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**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**

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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	55

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Winston
<b>Forename:</b>	Simon
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	17 March 1938
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Radziwillow, Poland

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	28 March 2004
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Sutton-in-Ashfield
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Yvonne Gordon
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	2 hours 7 minutes

## **REFUGEE VOICES THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**INTERVIEW: 55**

**NAME: SIMON WINSTON**

**DATE: 28 MARCH 2004**

**LOCATION: SUTTON-IN-ASHFIELD, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

**INTERVIEWER: YVONNE GORDON**

### **TAPE 1**

**Tape 1: 0 minute 38 seconds**

YG: Hello Simon. Now, could you begin by telling me your name at birth, where you were born, and the date of your birth, please?

SW: My name is Simon Winston. Originally it was Shimon Weinstein, which is very close. I was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1938 in a town called Radzivilov, then in Poland, but it is now part of the Ukraine.

YG: Would you like to tell us something about your early life in that region?

SW: There's very little I remember but the actual facts are so: when I was born, the town was mostly Jewish. The population was about 30,000, of which half of them, a good half of them, were Jews. So it was quite a close community, with synagogues everywhere. And then war broke out in 1939. At first we feared the worst but then, after Hitler made a pact with Stalin and they carved up Poland, our part was sectioned off to the Russians. So the Russians came and they stayed there for two years. They weren't so bad. We weren't so fearful of them. They certainly weren't going to kill Jews. The only thing was they imposed their form of Communism or Socialism onto our ways, which included things like disposing of private Jewish schools and having comprehensive schools and various other - shops were integrated into cooperatives etcetera. But then when the Germans invaded Russia, things changed. Because suddenly we were under German Nazi occupation. And that was a different thing altogether. Their intention, which we all know now, was to exterminate the Jews and certainly make their lives as difficult as possible. And the first thing they did was to isolate us, at least visually, by making us wear white arm bands with a blue Star of David. Eventually, they moved us out of our secure homes and pushed us into a very small section of the town, which they called a ghetto. And this meant that life in the ghetto was very cramped, in fact 1.8 square metres per person. Very difficult because there was little food. Existence was on a knife's edge.

**Tape 1: 3 minutes 53 seconds**

YG: How old were you at the time?

SW: I was by then, 1943, I'd be 4 or 5 years old.

YG: Could you say a bit about your parents and your family life?

SW: My mother actually came from a town called Brody which was about 20 miles, 30 kilometres north. She met my father, they married. My father's parents, that's my grandparents, actually were part-owners of a flour mill, which was one of the kinds of occupations for people generally, but certainly Jews, in the flour industry. I have a brother. He's two years older, well, one and a half years older than myself, and of course my father had a brother and a sister. My mother had three brothers and, except for one of her brothers - both the brother and sister of my father perished in the Holocaust and two of my mother's brothers also perished. One of her brothers, fortunately for him, he was a scholar, he was a linguist, and he went to live in Vienna. Vienna of course, Austria, was also anti-Jewish at the time but he foresaw this and was able to escape, to get out in good time, before the war, and he came to Britain where he worked, I think as a linguist in a university for a while, and later on he had an export and import business. But going back to my life under the Nazi occupation. Jewish life under the Nazi occupation was absolutely terrible. Unimaginable. And I say that with benefit of what I've read and what I've heard from my father and my brother, who has a better memory than I. Because I was very young and I don't really remember too much of my existence under German occupation. But I can imagine. I can imagine I would have been fearful, I would have been hungry and I would have lost my childhood.

**Tape 1: 6 minutes 54 seconds**

YG: Do you remember what family life was like before then? What kind of kind of house you lived in, what the general atmosphere was like at home?

SW: Yes. Again, as far as I know, the ownership of the mill between these 3 families meant that there was a close unit between us and we all lived in the same large mansion-type house. And I remember it was very nice and vaguely remember some reflections of little things like falling out of the window once when I was looking out for a red van. But, in any case, it was secure and safe before the war. There was anti-Semitism. Not all the Ukrainians now, or the Poles as they were then, liked Jews. They were anti-Semitic. But there were enough who were tolerant, to say the least. And in any case there were many, many Jews and we kept communal life more than marginally. We were very, very strong in our communal life. I mean there was both religion and Zionism. And the whole notion of being Jewish was very important to us and we kept it up.

YG: Was it quite a large Jewish population in the town?

SW: Yes. I'm not too sure about figures. My father didn't tell me too much about figures, even in his draft piece that he wrote. But I do know also that during the Russian occupation a lot more Jews came to live in our town, in Radzivilov, because

they were fleeing from oppression of Jews from that side. So in the end, as far as I can gather, it must have been about 15-20,000 Jews.

**Tape 1: 9 minutes 13 seconds**

YG: And how many were there in the town as a whole?

SW: About twice as much, that's 30-40,000.

YG: So can you remember the day-to-day life in the ghetto?

SW: As I say, I can't personally remember, I have to admit that because it would be false if I said I remember this and I remember that. One or two little incidents I do remember. I remember the incidence of the first mass murder. People going up a hill. To me it seemed like a hill. I was told afterwards that it wasn't a hill, but I do remember people going away and just a few coming back. Generally I feel that I lacked the kind of toys and the sort of occupation that a child might have during his development at that age. That seemed to be lacking. There was no games. I don't remember any games. All the games I remember happened after the war. All the play things and the fun element. There was no fun. Well obviously, there wouldn't be any fun. People just had nothing to laugh about or laugh at. So I can imagine again that it wasn't very pleasant.

**Tape 1: 10 minutes 40 seconds**

YG: And did you mix with other children whilst you were there?

SW: I must have done. I don't remember any specific children that I mixed with. I certainly don't remember their names. One or two, incidentally, who I meet up with in Israel, because we have a reunion of survivors of the ghetto, they tell me that they remember me, but I think that's more through hiding, during the period of hiding in the bunkers, rather than the actual town itself, during the Nazi occupation. But it was really tough. They divided the ghetto into three parts. One was for useful Jews, what they called the term 'Useful Jews' - those who could work. The other one was for non-useful Jews, or not so useful Jews. The other one was for the very old and the very young. Presumably getting ready for complete extermination. Life, as I know, as I gather, wasn't very pleasant. There was little food, difficulty in getting water even. There was no sanitation and there was just one well, and people had to walk a mile or two to it, and it was always flooded and full of puddles and muddy. So it wasn't a very pleasant situation. And then it became worse because eventually the extermination plan took shape in the form of mass murders. And my father writes about the first one, which involved getting the whole of the Jewish population together in a yard and then segregating a section of them - about two and a half thousand - marching them up, again I keep thinking of a hill, but marching them up to the killing fields, which was the Brody forest. And there there would be a pit ready that was lined with lime along the bottom. And then they would be forced to take their clothes off and then shot. And some, who weren't shot or were shot but hadn't died yet, were still covered in more lime. And then there was a party of Jews or Ukrainians, I don't know, who would fill the grave up with earth. And that was a horrible, horrible shock. You can imagine that everybody there, presumably including

myself, would have been absolutely horrified, because we knew what had happened and we also feared and knew that this was going to happen to us too.

**Tape 1: 14 minutes 6 seconds**

YG: As a young child how did that actually come over to you?

SW: I don't remember. I really don't remember. And no one has really told me how I responded. But I must have been absolutely shocked. My brother was shocked. He remembers and he has the after-effects of what happened. But nevertheless it happened. And then there was another action. They called them 'Actions' or 'Aktions'. And before that happened, my father, or some of the Jews, were told to go to the section of the ghetto where those two and a half thousand had been and clear the ghetto, so that there would be no trace of what had happened and perhaps more space for people to live in. And the first place my father went to was an attic of a house where he told his parents to hide. And he went there, and they weren't there, and he looked for them all over the place, but he didn't find them, so presumably they were killed in the second action, which was the old and the very young and the infirm. And then it would have been our turn. So everyone was wanting to get out, wanting to escape. And that's what we did. That's what my father set about to do, to escape. How was he going to do it? First of all, he had to have a passport, he had to have some kind of document that would allow him to wander through the streets, which he got. He managed to acquire a passport. I think he said his name was Ivan Dobienko or something like that, a very Ukrainian name, and he gave our names similar. And the next thing he had to do was to find someone who was willing to hide us. That wasn't very easy. I don't really know if he had pre-arranged this or not, but presumably he had, he must have done, because we did go to places where people were prepared to hide us. Very often it would be a farm house, or the home of a horse-thief. He used to call them that. That's what they were – they were horse-thieves. But they had enough humanity in them to not want us killed; in so much as they gave us sanctuary.

