked people to write about what they remember, did they have anything they took out with them, and so on. And I thought about it and I found it very difficult to sort of think, well, we had certain customs. You see, first of all, when we lived in Germany during the Hitler years, food was short for instance. Once a week you had to have a meal which was all cooked in one pan - they call it Eintopfgericht - so that you wouldn't use more food or burn more gas. You see, we had a Jewish household, so our meals were Eastern European meals and other customs, I suppose, we stuck to our own Jewish families, you know. People had Christmas ..., the neighbours all had their Christmas trees and their Christmas things, but it didn't affect us. We weren't part of that. So I found it very hard. I wrote to the Jewish Museum in Berlin and told them what I remembered and they also asked how difficult I found it to settle in England and what I found was different and so on, but I'm sure you'll come to that later.

RL: We'll come to that later. So this film's about to end, so we'll just stop here.

GF: I could see that. It was giving you a sign.

TAPE 2

RL: So this is the interview with Gisela Feldman and it's tape 2. So I think we are up to the St. Louis and what you remember of that trip. So if you take me through from the very beginning, from the boarding of that ship.

GF: Well, obviously for us teenagers it was quite exciting to go on to this luxury liner, you know. And we had a swimming pool, we had all these things, but I must just come back to us leaving and I was saying that the family also saw us off at the station. And I must say that even now I cannot see anybody off at the station or at the airport without getting choked, because that memory that I felt at the time, we would never see our relatives again. However, coming back to the boat now, yes, for us it was exciting. For my mother I didn't realize till afterwards how worrying it must have been for her to have two teenage children, no husband, going to a country where we couldn't speak the language and had no way of keeping ourselves actually. And when I think back she never much took part in any of the activities or anything. However, for us kids, as I say, it was a very exciting time. We had all these sport facilities, all these meals and so much company, so many teenagers, and so on. And we knew that we had ten days in which to really let go and enjoy ourselves, do a lot of things we hadn't done in Berlin because life was pretty hard then. And we had our Friday nights, my mother had brought candlesticks with her and I think so had all the other women, and the dining room had a portrait of Hitler in it and the captain allowed us to take it off for our services, and then it had to go back on again after the service. But the captain was a very good person, he had no ... he did not belong to the Nazi party, he told the crew that we had to be treated like any other passengers and he was really very fair and very concerned with our well-being. There was a cinema on the boat and, as I say, we had a really wonderful time for ten ..., well, things were a little darkened because one of the people on the boat died and we had to stop and put his body into the sea, so that was a little bit of a dark cloud, which I think affected the adults more than it did us youngsters.

RL: OK, you were just saying about the man that had died. Do you know anything about him at all?

GF: Again only what I'd read or heard subsequently. He was quite an old person and had a respected academic job in Germany and just could never get used to the fact ... he died of natural causes, but it appears he just faded away because he couldn't take the fact that he'd spent all his working life respected, in a respected job and then he had to leave, so he died. And then we were also told that one of the crew committed suicide because he had been associating with some Jewish girls and I think he was in trouble because it appears that there were some people from the SS, or whoever it was, watching what was going on, even watching the captain. But on the whole, as I say, it was a very pleasant thing for us youngsters and we reached Havana ten days later and the night before was Shavuot and we had a very good time getting dressed up, but we were told we had to be

ready on deck at 4 o'clock the next morning and so we had a very early breakfast. But we wondered, in fact, why we berthed so far out at sea, why we didn't go into the harbour

Tape 2: 4 minutes 55 seconds

and our thoughts were perhaps, it wasn't deep enough, you know, for a big ship to land there and we still didn't get terribly worried, and there we stood with our luggage and eventually the police came on and we still couldn't land. And then suddenly this went around that our passports weren't in order and visas weren't in order, things had to be attended to and then it was always mañana, mañana, tomorrow it will happen. And then people got of course worried, wondering what will happen, and lots of people went to Cuba because they already had husbands or family there, and then little boats starting coming and going around the big boat, around the St. Louis, and people shouting names of their families. And we used to go and search for the family and they would go and wave to their relatives, that's all they could do, just wave to them, and I well remember one man shouting to his wife, "Throw my little boy down, at least I'll have him!" Of course, she never did, but that's how desperate he was. And that went on for quite a number of days. The captain even went to try and intervene himself, he went ashore, but he wasn't successful and somebody from the American Joint, came to negotiate, and it appears (so we were told) that the person that had sold the visas, had sold them and they were really only landing permits, and he had pocketed the money. And another person wanted a precedent felt, perhaps he should have had a share of the money, but all sorts of rumours of course were going round. And if I read books now, there are also all sorts of different explanations. Whatever happened, the final outcome is the same, the negotiator from America even offered the Cuban authorities money for each passenger, but he wasn't successful. And eventually we were told that the harbour was needed for other ships arriving and we would have to go and cruise somewhere else and wait a little longer to see what the negotiations would bring. And so then we were cruising off the coast of Miami and ...

RL: How many days were you in the harbour in Havana?

GF: I think about four or five days, but really, you know, I cannot say for certain. And then we were cruising off the coast of Miami and then as we got too near the coast, the Americans sent a gunboat out in case anyone jumped overboard. That's how things were at the time. And the women sent telegrams to Mrs. Roosevelt, you know, begging her to let us in. She didn't reply. We then sent a telegram to Roosevelt, saying to him, "Build a camp, and let us into the camp. And if not us, at least let the children in." Because the majority of the people had a quota number for America anyway, which were just, you know, on the waiting list and they said, "Put us into a camp until our names came up." But without success. And eventually we were running out of food, water and fuel, and the captain had to make the decision to go back towards Germany. But actually, I'd forgotten that bit, while we were in the harbour of Havana, I was standing on deck one day and a man rushed towards me with blood dripping from his wrists and he jumped into the water. And a member of the crew jumped after him actually and pulled him out, and he went into a rescue launch. But it appears, you see, those people who had been let out of concentration camps because they could show that they could leave the country had to sign a form to say that they would never return to Germany. And he had signed this form

and just couldn't take it, so he tried to commit suicide. And they took him to hospital in Havana, where he tried again, I think, to smash his head into a mirror, but he didn't

Tape 2: 9 minutes 31 seconds

succeed, and his wife and family were not allowed to visit him. He did eventually recover and his family came to England and he joined his family in England, I don't think he lived terribly long. But we were eventually cruising back towards Germany, because we'd run out of everything and we had patrols going through all the cabins and gangways to make sure nobody else attempted suicide, because of course the thought of going back to Germany was an awful thing. And we've also been told since, the Canadians, when they were asked "how many Jewish children can you take?" The immigration minister at the time was a Mr. Blair, and he said "None is too many". And apparently there's been a book published since called "None is too many." And so apparently also a group of the younger people on the boat, passengers, were plotting to scuttle the boat, and they were overheard and somebody reported to the captain, and he said, "Look, you have to be sensible, you wouldn't know how to manoeuvre the ship and so on. And so that passed over. And eventually when we were nearing the coast of England we were told that the American negotiator had managed to persuade Holland, Belgium, France and England to take a quarter each of the passengers. Now again, this is what I've read, but apparently, he said to one country, the others have already agreed, and they hadn't, so when one country heard the others had agreed, they said, "OK, we will" and then they could say, "You see, this country has agreed to take them in", and they took a quarter each of the passengers. We landed ...

RL: Can I just ask how did you feel as the boat was coming away from America and back towards Europe. How, as a girl, were you feeling at that stage?

GF: I still didn't feel desperate; I still felt this cannot happen; something has got to happen to let us in somewhere. I think it's only when we were told we're already nearing England that it really hit home that the miracle is not going to happen, you know. Finally, of course, when we were told that the four countries were going to take a quarter each of the passengers we stopped at Belgium and let some of the people off. But first of all the immigration officers from all the four countries came to process us and my mother said to me, "You've learned English for four years, go to the British fellow, perhaps it'll help." I don't think it helped, but we came to England. And obviously they knew what was going on in Germany because – my father was on the next boat, by the way, and when the captain learned that we couldn't land, he just turned back to Hamburg without telling the passengers and so they actually all perished because of that, because we couldn't land their boat turned back. But they obviously knew what was going on because my father sent a telegram to the boat and said, "Choose England, you have an uncle there." And also apparently while we were cruising at sea and nobody would have us, Goebbels published in the paper saying, "You see, nobody else wants them either. At least we're building camps for them." And this is really the whole point, to show the world, you know, that just over nine hundred people could be driven from pillar to post because nobody could take such a group of people that were really in danger. So I went to the immigration officer for England and talked to him. And we did come to England. As I

say, how much influence that had, I don't know, but he was extremely good to us afterwards because the little stuff we had sent over he helped us to get it out. I went to see

Tape 2: 14 minutes 3 seconds

him and he helped us to get it out more quickly than the other people. After we arrived ... well, we arrived in England, of course, in July...

RL: So, first of all, can you just tell me, you've got the boat landing in Belgium, so can you just take me through from the landing to ...

