

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Sex:	Female
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV210
NAME: Diana Davis
DATE: 3rd November 2017
LOCATION: Brentwood, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 3rd of November 2017. We are conducting an interview with Mrs. Diana Davis. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in Brentwood.

Can you please tell me your name?

Diana Davis

And your name at birth?

My name at birth- Goldina Trauring.

And when were you born?

Twenty-eight, eleven, 1927.

And where?

In Gotha, Thüringen, Germany.

Thank you. Thank you, Mrs. Davis for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Project. Can you please tell me a little bit about your family background?

My mother and father lived in Gotha. My grandparents lived in Gotha. They were all business people. They were of Polish extraction, but my mother came to Germany when she was quite young - and went to school in Germany. I'm not sure about my father, when he came, but he lived in Berlin- but he was born in Poland of a large family. In Gotha, my aunt, my mother's sister, lived in the same street as we did. And I had two cousins - boy cousins. Both of them survived. One came to England and joined the British Army, and the other one went with his parents first to Belgium – Brussels, and then to Switzerland. And after the war, my aunt, my uncle and my cousin went to live in New York. My other cousin stayed in England and married... I think she was Czech. Married a Czech girl. And I still see his children occasionally. He unfortunately died. But I was very close to him, and he was very good to me and generous. There you are.

[0:02:51]

Where did you live in Gotha?

Neunzehn [19] Augustinerstraße.

And what was- you said there was a shop- your mother...?

There was a shop at the bottom, and there were three stories above. My grandparents had the first floor, and we had two and three.

And what sort of shop was it?

It was clothes.

What kind of clothes?

I don't know.

So, was this your mother's parents?

My mother's parents were also in business. My grandfather used to travel all over Europe to import - I know not what. And... my grandmother didn't work. She was an old lady.

But were those the grandparents in this- in the same building?

Yes.

Yes. What were they called?

They were called Solomon and Bertha.

And surname?

Well, my- I don't know why, but my grandmother was Westreich and my grandfather was Weiser. I think under Jewish law, they had to retain these names. I don't understand. I think maybe when they came to Germany, because they had- only had a Jewish ceremony they had to - in Germany - had to keep their separate names. And my mother, although her parents were married under Jewish law, my mother took her mother's name Westreich.

And do you remember them?

I do remember them. I was eleven.

Yeah...

I remember particularly my grandfather, because he was... a Cohen. And he was quite religious. And very much respected in the Community, I remember that. And his son was a consul - a Polish consul - and lived in Leipzig. As far as I know he was quite an important man. One of his daughters went to live in Paris and then she went to New York. And the other daughter was murdered with his- with her parents. They all went to Crakow together, both families.

Because they had to leave Germany?

Mn-hnn.

Because they didn't have any German citizen... ?

Yeah.

They didn't have German papers?

[0:05:36]

No. No, they were Polish.

But they lived in Gotha for some time?

Yes. Well, my father and my grandfather and presumably my uncle, were taken to Poland. I think it was Kristallnacht- on Kristallnacht. I think so. My mother and the rest of the family stayed behind. And my brother and I came to England as I say in June. And my parents- my father came back to collect my mother and my young brother, and they went back to Crakow. I think within a very short time. I think he came to see us off, and then they returned- they went to live with him in Crakow.

Yeah. Before we talk about that time, can we just go back? What are your first memories of growing up in Gotha?

I remember going to school. And I remember with a- went to school with a *Zuckertorte-Zuckertüte* [*Zuckertüte is a cone filled with sweets and gifts which German children get on their first day of school*]. I think it must have been at Easter. I did quite well at school, and I had some German friends who lived in the same road. But after '33 they wouldn't have anything to do with me. And they used to spit at me. So, it wasn't very nice. But we had Jewish friends and we mixed only with Jewish people after that. But I remember 1933 particularly, because Hitler came to power in '33 and I was- I think I must have been six, and I was in bed, ill. And I kept calling my mother and she didn't come. I kept calling her, and eventually she came. And she came up and she said, "A very bad man now rules Germany. And it is going to be very difficult for us." But I remember that, and I was six. So clearly it had an impact. But I continued to go to school until I was ten.

To a- what sort of school? To a primary school?

[0:08:09]

I went to primary school until I was ten and then I took an exam and went to the *Lyzeum...* which was just at the bottom of my road. And I stayed there till I had to- had to leave- forced to leave.

But what was it like in the school? Were there any other Jewish children with you?

I don't recall any other Jewish children being in my school. No, I don't.

And you managed? It was all right?

Sorry?

Was it okay?

Yes, I was fine until I had to leave. As... far as I remember it was OK - at school.

So, the incidents with the spitting were local?

Local, yes. In the road. People I'd been friendly with. There was a Catholic girl who continued to be friendly with me for a short while, and then she was forbidden to mix with me. But I think I had a circle of Jewish friends. I think it had- there was a circle of Jewish people who used to meet.

What about your parents? What sort of friends did they have?

Well, I think they had quite a large circle of friends, because my aunt and uncle lived up the road. And... So, they had- a: They had all the family, and then the family from Leipzig used to come and stay with us. I remember that. I think they had *Kult- Deutsche Kulturgemeinde*, I think it was called. And they used to meet I think on High days and holidays or... certainly had a circle of friends.

And what was your father's profession? Your mother had the shop...

Yes, my father was *ein Weinvertreter* [salesman for wine].

Yes? And what does that mean, please?

What's that in English?

No, what does it mean? Yeah, or...

He sold wine to... hotels and restaurants. Not physically. He got their orders... and sent the orders off and shipped the wine to these people.

So, were they rather well-off or, how were they...?

[0:10:28]

I would say middle class. They had a car, which I think in '33 was fairly unusual. I think the house was... probably owned by my grandparents. But I'm not sure.

And how religious were they?

My grandparents, very religious. My parents not that religious, but they were practising Jews certainly. They kept High days and holidays and they kept kashrut, so...

And on that note, what do you remember? Do you remember going to synagogue?

Yes, I remember going to synagogue. I remember all the High days and holidays which we usually celebrated at my grandparents' downstairs, like Passover and Hanukkah... and Rosh Hashanah, we had a little hut in the garden. So, I remember all that. Don't forget I was eleven, so, you know...

Yeah... And do you know how your parents met at all?

I think it was an arranged marriage. That was my... impression.

And did you have siblings?

I had an older brother, and a younger brother, and then another brother was born after I left.

And... What was the relationship between you and your brother- your brothers?

Very good. Wonderful, particularly after he came- we came over here. Because he got very ill. He caught TB, and I was his sort of... his comfort, presumably. He was highly intelligent and- but he was in hospital for many years. And he- actually, I took him to see my son after he was born. He wasn't allowed to go near him, but he could look at him through the window. And my son was about two or so. And he actually died when I was in hospital having my daughter. That's when he actually died. But we were very close.

Any other- did you have any hobbies in Gotha? Did you- do you remember...?

[0:13:02]

Did I have hobbies? I don't think- oh, I think I had embroidery lessons or something like that. I had quite a lot of schoolwork, and I learned- had to learn to read Hebrew. So, I obviously went to Hebrew classes. ...Used to go into the country, on Sundays...where we had a little sort of hut in a piece of land. And we all went the whole family: my aunt, my uncle - all of us. So, I remember that. And I think- until I was six, I think my childhood was quite happy. Because we used- I remember my sixth birthday party - quite a big birthday party. And all the local children were invited. I did have a - a nanny... because my mother was working. And in fact, she tried to contact me after the war because she survived. She was obviously Christian, but I chose not to. She contacted my aunt in- who was then living in Brussels, and she asked to be in touch with me and I- it was just too painful; I didn't want to know at that stage. So.

Were you traumatised because of the whole situation, or with her particularly? Did you feel she in particularly did some...?

She used to hit me, and I remembered that.

Aha...

And... That's all. I- I'd built a life away from that, and I never went back to Gotha, but my cousins did. And they said it was it was... it was very run down, because of course it had been East Germany. And the- my cousin said, "Don't go back. It's- it's not worth it." So, I didn't.

But you didn't feel you- you didn't want to go back?

[0:15:11]

Well... not really. The memories weren't that good, and I'd built a life here. So... no. I've been back to Germany.

Right.

But not to Gotha. Been back to Germany several times, because they had- I don't know if you've heard *Freie Universität* in Berlin. And we used- my husband was very good in- at German. He was brilliant at all languages- well, five languages. So, we went... to university courses in Berlin. We took my daughter on one occasion, I think, with just my husband and I

and we studied at the *Freie* University for a couple of weeks. And of course, saw a lot of Berlin, as you can imagine. And then later on, my husband had worked with somebody in – I'm trying to remember where - somewhere in the Rhine. He worked with this German firm, and we used to go stay in a hotel in Baden-Baden, I remember. So, I've had a lot of holidays in Germany. Partly I suppose 'cause I still speak the language - though probably not terribly well. And I met this very nice German woman... and she came to stay with me quite often and I'm still in touch with her. And she came to stay. We invited her. We met her in Berlin. We invited her to stay with us, and she brought a very large suitcase. And I thought she'd stay a week or two and she stayed a month. And I liked her as much at the end of the month as at the beginning. And when she got married, her husband came and stayed with us. So- and they were German but civilised, nice people.

