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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Mosbacher
<b>Forename:</b>	Renee
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	18 May 1929
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Vienna, Austria

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<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Rosalyn Livshin
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**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

**INTERVIEW: 47**

**NAME: RENEE MOSBACHER**

**DATE: 29 JANUARY 2004**

**LOCATION: SALFORD, MANCHESTER**

**INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN**

**TAPE 1**

RL: I am interviewing Renee Mosbacher and today's date is Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004. The interview is taking place in Salford, Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

Ok, so if you can tell me first your name.

RM: My name is Renee Mosbacher.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

RM: My name was Brainin, it was pronounced Brynin, when we came to England it seemed to automatically change to Brainin.

RL: Did you have any nicknames?

RM: Well my name is Renee, so I was called Renkele, Renayli, Renny anything but Renee.

RL: Do you have a Hebrew name?

RM: My, not a Hebrew name as such, it is Roizel, it is a Yiddish, what they call a Yiddishe name.

RL: Were you named after anybody?

RM: I was named after my mother, my grandmother from my mother's side.

RL: And where were you born?

RM: I was born in Vienna.

**Tape 1: 1 minute 34 seconds**

RL: And the date?

RM: The date was 18<sup>th</sup> May 1929. I have, I still have my birth certificate from Vienna, which is quite different, it was given out by the Judische Kultures Gemeinde. Births and deaths and everything, marriages, were through the Judische Kultures Gemeinde which was like an umbrella organisation for all the Jews.

RL: Ok, so your parents, if you tell me their names and where they were born.

RM: My father's name was Avroham Moshe, they used to call him, and he was born in Lyady, it was always said. They always said it was in Russia, whether it was in Lithuania I am not sure but it is actually the birthplace of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, which is a very famous little village, Lyady, but we weren't Lubavitchers.

My mother's name was Sophie, her Yiddishe name was Zeissel, and she was born in Poland. I am not sure if it was Krakow or Tarnov, I just don't know.

RL: What was her maiden name?

RM: Her maiden name was Guttenberg.

RL: Now, if we concentrate first on your father's family and if you can tell me what you know about his family and his parents and siblings.

RM: My father was the eldest of five children. He and my uncle came over before the First World War from Russia to Vienna, and they worked very, very hard. They were interned during the First World War in Vienna, they worked very, very hard afterwards to save money and to bring their siblings, their parents and their siblings over. I don't really know all that much about my grandparents, I only remember my grandmother, and she, when I remember she was already in her seventies and she died in 1936, of cancer unfortunately.

RL: Do you know what your grandfather did for a living?

RM: No. I don't know. As I say, I have no idea.

RL: Do you know why your father chose to come to Vienna?

RM: They came to Vienna because of the difficult situation in Russia for Jews at the time, and I suppose they wanted to better themselves as well, which they did ...

RL: But why ...

**Tape 1: 4 minutes 33 seconds**

RM: My father actually had to leave in a hurry, he was a bit of a socialist, he had to get away quick, and he managed to get to the border where he was caught actually, and the guard there opened up his bag, and when he opened it up and he found his tallis and tefillin in there. He quickly closed it again and said, "Quick, get away." He must have been Jewish, that is all I can say, that is the famous story that his tallis and tefillin actually saved his life, yes, and that is how he managed to get to Vienna.

RL: Do you think he might have known people in Vienna? I mean, why he chose Vienna as opposed to another city or another country?

RM: I am not quite sure. I had a great uncle, my grandfathers brother who was quite a famous person actually, he was Reuven, his name was Reuven Brainin, he was a journalist, a writer, and he went to, he was in St Petersburg and from St Petersburg he went to, all over the place, to Canada, and he eventually settled in Canada, and he had twelve children. In fact, in Montreal, there is a, in the library, in the town library, there is a room which is donated completely to Reuven Brainin's works or his writings and books and things. He also, in Israel, in the archives, a lot of his things are there, he is Weizmann, no not Weizmann, Herzl, he used to correspond with Herzl and then he had, there was a break with them, you know with the Zionists, and he broke with him and then the friendship finished, you know there was a whole, I am not quite sure what happened there, but at one time I was in Israel I went to the archives and when I said I was Reuven Brainin's great niece they brought the red carpet out and they came, went into the archives and brought out all sorts of letters and different things and were telling me all sorts of things, in fact they tell me in Tel Aviv I believe there is a street named after him.

So maybe there was an other uncle, Isaac Brainin, who lived in Vienna at the time, possibly, he was a sculptor, he used to make statues and things actually, he was quite artistic, the family ...

RL: So this was an uncle of your fathers?

RM: These were two of my father's uncles, yes.

RL: So your grandfather's brothers?

RM: Yes.

RL: Was your grandfather from a large family? Do you know anything else about your grandfather's family?

RM: Actually, do you know, I am just thinking now, I have somewhere a family tree and I can't think where it is. There is still some family in Russia, there is some family in

South Africa who I tried to contact when I was there once. There is a big, big Brainin family in America, there was in Montreal and in New York, and there was

**Tape 1: 8 minute 6 seconds**

quite a famous journalist, Joe Brainin in New York, he was quite well known, he was the son of Reuven Brainin.

RL: So you said there was an uncle who had already moved to Vienna ...

RM: I think he moved before, yes, it could have been Uncle Izak and Tante Melly, they had two sons and they moved to America eventually. I don't know very much else about them.

RL: When your father came to Vienna what work did he go into?

RM: Anything they could find, they used to build stoves, now on the continent in order to heat an apartment or a house in the corner of the room they used to have these tiled, big tiled oven stoves that used to heat if it was in the corner, there were pipes going into the other room, perhaps they used to heat two or three rooms at the same time, and they used to build those. Anything they could find in order to save money, my father and my uncle.

Eventually they, after the First World War they started dealing in furs, they started making up fur gloves, fur hats, fur scarves, collars, and that is how they got slowly into the fur trade. And they opened up a little shop. They used to have the workroom upstairs and the shop downstairs. And then eventually in the early thirties, end of the twenties, early thirties, they opened up a business in the best part of Vienna called the Bauenmarkt.

RL: Where was their first shop?

RM: Their first shop was in a small street called the, in the second district, Leopold Stadt, which was called Die Matzasinsel, all the Jews lived there. I am just trying to think of the name, Glockengasse, that's right. It was where my uncles lived and across the road they had the shop and workshop. It was called Glockengasse.

RL: And then you say they moved ... ?

RM: They moved then to the city, Erste Bezirk, which was the, like a Bond Street in London, and they had a very good business there.

RL: What happened to his other siblings? What did they do?

RM: My father? Well they all went into the family business, when they, when they bought them over they all went automatically they went into the family business, even his sister, my auntie, she also helped in the business. It was a family furriers.

RL: Did it have a name?

**Tape 1: 11 minutes 31 seconds**

RM: Yes. Gebrude Brainin, which eventually went into Brainin Brothers.

RL: What kind of education did your father have? Would you know?

RM: Just a Jewish education. That is all. In Russia there wasn't proper school, they just went to Cheder classes. My father, my uncle, I don't remember my father at all, my father died before my second birthday.

RL: Do you know what kind of religious upbringing he would have had?

RM: It wasn't ultra orthodox. It wasn't what you would call Haredi these days, but it was quite a strict, fairly strict orthodoxy, because everybody kept to the same thing there, in Russia. I was bought up, how shall I say, what you would nowadays call perhaps conservative, you know ... unfortunately when we came to London a lot of things fell by the way, we kept the trimmings, trappings, without the essence what I would call. We went to Shul, we kept all the Yom Tovim, we knew about Shabbos, we went to Shul on Shabbos, on Yom Tov, everything, my mother lit candles on Friday night, we never went out on a Friday night, but the essence, what I would call nowadays the essence wasn't there, and that worried me, it always worried me. And cheder classes during the war in England weren't very, weren't up to much, we had a very, very sparse Jewish education, it was really what I knew from my uncle and my auntie.

RL: Just coming back to Vienna, we will come back onto that later.

RM: I am sorry, sorry ... if that ..

RL: It's fine. With regard to, we have spoken about your father's family, do you remember his mother? Because you said that he bought over ...

RM: Yes, I remember my grandmother, my father's mother. She was an elderly lady, I loved her very, very much and she couldn't speak German all that well, she spoke Yiddish, I used to go and visit her with my mother very frequently. I used to sew little tray cloths and little things and embroider and I used to take her little presents. I remember going once and my mother took something, I wrote something in school and my mother took it to show my grandmother and I remember her taking it to the window and having a look at it and saying, "Oh, how clever." She couldn't get over it that, I was always very special to her, because I was the youngest child of her eldest son who had died. He wasn't ... you know, sort of, I think she always had a special feeling in her heart because of that. I don't remember my father at all. I have no remembrance of him.

RL: How old was he when he died?

RM: He was 41.

**Tape 1: 15 minutes 12 seconds**

RL: And what did he die of?

RM: Peritonitis. He went in for an appendix operation and his appendix burst, and not having any antibiotics or anything like that, penicillin, there was nothing much they could do. He died I think a couple of days after the operation, that was a week before my second birthday. My mother was left with three children.

RL: Now coming onto your mother's family, if can you tell me something about her background?

RM: Nothing at all. I have no, I don't know, I never saw my grandparents, I think they had already died by the time I was born. All I know is that I haven't even got a photograph of my grandfather on my mother's side. I have seen photographs of my grandmother from my mother's side who I was named after. I know my mother had a brother who I never met, who lived in Poland, I haven't got the faintest idea of my mother's family whatsoever. There were cousins, yes, who, but exactly how they were related I don't know.

RL: How did your mother come to Vienna?

RM: My auntie actually. My mother had a cousin who was also called Sophie, her maiden name was Hacker, that was a first cousin, how exactly they were related as first cousins I really don't know. And she was, she went to Vienna first, there were also other cousins there, I don't know exactly how they were, relationship. They all came from Poland and my mother eventually joined, came over, and they happened to marry two brothers. So my auntie who was a cousin turned out to be my auntie.

RL: Do you know how your mother met your father?

RM: No, I don't, I think it was an introduction.

RL: And when did they marry?

RM: They married in 1922. I am not quite sure of the date.

RL: Had your mother worked at all before marriage?

RM: I think she worked in an office, yes, as a secretary?

RL: And do you know what kind of education she had?



RM: I have no idea.

RL: Did she ever speak about her past at all?

**Tape 1: 18 minutes 16 seconds**

RM: I was a very little girl when my mother died so I really don't know. As I say my mother was widowed when I, just before my second birthday and she died when I was eight years old, so I really truly I can't say I had a proper relationship with my mother, I was too young for that still.

RL: As far as you know did she just have the one brother?

RM: Yes, yes. That I know definitely, there were other children but they didn't survive their childhood.

RL: And how old was your mother when she died?

RM: 39.

RL: And what did she die of?

RM: Influenza. Yes, that was in 1938, January 12<sup>th</sup> 1938. The Yahrzeit is just coming up now, the Hebrew date was 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> of Shvat.

RL: Where were you living in those first eight years? Where was your home?

RM: Well, while I was, when my mother was alive I lived in Vienna in a little street called Konradgasse 3

RL: And what part of ... ?

RM: Also in the second district, Leopold Stadt. And then when my mother died, the day that my mother died I just went to stay with my aunt and uncle, that is my father's brother and his wife, who was also my mother's first cousin. So they actually brought me up. We were very close always and I went to live with them, and they had four children, so with my cousins I grew up as if they were my siblings.

RL: And where did they live?

RM: They also lived in Zweiten Bezirk in Glockengasse and we lived, I lived there until we came away.

RL: First of all, your first home, do you remember that?

RM: Oh yes.

RL: Can you describe it?

**Tape 1: 20 minutes 36 seconds**

RM: Well, apartments, we lived on the fourth floor, apartments are completely different to what they are here, the rooms are quite big actually. And where one slept and where one lived wasn't separated, sort of really, the kinder zimmer, where everything happened, you ate there, the children slept there, I mean I had to fall asleep in the corner of the room and people were there, sort of, whether it was noise or not, I just had to go to bed and that was it. We had a kinder zimmer and then there was my mother's bedroom which was during the day was like a salon, and then there was a dining room and then there was what you call a half room, which was my mother used to sit in there, she used to have books in there, she used to do her sewing in there very often. And that was, you could go from one room to the other, there were double doors leading from one room to the other, it was like a little semi circle, and then there was a long corridor next to them that led down to the kitchen, and off that corridor was the entrance hall to the apartment and at the end of that entrance hall was a bathroom and off that bathroom was the maid's room. It was quite a bit apartment actually.

RL: And this was on the fourth floor?

RM: On the fourth floor, no lift.

RL: And your neighbours, were they Jewish families or non Jewish families?

RM: Mixed, mixed. We had next to our apartment a very orthodox Jewish family, and I was very friendly with their little boy, whose room was next to where my bed was and we used to knock on the wall and sort of, you know, have contact that way in the evenings and at night time and I used to go in there quite a lot and play. And you know I don't remember the name. Underneath there was another family, another Jewish family, under our family on the third floor below us was a family called Shechter, a family of boys, there was about three or four boys and I remember meeting one once actually in London, when the family came to London. The other I really don't know the other neighbours, only those two.

RL: And what siblings did you have?

RM: I had two older brothers.

RL: And what were they called and when were they born?

RM: Norbert, he was born in 1923, and Hugo, he was born, oh, 18 months later, 23, oh gosh, 24 or 25, not quite sure, I always have to work it out, I know he is four and a half years older than me.

RL: After your father died, how did you mother manage financially, did she work at all?

**Tape 1: 24 minutes 8 seconds**

RM: No, she didn't work. My father being the eldest of the family and having started the business, which was a family business, so the family kept her, kept us.

RL: And when did you start school?

RM: When I was six years old?

RL: And where did you go?

RM: I went to the local school, I can't remember what the street was called, I could take you there! I remember how to get there from where I used to live but I don't remember the street. I was there until my mother died and then when I went to live with my aunt and my uncle I went to the school that my cousins went to. But that wasn't for very long.

RL: And were these non Jewish schools?

RM: Oh yes, they were state schools. There were very, very, very few Jewish schools. My brothers went, when they went to the High School, there was a High School called the Chayes Gymnasium, where eventually, after the Anschluss we went to as well.

RL: So the first schools that you attended, how did you get on with the non Jewish pupils there?

RM: I don't remember, I remember, I had one friend, she wasn't Jewish, but my memories of my school days actually are very cloudy, let's put it that way, in Vienna, I don't remember funnily enough any of the names, I didn't have much to do with them, I don't know. I know when I used to come, we started school at eight in the morning, and primary school finished by twelve o'clock and I remember we had a maid, it sounds funny to have a maid, but she was a live in maid and she always used to fetch me from school and sometimes if she was late I would start walking by myself, and we used to have to go past a school with older children, boys, and sometimes they used to make fun of me, I used to be quite terrified actually.

RL: Did you ever come across any anti-Semitism?

RM: Me personally, among the children, I don't remember anything. But I do remember once walking along with my brother one evening, it was after my mother had died and I was already living with my aunt and uncle and we were out one evening walking along the street, with my eldest brother Norbert, and I think my uncle was there and as we were walking by suddenly, somebody came in the opposite direction and gave my brother

Norbert such a swipe across the face and he just said, "Filthy Jew". That was the only thing that was before the Anschluss, otherwise I had personally had never felt any anti-Semitism there at all.

**Tape 1: 27 minutes 40 seconds**

RL: What ...