GF: Yes, the people that were allocated to Belgium got off the boat there. The rest of us – and the French people got taken off – those for England had to be put onto a different boat because the St. Louis was needed for another cruise to go to New York or something. In fact, we often wondered why they put such a luxury liner at our disposal. And a lot of people wondered why we had to pay for the return fare. We had to pay both ways. But you won't think of these things at the time and again, it's only what I read subsequently that people say it was all planned. There was negotiations with the Cubans not to let us in and they'd sent Nazis out to Cuba to tell the people how awful it was to take us in, but I've read all that subsequently, you know, this is not really what I can tell you of my feelings. But history, of course, is based on what you learn afterwards what happened. And, as I say, as a fifteen-year-old I didn't delve into it very much. So for us, the people that came to England, they quickly got a cargo ship and put bunks onto it for us to get to ..., and the men slept on one side and the women on the other side, and the toilet facilities weren't great, but what did it matter, you know, we were so near to safety. And we landed in Southampton. And we landed in Southampton, and there were flags and bunting everywhere and somebody said, "They're really making us welcome!", but it turned out the King and Queen were arriving from Canada or something the next day, so all the festivities were for them. Yes, and then there was a train waiting for us and we got to London and met by people from Bloomsbury House, which was a refugee association in those days, they took care of us. And we were all put into hotels round Bloomsbury Square and we spent some time in the hotel and then they had to decide what to do with us subsequently, because as you know, there was no social security in those days, and you weren't allowed to do any work except cleaning, and so one of the girls on the boat and I were sent to a Jewish convalescent home in Broadstairs to do the cleaning there. I was fifteen then. And my mother had to find a cleaning job, and she found it with the people that she first worked for when she got to Berlin at the age of 15. These people had money and they came out quite early, so they were already established in England, and she found a cleaning job with them. And my sister was eventually evacuated from school, but my mother found a room with the week's money they had been given by the Bloomsbury House, and she found a room and the next morning they got up and my sister was covered in spots and it was a bug-ridden room, so my mother was walking the streets crying and a woman stopped her and asked her in Yiddish what was the matter, and my mother told her, because until she found that cleaning job she didn't have the rent to go to another place, and this woman said, "Come and stay with me until you find something." So there were some good people about. And she also then walked the streets of the East End with the Yiddish – she couldn't speak English – to try to find somebody who would

guarantee for my father, and she found a Jewish grocer who guaranteed for him at a very good wage actually and we went to this Mr. Brister, who had given us permission to come to England and he said, "I will see to it that this is processed very quickly". Nothing

Tape 2: 18 minutes 36 seconds

happened and my mother went again and he said, "Hasn't it been dealt with yet?" She said, "no". He said, "I'll see to it." And within two days war broke out. So that was the second time he could have been saved and wasn't. When I was sent to that Jewish convalescent home in Broadstairs, I must say it was not the hard work that made us unhappy, but the fact that we got so little to eat. The matron wasn't very kind to us and we were always hungry and then we walked along the beach in Broadstairs and we met Czech soldiers, Jewish Czech soldiers, that had come from Czechoslovakia and they took us to their canteen and the cook fed us, so that was quite good. And then after war had broken out, I met a Jewish family on the beach and they needed an au pair girl, and so they asked me to come with them to London and be an au pair girl. And in the convalescent home I got half a crown a week, I don't know how you work that out the equivalent of it now, and these people offered me ten shillings a week, which was half a pound then, wasn't it, which was wonderful and also I could go back to London and see my mother. So I went with that family to their home in Hendon and I looked after two children of six and eleven. By that time I was sixteen and I did all the cooking and all the cleaning. And I'd never done anything at home. I used to phone my mother and ask her how to cook a meal. But it seemed to work alright because they put my money up by another half a crown very quickly and had a nice outfit tailored for me and although I did all the work, I always ate with them, they treated me like a member of the family. And also the person's mother took my mother in, gave her a room free of charge eventually, so that was a good thing. In Stanford Hill that was. But I lived in Hendon with that family. I think they really relied on me for everything because the woman went to work, and when she didn't work, she stayed in bed reading novels, and I had to write the notes to school when the kids were ill. Now what the notes were like I don't know, the teacher must have been very amused, because after three months in England, what did I know? And in fact when we first arrived my mother sent me to buy candles and it took me a long time because I kept asking for lights, but eventually I managed to bring the candles home. And so I stayed with this family until the beginning of 1940. And they then evacuated, the mother took the children away. But by that time we were allowed to do war work, we were allowed to do other things than domestic work. In a way that's where my dress-making came in because I made soldiers uniforms. Sort of sweated labour, you know, you did a bundle of sleeves, a bundle of collars, and I made soldiers' uniforms, I made gunpowder bags, and then I made children's coats.

RL: Was this in different places?

GF: In different places. I moved to different places, yes.

RL: And this was all in London?

GF: In London, yes, yes. By that time I was working and so we took a flat, my mother and I and my sister took a flat, and so then we lived together.

RL: Where was that?

Tape 2: 22 minutes 34 seconds

GF: In Highbury.

RL: When did you take the flat?

GF: I should think in about '41.

RL: So where were you living whilst you were working before you took the flat, yes?

GF: Well, almost as soon as we took the flat ... as soon as I started work we took the flat and then ...

RL: But you said that that family evacuated at the beginning of 1940.

GF: Yes.

RL: So is that when you started ...

GF: Roundabout, or was it perhaps '41? I'm not quite sure, because I remember going with that family during the Blitz to sleep in Marble Arch tube station and also in a block of flats we used to sleep in the cellar. So perhaps it was a little later than that. I haven't got my diary here, you see, I could tell you, because I gave that to my grandson about the Blitz. So it could have been a little later that we took the flat. And then eventually we took another flat near Finchley Road. And that was a much nicer flat.

RL: Was your mother working at this stage?

GF: Yes, my mother then started working and she also worked in a factory pickling cucumbers and herring, run by a Germany family, and then she had a job ironing handkerchiefs, she did all sorts of things, her life must have been terribly hard really when I think of it, no husband, no family, two teenage daughters and she always used to say, "All I want to see is my children married," and then "All I want to see is my grandchildren". And she lived to see great grandchildren. She ended up in the Morris Feinmann Home when she died in her 91st year, so she saw her great grandchildren.

RL: What did your sister do at this stage, what was she doing?

GF: Well, my sister went to school in England and then she was evacuated with the school and when she came back, she went to a dress-making school. It was a very professional school. She did all her training, and she was a dress-maker and she worked in London in a place that made dresses for some of the big companies in London. So she also had a job. And then eventually in 1942, I suppose it was, I went to a Czech garden party with a friend, who actually later became an actor, his name was Herbert Lom, at

that time he was only working for the BBC. But I was with him and I met this young man who kept dancing with me, it was on Hampstead Heath the Czech garden party, and he became my husband. Not Herbert Lom, the chap that kept dancing with me at the garden

Tape 2: 25 minutes 49 seconds

party. And in fact we met in July, I think, and by September we were engaged. And because he said to me, "If we're still going out in September, I know you will marry me." I was only nineteen at the time but he came from Krakow, he had no family, so I suppose that was a longing for a home.

RL: Now, in the years before you met him, since you arrived in England, first of all what did you think of England as a place?

GF: I think I adapted pretty quickly. I didn't really feel anything that, you know, lots of people talk about the unusual things the English people do, but I think, I think because I worked in factories I adapted very quickly to the way of life. You know if you work with people like that you really know how they live and they were friendly, very helpful, and almost felt sorry for me that I had nobody. You see, when my sister was evacuated, she had at the beginning quite a bad time changing digs, but she ended up in one family where the father was an airman, and he felt so sorry for her that she had no father that he used to write to her from wherever he was stationed, because he felt she had nobody. So people were very, very kind actually, and felt for one. So I don't think I had any difficulty at all in adapting to my new way of life. And one of the questions the Jewish Museum asked in Berlin, "How did you feel?" And all I can say is I felt that sense of freedom, that I was free to do what I liked when I liked. There was no looking over your shoulder to see, you know, was there anybody who was going to arrest you, or were members of your family going to disappear. So it was such a wonderful sense of freedom. I never thought I would reach the age that I would be afraid to walk on the streets at night.

RL: And did you come into contact with the Jewish community, you know, when you first arrived, or ...?

GF: No, we didn't. And I often think back and I wondered why we didn't. Is it because we felt we couldn't pay the fees in the synagogues. Or is it because no one approached us. I mean, you were so new, you don't know where the next street is more or less, you know. And so I think perhaps it would have been good if people had come to us, if they'd looked, you know, came to the Bloomsbury House, "Where are you going to live? Would you like to come to our shul?" or something. Perhaps that would have helped. But at the beginning, no, we had no contacts with any synagogue. We had these Jewish friends that my mother worked for, and so on. But no contact for the holidays. And, as I say, with hindsight I wondered if more could have been done. I think now there is, people are concerned with newcomers, but then there wasn't all that much concern.