**Tape 1: 17 minutes 8 seconds**

YG: So you managed to escape from the ghetto?

SW: We managed to escape from the ghetto.

YG: How did that come about?

SW: Well again, from his document, from his memoirs, he writes about having to cross a river. There was a river there apparently, which I wouldn't know because I've never been back. And he does actually describe how he went in first to check the depth of the river and it came up to his neck and he went back for us and he carried each one of us across the river until we got to the other side. And on the other side, apparently, he knew someone who lived in a house. And he thought, 'We'll get immediate hiding in this house'. But the person was reluctant to take us on but he gave us good advice, where to go, what to do, etc, etc.. And for the next two years we hid in different places. We had to move because the Nazis and the Ukrainian militia were always on the lookout for Jews. That was the first important thing, apparently,

you know, winning the war wasn't as half important as finding and killing Jews. So we were being, what's the word?

**Tape 1: 18 minutes 43 seconds**

YG: Being herded from place to place?

SW: Yes, but there's... we were like wild animals on the loose that... I forget. You know how you've got a word on the tip of your tongue? You want to use that word especially but I've forgotten the word I want to use. It'll come back to me and I'll tell you what it is. Nevertheless, we had to hide and keep a lookout. Now this is the first time that I actually remember incidents. Two incidents stick in my mind. And I'd like to tell you these two incidents that stick out in my mind.

YG: This is when you're about 6 years old?

SW: This would be about 6 or 7 years old. One was when we were told or we heard the Germans approaching in their jeeps or whatever. First thing we had to do was to go down into the bunker. This bunker was in a pigsty, under a pigsty. And we had to stay still for what must have been hours, without uttering a word, or whatever we needed to do, natural things or otherwise, we just had to forget about it. And I do remember a profusion of liquid; probably warm liquid, coming down, and being told afterwards by the people who were hiding us that the Germans had just pissed on us. I remember that distinctly. And the other incident was I was playing hide and seek. Occasionally we could surface, although that was never, never acceptable or very rarely acceptable to the people who were hiding us because they were scared. If they were found out hiding us, they'd die too. But on this occasion we were out playing in the hay fields and we were playing hide and seek and I was hiding and suddenly I heard some voices. It was some Ukrainians that were coming and it was Ukrainian militia, with uniforms. And they came to me and they said, 'What are you doing here?' And I said, 'I'm playing hide and seek, and I'm waiting for my friends to get me.' And they accepted that and went away. And the miracle of that story is, which I realised afterwards, was that I was able to speak to them at all, because my native tongue was Polish, and Yiddish, but certainly not Ukrainian. What my father had done, he'd prepared us for such an event by teaching us Ukrainian. And just enough Ukrainian for me to be able to get by telling them that I'm not a Jew, I'm really a Polack, and I'm playing with my friends. Otherwise, not only would I have been killed, but the whole family that were hiding us, and my family would have been killed too. So these are the two incidents that I do remember. But then after two years the war finished and we were free.

**Tape 1: 22 minutes 8 seconds**

YG: What had happened to your father's business and your family home during this time?

SW: They were still there! They're still there! After the war, we couldn't go back there because they wouldn't have us back there. They were still hostile. The Ukrainians that lived in Radzivilov were still hostile towards Jews. They were anti-Semitic. To this day, it's not so much anti-Semitism, it's more banditry. The area is a

no-safe area. Even the Ukrainian authorities find difficulty in entering the area. It's called the Volyn area. Apparently, recently, it's calmed down a lot and it's now possible for anybody, including Jews, to go there. Not only that, but over the years, after the war, a group of survivors from Radzivilov, they formed a society which meets once a year in Tel Aviv. And we say prayers, we discuss our presence and what we're doing and our futures. We go to a school which commemorates the Holocaust. That's another thing that Israeli schools have a tradition of taking on board survivors of towns that were liquidated like ours and presenting a passion play or some kind of activity to commemorate and remember what happened during the Holocaust. We've got one in Tel Aviv and they put on a beautiful show. But, anyway, two years ago, the group leader, who's not been very well, and I wish him well - so I don't know how long it'll continue, because he's been the backbone of our society - he and some friends went to Radzivilov and they actually made plans or got permission to provide a memorial site for the victims and the survivors of the Radzivilov Holocaust. We didn't think it would happen but it did. It's already materialised. There is a memorial centre, which is actually some stones and a pathway, built right on top of the mass graves. The synagogue is still there but it's obviously not being used as a synagogue; it's being used for something else, but they've been allowed to place a plaque in Hebrew, which says, 'This is the Synagogue that used to belong to the Jews'. And last year they had the first visit of a community to Radzivilov, as tourists, as visitors. And now they're arranging for another one and another one. And this time they'll have a place that they can actually go to see and to say their prayers or whatever. Actually, there's just one Jew, who they found out lives in Radzivilov. And he's got nothing to do, or his family's got nothing to do with the old Jewish community which was there, and he's agreed to keep an eye on the memorial centre, so that's nice. And not only that, they've had special consent to include Radzivilov as a tourist centre for anyone visiting the Ukraine. That if anyone wants to see a memorial place where Jews died, like in Auschwitz, they can now go to Radzivilov and next year I hope to go there.

**Tape 1: 26 minutes 57 seconds**

YG: Going back to when you were on the run. How did you actually cope for money?

SW: On the run? Oh yes, yes, that's the point. We had to pay for our hiding in most cases. I would like to think that it's not in all cases. But it's probably appropriate that people who are putting their lives at risk should be rewarded in some way. And my father foresaw this in advance so he had already prepared, whilst he was in the ghetto, items, and ways of concealing these items that would pay for our safekeeping. And that consisted of small nuggets of gold, which were usually hidden in places like inside brushes, at the bottom of shoes. One had to be very careful that the shoes weren't going to be required by someone, like the Ukrainians or the Nazis, and that would be filled with gold. And these were then secreted out to these places to pay for individual people, who were kind enough and humane enough to give us hiding. Because remember they didn't have to. They could have taken the money and still given us away, but they didn't. So that's the humanity in what they did. A: that my father had the foresight to do all this. To prepare himself for all this. B: that he obviously collected people who were not going to give us away, were going to keep their side of the bargain and were humane enough to do that. And C: That it worked! I mean that in itself was a miracle. But we survived and, at the time, we were miles away from Radzivilov, so whoever was hiding us would have probably come to us



and said, 'Look, you're free now, you can go back.' And we said, 'Back? Back to where? There is nowhere for us to go.' So, eventually, we were taken on board by the Americans, who were then in control of that area and we were displaced persons.

**Tape 1: 29 minutes 10 seconds**

YG: How did you travel from place to place while you were on the run?

SW: On the run? I don't know. I can only imagine. I mean it's not a thing that I asked my father. And recently I've been trying to collect some memories of what happened by asking my brother. And he knows, but he's very difficult to tackle.

YG: Is he a few years older than you?

SW: He's a year and a half older than me. He's two years older than me, yes. Because he had his own problems. You see when we surfaced, we suffered. And we suffered physically as well as mentally. My mother had asthma-bronchitis and she only survived another 10 years and she died of asthma-bronchitis – chronic. My brother lost the sight of one eye, immediately that we surfaced. And that was the first thing. Through a cataract. Nowadays I suppose cataracts could be treated. So he's blind in one eye. But more than that - he won't like me saying this, he certainly objected to what I've written about that - but he's manifested with complexes. He has a persecution complex; he has an inferiority complex and he has a hoarding complex. In other words, he collects things. He never throws things away. So this must have resulted from the experiences that he had, being slightly older, being more aware of what had happened, which I haven't got. I sometimes wonder why he acts in the way he does act. And I have to say to myself, 'Well, he's experienced something during a very difficult period for him'. Because that was his learning period, his - tip of the tongue syndrome again – his development period. And that's how he developed. He's developed these inhibitions, so he's very difficult to confront with 'How did we get from one place to another?' I did ask him once that, you know. I asked him things like, 'How did we spend the time? Did we play games?' And he doesn't respond. Sometimes he'll respond but sometimes he doesn't. And then later on when I say something that he tells me is not true,

**Tape 1: 32 minutes 5 seconds**

I'll say, 'Well, I asked you, why didn't you tell me?' That is incidentally the case of one of the stories I told you. I told you that we were playing hide and seek with some friends. And that's how I remember it. And he says, 'That's not true. We weren't playing hide and seek, we were running away, presumably from one hiding place to another, and we saw the soldiers coming and we dispersed and you were left in the field. And they confronted you and they let you alone. And they never caught us.' That's what he tells me now. So I don't know, I have to accept what he says. But my memories tell me differently. That's the problem that I have. I suppose also it's my fault because my father eventually went to live in Israel. When my mother died, my father met an Israeli woman and she didn't want to come to England, so he went to live in Israel. And, at that time, he was constantly trying to pressure me with what happened during the war. And I suppose, to put it bluntly, I wasn't interested! You know, I wanted to pass by that part of my life. I wanted to get on with my life. And I'd perhaps catch a little phrase or a little story and then move on or move out.