RM: I heard about things but I didn't experience anything personally.

RL: What Shul did you belong to?

RM: I belonged to a big Shul, I can't remember the name, I am sorry, I am not very helpful in that respect, Rotenthur no it wasn't Rotenthurgasse, I really don't remember, I remember, I didn't go very much again, I remember, I went with my mother once or twice to Shul, and then I went for my brother's Bar Mitzvah where we all went.

RL: How was it celebrated?

RM: It was celebrated in Shul, and then we had a big, a big celebration at home, a sit down meal, and it was all done in the house, nothing outside. I remember my auntie coming and helping to set the tables up, as I said there was one room led through into another, all the doors were opened up and there were tables laid right through the flat. It looked very beautiful from what I remember.

RL: When your mother died, and you went to live with your aunt and uncle. What happened to your brothers?

RM: My two brothers, for a week they stayed in the flat because they sat shiva, and I was just whisked away, and then they went to live with my father's sister, who only had one son, so she looked after my two brothers and I went to my other auntie because she had three girls and a boy, and I was very close with them, that is why we were separated. But we may have been separated as regards sleeping arrangements but we saw each other every single day, they made sure, the family, that we had contact every day.

RL: And then what are your memories, first of all, did you belong to any clubs or any groups at all?

RM: No. I was only eight. Our club was the family. We had a large family, as I say, and even before my mother died, either my cousins used to come and play with me, or I used to go and play with them, and my aunt and my mother were very, very, they weren't just sisters-in-law and cousins, they were very good friends. They were very, very close, and we lived a very close family life, with my other auntie as well, my father's sister, we had very close contact, very close family ties.

RL: Did you ever go away on holidays?

RM: Oh yes, every summer. All the families, we used to hire a lorry and it used to go from house to house and pick up all the luggage and even the pin, even the baths used to go onto the thing, and we used to go down to the local taxi rank, and we used to get into

**Tape 1: 31 minutes 17 seconds**

three or four taxis and we all went off to a place called Baden bei Wien, which was a local holiday place, spa, which was about 15, 30, I think it was about 30 miles outside of Vienna, and we were there for, as soon as the schools broke up, we were there for about, for the whole, for about two months, from June, end of June, July and August, 1<sup>st</sup> of September school started again, and those were wonderful memories. We all rented apartments there, the whole family, my aunt, my uncle, my other aunt, everybody was there, and again we were all together.

RL: Did you ever go out in Vienna for entertainment?

RM: As children? I remember once, just once, I was taken to a cinema, and I remember seeing a Shirley Temple film. And that was the only time I ever went to the cinema in Vienna, otherwise I don't ever remember going out, because don't forget I was there for ten months, and it was under Hitler where we weren't allowed. We just, our entertainment was at home actually. We used to have a piano, we used to learn to play the piano, we sang and we, you know, it was all family, family entertainment.

RL: Can you now tell me what you remember of the Anschluss and those days?

RM: It started off with a bang in Vienna, because the Austrians wanted to show the Germans how to do it. They were far worse than the Germans ever were I think. Just from day one, it was just havoc, hell, if anybody went out they didn't know if they would be back again, be home again, they used to pick people up off the streets, what they used to do at night time, they used to go and paint the roads and we used to go and collect the Jews and make them wash the paint off, not with a brush but with the nails, scrape it off with their nails. There was a lot of, at the beginning it was just harassment more than anything else, but it all had undertones, and the undertones were worse I think than the actual things that happened if you know what I mean, they sometimes came to the house, and if you didn't open up the door immediately, they just played havoc, through the flat, destroyed things, verbal abuse, physical abuse.

My auntie's sister and her husband had a visit by about three or four SS men and after the visit they went into the kitchen and turned the gas oven on. Their little boy died and they were taken to hospital. He was sent to prison because of it, but I mean what they did was just too dreadful for words, they just turned the whole flat upside down, broke everything, ruined everything. One of the SS men had, their boots got wet, so they made the father go on his knees and lick his boots clean, they beat them until they were black and blue, just for no reason.

My neighbours, our neighbours, didn't open up the door immediately, and so they took him away, and when he came back we didn't recognise him. He was a little man, his face was swollen, he was beaten till he was black and blue and they made him sit on the train looking into the bright light, they weren't allowed to blink, they had to look, you know it makes them blind after a while if you look into a very bright light all the time, you can't

**Tape 1: 36 minutes 2 seconds**

see after a while, it takes a long time to get your eye site back again, things like that. They used to pick up people off the street and take them as I say, they just whisked them away, you didn't know if you were coming back again or not.

I don't know, I was just, we barricaded our windows because stones were thrown through the windows, we lived on the first floor. We used to have a, what do you call, a kinder madchen, that used to come, like a nanny type of thing, she used to come of an afternoon before the Anschluss, she used to take us out and do homework with us and keep us, I mean its difficult a lot of children in the flat, she used to keep us occupied, of course she couldn't, after the Anschluss, she came and she said I am sorry I can't work for you any more, I am not allowed. But we had a maid, and she stayed with us until the day that we actually left. And it was a very beautiful spring day and she was just going down the stairs when two SS men came up and said, "Are the people in? Are the folk in?" She looked and she knew the house was full of, it was all Jewish people, and nobody would go out, everybody was at home, and she said, "What do you think? On a day like this they will be at home?"

They said, "Are you sure?"

She says, "Would an Aryan tell you a lie?"

Anyway she started flirting with them and they went away. If they would have gone and found, she would have been worse off than we.

Anyway as it happened, a month before the Anschluss my uncle, two of my uncles actually went on their usual business trip away, the family had opened up a business branch already in 1934 in London, and every year they used to go, they used to leave around about February and they used to be away for two or three months. They used to go to the Leipziger Messer, which was a fair, and then they used to go on to London, stay in London to see how things were going there, how the manager was doing, and how things were going on and then they used to come back, and as usual they left in February, so when the Anschluss occurred they were actually in London. I remember, the day after the Anschluss, which happened to be Norbert's birthday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, there was a phone call from my uncle, and I remember my auntie shouting through down the phone, "Don't come back, don't come back, get us out of here." And it took ten months for them to get all the visas, we just couldn't get up and go, we had to have visa entries, we had to have papers from Austria, but we also had to have papers of entry into England, you couldn't just go and hope for the best, because they would have just sent us back. So it took ten months until they took all the papers, from England as well as from Austria, were all put together and in order.

RL: And during that time did you attend school?

RM: Well, the day after the Anschluss all the Jewish children had to line up and we were sent home. And then we were sent to a school only for Jews, it wasn't a Jewish school, it was a school for Jews, which was in the city itself, which was in the same building as the army headquarters. As it happens the soldiers were very friendly, it was the SS which

**Tape 1: 40 minutes 41 seconds**

wasn't, but anyway we weren't there for long, we were only there for about a week or two and then we were sent to a Jewish school which was near us, which was the old Chayes Gymnasium, also took in then younger children.

RL: And how was it at school? How was it getting to school?

RM: Well, that was alright, getting to school, until we were taken and brought back, until November, Krystall Nacht, the day of the Krystall Nacht, we were collected from school during the middle of the day and after that we never went out again. We saw some scenes on the way home which I don't want to see again.

RL: Can you tell us about them?

RM: Well I remember we had to go, we had to cross a main road, and there were some, it was called Heine Strasse, from the Tabor Strasse to the Heine Strasse and there was a big tall building, well all the buildings were tall, three, four, and there was somebody on the third, fourth floor. There was a pile of rubbish, well, what I thought was rubbish, on the ground, they were throwing books out of the apartment onto the outside, onto the ground, and there was a, it looked a frum Jew, with a beard, by the window, they were pulling his beard, and it wasn't a very nice scene. After that we never went out again.

RL: So you never went out of the apartment ...

RM: We never went out of the apartment after that, until we actually left, which was December, end of December, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, we left Vienna, by train.

RL: Were you aware of what was going on outside?

RM: Oh yes, oh yes. Yes, we had one or two visits from the SS wanting to know where my uncle was. And then when they saw my cousin who was a big, very big boy for his age, he was, how old was he? He was 13/14 at the time and he looked more like 15, well a young man really, and they wanted to take him away, and how my auntie managed to, she said, "He is only a boy of 13, what do you want him for?" And anyway they left without him. In the meantime the Nazis walked into the business and just took over. I don't remember whether they actually, whether we had money, whether they sent us money from England or whether they gave us money from the business to live on. I don't, that I don't, those things, I was too young to know about it.

RL: Did any members of the family go out?

RM: Well my auntie must have gone out, we did actually have to go out to get our papers, but just to go out, just like that, nobody went out just, I mean I never went to school after November, but I did have to go with my auntie because I needed a passport

**Tape 1: 44 minutes 15 seconds**

for myself so I had to go with my aunt to all the different places to get all my papers together. With us being orphans, my two brothers and myself had to have all separate passports. They thought should we all go on one passport, my brothers and me, and no they decided we should all have separate passports, so I did, I remember standing in queues with my auntie, and not feeling very happy about it, because there was always an SS walking up and down there.

RL: And what were you able to take with you when you left?

RM: Well we smuggled out a lot of stuff. The manager came from Vienna and took a lot of, from my mother's jewellery and things like that. He came with a lady who he said was his wife and she put the jewellery on her and that is how we got stuff out. But we had, we could have a lift for all the household and different things. All personal belongings I suppose we could take. I remember we had an uncle who lived in Berlin, and he had a warehouse there, a big warehouse, and he sent us, for us children, he sent us clothes, but we didn't, big trunk fulls of clothes, we didn't have to buy anything for years actually.

RL: He sent them to England?

RM: No, he sent them to Vienna, and we, he couldn't send them to England from Germany, he could send them to Vienna. And all new clothes, all different sizes, different things for us, beautiful things, and we had them for quite a long time.

RL: Did anybody supervise the packing of the lift or the cases.

RM: I think so, I remember somebody came and actually helped mummy pack. I don't know whether, I can't remember whether they, we weren't told very much. I don't remember whether they were from the SS, there was somebody to make sure we didn't take something that was too valuable or what, I don't know, but somebody did come.

RL: Where they able to take things like candlesticks and silver items?

RM: Yes, they did actually, because I remember having the same candlesticks, my auntie having the same candlesticks in London as she had in Vienna.

RL: And can you describe the day of departure?



RM: The journey is a story in itself. We left, we had to leave early in the morning, we had to catch a train at 11 o'clock, 10 or 11 o'clock train from Vienna. I remember a neighbour coming in who wanted to make sure that our knickers were inside out for good luck. You know, we were neighbours for many, many years, of course she was crying her heart out. The, our maid, who was with my auntie for 16 years, was like a child in the house, she came when she was a young teenager, she was absolutely heartbroken.

**Tape 1: 47 minutes 55 seconds**

She wanted to come with us but of course she couldn't. I remember as we walked out of the apartment she just threw herself on the bed and she sobbed her heart out. She was a broken woman. We all got down to the, we got on the train, and, was it an early morning, I can't remember, all I know is that it was a few hours later at 11 o'clock in the morning we arrived in Cologne and somebody on the outside was shouting, "Everybody out, everybody out of the train!" So there was my auntie, who brought me up, my father's sister and 8 children, they had to get all the Pekelach and everything, we had to get out of the train, because the train wasn't going to the right place, it was a different train, and that, anyway we all got out and we were all on the platform, and as the train went off, yes it was the right train, so we were stuck. So what do we do, my aunt packed us all up and we went to the restaurant there, phoned up to find out when is the next train. In the meantime of course we lose our connection, for the boat connection, we were going, I don't know whether we were supposed to go through France or where, or what, I don't know quite. Anyway that had to be changed, oh yes, we were going to Harwich, we were going from the Hook of Holland to Harwich. Anyway, it's, anyway what happened was, we were stuck in Cologne from 11 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock at night, two women and eight children. We finally, what to do, we had to eat, anyway a waiter came, a German waiter and there were, they took one look at us and they knew exactly who we were, and he said, "Ganedige Frau, whatever you want. If you haven't got money," he says, "Don't worry. I will give your children to eat." Anyway, as it happens, mummy did have money, and we sat there until it was time to get out by train.

In the meantime we were sitting at the table, and at the next table, four SS men came in, with their leather things and with their girlfriends, and they took a shine to my little cousin, who was three years younger than me, she was six years old. Ah, they knew who we were, they got her and they sat her on their knee, and they played with her, well you can imagine what my auntie felt like, if they take a liking to her they can say, "I want her." Anyway, these were feelings more than anything, do you know what I mean? We were all on such nerves, this all helped, the tensions of the day. Anyway, they got up, they gave Putzi back to my auntie, like 'bye 'bye.

Anyway, eventually we got up and we got our train, and we got onto the train and then somebody, my cousin, who was the older, my oldest cousin lost his passport. This is another story, until they found it, he was talking to a girl, he got friendly with a girl there, and she wasn't who she was supposed to be, I don't know who she was, but they found it among her things. That was another thing.

We got to the border of Holland and they decided that my auntie had too much money on her, she couldn't take it out, so she had to go off and post it back, she had a sister in Vienna still who she posted the money to, whilst she, by this time it was very late at night, while she was on the platform posting the letter to her sister the train moved off. Well, my other aunt and all of us were standing there, and gave one enormous yell. You can imagine, I don't know whether the train just moved further into the platform and then stopped, or whether it stopped because of the yell. So, anyway, she got on, you can

**Tape 1: 53 minutes 14 seconds**

imagine what she felt like on the platform, and what we felt like. Anyway, she got on the platform, onto the train again, and I remember sitting opposite her and I didn't want to close my eyes, because I felt that if I closed my eyes she will disappear. I was so tired already, anyway eventually I must have fallen asleep and about 1 o'clock in the morning we got to the hook of Holland and onto the boat, and I remember my brother, one of my, my brother Hugo, taking me round the boat and showing me all, like the big brother. How old was he? Eleven, twelve, yes, twelve or thirteen he was, thirteen already. Anyway, we arrived very early in the morning and we met my uncles at Harwich, it was very emotional. There is a poem about it actually, my cousin, Putzi, the youngest one, she writes poetry, and she wrote a poem about the meeting, and every time I read that poem I always cry.

RL: And where did they take you?

RM: To London. I remember getting on the train and my big brother Norbert explaining to me what toast was, which I had never seen before in my life. Having breakfast on the train, my two uncles, Uncle Solomon and Uncle Max, we went to London and we stayed in Paddington, there was a pension or a boarding house whatever, we had rooms there, in those rooms, we had breakfast in the, but for all the other meals my auntie provided, how she did it in the room I don't know. That was when we arrived in England on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1938 which is just over 65 years ago. Yes, so we were in Paddington, and we went to a Church of England school there.

RL: What were your first impressions of England?

RM: We were dazed. We were really dazed. We couldn't speak a word of English, forlorn actually I suppose, it was a very cold winter as well. We couldn't speak a word of English, anyway we went to school, they sent us to a Church of England school in Knightsbridge, that's right, and they put us together with the, in the nursery. That is the best way to learn the language, among little ones, babies, because a child, a little one, when he says a word he points. So for about two weeks we were in a nursery together with the little ones, and we learnt a few words there, and every time we used to get back home we used to tell mummy we learned this word and we learned that word, and that is how she learnt. Yes, so it's, so, and then they put us into the respective age groups and all we did was write out copy from books, copy out writing from books, which had the

feel of the spelling. I remember once having to go to the toilet, and putting my hand up, to ask whether I could go to the toilet, and there was a most peculiar look on the teacher's face, because I think she thought I must have said that I wanted her to go to the toilet. Anyway as I walked out she realised what I meant.

