IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV310
NAME: Ruth Sands
DATE: 13 March 2025
LOCATION: London
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[00:00:00]

Today is the 13th of March 2025. We're conducting an interview with Mrs Ruth Sands, and my name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. Can you please tell me your name?

My name is Ruth Sands.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in Vienna on the 19th of July 1938.

Thank you, Ruth, for having agreed to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Can you tell me a little bit about your family background, please?

[Sighs] Well, I have a mother – I had a mother, a father. The whole family lived in Vienna. My mother had two, three brothers in Vienna and my father had – he had a – he was the youngest of four and his eldest brother died in the First World War, and then he had two sisters and then he came much, much, much later. And by looking at old photos you could see that he [laughs] always joked he must've been an accident child. And [sighs] that was my family. Yes.

And what about grandparents and –

I never knew any grandparents. **[00:02:04]** Never. Grandparents were for me something which – I mean it bothered me of course, especially when I was a child in Paris. Everybody had grandparents. I had none. But you also learn very quickly not to ask any questions, so I never asked my parents why don't I have grandparents, never as a child. As a teenager, I began to be slightly interested in my past, not really that much. The – [laughs] one of my problems in Paris was that I did not have a Jewish name. My name was Buchholz and it wasn't Jewish, which created for me after the war when I started going to primary school a lot of [laughs] problems, other kids at school accusing me of being a [laughs] – a German and having killed their father I think and that is a memory, a very vivid memory. And –

So, because Buchholz was considered as a German name, so they thought you were German?

Yes. **[00:04:01]** They thought I was German, they called me *sale boche* because *boche* is a French name for dirty German and, yes, I suppose these were my first memories of difficulties where I – and I used to come home crying and I said, "am I German? I knew my parents were German. And I said, am I German?" And my father said, "no, you're not German, you're Jewish. You're Jewish." But it was [laughs] – it was a difficult name to have, Buchholz. [Laughs] Probably one of my first, you know, as a little girl of seven, eight, nine, and even at school they just didn't know how to spell it and when they managed to spell it then they asked me for my first name and then they expected Françoise, Michelle, Nicole, and it was Ruth, and Ruth did not exist. Now it does exist in France but Ruth did not exist in France. So what I used to find out is the whole two names were in one word and then they were still [laughs] waiting for Nicole or Françoise or Michelle [laughs] or whatever. So, I suppose that was my first, you know, I'm different, I'm different. But I coped. I coped well, I think. I think. I don't know.

Ruth, you were born just before the war started.

Just before.

So you were a hidden baby. **[00:06:01]** *So I think we need to find out more. Can you remember anything at all about that time?*

I have absolutely no memory of the first I would say – I have one or two flashes but I have absolutely no memory of the first I would say five, six years of my life. None. If – the only thing I know is because I've been told [laughs] but they're not memories.

No. So your own history of those years [overtalking].

I have no memories at all. Even when I met my mother for the first time, and I was already five and a half, and I don't have memories of that. But I have been told that it was a very difficult time for both of us. She only spoke German and I only spoke French [laughs] and she wanted to hug me and obviously I must have been a very strong little girl and I used to say the most horrible things, [laughs] you know, that's not a mother, I don't know what she's talking about. And I used to ask my father, you know, you told me I was – a mother, but I had a mother, but that's not a mother, you know, because we can't talk to each other. But I have no memory of that. It's my father who told me about the difficulty that there was between me and my mother, until – and it was just after the war, they had nothing, and they didn't know what to do with me because I did not want to be in the same room as this mother who speaks rubbish. **[00:08:13]** So they had an idea to buy me a doll and so they bought me a doll, a big doll, and my mother gave me the doll and apparently, that changed everything. And that doll, which is big, I have taken it with me everywhere and it has a prominent place everywhere because apparently, that's the doll which made me [laughs] a bit more open because she wanted to, you know, but I – I didn't want to be touched. Again, that's what my father told me. But the doll came and the doll has been with me all my life [laughs].

And you still have it?

Yes.

Another object.

[Both laugh] Another object, yes. Yeah.

Okay. We'll look at it later. So Ruth, where do your – before we start about what happened to you in the war, where are your earliest memories? What can you remember?

My earliest memories, [sighs] probably my earliest memory, full memories, was when my brother was born. My brother was born in the beginning of '47 and I was very, very unhappy [laughs]. I really did not want him [laughs] because up to then, you know, I was the only person and obviously I was loved and all that, and suddenly this baby arrived. **[00:10:17]** And I hated him. I really hated him for quite a few months 'cos I did nasty things to him. They really could not leave him with me one moment, you know. And that I remember. Yes.

But did – what did you do?

Oh, the worst thing I did [clears throat], the worst thing I did – my parents lived on the fourth floor of a block of flat with no lift and one day my mother got ready to go out with a pushchair and she put the pushchair outside in – outside the front door and she obviously had forgotten something, to get back into the flat. And I went [imitates pushing] and he was attached to the pushchair. I went, whoops, and he went all down the floor [laughs]. Yeah. I was punished and I can't even remember the punishment. I only remember the *poof*. Hmm. Yeah. And, but it didn't last very long because I do have some lovely photos of him by the time, he was two or three, you know, and I was nine, ten. **[00:12:14]** He was my little brother, you know, my baby brother, and, but the beginning was very hard. Very, very hard. And I think my parents made a mistake as well because they sent me away before he was born, you know, so I live – I left the flat and I come back and there's a baby.

Where did they send you?

They sent me – they had found family in Amsterdam. I was eight. They had found family in Amsterdam and they sent me there for a few days, you know. I had a very good time. They were a very nice a couple. They were actually related to my mother and they were very nice.

They had, they were wealthy, you know, not like when I was at home [laughs]. They treated me very nice. They had no children. And I came back. I always – I mean not always, but what a terrible thing to do [laughs] to an eight-year-old, you know. But they meant well, you know. They meant well. But yeah, it was –

But you remember that?

Oh, yes, I remember. She'd just say, you know, I'm coming – obviously all in French, in bad French, but in French, and I said, *"J'ai oublié quelque chose*, you know. **[00:14:00]** It was already tied up, you know. Yeah. Yeah.

Did you tell your brother about it? Did you ever speak to him about it?

[Sighs] Well, you know, as you probably noticed when you were asking about him, it's still pain – very painful because I married very, very young and he was only – how old was he. I was eighteen, he was ten, twelve, something like this, so – and I came to live here. We did build a good relationship. We have a very good one, yes, but it was a very slow process. Very, very slow, yes. Yeah. Yeah.

So, Ruth, let's go back to the wartime. So just to reconstruct your history. So tell us what you then found out and talk –

Do you know, the wartimes, I – I really have no – I mean I have no – it's a blank, a total, total blank. The first thing which made me aware that something had happened is in '46, Jean-Pierre wasn't born, there was no Jean-Pierre, we went for the first time to London because one of my mother's brothers had survived, so the three of us went there. And that was '46 or something like this. **[00:16:00]** And from my memory of that is that London was in a terrible state. It was heavily – it had been heavily bombed. And I went to parts of London, I don't know, to visit maybe other people where it was totally bombed, which Paris was not bombed at all, you know. So that was my first sort of physical – but there was a war. You know, before that –

You didn't notice anything in France?

No, no. No.

But you understood that your parents are not French?

Oh, my father's French was quite good. My mother's French, I have no memory of my mother not speaking French. I have memories of her speaking bad French but I have no memories – she must have learnt within weeks, you know, obviously because of me.

To speak to you.

Weeks. And obviously the little girls, the little girl friends that I had, were in primary school, you know, they all used to say, gosh, your mother speaks such [laughs] bad French [laughs]. And I used to say, *non, non, très bien Français* [laughs]. I was so annoyed when – and of course she – it was terrible [laughs]. But she never – I have no memories of her not speaking French, which she didn't, and apparently it was terrible. **[00:18:08]** She wouldn't touch me. She wouldn't, you know, so, but she learnt very, very quickly.

So when you came here, so you – she met her brother?

'45, '46. '46, she met her brother and her – and his wife and their son who had all three left Vienna in September '38, which was just a few weeks after I was born. And [sighs] I have been told that the plan was that they go first. My mother had just given birth. They go first and they will organise, you know, something for them to come.

To England?

To come later. But nothing came of it.

Oh, that was before the war, in '38.

Yeah, in ’3 – yeah, end of ’38. But nothing came of it, er, ’38. They left in September ’38, yes. They left – as far as I know, they left properly, you know, they went by plane to Croydon, they obviously got a visa or whatever.

And they settled in London?

And they settled in London, yes, and [laughs] and that's where I started coming to London when I was eleven, twelve, thirteen –

By yourself?

Fourteen. **[00:20:06]** To my uncle and his aunt and his wife to – as a nice, French, little girl, to learn – to begin to learn English.

And what were their names, please? Ruth, what were –

Their names were my mother’s maiden name, Landis. And I came every year and I had a very nice time for a couple of weeks. And I didn't speak German and they didn't speak French, so we spoke English, you know, and it was part of my education, secondary school, when we did English at secondary school.

And tell me, so what sort of family – so your mum and her brother, what sort of family had they come from in –

Her brother was a dentist. Yeah. There's been a lot of dentists in this family [laughs]. Why, I don't know. He was a dentist in Vienna and he became a dentist in – yes. Yeah. And they had a good life, yeah. And, you know, and that’s – that was my first entry to London, aged – you know, when I went to secondary school, let’s send her, you know, there's an opportunity, she can learn English, you know, which is the second language – the first language you learn. And that was my first, yeah. And they were very nice years. Every summer I went for, I don't know, ten days, two weeks, and it was very nice. And they got better and better financially as well and settled. **[00:22:06]** But initially, the first time I went and we visited a bit London,

you know, it was shocking. Shocking, shocking. Because Paris hadn't touched at all, you know.

So the damage you saw, yeah.

Yeah. Yeah, the damage was terrible. Yeah.

Just to come back to the pre-war time, do you know how your parents met at all?

How my parents met? *Non*. *Non*. My father was very romantic. I mean every now and then I did ask him one or two questions and he said, you know, I went to a dance and here was your mother, very beautiful and, [laughs] you know. *Non.*

Because your father was born in Lviv.

My father was born in Lviv.

So when did he [overtalking] his family?

He left – he left Vienna as a little boy because most of his secondary school is in Vienna. I've still got his – all his results, school results. They're all in Vienna. He left with – his father had – his eldest son had died in the First World War and his father had died, so I think it must have been some time, you know, after the First World War, the mother went to Vienna, to live in Vienna, with his two sisters and him. I would imagine, you know, around 1919, 1920, something like that, because his schooling was in Vienna. **[00:24:01]** I've still got –

So he finished his schooling in Vienna.

Yeah. Yeah.

Then what did he do after he finished his schooling?

Well, he became – I think what he did, he – one of his sisters married and they had a firm – I mean I do have photos which says the name of the firm, of the, you know, distillery, you know, making spirits, you know, alcohol or something like that. Yeah.

So he started working there.

Yes, yeah. He didn't go to university, no. No.

So it was like a factory for –

It was like a factory.

Alcohol manufacturing.

Manu – yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

So, when he married your mother, that was his profession.

That was his profession. And they had a very, very lavish wedding. Very lavish.

Which year?

1937. A very lavish wedding. I've got their wedding photographs. They're big, like this.

Where did they get married? In a synagogue or –

Yeah. Oh, yes, at the synagogue, in May 1937. And very – it was – I think it was a very big wedding, a very big affair, because I also found, you know, lots of telegrams, you know, in that May '37, happy – to the young couple. The usual thing, you know. But it was a very – the photographs, [laughs] you know, were that big [laughs].

And where did they settle, then, your parents? **[00:26:00]** *Where did they live?*

I'm not sure. I'm not sure where they live, although I do have a couple of addresses, yes.

You said, 2. Bezirk, second –

Second. Definitely second because I didn't go to Vienna. I didn't go to Vienna. [Sighs] I've been to Vienna several times but my mother [sighs] – my mother, as far as she was concerned, Vienna didn't exist. My mother started her life in Paris at the age of nineteen – at the age of thirty-two, thirty-three. She never, never, never – but when I say never, it was – you could feel it, you know. My father would have liked from time to time to talk about Vienna. My mother, no. It's – I don't know if she speak German a little bit, *"es gibt kein Wien mehr. Warum sprichst Du über Wien? Es gibt kein Wien."* [There is no Vienna anymore. Why do you talk about Vienna? There is no Vienna] You know. But really powerfully. But I still went once while she was still alive and [laughs] it was quite funny because the weather was terrible for three, four days. Terrible, I suppose. And I was already married and all that. And so I told her I've been to Vienna and the weather, and she used to say – and she said to me, but I could have told you. **[00:28:03]** I don't know why you bother [laughs]. But she – it was, but to an extent, you know, that you don't talk about Vienna in my presence.

It was her way of dealing with the past.