Because here he was trying to remind me or to be the recipient of his experiences, so that I could pass it on to other people and I wasn't taking too much notice of him. And I feel very, very upset by this now, in reflection.

YG: What kind of person was he?

**Tape 1: 34 minutes 0 second**

SW: He was very, very sincere, devout, strong willed, physically and mentally, who hadn't got a bad cell in him.

YG: What was his name?

SW: His name was Yitzhak – Isaac - Yitzhak Weinstein. That's interesting really because when he went to live in Israel, he maintained... We changed our names to Winston. And when he went to live in Israel, he maintained his name, Winston. But my brother changed back to Weinstein, so he's now Weinstein, but he was Winston and I'm still Winston. I've lost one or two parts that I've missed out on but I'll go back to saying about what happened in the two years of displaced persons camps. We were actually moved from one displaced persons camp to another, trying to find somewhere to live.

YG: Whereabouts were they?

SW: Well, I remember one. This part of my life I do remember. One was called Bytom. That was in Poland. The other one was called Hofgeismar, which was in Germany near Kassel. There, we assumed a sort of traditional Jewish community, where we had our services. We had a synagogue, a makeshift synagogue. We had youth clubs and Zionist movements and all that sort of thing. And there was a drive in those days to go back to Palestine, because if no one else was going to give us a home - we couldn't go back to our original home. Palestine was the natural place, but we were denied that. There was a quota on, so we were denied that. Eventually, my uncle, who I mentioned earlier, who had the foresight to leave Austria to come to England, he was our lifeline, because, even if you wanted to come to England, you had to first of all have a house to live in. This was in those days. And then you had to commit yourself to some sort of job. You had to have a job. Without a job, without somewhere to live, Britain wasn't prepared to accept refugees at all. Not like today. But my uncle was able to provide us with a house, which he paid for, and later my father paid my uncle back. Oh, and, incidentally, he paid him back partially in some gold ingots which he still had, to pay for this house. I remember it was £1,000, which was a lot of money in those days, and it had a lease on it. And, incidentally, talking about the gold ingots and the hiding places, he gave me the remnants of one of the brushes with a concealed compartment and a gold bar, which I've got some place upstairs in a hiding place in the attic. The brush I've left with Beth Shalom, which is a Holocaust Centre in England, nearby where I live. But going back to coming to England, we then moved to Nottingham because my uncle was a linguist and then he opened an import and export company in Nottingham. And he lived in Nottingham. He lived in Beeston, which is about 5 miles from Nottingham. And my father stayed in his work. He was a flour miller, which was what he did in Radzivilov.

**Tape 1: 38 minutes 15 seconds**

YG: What happened to your father's business? Had it been left or sold?

SW: I don't know. I don't know. I made one or two queries to the AJR actually about compensation, you know, because people are claiming this that and the other. You know, because we had a house and my father was part-owner in a mill. We're entitled to something. And apparently Ukraine is out of bounds for claims for any form of restoration. So, I'm not really worried. If someone wants to claim money or whatever, property, on my behalf, let them do it, by all means, and let them put the money to good use. But I'm sufficiently enriched that I don't need to look for reparation money. As a matter of fact, I did once get the equivalent of about \$2,000 as my reparation. My father got about \$6,000. My mother got something similar. My brother got \$2,000, the same as I did. My father and my brother and my mother for a while - no, not my mother because she died before this offer came from Germany - they were on a pension, a very small pension, from the German government. I wasn't. And they were on a pension because they'd suffered physical damage, and I didn't. But, anyway, going back to... So for 5 years we had a passport and it said 'Stateless' on it. Because we weren't British citizens; you had to qualify by proving that you could hold down a job for 5 years and then, after 5 years, you were naturalised and became a British citizen. And if I say that we were fortunate in one sense, I'm trying to compare now, because I'm very much involved in the refuge program from Beth Shalom that it was very easy for us to integrate into British society because of the Jewish community that already exists here. And, being Jews, they took us on board, regardless of whether we were refugees or not refugees. So we had a synagogue to go to, I had youth clubs I could attend, and I had friends who had similar backgrounds or a similar ethnicity. This was good. This gave me a positive attitude towards life.

YG: What year was this?

SW: Well, this would be from when we came to England in '47. We came in '47, so I'd be 9 years old.

**Tape 1: 41 minutes 5 seconds**

YG: Had you had any schooling up to that point? Any education?

SW: Only in... Well, that's it! I missed out on schooling when I was very young. When we were in DP camps, there was some kind of schooling but it was more Jewish schooling, that religious aspects were taught, Zionism was taught, I remember. But very little mathematics. My father used to teach mathematics. I'm a mathematician and I'm quite a good mathematician and I learned that from my father. At home he'd start teaching me long divisions and long multiplications. And that would stick in my mind. As I remember, there weren't actual schools as such but there were Hebrew classes, Hebrew classes. But going back to the British aspect that I was able to integrate because of the Jewish community that was already here. And that went very well. On the one hand no-one... There was anti-Semitism, you know, in those days you couldn't get into trouble for telling Jewish joke. You can today but you couldn't then. And I felt it. You know, some people, even today, say, 'Well, it's only a joke. It's humour'. But if you're at the other end of that joke, if you're the butt

of that joke, it hurts. Especially in my situation, because here am I, who suffered the Holocaust, and having to come to terms with, you know, 'Why did they hate Jews?' And someone who is my friend probably is telling a Jewish joke. And I don't like that! And for a while, I think, I have to be honest with myself, at school even, at school especially, I was ashamed of being a Jew! So it was nice to be able to turn to the other side, to the synagogue and to the youth clubs, the Jewish youth clubs, and not be afraid of being a Jew. And, of course, when I embraced Zionism, because I belonged to a Zionist youth club, called Habonim, incidentally, that was wonderful because suddenly here there are people who are not ashamed of being Jews and they're quite open about it. They're prepared to embrace it and it's part of their culture. And that turned me, very much so, because it made me into the person that I am. I am Jewish. I can't deny that. I was born a Jew. My father was a proud Jew. My grandfather or my great-grandfather was a rabbi! And I have to take all that on board. It's part of my ethnicity. So that's what I've done. I've taken it on board. I have to say that whilst I was quite religious in my youth, I've got mixed feelings about religion generally, about God. I sometimes ask myself, 'Where was God when all this was happening? Surely he wouldn't have allowed that.' And if you think that God is an all-forgiving God. I don't forgive what they did to us. I will never forgive it. I might want to forget it, but I will never forgive it. I don't take it to any extremes. I don't go suicide bombing or anything like that, or killing off people that I know are Nazis or ex-Nazis. But I do wave my fist when German lose 5-1 to England in football matches. So, you know, it's something that I've maintained a certain hatred towards a group of people, an ethnic group of people, who hated another ethnic group of people. Because of what they did, because of the extremity they went to to annihilate that particular group. And it's one of the reasons that, I'm proud to say, I then discovered Beth Shalom. This is the Holocaust Education Centre, which is not far away from here, about 20 miles from where I live. I think I already mentioned about the family and how they ... Or did I? Can I just quickly say?

**Tape 1: 46 minutes 4 seconds**

YG: Would you like to just say it very briefly?

SW: This is a family who were not Jewish and they went to Israel. And they had a day to spend at the end before they were due to leave and they went to visit Yad Vashem. And they found it a very profound experience and they wanted to learn more about it. And when they came back here they realised there wasn't a place they could go to learn about Beth Shalom, so they decided to open their own Holocaust Centre, their own Yad Vashem. And they've done a marvellous job. They're very, very sincere people. When I first heard about it, I thought I'd go have a look and see what it's like. And the first thing I did, I gave Stephen, Stephen Smith, who's the director there, I gave him my father's testimony. And he read it and he was very moved. And I could see immediately that this is a man, this is a family, that is sincere in what they're doing and the reason why they're doing it. And I've been on board ever since. Sometimes I give talks there. And I've actually commissioned a sculpture there, which is a commemoration of hidden childhood. That's the name of the sculpture, 'Hidden Childhood,' which was well attended and my story actually made the headlines in the local paper. What was I going to say? And they've gone further. Because I could see that they're not leaving it at that. Essentially, it's a place of memory and it's an education centre, so that people can learn about what happened in

the Holocaust. But there have been other holocausts since. And people haven't learnt. And they want to address this issue. So I'm glad for what they're doing and I've tried to help them out. Because one of the things they've presented is an educational pack, which goes to schools, called the Refuge Program. Because we're living in a climate now where there are refugees of all sorts coming and going and we don't know who's a victim and who's a commercial refugee – what's the word for it?