So, when do you remember? You said you remember that kids didn't stop playing with you. What was the turning point, in your memory in- in Gotha?

I think when I was about nine or ten. I think after I had to leave school. ..But I had- we had Jewish friends.

Yes.

And I had the family - my cousins and so on.

But you said you still- you did go to the Lyzeum?

I went to the *Lyzeum* for a year.

[0:17:56]

Right. And how was that? Because that was already 19-

It wasn't good. I remember it wasn't good. I remember... there was a lot of "*Heil Hitler*" and that sort of stuff, which of course I didn't do. It wasn't- was not pleasant.

And do you remember as a child, was it- were you scared? In Gotha?

I remember I was scared... towards the end, yes. After the stormtroopers came to the house... I was scared.

When did they come?

They came on *Kristallnacht*. They took my father and my grandfather away. And they- my mother hid my brother in the attic, because he was fifteen. And... They came and searched the house, but they didn't find him. And we were- my younger brother and I were too young to be taken away. But they would have taken my brother had they found him- I think. ...So, he came to England with me.

So, bear with- what happened to your father then?

My father was taken to Poland.

Immediately?

Immediately. And my grandfather. We didn't see him again, until I think a day or two before we went to England. He came to see us off. He was allowed; it was pre-war. It was June '39, so he was allowed back briefly. And then he took my mother and my younger brother back.

So, your father and grandfather, they left basically in November '38?

[0:19:43]

Yes. *Kristallnacht* was November? I thought it was October, but I can't remember exactly. But whenever.

It was November.

Yes.

Next week- I mean, 8th of November.

Yes.

And how did they- Where did they go in Poland?

To Crakow.

And did they still have family in Poland, or...?

Well, my grandfather, and my father and my uncle went to Crakow. I don't know if they were able to work. I don't know. I'm not sure.

You don't know about their circumstances?

No. Don't know. No.

And did they- speaking of Poland- did they speak Polish?

I am sure my mother didn't. She might have understood, 'cause she was quite a young girl when she left. She might have understood it. I- they didn't speak Polish to each other, they spoke German.

They spoke German together. Did they speak some Yiddish?

Yes.

In the family, which language was spoken?

At home it was German. But the grandparents spoke Yiddish. And I imagine my mother spoke Yiddish to her... parents.

Yeah...

I would think so.

So, your mother was basically left... alone...

Yes.

...with you...

And my elder brother, and my younger brother.

Yeah. And then what did she...?

I don't know because they wouldn't allow- they shut the shop. They wouldn't allow her to trade anymore.

Yes?

So, I don't know what they lived on; I've no idea.

[0:21:22]

And you didn't leave immediately. You had quite a bit of time between Kristallnacht till June '39...

Yes. June '39.

So, what- what do you remember from that period?

I had...I remember a lot of unpleasantness... from other children. And- but I do remember that some teachers used to come to the house to teach us. Both my brother and I had what was called '*Unterricht*'. So, we were privately educated by the German *Gemeinde* [community]- probably German Jews- Jewish teachers or something. I don't know.

Or the Jüdische Gemeinde.

Yeah, the *Jüdische Gemeinde*. And we learned to read *Ivrit*. That's sort of all I remember, really.

And English?

No. Didn't speak any- well I didn't know that I was coming to England, until a few days before I came. It was my cousin... who had lived in the same town, came to England, because he had English relatives. And he organised for my brother and I to come. He organised some dis- relatives of his - nothing to do with me - to take me in. And my brother went to a hostel.

So, did he arrange the guarantor, or...? Or he told you about the Kinder...?

Well, I think this- Leonard Montefiore was our guarantor. I think it was The Jewish Refugee Committee. There was a big Jewish Refugee Committee, and they organised.

But you cousin, how had he come to England?

He came to stay with his... uncle, I suppose. His father's brother.

Not on the Kindertransport?

No.

[0:23:20]

No. And did he come with his parents?

No. They went to Belgium. They went to Brussels.

Right.

They- I member my aunt saying they crawled through tunnels to get there, because I imagine that it was difficult to get out. But they did go to Brussels.

So...

My uncle, in fact, I remember very clearly. He was stateless, and they took him to Buchenwald. But I think they must have paid a lot of money to get him out. And then they immediately went to live in Brussels. And then they left during the war- they left Brussels and went to live in Switzerland. I think they were probably quite comfortably off. I have the feeling.

But your father was not taken to Buchenwald. He was taken...?

No. Because he was- my uncle was stateless; that's why they were allowed to take him to Buchenwald. But my father was a Pole. So that's why they sent him to Poland. Cause Poland didn't come into the war till '39, did they?

Yes...yes. So, your mother stayed behind with your grandmother as well?

Well, that's why they went to Poland. She wouldn't leave her elderly grandparents. And of course, her husband was in Poland by then.

What options did she have? What do you think could she have done? Could she have done something? Could she have gone to Belgium, for example?

I think my aunt who went to Brussels, could have got her out. Yes. I think they had to pay a lot of money. I have a feeling that they had to pay a lot of money to get out. But I know that she could have got her out, but she wouldn't leave her- her parents are quite old, and she felt she couldn't leave them.

Yeah...

So, all rather sad.

Yeah. But she saved your brother in the way that she did, by hiding him.

[0:25:11]

Yes, she did. Yes ,she did. But I still remember the banging on the door: “*Juden raus!*” I still- I can still hear it. You know they banged on the door and screamed, “*Juden raus! Juden raus!*” And then they took my father and my grandfather away. And I- don't forget, I was eleven! No ten – ten when that happened; I was eleven the following year. So yes, I do remember. But I never have talked about it to my children - ever. And I didn't talk about it to my husband, but I think he had an idea of what went on. But I just couldn't! This is the first time I've talked about it.

Yeah...

It was horrible! ...I think what you do, is you develop a – a, a sort of- a thick skin. And you- I mean there were times when I broke down. Because I remember when my cousin married. This cousin that I was very close to. And he married over here. And my aunt and uncle who had lived in Switzerland, came for the wedding. And I remember breaking down at the wedding - that I do remember. But I suppose I was- I mean I didn't have the children then, so I was only about twenty, twenty-one something like that.

What do you think triggered your breaking down? Seeing that they...?

I think having my aunt and uncle there, not my parents, I would guess.

Yeah... And you were just at the age where you understood enough- ten is....

[0:27:07]

Well, I was married by then.

No, later, but also at the time of leaving, or Kristallnacht...

Oh yes. Oh yes, I remember all that. I think you put it at the back of your mind, and then at some stage... I think when I went to Yad Vashem, and saw my parents' name up, I probably broke down then. I went with my husband to Israel, because he went on a scientific conference. And - quite interesting - there were seven English scientists, and me. Because I'd always wanted to go to Israel, so I- we went. And I think that's when I went to Yad Vashem. And we toured round Israel. Not my husband so much because he was giving lectures, but with the other delegates who were all non-Jewish we toured around Israel. So we visited kibbutzim, and we went to Masada... We went- we saw a lot. And I do- I also remember that we were invited by Jewish scientists for dinner. All of us- all the delegates who weren't Jewish, they invited us for- for dinner. Particularly Friday night. And we were also invited by the British Consul. And I- I had remember very clearly that his wife – the Consul's wife - was the most terrible anti-Semite. And she didn't know we were- well, only my husband and I were Jewish, the others weren't. And she spoke in the most derogatory way about the Israelis. So, there are certain things that-

Yeah...

...that are there. You don't- you're not even aware they're there, but they are there.

[0:29:04]

So apart from the- the, the Nazis coming to the house, do you remember anything else from Kristallnacht? Were you outside? Did you see the synagogues? Did you...?

No, I only remember that my- children- children I used to play with, weren't allowed to play with me anymore. That's how I remember.

Did you go out the next day? Did you go into the street? What happened to the synagogue?

I think... I think the synagogue was burnt. I'm pretty sure it was burnt down. I think we must have been leading fairly isolating- don't forget, I had the two brothers. I had my mother. I had my aunt still...

Yeah.

I had my younger cousin. So, there was a sort of... nucleus. And I think it wasn't until I actually was on the train to come to England... that it- I still thought I'd see my parents again. I think they said, "It's a temporary...". I'm not sure. I think I hoped I would anyway.