RL: How were you received by the other children in school?

RM: I don't remember very much really. I think quite nicely actually. There were, I don't remember much, we didn't make any friends because we couldn't really speak the

### **Tape 1: 58 minutes 4 seconds**

language, but they all treated us I must say very, very nicely. My brother, Norbert, once came to fetch us from school, and one of the children said to my older cousin, she said, "Oh Ruth, your father is here." Because he always looked so much older than he was, so when we saw Norbert we all started laughing, "That is my brother, not my father." We didn't make any close relationships, because, as I say, of the language. And we were trying to feel our way really, but I must say generally speaking people were very friendly towards us.

RL: I think we will call a halt here as this film is about to end.

RM: Yes. Ok.

### **TAPE 2**

RL: How are you doing? Do you need to pay a visit?

RM: My nose.

RL: So this is the interview with Renee Mosbacher and it is tape 2.

I was just wondering what has happened, what has happened to your uncles, you know your father's brothers and sisters and what had happened to them at this point?

RM: Well, as I say, my father had died some years ago, my uncle was at the time, two of my uncles were actually at that time in London on there, they had been on their annual business trip and during the Anschluss they were there, in London, and they managed to get the ball rolling to get all our visas from the English side. I had my youngest brother, the youngest brother of my father, he was married, during the Anschluss, he, quietly they got married, and he lived, and he left because they got to know that they were coming for him so he quickly left one night. He went across the border and by ways and means he managed to get to England eventually, I am not quite sure exactly how. My auntie also managed to get to England, I am not sure exactly how, and then my father's sister and her husband, my father's sister came with us, but her husband who was Hungarian, managed to get into Hungary, and from Hungary he managed to get eventually into England, in

roundabout ways. I had other cousins who managed to get to England on domestic working permits, and that is how people came out.

RL: Were any left behind?

RM: Yes, my aunties, one of my auntie's sisters unfortunately perished in Auschwitz. She had another, she had a brother who managed to get to Israel, and she had a sister who after her ordeal with the SS and everything also managed to get to Israel, and that is all about I can remember at the moment.

**Tape 2: 3 minutes 0 second**

RL: You mentioned before a poem that your cousin had written on the journey about the Germans ...

RM: Yes, my cousin, she started writing poetry when she was a little girl, little ditties and things, and she writes poetry, she writes short stories and things, she is very good.

RL: What is her name?

RM: Her name is Hutterer Putzi, Mary Hutterer. She was Brainin, and she married Felix Hutterer, who actually, by the way came over in the Kinder Transport just before the war, he lost his parents and most of his family, and this is the poem, she wrote a whole series of different poems, and she, a little booklet. It is called "New World For Old".

It was December when we left our native Vienna,  
Just six years old, I had never been abroad before,  
My mother wept as she took leave of friends and neighbours,  
I think she knew she would never see them any more.

Those were the nightmare days of Hitler's Austria,  
Of sudden disappearances and constant fear,  
Of knocks on doors at night,  
And queues for visas to any country that might take us, far or near.

Youngest of five I was the much spoiled baby  
And wasn't told that we were now an alien race,  
I watched my brothers and my sisters packing,  
And put my own loved doll and toys into a case.

My father came to meet us at the boat train,  
I didn't know him any more and hid my face,  
My parents, after ten months separation, stood on the platform,  
Wordless in a long embrace.

The twelve of us, my brothers, sisters, cousins and aunt and uncle,

Found a place to stay,  
We children went to school and learned some English,  
Good morning, thank you, what a lovely day.

But soon we went to boarding school in Essex,  
I cried a lot and wet my knickers once or twice,  
We suffered pangs of homesickness and hunger,  
And got the chicken pox and some of us caught lice.

**Tape 2: 5 minutes 37 seconds**

When war broke out, they told us in assembly,  
While anxious teachers listened to the news,  
A girl who had heard it from her father,  
Told us, "It's all the fault of Hitler and the Jews".

A house was bought in Hampstead Garden Suburb,  
We packed and came to London on the train,  
And oh, the bliss of being altogether,  
A family in our own home again.

I think it puts it in a nutshell.

RL: So you went to the school. Did you continue living in the pension?

RM: No, until April, from December until April we lived in the pension, and then we children were sent to boarding school in Essex. The girls were sent to Westcliffe-on-Sea and the boys to Leigh-on-Sea. It was the same school but one was for the girls and the other was the boys' part. And, when the war started we were in the school when the war started, and a lot of children left and the whole thing went into one school and we went to Leigh on Sea, and we went to Leigh-on-Sea altogether, my brothers left already, because they were older already, and they went to London, and we girls, four of us stayed on until I think my oldest cousin went back sooner, and then I was the last to leave actually, which was a year later, March 1940.

RL: And how did you get on ...

RM: So we were in the school from April 39 to March 1940, when I was in boarding school.

RL: How did you get on in that school?

RM: I didn't like it at all. It was the first time we were separated from family. I was very unhappy, my cousins as well. I didn't like it at all.

RL: Why did they decide to send you to a boarding school?

RM: Well, the reason was because we couldn't stay on in the pension because it was rather expensive, and it didn't, well, it was just impossible. They had to find somewhere to live, so in order to save money as well, they moved into a bed-sitter, my aunt and uncle, while they were looking round for a house, somewhere to live, and it took a while until they found something in Hampstead Garden Suburb, 41 Kingsley Way. And until we were all able to move it was, it was in ones and twos that we left, as it happened I was the last one to leave.

**Tape 2: 8 minutes 49 seconds**

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

RM: We had a bit of fun together, but we didn't really get very close. We always felt we were different, we were Jewish, it was a non Jewish boarding school, in fact, they made us go to church, and we didn't want to go, and they made us go. The people who owned the boarding school turned out to be quite nasty, took a lot of our clothes and we just didn't have very good food either, they made a lot of, once the war started they made a lot of excuses, and when we complained of course to our parents, to my aunt and uncle, they, "Oh they are just making it up." Anyway, the thing is, it wasn't a very happy time.

RL: Did you actually meet hostility there?

RM: Yes, I would say so. They didn't much care for us, as long as they took our money, but they didn't care for us, and certainly, I personally didn't care for them, they didn't have the best teachers either, we didn't learn very much, and I don't think it was a very good thing at all. The only thing that came out of it is that we learned to speak English. So, I finally came, my brother came to fetch me, it was in March 1940, and I remember walking down Kingsley Way, "Which house? Which house? Which house?" Finally I saw it and it thought, "Oh to be home." It was finally home, and I must say my childhood years from the age, it was just before my eleventh birthday, from the age of ten, until I got married, in spite of the war years, I had a very, very happy childhood, and it was all down to my aunt and uncle, the home life that we had together.

And then we went to a local school, a local primary school in London, in Childs Way, on Finchley Road, near Henley's Corner. Oh what is the parade called there, I can't remember now, I was there last week. And I said, "There was my school."

And then when I was eleven, when we were eleven we went to Clarke's College in North Finchley, on Ballards Lane.

RL: How did you get on in these places?

RM: Well, I didn't pass an eleven plus because our education was a little bit chequered, let's put it that way, but we did go to Clarke's College and in Clarke's College we had a very happy, I didn't like school generally speaking, but it was a good, they did us proud,

put it that way. We all went there, we all took our exams there, we did our matriculation there. The headmaster was exceedingly nice, in fact he always spoke about the Brainin Family and what a wonderful, in fact he once said in assembly that we came from the Austrian aristocracy, how he got to that I don't know. We all thought it was very funny. And my auntie always complained that the holidays weren't long enough, and he always said that he had never experienced that before, people always said that the holidays were too long, the mothers. We got on very well; he was a very nice man, a Mr Savage, who was the headmaster of Clarke's College.

**Tape 2: 13 minutes 22 seconds**

RL: Did you make any friends at school?

RM: Yes, I had, I had two particular friends, one was a non Jewish girl and one was a Jewish girl. The Jewish girl I, I had a certain relationship after school with, once we were married we kept in touch with each other. But as the years went by we lost touch, because she had a different way of life to mine. I didn't take my matriculation until I was about 17 because I stayed at home a lot, my auntie was rather poorly, and she used to suffer from phlebitis, and in those days you had to stay in bed for a week, for a month, and I used to stay and home and look after her and run the house, so it was nearly a year later that I took my, finally my matriculation exams.

RL: Did you have any Hebrew education?

RM: We went to Cheder classes, which during the war were a little bit, what you learned was a bit, wasn't very deep. We learned how to read and how to daven and the story of the week type of thing and that was about it.

RL: Where did you go?

RM: To, our Shul was Norris Lee. A united synagogue Norris Lee, Rabbi Bornstein was the Rabbi during the war there, and then he was the chaplain in the army and unfortunately he lost his wife during the war. And then afterwards there was another Rabbi, I can't remember, then there was Dayan Lew, Rabbi Lew at the time who became the Rav of our school, and then there was a Chazzan Freilich, it was a lovely Shul, I enjoyed going to Shul. We used to go on, on Sunday; we used to go on a Sunday to Cheder.

RL: Did you belong to any clubs or youth groups?

RM: In my teenage years I belonged to the Shul Club. The West Hampstead Synagogue Club we belonged to, my auntie, when we mentioned a club, my auntie always, her hands went up in horror, nice girls don't go to clubs. On the continent one didn't, so I had a big fight, well not fight, persuasion, until I managed to say it's a Synagogue Club, where all nice Jewish boys and girls met, and we used to have musical evenings, it was the music club particularly that I went to.

RL: Was that the only thing that you belonged to?

RM: It was the only thing that I belonged to, as I say we always had our own family, we always went out together. On a Sunday my cousins and us girls, my boy cousins, on a Sunday always used to say to us girls, like to come out, come to a concert, or to the pictures or to a concert or to this and that and the other, and if we said "No", they said, "What do you mean no, of course you are coming with." We always went out as a family

**Tape 2: 17 minutes 10 seconds**

together, we, as I say we used to go to concerts, we used to go to the cinema, and then there used to be on at the corner house in Marble Arch there used to be a salad bar and you could go and eat for very little, you paid and then you could go and fill yourself up as many times as you wanted to, we used to do that.

RL: Did you meet other refugees at this stage that had also come over?

RM: Only people that we knew from Vienna. Because when we came to live in London it was 1940. Refugees, we were called enemy aliens, there was a time when we weren't allowed to have a radio, there was also curfew, we weren't allowed out after dark, so there wasn't really much of a thing of being able to get together. If anybody came to visit us during the day and it got dark and they couldn't get back in time they had to stay over night, so for a short period, as I say, it was, it sounds very grim, but being as a family, we just didn't feel it really, because we lived such a close family, close knit family life. We were very happy within our own, we used to, I don't know, I can't remember feeling a restriction, because as I say, at home family life was happy and content. I remember when we were allowed a radio again, I remember my uncle coming on a Sunday morning and bring a radio, he had brought a radio, and oh it was wonderful to hear it, we could listen to the news again.

RL: Were your uncles working?

RM: Yes, the business, we had the business in Bond Street, Brainin Brothers, which was actually opened in 1934 already, and that had to, had to keep us all, we did live under the fear of internment. A lot of enemy aliens were interned at the beginning of the war, including my brother who wasn't 18 yet, and they said they wouldn't take anybody under 18 and my brother was 18 and he was in the Isle of Mann for three months.

RL: Which brother?

RM: Norbert, my eldest brother, Norbert. And the funny thing is though, he was a musician, he played, he was studying music already since he was seven years old, and it was in the Isle of Mann that he met his future colleagues who he formed the Amadeus Quartet with, that was Siegmund Nissel and Peter Schidlof and he met them in the Isle of Mann. I had one uncle who was sent away to Australia, he was there for two years on



one of these horror ships. Another uncle, my youngest uncle was also interned for some time. I had a cousin who was interned, and they offered him, they said we can either intern you or you can join the army, so he joined the army, and he became, he looked very Semitic, put it that way, and they put him in, he had to interview prisoners of war and find out whether they were actual Nazis or not, you know. And as soon as they saw his face, when they walked through the door, he could already see what they thought, because he looked very Semitic, that is why he did the job. Oh I don't know ...

RL: How did the war itself impinge on your life?

**Tape 2: 21 minutes 46 seconds**

RM: Well, we went through the blitz in London. The anti aircraft guns were on The Heath and those weren't very far away and I believe there were some at the top of the street as well. We lived near The Heath, I myself, our house, we were very lucky, our house only lost a few slates and a couple of little window panes, I have one aunt, my aunt and uncle, the youngest brother, my father's brother, they were hit by a landmine, they were bombed out. Another auntie, my auntie's brother and wife and children were also bombed out, also hit by a landmine.

RL: Where were they at the time?

RM: One was during the night. One was by a landmine, no I am telling a lie, the second one was actually a V2 rocket, and that you didn't get any warning, you had the bang and then the whistle, and that was on the Sunday morning, and they were, my auntie had not long given birth to a baby and the child was outside in the pram on the balcony, the other child was inside, no, my uncle had just come in by the front door with his older child and as he walked through the door the door fell on him and sort of, he went to try and save his younger son, so he got the big heavy front door fell on his back and he was in Paris of Plaster for about six months, from, his whole body, right up to his neck, and that wasn't funny, and they moved in with us for a few months. Because there flat, they lived on a top floor flat, and that flat just caved in, so they moved in with us.

RL: What precautions did you take when there was an air raid?

RM: Well at first we all went on, into the, into the hall which we were told was the strongest part of the house, near the front door, we all slept there, and then in the garage we had a shelter built. The thing is if we had a direct hit it wouldn't have helped, but it did help from shrapnel and flying debris and things like that, but as I say, thank God we were very lucky and we had no major repairs on the house at all.

RL: So did you go to that shelter?

RM: Yes, we used to, automatically at night time, instead of sleeping in our beds we used to go into the shelter to sleep; our beds were made up in the shelter. Mummy and daddy used to sleep in the middle and the men on daddy's side and the women on

mummy's side, whoever came to stay slept into shelter, we all slept together in the same place. It was taken for granted and that was it. Once or twice we said, "No we have had enough." And we slept in our own beds, and I remember mummy going round. I must say, if I say "mummy", I mean my auntie, I spoke, always called her mummy, I never forgotten that I had a real mother but I didn't want to be any different to all the other children. Anyway mummy used to go round half the night seeing if everyone was alright. But one got used to the noise of the things, after a time you didn't care anymore. But the alarms, they went off in the evenings, and the air raid alarms went off and that was it, finished, people still went out, at that time you still weren't on curfew any more. Mummy and daddy were wardens, they had to go up and down the street that nobody

**Tape 2: 26 minutes 20 seconds**

showed their light. We had to have blackout curtains, all the curtains had to have black cloth lining, that when we pulled the curtains there wasn't a chink of light to be seen outside. You weren't allowed even, you had to be careful to use a torch when you walked outside at night time, because there were no street lights. What else can I tell you? I don't know ...

RL: Did you ever ...

RM: But we used to have to go to the, as we were enemy aliens we used to have to go to the police every so often, there were certain restrictions.

RL: Did you used to go?

RM: I remember going once or twice to the police. I can't remember why, I don't think I had to go regularly; I think mummy and daddy had to go regularly.

RL: Did your family ever think of evacuating out of London?

