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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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**REFUGEE VOICES**

**Interview No.** RV290

**NAME:**  Albert Lester

**DATE**: 23 January 2024

**LOCATION:** London

**INTERVIEWER**: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

**[00:00:00]**

*Today is 23rd of January 2024. We're conducting an interview with Mr Albert Lester. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. Can you please tell us your name?*

Albert Lester.

*And your name at birth?*

Albrecht Levi.

*And where and when were you born, please?*

In Buchen in Odenwald in Germany on 23rd of October 1927.

*Mr Lester, thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Can you please tell me a little bit about your family background?*

Well, my parents had a business selling clothes and shoes – in fact it all an all-encompassing- you could go in naked and you came out fully clothed – in Buchen. And the business was good, except of course they lost an awful lot of money during the inflation in the 1920s, but then it picked up again and then of course once the Nazis came to power the business went down because people weren’t allowed to go into the shops any more, and so that was the end of it. And then my parents decided to emigrate to Southern Rhodesia and the plan was for my father to go first at the end of November in ’38 and then the plan was for my mother and my sister and myself to join them later. That was the idea. However, on the 9th of November, my father came to Esslingen where I went to school to say goodbye ’cos he was then going on the boat to Hamburg and on the 10th of November he bought me a little toy car. **[00:02:18]** On the 10th of November I was playing with the little car in the common room when there was this huge commotion, children were running, screaming. I opened the door and I was swept away by the screaming children. I went down the corridor and into the dining room, down to the kitchen under the spiral staircase, over the kitchen garden, over the fence, and there was – and a huge drop down to the pavement in front of a three-foot high wall. I thought if I jump here, I’m going to break my neck [laughs] or my legs. And then I saw a little boy next to me hang himself on the top of the wall by the fingertips and let himself drop and I did the same. So, I got out, got down all right. And then a lot of the children ran down towards the town, Esslingen, and then some of us ran up to a little wood. And we went to the little wood and we sat down on some broken tree stumps and didn’t know what was going on and we just sat down and waited. And then we decided after about quarter of an hour, you know, we can’t sit here all day, so one of the girls – there were about maybe six or seven of us – there was one girl and we sent her back to school to do some reconnaissance and we thought a girl wouldn't be harmed, while a boy might. Anyway, she went and came back and told us, yes, she spoke to somebody and we all have to go back. So we all trooped back, didn't know what was going on, and then we saw really what happened. **[00:04:04]** In the playground stood men with clubs and sticks. The front door, this beautiful oak door, was ripped off its hinges, all the windows were smashed. There was a beautiful marble imitation statue of Michelangelo’s Moses. The head was chopped off and it was rolling on the ground. All the bottom panels of the classroom doors were all kicked in and it was shambles. And so, we were then told to go into a classroom where there were already something like thirty or forty children whom they collected and there we were told to sit down and not talk, just sit there. And we sat there, nobody cried, we were all terrified but we didn't know what was happening. And then I was looking at this big hole in the floor – in the door and I really thought sure they're going to do – they're going to put a machine gun in and just let us go. I was quite – I really thought that this would happen. And there was a guy with a big club keeping us quiet. And then he left after about quarter of an hour and then the headmaster came in, Dr Rothschild, came in and he sat down on the desk in front and he put his head in his hands and began to weep. And then of course everybody began to cry. The floodgates just opened up. Anyway, after he composed himself, he then told us what had happened, that this German, von Rath was killed by a Polish youth in Paris and there was a big uprising of the German, the “*Volkswut”*, a big uprising, and they smashed all the synagogues and set synagogues alight and burst in Jewish shops and arrested all Jewish men, including our teachers. **[00:06:20]** I don't know why he wasn’t arrested but anyway, because he was an old man, he was about sixty or so. And anyway, they were all arrested and he told us that the school would close and we’d all be sent home. And at the same time, the Jewish community in Stuttgart nearby heard what- that they raided the school, so they came in their cars to pick us up and take us home to look after us while arrangements were made to send us home. And so after about two days they managed to locate members of my family and I was given a ticket and I was sent home with my suitcase. And the – this was okay. Now, the – it was quite a long journey. I had to change trains three times and at the first stop in Heilbronn I changed trains into a *D-Zug*, you know, which was an express train and, you know, they had these individual compartments with a corridor and a sliding door. Anyway, I sat in the compartment alone when the door flew open and there stood a man in full SS uniform. I thought, my God, you know, this is going to be bad, so I pretended to be asleep and I prayed, ‘please dear God, please don't let him start talking to me’. You know, what's a little boy doing on his own on an express train. **[00:08:10]** Anyway, I pretended to be asleep and so he sat there. He didn't say anything. And mercifully at the next stop he got up, got to the door, a ‘Heil Hitler’, and left. But I was really terrified that really, you know, that’s particularly – anyway, I got home eventually and I was met at the station by my aunt who lived with us. My grandmother and my aunt lived with us. And I said, well, you know, where are my parents, where is my father, my mother, and then she told me that your father was arrested on Stuttgart, on the way home after seeing me, he was arrested actually on the station and sent to Dachau concentration camp. And my mother – it was two days after Kristallnacht – my mother found out somehow or other or she surmised it and went to – she was then in Karlsruhe, she went to Karlsruhe to the Gestapo headquarters with his permit to leave Germany and his train ticket – his, ship’s ticket, boat ticket, and his World War medals from World War One and his citations, and she put them on the desk of the Gestapo of Karlsruhe and said, ‘is this is the way you treat your war veterans?’ Because he was badly wounded on the front in France. And it seemed to work because they let him out on condition that he went straight from Dachau to Hamburg. He wasn’t allowed to go home any more. **[00:10:01]** So, then my mother had to go to Hamburg with all his belongings which he could take and his papers and the tickets and she said goodbye to him in Hamburg and then he went off on the boat.

*And when was that?*

That was in November ’38, just after Kristallnacht, maybe about a week after Kristallnacht, or maybe two weeks, I don't know. Anyway, they let him out in time enough to get the boat. In the meantime, I was at home and I spent most of my time playing with – I had a very big Meccano set which I built up over the years. When I was in Esslingen, I used to swap all my toys for Meccano parts which I used to [inaudible] [laughs]. I always wanted to be an engineer, even from quite young. And then in January ’39 they allowed the school to reopen, the Germans, so I went back to Esslingen. And in March, about two months later, I was in the middle of a lesson, the headmaster’s wife came in and said, ‘Albert, pack your case, you're going to England.’ So, my mother in the meantime, had made arrangements for my sister and me to come to England but I came first. So, I went back home again, the same trip and then two days later I was taken to Karlsruhe to board the Kindertransport train straight from Karlsruhe to Hamburg, no nonsense. There were a lot of children of course saying goodbye to their parents on the special train and they were all crying but I wasn’t. **[00:12:00]** I was just pleased to get out. I really had enough. And my mother put on a brave face but, you know, as we pulled out, I did see her take her handkerchief out of her purse. Anyway, we got to Hamburg and got on to this marvellous American liner –

*Which was called…? What was it called?*

The Manhattan, SS Manhattan. Went from Hamburg to Le Havre, from Le Havre to Southampton. And then in Southampton we got the boat train to Waterloo and on the way we were – the children were accompanied by sort of young German Jewish boys or girls who actually were either from the university- anyway, they were leaving as well and they looked after us, *madrichim* they called them. And one of them taught us the English national anthem on the way, [laughs] on the way up. And in Waterloo, we were sort of corralled, as it were, down in the Underground station in some unused passages, waiting to be called up one by one to meet our guarantors or the people who were going to look after us. And I came up – my name was called and I came up and there was a London bobby and he smiled at me. He sort of ticked my chin and smiled. Never before had a policeman smiled at me, and then I realised what it was like to be free of fear. It really opened the country for me. Anyway, eventually about twelve of us were put into a bus and we were taken to Woodside in High Wycombe to the school, where there were already some children there. **[00:14:11]** But they were only from Germany and Austria, just those two countries. And there we learnt English and we were taught by various people. The headmaster taught us English and history, a Jewish judge who was from Berlin, Dr Braun taught us Latin and geography, a Jewish university lecturer, Frau Friedman, Dr Friedman from Vienna, taught us mathematics [laughs] and science. So it was a mixture.

*So who ran this school or –*

It was run by the Refugee Children’s Movement in Bloomsbury House. They ran the school. And the headmaster was Mr Bolton and his wife. He was called Sir and she was called Auntie. And I had a great rapport with Sir because he used to a district commissioner in Rhodesia and when he heard that my parents were in Rhodesia of course, we had something in common. So I got on very well with him. Anyway, I was very happy there, certainly compared to Esslingen, which was very restrictive. This was free and easy. It was lovely, so I had no problems. And when we then were able to speak enough English we were then sent to the local schools, elementary schools, until we could speak enough English and then the school actually became a hostel. **[00:16:05]** We just slept there. And then after a while the Refugee Children’s Movement – Bloomsbury House as they called it – Bloomsbury House decided to close it and we were then billeted out to various families in the area. And I and another boy were then sent to a woman in Stokenchurch near – between High Wycombe and Oxford and we were there and stayed with her and she then managed to get us into the technical school in High Wycombe.

*And what was her name?*

Newman. Yeah, Newman – Neumann. No, Newman. She was English. Yeah, Newman. Yeah, Newman. She was a teacher and she was evacuated from London and had this cottage in Stokenchurch behind a pub called the Red Lion. It was called the Red Lion Cottage and there we stayed with her for, I don't know, maybe two years. And then they decided to move us to another family between High Wycombe and Amersham, in a place called Holmer Green and we stayed there while we were still at school. The boy and I were together. We always moved together. He eventually became a director of Chase Manhattan Bank.

*What was his name?*

His name was Gerd Moses but he changed his name, er –

*Gerd Moses?*

Yeah, but he didn't want to be known as Gerd Moses. He changed his name to Gerald Morley. Gerald Morley became his name. **[00:18:00]** Clever boy. He always was interested in money. When we played Monopoly, he always won [laughs] and he then ended up being the director of Chase.

*Albert, before we move on, because you have already told us so much, let’s just go back a little bit. I have many more questions. Let’s go back to Germany a bit because you said you were born in Buchen. Tell us something about Buchen and how your parents – your mother was born in Buchen as well. Tell us a little bit about Buchen and the Jewish community.*

They regarded themselves – I mean they were highly assimilated, as most German Jews were I suppose. They regarded themselves as German. Germans who happened to be Jewish, you know. And they took full part in all the activities. I mean my father and my mother were in all sorts of societies. My father ran the gymnastic club or whatever you like to call it. He was a great gymnast. And my sister was a, you know, a gymnast. She was running – she eventually went to Berlin to compete with some – a Jewish Olympiad – not the big Olympiad. So, she – and my father trained her. So, he was very busy and he was also involved because after – in the First World War he was badly wounded in France, in Notre-Dame-de-Lorette and so he couldn't fight any more and then he became a medic. And so he ran – he was in the Red Cross in Buchen and whenever somebody was in a bad way they called him or somebody else. So, they fully integrated. And my mother wrote poetry in German and the vernacular.

*Which was…?*

Which was the accent – the accent of Buchen. **[00:20:02]** I can’t speak it. But the strange thing is, she wrote something like a hundred poems, some in, you know, High German, some in the vernacular, and when she was in England, in English, and they were all published. They were all – yeah, they were all published and they are now in the museum in Buchen.

*Really?*

Yeah. And I am in touch with the people in Buchen. I was invited back to open a picture gallery of a Jewish painter called Ludwig Schwerin. He became quite famous and he painted me and there's a picture, The Boy with a Mouth Organ. And that picture is now in Jerusalem. It belongs to a Jewish psychiatrist. We wanted to buy it but she wouldn't buy it, so she sent us a photocopy of it and my son had it redone on linen but, you know, you couldn't buy the picture. He sold them in four figures. And he was the only Jewish artist who was allowed to sketch at the Eichmann trial and he painted Ben-Gurion and all the other people, Einstein –

*So he painted you when you were a child?*

When I was a boy, yeah. He was a boyfriend of my mother and he worked in Berlin and every time he came back for a holiday, he painted me and I used to get a mouth organ in reward. So, he painted me at least twice, maybe more but certainly twice.

*And he came from Buchen? He was a –*

He came from Buchen. He was born in Buchen, yeah. Yeah.

*Tell us. So how – tell us a little bit about how many inhabitants are there in Buchen, how many Jews?*

Oh, it was quite small, something like maybe 15-20,000 people. **[00:22:07]** It wasn’t very –

*And how many Jews lived there?*

It was a market town. There was one main street which had all the big shops, including ours. Ours was one of the biggest shops, probably the biggest. And [laughs] a lot of the Jewish shops had names of animals. I mean my uncle was called Wolf, two of them were called Strauß and another one was called Bär, right. And when eventually – one after the other they emigrated, most of them to America. Ours was the last one to go. And after my mother left, the *Stürmer*, you know, this nasty magazine, the *Stürmer*, wrote an article and said at last the Jewish menagerie [laughs] in Buchen [laughs] was closed. Anyway –

*So how many Jews live there in Buchen?*

Probably about fifteen families, that’s all, fifteen Jewish families. You know, just enough to have a *minyan*.

*So there was a synagogue in that town?*

There was a synagogue. Yeah, there was a synagogue and a permanent cantor who taught me Hebrew. We had to go every Sunday to learn Hebrew.

*What was his name, the cantor?*

His name was Wertheimer. He emigrated to America. He went to America. And he wrote a book about it too. Anyway, so I was in England that way and then one day I got a letter from a chap in Germany called Walter Jaegle. **[00:24:01]** No, let’s go back a bit. My son – my younger son – was then studying medicine at Royal Free and there he met another German, a German boy who was also studying medicine, from Heidelberg. And so they got friendly [laughs] and so one day – and then the boy went back to Heidelberg and they had a party and he invited my son to go to the party in Heidelberg, so I said okay, you can go. So anyway, so he went to Heidelberg at that party, and at that party he met another medic, a young student, and they got talking and he said, well, where do you come from and the boy said, well, some little town, you never heard of it. So he said, you know, what's the town? It was Buchen. And his father was the mayor of Buchen [laughs]. So of course, this was transmitted back ’cos this was great news. And this mayor had, as they have in Germany, a *Stammtisch*, and on the *Stammtisch* was this guy, Jaegle. And Jaegle said, ‘oh, I remember Albrecht, I remember Albrecht.’ I can’t remember him because he was a class above me, so he wasn’t in the same class. I can’t – but he said he remembers me and remembered our shop and remembered – because my father was an agent of Norddeutsche Llyod, you know, the shipping company, and we had a great, big – one of the windows in the shop had a great, big model of a lion on it, the Columbus, and they used to look at that lion because at night it was lit up and he remembered that. Anyway, so he wrote to me and told me, you know, he’d like to be in correspondence. And then he told me what he was. He was a year older, therefore he was called up and joined the Luftwaffe, became a fighter pilot flying a Messerschmitt. **[00:26:09]** I – it must have been about 1944 and he was shot down over the Channel, was rescued by an RAF rescue launch, became a prisoner of war and loved it. He became an anglophile. And [laughs] he went back and said, you know, we’d like to stay in touch. So, I – we started to write to each other and we write to each other – maybe every two weeks I get a letter from him and we email backwards and forwards. Anyway, the result was that they had this exhibition of Ludwig Schwerin and I was invited across, to open it and so I got to know them quite well. And then last year, at the end of last year my son and I went to Germany. We were invited again to go back and see them and I was made the honorary member of their museum, what have you. Lord mayor, the mayor was there and all the dignitaries at the museum, a great, big thing. And Jaegle was then trying to persuade the mayor to put Stolpersteine into the thing and they're now thinking about it. And now in – but three weeks ago I get a letter saying that they would like to – they also had plaques scattered in various parts of the town. It’s quite a pretty town and, you know, a tourist attraction really, a very old town, and because there's these plaques where they had a poem in the vernacular and somebody was speaking and you put your iPhone on it, you know, and you can then hear them speak. **[00:28:13]** So they asked me whether I would like – they would like me to speak into one of those plaques with my picture and one of the – or two of my mother’s poems. So, I’m working on it now. I’m now learning, so when I –

*We're going to record you, if we may, reading it.*

Yeah, it’s going to be recorded then sent across- all the technology, if you're going to record it and then they will hear my voice for the rest of the – on their twenty – the town was seventy-five – two – no, 7500 years old. No, 750 years old and so in celebration they did a two-year calendar, every week. And every week they had an important event in the life of their town for 750 years, right. And one of the events on the calendar – I've got the calendar here, I'll show you – is a picture of me and my sister on the day we left Germany. So, this was an event suitable to go into the calendar. I'll show you the calendar. So, they're really leaning over backwards to amend and I must say, they're pretty good.

*And Albert, what are your earliest memories of growing up in Buchen? What do you remember?*

My earliest memory, I was happy there. I mean we, you know, I played with the local boys. There were no other Jewish children, except my sister and I and the daughter of the – of Wertheimer, the cantor. **[00:30:02]** Otherwise, there were no Jewish children my age. They were all older. And so all my children, they're German. And my first memory of anti-Semitism was when I was about six. I got some roller skates for my birthday and two of my friends were pulling me with string on my roller skates. They were pulling and I was rolling along in the street and a man came along and he shouted at them and said, you know, why are you pulling this Jew boy? Why are you becoming a minion to this Jew boy? And they were absolutely flabbergasted. Anyway, they dropped the rope and I went back home alone and told my mother and she comforted me. And then of course, it was 1933, I was six, and then it became worse and worse and especially after 1935 after the Nuremburg laws and then of course you had SA men in front of the shop, ‘*Kauft nicht bei Juden’*, don't buy it with the Jews, and of course the shop went down. And we had a lot of trade with the farmers in the area and they still bought but the locals were afraid to come in. They were too frightened. And so – and then things got worse and worse and how my parents survived, I don't know, but they did manage.

*Because how can you run a shop in the country – in a small town without any Jews, if non-Jews can’t shop there?*

But shortly my father, you know, he then – it was done by sort of mail order, if you like, and they bought. They had big clientele from the local – from the farmers in all the villages around about. **[00:32:02]**

*So what did they buy? What sort of things?*

Oh, clothes, shoes, trousers, especially *Manchesterhosen* was, you know, corduroys. That was one of their favourites and they all wore corduroys, the German farmers, so we sold, you know, that was our main business after the shop was virtually barricaded, if you like, almost.

*So was it like a small department shop?*

Yes, yeah, you could do – they sold clothes, shoes, hats, underwear, everything, as I was saying, a complete outfit of –

*And tell us, the shop was founded by your mother’s father?*

It was founded by my grandfather, yeah, yeah. And then my father married into the family and then my grandfather died a few months before I was born and then of course, my father took it over. My father was trained also as a *Kaufmann* after the war, so he knew the business.

*And how did your parents meet? Do you know how?*

God knows. I’m sure it was an arranged marriage, you know.

*It was or it wasn’t?*

Oh, I’m sure it was. I’m sure the bridegroom had to be a *Kaufmann*. The idea was he would take over the business. I’m sure that was part of the deal, hmm.

*Yeah, because he came from a different place? He came – where did he come from, your father?*

He came from Breisach. He was born in Breisach. In Breisach, near Freiburg. But he had a brother and the brother went to Rhodesia in 1935. He saw the light! And he then managed to get my father out on condition that he had to work on a farm for a while. That was the only way to get into Rhodesia. But anyway, he was there for a while and then he managed to get to town and managed to get a job.

*So it was the brother who helped him?*

Yeah, yeah. **[00:34:00]** But the brother got him out, to his credit.

*So just to come back on – to Buchen. You said then things changed and you felt it. Was it more difficult? It must have been, to be in a small place, you know, in the countryside, let’s say.*

Yeah.

*Did you feel – do you think it was – did you feel more anti-Semitism or more –*

No, I don't know. Of course, I don't know what it was like in the towns but basically, no, I mean the general population was friendly. I mean we were still friends with all our neighbours. I mean that did – well, that wasn’t a problem.

*So nobody dropped you –*

No, no, no. I mean there were some Nazis but things slowly changed radically and drastically on Kristallnacht, when suddenly ordinary people began to smash up their neighbours’ shops. I mean it was incredible how you can switch in one night. And then of course, my mother realised it’s the end, we've got to get out.

*But tell us about – you were sent to a Jewish boarding school.*

I was – this was long before that. I mean I was sent to Esslingen in ’35.

*Yes, so tell us a little bit. How did that happen?*

Well, that happened because I couldn't go to the Jewish school any – to the German schools any more. After eight you weren’t allowed to go in any German school, so they had no option, you know, there was no Jewish school in the area, so I was sent to Esslingen and my sister was sent to Herrlingen.

*So tell us a little bit about Esslingen and Herrlingen, please.*

Yeah. Herrlingen was a marvellous school. It was a great school. I went there once for my holidays and I loved it. It was great. I was the youngest boy there. It was a secondary school, they were all about thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old and I was eleven – or ten when I went, so I loved it there because it was very advanced when it came – to think, in 1935 in Germany, a teacher was regarded as a sort of demigod. **[00:36:16]** In Herrlingen they called their teachers by their forenames, which is unusual at the best of times.

*But it was a progressive school?*

It was very progressive. I mean they taught – when they taught Hebrew, they taught the Sephardic Hebrew, not the Ashkenazi Hebrew.

*And obviously also in Herrlingen it used to be a non-Jewish – it was a –*

It was a Jewish school.

*At that point. But I think before at some point it –*

I don't know. I don't know what happened before.

*Because I think when Anna Essinger moved the school, it then became a Jewish school.*

Oh, I see. I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

*Because I tell you why I know it because I interviewed somebody called Lucy Schachne.*

Oh, I know her. She taught me piano. What do you know? Lucie. That’s right. She was my piano teacher at Esslingen.

*Really?*

Yeah. Is she still alive?

*No.*

Oh, what a pity.

*Lucie Schachne.*

That’s right.

*And she married a teacher.*

That’s right.

*So where did she teach you?*

In Esslingen, in Esslingen, she taught me piano. We used to play duets together, very simple ones, on the school concerts. That’s it.

*Because she came to –*

Lucie Schachne.

*Lucie Schachne.*

Yeah.

*Yeah. She came to England and with the – because she was – she then married a teacher, I think.*

Not one of the teachers from Esslingen, did she? There were two teachers in Esslingen which I remember and one of them was called Albrecht. Now, Albrecht is not all that common name and so we had something in common. **[00:38:04]** He came from Nuremburg. But he and the other teacher were then arrested and one of them- I know- came to England, called Samuel, Fritz Samuel. He came to England.