RL: And at what stage did you begin to have contact with the Jewish community?

GF: Well, when I became sort of seventeen I suppose, when we'd moved to the flat in Hampstead, I went to the Czech club, there was a synagogue on Belsize Road which was

founded by the German refugees and there were things going on there. And I kept in contact with some of the people that had been on the St. Louis with me. In Finchley Road there was quite a group of refugees. In fact, you had a couple of cafes where everybody

Tape 2: 30 minutes 14 seconds

always met. One was Dorice, and I've forgotten what the other one was called, it only shut a few years ago, the other one on Finchley Road. And it was a meeting place, and John Barnes, a branch of John Lewis, and people just went in the afternoon to have coffee and they knew they would meet other refugees too. And Rabbi Julia Neuberger talks about her parents, her mother, exactly the same thing in that area, going to the cafes and meeting their friends.

RL: And you say You joined this Czech club. What made you join a Czech club?

GF: I think because those Czech soldiers I'd met in Broadstairs and we'd kept in touch with them afterwards and still stayed friends. And I think that's how it came about.

RL: And what were the activities that were going on in Belsize Park? What kind of things were happening there?

GF: I think just sort of talks and things.

RL: Did you used to go to that?

GF: Not an awful lot, no, because having looked back at my diary, I spent a lot of time going to pictures with friends and going to dances at the club and so on. In fact, I should re-read it because there are some things you forget.

RL: And what about your experience of the Blitz?

GF: Yes, well, again I have it all in my diary, the number of warnings we had and the East End in flames, sleeping in Marble Arch tube station, but there was such a spirit I think of, community spirit, you know. I used to come home at night as a teenager and sometimes when we had a fog, you wouldn't see the person that was walking next to you, and you would talk to them, you were never afraid of talking to a voice, not a body at all. So I suppose in times of trouble there was such a community spirit that you were never worried about what was going on, you never feared for your life or anything. And we just I suppose accepted it, the sirens went, and not everybody went to a shelter, you stayed in a downstairs room or went under the bed or under a table. We only went into the tube station a few times, not very often. So it became a way of life actually, I think. And then of course we had these bombs that went off, forgotten what they were called, forgotten what they were called, anyway but they came, flying bombs, and they went off near us and you just felt happy that it was somewhere else and you went on with life, you went off to work every morning and stayed at work and went to the pictures in the evening and, as I say, I never realized that until I read through the diary how often I went out in spite of the fact that we'd had air raid warnings.

RL: How did you manage for food with rationing?

GF: I think it was a very healthy diet. We managed all right. For instance, of course, we

Tape 2: 33 minutes 48 seconds

always gave away our bacon ration and got sugar and ... tea we didn't drink, our tea ration we gave away because we were coffee drinkers, and I can't understand why coffee wasn't rationed, because you could get coffee but perhaps not so many people drank it and so it wasn't bad. Well, we managed all right. I think the time I found it hard is, you see rationing went on well after the war, and when I was pregnant and had to queue up, that's the only time I found it difficult, the queuing up.

RL: How do you think your mother managed during these years?

GF: My mother?

RL: Yes.

GF: She never gave very much away. She was just concerned that we should be alright and she worked, and worked very hard.

RL: Who did she mix with?

GF: Other refugees. She worked for refugees, and so she mixed with the refugees. And one family that was on the boat with us, who eventually emigrated to Australia, they were friendly too. And we had quite a number of friends in London.

RL: Were there other families near you that had come from the St. Louis?

GF: Yes, when we lived near Finchley Road. In fact I think we moved in that area because they lived there.

RL: And then you say you met your husband ...

GF: ... at the Czech garden party.

RL: Yes. What was his background?

GF: He came from Krakow. His parents had sent him to England in 1938 to go to boarding school because in Poland, you know, they had a *numerus clausus* for Jews to get into university, and so they sent him to England to learn English to begin with. But then when war broke out, of course, they couldn't send any more money. And so he did war work, I think he did demolition work, and they didn't take him into the army because he had a heart problem from birth. So he did this war work, he built rescue launches and all that sort of thing for a company called Napier. And then, as I say, we got married very quickly in February 1943.

RL: Where did you marry?

GF: In West Hampstead Synagogue.

Tape 2: 36 minutes 45 seconds

RL: What was the connection?

GF: No, I've got that wrong. My friend married in West Hampstead. I married in a synagogue in Chalk Farm because the people that my mother knew from Berlin, that she's first worked for when she first came, lived there, and they arranged the wedding for us and they even gave us a little reception. And I had exactly eight people at my reception. So that was our wedding. And it was very difficult to get presents because everything was rationed, you had to have coupons for curtains, for sheets, for anything. So we didn't have an awful lot of wedding presents. We had a three-day honeymoon in the Regent Palace Hotel, my husband got three days off work and we saw a couple of plays, one with Vivien Leigh, and that was our honeymoon. And then we moved into rented accommodation in Willesden Green. We bought some furniture; we'd already started saving up the day we got engaged. My future husband gave me so much money every week to put in the kitty and we finally bought a three-piece suite. And that was stored in my mother's home until we found a place of our own. And we started off with very little, but it never seemed to matter very much in those days. I think whatever you got was an achievement. And then, soon after we married a relative of my husband's got him a scholarship with the British Council, but of course he had to get what in those days was the Higher School Certificate in order to get to university. So in fact for the first six months of our married life I hardly saw my husband because he came home from work and studied to get this School Certificate. And also I was taken ill with chest problems; I spend ten weeks in hospital soon after we were married. I had what was called a pleural effusion. And then when my husband passed the exams, his family were in the glass business, so he decided he wanted to become a glass technologist. And the only department in the world actually to give a degree in glass technology is in Sheffield. So he got accepted in Sheffield and he moved out before I ever did because I was ill recuperating from my illness. And he got a couple of furnished rooms in Sheffield, while he waited for me and after I came out of hospital and convalescent home I went to Sheffield. And we had some happy years there.

RL: What date did you move to Sheffield?

GF: What date?

RL: Yes, when was that?

GF: '44.

RL: How did you feel about moving away from ...

GF: ...from my mother?

RL: ... from your mother and your friends?

Tape 2: 40 minutes 0 second

GF: I didn't mind really. No. Everything was an adventure when you're young, you know. And we moved to Sheffield and had quite a number of Jewish friends there. We found a flat in a house where a Jewish family had the bottom flat and we had the top floor flat and I was still not allowed to work because I'd been ill, so for a time I didn't work. It gave me an extra milk allowance, to recuperate, two pints a day, which was a tremendous amount in those days. And, as I say, my husband was at the university, we met up with all the students, I went to the students dances and they called us Hotel Feldman because he was about the only married student. Whoever came had a meal at our house or stayed in our house, whatever. And then my sister and I had a little evacuee of friends of ours; she came and stayed with us for a little while to get away from London during the bombing. And then my sister was in a fire in London. The place she worked at caught fire. And she worked actually for the daughter of the people from Berlin that my mother had worked for and that poor girl fell out of the window during the fire and was killed. But my sister was badly burned, so she and my mother came to Sheffield to stay with us for a while until she got better. So we had them for a while. And then in 1946 we brought my husband's parents to England. They had left Krakow when the Germans marched in and kept always ahead of the Germans. They left their business; they left everything, and just walked out. And somebody always made fun; they said his mother walked out in high-heeled shoes and silver fox fur. But they walked out with another relative, a younger relative and husband, and I think at some stage they bought a horse and cart and fled in that. At some stage they went on a boat, on the canals and hid under bridges during the German bombing and then ended up in Lwów, Lemberg, and from there they were taken by the Russians, into deepest Russia, and they spent the war years there, safe but very, very hard times, starving and all that. And after the war they came back to Kraków and we brought them to England. And at that time actually when they came, my husband was still studying, and I was working by then sewing overalls, and so I was the breadwinner for a short time in that family.

RL: So did you work after you had convalesced, did you go back to work?

GF: Yes, did a sewing job again, you know, because, of course, one of my greatest regrets had always been that I'd lost out on education. You see there my husband had got his degree eventually and I was still this little nobody, I really always regretted that. However, we survived and my father-in-law soon found a job because he had a speciality to imitate wood. In those days it was fashionable for people to have their doors and skirting boards painted in the same wood as their furniture. And he was an expert in imitating wood. In fact, he had learned that in Paris in his youth, which was something really for a little boy from Poland to go to Paris to learn that trade. So he very quickly found a job. And once my husband graduated his first job was in London, outside London, so we moved in with my mother for a little while in London.

RL: Can I just ask you, what did you think of the community in Sheffield, the Jewish community there. Did you have much association with the community?

Tape 2: 44 minutes 32 seconds

GF: Well, we went to shul for Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur, and so on, but we didn't have a great deal, you know ... But the Jewish students used to come to us. We had friends which were Jewish students, yes. And we met another refugee and his English wife, so we had a mixture of friends actually. And strangely enough my daughter went to Sheffield for teacher training many years later.

RL: And were you in Sheffield, you must have been in Sheffield, when the war finished.

