

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	42

Interviewee Surname:	Silman
Forename:	Gertrude
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	25 April 1929
Interviewee POB:	Bratislava, Czechoslovakia

Date of Interview:	20 November 2003
Location of Interview:	Leeds
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 42

NAME: TRUDE SILMAN

DATE: 20 NOVEMBER 2003

LOCATION: LEEDS

INTERVIEWEE: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 1 minute 1 second

RL: If you can tell me first your name?

TS: Well I'm actually Gertrude Silman but I'm known as Trude.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

TS: Oh, it was Gertrude Feldmanova, because...Well, did I say Silman or did I say Feldman at the beginning?

RL: You said Silman.

TS: Oh, I couldn't remember. It was Gertrude Feldman or, as in Slovak, it would be Feldmanova.

RL: And did you have any other names, any nicknames?

TS: No, it's just that I'm known as Trude.

RL: Did you have a Hebrew name?

TS: Yes, that is Esther.

RL: And where were you born?

TS: I was born in Bratislava, in Czechoslovakia.

RL: And when?

TS: On the 25th of April, 1929.

RL: So how old does that make you now?

TS: Well, I think it makes me 74.

RL: Now if you can tell me your parents' names and where they were born?

TS: My father's name was Adolf Feldman and he was born in Korytné and obviously that then was the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it wasn't Czechoslovakia at that time. My mother's name, maiden name, was Elsa Fischer and she was born in Turčiansky Svätý Martin, which obviously again was in the Austro-Hungarian Empire because Czechoslovakia as such didn't materialise until after the First World War in 1918/19.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 42 seconds

RL: Now first of all if you can tell me about your father's family background?

TS: My father's family, his parents farmed in a village called Vruboldje and they were called Fanny and...do you know, I can't remember my grandfather's name. Anyway, Feldman and my father was the eldest of nine children, and he was the first of the family to really go and have any education, and he went to Vienna and studied banking and economics. This of course is well before the First World War.

RL: And what happened to his siblings, where did they go?

TS: Two of his siblings, his sister and his brother, lived in Budapest and have families in Budapest in Hungary, two of his sisters lived in Vienna, which of course is Austria, and two of his brothers lived in Czechoslovakia, and his youngest sister married an American and lived in New York. I think that should cover the nine.

RL: Did you know your grandparents?

TS: I knew them very well indeed, we were a very close family, and although we lived in Bratislava we used to visit regularly and very often the cousins from the different countries used to meet there.

RL: What memories do you have of them?

TS: I have very happy memories. I was of course only 9 when I left Czechoslovakia, so I have a child's memory, and I suppose with almost 70 years back sometimes it may be a little hazy, but my recollections of the farm are that we certainly had a wooden seat lavatory, there was no running water or anything like that, there was a stream near the house where we used to go fishing for the little crayfish, obviously there were a lot of fields about, and my grandmother actually used to stuff the geese with maize because you see if you make pate de foie gras, you used to have to have fatty livers and I remember

her sort of in essence sitting on the back of a goose, opening its beak and stuffing maize down, I have very clear recollections of that. But it was a very happy childhood. Now my father's family were Orthodox and were also in the same village. Across from my grandparents' farm there was another aunt and uncle who also farmed. I think they farmed all together.

Tape 1: 5 minutes 42 seconds

RL: What were they farming?

TS: Well that I can't tell you. I presume it was maize and they had poultry, I think it was mainly agrarian rather than animals, except for geese.

RL: And how often would you go to visit them?

TS: Well I can't say exactly, but possibly at least once or twice a year, and we used to go in the summer when the other cousins would come from Hungary and Vienna and so on.

RL: What happened to your grandparents when the war broke out?

TS: Well, my grandfather died in 1933/'34. My grandmother was actually hidden by some peasants in the village and she survived the war and after the war she lived with an uncle of mine, who had survived by being in Russia throughout the war, and she came and lived with him and she must have died in the 1950s, aged about 96/97, but she'd seen the vast part of her family decimated.

RL: Now coming onto your mother's family, if you can tell us a bit of her family background?

TS: Well, totally different, they came from a much wealthier background, they had a business, which was basically ironmongery and house building materials and they had this business initially in Turčiansky Svätý Martin, where my mother was born, but eventually they moved to Bratislava and they opened a very large shop there. My grandfather died in about 1938. He was a great garden lover, and they had this big building, most of which was the shop, but on the second and third floor they had a number of flats, it was like a block of flats with a shop and storage underneath. And this first floor flat was amazing because they had built it around a space where he had a garden and a fishpond with carp and things in it, he was very keen on geraniums, and I remember all the geraniums in the garden. The other thing which was... I remember in the flat, they had obviously a number of rooms, and in the salon room, which was for best, they had a coffee table I suppose and on it was a huge Dürer Bible. And that was about that size and of course Dürer was a very famous engraver and printer and I think it was one of the six originals, but it certainly disappeared during the war, it doesn't exist now, not for me anyway.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 37 seconds

RL: The shops that they had, what were they selling?

TS: They were selling hardware, ironmongery, builders merchants' material, that sort of stuff. And my grandmother really was the main businesswoman of the setup, my mother actually was one of 5 children, she was the middle one, she had three sisters and a brother. And, as with people who have money, they found it easier to get out of Czechoslovakia and in fact all her three sisters survived, one only died recently in America, and the eldest one died several years ago, and the middle one, the next one, died several years ago as well, they went to Canada. But my mother, she is a question mark. I know she survived 'til 1944, because we used to get the odd occasional 25-word Red Cross letter, but then it stopped. And I really don't know exactly what happened to her. Initially she was in Bratislava, and I'm given to understand she worked as a nurse in the Jewish hospital, and eventually she must have moved out of there and went further East when there was the Slovak uprising and, as far as we can gather, but we have no proof, she went out one day and she never came back, so they assumed she was one of the people who was picked up and shot. But we have no clear evidence as to what actually happened to her, we believe she was sheltered by a Roman Catholic priest, and we actually had some proof of this, because, after the war, the priest's housekeeper somehow or other sent us a letter telling us about some possessions of my mothers, which they were placing with another aunt. But we've lost the letter so we've no idea what, where and how and I've never been able to trace it and I haven't done a great deal about it. If you don't know the place, if you don't know the name, if you haven't the time, if you don't speak the language, it is not easy to do. So we hope that possibly still some literature will come up from somewhere. The Red Cross haven't been able to trace her and there's no record.

Tape 1: 11 minutes 21 seconds

RL: Coming back to your mother's upbringing, what kind of education did she have?

TS: I assume she had a good education because my mother's family were all French speakers, they spoke a certain amount of English, their mother tongue was Hungarian, they spoke mainly Hungarian between themselves, but they always seemed educated. Going back to my grandmother, she actually was born I think in about 1865 and she had a university degree and that is very unusual.

RL: Do you know what it was in?

TS: No, no idea. I mean a child of nine, you're not interested. This is hearsay, which I've picked up over the years from various other cousins and things, but there's no proof. I know how I think I could probably... Her maiden name was Schenk, so it could be found, if somebody took the trouble to look for it.

RL: And what kind of religious upbringing did your mother have?

TS: Well, we were all Jewish and I think none of us took it to any large extent, I mean, in my own household and in my mother's household, I think everybody went to Shul once a year and that was it. You know more neologisch, the more emancipated type.

RL: Do you know what happened to your father during the First World War?

TS: Yes, he fought for the Austro-Hungarian Empire; in fact I have a photograph of him sitting on a horse as a First Lieutenant.

RL: And did he tell you any stories about that time?

TS: No, not at all. What you may find quite interesting, after his studying in Vienna and after the First World War, when he came back, he actually opened a bank with a colleague in Bratislava but in 1929 I'm afraid the bank collapsed and therefore our circumstances were much reduced. Father had great difficulty finding a job as such and he ended up as a freelance journalist writing on financial and economic affairs. I think he also had a small job with some property development, or property...or estate agent work, something like that, but it wasn't regular, and in fact I think we were probably rather like the impoverished genteel family, with high culture but not much money.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 8 seconds

RL: When and how did he meet your mother?

TS: I don't know, that I have not discovered yet and I don't think I will, but my mother was a renowned beauty, and obviously my father fell for her somewhere or another and they got married, but my mother's family I don't think were very keen on him, because of the lack of money, but anyway they got married, but there was always a certain amount of strain between my father and my mother's family.

RL: Had your mother worked at all after her schooling?

TS: Not that I'm really aware of, she seemed to lead the sort of life that most of her sisters lived. They did their basic cooking, they did their shopping, they met in the coffee house to talk, and they went to each others' houses and that was basically it. But my mother was a very early riser and she used to go and do the market shopping very early in the morning, about five in the morning when the market started, I remember that. She was a fabulous cook, and unfortunately I never picked it up, because I was too young at that age to learn about those sorts of things, so that's one of my failings, I do not like cooking.

RL: So when did your parents marry?

TS: I assume it must have been about 1920/'21, because my brother who is the eldest of the three of us was born in 1922.

RL: And what's his name?

TS: His name is Paul Feltham.

RL: And the second one?

TS: Is my sister, and she was born in 1924, and she's called Charlotte, and she's now Charlotte Bouchel.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child, would you say?

Tape 1: 16 minutes 15 seconds

TS: I have a happy aura, if you can put it that way, I can only pick out very few incidents. I know that I learnt the piano; I know that I went to ballet classes, I loved swimming and I just had a good time, that's about it. And, like all kids, the three of us all fought, but my brother always used to take my side against my sister, if she picked on me he would stand up for me. And in fact we developed a very, very close relationship. I used to suffer from very high temperatures as a child, and in those days the remedy was an absolutely cold towel, really large towel, wrapped around your body. The only person I would allow to do that to me was my brother, and when I had chicken pox he was the only one who was allowed to dab it with the ointment.

RL: Can you tell me about your home, what kind of place it was?

TS: Yes, well, being born in 1929, which was the year my father lost his money, I remember living in a flat, I presume it was a five-room flat, we had a maid and we had a nanny. We were extremely fond of our nanny. We moved from there, probably when I was about four or five. This first flat was in an old building near the German Gymnasium in Bratislava but we then moved to a modern block, which was owned by, I presume, two Jewish gentlemen, one was called Schweiger and one called Schlesinger. They had the first two floors, and I remember they had balconies and they used to have the Sukkos on the balconies. We lived on the third floor, we didn't have a big balcony and anyway we wouldn't have bothered with a Sukkah, I don't think. And again this time we had one, two, three, four, again five rooms, but the fifth room would have been the small maid's room off the kitchen. We had one main room, which was our living room, and we ate there, we had a dining table, father had his bureau there, he used to write his letters and he had his telephone there and we also had our three beds, because poor Charlotte and I slept in that room as well. Then the next room in between had a grand piano and a proper dining table, if there were visitors, and off that was a salon, which was very small, but it had some pictures in, and a settee and some armchairs and then of course my parents' bedroom was at the end of that.