*So, you said that Esslingen was much more Orthodox than Herrlingen?*

Oh, yeah, Esslingen was really Orthodox. We had to wear a *yarmulke* all the time and it was almost oppressive. You had the full prayer for meals afterwards, you know, long prayer, before the meal and after the meal. Every morning the full – they had their own little synagogue building, little- a sort of a chapel almost I suppose- and they had the full morning service every morning. And then for the Saturday we had to go to the synagogue in Esslingen in the town and that was the only time we ever – we could take the cap – the *yarmulke* off ’cos otherwise, they would throw stones at us on the way to the synagogue. But it was really strict Orthodox.

*So was that new for you, coming from Buchen?*

Yes, yes, I didn't like it. I almost rebelled against it. You went along. You had to. You had no option. But I – it – I never took to it. Although I learnt quite a lot of Hebrew and I learnt a lot of prayers but it didn't – it didn't help me.

*And were there only boys in the –*

No, it was mixed. Mixed, yeah, it was mixed there. Herrlingen was mixed too, of course.

*So Esslingen, how many pupils were you there?*

I don't know. It must have been about 300. It was quite a big school.

*Sorry, yes, of course you were with a girl on Kristallnacht.*

Yeah, yeah, it was quite a big school. Yeah. Of course, Herrlingen, of course eventually when it was closed it became the home of Rommel, Field Marshal Rommel. **[00:40:04]** He lived there. Yes.

*In the actual –*

In the school, yeah. And it was where he committed suicide after he was found to be implicated in the Hitler plot. And the road from the village of Herrlingen to the school is called the Erwin-Rommel-Straße. It’s named after him. Yeah. He took it over at Herrlingen. So, he had sort of three big houses and he must have taken over one of the houses.

*So for how long were you in Esslingen?*

In Esslingen I was from ’35 till ’39, to the time I left, or ’36 to ’39, to the time I – till I came to England. Yeah.

*And would you go home often or how often would you –*

I went home for my holidays. But what used to happen, my sister was in Herrlingen, she used to travel from Herrlingen to Stuttgart, and then I travelled from Esslingen to Stuttgart and then together we would go home. That was always arranged. So, I always had somebody, except of course after Kristallnacht I had to do it on my own, so I had no option. And of course, when I went home after, I was told I would go to England. But I knew the road, I knew where it was changed. It wasn’t a problem.

*So, in that time when you came home to Buchen, did you notice sort of gradual changes, your parents?*

What, recently?

*No, when – in that time.*

Well, I went home – no, not much. Things were – I still had my friends, I still played with them, you know, there was no problem. They – although some were in the Hitler Youth, we still played together, you know. They weren’t Nazis, they were just – to them it was just like the Boy Scouts, you know, because they had camps and they loved it. Jaegle was in the Hitler Youth but as I say, although they were indoctrinated it didn't seem to catch on with them. **[00:42:01]** The whole area of southern Germany was mainly Catholic and it didn't seem to catch much, I must say, except after Kristallnacht where things must have changed. And opposite us lived a guy called Jacob Mayer who was vaguely related to us. I called him Uncle and he was really heavily implicated in the Jewish – in the German community in Buchen. He devoted his life, if you like, to Buchen and he wrote poetry and songs and he wrote a song which was always sung at Carnival, *Fastnacht*, and they still sing it today, *‘Kerl wach’ uff’.* Still sing his song today.

*Which he wrote?*

Which he wrote, yeah.

*What is it called, the song?*

Kerl wach’uff.

*Kerl wach’uff.*

Yeah, yeah. ‘Man, wake up’, I can’t remember the rest of the words. But they still play it – they still sing it today.

*What happened to him?*

After Kristallnacht, they beat him up, would you believe it? The very people who devoted his time – to beat him up. And after my mother left he committed suicide in his home. Hanged himself. He was alone. He must have been one of the last Jews left, if not the last, ’cos everyone had emigrated. And he then killed himself. Yeah, *Dank des Vaterland* [The gratitude of the fatherland]. However –

*So he also wrote poems, like your mother?*

Hmm?

*So like your mother, he wrote songs and poems?*

He wrote – yeah, he wrote vernacular poems, yeah. Yeah. I actually, you know, had these plaques when I was there, one of the plaques was his. Yeah. And he's – he, you know, everybody knows of Jacob Mayer now. **[00:44:00]** They actually named a road after him, Jacob-Mayer-Straße. Yeah. He was much more involved than my parents. But strangely enough, my parents were probably the only Jewish family who were heavily involved in the community. The other Jews were – kept themselves to themselves. Only my family was – mainly through my grandfather originally and then my father sort of got into it and my mother was. So we were, you know, German, for all intents and purposes, as far as they were concerned. And the whole thing shook them of course. And then of course there was this episode when I went back to Buchen to – after I was told that I was going to England, I had to go back to Buchen and I had to get my papers and I've got this *Kinderausweis* where this man changed my name from Julius to Judas, you know.

*When was that? When –*

It was in ’39, just maybe a week. I was home. I must have been home about a week before I left to go to Karlsruhe for the train.

*So you presented your papers to the local municipality?*

No, I had no papers. They made out the papers, because I needed – because I was too young for a passport, so they had this *Kinderausweis*, this children’s certificate. I've got a picture of it here. Oh, I've got the original in fact. And he did what he did, but I didn't argue with him because –

*So what did he do? He changed your name –*

He changed my name from Julius to Judas. Judas [pronounces the German way]. Just to make sure [laughs] everybody knew apart from Israel, which Mr Hitler put on. But I didn't care anymore. Frankly, I just wanted to get out. **[00:46:02]**

*And just to come back a little bit to Kristallnacht. So that school was targeted because it was a known Jewish –*

It was a Jewish school, yeah. Yeah, sure. So as they all – but Esslingen apparently was not attacked. Esslingen was not attacked. My sister told me that it was – the reason was that the *Bürgermeister* –

*Herrlingen?*

Sorry, Herrlingen. Herrlingen was not attacked because apparently the *Bürgermeister* in Herrlingen stopped it because all the provisions, all the food of the school were bought locally from local traders and they regarded it as, you know, half their income. And he didn't allow the Nazis to attack the school, which is most unusual – because they weren’t attacked. We were, but not Herrlingen.

*So there you were as an eleven-year-old.*

An eleven-year-old.

*So that must have been scary.*

Oh, it was scary. You're telling me. We were sitting in the wood, you know, wondering what was happening. I was clutching a little knife. I've still got the knife. I can show it to you. I've still got that knife. I clutched it and that gave me some sort of courage. I would have done with it, God knows. But anyway, and well, the worst part was sitting in that classroom, seeing that old man cry. I mean that was – that was really terrible. That was terrible.

*’Cos often one thinks of, you know, Kristallnacht, of shops being attacked or –*

Oh, yes, I mean –

*And synagogues, but less often of schools.*

Of schools, yeah.

*’Cos I know there were other schools attacked. There was a Haushaltsschule in Lenitz and one of our interviews was – and she describes an attack like that.*

Yeah. No, they ransacked the place. Yeah, yeah. They didn't smash our shop up because, you know, every night they put down very – metal shutters, you know, roll – the – which came down. **[00:48:07]**

*Rollladen.*

*Rollladen*. And so, they couldn't smash they glass, you know.

*Your shop?*

I mean our shop, no, it wasn’t attacked. They – of course my father by that time was in the concentration camp because they called him in Stuttgart on his way back after visiting me. So only the women were there, my grandmother and my aunt. And they were praying that they wouldn't break the door down. They locked the door. It was a big, wooden door, an oak door, but they didn't break it. They didn't break it.

*So they stayed in the shop?*

No, they –

*I mean your mother.*

No, we lived above the shop, right. It was a big house, huge house, something like seven bedrooms, you know, because my mother and my father, my sister and I, we had our own bedrooms, my grandmother and my aunt and a maid, you know, it was a huge house. We lived above it. And –

*And the other shops were attacked?*

The other shops were attacked. The other shops were attacked. But whether it was because they felt we were more – more cooperative, more German, if you like, I don't know. Maybe that was the reason. Who knows? Anyway, they didn't, mercifully.

*So when did you – when you came back did you still see the signs of anything when you came back to Buchen?*

Well, when I came back, I saw what they had done but by that time, you know, they'd patched things up pretty quickly. I mean the other shops weren’t so big as ours and they had only one shop window, we had two huge ones, and so it was easy enough for them to get the things repaired. **[00:50:04]**

*What about the synagogue? You said the –*

The synagogue was burnt. It was completely gutted.

*So, there was no more synagogue?*

Nothing left. It was completely gutted. And one of the visits afterwards, again when I was invited back to Buchen – they paid all the air fare and everything – to open again, in the *mikvah*, in the bottom of the thing where they had the *mikvah*, and the *mikvah* of course was underground, they couldn't smash that, and they converted that into sort of a shrine in memory of the Jews in Buchen, to open it and I went there for the inauguration. They invited me for that, yeah.

*Like a memorial?*

The *Bürgers* of Buchen. So yeah, they treated us royally, I must say, you know.

*Yeah, but at that point –*

I had to give a lecture to the, some German Jewish – some German children.

*In Buchen?*

In Buchen, yeah. The older ones. They were between maybe fourteen and seventeen, you know, in the *Gymnasium*. And I had to tell them that story. I think I was given an hour to talk about it and then maybe half an hour for questions. The question time eventually almost was one and a half hours. They just kept on asking questions. And at one of the stage, I don't know at what stage of my talk, one of the girls in the front row began to cry. That was quite touching. Anyway –

*When was that, Albert? When was it?*

That was maybe about – my wife was still alive. **[00:52:00]** That must have been about six years ago. Yeah, she came with me of course. But yeah, as I say, they are trying to make amends.

*Wow, it was in a such a small Jewish community, you were – your family was very prominent, if it’s placed like that.*

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

*So when you came back, what happened to what – the grandmother and your aunt?*

My – ah, well, yes, that was the other thing. As I say, my mother and my father went to Rhodesia. My grandmother went back to Laupheim, where she was born, and there she died at home, you know, died naturally in 19 – it must be in 1941, you know, before they were all deported. My aunt then went to live with somebody in Baden-Baden and in 1942 of course, when the German Jews were rounded up, the German were the last ones to be rounded up. She was then – the *Gauleiter* of Baden, a fellow called Wagner – not Richard Wagner – Robert Wagner, decided to send all the Jews to Gurs in France, to unoccupied France. So she was sent to Gurs. And of course, eventually they were all sent to Auschwitz. They went to Paris first and then to Auschwitz. And while she was in Gurs, she could write to me through the Red Cross and I got something like a dozen letters from her and I wrote back, right. **[00:54:05]** And then the letters stopped. And then – this was 1944. And then suddenly I got a big parcel from the Red Cross of all my letters to her, unopened. So she never got my letters. So she must have thought I was forsaking her. She never got my letters. And I was so infuriated, I borrowed some money from my landlady, who – I then lived in Wooburn Green– and I went up to London and I went to Rhodesia House, where I knew there was an air attaché and I said I want to join the Rhodesian Air Force. Because all I wanted was to get into a Spitfire [laughs] and shoot down these swastikas. And I said to Jaegle at the time, if they had taken me, I might have shot him down. [laughs]. Anyway, to my amazement, the air attaché saw me. He was very kind. How old was I. I was then about sixteen. I saw the air attaché and he listened to my story and he said how old are you, son? I said sixteen. He said, go back to school, the war will soon be over. And of course then about nine months later it was over, you know. So, I never got the chance, I was never called up. And my only service in Her Majesty’s Forces was when I went on the troopship to Africa. **[00:56:02]** I had to sign up and join the British Army and I had to swear allegiance to the Queen and so for four weeks I was in the British Army and I had to, you know, go on parade, do all the things which the other soldiers did, because they were all being repatriated, which was a bit of a laugh of course. But anyway, so that was it.

*But your – the letters were returned through the Red Cross?*

Through the Red Cross, beautifully parcelled up, never opened. It was –

*From Gurs or from –*

From Gurs. Yeah. Yeah.

*Because I know that that was the only – from Baden, you know, it was the only westwards deportation of the Jews. It was a very early deportation, I think.*

That’s right, that’s right. The *Gauleiters* could do with the Jews what they wanted, you know. The Prussian ones were probably sent to Poland, you know, Streicher in Bayern probably got rid of – he – they probably went straight to Auschwitz, for all I know. But for some reason or other, Wagner decided he didn't want to kill them, so he sent them to unoccupied France. And if the Germans hadn’t invaded unoccupied France later, after the Allies landed in Italy, she might have got away with it. She might have, you know, maybe might have survived the war. But then the Germans invaded unoccupied France and then all the Jews were then sent – first they went to Paris, to some block of flats, which strangely I got associated with later.

*To Drancy?*

To – yeah. Yeah. Because [laughs] they were built by an architect called Maupin. **[00:58:00]** He built it, which was a novel way of building where they had steel columns filled with concrete. And later when I was a consulting engineer in Leeds, we had a commission from the Leeds Corporation to examine this huge block of flats in Leeds. I've forgot the name now. It was the largest block of flats in Europe, right. It was built by Maupin. And we got the commission to investigate it because it was coming apart at the seams. Bits were falling off, panels were falling off. And we did a thorough investigation and recommended that it be – it would be demolished. We told them it couldn't be saved, and they did demolish it. And the Maupin system, in order- investigation I wanted to know a little bit more about the Maupin system so I wrote to the people in Drancy in Paris and I said, you know, could I please go to there and have a look, whether they had the same troubles, and I never got an answer. Never got an answer. They just didn't want to be reminded, if you like, of what went on, especially – you know, I was then still called Levi, so the company was called Down Levi, and so I never got an answer from them. That was the Drancy system and the complex in Leeds was built by the same man. It was shoddy. Shoddy construction.

*Maupin, is it?*

Maupin, yeah. He was the architect. Yeah. **[01:00:00]**

*And do you think your aunt was in Drancy?*

Hmm?

*Your aunt was in Drancy?*

Well, I’m sure. I mean that’s what happened, they went from Gurs to Drancy, and then from Drancy to Auschwitz. That was the normal route. Yeah. Yeah.

*What I wanted to ask you is how did your mother manage to get a visa? Did your parents both get a visa to Rhodesia?*

Yes, they got the visa because my father was there, then my father was able to get my mother out.

*So he went first?*

He went first and then I came to England and then my sister came to England and then my mother went to Rhodesia and before she left of course she sort of closed the business formally, sold the house at a knockdown price of course. And you couldn't get any money out. You weren’t allowed to take any money out. 10 Marks you were allowed to take out but you could take out goods, so my mother bought a lot of new goods with what money which was left and put it into a great, big container and the container went on a German cargo ship called the [SS] Ussukuma which was a very slow ship. And by the time it got to the South Atlantic, it was caught by a British warship, destroyer or whatever it was, and it scuttled itself, so we lost everything. And when my sister told me about it, she said, you know, we lost our container, everything, it’s gone, nothing left, I was- not very happy about this but when she told me that my Meccano set was on it, [laughs] then it hurt. Then that was bad. But we lost everything. And of course, it wasn’t insured against war, so we – but we got out with our lives but not with our belongings. That was at the bottom of the sea. **[01:02:01]** Yeah.

*What did your mother put in there? Do you know what she had taken – what she managed to pack in that?*

Whatever, everything. I mean she bought a lot of new things because, you know, she sold the house [inaudible] money but you couldn't take the money out, so the only thing you do was to buy as many useful things which you could possibly use in Rhodesia, new bedding, you know, kitchen stuff, crockery, whatever you need, and had this huge container, you know, like – and a lift, they called it – that was the name they used – and it was put on this cargo ship and it went down.

*So when did she leave? When –*

She left in May ’39. Yeah.

*So a few months after you left.*

Yeah, yeah. I left in, just before the war, ’cos the war broke out in August. Now, I left in March, my sister left in April, my mother left in May, and we all made it but the ship didn't, the Ussukuma didn't.

*Yeah. Albert, just to – because you have such good memories, I want to come back to the Kindertransport. Although you told us briefly what happened, just to get a little bit more detail if you can tell us, from the time of leaving your city and going up to Hamburg.*

Yeah, I mean basically it was quite simple. I got my *Kinderausweis*, which was the only paper I had, it was all I needed. The visa obviously was arranged by Bloomsbury House, so that was all set up. So –

*Did you know where were you going, or anything else?*

I had no idea. No idea. No idea who I was going to. All I knew I was going to England and my mother assured me that I would be well-looked after.

*And do you think she put your name on a list through – in Stuttgart or –*

I don't know. She must have heard about – she must have heard about the Kindertransport while I was at school in Esslingen. **[01:04:04]** Now, my sister also went on the Kindertransport but she was not under the Bloomsbury House. My sister had a private guarantor, a woman called Maud Jellinek, who was a very rich Jewish woman who lived in Gerrards Cross.

*Can you repeat the name, please? What was her name?*

Jellinek.

*Jellinek?*

Jellinek, yeah. Yeah, Jellinek. In fact I had an email today from one of their relatives. They're still in touch. And of course –

*What was her first name?*

Maud. Her name was Maud.

*Maud Jellinek?*

Maud Jellinek, yeah. And she looked after – she had a lot of refugees. She rented her house. She had a big house in Gerrards Cross. The housekeeper was a refugee, the cleaner was a refugee. That’s the way she got them out. You know, provided you were in domestic service, they could come out. In fact, I asked her whether she could arrange for my aunt to come out from Gurs and she was happy to do so but of course all the correspondence was never submitted to my aunt, so that didn't work.

*So she was sponsored directly, your sister?*

She was. She was sponsored by Mrs Jellinek. And she educated her, she sent her to school, to – first to – she – first she wanted to be a nurse, so she sent her to a nursing school and then she wanted to be a secretary, so she sent her to a secretarial school and then she wanted to be a pharmacist. Auntie Maud paid for everything. And I of course then – when she knew that she had a little brother, of course Gerrards Cross isn’t very far from High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, so I used to go there for my holidays. And she almost took me into the circle, if you like, like my sister. **[01:06:02]** I was known as Hella’s brother. That was my claim to fame.

*And were there any other kinder, or did she only sponsor your sister?*

To the best of my knowledge, only my sister. But she also sponsored a lot of her own relatives, especially a company called Schiller, who, I only discovered recently that Rudi Schiller, whom I knew, also came on the Kindertransport. I didn't know, but every – they all were sponsored by Auntie Maud.

*And was she Jewish?*

Auntie Maud?

*Yeah.*

Yeah. But she converted to – she became, Christian Community, which was the religious side of Steiner, you know, the –

*Yeah, Rudolf Steiner.*

Yeah, Rudolf Steiner. And of course, anthroposophy, and my sister got involved in that, and that’s why she got involved in Weleda ’cos Weleda was part of this Steiner thing, Rudolf Steiner.

*Rudolf Steiner.*

Yeah. Rudolf Steiner. So, it was all – it all – the whole family of Jellinek revolved around the Steiner philosophy. Yeah. The Christian Community, who themselves brought out a lot of Jewish children, yeah. They and the Quakers, of course. So my sister actually converted. Although she kept her name, she converted to The Christian Community because of the influence of Auntie Maud obviously. But she wasn’t forced or anything, she wasn’t coerced. She just felt it was the right thing to do and they –

*Because I think there were quite a few refugees involved with König and –*

Really? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

*Yeah, we have – I interviewed one person actually who was very involved.* ***[01:08:03]***

With – with…?

*With The Christian Community.*

With The Christian Community, yeah, yeah, who are part of the – of the Rudolf Steiner organisation, yeah. Yeah.

*Yeah. I will find his – I can’t remember the name. I will look for it.*

Yeah. I mean I used to get all my medicine from Hella for free of course. That’s brilliant stuff. My wife used it exclusively. It’s wonderful cosmetics. They kept you young. I mean my wife was a very beautiful woman and she used them, she was living advert. I'll show a picture of her. She only used the Weleda medication.

*So the motivation to take in those refugees for Maud, what was the motivation? Her motivation was to help –*

What, for Auntie Maud?

*Yeah.*

Philanthropy. She just felt she wanted to help, yeah. She was sort of a miniature – well, I wouldn't say – what's the man who did the Kindertransport?

*Nicholas Winton.*

Yeah, yeah. She was a sort of a small Winton [laughs]. Lots of – lots of – she had lots of relatives, Jellineks, who were all in Germany or in Danzig, including a professor from Danzig, and they all lived in Gerrards Cross. She brought them all over, so there were lots of Jellineks from Czechoslovakia. Originally, they were a Czech family of course and they were –

*So did they emigrate a generation before? Like –*

No, no, they all came around about 1939.

*But I mean her, Maud. She grew up – she was British?*

She lived in Eng – her name was Werner [ph]. She was an English Jew, right, and she married this German – this Czech Jellinek, right, so she married Jellinek and her surname was Werner [ph] but she was English. **[01:10:14]** You wouldn't know she was Jewish. You know, she was – she came from this old English family who came over, under Oliver Cromwell, you know, like the Rothschilds. Yeah, she came from that set, if you like, the sort of Jewish aristocracy. But she was very generous, extremely generous. I mean when I was at school in High Wycombe we had woodwork – we had metalwork and woodwork, and I made her a wooden fruit bowl. I carved it myself out of mahogany. And I gave it to her for her, you know, on her birthday and I made her a little bookshelf, you know. And then she – when I had my birthday, she said, what would you like? So I said, you know, I’d like, you know, a few little tools and I got an enormous toolset, with saws and everything, you know, a complete carpenter’s shop, as my birthday present. I've still got the case upstairs [laughs]. So, she was extremely generous. And well, I almost became part of the family because I was my sister’s brother. That was part of it.

*So that was quite different and so let’s come back to your Kindertransport. So you knew – so it was through Bloomsbury House.*

Bloomsbury House. Bloomsbury House were the people who were responsible for me and they decided what school I went to. They had to approve a school I went to and I had to fight them at one stage [laughs] because when I was in Stokenchurch with Miss Newman I got earache. **[01:12:17]** I always had earache when I was a boy. I always had earache and I was taken to the Oxford – the infirmary, the Radcliffe in Oxford for an examination and I thought it would just be an examination and the next thing I knew I was being shaven. They decided to operate right away. And [laughs] the surgeon, the specialist, was a guy called Macbeth and I remember [laughs] I was being shaven and I said, you know, why are you doing this? I didn't know what's going on. I said why are you doing this? He said, you're a lucky boy. You'll be going to the theatre tonight. You know, the operating theatre. He said you'll be going to the theatre. What am I going to see? He said, Macbeth. [laughs]. And they actually operated on both ears, though one was done by Macbeth and the other one was done by a Canadian army surgeon who happened to be working at the Radcliffe. And that one cleared up very quickly and the Macbeth one took ages to clear up. And then I used to – and then I went back to Auntie Maud, Mrs Jellinek, to recuperate. And then I went – I was sent to a Catholic convalescent home in Bournemouth to also again to recuperate. In those days you went to a Catholic home, which was good. It was – but they had nuns – but they were charming – who, you know, did all the cleaning-out of the ear every day. **[01:14:07]** So that’s–

*But you said you had an argument with–*

I argued with Bloomsbury House because then I got – I lost a whole term at school, right, and so I had to do a lot of catching up. I was – sorry to have to say that but I was the top of my class and within a term I had caught up again. But they – and I said I, you know, it’s time I took my matric and they said no, no, it'd be too much of a strain for you. You know, you couldn't, you won’t manage it. And I said no, I’m going to do it. And so, against their wishes I then took matric and I passed it and then I got my results on the day they dropped the atom bomb. But anyway, they decided, you know, the war was over and they wanted to get rid of all their responsibilities, so those people who were still in England, many of them won scholarships to university and carried on, and I couldn't. I had to go – I had to leave and I had to go to Rhodesia, so as I say, my – the smooth flow of my education was broken and I had to do it the hard way, you know. But anyway –

*If you were a bit younger maybe you could have – it was also your age, wasn’t it?*

It was…?