GF: Yes, we in '47.

RL: What do you remember?

GF: It had been very badly bombed before we got there. So we weren't there during the bombing, no.

RL: What do you remember of the end of the war?

GF: Oh, the students went mad, we had the D-Day and the VJ-Day celebrations, marching in the streets and going to the pubs and having banners, it really a horrendous time, yes, of joy.

RL: And did you, when did you find out what had happened to family that hadn't left?

GF: Well, that really took some time. You had to write to the Red Cross and people like that, so that really took quite a long time to find out about all that. And my mother did most of that.

RL: How did your husband find out about his parents surviving?

GF: They always somehow stayed in touch, you see, from Russia they could still send letters. Because in fact when we got married, my husband sent a telegram to say he was getting married and one of the important things he put in, 'Jewish girl'. And so somehow they'd always been contact and so we knew that they got back to Krakow because by then, of course, there was normal communication. And they managed to recover some of their things, some paintings and some things they recovered and brought them to England.

RL: Did your husband have any brothers or sisters?

GF: No, he was an only child.

RL: So, we're up to you moving back to London.

GF: Yes, we moved back to London in '47 and my husband's parents still stayed in Sheffield. And my husband, as I say, had a job just outside London, we lived with my

Tape 2: 47 minutes 33 seconds

mother. I became pregnant while we were there, but I had a miscarriage, and then that job fold...I then worked also in the dress-making place my sister was managing. Then that job folded up and my husband got another job in Chingford, and then ...

RL: What was the work that he was doing, your husband? What was the work?

GF: Setting up a glass works. And by that time I'd been working and he's been working, so we'd saved up some money and we'd sold some of the furniture and stuff that his parents had brought, and between us we bought a house in Chingford.

RL: Did you know people in that area?

GF: No, not at all.

RL: How did you get on there?

GF: It was alright. I still travelled back to the Hampstead area to see friends. And I also worked, even then, in another dress-making factory. And that job really only lasted till '49 and then my husband's professor said, "There's a nice job going in St. Helen's, you should take it for a year or two for the experience and, you know, in those days you went where your husband's job was. Not that I fancied going to St. Helen's, or leaving my mother, but that's where we went. But then the problem arose, what was going to happen to my in-laws, you know, what were they going to do in Chingford. It would be very boring for them. And so then we thought, well, we'll sell the house in Chingford and get another one in St. Helen's. But then we had a friend by then, a Mrs. Koch actually – I don't know if you knew Dr. Koch here – and we had met her in Sheffield on the market. They used to come to the market selling materials during the war, and I went to buy something and she said to her daughter, "Verkauf das nicht der Schickse" [Laughs]. And of course I answered her back, and we became friends after that when she realized I was a refugee too. And when my in-laws came from Poland, we introduced them, they became great friends. Well, this Mrs. Koch lives in Manchester, lived in Manchester, and she said to us, "Look, you can't take your parents to St. Helen's, they don't speak English, what are they going to do there?" And so, in the final analysis, my husband and I lived in two furnished rooms, and all the money from the Chingford house went into buying them a house in Parsonage Road here in Manchester, a big house, so they could let rooms to students and be independent. And so that's why they ended up in Manchester and became members of Wilbraham Road Shul. And we stayed in St. Helen's and, as I say, had two furnished rooms. I had two babies in the two furnished rooms and finally the company my husband worked for gave us a deposit for a house and we had a house built in St. Helen's. And so then we had a house.

RL: When were your children born?

GF: My daughter was born in 1950. The son we lost was born in '52. And the other son was born in 1957.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 49 seconds

RL: And you were in St. Helen's all of that time.

GF: All of that time. Yes, we didn't leave St. Helens' until 1967. My daughter had taken her A levels and my son had taken his 11 Plus. So we left in '67, yes.

RL: What did you make of St. Helen's?

GF: We met a lot ... we had a great circle of friends, but there were no Jews in St. Helen's. So ... well, there were three doctors actually, Jewish doctors in St. Helen's. We were quite friendly with one of them. But on the whole we didn't have Jewish friends, but we had a great time actually because we belonged to all sorts of groups. There was the Historical Society, or the Language Group, and we had a great circle of friends.

RL: What was the language group?

GF: The Language Group, it was in a way a discussion group, yes, but they called it the Language Group. And so we stayed there, as I say, until '67 and my husband's job folded up then because the company was moving to London.

RL: Which company did he work for?

GF: Forster's glass company. And they moved him to London. And the children, as I say, were at a good age, having taken the 11 Plus and the A levels. And then we moved to London ...

RL: Can I just ask you a little bit more about St. Helen's. I mean, how you felt living there and how you got on there, and how you felt that you fitted in there?

GF: Well, we did, we did, you know. In fact, I think I think this was in a way the beginning of a career for me because my daughter went to the grammar school and there was a great shortage of teachers in those days. Well, I had nothing. I had not been to school in England, but they decided, they asked me if I'd like to come in for German conversation. And so I went to see them, and they said, yes, they'd like me to come in and do German conversation with the girls. And then they said, but you know they have to do this for A levels and the other. And I said, "Well, I really can't teach them A level work, but conversation, yes." But they also specified and said that if they get a degree person, then they would have to get a degree person, which they did. So in a way I was a little disappointed, because I felt somehow finally I could do something. But I had a neighbour who was in fact, had a position in Huddersfield College, and she said, "Take a technical teacher's certificate. That will sort of allow you to teach in evening classes,

even if you have no other qualifications,” So I had to go into Liverpool to take this technical teacher’s certificate, and when I applied, they wrote back and said, “I’m sorry, we can’t accept you, you have no qualifications, but will you come for an interview.” And I went for an interview, and they said, “Yes, we’ll take you on that course.” So I took the technical teacher’s certificate, which then started me off and I taught English as

Tape 2: 55minutes 45 seconds

a Foreign Language, German and dress-making in St. Helen’s, all with this technical teacher’s certificate. And then the local school was also short of teachers and they asked me to come in and teach German to the 10 and 11-year-olds. So when I think back, without ever having had any schooling.....myself, here was I teaching, which was good for my morale obviously, to think I could do something too, and then of course when we left St. Helen’s, all that folded up and when we moved to London I went to the Local Authority to see if they needed anybody and I did get teaching jobs there in dress-making, teaching English as a Foreign Language to the ladies that were not allowed to go to a class with a male teacher, the Muslim women, they could only go if there was a female teacher, so I got a class of these women, and I did that teaching. And my daughter went to the local college because she wanted higher grades in her A levels and my son was accepted at the local grammar school. And the son that I lost at 18, he’d had polio at six weeks and, therefore, he was in a wheelchair at the time. And he also went to the local college in spite the fact that he was in a wheelchair to take his A levels, eventually, he was supposed to, but he had a car accident at the age of 18 in an invalid car and he didn’t survive that.

RL: This film is about to end, so ...

GF: Do you know I keep forgetting I am on film and scratching my nose and things, I shouldn’t ...

RL: It doesn’t matter.

Tape 2: 57 minutes 57 seconds

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 0 minute 4 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Gisela Feldman and it’s tape 3. I just wanted to ask you, just recapping a little, what kind of contact did you have, if any, with refugee committees when you came over? I know you mentioned Bloomsbury House at the very beginning.

GF: That’s the only one really we had any contact with, yes.

RL: How did they help you besides what you’ve already said?

GF: Nothing else really. No, no. I mean the great disappointment was that they were so slow doing the work that Mr. Bristed asked them to do and it stopped my father getting a

visa. After we'd found a guarantor for him and that was really a great disappointment and made us lose faith in the way they work.

Tape 3: 1 minute 0 second

RL: Did you have any other contact with any other refugee organizations?

GF: No.

RL: Did you mother ...?

GF: No, not really, no.

RL: And then in terms of being a Polish citizen, did you have to register with the police during the war?

GF: No, because we were friendly aliens, not enemy aliens. And then, of course, when I said to my grandchildren now I was an alien – you know there's a programme on, isn't there, you know 'My parents were aliens' – they can't understand what I'm talking about. No, we were friendly aliens. It's only the people that were interned and had German passports that had to register.

RL: So did you never have any contact with the police?

GF: No.

RL: Never had to register in any way?

GF: No.

RL: Did you take out British nationality?

GF: Yes, in '46 I think it was, '45 or '46 we got our British nationality.

RL: Right.

GF: I got it automatically with my husband, didn't I? He got his and then mine came automatically.

RL: And during the war years and ... well, particularly during the war years, did you ever experience any anti-German feeling, any hostility in this country?

GF: No, I didn't, no. In fact, as I said, when I worked in the factory people were very kind, they were very sorry for us, you know, that we were poor refugees and the way things had happened.

RL: Did that show itself in any concrete kind of way?

