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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Forename:	Marion
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	24 June 1915
Interviewee POB:	Munich, Germany

Date of Interview:	26 August 2005
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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 102

NAME: MARION SMITH

DATE: 26 AUGUST 2005

LOCATION: KINGSBURY, LONDON

INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE

TAPE 1

AG: I'm conducting an interview with Mrs Marion Smith in Kingsbury in London. It's the 26th of August 2005. My name is Anthony Grenville.

AG: First of all, Mrs Smith, can I thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us. Could I just start by asking you to state your full maiden name please?

MS: Yes, Marion Smith, and my maiden name, Lehrburger.

AG: Where were you born?

MS: In Munich.

AG: And when?

MS: 24th of June 1915.

AG: Right. I'd like to start by asking you about your family background. What sort of family did you come from? Did you know any of your grandparents, for example?

MS: No, my grandparents on my father's side died before I was born. And I knew my mother's mother, my grandmother, but they lived in Berlin because that's where my mother came from.

AG: And where did your father's family originate from? Were they from Munich?

MS: Yes, well he lived in Munich, as far as I know, always Munich. The family had lived in Bavaria for about 300 years as my brother later found out. He did a, made an attempt at family history.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 8 seconds

AG: Have you any idea what they'd been doing in Bavaria all that time?

MS: Yes, apparently they were, they had something to do with cattle about 100 years ago but that's as far as he knew. My grandfather on my father's side, his father, they had a factory in Munich.

AG: What sort of factory? What did it produce?

MS: Ladies' clothes and furs. But during the First World War they became quite prominent because they provided the Lodenmäntel for the army. So they did … very … Lodenmäntel was something special, yes, [AG: for hunting?] I think they came actually from Austria, Bavaria and Austria of course were very closely connected, but normally it was a factory for ladies' clothes.

AG: Do you know the factory's name?

MS: In the Sonnenstrasse.

AG: Do you know the firm's name?

MS: Well as far as I know they were just called Lehrburger & Company, I think, but I know they were in Sonnenstrasse acht in Munich. I do know that. There were several brothers in the family. And two of them worked in the factory, they were trained. My father, I think, was trained as a cutter originally.

Tape 1: 3 minutes 38 seconds

AG: What was your father's name? Could you tell me his name?

MS: His name was Albert David.

AG: When was he born?

MS: He was born 8th of April 1872, I think.

AG: What sort of man was he? How do you remember your father?

MS: Well, he was very good looking. I remember that, when he was young. And I have several photos of him actually, so you can see he was a very good-looking man, very good-natured, very good-natured man. I remember that. And there were only two of us, two children, so we got a lot of attention.

AG: Did he run the firm? What sort of position did he have?

MS: Well, together with his brother, yes. There were two other brothers but they weren't in the factory. It was called Damenmäntelfabrik, actually.

AG: And where was your family home in Munich?

MS: We lived, well I lived in the Possardstrasse, which was near the Prinzregententheater, a place comparable to Hampstead sort of area, outside, a little outside.

AG: What part of Munich is that, what district?

Tape 1: 5 minutes 12 seconds

MS: Well, it was certainly in the outskirts, in a fashionable part, fashionable part of Munich. We had a very large flat, where I was born. At the end of the road there were a few villas as well but most of it were apartment houses.

AG: Was this a specific district of Munich? You said was like Hampstead. Did it have a name?

MS: Bogenhausen.

AG: And was that an area where a number of Jewish families…?

MS: Yes, there were quite a number of Jewish families there. Because it was also near the Prinzregententheater, so it was a very well favoured area

AG: It's just the other side of the Isar.

MS: Yes.

AG: And where you lived, was it a flat or a house?

MS: Yes, it was a large flat, something like 8 rooms, but I was quite customary (comfortable??) there because one of the rooms was called a Salon [drawing room], and it was Louis Seize style, it had chairs where you were not allowed to sit on when you were a child because they were too delicate. In fact it was strongly disapproved that children should go in this room at all. And as my grandfather on my mother's side had a jewellers shop, had, he was no longer alive by the time I was born, so they had a little cupboard in the corner with all silver reproductions of figures and little wagons and things like that, little tables, all very small, miniature silver. And that was a cupboard I was never allowed to open either.

Tape 1: 7 minutes 15 seconds

AG: Sounds like a well-to-do …

MS: It was, it was.

AG: Did you have servants as well?

MS: Yes, yes, we had quite a few. We had a cook, and a sort of parlour maid, and my brother had a tutor for a time. He had, in fact, one of them was an English lady, who taught him English, and I had first a nurse and then I had a governess as well.

AG: And these servants, governesses, and so on, and nurses, were they Jewish or were they … ?

MS: Oh no, no, the staff were never Jewish, there were no Jewish maids. There was no such thing.

AG: How did the family get on with these people who were Bavarian Catholics presumably?

MS: Oh we got on very well. I spent one weekend when I was about 6, I think, with one of the, with the housemaid, they lived in a village somewhere near Munich, and I spent the weekend there and I remember that. I didn't know I was Jewish, I don't know how old I was, 4, 5, something like that. And the housemaid attended the church of course, the Catholic Church, and I insisted on coming with and nobody explained [Laughing] that I didn't really belong there, but I didn't want to be left out. So I went to church with them and there was, I still remember when they had the Weihwasser [holy water], I don't know what it is in English, you know when the Catholics have to use that, you, it's holy water. You have to use that when you enter the church. I remember it made a great impression on me. And the other thing that was an even greater impression was the fact that [Laughing] they had no indoor toilet. The toilet was in the Kuhstall [cowshed], you know, where the cows were. And I remember [Laughing], I remember, when I came back telling my mother that they had a much more modern toilet than we did because there was nothing to pull [Laughing], you just sat there in this cowshed. I was very impressed with that. Yes, I must have been about 4, something like that, 4, 5.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 43 seconds

AG: Was this a housemaid that you got on particularly well with?

MS: Yes, I got on with all of them. I mean I had, really I mean at that time there was nothing like now, sort of it was accepted, I mean they were the staff and I had nothing much to do with them because I always had this nurse. But, as the difference in our ages was so big between my brother and myself we didn't grow up together at all. We grew up as only children really you see. I had no connection with him really because he was 11 years older than me.

AG: And so he was born in 1904?

MS: He was born in 1904, that's right.

AG: I think I haven't asked you yet to state his first name?

MS: Egon.

AG: He later became quite prominent?

MS: Yes, yes, he became quite prominent. And he was the correspondent for the Süddeutsche Zeitung later on. But of course, in Germany, in Munich rather, I never had a very, hardly any connection with him because there was so much difference in our ages.

AG: I'll ask you about him later.

Tape 1: 11 minutes 7 seconds

AG: Actually, seeing as we've mentioned him, what was the name that he became well known under?

MS: Egon Larsen.

AG: I've come across a lot of his old articles…

MS: Yes, he wrote a lot, he wrote a lot for the AJR. He was a regular contributor.

AG: Yes, I remember …

MS: But, he, that was what he always wanted to do, to write, so his career at school was very chequered because he didn't…, although he was very gifted he left his primary school, we both, we both went to private, preparatory school. And he left his primary school a year early because he was, by the time he was 10, we all stayed to 11, but he left at 10 to go to grammar school because he was so far advanced. But once he was in grammar school all he was interested in was languages, really, particularly German. And the higher up he got in the school the less interested he became in the all the subjects [Smiling]. And by the time he was 15 he had already persuaded some newspaper sellers to stock one of the papers he wrote, he wrote some story, a school story, or whatever it was, and persuaded some sellers [Laughing], which was strictly forbidden by the school of course, you were not allowed to publish anything. But I don't know how he managed to get [Laughing] to get street sellers to sell his stories. But I do know that.

AG: Which school was he at?

MS: I don't know. He changed schools various times because my mother took him out always before the end of the year because she thought he wouldn't pass his exams because he only excelled in certain subjects and took no interest in others. But if you see his books, which I've all got, in the preface he always wrote that he was bottom of…, in all technical subjects, in maths. And he was quite determined to make things easy for other people, in every one of his books, technical books, that he wrote for the school. He always used that expression, that his teachers never made it interesting for him, but he was quite determined to make it interesting for other people, for other youngsters who become interested in maths and science. So that was his object. But of course it was not appreciated while he was at school [Smiling].

Tape 1: 13 minutes 44 seconds

AG: Actually, going back now to your parents. Your father, did you see a lot of your father, or was he mainly, was he often at work?

MS: No, no, I saw quite a lot of him. Because in those days it was customary for all the bosses to come home between 12 and 2 and they had their meal. And in the afternoon I understand they quite often played Tarock [Smiling]. If you've heard of that?

AG: I have, but can you explain for the tape?

MS: Well Tarock is a card game and it has quite different cards from all the ordinary games and it is only played in Austria and Bavaria. Nobody else knows anything about it. That is what they did. And my mother always said that, I mean I was only young. My mother always said that the bosses in the firms spent most of their time playing Tarock. I don't know if it's true. Now and then I was taken to the factory.

AG: Could you remember the factory at all?

MS: Very faintly. Now and then, I was allowed and had a word with the secretary there.

AG: Was it successful? Did your father do well in the business?

MS: Well, my father, well, I wouldn't say, he was not a very hard worker but his brother was. He was an extremely hard worker and his wife also helped. But my mother came from a sort of family where that was unheard of, women never did anything, other than being decorative, buying lots of clothes and attend Kaffeekränzchen, which was quite common in those days

AG: I'd like to ask about your mother. What was her full name?

MS: Königeberger, her maiden name was Königsberger.

AG: And her first name?

MS: Beatrice. Margarete. Beatrice Margarete. But she only was known by her name Beatrice.

AG: Beatrice Margarete, very German-sounding. It's hardly a Jewish-sounding name?

MS: No, no. My grandmother on her side, her mother, was very religious, extremely religious, and she had a very orthodox upbringing, so my mother decided if ever she got married and got away from her mother she would keep nothing at all and she did keep to that [Laughing].

Tape 1: 16 minutes 28 seconds

AG: And what about your father?

MS: My father came from a very religious family as well. But he was attached to religion. He retained a feeling for Judaism all his life. And he was very particular. He wouldn't eat pork.

AG: Did you have Seder on Friday evening at all?

MS: No, no, because of my mother we didn't keep anything, but I was taken to a Synagogue on high holidays and I took to it like a duck to water. I was very keen on it, I was very impressed by the service, but I was only taken on the high holidays.

AG: What sort of women was your mother? Oh, I didn't ask when she was born?

MS: She was exactly 10 years younger than my father, so she was born on 8th of January 1882, it must have been.

AG: What sort of person … ?

MS: I've got pictures. She was a very elegant, very elegant and well educated lady because she had been to finishing school. I think she was sent to Switzerland to finishing school, where she learnt cooking and French because the idea was in those days that all the ladies of quality had to learn to cook so that they could tell their cook how to do things later on. That was the assumption, that everybody of course would have servants. She was never terribly happy in Munich, she always longed to go back to Berlin because her family was there.

AG: And what sort of …

MS: She didn't fit in with the Orthodox Jewish community in Munich. In Berlin they were far more integrated into ordinary society than they were in Munich. She always considered it a backwater [Smiling].

Tape 1: 18 minutes 32 seconds

AG: What sort of society did her family come from in Berlin?

MS: Well they had a far…, yes, they were both rich, and both her parents came from Poland, a small place in Poland. But her father was apprentice to a goldsmith and he was a very clever man. As soon as he could he opened his own business and moved to Berlin. I'm not sure where my grandparents actually got married, whether it was already in Berlin, but I think they still got married in Poland, but I'm not sure. But then they spent all their life in Berlin. And my grandfather, on that side, he was a very generous man. I never knew him, he died just before I was born, but he had, in those days because it was customary to have a very large family, he himself had 7 children, but one died young through an accident. But they were a very large family and he made sure that all his nieces got dowries from the business because he was doing so well. He had a big shop in Friedrichstrasse, which was in Berlin, which was a good business area there.

AG: Was the shop called by the Königsberger name?

MS: Königsberger, yes. Königsberger & Co., I think. He did extremely well and he did also very well for his family. He made quite sure that all the girls got married and had dowries [Smiling]. And, he was a very generous man, but he wasn't quite as religious as my grandmother. He fell in with her ideas, but my grandmother took religion very seriously, and all the Pesach stuff was stored in what I called the Speicher [attic], you know at the top of the building. And, my grandmother, and they

had quite a few servants as well so she supervised everything. But they did have servants. But my mother made quite sure [Laughing], she said that as soon as her mother would no longer, would no longer see her, she would not keep anything. And she stuck to that all her life. But I took more after my father.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 6 seconds

AG: How do you remember your mother's daily life? How did she live in Munich?

MS: Well, I would say that I didn't see an awful lot of her really during the day because I always had a nurse. Or later on a governess. So, I think she went shopping in the morning for personal things. I suppose the cook did the proper shopping, I think. And, in the afternoon I think she met friends. But my mother was the sort of person I could always look up to. I loved her very much. I was much closer to her than to my father, but of course that was in the nature of things. Because I grew up as an only child really. I mean, I could discount my brother really. I remember the only time I had a…, my brother told me off, was when I was in the school play, in my private school, and I was supposed to play, at Christmas I was supposed to play Joseph in the nativity play, and I borrowed his hat without asking him. [Laughing] When he came home he was very upset. I remember that [Laughing].

AG: I must ask you a little about your school. Which was the first school you went to?

MS: It was a private school. There were only about four of us in the class. And she had all of the classes together. So, all together there were about twelve children. And she managed them all, I don't know how she did it.

AG: Did the school have a name? Do you remember the name of the school?

MS: No. I remember, I remember the name of the teacher was Fräulein Hell, I remember that. And of course there was no playing about. That's quite obvious. We were given the Griffel [slate pencil], you know the Griffel straight away to write on, the very first day of school, there was no messing about with anything. We had this Griffel, which we wrote on a little blackboard that you had.

AG: Like a sort of slate, is it, that sort of thing to write on?

MS: Well it was a sort of, it's a special pencil, I've never seen it since, and only for blackboards. So from the day we arrived we were taught to read and write. So I was already 7 because my mother thought I was too delicate to attend school at 6 like the other children. But after six months I could read, and once I could read that was it. I didn't need any company any more. I read books and so I was quite happy.

AG: Do you remember what sort of books you started reading?

MS: Well, children's books. Just children's books. All of the time. And when we went out in the afternoon to visit my mother's friends I always had a book with me and sat in the corner and read. I do remember that.

AG: Did you have any favourites?

MS: …, those books would no longer exist anyway. It's so many years ago. 85 years ago, I couldn't possibly... But, I do remember that, I never went out without a book.

Tape 1: 24 minutes 35 seconds

AG: You said that you were playing Joseph in a nativity play?

MS: In my primary school yes [Smiling].

AG: Unusual for a Jewish child to appear in a nativity play?

MS: Yes, in every class, in every group, or class, whatever you call it, there were only 4 of us and so altogether everybody had to have a part, I suppose. The other children were, I would say, half Jewish, half of them were Jewish, and half were not, I think. Or perhaps three-quarters were Jewish. The school was probably very expensive and it was quite, in a nice area not very far from us, but the Kinderfräulein took me there.