*Your age. So – because you were finished at that point when the war ended.*

When the war ended I was seventeen, yeah. Yeah. And I was then – I went to Rhodesia.

*And they knew that your parents survived?*

Oh, yes, they knew my parents were in Rhodesia obviously, so they felt, you know, the right thing you do was to rejoin my – which was quite good, I mean I – it was – I was happy to go to them and had no problem. **[01:16:10]** I mean some people might have thought after seven years you'd be estranged but I wasn’t. I mean I – they hadn’t changed much, in my opinion. It was very easy to get going again. And of course, Rhodesia was a marvellous country then, in those days. It was still a British colony and – if you were European, I mean, you had a wonderful time. It was great. I loved it. And –

*And it was different, very different but we – just because we wanted – I wanted to go back to the travel on the Kindertransport.*

Yeah, well, the Kindertransport, we got to Hamburg and we were in this – they had this big departure hall on the Hamburg docks where all the Polish Jews who went previously, you know, the late 19th century, you can still see their luggage there. They have a – in fact a museum there, and there we were. And my name in fact is on their list. When I went to Hamburg, I actually saw it. Everybody who emigrated from Hamburg is on that big list. So, we went –

*And you're on the list because you – that’s where –*

Because we emigrated from Hamburg, yeah. Yeah. And so, I – we were in that big hall and then from there we went straight onto the boat, no customs, no police, nothing, straight from there to the boat.

*How many children roughly were in –*

Oh, it must have been about, I don't know, 200 or 300 who went on the Manhattan.

*And were there other people on the boat as well?*

Oh, yes, yes, it was an ordinary ship, it was a normal route for the Man – there were two ships, one was the Manhattan and the other one was the Washington. **[01:18:10]** They both belonged to America’s Stateline. They were the – you know, they were the equivalent of the Queen Mary and – but we were treated like ordinary passengers, in luxury, you know, and only two of us in the cabin and there was another boy there who was a – as it happened, ended up at Woodside, a fellow called Goldschmidt, Walter Goldschmidt from Nuremburg. And we actually both went to Woodside.

*He was in your cabin?*

He was in my cabin, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. He could speak a bit more English than I. I could speak a little bit of English because I took English. I loved learning English in Esslingen and I remember I was very interested in the irregular verbs, you know, I took to that [laughs] for some strange reason. Anyway, he knew a little bit – a bit more English. And I remember the porthole was open and for some reason there was a wave because we must have been on very low deck and some water came in, so we closed the porthole and called the steward. And Walter showed off his English and said, look, look, water, water. And [laughs] the steward then said, [laughs] much to Walter’s dismay, “*Ja, das werden wir gleich aufwischen.”* [Yes, we are going to clean that up.] So, his English was a bit lost on him. But anyway, it was a marvellous trip and I loved it. And I was particularly interested when we docked at Le Havre ’cos all these beautiful cranes, you know, and I was interested in cranes and I always wanted to build a crane with my Meccano. **[01:20:07]** But I never managed it because [laughs] I ran out of screws. I didn't have enough screws. So I was very interested in that. And then we went to Southampton as I say, and then went on the boat train.

*And you said – just to come back. So first of all, I heard also that other people said it was nice because you were treated well as passengers.*

Oh, extremely well.

*Because it was a private liner, wasn’t it?*

It was a United States liner, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. We were treated like ordinary first-class passengers. I mean we didn't travel first class but we were treated like – I mean all passengers on these ships are treated very well.

*And you said there were these madrichim [overtalking].*

The *madrichim*, I think every sort of thirty or forty of us had one *madrich* to look after us and we had this particular boy who for some reason or other decided he should teach us – strangely enough, he taught us God Save the Queen. And I said to him at the time, you know, but why are you- because we had an English king, George VI was king. So he said, ah, well, this thing was written in the days of Queen Victoria [laughs]. So, we were taught God Save the Queen, [laughs] God knows why. Anyway –

*But it’s interesting that they were called madrich because it means obviously leader, youth leader, the – so it assumes there was some youth leadership [overtalking].*

Yes, there were youth leaders but they were either – some of them must have been university students who, you know, who couldn't carry on any more, and some were others, but they were all in their early twenties I suppose. Late teens, early twenties.

*And did they have to go back or did they –*

No, no, no, they stayed. They managed to get out on the strength of the Kindertransport. **[01:22:04]** They were – because, you know, they had to – you know, 200 or 300 children, they had to be looked after by somebody and these guys – or some were women and some were men, they looked after us and –

*And how long was the whole trip from the minute you boarded?*

It took about – it must have taken about three days because we stayed the night in Le Havre, so it took us a day to Le Havre and then a night and then probably another day to Southampton. So as far as I was concerned, it could have gone on forever [laughs] but it was great, you know, complete luxury. I'd never known such luxury before.

*So it was quite an adventure?*

Oh, yes, yes, it was great. I've got a picture of it here, the Manhattan.

*And do you remember your feelings of leaving? I mean when the ships [overtalking].*

Oh, I just wanted to get out. I had no – I just hated it, you know, after what they did at Esslingen, I knew there was no hope for the Jews any more, to get out. Of course, we had no idea that war would break out so soon. And of course, once war broke out, that was it. And of course, a lot of the – I was lucky in the sense that my parents got out but of course a lot of the children at Woodside still had their parents in Germany, including Walter and Gerd Moses. They were all killed. They all died. There was one particular moving moment when, oh, God, when there was one boy there called Harry Bienstock, I remember. He came from Vienna. And his father had managed to leave Vienna and lived in Brussels and he told us that his father was in Brussels. He was very happy that he was out of Germany. And when Germany attacked France and Luxembourg and Brussels and they dropped the bombs on Brussels, before even the declaration of war, and I remember we were listening at breakfast to the eight o'clock news or nine o'clock news – maybe it was the eight o'clock news, we had the radio on, sitting all there, all having breakfast together as a school, and they announced that the Germans had bombed Brussels. **[01:24:30]** And this boy was sitting opposite me at the table and I remember to this day I could see the blood drain from his face. He went white. It was uncanny. He just went white when he heard that Brussels was being bombed when his father was there. It was shocking. Of course, he never saw him again. So, most of the children – Peter Pulzer, of course, his parents came out. He was one of the lucky ones.

*He was in the same school?*

He was in the same school. And another fellow who became a professor, Werner Katz, he became a prof at Oxford, his parents came out but most of the others didn't.

*Yeah. And Albert, what were your first impressions, coming to England, embarking that ship or –*

Well, I knew the – because my parents were in Rhodesia and I knew that Rhodesia was an English colony, to me it seemed a natural place to go. And the idea was of course that I would be in England maybe six months or a year until I’d learnt enough English and then I would join my parents. The problem was then the war broke out and we couldn't make it. **[01:26:02]** And then strangely enough, Bloomsbury House still tried to [laughs] get shot of us as quickly as possible, [laughs] not unnaturally because they had limited funds I suppose. And so they actually did manage for my sister and me to get a passage during the war on a ship to go to Rhodesia and we packed up everything up and I remember Auntie, who tried to convert me to Christianity, gave me a Bible, right, as a farewell present, Old Testament and New Testament. And I had to promise to keep the Bible and read a section every day or week. Well, I kept my promise insofar that I kept the Bible but I [laughs] didn't keep my promise [laughs] of reading it [laughs]. Anyway, we actually got to Waterloo for the boat train to Southampton when there was a tannoy from the station that the train had been cancelled because Southampton had been bombed and the ship was damaged. And then about six months later we got another chance to get to our ship from Liverpool, and we got to Euston station and the same thing happened, a tannoy, Liverpool had been bombed [both laugh] so we never got as far – we got as far as the station and had to go back. In both cases the ship was bombed. So I don't know, maybe we were lucky in a sense because of course maybe the ship could have been torpedoed. **[01:28:00]** It was a risky business. Anyway, but we actually got as far as the – at the train station for the boat train.

*So when you arrived in Southampton, then were there buses waiting or how –*

No, no, we got a boat train. There was a special boat train every day from Southampton to Waterloo and so we got on the boat train. Whether it was a special train for us because there were so many, or whether it was the normal boat train, I don't know. But we were on the boat train, straight, non-stop, Southampton to Waterloo, and there we were – and there was this huge crowd of course. They then had to accommodate us in various place were the Underground, the London Underground.

*So you literally went into Waterloo station?*

We arrived at Waterloo station and then we were taken to the Waterloo Underground, where there must have been some empty passages or old passages and there we waited. It was all right. I mean it was all lit and very nice.

*Were you wearing a label at all or –*

I had a label, oh, yes, with a number on it, handle with care [laughs]. No, we went –

*What was the number? Do you remember the number?*

No, I can’t remember the number. No, no. We had a label.

*And were some children picked up by individuals? You said –*

Some were picked up by individuals, some were picked up like us by organisations, by the Quakers or whatever, and we were picked up by this bus. In fact, we didn't go straight to Woodside. First, we went from Waterloo through London, which was a lovely trip, you know, went right through the middle of London, Whitehall, whatever – it was great – to an English prep school in Gerrards Cross because the headmaster of that prep school and a fellow called Mr Gibbs, he was one of the people who organised this little school in High Wycombe, who organised Woodside. **[01:30:18]**

*Oh, I see. He – so he helped Bloomsbury House or he –*

Yeah, yeah. He worked with Bloomsbury House to set up that school. So we went first to Gayhurst School in High Wycombe – in Gerrards Cross.

*Gayhurst School?*

Gayhurst School it was called. It was a prep school. And they gave us tea and we watched cricket and we had little sandwiches, cress sandwiches.

*So what did you think of all that?*

Hmm?

*[Laughs] What did you make of it?*

I thought it was fantastic [ph], [laughs] yeah, except I couldn't get on with tea because they had milk in tea. In Germany you only drank tea when you were ill, [laughs] *Kamillentee* [camomile tea] [laughs] but there we got tea. But anyway, we persevered. I thought this is what you do, this is what you do. But they were very nice. We spent a whole afternoon there. They showed us around the school, which was very nice. There was one German boy called Wolfgang, who was a Jewish refugee, and he showed us around. A brilliant school, a private school of course, public school, prep school. And then from there we went on the bus to Woodside and there we stayed.

*Because there were – I know there were quite a few schools like that for refugees.*

Yeah, there were.

*Where the idea is to, you know, integrate the people to the [overtalking].*

That’s right, yes. The idea was to teach us English and learn something about English history and English geography. **[01:32:00]** You know, I remember we learned about William the Conqueror [laughs].

*’Cos there was a school called Regents Park School. I don't know whether you’ve heard of that.*

No, no.

*Near Swiss Cottage, which was a private school but that was a similar idea. But was it only boys, then, for that school?*

Only boys. Only boys, yeah.

*Because there was like a prep school or the idea –*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was only boys. The prep school, there was only boys. Yeah, and Gayhurst was only boys and our school was only boys but only German and Austrian, no Czech or anybody. It was just all Austrian and German.

*So did they ask you to speak English or –*

Some spoke a bit of English, I spoke a little bit of English. But it didn't take long. Of course, we spoke German to each other and we were told not to- in order to pick up English better but we still spoke German to each other of course. But we learnt English because we realised then we were – we actually could join the Boy Scouts, and I became a Boy Scout but I didn't do much. I got a Tenderfoot badge and we went to a Boy Scout camp in the summer with the Berkhamsted troop I remember, in Sussex, in tents which I loved. It was great. So we were integrated into the English way of life and became English Boy Scouts.

*What about the Jewish aspect of things? What –*

Forget it. Nothing Jewish. Nothing Jewish at all [laughs]. Auntie tried her best to make us Christian. And so, one day she said to us would you boys like to go to a church? And I said yeah, it would be quite interesting to go to a church. But she said you can’t really go, you must get permission from your parents, for those boys who had parents. **[01:34:07]** So I wrote to my parents and I said there's a chance for me to go to an English church, do you mind if I go? My mother said yeah, go ahead, you know, see what it’s like. So I gave Auntie that letter and she said good, so we went to church on a Sunday morning and I listened to it and I wasn’t particularly impressed. It was very sparse, you know, the Church of England, no big ceremonies. Okay, that was fine. And the next Sunday, boys, get ready, you're going to church. I said hang on a minute, I went last week. She said no, you're going this week. I said no, I've seen what I wanted to see.

*[Both laugh] I’m not going back.*

I don't want to go any more. So, there were about six of us who were the refuseniks, who refused to go. So as punishment for not going we had to learn a psalm. Every Sunday we had to learn a psalm.

*This was in the Wood – in that –*

In Woodside.

*In Woodside School?*

Yeah. And I learnt a lot of psalms [laughs].

*But it’s interesting. You said it was sponsored by Bloomsbury House? So that they –*

It was?

*You said it was under Bloomsbury House?*

It was under Bloom – Bloomsbury House didn't know about that of course. They had no idea. They had no idea. But eventually it leaked out. Eventually it leaked out. Anyway, as I say, we – I never went to church again but I learnt a lot of psalms, all of which I forgot, except one, Psalm 23, I remember, the Lord is my shepherd. Anyway, so Bloomsbury House got wind of it and then the Jewish community in High Wycombe, which was largely Jews from London who were evacuated during the war because of the Blitz, they then sent somebody around, a Miss Perlman from High Wycombe, who was a Jewish teacher- a Hebrew teacher. **[01:36:17]** And she came around and she managed to persuade Auntie to let us go to – well, she had no option, Auntie, because Bloomsbury House insisted on it – that we went to a Jewish service in High Wycombe. High Wycombe had no synagogue, so the service was in the Quaker meeting house in High Wycombe. So every morning we had to walk all the way to High Wycombe to go to a Jewish children’s service which was run by Miss Perlman. And it was a long walk. It was a long walk. It took about an hour maybe, or three quarters of an hour. And I did this about three or four times and then I thought, well, enough’s enough [laughs] and I just refused to go any more. And I had big arguments with Miss Perlman and, you know, I then told her what I believed about religion, I told her I believed in God but I don't believe in religion. I said I believe in the Ten Commandments but- and that I don't need a label to pray to God. I can pray to God alone. Even as a little boy of, I don't know, sixteen or – fifteen or sixteen, I was then, and I didn't go any more. I didn't go any more, and that was it. Some of the other boys still went but I didn't. So I’m sure if a Muslim tried to convert me it’d be the same thing [laughs]. I’d go once and never again [laughs]. **[01:38:00]** But otherwise, I mean there was no coercion. It was a sort of a gentle shove, you know, to- because they knew they couldn't.

*No. Albert, what was the atmosphere among the boys there?*

Oh, it was good. Good, good.

*Was it a supportive – was it supportive? I mean people were in the same – a similar situation.*

Yes, we were all in the same – similar situation. The teachers were very good of course. I had Dr Braun. [Laughs] We had another teacher called Grossman I remember, who spoke English with an atrocious German accent [laughs] and I remember he said – if you gave something, he said thank you – instead of saying thank you very much, he said thank you very much [imitates teacher’s accent], right. So, we got – so we called him Mr Very Much, you know, like children do. But no, everything was very good. There was one very charming English teacher who used to come to read English stories to us and she had a lovely car, a little Morris convertible and took us for rides sometimes, which was great. Everybody was extremely kind, very extremely kind. There was a family who lived two doors away who invited us over sometimes at lunch on a Sunday, to have lunch with them and we could go and we ate with them. And they had a son called Donald I remember, who was about eighteen, nineteen, and he was called up when the war broke out. And I remember I was playing in their garden when the woman, Mrs Brown, called me in and said you want to listen to the radio, to listen to Chamberlain declaring war on Germany. **[01:40:14]** I listened to the radio where Hitler [sic] said, you know, we’ll send an ultimatum for the Germans to come back and we had no answer, and from this onwards now, we're at war with Germany. And I was happy because I felt now Germany’s going to be defeated. I knew [laughs] – of course, I had no idea how weak Britain was but I thought this was going to be the end of Germany and I was glad there was going to be war. [Sighs] I just wanted Germany eliminated. [Laughs] Anyway, it was terribly sad because then their son, Donald, joined the Royal Air Force, became an aircrew and got shot down and was killed very early in the war, very early on, which was sad, their only son. But they were very kind. And there was a local school in Stokenchurch where some of the boys went to and they used to invite – the headmaster used to invite us there for tea. And I remember [laughs] they gave us what I thought sand – of bread, you know, with what I thought was chocolate cream. It turned out to be Marmite. God [laughs]. It was terrible. I hate Marmite [laughs].

*Yeah, me too. Me too [both laugh]. Me too.*

[Laughs] Awful. Anyway, [laughs] –

*Did you experience any hostility at all?*

Not at all, not at all. Not at all. At school, about four of us went to this particular school which was a school which was evacuated from London, so we went to this evacuated school which they accommodated in the British Legion Hall in High Wycombe. **[01:42:12]** And it was quite a nice school. But they came from west London, near Kensington, Shepherd’s Bush area and all the teachers were of course from London. And we were taught and I remember [laughs] one little boy called me a bloody German or something like that, right, because there was a war, I was technically an enemy. I was an enemy alien. He called me a bloody German [laughs]. And another little boy came after him and said no, no, he's a good German [laughs]. But there was – I got on well with them. No antagonism at all. No, no, it was great.

*So how long were you – you said it was first a separate school and then –*

It was in that school until – because we then lived in Woodside and it then became a hostel. We just lived there.

*So how long was that school but before it became a hostel? Woodside.*

It was a – maybe two years, a year and a half. Not very long. Not very long.

*So, then people’s English, pupils’ English was [overtalking] good enough so everyone felt –*

It was good enough. I mean – yeah, yeah, we went to normal lessons, we had everything, you know, it was good. Good. [Laughs] I remember at one stage one of the teachers I remember taught the school, taught the class, how to read a dictionary, you know, and they had some difficulty sort of – I had no difficulty because I was used to a German-English dictionary, I was used to the idea ’cos I looked everything up in a translation dictionary, so I had no problem at all. **[01:44:07]** But anyway, when then we were – when the school closed then of course we were sent out to the various families and that’s when I was sent to Miss Newlands, not Newman – Newlands.

*Newland?*

Newlands, her name was. Yeah. I went to – Irene Newlands. And we went to live with her, Gerd and I. And then the school was closed. I went there when I came back to England to see it had been pulled down. It’s now a housing estate. You know, it was a huge house. You can imagine. It had something like ten or twelve bedrooms, a huge garage and a huge garden, huge football field. You know, it was good.

*And this Mrs Newlands, why did she take you in, or was she [overtalking].*

She took us in, I mean I suppose to some extent for the money and, you know, Bloomsbury House paid her to look after us. So, she got paid so much for, you know, every boy and she lived there with her bedridden mother and she was a schoolteacher so she taught and –

*She taught at the school?*

No, no, she didn't. She taught in English. She taught occasionally. Most of the time she had to look after her mother. But she taught occasionally but not full time. But to her credit, she then got us into the tech. It was either a technical school or a grammar school but because we I suppose didn't have a good enough academic background, we couldn't get into the grammar school, so they took us into the technical school, which was for me better because I wanted to be an engineer. **[01:46:04]** That was for me the ideal. And that’s where they laid the foundation. And I took to it. Mathematics to me was a joy. And anyway, so then when school was finished I had to find a job. And this [laughs] – then Bloomsbury House again took over and Bloomsbury [laughs] House arranged for me to have two interviews in London to be trained as a draughtsman ’cos the stages, you know, you do your practical and then you go into the drawing office and then you become qualified and you become an engineer. That’s the sort of stage you go. So, the idea was I wanted to then go into a drawing office. And the first people I went to was again a refugee who had a design office in Swiss Cottage and they wanted – they interviewed me. Of course, all I could do was very basic stuff, you know. We did a lot of drawing of course at school and I showed them the work I did and they said yeah, you can start. And I felt I was really – didn't know enough. I had a feeling that they thought I knew more than I did know and I felt I would let them down, and I turned it down. And then I went to see the second company which was this – it was Swan Mill Paper Company, [laughs] it was very funny. I had an interview with the chief engineer called Jacobi [ph], also a refugee. **[01:48:06]** And the company was started by a German refugee, a fellow called Fleischer. And I was put into Jacobi’s [ph] office to wait because Jacobi [ph] was away in the workshop somewhere, to wait for Jacobi [ph] to come back and interview me. And while I was sitting there the managing director, Fleischer, came in, looking for Jacobi [ph] and he saw me sitting there and he said, you know, who are you, what are you doing here? And I said I’m waiting to be interviewed by Jacobi [ph] and he said are you German? And I said yes. He said do you speak German? And I said – and he noticed that I had a south German accent, a Baden accent, and he said ah, you come from Baden. I said yeah. He said where were you in Baden? I said in Buchen. And where did you go to school? I went to Esslingen. Ah, my nephew was in Esslingen. His name was Richard Fleischer. He was sitting next to me at school, absolutely sitting next to me at school. So, we had something in common. So, we talked about, you know, about Germany and about what have you and then Jacobi [ph] came in and- to interview me and Fleischer said to Jacobi [ph], do you mind if I sit in? Right [laughs]. So, I showed Jacobi [ph] my drawings which I did at school, very proud, and there was – I remember one drawing was called a pedestal, which is a bearing, you know, it looks – it’s called a plumber block. Anyway, I drew this thing with a cross-section and everything and then Jacobi [ph] said okay, now, if you had to machine this from a casting, where would you start? **[01:50:02]** I had no idea. I had no idea so I said, no idea, you know. How could I? And this went on for a while and I thought, this is bad well, I would start on the hole. He said wrong, you start on the bottom. So, he asked me question after question and I made a complete idiot of myself. I had now idea, how could it. And this went on for a while and I thought, this is bad. And then Fleischer intervened. He said, Mr Jacobi [ph], why are you asking this boy all these questions? He obviously has no idea but it makes no difference, I've already given him the job [laughs]. So [laughs] an early example of not what you know but who you know [laughs]. Anyway, so I joined and I did well. I mean I then went into the drawing office and the chief engineer was Jacobi [ph] and the chief draughtsman was a fellow called Weber, also a refugee [laughs]. And they taught me how to do engineering drawings and I learnt a lot.