RM: There was talk at one time of sending us children to Canada, because we had family in Canada, but then we said, "No way, no way." Eventually towards the end of the war when the, what you called, the doodle bugs started, mummy and daddy sent us, some of us up to Huddersfield, where we had some friends, and they said why don't you send them up, just to get a bit of respite. Anyway we stayed for a while and then the rockets started falling and we were too worried and we said, "No, if G-d forbid anything happens let's be together." We were too worried to be away from home and we said we didn't want that, so we came back again.

RL: Who did you know in Huddersfield?

RM: We lived with a non Jewish family, actually, a non Jewish lady who actually used to keep a boarding house at one time, and we were there for a couple of months actually, but she made, she was very good to us, she looked after us very nicely and we became very, very good friends. We used to go, in later years we used to go and visit her

regularly and she, once or twice, she came down to London, and she always used to correspond, and she used to call herself our foster mother. She was a lovely, lovely lady.

RL: What was her name?

RM: Mrs Turner, she was a widow, and had married children already, and she was just a lovely lady, but she used to say that she was always taught that Jews had horns, and when she saw us she said she couldn't think, she thought we couldn't be Jewish, we didn't have horns, and after she met us she said she will never, ever say anything about anybody unless she knew exactly what, she turned out to be a wonderful, wonderful friend. Her whole family did actually. I just recently went back to Huddersfield to Outlane, Zena

**Tape 2: 29 minutes 45 seconds**

and I, my daughter Zena and I go out usually on a Tuesday afternoon together, and we drove up there and actually saw the house and all the things and it brought back a lot of memories. That was in 44, when we were there, so it is how many years?

RL: Did you go to school whilst you were there?

RM: No, we didn't actually, we didn't.

RL: What did you do?

RM: I don't know, we kept busy, we kept busy, we used to help her, and I don't know. There were some people who used to, I meant it was boarding house and there were people who used to stay there, sometimes they took us out for the day with them, there were travellers, by that time it was towards the end of the war and things were a lot easier and, I don't know, it was just village life up there, which was quite enjoyable actually, and I got to love that part of the country. In fact I love Lancashire and Yorkshire, there are some of my favourite places, I love to get out into the country to all the little places.

RL: Coming back to London and life in London, in terms of the festivals and food, how did you manage at that time?

RM: We never felt, we were never hungry, the rationing system was fantastic, there was enough for everybody, and particularly being in a bigger family it was always easier. We never, ever brought anything on the black market. No, the only thing we ever did was to now and again buy eggs, because my uncle was diabetic and he needed eggs. That was the only thing we ever bought, and I must say there were two grocers near on the local shops, one was a Jewish one and one was a non Jewish one, and the non Jewish one every now and again, "Where's Mr Fletcher? Oh, he's not there, he is sitting ..." In cheder, what do they call, he was caught selling black market so he was in prison, every five minutes he was not there, his wife used to have to run the business, thank G-d a million times it never happened with the Jewish one, he was always very, very careful and never did anything wrong and that was a big Kiddush Hashem. But food wise, I remember, we

used to be able to get these tins of dried egg, and we used to cook with that, and my mummy used to bake with fatless cakes, they were delicious, I can't ever remember being hungry, there was plenty to eat.

RL: What was the level of observance at home at this stage?

RM: As I say we kept, we kept Friday night, but we went out on Shabbos, we didn't keep anything as regards lights and anything like that, but we knew it was Friday night and mummy always benched licht, daddy made Kiddush, we had a Friday night meal, we used to have soldiers and people coming in for a meal on Friday night, Shabbos morning sometimes I went to Shul, my uncle never, ever worked on Shabbos, he never opened the business on a Shabbos, he didn't smoke on Shabbos, but other things were very lax. I

### **Tape 2: 34 minutes 0 seconds**

remember once, on a Shabbos afternoon, I had been to Shul in the morning and on the Shabbos afternoon I was asked to take an iron to be repaired, and I remember holding this iron and walking up and meeting the Shammas from the Shul and I felt so embarrassed, I knew it was wrong, one shouldn't do it, and it worried me sick. But we kept all the Yom Tovim, I can't explain, it was a funny situation, we kept Shabbos as a shell, as an outer shell, I can't explain it any other way, I mean naturally Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur was kept, all the other festivals were all kept, Purim, Chanukah, and yet we didn't keep the trimmings, nobody worried whether they put a light on or anything like that. Looking back now it was a peculiar situation.

RL: What language did you speak in the home?

RM: We children, among ourselves spoke English, with mummy and daddy we spoke sometimes German, sometimes English, it was a language mixed, English mixed with German. I had to be careful when I was out to make sure I didn't put any German words into it, no in the school I am in, as I said among ourselves we used to speak English.

RL: What did you think of London and ... ?

RM: Well it was my home, I was ten years old when I came, it was our home town. It's where we lived, where the business was, where the family was, I felt very much at home in England actually.

RL: Did you still feel different in any way?

RM: Yes, I always felt different, I always did feel different. I felt different because first of all I lost my parents when I was young. I felt different because I was Jewish. I felt different because we came from Vienna to London. I felt very different, not just because I was Jewish, but also because I lost my parents when I was young, I wasn't actually brought up together really with my brothers, I felt one of the family like my sisters, and yet I didn't, I can't explain it. I never ever sat and had a cuddle with my uncle the same

as my cousins that, because I always felt, "No, he is not my father." I can't ever remember sitting on his lap or kissing him, alright I kissed him when I walked in and out but, do you know what I mean? I have never, ever done that. So I did, I did feel different for a lot of reasons.

RL: Did you ever come across any hostility in London?

RM: Not really, no. No, I can't say I did, I never felt it anyway. Not from the teachers or anything like that, because I think the teachers were very much aware of not to make you, I don't know we just had very nice teachers in Clarke's College, in fact we were made to feel special funnily enough, I am thinking it through now, we were always treated very nicely.

**Tape 2: 38 minutes 35 seconds**

RL: When did you graduate?

RM: Matriculation it is called, when I was 17.

RL: So the war had ended?

RM: Oh yes.

RL: Do you remember the end of the war?

RM: Oh yes, we had a party. We had a party, we had a lot of people in and we listened to the radio, to the king, oh yes, I mean to us, perhaps it meant more than to anybody else. Yes.

RL: Were you aware of what had been happening to the Jews in ... ?

RM: Yes, we did know, we did know ...

RL: When did you first become aware of that?

RM: Well already in Vienna actually. We knew about Dachau. Our neighbour was sent there, we knew about Dachau, we knew that there were concentration camps, I mean we knew people in '40/'41 we knew that people were being sent away to Poland, my auntie's sister was sent to Poland, was sent off there, and she, actually she died in Auschwitz. We did know about it, we also tried, with our maid, we tried to keep in touch with her through the Red Cross and she through the Red Cross she tried to keep in touch with things that were happening for a while, we managed to keep in touch, and then it fizzled out. Our maid got married, she had a boyfriend, she married after we left, and her husband was very anti Nazi and he was sent, he was imprisoned at one time and then he was sent off to the Russian front, all the bad boys were sent off there, but he survived, I think he was a prisoner of war, and he survived the war.

RL: Did you get in touch with your maid after the war?

RM: Yes, we did, in fact my brother went back after the war he went back to, and my cousin, went back to live in Vienna, and they got in touch with her, and she was a lady in her forties and she looked seventy, she really did, I have a photograph somewhere, she really did, she looked like seventy, with what she went through.

RL: Why did your brother decide to go back to Vienna?

RM: He was a bit of a socialist. He wanted to rebuild and I don't know ... you know when you are teenagers, older teenagers, young, you have a few highfaluting ideas, he has toned down a little bit since then, and he went back to Vienna, with my cousin, who

**Tape 2: 41 minutes 58 seconds**

I grew up with, and he met a girl there, married her, and she had been in the Austrian resistance movement, she was caught, managed to escape, was caught again and then they found out she was Jewish and they sent her off to Auschwitz were she survived, just ... And she, since then she has had two very bad major nervous breakdowns, she suffered all her life through that, but thank G-d a million times she has had two children and, but she has had a very tough time, nightmares, all sorts of things that she can't get rid of.

RL: How did your brother find it in Vienna after the war?

RM: Well, it was tough going at the beginning, he was a draftsman, he got himself a job as a draftsman in various places of work, eventually he started working in a bank as a draftsman, he used to go round, he worked eventually for Austrian Hungarian Bank actually. He moved a few times his work place because of anti Semitism, anti Semitism hasn't gone away, I mean Austria has always been very rife, and they still are. They are still rearing their ugly head again now, the far right. Austria is a beautiful place, Vienna is a beautiful city, I always say, "It's a pity about the people." There is a saying about the Austrians, they turn, in German, in Yiddish, "??????? Past ... ??????????????", you turn your hat whichever way it fits you, and that is the Austrians, they will do this if it is good for them, and that if it is good for them then. They are not to be trusted, that is what I always say. I go back, because my parents are buried there, and my grandparents are buried there as well, but I don't feel particularly comfortable, at one time I felt very unsure of people who are older than me, people who are younger may be alright, the people who are older I always used to feel, "What were you up to during the war?" But my brother lives there and he has two daughters, one is a psychologist, one is a psychiatrist, they are both married to doctors, and they both have children.

RL: In Vienna?

RM: In Vienna, yes. I have a cousin, he was married but he is divorced. He has two sons, who are doing very nicely, but they are not married to Jewish, my cousins boys, and that is the end of the Jewish line there.

RL: When did your brother return to Vienna?

RM: 1946. Vienna was a mess at the time. Yes.

RL: So after you took matriculation what did you do?

RM: Oh, in those days I had to stay home for a year and learn housewifely duties, for a year I was home, I learnt how to cook and this and that and the other, I was also, I was having piano lessons from the age, I learned to play piano, I had teachers until I was 18, some very good teachers, some very well known people used to teach me. So after a year

**Tape 2: 46 minutes 33 seconds**

I went off to a Katinka School of dress designing and cutting, and I did a course there and I got a diploma from that.

RL: How long did that take? Did you say about a year?

RM: Also about a year or so. So by that time I was about 19/20, and then I got a job, in a factory at first, it didn't last very long, I had to be in work for half past seven, eight o'clock I think, I lasted about two or three weeks, that was in, right in the centre of London, it was, I couldn't settle in there. And then I left, and I got a job with a Haute Couture firm in Upper Brook Street, and I was there until I got engaged.

RL: How long was that?

RM: Perhaps nearly a year or so I was there, and then I got engaged, once I got engaged my aunt and uncle said finish, no more working, you are busy, you have got to get busy for your wedding.

RL: How did you meet your husband?

RM: I was introduced by my aunt, an aunt of mine, she had, she was widowed and she had a young man from Israel living with her, who was already a lawyer in Israel but he was studying English law at the Bar, and he had a friend, Jeffrey Bloom, who was doing law also at Lincoln's Inn studying, and they used to, they used to go together to my aunties to study together, to learn together as well, and when she saw, she thought that would be very nice for Renee, so she asked me for tea one Shabbos afternoon, and I said, "No, I am not coming." And my aunt and uncle were away at the time on holiday, and she said, "If you don't come, I will tell them all sorts of stories of what you were up to." Anyway, I decided to come, and I walked in with a long face and she said, "Wipe that look of your face and put a smile on." Anyway I met him, we spent Shabbos afternoon

together and after Shabbos we went out in a foursome, and then he started calling for me every night from work and within a month we were engaged.

RL: Where was he from?

RM: He was from Manchester, studying in London. And just ... one, two, three.

RL: He was English born?

RM: He was English born, yes. His parents were a lot older, he was the youngest child of ten children, and there was a big gap between him and his eldest brother, there was 25 years between him and his brother, his eldest brother, his mother was already 46 when he was born, in fact she thought she had a growth or something inside her, the doctor couldn't tell her what it was, anyway ... so, I went to see the family, meet the family, and we were married in November.

**Tape 2: 50 minutes 55 seconds**

RL: What was the date?

RM: 28<sup>th</sup> November.

RL: And the year?

RM: 1950.

RL: And where did you marry?

RM: I married in London, in my Shul, Norris Lee, yes, Dayan Lew gave us Chuppah Kiddushin and Rabbi Altman from Manchester, what do you call it, he was there as well, we had a few Rabbonim under the Chuppah, I used to play piano duets with Rabbi Altman when I came to Manchester.

RL: Where did you live after marriage?

RM: Well, we got married rather in a hurry because my father in law was very poorly, he was supposed to get married in March but we used to get phone calls from Manchester to say it is too late, if we want him to be at our wedding we have to move it forward, so then it was going to be January, and in the end it was the end of November, and if it would have been a week later he wouldn't have been able to make it. He died actually at the beginning of January, so when we came back from our honeymoon we moved in with my parents in law, it was a very big old house, Milwood it was called, off Upper Park Road, and we lived there until we actually moved into our own home which wasn't until April of that year.

RL: And where was that?



RM: That was in Duckworth Road up in Prestwich, it was off St Anne's Road, right at the bottom. It was a little dolls house and it was lovely, yes.

RL: What did you think of Manchester?

RM: I loved it, I missed my family, I missed my, you know, but I loved Manchester. To me, although we lived in London, we lived in a very, very close knit family unit, and in a way I was a girl who had come from a village suddenly into a big town. I, don't forget, I was brought up during the war, and as I said we lived a very, very tight knit, in a tight fit family unit. So suddenly I came into Manchester into a very large family again, a well known family, and I was suddenly, I was suddenly in a big town. To me it was a completely different life altogether. I was, sort of, I had to learn how to live in a big town sort of, I can't explain it any other way. But I loved Manchester and my husband had a large family, and we used to, and my mother in law went to live in Southport after my

**Tape 2: 54 minutes 26 seconds**

father in law died, so we used to go on visits to Southport, we used to go to Liverpool where his sister was living, another sister, Mrs Needoff took me under her wing and she took me everywhere, she introduced me everywhere, we used to go out regularly together and my brother in law Algi, they all treated us beautifully, but they treated us as if we were little children playing at being married. We always felt that we weren't taken seriously, they are little kids, they are playing, what do they know, you know, that type of thing, until unfortunately ...

RL: How old was your husband when you married?

RM: He was 24, and I was 21, he was three years older than me, and unfortunately tragedy struck and he had cancer and three and a half years later he died and I was left with two babies at the age of 25.

RL: What children had you had?

RM: I had two children; I had Zena, my eldest daughter Zena and Mark. Zena was named after my mother and Mark was named after his two grandfathers, my father and Jeffrey's father.

RL: When were they born?

RM: Zena was born in 28<sup>th</sup> May 1952 and Mark was born in June 21<sup>st</sup> 1953. Just barely, not even 13 months between them.

RL: And did you live at that time still in Duckworth Road.

RM: Yes, we lived in Duckworth Road there.

RL: Where was your husband working?

RM: My husband worked in Manchester, but he didn't work as a lawyer, he went into the family business and, textiles, but he was starting to study again at night time, he wanted to do his, he wanted to eventually become a barrister actually so he had started studying again, at night time.

RL: Was he active in the community at all?

RM: Yes, he belonged to what we called at the time the Mizrachi, the men's Mizrachi, and he was busy with our Shul, Shomrei Hadass, he was very active there, we were moving from one place to the other and he was very, very helpful there.

RL: Did you belong to anything?

**Tape 2: 57 minutes 32 seconds**

RM: I belonged, I jointed the Prestwich women's Mizrachi, I was there at its inception and also I, in later years I worked for the Jewish Day School Committee, for the Jewish Grammar School Committee, I did my little bit, I tried to anyway.