Tape 1: 19 minutes 16 seconds

RL: And what area of Bratislava was this?

TS: It was one of the main streets, you used to have the trams clunking along the street, it was one of the busy main thoroughfares. It was called Suché Mýto and recently, a few years back, I actually went back to visit an aunt who still lives in Bratislava and, when we returned, the building where we'd lived was still there, but my grandparents' shop - their building was diagonally across from that - their building had been erased and it is now the best known hotel in Bratislava. They used the whole plot and the whole layout of the streets now is quite different, it is now a major motorway and a main, different thoroughfare, so the layout is changed, the houses have altered, but the house where we were is still there.

RL: And how Jewish an area was this?

TS: Well, there was a very high Jewish population in Bratislava, Bratislava was a very well known place for learned rabbis and the major Jewish area was called the Judengasse or the Židovská ulica, which means 'Jewish street', and that is where the really Orthodox and the relatively poor people lived. I think the more emancipated Jewish people lived in a whole variety of areas. I did actually go to a Jewish school, so that wasn't very far from the Jewish street.

RL: And what was the school called?

TS: I think it was just a primary school, it was a Jewish primary school, I can't remember the name.

RL: Do you remember who the headmaster was?

TS: No, I remember my form master, he was called Mr. Neumann, and he had 55 of us in his class, and we went each year with him, he actually took a whole group through, each teacher went with one group all the way through school, so I've got quite a few photographs taken each year of the same form master and the same friends.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 31 seconds

RL: And how did you get on at school, was it like...?

TS: Well I was fortunate, I liked school and I was quite a bright kid, so I had no problems.

RL: What kind of Hebrew education did it give?

TS: Well, we learnt Modern Hebrew, well, the Hebrew which was not the speaking Hebrew, but the modern type of Hebrew that was used at the time in the synagogues.

RL: What synagogue did your family attend?

TS: Again, I have no idea of the name. I have a picture of the synagogue somewhere, which obviously does not exist anymore. It became a store, some sort of a store/warehouse at some stage. And actually, being at the Jewish school, we also had a synagogue within the school, I think, as far as I remember.

RL: Did you belong to any after-school clubs?

TS: Well I belonged to Sokol, which was the Czechoslovakian gym group, where kids used to go and do gymnastics and things, and I can't remember whether I belonged to the Maccabi swimming club or not, I certainly belonged to a swimming club, but it could have been a Maccabi swimming club, I don't know.

RL: Did your father belong to any clubs or organisations?

TS: I wouldn't know about that at all. All I know is that he was football mad and played cards and liked chess.

RL: What about entertainment? Where would they go, if they wanted to have a night or an evening out?

TS: I can't remember my folks going for evenings out, unless you went to friends' houses. I think you might have gone to an odd cinema show, I'm not aware of any of that sort of entertainment at all.

RL: Did you ever go out to anything like that?

TS: Yes, I remember going to the cinema, and I even remember the film that was showing in March 1939 when the Germans marched in. It was Deanna Durbin in I think it was called 'A Thousand Men in One Go' or something like that. I didn't see it but I know it was on locally. And I also remember 'Scott of the Antarctic' being shown somewhere locally a year or so prior to that. Oh, the most important thing from a child's point of view is of course 'Snow White'. I did go to see that.

Tape 1: 24 minutes 3 seconds

RL: What about the theatre?

TS: The theatre, yes, my parents used to go to theatre. My father was an opera lover, we always had opera on the radio, we had a nice little radio and it was always tuning into music.

RL: And what about concerts?

TS: Yes. Again, I don't know when they went or if they went but there were concert halls and concerts were around in Bratislava.

RL: Was there a Yiddish theatre there?

TS: If there was, I wasn't aware of it.

RL: Did you put on plays at school?

TS: I don't think so, I don't think we took those things very importantly, like they do in English schools.

RL: Did you mix at all with non-Jewish people in your neighbourhood?

TS: I don't think I distinguished between Jewish and non-Jewish at that stage. We mixed with our family and both my brother and sister obviously went to local schools, which were not Jewish schools, so we had their friends coming in, and the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish was not something which was labelled in our household at all.

RL: In terms of who you mixed with, what kind of people?

TS: Well, personally, because of going to a Jewish school, my friends were Jewish, but as far as the adults went and what they did, I can't tell you.

RL: Did you ever experience any anti-Semitic feeling in those years as you were growing up?

TS: No, there was no, I had no feelings of anti-Semitism towards me or I was aware of anybody in my family. I was only starting to become conscious of anti-Semitism after 1938 when Hitler had gone into Austria and my two aunts and their families living in Vienna were already being brutalised.

Tape 1: 26 minutes 21 seconds

RL: What did you hear from them about what was happening?

TS: My father obviously heard the news, I wasn't sort of given any particular details, but I do remember that when the Anschluss happened, which was in March '38, my father certainly wasn't very happy about it, and even in September '38 again, which was the Sudetenland annexation, on both those occasions my father sent my mother and us children to the country to his mother's farm, because he didn't think we were safe in Bratislava. In each case, obviously, we came back again, but my father was politically quite shrewd I think, and he realised things were not good, and he was doing his utmost to get at least his children out of Czechoslovakia. By late 1938, my mother's eldest sister and her husband had already left Czechoslovakia. They were a childless couple, a very well-to-do couple, who had managed to get money out to both the UK and America and they first of all came to Britain and then on to America. They were instrumental in bringing out my mother's next sister and family. They were also well-connected. They came to London and then they arranged for my sister, with, I presume, the help of the

Jewish Refugee Committee, to have her placed with an English family. And she came to a prominent Jewish family in Kew Gardens, called Mr. and Mrs. Leon, and they in essence looked after her, well, in fact until she got married. Not only did they have my sister as a refugee, but they also had a German lad, called Josef. So they had their own two daughters, and they took these two other children in, whom they educated and brought up with their family.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 37 seconds

RL: And this was all arranged through your aunt?

TS: Yes, because they had connections and they worked very hard back then, they went to Woburn House every day and you know what people had to do to get people across. So my sister actually arrived in England on the first of January 1939. Now the next thing was my aunt and uncle were trying to get my parents out, and the only way they could get my parents out would be as domestic servants and they also, I must come back a little bit earlier, because there was another sister of my mother's, the youngest one, Gitta, who they had found a domestic place for in Knightsbridge. Now, this aunt Gitta had a daughter called Vera, and she's four years younger than I am, and my aunt and uncle organised for them to come to England, and they asked her whether she would bring me as well. She wasn't very keen to do that, for a number of reasons, first of all she had problems getting her own child across, we didn't have the right papers, but pressure was put on her and she consented to bring me with her, so my aunt, my cousin and I left Czechoslovakia on the 28th of March, which already was three weeks after the Germans had marched in, and this was quite a traumatic journey. If you ask me if I remember saying goodbye to my parents, the answer is no, I had a complete blockage of most those what I call 'emotional situations'. I can't remember. All I can remember is we had a taxi, which picked me up, my mother had packed a suitcase for me, between the three of us I remember very clearly we had seven pieces of luggage, and we were driven to Vienna. We had no apparent problems at the border from Czechoslovakia to Austria and we got on the train but we did have problems once we got to Cologne. Now the journey from Vienna to London should take 36 hours by train. It took us 4 days and the reason being we got to Cologne and the Germans caused us some problems. We were turfed off the train and, as everything, it's midnight, it's pitch dark, I remember Cologne as an absolutely empty station, just with my aunt and cousin and myself sitting around not knowing what to do. Somehow or other, we were put on the train again or found a train the following morning and we went to Holland and once again we had problems, but this time we were in a bigger train, there must have been about 200 refugees on this train, and once again we were thrown off with quite a number of these other people, but by some miracle and I don't know how, we got onto another train and this time we managed to get through to Flushing. And this funny recollection is - in those days, in 1939, the Dutch engines had a very unique feature, they had highly polished brass sort of round turrets on their engines. I can still see these polished dome things sitting on the engine. Anyway, we got to Flushing and then we went across to Harwich, and we arrived, like most other people, at Liverpool Street Station. It's always midnight, every time we arrive it's midnight, I don't know why, but it's midnight, and they threw the luggage out from the

luggage van and my aunt had a huge duffel bag into which she had put all the family shoes, for herself and her daughter, and this thing ripped and there on the platform were all the shoes. That's my arrival at Liverpool Street Station.

Tape 1: 32 minutes 49 seconds

From there, I don't know, but I assume my other aunt and uncle, Geza and Bibbe Telsch, must have met us, because we needed them for the entry into England, because they had the documents. I can't remember them on the station. All I remember next is arriving at a boarding house in Hampstead Heath, where my aunt, cousin and I stayed for several days. She must have then gone onto her post in Knightsbridge, and I was found a family in Newcastle, a Christian family, who were going to take me, to look after me, and of course, retrospectively, I learned that these people had to put down fifty pounds and guarantee you and fifty pounds was a lot of money. And I went to this marvellous family, and I have terrible guilt feelings about them, because I only stayed with them a month, not due to any fault of theirs, it was me. I was a nine-year old child, almost ten, spoke no English, highly homesick. English buildings were totally alien to me. I had come from a centrally-heated, double-glazed flat. Here I was in a cold, draughty stone house. I'd never lived with pets, they had two huge Dalmatians that frightened the life out of me. I'd never eaten English food. Everything was wrong. I was cold, I was miserable, and obviously I wrote to my aunt and said I was homesick, so after a month my aunt came for me and I went and lived with them in London for a short period of time because they were en route to the States. And I have lost touch with the Gill family, they were called, they were Dr. and Mrs. Gill. They had two children, Roger who was a second-year medical student, and I think the girl was called Joan. She was about two or three years older than I was. They must have been quite a well-to-do family, because they had a second home in the Lake District, and we used to go at the weekend to this cottage in the Lake District, and, this was remarkable, they had a swimming pool. Which houses in those days had a swimming pool? And I remember that and, about ten years ago, Norman and I actually found the house with the swimming pool. We found the old postmaster, who remembered the family, but that was that.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 31 seconds

RL: If I could just take you back a little bit to Bratislava again, you've sort of come on to England, but you mentioned that you were still in Bratislava when the Germans...

TS: Yes.

RL: Can you tell me about that, your memories of that?

TS: I can tell you exactly. It happened, I was at school, we were in class as usual, I don't know the exact time, whether it was ten o'clock or half past ten, anyway the middle of the morning, our schoolmaster said to us, 'Will you please all get your coats and go home as quickly and as quietly as possible?' And that was that. Now, at the back of the school there was a Jewish street and you could see the tanks and the soldiers already on that street. I remember going home very, very quickly and then all I remember is that we all

became much more afraid. I could sense the fear which hadn't been there before, I hadn't sensed it before, because we were now in a situation where we were waiting for the knock at the door at night. We didn't go out, we just stayed put. And only a few years ago, when I was going through my sister's memorabilia from home, I came across a letter I had written to her, begging, begging that she does her utmost to get me out. I was afraid. So we've got that proof, she's got it, I haven't got it.