*So they started the company here in England or –*

They started the company – no, no, he must have had a company like that because he was an expert, so he must have known what it was like. And a lot of the Germans – a lot of machines were German machines which they got over after as part of reparations, you know, they took the German machines and brought them to England and they opened this company. But they had their own engineering company and they built their own machines and that’s why they had their own design office. And Weber was a brilliant designer. I learnt a lot from him. And [laughs] there was another guy, another engineer and an English chap, he was also in the design office – I forgot his name now – and they made toilet rolls and doilies and napkins, paper napkins and also these spiral notebooks. **[01:52:18]** And they had lots of girls putting these spirals by hand into these notebooks. And so, Fleischer came in one day – Duke, the name was. Mr Duke, he said, I think it’s about time we mechanised this business of putting [laughs] these spirals in these notebooks. Can you design us a spiral machine? A spirola [ph], they called it. He said yeah. So, he designed a machine, he did all the drawings, specification, everything. I saw him do it. I was at my board next to his. And he did design the machine and then Fleischer came in about six months later and says how are you getting on? He said I've finished, I've done the machine, I've done the drawings, you can now send it to the shops and have it made. And Fleischer said – oh, well, he says, we can’t spare anybody. There's nobody whom we can spare. We are all doing, you know, important maintenance for the main factory. You'll have to do it yourself. And this guy took off his white coat – we all had white coats – took off his white coat, put on a brown coat, went into the workshop and made the machine himself. I thought, now, that’s an engineer. That’s what I want to be. And that’s why I then took an apprenticeship in Rhodesia, then I’m going to learn how to make things before I learn how to design them. And that’s what happened. He was one of my role models. And that was it. **[01:54:00]**

*But was it unusual at the time that he could also make it?*

It was very unusual for someone to, you know – I mean the old-school engineers, you know, for instance, my boss at Foster Wheeler later, when I joined Foster Wheeler, he was like me, he was the managing director, he started at the bottom, in the shops and worked himself up and became managing director through the bottom. But nowadays, they don't do it any more of course. Nowadays, they go to university and spend maybe two months or three months in a workshop. But they wouldn't know how to do it. They have no idea. And it stood me in good stead later when I became project director at Foster Wheeler. I remembered there were occasions where I knew what I did in the shops and it’s helped me solve some serious problems later on some nuclear station. But anyway –

*But Albert, so when you did this apprenticeship, so to speak, were you – but you knew already you were on the way to Rhodesia, or that you were – the plan was –*

No, the plan was- I had to do something until they found a boat for me, right. The sooner the better.

*So they told you after the war finished –*

After the war was finished, they said you're going to Rhodesia but you can’t get a boat because all the boats were commandeered for repatriating troops, so – but when a boat becomes available, you're on.

*And was there an element of choice or no, they said that –*

I had no choice. I mean –

*And what about your sister?*

No, my sister was not under Bloomsbury House. She stayed in England. Auntie Maud looked after her. So, my sister wasn’t involved, only me, ’cos she wasn’t under Bloomsbury House.

*And your sister didn't want to? Was there an option –*

No, she didn't want to. She loved it here. She was quite happy here. She came to Rhodesia later to see whether she could settle but she didn't like it. She was there maybe six months and came back. **[01:56:02]** She couldn't settle. She didn't find – she found it was too, I don't know, what's the word, small, suburban, if you like, so she came back. She liked a big town. She liked London.

*But you didn't mind when Bloomsbury – well, did they call you in and discuss it with you or –*

Oh, yes. I mean, well, I went to their offices and we talked about it and, you know, they arranged the shipping, they paid for the fare and everything. But no, I knew. I knew I would have to go at some stage but I would learn as much as I could. I learnt how to draw, I learnt how to design – simple things of course – I learnt how to make specifications.

*And where did you stay? Where did you live?*

I lived in digs with a family in West Kensington, Mr and Mrs Keane [ph] who were charming people, who looked after me like a mother. They were really nice to me and they looked after me. And of course it’s all in my book. And I lived there, and in the evenings, there was a Jewish youth club nearby and I joined the youth club where I learnt how to dance and we had lectures by – about Israel, about Zionism, what have you. So I joined that youth club and that’s where I met my first girl, if you like. I don't know whether I should tell you but it was – I couldn't dance on the first night but they played musical chairs. I could do that. So, we played musical chairs [laughs] and, you know, what happens when one chair’s empty, [laughs] two or three people make for the chair. **[01:58:02]** And I sat down and some girl, who was what I thought was the nicest looking girl there, sat on my lap. I thought, this is great [laughs]. So anyway, when the dance – when the thing was over there was a dance and I couldn't dance, she then sort of taught me how to dance a bit, and when the thing was finished [laughs] I said can I walk you home? She didn't live very far away. It was always in walking distance of course. So I walked her home, got [laughs] back to her place [laughs] and we – they had these Victorian houses, you know, with steps going up and we got there and so I kissed her goodbye and she looked at me and said have you ever kissed a girl before? I said yeah, yeah, yeah [laughs]. She said no, no, that’s not the way to do it. I'll show you how to kiss [laughs]. And then there were – in those days there were air-raid shelters in the street, you know, brick shelters with concrete roofs, and they had air-raid shelters, so then she said let’s go down to the shelter, right, which was just empty houses with doors. And I said why? And then she said, you know, to do what we shouldn't do. I said oh, my God. What's going to happen now? So, I [laughs] – I gave her a lecture on the dangers of illegitimacy and the danger of, you know, people having children. I gave her a long, long lecture and she looked at me absolutely aghast [laughs]. Anyway, I didn't realise what a fool I was making of myself. So, I said can we see each other again? Let’s have a date. She said yeah, I'll see you again. **[02:00:00]** So I was looking forward to the next date and then [laughs] about two days before the date – it was going to be on a Saturday – I think on the Thursday I got a letter from her and said you're a charming boy, I think you have – I love your principles but I still think we shouldn't meet again [laughs]. Oh, boy. So, when I told my friend at the youth club about it, she [ph] said you must be an idiot. You had it coming on a plate, you're an [laughs] – you idiot. He said if you want to be safe, go and buy yourself some condoms. I was completely green. So, I said Okay, so I went to the [laughs] – to Boots in Ladbroke Grove and I went to this Boots and there was a very nice girl behind the desk and she said can I help you? And then my courage failed and I said a tube of toothpaste, please [both laugh]. I never bought [both laugh]. I was too embarrassed, but I bought some toothpaste. Anyway –

*Anyway. What was the name of that youth club you said that –*

It was called the Westbourne Grove – Westbourne Road Youth Club or something like it. But it was in Westbourne Grove I think, in west London. Yeah, Westbourne Grove Youth Club [overtalking].

*So was it under the auspices of a synagogue or auspices – that youth club, the Jewish youth club.*

The Jewish youth club, yeah.

*Was it under auspices of a synagogue or –*

On the – there's a thing called the Youth Club Association, isn’t it? The Youth Club – they were part of that youth – Jewish Youth Club Association, yeah. No, they were a part of it. **[02:02:00]** And I belonged to another youth club in north London, the Maccabi Club, but there I met a very nice girl and we became very friendly and she became my girlfriend until I left to go to Rhodesia, yeah. She lived in Hendon. [Laughs] And we wrote to each other. When I went to Rhodesia, we wrote to each other [laughs] and then six years later when I came back to England I thought, I wonder whether she is still around so I rang up – I still had her telephone number in Hendon – and I rang her up and – no, not Hendon, Wembley, Wembley. And I rang her up and her mother was on the phone and I said – I forgot her name now – Lucy or something like it – I said can I speak to Lucy? She said you want to speak to my daughter? I said yeah. But my daughter’s married [laughs]. I thought I could start – I could pick up where I left off, a bit naïve. But anyway, so I was happy, I lived with the Keanes [ph] and when I came back to England after Rhodesia, I went to live with the Keanes [ph] again. I wrote to her and she said yes, we’d be delighted to see you. Everybody was very kind. That was amazing.

*And were you in touch – and throughout the wartime, you haven’t told us exactly what happened to your parents once they got to Rhodesia. Were you in touch with them? Did you correspond –*

 Oh, yes, you could write. You could write. They had a very wonderful system. They had a thing called airgraphs. Of course it was a waste of time to have surface mail because a ship would get sunk. So, what you do, you had a special form on which you wrote and you sent that away to the Post Office and they photographed it and put it onto a tape, a 60 mm tape, a 35 mm tape, in big reels, and those reels were sent to Rhodesia and they were then photo – enlarged in Rhodesia and my parents then got a copy in Rhodesia. **[02:04:24]** And the beauty of it was that if an aeroplane got shot down, they had the original tape. They could send it again. They had the originals. So, they wrote back in the same way. So these airgraphs, we wrote every week. Every week I wrote to them. I had to – I promised Auntie. I remember I promised Auntie to write to my parents every week, which I did, and of course my parents liked that. And of course, they were terribly worried because we were being bombed, you know, we had air raids and we – especially in London. Because sometimes I used to visit my sister in London during the Blitz and I was terrified. My sister had a flat in the top floor in Kensington and the air-raid sirens went on and the idea was you – when the air-raid siren- you went into a shelter. And these girls – she shared her flat with two girls – they just didn't bother to go, right. And I was in my bed, terrified, and I said why don't we go to a shelter? Forget it. They won’t bomb us, you know. They’ll do the East End. They won’t bomb the West End – which was reasonably true because they concentrated on the East End. And, but, so my parents were petrified, what's happening to us. You can imagine, their children being bombed every night. But every week we wrote and every week the mail came through more regularly than now, I might say [both laugh]. **[02:06:01]** You know, it really was a wonderful service.

*So what happened to them once they got – how did they manage once they arrived in Rhodesia? Maybe tell us –*

Well, my father at that time – my father had to go to – the only way he could get a visa was to go on a farm. But what the hell did he – he knew nothing about farming. But we kept chickens, so he knew a little about chickens. So, my uncle had a friend, a Swiss guy, who had a chicken farm in Rhodesia and he persuaded to guarantor my father, so my father went to him on a chicken farm.

*So you had chickens in Buchen?*

We had a few chickens, yeah.

*In the garden or –*

In our garden, yeah. Yeah. It was a little country town. Yeah, we had a little garden, we had a few chickens, so we always had fresh eggs. It was good [laughs].

*Very nice.*

Yeah. And every now and again my father brought home a little lamb which he got in lieu of payment from the farmers [laughs].

*And what would you do with the lambs? Just –*

With the lamb, we had it for Passover. We had it slaughtered for Passover, yeah. Anyway, we had our own orchard. We had a big orchard outside and we made our own cider, yeah. The cider was brought in, there was a communal press which made it into cider, and we had great barrels of cider in the cellar. And it was originally *Most* [must]-sweet*- Apfelwein* [cider] and then after a time it turned into cider. It became quite potent. So anyway –

*Your father.* ***[02:08:01]***

Yeah.

*Chicken farm.*

My father then – ’cos this guy was Swiss and they spoke German, so my father spoke German, so my father never really learnt English the way he should have done. So, he then eventually he decided – and my mother had to live – had to become a nurse, a children’s nurse. Again, that’s the only way you could come, you know, and so she was a children’s nurse with a family, a very nice family. And then in the end they decided they'd saved enough money that they could then live in Bulawayo and they actually managed to buy a house, believe it or not. And then my father got a job in the shop with some other refugee who had a shop and he was the manager, selling what he used to sell in Buchen.

*But were there quite a few refugees in Bulawayo?*

Oh, yes, yes, there were. Bulawayo had three layers of refugees, depending on when they – when they emigrated. There were the – the first émigrés were – came from Lithuania and Latvia, the second ones came from Poland and the third ones were from Germany, right. The ones that came from Latvia were the aristocracy. They made all the money. All the big shops and the big agencies were by the Litvaks. The Polish ones didn't do so well. They ran the little shops, right. And the Germans started the industry. They were manufacturers and they had manufacturing plant, the clothing factories, on the big clothing factories, the industrial estate was almost entirely by the German Jews. **[02:10:06]** And there was a lot of antagonism between them and everyone looked after themselves [laughs]. But it was sad, it was really sad. And strangely enough, the German Jews were all in a clique. They didn't have much to do with the Polish ones, although they all belonged to the same synagogue, you know. I mean there was no warfare but I mean they didn't mix much. The Germans felt themselves slightly above the others. They were certainly the most sophisticated ones. All the doctors and the lawyers were German Jews.

*They had better education.*

Yeah, better education of course. They were integrated. I mean the, you know, the German Jews were German. You can imagine they went into German universities and what have you. But anyway, it – I had no problem in Rhodesia. I loved it. It was great.

*So your parents also managed and [overtalking].*

Oh, yes, they managed. My father, as I say, got a job and my mother became a housewife and they had this house and then I went back and I lived there quite happily and I joined the local tennis club and I've played tennis ever since. I played tennis until I was eighty-five. I was still playing tennis. And the only reason why I gave up was because my wife – I was coming home with my wife, we had a car crash and I broke my wrist. She smashed into the car in front and I braced myself on the dashboard and broke my wrist and that was the end of my tennis [laughs]. **[02:12:00]** Otherwise, I would still be playing even at that age.

*But you said it was – you hadn’t seen your parents obviously for –*

I hadn’t seen them for seven years.

*And so you took that ship, the military – on the month – on the crossing, they found you a –*

Yeah, on the crossing, I was on the British Army.

*On a British Army ship, yeah.*

Which was a bit of a joke because we had to go on parade, and the order was you had to wear headgear. We had no headgear. There were three other English chaps who were on the same boat, civilians like me, who had to sign up for the same reason. So, we had to go on parade and we had to wear headgear. None of us had any headgear. So, I took a towel and made a turban, another one took a handkerchief and put a knot on each corner, you know, like they do in the seaside, and I forget what the other one did. He put a sort of a cloth cap. And the colonel who came to inspect us got furious. He went red in the face and he stamped his feet. What are these people doing? But there was nothing he could do about it, you know, we were civilians. But anyway, the result was we didn't even bother to attend parade any more. We just didn't turn up any more. We didn't turn up. But I was nearly put on a charge for self-inflicted wounds [laughs] because when we were going through the Suez Canal we were in the East Coast. It took four weeks. When we were in the Suez Canal, at Port Said we took on a lot of African troops who were being repatriated to Kenya. And I didn't want to arrive in Rhodesia pure white. I wanted a nice tan, so I sunbathed and got terribly sunburnt, I mean to the extent I couldn't walk. **[02:14:04]** My legs were absolutely stiff, so I had to see the medical officer, the company medical officer, and the treated me with calamine lotion and he said, you know, if you'd been a real soldier we’d put you on a charge for self-inflicted wounds [laughs]. But fortunately –

*Through sunbathing?*

Yeah, for sunbathing, for getting sunburnt. That was the charge, you know. You should have known better. Anyway, fortunately it cleared up after about three days. But [laughs] the – we took on these African troops and they were on the deck below us, and below them was our mess deck where we had our meals. So, to get to our mess deck we had to go through the African askaris and none of them were sailors and when we went through the Indian Ocean they were all sick and they were lying around and there was vomit all over the floor. Jesus. [Laughs] I never got to the dining room. I got as far as the mess deck at their deck and I went back up again. I just couldn't. The stench was horrendous. So I didn't have a proper meal again almost until we got to Mombasa where they got off and then we went on shore and got – drank African beer. Anyway, and then I was ill. But anyway, by the time we got to Durban I was okay again.

*And did your parents come to Durban or [overtalking*].

No, my parents were in Rhodesia. We had relatives in Johannesburg who got notified and so I went by train with these other guys who actually also had to go to Bulawayo, by a strange coincidence, so we all went together to Johannesburg. **[02:16:05]** And Johannesburg, my relative picked me up in Joburg, I spent two or three days with them in Joburg and then they telephoned my parents and I was put on a train from Johannesburg to Bulawayo and my parents picked me up at the station in Bulawayo.

*And what was it like to see them again? What was it like to see them again?*

It was great. I mean they hadn’t changed much. I was surprised how little they changed. You know, it was like coming home.

*But you changed.*

I changed, you know, of course. I was eleven and I was eighteen, right. But I loved it. I – they immediately gave me a present of a brand-new bicycle, a lovely bicycle with raising things, so I could get around. And I was introduced to our houseboy and, Samson, and I met [laughs] – I – when we got home, they said this is Samson, I said hello, Samson, I shook his hand and my mother said you mustn’t shake hands with the Africans, you know, and I thought it was a bit odd. So, I never really – there was apartheid. It wasn’t called apartheid but in effect it was. But it wasn’t vicious. They just were separate. They, you know, he lived in his own – we had a little room next to the garage where he lived but he did all the housework of course and did all the cooking. But he was with us for years, Samson. Loyal as anything. Every year he went home to his *kraal* in the bush to buy himself another wife [sic]. **[02:18:02]** He had his [laughs] – he had his own cattle in the bush which his wife looked after, so every year he went home to his wives and during the rest of the time he worked with us. And he sent all the money, you know, to buy new cattle [laughs].

*Was it strange for you that coming from England –*

Absolutely strange. I mean it was a different culture. But we lived happily together, the – and –

*And I wanted to ask you, which citizenship? Were you stateless?*

I was stateless.

*You travelled – that’s why I –*

I was stateless, yeah. Yeah. That’s why I couldn't get a – a lot of the other Jewish boys of course got scholarships to, you know, Johannesburg or Cape Town, to university. I couldn't because I was stateless, right, so I had to do it the hard way. I had to – which was okay. I mean I loved it.

*And your parents were stateless at that time as well?*

My parents were stateless as well. But eventually then they were naturalised. After being there, I don't know, seven or eight years they were naturalised.

*British?*

British. Became British.

*And you too?*

And I too. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

*So in Rhodesia?*

In Rhodesia. It was a British subject, although it was what was known as a self-governing colony. They had their own parliament but they were still a colony, and not – they weren’t a dominion, they were a colony. They still had a governor.

*Was it important to them to become British?*

Oh, of course. It was their dream to become British, yeah. You know, we all became British and we had to swear our [laughs] – you know, they had a Jewish burial society, you know, the *chevra kadisha*, and they had this lovely Jewish joke of the German refugee who was interrogated. **[02:20:01]** And one of the questions was, did you belong to any underground organisation and he said the *chevra kadisha* [laughs]. They did ask you whether you belong to any communist party, you know, the normal sort of thing, but eventually we all naturalised and I got a British passport, yeah. And in fact, I was due to join the Rhodesian Army, it was a territorial army, because it was compulsory, you know, you had to join for two years or whatever it is. And I was on the point of being called – in fact I was – I got my call-up papers but as it happened, they arrived almost on the day when I booked my passage to come back to England, so I wrote to the military people and I said look, I've been booked to go to England to finish my education. They said Okay, when you come back – you can join when you come back. Of course I never went back, so I never did full military service. I wasn’t worried about it. I was quite looking forward to it ’cos the idea was to come to England, get my degree or whatever it was, get my membership of the IMechE [Institution of Mechanical Engineers]. and then go back. I was going to go back because I loved it so much.

*So you – your parents also, they after the war –*

Oh, yeah, they thought I would come back.

*But also they didn't want to – they wanted to stay after the war?*

Oh, yes, they wanted to stay. Oh, yes, they didn't want to leave. They loved it. To be European in Rhodesia was paradise on earth, you know. While in England they had rationing and bad weather, you had sunshine all year, even in the winter, you know. It was great, you know.

*Yeah. And did they have any contact with Germany, post-war, immediate –*

Well, only so far with reparations. They got some reparations, not as much as some others but we got some. **[02:22:01]** My father got a pension from the German government.

*That helped them?*

Oh, yeah, it did help. It did help, yeah. In fact, they managed to buy a second house. The idea was to have two houses, one for me and one for my sister. That was their dream. Well, you know, and then came Mugabe and it all collapsed, so for the second time they lost all their money because you couldn't then sell the house any more. My father died in Rhodesia and then when my mother left, she sold the houses. By that time Mugabe had taken over, the country’s gone to rack and ruin, you could only sell it, nobody wanted to buy, except the Africans. Some Africans had made money and they bought the house for a fraction of what it was worth. But you couldn't take the money out. You had to buy Rhodesian bonds. It became absolutely worthless. So, the second time in a – they lost everything – and it’s really sad, terrible – through dictators, first Hitler and then Mugabe.

*And then your mother joined you in –*

Then my mother came to England and she was in an old-age home in Crystal Palace, which was run by a German bank. What's their name now? A big German bank in the City. They financed it. And so she was there with lots of other German – they were all German refugees. And that’s when she learnt – well, that’s when she wrote her English poetry.

*So how many years did she have in England, then?*

Not very long. Before she died, she was here maybe two or three years, that’s all, and then she died. She died almost to the year – I specially moved to Dulwich to be near her. **[02:24:00]** And we moved here on the 31st of October and she died on the 4th of November, so, you know, it was quite a shame. But I – but then in those days we lived in Hayes, near Bromley and I used to come of course every week to see her. It’s only quarter of an hour by car. But anyway, she died of a heart attack and that was it.

*And what made you come – wanted to come back to England and not stay in Bulawayo?*

I wanted to come back to finish my studies. That was the reason.

*Right. And that wasn’t possible –*

Well, I got as far as I could. The engineering diploma, South African [inaudible] was as high you could go. That was it. There was no higher qualification. And you needed it – if you wanted to be an engineer in South Africa you had to have the diploma, otherwise, you couldn't even practise. You couldn't be anything. So, I got [South African] but it was not enough to – for the IMechE. You had to take some additional subjects.

*Right. So, you knew you had to come back –*

So, I came and I – so I came back but the idea was to do a degree but I was talked out of it, they said don’t worry about the degree, take these three and you can get in, and that’s what I did.

*And which year did you come back?*

I came back in 1952 and I was there for six years. I went to Rhodesia in ’46, came back in ’62.

*’52?*

’52 I mean, yeah, ’52.

*Albert, I suggest now we take a break and then we pick it up again, talking about your work really. Yeah. Is that okay?*

Yeah, yeah.