AG: Were you really aware that you were Jewish at this stage?

MS: Yes, I was aware because when I was seven I had a Rabbi come to teach me Hebrew at home because there was no religious education in our school. There were no classes for that, there was no time for it. So none of us learnt anything unless you had somebody at home. I don't know whether Christian children did.

AG: This school was completely religiously integrated. It seems to have made no difference at all between Jewish and Christian children?

MS: Well, as it was expensive, there were mainly Jewish children there, as far as I remember. I mean, I had a friend at the end of our road, they had a villa there, they were very well to do people. And actually they were mixed, I think the husband was Jewish and the wife was not. But I don't know, I don't think they had any religious education, as far as I remember. But the other children I played with in the street, they were nearly all Jewish. I remember that.

AG: Does this mean that your parents also mixed mainly with other Jewish families?

MS: Yes. Well, that was in the nature of things really. In, my father's family all came from Bavaria. I think they had one non-Jewish friend I remember, but, most of them ….

AG: Do you remember who it was?

MS: No .. I know his name was Karl ... I think he might have been to school with my father, possibly, that's how they knew him, probably. But otherwise, I suppose, yes, the people I knew they were friendly with were all Jewish people. And there were

also children older than me. And I remember being taken there and sitting in a corner with my book. I do remember that [Smiling].

Tape 1: 27 minutes 29 seconds

AG: Do you remember any of the other Jewish families in Munich? There were some others, very well…

MS: No, not really. When I went to, later on when I went to grammar school, I didn't really, only in my street, where we were in Bogenhausen, there was a Jewish boy, I remember that. But, I didn't have an awful lot of connections. The school was so small, I mean you couldn't really meet any other people.

AG: Did your parents have any particular close friends who were Jewish that you remember?

MS: Yes, they had friends.

AG: Do you remember any of the names?

MS: Löwenthal was one family. They lived on the other side of the Isar in a very elegant flat, I remember that. I remember going there quite often.

AG: How long did you stay at this first private school that you were at?

MS: At the school of, the normal age, at 11 you had to pass the Aufnahmeprüfung [entrance exam] for the grammar school. I was, yes, I was 11. And I remember that quite well, I had to take it later than the others because I had measles, I think, at the time that the tests were actually taken. I took it with some other people who had also been ill for some other reason. I do remember that I was very bad at maths and got all my sums wrong because I remember that, sitting there and puzzling over the long division. And I heard [Laughing], heard after [Laughing]. Then we had to write…, it was the essay that saved me, so I heard afterwards, I suppose it must be true because I would have failed for the maths, but I wrote an essay which was apparently much better than that of the other children. Well obviously, because I've always been reading books. [Laughing] Only stands to reason. So I wrote a better essay and was very bad at the other things.

AG: What was the grammar school called that you went to?

MS: The grammar school was Sankt Anna's. Yes, there was, it was near to us, in Bogenhausen, I suppose.

AG: Was that a Gymnasium?

MS: Well yes it was, in the beginning. You see the division didn't come until you were 11. So it was just called höhere Schule. I don't know if it was a Gymnasium because we went to Berlin, so I don't know. It was just called Sankt Anna Schule.

Tape 1: 30 minutes 13 seconds

AG: And how did you get on there?

MS: Oh I got on fairly well. I didn't do particularly well in maths but I did all right in the other subjects. I suppose I was not an outstanding pupil, just average, but I was only there a year because then we moved to Berlin. So, I did the, I can't really say what… it was discovered that my eyesight was bad because I couldn't see the blackboard. So that made it even worse for maths, when the sums were written up, so I was taken to the optician and given glasses [Smiling], and so that improved matters a lot.

AG: Did you get on well with the other girls in the school?

MS: Yes, I got on well.

AG: Were there any Jewish …

MS: Yes, there were quite a lot of Jewish children, yes.

AG: Why did your parents decide to move to Munich – sorry, to Berlin?

MS: To Berlin. Well my mother always wanted to go back to Berlin because her family lived here. She was never happy in Munich. Meanwhile, my uncle, who was really the mainstay in the business, was quite happy to pay out [buy out] my father, pay out his share, and when he moved to Berlin he just became a travelling representative for the firm and he took on some other Berlin firms as well and he started travelling. It suited him quite well.

AG: What year was this that you moved to Berlin?

MS: Sorry?

AG: What year was this?

MS: I was 12.

AG: '27, 1927?

MS: 12, so that must have been '27, yes.

AG: Oh, one thing I should have asked, which I forgot, was what your father did during the First World War?

MS: [Laughing] He was only a week in the army, and my mother packed him, packed him [Laughing] a box or a basket that would have lasted him, with food, would have lasted him for about a month at least. He was recalled after a week because the family made the Lodenmäntel for the army, so it was an essential occupation. He was recalled.

AG: That was part of the uniform?

Tape 1: 32 minutes 30 seconds

MS: That's right, yes. That's what they were. So he was recalled as essential [Smiling]. So all he did during the war was one week's service.

AG: Do you remember anything of the atmosphere and political conditions while you were still in Munich? It was very troubled there after the First World War.

MS: Yes, it was. Well I remember, well I don't remember a lot. I do remember that my mother had always said that you couldn't get coffee. I remember that. And, on my way to school, when I already went to the höhere Schule, Gymnasium, that there was a shop that sold Kathreiner Malzkaffee, and I've never seen that since but it's very much like the Camp Coffee that they sell here, or used to sell, but nobody ever touched, because you couldn't get coffee, I do remember that. And we always passed a bookshop, I remember that as well, on my way to school. And on a birthday my governess, I bought her a book [Laughing]. I don't know what made me do that but I thought everybody would love a book. It was probably quite unsuitable, I don't remember. I was only 7 or 8 [Laughing].

AG: Did you encounter any anti-Semitism during …?

MS: No, I didn't encounter any, nor in the villages where I was. I mean, there was really no, I could never remember anything at all. I was different, I mean, I had this Rabbi who taught me a bit of Hebrew. But I can't remember anything about anti-Semitism – at any time.

AG: And when you moved to Berlin, where did family live?

MS: Well the first year it was very difficult in those days to get any flats, in '27. You had to pay a very high premium. And we lived in a Pension, it was called Hotel Pension Kurfürstendamm.

AG: And so it was on the Kurfürstendamm?

MS: Yes, directly on the Kurfürstendamm. It was, we had, two, or maybe three, rooms, I forget, two rooms I think we had there. We lived there for quite a while. There was the Fürstin Bismarck Schule near by. And incidentally [Laughing] that is where my sister-in-law went after, and so I almost went to the same school. But it so happened they were full up and I had to go to a private school.

AG: What was that called?

MS: Which was near …

AG: Which was called - do you remember?

MS: I don't remember… Something Helene, I think, Sankt Helene it was a, it was a school which was partly supported by the state, it wasn't exactly a private school, it was supported. It was in one of the side streets, near the Kurfürstendamm.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 43 seconds

AG: And what sort of pupils went there?

MS: Well, as you had to pay fees, no doubt, it was probably also mainly Jewish students. I don't remember. But I do remember that first of all my mother got me the governess she had had as a girl. Who was by then quite an old lady, but she came out of retirement to help my mother out, so I had her.

AG: Do you remember her name?

MS: No, I don't remember that, but I had to, in Munich we had to learn English and in Berlin they did French. The reason they didn't do French was because of Napoleon. There was a very strong feeling against Napoleon in Bavaria, so they did not teach French there [Smiling]. As a first language, in the grammar school, it was English and so in Berlin it was the other way around. So I had 3 months to make up for the 9 months that the others had already learnt a language in order to pass to the next class. So I had private lessons, which I hated as well. And I remember that this governess had to buy me a cake every time I came out of there, a big cake I had my eyes on so that [Laughing] that I went to the lesson and didn't complain too much. So anyway, I made up for these 3 months, I did the 9 months that the others had done in private lessons so that I could pass up to the next class.

Tape 1: 37 minutes 23 seconds

AG: And how long did you stay at this school?

MS: It must have been about a year. I remember we learnt to knit there. We had to knit socks for our fathers, [Laughing] another thing I never mastered. I never got any further than the heel. I just couldn't manage that heel, apart from the fact that my father would never have worn socks like that, thick, thick wool, I remember that. Anyway, we then managed to move to Wilmersdorf, to get a flat in Wilmersdorf, Bambergerstrasse it was called. And I had to change schools anyway and I entered the Chamisso-Gymnasium in Schöneberg.

AG: What sort of area was Wilmersdorf?

MS: Well, that was the area where, that Goebbels said if you put a…, Bayrischer Platz, if you put a ring round it, he had all the Jews in it. That was the, one of the …

AG: Fairly well to do Jews, not like the Grenadierstrasse or something?

MS: No, no, nothing like that. The Grenadierstrasse was for Polish Jews, the German Jews always looked down on them. No, it was Bayrischer Viertel, that was exactly what Goebbels said. So the sort of middle-class Jews lived there, not very rich but middle-class.

AG: And you went to the, which Gymnasium did you say?

MS: That was Chamisso-Gymnasium, Chamissoschule it was called, in Schöneberg.

AG: And how did you get on there?

MS: Well I got on all right there, I mean, I stayed there to the end.

AG: Did you do the Abitur there?

MS: No I left before the Abitur, I stayed there till '32. And then the business had gone very bad and my father insisted that I leave school. Couldn't get as far as the Abitur, it was just before we got to the Oberprima, I was in the Unterprima. I did all right except for maths and science and I remember going up, before I moved, I went to the maths teacher who was also the class, the form teacher, and I said to him, would he consider giving me at least 3, satisfactory, because it would look so bad on my leaving report. And he said to me, I'll give you, he was a very nice man, and he said to me, I'll give you that if you promise you never become a maths teacher. [Smiling] So I said I can promise you that [Laughing].

Tape 1: 40 minutes 2 seconds

AG: How did you get on with the teachers?

MS: Oh, I got on very well.

AG: And the other pupils?

MS: Yes, we all got on well. I mean, my best friend came from an orthodox Jewish family.

AG: What was her name?

MS: Her name was Rosi Dombura [?]. Her father was manager of a betting shop and they lived on top of the shop. They had quite a big flat. Her mother was a horrible woman, and only had money for her son, who was to become a doctor. There were three children. The eldest daughter left and married a penniless gentile, which her mother afterwards completely disowned her. Her father sent us down sometimes, my friend and me, with food for this, for his daughter and her husband. He was a musician and could never really make a living. And certainly he was a gentile and so, but her father didn't mind, but her mother was terribly religious, so that, that is where my experience of Pesach came from, because we didn't keep anything at all, but they always invited me for Pesach.

AG: Did you mix also with non-Jewish children at the school?

MS: Well, the thing was you see in those days people were baptised mainly if they wanted to trick people, their parents I mean, if they wanted to get on. Another friend of mine called Marlene Yural [?], her father had quite a good job in the ministry somewhere, but they were baptised, christened. And another friend was Susan Goldstücker, it never struck me that they all had Jewish names [Laughing] and were Christians. They were brought up Christians. In those days it was, also it was very

difficult actually to get away from religious education because the minister had to […], everyone had to have religious education. So there was somebody called, I forget, she came from Poland - her name was Lubowitz [?] - or Russia, anyway her father was quite insistent that she was not to have any lessons at all, any religion. And it took him a long time to persuade the ministry that his daughter could grow up without any religious education. And the, but the education system as far as religion was concerned…

[A doorbell rings]

Tape 1: 42 minutes 45 seconds

AG: Oh, we'd better stop.

Tape 1: 42 minutes 47 seconds

MS: About the religious education.

AG: Yes, just resuming after the interruption.

MS: Yes, yes. The religious education was very well organised because we all had our instruction at the same time in different rooms of the school, the Catholics had one room, and we had another and the Protestants had a third. So we all were taught religion at the same time by different teachers.

AG: This is now in the later 1920s and early 1930s?

MS: That's right, '30s, yes.

AG: Did you then encounter any anti-Semitism? After all it was the years of the rise of the Nazis.

MS: None at all, no none at all. I mean, in fact the Jewish girls came under the influence of a very religious teacher, Fräulein Lesser. And she was strict but she was an excellent teacher, and she taught us all that we had to be ashamed to celebrate Christmas. That it had nothing to do with us and that we were not to have any more Christmas trees and that, to tell our parents that we all had to have a menorah at home. And my mother was most surprised when she heard that, but she did buy me a little menorah.

AG: Did you have Christmas, did you celebrate Christmas?

MS: We didn't have one [menorah] till then. We had always Christmas trees. And of course in Munich there was a big affair with Christmas trees. She had all the servants come round and we had a big … My brother played the piano with Christmas songs in German, although, of course, by that time he wasn't there any more, he lived with us…

Tape 1: 44 minutes 24 seconds

AG: What was he doing? Could you tell me a little about how he got on professionally in Berlin?

MS: My brother? Well it took him a long time to get any professional assignments. He did write articles for the Grüne Post and things like that. But it took him quite a time to get a permanent assignment. I think he started writing for the Süddeutsche, which was the Süddeutsche Zeitung then in Berlin. But he found it difficult. But once he got into it of course things were all right. But you're going ahead of the time because, by the, because that didn't last all that long. But while I was at school, I mean, he wasn't at home any more. He had married a Christian lady, a Communist lady.

AG: What was her name?

MS: Can't remember her … Hella was her Christian name, er, yes, I do remember, Lobstein, I think was her name, Lobstein.

AG: That was his first wife?

MS: That was his first wife. Lobstein, yes that's right.

AG: Were you aware, it sounds as if you were aware of worsening economic conditions?

MS: Yes, I was very aware of that. Because I had to leave school in '32 and my father said, although I no longer had to pay fees but we had to pay the books and the books were very expensive. I still got the atlas there that we bought. I remember it was 11 Marks, which was an enormous amount of money in those days. And we had to have this very big atlas, which we still have and which is completely out of date obviously. Printed in 1926. I was saying to my grandson [points], who has just been to, through Europe, and I said I'll show you that, and you'll see the difference in…, and he was…, from what it looks now. Because I'd seen the German map he'd brought home and it was so different from the ones we'd learnt.

AG: Did you see any signs of the Depression when you were travelling around Berlin? Were you aware of it, the Depression?

MS: Oh yes, I mean I was aware of my own circumstances and my friends of course. The bookmaker also didn't do well. His wife was working, she had to work all the time. And we both had a job that we shared. We became shared governess to another Jewish girl who didn't do very well at school and we were both a teacher in the afternoon when we finished school. I think we were five afternoons, six afternoons, I forgot now which…. But as we had a lot of homework so I couldn't do it by myself and so I shared it with her. So we both got some money, but we didn't get much, but the husband, they were quite well-to-do people, and the husband, when he saw us on his own, he always gave us extra money and told us not to tell his wife [Smiling].

AG: Where was this?

MS: This was not very far from the school, from the Gymnasium.

Tape 1: 47 minutes 52 seconds

AG: And were you aware of the deteriorating political situation, the rise of the Nazis?

MS: Well yes, after I left school, of course, after. While I was in school I don't think we gave much thought to it, we were very busy with our homework. So we didn't really have time. But, when I left school I went for 3 months to Luxembourg because I …

AG: To where?