RL: So how many weeks were you in Bratislava?

TS: Well, I thought that the Germans came to Bratislava on the 10th of March, but having now looked at other literature, they seem to say it was the 15th. Well, if it was the 15th, I only had two weeks, because I left on the 28th of March. So my father already had things in train to get us out.

RL: And did school stop at that point?

TS: Yes. No more school.

RL: And your father's work?

TS: Well, father was only working from home anyway on the whole because he'd lost.....from 1929 onwards. My brother was still at school, my brother who is 7 years older than I am, actually stayed in Bratislava 'til the end of May because he was taking his Abitur and he wanted to get that finished if possible before coming to England. But again my aunt, the Telsches, got him a job, through, I presume, the Refugee Committee, at a furriers in London, called Carmine Links, in Regent Street. And he came out to work in the furriers in May, end of May. So the three, my father's three children were in England, but we weren't together and we've never been together since.

Tape 1: 38 minutes 30 seconds

RL: So the two weeks you were in Bratislava under German occupation, is there anything that stands out in your mind from that period?

TS: No, I just had that sensation of being disturbed and frightened. I suppose this must have come through by osmosis from my parents, they were now getting my things together for going, and they didn't know what the outlook would be for them.

RL: What were you able to bring with you?

TS: I had two small suitcases, which basically contained my clothes, I had a couple of books, I had a few photographs, and that was it.

RL: Did anybody supervise the packing of your cases?

TS: I presume my mother packed them, I had nothing to do with them. I just had the cases to take with me.

RL: And, as you say, you don't actually remember the departure from your parents?

TS: No, not at all. When my sister left I can't even remember her going, all I know is she left on New Years Eve and my father took her to Prague, because that was before the Germans had come in, and she actually travelled on her own, she was 14, she travelled on her own from Prague to London, but she had no problems, she just went straight through.

RL: When you arrived in England, how did you manage with the language?

TS: Well, I certainly didn't speak any English, and it must have been quite a few months before I did, and this was one of the problems with the Gill family, you see you had to use your hands and point to things, but you didn't speak. I'm only conscious of starting English when I come to the school in London. When I stayed with my aunt and uncle in Priory Road, they got me into a little Church of England school off Finchley Road, called Holy Trinity. I was more advanced than my peers with my maths, because I had done more maths at school, so I had no problem with that, but of course I spoke no English. And I had a very, very helpful schoolmistress called Mrs. Hall, who gave me extra tuition, and I think I picked it up quite quickly. I don't remember any difficulties once I was evacuated with the school to Rickmansworth, I think I had no problems with English then.

RL: Whilst you were in Newcastle did you attend school there?

Tape 1: 41 minutes 15 seconds

TS: This must have been Easter Holidays, because I remember getting the tunic and the Panama hat and all the tunics, all the uniform, ready for school but I never went because I came back to London.

RL: Where were your aunt and uncle living in London?

TS: They lived in Hampstead in a small flat at that time. And so I must have joined them May/June 1939 and they arranged that I would start in September at another school, it was incredible how we all moved around, and this was a private school called Frances Holland College for Girls in Baker Street and I still have the badge for the blazer. I never went because it was due to start the first week in September but war broke out. But the Holy Trinity Church School with all the council schools was evacuated on the 1st September so I became an evacuee and I went with the school to Rickmansworth and I spent a year in Rickmansworth with another very interesting family, they were called the Pavlows. She was a Swiss lady, he was called Boris but I think he was English, and their daughter was Muriel Pavlow, who was quite a well-known actress at the time and she then married Derek Farr, so they were in the film field. Muriel and I shared a bedroom.

When we were in the bedroom, because when the air-raid siren went it was underneath the stairs, we slept on mattresses.

RL: Now before we come to hear of that, first of all in London, what did you do during the summer holidays?

TS: I have a very vague memory of going somewhere to some sort of a holiday place for children near Crystal Palace because I remember seeing Crystal Palace. I don't remember what sort of an organisation it was, I don't think I was fluent in English then. I only went for a short while, but it must have been a sort of a holiday school. Now somebody mentioned that there was a Jewish orphanage in Tulse Hill. Could it have been there? I don't know. Did they take people for holidays? I've no idea. But that's only a very fleeting, uncorroborated thing. I know I had a week somewhere and I know it was near Crystal Palace.

Tape 1: 44 minutes 0 second

RL: What was your uncle doing?

TS: My uncle was already retired. He was elderly, relatively elderly, he was a wealthy gentleman and they were just waiting for their transit visas to America. They were actually trying to take me with them and I had all my documents to go to America and they were due to go, well, they did go, at the latter end of 1940, but my brother wouldn't give permission for me to leave with them for two reasons: first of all, he felt that my sister, he and I should remain in England together, shouldn't be broken up any more, and secondly, of course, all those convoys were being torpedoed and bombed. So they eventually set off for America, I was left behind, but once again they'd made sure I was in a right place, so I made another move, and I went to a most fabulous boarding school, called Kingsley School, and I really feel almost the AJR ought to do some research into this place, its fabulous. They were a school from Belsize Park and it was started either in the very early nineteen hundreds or the late 1890s, and it was a very cosmopolitan school, run by half a dozen very dedicated women, who believed in the high morals and standards and everything, and they took 5 refugees without any payment. I was one of them. So I ended up in this school, which wasn't in Belsize Park then, but had been evacuated to North Cornwall, and I spent 4 years being given what I consider is my backbone. I was really brought up with high standards, and belief in the League of Nations, and belief in the good of everybody, which unfortunately I've lost now.

RL: Coming back to the summer months of '39, what efforts were your parents making at that stage to get out?

TS: Well, that's a tragedy, a real tragedy, and I only found that out relatively recently. My aunt and uncle managed to get them a post as housekeepers, as domestics. My father was already well in his 50s, and at that stage he decided he was too old to make that sort of a commitment and he didn't think that the Holocaust would arrive, he didn't think it was going to be what it was going to be. And so my parents didn't come out. And I only

discovered this when I found a document, which came out from, oh I don't know, one of the refugee committees, which is looking into people gone. There was a little 'D' against something, oh I know what it was, I asked whether they could find any records of myself and my sister at the Refugee Committee and they eventually came up with this document, which had a 'D' against something, against my parents name that indicated that they were granted a domestic permit. They never took it up. So that was that, I only discovered that relatively recently.

Tape 1: 47 minutes 30 seconds

RL: So were you receiving letters from them?

TS: Well, letters in the first year, up to about 1941 were letters written on what I would call toilet paper and my father did most of the writing, used to be a little sheet of paper and if it came to me I would pass it to my sister, and she would pass it onto my brother, so we used to circulate our letters and that's why some of them have gone astray, because my brother destroyed all of his stuff, he couldn't bear it. So we lost a lot. And then the letters stopped. I had a letter I think about two months before father was taken away to Auschwitz and of course they stopped. Because from the documentation which I followed up from Auschwitz, he went to Auschwitz, he was transported on the 19th of April, 1942 when it all, very early on, when it started, and the death certificate the following year, the death document said the 8th of May, so he survived 3 weeks in Auschwitz, which doesn't surprise me, because when he was transported he had actually injured his leg, and my cousin who saw him off said he was limping when he went on the transport.

RL: How aware were you in the summer of '39 of what was happening and of the imminence of war?

TS: I think as a child of, I was 10 then, I don't think it registered properly. You know, you were expecting to see your parents very soon and there wasn't a day, every single night I used to pray, you know I hope they're all right, and that they'll be safe, and I'll see them soon, this went on for years and years and years. But again the emotion has gone out of this, I think as the years have come on, that goes, you only see the nice things, so, I can't tell you about that. All I can tell you is I have a fabulous memory of my four years at Kingsley, it was a fantastic school and, well, if you want a little AJR connection, Esther Rantzen's mother and her sisters went to that school, and it is a well-known school for its good works. The other thing, which I have tried to investigate and I've drawn a blank, was those five refugees of us at Kingsley, and when the rest of the school went off to church, we used to go to what was called the Library and we were supplied with correspondence course material from what I think was from the Liberal Synagogue in St. Johns Wood, a correspondence course, we had Hebrew, we had all sorts. Now, 2 or 3 years ago, I tried to contact the synagogue. The lady who had dealt with all this apparently had either died or retired and nobody could find any records. I have one further recollection, during this period at Kingsley, the 5 refugees were invited to a Jewish household, which must have been quite a prominent Jewish household, I may

be incorrect, the name was definitely Singer. I don't know what the lady was called, she was very deaf and she had a large hearing aid always on the front of her dress, and I had a feeling that her husband was a professor, a medical historian or something, but they had, whether it was their main home or a second home, a home in South Cornwall, and I think it was in Par, and one Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah we were invited over, the five of us, and I remember spending 24 hours or 36 hours in this house, and I haven't been able to follow any of this up.

RL: Who were the other refugees?

Tape 1: 52 minutes 1 second

TS: Well, you may have a little laugh at this one. One of the refugees was called Vera Behr, and I don't know what has happened to her, then there was another one called Ilse Solomon, and there were two sisters called Renee and Steffi Beerenbaum, and Steffi went to Israel and married a Romanian, Renee was a nurse in London. And on one of our recent visits to the AJR, you know the residential place, what do you call it? In Cleve Road. We went for lunch. Renee was there serving lunch, and I hadn't seen her for 60 years.

RL: Where were these girls from?

TS: Germany, they were all German, I was the odd one out. And I know that Renee and Steffi had been with another wealthy Jewish family, not Rothstein, what are they called? Rothschild, because they took some children into their home and Steffi and Renee had been with them, and then they came to the school where I was.

RL: Now of course, before you went to that school, you were telling me that you were evacuated, that it was the whole school that was evacuated. Can you just tell me a little more about that evacuation, your memories?

TS: Oh, that was a typical British evacuation. We had our little gas-mask boxes, and we had a little suitcase, and we were put on the train, and we went to, I mean it wasn't far away, I mean it was very near, Rickmansworth to London, and I remember distinctly the voluntary ladies taking us round, knocking at each house and saying, 'How many will you take? Will you take this one, will you take that one?' I was one of the last ones, but I ended up in a very nice household, and then we were, we shared a school with another school, but we tended to still have retained our own classes. I've got a photograph, two photographs, taken in this school at Rickmansworth, where about 20 odd of us are sitting behind the desk with our form mistress. But we were taught as if we had been in London, but we'd been transported into another building, we weren't integrated with the other school, I don't remember anybody from the other school at all.