*So, I think we –*

So what do you need? Do you want to –

**[Break in recording]**

*Okay, we got to 1952, when you came back from Rhodesia.* ***[02:26:02]*** *So let’s pick it up there. Tell us what happened to you and how your life continued, please.*

Well, when I was in Rhodesia I belonged to – I had a car, an MG and I belonged to the MG Club and we used to do races and hill climbs and whatever, gymkhanas. And on one of the occasions, on one of the events we had, it was an overnight stay, we went out to the [Pulver inaudible] falls and I remember one of the – we took our girlfriends along. And I remember one of the members took his girlfriend and this member – they weren’t married of course and they had this sleeping bag and they simply went into the common sleeping bag – her name was Lucy also as well – and everybody was slightly amused by that, you know. Anyway, the reason is why I’m mentioning this, that when I came back to England, I had a backache. I got a backache and so Mrs Keane [ph] said you'd better go and see a doctor. So, I went to see the doctor and she said where do you come from and I said Rhodesia. So, I said did you ever have Bilharzia, you know, which is this horrible disease. I said no, but I did swim in one of the dams. And there's always a danger in the dams that you get Bilharzia. Although they were very well-inspected by the health ministry, he said, well, I can’t take a chance, the symptom is – one of the symptoms of Bilharzia is a backache, you'd better go to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases at St Pancras and get yourself checked out. **[02:28:11]** So I went to the HTD and of course, they kept me in overnight and did all sorts of tests and they said you’ve got to be here at least a week in order to get a check – checked whether you actually have this horrible disease. And the bed next to me in the ward – it was only a small ward – was a guy who came from – he was a district commissioner in Borneo and we got talking and I said to him, you know, I came – I was in Rhodesia and he came from Borneo. And he said I've got a girlfriend who used to be in Rhodesia. Her name was Lucy. It was the same girl. She’d come over to England and he got to know her. So I said, oh, you know, a small coincidence. Anyway, after I came, are you registered with Rhodesia House, and I joined what was known as Rhodesia Club and they used to have parties and dances and what have you and- And then while I was in hospital the son of Mrs Keane [ph] brought me my post and I opened the post and there was an invitation for a ball at Rhodesia House, right, on the Saturday when I was in hospital. Now, all the tests were negative but anyway, they kept me in. So, I saw the doctor and I said look, I've got this invitation to the ball, do you mind if I go? He said no, it’s all right, you can go, but come back tomorrow morning. Of course, I had no one to go with, so I asked one of the nurses, you know, are you okay for Saturday night to the ball? **[02:30:00]** Oh, yes, love to. [Laughs] So I took one of the nurses to the ball and we got into the room, on top of Rhodesia House, there was a big area, and there as Lucy. So, you know, hello, how are you, very nice, and, with another guy. So of course then when I came back the next day, he said how did you get on? Of course, I didn't tell him that Lucy was there, the poor guy, so I don't know whatever happened. But anyway, they let me go and then I got a job with a firm of consulting engineers called Biggadike and they were looking for someone who had experience with mining. Now, in Rhodesia of course the company I was with, we did a lot of work for the gold mines and the asbestos mines and the copper mines.

*What was it called, the company in Rhodesia?*

Conolly & Co. They were probably the biggest – had our own foundry, our own welding shop, our own machine shop, and that’s where I did my apprenticeship, with Conollys, and ended up at the design office in Conollys, you know. Because of the four years of apprenticeship, which was the official, I only did three because I passed my exams. They let you off and they spend the last year in the design office. So, where was I?

*You were saying you finished your apprenticeship. They wanted you for the mining. They were interested, your mining experience.*

Yeah, they wanted the mining – and of course we built a lot of stuff for the mining industry, you know, a lot of – and I used to go on surveys to do on the mines, the asbestos mines and – so they took me on immediately. **[02:32:09]** A very nice chap, you know, they were very friendly. I mean I was being interviewed by this chap and, you know, and come and see, come right away. And I said I can’t go right away because I've got to go to hospital. They said that’s okay, go to hospital, have yourself checked out, come back. And I was with them for, I don't know, five, six years. I started out as a junior design engineer and I ended up as chief engineer. I first was chief draughtsman and then chief engineer.

*And the name of that company was?*

Biggadike. Biggadike and Company. We did – most of our work was for the National Coal Board and so I got to know this, you know, Wales, all the gold mines in Wales, and in Yorkshire and in Nottinghamshire and Scotland. I got around. We did a lot – all the top surface work. And you know those big headgears with a wheel on top? We designed those and also all the handling system for the coal cars and the tips and what have you. And [laughs] we did – one coal mine, we got a commission to do the plant in, near Bath, Radstock. There was a small coal mine there. And I was sent down to be the resident engineer, to make sure that they put it into our design. [Laughs] And there was a rail circuit with a tippler, you know, they put the cars in and they tipple them around and there are automatic stops to put them right. Anyway, they were doing this work and I was sort of looking at it to see whether it was working all right. **[02:34:03]** And so one of the stops had to be welded in to the rail and of course we had a timescale. You had to finish by a certain time. And the welder – they only had one welder – it was done by the own staff of the Coal Board, no outside contractors, by their own people. And the only welder they had was called down to the mine for some repair work, so he was down the shaft and the work stopped because they couldn't get on – this was – the thing was on the critical part. It had to be done. So I said don't worry – I knew how to weld ’cos I learnt how to weld as part of my apprenticeship. I said give me the welding set and I'll weld it on. So, they looked aghast and I got a welding set, connected it up, started to weld and they all went on strike. They all walked off [laughs] because I wasn’t a member of the union [both laugh]. So, it took a whole afternoon of conversation between my boss and the mining manager and the unions to sort it all out [laughs]. I was absolutely naïve [laughs]. I caused a strike right away [laughs]. And that taught me a lesson how to deal with unions. Anyway, so I was with them for, as I say, five or six years, and then I decided I really need some more experience in other work. We did some big jobs, some coal washeries and what have you. And some rather amusing story that the Coal Board wanted a new washery built, a coal washery. You didn't know coal was being washed, did you, before they send it out? **[02:36:00]**

*No.*

[Laughs] To take all the fines out, so it’s clean. It was a huge plant, enormous machinery. And they sent the tenders out to three of the main companies who did this, who were all based in the north of England, big, well-known companies who were formed in Victorian times, well-known. They sent out for tender. And when it came for the tenders to come in, only one man come up, and he put his tender on the table and they said, well, thanks very much but we're waiting for the others. And that idiot said there won’t be any others. So they had a cartel. And the Coal Board was absolutely furious and they said right, go away, we're going to do something else. So, the only other big firm who was vaguely able to do it was George Wimpey, you know, the building company. But Wimpeys had no technical knowledge of washeries, but we did, so we worked for Wimpey, who happened to be next to us almost in Hammersmith. Their headquarters was in Hammersmith Grove and we were near this Tube station. So we did the design work for Wimpey to build the – to do the washery. Anyway, I had a friend of mine who was originally a friend of my cousin, my cousin is also an engineer, and he worked for a firm of consultants and his boss was a fellow called Jeff Trimble [ph]. And Jeff and I got very friendly and one day Jeff came to me and he said look, I came back on a plane from Italy – ’cos he was a project manager for an Alfa Romeo factory in Milan – and he said I came back and was sitting next to a guy who is a consulting engineer in Leeds and he wants to open a London office. **[02:38:22]** Why don't you contact him? Maybe, you know, he's interested. So, I thought, okay, well, here's a chance maybe to leave Biggadike. So, I wrote to Morgan, this guy, Morgan, in Leeds, and he said yeah, come up, I'll speak to you. So I went up to Leeds and he interviewed me and he said yes, I want to open a London office and you can run it, you start it up. And then he said something funny. He said how did you come up? I said I came by train. He said first class or second class? So, I thought, you know, I would show him how frugal I was and I said second class. He said if you work for me, you only travel first. It’s only in first class that you meet first-class people, right, ’cos you never know who you meet. Okay, fair enough. Anyway, he took me on and I started at the London office. And they were involved in designing a huge packaging machine which – where you took an article that size and they put it into a small parcel and the machine then put it into a bigger parcel, and the bigger parcel put it in the bigger one. It did the whole lot. And they had great difficulties. Then he had another – I mean the office in London was civil engineering, structural and civil engineering, and he also had a civil engineering office in Leeds but his main office was mechanical engineering. **[02:40:12]** His staff were about 100, right, mainly mechanical engineers, at this civil engineering office. And they had real problems with that machine. They couldn't get it to work properly, so much so that the company who ordered it, pulled the plug and so of course he’d borrowed heavily to finance all these men and he went bust. And the first I knew about it was when I went into my office and I found the lock had been changed by the landlord because he hadn’t paid the rent for God knows how long, and he changed the lock. So anyway, the result was that I knew that my time with Mr Morgan was finished, so – and then the fellow who ran the Leeds civil engineering office rang me up and told me, you know, Morgan’s gone bust but shortly before they went down, Leeds placed an order with their civil office for the investigation at Quarry Hill flats, you know, this huge block of flats in Leeds. I don't know whether you’ve ever been to Leeds. It was huge – there's a picture in my book – huge. And we got this commission to do the investigation, come up to Leeds, we’ll form a partnership called Down Levi and this is a way to start up, we've got a huge commission for at least a year and a half, money for Jeff to do this investigation. **[02:42:00]** In the meantime, we can get other work from ICI and people like it, because he used to work for ICI. So, I moved to Leeds and we started this partnership, Down Levi.

*And you were still called Levi at that time?*

I was still called Levi. It was Down Levi. And that’s of course when I contacted the people in Drancy, you know, because of the Quarry Hill flats, the same thing. And we did very well, we made a lot of money. If you're a consulting engineer and you’ve got work, you can’t lose. I mean it is – the only way you could lose money is if you get no work, yeah. But we got lots of work and we got work from ICI and we did well. But he had contacts and he – he was – he came from the north of England and Yorkshire was a very close community, you know, so he had all the contacts at ICI and some of the other companies, and so he got the work in. So he got the work in and I got the work out. I was responsible for the design and did all – made sure – we had about twenty draughtsmen and engineers. And we had no office, right. And it was very difficult for a landlord to allow us to start because we had no guarantees, you know, we were starting from zero. And by sheer coincidence, Biggadike had an office in Leeds. I went to – I don't know whether I contacted – I must have gone to Biggadike and asked him or said goodbye or something and he said have you got an office, I said no, he said, well, I’m thinking of closing my Leeds office, why don't you take it over? Just like that, at exactly the right time. So, we had a – we took over the office, he even guaranteed that we would be good landlords. We even took over the staff and even the secretary. **[02:44:00]** And the drawing boards were all there. Brilliant. Couldn’t go wrong. And this contract on a plate from Leeds Corporation. So anyway, we worked – I was there for about a week and I used to – my girlfriend who was an Israeli girl, who was studying architecture in London – I used to live in Leeds, come down every weekend, spend the weekend with her and then go back to Leeds and – which wasn’t ideal but at least it worked. And then he got greedy, my partner. He suddenly said, you know, I’m bringing all the work in, right, but the work you do, I can get a chief engineer to do that. I don't need a partner. I said but look, this is a fifty-fifty partnership. He said, well, if you want to leave, you can leave, because what I'll do, I'll simply start off next door because I've got all the contacts. That’s the important thing, he had the contacts. He said from now on, we’ll be sixty-forty, he’ll take 60% and I take 40%. And I realised if that happened, I could lose all control, he could do what he liked. And I said look, this is not going to work, let’s split. So we took all our profits and I left with quite a lot of money, and we decided to split, right. And so, I decided I would come back to London and start my own firm, my own business, my own consultancy, because I had quite a lot of money now to start an office. And I got onto the train in Leeds and I took old Morgan’s advice and went into the first-class carriage. **[02:46:05]** And sure enough, opposite man [ph], sat a guy, a very nice, elderly chap and we got talking and he said, you know, why are going to London and I said I’m going to London to have a look around to see whether I can start my own firm. He said young man, what you need are contacts. I said yes, you're absolutely right. He said I'll tell you what, when we get to London, come with me, I’m going to the City Livery Club – he belonged to the City Livery Club – and I'll introduce you to some important people. Just like that, a complete stranger, in a first-class compartment. So, I remembered old Morgan’s saying. It really works. Anyway, we got to London and there was a car waiting for us, we got into the car and went to the City Livery Club and I was introduced to a builder in London, so it went well. Anyway, then I opened up my own business, my own consultancy in Queen Victoria Street, and I got quite a lot of work, including Nottingham University, the cores of [sic] residents. And some of my contacts in Leeds, you know, where I did the design work for them, some of the company, they remained faithful to me and they sent me the design work for their factories and what have you. So, it worked. It worked very well. And then Jeff Trimble [ph], the chap I mentioned to you, he then worked for a firm of management consultants ’cos he – PE, Production Engineering, and he became the project manager of Victoria line, you know, the Underground, he was the project manager. **[02:48:01]** And he said we've just took on a new method of planning, you know, programming, called critical path analysis, CPA, are you interested? And he used to stay with me in my flat when he came over for meetings and he showed me this CPA and I thought this sounds like a good idea and I said I want to try it out. And I rang one of the chaps I met at the City Livery Club, the builder, and I said I want to try out a new planning system, I'll do a tree, I just want to see whether it works. He said great. So he gave me the job to do this and it worked and then he gave me another one for which he paid, so I knew I was happy. And then I specialised, apart from design work, to do network analysis for clients, right. And I got quite used to it and my first book was mainly about network analysis, if you look at it.

*Tell us what that means, network analysis.*

Yeah, network analysis.

*What does it mean, for a layperson?*

Well, you have to look at the pictures. It’s – what you do, you take a project and you break it down into small pieces, right, called activities. And then you decide how you're going to build it. You – in fact you build the plant on paper, right. You start with the foundation and you do this and you do this and you draw a little circle and a line. I'll show you.

*No, no. Later, later.*

Yeah, later. And then you put some times on it and you work it out and eventually you get to the end date and then you look at it. Anyway, the upshot is, you build the plant with – in the least possible time. **[02:50:01]** And you have a thing called the critical path. Any delay on the critical path will delay the project as a whole. And a lot of the activities are not on the critical path, so if they go late it doesn't matter, so you know where you have to concentrate to make sure that you finish on time. So, it’s called critical path analysis, CPA, or network analysis. And I became quite conversant with it and sold the idea to companies and I got commissions to do a sugar refinery in Pakistan and other [inaudible]. And I got – actually got one from the Reader’s Digest to do a network analysis for a mail order campaign, you know, all the activities which you have to do for the campaign to work. It was quite complicated to organise it. So they wanted me to do a network analysis so that they finished on time and did everything properly, and it worked. So yeah, so – and I – we did this work and I was doing all right [ph], I had about four or five architects who gave me all their work, you know, for the foundations and retaining walls and stuff like that. And then- I was on my own, I had about six – one engineer and five draughtsmen and I decided I really need a partner. And as it happened, my cousin, Ludwig, was also an engineer and he worked for Linz [ph], the contractors in London, and I said, you know, Ludi, why don't you become my partner? **[02:52:00]** So Ludi said Okay, so he became my partner, so it was A. Levi & Partners. And this worked well. And he had some contacts for [Arabs], you know, the consultants, and we did some work for them. We designed a retaining wall for the Metropolitan line at the Barbican. You don't see it. It’s a huge reinforced concrete wall. Anyway, and this worked fine and then Ludi got an offer from a firm of property developers- which in the words of the Godfather- he couldn't refuse. He got an offer he couldn't refuse and he said Albert, you know, I really want to take that up. I said Okay. Nothing you could do. So anyway, he left. We parted as good friends, you know, and he left and I was carried [ph] on my own. And then I got married and a year later we had our first child and suddenly, I got frightened. I said what's going to happen? When I was on my own, I didn't worry. If I got ill I would know enough engineers, enough consultants who would take the work over for the time being, right, and then give it back when I got better. That wasn’t a problem. But when you’ve got a wife and a child, then you have bigger responsibilities. I said if I fall under a bus or something goes wrong, what's going to happen to them? I thought this isn’t going to – I can’t do it, and I really lost a lot of sleep over it. So, I decided – I talked about it with my wife and I said, you know, at the moment – at that time Harold Wilson made a new rule in London that you weren’t allowed to do any more development. **[02:54:11]** He put a ban on development. And a lot of the architects I worked for did a lot of building work in the London area and they didn't get any commissions, and if they didn't get commissions, I didn't get commissions obviously. So, the work wasn’t flowing in all that well and I thought, really now is the time to get out. I have a choice of either sort of slimming down and carrying on in the hope that it'll improve or close the firm down, take whatever profit I've got, invest it somewhere else and work for somebody else again. And we talked about it and she said yes, I think that’s the best thing to do. But you’ve got to go to a big firm who have a proper pension scheme and a health scheme and what have you. So I said okay, I'll test the waters, so I went to a recruiting company who specialised in engineers in Victoria Street and they said yeah, I've got two companies here who may be interested. One is Spectol [ph], you know, the big petrol [ph], and the other one was Tarmac, who were then the biggest construction company in England, Tarmac – Tarmac [engineer]. I saw [Spectol] and they said yes, you can have it, we’ll offer you a job, think about it. I said I'll think about it but I said I'll go and see Tarmac as well and I saw Tarmac and the guy I saw at Tarmac, a fellow called John Davis [ph], we immediately clicked, you know, it’s one of those things that happen. He immediately clicked and we talked about it and he said yeah, I think we can use you. **[02:56:08]** But I said look, I can’t start for at least four months – three or four months because I've got to wind down my business, you know, and tell all my clients and sort of finish off neatly. Yeah, that’s okay, we can wait. He says but in the– he says come and meet our managing director. This guy was the chief project – director of projects – see our managing director, a fellow called Lampert [ph]. I didn't know he was Jewish, but I didn't know that. Danny Lempert [ph]. So, he took me to into Lampert [ph] and Lampert [ph] talked to me, and he said do you speak German? I said yeah. He said look, I've got to write to a firm in Germany, I wrote a letter but my German isn’t very good. Would you like to clean it up for me? Right. I said yeah. And I took the letter, I took it home and gave it to Barbara, who was fluent, and she did a beautiful letter. I took it back [laughs] – I took it back the next day and he was delighted, it’s exactly what I wanted, yes, we will see in four months’ time. After about a month I was still doing my own thing. After a month I got a telephone call from Tarmac. He says we would like you to go to Germany to meet our technical director from Wolverhampton – because the headquarters was in Wolverhampton – to meet our technical director, to meet him to go to a German company called Polysius who were the – one of the few companies who knew how to make cement factories, Polysius Cement, huge kilns whatever- they designed those. Of course, we got order from Rugby Portland Cement to build a cement plant and they also want us to do the mechanical work, in other words, the actual plant, and they specified Polysius as the main supplier of this German proprietary equipment. **[02:58:18]** And we want you to go to Germany to meet our technical director and go to one of their – to their headquarters in Neubeckum and discuss things. So okay, so I flew to Hanover and took a Volkswagen and met this guy on the filling station on the Volkswagen. We arranged to meet and would tell [ph] what we were wearing. And I met this guy and okay, so we decided to go to Neubeckum and he said you speak German? I said yeah. He says well, don't let on, don't let on, because during the discussions they may say something to themselves which they may not be – may not want us to know, you may hear something, who knows. Don't let on that you speak German. Of course, all these guys spoke perfect English, you know, perfect English.

*And was this the first time you'd been back to Germany or –*

That was – yeah, it was the first time I went. No, except when I went on holiday years ago. That was the first time I went there on business, yeah. So, we went to Neubeckum and we had this meeting with their directors who were brilliant. I mean, they knew the plant, they were – I was impressed. They really knew their job. And then they said Okay, now what we’d like to do, we’d like to show you one of our plants which – where we supplied, so you can see the equipment in operation, a huge cement factory. So, we piled in to about – so all the engineers were there, so some of the engineers, so there were three big Mercedes-Benz, we got in these big limousines and drove down to the cement works. **[03:00:07]** And I was sitting in the front with the driver and in the back we had two German engineers and they were talking and one of them was telling the other one that he just got married and he got a young wife and blah, blah, blah. And I was – I hear all this, you know [laughs]. And when we got to the works we were given all these hardhats, you know, these helmets, and we were one short, right. So, the last helmet was given to me and the gentleman that I was, I said no, no, I said to that young engineer who was sitting in the back of that – you have it, because you’ve got a young wife. And he said, *Ach*, so you speak German? [Both laugh] So my cover was blown [laughs].

*Until then, did they think you were British?*

Yes, yes. They thought I was British [laughs]. So anyway, so they knew I’d – I would never make a spy, I would be too stupid. Anyway, so anyway, I went back to England and I went back, did – carried on my work and then four months later, I joined them as a design engineer and for the first sort of month or so I was designing some of the foundations for one of their refineries when I was called in and he said look, we've now got the job from Rugby, we would like you to be the project manager. I said look, I've never managed a project before. They said well, look, we need somebody who is a structural engineer and we need somebody who is a mechanical engineer and we need somebody who speaks German because all the equipment was German, it all came from not only Polysius but other people as well. **[03:02:03]** They were the specialist cement [inaudible] so we need somebody who can – and you need the bill and so that you know something about planning. Now, they'd never used critical path before and the first time it was relatively new. They used the old-fashioned bar charts. So I said can I do it on critical path, they said yeah.

*What is it called? Say it again.*

Critical path analysis.

*Critical path.*

CPA, yeah. So, we designed, we planned the job using CPA and it was a great success. Strangely enough, then the computer people got in, into CPA. They said this is the ideal thing for computers.

*Because before it was no computers?*

Before, no, it was manual. We did it all manual and then the computer came in. So, I said Okay, we’ll try getting the analysis done by the com – we did the planning but the analysis, all the arithmetic was done by computer and it was done by a company called ICL, International Computers Limited, who are now called Fujitsu, people in the Post Office, right. It used to be called CIL [sic], ICL, International Computers Limited, and they did the analysis and it was complete rubbish. Absolute rubbish. Absolute rubbish. It cost a fortune. It was all printed out. In those days the printouts were sort of like concertinas. I don't know if you remember. Great, big stacks of – hopeless, hopeless. I said let’s scrap this, let’s do it manually. And we did it manually and we finished dead on time. It really worked. So I was convinced and that’s when I started writing the book.

*So, when did you write the book on this?*

I started writing the book when I was with Tarmac but it took a long time to get published. **[03:04:06]**

*And sorry to interrupt but you said you spoke German. How good was your German, then? Did you –*

Oh, my German was good, I mean I could understand every word but speaking, you know, was a bit difficult.

*Did you – with your parents, for example, in Rhodesia –*

My parents could – always spoke German to each other, always.

*And to you as well?*

And to me as well, yeah. Yeah.

*So you kept up – you spoke –*

So I relearned my German in Rhodesia, if you like, speaking to my parents, yeah. So I could make myself understood.

*But could you still speak German when you got there, to Rhodesia? You still had – or was it difficult at the beginning?*

Well, I took German for matric and then I had to take German lessons in English, you know, to get the grammar right. But no, I could speak it. And of course, I spoke German to Weber, you know, who was my boss, so – on the train. We – he came on the same train as me. We used to speak German. So I knew enough German to get on. That wasn’t a problem.