MS: Luxembourg, I had relations there, Luxembourg. It was my mother's niece and her husband. They had moved to Luxembourg. And he was well-to-do, and he opened a store, he had a big store in Luxembourg itself. And he needed someone for his two children and so I was there as a sort of au pair. That was just after I left school, before I did anything else. And I stayed there for a few months, in Luxembourg, and improved my French and learnt to dance, I remember. And then they said they no longer needed me. The boy was not very well. He had some, what do they call it, Veitstanz, St Vitus Dance, I think. He was very indulged because of that. You couldn't say anything to him because then he had his attack. Anyway they told me then that they didn't need me anymore. And I came back on the day, 30th of January, on the day that Hitler [became Chancellor]. And I remember coming back on the train and sitting in the corner. And that was the first time really I was conscious of things and people, German people, sitting there, opposite me, saying to each other now it's about time, now the Jews get what they deserve. Now they will all see what's coming to them. [Laughing] And I'm sitting there. I was 18 there, sitting in the corner, and it was the first time I could see things were not going to be very good.

AG: How did you feel about that?

MS: I felt very upset. It was totally unexpected. I mean, I hadn't given any thought to any, really, much to political ideas, but this obviously opened my eyes. And coming back, it was quite difficult to find a job, because quite a few of the Jewish firms didn't want anyone else and engage new staff, and I already had an idea that I wouldn't get any jobs other than with a Jewish firm. But I did find one, in a millinery shop, a Jewish firm.

Tape 1: 50 minutes 39 seconds

AG: Where was that?

MS: Alisa Jolles [?], Kurfürstendamm. It was only hand-made stuff.

AG: Did you notice the change in atmosphere when you got back at the end of January 1933? Did you see people with swastikas and so on?

MS: I dare say, I must have done because I didn't even look for anything with a Christian firm, so the idea must have been already there in my mind that there wasn't going to be much outside the Jewish community. And so I got that job and the staff

were, the staff were mixed. In the workroom there were gentiles, Christians, but the salesladies were, one was half-Jewish and the other was Jewish. So I felt quite at home there.

AG: And what did you do? What was your job there?

MS: Well, it was called volunteering at the time. It was really a sort of apprentice saleslady. In Germany you see, you normally had a three-year apprenticeship but if you had a grammar school education it was reduced to one year. And so that's what I had, and the other person as well.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 0 second

AG: Were your parents affected by the Nazi take-over?

MS: Well only in so far as the political situation was, so they knew, less my mother, but my father could already see that things were not going well. I mean as I said, I had to leave school the year before. So he could see it. And in fact he was interned for a week. He was travelling, as I said, he was travelling around and he had gone to Munich … 1933, must have been '33, and he had gone to Munich, to, in his job, as a traveller to visit some firms. Yes, it was early on, '33 it must have been, and he was overheard making quite a harmless remark to one of the models he took out. He was quite fond of the models he used to take out, and he said something to her about another ridiculous holiday that the Nazis have instituted, something like that, and somebody heard him and reported him. And he was, and they sent him to a prison called Stadelheim near Munich. And, because he let my brother know, my uncle know, who was in Munich, he was in the factory. And I remember the next morning we had a telephone call early in the morning. And I knew, I always remember, now, remember saying to my mother, well that can't be anything good to have a telephone call 8 o'clock in the morning. It must be something bad. It was my uncle and he told my mother that my father was in there, but he had already instructed a solicitor and he hoped he'd be out soon. So he was only there I think for 2 to 3 days and they got him out. Nothing happened to him.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 8 Seconds

AG: Did he talk about it at all?

MS: Well, well, really I mean, it stuck in my mind that he'd said he'd passed this remark about another holiday and that's all he had to say. But obviously it taught him not to say anything to these …. Also, they were very concerned that the models were all Christians of course and that was against him. See, they, that was the atmosphere was already quite obvious then,

AG: And the shop where you worked, was it affected by the boycott of Jewish shops on the 1st of April 1933 do you remember?

MS: … I don't think it was affected.

AG: How long did you stay and work in that shop?

MS: Well, I stayed there, I was there not very long, I was there a year, I think. I was just trying to recall it the other day. It must have been just over a year. My brother had to, had to go, had to leave Germany anyway because he was... One of the first things they did, they expelled people from the Reichsschrifttumskammer, which he had to become a member of, you see, in order to write. And you couldn't become a member if you were Jewish. So, so he went to Prague because that was the only place where you could go and write in German [Laughing]. And so he got a job there. He already had a name and so he went over to Prague, to the Prager Tagblatt And it was arranged then that my sister-in-law, his wife, they would arrange a divorce. She didn't want to follow him. And it was the obvious thing to do, to have a divorce.

Tape 1: 56 minutes 6 seconds

AG: You said she was a Communist?

MS: Yes, she was a Communist.

AG: And what became of her?

MS: Yes, that's quite a different story [laughs], what became of her. She stayed a Communist, she was. She took great, she took great risks in distributing Communist papers. She was quite determined that nobody would get the better of her. But in the end she was caught, and she was put in a concentration camp for, a concentration camp and not the Jewish ones, the other one, they called it Wiedererziehung [re-education] or something. Anyway, she was in there. And she did a, whilst she did a very, a very sensible thing, because we continued seeing her now and again, she came to see us, and she was asked then, I remember, that when she had a sort of tribunal, it came out whether she still saw her previous husband's family. And she said no, she had no contact. It was the thing that I have never forgotten because she could have got us into big trouble if they had known that she still had contact with us. So, she was very sensible. Meanwhile they had a son, of course which was rather unfortunate. I don't think my brother wanted a child really. While she was in a concentration camp of course she had to board him out and she, he was in a camp, or sort of camp, outside Berlin, where they had some very strange ideas about upbringing. It was a Christian camp obviously, she was a gentile. We visited him there once. We never quite, we never quite could make out what the education there had been, because he was only young, he was no more than a baby.

Tape 1: 58 minutes 10 seconds

AG: What was his name?

MS: Peter. And, so, because in the end, that was a different story. And when he was six, before the war broke out, she just put him, she had been out meanwhile, and, she put him on the train, just like that, to England, to London, and wrote a letter to my brother saying the boy was going to arrive there on his own, and forthwith he had to take responsibility for him.

AG: We'd better stop there because the tape's coming to an end.

MS: Right.

Tape 1: 58 minutes 52 seconds

TAPE 2

AG: We were just talking about your life in Berlin, in the early years of the Nazis. How did Nazi rule begin to affect you and your family?

MS: Well, the main thing was really the difficulty in finding work because everything was already controlled. And Jewish firms only got permission to employ Jewish staff for a certain period. You had to get special permission even to engage them. So, the first, after my brother went to Prague, he invited me Easter to visit him. Just for the Easter holidays. I went there, that is, I think before he met his second wife. I went there and stayed in his lodgings and I, well the atmosphere there was perfectly all right, I don't know whether people could foresee anything there either. I mean my brother was quite well established, but he was never on the Jewish side anyway. He wasn't interested in anything to do with Judaism. After all he married out. Well I came back from this …

AG: What year was this that you went to Prague?

MS: Well it must have been '35. I'm not quite sure, but it must have been Easter '35. Thinking back. Because I came back and I fell very, I felt quite ill while I was there and I put it down to slivovitz being drunk, but, because they had parties there in the evening, the journalists, and I drank slivovitz, which I never drunk before. And when I came back I felt absolutely terrible. I drank myself… There was only my father at home because my mother had meanwhile gone to visit her brother who'd gone to Paris, settled in France. And that was quite a story on its own, my aunt. Anyway, she stayed in Paris during that time. And I came back telling my father that I felt very ill and I didn't know why and went straight to bed. And the next morning. And I had a terrible sore throat. And the next morning I was covered in spots and so I could see there was something bad coming. I got hold of the doctor after my father had left for work and the doctor said it was scarlet fever, actually. And he gave me the option of either staying where I was, with my mother not being there, and the flat would have to be fumigated after I got better. Or I could try to get into hospital. Because I was on my own I decided to go into hospital. Although at that time, it was already, I think it must have been, it might have been '36, I'm not quite sure. Because I remember thinking that I wonder whether I get any treatment in hospital.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 22 seconds

AG: Because you were Jewish?

MS: Yes, yes [Laughing], because of being Jewish. So, I'm not quite sure of the, I remember thinking that, anyway they took me away in an ambulance and it turned out that it was scarlet fever and in those days they had nothing for it, but to leave people for two days and if they, first two days just give them aspirin. And if you were alive after two days then you were going to survive it. It's quite easy [Laughing].

AG: And you obviously did.

MS: So I survived it, yes.

AG: And you got some treatment, for what it was worth?

MS: I don't think they had any treatment, except we were only given things connected to carrots, because they said carrots would improve that. And so the food was terrible but after two days I was taken to the general ward and stayed with the other. My father had the good sense of summoning my mother back from Paris and she came post-haste as soon as she could.

AG: Were you treated any differently from the other patients?

MS: No, no. I can't say, I was treated fairly enough. The only thing happened during the first night, but it might have happened to other people as well. They had, even in German hospitals things were not so perfect. They, something happened to the water [Laughing] there. I don't know what it was, but in the middle of the night there was water flooding out of the basin. So I called somebody, one of the nurses it would have been, and she came and put it right. And then some, another nurse came in, and I said to her, thank you Schwester, because that's nurse, and she corrected me, Oberschwester. I always remember that [Laughing]. There I was on the brink of death and she corrected me with her rank. That she was one higher up.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 18 seconds

MS: Oh, my glasses [takes off her glasses], you're right. Never mind, never mind.

AG: Yes I hadn't noticed, I should have.

MS: So I remembered that from my stay, but I was treated fairly, not treated any differently from other people. But I had been apprehensive.

AG: Were you already aware of … ?

MS: I was already aware of that, yes, that things were not right and that Jews were not treated fairly.

AG: Were there restrictions that began to affect your life, apart from jobs of course?

MS: No, it was just with jobs really. It was really just a question that I could see that there were no openings, there were no openings with jobs.

AG: What did you do after you left this first firm that you worked for, the shop on the Kurfürstendamm?

MS: Yes, I got another job with a clothes firm, I think. And that didn't work out. And then I got another job with a very big millinery firm. And by that time they were

already restrictions. He told me that he had to get permission for me to work there for 6 month.

AG: When was this? Do you remember?

MS: Well that was, '36, must have been, '36, yes, that must have been in '36. Because, that's right, because after that I had a, my brother had suggested that I should join him in Prague. Because he had settled down and, of course, who was to know what was going to happen? So we then decided that I should try some time in Prague, '36, '36 to '37, yes, that's right, I was 21. So, you were allowed to take a very small sum of money out. I forget how much it was, it was very small. I opened up a millinery shop with a Czech girl there, on the strength that my brother was there. It was a very small capital. The girl, I had only been on the sales side and she was an actual milliner, the girl.

Tape 2: 7 minutes 44 seconds

AG: Where was this in Prague?

MS: Prague.

AG: Do you remember where it was in Prague?

MS: No, I don't remember where it was.

AG: Where …?

MS: Not far from the … sorry?

AG: Not far from the…?

MS: Not far from the Wenzelsplatz. No, the story in Prague was quite amusing because my brother had been told, by my mother, to find me cheap accommodation, cheap and clean accommodation. But my brother unfortunately was very busy. He had already met my sister-in-law by then [Laughing] and he didn't bother himself much. And so he found me a place, that was cheap, I don't know about clean, it was cheap, but it turned [Laughing], it turned out to be a bordello in, near the […], one of the side streets. And I had a room in there on the ground floor. Of course he didn't say what it was for, I mean he didn't bother to find out what it was. And I had a room on the ground floor, no daylight, the windows, the windows, next to me was the toilets, and the windows were over there. And also, the rooms, you needed electric light all day, because the room was almost basement level. And, so I had nowhere else to go and so I stayed there for a few days. And by pure chance when I went to a restaurant there, in the afternoon, coffee, I asked for, I asked the waiter. As you know in, on the continent, people can always read newspapers. You only, order one coffee but you can read 50 newspapers during that time. And I asked for Journale because that is the only word I knew for that. And the waiter didn't know what it was and he asked me all sorts of questions. Of course the young people only spoke Czech; I mean their German wasn't all that good. So, a young man from the neighbouring

table heard me and he translated it. So I got my papers and I also got the young man as well [Smiling].

Tape 2: 10 minutes 4 seconds

MS: So from that time on, of course things improved. He was aghast at the place my brother had found me [Laughing] and he found me a place in the suburbs. It was a landlady. Of course she didn't speak German and I didn't speak Czech but it didn't matter, he translated things for me. So I had a proper room, a little outside but I don't know where it was. I've still got the papers probably somewhere. It was certainly a Czech-speaking area. But, once I met him things were quite different.

AG: What was his name, do you remember?

MS: …

AG: Was he Czech?

MS: He was, well yes, his father was a Rabbi, but he spoke German. I mean, all the people spoke German. It never occurred to us that anybody would not speak German. It's very odd, isn't it? When you came out from Germany you assumed everybody speaks German. You never think about it, that you might need Czech. It never occurred to me. Obviously he was bilingual. He was a lawyer, he was a lawyer actually. He worked for an insurance company, well that was the one I mentioned before. With his help, I've, the millinery shop didn't succeed at all. The girl had had a boyfriend, he was a Jewish lawyer. A Czech-Jewish lawyer, who was a rather unpleasant, so I was glad to get rid of this shop. And, with the help of my boyfriend I've got myself a very nice job as a secretary in a marriage bureau [Smiling]. You find it in the paper I suppose, I don't know, they didn't need any Czech, I only needed German. That was an absolutely lovely job, the best job I've ever had because all we had to do, we had to read the letters that people wrote to this marriage bureau. And then they were passed on. The people who actually wrote the letters, they didn't know that this was a marriage bureau. They thought they were writing directly to a young man. There were many girls. To a young man who would then, you know, take care of them. And that provided a lot of material for my brother for his journalism, he'd been working as a journalist, for his humorous articles.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 46 seconds

AG: What paper, or papers, was he writing for in Prague?

MS: Tagblatt, Prager Tagblatt.

AG: Did you get to know any of the journalists who wrote for the … ?

MS: No, I never, I never had any connection afterwards. I never even saw him when I was in Prague because by that time he had met his second wife.

AG: What was the name of his second wife, for the film?

MS: Ursula … it will come to me I expect.

AG: And was she also a refugee from Germany?

MS: Yes, yes, she was a refugee from Germany.

AG: And where did she come from?

MS: Well, she came originally from Munich, or near Munich. They lived in a small place because her mother married twice. But her first husband was Jewish but her second husband wasn't. So she always said she had two fathers. But they also moved to Berlin from their village in Bavaria. And she went to the school I mentioned where I nearly went to, she's a bit older than I am. Anyway, at that, of course his divorce hadn't even come through yet. It took quite a while to get through. I think it only came through when he was in England. I'm not that sure. So, he, in the end, so I, my passport expired, so I had to go back to Germany, had to go back to Berlin, because you couldn't be anyway abroad with an expired passport. It was important to get my passport renewed.

AG: You had no difficulty getting back into Germany?

MS: No, no, my passport was still valid. No, I made quite sure that I wasn't staatenlos [stateless] or anything. I still had …

AG: I was just thinking that they might have not wanted Jews to come back.