RL: This film is about to end so we will take a break.

RM: Yes.

RL: We will take a break here.

RM: Ok, fine.

**TAPE 3**

RL: This is the interview with Renee Mosbacher and it is tape three.

You were just telling me, I had asked you about clubs, whether you had joined any organisations when you came to Manchester and you mentioned firstly the Prestwich Woman's Mizrachi ...

RM: Mizrachi, which is now called the Emunah.

RL: Right, when did you, you said you were at the inauguration meeting

RM: I think it was the inauguration meeting, 1951, '50 or ... '51 it must have been.

RL: Was that your first association with any Zionist organisation?

RM: Yes, yes.

RL: What had been your attitude towards Zionism before that, or your family's attitude? Had they spoken about it at all?

RM: Well, quite a lot of my, well quite a lot of the wider family, I had cousins who went before the war, just before the war, from Vienna actually, I had a cousin who managed to get into Israel on the quiet, sort of slip in, and he married an Israeli girl and he lived on a moshav. I had another cousin and he managed to get into Israel, illegally, put it that way, and the first thing he did was, he joined the police force, that was the best thing to do. He lived there for many years and he became, I believe the captain of the ship, he was in the Navy, and eventually he went to live in America.

RL: What was his name?

**Tape 3: 1 minute 48 seconds**

RM: Vicky, Victor, I can't remember his second name ... Bleicher, Vicky Bleicher his name was. He was a second cousin of mine from my mother's side. So there were one or two people who went to Israel but we weren't, we weren't Zionist as such, I mean I knew about Zionism from my great uncle, Reuven Brainin, the writer, the journalist, but we were as a family we weren't particularly Zionist. In the business my uncle used to get lots of people during the, during the war, when they were fighting before 1948 they used to come, we had a man, they all used to come to the business and collect money, my uncle used to give quite a lot of money at that time to the underground people to help.

RL: How did you feel when the State of Israel was formed?

RM: Oh, we felt terrific, we finally felt we could all hold up our heads, we felt, well, we actually have somewhere to run to if need be, we felt, part of the human race, put it that way. Somebody to be counted as well, already. But when we were in London during the fight, with certain things happening, we didn't feel very happy, we even felt a bit, what do you call it, not frightened, there was a lot of anti Jewish feeling in that time actually, particularly with what happened with those two soldiers when they killed them, actually, it turned out that those two soldiers were Jewish, those two soldiers that were actually killed by the Israelis, they were actually, or at least one of them, was Jewish, yes, but they were in the army, they had no choice, difficult times.

RL: So, you joined this lady's group?

RM: Yes.

RL: Do you remember who else was involved in it at that stage?

RM: Yes, there was, oh golly, Mrs Feingold, there was Reuven and Maida Feingold. She was a Newman, she was the one, it was in her house that we met. Of course there

was Doris Buchsbaum was there, oh gosh, I can't remember who was there anymore, I know it was Maida Feingold, it was in her house that was in Chichester Avenue in Prestwich.

RL: Were any of these also refugees?

RM: Well, among my friends, most of us were refugees really. Maida herself was, she was Bubby Newman's sister, most of my friends actually, we all sort of loosely belonged to the, even if we didn't work for it, we all belonged to the Mizrahi organization, there was Ilse Grosskopf, there was Eleanor, they were all, I mean, they were all refugees. Shifra, Shifra Grosskopf, G-d Rest Her Soul, she was one of the few English, I mean Welsh girls ... I can't remember just off my head, oh yes, there was Pearlle Potash that was, she was a Haffner, there was Pearlle Potash in that family, they were all, there as well, she was one of the first people there as well. Yes ...

### TAPE 3

#### **Tape 3: 6 minutes 27 seconds**

RL: Did you have English born friends at all as well? Or were your friends mainly refugees?

RM: Well, a lot of the Jews, mainly there was, I don't know, well of course there was my husband's family, but among my friends, among the Shul that we belonged to, the Shomrei Hadass, I mean, among, Shifra was British born, there was Eleanor, she was a refugee, there was Eva, she was a refugee. Toby and that family, the Haffner family, were English born, weren't they? My best friend, that was a few years later, was Paula, Paula Rabinowitz, but of course she was a refugee, but I don't think I actually looked for refugees as friends, but there were so many who were just there, I don't know, I can't explain it, there was a terrific influx of Jewish people from the continent. Maybe the boys were English but the girls were refugees, not both of them, or vice versa, but you couldn't get away from them, not that you wanted to.

RL: You also mentioned being involved with other organizations. Was it Jewish ...

RM: When the children started going to school I was involved with the Jewish Day School, and I belonged to the mother's committee. And then when my children started going to Grammar School I was involved with the Jewish Grammar School mother's committee, and that was really, and that was about it. I can't really remember any other organisations.

RL: When your husband died, how did you manage after that?

RM: What do you mean? Financially?

RL: Financially, yes.

RM: Well, financially the family looked after me. Spiritually and emotionally, emotionally as you can imagine it was rather difficult, there was a time straight after, when I was on my own that I cannot remember, there was a lot of things, not everything but a lot of things that I don't remember. It is, certain things are just a blank, I was so low that I just blanked it out over the years. I was on my own for about four and a half years and my husband's family were a terrific support to me, I must say. My mother in law, my brothers in law, my sisters in law, they were really fantastic. My family lived in London, my auntie wasn't always that well and in any case when my first child was six months old my uncle died as well, so she was, she wasn't in too good a state either, my family came up now and again, not as often as I would have liked actually, I think people forget, I think people think you can get to London easier than you can get from London to Manchester, it is a psychological something about it.

RL: Where was Norbert at this time?

**Tape 3: 10 minutes 30 seconds**

RM: Well Norbert was very busy. He was at the outset of his career. He was away a lot, he was also married with a young child and he was away an awful lot, he was a very, very busy, busy man, at the beginning. He started off his quartet in 1948, with the quartet at the same time he belonged to a member of a trio, he was the leader of a small chamber orchestra at the time and then slowly these things fell by the way and he just concentrated on his, on the quartet.

RL: Who did he marry?

RM: He also married a refugee. Katinka And it is rather a complicated name, her maiden name, and I can't remember it, it is actually, Kathy actually we called her, her name is pronounced Katinka, it is a Russian name. But she was from Germany.

RL: Where did they live?

RM: They lived in London, they lived, they started off life, first of all in, not Mornington Crescent, what is it called, near Chalk Farm, and then they bought a house in Edgware, and then from Edgware they moved to Mill Hill and from then they moved off to Bushey where he still lives now, he has lived in Bushey for many years, it is nice and quiet there.

RL: So coming back to you, at the time when you were on your own with the children, did you do any work at all or you ... ?

RM: Well, I went and helped a cousin of my husbands, she had a retail clothes shop in Cheetham Hill, and just for something to do I used to go and help her out sometimes, not for pay, just because I wanted to get out of the house, and in lieu of that I got some clothes from her, but I wasn't on her payroll or anything like that, just literally to get out of the house because I needed to, not to be at home all the time by myself ...

RL: And how did you meet your second husband?

RM: I met Isaac, also, I was introduced by mutual friends, we were introduced, I was on my own, it was about four and a half years, and we were introduced, we met at somebody's house, and they made an evening, and I remember going to that evening and, we never spoke all evening to each other, he sat at one end of the room and I sat at the other and we just looked at each other, and at the end of the evening he walked out and he said "Goodnight", and I said "Goodnight", and that was it, and I thought well, very nice, finished. That was on the Tuesday, and on the Friday I get a great big bunch of flowers, he would like to see me again, I don't know, that was on, we met on 17<sup>th</sup> June, I remember I met my first husband also in June, on 24<sup>th</sup> of June actually, and also within a month or two we were engaged, when you get older you don't wait that long. I had two children, he was widowed and had two children, in fact I, although we knew the same people, and had friends, more or less had the same friends, we had never met. Funnily

**Tape 3: 14 minutes 40 seconds**

enough I had met his wife once, she gave me a lift once, coming home from mikveh, and he was in the car and he wasn't allowed to look back and they gave me a lift home, because when he came to see me he remembered the house, it is very funny that.

RL: Can you tell me a little bit about him? What was his name?

RM: Isaac, he was born in London, within the sound of Bow Bells I believe, when he was 18 months old, he was born in 1915, and when he was 18 months old, during the war they moved up to Liverpool, and he had three brothers and a sister, and he was the second, was he the second? Yes, he was the second, no the third, I don't know whether his sister was older or younger than him, I don't remember any more, no I think he was the third, the third son. No, the sister was the eldest and then there were four brothers, and he was the third brother, he had one other younger brother, Shalom. What was his surname? Barron, with a double R-B-A-R-R-O-N, somebody once asked me how do you spell it, with an E, and I said, "Definitely not."

RL: And what did he do for a living?

RM: All sorts. When I met him he was in partnership with a garage selling petrol, and doing repairs, and renting out cars for hire, that was, he did that at that time, he had been in the army.

RL: How old were the children?

RM: Aviva was 11 and Moshe was 17 already, he had been married for 20 years, he was got married very, very young, he was married at the age of 20, he was in the army for four years, he was sent off to Italy, he was there for a while, in fact he didn't see his son I think until well after he was born, I can't remember now.

RL: And when did you marry?

RM: We married on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1959.

RL: And where did you marry?

RM: In London. It was at the Kedassia restaurant, under the Kedassia with Rabbi Munk from Golders Green, he married us.

RL: And where did you live after marriage?

RM: We lived in Manchester. We started off in Duckworth Road still and then bought a house in Woodhill Drive, Prestwich, and we lived there for 24 years, or nearly, yes just about 24 years.

**Tape 3: 18 minutes 0 seconds**

RL: And what children did you have?

RM: And we had two children, two sons ...

RL: Their names?

RM: Shlomo, the older one is Shlomo Reuven, named after the uncle who brought me up, and the younger one was Philip, Philip Nigel, Pinchus Nachum, which was named after two uncles of my husbands, of my late husbands.

RL: When were they born?

RM: Shlomo was born in December '59 and Philip was born in June '63, '62 sorry, '62, yes.

RL: And which Shul did you belong to?

RM: Shomrei Hadass. Up in Prestwich, which the famous Rabbi Gedalia Rabinowitz started that Shul, I believe in 1945 I think they started it, and we joined in 1951, my first husband and I joined in 1951 and I have been a member there ever since. And whoever came into my life I shlepped there.

RL: And what Shul ...

RM: Isaac was a member of Machziki Hadass, and he quite enjoyed our Shul actually, and he had to change his Nusach, because his Nusach for davening was Nusach Sephard and our Shul was Nusach Ashkenaz. I must tell you though, before I got married for the first time, Jeffrey, Oleh Hashalom was a very frum young man and it is through him that

I became more orthodox, and through some very good friends of his, who lived in Golders Green, Bernard and Cynthia Kahn. They taught me an awful lot, in fact before I was married I went to her for lessons and my pre marriage lessons were by Cynthia, and they have been wonderful, wonderful friends over the years, not always in contact all the time, but, he is not here any more unfortunately, he was nifta a while ago, and she has not been in good health, but they have been the most fabulous friends over the years, but also he was a refugee, but she was a girl from South Wales, a very interesting story in itself. And they have been fantastic friends to me and my first husband, and to me over the years.

RL: So as you entered into your first marriage you had become ...

RM: I had become orthodox, yes, yes.

RL: He obviously must have been from a religious family?

**Tape 3: 21 minutes 31 seconds**

RM: He became, yes he was, he became, well yes he was, Jeffrey, Oleh Hashalom, was a very, was the youngest member of a very well known family in Manchester, who had a lot of affiliations to Manchester Yeshiva, to the Central, not Central Shul, Crumpsall Shul. My late father in law put a lot of money into the Shul, he gave a Sefer Torah there, he gave a lot of money there, they gave a lot of money to the Manchester Yeshiva and generally speaking my later brother in law, Algi, gave a lot of money to all the educational places in Manchester, and gave land, where the King David School is now, the land belonged to the Bloom family which was given to the, for the school, and I remember being at the first turning of the sod, what they called, at the ceremony there, they were really in the forefront of Jewish education and Torah learning in Manchester. But my husband was I think the frumest of the family, yes. My brother in law, my husband's sister's husband, Needoff, he was the president of the Manchester Yeshiva at the time.

RL: How did you feel about becoming more religious?

RM: I felt very comfortable, because as I said before, it has always worried me greatly that I didn't know enough, and I used to think, if I know so little, what about my children, how will I be able to teach my children. If I know so little, my children won't know anything, what will become of them, will they forget that they are Jewish altogether. It used to worry me greatly when I was in my teens still, and when I met Jeffrey it seemed that this is the answer to my prayers type of thing, quite apart from liking him, I felt that this must have meant to be, and well he was, he used to teach me, not teach me in that he used to sit down and teach me, but he used to tell me different things, and then as I say I went to his friends, Mrs Kahn, and she actually, I went there for lessons, and then I learned everything I needed to learn, I needed to know.

RL: Did you continue your learning after marriage?



RM: Yes, yes.

RL: In any formal way?

RM: No, no. Not in a very formal way, not so much, we used to sit down together, my husband and I used to sit down together, we used to do the Sidra of the week, we used to do Pirkei Avos, we used to do different, learn different dinim and things, in those days we didn't go out to a shiur, it wasn't as much as it is nowadays, the whole set up was completely different then. I had no formal, I never what you could call, apart from going to Cheder, which wasn't much really, I never really had any formal Jewish education. So, when I had my children, I mean, the first thing, I said, "Thank God there is a Jewish day school". And also, you know, over the years, you learned things from other people.

RL: How did your second husband fit into this?

**Tape 3: 25 minutes 38 seconds**

RM: Well, my second husband came from a very orthodox family. At first I was worried if I was going to be enough orthodox, and then I found out that I was. One never thinks, I never thought of myself, if I am orthodox or not orthodox, it didn't come into it in those days, people weren't pigeon holed. In fact if somebody asked my husband, "Are you frum?" He says, "Frum where?" You know, Isaac was a very, very devout man, without showing it on his sleeve. As I say, he came from a very religious family, I mean his Jewish education was pretty good, although he didn't actually go to Yeshiva, but his father learnt with his children.

RL: Had Jeffrey gone to Yeshiva?

RM: Yes, Jeffrey, yes Jeffrey was in Manchester Yeshiva for a while, he had a very good keshet with the late Rosh Yeshiva. In fact the late Rosh Yeshiva, after Jeffrey was nifta, he used to, I used to go the Yeshiva to speak to him at times, he phoned me every single Erev Shabbos to wish me good Shabbos. He used to phone me, "How are you? How are you keeping? How are the children? Do you need to talk about anything? Look upon me as your father." It was, he was the most wonderful man, and as for the Rebbetzin, his late wife, they were wonderful friends to me, they invited me to all their Simchas, I was there for Sedorim, and I had, my late husband had a very good, a wonderful keshet with him, it was his Rebbe. Yes.

RL: Was your second husband involved in the community at all?