Yeah. In my presence, you don't talk about Vienna, which I understand. Other people have felt this way. But the way it was with my mother, [sighs]. Yeah. Yeah. But she was okay. The other thing which for me was very important is that she gave me away, you know, at the age of eight months, nine months, ten months, and that created quite a lot of problems. She was a very good mother. But – I mean that's the only mother I have. And she was good. She was nice. She was like a wonderful friend. But when my first son was born – and she was very present as a grandmother, very good, very present. But when my first son was born, that's the – I knew by then that she had sent me away, you know, and I was holding that little baby and obviously all in French, and he [ph] said, I'm proud of my new baby. How could you do this? How could you? And really that's the only time I – I used to be angry with her. Talk, say something. **[00:30:01]** And the only thing she said to me, *"Ruthi, ma chérie, one*

day you will understand." But I got nothing else from her. And I realise that probably was the only time where we, you know, here I was, so proud of my baby, and I wanted to know and I – I wish all my life, all my life, I wish – maybe not at twenty-one when I had my first baby but, you know, she died when I was forty-nine – I can't remember exactly – she just talked to me. My father talked a lot.

But she couldn't?

Not well. With my father, I've done the full circle. Yes, I was upset when he died, a very old man, but it was a full circle. It was wonderful, wonderful, about anything, everything, totally full circle. My mother, nothing. She was a good mother, yes. Yes. She was a good mother. And the grandchildren, Philippe and Marc, who – they used to go to Paris all the time and she lavished them, you know, very good. But, you know, I missed something she didn't give me, talking, you know. **[00:32:08]**

But do you think it helped her in a way, for herself to sort of deal with her trauma or past or – by not talking?

I [sighs] – I personally think she should have talked because she quite early on got that terrible disease which I am sure is linked to Parkinson's and I've done a lot of study [laughs] about Parkinson's and I'm convinced that it's linked. If you – yes, I have done – she had Parkinson's when she was young, for about twenty years and she didn't die that old. And I started being very involved in Parkinson and then I am – I am convinced that there is a link between –

So you think it wasn't good for her either?

No, no.

Apart from for you.

But she obviously – she couldn't, you know. I wish she would.

And with your father – you think she spoke with him about [overtalking]?

No. Not a thing. It was the same, no, no, no, no. He realised. They had a good life in Vienna and I could see from the wedding photos, poof, you know [laughs]. It wasn't just one little wedding, it was – I've got the invitation of the wedding. It was, you know [laughs]. **[00:34:02]** So everything was fine, you know. But obviously it wasn't fine [laughs].

No. So what did you find out, then, about the circumstances of your leaving or –

Well, the – I know exactly what happened, yes. My father left Vienna first and then the official reason was she couldn't leave because her mother would not leave. Her brothers had gone. She was the only daughter amongst brothers – sons. And her mother would not leave. That's the official. Her mother wouldn't leave, and she was not going to leave without her mother, so it was arranged that she would send me away and my father got all the stuff and he organised everything and that's how I came. My mother eventually came to Paris but during the war, 1943, in the middle of the war, she came to Paris and I suppose I was away in hiding. They had – they were hiding as well and they were helped for – they were helped by a very nice French couple which they befriended. **[00:36:03]** And [sighs] [laughs] it – I don't – it may have been a reason but there was an ulterior motive [laughs] and basically – I mean now it's all – it's in the book, Philippe has found out and it's all – so it's all – I mean I suspected for many, many years there was more to it than that. When we were talking with my brother about it, that I suspect there is more to it than – and how can you send me, a baby of, you know, how can – and I used to tell my brother there is another reason, I don't know, something, you know. It can't be just be for the – because the grandmother did not want to go. Okay, the two – I mean it looked – it sounded good, the two brothers left, everybody left and she's the only girl, so she stayed, the usual, yeah. But there was obviously an ulterior motive. My mother had met somebody.

And who – Philippe found that out in his research, or –

[Clears throat] [laughs] It's not really Philippe who found out, although he did find out everything, yes, yes. But I put him on the –

On the path?

On the path because [laughs] – because my father lived another eight or nine years afterwards and we spent a lot of time together – a lot, a lot, a lot of time together, and a lot, a lot of talking, a lot of talking. **[00:38:10]** And on one occasion I, I - we looked at old photographs about Vienna and he said to me, this is that person, this is that person, and so on, and [laughs] I see a portrait of a man and I said, who is that? And he said, nobody. Nobody you know. And I said, [laughs] – I said, I've seen him before in my life. He said, no, no, no, no, it's not possible. Not possible [laughs]. And we were sitting here and we're both tough – tough people, and I said, Papa, I have seen that man in my life. I don't know where, I don't know how. I have seen that man in my life. And I pushed my father so much that he said, it's possible. It's possible. So, I said, okay, tell me what happened. So he said, well, after the war, after the war. He was a friend of your mother and he came to visit her. And I said, when was that? Before Jean-Pierre was born [laughs] When was that? So it was straightaway after the war, '45, he came. And I said, did he come to the flat? So I said yeah – he said yes. I said, did he come more than once? **[00:40:01]** And I – he said yes. So, I said, so that's where I must have seen him, when I was seven, and he said yes, that's when – and he came to visit your mother in the flat and then he left, back – and he went back to Vienna. And that's it. And I decided – I made a decision, it's my parents' lives, nothing to do with me. I was only – my only concern was, I knew I had seen him before and when he said yes, that was enough for me. Even though I was fifty, something like that, you know, it's this – it's my parents' life, it's not my life, you know. I was only concerned about I knew I had seen him before. And so of course when Philippe started all this, he [laughs] – he saw that picture and I told him about that. You know, I told him that. So, Philippe being Philippe started making enquiries about that man, something I would have never done, and he found out a lot. He found out a lot.

So who was he?

And it's not so much who he was. It's not so much who he was. He was Austrian, he was married, he had – his wife and his daughter – I mean the parallel is just ridiculous. **[00:42:01]** His wife and his daughter went to live in America and he stayed behind. Me and my father [laughs] we went to Paris and she stayed behind. And then Philippe who has to go to the bottom of things, he eventually met the granddaughter, this man's. He found out that the man lived in Vienna all his life and he died in – he was eighty or something like this, yeah. But then Philippe tried to search for his family in America and he did and eventually he met the granddaughter, who is about the same age as Philippe and she had – she knew she had a grandfather who was Viennese and who stayed in Vienna. And then they had tea together, the two of them, and Philippe said, do you have photos? And she said, oh, yes, I've got lots of photos. And even Philippe, who is very solid, [laughs] he said, she brought a couple of album, you know, of Vienna, you know, with – where her mother who had died – this is the granddaughter – the mother who had died but then who was also born in Vienna. And suddenly, we – [laughs] he says, [laughs] he sees photos of – Philippe says, suddenly, I see a photo of my grandmother. **[00:44:08]** [Laughs] And so Philippe said, do you know who this woman is? She said, no idea, you know, like we have all, you know, [laughs] we all have. And there were quite a lot, some of them with her grandfather in Vienna woods, [laughs] you know. We're talking about 1940, 1941, 1942.

But he was Jewish, this man?

I don't think – that's – funnily enough, I don't know. Probably that's a question I haven't asked Philippe. I haven't asked Philippe that question because by the time Philippe said, Mum, when you – and the granddaughter said, look, Philippe said, can I have these photos, and the granddaughter said, yes, of course you can. I don't know who this woman is. So, Philippe said, the weirdest thing was the two of us, we'd never met before [laughs] because they were glued and all this, and were just both of them trying very hard to – and so and Philippe got them all, they are quite – about a dozen, you know, and with my mother, very happy [laughs] with this man who wears *Lederhosen*, so I don't know [laughs].

No, I'm asking the Jewish thing because I wonder –

Because that's a Jewish thing. Do – did the men in Vienna [laughs] woods when they go out for the day, they wear these – do you know these *Leder* – [laughs] – I'm sure you know.

Yeah. I've seen the children – the children [overtalking].

But they were adults. **[00:46:09]** They were two men. They were two men and two women.

Yeah, because I wonder whether she – if he wasn't Jewish, whether she thought she was protected somehow. You know, he could protect her. Well, I don't know.

I don't know. I don't know. The only thing we know is that maybe he helped her to get out in the middle of the war, in 1943. I don't know. That, Philippe does not know.

And what happened to her until 1943? Did she live with her mother, or –

Then she left her mother, yes.

Then she left her mother.

Then she left her mother. And her mother was taken to – and I've got the dates. It was within two weeks of my mother leaving, her mother was sent to Theresienstadt. I've got that connection as well. That, I did myself. That, I did myself, yeah.

But Ruth, to come back. So, your father said you organised that somebody would pick you up. So was it through the Résistance, or – who was the person who literally took you as a baby and brought you to France?

Well, it was, I mean my father always told me that, but that was it. And I never wanted to know.

A man, a woman, or –

It was a woman. Oh, now, I know everything about her – everything about her. **[00:48:00]**

So who was she? Tell us a little bit about her.

She was – that, I'll lend you a book which you can – just a little book which talks about her, which I only – somebody else found it and said, Ruth, [laughs] you are in the book [laughs]. You are in the book [laughs]. Not – nothing to do with Philippe, nothing to do with Philippe. She was a missionary who lived in Norfolk and she wanted to do – all her life, she was a missionary. She was very religious, one of these Norfolk, kind of *Protestante*, you know, but not one of these affiliated thing.

Cameraman: Presbyterian?

Yeah. Yes, that's right. And she was linked to a church. I mean I've [laughs] been or I've done all that since then. And the way we discovered that is when my – after my father died there were lots of papers and we found a little paper, said Elsie Tilney, an address and Norfolk, England.

Elsie – what was it?

Elsie Tilney.

Tilney?

Tilney. T-I-L-N-E-Y. And Philippe said, what's this? So, I said, you know, that could be the name – because my father always said that it's an Englishwoman who took you from Vienna to Paris, and how interesting that you eventually ended up in England, you know, he always saw this a bit, so I said, you know, and then maybe that's – a little piece of paper. **[00:50:04]** And so Philippe started doing all the – and she's had a fantastic life. It's – she was a missionary. She had an extraordinary life and she was – she want – decided to go to Paris in 1939 and hoping to help whatever. And she was linked to a church in Paris which – there were a couple of churches where – and probably my father went there when he needed help,

any kind of help, and obviously – and these are the name of the two churches who were helping for refugees, you know, if they needed something. So, he needed someone and they found her and she did the journey between Paris Gare de L'est and Vienna, or whatever western [ph] or – which I went to that station. And my father had arranged that she would take two babies and the two mothers would be at the station meeting her. And there was my mother with me, a small baby, and my father's sister had a little girl – they were sister-in-law, you know, they were – my father's little – had a little girl. My father's sister had a little girl. She was three or four, something like this. **[00:52:01]** And they arrived at the station. My mother handed me over to Elsie. That little girl who was older started screaming and screaming and screaming, holding her mother's, you know, and she didn't want to go, so she didn't go. She didn't survive. I was – I survived. So – but that I knew – I knew as well. I've known that for quite – not very long but quite a long time.

And was she just a sort of a courier? I mean did she –

She was a sort of courier, yes. She –

Courier. She didn't stay with you?

No, no, she didn't stay at all. Not at all. I don't even know – I mean I didn't ask my father [laughs] was money exchanged, I didn't – well, I didn't even ask that. No, no, she didn't stay at all but she helped other children as well. She hid – I mean she had quite a – 'cos she eventually got stuck in Paris and she was sent to – I mean it's not a killing concentration – but she was sent to – she was sent – she was caught and she was sent to a concentration camp in Vittel which was a concentration – with foreigners, you know, and apparently there she helped a lot – a lot of people.

Was she recognised ever? Was she recognised as a –

As a what?

As a Righteous Gentile or –

Oh, Philippe did it, yes.

Okay.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, Philippe did it and I went there with Philippe. We went to Israel, um, yes. **[00:54:01]** Oh, yes, yes. Yes, she – of course she was. And –

And was she still alive? Was she still alive?

No, no. I mean she died when she was about – after she was liberated, when France was liberated, she went to continue to do missionary work in – I mean a lot is known about her – in Africa, Africa. And I mean Philippe is very attached to Elsie [both laugh]. Do you know, when she [laughs] – he always says to anybody, if it wasn't her, I wouldn't have my mother. [Laughs] I mean I wouldn't – you know [laughs]. It's Elsie.

But is there any family of her? If – she probably was married, was she?

She never married, no.

No. So she had no children.

No, no. There – some – when we went to the church, Philippe and I, in Norfolk, there were one or two people who remembered her as a very odd woman.

In Norfolk?

Hmm?

In Norfolk?

In Norfolk, yes, she – yeah.

She went back to Norfolk?

Just a little bit, when she – and then she went back to – after the war she went back to Norfolk and then she decided she wanted to do more missionary work but she did – she did it in Africa, part of Africa.

And when did you – when did Philippe manage to get this recognition for her? When was that?

Er, [sighs] well, I've got a copy of it. I don't know, when did we go? Five years ago? Six years ago?

Okay, so quite recently. Yeah.