RL: How many refugees?

TS: In that class I was the only one, I mean in that school in my class I was the only refugee.

RL: And in the school?

TS: I wouldn't know, because we didn't meet, I didn't look at these sorts of things, I was just with a class, and I was learning English as fast as I could.

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

Tape 1: 55 minutes 10 seconds

TS: I think everything was fine, I can't remember. I don't think there was such a great deal of time, because by the time we'd finished school, we then went to our billets, but I do remember, for example, going to the Odeon on a Saturday morning. Obviously, I must have gone with my school pals, we watched those Saturday morning films, and we used to go swimming, 'cause Rickmansworth still has a Lido, and we used to go swimming, I remember that. And we used to go mushrooming in the fields which were nearby.

RL: Were there any air raids?

TS: Yes, we used to have regular air raids, and I was even bombed, but not in Rickmansworth, it was still while my aunt and uncle were in London, just before they left for America, they had sold or vacated their flat, and were spending the last few nights in the Strand Palace Hotel in London and I came to say goodbye to them, and we had a bedroom on the second floor, and I think several incendiaries hit the hotel that night and the following night, but we were alright because we were downstairs.

RL: And in Rickmansworth what happened whilst there was an air raid, what kind of drill?

TS: Well, I don't remember anything during the day, it was mainly at night, and in our house, as I said, we slept on the mattresses in a cupboard under the stairs, which was quite large.

RL: Was there any provision made for the fact that you were Jewish?

TS: No.

RL: You mentioned going to Par. Was that at a later date?

TS: Oh, that was after 1940, the autumn of 1940. Up to 1940, I'd only been in Christian households, I mean it was the Christian people in Newcastle, then I had the Christian school and the Pavlows were not Jewish.

RL: And when it came to a festival or anything, was there ever any?

TS: I don't think I was aware of anything.

RL: When did you come back from the evacuation, when did that end?

TS: I actually didn't come back from evacuation, because I left the moor in Rickmansworth to go to Cornwall. When my aunt and uncle went, they felt that, as they had, I mean, I was at school through them, and this was really just a day school, they had to make more provision for me, so again they must have worked very hard with Bloomsbury House, on the Czech Refugee Committee, and got me placed in this place. And I only have happy memories, if one can describe it like that. My education was fine, my friends were fantastic, I had opportunities of good education, and the only thing is every night I prayed for my parents, I was obviously aware of the situation and things were getting worse and worse. I mean, after '42, no word from my father and I think I only had about three letters after '42 from my mother until 1944, so there was not a great deal of contact. The aunt and uncle had gone to America, but I still had the other aunt, who was living in Altringham, Bowden actually, with her son who was working in Metrovicks in Manchester, and I used to correspond with her, and the odd holiday I would go and spend with her, but then she emigrated to Canada, so that link went. But, because I had nowhere to go during the school holidays, the school was always open, they never closed, but I was always invited to one of my school friends to spend holidays, my close friends. I went to Cardiff, I went to Evesham, I was taken into peoples' homes, which was very nice.

RL: When did your aunt go to Canada?

TS: I can't remember the exact date when she went; I don't have that documented at all. Probably it might have been '42, '43, I mean she obviously was waiting for, I say Canada, no, that was wrong, they went to America, they ended up in Cleveland and then only did she go to Canada after that, so that must have been after the war, but I don't have a clear recollection.

End of Tape 1

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minute 34 seconds

RL: What kind of contact did you have with your brother and sister during this time?

TS: I had a regular contact with my brother, he used to write to me every single week and I used to write to him every single week. My sister was not quite such a regular correspondent but we did correspond, so we were in touch all the time.

RL: And what was happening to them?

TS: Well, my sister was living with the Leons and going to school, and she is 5 years older than I am, so, work backwards, she eventually came to Leeds University. My brother in the meantime was working in a number of places, I think at the initial stage he worked for Carmine Links, and he used to go to night classes, and eventually he qualified, got an external London BSc., and he started working in a much more technical sort of background and when he started I remember he was earning seven shillings and sixpence and he lived in a little bed-sit in St. Johns Wood and out of that seven and sixpence a week he used to send me a monthly amount of pocket money, 'cause obviously I had nobody to send me any money or anything, so he used to subsidise me. So regularly once a month I used to get a little half crown pocket money from him. But whenever I needed any support it always came from him. With one exception, when during the Blitz there was a three-week lull when I had no letters. I never discovered from him what happened, whether he'd got bombed, or whether something went wrong, but that's the only time I never had a letter from him, every week otherwise there was a letter from him. And he took his responsibilities about looking after me very seriously because when I had to leave Kingsley School to find another school, he was instrumental in finding a school for me and finding somewhere to live for me, and so on. But he had always been like that.

RL: Aside from the money that he sent you, did you get money from any other source?

TS: Not that I was aware of. I can't answer those things, I don't know where the clothes came from, I know a lot of them were pass-downs, the Leons used to give me their daughter's pass-downs or my sister used to send me hers, but there must have been a small amount of money, perhaps deposited by the Telsches, for use, but I didn't handle it, I mean I was too young at that stage. And whether it was left for the school to handle I don't know. But the Jewish, the Czech Refugee Committee was also in constant touch with me. I still have a few letters from them.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 38 seconds

RL: And where were they based?

TS: In Kensington. Kensington Gardens, Rutland Gardens I think it was, near Knightsbridge in London.

RL: And what kind of contact did they have with you?

TS: Well there was a lady who obviously had me as her responsibility and she'd keep in touch that I was alright, I think the last letter I had was when I got married.

RL: Do you remember what she was called?

TS: Not offhand without going through the correspondence.

RL: Did she used to come to visit you?

TS: No, I never saw her, it was always done by correspondence.

RL: And was there ever an occasion where she was able to help you in any way?

TS: Well, she must have done in some ways, otherwise the only other thing I can think where they might have had an input was I was one of the few people who was naturalised as a minor, in other words before the age of 16 or 18, which is very unusual. And I put this down to the fact that after the war, Great Britain was going to take 1,000 orphans from the concentration camps, but they could only find seven hundred and something, and therefore there was a deficit, so they looked to other orphans within the country. So I actually became a British citizen by the time I was 16, so I'm British in my own right, without having to get married. So whether they had something to do with that I don't know.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 15 seconds

RL: How had contact started with this Czech Refugee Committee?

TS: It must have been there from the word go, because I have a little postcard which is I think May or June 1939, which tells me that I've got to be well-behaved. I think it was a postcard that was given to everybody, it was in German, it was in Czech and it was in English, telling you that you are to be on your best behaviour because you were in a country where they will judge people by your behaviour. I've still got that somewhere in my documents.

RL: And when you corresponded with your siblings, did you used to write back to this lady as well?

TS: Yes, yes.

RL: What language did you...?

TS: Well, English. The only people I used to write to in German were my parents, and my relations, that was our common language.

RL: But your siblings?

TS: English, well, they were at English schools, they were living in England, it was always English, well, as far as I remember anyway.

RL: Did you ever use German with anybody as a spoken language whilst you were here?

TS: No, in fact I only picked up my German again when I decided to take it for school certificate and I had to do a correspondence course for that because German wasn't taught at school.

RL: And with the other German refugee girls at Kingsley?

TS: We spoke English.

RL: Was that a conscious decision?

TS: I have no conscious decisions that I am aware of, it's just one of those things. You spoke English, you were in English milieu.

RL: And then, as you said, during holidays you went back to different friends' homes?

TS: Yes.

RL: How did you find it doing that?

TS: Well, I enjoyed it immensely because it gave me a feel of family life and how other people lived. I went into a normal household, which I wouldn't have had otherwise, and in fact my best friend, she's a widow and lives in Finland and I'm still in touch with her, I used to love going to her parents' house in Cardiff. Her mother was Norwegian and it was very nice.

Tape 2: 7 minutes 42 seconds

RL: Did you ever come across any anti-Semitism or anti-Jewish or anti-German or anti-foreign feeling?

TS: No, you would never find any anti- in Kingsley school. That was not allowed. Tolerance and understanding were the only things which were allowed.

RL: And what subjects did you learn?

TS: I actually had no problem with schooling, I found school easy, I enjoyed the work, I worked hard and I liked it. Finally, I ended up by taking Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Biology and I won a major scholarship for Leeds University. And that's how I came to Leeds.

RL: And you mentioned that you had had to change schools as well. How was that?

TS: Well, because Kingsley was evacuated to Tintagel, which is a small village, we were billeted all around. I actually lived on a farm and we didn't have a proper laboratory and to do science you need a laboratory, so after I had matriculated, which I took rather early, I took it in the December rather than in the summer, I moved across to another school, basically to do science, and I moved now to South Devon, to another boarding school, which had initially come from Seaford. And it was called Blatchington Court. This school doesn't exist either anymore, neither of these schools exist. And although they

guaranteed that they'd have laboratories for me, they weren't on the premises. I had to go once a week to Exeter to the boy's grammar school, which was Bishop's Blackhall School to do science. I used to do one day a week science at Bishop Blackhall School and that wasn't very satisfactory. So I did pass Chemistry and Physics within the 6-month period that I took it, but I then left that school and I needed somewhere where we had a proper laboratory, so we were on the hunt again. Now this time I moved to the Rygate County School for Girls in Reigate, Surrey. Believe it or not, they had a laboratory, but they hadn't a teacher, because there were shortages of science teachers. So where do I do my science? At Reigate Grammar School for Boys and there was one other girl with me, we used to go to do physics and chemistry with the boys. And amongst the boys in that year, was, oh, what was he called? I've forgotten it now. He was quite a well-known broadcaster and so was his wife - Mitchell Moore. Now it was his wife who was also a broadcaster, but it was her brother who was in my class so we once again had a celebrity. But there we are, that was my schooling.

Tape 2: 11 minutes 5 seconds

RL: When you moved from Kingsley, did other girls move with you for the same reason?

TS: No, no, well if they did I wasn't aware of anybody; I always went on my own. So, plenty of uprootings!

RL: And how did you adjust to all these moves?

TS: I don't know. I have no idea. I was extremely polite, I was very well-mannered, I had learned how to do these sort of things, you have to if you're constantly moving, you've got to be able to get on with people and you learn that.

RL: And each time did you lodge with a family?

