

**IMPORTANT**

**This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees**

**Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.**

**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**

**AJR**

**Winston House, 2 Dollis Park**

**London N3 1HF**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform [ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	58

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Goldberg
<b>Forename:</b>	Rudolf
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	17 July 1925
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Ratibor, Germany

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	29 April 2004
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Birmingham
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Helen Lloyd
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	1 hour and 51 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE****INTERVIEW: 58****NAME: RUDOLF GOLDBERG****DATE: 29 APRIL 2004****LOCATION: BIRMINGHAM****INTERVIEWER: HELEN LLOYD****TAPE 1**

HL: This is an interview with Rudolf Goldberg, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 2004, in Birmingham, and my name is Helen Lloyd.

RG: My name is Rudolf Goldberg, Rudolf Goldberg, so most people call me Rudi. And I was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1925 in a little town called Ratibor in Upper Silesia, Eastern Germany, as it was in those days. And my father had a pub and was a manufacturer of drinks, spirits and all that. And my father and mother were married in 1924. I was born in 1925. Then I had a little brother in 1928. And that's the beginning of my life, anyway.

HL: What do you know about your fathers...?

RG: Well my father was in business, together with his father. His father came from, as it was in those days, East Prussia, which was even further east than we lived and he arrived as an apprentice in the late 1800s and settled down in Ratibor, and eventually in those days in Germany if you wanted to open a pub or anything, you had to be an apprentice, you had to pass tests and all that. It wasn't just anybody who could open one. So after he passed his test he set up, and then we were in this pub and as my father got older he joined him in business. My father's mother died very young, so my grandfather married again. And the three of them between them, my grandfather and my step grandmother and my father were in this business. Now, they used to have an ordinary pub – just an ordinary pub - people used to come and go. But as a side line, quite a big side line, they also manufactured certain drinks, like egg flip and all that. And a drink called Goldwater, which had tiny little flakes of gold in, which was supposed to have mental benefits. And we used to get huge barrels of wine from the wine growing districts of Germany. Now the wine came to the station, and one or two people who worked in our pub used to go to the station, collect these huge barrels on a two wheeler truck, push the truck to our pub. Then when they got to our pub we had all the workshops, the distillery or whatever, in a cellar down below. So they used to park this barrel on a side road and they had a pipe, and this piped wine went down into the cellar, into another big barrel, where it was stored. And then when the time was ripe, the wine was - they had glass containers, and funnels, and paper strainers. - they opened the wine barrel and then they poured this wine into these glass containers, as many as it would take.

**Tape 1: 4 minutes 0 second**

RG: And, you'd be surprised how, you know when you get the wine, as it was made, how dirty it is, like all the tiny bits and all that. So then eventually, after it had been in these big glass containers, it was bottled, and strained again, on the way. Then after it was bottled, of course it was labelled and corked, caps put on top. And then the wine appeared under different guises with the name of 'H. Goldberg', my grandfather's name, who was official owner. But then my father's business; he used to serve in the pub one or two days a week or supervised the distillery downstairs, or the wine making part. He used to have to go out into the countryside, perhaps twice, three times a week, first on his bike and later in a car. To all the little country pubs, and sell so many bottles of this wine, so many bottles of that spirit, and all that sort of thing, and take their orders, bring them back home. All this would be put up. Eventually he would take these orders out to these country pubs and deliver so many bottles of wine, so many bottles of spirits. And go around the countryside, perhaps 4, 5, 6, 7 hours a day and perhaps once a week, twice a week, occasionally even three times a week.

**Tape 1: 5 minutes 39 seconds**

HL: We'll talk more about your father's business in a moment, but tell me what you know about your mother's family.

RG: My mother's name was Ruth and she was one of 6 children of a wholesale timber merchant, who lived in another part of Silesia a place called in those days Beuthen, I believe it's called Bytom now in Polish. I don't know quite how my mother and father met, but my mother and father got married in 1924, early January, a bitterly cold day. And then after they got married, they settled in my father's home town. My mother as I said was one of 6 children, 5 daughters, they kept having daughters, daughters, and I think the idea was they really wanted a son. Eventually they produced a son. And then much, much later, they had another daughter. And this daughter I met eventually again, only about 10, 15 years ago when she was quite an old lady. But to me of course, when I was young, this sister of my mother's was more like a sister to me because she was so much nearer in age to me than she was to my mother.

**Tape 1: 7 minutes 6 seconds**

HL: So although they came from another part you did meet your mother's ...?

RG: Yes, well, we lived about 70 miles apart. But of course once my father managed to get a car... I mean, previous to that we used to go by train, which was a bit of an ordeal because we used to have to change trains, but once my father got a car, we made this trip two or three times a year, and we used to go and visit my maternal grandmother, maternal grandfather. Unfortunately, or fortunately, whichever way you might like to think, my maternal grandmother and grandfather died quite young. It was very sad at the time. But looking back on events, it was just as well they passed away when they did because at least they didn't perish in the Holocaust. Now my mother, as I said she had 4 sisters. Two of these sisters survived the war. They were lucky enough to get married and managed to get out of Germany just in the nick of

time. Another sister, who thought she had escaped by moving to Czechoslovakia, because her husband had been born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and automatically, became a Czech citizen then. They moved to Czechoslovakia for safety as they thought. Of course events overtook them, and they got caught in Czechoslovakia and perished in the Holocaust, just the same. My mother's one and only brother also perished in the Holocaust. But the two sisters that did manage to escape - one went with her husband to Colombia and went into the coffee business in Colombia. And the other one went to Chile, and then eventually because her son wanted to settle in Israel, went to Israel. They both died of natural causes, and lived to quite a good age. And so, that's the end of the story as far as my mother's concerned, you know.

**Tape 1: 9 minutes 11 seconds**

HL: Now on your mother's side, you said your grandparents - your grandfather was a timber merchant?

RG: Yes he was a timber merchant.

HL: And on your father's side he ran a distillery?

RG: Yes, that's right.

HL: So would you say you came from a well to do background?

RG: Well reasonably well, yes. I mean they were neither of them millionaires, but they were reasonably well to do. And all these stories you hear about afterwards, written by the Nazis about the Jews robbing the Germans - we all lived quite normal lives, none of them were gangsters, or anything out of the ordinary, you know? Just reasonably well-to-do business people, full stop.

HL: Did you live on the premises of ...?

RG: No. When my mother and father - in those days, in Germany, even today comparatively few people own their property. Majority of people rent their property. So we lived in a flat. Quite some distance from the shop. And my grandfather and step grandmother, they lived on the premises. And my mother - my father used to work each and every day, and every afternoon, or almost every afternoon like normal times - my mother used to go into town, because where we were there were only one or two little shops, to do a bit of shopping in town, go and visit our pub, to see my grandmother, grandfather, my father and just say "Hello" and a little chat, then stroll back home and do a little shopping on the way. Eventually when things got really, really bad, we had to give up our flat. I mean once the business was shut after ... [Inaudible], eventually we did, my grand parents, step grandmother, grandfather, all move into one flat above the shop. But that was just - I mean we managed, but that was just because we couldn't afford to keep up two premises anymore.

**Tape 1: 11 minutes 18 seconds**

HL: Were you part of the Jewish community?

RG: Well we belonged to the Jewish community. But I mean, I mean in those days the majority of Jews in Germany hardly knew they were Jews. It was only Hitler that really made them realise they were Jews. I mean, the majority of Jewish people in Germany were not orthodox. It was only a comparatively small proportion of Jews in Germany that were orthodox. And they were more German than Jewish. And it's only that Hitler that made us realise we were Jewish. And at home our religious observance was minimal.

HL: What was it?

RG: Just minimal, our observance at home. It's only in later years once Hitler came to power that we started doing things like light candles on Saturday. We always used to go to the children's service at the local synagogue. We always went to that at 3 o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday. But apart from that we used to go to synagogue on the high holy days and we used to have the days off from school when it was the Jewish holy days but - anyway, as I say we were like the majority of Jewish people in Germany. Not religious, not orthodox. We'd eat just normal food, we'd eat anything and everything, like the people around us. I mean we may not have eaten pork on a Jewish high holy day, which I still wouldn't do today. But other than that, I mean, we ate pork, we ate this, we ate that. And we scarcely knew till the late 1930s that we were Jewish. We were made aware of it, you know. The majority of Jews, and ourselves included, thought we were more German than Jewish. I mean, we used to think in those days, some people in Germany are Catholics, some are Protestants, and some are Jewish. We just happen to be German Jewish.

**Tape 1: 13 minutes 27 seconds**

HL: Were you aware of people speaking Polish?

RG: Well, you'd have - some of the country people that came into our pub spoke Polish. That's all. But I mean there was quite a bit of trade from across the border, because Germany by comparison to Poland was quite prosperous. And they used to come and sell their eggs and chickens and all that over the border in Germany, where they managed to get a better price. And I mean if you went in those days, say, to Poland and looked in the shops, and this was pre-war before the communists came, what was on sale there was really very poor, so we lived in a rich society by comparison.