**Tape 1: 48 minutes 38 seconds**

YG: Economic migrant?

SW: Economic migrant. But there are people who are being persecuted still today, who need some kind of sanctuary. And as there wasn't sanctuary for all the Jews, the vast majority of Jews in Europe during the war, I hope that there is some kind of place where people can turn to, even temporarily whilst they're being persecuted, and then go back and create their homeland or their own state. And this is what the extension of Beth Shalom is doing. It's formed the Aegis complex. And we've produced this pack, which involves about a dozen refugees from different parts of the world, with different experiences. It includes people from Bosnia-Herzegovina, people from Chile, Rwanda. All places where, they're not The Holocaust, they're not as big, except for Rwanda, you could say - that was a hugely devastating genocide over a very short period of time. How can we stop it? You know? Has the world gone crazy? Is God not listening? What's happening? We can do something. There are people who are prepared to contribute their time and effort. Sadly, I don't contribute enough but I'd like to contribute more. Maybe now I will be able to, now that I've slowed down on my part time work. That we should prevent future holocausts.

**Tape 1: 50 minutes 37 seconds**

YG: Can you say more about life in the Displaced Persons camps on a day to day level?

SW: I remember belonging to a youth group. I think it was called Bethar, which is a very hard line, right wing, or left wing, depending which side you are on, Zionist movement. Wearing a uniform, going camping with them. And I enjoyed it! Playing football with them. Later, of course, on reflection, I found that they were too hard line for me. I've got my own opinions about Israel. I'm a very sincere supporter of Israel, in so much as it's a place for the Jews. But I do also recognise, albeit that there weren't that many, that there used to be some other ethnic groups that lived in that country, and they are entitled to their own... either part of that country or genuine integration into that country. So I'm not an extreme Zionist, but I do believe in the necessity, I sincerely believe in the necessity, for a home for Jewish people, because if there was another Holocaust, another mass-extermination of the Jews, they would have very few places to go, except Israel.

YG: Do you know what happened to your family home? As far as you know, it's still standing, is it?

**Tape 1: 52 minutes 17 seconds**

SW: That's the third time you've asked me about my family home, and maybe, next year, I'll be able to tell you. Because I do hope to go there. I've already made plans that they should inform me. It's a complicated thing. Oh, I've got another story that I should tell you. I could go there from Poland, because I have a cousin who lives in Poland. I'll tell you about her in a minute. Remind me to tell you about her in a minute. She's been back and she told me she's even got a photograph that she took, or is it a sketch or an etching that she brought me back? And it would be very, very much cheaper. But to have to go to Israel first, and then join that group from Israel, go to Radzivilov, and then back to Israel again, and then back to England again, would cost me about £5,000. So I'm going to think. It might be worth it. It might do me good to fork out a lot of money. And now, going back to why I could go there a lot cheaper, a lot quicker, if I go from Poland, is because I've got a cousin who lives in Poland. Again, very briefly, I'll tell you this because it's a fascinating story. My mother had a brother and he died in a concentration camp. He died in Belzec, eventually. He was asked to come and join us but he refused, or he had other ideas. So we survived and, sadly for him, he didn't. He was married and had a wife and a small child. The one thing they wanted was that this child should survive, you know, which is a natural instinct for parents. And they took this child to a church, where there was quite some business going on between people who wanted babies and those who wanted to give them away or to rescue them from extermination. And that's what happened. He gave his child away to a Ukrainian couple for sanctuary, and hoped that she would survive. And they took her on board, and that was the end of it. He died. His wife didn't. She came along with us in the bunkers. She was with us in the bunkers. She actually managed to get to Israel. She remarried. Had two sons. And one day, an Israeli reporter went to Poland to do some research on surviving Jews in Poland. And she came across this woman, young woman, well, no, middle-aged woman, young middle-aged woman, who had some strong feelings that she was Jewish. And she confronted her and she told her various things, which included songs that she remembered, Jewish songs that she remembers. You know, how could she remember Jewish songs when she...? And also one or two snippets of names. And that was reported in a magazine, which was the section of a big Hebrew newspaper there. And my brother read it and he immediately recognised the songs and the names. And he went over to our cousin in Beersheba and he told him, 'You know, I think we've found our lost cousin'. And, 'No, it can't be. She's gone now. Forget about her'. But, sure enough, she was invited to Israel and she was confronted with various family members. And then, although DNA wasn't the thing yet, it was still available, and DNA tests were made. And I went to Israel to submit my blood. And it fitted. She was our cousin. There was absolutely no doubt about it. Sadly for her, her mother, who went to live in Israel, died about a year prior to her finding out.

YG: That's incredible! Well, I think we're reaching the end of Tape One, so thank you very much.

**Tape 1: 57 minutes 10 seconds**

**End of Tape One**

**TAPE 2**

**Tape 2: 0 minute 23 seconds**

YG: Now could we go back to the life in the ghetto? Who were your family members that were actually there with you then?

SW: The whole family. On my father's side, definitely. Not on my mother's side because her parents stayed in Brody, which is where she was born and brought up.

YG: What was your mother's name?

SW: My mother's name was then Battya Weinstein, but she was born Battya Goldenstein, which is the name of my uncle, the one I mentioned earlier. And my father's parents certainly lived with us. Although my father was born in a town called... He was born in Russia! Gosh! Tip of the tongue syndrome again! I've forgotten where he was born, but I should know. Anyway, they all lived together just before the war and during the war.

YG: And what about their parents, your grandparents?

SW: On which side?

YG: On both sides.

SW: Oh, on my father's side it was Weinstein still and he was part owner of the mill, a mill. And his grandfather, as far as I know, or was it my mother's grandfather that was a rabbi? But they lived with us. Yes, they lived with us.

YG: And what happened to them during the ghetto years and afterwards?

SW: My father's parents were exterminated, murdered during the second action, where they killed - no, during the first action - where they actually killed the old and the useless Jews, the infirm and the very young.

YG: What were their names?

SW: Their name was Weinstein!

YG: Their first names?

### **Tape 2: 2 minutes 43 seconds**

SW: Well, his name must have been Zwie, because I was... His name was Zwie. But I don't remember my grandmother's name. No, I don't remember her name. I would probably just call her 'Grandma' or whatever. That's when we got close enough to meet, because remember they segregated the ghetto deliberately to keep the workers away from doing their work, or wherever they were working. My father actually worked in a sawmill. He was a flour miller before that, but he worked in a sawmill. And it was in his sawmill, in some compartment of the sawmill, that he told, or warned, his parents to go and hide, just in case they were going to be searched out. But, unfortunately, they either didn't do it or they couldn't do it or they were found anyway. Because they died.

YG: And your mother's parents? Your other grandparents?

SW: As far as I know, they would have been shipped off to...in a train... to the Belzec concentration camp. Which is where the Brody people eventually died. In Belzec. But, going back to incidents during the Nazi occupation, one I forgot to mention was that right from the beginning, on the first few days, they gathered all the Jews into the square, into the main square. So there must have been about 10,000 of them. Numbers are peculiar because...I don't know if my father can guess or know numbers for sure because A: there was an influx of Jews from outside. B: Jews were dying off daily through natural causes, you know, because they couldn't live any longer, they were starving or whatever. But, nevertheless, there must have been about 10,000 Jews in the square that day. And machine guns, about 20 Nazi paratroopers suddenly shot out from nowhere, and they were pointing their machine guns at us, and everyone was saying their prayers. They were bidding goodbye to each other, thinking, 'This is it,' you know, 'This is how they're going to finish us off'. But then a high ranking officer came and he put his hand up and everyone downed their guns. The machine gunners went away and we were sent back to our homes. But when we got back to our homes, the homes were empty!