GF: There's nothing I can think of in particular, but they went out of their way to speak to us and to make us comfortable in the canteen and in the workshop and so on. And I

Tape 3: 3 minutes 15 seconds

always remembered – it's got nothing to do with being a refugee – but one old lady saying to me one day, "As you go through life the worst thing anybody can do to you is to pull you down to their level." And I've always remembered that. But unfortunately it happens so often. That's the only the way you can survive. But on the whole they were very kind and very nice to us and very understanding, I think, almost feeling sorry that we were without family and without the things other people have. And I always think, you know, that the man in the street was more understanding than a lot of the Jewish people. I think there's always that fear that the more of us come, you could create anti-Semitism.

RL: And did this come out in any way in your contact?

GF: Not really, but a lot of the children that came with the Kindertransport, some of them felt that, you know, they were not treated like one of the family. A cousin of mine went to a – with the Kindertransport – to a non-Jewish family. They were very good to her and said to her, "Whatever you do, don't allow anybody to convert you. You stick to your religion." And when she got older and started working, she paid them some money, and when she left they'd saved it all up for her and gave her this lump sum, of the money she'd contributed to the household. So she had a very good experience with her Kindertransport family.

RL: So in terms of your own experience, I mean, did you feel that about the Jewish community yourself?

GF: Well, I felt perhaps they could have been a little more help, more interest from people. But as I say I think it didn't really occur to people, you know, I think a lot of people hadn't accepted as to what had happened because a lot of the people that came out, particularly those that had been in camps and came out after the war, a lot of people couldn't talk about it. They never talked about their experiences. And apparently that's been one of the problems, that's why only in recent years so much material has been collected. And even in my own family, my sister never talked to her children. I always felt that grandchildren only meet their grandparents past their sell-by date, and I wanted my children to see their grandmother as a young woman and to tell them that she'd been the brave one and not we. I mean, we were young; we took things as they came, but she had been the brave one, the strong one that got us out of Germany and so I've always talked to my children. And they've always known all along that she was the one that really was the sufferer in the family. So it takes different people in different ways, but a lot of people wanted to save their children from the horrors of the things that had happened. And so it was years really before it became known what people had gone through.

RL: Whilst your children were growing up in St. Helen's, did they have any contact with other Jewish people?

Tape 3: 7 minutes 7 seconds

GF: No, no. I mean my sons, the mohel came out to St. Helen's and had a bris..., they were circumcised. But no, they didn't, which in a way made it quite difficult because of course to prepare for the bar mitzvah afterwards, yes ...

RL: So, were you still living in St. Helen's at that time?

GF: The son that I lost had his bar mitzvah, and he was taught, but he had that – wait a minute – he had that in Wilbraham Road, because my in-laws lived in Manchester and my mother lived in Manchester at the time and so we decided to have it in Wilbraham Road. And then my son, the eleven-year-old, of course, by then we lived in London, and he could prepare for the bar mitzvah, the only thing he wouldn't do was sing. And Rabbi Carlebach said, "It doesn't matter", you know, "he doesn't have to sing." So he also had his bar mitzvah here.

RL: What level of religious observance did you maintain after marriage, what kind of family ...?

GF: Not an awful lot. In fact, I mean I came from such a religious family, and after coming to England we did not have a kosher household. One simply couldn't afford the kosher food and in fact things began to slide in Germany because my mother then said there was such a shortage of food, "I can't let the children starve, we will eat what we can get." But when we came to England, we didn't keep a kosher household although my mother always koshered the chickens that we bought. And I do now because I think they taste differently when they've been in water and salt, but no, we didn't. We kept Friday nights, lit candles but my husband did not come from a very observant home, and sadly after we lost our son he turned away from religion completely. He said "Six million Jews and innocent children, you know I can't ..." He was very, very Jewish. He'd listen to records and cry. But he couldn't reconcile himself with what's happened and religion. And he would come to service with me for Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur. But that was it. But I always kept it up. I went regularly.

RL: Did the children, did your daughter, have any kind of Hebrew education?

GF: No, she didn't, no. And she's turned away from organized religion. She is in America, in California, she lives in California, yes.

RL: In terms of belief in God, did your experiences affect that, and where do you stand with that?

GF: A very difficult situation. I have long discussions with my rabbi about it, you know, and I say, "When I think of all the family I lost in the Holocaust, where was God?" And he says to me, "I have no problem. He cried with us" I say, "but if he's all-powerful, how

could he let it happen?” And he will say to me, “Because he gave us free will. And so we cannot blame God. In fact, you will grin,” he always said, “Never ask, ‘Where was God?’, ask ‘Where was man?’” “ And then I said, “But he is supposed to have made us in

Tape 3: 11 minutes 20 seconds

his own image, why are there so many bad people?” And you can have discussion all along, and I’m never hundred per cent certain where I stand. But I feel to me the belief is the way you behave. That’s the most important thing. And in fact I think our rabbi was once asked what makes a good Jew, and he said a good person makes a good Jew. And I think you have this feeling in your – the Hebrew word is the *neshoma* – in your soul, and I think that’s more important than spending time praying, or anything. I go to services fairly regularly because I like the belonging. I don’t always follow the prayers, it’s a form of retreat to me, you can sit and think your own thoughts. And I need that form of belonging. I cannot be a hundred per cent certain that I believe there is somebody who ... I feel Judaism is more of a tradition than anything else.

RL: Which synagogue do you attend now?

GF: I actually, for the first time in my life, I go to the Reform Synagogue, Menorah.

RL: And how long have you been a member there?

GF: Since I came to Manchester nine years ago. Before that I belonged to a United Synagogue but I came to that one nine years ago.

RL: I think we’ve jumped in a way a little with the chronology because I think we’d got as far as London. So we’ll just pick up the story...

GF: ...when I lost my husband, you see, we’ve lost the London years.

RL: Right, so we’ll go back to going to London.

GF: Yes, that’s right. Well, how far have we got? We moved to London, my daughter went to the local college, that’s what I said, and my son went to the grammar school. Again I started finding work and ... and then I finally had ... wait a minute ... Now, we lost our son in 1970, and I’d been doing some part-time work at that time, but after I lost my son, Chiswick Polytechnic offered me a full-time job teaching English to foreign students. And again, there was still a shortage of people, and I only started really helping out when the head of department was sick and when she came back she said, “The students are so happy, will you stay on?” And I stayed on, and I had to learn as I was going along because I’d never done anything like this before. And then eventually again Chiswick Polytechnic said, “Well, we now only want to take people that have a degree. But we want you to stay. Your exam results are good. Could you find some way of getting a qualification?” Well, the only possibility then in those days if you had no A Levels or anything, was the Open University. And so they said they would give me an annual contract as long as I carried on working for my OU degree, which in fact was not

easy because I'd never written an essay in my life or done things ... and having a full-time job and a home, and you know husbands [of] my generation were not very familiar with the kitchen or a washing machine or anything like that. But I decided to do the OU degree which I did and eventually got a degree. And I also in the meantime did an

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examination with the Institute of Linguists, which in fact was recognized as a degree, but I still finished the OU. So in a way was a great day because it made me feel, you know, I needed something. My husband was very proud, my mother came, and my son, who was already at university, came to my degree ceremony. And so that was a great thing to do.

RL: When did you get it?

GF: I got it in 19..., I was '49, I was born in '23 ... 23 and 49 is ...

RL: 72.

GF: '75, '76, something like that, yes.

RL: '23, oh yeah, no '72.

GF: Yeah.

RL: 1972, yeah. And then did you stay on at the Polytechnic?

GF: I stayed on until I was 60. And then they decided to amalgamate with another college and so they gave us the opportunity of retiring with a 50 per cent enhancement in our pension, or to go to the other college. And I decided to take the retirement with the enhancement, which gives me the jam on my bread and butter now, I always say. And as soon as I finished there actually, the local college phoned up and said, their head of department is pregnant and would I take over there, and so I still worked there.

RL: And what was the job that your husband was doing in London?

GF: Also working in Rockware Glass Company, they made glass containers, he worked there.

RL: Whereabouts were you living?

GF: But he worked there when we were moved from St. Helen's to London, but then in 19.., when he was what, '50, '52, he was made redundant and he worked for the Glass Manufacturers Federation in London ... until he needed heart surgery in '50...? He'd already had heart surgery in St. Helen's actually, he needed a valve replacement. And then he needed another one when we were in London later on, but before that we ... when he retired, he took a job in Pakistan because there's an organization called British Executive Service Overseas, and the British government sent people to developing countries for their expertise. And the host country then paid for your keep, and pocket

money, so his first job was in Pakistan, which was quite an experience because they gave me a house and servants. And I found it very hard to deal with servants because I treated them like I would treat my cleaner here. But if you treat them like human beings, they don't respect you and they don't work for you. I could never find them to do anything

Tape 3: 19 minutes 13 seconds

because I allowed them to come in my room and I gave them the same meat as we had. You don't do that, you buy them the cheapest meat, and they eat on the kitchen floor. And so, that's what I had to learn to do. But it was very hard, but then when I went to have meals with the expatriates, I realized how they treated them and it wasn't for me, I found it terribly difficult. And I also did some English teaching there and I earned enough money to buy a Pakistani rug for each member of the family.