HL: Did you go over into Poland?

RG: Yes, we went once or twice because one of my mother's sisters and her husband, they had, they were in the leather - well, not just the leather business - but they used to supply shoe makers with the shoe makers' requisites, like nails, wooden nails, soles, stick-on glue, and all that sort of thing. They had one shop in Beuthen, where my mother was born, and another shop in a town which, when it was founded by my uncle's father, was in Germany. But afterwards when the border was drawn, finished up in Poland. So he stayed and lived in Poland and so we went to see them occasionally in Poland. And the difference to me, even as a child, in what you could see in a shop in Germany and what you saw in the shops in Poland was quite startling,

you know. I mean I've never been particularly keen on living there, but you couldn't help but see it, you know.

**Tape 1: 15 minutes 14 seconds**

HL: Did you have any servants or help...?

RG: Oh yes, well, in pre-war ... In all my life, in the early days like in the early 1930s in our flat, my mother and father, we always had a young – well first we had an old woman really, a servant. Her name was Maria. She was a proper country woman. She was an old maid. To me she seemed really ancient, but she was a staunch - you see our part of Germany was mainly Catholics, where some parts of Germany were mainly Protestant. - and she was a staunch Catholic. I can still remember waking up say 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock maybe, on a Sunday morning, when it was bitterly cold. And she'd get up at that time of the morning and go to church, to mass. She'd never ever miss. So she stayed with us a good few years, and then I don't know what happened to her then. She was worn out. She had enough of it. And we engaged a young lady, a maid, and she stayed with us until we couldn't afford anybody.

HL: Do you have any pre-school memories?

RG: Well yes, can I move a bit? The one outstanding memory I have. In 1928 there was an exceptionally cold winter. And I can still see myself there in our house, in our flat – there must have been a shortage of coal and all that - walking around the house with gloves on! We didn't have a gas cooker, but we had a couple of gas rings. And my mother was just lighting the gas rings just to provide a bit of heat, because she couldn't get coal or nothing! Because all our heating in those days was coal briquettes and we had like stoves in the house, which were very good, but of course we couldn't get any coal or briquettes. Useless!

**Tape 1: 17 minutes 17 seconds**

HL: What school did you go to?

RG: Well, all children at home in Germany in those days started school at 6. So I started school along with everybody else, at 6, at the ordinary elementary school. What happened, I mean, in some of the big towns there were some Jewish schools. But ours only being a very small town, a very small Jewish community, wouldn't have been able to set up a Jewish school. So what happened, once or twice a week when the children had their religious lessons at school, a Jewish chap came along. He used to go to two or three schools and he used to give us our Jewish religious education - in a separate classroom. And that was it. That was the only difference. And that's sort of how we learned to write Hebrew, learned a bit of the Bible, and this that and the other, apart from going to our regular Saturday children's services in synagogue.

HL: But this separate religious education would have made other children in the school aware that you were Jewish?

**Tape 1: 18 minutes 27 seconds**

RG: In a small - in Germany, in any small or smallish town, everybody knew the Jewish people. In our town they knew even, because the majority of people were Catholics, they even knew exactly who was a Protestant. I'm not saying they were shunned, you know, but just everybody went "Oh, so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so are Protestants". Everybody knew the Jewish people. There were 600 Jewish people in our community at one stage. And so everybody was quite aware of who the Jewish people were. But saying that, there was never any ... except for a few people, the majority of people never took much notice as far as I know. And Jews were free to come and go. There was just always, in Germany, even before Hitler came – and he built on that - an undercurrent of anti-Semitism. Always, always has been, since way back in the middle ages, and it's never gone away.

HL: But were you aware of that in any way?

**Tape 1: 19 minutes 38 seconds**

RG: Well, only because I was a child then, only because what I heard people say and talk. It wasn't obvious, till eventually it got vicious. But previous to that – nothing much said.

HL: What was your first school like?

RG: Well the first school – just an ordinary elementary school. I don't know if I was particularly keen on it. Keen I can't really remember. But one thing I do remember, when children start school in Germany, at least in those days, they used to get a big present after their first day at school. It's like a cone, a big cone made of cardboard and it was stuffed with chocolates and sweets and that. I always remember getting the first big cone. Of course if you were well to do you got a big cone and if you were less well to do you might get a tiny little one. But apart from that I don't remember much about it.

HL: What are your next memories then, after your ...?

RG: Well, my next memory... Don't know about that, you see then after I left my elementary school, I transferred to grammar school, but saying that, along with that...then of course, when Hitler came to power, in the first weeks, nothing was said. It was always known that he was anti-Semitic and his programme was anti-Semitic. One thing I do remember is, in the very, very early days when he came into power, I had some children's ailment, scarlet fever, something like that. And our family doctor came to see us. He was a staunch anti-Nazi. He wasn't a Catholic, I mean a Communist, or anything. He was a Protestant actually, very nice cultured man. He was dead set against the Nazis. And I always remember and when he came to our house and us talking about Hitler coming to power, saying "Oh dear, oh dear" and he said, "Take no notice". He said, "In a very short time, instead of the greeting 'Heil Hitler', very soon it will be 'Heul Hitler', which means 'Cry, Hitler'. And that's always stuck in my mind. Well anyway. He was proven wrong.

HL: How old were you when Hitler came to power?

RG: Eight. But I've always been very keen on reading the paper. I've always taken an interest, even as young as I was - haven't I – always taken a certain interest in politics. I know I'm boasting a bit, but I did, you know. Always the first thing I did, able to read, pick up the paper, and as small as I was, as young as I was, I'd make sure to, read my daily paper. Day by day, so I still do now. My two daughters and my son are just the same. Give them a paper and they're settled for the day.

HL: What were the first signs of changes after Hitler came to power?

**Tape 1: 22 minutes 50 seconds**

RG: Well it was just very gradual, you see. It was big actually, see? I don't know if you know but Hitler or one of his henchmen made a speech. Hitler came to power in '33, it might have been by '34, and he made a big speech at some party rally. And he said, "These Jews, leaving today, leaving with their top hats and their suitcases and everything. The last ones to leave will be lucky to leave Germany alive, naked". And everybody said, "He's just talking a load of rubbish"! you know. But ...Of course he was proved right, but nobody could have either believed or foreseen what would happen in the end, you know. I mean the first thing I really knew finite is - I don't know if you've heard of the *Kristallnacht*, that was 1938. Well what happened, apparently a German diplomat was murdered in Paris by a young Jewish chap. But that was an excuse to slaughter the Jews in Germany. Synagogues were bashed. A huge tax was put on Jews. You had to surrender your jewellery except wedding rings, and all sorts of restrictions. Then eventually Jewish children were banned from ordinary schools. I mean if you lived in a big town, you could just carry on school if you had a Jewish school, but anybody else going to ordinary school ... My school had finished in 1938! Once *Kristallnacht* came along, and I left school, that was the end of my schooling. Whatever else education I had, I educated myself.

**Tape 1: 24 minutes 39 seconds**

HL: Just going back before *Kristallnacht*. What was your secondary school like before *Kristallnacht*?

RG: Well, the secondary school, just ordinary secondary school. But people were beginning to – certain people - were beginning to become a bit nasty. So were some of the teachers, of course.

HL: What memories do you have of that?

RG: Well, the best memory I have of that is – we used to have one teacher, a maths teacher a young man. I could tell you he was quite brilliant – very good. He was a really pudgy man, you know, only small. And he was like a barrel. This is more funny than serious. And one day he came into school, dressed in a Nazi Uniform., brown shirt, black or brown trousers, leather belt and so on. In those days you couldn't insult the party, you couldn't say anything about Hitler. But despite that, the moment he walked into the classroom, there was a titter around the classroom, you know, because he looked so ridiculous. He really loved himself. I don't know if he was homosexual or not but he may have been. He came in and he smelled of violets. Must have put some aftershave on or something, which was unheard of almost in those days. But I

can still remember the titter going around the classroom when he walked in. So that's one memory I've got of the early days, of secondary school.

HL: What about how your fellow pupils at secondary school...?

RG: Well some - some began to turn then, you know, and either shun you or make nasty remarks. You know. You see the thing was that, the rule then in Germany, even when some Jewish shops were still open: 'A German doesn't go and buy in Jewish shops'. 'A German doesn't talk to Jews'. 'A German has nothing to do with Jews'. You know, and so gradually we got more and more shunned. And of course then *Kristallnacht* came. And my school finished just like that. And that was that.

**Tape 1: 26 minutes 49 seconds**

HL: What about your friends?

RG: Yes, I had some friends but they never turned up because - if they came and visited me, A Jewish family or a Jewish boy, they would be ostracised, you know? You felt that, obviously. Yes.

HL: Moving on then. What happened after *Kristall*...?