**Tape 2: 5 minutes 50 seconds**

Someone had been in there and just completely took everything that belonged to us. You see, remember, when they designated the ghetto part, they did allow us to take our stuff from our homes. Whatever we could carry, whatever we could manage. So we would take decent furniture and valuables and cooking implements and all sorts of things that you would rightfully claim as your own and take with you if you were told to move. But that was the intention of that action, that first incident, frightening us, yes, but also denuding us of all our property, all our valuables. Yeah. That's the first thing they did. But also, going back to my cousin. When she eventually was accepted as being who she was - not that she claimed to be, she didn't claim to be anybody, she just wanted to know who she was. She felt uncomfortable in the person that she was told she was. Nevertheless, having gone to Israel, met her stepfather and met her two half-brothers, who are wonderful people, they've been over to Poland to see her since, she then decided to go and live in Israel. And everyone was pleased for her and set her up with a job, a temporary place to live. But she didn't like it there. She was homesick. She had already married a professor at the university. She lived in... Actually what had happened was that her parents, who had adopted her, fearful of losing her, they moved from the Ukraine, right the way across Poland to a town called Toruń, which is in the middle of Poland. And during the war it was not touched by the Germans. It was...What's the word? It was a neutral part of Poland. And they felt safe. And they'd bring her up as a Christian, as a Catholic. And she was brought up as a Catholic. And she just had one son, sorry, one daughter, who's now a devout Catholic. Wonderful person. She's got about 6 children. But a devout Catholic.

**Tape 2: 8 minutes 40 seconds**

SW: And then one day, I had a peculiar phone call in Sutton when I was at home. And it was an Englishman from Yorkshire, and he said, 'Hello. My name's Colin Booth. You don't know me but I know your cousin. And I'm very much in love with her and I want to marry her'. So I thought, 'What the devil he is talking about?' So we agreed to meet. And he came down here and he started telling me that about 20 years ago he



met up with this beautiful girl and he fell in love with her. She was married at the time and he was married, so they couldn't do much about it. Except that whenever he went to Poland to work - he worked for a company that did a lot of work in the Soviet block - they would meet up and share acquaintanceship. And then one day, she divorced, no, she didn't divorce, she separated from her husband. Apparently, because he was always getting drunk. Not that he objected to... Because, by then, it came out that she was Jewish, and he had no scruples about that. He was a very nice chap actually, a gentleman, but he was always getting drunk, and he'd had couple of affairs with different women. I think eventually, though I didn't know that Catholics could divorce, but anyway, they divorced in the end. And, in the meantime, Colin separated from his wife and then he also divorced. And then he invited her to come and live in England, which she did. And they lived in a beautiful town called Howarth, which is Bronte country.

**Tape 2: 10 minutes 34 seconds**

SW: And eventually she set up a couple of rooms, which she let out for visitors to use as a bed and breakfast. He still had his job. He was very good at his job. He was in the textile industry. But again she felt lonely. Oh, and then they got married, and I was the best man. They got married in the registrar's office. She got lonely. She got more lonely for her daughter than anything else, because she doted on her daughter. They'd come over to England, so she'd spend time with all the children. So she went back to live in Poland but this time with her husband. And they bought a dilapidated old farmhouse, which they converted beautifully. Well, it's paradise where they live now. I've been there twice and visited them and they still want me to come as regularly as possible because they like my company, so I'm going there next year hopefully. But that's the situation with her. And she now belongs to a very big movement. They've got 20,000 members in Poland. And it's called... It's either called 'Hidden Children' or 'Children of the Holocaust'. That's it - 'Children of the Holocaust'. And these are all kids, who one way or another lost their parents, in some cases were similar to her, that they lost their parents and didn't get to find out till later that they were Jewish. So, yeah, I wish her all the best.

**Tape 2: 12 minutes 29 seconds**

YG: Going back to the second displaced persons camp that you and your family ended up in. Where was it? And could you tell me a bit more about how you got to England from there?

SW: The second was in Hofgeismar. And I remember that one well. I remember one or two incidents. One incident in that one - or was it Bytom? - I might be wrong - one woman committed suicide. I remember seeing her doing it, if my memory serves me right. She just jumped off a balcony. But the other thing I remember there is it's where I played football. There was a field there and we used to play football there. That's where I picked up my love for football. I belonged to yet another Zionist group. And then, when notification came through that my uncle had prepared a dwelling place for us and a job for my father, that we could come. And I remember going by train and then by boat. By ferry. It was the Harwich ferry. We went to Harwich. I remember that distinctly. And for the first 3 weeks we stayed with yet another cousin of mine, who also left Vienna round about the same time. He was a second cousin of mine. He had a ladies' costume shop on the Old Kent Road. And he

put us up in the attic, his attic, cause he'd got no other place to put us up, for 3 weeks, till eventually my uncle was able to purchase and get ready the house that we moved into in Nottingham. Yeah, I remember that quite distinctly.

**Tape 2: 14 minutes 34 seconds**

YG: Do you remember how you felt when you arrived at Harwich?

SW: Excited. Wondering what was going to happen next. Wondering if I would ever see my friends again. Because I made a lot of friends in Hofgeismar, and they weren't coming with me so I was wondering if I'd ever meet up with them. I still, to this day, would like to meet up with some people that I haven't seen in years and years.

YG: Where were they from, the other people?

SW: Well, they would have been from different parts of Europe where they were found. There were a lot of, as I remember, there were a lot of single people there who had lost relatives. They would talk about it. They would bemoan the fact that their loved ones were not with them. And I presume there were also young people of my age who didn't have any relatives at all. They survived and their parents had died. Yeah. That's the most I can remember.

YG: Did you speak any English when you came over?

SW: No, not at all. But I spoke good Polish and Yiddish. And I remember when I came to England for some reason or other. I wanted to forget, even then, I wanted to forget what had happened, to put it to the back of my mind, so I very quickly learned English. I was amazed; other people were amazed, at how quickly I learnt English. That within... I didn't pass my 11-Plus, because my English wasn't perfect enough, but I did pass my 13-Plus. So, when I was 13, I was already clever enough to go to grammar school. But what I did do is I forgot the Polish. Completely forgot the Polish. Which annoys my cousin because she came over here, and she tried to learn English. That's why she went back to Poland from England incidentally and certainly why she left Israel. Because she couldn't learn the new language. She never forgives me that I forgot my Polish because she can't speak to me properly. We have to speak through Colin who is the interpreter. So yes, I very quickly learnt English, but I forgot Polish all together.

**Tape 2: 17 minutes 12 seconds**

YG: How was it just being in the English school system?

SW: Oh, I loved it! Where we lived, there was a family that befriended us, both my parents and their parents and also me and their son and my brother. And we used to do things together. We used to go on adventures and go to the park together, and get into trouble together. And their son, I actually kept up that friendship for many, many years, after I bumped into him in the same place we worked. We worked for the council and he did one type of job and I was a civil engineer then, engineer-surveyor. But, in a sense, they were very helpful to integrating us. On the other side of the coin, on the non-Jewish side of the coin, because they certainly weren't interested in the

fact that we were Jewish. We were human beings. We were people. And I remember his father was a truant inspector. Don't have them now – a truant inspector. Very right wing. I remember that because one of the things is that, as a Zionist, or at least as a harutzig Zionist, I became more and more interested in Socialism and the left side of politics. And that was an anathema to him because... I remember him saying to me, 'Do you know what colour flag the labour party has?' And I said, 'No'. And he said, 'It's Red, and that's the same colour that the Communists have and they're horrible people, they're terrible people. You don't want to have anything to do with them.' So, in a sense, he was trying to indoctrinate me into his way.

**Tape 2: 19 minutes 19 seconds**

But I do remember that there was no problem about foreigners coming to live here. There were other people, who were not necessarily Jewish, who came from Europe, at school, who were foreigners, they had foreign names. Some of them didn't speak as good English as me. And they were well accepted in the school. I do remember that. The only thing was the Jewish jokes, which was part of the culture of Britain in those days, that you could tell Irish jokes, or Scottish jokes or Jewish jokes. You just had to learn to accept it. Except that I felt a little bit inhibited or upset by some of the jokes. But I didn't dare say so because it was the culture. So I wasn't going to... I wanted to get integrated in the culture. I wouldn't tell those same jokes but I'd turn a blind eye or ear.

YG: Were your family practicing Judaism?

SW: Yes. My parents were orthodox Jews. And we actually lived very close to the synagogue, very, very close to the first synagogue that I went to. It was just around the corner. So not only did we go regularly on a Shabbat to the synagogue but we'd be the nearest ones for a Minyan, if someone wanted to say Kaddish or something like that. But also my father was well integrated in the Jewish community. He never really held any high posts. A: because he was never one for taking on posts, responsibility. Incidentally, that was a thing about him. I do believe he was asked to sit on the Judenrat. I didn't mention the Judenrat. In the ghetto the Germans enforced a committee of Jews who would supervise the daily affairs of Jewish life in the ghetto. But they were hand-picked those people and their job was to delegate what people should do and shouldn't do. My father just refused to join them. He knew what they were up to and he refused to join them. And of course they wore uniforms. They had certain things about their uniform that made them stand out. And he always had this thing about never ever joining the police force. Never wear a uniform. Never take on a responsibility or authority. To him that was bad. That was an anathema. But what was I talking about before?