Yes. Yes, yes. Yeah. Yeah, and talking to me about the problems I have, oh [laughs] and they are all linked to the Holocaust, [laughs] all of them. **[00:56:00]** [Laughs] I've put them all in the same bag [laughs].

Okay, so thank you for sharing the story of Elsie.

Yeah, Elsie is – yeah, I mean if – there are two things I regret very much, is my mother never, never, never talking to me, and Elsie died in 1974, so I was, you know, I was already – and I regret that as well. On the other hand, you know, I made some decisions for myself in order to cope with my life [laughs] and one of them at that age, thirty-four – I was thirty-eight, '74, I was still of an age where I, you know, I – just leave me alone, I'm going to live my life, not my parents' life.

Yeah. And at that point you didn't know about her probably.

About?

Elsie.

Elsie.

You said you found out later.

No, I mean I knew there was – it was an Englishwoman, yeah. My father talked always. Yes, yes. When I – yeah, yeah, that –

But you didn't feel that you had to connect with her at that point?

No, not in the 1970s, no, no. No, I was too full of, um, I'm going to live my life, not my parents' life. That has been very powerful for me. **[00:58:01]** Very, very powerful, yes. I – it was – I know, I'm aware of it.

Okay. We'll get back to that, Ruth. I just want to go back slightly to the wartime, to just reconstruct your story a little bit, so we know – so train station, Westbahnhof, you said?

Westbahnhof, that's right.

Westbahnhof.

Yeah.

So there were supposed to be two but she took you. And then –

Only because the other one was screaming.

And then where did she go? Did your father wait for you? Your father was already in France?

My father was already in France, yes.

And why – tell us why did he go to France, or what [overtalking]?

I understand from what he told me that I was born in July and he was sent to Dachau in October, something like this, for a short time, something he did, I don't know what. I don't know what.

Not with Kristallnacht?

No. No, no. Nothing to do with –

Before?

Nothing to do with Kristallnacht. As far as I know, nothing to do with Kristallnacht. And he had a lot of non-Jewish friends in Vienna and he was there only for a few days and they got him out and they said to him, you have to go, you know, we've helped you this time but I don't know if we can help you again.

So because he was incarcerated in Dachau.

And – yes, just get out. And the plan was he would get out and the – he was going to get out, my mother said no. **[01:00:03]** There were two grandmothers, his father's mother, and he left and so my mother was stuck with two – and I think she was very close to her mother-in-law 'cos I've got photos of them. I don't have photos of my mother with her mother. I've nothing. But I have photos with her mother-in-law. So, it's –

So she was left with you and the two mothers.

And the two, yeah.

But had your father already arranged your – before he left, was your – they arranged your –

Not my – no, only once he was in Paris.

So everything was organised from Paris?

Yes, everything went from Paris, yes. And I've got somewhere the name of the two churches where Jewish refugees could go if they need any kind of help, whatever, and I would imagine he went there.

And did he have anyone he knew when he came to Paris? Or did he –

No, nobody. As far as I know, nobody. He's never mentioned anyone.

And was he able to take something out from Vienna?

Nothing.

So he left with –

He – I mean as I said it, he left his mother in December. It was in December, it was cold, and he said good –

Tell us the story [overtalking].

He said goodbye to his mother and she gave him – he had a scarf that she was wearing and her ring.

Show us. Show us the ring now.

And her wedding ring.

And please just tell us the story again because it is so – how, what – how did she give him the ring? **[01:02:07]** *What was the story of the ring? How did she give him the ring, your gran?*

Well, when she said goodbye to him, she said – she gave him the scarf and she – and my father tell me, you know, about forty years ago, he said – maybe fifty years ago, I can't remember. He suddenly said to me, you know, when I left Vienna, I said goodbye to my mother and she gave me two things and, a – her scarf she was wearing and this wedding ring, and I'd like you to have it now because I've got it but I don't know what to do with it, you know. So I said, okay, I'll take it.

And those are the things he managed to take.

That's all. He had nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing. My mother, when she came in '43, she did come with a few things, you know, including the *Topf*, [laughs] you know.

The Gugelhupf [ring cake]?

Gugelhupf, including a *Gugelhupf* [laughs].

It's a – what is it? A shape to make –

But she – but – yeah.

Okay.

Yeah, that's right. But she took –

They were going to film it?

No, and – because for me I find it – it doesn't affect me emotionally, you know. What made her – I mean she can't have come with a big suitcase but she did come, she did come with these two, um –

Candlesticks?

Candle- yes.

Shabbat candles.

She did come with these two Shabbat candles and she came with that watch as well, which was a wedding present. So, she came with a few things, you know. **[01:04:00]**

In '43?

In '43. And my – [sighs] Philippe could work out from her passport, there was no J.

There was no J?

No J, no Jewish, no J. I had no J either. I mean I've got all the passports. I've got that all. But hers had no J. And he worked out from where they had stamps on her passport, she didn't go west to France, she went east and around that way. It must have taken a long time. No idea how, no – because she would not talk.

So the papers are her name but without a J?

There is no J.

She didn't change her name?

No.

It is her name? On –

Yeah, her name, Regina, Regina Buchholz, née Landes, yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

It's unusual. I mean that she didn't have the J.

Ah, that she – no.

And then she was – managed to travel.

I know.

With the J probably she wouldn't have been allowed a visa.

Probably not. Maybe he helped her and maybe they – and, you know, it – you go into fantasy world. Maybe he said, when it's all finished, when it's all finished, we'll get together, you know. You know, then you are dealing with fantasy a bit.

Yeah, you don't know exactly.

You don't know. The only thing, and I have to thank Philippe from that, because when I – when he showed me all the photos that the granddaughter [laughs] found, you know, and I – he does – he did that very well. **[01:06:08]** First of all, he didn't tell me here. If he thought here I would cry too much [laughs] but in a restaurant [laughs] I would probably be better [laughs]. And so, he, you know, he gave them to me and obviously I cried, yes, and he waited for me to feel a bit better [laughs] and then he said, Mum, just remember one thing, she made a choice. She did make a choice. She came to Paris You know. Just remember that. And I said, Philippe, you're right. You know, you can start to, you know, what did she do, why, and all that blah, blah, blah. Mum, just remember one thing, she had a choice and she made it. That's a choice she did, to go to Paris. And that has helped me a lot, even though I was old, [laughs] you know, but it's still a shock [laughs]. You think, you fantasise and your mind goes all over the place, you know.

You were disturbed by it? Yeah.

But – and it's true and that's what I do when I sometimes said, you know, you could have – she could have stayed in Vienna, she could have, you know. There was an opportunity for

her. Did he help her? I can't say. But we don't know. We don't know. But she made a choice, she had a choice and she made it. You know, in the same way she had a choice not to go and give me away. **[01:08:04]** That also was a choice. But Philippe said, don't concentrate on that choice, just concentrate on the choice that she made that decision to come to Paris. And she was, as I said, she was a very good mother.

So that was in '43. And so in between '39 and so it was four years. So when you – you were first with your father in Paris. What did you say? Or when you were sent off?

My father said it was on and off because he – in order to stay in Paris he – he was working [laughs] for the – he was working for the Berlitz – I'm talking when he arrived. He was working for the Berlitz School, teaching French soldier German [both laugh]. This is at the school of language. And then it had to stop. The German marched in. It had to stop. And then the French allowed him to stay if he became part of a special army, *les engagés volontaires*, it's called, which were based in south of France, in Barcarès.

Oh, I know Barcarès, funnily enough, yeah. It's near Perpignan.

Hmm?

Near Perpignan, Perpignan.

Yeah, that's right. Yes. And that's where he was based. I've got photos of that and – with lots of other foreigners, you know, and he has the uniform and the [laughs] –

Yeah, so he couldn't take care of you.

So he couldn't. **[01:10:00]** But apparently, he came – he was able to visit me, to come and visit me. And he said he knew always where I was.

Okay. So, who took you in? Was it the Résistance, or –

Private people. Only on one occasion I was taken to, to I think in 1940 I was taken to a sort of a *crèche* where there were other – I lived there for about a year. And it was, Philippe tried to find out because it was a Jewish thing, a *crèche*, in – just outside Paris somewhere and [laughs] – but they couldn't find either name, either Buchholz or Teve. They couldn't find it.

Tell us about that name, Teve. So, you were given another name?

I must have been given another name but you can see I'm – I have lots of photo – my father used to come to visit me and he – lots of – I've got so many photographs of baby. You have no idea.

So what was your name? The –

That's all I knew.

Teve?

Jocelyn.

Jocelyn Teve.

Oui. But that *crèche,* you know, couldn't –

Couldn't find.

Couldn't find me. And yet I'm amongst lots of other babies.

Oh, you see it on the photos, you see –

Yes, yes, you see –

But you can't locate where.

Yes, yes, I know, I – yes. And that was – all that was located, yes. Yeah.

Okay. Was it – because I know there were all these OSE [Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants].

OSE – Enfant- no, it wasn't OSE, it was called [laughs] – it was – a friend of mine in Paris tried to find out as well but – it was outside Paris and it was called *"À l'aube de la vie".* **[01:12:19]** *"À l'aube de la vie",* is the sunset of life. But Philippe couldn't find anything. I wasn't particularly interested.

So did you find out how many different families you went to, or –

No, no. Families, he couldn't – in that home, yes, for about eleven months I was there, yeah. Afterwards, I don't know where. No idea. Never asked my father.

But certainly more – I mean you were moved a lot.

Yes, I was moved around, as I said, and my father used to tell me, it was – you became very difficult when you were a child – because it was always in the country, in little villages, you know.

Right. And once you started talking –

Yeah, when I – you know, someone said *"comment tu t'appelles"* [what's your name] [laughs]. You know. *Ça depend.*

What did you say? With my father?

It depends. *Avec mon Papa*. With my father. My name is Ruthi. And when my Papa is not here, my name is Jocelyn [laughs].

You know, it's interesting because from a sort of safety point of view, it would have been probably better if your father didn't come.

I know, but he came a lot.

But he wanted to.

He came a lot. I have to say, between – again, I don't remember [laughs] but yes, I have a very special relationship – I had a very relationship with my father, which lasted the whole life, the whole of my, you know. **[01:14:11]** Yes, we had to. I mean my mother was very nice, she was lovely, she –

But he was –

But no, he was definitely –

And how did he manage – I mean it was dangerous for him to be in France as well, I mean to be Jewish, so how did he – he managed to –

I don't know how he managed. He never talked about that. But I never – I wish I had – I was asking him that, because that I could have.

Did he have another name?

No. No, no.

So he was first in the south and then –

Yeah.

And the rest of the war?

Yeah. Yeah. The only thing, they had a – he met someone and it was a couple and then my mother in '43 – a French Catholic couple and they remained friends all their lives. They were fantastic. And I knew them as well. And –

And they helped, yeah.

And they – he had – my father had organised – he met them first. My father had organised that if my mother wasn't there but if he has a problem, and if eventually the mother doesn't come, they would adopt me. That was – that I knew. That I knew because I knew them. I knew them after the war.

What were they called?

Monsieur, Madame Boussart. Very French. Very, very –

In Paris?

In Paris, yes. Yes. And they became very good friends and- yeah. Yeah. And I'm sure they have a big part, a big part. **[01:16:06**] I know my father told me that when my mother – when they were together in Paris –

Yeah, when she came.

Yes.

She came to Paris?

I was somewhere else. But when – they knew when they would be – you know, *rafle* [laughs]. You know what *rafle*?

Yeah.

You know.

Tell us what it is.

Rafle [roundup], you know, like in July '42, the *Vel' d'Hiv rafle*, *Vel' d'Hiv rafle*, where they just took all the Jews, street by street, flat by flat. Well, it seems that this Monsieur, Madame Boussart knew when there was going to be *rafle* in that part of Paris where my parents were, and so they used to – they – my parents used to go and sleep with them in their flat and then go back. And this happened quite a few times. I don't –

So they evaded German –

Yes, the evaded everyone. There was no – they were never, never caught, my parents. Never. And that is because of this couple.

And they stayed in Paris? From '43 till the end of the war, your parents.

Sorry?

Did they stay in Paris? Until the end of the war.

Yes, yes, they – yeah, yeah, together. Yeah.

And they were not arrested or not –

And then came the liberation of Paris in '44, and again it's my father who told me and said they were both in the Champs-Élysées watching the parade, you know, with the French and the Americans, you know, Paris is liberated, because the war lasted another year. **[01:18:15]** And my father said, you know, we must get Ruthi, me. We must get her. We must get her, but we don't know how. And my – obviously, my father was young and, you know, so he [laughs] stopped an American lorry, a lorry full of American soldier, and he asked does anybody speak

German or, my French is very bad. Then he said Polish, and then there was one who spoke Polish, so he spoke to that –

In Polish?

Yeah, in Polish, to that soldier in the – they stopped the – and my father explained that he has a daughter who is just outside Paris, Meudon, I was in Meudon, but they don't know how to get her 'cos there's no public transport, they said there's nothing. And the American soldiers asked [laughs] – said, shall we take them both, you know, and they both – they – so both my mother and my father [laughs] jumped onto that lorry and they came to pick me up.