So, when was the first time that you knew you were going somewhere, or you heard that...?

I think only a week or two before I went. Not very long before.

So, what were you told?

...It's hazy, but I know we were- my mother was packing a trunk for me. And then my father came back. And my mother and father and my younger brother came to the station to see my brother and me off. That I remember. And... I think we went to... Bremen, and came over maybe to Dover? And then we were met by the *Jüdische Gemeinde* – The Jewish Refugee Committee. There were some very eminent Jews among them. And they came and met us and then I was taken to live with this cousin of a cousin.

[0:31:33]

And did you- when your mother told you that you were leaving, what was your feeling? Did you want to leave? Did you feel...?

Oh no! Of course not. No. It was... I think I cried solidly for a long time. But interestingly, I learned to speak English quite quickly, because they sent me to a Habonim camp during the summer months – July, August. And they were all English... children. And I just picked it- I think at eleven, you learn very quickly. So, I learned quite quickly to speak English.

And tell me a little bit about the journey. What do you remember? You said your parents...

I remember being very ill.

Ill?

Very ill. ... And probably weeping a lot. I'd left my parents after all...

And you hadn't seen your father for quite some time when he came...

I just saw him for the one, one day- one or two days he came back. And they came to see us off; I remember that what.

[0:32:38]

And what- what were you allowed to take? What sort of luggage? What did you take?

I took a trunk of clothes, I know that. And I also remember my mother gave me- this is the most extraordinary story, and I've never mentioned this to anybody. My mother gave me... a locket... with her- probably her picture in. I don't know. Anyway, I got very close to an English girl- Jewish English girl. We were very great friends and she was going to America with her mother, and her brother. This is during the war. And I gave her that locket. How- why- I was so fond of her. I think she was sort of replacing my family. And I never told anybody that, but I remember this gold locket, giving it to Jane. Isn't that curious the memories you have, that you don't know you have them? They just come back.

And do you regret it now?

Oh, I've got other jewellery. I just regret because my mother gave it to me. Actually, my aunt did give me some pieces of jewellery after, you know, when I met her again. She gave me a few pieces of jewellery that had been my mother's, which my daughter has. Nothing very...

Yeah.

... but, you know. And she probably doesn't even know that it was my mother's. She may. I don't know.

What other things could you take? Did you take?

Just took clothes. I think my uncle from America- in fact I know- my brother- my father's brother who lived in America, who had been to visit us several times, so I knew him... as a little girl. He used to send checks I think, to the cousin I was living with.

Right...

I don't know whether they were large amounts- probably small amounts. I actually went- when we went to America, I met him. And he looked very much like my father. And he was

an American business man, with an American family. And he came to- and also my father's sister went to America. And she had two daughters. Married an American man. And they both- well, the eldest daughter and her husband and child came and stayed with us here in... Essex. And then he was in the Army - American Army. And then when we went to live in Paris, they came to visit us in Paris. And the other cousin, Naomi, I met in Chicago. She was living in Los Angeles, but she came when I was- we were living in America, my husband and I, for a while. And I came to meet her in Chicago, and she was very nice and kind.

[0:36:06]

But... Coming back to the journey. Who else was- who were the other children?

A lot of other children, none of whom knew. But there were a lot- from Leipzig. You know, from other places.

Did you go to Berlin? Or no, you said you went to Bremen.

We went from Bremen. I did have cousins in Berlin, but they were- they were all gone.

Yeah.

You know when I went back to Berlin, I try- tried to trace them, but-

Yeah... So, on the journey, you remember being ill. On the boat, or...?

Yes, very sick. That I remember.

And then what were your first impressions of England?

I just remember some people came to meet us, I think, at Liverpool Street station. And we were taken- I was taken to- said goodbye to my brother, and I was taken to this cousin of a cousin.

What were they called, the cousins?

Bertha. She was called Bertha Berrat and she had a little boy of nine months. And I used to look after him. And he actually became a doctor in Highgate Hosp- Highgate Hospital. But

we lost touch- saw them occasionally at my, at my- at my cousin's- my German cousin's wedding and at his son's Bar Mitzvah you know, I saw- saw them, but not very often.

But they took you in? They took you in?

Yes. I've got a feeling they received some money from The Jewish Refugee Committee, but I don't know.

And what was it like- so, in the first- when you arrived there? How- how did you feel?

[0:37:52]

I cried a lot. But fortunately, there was this little baby, so I was able to push him around in a pram. And I think they were quite good to me. But of course, they didn't speak German, so I had to learn to speak English quickly - and I did.

And did they send you to school?

I didn't go to school immediately. I went- because this was June. I went to this Habonim camp in Bedfordshire. And I think there I picked up English quite quickly. Of course, all the children were... English.

And how come they sent you to the Habonim camp? Was there a sort of...?

It was lovely! It was, you know the children we used to sing Hebrew songs, and we used to have a campfire and you know, it was very nice! It was the summer.

Yeah, but I'm just asking whether it was a particular reason that it was Habonim? Were they Zionists, or...?

Well, the... The cousin's sister was in charge of Habonim at Bloomsbury House. So, she organised this.

Right. And at the Habonim camp, were there other refugee children, or...?

No. I don't remember any others

[0:39:05]

And did your brother come as well?

No.

No.

No. He- he was sent out to work... in a tailor's shop, I think. And then he was moved to- when the war broke out, he was moved to Margate. And he worked in a hotel, washing greasy dishes. And I went to see him just once in Margate. This was after the war broke out. I can't remember exactly when, or maybe it was during August when war was going to break out. But- but I did see him, whenever I came back to London, 'cause he was at the Whittington Hospital. And I was living in Junction Road, Highgate, so I used to go and visit him. And then he went to- he went to - had a lot of hospitals and went to Wales - North Wales and I visited him in North Wales. And then he went- came back, and he ended up in Ugley, in Hertfordshire. Or, yes- Hertfordshire. And that's where he died. But I think they were all Jewish.

And when did- when did he become ill?

I think when he was about seventeen. During the war. And in those days, they didn't- they had drugs in America, but they didn't have any here. And TB was rampant. And of course, he was ill-fed and you know, living under fairly... bad conditions.

Yeah...

So. But he lived, as I say, he saw my son, and he lived until the week my daughter was born. And my husband was very good to him; used to visit him regularly... And so did I!

[0:41:15]

Yeah. But it must have been hard for you.

Well, he was my lifeline really, wasn't he? But my cousin Joe was very kind to me. He had to join the Army. And he was sent off to Australia. And in order to come back- I think they were interned. The Isle of Man, then to Australia. Then he came back and joined the Army. And... Because he had German of course he was very useful. He ended up in Germany. He was in the 7th Armoured Division. I think they gave him British nationality. I suspect so. And

ended up in Germany, interp- doing interpreting. And he- when he- he had these English relatives here. And he became very successful. He... had a jewellery business in Hatton Garden, which his son still has. And his daughter became a lawyer, and I'm still in touch with her from time to time. She lives in St. John's Wood. But my cousin was very, very good to me.

In which way? I mean...

Well, he was very generous.

Yeah. Did he help you?

He was so generous to me, and to my children. So that was- that was a plus.

Yeah. So back to 1939. So, you went to Habonim camp. And then what happened to you?

[0:43:06]

Then I came back to London and lived with these cousins for a very short while, because they- we were- eva- all the young children were evacuated. And as I say, I went to live in Olney in Buckinghamshire. And again, I was extremely lucky, because the two teachers in charge of all the children - because I was different - they took me to live with them, and a very nice English family. So, I was extremely lucky in that sense...

With the teachers?

With the teachers. We all went- it was quite a wealthy English family, and... I went and lived there. The teachers went and lived there. There were two lady teachers, and I think they took pity on me. Or maybe it was to learn German. I'm not sure.

What was the family called who took you in?

She was Lady Fairy. You know, like- like a fairy, that was- well, Win- Lady Winifred Fairy, I think. And she was quite well off, and they were- she was very nice to me.

And were there other children in the house?

No. They only took me and the two teachers. But there was a maid and a daughter. And she had sons who had farms and we used to go to the farm. And by this time, I could speak quite good English. And I remember when I went to the local school - we all did - I took an intelligence test. And apparently, I don't know if it's true, came out very, very high on the - couldn't speak much English, but the intelligence was all right. Anyway.

And what was different from Germany in terms of- you know, do you remember in the household or how different was it for you?

[0:45:01]

Well, here we had a flat in Junction Road. But at home we had a house - a large house. And quite a nice part of town. It was down- the castle... There was a castle in Gotha. The castle up the road, and there was a beautiful park... within five minutes of the house. So, it was very nice. I think we were comfortably off. I get that impress- well, we employed a nanny and a cook, so...

Yeah...

...must have been quite well off, mustn't we?