MS: No, oh no, no, it wasn't, I mean at that time it was not, '37 by the time I came back, so that was all right. I came back in November, and then gradually we started making preparations for the proper emigration.

AG: Could you get a job when you came back to Berlin?

Tape 2: 15 minutes 3 seconds

MS: Yes I had a job there. Yes, I've got a job, temporary, as there were only people around there allowed temporary. But by that time people already had quite a good idea. I mean, my friend, who also worked for the firm he, she had relations in London. They started making contact and her sister went to Palestine. So I mean that was the time when people realised. I also, when I went back, people, I got engaged by the time I got back but my future husband didn't want to emigrate and so, so I broke it off. Because, he was, he had a very good job. He didn't realise. You see some people didn't realise. He worked for IG Farben as a representative and he was earning very good money and we didn't think it was urgent to emigrate. And I said to him I think that it is very wrong what you're doing, you should come, but he didn't want to come. So I said well I'm going [Smiling].

AG: What became of him?

MS: I never heard any more. I don't know. He had a mother to support and I suppose he thought … he was one of those people who couldn't decide and he didn't have the foresight to see that things were turning out badly. I mean in '38 …

AG: What was it that made, was it anything particular that made your family think that we must really get out?

MS: Well I think that it was just a general... It was the economic atmosphere really. We didn't think in those days that anything was going to happen to us personally other than that the economics was such that Jews would no longer be employed and what were we going to live on? I mean that is how I remember it. My father was earning only very little compared to, and depended at least in part on my earning any money and I could see that it was no longer possible. And so I had a job, my last job was with a, after I had been to this marriage bureau I had learnt to type you see, and so I managed to get a secretarial job, in the end with the firm called Passmantier [?] That wasn't his real name. He came from Poland originally and I think it was Posamentier [?]. Anyway, he called himself Passmantier. And he had a textile firm. I worked there as a, supposed to be a trilingual secretary, English, French and German. And there we could already see the signs that things were not going to be very good. I met my friend there. The one who eventually got me the job here at the Foreign Office, that might have been predestined.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 8 seconds

AG: Do you remember your friend's name?

MS: Yes, Paula Riddleson [?]. That was by pure chance I mean that we met there. Passmantier, he left overnight. He didn't make any announcements, he just left. And so we could see the way the wind was blowing. So, he left the firm as it was. The gates were locked one evening and not opened the next morning. He had gone and so, the representative there said, the representative, someone from the trade, I don't know who he was, took over. And he reopened the firm and the staff were kept on for the moment, even the Jewish staff, because they had to inform the customers and so I mean there was a lot of work to be done. So we were kept on for the moment. And, in fact something quite strange happened. One of the gentile staff made a complaint about the wages we had been receiving there. And a tribunal was set up, with a proper judge. And we were all called into this tribunal. And I remember somebody said to the judge. There, there are a lot of Jewish staff in this firm. What about their wages. And the judge must have been a very courageous man because he said that it didn't make any difference to him. They all got the same money, they were underpaid, and whether they were Jewish or gentile didn't make any difference. I always remember that. I don't know what happened to him afterwards. I hope nothing bad. Anyway we all got money, back pay. It was no good to me, I left it to my mother. That was the last thing. I left and meanwhile I got a job in domestic service. And my uncle, who was born, by pure chance, he was born here.

Tape 2: 20 minutes 16 seconds

AG: Who was born here?

MS: My uncle.

AG: Oh, was this your mother's … ?

MS: One of my uncle's, my mother's, yes, my mother's brother, one of the brothers.

AG: What was his name?

MS: The eldest. Henry is his name. See there were, as I said, seven children, one died. And of the remaining six only that one was born here. Because my grandfather, who had business dealings here in the jewellery trade, had taken my grandmother with, and by pure chance one of the children was born here.

AG: So he had British nationality?

MS: That was Henry, yes he had British, yes he had, well at the time of course it didn't make any difference but when, you know, Hitler came. He got …

AG: So where did he settle in England?

MS: He went to London. He never, he didn't do well at all, he was a representative of something, of children's toys I think. Anyway, he settled here and my mother asked him to put an advertisement in the paper for a domestic.

AG: Do you know which paper it was?

MS: I think he put it in the Times. [Smiling]

AG: [Laughing] Oh, yes.

MS: That's probably all he knew about, so. I hadn't wanted to go to London at all. There was a much better job come up in Sweden, Stockholm, with children. But, I don't know how many applicants there were for one job so I didn't get it. But I did get, I had various offers from this country and I took that one, which was in the country, in Sussex, it was called Lakers Lodge. It was a big house.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 57 seconds

AG: Which town or village was it near, do you remember?

MS: Yes, Loxwood, in Sussex, Loxwood in Sussex. The man of the house was a director of Prudential, I didn't know that, he was a very important man. His wife wasn't well. She had a fall from a horse I think when she was young. She spoke a little German, and so my mother thought that was more suitable. The rest, I had some offers from Arabs living in Oxford. My mother didn't like the idea of some Arab bachelor wanting a housekeeper. So she didn't think that was very good. So we settled for that one. And I remember that in one of the letters she wrote back she said she had a staff of six and we couldn't make out what it was she meant by staff. We looked it up in the dictionary and it said Stab, you know military

AG: Staffs that you … ? Military staff?

MS: Military, no, military, you know they are called Stab. We couldn't make out what it was [Laughing] to the end until I got here and realised what staff meant.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 7 seconds

AG: And how do you remember your departure from Berlin?

MS: Well, I had a Pullman train that my mother put me in. And we had, we had the Lift packed.

AG: Could you explain for the film what a Lift is?

MS: Well the Lift is a collection of things that you wanted to take out and for which you had to get permission. I also had permission for a little locket I wore. For that you had to get a special permission. And of course that Lift didn't travel on the same train, went differently. Actually, the Lift was later when my mother came. It was packed ready but... I didn't take it. I took personal things and the little locket. But at the border at Bentheim, the Dutch border, Bentheim, the Jews were ordered out of the train. The train went on and the Jews were ordered out. They left us there at the station, the train went away. Of course I only had 10 Marks with me, which we were allowed to take out. And my friend, the one I mentioned before, she was supposed to meet me at Waterloo. And. so all of the money that I had went mainly on the telegram saying I would come a day later. And the station closed overnight and I think, well I had zwei Mark left, two Marks left, it was as good as nothing, so they advised me to find a hotel room, which I couldn't afford with that money, but I did go to town anyway, to Bentheim, as I said, was at the Dutch border. And I said to somebody there could I stay the rest of the night with the rest of my money. I wouldn't use the bed, just to sit there because I had nowhere to go. So they let me do that. And the next day I went back to the station at 6 o'clock and caught another train. I mean this was pure malice obviously.

Tape 2: 25 minutes 20 seconds

AG: What date was this?

MS: Pure malice. Sorry?

AG: I didn't ask you what date you left Germany.

MS: Date? It was the date of the Munich agreement. 28th September, something like that.

AG: September '38 …

MS: Yes, it was 28th, something like that, the end of September. Yes. On the very day of the Munich agreement.

AG: A good time to get out.

MS: It was just on that day. So anyway, I got, eventually we, I got on the boat to Harwich.

AG: What were your first impressions of arriving in England?

MS: Well, I don't know. I stayed the night with my friend, who had at least established herself. She had a room there.

AG: Where was the…?

MS: I don't remember at all, I don't remember. She took me in for the first night because the next day I was going to be collected by the family from Waterloo.

AG: What was the family's name, do you remember?

MS: Mmm, well it'll come to me in a minute. Yes, they were, I mean, they were really important people, which I didn't know of course. And they had this staff of six and I was supposed to be the upper housemaid there. Of course I didn't know anything and I had to learn everything from the under housemaid. I didn't know which way to hold the brooms, never done anything before.

AG: How did you feel about becoming a domestic servant?

MS: I felt terrible, absolutely…. [Smiling]. I've got actually an article there [pointing] that I wrote, on …, I felt terrible, but there was no choice, was there? I mean, it was lucky in a way, because after the Kristallnacht it meant they could see how upset I was in thinking, you know, about my parents. They, they made an effort to get a permit for them, for my mother, not for my father, he was too old anyway. For my mother to come out under a domestic permit. He had connections to the Home Office but nevertheless he was refused at first. But then he made another application and they granted that. And I wrote to my uncle, who was here already, to give an affidavit I think you needed for my father.

AG: A guarantee?

Tape 2: 27 minutes 53 seconds

MS: Yes, he was very reluctant to do that. I remember writing to him that, it was not, because they didn't like each other, so I said in the letter it wasn't a time for liking or disliking, it was a question of life and death. I remember that. I mean it was only '38, but I could see things were going the wrong way. So in the end he did, he did give the affidavit and they came.

AG: Both your mother and father?

MS: They came, yes, in different transports but they both came, at different times. My mother came in March. I had, the domestic permit was for a, for a relation of the people I was with, Lakers Lodge.

AG: Was this family British or Jewish?

MS: Oh they weren't Jewish, no, no, they were very British. I don't think there were any Jewish directors of the Prudential. There were no Jews I ever seen there the whole time. They had a lot of parties, shooting parties. You see, they had pheasant and grouse and that sort of thing, they shot. They were very important people.

AG: How did they treat you?

MS: Well, they treated me well enough. It was the staff who was rather nasty. Except the butler. He was very nice. The butler was a very nice fellow. He was Irish. And I remember that they had a conversation there once, and I couldn't, I found it difficult to follow that obviously.. But he once said to me, when he came back, in the evening, I noticed you met my kids today. And I had never heard the expression kids. I thought kids were sheep [Laughing] of course as we learnt at school. I remember that, and he taught me.

AG: How were the other members of staff unpleasant to you?

MS: Well the cook was rather unpleasant. I think, yes, I put it down to anti-Semitism. I think they didn't like Jews, and foreign Jews on top of that.

Tape 2: 30 minutes 0 second

AG: Was this because you were Jewish rather than because you come from Germany?

MS: Well, it's probably both [Laughing]. We all experienced that. I mean it was bad enough to be either German or Jewish but to be both things together was a bit much for people to take in.

AG: What sort of work did you have to do?

MS: Well I was the Upper Housemaid; we had to clean the rooms every day. Although there was nobody in them they had to be done every day. I also had to clear the grates downstairs. Then the butler, the butler came after and laid the fire. But everything had to be clean for him of course. The butler and the cook were the most important people.

AG: How did you find the work?

MS: Well, I hated it. I mean, I mean, I was only good at it as far as I was very conscientious. I did everything I was told to do but I hated every minute of it, of course. I had never done any hard work before. I thought it was degrading. And I couldn't see really any way out at that time. I had my parents there. I also had to cycle every day to the other place where my mother worked, which wasn't far away, to see. We were near, this place where we were, wasn't far from Guildford and some other places there. Anyway, I cycled there because my mother couldn't manage at all. She was lost in this house where she was supposed to light a fire. Never lit a fire. In those days that was all you had to do really, light fires and a boiler, and she had never seen anything like that in her life. We had central heating [Laughing] in Germany and

she was completely lost. I wasn't much good either, but at least I did the cleaning round there.

AG: And what sort of family was your mother with?

MS: There was a single lady, not there much, so she expected a sort of a housekeeper. But I mean my mother was quite useless at any of these things.

AG: And what about your father. Did he …

MS: Well, my father had meanwhile arrived in my uncle and he stayed there. My uncle had got himself a girlfriend, and, she was also German-Jewish. She was a nurse and she managed to get a job because they needed nurses. But, when he, later on, when he, he had thought by marrying a nurse when he got old and ill she would look after him. But I'm afraid [Laughing] that didn't work out because she left him when he became old and ill. He was already quite advanced in years. I mean, he came here and she left him. So my father was already ill at the time. He had various illnesses, so he never stayed with us. He was always more or less confined to a home after he went away from my uncle's and so that was an added difficulty.

Tape 2: 33 minutes 5 seconds

AG: And where was that? Was that in London?

MS: Because, yes, it was in London. But there were already difficulties of course with nobody having any money and Jewish Care had to step in, later on of course. German-Jewish they did… But first we had to rely on Jewish Care. Well they weren't Jewish Care then. They were the Jewish Board of Guardians first and then they were something else. So, you see, you had to give an undertaking that you would never use, you would never be out of a job, so you always had to contribute, for everything. So sick people were really officially not allowed in. They didn't want any people with any sort of illness. Only we had to sign, we were given, I've got it there [pointing], I've got all the papers there. We were given a booklet how to behave, and what to do.

AG: Was this the booklet that came from the [Board of] Deputies?

MS: Yes, it came already, yes, that's right. Which I've still got, I kept that.

AG: And what did you think about that? It's quite notorious.

MS: Yes, well. At the time it wasn't funny. Now you can laugh about it. But at the time it wasn't at all funny. And not so easy for some people, when, not everybody's English was so good, you know. [Laughing] Some people had great difficulties in expressing themselves. It said you mustn't speak German once the war broke out. It was certainly very different from what it is now.

AG: Where did you live in Lakers Lodge? What sort of accommodation did you have?

MS: I had a room under the roof there. There was no heating in there either and so I had to ask for a paraffin stove. We weren't allowed to have any heating during the day at all. Although they had plenty of money but they were very mean with staff. And so we weren't allowed to sit in the room really. We were supposed to be in the servants' hall, with the others, and so if I sat in the room I had either the choice of sitting up there in the cold or joining the others in the servants' room.

Tape 2: 35 minutes 25 seconds

AG: Were you paid?

MS: Oh yes, we got paid. I got paid a pound a week. That was the going rate. But anyway, when my, fortunately, a school friend of my father's, lived here, had relations here, who were well-to-do. They, I can't remember the name now, they were, the relations had emigrated early to England. I think early in the century. They were connected with the …, CG, or something like that, something, one of the big electrical firms.

AG: Oh right, GEC.

MS: So when my father's friend came over from there they established him in a block of flats in Hampstead. The block of flats is still there. And they also gave him some money, actually to live on obviously. They were well-to-do-people. And he was very good because my father, they had been school friends, yes, my father was mainly in the home, he managed to get a flat for my mother here in London and also to find a tenant because she couldn't, obviously we had no money to pay the rent. Although the rent was very cheap in those days because people moved out of London once war broke out because of the bombs. And so the landlords were, the landlords were happy to have anybody more or less who could pay the rent.

AG: Where was ….?

MS: It was Mapesbury Court in Cricklewood. It was a newly built court and they even asked the tenants what they liked in there because you could choose. And my mother chose a large cupboard in the hall [Laughing]. You were allowed to do that.

AG: Mapesbury Court, I know. It's on the top of

MS: It's still there.

AG: It's on the top of Shoot-up Hill.

MS: Shoot-up Hill, yes, it's still there, yes. So we got in there and we had a, the tenant came with it, which was very lucky. She was another Jewish girl, a refugee, but her parents lived in Dublin. And they had somehow managed to get money out. So she was studying to be a doctor, so obviously they paid for her and they paid for her lodgings. So it was all right, that they shared the flat. And then my mother wanted me, eventually, I mean that took some time obviously, after… but I had… She said meanwhile I should get a get a job which was nearer London, because I was

rather far away there, where we were in Loxwood. So I got a job in Guildford, which was easier ….