RL: How long were you there for?

GF: Three months the contract lasted. And then we sent all our luggage home and kept a rucksack each, my husband and I, and travelled for eight months with the students through India, Nepal, Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and we did this for eight months. Everybody said, "You'll never come back alive at your age", but I'm here to tell the tale. And the students attached themselves to us, which was quite strange. It was a great experience, all the places I've been to, yes.

RL: Anything that ...?

GF: When we came back, my husband got another assignment for three months in Kuala Lumpur, but there we were in a hotel, and he worked for three months in Kuala Lumpur. And a third assignment was in Mombasa. So we had three lots of assignments ...

RL: When was this? When were you doing this?

GF: The first one was in '85. Then we travelled for eight months. And the second one must have been two years later, I can't give you the exact dates. And the third one ... My husband died in '93. Again, while working, died on the tube station. I'd driven him to the Underground and he was meant to get on the train and died on the platform of the tube station. It was wonderful for him. But a shock when the police had to come and tell me.

RL: What work was he doing at the time?

GF: Consultancy work.

RL: So he never stopped working, no?

GF: No.

RL: Were you still working at that point?

GF: Well, every now and again I was called in to take a class. But then, when I was seventy, they called me in again to take a class of immigrants, you know the people from the Sudan and from Albania and Afghanistan and so on, and I taught them. But what really troubled me was the fact that they're supposed to come daily to prepare them for the job market. And they did come in the car, some of them, and they told me about the

Tape 3: 22 minutes 44 seconds

flats and everything, and it made me understand why people could perhaps be a little put out if they had, you know, to someone who isn't working having these comforts. But what troubled me is that they didn't turn up regularly and I asked the head of department if there wasn't a sort of ruling that they didn't get their weekly allowance, if they didn't come regularly. He said, well, he can't do anything about it because the government hadn't put that obligation on them. So really they were just sort of turning up whenever they felt like turning up. But I only did that for a short period, because then, after my husband died, my son who lived in Manchester decided it would be a good idea for me to move up here. And that's when I came to Manchester.

RL: Where were you living in London up till then?

GF: In a place called Ickenham – I-C-K-E-N-H-A-M – which was on the way to Oxford actually, seventeen miles out of London.

RL: What made you chose that place?

GF: Well, it was five miles from the factory where my husband worked, and we had friends in the area, so ...

RL: Tell me about your children, what they did after school and what they ..?

GF: Well, my daughter went to teacher training college in Sheffield and did some teaching in London and then decided to travel for a bit and she went of to travel to Canada and America and in America she met a young man and got married. She came home first and then decided they were going to get married and that's it and [they live] in California.

RL: Who did she meet?

GF: You want the name of the person?

RL: Yes.

GF: Niels, N-I-E-L-S, Harms, who was a Dane actually, Harms, H-A-R-M-S, who was a Dane but had lived in America for quite a long time.

RL: And what does he do?

GF: Road construction. And my daughter decided finally to take some courses and teach mentally and physically disabled adults, and she's still doing that.

RL: So, did they get married in England?

GF: Yes, in a registry office.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 33 seconds

RL: And then your son?

GF: My son, when he left school he came to Manchester to do dentistry. And then he qualified, he'd worked for a little while and then he decided to go off and do his travelling, and he travelled for about 18 months all over Asia and everywhere. And when he came back he worked again for one or two people and eventually ended up with his own practice in Heald Green. He got married in 1992, Julie Cox.

RL: Where is Julie from?

GF: Wigan.

RL: And do they have family?

GF: They have two children, Joshua and Adam. Joshua is nine and Adam is seven. They go to the North Cheshire Jewish Primary School.

RL: And your daughter, does she have children?

GF: Yes, she has a son of 26 now and a daughter of 24. The son is Paul, and the daughter is Nicole. And Paul is an accountant, and Nicki is the, Nicole is the Membership Director of the Girls Scouts.

RL: In California?

GF: In Monterey. Paul is what you call a forensic accountant; I don't know if that means anything to you, it had to be explained to me. It's a medical term really, forensic, isn't it? It really means they look into fraud and things, which is a little more interesting than just adding up columns, he tells me.

RL: Do your children have, what kind of Jewish identity do your children have and your grandchildren?

GF: My grandchildren in America know all about the fact that they are Jewish and very interested in my history. The grandchildren here are Jewish, Jewish in the reform sense and as I say they go to the North Cheshire and are members of the Menorah.

RL: Yes, and that's when you joined, when you moved up here.

GF: In fact, my son moved away for about two years to somewhere near Kidderminster, but they are now coming back again to Manchester hopefully.

RL: So are they still in Kidderminster at the moment?

Tape 3: 28 minutes 36 seconds

GF: my daughter-in-law and the children are already here, but they are in rented accommodation, my son is still working there and trying to sell the house.

RL: In terms of identity, how would you describe yourself?

GF: Myself? Well, what do you mean, religious, political, which identity are you talking about?

RL: Well, everything, one by one.

GF: Well, religious identity, I think you've already gone into that when you asked me about my belief in God and how much I believe, and I certainly feel very Jewish. I cannot say that I am an orthodox Jewess, but that doesn't make me less of a Jewess and I'm very sad when people talk about their beliefs, you know, if you are a reform Jew you are not a Jew. And I always say that Hitler made no difference. And I'm very sad that one person should be against another person, whatever happens. Politically, I think, my political persuasions I'm not prepared to discuss [Laughs]

RL: What about in terms of national identity? And cultural?

GF: Oh, culturally I am more British than the British. Because I always used to get and still get very annoyed when any of the refugees find fault. In fact, during my teaching days, particularly a lot of my Polish students would say, "In England you do this and you do that!" and I used to say to them, "Well, why don't you go back to Poland now, you know it's OK". "Ah, we can earn better money here." And as I say I feel very, very British, and I went back to Germany and I felt like an outsider looking in. I had no affinity whatsoever. The first time we went back I think was in '89, because it took me a long time to go back, to decide to go back. And then my sister, her husband, and my husband and I we went back together, because you know you get an invitation from the German government to sort of make you feel a bit better or something, and we went back and we went to look at our flat. And the block of flats was still standing, but our flat had been bombed. We just felt that was great, we had nothing, no affinity whatsoever. And the school I think was something that made me feel a little sentimental, but otherwise, no.

RL: How did you feel towards the German people?

GF: People, my generation and older, you always ask yourself "What did you do?" and we have German friends through my husband's work because he used to have to work for the European offices, and I had German friends. And this German woman always said to

me, “You know, when I ask my father what he did during the war, he will never tell me.” So it’s a very difficult situation. And I know when I’ve given talks, I gave a talk actually at the Herbal Centre is it, near to Nicky Alliance, the other one in North Manchester, isn’t it Herbal World, well whatever, there is this centre there, and my sister and I gave a talk and somebody got up and said to me, “Do you hate the Germans?” Well, I sort of had to think about the answer and I said, “You know, hate is such a destructive emotion, it

Tape 3: 32 minutes 44 seconds

would hurt me more really than the people I hate.” And also some three years ago the Canadian Churches invited us because they wanted to ask for forgiveness that they didn’t take us in. And they invited all the survivors of the St. Louis, and I went. And when I said to them, “You know, I cannot [sic] forgive you only for what has been done to me, not for anybody else.” But I said, “I don’t see any reason why you should carry the burden of your ancestors on your shoulders”, because they are a new generation. And I said, “The fact that you realize that a wrong was done and that you feel in future people should stand up for their beliefs that is the important thing.” And I said, to them, “I hope your little acorns grow into strong oak trees” and they were happy with that. They liked that. But the people speaking to us, one of them was the great nephew of Blair, the fellow who had said “none is too many”, he was a Methodist minister, and he apologized for his uncle. And a year later the American churches wanted to apologize and they invited us to Miami and again the same thing arose, and again, you know, we told them that we can only forgive what’s been done unto us, and they made quite a fuss of us and entertained us and we had a lot of discussions. And then, another year the German nuns invited the people on a trip to Israel – I didn’t go to that one because I had a knee replacement. This year the Cuban churches invited us. Unfortunately I couldn’t make it, because the Americans put a ban on anybody that didn’t have an American passport to go from Miami to Cuba, so I couldn’t go. [Laughs] I wrote to the American Ambassador here and I said, “You know, in ’39 the Cubans wouldn’t let us. I can hardly believe that in 2004 the Americans won’t let us in.” But it didn’t happen, so ...

RL: Coming back to my original question on identity and you were saying that you really feel more British than the British, is there any sort of cultural, sort of German cultural identity there in the background at all?

GF: None whatsoever. Because educationally I never felt I had very much there. And in my daily life I think, you see, having grown up in a Polish family, that made a difference, we were never sort of German Jews, and so we were different anyway.

RL: Have you ever felt or experienced any anti-Semitism throughout your time here in England?

GF: I don’ think so, I can’t think of anything, no. Not personally, only what you read in the papers and what’s going on, but I personally have never felt any of it.