Yeah. Do you remember the food?

German food?

Yes.

Of course!

Yeah? What did you eat then?

Oh, I- when I came here, I went to Schmitt's, which was a German... restaurant - quite a famous one - in Charlotte Street. But yes, I remember all kinds of *Hühnerbraten* and... *Kalbsbraten* [roast chicken and beef]. I don't know, all kinds of- maybe that was afterwards. I don't know. I think we had a kosher house. I'm sure we did.

Yeah. But- and when you came here, what did you do, regarding...?

It wasn't a kosher house anymore. Although they were Jewish, it wasn't kosher.

Was it a problem for you, or you...?

No, at that age it isn't a problem, I don't think. But they did make- make me go to Habonim. And I did- on High days and holidays I went to synagogue. You know, to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

With them, or...?

In Archway- in Highgate. I don't know if they went, but I went. I think they made me go.

Right. And then you were in Buckinghamshire, with the... with the two teachers, in this house?

Yes.

And for how long did you stay there?

[0:46:51]

I think about nine months, something like that. Not that long, 'cause they wanted me back to be among Jewish people. I don't know who imposed all these rules. I have no idea. It might have been the Jewish *Gemeinde* or whatever they're called. You know? I don't know.

And do you think that- was it correct? I mean, do you think they should have kept you there longer or were you happy to...?

I was very happy there.

Yeah...

Very happy there.

So, in hindsight, do you think you should have stayed there? I don't know...?

I've- I've never given it a thought. I just- you accept things, don't you? When you're a child, you just accept things.

Yes.

I don't think anybody was very- ever unpleasant. Oh, one or two children used to call me names, you know, but that I think is whatever nationality or...

What did they call you?

I think- I think I resented being called a refugee. I don't know why I resented it, but I do remember it. I wanted to be the same as the others.

What about your name? Did you then- when did you...?

No, I didn't change my name until... I'm trying to remember... I should think... When I was in the Habonim hostel, I was 'Zahava'. I think it was probably when I was about seventeen or so. Something like that - sixteen, seventeen.

Right. So, you came back to London?

Mnn.

And stayed with the same family?

Yes.

Yes. And then?

[0:48:55]

And then I was shipped off to Devon. And then I came back with- stayed with the same- oh, briefly stayed - same family. And then I went to Wales. And then when I came back from Wales, I went into a hostel.

So, in Devon and Wales, that's- was where Habonim...?

Habonim hostel.

Hostels. And what was- tell us a little bit about the routine, and what were you doing...?

Went to school. Everybody was Jewish. And I think I was the only refugee. I think they were all Jewish - English Jews - because their parents used to come and visit them and bring tuck parcels. And Ju- my great friend Juliet's parents were very, very comfortably off. Their name was Selby and they owned a restaurant in Hanover Square. And they sort of took me under their wing because Juliet and I became very friendly. And when I married, they provided my trousseau. And I married- the reception was at their house. They were very good to me. And as I say, they wanted to adopt me. But my brother was against it because he hoped, at that stage, that we would still find our parents. But...

And they wanted to adopt you?

They did.

And did you...? What did you feel? Did you want it, or...?

I don't know. I'm not sure that- they were very nice to me and they had a beautiful house. But they had four daughters and a son. And I think I felt probably it wasn't the right- I really don't know. ...You know, you don't think... at the time, really. You accept, don't you? I didn't intend to marry my husband. No intention of marrying him. Thought it'd be fun to get engaged. But he intended to get married, and before I knew it, I was married! He was that sort of person.

But just to come back to the Habonim camp, so was it- for you personally, do you think it was better to be in a communal situation, rather than...?

I think I was very good... because I learned to speak English. I think it was very good for me.

[0:51:27]

And were you happy there? How did you manage...?

I think so. I think so.

And did you have any - at that point – any communication with your parents?

I think I still had cards from them, because it was pre-war. So yes, I think they sent postcards from Crakow, because I remember their address.

What was their address?

Their address was - Wygoda *Acht* [8]. That was in Crakow.

And- but you didn't speak to them on the phone, or...?

I possibly spoke German to my brother.

Yeah.

And to my cousin, almost certainly. But nobody else spoke German.

But I meant, did you speak to your parents on the phone, or did they...?

I don't remember them phoning. I remember having postcards...

Right.

...but I don't remember them phoning. ...No.

And the Habonim hostels – the two. Were they very different ones, the ones you went to?

Yes. The first one in Exmouth, was right on the sea front. And they were all very young staff in their twenties, I think. But there were of course raids - German raids overhead, going to Plymouth. And we used to hide under the table. I don't know what we thought we would achieve under the table, but that's what we did. Hid under the table. And... it was, it was quite pleasant because we were all young people. We could go swimming; I learned to swim. I don't remember being hungry, so we must have had food. I don't think there was any chocolate or sweets or anything, but I think we were... fed.

Who paid for it?

I think The Jewish... Refugee Committee - for me, not for the others. The parents paid for all the others. But I would think The Jewish Refugee Committee. But I really don't know. But

when I went to live in the hostel in Willesden Lane, I paid, because I was working. They deducted so much from what I was earning.

[0:53:49]

You were older by then.

By then I was fifteen.

Yeah. And then the other hostel? What was that like?

That was- the one on Willesden Lane was mixed.

No, the Wales, the Habonim...

Oh, Habonim. That was mixed as well. But I think they were all Jewish, but not German. I think they were just all Jewish children.

Where- in the first one?

The first one, all Jewish children. Absolutely.

And the second one? How different was it, the Wales...?

I think it was slightly more religious.

Aha...

I have a feeling, 'cause it was Chaim Pearl was the man in charge, and he was... a rabbi. So, it was more- but I went to an ordinary school. I had the option, would you believe, of doing Welsh or Latin! So, I certainly didn't do Welsh.

And was it very Zionist, I mean, did they...?

Not- not that one. The first one was. I don't think the second one was. But I met Golda Meir.

Aha.

She came to Cardiff on a fundraising... event. And I- I don't know if you've ever read anything by Bernice Rubens. She was quite a well-known writer. And the Rubens family were very nice to me. And I became very friendly with Bernice and Cyril, her brother. And they used to invite me for Friday evenings occasionally. So, you know, it was...

This was in Wales?

This was in Cardiff.

Were they in the same camp?

No, no. They were English Jews, living in Cardiff, but they occasionally invited me, I know not why.

From the camp?

From the hostel.

From a hotel. Where was the hostel, exactly?

In- near Merthyr Tydfil in Cefn Coed.

[0:55:49]

And how many children were there roughly?

I don't know... thirty? Forty? I'll tell you what else that was quite interesting. The people who owned Marks and Spencer's - name was Sieff. They came to the hostel, and Rebecca Sieff who was the chairman's wife, told me that if ever I wanted to come and work at Marks and Spencer's she would be very pleased to have me. I never did, but she said, "If you want to work in Marks and Spencer's come and see me." I think they were quite generous to people. I think they donated quite a lot of money to the hostel, I would guess. That sort of thing.

So where- did Golda Meir come to the hostel, or you met her...? Golda Meir... where did you meet her?

Meet who?

Golda Meir. You said you met her.

No, I met her- I went- there was an open meeting in Cardiff. It was a fundraising thing, I think. And Bernice Rubens who had befriended me, invited me to meet her. And I remember her talking about Israel. And I think because of Habonim, if I hadn't met my husband, I probably would have gone to a kibbutz. But I met Michael. And my brother was still alive; I felt I couldn't leave him. So. But they- there was- I think it was a sort of recruitment drive, a bit, for *kibbutzim*. I have that impression.

[0:57:29]

Yeah... yeah. So, you came back from the Welsh hostel, back to London. And that was when?

Forty-four...?

So, the war was still ongoing?

Yes.

Yes. And then?

And then I went to work.

So, you didn't go back to the Highgate family?

I saw them occasionally...

Right...

They- because of my cousin, they came to his wedding, and to the children's Bar Mitzvah. So, I saw them occasionally.

But you didn't want to stay with them?

They didn't want me to. They by then had a second child. They didn't have room for me anymore. And they only lived in a flat, so... No, there was never any question about that.

Right. So how did you find the hostel...in Willesden?

The- I think The Refugee Committee found it- they were all refugees at Willesden Lane. All of them. And in Teignmouth Road, were all refugees. ...Run by refugees.

Yes – yes. So, you remember dealing with the Bloomsbury House, or going- did you go...?

I think I went occasionally to Bloomsbury House. I think when I went to see my brother- had to go there to get a ticket to go and see him. He was living in Wales in a hosp- in a hospital. And I think I went to Bloomsbury House to get the rail ticket. ...And I also remember when my brother died, because he had a Jewish burial, Leonard Montefiore sent me a check for a memorial stone. And my husband made me send it back. He said, “We don't accept charity.” That was the sort of man he was. So, I had to send the cheque back. And we paid for the stone. My cousin and my husband.