RM: Not really, not really. He was away, as I say, he was away, as I say he was in the war, when he came back from the war, he was involved with the community, he didn't belong to any organisations or anything like that. He married in 1935, he went away to war in 1941, and by the time he came back in 1946 he had to start looking for something to do, life was very difficult, he was already married with a young child, and then in 1947

the second child was born. He, no he didn't really, not really, the only thing is, when he joined, when he joined, when we joined, when he got married to me he was quite active in our Shul. He became a Gabba in our Shul and he was busy with that. His hours with having the garage, some nights he worked until about 10 o'clock at night, so that was a bit awkward doing anything, so he was in partnership with a non Jew, so when non Jew worked on Saturdays, my husband had to be there on Sundays. Jewish holidays of course my husband was off, so the non Jewish partner was in, so Christmas and non Jewish holidays my husband had to be in, that is how they worked it. They were very, very good friends, yes. They never fell out ...

RL: Was he always in the garage?

RM: No, when he came out of the army he got the garage, and eventually he felt he was getting too old for the garage, so ... Was it after Philip was born? Yes, after Philip was born, he decided to sell the garage, and then he started manufacturing raincoats, but anyway, it wasn't very successful, eventually he went on selling anoraks, raincoats and

### **Tape 3: 30 minutes 32 seconds**

all those sorts of things on the markets. With not, with not working on Shabbos of course, things were not very good, and we went through some very, very, very tough time for some years. If it wasn't for Mr Feingold or for Bubby Halberstadt, I don't think we would have had a meal on the table sometimes. Mrs Halberstadt used to phone me up and used to say, "Well Mrs Barron, what can we send you this week?" And I used to say, "um, er, er, er", because I didn't want to give an order, because I couldn't pay for it and she would say, "Well you need this, and you need that and you need the other." And she used to send it. I used to pay when I could, whatever I could, and if I used to go to Mr Feingold and apologise, he used to go like this. Anyway, Boruch Hashem, over the years I have paid off every penny. Eventually, one of the reasons I went into catering was because I felt I had to, somebody had to do something, and slowly, slowly, the catering, I was just going to do it as extra money to, you know, but it took over, so one by one my husband took over, left the markets and he just kept the best market on, and then eventually he left that and we went into catering and we opened up a Middleton Road shop, the front was a shop, and the back was my catering premises.

RL: Had you had any experience with catering before?

RM: Only my children's Bar Mitzvahs and engagements, that's all, and my own catering because we always used to have a lot of people in. I had a large family, I took in, I was very friendly with one of my neighbours when I lived in Duckworth Road, when she moved in was not long after I lost my first husband, and three days after she moved in she lost her husband and she was left with three children as well, in very poor circumstances, and the whole street just went in and started collecting money for her, anyway I sort of took her under my wing, she was a refugee as well, her husband died because of things, he was in a concentration camp, in Dachau, and what happened to him there, because of that he got something to do with his lungs and he died, very young. We helped each

other really, I helped her, and she helped me, and we became very close friends. Unfortunately, I had already remarried, her little girl died at the age of eight, her youngest child, of cancer of the bone, and about a couple of years, maybe a year or two later, she died one night, in her bed, with her, she got a heart attack or something, I had already moved away at that time. So she had a girl of 15 and a boy of 19, so they moved into my house, to, they sat shiva in my house at the time, and they had no relatives in England, except the distant cousin up in Glasgow, and she had two sisters, one in Germany and one in Denmark. I was really the only one here. Anyway the girl stayed with me and the boy went back to live on his own, for various reasons I couldn't have him, and eventually he went off to Canada, he lives in Canada now. The girl became a nurse, she married from my house, it was Vivienne Silverman who is now Vivienne Marcus, she has two children who are both married now and I think they are both having babies at any time now. She became a nurse and she is quite high up in her profession, yes.

RL: You were telling me also about the catering.

**Tape 3: 35 minutes 22 seconds**

RM: Oh yes, sorry, I am digressing. Well I started catering from the house, doing a Kiddush here and a little dinner there, and it sort of took over, until eventually we had to get premises and in 1975 we got premises on Middleton Road, and I was there for seven years until my husband died.

RL: What did you sell from there?

RM: A delicatessen, it was an outlet for my, I sold, kosher food, it was all kosher, the Rabbonim used to come to have a look, whatever I sold was 100%, the people knew that whatever they went to buy in my house was all right. I think your husband came in at the time and you came in. And I was there for seven years, and my husband died in 1983 and it was too much for me to do the catering and the shop, and then I got a, I was asked if, the Sharei Torah just started up, the Yeshiva and I was asked whether I would consider becoming the cook there, to cook for them. At the time they only had about 18 boys, so I felt that, I tried to juggle cooking there and the shop, but it was impossible, so in August of '87 it must have been, '83, no August '83, I closed the shop and I took my catering, I was allowed to do my catering from, while cooking for the Yeshiva I could do my catering from there. I took all my catering stuff and took it to the Yeshiva so that I could cook and do for the boys, and I was a cook there for four years, until they moved to Upper Park Road, they started off in the Machzikei Hadass Beis Hamedrash. The boys were learning and I had a kitchen, we made a kitchen up next door, and then two years later we moved to Upper Park Road, and by the time I left there were about 120/130 boys, and then I felt it was getting a bit much for me, I was getting older as well, and then, what year was that, '87, but I always kept close relationships, close connection with the Yeshiva, I still did my catering from there, even after I left.

RL: So what was happening with your family, with your children, during these years.

RM: Well, Aviva, well Moshe got married in 1964. In 1960 he went off to Israel, when he was 20 years old, or '61, he went off to Israel. Primarily to go off to Yeshiva and to study to be a shochet, which I said he will never do because he was too soft, that was in 1961 after I had Shlomo, before Philip was born. He got married in 1964 to an American girl who lived with family Finkel, who was one of the Rosh Yeshivas of Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim, she was like a daughter in the house, they took her under their wing, I consider myself a machutenista to Rebbetzin Finkel, which I am very honoured actually. And over the years they had 14 children, Kein ayin hora.

Aviva got married in 1966 to David Salem from South Manchester, and they moved to South Manchester, David asked the Rosh Yeshiva, who was his Rebbe where he should live, north or south, and the Rosh Yeshiva said South Manchester because that is where he should be in order to, for kiruv. And the day that they got engaged my eldest grandson was born in Eretz Yisroel, in 1966, Erev Pesach, 1966 we had a birth, an engagement, a bar mitzvah and a wedding. That was the year of years in our family.

**Tape 3: 41 minutes 15 seconds**

RL: What was Moshe doing in Israel? What did he do?

RM: He was in Yeshiva, he was at Slabotka Yeshiva, I mean he carried on learning for a time, until the children started coming, and he went to Feinstein's Kollel there. And then he started slowly working, doing this, doing that, whatever he could find, he has always had a very good brain bless him, and he started doing, building generators, first of all a generator just for a fridge that they could use on Shabbos, and then for a flat, and eventually for a whole block of flats, for yeshivas he used to do the generators and then eventually he did the generators for a shikun, for a whole area, together with the local authority. Someone else muscled in on it and unfortunately Moshe lost a lot of ground and he was looking for something else, he did, over the years he did very well, and then, he had his ups and downs, at the moment he is on a down. But I must say, in his fifties he completely retrained himself and he became quite a computer expert and he is something to do with computers at the moment, but at the moment in the, in Israel, with computers, it is not very good at the moment, he is waiting for something, he is, he will always find something kein ayin hora. He is very clever, and very versatile.

RL: And Aviva?

RM: His wife is, teaches English, yes.

Aviva is married, she worked as a secretary for some time, they lived in South Manchester for 16 years and yes, for 16 years they lived in South Manchester, and altogether they have five children, four of them are now married, two of them live in Gibraltar and two live in Eretz Yisroel. And her youngest son is in Gateshead, and her oldest son has just become, has just got Semicha, he lives in Kiryat Sepher and he is in The Mir. The Mir Kollel, and he has got, he teaches, and he has got a little kollel, a little

week kollel in El Ad. And he has got, and he started off on the bus from Kiryat Sepher to near Yerushalayim, because it took three quarters of an hour going there, and coming back, so he started a bus kollel, which is funded by somebody, so they don't waste there time. Every minute he uses it, he never wastes a minute, and he is married to a lady from Manchester, Seruyah, Rivka Seruyah, her father is a Rabbi in Paris actually now, her parents live in Paris actually now, and they have three little girls.

Her eldest daughter lives in Gibraltar, married to Shlomo Cohen and they have five children, and he is in business, and the next daughter in line is also married to a Gibraltarian, Mordechai Benadi, who is also a Rabbi actually, but he is an accountant, but he also helps to run the kollel in Gibraltar. He teaches in the kollel, gives shiurim, he and his brother in law run a very busy school, the high school, and running the school and generally very busy in the community, and they have seven children, kein ayin hora.

Next in line is Shani, Aviva's next daughter, who lives in Eretz Yisroel, who is married to an Israeli. And they have just had their fourth child, my daughter is on her way home today actually from Eretz Yisroel.

### **Tape 3: 46 minute 5 seconds**

And the youngest son is in Gateshead. And then there is my daughter Zena, who has two married daughters, the younger one of which has just had a baby, about three weeks ago, a little baby boy, we had a bris. She lives in Manchester, her older daughter, who got married last year, she had her anniversary two days ago, she lives in London and they have just moved into their first new home, a new house actually.

RL: Now Zena, what was her schooling? And did she work after school?

RM: Zena went to Jewish High, Jewish Day School and then Jewish High School. She left after O Levels, went to cutting in Salford Tech, a dress making and designing course. She was very, very, she is very artistic and she used to paint and draw beautifully, I really wanted her to go to art school, but she just, there wasn't anywhere for her to, in the North Western area, nothing it all, so that is why I sent her to the dress designing school to give vent to her artistic feelings there, when she got married, she got married very young at the age of 18, she hadn't finished her course yet but she promised me she would, which she did. And now she helps her husband in the business.

RL: Who did she marry?

RM: She married Stanley Field, who in the printing, his father used to run the business and now he runs the business and Zena helps him in the business, it's a family, family Field business actually. Next in line is Mark, who unfortunately never married, we are still hoping. He is also very artistic actually, he is a very, very clever man who doesn't think very much of himself unfortunately, I don't know why, he always puts himself down.

RL: What was his schooling?

RM: He went to Jewish day school, Jewish Grammar School and then had a couple of years at university actually, and then he left, he wasn't interested, he was doing, what you call it design, not garden, what do you call it, landscape architecture actually, yes, he once won a Manchester Evening News competition when he was 15.

RL: What did he go on to do?

RM: He was in business, also something to do with the printing trade and with computers, you name it, he is doing something with computers at the moment, yes.

Then there is Shlomo, who married in '83, when he was 23. Three weeks before his father died. He married an English girl, Beverley Bloom, nothing to do with my side of the Blooms at all, a different family completely, actually a granddaughter of the Rosenberg family, the famous Rosenberg family in Manchester. And they, after a year in Manchester they went off to Israel, and were in Israel for, oh golly, how many years, I am not quite sure, I must work it out, they came back in nineteen ... oh, when did they come

**Tape 3: 50 minutes 23 seconds**

back? About five/six years were they in Israel. They did quite nicely there, he is also in computers, and then he came back and settled back in Manchester. He is also in computers, they have seven children now.

RL: What education did he have?

RM: Shlomo went to Jewish Day School and then he went to Jewish Grammar School, and also he went for two years, two or three years he went off to University, to Manchester University to do law, he enjoyed the first year and not the second year, and during the second years exams he just put a line through his papers and walked out, just before his wedding. So, we were very upset, but what could we do, it was his life. Anyway, he didn't turn out too bad, bless him.

And Philip bless him, he went off, also to Jewish Day School and Jewish Grammar School and then he was also, he also went off to University. Oh I forgot to say, before they all went off to University they were in Yeshiva. Mark was in Yeshiva here and in Eretz Yisroel. Shlomo went off to Eretz Yisroel Yeshiva before going off to university. Philip went to Gateshead, he didn't want to go to Israel, and he was there for two years in Yeshiva and then went on to, was it Salford or Manchester University to do, with computer engineering, what do you call it? I am not quite sure what they called it, electrical engineering or something like that. He did two years, the second year he failed, that was the time when his father died, and I wanted him to do the second year again, but he didn't want to know, he was, it took him a long time, he didn't want to know, it hit him the hardest because he was the one who was still at home when his father died and it really hit him very, very badly. He lost all his concentration and everything, he had long

talks with his tutor, with his Rabbonim, with me, anyway he eventually got a job with JM Computers, and they sent him off to do different, to colleges, to do different courses and that is how he got into the computer world, through the back way, instead of going to university he did it that way, which perhaps is better because he got his experience right away. And he married also a local girl, the first time that two people from our Shul got married, Karen Marks, and they live in Manchester, Philip has got his own business now, and they live in Manchester and they also have seven children, kein ayin hora.

RL: Did your children belong to any youth groups or clubs?

RM: Not really. They belonged to the Jewish Grammar Youth Club so to speak, they always had their friends from school mainly, I think that at some stage or another, Zena and Mark used to belong to Ezra at one time. I can't remember, Shlomo never belonged to any Ezra or anything like that. They all used to go to the Aguda Siyum, not that they belonged to the Aguda, but, no they never belonged to any, through there school years, I think maybe they may have gone to once or twice B'nai Akiva perhaps at times, but not really, not when they were in grammar school, grammar school frowned upon Bnei Akiva.

**Tape 3: 54 minutes 58 seconds**

RL: Why was that?

RM: Well, it depends, there were some years, when the elements there weren't, were not as from as at other times, sometimes things happened there, they did things perhaps that weren't quite right, generally speaking it was frowned upon. I don't know, they always had loads and loads of friends, they didn't need to go to any, I mean Shlomo was never short of friends, Philip used to sometimes go along with Shlomo, and when Shlomo went off to Israel to Yeshiva I was very worried about him, because I thought he had no friends, but I needn't have worried, because the first Shabbos that he was on his own, he said "Goodbye" to me at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and I never saw him again until 11 o'clock at night. Suddenly he had all these friends, well that is it, as regards to my children, bless them.

RL: Was it usual for boys to go off to Yeshiva after school before university? How usual was that in those days?

RM: In those days, it was, from Jewish Grammar School that would have been considered the ideal, to take a couple of years out, and the universities were very happy to defer the places because they realised that boys who went to Yeshiva didn't mess around in university, they studied. Because how you study in university and how you study in Yeshiva, university is child's play in comparison, so most of the boys did that.

RL: How big was the Jewish Grammar School when the boys attended?

RM: Oh, over the years, well over 100, yes. I don't know how many there are there now, about 200 boys now. But then the, there were well over 100 boys.

RL: And you said you were active on the ladies ...

RM: I was active on the ladies committee. We used to have jumble sales, we used to have coffee mornings, we used to do dinners, and special occasions, we used to make evenings, we used to, it was a very, very active group actually, every month we had something. It was a very hard working committee.

RL: This film is about to end so we will just stop here.

#### **TAPE 4**

This is the interview with Renee Mosbacher and it is tape 4.

We have got to the stage where you have lost your second husband, and what happened next in your life?

#### **Tape 4: 0 minute 22 seconds**

RM: Well, I was working, and I, after my husband died, I carried on working, I gave up the shop because it was too with the catering, and I took the job as the cook in the Sharei Torah Yeshiva and I did my catering from there. I had to carry on working, I had to make a living. For the first few years I still had my youngest son living with me, it was a very difficult time for me and my son, he took it the worst, and he found it very difficult to come to terms with everything, as I did as well.