TS: Well, in Kingsley all the girls were billeted in different houses and there were sort of 8, 10, 15 of you in one house. So we were like that and then we had our own form. In Blatchington Court they were billeted in a very beautiful house, must have been like Harewood House, you know, that sort of estate. And one of my school acquaintances there was a girl who came from Powderham Castle, she was Lady Powderham or God knows what, I can't remember the name, another you know nobility. I only stayed six months there but in Reigate I was entirely on my own and I was lodged first of all with a family called Mundy. Mr. Mundy was in the services, Mrs. Mundy had two small children and she had a spare room. And I lodged with her for several months. And then I changed again, this time I lodged with the Hasler family, and I went to them because Ruth Hasler was an upper sixth former and I was a lower sixth former and we got friendly, and I went and stayed with her and shared a bedroom with her and her sister and lived with her family for the two years I was in Reigate. Ruth unfortunately died in her second year at university, I think she must have had something like meningitis, we would call it meningitis today, they couldn't give it a name, she just died very suddenly at

university. But I've been in touch with the family all along, the older group have died of course, but I'm still in touch with one of...with Daphne, the other sister.

RL: Did you keep in touch with friends that you'd made in Kingsley?

TS: Yes, because I'm still in touch. And in fact I went back in 2000 we had a reunion in Horley and about 150 of us went back to the reunion although the school doesn't exist anymore and it was good.

RL: Who was the headmaster there?

TS: It was the headmistress. Well, that's a difficult question as well, because this school was started by these six fantastic women and I don't know which one of them was the head. They were all just sort of equal but eventually the head was Vivian Shepherd, who happens to be the aunt of my best friend from Kingsley. This lady I'm still in touch with and they were a remarkable family. But after her, another lady took over who was called Miss Edwards, and then I don't know because I lost touch, close touch, with the school.

Tape 2: 14 minutes 50 seconds

RL: How aware were you whilst at school of what was happening in the war and what was happening in Europe?

TS: I was beginning to get more and more conscious of what was happening because, while we were living in this farmhouse, the farmer and his wife used to have the radio on and we used to listen to the news, so we were beginning to be aware, and also we used to have regular prayers at school and things would be announced, and not only that, but the school took a great part in helping the war service. We worked on the farm, we milked cows, we did the milk round, we planted potatoes, we stocked corn, we did all sorts. We made camouflage nets, we salted beans, I even taught first aid to the home guard. We did all those sort of things but, on top of all that, once a year there used to be a fund-raising effort, whether it was air-force week, or army week, and the main staff, the principals used to write these pageants and we used to take part in this and raise money. We were always doing things. And amongst the sort of people the principals mixed with, for example, J.B. Priestly was a regular visitor at school; I remember playing table tennis with him, and being aware of the fact that he was a writer and a broadcaster. And one of the other principals, who didn't spend so much time at the school, was actually a professor at Cambridge, of Philosophy, a very well-known philosopher, so you know we had a lot of interesting stimulation.

RL: And did the other schools that you went to also have activities for the war effort?

TS: No, they were rather different schools, they were in towns, and by that time when I got to Reigate it was already at the end of the war, after the war so to speak in Europe, so that wasn't that sort of a thrust.

RL: How long were you at Kingsley?

TS: Four years, very formative years, from 1940 to December '44, so I was already 15 by the time I left.

RL: And do you remember the end of the war, the day that the war ended?

TS: I have a recollection of that I went... In fact, at that time, I happened to be staying with what was a pen pal of mine and she lived in Blackheath, she was called Maureen Hallguy, I was staying with her family, and her cousin was there, he was a sailor on leave at the time, and the three of us actually went up to Trafalgar Square. I can't remember anything more than that.

RL: When did you finish school?

TS: I finished school in the summer of 1947, from Reigate, where I got my high school certificate and County Major to come to Leeds, so I then came to Leeds in 1947 and by that time my sister had qualified as a medic at Leeds Medical School and she was studying for her membership, so she was in digs in Leeds and I joined her in the digs, and then she left Leeds and I met Norman through her, because she'd met Norman's cousin, who she married and then I married Norman.

RL: Before that, when did you discover what had happened to your father and how soon after the end of the war did you find out?

Tape 2: 19 minutes 4 seconds

TS: I don't know exactly when, I've no date in a diary or anything, and all I know is that my brother told me that both my parents were dead and that was that. But as far as the detail about father, I only picked that up eventually after looking through from the Yad Vashem or wherever I did some little research and I got the Auschwitz little papers, it might have been from the Red Cross, I don't know, anyway I got those which gave the date. I've never found anything out about my mother at all.

RL: So is your brother...?

TS: Well, my brother was the eldest, and he was in contact, and he was a Slovak speaker and he must have made contact, so.... I know they had one or two people who survived the Holocaust in Slovakia, and I have some letters from them, from 1945/46, but they then emigrated to Canada.

RL: So you moved up to Leeds and what did you think of Leeds having lived in the South?

TS: I don't think I took any notice of it. I came here to study, and I was busy. I took part in the activities at the university, I was a sporty girl, I played tennis for the Chemistry

Department, I played hockey for the Women's Team, you know, I did all those things that kept me busy, and then when I did meet Norman We used to play tennis, I had no time for other things. Having said that, I mean, like all the youngsters, we used to go out to the dances, and we used to mix together, but I didn't sort of compare North with South.

RL: And when did you eventually marry?

TS: Well, that was quite a difficult problem, because I had this County Major scholarship, and I always have to do things the difficult way. I wanted to do Medicine and my aunt and uncle, the Telsches, who were now in America, felt that that was far too long a training and they wouldn't give me permission to do that, so I wanted to find the nearest thing I could, so I found a special honours course in Biochemistry, which was 4 years anyway. I don't think they realised that, so I enrolled, and this was a brand new course, it was the second year, and there were 5 of us, I was the only girl with 4 fellows. I did a year, by which time it became evident that Norman and I were thinking of getting married, and Norman is appreciably older than I am, and he said, 'Well, you'll have to make up your mind, you'll either study or you get married, you can't do both'. It was a very big decision to do because my brother and sister felt I should continue my studies but I decided I'd been rootless for 10 years, I needed some security, and I thought Norman would be that for me, so I did another three months, in other words into my second year, and then we got married in December '48. And the Surrey Education Committee wasn't very pleased with me, because I had denied somebody else from using my County Major scholarship, obviously they wouldn't have given it to me if they knew I wasn't going to go through with it, but anyway that was the decision which was taken and we got married in 1948.

RL: And you gave up...?

TS: The County Major scholarship and the long study.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 3 seconds

RL: Can you tell me something about Norman and his background?

TS: Well, Norman comes from an Orthodox Jewish family, his mother's family comes from the Ukraine, his father's family from Lithuania, and his father came over to England as a very small child, and Norman was English-born. And, like many people in Leeds, he was in the clothing industry, he has a degree in Economics, he'd done his war service, he'd learned Japanese for the intention of interrogating Japanese prisoners during the war, which he never used, 'cause he got as far as India when the war stopped and he wasn't prepared to sign up any longer. And he has a brother who spent 3 years as a prisoner of war with the Japanese, in Changi (?), that wasn't a very nice experience, and his elder brother was in the Green Howards, and they all did their bit, and they came back to pick up their jobs. Norman went back into the clothing industry, and, when we married, the first three months of our marriage, we actually lived with my in-laws, 'til we found a house, and then we set up home in Scot Hall Road, and we had two girls, and we

lived in Scot Hall Road 25 years. And then, of course, I went back to study, when my... after I'd been at home 5 years, I felt I had to study, I couldn't, coffee mornings and kids and things just wasn't right for me, so I started again, went back. Norman had to pay this time, so he subsidised me, and I qualified in '58. I then wanted to do more and I then worked as a research assistant, I then went to the university and did a couple of years of research and got a Masters, and that's how it went on.

RL: What was your research in?

TS: Something which most people know very little about. The initial research I did for my Masters was on a species, a fungal species, called Omatophides (?) some of these cause things like athlete's foot, very uninteresting for most people. So that's what I worked on. But eventually I worked on much more medically-orientated stuff, I was interested in paediatrics and I worked on paediatric liver disease and jaundice and things like that.

RL: And where were you working?

TS: Well, initially at Leeds University, then the Department of Chemical Pathology, and then I found it quite difficult to find a suitable job, but I thought I'd got a job where I could do further studies, but it didn't work out that way, so I then decided to go to what was then Leeds College of Technology as a Lecturer in Biochemistry and I stayed at the college, which eventually became Leeds Metropolitan University, and I ended up as a Principal Lecturer in Biochemistry. But I was always basically teaching Medical Biochemistry to people like dieticians and, well, medical scientists.

RL: When did you start lecturing?

TS: I think I started in 1967, I think I got my job at LMU.

RL: Now, going back to your marriage, you said you lived on Scot Hall Road. What kind of home was that?

TS: We had a very nice four-bed roomed detached house, and we stayed there 25 years, brought the kids up and they left home and the house was too big.

RL: And what children did you have?

TS: I have two daughters, there's Ruth, who was born in 1950, and she's got a Masters in Education, she's a teacher, she lives in America, and Judith was born in 1953, she lives near Nottingham, she's a pharmacist and she has two boys.

RL: And who did they marry?

Tape 2: 27 minutes 39 seconds

TS: Who did they marry? Well, Ruth is divorced now, she married a Mr. Scharf, and Judith married a Mr. Smith.

RL: And what backgrounds had they?

TS: Well, the kosher one was Mr. Scharf, who was a most abominable fellow, take that out if we can, he wasn't our choice, and it didn't work out. And Brian comes from a Methodist background, a very nice young man too.

RL: And what children do they have?

TS: Two boys. Ruth has three children, a boy of 16, a daughter of 21ish plus, and another of 24 plus.

RL: And what do the two older ones do?

TS: One is just finishing college and the other one is a graduate and she's got a job, she's working.

RL: And your other daughter?

TS: Yes, two boys, aged 11 and getting on for 14, they're at school.

RL: After you were married, did you join any clubs or societies, any organisations?

TS: I did join the Blanche Dugdale group, you know, one of the Woodsow groups, basically this is before I went back to university because all my sort of young women friends, who had young kids, all seemed to have joined that, but I was never really active in it. I just joined because my sister-in-law belonged and this one belonged and that one belonged, but once I started studying everything stopped, because if you do full-time study, running a house, with two kids, there is no time for anything extra, although we used to have the odd bridge game.

RL: And was your husband active in any...?

TS: Yes, Norman's been active in all sorts of things: Rep. Council, Welfare Board, Masonic, he was very active particularly with the Friends of the Hebrew University, so he was always busy. And, of course, with being from the Silman family, they were very much associated with people like Boretski and mixed in that circle.

RL: Zionism is not something you mentioned up 'til now, is it?