[0:59:38]

Yeah... And again, how were you feeling in that hostel. How...?

I didn't like them very much, but... I think they were- I think- I went to work. And... I suppose it was quite a social sort of atmosphere. Used to go to the cinema occasionally. Juliet lived up the road, so they used to give me Friday night supper. It was fine. It was OK.

And what job? What did you work- what was your job?

I worked in an office as a secretary... in Regent Street, next to Galle- what was then Galleries Lafayette, which no longer exists. And then I worked for a German export company: import-export. I was married by then. And they li- I worked in High Holborn, and we were living in Willesden. My husband decided to go back to university. He didn't tell me when we married that he wanted to go back to university, but the year after we were married, he said he wanted to go back to university. So, I had to earn the money. So, I had to get whatever job I could that paid the most money. And he did a PhD. And then we went to America. And he was offered an amazing job, I think at the University of Michigan. But my brother was so ill, and I felt I couldn't leave him. So, we were there for four months but we came back. And he'd got his PhD by then; he did it very- in under two years. And so, he went and worked for a British-run company. And I went back to work, wherever I could earn some money, as a secretary. And we lived in Willesden, in a furnished flat. And then we were offered a flat in Tottenham, which I loathed. But we were offered this flat if we paid key money - fifty

pounds key money. So, we took it. And as we had a flat, and as I was obviously missing not having a family, we started a family. So, my son was born when I was twenty-three. My daughter was born when I was twenty-five. And... They turned out to be rather wonderful people.

[1:02:26]

So how did you meet your husband?

At the International Youth Club in Pond Street in Knightsbridge. I went there with a girlfriend. They had dances on Saturday night, and I went to the dance. And I think the first time I went there he saw me and that was it! Invited me to the theatre, so we went to the theatre. He was very intellectual. But of course, he spoke German, and he wanted to practise his German. So, he invited me out, and within three months he asked me to marry him. And within a year I was married. I had no intention of marrying him. None at all. I don't know how it happened. But he was persistent. And I stayed married to him! There you are.

And what was his background?

Jewish, but he became a- when he went to Cambridge he changed, because I think of his science background. He became an agnostic. And he didn't- we didn't bring the children up as Jews. Although they both know they're Jewish, but they married non-Jews. Both of them.

And what- were his parents still around?

His parents were Orthodox Jews. Oh, yes.

So, were you- did you have a relationship with them or...?

Oh, we used to go there for Passover and things like that. Oh, yes. And he was very good to his mother. He subsidised her, after her husband died. And his sisters were very clever and made brilliant marriages. I mean, brilliant marriages.

Yes. So, he- and he came from London? Where was he from? From London?

Tottenham. That's why we went back to Tottenham.

Oh, I see. He was from Tottenham.

But... he did very, very brilliantly at school. And as I say, he was multilingual. Spoke five languages and he was a scientist.

[1:04:41]

And you married after the war?

Forty-six.

Yeah. So, how do you remember the end of the war? Where were you, towards the end of the war?

I remember the end of the war very well. I was with a girlfriend, and we went outside Buckingham Palace with hundreds of other people. And we- Americans, Polish, all kinds of people- and we stood outside Buckingham Palace, cheering. And then the girlfriend and I walked all the way back from Buckingham Palace to Willesden. And we weren't molested or anything. It must have been dark... but nobody molested us.

And how did you- what was your hope or what was the feeling then?

Well, I hoped I'd meet my parents again. Of course.

Yeah...

Because my aunt and uncle were still alive. But of course, they'd gone to Switzerland.

And did you know, or did you have contact with them?

I was in touch, through my cousin- in fact, it was his parents. And he used to send me money to send to them. I used to have to go to the Red Cross to send- he was in the Army - a sergeant in the Army. He used to send... me money, to give to them.

Right.

So, I was in touch with the family.

And did you know- because you said your mother had another baby after you left. Did you know about that?

I think I... I think my aunt knew about it, because she said she used to send nappies and things. So, she- she must have told me.

So, when did you find out what happened to your parents?

I never actually found out, except my aunt says she thinks they died in Auschwitz. I- I never- I never went back to Auschwitz. I didn't want to. But somehow my aunt probably found out, and she said, "Put the name up at Yad Vashem." So, I did. I mean, for a while I hoped they'd survived, as you do.

Yeah...

But... I know she and my... two little brothers died before my father. That I know. I should think gas chambers, wouldn't you? Almost- I hope it was quick.

[1:07:10]

Yeah... You think your father's- lived longer, or stayed longer...?

He- he survived for a little while. I think somebody might have hidden him for a while, but...

In Crakow?

In Crakow.

Because there was- you said there was correspondence, or...?

Well, to my aunt. She didn't tell me. Her son told me. But that son who was living with her, said that he wrote and said, "Can you help me?" And... she decided not to. Maybe she couldn't. I don't know.

Yeah...

I don't know.

So, you never found out what happened to your parents?

No.

Nor did you... try to get...?

I knew they were dead.

Yes. Yes.

I knew they were dead. Cause there was a card from my father to my aunt saying, "*It ist- already too- Es ist zu spät für Minna und die Kinder.*" [*It is too late for Minna and the children.*] Do you understand that?

Yes...

So, they obviously took them away first, and maybe somebody hid him for a while. I don't know. ...But I didn't want to go back to Auschwitz. Told you- my young granddaughter did.

And did she find- find something?

I don't- she didn't say. She didn't say. She just said she- well, she saw what was left, you know.

Yeah...

But she wouldn't even have known the name... you know. My granddaughter wouldn't. My children knew my name, but my grandchildren didn't know my name before my marriage.

Yeah...

They know my background... but...

Yes. But you said you didn't talk in detail about your past.

No. I couldn't. This is the first time I have! I don't know what made me do it.

Did your son say you should do it?

[1:09:05]

It's- it's one of those curious things, isn't it, that... you try to forget!

Yeah.

And I did have children... and a busy life. I mean my husband obviously knew. ...But my German friend who's in Munich doesn't know. She may suspect, but I've never discussed it with her. She's German, but I've never discussed it with her.

She doesn't know that your parents died in the...?

No. Never mentioned it. None of my English friends knows - none of them! My Jewish English friends yes, but not the- not people here. No idea!

You didn't tell them. Or, it doesn't come up.

No. I- I don't know why. I just didn't. If I'd been asked... I mean, I did have a local friend who left Vienna. And she knew, because she had left Vienna and she married a Jewish man... who's a- a psychiatrist. She died very recently aged ninety-four. But she left Vienna much- when she was- well, long before I did. Before I left Germany, and she was older. I think she was about fifteen. And she became a hospital sister and met her English Jewish husband who was a psychiatrist. But they didn't practice Judaism and they didn't keep a kosher house although they lived locally.

But why is it that you think you didn't tell people, or is it- or didn't...?

I don't know. I have no- I mean one of two of my local friends who are very close...

Yes.

...do know. I don't know what- but I must have mentioned it sometime, but only close friends. Not most people. Whether they suspect I don't know but it's only the people I was very close to who I...

But does anyone ask you, because you don't have an accent...

[1:11:22]

Well, one of my friends in U3A who was Jewish - he now lives in Cardiff – he... he knew about it, but we didn't talk about it at great length. But he knew about it cause his parents had left Holland for the same reason.

Yes...

So, we- he knew about it. But we- he married an English woman and so... he was aware of it but that's all.

But I mean nobody- because you don't have an accent, nobody necessarily thinks that you...

I don't know if they do or not. I don't know. I've no idea. As I say, one or two people know.

Yes.

Cause I think I must've told them. But they're people I was close to. But the average person, no.

But do you think because- it's partly because it's traumatic for you to remember?

Oh, I should think so. I mean this is the first time I've ever done this! Not even to my children!

*It's quite amazing. And you haven't joined any of the AJR, or the groups or anything?
Because by now there are- you know, there have been Kindertransport conferences.*

Interesting.

There's been a lot of...publicity about...

I went to- I went to a concert at Swiss Cottage. What's that- theatre? That...?

The Roundhouse?

Roundhouse. On my birthday I took my son and my grandchildren to this... concert.

Aha...

That was just a few years ago. Prince Charles was there.

Yes. I was there as well.

Were you?

I remember it. Yeah.

Prince Charles was there in the same row as we were. But they darkened it, so that you couldn't see him coming and going.

Yes.

But...

How did you find out about this?

Well, Graham knows all these things, he's- he has a lot of Jewish friends. And Graham said, "On your birthday, would you like to go?" So, I did and wept... at the concert. Again, I don't do that very often. But it was an emotional... time.

But it's not something- you're not interested, even now, to join- you know, to meet other Kinder?