But, once Philip was married, I really didn't like living on my own again, and I really thought I would like to settle down again, and eventually I registered with a marriage bureau in London, which was from the, non profit making, the head was the Chief Rabbi, and really the people who worked there didn't get paid for it, they did it because it was a Mitzvah, and also anybody who had registered had to prove halachically that they were Jewish, and I mean, the circles that I lived in, you didn't meet people and go out with somebody, so that the only way was either somebody to introduce me to somebody, or to, that way I thought. In fact, somebody told me about it, because they were happily married through this bureau, and I was registered for a number of years and met various people at various times, until I got a phone call from them that this gentleman had, was here from Switzerland, he was only here for the weekend, and he saw my name and he would like to meet me. And I said, "I am very sorry but I can't come down because I am in business, and this week I can't come down, I am in catering and I am catering this weekend." Anyway, this gentleman phoned me instead and we had a very long conversation, three quarters of an hour actually and we left it at that. He went back to Switzerland and that is the last I heard. That was November. At that time I belonged to a music society and I came home one evening from this music society concert and there was a message, I was just playing a message from him, when the phone rang, and he



actually phoned through, he had just come back from South Africa, which is where his daughter lives and he would like to meet me, so we arranged for me to come to London, for him to come to London and for me to go down to London, and we met at the beginning or March, I think it must have been, no, it was February still, it was February that we met, in London, and I had made arrangements, in case I didn't like him, I came down on a Friday, like over Shabbos, in case I didn't like him I made arrangements to have Shabbos lunch somewhere else, anyway we met on the Friday morning, and he said that by lunch time he had made up his mind. It took me a bit longer. We had a very nice weekend in London, he stayed with his niece, a Mrs Posen, and I stayed in The Croft Court Hotel, or something, anyway we spent Shabbos together, we spent Motzei Shabbos together, by Sunday I said, "Alright, I will go and visit him in Switzerland". So, that was the thing, it was just after Purim I think, I went to Switzerland for a weekend and that is where I said, "Yes, alright", I decided, and that was Purim time, he came over to visit me for Pesach, to the children, and Lag B'Omer we were married.

RL: And what was the date?

**Tape 4: 5 minutes 49 seconds**

RM: The date we got married? Lag B'Omer, I think it was 13<sup>th</sup> May, funnily enough I am not that sure of the date, the English date ...

RL: And the year?

RM: The year, 1990. I was seven years on my own, yes.

RL: And what was his background?

RM: He was Swiss, and his father originally I think was born in Germany. His grandmother came over before the First World War to Switzerland from Germany, from a small German town, and "forgot" to go back! She settled in Switzerland with two sons and they built up quite a nice little family there. One son had four sons and two daughters and one son had four daughters and two sons. They built up a nice Kehillah there, those two boys and their families; they have grown into a very large family now, the Mosbacher family, Yekkers. In 1951, I think it was, or '52, as a young man, he was born in February, February 21<sup>st</sup>, and I think he was 21, 21 I think he was, when he left for America, he went to make his way in America. He was a draftsman as well, he was a very clever man, he, of metals, and he, different things, anyway he managed to find himself some very good jobs, in American in those days you, when you have got a job you have got a contract for a certain length of time, and when one contract finished you had to make a contract for another, and every time you made a contract he always bettered himself, he joined a sort of a youth organisation, and through that he met his first wife, he got married also to a refugee girl, but she was more American, she came over as a very, very young girl, and he lived there until 71 and then moved back to Switzerland because of his wife's ill health, he felt that the medical treatment she could get would be better in Switzerland. They had two children, both born in America, a boy and a girl, the

girl was the elder one, and unfortunately he lost his wife. What year was it? He was on his own for about a year before I met him, when he decided that he, it took him about a year, about two years before we married, he was only a widower for two years. In the meantime his daughter married a South African young man and moved to Johannesburg, his son at the time, I met him, he lived in America, in New York, and when he came back to Manchester he worked, he started working in a bank, in a private bank.

RL: What made you decide to come back here as opposed to going to Switzerland?

RM: Well, I came back because my husband died, in Switzerland, well he died here actually.

RL: I mean when you married. What was his first name?

RM: Leo.

RL: Leo, where did you live?

**Tape 4: 10 minutes 0 second**

RM: We lived in Switzerland, and we were married barely four years, we were back here for a visit, over Yom Tov, over Pesach, and he died on the last day of Yom Tov in our Shul, well he didn't die in Shul he died in the hospital, it was all very sudden. As was Isaac's death, also happened from one minute to the next. It was a terrible shock, a dreadful, dreadful shock when that happened, it takes you a long, long time to get over these things, and I went back, for six months to finish off things like that, I just couldn't have afforded to carry on living in Switzerland, and in any case I didn't really want to because all my children were here.

RL: So how was life in Switzerland for the four years you were there?

RM: Wonderful. There were certain things I didn't like about it, but generally speaking life was sweet.

RL: Whereabouts were you?

RM: We lived in Zurich. In an apartment, everybody, most people lived in apartments there. We had a good life. I worked, not because I had to but because I wanted to.

RL: What did you do?

RM: Guess what? I was in catering, I helped out in a restaurant and two young women, who had just started when I got there, and they opened a restaurant, and the Rebbetzin, Rebbetzin Levy, who knew me, when we went to see her she said, "There are two young ladies here who are just opening a restaurant. They need somebody. They need somebody to help them cooking, and I told them you were going to see them tomorrow."

So I went to see them tomorrow, and I helped them out, they were wonderful, when my husband died they were absolutely wonderful, when he was in hospital, already before he died, they were absolutely fantastic to me, I had some very, very good friends in Switzerland, I must say my best friends, they were not Swiss girls, they were all girls from, who came from outside, the Swiss generally speaking are a bit cold fish, I think. But most of my friends actually were my children's generation and they were either English, South African, American, anything but Swiss, French.

RL: What were the non-Jewish Swiss community like to you, towards the Jews?

RM: They were very nice to me, but generally towards the end, there was anti-semitism, but generally speaking the Swiss are cold fish. I don't mean the Yiddish, just the Jews, generally speaking they are cold fish. They are very, they don't like the Germans, I found they didn't like the Germans at all. They liked the Swiss, they liked being Swiss. I don't think they like any outsiders really. I mean we lived in the German part of the country, where they spoke German but I, I myself didn't encounter any hostility or anything, on the contrary, when I got there and when I had to, and when I went away and when I went to all the different consulates, and all the different, what do you call them,

**Tape 4: 14 minute 28 seconds**

different departments for income tax and this and that and the other, I found them very nice and very nice and very helpful, indeed, there was a lot to be done after my husband died and they were very helpful, but I got, just generally I felt they didn't like the Germans one little bit.

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

RM: Mistrust. More so to the Austrians rather than to the Germans, but then, I don't know, wherever you live, I have always felt that if anybody becomes too much busy with politics, too many Jews come to the fore, either in politics or anything, I always feel uncomfortable, I always feel, well, we are here on sufferance and on sufferance only, I have always felt that. Not that anybody, it's just a general feeling I have, maybe it's a built in feeling. However much, look, the Germans always felt they were more than German than the Germans themselves, but when it came to it, OUT! I always find that when Jews forget that they are Jews, that the non Jews will remind them that they are Jews. That is not how we feel, but I think that it is a matter of fact. It is nothing derogatory to non Jews or anything, it is a fact.

RL: How safe do you feel in Britain?

RM: It is a feeling, I mean, I feel fine, I feel I am British, I mean I have lived most of my life here, I have lived 65 years of my life I have lived in England. I love it here, the people generally are lovely people, there are good and bad in everybody. Just generally speaking, I think, you think it can't happen here the same thing as things happen on the continent, because British people are different, there is a different make up, they are

more, easy going, I don't know, I can't put my finger on it. On the other hand, when you see what happened up in Oldham and in Burnley and in all these places, if people feel threatened by an outsider, they will do something about it, they can't help it, we would be the same, but one thing is, we are here on sufferance only. In the world, wherever we go, not just England, or wherever, even in America, I think Jews themselves are different to any other people, we are meant to be, not because we are special, because we are not particularly, but we are Jews, and until Moshiach comes we are strangers, wherever we go, and we have to behave ourselves, between ourselves, and between other people, we have to know how to behave ourselves, and if we become too cocky, or too ... people will let us know.

RL: How would you describe yourself in terms of nationality?

RM: I am British, but I am Jewish.

RL: When did you take out naturalization?

RM: When I was 18 years old, before I was 18 years old, although I came over with my aunt and uncle, I was considered an orphan, I was never officially adopted by my aunt

**Tape 4: 19 minute 9 seconds**

and uncle, it never crossed their minds, because we were just one family, so when they became naturalized after the war, they looked for my name, and they realised my name wasn't on the thing, so I had to through a naturalization by myself, which because I was a minor, I was under 18 years old, it went through within six weeks. And I have got my naturalisation papers still and I remember when I had to, when I went for my final interview and I was called into an office and the lady sat there, you know a very old fashioned kind of old lady, and she congratulated me on becoming British, you can't become English, only British, she said "You know you are British, I know you live with your family but you should always behave yourself and be good girl", it was very nice actually the way she spoke, but I was laughing my head off, I had somebody waiting for me outside to take me home, and I said afterwards, what a nice thing to do, to speak very maternally to me, because I was a minor, I will never forget that, that was at The Home Office that that happened, yes. But as I say it only took six weeks.

RL: Do you feel you have any kind of continental identity?

RM: Yes, I do. In some ways I do, that is why I felt comfortable living in Switzerland I think, because deep down, although I feel very British, I do like the way of life here, but there is something in me that is still very continental. My father was Polish, my mother was, no my mother was Polish, my father was Russian, I was born in England, I married two English man and a Swiss, so who am I? I am a bit of a mixed up kid.

RL: You were born in Vienna.

RM: That's right.

RL: Can you put your finger on what continental identity means. What is it that you feel?

RM: A certain excitement at certain things, I can't explain it, not political, a certain something, something to do with the arts I think it is, I come from an artistic family, my brother is a musician, I mean I play the piano, I like art, I like music, I like continental music. I like, I don't know, there is something, the way, to get up and about, to do things, I speak two and a half languages, I speak English, I speak German, both languages like my mother tongue. I speak a bit of Yiddish, I feel I have a lot in common with continentals, and yet I feel very much at home in England, I can't explain it. Maybe it is the artistic side, I don't know, there must be something there. I remember once going back for the first time to Vienna; I was on holiday with my brother, who lives in Vienna, in Italy. He went back, and then I went back a day later on the train with my children, and we crossed over the boarder from Italy into Austria, about 5 o'clock in the morning, about 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, it was just about to get light, it was still very grey, and I had such a, for the first time I was back in Austria, I had a battle inside me was going on. And I thought, oh this excitement, the excitement of being back again, the place where I

**Tape 4: 23 minutes 40 seconds**

was born, after all, and I thought, why should I be so excited, they threw me out of here, but there was this battle going on, it's the land, not the people, it's the land itself, never mind the people, it is the land of my birth never mind the people, there was such a war going on inside me about my emotions and my feelings about going back to Austria. I can't tell you, I was in such a turmoil, I couldn't understand it myself, I cried, I cried my eyes out going back into, back into Austria, never mind Vienna, just Austria, going back into the country for the first time. After all I was already the mother of two children, I had already been through the great emotional strain of losing my first husband, and yet I had this terrible turmoil inside me, of going back again. It didn't happen the second time, but that first time was terrible, it was like a rebirth, I can't explain it.

RL: Did you revisit the places that you lived?

RM: Not the first time, I wanted to go, and my brother kept saying, "Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow." I was only there for a, for barely a week, and he had a, and afterwards I said to him, "You never took me to where we were." He said, "I didn't want to". Because things looked a mess, I don't know. It wasn't until the second time I came that I said, "Now, I am going". And my niece at that time took me to the school where we went to, and I recognized, and I could walk there from the place where I lived with my mother, to the place where I lived with my auntie, as I say to the school, to the primary school where I went, to the shops where we went, to the street, to the town, I remembered everywhere. I had to go back, because I had to make sure that these things really happened, that it wasn't just a dream, for my own sake, this really happened, that the beginning of my life was really here, because if it's, if you don't revisit after a while.

I have been back a few times now, I go back for Kever Ovos, to go to the cemetery, and now to see my brother as well. I don't feel one hundred per cent comfortable there, but I feel I have to go back. Last time I went, my brother got freedom of the city of Vienna, for his musical work over the years, because he was born in Vienna, so they think he is a Viennese, so we let them honour him. And they did actually honour him very much, I was there, they had two concerts in his honour, they gave him the freedom of the city, they made a big dinner for him, and they made a big do in the, in the Rathaus in the main city hall. It was very, very nice, but, it was very nice. It was just four years ago, and I haven't been back since.

RL: How interested were your children in you past?

RM: Yes, my children, especially Mark, is very interested. And actually, I am looking forward to having a thing of this, I would like him to ... is it being edited or what?

RL: No.

RM: No, I think it would be very interesting for him to go through it.

RL: Have you taken them to Vienna?

**Tape 4: 27 minutes 50 seconds**

RM: I took Mark. Mark went, Zena went, I once went with Zena, my daughter Zena, for a day's outing we had to Vienna, we went very early in the morning, we got there for about half past ten, 11 o'clock, my brother and my cousin met us, we went straight to the Beis Olam, to the cemetery, went back to the Jewish kosher dinner place and my brother gave Zena and me a tour of Vienna, and the places where I was, and it was just a fantastic day, I did everything I wanted to do. In that day we saw the children, we saw the family, she saw some of the places where I grew up in, and one day we got back here about 11 o'clock at night, it was quite terrific. But the others, my two younger sons don't know at all, and Moshe and Aviva don't either. But Mark and I also had a holiday there, we stayed there for two weeks together, as a holiday. We went to Bad Gastein for a few days, which is on the west end of Austria, with my brother and sister in law and we spent some time in Vienna, and I showed him all the different places where I lived, where I went to school, where we went for walks, to the Prata, yes, he was very interested. Of course it looks different now to how it did then.

RL: Have you ever belonged to any refugee organisations?

RM: I did at one time belong to the Association of Jewish Refugees, and I used to get their letters, their newspaper sent, and I let that lapse after a while. Sometimes when I am in London, if Fotsie goes, if my cousin Fotsie goes, the one who, Mary rather, her nickname is Fotsie, I have been to one or two functions with her as well.

As well also, when it was her 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary I went down, they had in conjunction, they made something with, because of the Kinder Transport, her husband came over in the Kinder Transport, so some of his friends and, they did something in conjunction with, as a celebration. I have been to a meeting of the, with the association here, I think you should, was it the Kurers was it, I can't remember now, it was in the Morris Feinman Home there was a meeting some years ago and I went.. But actually most of them aren't, I can't always go, the food isn't always, they are not particularly religiously inclined, put it that way, so really, apart from being refugees we haven't got that much in common. I didn't realize when I was in Middleton Road, when I had the shop there, that there was a whole load of people from Vienna there, that I didn't know it. Because when I came to Manchester I didn't come as a refugee, I came as the bride of an English boy, so I never had any association with the refugees here in Manchester. Because the people, my friends, although they were refugees, they also didn't belong to any organisations, which in a way is sad actually. I am sorry, because in other ways I might have had something in common, let's put it that way.

RL: When did you first visit Israel?

RM: In 1972 or 1. When was the Lod massacre? What year? Was it '71 or '72? I think it was '72 because that is the night that we got, we came into Israel for the first time. That was our first visit to Israel, my husband and I, and my eldest grandson was already seven years old. Moshe had been married for many years.