And that was the first time you saw your –

And that – yeah.

That was the difficult meeting.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

But you did go with them.

Yes. Yeah.

Because you recognised –

Yeah.

You knew your father.

Yeah. Well, it was my father and of course, who is this woman, [laughs] you know. It was terrible.

But again, you can't remember this.

No, I have no memories.

Which is interesting, that you can't remember that, because that must have been quite –

I know, I don't remember. **[01:20:02]** It is – I mean it has – I mean not now any more, I'm old. It has bothered me all my life, yes.

You think you should remember something?

Yes.

But you said you had some flashes of memory, there –

Yes, but the flashes were of a broken door, of a – and I don't know why, and nothing to do with people, nothing to do – no. No, it wasn't – oh, listen, I tried. I thought I'd go to analysis, I go to, what do you call it, er, hyp – hyp –

Hypnosis?

Yeah, and – oh, I thought of all that, and every time I decided, no. That was my decision., rightly or wrongly. I mean it did bother me all my life, yes, yes. It's still odd not to have – well, I mean what happened? Maybe dreadful things happened. I don't know. I don't know. But…

Yeah. But they came to pick you up and then they took you to their [overtalking].

Yes, and – yeah. Yes.

And that's when your mother brought the doll?

And then the doll, yes. [Laughs] Yeah, yeah. And she was very present and very, very loving mother, you know, although I confided to my father, not to her.

Yes. And by that time, you spoke French with your father, when he came to visit?

Oh, yes. He spoke French, yes.

He switched to French, yeah.

Yeah. He was – yeah. I never spoke German. Never.

But your father spoke Polish as well? **[01:22:02]** *he was from –*

But he spoke – yes, he spoke Polish as well because he was born in Lviv.

And so Yiddish, maybe? Did he speak –

No, no, no. No, that we are very [laughs] – all – it's been – I always used to take the mickey of my parents, no, Yiddish? No [laughs]. No. Okay.

Polish, yeah. So, did he learn French in Lviv, maybe, your father?

I doubt it. Maybe. I don't know. Well, he left when he was still young, you know.

Yeah, because, you know, among the upper class, the French was the language –

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I know. No, no. His French was – it was – I mean with an accent, yes, but his – and my parents in any case did not want to speak German. They did not want our children – their children to speak German. Oh, no.

No. And they together, what did they speak?

Well, I always – and it's a joke [laughs]. I always say [laughs] they never wanted to speak German, except when they were – when they had a row, and there were lots of rows. They were very volatile, my parents [laughs] so German – so that's how I learnt my German. But I went to school and I did German as well. I did English first and then German. And my father, my – not my mother, but my father helped me with the German. You know, my mother didn't want [laughs] anything to do. It was all part of Vienna. It was a joke. We used to laugh, you know, and maybe we shouldn't have laughed, but we did laugh, you know. That's how she was. I mean Vienna was…

Yeah. **[01:24:03]** *And how did your parents then after the war manage financially?*

Financially, it was – I mean- I think we were very poor. I think we were very poor. My father tried to start with a friend after the war another *distillateur* or something, but it did not work. It did not work. Eventually – you know, I left very early. I left in '57, [laughs] you know. So I don't – I know that eventually they had a good life, you know. But he eventually went into – again with a friend of his and they were dealing in watches and they had a sort of a little – there was a main – there is a main town in northern France which deal with watches and they had – and that was – and that's what Philippe and Marc remember as well, you know, when they used to go to Paris and my father –

Okay, the watches.

Yes, with watches, he was busy, yes.

And who were their friends? Were they friendly with other sort of Continental survivors?

Yes. Yes, yes. They were very – they – I mean that's where I learnt that their – it was not that difficult for them to manage in Paris because it's very similar to Vienna, you know. **[01:26:00]** They had their friends and they had their social life and their – they had their cafés, you know, there were café society. I mean there were, you know, they had their cafés for during the week and they had their cafés on the [laughs] weekend and –

And the friends were other – were they other Austrians, or other –

It's funny enough, rather than Austrian, they were Hungarian.

Interesting.

Most of their friends were Hungarian refugees. A few, yes, there were some German as well and obviously lots of jokes and- do you speak German?

Yes.

You speak German. Yeah, because some –

Have you got a joke?

Oh, it's not a joke but she was talking, she was a very attractive woman and [laughs] – and she always started the sentence with, *"oh, Frau Buchholz, wissen Sie…"* [Mrs. Buchholz, do you know] and so I used to say, *"Comment il va, Madame Wissensie*, 'cos they were very close [laughs]. And I can remember, I was back in London and I was already in London and I said, Madame Wissensie. [laughs]. Everything was *"Wissen Sie"* [laughs]. Yeah. But they were mostly Hungarian. Is that quite interesting? Mostly Hungarian refugees, yeah. Yeah.

And Ruth, when did they find out what happened to their mothers? To [overtalking].

My mother never found out. My mother never made any enquiries. **[01:28:00]** My father did, and in the late '40s he did, about his mother, and they said – I've got the letter, or Philippe has it now. You know, she was – she was taken to Theresienstadt and then she – from Theresienstadt she went to – I can't remember. But my father – and then we lost touch. We don't know. But no, my mother was not – she didn't want to know anything, anything, anything. Nothing. My father made – yes, early, early, early after the war, I think the notes I have, or maybe Philippe has now, it's late '40s he made – but obviously without telling his wife because his wife [laughs] would just –

Yeah. And what did he find out about his family, about –

Most of – I mean he found out quite – not that much because it was still in the ’40s, you see. I mean Philippe has found out absolutely everything, you know, but in such details, you know.

And when did Philippe start researching the family history? When?

When he was fifty. He was – Philippe was very close to his grandfather, very, very close.

Your father?

My father. So much so, that I sometimes felt, you know, [laughs] he's stealing him [laughs from me [laughs] which is ridiculous. But they were very close but from – for – from always. **[01:30:02]** I mean they have university – when Philippe was at university, they used to write, you know, and he was only eighteen, nineteen. They were very, very close, the two of them. And he will say he was the father he would have liked to have had. That sort of father. Yeah. And when he was fifty, which is fourteen years ago – that’s, he's an old man of sixty-four. He wanted to – you know, he's very much into human rights and all that and the first thing he wanted is to go to Lviv and he was offered to give a talk at the university of Lviv about human rights and that’s how it all started. And he – I went with him and that’s when he started discovering, because it’s, you know, he's – of course he's interested about his life, personality, but for him it’s much more human rights. It’s much more the Nuremburg trial, you know.

Yes, it’s the bigger question.

Yes.

But within it, it’s also your family history.

But – yeah. But of course – and of course we went there and we went to where he was born, the – right in the centre of Lviv, it's still a proper building, you know, it's a block of flat. **[01:32:00]** And that's when he started to – my father had asked me a few years before he died to go – he would like to go to Lviv and again, I said, *oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui*, but it was no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I didn't want to take that on board. No.

So how was it for you, that now your son in a way took this up and is – was so interested in it?

[Laughs] You know, I am not so- no, I don't regret, no. I could have gone with him when he was ninety. He was fine. mean I think I take after him. He was still coming here at ninety, you know. He was fine. But no, I mean for me it has been – I mean [sighs] I know I haven't probably achieved it but for me, my most important goal and it started at the age of fifteen, I don't want to live my parents' life. I'm going to live my life.

And what made you come to this conclusion, aged fifteen?

[Sighs] When I was fifteen I was – I went for the first time with a group of kids to Israel, '54 or something like this, and I loved it. I went for three months. **[01:34:00]** Maybe I was sixteen. Fifteen, sixteen. I was – I went there for three months with a group or a bunch of French kids, you know, going to Marseille, taking the boat, the "Theodor Herzl" to Haifa and I mean it was – you know. And I – we stayed there for three months and I didn't want to come back. I really wanted to stay there. And when my father forced me and – although I'm – I was too young. If I would have been eighteen, nineteen, he would – because he was a Zionist, very much so. And I – I know, I just wanted to – and I think that was part of my, my not wanting to live my parents' life. I'm – it's not a matter of denying your history. It's got nothing to do with denying your history. On the contrary, that is part of my life. My history is part of that. But I have to deal with it my way, not their way. And I found another exit two years later. I met an Englishman [laughs]. Okay, I was seventeen [laughs]. He fell in love with me. I think it's more him, [laughs] you know, than me. And that was an exit. **[01:36:02]**

An exit from...?

From living my – you know. I mean they were very good parents, they were, and we kept, you know, all – they were very good grandparents.

But you wanted to leave? You wanted –

It is me. It always was me. And it has nothing to do with denying my past, my heritage, my, but I have to live it my way. [Laughs] And for better or for worse, I've done it. I've done that, you know. And I feel I have. And nothing to do with, you know, nothing to do with not wanting to be part of – because I am part and that's what I want. That's what I want. And the only thing I can say is my parents, they were very – yes, they were lovely people but they were sad. Sad, so sad.

You – that's what you felt?

Oh. And Philippe and Marc felt that as well. When they were –

Both of them?

Yes, both of them, when they were eight – they were wonderful grandparents. They took them away, they went travelling with them, they were –

Yeah. But nevertheless –

But there was an – and when I talked about it with them, because from years you don't talk about these things, but they, you know, they were – I mean with both Philippe and Marc, they were wonderful grandpar – very present. **[01:38:05]** But yeah, and for me they were so sad. So, so sad. They probably tried, you know. I don't know. I don't know.

And even though they had a child. I mean they –

I mean they had another child, which I think is wonderful. I mean I thought it was fantastic because very few people of my – I don't know if you – of my, you know, never had a second child, and they had – I mean there was – there is a very, very good book written about that, you know, people who were born on the edge of the Second World War, you know, and especially if it's the same couple, you know, they never –

Yeah, sometimes it was one –

They never – were not going to have another child, you know.

Yeah, because it's a lot of years in between, so not many people were –

It's been too – and they had – so I call it, you know, it was some of sort of *renaissance*, it was fantastic.

But nevertheless, you felt the sadness was still there.

For me. For me, yes. Yes. Yeah. For me, they were very loving, very caring, very giving, very generous, very – all that. But sadness, sadness, you know. And it wasn't – I wasn't going to [laughs] – you know, for better or for worse.

Okay, Ruth, I think this is a good time to take a little break.

Okay [laughs].

And we will continue. **[01:40:01]**

[Break in recording]

Yes, Ruth. So, let's maybe come back – you said you wanted to live your own life, so maybe let's start from there, or unless there's anything else about the immediate post-war years you want to add.

What? What do you mean?

Is there anything before? Because this is – when you left Paris, that was the later '50s. Anything else you want to add about the – from '45 to '57 in Paris?

No, no, it was, [laughs], it hadn't- oh, of course there were *souvenirs*, sad, always sad souvenirs, you see. I mean for instance, my mother was not religious at all, my father, it's not that he was religious, he was very spiritual, it was very – and one of the terrible things which [laughs] happened every year was with Kol Nidre, with, um, you know, the –

Yom Kippur?

The – sorry?

Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur. Sorry, *Yom Kippur.* And he sort of – we had a small flat and he didn't use candles but it was a little bit like it's done fifty years later at Christmastime with lots of lights, you know. And my father wanted the whole flat to be lit with light, with little – for everybody I suppose. **[01:42:04]** So he had - he took it out every year and he had basically it sorted out by electrical wiring and all that. We started on, you know, just before Kol Nidre and he set it all up, the whole day before. My mother used to get annoyed. I just looked in, you know, and so that in every room, everywhere, there were lights, you know, which lasted until after the Yom Kippur, right at the end when it finished and then he turned everything off, put it away for the following year. And it was something that I [sighs] – I won't say I have bad memories of that but it made me feel slightly sick. It was more at that level, you know. Okay, for him it was very, very important.

Did you go to synagogue in Paris?

My father, yeah. My father did.

Which synagogue? Where did he go?

My father went to the only synagogue which was open during the year – during the war, [laughs] during the war. It's a little synagogue. It's called Rashi, which has over the years now become very religious. I mean I went there a few years ago just to – for memory and it's not the synagogue that – this was a synagogue where it was full of refugees, a lot of Hungarians, and it was [laughs] – the women were upstairs and that way. **[01:44:09]** But it was – and there were the prayers and all that but I remember it much, much more as very lively, chatty [laughs] places I'm talking about because I used to go a lot with my father when I was eight, nine, ten. He used to – I liked the walk. It was a nice walk and there was always lots of children to speak to, so there nothing serious of, or, you know, it was very jolly and, yeah, it was [laughs] – and it was full of refugees and they all seemed to know each other, they all seemed – it was, er, rather than a praying place, it really was a meeting place, you know. A few women –

You enjoyed it? You enjoyed going?