Oh, at ninety, I now- it's too late. It's too late. I have enough problems seeing my children. It's all too late. I actually, I had quite a good social life here, because I joined so many things.

[1:14:06]

How come you are in Brentwood? Maybe you can explain what...?

Oh, I'll tell you how we came to Brentwood.

How did you come to Brentwood?

My husband worked for May and Baker. Have you heard of M & B sulphonamide drugs?

Yes.

Well, he was- worked on sulphonamide drugs, and they were based in Dagenham. It's now run by a French company, Rhône-Poulenc, and we went and lived in Paris for a year. He did

a- not only did he have three English degrees, but he had to do a French one as well, didn't he? So, we went and lived in Paris. My son was seven, my daughter was four. They went to French schools and learned to speak French very well! So that was a plus. And they still speak very good French, of course.

What- why did you come to- here? I asked you...

Ah! Because my husband worked at May & Baker, which was based in Dagenham. And the children came to school in Brentwood. We didn't live in Dagenham. We had a- we were very lucky. We had a very nice house in Upminster, because- we moved here because of my husband's work and it was much easier to get a really nice house out here, rather than in London. So, we had this lovely house in Upminster. And I worked in London. So, Upminster to London was not that difficult. My husband worked in Dagenham. Children went to school in Upminster, and they both won scholarships, so they came to school- the best schools were in Brentwood. So, they came to Brentwood schools. And it was they who wanted us to come live in Brentwood. So, we had a very nice house in Brentwood - not this one - very nice house. And I lived there on my own for eighteen years. But it was too big for me. It was too much work. And my daughter decided, "Time you move, mother" ...and moved me here. And it is more convenient. And that, as I told you, they've been on and on at me to move to London, but I've left it too late. I should have done it ten years ago. Got involved running University of the Third Age.

So, you are very involved in local things.

Very. I started it!

And what other things? You said the arts...

I was on the Arts Council, WA classes. I've only this year given up classes. Just this year. Been to classes, always. Haven't given up University of the Third Age; I still run a couple of groups. But I ran them all, at one time. I was a busybody. I think I wanted to forget, so I got in- immersed in other things.

[1:17:06]

But you married- you married very young?

Eighteen and he was twenty-two.

And do you think you married young because you didn't have a family?

Oh of course.

Yeah.

Of course.

And when you had children, did the past come back? Because... in a way one is confronted with...with...?

That's- at various times, but I never talked to the child- I mean, they know about my background. But I don't remember discussing it with them. With my husband, yes. But with the children, no. I didn't think so.

And what about your Judaism? You said your husband didn't want to...

No.

...raise the children Jewish.

No. He didn't want to practise. He was- became an agnostic, so that was that.

And for you that...was fine?

Well, I used to see my cousin, and I went- Always went to Bar Mitzvahs and Jewish weddings. You know, I went to my cousins' weddings. But he died about- a couple of years ago. But I kept- kept in touch with him. And he got on quite well with my husband, because he travelled all over the world. And my aunt who survived came and stayed with me several times. And so did my cousins from Paris came and stayed with me.

What sort of identity, raising your children- what sort of identity did you want to give them, or what...?

I just- I think I just wanted them to have a good education. But it was really my husband who was sort of... controlling. He certainly didn't want them to have any religious background.

But as I say, they both are aware of their background. But they married non-Jews. Both of them.

[1:19:23]

Yeah. And did you speak- at that point, did you speak German at all, regularly, or did you...?

For a long time, I didn't speak German. Only with my husband. But not to the children. I regret it, because I think it was a big mistake not to. Cause both are very good linguists. But I don't know- it's one of those things. I think I wanted to forget, really. So, no I didn't. As I say they both speak excellent French. And one of my granddaughters speaks French, Italian... I think she has some knowledge of German, but then you know, she's a clever girl, she's a lawyer, and she likes languages.

Yeah...yeah.

And my grandchildren know about me. You know, they know my background, obviously.

Do you feel they know more than your children, or...?

Oh, no – no. No, no. No. Matilda, my youngest granddaughter, went to...

To Auschwitz?

Auschwitz. See, my son has a lot of Jewish friends, and my son travels. He's a- my son and my daughter-in-law are great travellers. And they went to Poland with these Jewish friends. And I think my son said he looked up where my parents lived in Crakow, but he just couldn't go to the camp. But my granddaughter did.

Yeah... yeah. And were you- you said you lived in America with your husband. Were you tempted to stay, or you- did you want to stay in England?

We went- my husband had an American uncle, and we stayed- they were Jewish, because my husband's family were all Jewish. And we stayed with them. And we travelled a lot in America because my husband was a traveller like my son is. So, we saw a lot of America. And then he was offered this job at a university. And... it was my brother. I just felt I couldn't leave him alone; he was so ill. So, I felt I had to get back to him. He had nobody else. And

my husband was agreeable. Cause- you know, it was easy for him to get a job anywhere. No problems in those days for a scientist with a- his background.

Yeah.

So, you know, we came back here.

And Israel? Was that because of Habonim?

No, we went to Israel on a scientific conference, I told you-

Aha, the one you mentioned...yes.

Just he and I, and... seven Englishmen.

[1:22:07]

Yeah. But that... you were not interested in?

Oh yes! I saw everything I wanted to see. I went everywhere.

But to live there, I mean.

Well, I was married with children by then, no. No. If I hadn't married, and if I hadn't had a brother in hospital, there would have been a good chance. Because I was very involved with Habonim.

Yeah.

I was a *Madricha*. I don't know if you know what that means.

Yeah, I know what that means. A youth- a leader.

Yes. But... you know. It's circumstances... you accept things.

And you said your brother... He was very ill. So, do you think that The Refugees Committee did they take care of him? Or who took care of him... financially?

Yes. He... I mean, he ended up in a Jewish home, at Quaremead. And quite a lot of the kids at Quaremead had been to the camps. You know, came out of the camps... and had TB of course... and went to stay. And the woman in charge, Eva Kahn was an Orthodox. She was the sister in charge. She had trained over here and lived over here. But she came from an Orthodox Jewish background. And it was her father who was a lawyer in Germany, who managed to get me 400 Marks, for loss of education.

Pension?

400 Marks - just a one-off payment. That's all.

Oh. So- you don't get- you don't get a pension?

No.

Did you ever get any reparation or...?

No. ...I think I didn't apply. No just the 400 Marks; that's all I've ever heard. I thought that was for loss of education. But nothing else. Never had anything else.

You're probably entitled to...

Probably?

Yeah...

I wanted to forget. You know, a lot of me just didn't want to remember. [with emotion] It was horrible!

[1:24:23]

It was your coping – coping strategy, or...?

Well, fortunately I married a very steady man. And I had the children quite young... And I got involved with all kinds of things. Probably just ...you know.

Yeah. But do you find in the past is coming back to you now, or... more, or...?

I think as I get older - yes.

So, what do you think about when...?

Death. [laughs] And my grandchildren. Aren't I lucky?! I've got wonderful children, and wonderful grandchildren and super-great grandchildren. How about that? I looked after my grandchildren while the mothers worked. I stopped work, did two days for my son so that his wife could go back to work. And two days for my daughter so that she could go back to work. So that's why I'm so close to my grandchildren.

It's wonderful.

It is. And on my birthday, my ninetieth birthday this month, they're taking me out. I know not where, but they're taking me out. Norm- normally on my birthday I take them out. But this time they're taking me out.

But nevertheless, you're not tempted to move from here to – to London?

I'm sure my daughter will take me to London. Certainly, she will. Cause she took me recently to see this latest grandchild, who was only born three weeks ago.

Aha...

So, but she's back in England now - for the winter.

So, how would you define yourself, in terms of your own identity?

[thinks] Born a Jew in Germany. But lived in England for the rest of my life! And mother, grandmother, great-grandmother.

Yeah...

And this has been an eye-opener! This has been- my son would have found it fascinating, I think. My daughter, not so much. I mean she knows... but we don't talk about it. ...Do occasionally with my son.

[1:27:09]

And what do you talk about, if you talk about it? Do you talk about your parents? Your...?

Well, I think- I think I must at some stage, have talked about my parents, because as I say, my granddaughter went to see Auschwitz... so... when she was a teenager, so... I think my son's family more so than my daughter's family. But I think that's because he lives in North London and she lives in Kent. It's different,

Yeah...

But she does have Jewish friends - medical friends.

So, when you think about the past, what for you is the most painful thing to think about?

It's very painful... Very painful. And I was lucky to survive, wasn't I? And have all these wonderful grandchildren.

But how do you think did it impact your life, your experience? Your experience of being separated?

Oh, it had a big - big impact. For one thing, I married too young, I think. I sought security very early on... But, you know, I'm ninety, so I haven't done badly. I've survived, haven't I? The only one who has. My- my- actually my aunt lived to ninety-two - the one who got away...