**Tape 2: 22 minutes 12 seconds**

YG: You were talking about your reception in this country.

SW: Yeah. The fact that my father wasn't going to join. He wasn't going to be the president or anything like that in the community. But one of the things he did, he left his job as a flour miller, and when he saved up enough money he bought a little shop, and he became a grocer, just around the corner from where we lived. So he had a grocery. You could say he was one of the first foreign corner shops. But the main part

of his...I mean his clientele were from anyone who was local and wanted to buy things from him. But he also had a corner which was kosher. So he would sell kosher food and, not because he had such a good selection of food or anything, but because they respected him, he had a good clientele of Jewish customers, who would come and buy his sausages, his kielbasa, and all the things he was used to when he was living in Radzivilov. And they would too because they remembered it. And he made quite a decent living at it. So decent that when he left to go to Israel he was able to sell up and make enough profit to get himself started in Israel, where he again bought a shop. It was a different kind of shop. It was a bookshop and a newsagents. It was a newsagents. And also buy a house. And it was his foresight...It doesn't matter but the thing is that he bought a flat in a nice area of Tel Aviv, for very little, but then we have the same situation here now. And when he died that house was worth a fortune. It was split 5 ways because it was bequeathed to myself and my brother, also my stepmother, Vitja, who was like a second mother to me. She had 2 sons and a daughter, so it went 5 ways. They still live in Israel, that's the two sons. She died before my father died. It upset him very much when she died. Oh, that's it! I've got it now. Where my father was born! He was born in a town called Kremenets, which was more Russian then. And he was in the same class as my second mother. They were classmates together! So when he went to Israel or when he found out, that's after my mother died. And her husband died in a concentration camp also. They finished up in Belgium and from Belgium they went to one of the concentration camps. She and her three children survived. They went to southern France and they hid. They were hidden as well. And she came over to Israel. And... But where was that coming from? Yeah, so they married when they found that...where they lived. He discovered that this was the woman that... He actually was in love with her before she married her husband and he knew her husband because they were in the same class together. They had a little rivalry going on between them for her hand. Sadly, he got her hand, but not in the right circumstances. Anyway, she died about 5 or 10 years before he died. So it was very sad. In fact, that was the first time that I noticed that he was starting to get a little bit of dementia.

**Tape 2: 26 minutes 50 seconds**

YG: How old was he when he died?

SW: He was 80. 84. 84.

YG: When was that?

SW: That would be '86. He was born in '02, 1902, so that would be 1986.

YG: Can you say a bit more about what kind of person your mother was?

SW: Well, as I say, she and I didn't always get on with each other, but I forgive her for that and I hope she forgives me. Because of her circumstances. First of all, she was ill, she was always ill. She suffered from asthma-bronchitis and it was getting worse. And it was getting worse. It was chronic and it was getting worse. Sometimes she would chide me or disagree with me when I didn't deserve to be chided or I didn't deserve punishment. And I would argue with her and I would resent that. But now, on reflection, I can see it was not just the fact that I'd done anything wrong, but it was

her circumstances that made her like that. But, having said that, she was a wonderful mother. I can only see that we survived because of her ability to nurture us. She was a wonderful cook. A wonderful provider. Good at embroidery. Good at keeping house. She was a typical Jewish Momma. And she was a brilliant pianist. She played the piano. In fact, I remember once, she got acquainted with this woman who, they used to come to my house, because there was a piano in the house. Not every house had a piano in those days. And they'd play duets or they'd play tunes together. And this woman would, I'll never forget, she said that, obviously true, why should she tell a lie? She was a student of a student of Liszt. That was her big claim to fame. That she was a student of a student of Liszt. So, yes, my mother was a good musician. But she had a chip on her shoulder. She had this memory of what had happened to us and why should it have happened to us. In any case, I think that she came from a higher class than my father and she felt that the world had done her a tremendous injustice. A: That we were confronted with this evil that nearly killed us. But now that it's not killed us, now that we're free from it, she wanted to get back to the way it was, you know, the way that she was used to, and it just wasn't to be. It wasn't so easy. Because mainly of her health. She suffered the asthma-bronchitis. She tried all kinds of cures and went to Switzerland a couple of times. But in the end she died.

**Tape 2: 30 minutes 25 seconds**

YG: How old was she?

SW: She would be 56, no, she'd be 54. Between 54 and 56, something like that. Either she died in '54 and she was 56 or she died in '56 and she was 54. I'd have to check that out.

YG: So you were at school at the time?

SW: I was 16 then. I do remember that. I was at school. I remember her dying. I had a phone call from the hospital, the nursing home where she was staying at the time, they said, 'You'll have to come quickly.' That night was a very foggy night, there were no buses, so I had to walk it. And I had just about got to see her and hear her last sounds and then the nurses, I remember, moved me away and told me to go to another room. And one of them came and said she died. I remember having to walk all the way back in the fog too. That was it. I lost my mother.

YG: How did your father take it?

SW: Oh, he took it very badly. He took it very badly because she was his rock. Both before the war and during the war. They were always at loggerheads and always quarrelling in England, I do remember that, but again that was down to my mother's inability to accept situations that were beyond her control, beyond our control. But as a person and obviously as a wife he felt it very, very badly. He still, even when I went over to Israel, he cried a lot. He was a very emotional person in that sense. As he did when his second wife died too.

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 47 seconds**

YG: And how did you carry on with your schooling after that?

SW: School? After my mother died? It was interesting that because I was due to take the... Maybe I was older than that. I can't remember. I know that I used that as an excuse for failing my exams to go to university. In those days you had to take 3 A-levels to get to university. And I had taken my mock. You take your mock in the winter, in December, and if you passed those, you'd got into university. But you've got to pass the actual exams as well. I was accepted at both Nottingham and Leeds. I opted for Nottingham because it was closer. And then I failed all my exams. And I don't know, to this day I still blame the fact that I was depressed and didn't give it my best during the exams and that's why I failed. But having done that I could have stayed another... re-sat them in December or January, but I didn't because in those days there was National Service. And I knew I'd have to do it some time or other, so I decided, 'Well let's finish with all that. I've had enough of education. Let's do something different.' And I didn't sign up to the Army but I agreed to do my National Service. Yeah. That's another thing I remember. She couldn't have died yet, because they wanted to send me to Shape because of my language skills. Imagine that – language skills! I was speaking French, Hebrew, and English. Anyway, they wanted in Shape, which is the NATO headquarters. But because of my mother's ill health, or perhaps what happened to her, I claimed compassionate leave. I didn't want to go to France because it was too far away. So what did they do? They sent me off to Scotland, which is 3 times as far away as Paris would have been. Anyway, I went up to Scotland and I did my National Service. Had a wonderful time. It was my passage... What do you call it?

**Tape 2: 35 minutes 40 seconds**

YG: Rite of passage?

SW: Rite of passage. It was my rite of passage, because I'd never done anything like that before. I was now free of my father and authority of that kind, my immediate family authority. I know I had a different kind of lifestyle but that wasn't so bad. Basic training was a bit tough but I got over that. And then it was mates and going for booze and playing football and cricket. And I did quite well in those. I played for the regiment. And a sense of fulfilment. There was something. I suppose at the back of me was still this idea that I wasn't really British. But now I've joined the army, I am British, you know? I'm a soldier. I'm a British Soldier! So there you are. That's proof that I've been accepted.

YG: Was that in the late '50s?

SW: That would be in '58-'60. And incidentally, they abolished National Service halfway that I was in there. So had I decided to re-sit my exam and not gone till next year, I wouldn't even have been called up, so I could have saved myself two years. But I'm glad I didn't because I found it a very exhilarating and fulfilling two years.

YG: And you didn't find any kind prejudice or discrimination?

**Tape 2: 37 minutes 14 seconds**

SW: Yeah. Yeah, there was one incident, if you'd like me to... The very first incident. I suppose to some extent that's why I kept quiet about it and it wasn't necessary for me to come out. When you did your basic training, you were in a billet with about 20 other recruits. And you've got a locker. On your locker you had to write down 3 things: your name, your number and your religion. So, I put Jewish. And there were one or two of them, who taunted me about it. And, in the middle of the night, you'd be trying to go to sleep, and they were cracking rude jokes and deliberately trying to provoke me. And I felt very bad about it. I felt ashamed and I felt angry. So then I did something that's proved to be a... I don't know. I challenged one of them. Not the toughest one, I remember. 'Cause I was a boxer as well. Yeah, I was a boxer at school, quite a good boxer. And I remember joining the boxing club in the army but going into a fight, into a championship fight, and getting knocked out, knocked silly, and telling myself, 'Don't do that ever again.' It was just a mug's game. But, anyway, I challenged one of those lads, who were taunting me, to a fight. And I beat him. I felt good about it. The others left me alone. And the amazing thing is that this lad who taunted me most of all, he came and, well, no, he didn't apologise, but he was my friend. He was one of my best friends for the rest of the time in basic training. So that was the only incident and, as I say, other than that I never opened up about it. I didn't need to. No one asked me. I didn't have to write my religion on any lockers or anything.