**Tape 1: 27 minutes 14 seconds**

RG: Shall I tell you about *Kristallnacht* and the after effects? Well you see, up to that time I was going to secondary school. My brother was going to elementary school. And we used to - once a week or so we used to have gardening lessons - they took us out to some allotments, from school, way out of town, a bit of a walk, just popped around and see how plants are planted, and seeds are planted and all rest of it. I was in one of these gardening lessons one day with the teacher and other pupils. And suddenly the teacher or one of the other pupils said, "Look, look. There's your mother!", and my brother! What did they want? You know, I couldn't imagine. And she had a word to the teacher and soon as she had a word to the teacher, I was let go. And outside the allotment I said, "What's up? What's up?" And she said, "Never mind, never mind". And so we walked back to town and we went really a long, long way around. I couldn't understand it, you know. Well by that time our shop had already been closed. We lived in the flat together with our grandparents. And as it happened our place overlooked the synagogue. So, I still couldn't make out what was happening. So we stayed in the flat. And next thing after an hour or two, my mother or grandfather or somebody said, "Oh Look"! Because the synagogue of ours had little twin towers, and you could see little curls of smoke coming up. And the synagogue was on fire. Because if you know, they'd set fire to practically all the synagogues in Germany, because it was meant to be the uprising of all the German people, it was well organised, you know. My grandfather - I mean we always thought we were German, and my father. But my father always had more, say left-wing views. My grandfather was really out and out German, you know. He was almost a nationalist. And for the first time ever in my life, I've seen my grandfather cry. When he's seen the synagogue on fire, he actually cried, although he wasn't a particularly religious man, not even orthodox or anything like that, but - he did cry, for the first time in my life. So we stayed in our flat all day. We couldn't move anywhere. In the

afternoon at one stage, you could hear like a buzz, you know. Couldn't make out what this was. And in the end we saw people on the corner. That's a mass of people, 200 or 300 people, coming down the road towards our block of flats. Well, it appears that a woman, a Jewish woman in our town had - like my mother had gone out looking for us - she had gone out looking for her husband who had gone somewhere and not come back. She didn't realise the situation. And as she went out around town a crowd started following her, first one, two, three. In the end 2-300 people all jeering and shouting. Whatever they shouted I don't know. And she happened to come past our place with everyone following her like a swarm of bees following somebody. And in the end somebody just opened the door in one of the blocks of flats and let her in. After that the crowd dispersed. But I've never seen anything like it since or before. Mass hysteria, it was, absolutely. So anyway from that day onwards, *Kristallnacht*, I didn't go to school no more. School was finished. And our life just changed completely, everything!

**Tape 1: 31 minutes 28 seconds**

HL: What did you do all day?

RG: Then after that eventually I got a little job in the Jewish Cemetery. My mother, she was one of these people she'd always do something, you know. So, I managed to get a little job in the Jewish Cemetery just out of town, used to cycle there each day, and just picking weeds and all that sort of thing. Just for a little bit of pocket money, you know, to keep me employed. And... That leads on to another story. While I was there, after I'd been there a few months, the man who ran the cemetery, the boss there, he called me, he says, "You're wanted on the phone". Well, in those days, I'd hardly ever seen a phone, let alone spoken on one. So I picked it up gingerly. It was my mother. Well previous to that, we'd heard about this *Kindertransport*, that there was such a thing going, you know. My mother said, "I'll put your name down". That was it. Mind you, saying that, I felt so awful in those days. I could see that things were going the way they .... I used to think, "I wish I could get out". Anyway, there's my mother on the phone and she says, "You and your brother are going to England next week". I was speechless! So I left work straight away, went home. And then for the next few days, my mother was mad packing because you could only take one little suitcase. And going round all the friends and neighbours, saying goodbye here, and goodbye there, you know. And I couldn't believe it. So we left in the end of June, my brother and I left. It was only the two of us, and waved our goodbyes. And of course we thought when we left, few weeks, a few months, next year, you know. Nobody ever dreamt that we, we would never see our parents again.

HL: Did you know other children from your town who were going too?

**Tape 1: 33 minutes 25 seconds**

RG: Nobody else went, at least not at that time. As far as we knew, nobody went before or after, might have done, but as soon as you got to England communication was a bit poor, you know? And - the war started a few weeks after, you know, so...

HL: Would your parents have had access to a phone if you had tried to phone them from England?

RG: It's doubtful and I certainly didn't have access to any phone. I mean there were one or two letters before the war broke out. Then once the war started you could only write via the Red Cross in Geneva. So you used to get forms. You could only write 25 words. That letter had to go to Geneva, and from Geneva that was passed on to England. And then you only got one letter a month or one letter in two months. Like prisoners of war, really, you know.

HL: Did you manage to write to them?

RG: Yes, I sent a few messages, a few Red Cross letters to them, as they sent a few to me. Till one day, I had a letter from them saying, "We're going away tomorrow". Anyway, I didn't really know what it meant. I mean just 'Going away, going away'. And that's the last I ever heard of them. And that was when they'd been deported.

**Tape 1: 34 minutes 55 seconds**

HL: How did they manage to arrange the *Kindertransport*?

RG: Well, it was organised in Germany on a nationwide basis, you know. But once *Kindertransport* was established, they drew up lists of children that wanted to go, of parents who were willing to send their children - so many going every week, every month. I suppose they had a list of hundreds of children and I suppose they just picked by putting a pin in, I don't know really. Just sheer luck, you know. When I think about it now sometimes, it makes the hair on the back of my neck stand up. To think how close I was to perishing myself. It was just a lottery.

HL: Do you have any memories of leaving the town?

RG: Oh yes, I can still see us leaving, my brother and I. My father came and my mother stayed behind, because... The main transport went from Berlin. My father took my brother and me to Berlin. In Berlin we had my father's aunts, my great aunts, who had - used to run a big factory there. So we stayed overnight with my great aunt. And the next morning my father took us to some station in Berlin. We met children there, more or less they were from all over Germany, you know. And put on a train going to - well we didn't know exactly where we were going. And that's the funny thing. For years, reading the papers, I always kept a daily diary. And in my own mind we thought we were going via Holland. And in my mind I thought, 'when we get to the Dutch border, they're going to open and look, they're going to read my diary'! And I got so frightened! As we travelled along I got my diary and I flushed it down the toilet. It would have been worth keeping. So once I'd flushed the last of my diary down the toilet I felt relieved. And anyway, as it happened we didn't go via Holland, as the majority did. We were taken to Hamburg. When we got to Hamburg - I wrote a letter in the Jewish Association Journal recently - when we got to Hamburg, the Jewish ladies there had laid on a spread for us, sandwiches and whatever. And they really, really looked well after us you know. Fantastic welcome we were given. I'd never seen the sea before, because where we lived - we lived about 600 miles from the sea. I mean, in those days you could be a widely travelled person and never see the sea. So it was an eye-opener to me to see the sea. And believe it or not, it was, like, fantastic. We were taken to England on a big American liner, on The

Washington. And so embarked on this liner and then we sailed from Hamburg. It was a transatlantic liner, and from Hamburg to Le Havre, then next day from Le Havre to Southampton, and disembarked in Southampton. And to travel on a big American liner, pre-war, it was a real eye-opener. I'd never seen such luxury and things. And the food, the menus! For the first time in my life in a way, I was free, because no longer was my mother saying, "You mustn't eat this and you mustn't eat that". I'd walk into a dining room, big menu in front, and I could eat anything and everything I liked and we were treated like grown-ups. So seeing the sea for the first time, going on a big liner, all these sort of things, it was quite an experience, you know? So in a way... We didn't know we would never see our parents again ever. It was like going on a fantastic holiday, really.

**Tape 1: 39 minutes 16 seconds**

HL: Do you have any memories of the adults who accompanied you on the journey?

RG: No. no. The only other odd thing was, I was walking around on the deck of this liner and all of a sudden there's a Jewish family, or husband and wife, rather, who also ran a pub in our town, not far from us. We ran into them, they were travelling to New York. You see in those days when people managed to get away, there were so many complications, that it was all hush-hush. So we didn't know they were leaving. So we ran into them. That was a bit of a surprise. But I don't remember anybody else who travelled with us or supervised us.

HL: And what are your memories of arriving?

**Tape 1: 40 minutes 2 seconds**

RG: Well, when we got to Southampton they took us by train to London, and from London they took us - I stayed for the next few weeks, few months, I stayed in a big camp, in a place called Barham House, in a place called Claydon near Ipswich. And we stayed there for the next few weeks, my brother and I. And from there we were dispersed. Some were taken to families, some were taken to schools. Some were taken here. Some were taken there. Well my brother was taken on by a family in Southampton, a childless family. And he stayed with them for the next 20 or 30 years, sort of. I mean, he had all his education there, grammar school and all the rest. And the old lady, the wife, she survived until fairly recently, she was well into her 90s. And my wife Kate and I we used to go and visit her even, you know. The husband died quite young, you know. We kept up, you know. My brother's passed away since. He died comparatively young, from different causes. He lived in Guildford. And so...