**Tape 4: 32 minutes 56 seconds**

RL: Had the massacre happened or was it about to happen?

RM: It was just before the massacre. If we would have stayed in the airport just a little bit longer we would have got caught up in it, we were very, very lucky. We arrived, it was at the end of May, and Moshe was supposed to collect us. And Moshe mistook the day, he was expecting us the next day, because in his mind 30<sup>th</sup> of May was the last day in May but 31<sup>st</sup> of May is the last day of May. Moshe and Aviva had Yahrzeit for their mother that night, so when he didn't come I thought maybe he has gone to the Shul and he is late, and we waited and we waited, we couldn't speak, I couldn't speak Ivrit and my husband couldn't speak Ivrit, we managed to find a phone and find the coins to put in the phone and we phoned up my daughter in law, and oy vey, they had made such plans for the next day, we're in, anyway Moshe quickly managed to get somebody with a car and they came to fetch us, not long after we left the airport this happened, we had no idea, because of course we hadn't seen Moshe for many years, we hadn't seen our grandchildren yet, we hadn't met our daughter in law yet, it was the first time, we went back to the flat and we talked and talked and talked and talked, we didn't listen to any radios.

Cameraman: Can you just take the chain off the wire ... that's better ...

RM: Sorry is it making the ...

Cameraman: A loud buzz. That's fine now.

RM: Sorry. Anyway, because we didn't listen to any radio, anyway the next morning, we had a little flat, Moshe managed to get for us to stay in, the next morning Moshe comes to our flat, woke us up, good morning, he said, "Oh, you had a few telephone calls this morning." So my husband said, "Good G-d, can't they do without us, ten years, we haven't been away for ten years, it's the first time in ten years I have been on holiday." He said, "No dad, something happened here." In those days you didn't just phone, it was a costly affair to phone. So Moshe told us what had happened the night before, anyway, Aviva phoned us, she had Yartzeit for her mother anyway, she was listening to the radio, to the news when she heard, she didn't want to phone Zena in case Zena hadn't heard and she didn't want to worry her. Stanley found a newspaper and kept it from Zena because he didn't want Zena to know. The two boys stayed with Ruth, G-d rest her soul, Ruth Maslin, Ruth heard it, kept the newspapers from the children, from Shlomo and Philip. Nobody wanted to tell anybody else, and they were all worried. My sister in law, Isaac's sister, Bessie from London phoned through and eventually I spoke to Aviva, and she said "Auntie". I said, "Aviva darling." She said, "I just wanted to hear your voice."

**Tape 4: 36 minutes 25 seconds**

It was, anyway we were very lucky, we didn't know anything about it, thank G-d, I believe within 24 hours that airport you couldn't have seen, you didn't see a thing, as if nothing had happened, that is how quickly they tidied everything.

RL: How did you feel about being in Israel for the first time?

RM: Fantastic. Suddenly, the whole of the Chumash came to life, before to me it was just stories, and suddenly everything came to life. I went to Kever Rochel, and I was just mesmerized, this is where she .. it was just mind boggling, just to stand there and say a few Tehillim, it was just, I can't tell you, that whole week, it was just, the only thing is, I remember, I went to the Kosel, and as I went to the Kosel, it's a wall, a wall, that is all it is. And there I went, and I stood there, we were told not to touch it, we were, before we went, we went to Yerushalayim. Moshe lived in Bnei Brak and when we went to Yerushalayim he took us to see the, Rabbi Finkel, who we had never met before, what a wonderful man. And he talked, he was just wonderful, he and the Rebbetzin made us feel so warm and welcome, and he said "Don't touch, don't touch it." If we go Friday afternoon after minchah it means you don't have to cut kria if you go there for the first time. Anyway, so we took it to heart that we aren't allowed to touch it, and I was standing there, and I was davening Mincha, and something just came over me, and I don't know, I just started crying, such a feeling of where I was, before, as I walked up it felt nothing, well it is just a wall, and suddenly this feeling came over me and it was just so overwhelming and we went and we stood there and we think that that is actually the place where Avraham went with Yitzchok, it, I don't know, the whole, wherever we went, where the forefather's are buried, it was, I can't tell you, it felt very, the whole week I felt so over emotional about everything and it was as if I was walking on holy soil. The



Kever Rochel, apart from davening at the Kosel and this overwhelming feeling came over me, Kever Rochel had the most impression on my somehow, more than anything else, but just the feeling of being in Eretz Yisroel. And I really, the morning we went away, I really felt that I didn't want to go, and I felt times after that I felt the same, why did I really have to leave, that is the most amazing feeling. Kever Rochel was the most, most, the most impression it had on me, emotionally.

RL: Coming back to England, you came back to Manchester after the death of your husband, could you just bring me up to date with your movements and your life from then.

RM: My movements and my life, I live for my children really, I came back because my children are here. I lived for six months with my, with Shlomo. I had made negotiations for a house, but it fell through, so until I found somewhere else to live I stayed with my son Shlomo and Beverley and the children, and really my daughter in law, bless her a million times, she just opened up, not just her house, but her heart, she always has done. And, mother in law and daughter in law lived together very amicably. Mind you we did in Israel as well, I used to go for a month and six weeks at a time, and she is just the most amazing person, Beverley, and they really made me, they didn't make me feel as if I am

**Tape 4: 41 minutes 39 seconds**

putting on them one little bit, on the contrary, as if I am doing them a favour. And then I found the house on Leigh Street, near the Machzikei Hadass, and that was my, like my little dream house, it was a brand new one, which I thoroughly enjoyed and I lived there for seven years. It was open house, people used to come and stay and anyway whoever wanted to come could come and stay with me there, anyway I was very happy there, I loved my neighbours, I still do. It was near the school, near the children, but, suddenly, I had a fall or something and I hurt myself and suddenly I felt that hill that I had to walk up became a bit difficult for me and I thought that maybe the A-mighty wanted me to move, I don't know. And then out of the blue I got the most fabulous offer for it, and I thought maybe the A-mighty is telling me it is time to move while I am able to do it on my own, so that is when I looked for this flat, and that is when I moved into this apartment nearly two years, March it will be two years since I have been here. I am busy with the children and the family. It took me a little while to get back into Manchester society, put it that way. My friends, when I left my friends had to fill a certain hole, and it took me time again to fit, to find my little niche again. In fact I think it was more difficult for me to come back than for me to settle in Switzerland. It took me a while to settle back with my former friends as it was before. I had been back with Leo while I was living in Switzerland, but that is not the same. And then unfortunately I lost a few of my friends, unfortunately, we are all getting a little bit older.

RL: Do you attend anything? Do you belong ...

RM: I still belong to the Prestwich Emunah, which is called now Emunah rather than Mizrachi. I am there for them if they want me, I am there to help them. I go to a Shiur

on a Wednesday morning which I enjoy tremendously. It is the seminary that I never went to as a girl, and sometimes I am surprised at how little I know, and sometimes I am surprised, oh, not so bad after all. I have, I have a comfortable life, thank God, I get on with my children pretty well, I am very lucky that I have wonderful machutonim, they are not just my machutonim they are my friends. We see each other a lot not just because we have to but because we want to. I have quite a good social life. My grandchildren, my great grandchildren, I am busy running for Bar Mitzvahs and this and that and the other, I go to Israel, I go to Gibraltar, I have been to America, I have been to Canada. My late husband Leo has a daughter in South Africa, and since I have been widowed I still go and see her. I have been twice already, we get on well, they have two children married, and I am in contact with them. I have a large family, Boruch Hashem. I have a lot of grandchildren, I have a lot of great-grandchildren, they keep me very busy, and I have, unfortunately I have a grandson who is not well, a little boy, and we pray for him, and we are hoping that he will be able to have a very successful heart transplant, and as I say my son and daughter in law need a lot of support, emotionally and physically. But I have a lot to be thankful for to the A-mighty, over the years, I sometimes wonder why, why was I spared and so many others not. And sometimes one has a guilt feeling about it, in spite of all that I have been through I still feel that the A-mighty has been good to me, sort of in the outcome, I am very lucky to have such a wonderful big family, maybe that is why the A-mighty spared me. I, I don't know, I can't, I have been married three times, and I

**Tape 4: 47 minutes 8 seconds**

have had three very good men. My first husband was a love affair, my second husband was a marriage and my third husband was a holiday in Switzerland for four years, as my daughter Zena put it. The longest I was married, was I was married to Isaac for 24 years, and perhaps he has made me what I am today.

RL: Is there any message that you want to end with?

RM: I don't know, I am not a clever person to give messages or something. One has to be true to oneself I think, and see, always see the best in other people, not always the worst, because sometimes things seem bad, but they turn out to be good. As I say, my life started, I never knew what my father was like, I only knew my mother for a short time, and yet I was lucky because my aunt and uncle brought me up, I was looked after. For what reason? That maybe my parents shouldn't go through terrible things. You never know in life, one day please G-d we will know the whys and the wherefores and in the meantime we have to hope and believe in the A-mighty that whatever he does is for the best in the long run. We are not here to say what is what. That is all I can say.

RL: Thank you very much.

RM: Thank you for giving me the opportunity, because I think it is very important for people to know what has gone on in the past. And thank you.

**TAPE 5****PHOTOGRAPHS**

RL: These are the photographs relating to the interview with Renee Mosbacher and it is tape 5.

RM: The photograph that you can see just now is of my family from my father's side. Which consists of my four uncles, my grandmother, aunt from my father's side. I will start from the back row from the right hand side, that was my youngest uncle, Uncle Leo, who lived until he was 96 years old, he only died a couple of years ago. The photograph itself actually was taken round about 1927. The next one from the right is my Uncle Max, who died some years ago when he was 93, next to him is my mother, who died when unfortunately when she was 39 from a flu epidemic. Next to her was my father, who died when he was 41 after an appendix operation. Next to him was my uncle, his brother, my uncle, who brought me up, who died in London in 19--, no, he was 58 he died in 1952. Next to him, I don't know if he was one of my great uncles, or exactly which part of the family, I don't remember him. At the time of that photograph I wasn't even thought of yet, I wasn't born until two years later. The next row from the right, the lady sitting on the far right is my father's sister, Auntie Dora, she died in London in her early seventies. Next to her is her son, Vicky, Victor, and he also died in his seventies in London. Next to him is my grandmother, she is the only one of my grandparents that I ever knew. She died in 1936 when she was just turned 70. Next to her, in front of my father, and my two brothers, the one sitting is my brother Norbert Brainin, and behind

**Tape 5: 3 minutes 20 seconds**

him is my brother Hugo. Next to them is my auntie who brought me up, sitting, with her eldest daughter, Ruth, who now lives in America, and next to her is her son, Harry, Harold, who lives in Vienna. The photograph was taken in Vienna, as I say, around 1927 it must have been, before my time.

The photograph you see now was taken of me in 1938 in Vienna. I can't remember whether it was before my 9<sup>th</sup> birthday or just after. That was me, Renee Mosbacher, nee Brainin.

This photograph is of my two brothers, Norbert, who is, who grew up to be a musician, leader of the Amadeus Quartet. And his brother who is 18 months younger, Hugo who lives in Vienna. That photograph must have been taken around about 28, 1928 or 1929, also in Vienna.

This photograph is of my uncle who brought me up, this was taken during the First World War in Austria, he was interned as he came from Russia, so he was interned. He is in the middle row, far right, in a flat cap, so it must have been 1915, 1916, something like that.

This photograph is of our business premises, the showrooms of Brainin Brothers furriers, 99 New Bond Street, London. It must have been taken around about 1950, 1949 perhaps. My uncle who brought me up is on the left and his youngest brother, my Uncle Leo is on the right.

This photograph was my wedding photograph, which was taken on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1950. My auntie who brought me up is on the far right, Mrs Sophie Brainin, with my uncle, Solomon Brainin, on the other side is my mother in law Mrs Minnie Bloom, from Manchester and that was taken in London, in the Shul, in Norris Lea.

This photograph was I think the last photograph taken of myself and my first husband, Jeffrey, Jeffrey Edgar Bloom, with out two children, Zena Jane on the left and Mark Abraham who was about 11 months old then and that was taken in Manchester in the year 1954.

This picture is with my second husband Isaac. This was taken at a great nephew's Bar Mitzvah, hence the bottles on the right. It was taken, somewhere in the seventies, early part of the seventies, in Manchester. Isaac Barron, my second husband who was Isaac Barron.

This photograph is of my brother with his colleagues of the Amadeus Quartet. Starting on the right is my brother Norbert Brainin, next to him is Siegmund Nissel who was the second violinist, next to him was Peter Schidloff, unfortunately he is not here any more, he was the viola player, and next to him was the cellist Martin Lovett, he was the only English boy, as I used to say about the quartet, and the photograph must have been middle seventies to, middle to late seventies, also in London.

#### **Tape 5: 8 minutes 49 seconds**

This photograph was taken at my third wedding to Leo Mosbacher. Behind me is my eldest brother Norbert Brainin, and next to him, behind Leo, my husband Leo, is my brother Hugo, and next to me, in red is my very, very best friend right through my married life since I have lived nearly in Manchester is Paula Rabinowitz, who has been a terrific support to me throughout my life, and the wedding took place on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1990, which happened to be Lag B'Omer and that was taken in Manchester.

This photograph is from all my children, and that was taken on the first Sheva Brachos of Philip and Karen, they got married the day before and this was the first Sheva Brachos in July 1988. On the far right, we start with my eldest daughter Aviva with her husband at the back of her, David Salem. In front was my late sister in law, Idi Baron, behind her, next to David is Stanley Field, my son in law, next to him is Zena, his wife, my younger daughter. Then is Karen Marks, who got married to my son Philip, who is now Karen Barron, sounds funny. Next is me, peeping through. Next to me at the back is Beverley Barron, my daughter in law, and then is Philip Barron, my youngest son, next to him at the back is Shlomo Reuven Barron, my second youngest son, next to him is Moshe, who is the eldest and who now lives in Eretz Yisroel, his wife unfortunately couldn't come,

and next to him is my son Mark. And this photograph as I say was taken in Manchester in the July 1988 and the young couple now have seven children.

This photograph is of my eldest son and his family at his, at my eldest granddaughters wedding , taken in Israel in Bnei Brak, around about 16 years ago, in 19--, also round about 1987, '88, I am not quite sure, but these are all his children, kein ayin hora.

RL: His name?

RM: And his name is Moshe Dovid Barron.

Cameraman: No hang on.

RM: This photograph is of my eldest daughter's Aviva's children and grandchildren, taken at her grandson's, the eldest grandson's Bar Mitzvah in Gibraltar, in 19, in 2001, it was around about Shavuot time, my daughter's married name is Salem.

This photograph is of my daughter Zena, with her husband Stanley Field, and her two daughters. It was at the engagement in Glasgow of her younger daughter, Michelle, in 1999. Michelle is, do you know I can't see so far, if Michelle is on the right or left, Michelle is the one on the left.

RL: Do you know the date?

RM: It was taken this, in 2003, it was taken this last year, a few months ago, that is all.

**Tape 5: 14 minutes 2 seconds**

These are the children of my second son, Shlomo, second youngest son Shlomo Barron. The eldest of his children actually is missing, there should be seven there altogether and there are only six, so his eldest son is not there, but this was taken in Manchester in the autumn of 2003.

This photograph is taken of my youngest son and his wife, Philip and Karen Barron, with their children, and it was taken also in the autumn of 2003 in Manchester.