YG: You didn't want to share it with anyone?

SW: I didn't have any cause to share it. If I was at home, non-Jewish people knew me and they knew I was Jewish. My Jewish friends knew I was Jewish and I was quite happy to be open with them and discuss Jewish things. But I didn't need to discuss Jewish things with... I certainly never, not even with my Jewish friends, discussed my plight during the war. That is something that confounds me. Was I ashamed of it? Probably so. Did I have any inhibitions? Yes, of course I did. Did I want to forget it? Possibly. But what was it that brought it out now? Because I'm doing a lot of work, giving up a lot of time and money towards these projects that I've mentioned earlier - Beth Shalom and the Aegis Centre. Because suddenly I found that somebody somewhere not only was interested in my story but was prepared to do something about it, i.e. let others know of our plight and also to do something about preventing it, to change this crazy world from the way it is.

## **Tape 2: 41 minutes 13 seconds**

YG: Was there a dawning realisation that came as you got older or was there a particular incident?

SW: What? The realisation that what?

YG: That you wanted to change things?

SW: Well, I didn't think I could change things. I don't know even now to what extent I can change things. But there is a window of opportunity through Beth Shalom and if I can put my input into it, if they want me to put my input in it, I'll certainly do so. Because I don't want it to happen again. I don't want anyone to suffer in the way that we suffered, for no other reason than that a little man with a moustache decided that

he didn't like us. What would have happened if someone suddenly decided that he didn't like people with red hair? All red-haired people would be persecuted for the no reason. He had no actual reason. All the reasons that he gives that are now regurgitated, are just false ones- the fact that Jews want to rule the world, that the Jews were scrounging, that the Jew is an ethnic failure, that he's inferior, that you don't want to breed or have Jewish blood in you because they're not so strong. Nonsense! I mean, that's ridiculous. Same as it is the other way around - that Jews are the chosen people, that Jews are so intelligent. Look at all the famous scientists, etcetera. But this is an individual thing. If you don't like a person's opinion, you don't share it with them, you don't have to go out and kill them for it. If you feel that you've done something that's worth doing then, good, pursue it again, do it again. You don't have to claim it as your own because other people are also trying to do good. We live in a global society. We live in a global world. In that sense, I've got strong feelings about things like international socialism. You have to be very careful when you use the word 'socialism'. Because for some people it means Stalinist...what's the word? Totalitarianism. It's not that at all. Socialism means doing things together and having some fairness about the way that they do it. In a non-oppressive way. And Internationalism. Because why should there be borders? Why shouldn't people be allowed to work and live where they want to? Because it's our world. It's not just sectioned off to certain groups of people. Of course, something that you have to be very wary of, and they spring up every now and again - through Hitler, Stalin - is people who want to rule the world, people who want to change the world the way that they feel that it should be. And because they feel they are right, any opposition is suppressed because it's wrong. That's what totalitarianism is. So I'm for anything that contributes towards those three things: Socialism, correct Socialism; Internationalism, and the avoidance, the abolition, of totalitarianism, is what my philosophy is.

### **Tape 2: 45 minutes 34 seconds**

YG: Do you think that anything about being Jewish has shaped your views?

SW: It might have done, but only accidentally. It might have been because, I suppose in a sense, you know, I sometimes question, 'Why am I Jewish? Why do I want to be Jewish when I've got all these thoughts and ideas?' Especially now - I've not rejected God, but I don't really know who God is. Because he's never presented himself to me. And what other people tell me what he says and does and what he wants me to do is nonsense because that's just them talking. What was the question again?

YG: It was about your Jewish identity and how it integrates...

SW: The fact is I could quite have easily decided, 'Why be Jewish?' I don't want to be another religion. That's for sure. I'm a humanist, but that's not really a religion. But because of what happened to us. Precisely because of what happened to us. I don't know, I suppose because there might be some reason, there might be something valuable in who we are, and someone wanted to get rid of it, I want to be a Jew. I'm determined to stay a Jew. It's my history. It's my ethnicity. It's my background. And I don't see why I should have to change that. But I'm not going to make any further claims than that. I don't want the whole world to become Jewish and I don't want to make claims about being Jewish that are not true. But I certainly don't want people to



hate me because I am Jewish, whatever the reason. Remember that Hitler and Nazi Germany, they condemned Jews just simply for being Jews. Not for what they'd done or said. And they weeded them out deliberately with a lot of hard work and calculation, even if they were hiding under assumed names, even if they were partly Jewish, even if their grandparents were Jewish. They just wanted to get rid of a certain trait. He felt that that was the way forward. What a terrible idea or terrible thought that he had. The fact is that he was able to manifest his idea. And we gave him permission to do so – that's the German people gave him permission. The average German. Remember, before Hitler a great vast majority of people were socialist and they were certainly against the right wing element who were trying to rule the roost. But he was a manipulative person and he was able, in his own way, to gain power. But even when he gained power, there should have been enough pressure on him to get rid of him. If enough people were prepared to do something about it, but they weren't. They were prepared either to go along with it because it suited their cause and they were given bribes of position etc., or because they were frightened, or finally, this is the most important thing of all, because they were apathetic. They were the sort of people who were, I suppose the kindest thing you could say about them, is the ones who don't vote in an election. But the harshest thing is the ones who turn a blind eye when people are being kicked and beaten up in the street and they don't even tell the police. And there were lots of those, and those are the ones that need to feel ashamed and that they did wrong. They could have got rid of Hitler before he did as much as he did.

**Tape 2: 49 minutes 40 seconds**

YG: Going back to your professional life, what happened after your National Service and how did you train?

SW: After National Service, I had... Oh, my step brother! He was a civil engineer and he was a good civil engineer. He's done quite well for himself, even now. And I got the notion that I wanted to do civil engineering. So I enrolled in a part-time course and I joined a company called Wimpey. They build houses, but they build a lot more than houses. For 2 years, I worked for Wimpey as a civil engineer, as a trainee civil engineer. And then I left Wimpey and I joined the Basford District Council, which is a local council, which is not existent at the moment, and I was in the engineer-surveyor's office as an engineer-surveyor. And I worked there for 2 years. Something was holding me back. I wasn't passing the exams. I think I'd got the ordinary national but I wasn't able to get past, it was either the electricity element or the chemistry element. But I kept failing my exams. And I got a bit fed up with it. I wasn't getting any higher, I was just stuck in the lowest echelons of civil engineering and I wanted to go further. And then I met a friend who was a school teacher and he... Oh, when my father left, I was left the house to myself. It was a big Victorian 3-storey house with lots of rooms, but it only had about 4 years left on the lease, but it was mine. And I didn't need it at all, so I let it out to people.

**Tape 2: 51 minutes 44 seconds**

YG: When did your father go to Israel?

SW: He went... Well, I'd have been about 22, so 22, add 40. In the '60s. In the early '60s. And one of the people I let the house to was this teacher. And we became very good friends. And he always enthused about his work. And he enticed me to... Oh, at the time there was a big demand for teachers. So I enrolled in a college, a teacher training college, did 3 years, got my teacher training qualification and became a teacher. My main subject was maths, although later on I did a DipEd Diploma in Special Needs. So then I worked in Special Needs. I worked for about 25 years as a teacher, took early retirement when there wasn't a need for teachers, they wanted to get rid of teachers, and there was a very enticing offer made that I couldn't refuse. So I retired when I was 55. Then when there was a demand for teachers, I went back to do supply work. That's part-time work as a teacher. And I'm doing that to this day. Doing work as a supply teacher.

YG: Do you still enjoy it?

SW: Oh yes, I enjoy it. I wouldn't be doing it. I don't need the money. That's not the main reason. In fact, it's very difficult, especially new schools, because the children are a little bit more hyperactive, to put it mildly. And every time you go to a new school, you've got to start all over again acquainting yourself to the kids and them to you. So I've had enough of all that. But there are about 3 schools that still take me on board and whenever they send out for me, I'll work for them. And there's one such case now.

YG: Is there anything you'd like to say to people watching this film, something you'd like them to take away with them?