*And you also – you have to tell us, how did you meet your wife? And she was from Germany?*

Yeah, I met my wife, yeah [laughs]. I belonged to a club called the Linguists’ Club. I don't know whether you’ve heard of it. The Linguists’ Club is a club which was formed by a guy who used to work for these people who did the, monitoring of the German codes in Bletchley Park.

*The codebreakers?*

Yeah, codebreaker. He used to work there. He was multilingual, a fellow called Pilley, he started the Linguists’ Club. **[03:06:00]** And the idea was to have a club – in a beautiful house in Kensington, a big country house – where foreigners could meet, young people mainly, to learn either French or German or Italian, whatever it is, and then meet and then socialise. So, it had- God knows how many rooms. Each one was a classroom for a different language. And my wife was an au pair from Germany but she taught German in the club. Well, taught, when I say taught, they were conversation classes, they weren’t formal. You know, people who went there had a smattering and then through conversation they improved it, and she ran the conversation classes and I went there to brush up my French because I wanted to speak rather better French. So I went to the French lesson and she ran the German classes and then when the classes were finished at about half past nine, we all went down to the restaurant down below in the basement, a sort of coffee bar, to have a coffee or sandwiches or something like that. So one day after a class I went down and of course, there were lots of girls there and what have you, from all countries, any country in Europe, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, you name it, and a few Germans. And there in the far distance, in the far corner sat a friend of mine, a young doctor from Thomas’ with who I thought was a very beautiful girl, so I, you know, if you see a beautiful girl your eyes begin to roll, so I sauntered over to [laughs] – to his table and I said hello, John, you know. **[03:08:00]** And he said- his voice said hello, Albert, sit down but his eyes said bugger off. [laughs] So I sat down and I got introduced to Barbara. And as it happened – it’s really a small world – as it happened, she said she was very interested in doing translation work, right. She thought she could do that because she was an au pair and she was going to go back to university and finish her studies and learn – came over in England to do a bit English and do some translation work. So, I said you're in luck, I have a friend of mine who’s got a translation agency, right, a fellow called Flagon [ph], which was true. So, I said if you like, I can ring him up and maybe he can give you a job. So she said oh, it would be great. So, I said hang on a minute, so I went to the telephones – they had one of those external telephones – and I rang up Alec and I said look, I've got a girl here who wants to do translation, can you give her a job? He said well, I'll interview her but I am at the moment – tonight I will be going to the BBC Overseas Service to do a broadcast – he was Romanian, he broadcast in Romanian – see me at the BBC canteen in Bush House at twelve o'clock tonight, midnight. Okay. So I went to Barbara [laughs] and I said look, at twelve o'clock [laughs] I'll take you to the BBC for an interview. Can you imagine? This girl was hugely impressed [laughs]. So, we got to the car, drove to Bush House at twelve o'clock at night, went to the canteen and there was Alec with a genuine German Count [laughs] which impressed her even more [laughs] and he gave one look at Barbara and said you can have the job. **[03:10:15]** So she then started to work for him part time as an au pair, when she got her days off on the au pair, she went and did some translation work for Alec. And that’s how I got to know Barbara and then, you know, we started to date and got to know each other better and blah, blah, blah. So –

*So she stayed in England and never went back or –*

Yes, and then she went back and then – yeah, then she went back to finish her studies, right, and I thought, that’s it, parted as good friends, went back. [Laughs] And not far from the overseas – not far from the Linguists’ Club was my tennis club at Notting Hill, Camden Hill Tennis Club, and I was playing tennis and I came back and there was a pub nearby where I used to meet some friends and I parked the car outside the pub and there was a bench outside the pub and who sat on the bench but Barbara with some other guy. So, I went across, hello, I see you're back, blah, blah, and hello, all very friendly. No problem, I got back in my car and I went home. About a week later I was in my office in Queen Victoria Street and a knock on the door and there was Barbara. And I said hello. She said, can you help me, I've got a translation of a nuclear power station, I don't know some of the technical terms, can you help me? **[03:12:05]** I said yeah, sure, I can help you on the technical translations. So, we sat down and we did it and then – at that time I had a girlfriend, another girlfriend, because Barbara had gone, you know, a Jewish girlfriend, as it happened, and I had arranged with her to go to a concert at Kenwood, the open-air concert. And then she rang me up about two days earlier and said look, I can’t make it because of a cousin of mine coming from America, blah, I’m sorry, I can’t make it. So, I had these two tickets and there was Barbara who came in and I said look, I've got these two tickets for Kenwood, why don't you come with me to Kenwood? She said I’d be delighted. So [laughs] we went to Kenwood and, you know, you sit – I don't know whether you’ve been to Kenwood – you have this grass thing and then the lake and you sit on deckchairs and we went to our deckchair and who sits on the deckchair behind us but my girlfriend’s brother [laughs] whom I met and he sees me there with a new girl, so he must have told her that I was double-dealing. I had no intention of going any further with Barbara but this other girl then gave me the push. She said, you know, you're two-timing, so I was landed with Barbara [laughs]. So anyway, we got to know each other better and better and better, and I realised that she was a pretty bright girl. She spoke English, believe it or not, that’s what impressed me first, when I first met, she spoke English without an accent. **[03:14:00]** Normally the other girls I met, they all had heavy Italian accents or Spanish accents or German accents. With her, you couldn't tell. She had a musical ear and was absolutely perfect, so I was hugely impressed with that. So anyway, so we got married – eventually got engaged and of course then you’ve got the problems. My parents were unhappy and her parents were unhappy. It was a real Romeo and Juliet thing, you know.

*Where was she from or where –*

She came from Kassel, or near Kassel, a place called Hofgeismar. And her parents tried everything to stop it, everything. My parents were not happy but they said look, if that’s what you want, that’s what you want. They were more amenable. And in fact after we got married, when Barbara went to Rhodesia, they loved her. They really took her – but her parents were very – they didn't like it at all.

*On what grounds?*

That I was Jewish, right. They were the old generation. You couldn't, you know, it was ingrained in them, and it took a long time to bring them round and Barbara really did hard work. She really – she really – I must give her credit. She really changed them. And in the end, we became great friends but it took some time. But anyway –

*And for you, what was it like to have German parents-in-law?*

It was – when we went back first, I mean she – we went back before we got married to introduce her and of course it was very, very cold, very stilted, very correct, extremely polite, right, but cold. **[03:16:01]** But gradually it got warmer and warmer and warmer and then, you know, I said to her father, you know, what – look at it from the point of view that I know what went on in Germany, I went through it, I know all about it, but anyway, I said now is the time to build bridges, you know, and look at it from the point of view that we are building a bridge. And he saw the point and gradually, we sort of talked them round and they accepted me. In the end, you know, it was quite normal. So that worked out but it took time. But her sisters took me right away. They liked the idea. Anyway, so –

*And how did you want to raise your children at that [overtalking]?*

Well, we decided – I told you what my views of religion were, I believe in God but nothing else, and Barbara was about the same. I mean they were Protestants but she wasn’t practising it or anything like that, except she did like to go to midnight mass on Christmas. I said okay, you can go. And on *Yom Kippur* I fasted and she [laughs] – the one concession I made, I would keep Yom Kippur because that was spiritual. *Rosh Hashanah* didn't matter. *Rosh Hashanah* was no better than *Shabbat*. Even in the hierarchy, Shabbat comes before *Rosh Hashanah*. But *Yom Kippur* was sacred. So that I remember because there you think about yourself and you have a chance to see which way you're going and that’s the only concession. We accepted it, we would do that, and we did bring up our children with the same view that believe in God, believe in the Ten Commandments, kindness, goodness, all these sort of things, but there is no need to put a label on it, right, just do the right thing, and they accepted that and that’s how we brought them up and that’s how they still are, right. **[03:18:09]** However –

*And bilingual? Did you bring them up –*

Yes, they were bi – yeah, they – when – it was really funny. The eldest one, Barbara spoke to him in German, I spoke to him in English, and he was completely bilingual. If I came home from the office and I was tired and I sat down in the sitting room and I said to him, look, Guy, just go to Mummy and see whether she can make me a cup of coffee – I said to him in English. And he went to the kitchen and he said to my wife, *“Der Vati will Kaffee haben”.* He spoke to her in German, he spoke me to in English [laughs]. Incredible. Quite naturally. And then we had this funny episode. We were on holiday in Nice and we had an apartment with a little annexe, and in the little annexe of the bedroom was a cot for Guy. He must have been about, I don't know, two years old or three years old. And he had a habit, when we spoke to him in English – no, when we spoke to him in English – no, we spoke to him in German and he didn't know the English word, say, we said *“geh und hol den Stuhl”*, and if he didn't know what *Stuhl* was in English, he said *Stuhl oder* [*oder* means or], then we had to tell him chair. He did this quite naturally. He said *Stuhl* *oder*. Anyway, he was sitting in that little cot, burbling away at night and we couldn't get to sleep because he was singing to himself and so Barbara got a little bit irritated and she went over [laughs] to his cot and said, *“wenn Du jetzt nicht ruhig bist, dann schmeiß’ ich Dich zu den Katzen!”* [“if you aren’t quiet now then I will throw you to the cats”]. **[03:20:07]** And he said, *“Katzen oder?”* [laughs] so he completely pulled the rug from under her [laughs]. Anyway, he was bilingual. And then I said let’s make a rule, that at dinner in the evening, we speak German, so that they wouldn't lose it, and Barbara wouldn't have it. She said no, I want them to be English, we don't want any connection at all, let’s make them English. So okay, so the result is they can still speak German and they can certainly understand German but not very well. Their German isn’t very good but they can understand most but they can’t speak it very well. That’s – and I am sorry now that I gave in but Barbara was insistent, she wanted them to be English boys. Okay, that's what happened. So well, now they are. So, then we got married and then I decided that I – to join Tarmac and I became project manager for this huge cement factory. And when it was designed, I was, junior design stage, I did the planning and design, and then we needed – now, Tarmac had two divisions. They had a civil engineering division which was based in Wolverhampton, which was by far the biggest section, and the mechanical division in London, where I was. And so when we built the site there were two separate contracts. One was for the civil and one was for the mechanical, the management for the mechanical, and they had their own profit centre, right. **[03:22:00]** There was a Tarmac civil site manager and the Tarmac mechanical site manager. And we needed somebody over the top of them, called a supremo, to make sure that they don't get into a war with each other because they could claim against each other. If the civil, for instance, foundations weren’t finished and we wanted to build the plant on the foundation, we could claim against the civils for being late. On the other hand, if we were late to erect something, to stop their progress, they could claim on us, which worked fine, we became sort of competitive. But we didn't want them to get too extreme about it so we wanted to employ a supremo and we advertised for a supremo and we couldn't find anybody who would be suitable. So they said look, Albert, there's only one thing you can do, you go. So, they – said Okay, so they rented me a house with a car and we moved – we left our house in Hayes, we lived near Bromley – and we moved for a year to site, lived near the site in – near Scunthorpe where we built that plant. So, I spent a site – on that site as the site manager, looking over, you know, over the two. And it was a brilliant experience for me of course. There's nothing like it when you see a plant go up, having designed it then you actually see it being built and being in charge right from beginning to end, right up to commissioning. And so, it was a big success, we finished on time, everything was great, and I came back to London afterwards and then I got another project in [inaudible] for – to make sausage skins. **[03:24:04]** They used collagen, you know, to make sausage skins, so we supplied the plant, and so lots of projects, so I got a lot of experience –

*So how many years did you stay with the company?*

I stayed with Tarmac probably about four years, maybe and I was headhunted. One day I got a telephone call from a firm of management consultants. He said – what had happened was, we had a chief electrical engineer fell out with the company for some reason or other and he left. He left in a huff. And he must have got himself another job using these management consultants and they must have said is there anybody else at Tarmac who would like – whom you know who you think – who we could contact in case they needed somebody, so he must have given them my name. Anyway, they rang me up and said would you like – are you interested in having – becoming a managing – for a – the manager of a civil engineering company in Canterbury, with a prospect of being on the board, being a director. So, I went down to see them and they said, you know – it’s quite a small company compared to Tarmac. He said of course are you happy with contracts of about £2-3 million. I said look, my contracts were £200 million [laughs]. I've got no problem with that. So, I was interviewed and I got the job and I gave three months’ notice. **[03:26:01]** When I was interviewed, when I decided to bring the job – to take the job, I went down to Canterbury and saw them, this first job was to be the manager of a subsidiary of theirs in Billingshurst in Kent – in Sussex, who wasn’t doing very well, so I said what I would like, is to see the company books, see the books of that subsidiary. So they said well, sorry, we can’t show them to you because they're with the auditors but by the time you start in three months’ time, we’ll have them back. Okay. So, I gave notice, worked my three months and then started with them, got the books and got the shock of my life. That company had never made a profit in their life. The books were a bit of a shambles. It was not what I expected and I thought I've made a huge mistake. I realised I made a big mistake. And funnily enough, we were looking for a house in Canterbury because the idea was that we were going to move to Canterbury and one of the houses we looked at was of a young engineer who was selling his house, who worked for a small company in Canterbury, not this one but another one, going to a big company in London. So I said he's moving – he said we're going from a small one to a big one. And I said I’m going from a big one to a small one. So, he said, you know, one of us is making a mistake [laughs] and boy, was he right [laughs].

*It was you?*

It was me [laughs]. It was a huge mistake and I realised this isn’t going to work. **[03:28:01]** It was underfunded, it was in the wrong niche, but I said I'll give it a go. I'll give it a go. And I said I'll give it till Christmas, if I can’t pull it around. Anyway, we got some – most of our work was for local authorities and I needed more money to improve the site conditions and it wasn’t forthcoming. They weren’t prepared to sink any more money into it and it was getting worse and worse. And then we got a big commission from one local authority in Sussex for a housing estate and I thought here's my chance to try my network analysis again. So I did the network analysis for this and it was great, we finished ahead of schedule. We finished ahead of schedule. And the developer was delighted because he could start his main works. We did the foundation of the roads and then the builder came in and did the houses, something like 400 houses, quite a big estate in Crawley, so much so that the director of the building company offered me a job. I said no. But he found out – I don't know how he found out that I wasn’t happy. Maybe I spoke to him or something. Anyway, he offered me this job but I realised it wasn’t going to work. I couldn't pull the company around, so I went – on Christmas I went down to a meeting in Canterbury and I said look, I’m very sorry, the best thing you can do is – Brymor [ph], which was the name of the company – is to wind it up. It’s a lossmaker and will always be a lossmaker unless you are prepared to put more money into it. And they shut it down, not then, about three months later. **[03:30:02]** They shut it down. And I left, I had to give three months’ notice but they told me to go right away, which suited me ’cos by that time I’d already made arrangements [laughs] to join a firm of architects who I used to work for when I was A. Levi & Partners, and one of the senior people said, why don't you come and join this company called [inaudible] who were the biggest firm of architects in London, who had only one partner, that was old Hart himself. So, he says, they got – they want to start a combined practice, architects and engineers, ’cos the ministry, the Property Services Agency who looked after the Ministry of Defence, the law courts, the Post Office, and all the government agencies, did all their contract work, they wanted a one-stop organisation for mechanical work, for civil work, for architectural work, can you imagine one stop. So, I was going to start up this engineering site of Mail Hart [ph] and I took it, as a – what is known as a salaried partner, right, and my qualifications went on the letterhead. And because of course while I was with Tarmac, I also then become a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers, so it was important, the government wouldn't give any job to any company in engineering unless the partners were members of the civils. It was written into the contract. Anyway, so I suited them and I joined them and I built up this practice and in the end we ended up with about – I mean the architects had about 100 people and the engineering, maybe ten. **[03:32:06]** We started and we got quite a lot of commissions, heating ventiling [ph]. I got two good guys in, one structural man and one [H and V] man.

*And what was the name of this company?*

Mail, Hart and Partners, Mail, Hart and Partners. And – Mail had died and Hart, Tony Hart [ph], who was very well-connected in the City, he was alderman in the City of London, he got all the work from the government. We got a huge amount of work. We worked for every department, army, the navy, air force, everything, what are known as term contracts. We had plenty of work. So we did a lot of work for them. And I built it up into quite a good practice, from the engineering point of view. And then Tony Hart [ph] decided he was getting on, that he would now like to make some of the architects partners, but you had to buy them, right. And he wanted £50,000 from everybody to become a main partner, right, including me, ’cos I was a salaried partner. I had to be a partner in order to satisfy the ministry, but I was salaried. So, he wanted £50,000 from me and I said hang on a minute, I started this business up, I started the – why should I now pay £50 [sic] for something which I started up, you know, the engineering section. And I was mulling it about it and I wasn’t very happy, and then again, coincidence, I get a telephone call from Danny Lampert [ph], the ex-managing director of Tarmac, who had left Tarmac, joined a company called Simon Engineering, another huge conglomerate, who had got a contract from Phillips Petroleum to build a huge terminal for North Sea oil near Teesside – Teesside terminal. **[03:34:16]** They got the contract and he was the managing director of the subsidiary called Sim Chem to build this refinery and he was building up a team and, you know, he came from Tarmac and then he recruited – he took with him the – John Davis [ph], the operations director, manager from Tarmac, the chief buyer and a lot of other staff from Tarmac. But he needed someone to do the planning, right, and he rang me up and said why don't you join [laughs] the old team [laughs] at Simon Engineering to build this huge – it was the biggest petrochemical construction contract in Europe, £2.8 billion, a huge thing. He said there were three project managers, one for phase one, one for phase two, and one for the planning and the contract and that was me. And I was offered this job. So I went to Tony Hart [ph] and I said look, I’m not very happy about paying £50,000, so he said well, I’m sorry, Albert, but that’s what I need because I need money for my retirement [laughs]. So, I said no, I’m not prepared to do it, and of course Danny Lampert offered me a job, more than I was getting at Mail Hart and all the facilities again of a big company with pension scheme and medical, er, first class BUPA and what have – all the rest. So I said to Tony, look, I’m sorry, I have to leave you, and again, three months’ notice and they were happy with that. **[03:36:08]** But he said – they were then of course in danger because my letterhead, my qualification would come off the letterhead, so we made a deal that I would remain as a consultant to Mail Hart and my name would stay on the letterhead and I spoke to Tarmac about it, they were happy about it, and I used to go maybe once a month, spent a day with Mail Hart, so I kept Mail Hart happy. And the two guys I recruited kept the engineering section going. They were good men. So anyway, then I became project manager for the, for Sim Chem on this Teesside refinery and eventually one of the – the project manager for phase one left [laughs]. Phase one was a bigger section, for a million barrels a day of crude, a huge amount of crude, a million a day, and we finished again with network analysis, bang on time. It included a jetty and a harbour. On the day we finished, the supertankers were ready in the jetties, waiting to load up, waiting to load up. And the plant was opened by the representative from the King of Norway because it was North Sea oil, you know, the Ekofisk Norwegian oil, and the – it was – the British government were going to send Tony Benn. Tony Benn said he wants to represent Britain on this huge refinery, and Phillips said no, because Tony Benn said he would like to come and speak to the men and Phillips said the last thing we want is a Labour politician speaking to our site people. **[03:38:10]** That’s the last thing we need. So, they sent all the men home on that day and Tony Benn was annoyed about that, so he sent his henchman, the guy who died – I forget his name now. Anyway, he came along and represented the British government. Anyway, the plant was opened and I came back. And one of the companies who gave me more problems than anybody else were the people who did the power station, was a company called Foster Wheeler. Now, Foster Wheeler were a huge – an American company. They were almost as big as Bechtel. They were Foster Wheeler, [Kellogg] and [Bechtel]. They were the big international contractors. And Foster Wheeler had a power station division called Foster Wheeler Power Products and they did the power station at Teesside and they were late, they had problems, and I – of all the companies I had big problems, and we were on the point of suing them for being late, liquidated damages. It was on – almost on the point of going to court. So we had big arguments in the office all the time with their project manager and one of their operation managers, main man who looked after all them [ph]. And anyway, the Teesside terminal was finished. I was offered a job then for a refinery in Vancouver, which I was looking forward to, but in the end, we didn't get the job, some other company got it. **[03:40:03]** And I was then made manager of procurement, with a company car and more money of course, everything fine. But procurement wasn’t really my – I wanted to be project – ’cos I liked to be right in the middle of it. When lo and behold, again I got a telephone call [laughs] from a headhunter. He said are you interested – I don't know how he get [ph] my name – are you interested in a senior project management role on some big petrochemical contract. I said yeah. He says would you like to talk? I said yeah, I'll talk to anybody. Let’s see what it does. So, I had the office in – I remember in Oxford Circus and I walked into their office and they said now, come and meet the client who is interested in you. And I opened the door and there was the operations manager from Foster Wheeler, [laughs]. The people I was fighting [laughs] for the last two years [laughs] wanted me to join them. And I went, hang on a minute, there's a dispute going on between Phillips and Foster Wheeler, and I was involved in, you know, doing all the technical work. They are probably thinking that if I joined them then I could tell them all about what Phillips are thinking about the dispute. And I said this isn’t going to work. So I said what do you want me for? And he says well, we've got a contract for a North Sea platform, you know, the North Sea platforms? We want you to be the project manager for this North Sea platform, because they built them up near Glasgow. So, I went to see Phillips and I said look, I've been offered this job by Foster Wheeler, and they were very unhappy about that and then they said this is not going to work. **[03:42:09]** But I said look, it’s a better job, it’s more money. So, I had to make a written declaration which had to be signed by me and Phillips and Foster Wheeler that I would not get involved in the dispute while I was with Foster Wheeler and they mustn’t ask me about the dispute. It was like a Chinese wall, right. I do my work for them but I wasn’t involved with the Teesside refinery, which I signed and they all agreed and that was fine. And they kept to it. They never did ask me to get into it. Anyway, I did – I was project manager for Foster Wheeler and then until the project for the offshore platform was ready, I had virtually little to do so I was asked to rewrite the general conditions of contract for Foster Wheeler, which I was able to do because I knew what the, you know, how to write conditions because I did the conditions for Teesside, so I rewrote them and I was quite busy. And there was a guy sitting next to me, a project manager, and then the operations manager sent – called me over and he said, you know, keep an eye on old Jack because he – his project isn’t going very well, there's something wrong with it and he's feeling the strain. Try and see whether you can help him out. So I said, you know, if I go to him and I say look, can I help you out, he's going to get even more worried. He said, well, you know, think about it over the weekend. I said okay. **[03:44:01]** So I got home and I thought about it and then as I came to the office on Monday morning I was going to go and see him and tell him what I thought and they said don't worry, it’s too late, over the weekend he committed suicide. So, it really got him down. It was – the strain was too much. He committed suicide. And I took over that project and then I realised that it was in bad shape but it wasn’t the fault of Foster Wheeler, it was the fault of the client, which was British Steel. And I managed to turn it around and put in a huge claim against British Steel and we actually ended up with profit. And they sued us for being late and I sued them for their steel not being up to scratch and we made a big, big claim. Anyway, we won.