HL: Where did you go?

RG: Well, once we'd been to Barham House, they transferred me to a farm school up in Derbyshire, a YMCA farm school, along with some other kids. And from the YMCA farm school they used to send us out to different farms each and every day in the area and collect us every night. Then after we'd been there two or three months they placed us in farms all over. And you see that's how I came to learn English, in the best way, because I was plonked onto a farm in the middle of Derbyshire, in the middle of England, in the middle of the war. And, you know, it was a case of sink or

swim! I was always very fond of reading, so I could pick up an English book or English paper. Nobody spoke German for hundreds of miles around. Nobody would even dare to speak Germans in those days. And that was it!

**Tape 1: 42 minutes 29 seconds**

HL: Were the other Jewish children with you all from Germany?

RG: No, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, mainly those three countries.

HL: How did you get on with each other?

RG: Oh, like children get on with each other, I mean, you know. For one thing I had my brother. We were company for each other. You know how it is when you meet a bunch of kids. Some pal up and some don't. Some fall out and some fall in. You know, so...

HL: Did you meet any English children?

RG: No, not there we didn't. The first time I met any English children was, when I went to live on a farm in Derbyshire. The second farm I stayed at. The first one I stayed about 6 months. The second one I stayed about 3 or 4 years, and they had two young children about my age maybe at the time, 13 and 14, a boy and a girl. And there again, even though they were the children, they were the boss's children. Between their being English and my being German - they spoke English. I spoke bits of English - there was a big gulf between us, you know.

HL: It must have been quite lonely.

RG: Well it was. It was really. It was lonely in a way, like. I didn't realise I was lonely so much in those days, when I lived there because I had such a busy life. On the farm I used to get up at 6 in the morning and work all hours, every hour, Saturday and Sunday. I didn't really have much time to feel lonely, you know? I might get a couple of hours off on Sunday afternoon, an hour or two at night. But most of the time it was just work, work, work, so...

**Tape 1: 44 minutes 24 seconds**

HL: How aware were you of what was happening in Germany?

RG: I didn't have any really - I didn't know what was happening in Germany at all, nothing really. You see, after I'd been on that farm. The first farm I worked on in Derbyshire it was a really rotten place. And I asked to be moved. The woman was really quite nasty, like and she didn't look after me very well, because I lived on the farm. So then they moved me and the next place I stayed in for 3 or 4 years they looked after me quite well, like, you know. It was a big farm. And in a way, living on this big farm, I hardly knew a war was on because everything was there, plenty, you know. Food and everything, you know. I mean, they produced meat and everything. My own needs were very little because I didn't go anywhere, do anything, more or less only had my farm working clothes. Well eventually - that's how it all began - I

decided I wanted to be near to my brother. My brother was living down in Southampton. I don't know if you know but during the war it was very difficult to get to certain areas of the country because they were restricted areas. I wrote to the YMCA who was in charge of me and said, 'Could you please find me a place near to my brother, who lives in Southampton, because I haven't seen him for so many years?' Well first of all I managed to arrange for a holiday. I'd never been away from the farm. I'd never been anywhere in England, really. I managed to get a week's holiday in Southampton. I had to write for permission to the Chief Constable of Derbyshire, the Chief Constable of Hampshire to be let in, to be let out. So I travelled on my own from Derby. I went in a milk lorry to a place called Edenton, and then by train. I still wonder sometimes how I managed to find my way!

**Tape 1: 46 minutes 34 seconds**

HL: How old were you?

RG: 15, 16. I was very innocent, like, you know. Only knew what English I'd taught myself, you know. So anyway I travelled from Edenton to Derby, from Derby to Birmingham I had to find my way in Birmingham during the war from Snow Hill to New Street to catch another train and go down to Southampton. But that was a real shock to me, when I found that place in Southampton where my brother lived. When I left him he was a little boy, in shorts. Knock, knock on the door. He opens the door, and when he opened the door - I know I'm small - there he was, a big boy, long tall... Hardly knew him. Well anyway, I had a wonderful week there. Believe it or not, on that farm, I never had a bath or nothing. There was nothing there. Whatever luxuries there were on the farm, were reserved for the farmer. I mean farm workers didn't have a bath. I was able to have a bath there. I was able to stay in bed, breakfast in bed, all these sort of things, you know. It was quite fantastic. The only thing is, once or twice, got woken up in the night when there were air raids. Rush out of bed. Go down to shelter. And - but apart from that, wonderful to be free, away from the farm, to live in a town. So after that I could never settle on the farm again and I applied for a place on a farm in Hampshire, perhaps to be near to my brother. Eventually I got one. And I went and lived then for the next few years in a place between Winchester near Basingstoke in Hampshire. Living there, and then the war was drawing to a close, I was able to see my brother a bit more frequently. Then eventually I volunteered for the army.

**Tape 1: 48 minutes 48 seconds**

HL: You were a farm labourer?

RG: I was a farm labourer. I was a farmer's boy. I used to lead a little horse along the field - up and down, and up and down. I was hoeing away and all that. I was a proper farm labourer.

HL: Did you have a sense that you might have had a different destiny?

RG: Oh yes, I did, but - well, that's partly why I wanted to get away from that farm up in Derby. That was my first move. Then, of course, once I had been on that farm in Hampshire - you see, I never wanted - during the war, I knew you could join up. I

knew there were people in the Pioneer Corps, but I never, to be honest, fancied joining the Pioneer Corps. I never fancied burying the dead and that sort of thing. I always wanted to be in the army, but the real army, you know. So eventually - I don't know if you know - but they founded The Jewish Brigade. And as soon as that came about, I volunteered. And then I had a letter from the army to say one day would I go down to Southampton to the recruiting centre. So I travelled from mid-Hampshire down to Southampton to the recruiting place. The recruiting sergeant was there and I said, "I don't want to only be in the Jewish Brigade, I want to be in the British Army" and he took down all the particulars and I got my King's shilling and I became a soldier. A few weeks after I'd volunteered I had a letter saying, 'Report...' and a travel warrant, 'Report to the Invictor Barracks in Maidstone'. And I've done my training in Maidstone with the Queen's Own, or whatever, at the time.

HL: What year was this?

RG: Oh, '45, because nobody knew the war was going to finish. It was drawing to an end.

HL: Which month did you join, do you know?

### **Tape 1: 50 minutes 50 seconds**

RG: Well, it must have been early in the year, because next thing I'd done 6 weeks primary training in Maidstone. It was quite amazing really, because a lot of blokes who had been living in London and towns all their life, they found the going really tough and hard going. They had to wear boots. Well to me, wearing boots was an every day thing. And the funny thing, well to me, was reveille at 7 o'clock, "Oh, God, having to get up at 7"! I'd been getting up all my life at 6! I thought I was on holiday! So, anyway, done 6 weeks training in Maidstone, got 2 weeks off, then I had to report back to London. And then I got my embarkation leave and so from London.... Oh, it was April. And like it's been here the last few days, it was snowing, cold, miserable. We were put on a train and we travelled all day, all night. Everything was blacked out. We travelled right through - only found out afterwards - all the way through Scotland, I mean we could have been travelling through the Sahara Desert. Eventually we got to the Glasgow docks. I only knew that when people were saying, "It's Glasgow". Pitch dark. Then we got on to a big boat. And that was the end of it. Then all of a sudden woke up the next morning, we were out at sea. And - that was a marvellous experience really. We travelled then, in a big convoy, which seemed to travel forever and ever and ever. We got to the bay of Biscay. You know, you read these stories about sailors... In the Bay of Biscay it was that stormy, that there were little destroyers to guard us. And I could look down on the little destroyers, into the chimneys more or less, and then the next thing they were up above us! You read these things and say, "They're just sailors' tales"!, but I really experienced that! And then to see the flying fish, and all these things, I mean it was a real eye opener to me. All the way from Glasgow it was misty and murky and foggy and miserable. And one morning we got up, and as we got up, there was an announcement on the ship's tannoy - loudspeaker system. We went with tropical gear because we didn't know where we were going, which was summer wear mostly. So it said, "Put on your tropical gear". So I put on my shorts, my little socks and all the rest of it, went up on deck. You know if you'd landed on a different planet, it could not have been different.

We were just going around the corner, by Gibraltar, after all that mist and murk and cold and snow. We landed in the Mediterranean. It was a typical Mediterranean - to this day, if I live another two-hundred years, I'll never forget that day! It was so wonderful. And then we travelled all the way along the North African coast. And when you see these photos of palm trees, and little white houses, I mean they don't look that good when you're close up, but from the sea, from the boat, it was like a travelling picture postcard. So we travelled then, on to Naples, and just as we got by Naples, the war finished. So anyway, we disembarked in Naples, or we were stuck in Naples harbour for a day or so. And that's another eye opener, because the war had just finished. It was dirty - and you know, people threw crusts. To see little kids dive into the murky oily water, just to fish out a little crust of bread and things you know, it was really pitiful. I mean we were overloaded with food on the troop ship, you know. I mean, the troop ship itself was fantastic, you know. As it happened the majority of people got seasick. Touch wood, I didn't, so ...