TS: It's a topic that I actually tend to avoid because I'm not clear in my own mind. I don't think that my own natural instinct is Zionism, but Norman's family's instinct is Zionism, because they were involved with the 1925 Balfour Declaration and the founding of things, and the Hebrew University and things. And, on the other hand, while in

Czechoslovakia, with the German situation as it was, I was certainly aware of the Jewish organisations and people going to what was then Palestine, I was aware of that. Some of my family actually ended up in what was then Palestine, but I've never looked at it from a sort of Zionist point of view, I think with the background which I've had, I've a much wider view. I firmly believe that everybody can follow what they want to believe in, and everybody has a right. Personally, religion has little meaning to me at all. On the other hand, having had my 4 years upbringing, I like to think that I'm extremely tolerant and understanding and I'm quite happy for people to do what they do within the sort of code which I consider to be right and wrong. And that code tends to be the Judeo-Christian code. There isn't much difference in what people in a place like England would look at from the way I look at it. On the other hand, I can see the attraction of the Jewish nation having its own home, obviously it depends on how one looks at the background, from the history, but I would rather see peace everywhere, rather than have bad spirit over such things. But it doesn't work like that, I don't live in Utopia.

Tape 2: 32 minutes 20 seconds

RL: Have you visited Israel?

TS: Yes, of course I have.

RL: When was your first visit?

TS: In about 1960/'61ish, and I felt very much at home there because it had much more of a European flavour, to my feelings, than the UK, and at that time I would have quite happily gone and lived there. I don't think I would do now.

RL: You mentioned just now about religion. What level of observance did you keep at home?

TS: Well, the once a year, Rosh Hashanah, I don't remember having Pessach, I remember having Matsid, having family dinner, but that would be it. Another thing which might interest you of course, my grandmother, who lived in Verbrugge after she was widowed, she would come to us and visit and she would actually sleep in our house, but she wouldn't eat in our house because we weren't kosher. But she did have other members of her family who lived in the town and she would go and eat there, but she wouldn't eat in our house.

RL: Did your daughters have a Hebrew education?

TS: Yes, they had a Hebrew education, in fact my older daughter in America is relatively active, but she's in a constructionist Shul, which is obviously very far out left, all the kids have Bar Mitzvahs or Bat Mitzvahs and fantastic services. You've got the rabbi there, strumming away on his guitar, which is plugged into the electric plug, but they're all sincere and they all do the right things, and the rabbi is still going and teaching the youngsters, he goes in to teach at the synagogue. Norman is actually a Hebrew speaker

and is very well versed in Jewish studies. So there we are. I keep a kosher household, not that kosher, but I keep a kosher household, so you can see how contradictory things are about me.

RL: And do you belong, does Norman belong to a synagogue?

TS: Yes, he goes every Shabbath.

RL: Which one does he belong to?

TS: He belongs to the one in Shadwell Lane, the United Hebrew Congregation.

RL: So did he keep up his Orthodox...?

TS: Oh yes, he does, I mean I don't stop him from going to synagogue, I go once a year and I wouldn't go once a year, it's just to please him, just to keep quiet.

RL: Do you think your experiences affected your religious beliefs or do you think you've not changed over the years?

TS: Oh, I think one changes, but I think with the background and my experiences, religion doesn't hold anything for me, despite the fact that I saw a great deal of religions practices while I was at Kingsley, because it was a very good church school and they had a church parade, and I mean I even used to go to church, I used to enjoy the singing. I didn't have to go 'cause we used to have a withdrawal class for our correspondence course, but those things just don't affect me. I don't think they have anything for me, which I think many people in my situation, I think the majority of people in my situation feel. No, religion doesn't do anything for you, it's humanity, and as long as humanity is bad, we'll have the world that we've got.

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

Tape 2: 36 minutes 0 second

TS: I perfectly accept them as they are today; you've got to move on. I know other people who won't, but I think, in my opinion, they're wrong. One of the reasons why I've got much involved in the Holocaust Survivors Friendship Association is, when I retired, I've made the time, and really the major purpose is education. It may never happen, but if you don't educate people, you'll never know whether you've a chance of achieving better standards. And, unfortunately, seeing what I see around me is that religious education sometimes goes in the wrong direction. It doesn't go in the direction of tolerance and peace and that's another reason why I find I don't want to be associated with it. I'm a Jew, I will die a Jew, I was born a Jew. But as far as being a practising Jew, that's totally out of the question.

RL: When did you start with Holocaust education?

TS: Pure chance. When I retired, I made up my mind I was going to keep myself really active and do all sorts of things. I was going to join a political party, I've always been a political animal, but if I join anything I have to be active, I can't just sit. So one day Norman pointed out an advert in the Jewish Chronicle, saying, 'Oh, we seem to have got an advert here for anybody who's been a refugee, there's going to be a meeting for them all to get together'. It was just the right time for me, so I went. And stupid me, they were looking for a secretary. Stupidly, I said, 'Well, I don't know whether I want to do this, but I said that I'll take it on for two, three months and, if I don't like it, you can have it back again'. And I've stuck. So, in fact it was from then onwards that I've at long last met people with a similar background, not necessarily the same, because there's only two other people who come from Czechoslovakia in our group. One is a camp survivor from quite a different part of Czechoslovakia, and the other one is a second generation. But most of the people are Austrian, Polish, German, very, very few from my neck of the wood. Anyway, the point is that apart from socialising and getting together, we suddenly realised that we have remembrance of Holocaust, not only should we have remembrance, but we should try through education to get through to as many people as possible the idea of understanding and tolerance. And that is how I've become involved.

RL: And when did this start?

TS: The HSFA was started in essence by some workers at the East Jewish Welfare Board, who had on their books several elderly, very lonely survivors and refugees, and they suddenly realised they were not in touch and it would be a good idea to form a group. So they approached Heinz Skyte, who'd been the Chief Executive at the Welfare Board, but he'd retired by then and he didn't think it was such a good idea, but anyway, to cut a long story short, it took off the ground, they had a few meetings and about 40 people showed interest, and they then formed a working party and I actually joined the working party. And by the following year, by 1997, we actually elected a committee and Chair and all the rest of it, and we've been functional since.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 56 seconds

RL: And how often does the group meet?

TS: We basically meet once every two months from the social point of view, and initially about 17/18 of us did a little training programme for going to schools, and we're down to a very small number now, so a number of us go to schools, but the major request from schools, particularly in the early times, was for camp survivors and even Beth Shalom wasn't interested in refugees or Kindertransport. But as we're getting fewer and fewer, those of us who are still able to, like Kindertransport or refugees, are speaking, but in Leeds we have a problem: the Leeds Education Committee, there isn't such a thing now, the Leeds schools don't invite us as often as we wish they would. We have very small requests, few requests, more requests come from outside. But we have some very, very active camp members, who go down to Beth Shalom once or twice a week, some of them are beginning to tail off now, it's getting too much for them, and they speak all around

the country and even out of the country, in Germany and so on. My next speaking engagement is on the 7th December, when there is an Anne Frank exhibition being launched at the Trinity All Saints College, which will run for a fortnight and I've been involved with the launch of it, and another one of our members, John Chirag is going to give a special lecture later during the week, he's a camp survivor. I did another launch in Wakefield on the 1st September for Anne Frank, then of course we've got Holocaust Memorial day coming off, so we've got various schools to go to for that, so we keep quite busy.

RL: How big a group have you got here?

TS: Our membership is almost a hundred, but we...I would think half of that are survivors, the rest are now people who are interested and who are prepared to share and share our aims of education and Holocaust remembrance, and we've trained in half a dozen younger people who are now beginning to go out to schools, so we are trying to push it down.

RL: And was that the first connection you had with the Holocaust group?

Tape 2: 42 minutes 35 seconds

TS: Yes I didn't think of the Holocaust in that way, I knew I'd lost my family, and all my extended family, the few that were still alive were scattered all over the world. I still have an aunt in Bratislava and I still have a cousin and her husband in Budapest, but those are the only remaining ones in Europe that I'm aware of. The others went to America, Australia, Canada.

RL: Did you ever used to speak about your experiences before joining this group?

TS: No. My children know a little bit because I've kept in touch with my relations in Slovakia and Hungary, and they knew a little of my background, but I never thought seriously about it, in fact, 'til the Spielberg interviews. It was only then that I suddenly realised, well, it is certainly of interest to my kids, and if it is required for testimony it's worthwhile doing. And that was it.

RL: Now you say, you've said before, that you actually went to visit your relation in Bratislava...

TS: Yes, I've been...

RL: Can you tell me about that trip back?

TS: Well, the very first trip back was I think about '60/'61. I wanted Norman to see where I came from, so we actually had quite an extended trip in Europe. We went to Vienna and from Vienna it's not far to Bratislava and, at that time, my uncle, who was the brother of my father, and his second wife were still living about twenty minutes out of

Bratislava. This uncle had been married before and he had a wife and a child but they were killed in the Holocaust and after the war he met this lady, who is my aunt now, Magda, who had also been married, but her family had been killed. So the two of them got together. And he was in his old house, where he had lived previously, and he was the doctor in the area, a highly respected man, and we went to visit. So I took Norman to see my aunt and uncle, he saw where I lived, he saw the town where I came from, just to give him the flavour. I have been back about 4 years ago because my...A sad part of the story that I haven't mentioned to you is that my mother and father I think got divorced after my brother left in 1939, for a number of reasons: her mother was a widow, her mother was pressurising her to come and stay with her, my father had no income, nobody had any income, he couldn't work, he had to give up the flat, so initially they lived a little bit in the flat at my grandma's, but then things got worse, and my mother then lived with her mother, my father ended up in a little bed-sit. But my father had three quite valuable paintings, now I've no proof, but I believe these paintings were given to my father while he was a banker in lieu of quite a large loan, and these three paintings were actually hidden in the same village where my grandmother was hidden, and after the war, they were returned but none of us had homes. I was sixteen, my brother lived in a bed-sit, my sister was studying, so these three paintings actually went to my uncle's house. And all of us forgot about them. And then, after I got busy with all this Holocaust business, I suddenly realised, those paintings actually belong to us, they don't belong to my Aunt Magda, I mean, she wasn't even family then, and she never realised those paintings belonged to us. Anyway, to cut a long story short, she was amenable that we should take these paintings and bring them to England, so in fact my sister and I went out again to Bratislava. My sister went with a very heavy heart, she's a very emotional person, and she felt she probably couldn't cope with it, but anyway, she came, and she was glad she went. I took her round, and we saw everything, and we arranged for the pictures to come over. And the pictures are very interesting, and none of them are here, because the one which belongs to me now is 4 foot 6 by 4 foot and there isn't a wall in this house which would take that. And it is of Judith, from the story of Judith and Holofernes, and it's a beautiful painting of Judith with a jewelled sword, holding the head of Holofernes just behind her skirt, you can just see the head peeping out. Well, it's not the sort of...it was a wonderful drawing, which was above our grand piano in our flat, the painting. I think we even know the painter but I've no provenance. But the duplicate of this picture is in the Munich Pinakothek and I've got a picture of that and that picture and our picture are not identical, for one reason and one reason only, that Judith is holding the sword, but in different fingers: instead of having her thumb out, she's got her finger out in ours, the size is the same, everything is the same, but I can't prove that it's an original, I can't prove anything, because I haven't got the money or the energy to start doing things like that. Now, my daughter lives in a very large old Rectory in the middle of nowhere, and she's got just the right home for it, so our Judith has my Judith. And my sister has actually taken the two other pictures because my brother didn't want them. And my father was an opera lover and one must be a nineteenth-century French painting of Pagliacci having just killed his lover in the opera scene, a very well painted one. And the third picture, which I think must have in some ways a Roman Catholic connotation or linkage with my father's bank, I think this picture must have belonged to somebody who was either related or... because this is the head of John the Baptist on a plate. And

interestingly enough, when I went down to London to see the Roman art of the 16th, 14th, 15th, 16th-century, there was a Caravaggio there, and the Caravaggio had exactly the same tablecloth as we have under our John the Baptist's head. But I don't think it's Caravaggio who's painted ours, but it could be a 16th century original. Now, I haven't the energy, I haven't the money, I haven't the drive, I need the provenance for these three paintings. So that's why we went back. My aunt, unfortunately, just the last two months was taken seriously ill, and she's now in the Jewish old people's home in Bratislava. My problem is: her native tongue is Slovak, which I don't speak; she speaks almost as bad German as I do, so we correspond in German, but I don't think she'll correspond now, so I find it very difficult to keep in touch, but we have a member at the HSFA, Erica Harris, who's a second generation and she's a political lecturer and she travels to Bratislava quite frequently and she keeps contact for me. And in fact it was she who organised, helped to organise, to get her into the Jewish home.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 8 seconds

RL: On your return to Bratislava, how did you feel going back, especially on the first visit?