AG: Was that another domestic job?

Tape 2: 38 minutes 11 seconds

MS: … to London. Another domestic job. There, the lady was an American and he was quite a big noise in the business world. They were also well-to-do people, with two boys in public schools. And their house was, once war broke out, was requisitioned. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company took it over. And so they went to America and didn't bother to take anything else. They took the boys with them and the house was then in the hands of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. And they, all the staff left because they, just the English staff left, because they said they weren't going to, to serve office girls, because they were all used to big houses. Lords and ladies. They didn't want to serve any office girls. But I stayed. Of course I had nowhere to go anyway. So they let me stay. They upped my wages. And so I stayed on.

AG: What do you remember about the declaration of war? Do you remember?

MS: Yes I do, yes, that's what I wrote in the letter to the AJR. It was the happiest day of my life. I said that.

AG: Could you tell us, for the film?

MS: I sat there in the kitchen of that house actually when war was declared. And I felt, yes, and I felt that now at least Hitler would come, get his comeuppance. And the Jews would be revenged. I thought the war was, that's the way I looked at it, the war was just fought for us. Because [Laughing] that is exactly what I said in that letter, you know. The war was fought on our behalf because we had been so badly treated. And now everything would be all right.

Tape 2: 40 minutes 18 seconds

AG: So you thought the war would be over quickly?

MS: I didn't even think about the end. Yes, I thought Hitler would be defeated, you know, it's not so long [?]. I mean, it didn't occur to me that things weren't going to go smoothly. You don't, when you're young you don't look at things like that, and all the casualties, in this country.

AG: Were you called before a tribunal as an enemy alien?

MS: Yes, everybody was called before a tribunal actually. It was quite straightforward. It was given a C. I was in the country, wasn't I, I think it was in the country at the time. Not in London I mean. I think.

AG: Was this in Guildford? Were you called before … ?

MS: I got a C. Yes, I think it was only in a police station, I don't quite know.

AG: Do you remember it at all? Could you tell me about it, what it was like?

MS: Well, I think I was only asked a few questions, I don't know what they were, and I was given a C straight away.

AG: A C is …

MS: A C was the clearance.

AG: That meant you were … ?

MS: The A was the, yes, the A was the ones that were very important, deported immediately somewhere or other. And the B I think were borderline. I don't quite know. But nobody in my family was deported, for some reason. But, of course later on I mean people were conscripted. You had to do something. And my brother was [Laughing] given the choice of either joining the army [Laughing] or going and help in the forestry. So he was unsuited to either of these but he thought the forestry would be the lesser evil. He wasn't married then, not yet. His wife was here also. But, so he joined the Forestry Commission. I don't know what they were doing there. Something to do with trees obviously. But he always said after that [Laughing] the forester couldn't wait to get rid of him, he was so useless [Laughing].

Tape 2: 42 minutes 16 seconds

AG: How did he make his way from Prague to England?

MS: Ah well, they had special plane chartered for them. For all the people who were in particular danger. Because of their German, their activities. Of course it went against him because his wife was a Communist obviously. I mean he was in particular danger. So they packed, they were all intellectuals, all various professions, so they were all packed into one plane and sent to England. I still remember, I still remember his arrival. And they went by train to Waterloo. And I went to collect him and I didn't recognise him because he had always been very thin. And, by the time, of course my sister-in-law cooked for him and he had become very stout. [Laughing] I didn't recognise him and I had great trouble in finding him in Waterloo. But anyway, they were all found accommodation temporarily. And then of course they were called for war work or they did do something. [Smiling]

AG: Do you remember the name of the organisation through which he came out at all?

MS: No I can't, no, I don't know even if I ever knew it. But it was actually mentioned not so long ago, somewhere. Yes, because he obviously wasn't the only one. The plane was packed with these intellectuals of various sorts. They weren't all Jewish, the majority of them were, but some were political refugees.

Tape 2: 43 minutes 47 seconds

AG: Did you then stay for any length of time in this job in Guildford?

MS: In, no, no. When my mother had the flat. Once she had the flat, and a tenant, she said I should try to get a job in London. Which I did. I found a job opposite, opposite where we lived. Opposite Mapesbury Court. There is another block of flats called Kendal Court, still there as well. And they were Jewish people and they employed me. And they were absolutely terrible. They were quite terrible.

AG: Was this as a domestic again?

MS: As a domestic, yes.

AG: Were these refugee Jews or British Jews?

MS: Well, he had come, come over at the beginning of the century. So he considered himself British. His wife was born here. And they had a daughter living in the next block of flats. And a friend of mine, another refugee, she got a job with them. And they were all quite terrible.

AG: In what way were they terrible?

MS: Well they treated us as, as, in Germany we had, we had treated the Polish Jews, as sort of inferior. We thought they were all totally uneducated people. They hadn't been to grammar school. But [Laughing] they were, they treated us just the way. I thought it was repayment for the way we had treated, or our parents had treated, the Germ…, the Polish Jews. As if inferior.

Tape 2: 45 minutes 20 seconds

AG: Was it worse than … ?

MS: Well I mean yes, they asked us to do things that English staff wouldn't have done. Like staying till 12 or 1 in the morning when they had a party, clearing up, and things like that. So, in the end, I managed to persuade her that I could stay in Mapesbury Court, stay with my mother in the one room, see, while we let the other. So as a daily, then I just worked as a daily.

AG: How long did you do that?

MS: Well I had, after that I had another job, daytime only, in Finchley Road, where people had a café. And that wasn't bad.

AG: What was the cafe called?

MS: Oh I don't remember that. [Laughing]

AG: These were refugees?

MS: No, no, they were English people. But they were all right, because I wasn't allowed to work in a café, I had no permit. I was only allowed to work in their house. The café was in the bottom and they lived in the top. It was quite a big house. And I

would have been quite happy there except for the attentions of the husband, who used to, mid-day, he used to leave his wife there and went, as he said, he wanted to sleep then, and I could see he was trying to persuade me to join him there. But, it was, still it wasn't a bad job. I mean they were quite pleasant people and they were dead afraid of having me in the café in case somebody reported them. I mean the regulations were very strict in those days, you see, and everybody obeyed them, not like now [Laughing]. Everybody disobeys them. There people were very obedient, they were told not to do a thing, they didn't. But anyway, in, by 1940, of course, things were quite different because people had been told to join the army or war works or other jobs began to get going. And so, the very first thing, I was one of the very first in 1940 who left domestic service. As I say I couldn't wait to get out. And I joined another refugee who had a little factory making belts.

Tape 2: 47 minutes 41 seconds

AG: Where was this?

MS: Well it was, the, the, inner London, the part that was bombed out. It was bombed out when we had the big. It was in January, wasn't it, '41, I think, when they had the big attack on London, the air attack. You know the famous one, where all the buildings were destroyed. And his little, his little office was destroyed with it. But that's the only time then that I went to the refugee committee, Woburn House, and asked for a job. Said what I could do and at last I got back an office job.

AG: I'd like to just take you back a bit because this has gone into 1941.

MS: Yes, 1941.

AG: I'd like to go back to 1940. You said that none of your family were interned?

MS: No, nobody was interned.

AG: But you must have been aware obviously of the … ?

MS: Well, we all had to be before a tribunal I suppose. I mean, I remember my own but nobody was… I mean there was no reason to intern anyone really. I think, funny enough, my, this friend of my father's was interned, for a very short time - to the GEC it was, his relations, connection with GEC, General Electric Company, that's right - but he was interned I think for three months for some reason. I don't know why. I mean he had these connections, although they got him out anyway. He was only there for three months.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 15 seconds

AG: And what about, how did you feel when Hitler invaded Belgium and Holland and France?

MS: Well dreadful of course. Couldn't think of anything worse that could have happened than that. Although I never really lost the belief that in the end right would

triumph. But it was very bad for everybody. I remember we all had to, had to do the fire watching, we had. I remember being on the roof there [Laughing] in, most…

AG: Did you feel any more hostility towards you as someone from Germany, when the Nazis arrived in, on the Channel coast, in France? Was there bad feeling?

MS: Well.

AG: Did you mix with…?

MS: I don't really know. Yes, my boyfriends were English gentiles. At the time, yes, at the time, but not later.

AG: How did the English treat you?

MS: Well I mean, the boyfriends treated me all right. One was a police sergeant in fact, so it was all right when I was out with him. We didn't have to worry about the curfew. We had a curfew at 10 o'clock. Didn't have to worry about that.

AG: You had other restrictions I believe? You couldn't have, you weren't allowed to have bicycles and cars and cameras and things like that?

MS: Well I don't really know. I mean, when, I think by the time the restrictions were fully in force it must have been already 1943, something like that, when I was already in the Foreign Office. So.

AG: What about the Battle of Britain? Do you remember the Battle of Britain?

MS: Yes of course I remember everything. I mean we never had a night's sleep obviously. [Laughing] It bombed all the time. I mean, I think my mother as well, we were absolutely convinced that in the end Germany would be defeated. I don't think we ever lost really, you know, lost the belief in that, whatever happened. We were absolutely, I personally was absolutely sure. I mean it was our battle. [Laughing] God was fighting for us, the Jews.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 26 seconds

AG: How did the behaviour of the British population in London strike you during the Blitz?

MS: Well, you had really only, I had really no connections with that I would say. Because I mean the firm, the firm I worked for was Jewish. And he, he was, he was a very good man. And he had his family come out, his aunts and his uncles, and he established them in Willesden Lane in one of the blocks of flats. He was well-to-do, but trouble was he had dealt with Germany before and so now that was impossible and so he imported the clocks from America and quite a few ships were sunk. So, so he was doing very well [?]. I mean he treated me well enough. My English wasn't all that marvellous at the time. I still remember that I couldn't make out what bonafide meant. He kept on saying bonafide. I wrote this down in the end. It dawned on me

that it was bona fide. I still remember that. I thought I would get the sack. I couldn't make out what it meant.

AG: You were a secretary?

MS: I was his secretary, yes.

AG: What was the firm doing? You say importing clocks?

MS: Yes, they were importing, yes, before the war they were importing clocks. As a sideline I think he probably also dealt in jewels. But his main thing was clocks. But in the end, of course, as I said, the American trade dried up because of the ships being sunk. But by then, by that time... But he treated me very well. He gave me an increase in salary. And then, by that time, when business turned to the bad I got a job with the Foreign Office.

AG: Do tell me about that. How come that you got a job at the Foreign Office?

MS: I can't really tell you that because I don't know. It was my friend, as I told you about, who I met in Germany, in this firm. And she lived with a landlady, somewhere in Hampstead. And I don't know what she was doing at the time. She must have been doing some war work. Anyway, one of the landlady's grandsons, of course they were British, they were English people, they were not British they were English, he came over and mentioned to his aunt, whoever it was, that the government was trying to recruit German-speaking people for war work. And my friend, she passed it on to my friend and my friend passed it on to me. And we both got jobs. She was in the registry there. And I was in the stencil department there.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 20 seconds

AG: In which department?

MS: Well we did stencils of German war communiqués.

AG: And where were you based? Where was this?

MS: Well we were based in Ingersoll House all the time.

AG: And where is Ingersoll House?

MS: In the Strand, or was in the Strand. Yes, between Holburn and the Strand. Opposite, more or less opposite the BBC. That house, that house must have, yes it was a commercial house and must have been requisitioned by the government.

AG: What department of the Foreign Office did you fall under?

MS: Well they called it PID, political intelligence.

AG: It sounds very sensitive work?

MS: Yes, of course. So that's why we had to swear the Official Secrets Act. And in the stencils department where we were, there was only the two of us. [Looking at something]. That's where I got all the details from and wrote to the AJR.

AG: Could you explain for the film, for those who haven't seen the letter to the AJR.

MS: Yes, yes, I was there for a while until the opening occurred, they were thinking of editing a paper for the German prisoners of war, in German of course, to convert them to democracy. And Dr Reichenbach, who was also at the time in the Foreign Office, he was entrusted, he had been a journalist and he was entrusted with the job of doing this, editing the paper.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 56 seconds

AG: And what was the paper called? Do you remember?

MS: It was first called Lagerpost and later it was called Wochenpost. And so he was looking for staff and I applied for the job and I got it.

AG: What were you doing?

MS: I was his secretary, I typed his articles. And I could also contribute some of my own ideas. Like a puzzle corner and things like that.

AG: Like what?

MS: Puzzle, puzzle corner.

AG: Ah. Did the Germans like, did the prisoners of war like puzzles?

MS: Yes I suppose. And some jokes probably, copied from somewhere or other and translated. It was a very, very nice job.

AG: And where was this?

MS: It was still in the same building, just on a different floor.

AG: And where were these Germans? Were these German prisoners of war in … ?

MS: Oh, that was later. At first they were all in the camps. It was only right at the end when we had a few chosen ones, when we went to the BBC place [Bush House] there, they were assisting us.

AG: They were … ?

MS: They were chosen, they were chosen from the camps I suppose. Those with, who were educated and more liable to be converted to democracy. I don't know how many there were but sometimes we had to go and take the papers down, I don't know why that was. But, later on, the government, for some reason, or the Foreign Office, I don't know, when the war was nearing the end they engaged more staff for it. So I

don't know why that was. My, I got a cousin of mine into the Foreign Office, towards the end. She had been to Palestine. She was married there. The marriage broke up, she came back to England and I got her a job there. And, they recruited a Dr Klein, who came from Prague, and she was a PhD.

AG: I think this is a good moment to break because the tape is just coming to an end.

MS: Yes.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 6 seconds

TAPE 3

AG: This is Marion Smith, Tape 3. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the work that you did in the Foreign Office for this Dr Klein?

MS: Dr Reichenbach.

AG: Oh yes. And you were saying that Dr Klein came from … ?

MS: Oh Dr Klein, yes. I don't know why they recruited us for that because by the time the war was nearing its end. And she was put in charge because she was academically better qualified. But we did the same job as before.

AG: This was producing…?

MS: Editing the paper and trying to re-educate the German prisoners.

AG: Do you think you had any success? Do you have any idea?

MS: That I don't know. I mean, Dr Reichenbach's son, he was a sergeant, he was in charge there of the lot that we had in Bush House. I don't know whether we had any success.

AG: How did you get on with your British working colleagues at the, in this branch at the Foreign Office?

MS: Well I had no colleagues. I had only, except I mean my, I had only bosses really, there were no colleagues really, strictly speaking. The orders came from above and Dr Reichenbach carried them out. I do know that there was rather an amusing, when sometimes, some weekends we had to spend in Bletchley Park, which we weren't allowed to mention of course. I don't know why we were there, I've no idea, because we did the same work as we did in London. But there was a Professor Stirk.

AG: Yes?

MS: You've heard of him?

AG: Yes, he was a Professor of German, S. D Stirk**,** yes.

MS: He used to teach English in Germany and German in Scotland. And he and Dr Reichenbach had a row over some grammatical point, I do remember that. Not that we, Dr Klein or I, had anything to say. But it struck me as rather odd, that he, merely a teacher, was grammatically trying to teach a journalist how to write an article. I mean it seemed [Laughing], it seemed to me quite… [Laughing]

Tape 3: 2 minutes 26 seconds

AG: Did you have any idea of the nature of the work that was going on at Bletchley Park?