Very much, yes. I went – I used to go very often; every Saturday with him, yes, and play around. And they let you, you know. They let you play around and, all these little children. It was nice, not particularly, you know, sort of where you had to be – not at all. Not at all. It was – and every time of course you had one older man who said, shh, shh, shh, but it was very nice. No, it was nice. They were nice memories.

And did you go to any Jewish youth movements or anything?

Any Jewish…?

Youth movements or –

No, no.

No?

No.

No. So –

I [laughs] – I made, and I didn't know how, [sighs] – how, when it was a conscious effort but how serious it was, I was not going to get to have any Jewish friends. **[01:46:18]** No way. No way. And so much so that when I was eleven, when I went to secondary school, there was a [laughs] nice, little girl and as I realised what her name was, she had to absolutely be not part of my life.

But why was that, Ruth? Who made this [overtalking]?

[Laughs] Her name was Muriel Mazeltov. [Laughs] So when you have a name you know, she can only be Jewish, so – the only reason I bring her up is because we spent eight years together at school, never spoke to each other. I found out about her, I recon – not even reconnected but whatever, about six or seven years ago and – in Paris – she's in Paris – and [laughs] we've become very good friends [laughs]. And she thought I was very arrogant and I said, no, just I didn't want to anything to do with you because of your name [laughs].

But why was that, Ruth? Why?

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

Was it from you or from your parents or – why –

I don't know. I think it must have been somewhere, something, you know, with my own life. I think I must have had that, I mean one – okay, well, again, it's after the war. **[01:48:03]** [Sighs] After the war, my father worked a lot with a Jewish organisation which was helping people who had gone to camps and where – and survived. And especially there was one hotel in Paris where they – I don't know if you've heard about it, Hôtel Lutetia.

What is it called?

Lutetia.

Lutetia?

Hôtel Lutetia, which – I'm talking about just after the war, '45, and whoever came back and had nowhere to go, went to this Hôtel Lutetia, which I understand still exists. And my father used to go there quite a lot in order – he was part of a Jewish organisation to help out this – he felt guilty, he had, you know, the usual thing, he had survived and so he did a lot of work for them. And every Friday night he brought three or four people to our house, to our home, and which my mother hated. Not the home, the people coming. But that, he was, you know, they had – she had no choice. And this happened every Friday. And he brought some odd bods, you know. I was seven, eight. Probably then Jean-Pierre was – but then it got less and – but especially at the beginning. And when I talked about it with my father, not too – before he died – not long before he died, and I said to him – and he said, you remember? **[01:50:10]** So I said, yes, there was that man who at the end of the dinner which was very basic – because my mother wasn't even very friendly, she was cooking soup or something, I can't remember – and he used to say always the same things. He used to kiss my mother's hand and he used to say, *"ah, Frau Buchholz. Das war aus-*

Ausgezeichnet.

Ausgezeichnet. "Ah, Frau Buchholz, Danke vielmals, das war ausgezeichnet." [That was delicious]. And so, I saw that and I said, "what happened to Eugène", I said to my father. His name was Eugène, Eugène. And my father said, he committed suicide three or four years later. And this went on and on and I remember and I said, what about that very pretty woman with a lot of black hair, and all that. And he said, "yes, we tried to put her – but she committed suicide." So I was, you know, I was seven, I was eight, so there was that. And it was every Friday and [sighs] it was okay at the time. It was okay and I ate with them and I know my mother was doing it under duress but she had no choice. My father said that's how it

is, and that's how it is. So, you know, what – coming back now with the sadness, you know, a lot of sadness. **[01:52:06]** Yes, yes, a lot of sadness, but that was when I remembered, you know, things that I remembered. There was a lot of sadness, yes, and I – and not wanting to have any Jewish girl friends, and I didn't.

And did you have other friends?

Sorry?

Did you have other friends?

Yes, I had lots of friends. Yes. No, I had some – I was a very, very gregarious little girl. I talked too much apparently and when you see my, you know, school thing, you know, could do better if she only didn't talk too much or, and three or four of my friends I've kept until – I mean one died and – but they were not Jewish. And this Muriel Mazeltov, we met again five, six years ago and [laughs] – and she said I was so unfriendly, you know, she never wanted to have anything – and I said, [laughs] I don't even know if you were unfriendly, I just [laughs] didn't want to be – and we've become very good friends late in life, you know, aged eighty. We're exactly the same age. And so, it's quite funny, you know, that Muriel and I have become good friends, you know. And in a way I probably have, it's interesting, I've remained – I've stayed more Jewish than she has. But it's all very, you know, obviously it's interesting from my point of view, you know, which is why I keep on saying, you know, it had nothing to do with giving up my identity, giving up, no, that's – but can I do it my way [laughs]. **[01:54:18]**

And Ruth, did you feel French? How did you feel at that time? I mean you said you were called out being German [overtalking].

Yes, but that was literally that very first year, you know, and –

Yeah. So, at that time how did – did you feel French? Did you feel part of –

Yes, yes. Oh, yes, yes. Yes, I felt very French and I think – and as you know, I still am only French and my parents got French nationality, literally as soon as the war was over. It was amazing, you know, in – straightaway in ’45.

They got it.

Yes.

And did they think of emigrating elsewhere at all after the war?

For a short time, yes, they did. They did. Because her closest friend from Vienna had gone to America, so they did, but it didn't – I don't even remember any talking about it. No, no. And as I said, they took to Paris life, you know. It was – I mean I even had – when they had no money they still went to cafés and met their friends and rather than staying in at home, you know. It was, oh, we’ll meet at this café and everybody had their preferen – café. And that, I think then that aspect which did not happen in England. **[01:56:05]** You know, it took a long time before you – which I can understand why my uncle and my aunt, as much as they liked being in London, it's not like Vienna, you know. And for my parents, yes, I can see there is a similarity. Yes.

And were they – how did they feel once they got the citizenship, the French citizenship?

Oh, I can’t remember because it was in ’45, straightaway.

Yes, so you were very little still.

So I have no memories of that. No, but straightaway they got it.

And did they ever get any reparations from Vienna?

Yes, of course. Of course. They – yeah. Yeah, both of them did. And then in the ’60s or ’7 – ’60-something or other, my father said, I think you may be able to get a reparation. I said, I

don't want anything to do with it. Absolutely nothing to do with it. Leave me alone with that shit, you know. Again, the same. Let me live my life my way [laughs]. Anyway, he insisted so much, he did, so he said, Ruthi, I'm only asking you to find me a lawyer in London. I can't do it from Paris because you live here. Find me a lawyer and I'll do everything. So, I relented. I said, okay, but I don't want to meet the lawyer, I don't want [incoherent sounds] [laughs]. No way. **[01:58:00]** And a friend of mine did find a lawyer and he started and it was quite difficult obviously. It was quite difficult. But not that difficult because basically it was based on having had no mother until she was five, you know. And that's the base – that was the base of it. And the lawyer needed some essays about, you know, what happens if a child has had no pare – no, you know. And I didn't have to be part of it, you know. It was just finding the – so by then I got a little bit more interested and, yes, yes, we got three – one child psychoanalyst, one paediatrician, one – and of course the long – they wrote long things about when you don't have a mother for the first five years of your life, you know.

Yeah, the effect.

You know, you're totally, and one of them was a friend of mine in Paris who happened to be a child – paediatrician and interviewed me and he knew me, but he wrote an essay [laughs] which I have somewhere, you know. Obviously [laughs] doing it properly and properly. **[02:00:00**] Yes, until eventually my father said – he used to come back to London and – until he said, but, you know, now we have to sign a few things and you have to [laughs] – that's when I met the lawyer for the first time. And what can I say? Today [laughs] I'm very happy [laughs] that my father – and he did everything, absolutely everything.

So you're happy that he insisted?

That he insisted, yes, of course. Of course. Especially in my case, when I got divorced and which created all these financial problems and all that, so yes, it's a yes, they did, and I do too. And I had a friend, we were probably – we were the – I mean not the totally youngest one but when we had to go every year to the German embassy to [laughs] prove, you know, I'm talking about thirty years ago, forty years ago, [laughs] we used to go together and there was a queue, a queue, a queue, a queue [laughs]. And, 'cos she's – she had a different story. I

mean here, everything changed when I came to England. It's not so much that I have Jewish friends but I have Jewish friends with similar stories to mine, yes. And that has been very good for me. Yes. **[02:02:00]**

But that's much later.

That's much later. Coming here, living here with my children and all that, that's much later, yeah.

So tell us about how you managed or how did you come to England? How did that happen?

How did I came to England?

Yeah.

I fell in love with an Englishman, or I suppose he fell in love with me.

Where?

In Paris. We met in Paris when I was fifteen, where he came for a dirty weekend [laughs] or something, so [laughs] I don't know. And I – don't forget, I went to London every year, you know. And [laughs] so I – and he was – my uncle and my aunt had a son who also was born in Vienna and who is six years older than me, who when I used to come to London, ignored me totally. Totally, totally. And six years make a big difference, you know. And then one year I was sixteen and [laughs] – and his father said, look [laughs] – and he never said more than hello to me, you know. He was twenty-two, I was sixteen, and, you know, six years' difference. And then when I was – I came when I was sixteen and my uncle said, look, she's very pretty – I was still wearing white socks – but she's very pretty. Look, he said, why don't you take her somewhere, you know, to a party with your friends and all that. And he said okay, so I went – the first time in my life I went to part – I was brought up very strictly – the first time in my life I went to parties and I met all these young men [laughs]. **[02:04:06]** And I had *l'embarrass du choix* [spoiled for choice]. It was wonderful [laughs]. It was wonderful.

And one especially took a real liking to me and I suppose I did too, even though I was only sixteen. I did too. He was different. He was ginger, which was fantastic, you know. And that's how we started and he pursued me and pursued me and purs – I was still at school [laughs].

What did your parents say?

Sorry?

Your parents. What did they say?

My parents were quite happy with him, yes. Yes. He was very – I mean he's not here anymore. He was – he's a very nice man. Very, very nice. And he really pursued me, really, really, really. And then he [laughs] – he said, let's get married and I said yes. I was eighteen [laughs]. And I said yes. So, we got married and it was very good. It was very good, yes. And about two or three years later, Philippe and Marc and all that, and then it's history. And – but we couldn't – we didn't – I mean it – the marriage couldn't work. It's not possible here. Well, maybe with another woman, not with me, because I put the blame on me. He married a little girl, you know, her pretty black hair, blue eyes, tall, slim, very French and, you know, very – dressing up very nicely, French-style and all that [laughs]. **[02:06:20]** And [sighs] ten, twelve, fifteen years later I was a different person, yeah, you know. From that point of view, it's nobody's fault but I was a child and he liked that, you know, and that's what he would have liked to have continued. But by then I had began to meet people of my own, not just – his friends were very nice, you know, but then I started meeting my friends and then I started being interested in a subject, you know, and developed it and developed it and then I started working and I wasn't the pretty, pretty, little, French girl, you know [laughs]. It's a sweet story, you know.

But what was it like to come to England from France for you?

Sorry?

What was it like for you to come to a new country?

No, to me that was part – I have – I think – I mean I didn't do it but I think there is an adventurous streak in me, which I discovered with Israel when I was fifteen. And, you know.

You liked coming here? **[02:08:00]** *I mean you knew it from your uncle. You had some family here.*

Yes. Yeah. I mean we were not particularly close, no, but –

So where did you settle? Where did you –

Ah [laughs]. Well, I said [ph] on that I was very unhappy because when he said, where do you want to live, I said, I don't know London. I've come here once a year for a week, you know, I don't know. You choose, you choose. And in Paris, I lived right in the centre of Paris, you know, near the opera and- and so he chose the last stop of the Piccadilly line [laughs].

Cockfosters?

Cockfosters [both laugh]. Poor guy. I mean he really – he was – Alan was a very nice man. We remained friends, you know, and we [laughs] just didn't fit. But then – and he could see very quickly that I – for me, Cockfosters was absolute – so he said – I think Philippe was then just born and he said, you know, Ruth, just choose wherever you want to live, as long as it's north London. I said okay, fine. So, I used to go with Philippe and I eventually found two – he said Hampstead is too expensive, can't afford it. And so, I saw there were two bits, Primrose Hill and Belsize Park. And being already very sensible, 'cos I'm also – I like an adventure but I'm also very sensible, you know, Belsize Park is better because of the public transport, you know, when they start going – I only had one but they start going to school, and for me as well, you know, and so it was Belsize Park. **[02:10:22]** And initially – and he said – he was, as I said, he was very good man, a very nice man [laughs] so it became Belsize Park. And for me, I've lived – I've moved around –

In Belsize Park?

A small place, a very big place, a bit – little bit smaller [laughs] but always Belsize

So when did you move to Belsize Park initially?

Initially, we bought – you know in Belsize Avenue they have these eight or nine little houses?

Yeah.

Just by the village.

Yeah.

Yes. We bought it on paper, you know.

Oh, before it was built.