*So, Albert, in terms of your work, what are you most proud of, in terms of your engineering? What are you most proud of in your career, in your engineering, what is your – for yourself?*

For myself, my being able to project-manage large projects. You know, they don't get very much bigger than £2.8 billion, you know. [Inaudible], you know. My own staff were only two people, an assistant and a secretary. That’s all I had. But I was involved but I controlled 5000 people on a site and maybe 200 designers, and it all come through me, you know, but you have to organise in such a way that you don't get too involved in the minutiae and you did the right thing and – but there were certain golden rules and the result of it, I wrote my book later. **[03:46:04]** At first it was all – only about network analysis and then they wanted me, a second edition, just a bit more about what they called the hard aspects of project management, which was planning and then risk analysis, cost control, and that sort of stuff. And then there was the soft side, the man management, the administration and so forth. And so gradually the book involved more and more facets of project management.

*And now it’s in eighth edition.*

Until you got to the eighth edition where it grew from that to that. And now they’ve asked me to do the ninth.

*And you're doing it?*

I’m doing it. I’m doing it. Because now there are new things. Sustainability is now the big thing.

*So you haven’t retired yet?*

I haven’t retired. In fact, in the end when I retired – at sixty-five I had to retire, with a company pension of course – I didn't know what to do.

*Because that’s more than thirty years ago, now.*

Of course that was almost thirty years ago. I was sixty-five when I retired. So, then I read in the – one of the institution journals that the government had brought in a new – they rewrote the contract, what are they called, condition of contract, anyway, for construction, right, the government, and they introduced a new form of dispute resolution called adjudication. **[03:48:00]** ’Cos previously you either had arbitration or litigation, both of which were very expensive and both of this took a long time, so they thought it’s really time to do something before arbitration, called adjudication, which was a new concept. Yeah, they did a new Construction Act, 1989 Construction Act, which had this adjudication. But there were no adjudicators, so the Institute of Civil Engineers asked anybody who knew something about project management whether they would like to retrain as adjudicators and I was one of the first people, I signed up and I went on a training course with the ICE and there was an examination at the end, and became an adjudicator. And I did adjudication in industrial disputes, usually with large companies, until I was – I did my last case when I was eighty-nine. I got briefed from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, from the ICE, Engineering Construction Council, CIC, and from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, I got briefed and I became an adjudicator. And it was very interesting because one brief I got was a dispute between Tarmac an Owarop [ph]. I’d worked for both companies, in a sense. I did subcontract work for Alp [ph] and of course I worked for Tarmac. And the lawyer – of course each company had their lawyers – the lawyer rang me up and said we're a little bit concerned to have you as adjudicator because you used to work for Tarmac. **[03:50:09]** Can you tell us under which circumstances you left them? Because they felt that if I had got fired, I’d have a grudge against them, right, and I would then give my decision to the other side. So I wrote back and said well, as a matter of fact, I was headhunted, and that was okay, so I could do the thing. So, I did the adjudication between the two. And I did something like twenty adjudications, each one took several months but I never did more than two or three a year because I wanted to – I didn't want it 100% full time ’cos at the same time I was lecturing at University College where I was lecturing on project management and I was also doing lecturing myself on project management for the APM examination. Oh, I did something like, I don't know, maybe 100 lectures for different companies, including British Nuclear, people in – from the nuclear stations, and some of the big companies, including [Alps?]. So I was busy and I didn’t want to spend all my time doing adjudications, so I restricted it to two or three. But I mean you make a fortune. I mean it’s money for old rope [laughs]. I mean it’s huge. I won’t tell you how much I charged per hour [laughs]. Look, but that wasn’t nearly as much as what the lawyers charged, I can assure you.

*But Albert, I want to ask you, being so busy and working in your working life, did you have time to think about the past at all or –*

About the…?

*About your past.* ***[03:52:04]***

My past?

*Yeah. I mean the –*

No.

*No.*

Why should I think about my past?

*Exactly. So, then the other way around is what impact do you think did have – your coming on the Kindertransport, being a refugee, how do you think did it impact your life?*

Not at all. Not at all. I was accepted by the British community, I was certainly accepted by the institute [ph], by the engineering fraternity. I was one of them. They never questioned. I think none of them ever knew that I came on the Kindertransport. In fact, when I wrote my memoirs, I sent it to one of my colleagues. The first time they knew that I was on a Kindertransport was when they read my memoirs. To them I was just an engineer from England, you know. They knew I was German but they didn't know anything else about it and I didn't talk too much about it. As far as I was concerned, it didn't concern them and they didn't ask.

*So that’s [inaudible]. Did you talk about it at all, about your experience, with your wife or –*

Oh, with my wife, of course. My wife knew everything. My wife knew – of course she knew exactly what went on.

*And your children?*

Later. Not when they were young but later. But then some of the things [laughs] when I sent my auto – my – the big autobiography to my son, he said I never realised what you were doing, you know, ’cos I didn't talk too much about my work. I – sometimes I used to take my wife with me because one of the things you do when you're a project manager, not only do you have to look after the engineering side and the management side, but you had to do PR work with the client, take them out for dinner and take them out for lunch. **[03:54:03]** And [laughs] we were doing a waste incineration plant in Nottingham and our client was the chief engineer of Nottingham Corporation. He was my opposite number from the client’s point of view. And so I got very friendly with him and so one day I decided it’s time I took them out to dinner, he and his wife. So, I took Barbara along and I showed her around the site, which she was always interested in, and then we had dinner. Now, I don't know if you’ve ever been to Nottingham but it’s a lovely town but they’ve got a terrible one-way system. You know, if you aren't careful, you can go around in circles forever. You get lost. It’s terrible. Anyway, so we were having dinner in this sort of four-star hotel, the chief engineer and his wife, and my wife and I, and we were doing sort of small talk with his wife and she said, oh, what do you think of Nottingham? And I said Nottingham is a very nice town, a very old town, but who on earth designed that one-way system? And he said, I did [laughs]. So, I thought, my God and I was really – but anyway, I don't know how I got out of that one. But anyway, they still made friends. And so, no, we got on well and we finished that plant okay.

*And do you think sometimes what would have happened to you if you hadn’t been forced to emigrate? Would you have – you became a civil engineer, yeah.*

If I agree – if Hitler hadn’t come, I’m quite sure I would have gone to the *Technische Hochschule* in Karlsruhe, you know, took my degree there and worked for some German contracting company. **[03:56:02]** In fact my cousin on my mother’s side in Germany, my mother’s sister, all of them married a non-Jew. He was a professor in Karlsruhe of the, of one of their schools and he had two sons, one of whom became an engineer and he was my sort of mentor, if you like. He was older than I and he used to come to us to stay with us for holidays and he worked for Mercedes-Benz. He was a mechanical engineer. He worked for Mercedes. So I would have probably ended up working for Mercedes. I wanted to be a mechanical engineer, then. That’s what I started as. And I only began civil when I – because of the work I did, it was then mainly civil. But yeah, I would have become an engineer anyway [ph]. I certainly wouldn't have taken over my father’s shop, no way. No way. No, no, I certainly – and my parents knew that. Knew that. And they encouraged me with my Meccano and things like that, no doubt about it. In fact, once my mother made a terrible mistake to buy me for my birthday a grindstone, you know, you turn a handle, you know, on a grindstone?

*Yeah.*

So you could sharpen things on it. And I took it upon myself to sharpen all the fruit knives, you know, for cutting fruit, and of course made a complete mess, scratches all over the – so [laughs] –

*So, you think that, let’s say, the separation also from your parents and that experience, didn't have any sort of long-lasting effect on you?*

Not at all. No, no, I was not – because I was, you know, being in Esslingen I was used to institutional life, so being in Woodside didn't worry me. **[03:58:02]** Some of the other boys felt it because they only came from home straight to a foreign school. To me it made no difference. I took to it like a duck to water.

*So you were already independent.*

I was already independent, yeah. Yeah.

*And do you think – because that’s a question which comes up now, do you think it was easier to be in a communal setting? [Ringing sound in background] Something is ringing.*

The front door.

*Okay.*

**[Break in recording]**

*Yeah, so I was asking you whether you think the communal setting in a way was easier for the Kindertransport children than the non-communal setting? You know, going to individual foster parents.*

I don't know. I mean a lot of the children who went to the foster parents became very attached to the foster parents and of course when their own parents were killed, it became their family. Now, I never had that. I never had a family in England. It was always strangers where I was billeted, who looked after me because they were paid to look after me and there I was never really part of the family but they were kind, you know, I got on with them and it wasn’t a problem. But I knew I had my parents in Rhodesia. I knew that and I knew that sooner or later I would join them, so it didn't bother me.

*And your sister? Do you think for her it was different because she was –*

It was a bit more difficult for my sister because she was taken on by Auntie Maud. She became part of her family really and she, as it were, grew away from our parents. She became more Jellinek than [laughs] – than Levi.

*So was it a conflict for her? Not a conflict, but –*

It must have been a bit of a conflict to her. But anyway, she knew what she wanted and she came to Rhodesia, stayed there for four, six months and decided it wasn’t for her, and came back. **[04:00:02]**

*And what sort of relationship did she have with your parents?*

Well, it was a bit strange, yeah, because well, she was older than me and of course she was also in Herrlingen, so she was away even before the war and she didn't get on with my father very well, so she left. It was – I mean it was friendly but it wasn’t as close as I. I –

*You stayed closed to them?*

I took to them right away, yeah. Yeah, no problem. Yeah.

*And you were close with your mother when she came to London?*

Oh, yes, oh, yes. I saw her every week and, you know, she came to us for dinner and took her out, oh, yes. And then while she was in that home, Schroders, German bank, Schroders.

*Schroders, Schroders, you said, yeah. So, in a way it was easier because you were in a communal setting but you knew who your parents were.*

Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

*And you corresponded with them as well, so you –*

Oh, yes, we wrote to them every week. Yeah, ever week. It was a matter of duty, if for no other reason but to let them know I was still alive.

*So, have you met in more recent years maybe but were you in touch with any other Kinder refugees?*

Well, as I say, once the school closed and once the hostel was disbanded, we went all over the country to different – I – Gerd and I went to Stokenchurch. God knows where the others went. I kept in touch with one of them, or two or three of them and then I went to Rhodesia and then of course we – I really lost touch, except with Gerd who went to – he was in Singapore, so we used to write to each other and I’m still in touch with him now. He's still alive. He lives in Highgate. **[04:02:01]** And then I hadn’t bothered very much about the rest of them. They did their own thing.

*And you were not affiliated with any organisations or –*

No, I didn't, you know, no –

*And you were busy working.*

Hmm?

*You were busy working.*

I was busy working, I was doing my own thing, I was married, had a family. And then, you know, I get the institution journals from the three institutions and I looked at one of them and there was an advertisement of an engineer looking for translation work from English into Japanese, right, and the name underneath was K. Iwnicki. I thought, hang on. There was a Kurt Iwnicki in Woodside and he lived in Wales and he was looking for work, you know, he was looking for people to give him translation work. So, I said I wonder whether it’s him, so I said how am I going to contact him? So, I wrote to him and said I’m interested in that. Can you tell me a little bit more? Anyway, it turned out it was him. It was him. So, the result was that every time we were doing a refinery in west Wales, in Pembroke, so every time I had to go to site I used to drop in on my way – he lived near Cardiff – and I had tea with him or lunch before I carried on to site in Wales. So that's how I kept in touch with Kurt. And then – but he was only one. So, I saw him because I had a site meeting every month, I used to drive down to Cardiff, see him and then carry on to site. **[04:04:00]** And then one day Barbara then finished her degree in England – she went to Birkbeck, got her BA and – a brilliant –

*In which subject? In which subject?*

German, of course. And of course, being German, she passed with flying colours. And [laughs] so much so that they said to her, you know, you'd better stay on to take a PhD, so she stayed on and she got a PhD in German literature and then taught at University College and at Holloway, Royal Holloway. So, she was teaching at UCL and then of course I was teaching at UCL doing project management. And –

*And what was her field? What was her exact field?*

German literature.

*But what exactly of – what was –*

The period was sort of 1900 to 1940, you know, the modern German writers. And her thesis was celebrations in German literature. Celebrations.

*Interesting.*

Interesting. [Laughs] [Overtalking].

*She was teaching.*

Yeah, she was. Anyway, so – where was I?

*I talked about whether you – were you in touch with other refugees? So, you said you [overtalking].*

Yeah, yeah. Then she, you know, she looked at the noticeboard at UCL and there was a notice of a lecture by a professor from Oxford called Peter Pulzer. Now, she heard the name mentioned – I don't know under what context – she came home and said, you know, I saw this noticeboard of this man, Pulzer. He seems to ring a bell. Do you know him? **[04:06:03]** I thought that man, if he's Peter Pulzer, it could only be him, so we decided to go to the lecture, right, on, I don't know, anti-Semitism in Austria or something like it.

*Austria, yeah, that was his subject.*

Yeah, that was his subject. And we were sitting there and he was pretty good, you know, Peter, very, very, very fluent. He gave his whole lecture without any notes at all. He was a big, tall chap – always has been tall. And so when the lecture was finished I went up. By that time, he was surrounded by accolade, you know, people asking questions, and so I went myself forward, and in the end, I said, you know, Peter Pulzer, I think we met before. He sort of looked down on me and said, ‘I dare say’. And I just said Woodside and he suddenly froze. He said don't go away, don’t go away, don't go away. So anyway, we stayed on and then we had a chat and then we found we knew more people and Kurt found more people, so in – ended up as, seven of which four of them were profs and the other three are all engineers, mechanical engineers and me. So that’s we got them together. And we used to meet regularly either at one of their houses or down here. What usually happens, they came down, we had dinner either at my house or at one of the other’s and then we went to either a concert at the Festival Hall or Barbican and went to a concert and then they went back home to their homes.

*And when was that? When was this – when did it start?*

It was about, I don't know, it must have been about six, seven years ago, certainly while Barbara was still alive. Barbara died three years ago and, you know, and then of course they started to die off one after the other, and there are only two left now. **[04:08:07]**

*You and…?*

Me and Werner Korn. All the rest have died. You know, we're getting old [laughs]. That’s what happens. You don't live forever.

*Yeah. So, was that important for you to have that little group? That was –*

Yeah, it was great. Yes, yes, yes. We got on very well together, yeah. One was a professor of geology, the other one was – and Peter was of course politics and what have you.

*Yes. And you said that all of you married non-Jewish women.*

All married non-Jewish girls, every one. Not one.

*And how come? Or what's your –*

I don't know.

*Do you have an explanation?*

I don't know. It’s just that we didn't mix in Jewish society, we mixed in English society and we only met non-Jewish people.

*Do you think to some extent it was easier maybe to mix in English circles? Or –*

[Sighs] When we were young- we were impecunious, right. Our parents were either far away or dead. We were at the mercy of friend or foreign – of strange people who looked after us but weren’t rich. The Jewish girls we felt, rightly or wrongly, were looking for rich men. That’s what I thought.

*There was an expectation?*

Yeah. And so, we didn't get in touch with – I mean this one girl, you know, who I knew before Barbara, she was Jewish. I was introduced to her at a party but otherwise, she was the only one. No, except the Israeli girl, she was Jewish of course. **[04:10:01]** I was really in love with her but she went back to Israel. Her mother thought I wasn’t good enough, so she whipped her back to Israel. And strangely enough, I still send her happy birthday cards on the internet and then she writes back, so she's married now, she married some – and divorced, married a guy who was a political commentator on the Israeli radio. Yeah.

*Oh, so it’s interesting, so yeah, maybe there was a point that it was more difficult within –*

It was, it was, yeah. I mean we didn't – I didn't move in Jewish circles. If I had lived in Golders Green or north London, I would have lived in a different circle but we lived in south London, you know, Hayes, Middle – Hayes in Kent, Bromley, no –

*And why did you choose south London?*

[Laughs] I was working for architects, you know, when I had my own firm and we had our son and we lived in London, we lived in Pimlico and I felt it – I wanted to bring up my children in a greenbelt, in Hayes, which is a greenbelt. And as it happened, the architect I was – one firm of architects had a housing development in Bromley for which I designed the foundations and the retaining walls there. So they said why don't you go down to Bromley and have a look because we can arrange for you to get a big discount from the developers because you were involved in the design. I said yeah, I suppose that’s worth doing, so Barbara and I went down to have a look at them but they weren’t what we wanted. They were too small, too cramped. The rooms were too small. We wanted something with big rooms, like this. **[04:12:00]** And then so while we were there in Bromley I said let’s have a look at some estate agents while we're down here [laughs] and we found a house in Hayes which suited us and that’s how we got to Hayes, merely because there was this development which in fact in the end I didn't take. So that’s why we got to Hayes, which was a nice part of England.

*And here, Forest Hill?*

Well, then we came to Forest Hill, the reason- [laughs] both my children won scholarship to Dulwich College and they used to commute from Hayes to Dulwich College, and they won scholarships. And then my mother of course had- was in this nursing home in Crystal Palace which is only around the corner. And Barbara wanted to be nearer London so she could get easier to UCL and to Royal Holloway and I wanted to be a bit nearer because from – my office was in Wembley and I used to drive every day from Hayes to Wembley. It was a long way, so we wanted to move nearer London. And because the boys were at Dulwich and because the – my mother was in Dulwich, it made sense that we came to Dulwich. And in the end, when we eventually found a house in Dulwich the boys had finished school. So the minute [laughs] they finished we moved in, which was crazy, you know, having [laughs] for three years commuted all the way from Hayes. But anyway, then they went – one went to Cambridge and the other went to the Royal Free and then we moved to Dulwich. That’s the reason why we came to Dulwich, only because of that. And it was – and it is a nice area. It’s a sort of Hampstead of the south. All the way around you get pretty crummy areas like Brixton and Catford and it’s not very nice but Dulwich is a bit different. **[04:14:06]** So we're really between Dulwich and Forest Hill, just halfway. In fact, the boundary is in the road outside. That’s the boundary. The dustbins on the far side belong to Dulwich, yeah, to what council is that? I forget now. And we are in Lewisham, Lewisham Council, yeah, so we're right in the middle.

*Okay. And Albert, since when? So, you joined the AJR at some point.*

At some point I joined the AJR. I don't know when and I don't know why, but I did.

*And do you go to any of the meetings or –*

Well, it’s difficult because they're all in north London. There are very few down here. But I go to some of them. And then of course somehow or other they found out that I came on the Kindertransport and then they asked me to speak and they liked it and then I did a Zoom and then they – I spoke at the Kristallnacht.

*And you met the King.*

And then I met the King and it sort of snowballed from there. And then you came [laughs].

*And what was it like to be there talking at this – there was a big Kristallnacht [overtalking].*

Oh, yes, oh, yes, I – I mean I enjoyed – I was used to doing public speaking because when I was in Leeds I joined the Junior Chamber of Commerce, right, which is the sort of junior type of Rotary, if you like, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, JCC. And they had a debating team and we used to debate the Leeds JCC against Sheffield and I was in the debating team. **[04:16:06]** And when I came to London I joined the Junior Chamber here and was in the debating team in – for the Junior Chamber and we debated against other things, so –

*So you like public speaking?*

I was used to public speaking.

*So you have you told your story publicly before or was it the first time at this Kristallnacht service?*

No, the only time I did it before was when I did it to the German children in Buchen. That’s when I told them the story then. And also on the night I arrived in Buchen for the inauguration there was a reception for me in the Hotel Prinz Carl, the big hotel in Buchen, where the corporation and the mayor and all the people were there and I had to tell them my story after dinner.

*And for you, what does it mean- to be in Buchen and tell your story? What does it feel like?*

It was weird, it was weird. I mean they lapped it up and, you know, I didn't realise they – I mean they're all younger than me of course, and half of them weren’t even alive at the time. My wife certainly wasn’t alive. She was only born after the war had started, so she didn't even know. And all these people were younger, so they were amazed, you know, what happened.

*But the first time you went back to Buchen, when was that?*

No, the very first time I went back was when I – shortly after I came to England, a friend of mine who was a dentist worked for the National Health in one of the hospitals, we went on a tour of Europe in my car. I brought my car to England, an MG, and we toured France, Switzerland and Germany.

*When?*

Oh, that was in, a year after I came back, it must have been 1953. **[04:18:05]**

*And you went to Buchen?*

We went to Buchen.

*And what was it like to come back?*

It was interesting [laughs] because –

*Did you recognise the place? Did you recognise everything?*

Oh, of course. Buchen hasn’t changed. I mean there was no bombing. I mean who’s going to bomb a little [laughs] country town?

*So there was – it looked the same?*

It looked exactly the same.

*So what about your house?*

Our house was still there. Yeah, in fact I was told when I went back, that during the war the – it was in the American zone, it was attacked by the Americans, you know, the Americans were advancing towards them and it was going to be defended by a regiment or battalion of SS, Waffen-SS, and they were going to make a stand against the Americans. And of course, the result would have been a disaster, the Americans would smash it to pieces with artillery. So the people in Buchen, of course they realised the war was over, you know, obviously. The people of Buchen decided we are not going to let our town be destroyed and they actually attacked the SS and drove the SS out. They actually did that and then surrendered to the Americans. And I remember speaking to one of the people who did it, who used to be a friend of my father, and his German – his expression was – I remember his words, he said, *“die haben wir ausgeräumt.”* [we cleared them out] It was his words. *“Wir haben die ausgeräumt.”* And, they surrendered. So –

*So when you came back did you meet anyone you knew, when you came in ’53?* ***[04:20:01]***

Yes, I – we booked in – my friend and I booked in at the Prinz Carl, the big hotel, which is –

*What is it called?*

The Prinz Carl.

*Prinz Carl?*

Prinz Carl, which is actually I suspect partly owned by Jaegle [laughs] because –

*Your friend?*

It was run by his nephew. But I knew the Prinz Carl, I – it was – they owned a big, proper hotel in Buchen, sort of a four-star hotel. And we booked in there and the manager was the same manager who were there before the war, right. And he recognised me. Anyway, I booked in – of course I was Levi then – and we booked in and of course I’d hardly got to my room when the telephone rang. He’d already informed half the town [laughs] that young Levi was back. And people rang me up and invited me and wanted to tell me, you know, what happened during the war and what happened, so it was great.

*So it was a positive –*

It was good, absolutely, absolutely. I had no problem at all.

*You didn't feel any –*

No, no. It was the contrary. As I say, they were extremely – they were – I suspect it was genuine. I don't think it was put on. They were really sorry what had happened. And they showed it in their own – they're showing it now, you know, now they're putting these plaques up which, with my name and my picture, and my mother’s poems and my voice.