Yeah.

She lived to ninety-two - in America. But, you know, she went... to Belgium and then to Switzerland and then ended up in America.

But do you think your experiences have affected for example your parenting? Your being a mother?

I think so. I'm sure so. I'm very close to my children - very close to my children. Yes, of course. And my grandchildren.

Yeah... And- but you said you had a few breakdowns on the way.

Once or twice... when my husband was alive... And when my brother died. I was in hospital having my daughter when he died. So, yes. And of course, Joe, my cousin: I used to occasionally talk about things to him, because he kept up his Jewish identity. He married a Jew; his children are Jewish. They all had Jewish weddings and Bar Mitzvahs and things, and they invited me to all these things. So, I've kept in touch with them.

[1:29:56]

Yeah... Is that something you regret? That- the Jewish, not Jewish...?

Well, no, I don't regret it because my children are happy. And my grandchildren are happy. So, I don't regret that. No. ...Obviously if I had married somebody else, it would have been different, wouldn't it? But I married a very clever man... who- and I've got wonderful children.

And when did he die? Some time ago?

Thirty years ago. Cancer. Like his father before him. But- you see my son is sixty-five, my daughter is sixty-two.

Is there anything you miss from Germany?

No, not from Germany. Nothing at all. Only my- I would have liked to have had- kept my parents, but... Other than that, no... nothing. No. It's- I mean I still speak German.

Yeah.

I've been back to Germany several times. But no. I've never been back to Gotha.

And you don't want to?

No- well my cousins both went back and said, "Don't."

And you said the nanny who got in touch, you didn't want to see her?

I didn't want to. I remember her beating me, and I thought, "No."

Yeah...

And she probably, you know, she was in... East Germany. She probably wanted some sort of... financial help or something. And- I don't know; I just didn't want to know.

Yeah...

I mean, possibly my parents gave her lots of things before they left. I would guess they probably did. Because in their... naive way, I think they hoped to come back. Cause war hadn't broken out when they left. I think they...

But you never went back to find out?

No.

And the house, did it belong to them or was it rented?

I think there was a "Notverkauf" [emergency sale] somebody told me, whatever that means.

Yes.

But you never...?

No.

You probably...

No, I'm sure I could have claimed. I just didn't want to know. It's odd, isn't it? Money doesn't compensate for losing lives.

No.

And as I say, I feel very blessed that I've got my family.

[1:32:45]

Yes. ...And how do you feel about Germany today? Has it changed how you felt about Germany?

I think I have a certain regard for Angela Merkel. I think she's a very astute politician. ...I'm sure the young generation can't be as bad as - as the other lot. I hope they're not. ...But you

know, people are swayed, aren't they? If you're ignorant, you're swayed very easily. And there was this amazing propaganda campaign, wasn't there? And he was so- he had them there, didn't he?

Has your attitude changed over time? I mean, were you... were you very bitter... after the war, or...?

I think I was very unhappy. I don't think bitter, but very unhappy. ...And for a while probably traumatised by it.

Did you ever receive help, or did you ever look for any...?

No. No. Isn't it interesting? Everybody goes to a psychiatrist these days.

Yeah...[laughs]

It never occurred to me. No.

It's also generational.

Yes, it is. I think...

Do you think it would have been good for you.?

I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't know. I mean, I feel I've made a success of family life. I don't think it would have helped. I don't know.

[1:34:31]

Do you think your experiences impacted on your children at all?

I'm sure it did. I'm sure it had an impact on them. Yes, of course.

I mean they didn't have grandparents on your side. They had no- I mean they...

Exactly.

They had some family...

They had no grandparents. And... Aunts and uncles they lost. But, luckily they've got families. And... they both went to very- good universities. My son went to Oxford. My daughter became a doctor at the top London teaching hospitals. Their children all went to university. So, you know, done something. It's not me, it's my husband probably more than me. But there's something good has come out of it.

Yeah... And do you sometimes think about what- how your life would have been if you hadn't been... forced to...?

No, not really. Not really. I mean, obviously I wish my parents had stayed alive, and that I'd had a normal childhood. But I don't think about it now. Not now. Years ago I think I - probably did. But not now.

And speaking German, is that- do you have a relationship to the language? Is that important for you?

I can speak German. Yes.

Do you read in German?

I don't read in German. I attend- I read a lot, but I don't read in German. But I can speak German, but I imagine I have the sort of vocabulary that a twelve-year-old has. So... But yes, I do. But I wish I'd taught my children German. I think it would have been an added language for them. I couldn't bear to. It's interesting, isn't it? Just couldn't bear to. Spoke German to my husband occasionally.

Yeah...?

No...

[1:36:32]

Yes. So just to ask you a few more questions, and to finish the interview. Is there anything you'd like to add which we haven't talked about?

I think I've talked a lot! I think it's been a sort of catharsis a bit... because as I told you, I don't talk about it. And I certainly didn't expect it to go on this long.

And how do you feel now?

I feel okay.

Yeah?

I feel okay.

So, you think we've covered everything? There's nothing else you... want to add, or I haven't asked you or... anything?

I don't think so.

Is there any message you have for somebody who might watch this in the future, based on your experiences?

You mean to people in general, or...

Yeah.

... people in particular?

To people in general, to family... to...

Oh, to my family... just so grateful to them. I'm so lucky that... I've got them. And to survive to be ninety, I ask you. Who would have thought that?

Yeah. And in general, I mean, based on your... experience of the Kindertransport. I mean I don't know- have you got any specific views, for example, about the...?

Well just how lucky I was. If I had stayed, I wouldn't be here. Nor would my children. So, I- I was very fortunate. There were some very good people who must have financed that sort of thing. And as I told you, Leonard Montefiore phoned me, and asked if- well sent me a check for my brother's gravestone... which my husband made me send back, because he didn't... like to accept charity. But I should think people like that must have subsidised people like me, I would guess.

What do you think, for example, about the current refugee- the Syrian refugee crisis? Do you think Britain should take children in or...?

Very difficult. Very difficult situation. I always felt, if I hadn't had children myself, I would have adopted a child from somewhere that was... deprived. But... I felt my priority was my own children, and I was lucky enough to have them! And I was able to give them a good education and make them into very worthwhile people. They really are... wonderful people. I shouldn't say that about my own children...

No, you can!

... but they are. They are. They do a lot for - for humanity. Very giving - and my grandchildren equally.

[1:39:48]

And how do you feel- you know, regarding the British government who let the children in...?

Well, thank God.

Yeah...

You know, thank goodness they did let us in. But I think it was- there was a Jewish lobby of well-known rich Jews like the Rothschilds and the Montefiores. I think they formed a committee. Because there was The Jewish Refugee Committee that brought me here. So I think there was... an influence that prevailed at the time.

Because some people think that, you know, rather than allow 10,000 children in, the British government should have allowed maybe even less to come, with their parents.

Would have been wonderful, but... they decided to rescue the children.

Yeah.

I think some parents did come, but a bit earlier on. Because I had this friend who came from Vienna. And her mother certainly came with her, but before- quite a while before me. I would think two or three years before I did. And I've met one or two people who came with their

families. Came- professional people, got jobs, like Eva Kahn's father and mother came. She was the one who looked after my brother... became a sister in the hospital that he was in. And then she fell in love with him, but because he was so ill there was no future. And then she went back to Israel- or went to Israel - not back - went to Israel and married an Israeli man. But she was a very kind, caring person. And it was her father who got me this 400 *Deutschmark*.

[1:41:44]

Yeah. But I guess it- you know, the experiences of somebody who came with their parents to England and the experience of somebody like you, who came by herself...

It's different.

Very different.

Of course, it was different. ...I suspect if my parents had come, my brother might have survived. Might not have caught TB.

And how you feel was the reception by the local Jewish community? To you... you know?

Well, they were obviously caring, or they wouldn't have taken me in. But I think I- they took- my- these cousins of cousins took me in, because of the cousin who came before me. He persuaded them.

Yeah...

And... She- her sister was something very important in Habonim. So, they were culturally ...tied up with Jewish people. And I imagine they married. They were certainly married to Jews. And I think their children... became Bar Mitzvah and all that sort of thing, so.

Because some people, you know, say that the British Jews they were- they felt hostility towards, you know, the German Jews, or...?

Well... some of them obviously opened up their purses I would think, wouldn't you?

Yeah.

I told you, Rebecca Sieff who was in charge of- well her husband was a Director of Marks and Spencer's when I met her. She said, "When you're- when you leave school, we'll offer you a job." I didn't ever go, but there we are. She did say that.

[1:43:46]

And did you ever experience any anti-Semitism or anti-German refugee sentiment ...anywhere?