**Tape 1: 55 minutes 8 seconds**

**End of Tape One**

**TAPE 2**

**Tape 2: 0 minute 9 seconds**

HL: Rudolph Goldberg Tape two.

HL: Before we get on to Naples at the end of the war, I'd like to ask you more about the people who were in the troops with you?

RG: Well. To be quite honest, there was an assortment of lads, all came either from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Some came from Poland even and even further abroad even, you know. Because what held us all together was that we were all Jewish, seeing as how we were all from the Jewish Brigade. One or two actually came from Spain and all that. It was quite interesting meeting so many different boys from so many different backgrounds, but saying that, the majority were from similar backgrounds to my own from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, who had made similar backgrounds.

HL: Did you practise at all, as Jews?

RG: There was the opportunity there to practise, but as in Germany itself, the majority were not religious or not very observant. We were Jewish, consciously Jewish. We knew we were Jewish and we always made sure we had our little hats if the occasion arose. But other than that we lived pretty well the same as any other British troops did, you know.

HL: What language did you speak to each other?

RG: Oh, always English. No other language. Always English, yes.

HL: How were you feeling about your German past at that time?

RG: You see by that time quite a lot of the lads, not me, but quite a lot of lads had forgotten their German, or half forgotten it. I hadn't, but they had. My German past, especially in those days - in some ways it troubled me, because you didn't like to acknowledge that you came from Germany. It's like saying that you came from a family of gangsters or robbers. I mean, you know, it's odd really because at the same time, for all that happened, there was - you came across a certain amount of anti-Semitism even in Britain or the British army. Not obvious, you never knew quite what to say. You couldn't want to say you were German. You didn't like to say you were Jewish. It wasn't quite as bad as being German. So most of the time we just said we were members of the British Army. Full stop, you know.

HL: How did anti-Semitism show itself?

**Tape 2: 2 minutes 41 seconds**

RG: Oh, just occasionally in the army you would get some remarks said by somebody out of the corner of their mouth or something, nothing obvious, nothing big. Nothing bad, you know but just...a little remark here, remark there, like, you know? And you see the thing was that, too, if you're a member on your own, you probably wouldn't experience it. It's only when you got a group together, then you might get comments passed about the Jews, like, you know. It's only when - I was in the British army afterwards, when the Jewish Brigade dissolved. When the Jewish Brigade dissolved, there were ones who came from Israel and Palestine and went back to Israel and Palestine. The ones like myself, that joined up in Britain, we were given a choice of practically any regiment in the British Army to join. I chose to join the Hampshires, the Royal Hampshires, for the simple reason that I'd lived in Hampshire, and got used to Hampshire. And so I joined the Hampshire Regiment. The Royal Hampshires, and eventually I was stationed in a barracks in Winchester, near their headquarters and carried on my army career from that point.

HL: We'll come to that in a moment but we're now in 1945 at Naples. What were your feelings at the end of the war?

**Tape 2: 4 minutes 10 seconds**

RG: Well, glad it was finished. It was a bit of an odd situation. We were getting ready for training, or getting ready for the war, but there was no war left! So, anyway, after we landed in Naples, we were stationed and camped more or less at the foot of Vesuvius. I'd never been to Italy before, never been to the Mediterranean before. It was marvellous there. May, the climate the weather was wonderful. It was wonderful to see the Vesuvius. We had weeks and weeks in army camp, where we had very little to do. Everybody had to go on parade. But beyond that, nothing much to do. We lived in tents. It was a glorious life, really. Then from Naples - we were taken to - eventually we went to army camp in northern Italy, close to the border with Austria. But before we got there, we went on the right hand side, on the Adriatic side of Italy, all the way up, in stages. Sometimes we went by bus, by lorry, by train. We went to different places, Brindisi, Ancona, all different stations. One place we stayed for a day, some we stayed for 2 or 3 weeks. It was like a tour of Italy, really. We finished up in a place called Tarvisio in the Alps and it was quite wonderful there, the climate was warm, summertime in the Alps. Not too high but high enough to get the fresh air.

HL: How soon did you begin to hear about what had been happening in Germany?

RG: I only found out little trickles of news, really. I mean in the army, we didn't hear much. Of course being in the army in Italy in those days, I didn't even get hold of any papers, very often did I? When I was in England on the farm, I used to read my paper every day. But in Italy, in the army, we only used to get the paper occasionally. We only found out whatever... little bits of news. Somebody used to say something, somebody else would say something, you know. The whole thing didn't seem to make sense really, you know. We were so far away from our origins. It was a bit like if you were to settle on mars and heard these odd stories coming occasionally from the earth, you know. That's how it was to us.

**Tape 2: 6 minutes 48 seconds**

HL: And what happened next?

RG: So then, well after we'd been stationed in Tarvisio, Northern Italy, it was decided to move us to northern Europe. So then by army transport we travelled across the Alps, we travelled to Austria. We travelled to the place where Hitler used to live, Garmisch-Partenkirchen. I'd seen Germany for the first time since I left. The war had just finished. You used to come to a German town, you'd see one or two houses, and each time, as you got towards the centre, it was getting more and more - till you came to the centre of every German town - and it was just very tidily, all the rubble was built up in heaps, town after town after town. And then we had one big moment, because when we were travelling Germany, they took us to Bergen-Belsen. Well, by that time Bergen-Belsen had been liberated of course by a few months. But, for the people getting there... Not many people, of those that survived, not many had left at that time. And for us to move in as a Jewish army, which we were in a way, we had Jewish flags, into Bergen-Belsen! That's an experience I'll never forget, you know, the welcome we had there from the people. You know, how we felt, how they felt. What they'd been through. It was only then that it really struck us what all these concentration camps meant. And to see the huge mass graves, by that time all tidied up... It was an experience you never forget, you know, and they probably wouldn't.

HL: What month was this?

**Tape 2: 8 minutes 30 seconds**

RG: It's hard to say, towards the end of '45. No, I couldn't say exactly now but it was an unforgettable experience. But we went all around Bergen-Belsen. We stayed there for a few hours. Then eventually we moved on into Holland. And then we were stationed in Holland for the next year, two years, Holland and Belgium, in a few different camps, different army stations - Holland for a few weeks, few days in Belgium, back and forth to a few different places. One place we were guarding a petrol dump, another place we were guarding a coal dump, and all these sort of things that belonged to the army, you know? Another place we'd guard a car park and all these sorts of things. Be stationed there for weeks or days. But at least that way I got to know the whole of Belgium and Holland. We were stationed at Eindhoven, Brussels, here, there, you mention it, we were stationed.

**Tape 2: 9 minutes 40 seconds**

HL: Can I just take you back to Bergen-Belsen, because this will be of interest historically. You say that people were still living there?

RG: Yes there were lots and lots of people there because by that time they hadn't really organised any... well, obviously some people had left, you know. But by that time they hadn't organised any mass migration from Bergen-Belsen, you know. So there were still lots and lots of people living there. I'll show you some photos about that later.

HL: And were the people there concerned to be reunited with their families?

RG: Yes, yes, yes, but the people living there by that time were already well nourished and all that. I wouldn't say they'd got over the trauma, but they'd survived, they'd recovered by that time and they were just waiting to be taken or sent somewhere, you know. But the experience of being there was wonderful, you know, just ...

HL: What were your thoughts about your own parents at that stage?

RG: Well we didn't know what ... what to think. I mean at that time we wrote here, we wrote there, we wrote to the Red Cross. We wrote to different organisations. Nobody seemed to know anything in those days, you know, all chaotic a bit.

HL: Who did you write to personally?

**Tape 2: 11 minutes 0 second**

RG: Oh, I remember writing to the Red Cross and to different organisations in London. I can't remember them all now, but different help organisations, Refugee Council, all these sort of people, you know.

HL: Did you have any contacts back in your home town?

RG: No. No, no because by that time the Poles had moved into town, into our part of Germany. The Germans - you see in a way, I had - I know it was a bit of a low laugh, but I had a bit of a laugh at least because the people in our part of Germany at least, the people who'd done that to us - who turfed us out, who robbed us of everything, who destroyed where we'd lived for thou... - you see we'd lived there longer probably, some of our families, than some of those people who called themselves German, because over the years lots and lots of people had come from Poland to settle in Germany because it was a higher standard of living. In many cases they'd got German names and all that and made themselves look ... I mean looking at them you wouldn't know the difference. And they spoke German. They made out they were true genuine Germans. And yet we'd probably lived there longer than a good many of them! And so I had a bit of a laugh to myself in a sad sort of way. To think that at least they suffered the same fate as we did. The only thing is that those people who were turfed out of Germany, of our part of Germany, at least they were taken to

another part of Germany. They didn't finish up in a concentration camp. And I mean I think the majority over the years settled quite well in other parts of Germany. They were dispersed, and as tough as things were in Germany after the war. I mean millions did die on the way, it must be admitted.