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. So, it was very nice, near the village, the Tube station, you know, everything was there. That's where – that was our first place, yeah, Belsize Park – in Belsize Avenue. Yes. And –

Yeah. And then you moved –

And the tree – I even told the grandchildren when they were little, when you go in front of 12 Belsize Avenue, there is a big tree and your grandfather planted it from that big [laughs] and it's now enormous, enormous, you know.

Next time I go for a walk with the dog I will look at the tree [both laugh]. And then you moved to Glenilla Road?

And then we moved to Glenilla Road, yes, which was very good, a beautiful house, a magnificent house. **[02:12:02]** And we gutted it, you know, and by then he was a dentist, so by then he was doing well and yes, it was really beautiful. Philippe and Marc, Philippe especially, remembers. He was very upset when we had to move, very upset [laughs].

So I wonder whether you knew my – I have friends there who have been there for a long time. They were – she was a dentist as well. They were from Berlin. Daisy Hoffner. Does that name ring –

No.

No. Just down the road.

Also in Glenilla?

Glenilla, yeah.

No.

32a or b, the two little, modern houses. And they lived there I think from the [overtalking].

Oh, the little, modern – little.

Yes, yes.

I think I knew her.

Daisy.

Daisy, that's right. Yes, yes, yes. I knew her. Yes, yes, yes.

From then?

No. No.

No? From later.

No, later.

And they used to go U3A as well, both of them.

That's right, yes. Yes, I knew her from – yes, yes, yes. Daisy. Yes, of course I met her. Yeah.

Yeah. She was a dentist.

Yes. Yes, that's right. That's right, she was. And she was in one these two little houses. Yes.

Yes, on the left side.

Yes. Yeah.

Yeah. Oh, that's so funny.

Yes, the left one, 'cos on the right one there was a man who lived there.

Yes.

Yes, I remember him as well. Yeah.

Oh, that's funny. I made a little film about her.

Did you?

Yeah, about – it's about Glenilla Road as well.

Ah.

I'll send it to you.

Oh, I'd like to see it, yes.

Yes, 'cos it was about her and there's a lady called Louise, who you probably don't know, and they were friends, when Daisy came on the Kindertransport. I'll send you the film.

Ah, that would be nice.

It's about Daisy and Glenilla Road [laughs].

Oh, Daisy and Glenilla – oh, that's nice.

Yeah. It's a Glenilla Road film, and you'll see by – anyway, sorry, but –

Oh, and I think Philippe –

When you said dentist –

I think Philippe and Marc would like it as well, to look at it, yes. [02:14:08]

I'll send it. I'll send it to you.

That's nice, yes.

Anyway, and then from there, what happened to you?

And from there, the marriage began to fall apart and we have to – we had to move. Philippe and Marc were at UCS, just around the corner, and I felt very guilty 'cos it was me who had

enough of the marriage. So we had to move and I said to the boys, you know what, I'll find – I'll look for something, and when I see something, I'll show it to you. You go together, just the two of you, and you decide if you like it. And I showed them, I don't know, three or four and they said no, we don't like it. And it was in Netherhall Gardens, in a basement flat, three-bedrooms, but what was fantastic, and it really was a fantastic idea, because the – there was a garden, the bottom of the garden led to Arkwright Road and then the school was there. So it became this – where we lived became a place where the boys came back, you know. And it was absolutely – yeah, I mean I'd never thought about that. But the few years we lived there were fantastic because so many of the boys came after school and the mothers used to ring me and say, oh, where's my son, I'd say, he's here, he's play – they're playing, and, you know. **[02:16:06]** So it became a hub for UCS boys, you know, for both Philippe and Marc. So that was I would say a complete success, without planning it, you know, without planning it.

And did you start to work as well?

I started work much before, much before. When I was – what I was doing [laughs] – what I was doing. I was very lonely, I didn't know anybody, and I used to go into bookshops and then Philippe was born and I used to take him with me. I could drive by then, so I used to put Philippe at the back and we used to go just outside London, just the two of us, and I used to go into bookshops and I started buying children's – old children's books. And I did that for two, three, four, five years, something like this. I didn't know what I was doing but just buying old children's books. And then I met someone who became a very good friend of mine and who knew a little bit more than me about literature and all that, so I told her what I was doing and, I mean if you want to, we've still got a few books on – we wrote our memoir, [laughs] Monika and I. It's quite funny. And we – so we started buying old books and joined organisations, you know, they do exist and they still exist. And we dealt from home and we sent catalogues every two or three months and it grew and grew and grew, our knowledge was getting more and more, we both did our homework and all that, and it grew eventually, we got ourselves a shop. **[02:18:25]** We had a very nice shop for about twenty years.

Where?

Marylebone Street. Street. Not Marylebone High Street. A little street parallel to Marylebone High Street. Yeah. And we did very well. And we did book fairs, we travelled around America doing book fairs in America. We became, yes, quite well-known.

What was it called, the business, or –

[Laughs] When we wanted to look for a name, [laughs] it was – we didn't know what to call it, so it is M & R Glendale – M, Monika, R, Ruth, Glen, Glenilla, Dale, Daleham Gardens [both laugh]. M & R Glendale [laughs]. And people coming to the shop said, could we speak to Mr Glendale, please? And we said there's no Mr Glendale.

[Both laugh] Glendale, that's good.

And that was our name and we've, you know, we spent – and we did that for about – until about 2000. Yeah. **[02:20:00]** And then lots of things happened to both, to her and to me, different things, and I'm still – I still get, you know, lots of things from the book world and asking me if I can find something I'm not – but I did that, well, for about thirty years.

And you enjoyed it?

Oh, it – very much. It was lovely. Really, really, really lovely. They were fantastic years. And the boys helped. She had sons as well and the boys helped, they helped in the shop, they helped – it was all about books and they were of an age, you know, it was very good. They all have – all the – their five the three boys. And I knew I would only have boys, so two is enough [laughs]. She was convinced she'd have a girl, I said –

You thought you wouldn't have a girl?

No. No, not me [laughs]. Not me. And I told her, you're not going to get a girl, either [laughs] and she had three boys [laughs]. Stupid. And – but they were – and they were part of, you know, they were teenager, you know, and it was very nice. And even when they started going

to – Philippe and Marc went to Cambridge, so I used to go there a lot, still look at bookshops a lot and study and – yes, it was – they were very, very good years. Yeah. Yeah.

Did you ever think of going to university or doing a degree? Because you married so young.

No, no. I have no hang-ups. I mean – I have no hang-ups about not, you know, not having gone to university, no. **[02:22:12]** No. No. Even one of my sons many, many years, told me, you know, he said to me, you've got a very good brain, Mother, but it's not disciplined at all [laughs]. You should have gone to university [laughs]. I said, okay. So it's not disciplined [laughs]. No, I don't have hang – quite a few of my friends who didn't go to university do have hang-ups, yes, and on the whole they blame it on their background, you know, the generation which I, you know. And obviously this wasn't my most important thing in my life.

And Ruth, you said slowly so you built up your own friends. So, what sort of friends did you have here in London?

In England, I only made friends – and they don't particularly – and they don't have to be Jewish, although the majority are. But not English Jews.

No.

No. [Laughs] I would say, my criteria, if I talk about criteria, I would say my criteria, I get – I've – I mean not so much now of course, not now, but I am – I've always been fascinated more than curiosity, it's much more, much more, with people, male or female, I call it who have been amputated by life and had to start again. **[02:24:15]** Different, other way. I've always found this, I'm attracted. I mean sad people, you know, not – but other – it's the best, quickest way for me to explain it, who have been amputated by life for whatever reason, whether it's necessity, choice – I mean there are millions of reasons – and then –

Do something else?

And then carried on, you know. I think if I were to do it in one line, I've always been, and all my friends have been amputated by life, yes. I've got lots of acquaintances. But friends, they've always been, you know, they started one way and I'm not talking about today, because today is the finish, but started one way and continued, poof, totally different direction. And I've always been attracted by that. Always. Yeah. I found it – I don't know. I still today. If I meet someone, I still will want to know, if they wish to talk to me, you know, how did you cope, all that.

But not English Jewish, on the whole, or not?

No. **[02:26:00]**

No.

No. No.

And when did you start getting involved with the AJR and others, sort of refugees, or –

AJR, I started with [sighs] – I start –

I remember you told me. Go on.

It's okay. I started with my father, yeah. My mother died, his wife died, and then- is it two years later there was a big tragedy where I lost my brother and his two children in a car crash, and my father was left on his own in Paris and he was already a very old man. And what I wanted was for him to come here. I was going to Paris, although I was still working a bit. I mean it was a crazy life, you know. Thank God there was the Eurostar. That's all I can say [laughs]. There was that. I mean I've used it I don't know how many times. And I wanted him to come here and so I started making enquiries with the AJR and joined and it was still in the – in Bishops Avenue. You know, it was still there. And they were very nice, absolutely.

The home?

Home, anything. They just – I wanted to prepare myself for my father to come here because that's what I wanted. **[02:28:03]** But I did the preparation first and all that. And I was very impressed and all that. They were very nice to me and they were very – and then – so when I had enough information and they could help me in some way, I don't know what, I don't know what. So, then I started putting pressure on my father and he absolutely refused. Absolutely refused. And that probably was the last fight that we – I mean had, both of us. He absolutely refused. I regret about that but I really fought for that, until one day where he said to me – my father, who was very spiritual and all that – he said, Ruthi, don't ask me to move country again. I've done it three times. I'm eighty-five. I can't do it again. I can't. I can't. And he was telling me, you know, you know, I know every stone in Paris and [laughs] all which he did, it's true, and please, please, please, he begged me, let's finish that subject. You can't ask me to do that. So I said, okay, I finished. And so, he eventually went to a home, a very nice, Jewish refugee, similar, you know, similar, in Paris. And I used to go one week every month and stay with him, which was hard, you know, but that's what I did. **[02:30:17]** I did that for just over two years, one week every month, I went, I stayed with him. The home was very nice- very, and- so just to finish this subject, it's a full circle. He looked after me at the beginning, I looked after him, 'cos he had lost his wife, his son, and his two grandchildren. So, I looked – the best I could do. I wanted more but he didn't want to.

He wanted to stay there, yeah.

Yes, he – I suppose I could have gone to live in Paris. Yes, I suppose. I didn't do that. I didn't do that.

So that's how you got in touch with the AJR and –

Many years before. And I've done a lot of work for the AJR. I was spending one day a week – when I finished work, I also was spending one day a week in their old people's home, sort of helping within the – exactly, the refugees. Only – I'm only interested in the AJR, [laughs] not in the others [laughs].

Yes, so in that – where was it? In the old age home? **[02:32:02]**

Yes.

In Highgate?

No, there was – no, there –

Day centre?

Day centre.

The day centre.

Day centres.

In Cleve Road?

Yes, yeah. And then there was – and then it moved and then they ended in Belsize Park as well and the – in the synagogues –

So you helped there?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

But you also did something for the Wiener Library?

I did the – yes, yes, I also went –

At the same time or later, or –

More or less at the same time, yeah. I finished work around 2000 or something like this and I was looking for something to do with books. It had to be books. And the person who introduced me to it was Katherine – Katherine Klinger, 'cos Katherine and I are – she's a difficult cookie but she's a wonderful, wonderful person. Absolutely.

So she's a friend. A friend?

Oh, she's a very, very, very good friend of mine, yes. She's much younger than me. Actually, we've all – we've got exactly twenty years' difference. Literally day by day. Literally day by day, twenty years' difference.

So, she introduced you to the Wiener? She was working there.

And she was working there for a while amongst all the millions of things that she's done. She's a crazy woman and all that. She's lots and lots of thing but I love her. I think she's – as crazy as she is, [laughs] and we have had lots of arguments, [laughs] lots of discussions, but as a friend she has been a most – as I was a friend with her mother as well. Yes, I was a very good friend of her mother. I'm in the middle, you know. **[02:34:01]** It was, I mean sixty-five, eight-five, 105 [laughs]. It was exactly. So, I was as close with the mother as the daughter. And Katherine's mother died a few years ago – three years ago, and she's – yes, she's – I know not everybody likes her, I know all that. To me she has been a most wonderful, wonderful friend and I'm sure she will continue to be that [laughs].

And Ruth, because you said about the generation, how – what do you consider yourself? Do you consider yourself first generation? Second generation?

Exactly. I'm – I think I am being put in the first generation but I [sighs] – I don't have much in common with the first generation because I have no memories. I mean I don't feel I'm – of course I'm not a second generation but I- [sighs] you know, I have no – there's a blankness, you know, literally probably until my mother arrives and then my brother arrives and then things start being normal, you know. But I have no memory. I have another friend who has a similar story to me. We're the same age. She remembers things when she was two and three

and four. **[02:36:00]** Does she really remember? I don't know. I don't know how it works. Is it because she was with her mother? She was in hiding with her mother? I don't know. And she always used to – I mean she's still around, yeah, but she – and she can't understand that [laughs] I don't remember anything. And it really is blank.

That's why, because your memory starts post-war, in a way it's –

Totally, totally. Of course, I know a few things because I've been told a few things but I have no memories.