TS: I can tell you I felt tremendous excitement, I couldn't sleep. The first night we were in the hotel, I got up at 3 in the morning and went to the balcony and just looked out. Where I was looking hadn't changed, it was exactly as it was. Now the old town of Bratislava is extremely old, it goes back to Roman times, it was mentioned in 800 God-knows when. It was also a capital city for the Austro-Hungarian Empire because many of their kings were crowned in the cathedral there and are buried there. But the old city has been kept, so that hasn't changed, with the exception of the one piece of road near my grandmother's house. The newer parts were all industrialised rather horribly by the Russians. And I felt at home, and I felt quite happy walking round, I knew my way, you could have put me there blindfolded. The only trouble was the Slovak names had been changed to Russian names, so they no longer were the same street names, so even if I knew the street, the street name had changed, which was quite interesting. Now, I felt at home but I didn't feel at home because I lacked the language. You can't go back home if you don't speak the language. And this I think is one of the things, which is inexplicable: I wasn't even 10, yet the nurtured ten years there have brought a tremendous European inside me, not a British, despite the fact I can't speak the language. I do not feel my roots here. I've been married 55 years next month, I've been in England since 1939, I speak very good English, with many English attitudes, but I don't belong, just as I don't belong to the Jewish community here, I don't belong, I don't identify, they're totally different from the Jewish community in Europe.

RL: In what way?

TS: Well, the Europeans became emancipated. The British lot didn't. That's made a difference. I don't know where you're standing from but the European outlook is totally different.

RL: Will you elaborate a little bit more on that?

TS: Well, again, I haven't done any depth of research into this, but the little bit I understand is that the Lithuanians and the Russians, who came here, tended to keep themselves together and therefore have developed in that rather close, inward-looking society. The Jews from the Hungarian, Austro-Hungarian Empire, were outward-looking, and they took on, feeling they wanted to become Europeans. They didn't denounce their Jewishness. Some of them did eventually, to save themselves, but it didn't. I have, for example, cousins who were baptised, in the hope that Hitler wouldn't get them. Well, we know the end of the story, don't we? But that wasn't done for religious reasons, just as the Spanish Moranos and others. You do things to save your skin in the hope that things will get better. And that's one of the reasons why I want to go and speak to schools and speak to groups, not particularly of my Jewishness, but that people realise you have to be tolerant, you've got to accept people. We all have our own peculiarities, but we all are the same. I mean I'm a biochemist, I know about my innards and your innards, and all the things how we work, and we're all the same, although our genes might be a bit different, we still have the same problems.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 21 seconds

RL: So in what way do you feel different to the British?

TS: Well, my experience of the Jewish community has been rather...just of the Jewish community, because Norman's family was a close family. With all my study and work, I didn't have a great deal of time to go outside doing things, and I've always found them...you can't put them into my skin. They haven't been from pillar to post. They have lived like little Jewish princesses. They have had things easy. How can I expect them to see things my way? They found it, I think, quite difficult: my politics, my outlook, the way I want to get about things. I mean very few of my contemporaries do the sort of work that I do, the HSFA is only one of the things that I do. I was quite politically active 'til just recently, because I got fed up with what was happening, but I'm much involved with health services and things like that: I have been appointed to one of these new patient forums, which are about to be launched next month, until now I've done 5 years with the Community Health Council, all these sorts of things, which are important. But of course when it boils down to it, every one of us is selfish, we make our choices of what we do, to protect ourselves to a large extent. One of the reasons why I (a) wanted to study and have a career, (b) on retirement wanted to keep really occupied, I mean I could do with more time for myself, I don't have much time, because I read documents and write things, the reason was this: I'm a realist and I realise the likelihood is that my husband will go before I will, and I will be left on my own. I must have something I can do, because my family isn't here, I do not have that unison amongst my peers, which I would have had with, for example, my friend in Finland. If she were here, that would be great, I'd find something in common, because she has my childhood in common. But the people in here, despite the fact that I've been here a long time, it's difficult to explain. I find I'm more at ease with the people from the Holocaust Survivors Friendship Association than the peers that I've mixed with.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 1 second

RL: You say that you feel European?

TS: Absolutely.

RL: In what way?

TS: I don't feel British. Britain is insular.

RL: What is it connected with? Is it connected with culture or way of life? Can you sort of pinpoint what it is?

TS: I have to go back to my first ten years. I'm going back to the way we lived at home and the life we lived at home is not the life we lived here. As I said to you I could have gone to Israel at some stage, because in 1960 I still had that European feel in Israel, which you haven't got in the UK. I don't know whether you've been able to make that yourself from your own travels.

End of tape 2

TAPE 3**Tape 3: 0 minute 36 seconds**

RL: You were just talking about, really, your feelings of identity and your feelings of being different. In terms of nationality, what would you class yourself as?

TS: That's again an unanswerable question. I've got a UK passport, I was naturalised at the age of 16, I've lived here since the age of 9, I'm perfectly aware of English customs and I've no problems whatsoever. But deep down its not the soil I come from, I can't tell you any more than that. But you see, if I go back home now, I feel fine, and then I get the terrible smack in the face, I can't communicate. So there's no point going back. And now, having married an Englishman, well, at least one of my kids is English, I suppose, and I've got grandchildren here now, I should make roots, but it's a bit late in life.

RL: How secure do you feel here?

TS: That's another question one doesn't answer very lightly today. I have terrible, terrible fears, not physical fear but mental fear if you like, that we are going to go through terrible global slaughter and it's again in my opinion religious-based. I don't need to elaborate, I think you know what I'm alluding to, no proof, but that's what I feel. Human beings are as wicked and as bad as they've ever been, and, as long as you indoctrinate people with the wrong ideas, something dreadful has to happen before it'll clear the air. And that is a fear I have for my grandchildren, I shan't be here I don't think. But, for example, it

sounds daft, but, when Norman goes to Shul on a Shabbath, I still, at the back, think anyone can lob a bomb in there or get a car in, they know where the Jewish community is, they can pick some of us up from what we do and what we say and how we go round the community. In that sense, we're not safe. But England at the moment is still probably as safe as anywhere. That brings me to another thing, which... I wish I had enough time and enough energy to do all these things. I feel we very often look at everything from a European, Western European, standpoint. Just look at the world, look at Africa, the turmoil in Africa. I don't know what those African kids look like, what sort of life they lead, my heart bleeds for anybody in that situation, whether they're yellow with green horns or whether they're black, white or whatever. I know what I've been through in my small way, and what I see around me is horrendous and, coming back to my father again, my father was the greatest optimist anybody could have wished to have met, I'm given to understand, and one of the last things he said to my cousin, who took him to the transportation place, he said to her, 'I've had a good life, I know my children are safe, and I'm grateful for that'. And that was that. But I have another memory of my father, he inscribed one of my books for me, and, loosely translated, it says: 'Man ages and goes then into his second childhood, but all the time he's hoping for improvement'. Now, with a background like that, what else can I think but that, hopefully, somewhere, and sometime, human beings will learn to be more generous in their attitudes toward other people.

Tape 3: 4 minutes 51 seconds

RL: Do you think that your experiences have affected you psychologically in any way?

TS: You shouldn't ask me a question like that, because to me, psychology, biochemistry, chemistry and life is one and the same thing. Your thought processes are chemical and electrical, I don't believe in psychology put in that way. Had you put it the other way, I would have answered you, 'Yes, it's got to have affected me'. Because under stress, you have different developments in your brain, you have different attitudes. My answer is: 'Absolutely'. I mean, I'll give you an example: my sister is totally different from me, she's tall, slim, elegant, she's a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, she's just about 80, she skis, she does everything, fantastic, but she's a bundle of nerves, and every blooming day, when she puts a mouthful of food in her mouth, she thinks of my father starving in Auschwitz. She's like that. Now, she left home at the age of 14. We're totally different because we've been brought up in totally different surroundings the three of us, we've led quite different lives. She was brought up as a semi-Jewish princess, but she resented that in some ways because the two daughters...she felt she was treated quite differently from the two daughters from the household. I'm sure she wasn't but her proof is that she went to a local school, the kids went, the two daughters, went to private schools, so she was driven by doing far better than the other two did, and she was brilliant.

RL: What happened to her after leaving school, what did she...?

TS: Well, she became a doctor. She was one of the foremost rheumatologists in London, she obviously is retired now, she is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, which not very many women in her age aspired to, and a very competent doctor too she was. But she lived a totally different life from me. She mixed in the rich top circles, I was just an ordinary person. My brother who did everything under his own steam, all his studies, he became a highly respected Professor in Theoretical Physics and Metallurgy, with all sorts of honours and things, and...

RL: Where was that?

TS: In London, and I of course got married so early that I didn't allow to develop my career to the same extent, so I am the least qualified, and the least, I don't know, cultured, if you like.

RL: Did your brother and sister marry?

TS: Yes, my sister got married before I did and she married Norman's cousin, Julius Silman, and she had 3 children, has 3 children. They divorced and she's remarried. And there we are.

Tape 3: 8 minutes 10 seconds

RL: And your brother?

TS: My brother married a girl from Hamburg, and they separated, but not divorced, they're both very frail and very elderly, and he has a daughter, who now lives in America, and her husband, David James, is Steven Spielberg's favourite still photographer, so he works a lot with Steven Spielberg.