MS: No, not really, we never knew where we were either. I do remember the journeys there, which were rather unpleasant, because in those days I was prone to car sickness and I had the window open; I had to have the window open. Even if it was in the winter and I don't think the other people in the car appreciated that. [Laughing] But we were treated... it was a country house, I mean, we were given early morning tea, which I never liked anyway [Laughing].

AG: Hmm.

MS: And I never know why we were there.

AG: Hmm, sounds very interesting.

MS: But something might have been going on in London while we were there, I thought rather, in Ingersoll House perhaps, I don't know. I had no idea because we did nothing different from our usual. We just…

AG: I suppose they needed German language experts, expertise?

MS: Well generally, of course, nobody knew any German to speak of. I don't think anybody had anything other than school German.

AG: I've never heard of German refugees being at Bletchley Park. It's quite extraordinary.

MS: Yes, but we were only there a few weekends. We had nothing to do with anything. Except we were given this, the tea in the morning. [Laughing]

AG: You must have done something other than drink tea?

MS: Yes, but we only did the same we always did. I mean Professor Stirk was there [Laughing], I remember that, arguing about grammatical points. I don't know. Perhaps there were some bigwigs there who were watching over us. I don't know. We did nothing different anyway. I didn't like going there either because of the car sickness, and I was much better off at Mapesbury Court with my mother.

Tape 3: 4 minutes 17 seconds

AG: How were your parents getting on at this time, throughout the war?

MS: Well they didn't [manage] at all. My father was only at home for about four weeks and then he went back to the home. He was in various homes. My father didn't have a good time in, anyway. But once the AJR homes [hostels for refugees] were established, of course, he was in Cricklewood, in the home. Mrs, what's her name? I forget now.

AG: Was this one of the homes for refugees?

MS: That's right, yes. He was there. He was there for a while. And, was, you remember Lucie, who was with the AJR, it was her mother who had... You don't know her?

AG: No.

MS: No?

AG: It was long before my time. I don't know who…

MS: No, it can't be before your time because she, she only died two years ago and she was still working for the AJR, in articles. What was her name, now Lucie, I shall think of it in a minute. She only died a couple of years back. She was friends, with my, with my assistant. Anyway, her mother had this, was in charge of that home in Cricklewood.

AG: Ah, I know who you mean. You mean Lucy Kay?

MS: That's right, Lucy Kay.

AG: Ah, Gertrude Schachne's daughter?

MS: That's right, yes, Mrs Schachne was in charge of the house.

AG: Of course I remember who you mean.

MS: Yes, that's right. She was in charge.

AG: Ah yes, that was in…

MS: In Cricklewood, her home was, yes.

AG: Yes, just off the, just off the Edgware Road.

MS: Yes, it was very near.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 49 seconds

AG: Oh right, and she ran a home for elderly relatives?

MS: Yes, mainly, yes invalids. Elderly and invalid. I mean it wasn't, it wasn't anything unusual. It was only one of many. She was very good.

AG: And what about your mother?

MS: She was very good. Well, we lived all the time in the same place, in Mapesbury Court. And I got married from there as well, you see. In this home they had, the secretary of the synagogue came round for services I think. And so my father knew […] and so we got married there. Although it was an orthodox synagogue.

AG: Tell me about your husband. First of all, what was his name?

MS: His name was Louis. And he was brought up in the East End. His relations, some of his relations still live there, as far as they are alive, of course. And he had great trouble in, the driver had great trouble finding the synagogue. I've never forgotten that, because he never, in the East End they'd never heard of Willesden Synagogue. And he couldn't find it. And so my father was already in a terrible state [Laughing] in the synagogue yard. They were all, he thought he wasn't going to turn up and I was going to be left there. Whereas he, my husband-to-be, he was sitting fuming in the car because the driver couldn't, didn't know where Willesden was.

Tape 3: 7 minutes 18 seconds

AG: How did you come to meet your husband?

MS: Well, we met in one of the Jewish clubs there in town. You know there were, there was Woburn House and later on there was the other one. I've forgotten. You probably know the name.

AG: Bloomsbury House?

MS: Yes, Bloomsbury House, yes. And they had, they had sort of club evenings there of various sorts. And in one, in one of the many in charge was a Rabbi Baum who had been in my husband's class at school. [Laughing] So.

AG: And your husband came to one of…?

MS: Yes, well, he came to this club. Well, there was really nowhere much to go in those days. I mean, he was, my husband, he was, he was a war worker anyway. He was an analytical chemist and they didn't have to join the army. He wanted to join the navy for some reason although he hated the water. But I don't know, because he was refused anyway. He would have been very unsure, because he hated the water. I don't know why he wanted to join the navy. We always asked him afterwards, all of us, but he could never explain that. So he wasn't in the army. He was always reserved occupation wherever he was.

AG: So he was in some, working in some sort of scientific laboratory?

MS: He was, no, no, he was always working for big firms. He was, but they were all the war work, you see, something or other. He worked for Yardley's for many years. Later on, after the war, he worked for Texaco.

AG: Do you remember when you first met him?

MS: Yes, we met in this Jewish club there.

AG: Do you remember when it was?

MS: Yes, I remember we got married, '46 it must have been, during the war, '44, that's right, '44. Because he lived in the East End and he always took me home and it was very difficult in those days to get from the East End to Mapesbury Court, it was very difficult.

AG: And wasn't he …

MS: '44, that's right.

AG: … bombed in the East End? Wasn't he affected by the bombs?

MS: Yes he was in one, I think, well they never had a house anyway, they were very poor. They always lived in rented accommodation. I think in one of them they were bombed out, I think.

AG: When were you married, do you remember?

MS: We were married, yes, in '46, in September '46, just after the war, yes. We met during the war, so it must have been in '44, that's right. We got married in September '46.

Tape 3: 10 minutes 4 seconds

MS: But it was a very different environment for him. He found it quite difficult actually to adjust to the German-Jewish ideas. They were quite different to the East End Jewish.

AG: In what way, could you … ?

MS: Well, first of all, he was the only boy in his class who qualified for a free grammar school place. That was the first thing. And so the most of them had no chance really. Apparently the system was if you paid you could go to a grammar school, if you reached a certain level. It was much the same as in Germany but we never had any free places anyway, but here they had. If you had a gifted child you could get a free place in a grammar school. And his parents had no money and so he was lucky to get that. But there was… And he also could have got a place at university, but not for his keep. Only for the studies as such. As his parents couldn't afford to keep him he had to do his degree in evening classes. So he worked very, he worked very hard. But he was a wonderful worker obviously. Very conscientious.

AG: How did he find it difficult to fit in with German Jews?

MS: Yes, he found German Jews very strange.

AG: In what way?

MS: Well, our assimilated ways struck him as very odd.

AG: He was more religious, more Jewish?

MS: Well, he was brought up, yes, in the end he was not at all religious, he didn't believe in anything. But he was brought up in an orthodox way. The orthodox English Jews were very different from the German Jews, very different. And so it seemed to him very odd. My mother was, I never met my mother-in-law because she was ill. She died very young. But the atmosphere when you went to weddings and that was so different from the ones I was used to.

AG: How was it different? Could you explain?

Tape 3: 12 minutes 14 seconds

MS: Well, we were so assimilated, I mean, we were, it was striking that we were so German in our, in our looks, but the English Jews were never like that. They were just Jewish [Laughing]. Jewish. And I mean most of them their ancestors came all from Poland and so they were entirely different. And so he found himself in quite a different situation, I think. He wanted to get away from [?] them and yet we seemed very odd to him. [Laughing] Until you get used to it of course. He still got used to it. [Laughing] In the beginning, I mean, he couldn't, he couldn't make out, you know, what people made of him, really. He spoke to my brother but afterwards, of course, everything settled. It's not that I converted to that, he converted to my side.

AG: How did you get on with his family?

MS: Oh I always got on all right. I mean, his father was, had nothing really much to say for himself anyway. He was a boot maker all his life and he never aspired to anything else. And I got on well with them, more or less, quite well. He didn't get on well with his family. But I did, and I still see his sister, who is also in her late 80s, and is in a home now. And I still see her. I always liked her.

AG: How did you find the Jewish East End when you came into contact with it?

MS: Well also very strange, in the same way as he did. I found it all very strange and very, eh, sort of, very... Their ideas were so different from ours. For one thing the girls in my generation, they were all totally uneducated, except for a few exceptions. I had... When I lived in the country there, in Lakers Lodge first, there, there was a doctor, a Jewish doctor there and his wife. And of course she was educated and she was the only Englishwoman at the time I met who was an educated woman. She had the same education as I did in the grammar school and of course he was a doctor. But they were clientele. There were no other Jews there. They befriended me because they heard that I was, they heard that I was coming. So they were very good to me.

AG: What about these people in the East End?

MS: They took care of me. Sorry?

Tape 3: 14 minutes 40 seconds

AG: You were telling me about the people in the East End that seemed very strange to you.

MS: My, yes, we didn't have an awful lot of contact other than we constantly had bar mitzvahs. We attended I don't know how many bar mitzvahs and a lot of weddings when we were young. The whole time, we were, practically every month. It was a very large family. There was some celebration or other nearly every month.

AG: Do you remember things like, for example, D-Day, the invasion of Normandy?

MS: Yes, I remember it. I mean, we were all very happy about it, everything that happened here that was in any way, you know, detrimental to Germany, obviously. I think most German Jews would have felt the same.

AG: And do you remember the end of the war?

MS: Yes I remember the end of the war. I don't think we went actually to the West End. I was just starting to thinking about that and I'm not sure whether we went. My husband wasn't the sort of fellow who celebrated anything much. I don't know whether we did. Although, I mean all the Jews were happy. The English Jews as well as the German ones, but I think to us it seemed something, something more sort of justice done in the end. I don't know, I think the feeling was strongest amongst us really.

AG: Did you ever think you might go back to Germany?

MS: Well, I could have gone back, from the Foreign Office. They offered me the, you know, job with the Control Commission. But I couldn't go because I was married by that time. I would have loved, loved to have gone back.

AG: Would you?

MS: Oh yes, I would have loved to, I would have been off like a shot.

Tape 3: 16 minutes 34 seconds

AG: Really? You would have been happy to go and live in Germany?

MS: No, not live there. Just to be there with the Control Commission. Oh no, I wouldn't have lived there. I would have loved to go there and come as a sort, on the victor's side, and showed them [Laughing].

AG: I understand. Yes, sorry, I misunderstood you. I thought that when you said you'd like to go back and live in Germany...

MS: I would have had, there, vengeance. I would have, actually I would have loved it. But actually my friend's husband went there, the one I'm telling you about, who got me the job. He went there for a little while. He was, he came from Poland originally. He went with the Control Commission.

AG: So you continued working in the Foreign Office after the end of the war?

MS: Yes, but only for a little while because my daughter was born then and so…

AG: Ah, so tell me?

MS: That all coincided, and so that was the end of the matter.

AG: Tell me about your marriage. Where and when did you get married?

MS: Well as I said, we got married in '46, September '46, in Willesden Synagogue. And then we had a great difficulty finding accommodation of course. So we had to have, got a couple of rooms in the East End, in Northfield Road.

AG: Where's that?

MS: Stamford Hill. It's become now quite a fashionable road I've seen in the paper, and it was a run-down Jewish area when we were there. And we only had a couple of rooms on the top. And the landlady was a Mrs Blanket [Laughing] and all she thought of was her family. She didn't care, she had some, another tenant, an old lady. And she let her house go to rack and ruin except for the floor she was on, the ground floor. And so we had, during the cold winter in '47 we had no water for months. Toilet didn't work. She didn't mind. She was totally, totally indifferent to her fellow Jews as long as she was all right. And she had a big wedding for her daughter. I remember during that time. Not that we were invited, but... We couldn't wait to get away from there, so when our daughter was born after a few months we, my husband already had a good job in Yardley's so he advanced us the money to buy a house on the other side of Kingsbury from where we are now. We are only ten minutes away from where we used to live.

Tape 3: 19 minutes 2 seconds

AG: Where did you used to live? Do you remember the address?

MS: Off Honeypot Lane, yes, just the other side of Kingsbury. So we haven't come very far once we got away from the East End.

AG: And when was, could you tell me the date of your daughter's birth?

MS: Yes, she was, she was born in '48, she was born in July '48.

AG: And what's her name?

MS: Vivien, Vivien Rosenthal**.**

AG: Is that your only child?

MS: No, I had a, we had another daughter who got killed when she was nine-, nearly nineteen, eighteen. So we never... My daughter [pointing] made this up for my ninetieth birthday. You can read, there's our life story in there. No, she got killed very tragically. And so we, I mean I never got over it of course. My husband probably never got over it either but as he fell ill when he was just turned eighty. We never spoke about it. I don't know whether it affected him in any way. I mean. I don't think so. I don't even know whether he remembered it after...

AG: When was your second daughter born?

MS: She was born... She was four years younger, so that's? Was it forty..?

AG: '52?

MS: Was she born, [thinking], '52. '52 she was born. She was born '52.

AG: I'm sorry to have to ask you.

MS: She had a very, yes, she was very difficult right from the very beginning. Quite unlike my older daughter.

AG: Well, you moved with your …

MS: Children can be very different, very different.

AG: You moved with your husband and your daughter to Kingsbury.

MS: Yes, well, my daughter was already... The main reason we moved here, I always wanted a bungalow and the school was at the end of the road here. So it was so convenient. I mean, she was six when we moved here I remember. So it was ideal to come here of course.

AG: What sort of house was the first house you had in Kingsbury?

MS: Well it was the ordinary three-bedroom house, the ordinary two and a half bedrooms and two rooms downside. It was a bit primitive but we were glad of a loan of the money to buy it.

AG: Was it a sort of suburban semi?

MS: Yes, a semi, ordinary, yes. It was actually end of terrace house but we sold it at exactly the same, for exactly the same money as we paid for it and so you could say we lived there for free. We got exactly…

AG: You lived there for how long?

MS: For free really, yes.

AG: For how long did you live there?

Tape 3: 21 minutes 57 seconds

MS: Well we lived there… We've moved here in '52 and so [thinking] '48.

AG: About four years?

MS: Yes, four years, four years. We tried to sell it the year before. We couldn't have. It was very difficult to get a mortgage on our first… the sale fell through on our first place. In the end I'd always wanted a bungalow. And so that was all right. We moved here.

AG: And you were happy to stay in the Kingsbury area?

MS: Yes, I was happy. Particularly, I mean, when she, the school was near and when she passed the 11-plus she went to Orange Hill, which is also quite near. Orange Hill Grammar. Of course that school is now a special school for mentally handicapped.

AG: And what was the school your daughter first went to, the one that was at the end of the road? Was it a …

MS: Yes it was a nice school.

AG: … a primary school?

MS: Glenwood. Yes it was a primary school.

AG: What was it called?

MS: Glenwood. It was called Glenwood because it was in Glenwood Avenue. Yes, she did very well there. Of course in those days the 11-plus was a lot easier than when my husband went to school. So, I mean, there he was the only boy in his class. But well [in hers] there weren't all that many. About… I don't know. There were about twenty-eight in the class, I think, and four passed to grammar school.

Tape 3: 23 minutes 31 seconds

AG: Did you get to know other mothers through the school?