Yeah. So Ruth, how do you think has that impacted you, your sort of lack of memories? What –

[Break in recording]

Yes, Ruth, I was asking you what – the effect do you think it had, that you – your lack of memories or – or the separation also from your mother, how that impacted you?

You see, I – there was one thing about my life or for me, it was important. I am not going to go through the road of blaming, you know, because of this happened or this happened. I think it's a very bad road to go to. I'm sure to some us who were maybe not strong enough to cope with it, I understand, I mean I'm not, you know, I'm not without any feeling, I understand, but not for me. **[02:38:11]** I'm going to [laughs] – again, it's the same sort of thing. I'm going to be responsible, I'm going to be – it's going to be my way, I'm going to be totally responsible for [laughs] the good things which happen in my life. I mean certain things you can't, I know, but, you know, no, I think if anything has changed my life, it's the accident with my brother and his two children. That has changed my life, yes.

How?

[Sighs] How?

In which way?

Yeah. I am – I'm less demanding. I'm less demanding, you know, the only thing I really want you to do [laughs] is to be healthy and have a long life. You know, when you have [sighs] – okay, even my brother died in his forties but his two children were ten and seven and it was – happened in a car crash. And you don't recover from that. **[02:40:00]** I mean I can talk about it now but the first ten, fifteen years, people were aware that I, you know, do you have any family, do you have, you know- [laughs] I mean, you know, and they could – the silence, I – I was stronger than I am now, you know. I was still, and the silence that I used to give was so uncomfortable for the other, you know, okay, what have I done, what have I asked, you know. [Laughs] It was [sighs] – it was my own personal, private holocaust. My parents had [sighs] – it's an extraordinary thing of wanting another child, you know, and then they were, you know, my children had cousins. I mean they were much smaller but we had – we were beginning to build a family, a – you know, we were beginning to. And that's gone. I think Philippe and Marc are also very affected by that because they were already adults, you know, when it happened. I think in a way it has – well, especially Marc. He has changed the course of his life. Yes, I think he may not talk about it and I'm sure but he won't but, no, if anything has affected, it's the last thirty years. **[02:42:08]** It's not quite thirty years. Yes, it is thirty years. That has changed me. Has probably also made me – some of my old friends, if you met them, would probably say, Ruth is, you know, is a bit more gentle [laughs] and is a bit more, you know [laughs]. You know. Not so much caring but just a bit more gentle, you know, bit, um, yes, that has affected me, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

And do you think that sort of tragic loss, terrible loss, is –

I think it's –

Brings out other losses in some way?

I mean it really is, when we were all beginning to, phew, you know, I mean it can't have been easy for my brother as well to be born in '47, you know, and [laughs] you know, because we became very close, [laughs] very, very close. We used to talk all the time to each other. All

the time. He married a very nice woman and I'm very close to her, 'cos she's the one who survived the car crash. She lost her husband and two sons. I know, I know. I know. And we're very close. We need each other. We – I mean she's younger than me, she's in her seventies, but we need each other. **[02:44:01**] And we can – I mean it could have gone one way or another. It could have gone the other way, you know.

But anyway, you were a small family because of the war.

Yeah.

And then so something like this –

Yeah, and it was the beginning – there was the beginning of something, you know, beginning, and the mere fact that my parents decided to have another child, I think it's fantastic. It's amazing. Amazing. I had about four friends, similar, you know, who didn't have any sibling after – if there wasn't one before, yes, but after, no, you see, that there wasn't. Well, I'm trying to remember the name of that American author who wrote about this, um, 'cos there was a time where I read a lot, I wanted to [sighs] – I don't know.

Understand.

To try to understand something. Maybe there is nothing to understand. I don't know.I don't know.

So you think that really impacted you and changed you.

Oh, yes. No, no, that, it has changed. I mean I – maybe people don't notice it but it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Yes, I was given something. I was given a brother, [laughs] you know, and it was taken away from me. And even sometimes when I see Philippe and Marc, they're very close. They do lots of things. And they're not – they're totally different but they're very close, you know. **[02:46:01]** And I know they, [laughs] – whether they talk about me or not, that's irrelevant. Do you have any siblings?

No.

You don't have siblings. But it's amazing to have a sibling. Have you got a sibling?

[Cameraman] Quite a few.

Yeah.

[Cameraman] I have a twin sister.

You know, and I can see it and I even watch my two sons and I say, oh, you know, they couldn't – they – it's not so much confide- I don't know, there is something. And I was getting it with my brother, because the gap was, you know, less and less and less, you know, and he was still my little brother. But he was beginning to take over and tell me, you know, what to do and – which was lovely [laughs].

What was his profession? What –

He was a dentist [laughs].

Ah, he was another dentist?

[Both laugh] I know. I know. This is the joke of my life [laughs]. This is the joke of my life.

You married a dentist.

The last question you can ask me, and who was, what the sail – what was the sailor doing? The Scotsman. He was a dentist [both laugh]. I know, I know.

What is it about dentists?

I know. It was – it was –

You know, my mother was a dentist. Yeah.

Your mother was a dentist [laughs]. I know, it's so, so funny. So funny. Yeah, my brother was a dentist [laughs]. Yes. Yeah. No, that has, well, especially with, you know, with my mother's death and my father's death, there's basically nowhere to – nobody to talk to, you know, and, [sighs] and he was a lovely, lovely, lovely man, much – much more gentle than me, much more. **[02:48:10]** Yes, he was.

Yeah. So, tell us, but this is another phase in your life.

Yes.

So tell us a little bit about it. What –

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, that's another – but I think – no, I think, [sighs] maybe I consciously chose not to go down that road of saying, yes, oh, no, I didn't have a mother for four years, five years, yes, I know I was a hidden baby, yes, it all looks absolutely – okay. So…

But maybe your wish to be independent and do this, could be also related to that, the –

Yes, it could be that as well, of course. Of course, yes. Yes, it's all related to, I'm going to live my life, [laughs] you know. I mean what life I've lived. But I – yes, I think I've done it. I think I've done it, I've lived my life, yes.

Any regrets?

Without denying, without denying my – anything about my past, you know.

And do you find the past is becoming more important the older you get, or –

Yes, that I do, especially now that I'm old and I spend a lot of time on my own. Yes, I think a lot, I – yes. But I don't dwell on – I think a lot but not dwell on to, you know, accept that [laughs] the only thing I always say to people, you know, that's why I feel so, so, so, so Jewish because I said, you know, if I hadn't been Jewish, my life would have been totally different, you know. **[02:50:19]** I would today be an old Austrian woman, [laughs] you know, probably very fat and [laughs] – and eating cakes one after the other, [laughs] you know.

Because that leads me to my – one of my questions is, you know, do you sometimes think what would have happened if you hadn't been, you know, forced to leave Austria?

But again, again, no, I make jokes about it, you know, but of course I also say to the grandchildren who – I mean now they're big now, the grandchildren, so – but they used to say to me, but you are Austrian, Ruth. And I said, no, I have never been Austrian and I never will be Austrian. Never, never. And they couldn't understand when they were little. But you were born there. So, I said, yes, but then I explained to them I was born after the Anschluss, and after the Anschluss you become anyone who is – any Jew born after Anschluss is born stateless. But Ruth, how can you be stateless? You know, I mean now they're all old, they understand, but when they were eight, ten, twelve, and interested in that sort of background, you know, and I said – and there is nothing Austrian about me [laughs].

And how do you feel – do you feel the same today about Austria? How do you feel?

Sorry?

Do you feel like this today as well?

Oh, yes, absolutely. **[02:52:01]** Absolutely. That's one of the big thing we had, Katherine and I. She's, you know, she finds it Austrian, all that, and she tells me about everything she's done.

And you?

Ah, don't. You know, and she said, why don't you come with me, why don't you? [Laughs] I said, I don't want to. I don't want to.

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

Well, I'm French. I'm French. And the identity – no, actually, identity, I don't see identity as, you know. I'm a woman. I'm a woman and I happen to have a French nationality, which was given to me, therefore that's the only nationality I'm going to have all my life.

Not British?

No, I don't want to be, no. No. No. I was given that nationality, French. That's my nationality. Where – I had no difference, no problem with identity. Problem with belonging, yes. That I felt problem with, belonging. Not today, any more.

Where do you feel you belong, then, today?

I don't – it has no importance any more. It used to, but it's not important any more. It really is not important any more.

When did it – when was it important for you, or –

It was important because I felt I didn't belong anywhere, you know. Probably living in London and I didn't belong anywhere. Maybe, maybe I have, you know, you know what I enjoy now? **[02:54:05]** [Laughs] I mean my children are very worried about me. They think I'm – because I like going – I don't pray but I like going to the Belsize Square Synagogue, you know. I go to the – I'm part – I do the library, I do the books on Wednesday.

Uh-huh.

Yes, see, I've – oh, I've been – not just me. There have been two or three of us. We're building a whole library at the Belsize Square Synagogue and I go there every week. Because it really is from scratch, we've done. I mean the books were there but what to do, how to put them in, you know, and they are – somebody knew I was in the book world one day –

But are you a member or not?

Sorry?

You are a member? Did you join?

Yes, I'm a member. Yeah. I used to be a member, I stopped being a member, and I am a member. I like, yes, are you – do you belong to that synagogue?

No.

No. Do you belong to a synagogue?

Yeah.

Yeah. Which one?

I'll tell you later.

[Both laugh] Okay. Okay.

Yeah. But I know it very well. I know it very well.

I like it, I – they've been – I like the cantor. He's been very nice when my ex-husband died, very helpful, very nice, because my husband had prepared nothing. It was terrible. It was awful. He was never going to die [laughs]. And he did die. And his sons had absolutely no idea what to do with him. **[02:56:01]** And he was very good. I said, just go there, tell him

you are – who your mother is and I'll chat with him and we'll do a bit a philosophy and, you know, and all that.

So that – do you feel that it's given you some sort of belonging? Because there is –

Yes, I like going there. Yes, I do, I feel very comfortable and I'm beginning even to give instructions because I think the library is not going – I would like to do it this way, this way [laughs] until it's nice.

But Ruth, what about the neighbourhood here? You've been here for so many years, Belsize Park.

Yes, I – I'm not a friendly neighbour. But it's true. But it's true. And that I think is [laughs] – I think it's- [both laugh]. I think it's my mother's fault. She used to say to me, in Paris even, I said, you know, because I remember their neighbour on the same floor and she didn't like them and all that and she always used to tell me, you know, you don't – it's better not to be friends with your neighbour because, you know, initially it goes well and all that and then something happens [laughs]. No, I'm not. I'm – I really am not. And I miss it now. Yes, I miss it now. And I know people who – they know each other and all that, and I don't. I don't. Not even at, what do you call it, the greengrocer, you know. I mean – I'm not friendly.

You don't chat to them?

No. No, it's terrible. No. **[02:58:01]** I think you [laughs] – I think you're going to meet a lot of people who say, well, I'm sure she's very nice, but she's not friendly. It's true. It's true [laughs]. I think I need – I don't know. I don't know. And today – and quite honestly, today, it's not important any more. I just want to – I would like to do – I'm still – I still have enough energy to want to do things but unfortunately, my peers, I don't have my peers any more. That, yes, I will – I still feel I have the energy to, I don't know, to do something, to –

Yes. But you do go to U3A as well?

Yes, I go to U3A and –

Which is also here in Belsize Park.

Which is also in Belsize Park. I go to U3A. And the other thing that I've learnt late in life, late-ish in life, is to play bridge. And that, if you have one more minute, that is a wonderful story because I learned to play Bridge – I didn't go to classes, anything like this – after the what I call the tragedy in my life, which is my brother. I didn't go out for about two years. I worked. I was still working. And my father used to come, or I used to go to Paris. I mean this is what my – that was my life. And I had a most wonderful friend, older than me, most wonderful, who came from Slovakia, and a survivor. **[03:00:05]** I mean she died a long time ago.

What was her name?

Roža Vos [ph]. She didn't want to have anything to do with Jewish things and she was very Jewish [laughs] but she just – she had lost absolutely everything. She went to the camps and she – as a twelve-year-old, eleven-year-old, you know, she – absolutely terrible. And we became very close, the two of us, and she was like a big sister to me and I was like her little sister and she was looking after me. And was a superb bridge player. Superb, superb. She used to play with her husband, competition and all that. And after that accident, she used to come every day to see me. She lived in Oak Hill Park, you know, just down the road. And she – and one day she said to me, Ruth, I'm going to teach you to play Bridge and I said, I don't want to play Bridge. I'm not interested. And she kept on saying, I will teach you to play Bridge. And she had that long, strong Slovakian accent and I said, Roža, leave me alone, I'm not interested. I know you enjoy it with your husband, you go on competition and all that, but I'm not interested. And then she said to me, Ruth, I am going to teach you to play Bridge because, I'll tell you why, when you hold these thirteen fucking cards in your hand, whilst you hold these thirteen fucking cards, you think of nothing but the thirteen fucking cards [laughs]. **[03:02:02]** And I said to her, are you sure? Do you promise me? She said, I promise you. It's like magic. It works like magic. Was she right? It's one of the greatest gift I've had when I

was fifty-five, something like this. And she used to come every day [laughs]. She used to – and she said –

Was it true, what she said?