*And you – and the calendar. You're in the calendar, in the official –*

And in their calendar.

*In the official Buchen calendar is a picture of you. We're going to look at it. Yeah. How do you feel about it? I mean to be –*

I knew about I when Jaegle sent me the calendar. That’s the first thing I knew about it. He said look at March 1942 [sic] [laughs] and I looked and there I was [laughs] on my tricycle, yeah. **[04:22:04]** No, they felt responsible I suppose, what they did and tried to make amends. And –

*What happened – Albert, what happened to the other – you said there were fifteen families.*

I don't know. They went to America. Most of them went to America.

*So did most of them survive?*

To the best of my knowledge, yeah. Yeah.

*But you said there were no other children like you. You were –*

No other, no. They were all grown up or they had grown-up children who had gone even before and then got the parents over later. To the best of my knowledge my aunt certainly didn't survive, you know, and I don't know what the others – I don't know. Maybe some of them didn't, I don't know.

*Well, you said this one uncle committed suicide.*

And my uncle committed suicide, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

*But the most famous resident was the painter.*

Ludwig was a painter, yeah. He was the local boy made good, if you like, and he's celebrated and as I say, they had this special exhibition for him on his 100th birthday.

*What was his surname again? Sorry, Ludwig…?*

Ludwig Schwerin.

*Schwerin.*

Ludwig Schwerin.

*So he is the most famous Jewish –*

He was the most –

*Resident of –*

Of Buchen, yeah. He, you know, he became, you know, nationally famous, if you like, Schwerin.

*Okay, you're going to show us some – we're going to take a picture, film yourself there. Albert, is there anything else you – we haven’t talked, you would like to add? I mean –*

No, I think you had most – I mean I would tell you all the girlfriends I had between the time I came back and to the time I married Barbara, except for Alma. Alma, I really – if she had stayed in England, I would have married Alma, no doubt about it. She was a sweet girl, very, very attractive. **[04:24:02]** She became a model when she got [overtalking].

*In Israel?*

Yeah.

*Did you ever think of emigrating elsewhere? I mean –*

I would have gone – yeah. When her mother came over and decided to take her back, she suggested that I go to Israel, right, stay with – she didn't like me particularly but she realised that Alma liked me and she said why don't you come to Israel? And I would have gone if I hadn’t just started partnership in Leeds, and I couldn't let my partner down. In the end of course, he did the dirty on me, which I didn't know, but if I’d been working for a company I would have gone, no doubt about it. But having my own business, just starting it up, starting up the practice, I couldn't just walk out, so I had to let her go. And then we wrote to each other and then gradually, you know, she must have met somebody else and it sort of fizzled out. But as I say, I still [overtalking].

*Is she still here?*

Yeah.

*That’s good.*

Oh, yeah, she, you know, she writes to me. I mean email. Yeah.

*Albert, how would you define yourself today, in terms of your identity? How do you see yourself?*

Retired, a retired engineer. But I enjoyed my work. I used to love going to work, really, so I – engineering was in my veins and of course even when you do adjudication, they're engineering problems which I have to solve and it’s – it was part of me ever since I can remember, so –

*With the Meccano? Your Meccano sets.*

With my Meccano [laughs].

*Which is somewhere on the ocean bed maybe.*

Which is somewhere on the ocean bed, yeah.

*Still there [laughs].*

Still there presumably. **[04:26:01]** Yeah, yeah.

*And what about feeling British or German or Jewish or –*

No, I feel British. I feel British. That’s how I was accepted, as British.

*What about – do you still feel a connection to Germany or –*

Not at all. No. I mean it’s nice to go back and it’s nice to be celebrated and nice to be treated nicely, I enjoy all that but otherwise, I feel no particular attachment to them, no, not really.

*And what about citizenship? Has your son or anyone taken up –*

Yes, my son, on the strengths of me, just recently got his German passport, mainly so that he could travel more freely in Europe.

*And how do you feel about that?*

Oh, happy. If I were more mobile and could travel more and go back, I would do the same, have dual –

*You would?*

Have dual nationality, yes, purely for practical reasons, not emotional. Purely for practical reasons, that's all, because it’s a damned nuisance having to queue on a, you know, and ever – of course, since we left the European Union, you know, it got even worse. If we’d still been in the European Union it wouldn't be necessary. It’s only after we left that we had to – that my son decided to get his own passport.

*So you feel British. Do you feel – where's your home?*

Here. Yeah. I mean I spent most of my life here. In Germany I was eleven years, here I was – and I was six years in Rhodesia and here I was sixty years. You know, you can’t compare it.

*Anything you miss from Germany or –*

Well, there are some German traits which I admire. They're efficient. I must say, the German firms I worked with were infinitely easier to work with than the British firms, you know. **[04:28:03]** If a German work said – I mean I'll give you an example [laughs]. When I was doing this plant for sausage skins which had to be built under laboratory conditions, you know, everything had to be 100% super, super clean, everything had to be stainless steel polished because it was food – food manufacturing, and there were some very expensive valves which only one British firm could do, right, special valves for food manufacturing. And they were on the programme to be delivered on a certain date, and as typical at the time with British firms, a week before delivery, we're very sorry, we can’t deliver because that’s happened or that happened, you know, we're going to two months late. Well, I couldn't possibly afford two months of my programme. This would have been a disaster. So, I thought well, there's no other British firm who did these, so I said there must be another company in the world who make these, so I said let’s try the Germans. So, I rang the German embassy and asked for their commercial attaché. And I said do you know a company in Germany who makes these high-precision food-quality valves? And he said just a moment, [imitates being put on hold]. Within two minutes he gave me a name. Brilliant. I rang the firm up and it happened to be Ascension Day in Germany, right, and the firm was closed, [Mariä Himmelfahrt, 15 August]. **[04:30:01]** The firm was closed. But the telephone call over the holidays was transferred to the managing director. And I got a call direct to the managing director on Ascension Day and I said look here, we need these valves, do you make these valves? I’m told by the embassy you make these valves. And I gave him the specification, he said yes, we make valves exactly to the specification, what sort of fitting do you want, because end settings change and I told him exactly what you [ph] want. So I said when can you deliver? He said, well, there's a plane leaving the day after tomorrow, we can put it on there. Just like that. It would cost a little bit more but it saved our programme. Just like that. While the British firm, two months late. Amazing. Absolutely amazing. And so, you know, they got a lot of trouble. And even the other firm, people like Polysius, you couldn't fault them. They were dead on time and when they sent their engineers over, they knew their job and you – in fact they were fully trained, brilliant. I was very impressed with them.

*But when you met your German colleagues, did you – did they ask about your story? Did you tell them your history or –*

No, never.

*No. It didn't come up?*

No, it didn't come up. On one occasion again [laughs] we, you know, we made our own boilers, you know, we had a big plant in Hartlepool making these big power station boilers and we needed – we actually – sorry. Yeah, the plant had Siemens turbines and we made the boilers for the Siemens turbines. **[04:32:07]** So I had to go to Siemens with our sales manager to negotiate the sale of our boilers to Siemens, who were the main contractors. So, we went there to negotiate with them, near Munich, Siemens, and of course they all spoke English. All spoke English. In fact- the internal progress meetings at Siemens –

*Were in English?*

Were in English. Amazing. So anyway, and again I was told don't let on you know German, right. And [laughs] so we tried to sell them our boilers and of course, there came the question of time and we said look, if you don't send – place the order by a certain date, we may not be able to get the tubes and therefore they’ll be delayed. The idea was to get the order as quickly as possible. That was the idea. We certainly could get the tubes but we didn't let on. So we said, you know, and so the – this was a long table, the two German engineers on this side and the sales manager and me on the other. And so, we told them this story that place the order early, otherwise we couldn't get it, and the Germans wouldn't buy it. And I heard the German speak to each other in German and he said *die bluffen*, right, so I kicked my sales manager under the table and said [laughs] we've been tumbled [ph], let’s change tack [laughs]. And then afterwards I let my side down, somehow or other they discovered that I speak German. **[04:34:06]** And then he asked me, where did you learn your German? And I simply said at school. I didn't tell him what school [laughs]. I simply said at school and there was no further –

*You preferred it to –*

Yeah. Just at school. [Inaudible] it was German. He didn't have – whether he put two and two together, I don't know. But I didn't want to go into a long discussion of what happened. But it was no problem.

*No. Albert, so just to kind of come to the end of our interview, considering what's going on now in the Middle East and the situation in Britain, are you worried at all about anti-Semitism, about –*

Oh, really worried. When I was in Rhodesia, I became a Zionist. In fact I was chairman of the Zionist Youth Federation and I was a member of the South African Youth Council, right. And I was very interested in Zionism and I wanted to go to Israel and I was told then by the people who were organising immigration that don't go now, become qualified, right. We want qualified people. We've got plenty of labourers, we've got plenty of doctors digging roads, we want qualified engineers [laughs]. So, I didn't go and I came to England and whether I would then have gone to Israel or back to Rhodesia, I don't know. Maybe I would have gone to Rhodesia and then to Israel, who knows. So, I was keen and I looked at Israel as the beacon, the example of how to run a country, right. And it was then, you know, it was mainly the Labour [ph] administration [inaudible] and it was mainly a left-wing government which suited my convictions anyway, because I was always a little bit pro-Labour. **[04:36:10]** And I am now heartbroken- to see what is happening, what Netanyahu – what Netanyahu is doing by aligning himself to the far right, the extremists who are a disaster for Israel anyway because they don't work, they don't go into the army, they're multiplying like mad and demographically, all – they would have the majority merely because they have more children than the others, so it’s a big problem.

*And what about the rise of sort of anti-Semitism here in England? Is that something [overtalking].*

Well, the anti-Semitism here in my opinion was stirred up by the Muslims. I think the pro-Arab community here – I mean we've got lots of Muslims here of course, and they regard them as brothers and they, I think cause most of the anti-Semitism. They stir things up. I don't think there's a lot of anti-Semitism among the English, except speaking to some of my English friends, when the 7th of October, they were all immediately pro-Israel. I mean there was an enormous sympathy to the people I knew of what happened. I mean they were appalled what Hamas did. But now because of the constant bombardment and the bombing and 25,000 people being killed, they're beginning to change. They really are saying enough’s enough. And that is turning them against – even some of my good friends who said to me, you know, this is – we can’t support this anymore. **[04:38:06]** This is overkill. But I don't know what the solution is. You know, it’s all very well to sit here and say you shouldn't do it but in my opinion he should stop. I think he's killed enough people. You will never kill a Hamas with a bullet. You cannot kill an ideal or a principle, horrible though it might be, by shooting. You can only kill it politically. That’s the only way. And at the moment the war is in my opinion pointless. In many ways Hamas have already won because they knew there would be enormous retaliation. You know, they're no fools. They must have calculated there would be enormous repercussions, they must have calculated there would be enormous casualties among their own people which would immediately get the sympathy of the Arab world and most of all, the Abraham –

*Accords. Yeah, the –*

What do you call it?

*The countries which signed the Abraham Accords.*

The Abraham Accord would be killed. And it’s happened. And they got exactly [laughs] what they wanted and Netanyahu fell into the trap. It was a trap and he fell into it. He shouldn't have done it. He should have had, in my opinion, though I’m not a soldier, have had sharp, short-term attacks, you know, in and out, you know, have good intelligence ’cos their intelligence failed completely. That was a disaster. But they should have re-established their intelligence network and started to have short attacks without causing these enormous casualties. **[04:40:06]** And he's now done, in my opinion, an enormous disservice and, of course he was unpopular already, you know, because of his legal manipulations when he tried to stop the importance of the judges. That was a disaster as well. I mean that’s the sort of thing Hitler did. Shocking.

*Albert, have – is there anything we haven’t discussed which you need to add? I think we covered a lot regarding your –*

I think we've covered most of my life.

*Early life and your career.*

Yeah, my career.

*Is there any – if there isn’t anything else, do you have a message for anyone who might watch this interview in the future, based on your experiences?*

My message is don't get involved with extremists, religious or otherwise. My belief is ideally there should be no religion in the world, there should only be a belief, there should be no terrestrial manifestation of religion. There should only be belief and principles. And if everybody had a belief and principles without all the peripherals, we wouldn't be in this trouble. But it’s a pipedream.

*You mean sort of organised religion?*

Organised religion.

*Versus belief. More spiritual –*

Yeah, yeah, whether it’s Jewish, whether it’s Catholic, whether it’s Muslim, whether it’s Hindu, all the wars are caused by the peripherals who all believe in God but we fight each other because we worship in a different way or we- think a certain person is a saint or the other one thinks he isn’t a saint and you get, you know, even the Protestants against the Catholics, you look at Northern Ireland, it’s ludicrous. **[04:42:10]** Absolutely ludicrous what religion is doing.

*And on a personal level, what do you think helped you to get through experiences of immigration, being displaced, loss? What helped you in your life?*

I think basically I – my ambition to become a good engineer. To do something worthwhile. To be able say I've done a good job and I've helped- and well, there are lots of plants around the world where I was involved in and I was proud to have been involved in. But I enjoyed it, you know, I did it for me, you know, and it was good. I don't have any regrets. I went to many countries and to America and France, Germany, India, Iran, Botswana, South Africa, USA, I got around. Yes, it was great. A great experience.

*And you lost your wife three years ago.*

And I lost my wife. She had cancer and I lost my – that was a big shock.

*Yeah. How are you managing?*

Well, I manage, I manage. What can you do? I live on my own, which I don't like but what can I do? I had a very good cleaner who used to do my shopping for me. Before she came, I rang her up and I told her what I wanted and then she got cancer and so she can’t do any more shopping for me, so I have to do it myself, which I can do because the supermarket isn’t very far away. **[04:44:09]** And so I've now got a new cleaner who I just started, and that’s all. Otherwise, I do everything myself. Of course I've got a microwave, no big deal with cooking, you know, buy a readymade thing, just shove in the microwave. But every now and again some neighbours – I've got very good neighbours – who knock on my door and bring me a great, big dish of food. One of my neighbours is married to a Japanese girl who runs – who owns two or three restaurants in the West End and the East End, Japanese restaurants, and she's a brilliant cook and every now and again she comes with a great, big bowl of Japanese food, still warm [laughs] for me to have and it lasted two or three days [laughs]. So, they're looking after me. Every now and again they ring up. If they – if I – I get The Times every day, you know, in packets from Times in these waterproof packets which they throw in front of the door. And I've got an agreement with them, if they see the packet lying there for more than a day, they should ring the bell, or I've got one of those key boxes and they know the code and they open the box and they come in to see whether I was all right. So that’s working. Oh, we muddle on, yeah. It seems to work all right. I've got one of those things on my arm, a button, in case I fall down, and I press the button and then it rings the police, the fire station [laughs] and God knows who else [laughs] and they come along. So, it’s okay, we manage. **[04:46:00]** I don't know for how much longer. My eyesight’s going, which worries me but I hope I'll die before I go blind. I really don't want to go blind. That’s not good. But we’ll see which winds.

*Okay. Albert, thank you so much for sharing your life story with us. We're going to look at some photos now.*

Yeah. [Sighs] Yeah.

*Albert, one second, please.*

It’s my parents, my father and mother shortly after they got married in Buchen.

*Do you know when it was taken?*

It must have been around about 1920 or something like it, ’20 or ’21 – after the war, after the First World War.

*And their names?*

Herbert Levi and Susi Wolf. [04:48:00]

*I'll tell you what.*

*Who is in this photograph?*

My sister, Hella, and I am on the tricycle.

*And when and where was it taken?*

In Buchen.

*And roughly when?*

Oh, I was about, I don't know, four. Three or four.

*Thank you.*

That was a long story, isn’t it?

*Tell us the story, come on.*

[Laughs] Right from the beginning of my son who met another medical student in Heidelberg, whose father was the mayor of Bulawayo [sic] and they had an exhibition of Ludwig Schwerin’s paintings and they asked me to come across for the opening. And I went across and then they told me that – and then I told them that Ludwig Schwerin had painted me. They sent me a photograph then of the painting with the information of what's happened to the painting, how it was sold to a Jewish professor who came to England, a fellow called Mittwoch. **[04:50:01]** We then rang a telephone number which was under Mittwoch – there was only one – in Hampstead and it turned out to be his daughter and we asked her whether they still had the painting and she said no, the painting is now with my other daughter in Tel Aviv – in Jerusalem. And so we offered to buy the painting. My wife wanted to buy the painting for my eightieth birthday and the woman said no, I prefer it – she was a psychiatrist in Jerusalem – but she said I will have a professional photograph taken of it, I'll send it to you and then you can have it enlarged. So that’s what happened. It was enlarged. My son had it printed on linen and that’s the copy here, printed on –

*And do you remember sitting for this? Do you remember the – actually when he painted it?*

He – well, I must have been about – how old do I look, probably about four – four or five years old. I got a new mouth organ as a compensation for sitting still for two hours. It’s no joke, you know, being painted.

*So you remember this occasion?*

Oh, yes. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yes, you sit still for a long time.

*Did he have a studio?*

No, no, he came to our house. He did it in our house.

*And he's quite well-known now as a painter?*

Oh, yes, yes. I mean you saw the brochure. Yeah. He was well-known in Israel and, Ludwig Schwerin, there's a lot of pictures over there which is painted by him. **[04:52:00]** That old woman, that’s an original which is I think his – some relative of –

*If you can just straighten it out for me [inaudible].*

Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, this is the shop which was owned by my parents. It was originally started by my grandfather and the name was still his, A. Wolf, and then my father took it over.

*In Buchen?*

In Buchen.

*And what's there today? Does the building still stand?*

Oh, yes, indeed.

*And what's in there today?*

It’s a shoe shop I think.

Thank you.

Well, this is the main street, the *Marktstraße*.

*No, no –*

*What are you holding now?*

What am I holding? Oh.

*One second, one second.*

That’s the Kindertransport – sorry, that is the *Kinderausweis* which I got in lieu of a passport because I was too young to get a passport, and that enabled me to leave Germany. I needed that document and that was the main document which I used to identify myself when I was in England and had to register with the police as an enemy alien.

*But were you interned?* ***[04:54:00]***

No, I was too young to be interned.

*Thank you. It’s your photo actually, ah, you look so young.*

[Laughs] I was young.

*I know, I know.*

I was eleven.

*But eleven sometimes, somebody, you know, it’s a funny old age. You can look…*

The ship I boarded in Hamburg to come to England, the American luxury liner, SS Manhattan.

*What day did you sail on that?*

It was in March 1939.

*How did you get this postcard?*

It was one of the cards they gave out on the boat as a souvenir.

*And you kept it ever since? Is this the card you got?*

That’s the card I got, yeah.

*Thank you. It’s a beautiful post – it’s a beautiful drawing actually.*

*Tell us about this picture, please.*

It was actually part of a – you remember polyfoto, where you take a lot of pictures? **[04:56:06]** And it was one of the polyfoto pictures, yeah. I needed it for a passport and so that was one of them.

*And when was it taken?*

About 1960.

*Thank you.*

*Who is in this picture, please?*

That was taken at a ball at – in the City of London which was organised by my firm to invite all sorts of clients and obviously I took my wife, and that was taken there.

*When?*

That must have been about 1965, ’66, something like it.

*Thank you.*

*Who is in this picture?*

That’s the president of the Institution of Civil Engineers and his wife, and I and my wife, at the Institution’s annual dinner and ball, which they have every year. It must have been about 1970, ’72, something like that.

*Thank you.* ***[04:58:00]***

This is the eighth edition of my book on project management, which I wrote to cover mainly the requirements to pass an APM examination.

Thank you.

*What are you holding, Albert?*

I’m holding a penknife which I had when I was probably twelve years old – no, eleven years old. Yes, I was eleven years old when I sat in the wood after being chased out of our school in Esslingen and I clutched that little knife and it gave me courage and I have kept it ever since.

*What do you think when you're holding this in your hand?*

Well, I remember sitting there, clutching it. It certainly made me feel better.

*And now you still have it, eight-five years later.*

I still have it later, yeah. Yeah.

*What are you planning to do with it?*

I will keep it. I showed it when I was talking to the children. I showed it and they were intrigued by it. But there's another funny story about it which I don't know whether you’ve got time for.

*Go on.*

And that is I had it in Woodside and I lost it, and another boy found it and I saw him using it and I said that’s my knife and he said no, no, no, that knife was given me by my aunt. **[05:00:08]** So I never got it back because I realised, you know, there was obviously more than one knife made. So anyway, he held it. And then I found some little nail clippers which belonged to I knew another boy, and I kept the nail clippers and then I thought, what's the point of keeping the nail clippers? They don't belong to me and I’m afraid to use them, so I gave it back to the boy who I knew owned the nail clippers and he said oh, thank you very much, I’d lost them, thank you very much. And the day later, the other boy came back and gave me my knife back. The following day.

*And were you relieved to have it back?*

Well, I thought that, you know, this is a sign, you know, one good turn deserves another. Honesty pays, I thought.

*Thank you. What are you going to do now, Albert?*

Yes?

*Yeah.*

*Rosenmontag in Buchen.*

*Fastnachtsmontag kommen wir, angezogen mit den besten Kleidern. Schau‘ nur für ein gutes Quartier. Dem Gedanken folgt die Tat. Jetzt wird natürlich geschafft wie verrückt, dass schön und würdig der Empfang. Am nötigsten haben es die Wirte- ihnen ist vor Andrang schon bang*.

[Carnival Monday in Buchen. On Carnival Monday we arrive in our best clothes. We are looking for a good venue. We are, of course, working like mad to make the reception beautiful and worthy. It is tough for the innkeepers; they are already dreading the rush [of Carnival fools]]

*Yes, please.*

This was written by my mother, Susi Levi, in about 1928 maybe.

[Now in the area’s vernacular:]

*Rosenmontag in Buche* **[05:02:30]** *[Faschenaachts -Mendi kumme mir, ohgedoun mim schenschde Schdaad. Sorch no eweil for guddes Quadier. Dem Gedange folchd die Tat. Etz wird nadierli geschafft wie närrd, dass schäi un würdi de Empfang, am näidischde habbes freili d‘Werd, dänne is schon vor dem Odrang bang.]* I can improve that because I've got to be perfect when I do the real thing.

*Thank you so much for sharing your story, [both laugh] sharing your photographs and reading your mother’s poems in the vernacular. What is it called? Schwäbisch or what is it called? Is it Schwäbisch?*

It’s – no, it’s *Buchemer*

*Buchemer?*

Yeah. It’s –

*And this is the first one [ph].*

The Buchen and the district round about, you know, *Buchemer*, they call it.

*Okay, thank –*

**[05:03:07]**

[End of transcript]