RL: How safe do you feel here?

GF: You mean ‘safe’ as a Jew?

RL: Yes.

GF: I think I feel safe, yes. I don't feel safe in going out at night, but that's got nothing to do, I don't think - very many women do - but as a Jew, I feel safe, yes. However, yes I have to qualify that, because I told you earlier on that I saw a letter which I wanted to

Tape 3: 36 minutes 50 seconds

reply to, written by a Muslim person, and I wanted to reply to, and I was afraid to put my name and address. So there is a certain fear I suppose in disclosing your religion in certain company.

RL: And coming back to what you were saying about Germany, how many times have you visited Germany?

GF: Three times. I went back on the invitation. Then I went back another time with my son and daughter-in-law because they wanted to, sort of, see where I was born. And then I went back last year to a school reunion.

RL: And have your feelings changed at all on those different visits?

GF: No. And I'm always amazed how many people have gone back to Germany actually, to live. And also amazed how many - in the school - how many Israeli children they have. People from Israel come back to live in Germany. I would find that very difficult. But there's quite a community. Mind you, the majority of the community are Russians, Russian Jews.

RL: We've not really spoken about Israel and your feelings towards Israel. If you could tell me a little bit about how you feel towards Israel.

GF: You mean, do I feel the state should exist? Or whose side am I on? Or what I feel ...?

RL: Just from the beginning, from the foundation of the state and how you felt with that.

GF: Well, I feel the state was almost a necessity. I don't always approve of everything that's going on ... on both sides. I feel perhaps it's not such a good idea that it's a state run by religion. I think perhaps religion and state should be separated. I mean I got quite sad when I go to Mea She'arim and I'm told the state of Israel doesn't exist because the meshiach hasn't come. I have family at Bnei Brak who, of course, tell me that their children can't fight for the state, they have to go to yeshiva, although now I've come back some years later and they've decided the children should join the army and they should work for a living. So I don't agree with everything, but I feel that we have to talk. We have to talk, that's all there is to it. Unfortunately, when Barak was almost prepared to give them 90 per cent of what they wanted, it wasn't accepted. So I really find as an outsider I haven't the right to criticize anything because I don't know what the people feel that live there. I just feel they have a very bad publicity. You know, they hadn't got

their act together as far as publicity goes. And when I was there this time, I talked to the people in the public relation field and he felt exactly the same way. He said it was very difficult to get people to realize, you've got to put over your point of view and feel "well I'm in the right, so it doesn't matter." It's very important to have the right publicity. And otherwise, as I say, it's a very difficult situation, and not being in the state, not being one of the people, it's difficult to voice an opinion.

Tape 3: 40 minutes 58 seconds

RL: When did you first visit Israel?

GF: '66. I went in '66. When I stood in the divided Jerusalem, looking across, realizing how green Israel was and how barren. And of course they always say, it was never a desert, it was deserted land. But I don't know how you can get people to adopt a culture that you've got to work for what you want, so ...

RL: How did you feel visiting Israel for the first time?

GF: Quite emotional actually, yes, yes. And met up with family and mainly my husband's family. I only had two cousins there who'd survived the war in Rumania, because the family in Rumania, as I mentioned earlier on, the only aunt there died of a natural death, although my cousin in Rumania survived the Germans but was imprisoned when the Russians were there for five years because he was a Zionist, so he was imprisoned for five years. And he finally got to Israel, worked for the government, went back to Rumania as a government official and of course they had to put the red carpet out for him.

RL: Do you feel that your experiences have affected you psychologically?

GF: Do you know, it's very hard to tell because I always had to have my feet very firmly on the ground and I think I'm a very, very placid and normal person, so I don't think it has affected me psychologically, no.

RL: Do you think it might have affected in any way the way you brought up your children?

GF: Well, you see, my son has been interviewed for the second generation thing, but I'm not allowed to know what he says, you know, and your children don't tell you these things. On the other hand, I'm a little bit upset when people blame their refugee parents. I remember reading an article by Mrs. Carp - she writes in the Jewish Chronicle sometimes and used to write for the Guardian - saying that some of her disturbances are due to her refugee parents because they pampered her too much and used to say, "Button your coat up! It's cold outside!" And I think it's so easy. All children blame their parents for certain things. I don't think that is a reason. One always just feel parents perhaps could have done things differently, but I think it's because they are refugee parents. Hope fully not, hopefully my children feel they had a normal home; I don't know.

RL: When did you start becoming involved, in these late years, with refugee activities and ...?

GF: Actually I'm very friendly with Douglas Angel and Anne Angel. Do you know Anne Angel? She does a lot of Hebrew teaching and things, and she got, asked me to go to school with her, so I went a couple of times to talk to the children at school and there's another person, Greengrass - have you come across her? She asked me to go to a school,

Tape 3: 44 minutes 48 seconds

she took me to Bolton to a school. And so once you start, people sort of know that you can do a bit of talking and they ask you again. And then our rabbi at menorah has a holocaust teach-in every year for the Christian clergy and students and I was one of the speakers there giving the first lecture about my experiences. The Spielberg thing came up. I went and talked at the Holocaust Memorial day at the cricket club in Chorlton, I don't know where the cricket club is, with the chief constable and somebody else. So I think once you start on a thing like this people just call on you. And of course I've done things for Beth Shalom, you know, contributed to the book and written part of one of their films. And they've also published actually a book of my husband's cousin who was in Schindler's camp and kept a diary in a little notebook, and after the war, in 1967, a workman pulled down a wall and found this exercise book with his identity card in it. And it finishes in mid-sentence in 1943, so he didn't survive. But that's also been published by Beth Shalom, that diary.

RL: What about your connection with AJR?

GF: Well, I, what connection? Well, I'm just a member, and I pay my fees and I've sometimes, once or twice, written something for them.

RL: How long have you been a member?

GF: Do you know, I can't remember whether I was a member in London or not, I really can't remember. Because in London I belonged to the ex-Berliners. We had an association of ex-Berliners and I still actually belong to them. They publish a magazine two or three times a year. And we had a little group here in Manchester run by Harry Blake, I don't know whether you knew him, but of course he died and so we don't have that group here any more.

RL: How often did you meet here in the Manchester group?

GF: Every few months or something. Not very often.

RL: When did he die? How long ago did that stop?

GF: Did he die a year ago? I'm not sure. I know I'm in touch with his wife every now and again. It must be at least a year ago, yes.

RL: How many used to meet?

GF: Pardon?

RL: How many used to meet?

GF: Not too many, eight, ten perhaps. You see, people from North Manchester found it difficult to come to South Manchester. It's the same with the AJR meetings actually, we

Tape 3: 47 minutes 55 seconds

try to hold one in the North and one in the South. But I think they are doing a lot more work the AJR, they're having local groups meeting, you know in Didsbury, and in Cheshire, and so on. A little while ago we went to Leeds to a meeting and they put on a little coach, so we all got there.

RL: Have you belonged to any other organizations or societies over the years, any other activities that you've been involved in?

GF: League of Jewish women, yes.

RL: When did you start with that?

GF: About two years ago. I sort of do my own bits and pieces. I go to the North Cheshire school every Thursday morning and help with the kids' reading, and I go to the Morris Feinmann home to talk to a lady who is eighty-four, has been there for twenty years and has nobody, so I just go and let her talk, and that goes on for about an hour and three quarters, I can't open my mouth, she just needs to talk. The only success I can claim is when I first when I first went there she was in bed, she wouldn't get up. And when I told her I was going to be on the Sunday morning programme, you know, Songs of Praise Favourite Hymn, I can't remember what it's called, with Julia Neuberger, when I told her I was going to be on television, she decided to get up and make a little sitting area around her television and she did that. And then I said to her, "It would be so nice if you got dressed every time I came". Well now she is always dressed, always in a different dress every time I come, but she won't go down to eat with the other people. She been in the garden with me during the summer. She'll go down with me, but she won't go and meet the other people. I've tried. At Pesach time I persuaded her to go down for Pesach, and she did. But on the whole she still sits in her room, but she dresses and so on. So that's my little contribution. And I think, well, she's only three years older, you know, and I go to cheer her up, and I've been going for more than a year now, but ... which makes me realize I'm going to stay independent as long as possible.

RL: What do you do for League of Jewish Women?

GF: Well, they consider the things I do as part of the work, the membership too. And I mainly go to meetings.

RL: How often do they meet?

GF: About once a month.

RL: And how long have you been a member?

GF: Two years.

RL: Oh right, yes.

Tape 3: 50 minutes 52 seconds

GF: And I go every Sunday morning too. In our synagogue we have got something called ARK, it's Adults Requiring a Knowledge. And we have lectures and speakers. And it's not necessarily on Judaism, it's just ... And then we have Third Age group at our synagogue, which has a meeting once a month with a speaker, and I'm tea lady. So anyway, my time is filled, you know. But I think when you get to a certain stage you need a reason for getting up every morning. I don't think you've asked me yet when I came to Manchester.