MS: Mmm, yes, not many. Another Jewish lady who also had a boy at the school. She just started recently. But there aren't many people up here Jewish, it's not a Jewish area. But my husband never wanted to live in a Jewish area. There was one. He would never have gone anywhere near Golders Green. That's probably because he was brought up in a Jewish area [Smiling], so he wanted to get away from here, see. Most of his life, I mean his young life, he always lived in a Jewish area. So he couldn't …

AG: I was just laughing at that because I was brought up in Golders Green. Sorry, that's by the by.

MS: But, yes, he, I don't know, he took a dislike to Jewish environment. I don't know. So he was quite determined not to be anywhere near Golders Green. But we had friends up here. They were Jewish, also Jewish refugees.

AG: Did you mix a lot with other Jewish refugees?

MS: Yes, of course. It was in the... I mean it was, sort, just how things happened because we played bridge. And, I mean, all the people we did meet really were, mainly, ninety percent, were German refugees. We all seemed a bit odd to him in the beginning but then he got used to that [Laughing]. They were all German. All our friends were then German refugees really.

AG: And where did they live? Did they live near here or?

MS: Well, quite a lot, in Harrow, well, we joined a bridge club in Harrow. A lot of people came from there. But here there was only one man [looking over her right shoulder], the old man, who, no, actually he was a German [again looking to her right], my neighbour here, he was a real German who married a Jewish, a Jewish German girl but that marriage broke up and she went to Israel then when it was established. But when we moved in of course it was very different. There were very different people here. There weren't any Indian or black people here at all.

AG: How did you get on with the British? I mean you were surrounded by them here, for example.

MS: Yes, well, I always got on well. Well I mean, on a sort of, for entertainment, I think I only mixed with German Jews really.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 53 seconds

AG: If you came into contact, say, after the war, with, I don't know, shopkeepers and people like that, did they treat you differently, did you feel?

MS: No, no.

AG: They must have heard you weren't British?

MS: Well they probably did. But, I've never had a pronounced accent because of him. So, I don't think so. A lot of people thought I came from Australia [Laughing]. A lot of people, English people thought that. They discerned an accent and they couldn't place it. No, very few people ever had an idea that I came from Germany.

AG: Did you ever have any hostility from British people because you were either German or Jewish or German-Jewish, after the war?

MS: Well no, but I mean, socially we didn't mix with anybody, I can't tell you, any non-Jewish people. I think most of the Jews didn't. It was in the, it was in the manner of things, isn't it, that you associated with others [like yourself]. Gleich und gleich gesellt sich gerne. [Birds of a feather flock together.] It's only normal. It's the same as the Indians do. The Indians all stay together. [Laughing] It's no different. I think this is the normal thing, isn't it? And particularly I had my mother here, didn't I? So she had, mixed with other, other refugee ladies.

AG: And did she continue living in Mapesbury Court?

MS: Yes, yes, till her death, yes. She was ninety, over ninety-four.

AG: When did she die?

MS: She was ninety-four when she died.

AG: And so that's? Let me do some mathematics. That's about, is that 197- ..?

MS: '76, she died in '76.

AG: And your father?

MS: When she was with me. My father died … Christmas, when did he die? … '56? I know he died, just before Christmas. I've got all the dates written down. I can tell you he was 80, so you, it means you got to work it out.

AG: Ah, he was born in 1872 you said?

MS: Yes, that's right.

AG: That's 1952. Oh so a long time…?

Tape 3: 28 minutes 1 second

MS: Yes, he was quite elderly. Well, he was ill. I mean it was surprising he lived that long really. But, as I said, he was always in... In the end he was in a home in Epsom, which was quite all right. I mean I saw him regularly. I also had to do his washing and things like that, which I brought back.

AG: And how did your mother manage? I mean, after all she lived here for a great number of years. Did she accustom herself to England?

MS: Yes, reasonably well I think, reasonably well. I mean she hadn't... She brought from one of the homes she was in, a Jewish home she was in for three months, for some reason - I think her charlady was away, or something like that, so she went to a Jewish home, which she very much disliked - but she bought back from there an Irish nurse. And she stayed with her for many years part-time. She made her breakfast and her lunch.

AG: Why did she dislike this home?

MS: Oh, she said it was terrible. She didn't like the food, she didn't like the surroundings. And, eh, she didn't like East End Jews at all. [Laughing] I think the home is not there any more. She could never get used to that. I mean, she was, after all, she remembered her finishing school in Switzerland. And so, I mean the way people were brought up then, you know, her environment was so different, she could never get used to that, never. [Laughing] English Jews seemed to her very strange.

AG: So she had a circle of refugee, of refugee ladies?

MS: Yes, other, other refugees.

AG: Did she play bridge as well?

MS: Yes she played bridge all the time. She was very keen. I used to collect the ladies from Kilburn and brought them up by car. We were very close, we were very close. The same as I am with my daughter. And my daughter also, she loved, loved her grandmother. They were, they were also very close.

Tape 3: 30 minutes 5 seconds

AG: You said that your daughter went from primary school to Orange Hill.

MS: Orange Hill, that's right.

AG: How did she get on there?

MS: Oh she got on well enough there. With the, do you know the school at all?

AG: Yes.

MS: Yes, well Miss Wood was the headmistress at the time. We had a terrible struggle with her because she wanted to leave at sixteen. She wanted to go where she could study drama. She was always, she always wanted to do it. And that wasn't offered there of course. English literature was offered. And Miss Wood made a terrible fuss because... I heard afterwards from people that the headmistresses get paid for the people they have in the sixth form. I heard that afterwards. It was probably the reason. I had a dreadful struggle. So, she, anyway, when she was sixteen, so we said, Louis and I said, she could leave but only if she took A levels. She was not allowed to leave for any, for anything else, any silly ideas she might have had in her head. So she agreed to that and the only place I could find for her was Chiswick Polytechnic, where they had a big drama department, as a sideline of course. And so she studied her languages, the three languages as she was meant to do, and she did drama there, with the, with the teacher there. He had attached quite, great importance and that was what she wanted. She, and from there, from Chiswick, after she got her A levels, she went to Bromley. Because, that was, that was the only one, Bromley College, Bromley Art College, that was the only one where they taught something called moving pictures communications.

AG: Moving pictures communications?

MS: Communications, yes, and that's what she took. She was a bit over-qualified because she had needed only two A levels and she had three, but she was determined that is what she wanted to do. And they were actually very good. I mean she, she was quite happy there. Although the accommodation didn't suit her at all. The first landlady didn't allow her to go out in the evenings.

AG: Good heavens.

Tape 3: 32 minutes 11 seconds

MS: So, but in, in the end she found somewhere else where she was independent. And she was, she was happy there in that college, she loved that a lot. So when she came out she joined the BBC. Twice, she joined. The first time, she joined and, of course she couldn't do any shorthand or typing, clerk, clerical work. The first time she joined, [Smiling] she kept on telling us she wanted to go on holiday with her friend and the BBC said she hadn't been there long enough for holiday. So she said she went anyway, which she did. And [Smiling] then she went back after that. The BBC are happy to take you back if they like you there. Come and go, they don't mind that, they are not like other employers. So afterwards she went back, to the BBC, after another job. And she was in the ticket office. And she didn't like that either.

AG: The ticket office?

MS: Yes.

AG: At the BBC? I don't understand.

MS: Yes, there was, they had a ticket office at the time.

AG: For what?

MS: I don't know. You'll have to ask my daughter what the... I don't know what she did in the ticket office.

AG: The BBC?

MS: It may be, it may be for the free tickets that they issued.

AG: Ah, for …

MS: You see you could, you could go. I was there, in the evenings you could go. The concerts and that, they issued free tickets.

AG: Mmm.

MS: She was there.

AG: And where did she work? Did she work in the main BBC offices in … ?

MS: She worked, yes, yes

AG: Did she work in radio or…?

MD: She worked. Yes, yes, there. Yes. And when she left, anyway, because she had the, she took all the time out, when she had the children, and there was a big gap, and I made her do temporary work because I thought if she loses touch altogether she won't be able to get a job after that. So, she did temporary work now and then and I stood in for her and looked after the children…

Tape 3: 34 minutes 4 seconds

AG: Oh. When did she get married?

MS: …the same as my mother had done for me. And they've just been married thirty years now, in the last month.

AG: That was 1975. And who did she marry? Who is her husband?

MS: Well her husband also comes from an orthodox family, but sort of different environment.

AG: What's his name?

MS: Yes they were quite well-to-do**.** Rosenthal.

AG: And his first name?

MS: His parents were. Michael, Michael.

AG: And where did they live?

MS: They lived in north-west London, they lived in Kensal Rise, they had a big house there. I mean his parents.

AG: Rosenthal? Were they originally from Germany?

MS: No, no, no, no, they were British Jews. I don't even... I don't know. I was just saying the other day... Vivien didn't even know where his father, whether his father was already born here. I don't know, could have been. I think his mother was born [here], definitely his mother. Both his parents were born here but whether their grandparents came from here I don't know. Could have been.

AG: How many grandchildren do you have?

MS: Three.

AG: Could you tell me their names?

MS: Yes, Ruth is the eldest, she's a drama teacher. And Edward is the second in line. He's a housing officer, for the council, in Hillingdon.

AG: Which council?

MS: Hillingdon.

AG: Oh yes.

MS: Where they live. And, the youngest has just gone out [looking over her left shoulder], just now. He's just finished university and he's already got a job in his old school because, he got no experience teaching at all, but they are so short of teachers that they offered him a job straight away. He's probably younger than the students he will teach. He's only just twenty-one.

AG: What's his name?

MS: Mmm, now, what's the matter with me? I've forgotten. You see that's when you get to old age. Oh, I'll think of it in a minute. Nicholas is his name, Nicholas. Yes, he's only just come out of the university. He's just been round, round Europe on this £250 they have. I don't know if you know that? The students, they've got student cards. For £250 you get all around Europe. On trains of course. And they visit all the various countries. So he visited everything. You heard of it [Smiling]?

AG: No.

Tape 3: 36 minutes 31 seconds

MS: Anyway, so he's just come back. And next week I think, or the week after, he's already starting his job. So, [Smiling] he didn't waste any time.

AG: Which university was he at?

MS: He was at Cardiff. And the other one was in Lancaster. And my granddaughter was here, in London, at the School of Speech and Drama. So, that's why I've got the pictures in the front, all three of them.

AG: And where is your daughter and her husband? Where are they living now?

MS: They live in Northwood Hills**.** And that's the reason I'm moving because they want me to be nearer them.

AG: And you'll have been here for…?

MS: Fifty years.

AG: My goodness.

MS: Over fifty years. Of course when we moved in we were young and we didn't notice there was a hill [Smiling]. We only noticed when my husband became ill, that things weren't quite so good, it would be a bit isolated up here.

AG: Did your husband continue working with Yardley's then?

MS: Oh no, no. He went to Texaco after Yardley's.

AG: Oh yes, you said. And you, did you work at all yourself?

MS: Yes, I always... I got myself a certificate from London University for teaching German.

AG: Did you? You must have had to study for that?

MS: I always taught German. No, well the funny thing is that, I mean in this country nobody ever wants to see any written qualification. You don't need it. That's how all these people go in there as doctors who never learnt anything. [Smiling] You don't have to prove anything. [Smiling] I could have saved myself the trouble. Nobody ever looked at my certificate that I got, with a distinction. Nobody wanted to know.

AG: Where did you do this qualification?

MS: London, well here, a correspondence course.

G: With one of the London colleges?

MS: No, the college was in Cambridge. Doesn't exist any more.

AG: I see.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 28 seconds

MS: But it was only a, correspondence, you see. But the, I mean, the exam itself was fairly difficult, but not, not terribly so. But nobody wanted to see it. So the people, the other people who took it with me, the French, there were French and Belgian people and English people, so it was quite easy. All the natives of course got distinctions. And the other ones either failed or just passed. [Laughing] It's not fair really [Laughing].

AG: Were there quite a lot of native speakers and refugees on this course?

MS: No, there was only another person and me, a German one. And there were two or three French people. And there was some English people. But, obviously for them the exam was very difficult.

AG: And where did you teach?

MS: Well I teach in various evening classes, always. And, I also had a job teaching English to foreign students in a private language school in Edgware.

AG: Where were the evening classes where you taught German?

MS: The evening classes were in various places. They were in Harrow, Edgware and for a time I taught in town, in one of Rhodes Boyson's old schools.

AG: Ah, so Highbury, I think?

MS: Yes, Highbury. Well I mean I had all. It wasn't so easy because my husband wanted to be looked after [Smiling]. He wasn't the sort of person who would do anything for himself [Smiling]. Not in that generation [Laughing]. They weren't used to that.

AG: Did you enjoy teaching German?

MS: Yes, yes I liked it. I liked it, I liked teaching English. There was nothing wrong with that either, to Cambridge Proficiency. And they were the only people who really know English, because they were very strict at Cambridge. Your English had to be absolutely perfect. Not like now, where even the newspaper people can't write English. Journalists can't write English. [Laughing]

Tape 3: 40 minutes 33 seconds

AG: What sort of people did you teach German to?

MS: Well they were all people over sixteen. It was in Further Education. It was mainly elderly ladies. But there were some, there was some foreign people as well. And when they came from abroad of course they were educated. I had a person that came from Italy. To her there was nothing because the grammar was practically the same as the Latin one, it was all based on Latin. She had no trouble. And I had a very well educated American lady there. She was fantastic. I mean, she picked it up in no time. But obviously the better educated you are, the easier it is for you. And the same went for teaching English. I mean, I had some people there from Germany, came from university, and of course they passed the Proficiency with ease. Other people did not do so well. One German person I remember, girl, she wouldn't be taught. She said her teacher in Germany had said such and such and that must be right. And when we said it wasn't right she said she didn't believe us. So obviously she failed [Laughing]. Well, that is with language teaching, that's what happened. I mean, our manager in the firm in Germany, from where I, where I came to England, he thought he was a linguist as well. And it's only when I got his letters here in England, written in English, that I noticed how terrible they were [Laughing]. Until then I had no way of, of judging it.

Tape 3: 42 minutes 13 seconds

AG: How did you find it when you had to run the household, look after your daughters and teach in the evenings?

MS: Well I only taught in the evening classes, or afternoons. So there was no, there was no problem really. My daughter was never a problem in any case [Smiling].

AG: Did she mix a lot with English people when she was at school and at college?

MS: Yes, yes. I don't think she has here even got any, any Jewish friends. I don't think so. Yes, I mix. Well they got some because of Michael, but... She always mixed with English people. And of course since she's in the BBC in particular. There are no Jewish people there at all, she says. She always mixed with, with English people. She gets on with anybody. She's the sort of person that mixes with every, everybody.

AG: I'd like to ask you about yourself. How you consider yourself? Do you consider yourself German-Jewish or Jewish or British? How do you see your identity?

MS: Well, no. I would say, as a former Jewish refugee, I suggested that when they wanted a title [for the Association of Jewish Refugees]. I said they should put an 'F' in there, that's all.

AG: 'F' for?

MS: Instead of refugee. Yes, I mean, an 'F' for former. That would be.

AG: You still consider yourself…?

MS: Yes of course.

AG: A former Jewish refugee?

MS: I've never... Yes, that's right.