**Tape 2: 12 minutes 40 seconds**

HL: When you went through all these German towns and saw the rubble, did you meet many German people?

RG: Not meet, no. I mean we were in army trucks just trundling along. You'd see them there. Can't say we really met anybody much. The only time we met any Germans was once or twice we stayed in British army camps en route. And the people, like the women working there, were German, you know. And they seemed nice enough to me. But we didn't have much direct contact. They just came and brought our dinners and teas. And that was it.

HL: Did you find your German still quite fluent?

RG: I didn't really need it then. The only thing when I come to use my German, after we'd come back to England, after the Jewish Brigade was dissolved, and I chose to join the Hampshires - and I still stayed in the army then for a while - the option came up to have a job as an interpreter. So I went as an interpreter. I went to London to do the interpreter's test. Obviously I passed. And I worked then for the next year or two in German prisoner of war camps as a staff sergeant interpreter!

**Tape 2: 14 minutes 0 second**

HL: Whereabouts?

RG: Oh down in south England mainly. One time I was in a place between Luton and Harpenden. And then I worked for a while in Essex. Two or three places in the country like, you know.

HL: Was this 1946, or...?

RG: '46, '47, getting on for '48, before I left the army. In fact, I was even given the option of staying in the army then, permanently. Because when you're young you - you've been in the army for some years, you feel kind of restricted. You think, 'Oh, it's going to be marvellous getting out of the army! Freedom, freedom,' you know. But now I sometimes think that if I'd stayed, I would have a good pension now.

HL: And what was it like being Jewish and an interpreter for German prisoners of war?

RG: It was absolutely perfect, I had no bother whatsoever. Well actually I met one or two German chaps who were really, really nice you know. I had no bother of any sort in the camps with the Germans, or anything. We just had a normal relationship and that's it. One or two were quite pleasant. Just talked normally, and...

HL: What kind of interpreting were you doing?

RG: Oh every day, I mean anything you... The camp commandant would issue an order "The prisoners got to be up at such and such a time, to do this that and the other ". I'd just translate it into English and type it all out. Sometimes I – oh, once or twice I had to go to court. One case, a German prisoner was a witness in a divorce case, so I went up to London for the day, and give evidence in the divorce court of what he'd seen. Because of course he didn't know any English. And another time there was some kind of Court Martial, and I had to interpret at the Court Martial. It was quite interesting, really.

**Tape 2: 16 minutes 0 second**

HL: How did your own written English come to be good enough, you know, spelling and grammar because...?

RG: That's what I said, I mean, my education, my official education ended in 1938. I just had to educate myself - because I think partly being fond of reading. And I mean once you knew one word of English you picked up the paper. I mean in a way I think I learned English like a baby learns to talk. You know - one, two words, six words. You gradually build it up.

HL: What about written English?

RG: Well that just came along. I don't know. I mean, when you grow up - say, you're 5 one minute and then you're 15 - you can't quite remember how you learned to speak, or to write. It just grows on you. That's how we learned. Just came normal to me. I don't think I'm praising myself, I think I'm fairly good at languages by and large. It's just second nature. It grew on me like hair.

HL: So what happened after the interpreting?

RG: And so after interpreting, then I left the army. And then I thought, 'I've got to go somewhere'. Then I lived in Hampshire for a while. Then I heard about Birmingham and work there, so I came to Birmingham. Then eventually I met Kate. And we eventually got married in 1950. And then in between we went back to Hampshire, and I worked for a while on the farm. While we were there, we adopted a little boy, because we didn't think we'd have any children. And then, no sooner had we adopted one, than my wife was expecting. And then we came back to Birmingham. Eventually we got a council flat in Northfields, where we lived for 20-odd years. Then after living in the Northfields flat, we managed to get this house. That's it basically, you know. Then I got - or as my wife told you, she worked for so many years at Woodlands Orthopaedic Hospital - I got a job eventually with a firm down in Hockley - brass founders - mostly doing despatch and all that. Then that firm shut. Oh, they were taken over by somebody else, and by that time we were living here. And I'd seen this job advertised down Warstock Road. So I went and applied for the job in Warstock Road. And I got the job. I ran a big store there, buying all the stuff, handing out, ordering all the stuff. Do you know Warstock Road? Lawton's, I worked for them for many, many years. And they were quite pleased with me. When I retired, they handed me a nice cheque, so they must have been pleased.

**Tape 2: 19 minutes 19 seconds**

HL: We'll go back now and look at those years in Birmingham, between when you stopped interpreting, and 1950. What were you doing then?

RG: When I came back to Birmingham eventually, basically, I just done the two jobs, I worked for this firm in Hockley...

HL: But I think you said you were in Birmingham before 1950?

RG: Yes, well, I'm just trying to think... First I met my wife. After I left the army and before we left Birmingham the once, I worked in the BSA. And that's where I met my wife. I was making bicycle frames and she was a welder there. We worked in the cycle factory, the BSA.

HL: And would you like to talk about your wife's background?

RG: Yes, well, my wife came from Ireland. We just met by chance. We sat together, met together dinner times, and we sat together. She was there with two or three friends of hers who'd also come over from Ireland. And when she... We used to sit there in a circle and when she'd talk to friends at dinner times between each other, all coming from Cork, I would sit there. I couldn't understand a word they would say. I mean, I was fluent in English by that time, but they were talking a foreign language to me, you know. But eventually we got together and went out together. She lived in Tilton Road and I lived next to Small Heath – next to Small Heath Park in lodgings. We started going out to pictures and all that together, we both liked the cinema and, eventually, decided to get married. We got married here in Birmingham.

HL: What kind of ceremony did you have?

**Tape 2: 21 minutes 12 seconds**

RG: We only had a small ceremony. We got married in church actually. I think it was St Vincent's church, somewhere down in Small Heath... My wife will tell you exactly where.

HL: A Catholic church?

RG: Yes. Yes. We were comparatively poor, so we just had a small ceremony, like, you know, nothing big. First of, all when we first got married, we rented a flat, we lived in a flat in Stratford Road. Do you know Stratford Road? We lived in a big old house opposite Ladypool Road and ... Just had one room up in the attic. And the landlord there, he wanted to know everything you were doing. And we had to pay - I don't know - a shilling a week for the electric and we couldn't use an electric iron. And one day, he had spare keys, he'd been into our flat, seen my wife had been using an electric iron. And after that we had to pay another shilling a week for the electric! He was that mean, that careful. He'd converted his own bathroom into another bedroom so that he could let another room out. And believe it or not, he used to have – and he was quite an old chap, he was - a hot water bottle at night, and in the

morning, he'd open the hot water bottle, put the plunger in the sink and use that water to wash himself. That's how careful he was. And we lived next to another young couple, they eventually migrated to Canada. And anyway, we were living in this flat. It wasn't too bad, I mean my wife made it quite comfortable and cosy, you know. But, one morning I woke up and there's all these bites on me. And we were pretty clean, like, you know, as clean as you could be, couldn't see anything, nothing in the bed. So next night we went to bed, and for some reason we had to switch on the light for something, and when we switched on the light, there was an army of bugs walking across the ceiling, and they were dropping down like parachutists. And they attacked me, they didn't attack her. That's where I was getting all my bites from. So we had to call in the Council. The whole place had to be fumigated and...so much for Stratford Road.

HL: Did your wife go to church after you were married?

RG: Oh yes. She's been a regular church goer ever since. Yes, she's kept up.

HL: Did she have any thought about you becoming a Catholic?

RG: Well, she talked about it. At one time I toyed with the idea, but... I think after the war you know and after all the things that happened I was a bit... wavering in my beliefs, you know. But gradually I came back to my old religion. And I mean I'm not Orthodox or anything, but you know, I'm Jewish to the core, you know. Yes. Not religiously really, but to the core.

HL: And in those early years of marriage, did it cause any...?

RG: No, no, no, not really. She went that way and I went that way (motions left and right).

**Tape 2: 24 minutes 40 seconds**

HL: Did you start going to the synagogue?

RG: I've never been to the synagogue much. I mean now I'm a member of the community. When there's something special on, special dos and that sort of thing, and the Holocaust Memorial Ceremony with the cemetery, I'll go to that. Any special occasions I'll go. And there was... a month ago there was some special ceremony at Singer's Hill and our son went and the one daughter and my wife went, and we all had a chat to the rabbi. Rabbi Tann, I don't know if you've met him. I've got to know him quite well like, you know. But...I'm just on the edge, like, you know. Not deeply involved.

**Tape 2: 25 minutes 26 seconds**

HL: And after those few early years in Birmingham where did you go next?