RL: Going back to my initial question of how you may have been affected, you were telling me about your sister, have you got any ways in which you feel you have been...?

TS: No, no.

RL: Do you think it affected the way you brought up your children in any way?

TS: Oh, it must have done, I'm sure it must have done, but the only thing is to ask them, I can't answer that. I'll tell you one quality I perceive in myself – I perceive myself as an extremely responsible and reliable person, who takes things very seriously. So, on that score, I think I did my duty by them. But that background has come from school, from Kingsley. If you want anybody reliable, ask Trude, that's my perception of myself. It may not be right.

RL: You've told me about your connection with the Leeds group. How long and what is your connection with the AJR?

TS: I was pressurised, no, I found myself so involved with HSFA that every time I spoke to Ron Channing, he kept on saying, 'Well, you ought to become a member of AJR' and I said, 'Well why should I? How should I? I'm not a German or Austrian refugee, I come from Czechoslovakia'. And then, of course, they have now loosened the bands, and they now take refugees virtually from anywhere, and I also felt it was necessary for the HSFA, as the Chair of the HSFA that I should be a member of AJR, after all we are affiliated and do work closely together.

Tape 3: 10 minutes 40 seconds

RL: And how long has it been now?

TS: I don't know, two, three years now.

RL: Did you ever receive any restitution?

TS: Yes, but it's a very peculiar thing, because from Slovakia you get nothing unless you actually live in Slovakia. You have to be a survivor, a Holocaust survivor, and live in Slovakia to be able to get any restitution. But I was telling you about my grandparents' house, which was knocked down. Well, my mother had an eighth share of that house because my grandparents had 5 children, they had one son and 4 daughters. The son got half and each of the daughters got an eighth. So my mother had an eighth of the house due to her. And sometime in the, I don't know whether it was the 1950s, late 1950s, the Czech Republic was actually compensating people for things they were able to prove they had lost, and it was a very small amount of money, I think they had about 14 million to disburse to all the people, and this share of my mother's house was accepted as being genuine and we received the princely sum of £725. My brother at the time estimated that that property was worth about 2 million, of which we ended up with £725 between the three of us. Apart from that, there is no way you can get restitution because (a) I don't live in Slovakia, (b) everything had been taken away. My father only lived in a rented flat in the end, he lived in a little room, which he was renting; the only stuff that he had were the three paintings, which were hidden, and that was that; the furniture, I don't know, must have been sold to keep him going in the little room, I don't know. And some of the things, which were in my grandparents' house, which were very valuable, I can't describe. There are only 2 items I remember – one was the Dürer Bible, which, if this was one of the six originals, must be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, I can't prove anything, and the other thing, she had a fantastic Meissen monkey musician set, which is, again, valuable, there were about 15 pieces. I remember that because I used to like looking at that when we went to her house. But all those things have gone and if you can't describe them and if you can't prove them...But I did try, in case father had any insurances, and nothing came up in his name, and on the last trawl in April, the most recent batch, I came across what could be my mother's name and it wasn't in Bratislava, it was in a town called Gerina, and I have actually filled out a claim form, the reason being my father did run a bank, not his own, this was after his had collapsed, in 1931/'32 in Gerina. Now, he could possibly have taken out an insurance in my mother's name, but I'm waiting (a) for confirmation that they've received it and (b) to see what's happening.

As well as that, I've picked up two other names which could have been two of my uncles, one was Alexander Feldman, which is the doctor who went to Russia, and there is even an insurance society by his name, so I have filled out the claim, not for myself but for my Aunt Magda in Bratislava, on her account, and I've sent that. I also picked up another one for another brother of my father, who also died in Auschwitz, but he was a bachelor. But I have no proof, if the names fit and if the birthdays that I can give them, we'll see. So I'm just waiting to see what's going to happen with those. You need time, effort and energy and I haven't got it. And my brother is unfortunately not well, he's past doing these things and my sister doesn't want to touch anything like that. So it's quite hard.

Tape 3: 15 minutes 33 seconds

RL: Is there anything else that you'd like to add that we've maybe missed along the way?

TS: I don't really know, honestly, I've worked all my life, I enjoyed that, I enjoyed my work, I think it was quite hard for Norman on many occasions to have a woman who was rather different from the rest of the Jewish girls he knew, but he's put up with it. As I say, it's 55 years next month, and there we are. The kids are fine, I miss them of course. We don't see, I mean, Ruth can't come over from the States every 2 or 3 minutes, she's working hard, and she's got to keep her end ticking over, she's actually coming for a visit next month, just for a week. The other interesting point, which you asked whether perhaps my background had an effect on my kids, I'll give you one example, I took a group of HSFA folks down to Beth Shalom, about 4 years ago, and as Judith actually only lives about a 15 minute drive away from Beth Shalom, I said to her, 'Would you like to come across and have a look at Beth Shalom and have lunch with us and get back to the kids after school?' So she came and she obviously found it interesting. She left early. And then a little while later, might be a few weeks or a month or two later, John Chirag was with James Smith from Beth Shalom in Frankfurt and James Smith said to John, 'I hear one of your HSFA members from Leeds has a daughter who's going to come to work at Beth Shalom'. That's the first I heard of it. Judith works one day a week as a volunteer at Beth Shalom. So you see it does have an effect. I mean she's a pharmacist and at the time she was only doing a part-time job. She still is, she's now working for the Health Department, for the Standards Health Commission, but she only does that a couple of days a week. She does a day a week at Beth Shalom.

RL: So have you a message that you'd like to finish with?

TS: Only one message and that is to strive for tolerance and global peace and if possible prevent religious strife. And that is from an a religious person. As Norman would say, I'm ignorant.

RL: Thank you.

Tape 3: 18 minutes 44 seconds

End of interview

PHOTOS**Tape 3: 18 minutes 54 seconds**

Black and white photograph. (Group)

TS: This is a photograph of my father's mother with her siblings. My grandmother is sitting in the front row at the centre, her name is Fanny Feldman, and my father is on the far left, his name is Adolf Feldman, and the other 8 people are his brothers and sisters. Two of them live in Hungary, two live in Austria, one in America and the rest in Czechoslovakia and the picture was taken after the funeral of my grandfather in 1933/34. The place is Vrumbobay, which is a small village in Czechoslovakia.

Tape 3: 19 minutes 48 seconds

Black and white photograph. (Group)

TS: This photograph shows my mother standing on the left in the dark coat, the other adult is our nanny, in between them is my brother Paul, sitting in the front row on the left is my sister Charlotte, and I'm the smallest one on the right. And this was taken somewhere in Bratislava, in one of the parks, and the approximate date is about 1934.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 22 seconds

Black and white photograph. (Group)

TS: This is a holiday snap taken in about 1935 and, on the far left, the gentleman with the hat and the stick, is my maternal grandfather, called Hermann Fischer; next to him is my grandmother, called Flora; rather hidden between my mother and my grandmother is a little child, and that's me; my mother is in a white outfit and, standing next to her, my brother Paul, next to him, my sister Charlotte, and finally my father. And the place is Bad Gastein in Austria. The date is about 1935.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 10 seconds

Black and white photograph, figure on horse.

TS: This photograph was taken in the First World War, 1914/1918, I don't know the place, but it is of my father as a Second Lieutenant and obviously he's sitting on his horse. My father's name is Adolf Feldman. The place I don't know.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 35 seconds

Black and white photograph, building.

TS: This photograph is the property, or house and shop, which belonged to my maternal grandparents, called Fischer. The shop is on the ground floor and then there are three floors with flats, this must have been taken, oh, probably in the 1920s and it is in Bratislava.

Tape 3: 22 minutes 4 seconds

Black and white photograph, City view.

TS: Here we see a view partly of Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, this must have been taken certainly well before the war, and on the left hand side is the Cathedral and on the right hand side, towards the bottom, you can see a building with two domes, and that is the synagogue to which we used to go. The synagogue is no longer functioning and, as I say, I don't really know the date, it may be just after the war or just before the war, but it certainly is not a recent photo, and the place is Bratislava. The river you can see in the background is the Danube.

Tape 3: 22 minutes 52 seconds

Black and white photograph, school group

TS: This is a yearly school photograph and it's taken in Bratislava at the Jewish school, the date is probably 1936. I am in the second row from the back, the second child from the left, in a spotted dress, with arms akimbo. And, as you can see, we have a very large class, there are about 55 of us.

Tape 3: 23 minutes 33 seconds

Coloured photograph of diary.

TS: This is my autograph book, which was given to me in 1938, and we're showing you 2 pages, the one with the drawings of the flowers has actually a little ditty in Slovak, the one on the right hand side is in German. They're both from two of my school friends. This obviously comes from Bratislava and the date would be 1938, early 1939.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 4 seconds

Documents

TS: This shows some documents from 1939, they're all from London, and they are from the British Committee for Czechoslovak Refugees, the one gives a registration number for me for when I have arrived, and this card also gives instructions that you should be on your best behaviour because you are representing your country. The actual originals are on either side of the middle one and this is in London and it is in 1939, and of course the documents are made out for me, for Trude or Gertrude Feldman.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 50 seconds

Black and white photograph, school group

TS: This is an old school photograph taken in Rickmansworth in 1939, showing my class and my teacher. My teacher, Mrs. Hall, is standing at the back, and I'm actually the pupil just in front of her with the shirt collar open and the others were all my school friends. This school, Trinity Church of England School, was actually evacuated to Rickmansworth and we were being housed in another school, which wasn't our original building.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 24 seconds

Documents

TS: This is my first report at Kingsley School, which I came to in autumn 1940 and eventually spent 4 very happy years. It is actually taken in Cornwall, in Tintagel, and the date of course is as it says on the top, December 1940.

Tape 3:26 minutes 0 seconds

Coloured photograph, family group.

TS: This is a photograph taken when we were attending Jackie's Bat Mitzvah in Florida in Fort Lauderdale and it shows Norman, my husband, sitting on the left; then we've got our grandson, Brett; me on the right, standing behind me, my daughter Ruth; next to her is Jackie, who's Bat Mitzvah it was, and then we've got Samantha, who is three years younger than Jackie, and standing next to her is her dad, Alan Scharf. I'll probably make a mistake with the date but let's say about 1996, that shouldn't be too far out, it might even be '93.

Tape 3: 26 minutes 44 seconds

Coloured photograph, family group.

TS: This picture is of my younger daughter, Judith, who is seated,; her husband, Brian, and by Brian's side is Robert, who is probably about 7 or 8 there, and Paul who is 2 years younger, so he's probably 5, so this would probably make it about 1995. And the place, this would be in Hockerton, which is a small village not far from Nottingham.

Tape 3: 27 minutes 19 seconds

END OF TAPE 3.