I think when I was-when I first came and went to live in Buckinghamshire, I think some people called me 'refugee', but I don't know that I knew what it meant, you know? So, I had- I had a lot of kindness actually. People were very kind. Because a, the people I lived with, in Olney, were very good to me. And then I went and lived on this farm in Devon, and they were charming to me! So, I had a lot of good experiences. ...Yes, I think... I was lucky.

And when did you become British?

When I married my husband. But I could have done in my own right, but I'd married him just before the law was changed. But in those days, on marriage you became automatically British. But as I say, I think I could have had it anyway. But just a little bit later- people were- who were in my position got it.

And was that important for you to be British?

I think it is. It certainly was at the time. I wanted to forget that I was German.

And do you feel British?

Oh yes... oh yes. Well, look how long I've lived here.

So, you became British in 1946.

Yes

Yeah. And your children? You said your daughter now lives half in France...

[1:45:44]

Yes, well she lives half the year in France because her husband wants to live in France. So, when he took early retirement- he was a chemist and his father was a surgeon, so he comes from a professional background. And... he always wanted to live in France, so they used to go on holiday to France and she does speak French. So, they- he bought this huge house, which he's doing up himself.

Yeah...

I'm told- I haven't been for a couple of years, but I'm told it's lovely. He's very hard working. But when I went to see it a few years ago, I said to her, "Have you taken leave of your senses?" Because it was derelict! You know, it was huge, but in a little village, miles from everywhere. But that's what he wanted to do. And so now she's given up work she spends the summer there, not the winter. But all the family have been, and they go for holidays. Even the little great-granddaughter has been. But she's not going to live there permanently. She's... Well, she's still got her house here which I think she'll have to sell now she's given up work because it's too big for her. But she's got her son and daughter here. She's never going to live permanently in France. I'm sure she's not- and she's got her old mother here ...they've got to look after me! [Bea laughs] Tell me what to do all the time. New telephone, she just sent me.

Yeah. So, they take care of you, your children.

They're very good to me. They're... very good to me. I'm not dependent on them. My husband made sure of that. And I did have a big house to sell thank goodness. So, I'm- I'm- I'm okay. But they mean- well both of them. They're good people. Very good people. And my grandchildren: they are good people. You can't say that of everybody can you?

And you're close to them?

So, I've been very lucky.

[1:48:10]

Ok, is there anything else that you would like to say...?

No, it's taken much longer than I anticipated. I thought, half an hour, they'll be gone.

Well, I'd like to thank you for sharing your story and especially if you haven't ever spoken about it... with us. And I hope that...

It's been a catharsis. It's been an interesting catharsis.

As I said- and maybe it will lead to other things, because you could definitely... check your own documents at World Jewish Relief. There are other places where you can find out... more.

I think Graham would be interested. So, I'll probably- if he has the time, we might go to – did you say Camden Town?

World Jewish Relief. Yes. They're keeping all the documents of the... it's called the... What was it called? The Central... British Fund which was an organisation...

I think it would interest him. He's that sort. You know, he's... he's an intellectual.

And you might find some interesting things both...

Yes.

... on you and your brother.

Yes. Yes. I'm sure he'd be interested.

Ok, so thank you so much again. We're going to now look at your photographs and documents.

Right.

Thank you very much.

As I said, it's been an interesting experience.

[End of interview]

[1:49:49]

[1:49:59]

[Start of photographs and documents]

Photo 1

That's my grandfather. It was probably taken in Gotha, in Germany.

What was his name?

Solomon Weiser.

Weiser?

W E I S E R – Weiser.

And when was it taken, roughly?

I would think- ...He looks about sixtyish, so probably in the 30s.

Thank you.

Photo 2

[brief discussion]

That is my mother, aged eighteen.

And her name please?

Her name was Minna Westreich.

And where was the picture taken?

I should think in Gotha, in Germany.

Thank you. - Yes please.

Photo 3

This is my uncle Chaim Trauring. He lived in Berlin. He had three children. They lived in Charlottenburg, and they were all killed.

And he looks similar to your father.

Looks exactly the same as my father. He was next in age to my father.

And how come you have this photograph?

I don't know. I don't know.

Yes please. What do we see in the photograph?

Photo 4

In the middle of the photograph is my mother and I. I was aged two, and we were in a *Kurort* [spa Bad Salzungen it says on the photo, which is also in Thuringia].

Or taking the spa?

A spa. Yes. It says twenty-nine, so I was two.

Photo 5

This is a picture of me, age twelve. And my brother Alfred, four.

Which year was it taken?

Well, if I was- no, I was ten. So, it was taken in 193...8?

Thirty-seven. [1937]

Thirty- seven.

So, in fact this was two years before you came to...to Britain.

Yes. Yes. Two years before I came to England. I'm sure he was killed in... Can you tell...?

What happened to him?

Oh, you want me to say. He was killed... along with my mother and there was a baby brother called Solomon who was born after I left home. And they were killed in Belsen.

Thank you. – Yes please.

Photo 6

Right. This photograph is of my brother - my two brothers. My eldest brother Nathan, my youngest brother Alfred and my cousin Jack – Jakob.

And when was it taken?

It was taken in 1937. In Gotha, in Thüringen.

Thank you.

Photo 7

This is a picture of me when I was sixteen, and I was working at a nursery school in Neasden. And I used to have to go to work at 6 a.m. because I was a probationer. And the bombs were dropping all over the place, each side of me, on the North Circular Road. But I had to get to work. So I just went on walking.

Photo 8

This is a picture of my husband and myself on our wedding day May 31st, 1946

What's the name of- what was the name of your husband please?

My husband? Michael.

Photo 9

This is my brother and myself. I think in nineteen fifty-three. [1953]

And where?

How old I was?

No, where was it taken?

At Quaremead near Bishop's Stortford. And he was in hospital - a Jewish Hospital - part of Broomfield Hospital. I don't know that it was entirely Jewish, but there were some Jewish people there. Certainly, the Sister in charge was Jewish. And he was- he died in that hospital. In 1954.

Thank you. -Yes please.

Photo 10

This is my cousin Joe and his wife and me. And Joe helped to bring me to England, before he met his wife. When he was about fifteen, he came to England and persuaded one of his relatives to give me a home.

And when was this picture taken?

This I would think was taken after they were married, and they were married... 1948, '49. Something like that. They were married in London.

And you said this was a difficult time for you?

Yes. Because at the wedding his mother and father were there. That's my aunt and uncle. But my parents weren't there. And I'm afraid... I broke down.

Thank you.

Photo 11

That's a picture of my husband, myself, my son and my daughter. And my daughter was clearly only a few months old. And my son must have been two-and-a-half.

And where was it taken?

We were probably on holiday somewhere or in a park. I'm not sure. Probably...

...When? Well, if my son was about two, so about 1953, '54 – '53 'cause she was born February '53.

Photo 12

This is a picture of my family, taken in my son's garden in Winchmore Hill. There's my son, my daughter-in-law, my granddaughter, my daughter, my grandson. His father, my other granddaughter, me and my son's son kneeling.

When was it taken?

And the granddaughter is there, in blue. That's my daughter wearing red. And that's her daughter. And the one in blue with the long hair, that's my son's daughter. Taken in Winchmore Hill about ten years ago.

So, in 2007, roughly.

Yes.

Thank you.

Document 1

This is my permission to enter England in 1939. And it's an official document... permitting me to come... and live here.

And what are the dates? What do we see there?

And the- gives my birth date 28 11 1927. And the date of entry is 11th of June. 1939.

Thank you.

Actually, it says 13th of June down there, and the 11th - I left on the 11th, and arrived on the 13th. ...I wonder why that picture was taken off...

Here and here. That will be really interesting, if...

If they have it there... Mnn.

And not- well that will be interesting. [Bea reads from document:]

“Leave to land granted in Southampton this day on condition that the holder does not enter any employment.”

Oh, and look, you had to register here... at the police station.

Is it mine or my brother's?

Yours.

It's mine.

Yes please.

Document 2

This document has my personal details: Goldina Trauring. Female. Date of birth: 28 11 '27, Gotha. Name Father: Bernhardt Trauring. My mother's name Minna Trauring. And I lived at 19 - *Neunzehn* Augustinerstraße, Gotha, Thüringen.

And this document allowed you to travel to the UK?

And this is- document that allows her- His Majesty's Government allows me entry into the United Kingdom.

And there's a missing photo, and you don't know what happened to the missing photo?

No. The missing photo, I've no idea.

Well maybe you can... find it somewhere. Maybe...

Well, my brother's photograph is missing too, so I really don't know.

Ok, Diana, thank you very, very much again for sharing your story and sharing your photographs.

Right. Well, it's been an interesting experience.

Thank you again.

[End of photographs and documents]

[2:01:39]