RG: Well then we went back because we couldn't find any proper accommodation. We went back to a farm in Hampshire. We lived on the farm in a rented cottage in Hampshire. That was an eye opener in itself, ...[Inaudible] because it was very, very

primitive. . We were miles from town. There was no gas, no electric, no buses, no nothing. The groceries delivered once a week. The man came around in a little van. We had a list. Pint of this, pint of that, pack of sugar, of that...And then the next time he came back he'd bring your delivery. And I worked on this farm for a year or two. Then the farmer – we lived in a rented cottage - wanted to pull the cottage down. I didn't like it there anyway, so eventually...My wife knew somebody living here in Birmingham. So she came back and lived with this old chap to keep his house. By that time we had the adopted one boy and we had one child of our own. So she came back to this place in Small Heath and looked after this old chap and kept his house for him and had her own room or whatever. And after a week or two I joined her. And I got a job then in ...Bermans, that's it. Do you know Bermans? Yes. I got a job in Bermans. So we settled in this flat and then eventually, we were on a council housing list, we got this flat in Northfields and from the flat in Northfields we came here, after many years. And from my job in Bermans, I got a considerably better job in Hockley. And...that was it.

HL: Did you ever have any thoughts of taking up your education, after your education was interrupted?

**Tape 2: 27 minutes 30 seconds**

RG: Well, yes and no, because once you've got a family and a home...it was very difficult. My wife was working nights. We used to time it so that, when she worked in the evenings, I'd come in, she'd go out, you know. And really, perhaps if I'd made a lot more effort, I could have perhaps. It's always been a bit of a bother like, you know? Any education I got, I got it by myself, by reading, by listening.

HL: When it came to bringing up your children ...?

RG: Yes.

HL: How did you feel that you would incorporate both your pasts?

RG: Well I mean, I've always told our children about our past, my past and what happened to their grandparents. What happened to the Jews in Germany and where I come from. I've always been very careful to tell them and explain to them as I do to the grandchildren, you know. They of course knew my kid sister, you know. They were well taught from both sides, you know. And I mean they went to Catholic school which touched a bit of a raw nerve in me at times. But by and large they've all done well in school. I'll say one thing; maybe it's off the interview, but the one we adopted., I wasn't really keen on it... It never really worked out. They talk about what's in genes and what's in upbringing, there's something in that. But at least ours, our own, have done well for themselves, you know.

HL: How did your children, as they were growing up, think of themselves? Did they think of themselves as Catholics or Jewish?

RG: No, I don't think they thought of themselves as anything very much, you know. They...once they got a bit older, got away from home, I don't think they bothered much to go anywhere, you know. They were just free spirits. So that's it. I mean, the

one daughter, the younger one, the one that's a teacher, she's a teacher in a Catholic school. She does have to do a bit of it since she's a teacher in a Catholic school. But I don't think any of them really followed it to any extent. None of them followed it to any extent, you know.

**Tape 2: 30 minutes 5 seconds**

HL: Perhaps we should name them for the archive, and talk about what they're doing.

RG: Well our oldest son...our oldest child is Marian Ruth. And she's a senior staff nurse at City Hospital. The next daughter is Judith Anne and she's a teacher at a primary school, and Adrian David, who is a TV broadcaster and TV person and journalist.

HL: There are some names there, Judith and Ruth.

RG: Yes, well I made sure they had a little bit of Jewish background in them. My wife called the oldest one, the first one Marian, because it happened to be a Marian year that year. But we called her Ruth as well, after my mother. Judith I called Judith because of the biblical connection. Anne, which is two nice names together. Adrian was my wife's choice, which I didn't mind, nice name and David, again the biblical connection. So that's it.

HL: When did you start to have anything to do with other Jewish people in Birmingham?

RG: Only for the last few years, again. For a long while I had absolutely nothing to do. You know for maybe 10 years now...You know believe it or not, it might be an odd thing to say, but I want to be buried in a Jewish cemetery. So to do that you really have to join a - I mean in some places you can join a Jewish burial fund, even if you don't go to a synagogue or don't belong to the community, and you can just pay and be buried as a Jew. But in Birmingham, you've got to join a community. So really what made me join the community was, so that I could be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 10 seconds**

HL: And which community did you join?

RG: Oh, the one in Singer's Hill. As I said, I'm not orthodox myself but that was my choice. I know there are one or two communities that are progressive. I don't really feel quite in tune with progressive, you know. As I'm just a member for the main reason that I'd be buried in a Jewish cemetery, it didn't make too much difference. But I said I've been up to Singer's Hill and have been quite friendly with them there, so it all went off quite well. No complaints.

HL: Did you get any clues at all about what had happened to your parents?

RG: None at all. None at all, to be quite honest, I know some people launch investigations as to where and when and how their parents died but you know I could

never, never bring myself to do that, because you know. I know they perished there but I just couldn't face it, to be quite honest you know?

HL: Did you ever think about going back to your home town?

RG: Well that's another story. If I drew up a list of destinations to go to from 1 to 100 going back to my home town would be my number 98, because I've always thought, all the people that used to live there were turfed out. I'd come back into a Polish speaking place. And to be honest I don't think much of the Poles themselves, because even so they mightn't have organised a holocaust like the Germans did, they've never been particularly friendly to the Jews. You know, I mean, there might have been one or two who helped Jews in Poland, but by and large they were silently clapping their hand over what the Germans did, and in many cases couldn't wait to move into Jewish homes and shops fast enough. I've never particularly liked the Poles or Poland, plus the fact that I said it would be like landing on the moon. But some years ago my brother and a friend of his - when my brother was still alive - my brother was a surveyor and his friend was an architect, they decided to...there was some conference in Poland, for architects and surveyors. They decided to make it a holiday as well. So this friend and my brother and their two wives set off in a car, to Poland, and attended this conference for a day or two, then after that, had a tour of Poland. That was the idea. Then my brother went over to our old home town. When he came back, he showed me the photos and then he told me, that if you went there now - I mean it had been German for hundreds of years, I would dispute it ever was Polish - you would never ever know it had ever, ever been Polish..

## **Tape 2: 35 minutes 22 seconds**

HL: You mean German?

RG: Ever been German, yes. It was so Polish; every trace of...of anything German just was wiped out. Not just the people but in every other way. He went back to our old house. Where that stood, there was just a green patch. But one or two of the places that we knew were still standing, you know.

HL: What about the synagogue you went to...?

RG: He didn't say. He didn't say.

HL: Or the cemetery where you worked?

RG: No, no. No, no. When he got there, for one thing Poland was still behind the iron curtain. And when he got there, to make things worse, it just happened to be a Sunday. Everything was shut. And he said the only thing he could buy there in plenty was beer and tomatoes, and nothing else. He wasn't impressed with the place, it was just that he went back and seen it. But I have no great - I mean, if I won a million today, I might go there one day - but it's no great ambition to get there. Lots of other places I'd go first.

HL: When you look back on your childhood, before it came abruptly to an end, what are your feelings about it now?

RG: Well, originally my childhood was quite happy, quite contented. We lived ordinary middle class lives. We had everything we wanted. Our parents took us on holiday once a year. We used to go mostly to - across the border into Germany, mainly to Sudetenland, with some lovely scenery, lovely walks. At the same time, you could talk to people, because they were German speaking people. By and large, us children - our mother was a bit strict, like, you know - looking back on it, we were perhaps raised too strict compared to some other children. But happy enough time.

HL: What about your cultural life in a small town?

**Tape 2: 37 minutes 30 seconds**

RG: That's one thing I was going to say to you. In those days, I mean there was no television. And even barely a few people had radios. My grandfather had a radio which was a bit of a sensation. My father and mother would never have one. Now, in every family you get somebody who makes music more than another. My father had a record player, a gramophone. He had a small one at first - a wind-up one. And then, it must have been about 1934, when they were married about 10 years, my mother's mother bought them a proper big gramophone that you could plug in and play. And my father had a few records. I mean records even in those days were an enormous price. If you had 6 records, you had a fantastic collection. But now and again on a Sunday night, we used to just sit there. My father would put on the gramophone. And we had a few old tunes like Orpheus in the Underworld and all these sort of things. And that's where I got my love of music from originally, in the first place. I don't think my mother was very keen, I mean she'd sit and listen. And...once I went into the army, I had a chance to go to one or two concerts. That sort of built up my liking of music, classical music. I mean Kate knows, she'll never go, never interested. But the one daughter, the one that's a school teacher, she's really keen on music like myself. She'll occasionally go to operas and concerts. That's how you get it in every family, you get some who like it and some who don't. But apart from that, in our town, our home town, there was theatre, and quite a good range of programmes. But from the late 1930's Jews were restricted from going to the theatre and to the cinema. So it shut itself out, you know.

**Tape 2: 39 minutes 30 seconds**

HL: Because your brother was younger, and his education undertaken here. I suppose you'd say a surveyor is a good middle class profession...