SW: Yeah, well, I've really said it during the interview, during the conversation that I've had. But to emphasise it even more at the end, so that the point comes through. I mean, why am I doing this interview? Because I'm a refugee. Why was I a refugee? Because at some time or another I had no country that would accept me. How did this come about? It came about because of the suppression and repression of Jews by a horrible man and a group of his gangsters called Nazis. So my message is: Don't allow another Hitler to do what he did. Two reasons: first of all, because he might succeed next time and then you'll be the victim, not just me; the other reason is because he did a lot of nasty things to people, which could have been avoided. So whenever you're confronted with a situation where someone is about to want to rule the world and subjugate you to his world, stop him. The other thing is that there are still little Hitlers about and there are still situations, which are not necessarily due to genocide or totalitarianism, where people have grievances, which cause them to have to leave their country, otherwise they die. So they become refugees. Not to be confused with economic refugees, which is something else. But they are refugees. They are victims of a severe government, which doesn't approve of them having free thoughts. Give them an opportunity to live. And if it means making room for them in this country or another country, so be it. There is room. And who knows, they might have qualities that will benefit this country and yourself. So don't go calling names and adding fodder to the papers that tell you that we're swarmed by immigrants and we should do something about it, 'Rivers of blood', and all the other things. Examine who it is that wants to come to this country. Ask yourself, have you got the ability or the facilities to let them come here and could they possibly be of benefit to us. And if

all these things are positive, then do something about it, and prevent other people from doing the opposite.

YG: Thank you very much. End of Tape Two. And we'll now have a look at some items of special value to you from your past. Documents and pictures.

**Tape 2: 57 minutes 31 seconds**

**End of Tape Two.**

**TAPE 3**

**Photos and Documents**

**Tape 3: 0 minute 21 seconds**

**Photo 1**

YG: Now this looks like a family grouping. Would you like to tell us who the people are in it?

SW: Yes, the top left hand large photograph has my father on the top left hand side, his brother on the top right hand side; in the middle, right in the middle, is his sister, and I believe on the right hand side of her, or on her left hand side, but our right hand side, is his mother.

YG: Could you tell us their names?

SW: No.

YG: That's all right. What year was that taken?

SW: That would have been taken... I don't know what year, but my father I think was between 20 and 30 there. So that would make it between 1920 and 1930. Yes, between 1920 and 1930.

YG: So that was before you were born?

SW: Yeah. Because he wasn't married. The picture immediately to the right, the two pictures, is my father and my mother after the war, already in Britain, I think they were taken, those two photographs. The one at the bottom right hand corner – the larger one - that is my mother and her mother, my grandmother. The chap with the sword is my uncle, which is my mother's brother. He's the one who came to live in England before the war. She would be about, again, about the same year, the same age, and therefore it would be between 1920 and 1930.

**Photo2**

YG: So this looks like maybe your mother and her mother in the photograph?

SW: Yes, that's my mother on the left hand side, leaning on my grandmother. And the chap with the sword is my uncle, that's her brother, the one who came to England in about 1939.

YG: And what was his name?

SW: Salor Goldenstein.

YG: And did he change his name?

SW: Yes, he changed his name to Bendor eventually. He was still Goldenstein for quite a while here. But I don't know, for one reason or another. Probably because even Goldenstein is a German name. Weinstein is a German name. Why not have a good old Hebrew name like Bendor?

### **Tape 3: 3 minutes 7 seconds**

#### **Photo 3**

SW: That picture of myself and my brother, that was taken shortly after the war and it's the picture that was used, probably because of the startled looks on our faces, as the model for the sculpture that I commissioned for Beth Shalom recently.

#### **Photo 4**

YG: Was this an impromptu lesson?

SW: I'm trying to think. This is in one of the DP camps. It's either Bytom or Hofgeismar. I think it's Hofgeismar. And it's a class, obviously a class. There is a teacher in the middle, who I do remember. And myself and my brother are at the bottom, sort of leaning on the floor. I'm on the right hand side, extreme right hand side. My brother is the third one from the left.

#### **Photo 5**

YG: So this is one of the youth groups you belonged to?

SW: Yes, that would be Betar and that's definitely Hofgeismar. It's a very right wing Zionist group. And we went camping. That was one of the things we did, we went camping. Very strong on uniform. And I'm on the left hand side next to the madrich, the guy who looks like a Nazi Gauleiter. And my brother is on the extreme right, standing, looking rather embarrassed.

### **Tape 3: 4 minutes 53 seconds**

#### **Photo 6**

YG: Who's this little crew?

SW: That is my friends. Remember I mentioned a family that befriended us immediately we came to England? That's them. The chappie in the middle is Jim Rugsdale, that's his mother at the back, and his grandmother, who died when she was over 100. I am on the left hand side and my brother is on the right hand side. I'm very grateful to that family for giving us their friendship.

YG: Are you still in touch with their children?

SW: No. The last time I remember about 20, no about 15 years ago, I got in touch with Jim and he was a high powered council – he worked for the council, like a town clerk, in the Derbyshire area.

**Photo 7**

SW: That is my father's certificate of naturalisation, which he got after being in England for 5 years.

**Photo 8**

SW: This is the Oath of Allegiance. It's something which was necessary then. It's only just recently been reintroduced in this country. And it also includes my name and my brother's name. It gives both our former names too.

**Tape 3: 6 minutes 38 seconds**

**Photo 9**

SW: This is a picture of the synagogue in Radzivilov as it is today. And below is the synagogue plaque, a plaque that denotes exactly what the building is. The reason why this is important is that it's only recently, in the last year or two, that we've been given permission to do that and also to erect a memorial garden, a memorial place where what happened in Radzivilov can be remembered. That's the next picture.

**Photo 10**

SW: Also we were given permission to build, on the site of the burial grounds of the mass executions, a memorial site. Somewhere that people could go to and visit and remember what happened. The top left hand picture will show you some stumps, some tree stumps. It was in the forest, but it was open land when they buried the people there, but they grew some trees on top of it. So we've been given permission to chop the trees down. On the right hand side is the walk way to a rather large wall, which lists words of sadness. And when we had meetings - we regularly have meetings in Tel Aviv to remember and acquaint ourselves yearly - someone suggested writing all the names of the people who died there and that might well be considered. And that place is there now. It's also being protected by the government, presumably by the government, because they've made it a site for tourism. In other words, people will be invited to go visit the Radzivilov Jewish Memorial Site in future.

**Tape 3: 9 minutes 33 seconds**

**Photo 11**

SW: This is the book published by Beth Shalom, 'Survival: Holocaust Survivors Tell Their Story'. It includes 49 accounts by survivors who are involved with Beth Shalom. Very nicely presented. And it was launched at the War Rooms, Winston Churchill's old war rooms, which is now an exhibition centre, in London, last year. I am actually the last entrance. My chapter is the last entrance because it's done alphabetically and my picture is on the bottom right hand corner.

**Photo 12**

SW: When I commissioned the sculpture and when I went for the unveiling of the sculpture, there were quite a few people, there were about 150 people, but also members of the press, which included the Nottingham Evening Press, which is a very

reputable, very good paper. And the following day, they issued this on page 3, which I was absolutely delighted with.

**Tape 3: 11 minutes 7 seconds**

**Photo 13**

SW: After the first article in the newspaper, the reporter phoned me up and asked if he could do a follow-up. And I was surprised. I said, 'You've already done a good job on the first article'. He said, 'No, it's a good story, can you do a follow up?' So, over the phone, we talked and I told him my life story more or less. And he was somehow able to amass this wonderful 2-page article in the same newspaper. It includes a map, it includes a picture of - actually it's a concentration camp in Germany, it's not Radzivilov, but it's something similar to what we might have experienced. And, yes, I was grateful to this article too.

**Photo 14**

SW: I'm very, very impressed and I've got a lot of time for the Beth Shalom project. Beth Shalom is a Holocaust Memorial and education centre in Nottinghamshire. And they have done wonderful things to remember and to educate people about the Holocaust. But also they've gone further. They wanted to use that experience as genuinely as possible - as politely as possible - to educate people, and to try to ensure that the Holocaust is not repeated. To that end, they've opened a new part, a new element, with new buildings, called the Aegis Complex, the Aegis Project, part of which has produced an education pack, which is full of booklets and videos, called 'Refuge'. It's The Refuge Project. In it, refugees from different parts of the world, for different reasons, who've had to flee and find accommodation and refuge somewhere else, have told their stories to school children, to school pupils, who have recorded their stories in various forms and produced, in my case, this booklet.

**Tape 3: 13 minutes 56 seconds**

**End of Tape Three.**