AG: And what about your feelings about Jewishness? Do you feel yourself Jewish?

MS: Yes, yes. Yes, I feel very strongly about that. I mean, whereas my husband didn't. I made him go [Smiling] to the synagogue. We've always, well obviously the children, you could see the necessity for going to Sunday School. So we joined first the Hendon Reform. And then, and then as soon as I could I went back to Belsize Square [Synagogue].

Tape 3: 44 minutes 8 seconds

AG: Ah, did you? So did you?

MS: I've been a member for many years. Soon as I could.

AG: Ah. Do you remember Belsize Square?

MS: I've always been, well not always, but I mean for many years. I rejoined them in '71. I couldn't do anything before because we lived in the East End and then. Then we were in Hendon and then we had no car. I mean, for that you needed a car.

But I rejoined in ’71. I’ve been a member ever since. Yes, I feel very, very strongly about Judaism.

AG: And did you join the congregation regularly at Belsize Square?

MS: Well no, not [Laughing], not as often as I should. I’d go for Jahrzeit. And, and, holidays. But of course they are in the […]. I mean I couldn’t have a more stupid place.

AG: Do you remember people like Rabbi Salzberger and…?

MS: No, it was after Salzberger that I joined. Kokotek was there. I dragged my husband along to see Kokotek. It was very happy because my husband listened to him with rapt attention always and then he said the man’s talking nonsense. [Laughing] But he always listened with rapt attention. That was quite funny.

AG: Do you have anything to do with Belsize Square now still?

MS: Yes, I’m still a member. Yes, of course. I said I’d been a member since ’71. And in the, in the beginning you see when we had, we had access to the St John’s Wood Liberal [Synagogue], as you know they belonged to the Liberal [Synagogue], so I went there for services. But we weren’t allowed in. There wasn’t any room for us. They had a vestibule that you could sit in there and they had a service relayed there. I’ve always gone, always gone. And, I disapprove of the orthodox ones. I’ve been only once to Walm Lane**,** and the women, women were talking the whole time upstairs. It’s not my sort of service. Of course we grew up with the idea. I mean, women were upstairs even, even in the Liberale [Synagoge] in Germany, but we didn’t talk. And we always had an organ at least [Laughing]. And a choir. But here they sit upstairs and talk all the time.

Tape 3: 46 minutes 27 seconds

AG: So you feel happiest in Belsize Square?

MS: Yes, yes I’m fine. Much happier than Hendon because the English Jews, I could never get used to the English Jews somehow. I mean the poor ones, yes, […] relations, they’re all right. But I think the rich ones, I don’t know, I couldn’t get used to it. They were very snobbish in Hendon Reform. But they’re all well-to-do people because that is the, an area, you know, it’s well-to-do people in Hendon.

AG: But Belsize Square is not exactly impoverished either.

MS: Well no, but don’t forget in the early years it wasn’t like that, was it? Now they’re all right but not in the beginning. We had a terrible struggle, every one of us. My brother had a particular terrible struggle, because for people with this, with this occupation, not really having studied anything in particular, and not knowing the language well enough, I mean he had a terrible struggle to get established.

AG: How did he manage?

MS: Of course he got established. By perseverance I suppose. His first books had to be translated because his English wasn't good enough. And he said he had to, to give 40% to the translator.

AG: When did he start becoming London correspondent for German papers?

MS: Well that I don't know. Must have been, a very long time ago. I mean he died, he died forty, no he was, he was eighty-four, he was eighty-four when he died. He was born in 1904.

AG: That's 1988.

MS: So, he had been a, their correspondent for a very long time. But not only that. He was also, there were, I've forgotten the name for that. These articles were reprinted in other papers. Swiss papers and things like that.

Tape 3: 48 minutes 21 seconds

AG: I've come across some of his books. He wrote …

MS: Yes right.

AG: …an anthology of British humour.

MS: Yes, that's right, I've got all the books there [pointing], you can look at them.

AG: It was called something like Laughter in a Cold Climate or Wet Climate?

MS: I've got that… *Auch Deutsche lachen* (*Germans Laugh too*). I've got some in German and some in English. I've got, got all of them. You can have a look at them.

AG: Because he's such a well-known name, it's interesting that you say he had such a struggle.

MS: In the beginning he had a terrible struggle, yes.

AG: Where did he live, do you remember? And how did he live?

MS: Well they, they've been in their place, where they now, Dartmouth Road [Willesden], where my sister is, for almost the same time as I've been here. Must be over fifty years. Of course my sister-in-law is now in hospital, but the flat is still there. They have the, they bought the freehold but she had to sell it. I mean when he died he was a very wealthy man. But unfortunately my sister-in-law has been... since she had the strokes and had an operation that misfired. Her back, something got disconnected there and she's been in a wheelchair since. Of course if she'd known she would never have had the operation.

AG: I never asked you what became of your father's, sorry, your brother's son by his first marriage?

MS: Ah, well, he, he died in America. He went with his third wife, Ronit (?), an Israeli girl. They went to America. And he had a brain haemorrhage. He died, he was very young. I mean comparatively, very.

AG: Did he live in Palestine, in Israel?

MS: No, she's gone back now.

AG: No, I mean your nephew, your brother's son. Did he come to England, or he went to…?

Tape 3: 50 minutes 4 seconds

MS: No, no, he came as a boy to England, as I said. He was six. But he never lived with my brother, never. He had him in a school in Oxford. He didn't do particularly well. And, but when he was eighteen he joined the Australian air force. And they taught him photography and he became a wonderful photographer. He collaborated later with my brother. And as a boy, he wasn't good at anything except drawing. He could draw beautifully. When he was six he could draw a horse, or anything, which I would never achieve in a hundred years. I still remember that. He was always top in art. That was his forte. I don't know where he got this from but he did [Smiling].

AG: The other person I didn't really ask you a great deal about is actually your husband. You said that he went to work for Texaco?

MS: Yes, after Yardleys he went to Texaco.

AG: Did he then stay with Texaco?

MS: He stayed with Texaco to the end, till he retired. He retired at sixty-five. Oh yes.

AG: And what did the two of you do after your husband had retired?

MS: Well he, he kept himself busy. He was reading all day. He went to every, the boys still remember him, he went to every library in London. He was a member. He had a card for every library in London. So he went from one to the other. He read all day. All he wanted really was to be left alone and not be worried. He was, he was happy when he was doing that. He loved music as well. And he went to philosophy lectures in the evening. I mean, before he fell ill, he did everything, other people never did it. I could never understand why he should fall ill. A lot of people have been so inactive and never used their brain and what's left, their brain is still there. And he became ill.

Tape 3: 51 minutes 54 seconds

AG: When was this? When did he become ill?

MS: Well, he started being ill at eighty, really. I noticed it with a small, quite insignificant thing. I bought him a ticket for his birthday because he loved symphony

orchestras, and there was the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra there. And I asked him what he wanted to hear, and I'd bought him the ticket. And he looked after the tickets because he was always a very careful man, much more than me, and that evening when I said, are you ready now to go, and he said, it doesn't start till two hours from now or something. So he'd misread the ticket although he had it there. And he got in such a temper. This was his eightieth birthday and I said to myself, that's very unnatural to get... It was only a ticket after all. It wasn't that important. And that was the first time. And then there was a long interval there, when things seemed normal. And then in the end he noticed that he couldn't remember things. And he went to the doctor. And the doctor, he was, the doctor was sitting there [pointing], and he was standing by the door, and he asked me a few questions. And then he said to him, well you've just got dementia, you're old, put up with it, it doesn't matter. We could never, I mean, he could never get […] So we changed the doctor for one thing. Not that the diagnosis was any different. But, just the way he was treated. So I did everything I could. I joined, I joined him in the special scheme they had in Hammersmith Hospital, where they were studying Alzheimer's and dementia and that. I got him on the scheme. We did everything we could. He stayed with the U3A [University of the Third Age] as long as he could. I took him to the station. But in the end this, this illness takes hold of you. There's nothing you can do. So he went to the station, he couldn't remember how to get to the platform. And when he, if he did get on the train and he got off and he didn't know where to go. He went to Harrow once, he said. And when he got there he'd forgotten his address. And he was just going to go to the police station when he remembered it. Afterwards I always gave him something to… [Showing how she would put something in his pocket]. See, there's nothing you can do. We did everything we possibly could. He played bridge as long as he could, but…

Tape 3: 54 minutes 15 seconds

AG: When did he pass away?

MS: It's just under two years. It will now be two years in October. But he was, I mean, altogether, I would say it started when he was eighty, and he started, and he died nearly eighty-seven. So in the end he had to be in a home. But... It isn't that you can do anything about it. You see, people got mistaken ideas. They think if you keep active you don't get it. It's got nothing to do with it. It's a certain part of your brain stops working and it doesn't matter what you do. You can't prevent it.

AG: How have you managed yourself?

MS: Oh, I'm all right. I mean, now of course I'm in a bit of a state because I'm moving. But. I did a, I was a volunteer for twenty years for the AJR and Jewish …

AG: Did you?

MS: … and Jewish Care. For both of them.

AG: What sort of work did you do?

MS: Well for the AJR it was to just talk to people in the homes mainly. I visited the homes, but the …

AG: The AJR homes?

MS: … Jewish. AJR homes yes.

AG: The ones in Hampstead Garden Suburb, in Bishop's Avenue?

MS: No, that was before that, in Otto Schiff House in Hampstead. Yes. I used to visit people there. And I also visited them at home. There was a Polish lady, who had great troubles there [Laughing] in the home because she didn't speak English or German properly. She only spoke Yiddish and Polish. So she wasn't well liked in the home. I, I looked after her for a long time. She didn't live far from here. At Jewish Care there was a blind lady I looked after for twenty years, did her shopping. So I had plenty to do. And then I had, I didn't retire really until I was seventy-six anyway. [...] I taught until they gave me the boot because they amalgamated their two classes there and so I had no more classes to teach. Oh it was quite easy to keep yourself busy. There's nothing to it. Well, I played bridge you see. So that alone keeps you busy.

Tape 3: 56 minutes 24 seconds

AG: Do you ever go back to Germany at all?

MS: I have been back, in '71, because my daughter wanted to go back. And that was just after the death of my younger daughter. So she, she was […] to let me come as well. She couldn't have travelled on her own. So we went back to Berlin. And I saw my old school, which had become a hospital for incurables. And, that's right, the caretaker said that there were quite a few people there from various countries still wanting to see their old school.

AG: How did you feel when you went back to Berlin?

MS: Well, the funny thing was the house where my grandparents lived, my mother's parents, was still there. That house was still there, nothing had happened to it. And yet all the other houses in that, in that row were destroyed. This is one of the few that was still there. It was very odd.

AG: What did you feel about being amongst Germans in your old home town?

MS: Well. Huh. Quite, in two minds really. I mean it's not their fault I suppose. They did […] and they made a lot of fuss about it. And as we came by ourselves we had, they gave us taxis to ride in. Then we were... And... I mean, they couldn't be faulted really. I don't feel happy about it, no. I mean, whenever I see Germans, although it's not their fault.

AG: And have you been back at all since '71?

MS: Yes, we had been, actually before that, before ’71. We, we all went, but not as a holiday resort as such, on the way back. We were in Italy, with the car. We always used to go, my husband used to drive all over Europe. So we stayed in Munich. I wanted to see my old house again. It was still there. The house was still there. It was divided, not in four flats but in about twenty flats. I mean, they each had eight rooms, these big places where I was born. And my school of course wasn’t there any more. I could barely find the road. [Laughing] All been built up with supermarkets. There was no hope for private schools. [Smiling]

AG: We have to stop there because the tape is coming to an end.

MS: Yes.

Tape 3: 58 minutes 47 seconds

TAPE 4

AG: Tape 4. Just to finish up the interview, I’d just like to ask you if you have any message, or anything you would like to say to anybody watching the interview, family members, about what you’ve learned from life and what you think about life, looking back as a former refugee?

MS: Well, I really wouldn’t know what to say. I think all you can do is you make the best of your circumstances, that’s all. I mean, I’ve been reasonably happy in this country and the things that happened to me are nobody’s fault. I can’t blame anybody for anything.

AG: Right

MS: So I mean... My life has been very long, that is all [Laughing] I can say. I’ve got a loving and supportive family, including my grandchildren. And I see a lot of them.

AG: Good. Well then I’ll say…

MS: That’s all I can say.

AG: Well, I’ll say, Marion Smith, thank you very much indeed for doing the interview with us.

MS: Thank you.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Tape 4: 1 minutes 49 seconds

AG: Who is the person in this photograph?

MS: This is my father’s father

AG: And what was his name?

MS: Died in Munich. Nathan Lehrburger.

AG: And where was this taken?

MS: In Munich.

AG: And when was it taken?

MS: 1906.

AG: Thank you very much.

Tape 4: 2 minutes 21 seconds

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

MS: These are my parents. Taken …

AG: And could you tell me their names?

MS: Beatrice and Albert Lehrburger.

AG: And where was it taken?

MS: In Munich.

AG: And when?

MS: 1916.

AG: Thank you very much

Tape 4: 2 minutes 43 seconds

AG: Whose is the person in this photograph?

MS: This is my mother Beatrice Lehrburger.

AG: And when was it taken?

MS: 1938.

AG: And where?

MS: In Berlin.

AG: Thanks very much.

Tape 4: 2 minutes 59 seconds

AG: Who is the person in this photograph?

MS: This is myself.

AG: Could you tell me roughly when it was taken?

MS: Must have been when I was about nine, I would say.

AG: So about 1924?

MS: 1924.

AG: Where would it have been taken?

MS: In Munich.

AG: Thank you very much.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 23 seconds

AG: Who is the person in this photograph?

MS: This is my brother.

AG: What is his name?

MS: Egon Lehrburger.

AG: And what was he known as?

MS: Egon Larsen.

AG: And when was the photograph taken?

MS: In 1934.

AG: And where was it taken?

MS: In Berlin.

AG: Lovely, thank you.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 47 seconds

AG: I'm going to introduce this one. This is a letter of thanks from the Director General of the Political Warfare Executive, R.H Bruce Lockhart, sent to Mrs Smith at the end of the war in May 1945, and it was sent to all members of the department of the Foreign Office for which she worked.

Tape 4: 4 minutes 22 seconds

AG: Who are the people on this photograph?

MS: That is myself, Marion, with my husband, Louis Smith

AG: And when was it taken approximately?

MS: About 1954.

AG: And where?

MS: It was taken in a ballroom in one of the London hotels.

AG: Thank you very much

Tape 4: 4 minutes 49 seconds

AG: Who are the people in this photograph please?

MS: Well this is my daughter, Vivien, and her husband, Michael.

AG: What's his surname? Michael's surname?

MS: Rosenthal. And they got married in 1975. In a hotel in London. My husband, Louis, is on the right there.

AG: Lovely, thank you very much.

Tape 4: 5 minutes 31 seconds

AG: Who are the people in these photographs?

MS: These are my three grandchildren, Ruth, Edward and Nicholas Rosenthal.

AG: And when were the photographs taken and on what occasion?

MS: On their graduation days.

AG: Thanks very much

Tape 4: 5 minutes 50 seconds

The three photographs are shown individually

Tape 4: 6 minutes 17 seconds