RG: He had a very good education. I mean he went to live with a couple. The husband was quite a high up in the postal service, as it was in those days, in Southampton. He'd started out during the first war as a telegraph boy and gradually worked his way up, you know, and he'd become a high range PO officer. And he went to Grammar school in Southampton. He was evacuated during the air raids to Bournemouth or some place... First he worked for Southampton Council, then for Portsmouth Council, for a while Portsmouth. And eventually he got a job as a surveyor for the council in Guildford. And he lived there till he passed away.

HL: What was his name?

RG: Werner. W-E-R-N-E-R. And he by chance married a Dutch girl. Believe it or not; neither of us married English girls. But he married a Dutch girl, who's still alive there. And they in turn had two children, a boy and a girl. But I often think my brother, he was perhaps more clingy than me. One of the reasons I think it affected him was, I think he missed home, and his mother, more than I did. You know it affected him more. That, plus I don't want to say anything against my sister in law, but if he'd married a different woman he might still be alive today, without going into details, so...

HL: When you think about your own identity do you think of yourself as German, British, Jewish?

**Tape 2: 41 minutes 34 seconds**

RG: English Jewish I would say, more. I never think of myself as German. I mean I like German, though I don't read much German, even. Music maybe, you know. No. Very little German cultural contacts nowadays, you know. But I always...If I'm abroad somewhere, I look forward to coming back to England. I really feel that's my home, here.

HL: Do people ever ask you where your accent comes from?

RG: I was walking down the road down Bell's Lane one day, and this girl talking says, 'Where do you come from?' I said, 'I come from Darlaston Common.' 'No, no.' she says, 'I mean originally?' That illustrates how I feel. I never thought further than that. She said, 'Where do you come from?' I said, 'Down here, Darlaston Common!'

HL: What do you say if people do question you about your accent?

RG: I say, "Born in Germany, like you know". I say, "I came here many hundreds of years ago".

HL: There's been a lot of media coverage of the events you've lived through. Can you remember how your understanding and knowledge has altered over the years?

RG: That's another thing now. When I see films about Germany, and pre-wartime Germany, and a lot of them I watch, haven't been there. And I say to Kate, "It doesn't seem real somehow". I think you must have been there to get a real feeling of the place. That film 'Schindler's List' I did see it once, but by and large, I don't like seeing any of these things, because if it's something that upsets me, it's seeing the concentration camp scenes. Not just for a second, but if it goes on for any length of time, it does affect me. Yes.

**Tape 2: 43 minutes 53 seconds**

HL: Do you have any message for people who may want to watch this video in future?

RG: Just tell them to be brave and patient, a have a lot of forbearance, and keep the faith. Not much else to say.

**Tape 2: 44 minutes 30 seconds**

**Tape 2: 44 minutes 45 seconds**

HL: Well I've asked you if you'd like to talk more about your working life.

RG: Yes.

HL: Tell me a bit more about it.

RG: Well I came back to Birmingham. I worked at Bermans. I worked there nights. They were making gears there for cars, and motorbikes and lorries, and all that sort of thing. And my job was to test the gears. Not very interesting but being nights I earned extra money because... At that time, we were hoping either to get a place of our own or buy a place, or get a place with the council because we were living in accommodation in West Heath with an old chap, and it was far from perfect. But I thought, if I could save some money, we could either put down a deposit for a house, or if we did get an offer from the council, at least we'd have some money to furnish it. But as it happened, the offer from the council came first. We got a flat offered in Northfields. So the money I managed to save up we used to furnish our flat in Northfields. Then, afterwards, I got fed up with being on nights. I saw this job advertised in Hockley. It was a firm of brass founders which manufactured door handles and window furniture and things. And I went there and handled stock orders and all that. Really, really interesting, or I found it interesting anyway. It was quite a nice job, the only snag being that it was a fair distance away. After I'd been there a few years, they decided - old chap who owned it, he only had two daughters - they wanted us to be taken over, and they wanted to sell to a bigger concern. So he sold to a bigger concern and once they sold to this bigger concern their premises, life wasn't the same any more because we were just like little pebbles. We said, "Better to be a big fish in a small pond than small fish in a big pond". So by that time we were living here in Darlaston Common. So I'd seen this job going in Warstock Rd. So I applied, got that job. And there I ran the stores. Bought stuff, got stuff in, kept it in order. I stored everything in that particular store from steel to pins to toilet paper to kitchen paper. And by and large everyone who worked there, they'd come to me for this and that. I still meet lots of people, when I go out shopping. It was very friendly place, family firm, as was the one in Hockley. I only retired because I had to. I would still be there now. Of course they've sold out since, so it makes no difference.

**Tape 2: 47 minutes 47 seconds**

HL: What about your social life and your spare time?

RG: Well, I've never had much of a social life. I'm not one for going to pubs or clubs. I occasionally go visit a concert, a cinema. And then the family just keeps me going most of the time. So between helping around the house, washing up, this and that, that's my life. But occasionally we go to visit one daughter or son. Grandchildren take us out for meals...Most Sundays we have somebody here for a meal. When it's just

the two of us sitting down, we say, “Nobody here”, which is unusual, because usually there is someone or other for dinner. We enjoy it. Christmas time we’ve had as many as 14 people here, which is a bit hectic, but most enjoyable. What we usually do on Christmas Day, we have dinner, with 6, 8, 10 or more people, but on Boxing Day we push the table to the window in the dining room, lay it out, have a buffet and the whole family appears. It might be as many as 20-odd, now, appear. And people just help themselves. Bit of pie, bit of food, this and that. And my wife makes some nice trifles. That’s most enjoyable. Having a buffet in a way is better than having a dinner, little washing up and everybody comes and goes just as you like. So we always look forward to it, to Boxing Day.

**Tape 2: 49 minutes 39 seconds**

[Camera pans around room.]

**Rudolph Goldberg Photos**

**Tape 2: 50 minutes 22 seconds**

RG: My brother, Werner, and myself before we left Germany, just before we left Germany. And there are some friends in Germany that we used to play with, all Jewish children. And as far as I know all of them perished.

And my mother and father just at the time of the outbreak of war just, at the time we left Germany.

HL: And where were these taken?

RG: They were all taken in Ratibor in Eastern Germany, Upper Silesia.

RG: My brother just after he left me, when he went to live with the family in Southampton, in 1939, and then, as he grew up, different stages, living with this couple in Southampton. And the next time I came across him, he was a grown up lad, still in Southampton, going to grammar school. And that was in 1943 but after not seeing him for about 4 years, like meeting a different person.

**Tape 2: 51 minutes 45 seconds**

RG: My brother Werner, and myself, in Southampton during the war in 1943, when I saw him then for the first time in 4 years. I got quite a shock because after leaving a little boy, I suddenly met a tall school lad, completely grown up.

RG: It’s a photo of myself, in July 1941, when I was working on a farm in Derby.

RG: That’s a photo of me, in the Jewish Brigade, on leave, in Brussels, with some of my friends, just taking leave.

HL: Which year?

RG: 1943 – no - 1945, isn’t it? 1945.

RG: That's me on the right doing kitchen fatigues, whilst in the Jewish Brigade, stationed in Belgium in 1945.

RG: Photos taken in Bergen-Belsen, in 1946. I'm on the right in that picture. It just shows you a memorial plaque.

HL: Which month in 1946?

RG: It was in September, was it?

HL: September?

RG: Yes, September '46.

RG: Photo taken in the British Army when I was in the Royal Hampshires, in July 1947.

RG: Photo taken at Christmas 1947, in a German prisoner of war camp, celebrating Christmas with a British camp commandant, a German camp leader and myself as interpreter. The picture was taken at the prisoner of war camp at Laindon in Essex.

RG: On a day trip to London in Trafalgar Square. I'm on the left and Kate's in the middle. And we had a wonderful day there, in May, 1949.

RG: Kate's original home in Cork, in the city of Cork in July, 1951, soon after we were married.

RG: The children's passport I brought over from Germany, issued in July 1939, on my way to England.

RG: And that's the reverse side of my children's passport issued in 1939.

RG: A copy birth certificate made out in July 1939 to prove that I came to life in 1925.

### **Tape 2: 55 minutes 30 seconds**

RG: My father, Julius Goldberg and his father Hermann Goldberg, taken in their German Army uniforms in our hometown in Ratibor, some time in 1918.

RG: We had to wear one of these on our clothes or on our suitcase – carry one on our suitcase - to prove that we belonged to *Kindertransport*. I had to wear one on my suitcase when I came over to England in the end of June, beginning of July, 1939

RG: My father Julius and his mother, when my father was about one year old in 1901.

HL: Where?

RG: In our home town of Ratibor.

RG: My father Julius and his grandmother, taken in Berlin, when my father was about 5 years old which means it must have been taken in about 1905. The oldest remaining photo I've got.

**Tape 2: 56 minutes 54 seconds**

**End of Tape**