RL: Right, no, we've not really covered that, have we, except that you came when your husband died nine years ago. So, yes, tell me a little bit about your move up here.

GF: Well, unfortunately it was a time when it suddenly was a bit difficult to sell houses and mortgages were short, you know, since then they've shot up. I often wish perhaps I should have stayed, but then it would have been so much harder for me to move anyway. But when my husband died my daughter-in-law and my son felt it might be a good idea to come and live in Manchester and he died in 93, and in 95 I moved up here. And this was my son's house actually, but he'd let it. He lived in Old Broadway, so when I came, the people moved out and I took over his house. And so I've lived here ever since and I'm very fortunate that I also have a sister in Didsbury, so I do have other family. She and I hadn't lived in the same city for about forty years, so that's very nice.

RL: Can you just fill me in a little bit with your sister? What she did, and what ...?

GF: Well, my sister obviously was on the boat with me, and when she came to ... she was evacuated from the school in London, so she spent some time away from London. And then she came back and she went to a trade school to learn dress-making. And after that she worked in a couple of establishments, and then she had her own little workshop for a time, and after a while, when she was about twenty-eight or twenty-nine she decided to come up Manchester and came to see – my in-laws lived here and she stayed with them for a while and met her future husband here.

RL: Who did she marry?

GF: A fellow called Adolf Sternberg. He was an industrial photographer.

RL: Where was he from?

GF: Somewhere along the Rhine. Near Kassel, I think. Limburg-Lahn, it's called, Limburg-Lahn.

RL: And what children did she have?

GF: She had two children, a son called Jeremy and a daughter Susan. The son is a lecturer at Aberdeen University and Susan lives in Oxford and is a full-time mum at the moment,

Tape 3: 54 minutes 42 seconds

but she graduated from Oxford and commissioned books actually, scientific books, she worked for a publishing company.

RL: Right. OK. So that brings us up-to-date in Manchester. Is there anything else that we've not touched upon? Did you ever claim restitution or compensation?

GF: Unfortunately, I can't get a pension because I never worked in Germany. You know, you have to have stuck some stamps to say you've worked, and I never worked, so I don't get a pension. My mother got a pension, but I don't get any. I had some money, I think £400 or something, for loss of education many years ago, in 1957, when I had my son and that bought me a washing machine and a television. I started married life with a scrubbing board and I had my first real washing machine when I had my third child.

RL: We've not really gone into much detail about the re activities, that you've done with the St. Louis, and the film that you took part in and so forth. DO you want to tell me a little bit about that?

GF: About what, the ...?

RL: With the St. Louis, the ...

GF: The life of the St. Louis?

RL: Not the life, no I mean now, the present-day times and what's been done that you've helped towards?

GF: Well, first of all, I did the programme for Spielberg. And then somehow Beth Shalom got interested and asked me to write my story. However, it is limited to ten or twelve pages because they felt that for young people to read one book about a survivor was too much and they felt forty-six people writing their own story, it could be used for teaching purposes, and they could read one story and perhaps identify and analyse it and so on. So I, as I say, wrote my story for that. I've often been asked to talk about it because the St. Louis is not so much about what happened to the passengers, but the fact that the world could not take in 900-odd people and save them from what would have been certain death if they'd been sent back to Germany. And it shows that, in fact, the

world did not care sufficiently to save us and in those days there was no such thing as illegal immigrants. You could only go to wherever you had a visa to. And, as I said once before, that Goebbels wrote in the papers to say “nobody else wants them either. At least we’re building camps for them.” And that was a significant thing for the world to realize that for Hitler it gave him carte blanche to do what he wanted to do because he knew the world wouldn’t do anything about it.

RL: Now, I think this film’s about to come to an end, so we’ll need to stop.

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 0 minute 3 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Gisela Feldman, and it’s Tape 4. One thing I was thinking I haven’t asked you is about hobbies, if you have had any hobbies over the years.

GF: Well, I took up painting after I retired actually and I enjoyed it very much. I need the discipline of classes; I’m not all that good to work on my own. And I must say I’m very sorry really that I haven’t done very much since I moved to Manchester. I went to classes regularly while I lived in London, but then I have the excuse that my walls are full anyway and my husband used to frame them for me and now I couldn’t frame them, so that’s a good excuse. Anyway, I’m very fond of the theatre and always have been. And in London my husband and I went regularly to the theatre and to concerts. He preferred concerts, I preferred the theatre, so we compromised, I went with him and he came with me. Not that we didn’t enjoy the other activity, but we had our preferences. Since I’ve come to Manchester, I still like the theatre very much, but seem to spend more time going to concerts because musically, of course, Manchester is a very good place to be. And now they’ve got the Lowry, you do get some of the London companies coming up, theatre companies and Shakespearean company. So these are my main hobbies actually. I don’t do dress-making any more, which I did at one time, and I don’t knit any more, but I now like activities that take me out of the house. And I like talking. I go to discussion group.

RL: Finally, is there any message that you would like to give?

GF: Well, I think if one looks back in history, I think there’s always been a shortage of tolerance and people seeing the other point of view and treating you as an equal human being no matter what your beliefs are, as long as you treat each other in a good way. And that’s all I can really hope for the future that people will have tolerance and allow for other people to live in the same way as they would like to live. And I often think when I’m asked to quote them, you know, talk about the Torah, or tolerance, or whatever, I always quote Hillel because he was asked to quote the Torah standing on one leg and he says “Don’t do to your neighbour what you wouldn’t like him to do to you.” And to me that is really a great quotation.

RL: Thank you very much.

F: You’re welcome.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 18 seconds**PHOTOGRAPHS**

GF: This is my grandfather, Isaac Wurzel. I think it would be taken in the late '20s or early 30's in Berlin. And that's all I know about it.

That's my father and my uncle. My uncle is on the left, his name is Max Knepel. My father is Leo Knepel on the right, Leib Yehuda Knepel and they were taken in roundabout

Tape 4: 4 minutes 0 second

1934, taking the waters in Karlsbad.

That's my father, Leo Knepel, standing outside our shop taken, would say, in the late 20's, 1920s.

RL: In...?

GF: Berlin.

GF: This is my sister, Sonja Knepel, now Sternberg, and Gisela Knepel, now Feldman, when I first started school. I'm on the right and on the first day at school our mothers met us with this little sort of witches' hat full of sweets. And it was taken in Berlin.

RL: What was the date?

GF: The approximate date would be 1930.

GF: This is the first school I went to, a state school, and I am along the gangway the third row on the left, I'm the very first girl sitting in the third row by the gangway. And it is in Berlin and approximately 1930, '31.

GF: This is the Jewish school I went to from the age of eleven. I am in the back row, the fifth girl from the left, the little blondie. And that would have been taken in about 1934.

RL: In...?

GF: In Berlin

GF: That's my mother, Chaya Hella Knepel and I taken in Berlin in roundabout 1927 or 28.

GF: That's me on the St. Louis, the boat that supposedly took us to Cuba in 1939, June 1939, or at the end of May, beginning of June. My name is Gisela Feldman, Knepel before I was married. This is a photograph taken on the St. Louis in June 1939. I'm in the

front row, second from the right. And my sister, Sonja Sternberg, is right behind me slightly to the left. And that was taken at sea, obviously.

GF: The boy on the left, his name is Karl Hoffman. The photograph is taken on the St. Louis and when we were in Havana harbour and weren't allowed to land, little boats came to see us, and his father was on a little boat and he kept shouting for his little boy and asked his mother if she would throw him into the sea so he would at least have his child. But obviously she didn't.

Tape 4: 7 minutes 35 seconds

GF: This is another photograph taken on the St. Louis in the dining room. In the front row there is my sister, Sonja Sternberg, and my mother Hella Knepel. And, as I say, it was taken on the boat on the high seas in June 1939.

GF: This is the post card my father sent to us in January 1940 from his address in Rzeszow and the significance of it is that it is still the Polish address, but it is Germany, formerly Poland. So it was very quickly recognized as part of the German state. My father's name is Leo Leib Knepel.

GF: This is a postcard that we received from my grandmother in about 1943. Her name is Rachel Wurzel. It was sent via her daughter in Rumania, and on it she says that my grandfather, her husband, had already died, but she doesn't know what's happened to the rest of the family, and she's there all alone.

GF: This is a photograph taken on our silver wedding. Next to me, of course, is my husband, Oscar Feldman. On my other side is my daughter, Frances. Next to her is Adrian, and above Adrian is David. And that was taken in 1968 in St. Helen's.

GF: This is a photograph of my son and his family. My son is Adrian Feldman. His wife is Julie. And next to my son is Joshua and on Julie's lap is Adam. And I think it's taken about roughly 1999 in Manchester.

GF: This is a photograph of my daughter, her husband and her two children when they graduated from Santa Barbara University. My daughter on the left is Frances, my grandson is Paul, I'm in the middle and next to me is my granddaughter Nicole, and next to her is her dad, Niels Harms. It was taken in 2002 in Santa Barbara.

Tape 4: 10 minutes 59 seconds