Oh, it worked. I mean I don't need it any more to work, you know, but it's true. And I play Bridge twice a week and it's true, you just think of this stupid fucking cards, [laughs] you know, as if it's the most important thing in your life for five minutes, you know. And by saying this, I knew what she meant, you know, 'cos she certainly had a story, that woman. But she didn't want to have anything – I mean she wouldn't set foot in a synagogue, she wouldn't – she became that way. Very Jewish but she bec –

And did she record her story?

No. No, no. No, no, she would not. She would not. I mean I know a little snippet of it but I don't know. I know. I mean she will also joke, you know, give you stories. She was very attractive, very – black hair, very attractive woman and all that. And she said, they did a lot in the camps. A lot, a lot, but I was never raped. **[03:04:02]** You know, she will tell you – oh, at a dinner party. You know, we used to have dinner [laughs]. I used to bring –

How did you meet her?

At the school, at – she had a son the same age, although she was fourteen years younger – older than me. At the school. We met at the school. And I don't know, we clicked. We clicked. And she used to say sometimes funny stories at a dinner party, you know, [laughs] when we all used to have a dinner party. Yes, she – I think she had a terrible, terrible time. Really terrible. Yeah. But she – but on the other hand, she also ended up, dementia and mad. That's true as well, you know. [Sighs] So –

Okay, Ruth. What I wanted to ask you, because you were quite reluctant to do this interview, whether you – did you do – ever speak about your experiences, or –

But, you know, I noticed you keep on saying do I talk about my experience, but I – what sort of experience? Wartime, I have no experience. I mean I think – I'm sure Philippe and Marc would probably tell you more about their mother as a result of she is like this, like this, I would imagine, you know. But on the other hand, that's only their version, you know, [laughs] so –

Yes. So, you feel you can't really talk because you can't remember, or – about the war? It's not your own memories.

I don't, that's right. **[03:06:00]** And they're – I don't have own – it's not –

Do you consider yourself a survivor, for example?

Do I continue…?

Do you consider yourself a survivor? You know, a Holocaust survivor.

No, I don't. I don't. Again, I'm told I'm a survivor. Okay, so I accept. Fine.

But for you it doesn't seem – it's not a category for yourself? You wouldn't choose it?

No. No. No, no, it's not. No. I think this is the life I was given, you know. Some bits are awful. The start was probably – I mean if one day maybe if we continue seeing each other, I have so many photos of myself, these little snapshot, because my father every time he saw me, he took little snapshots. And funnily enough, he sent them to Vienna because at the back it says, *"Die Ruthi lacht, die Ruthi das, die Ruthi"* – [Ruthi is laughing, Ruthi-]

Oh, to your mother?

Hmm?

To your mother?

To – yes. Yes. And *„Die Ruthi küsst Dich, die Ruthi"* [Ruthi gives you a kiss]- you know. And there is not one picture of me smiling. Not one.

And did your mother then bring those photos when she came?

Yeah.

Or how did the photos-?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that was one of the things she brought with her. Yeah.

So this is your little – so the photos are the witnesses of your story in some way. **[03:08:00]**

Yes, yes. I mean he – of course he has told me things. I mean I remember just one – before we go, one little thing. When Philippe went to university, he – one day he said to me, Mother, you never say, you know, when are you coming back? You never say, I want to see you. You never say – so I said, don't be ridiculous. You know, you tell me you're coming back and I say – for a weekend or whatever. And I said, no, I said, you don't say it. And I remember being – this never left me, that, I remember. And many years later I asked my father, you know, this is terrible, if that's how Philippe feels. He said, you never tell me, come over. Never. You know. And I said, don't be ridiculous [laughs]. And he said, Mum, you don't. I do it, not you. Phew. And I asked my father about it. I said, you know, this is terrible. What – and he said to me – he started thinking and he said to me, you know, one occasion, and he thinks, he thinks, he thinks, he thinks [laughs]. He said, one occasion, you were about two, two and a half, three maybe, he said, I can't remember. You were so happy to see me and all that, blah, blah, blah, we played and all that, and then you said, I'm going now. And I begged you not to go. **[03:10:03]** I cried, I cried, don't go, don't go, please, please, don't go. And he said, but I have to go, darling. I have to go, darling. And apparently, from one second to another after all that screaming, you know, I got up, stopped my tears, turned around, and left him, went wherever. And he said, afterwards whenever I came, you never said to me, stay a bit longer, you know. Never. We had a nice time and I said, darling, I'm going, you turned around and off you

went. You didn't say goodbye or anything like this. And he said, maybe it's got something to do with that [laughs]. I said, I don't know. I don't know. So, I took the two together, you know, and I thought, [sighs]. And it's true, I make no demands. That is true. I'm not [laughs] – I mean even Marc has accused me when he was a child, Mum, you're not really a Jewish mummy, you know [both laugh]. I don't make demands, that's true.

So you – were you quite free with your children, or – free in a sense of liberal, or let them get on with things.

No, it's not that. You don't make demands, I want to see you, I want to, you know, when are you coming again, when are you – you know. And it's true, I don't. I don't.

So that's a good thing? **[03:12:01]** *Is it not a good thing?*

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know any other way. I – but I think they both, [sighs] you know, sensed that. I'm not talking today, because today they are nice, I'm old, they come over and all that and they pop in. Marc said, you know, I'm going to pop in because I am, I don't know, and of course, of course I'm very happy and I said, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. But [laughs] no.

[Break in recording]

Okay. Ruth, we're coming to an end. One thing I wanted to ask you, given the political situations today, are you worried about today's –

Oh, yeah. Yes. I'm –

Let's go back. Because of the microphone, just go a tiny bit back. Yeah. Thank you.

Yes, I'm [sighs] – I'm very anxious about it, yes. I think my children will be okay. For some reason I think my children will be okay. I fear for my – I've got five grandchildren. They're aged between twenty-five and thirty. And yes, I feel – and I think a lot about it. Yes. Yes.

Yeah. I think it's – I think we're going through a – and it's not just going to be for one week or one year. I think it's – something is happening, I don't know what. **[03:14:07]** Something is happening. And I feel for them. Yes, I, um, yeah, yeah, that upsets me very much, yes. Yes, it does. [Sighs] It does. I mean even, you know, there is one who lives in America and she's doing a PhD in Berkley and now she's going to apply to do law. She's American in nationality. She has – and I would like to ask her, are you changing your mind? I'm not going to do it. Are you – I would like to ask her, are you – should you be, maybe – because she's French and British. She's got three nationality, because her family, Philippe and Natalia is French, she got a French father, and so it's all, you know. And that lot has three nationality. On the other hand, I have another one, Léo, who said he's thinking of giving up his American nationality, you know. So, you know, I mean even this thinking process, you know. Yes, for my grandchildren I'm concerned. **[03:16:03**] I think from that age group, …

And Ruth, what do you- do you have a message for this generation, that generation? Something from your own life?

The only message I have, and I'm a bit surprised because they are – they're not, you know, they're not teenager, they're quite old now. I mean older. They're not old. They're not. They are – except for one, they are not politically – but not at all, you know. And they're just getting on with their lives. And I find it quite odd that they're not – they really had – I don't know that age – is it just my lot? Or is it a general thing? You know, their only interest, they're only with their travelling and their planning and of course getting jobs and –

So you think they should be more politically aware or interested, or –

I think so. I mean I had – the other night I had a very peculiar thought. I thought, look, look what's happening, you know. Something is happening. I don't know what. And we've all been told, you know, you mustn't be a bystander, you know. So – and that word, bystander, came in the middle of the night, came into my mind.

Yeah. What does it mean?

What does it mean, that word? I mean that [sighs] – yes, I have – oh, it's – I don't know what suddenly had hit us. **[03:18:06]**

No, because it's true, all the lessons, you know, about we are supposed to learn, now so what does that mean exactly, and how do you apply it?

That's right. And that's – the word, bystanders, it came up. I mean okay, Lara going to do – no, no, no, of course I'm going to do law and, you know, and she probably is going to – yeah, why not, why shouldn't – she's American, why not? But even if it's just a moment every now and then, a moment of stopping and thinking, you know, just a moment. And then of course carry on with your lives. But what does the word, bystander, mean?

And for you, what do you think has given you strength in your own life?

I think it's not even what is – what I've – I think it's my personality. I think it's – it's not what has – it's not something that I've chosen. I think it's my personality who is that way. But if I was younger today, I would –

Yeah. What would you do?

I don't – ah. That's one thing, I don't know what I would do. But I certainly would spend a moment or two standing still, and what's happening? What does it mean? **[03:20:00]** And I don't see that but is it generally with these young people? I don't know. Maybe it's a good thing. I don't know. Maybe if I start talking about it, I am – am I bringing my shit, what I call it, my shit, you know. You know, Ruth, you've got your shit, and we understand you've got – you know, they'd be very – they would be very nice to me. They would be very – lovely to me. And Ruth, Ruthie, because they still call me Ruthi, you know, it's – we understand that you have – you're carrying a lot of shit, don't give it to us.

So what do you think, Ruth, about the Holocaust education? Because it's slightly related, you know, in a way. Do you think it's effective if so many survivors, you know, have gone around to the schools classes?

I think it's a fantastic thing. I think it has to continue. I'm not quite sure in what form or – of that I'm not, because I'm not convinced, for instance, that this place in – near the parliament, you know, they're building –

The memorial?

The memorial. I am not convinced it's a good thing. You know, I've been there, I've seen where it is. I am not convinced it's a good thing.

Why?

First of all, why should there be that kind of memorial in England? **[03:22:00]** If I was English, you know, why should you disturb this beautiful garden? Although half of it will be under the ground and all that, you know, which is facing as well a statue of, which I forgot now.

The Burghers of Calais, isn't it? Calais.

No [sighs]. It's – I'm – but from the day one, when I went there, you know, I – that's why I wanted to see, I wanted to see the surrounding, where it was, and I thought, why, why are they doing that? There must be other ways to – I mean, you know, as far as the Holocaust education, it certainly has gone from schools. That is definite. And I mean like some of the materials that you have, I mean which I haven't seen, should be used at schools.

Absolutely, yeah.

You know. It's not a matter of showing it in a memorial. [Sighs] To me, it's – it should be used – I mean memorials, there are. I mean one which I find – I'm not quite sure what the word, memorial, means, but one which I found, I've been now three or four times, which I think is very good, is the one at, the War Museum.

The Imperial War Museum?

You know.

Yeah, I've been to it.

You know the one, in – by Waterloo station, of – the – in the war –

Imperial –

Imperial War Museum.

Er, yes, that's right. **[03:24:04]**

Imperial War Museum.

Hmm?

Imperial War Museum.

Yeah, Imperial War Museum.

Exhibition.

Exhibit. Well, I think it's fantastic. And I think it's – I've been about three or four times. I think – I was amazed by it, you know. And it fits well there, you know.

Well, let's see what's going to happen with this Westminster situation. It's not clear.

[Sighs] I don't – you know, Philippe gave a talk only a few weeks ago, I went there, at the memorial museum [sic], visiting, taking a lot of people, visiting, just the Holocaust bit. And –

but he did it his way, especially from – it was well-attended. There were about 300 people, something, one evening. And from his point of view as a human rights, you know, and –

Yeah, through the lens of a human rights lawyer, yeah.

Yeah, yeah. And he was explaining, look what happened, you know, in the early '30s and one should have sensed, you know. As people went, [laughs] I was very tired, I took one of these chairs, but I wanted to go because I – he said I'm doing that. The director of the museum asked me for – if, you know, if I would be interested to, so I said yes, but I've got to do it my way. And he does it from the human rights, you know, and not – and again, partly with that sort of bystander, you know, not being able to – can't you see what is happening, you know, from that point of view. **[03:26:18]** And the signs were there, the – you know. And I think some of the signs here, are there as well. I think so. I think so. And then I get tired and I think to myself, you know what, Ruth, I'm old, I won't last much longer. I mean in the most nicest possible way, you know. You know. And I will not see it. That's why I keep on saying if I was born in a shit and I'm going to die in a shit. Given another few years, I'm going to die. I'm convinced of that. Convinced. So what has the life been for? What has these ninety years or whatever it is, been for? What was the point of it? Oh [laughs]. I spend a lot – too much time thinking. Too much time.

Okay, I think it's – we can end this on this rather negative note but [laughs] –

Yeah. Yes, yes, yes. Life is good, the sun has been shining today.

[Both laugh] We're sitting in your beautiful apartment here in Belsize Park.

It's a nice flat. I'm very –

Very, very nice.

Yes. I'm very pleased with that flat. It's –

Absolutely beautiful. Ruth, is there anything we haven't discussed, which you'd like to add?

Yes.

Yeah. **[03:28:00]** *Is there anything else you'd like to say which I haven't asked you? Any other things that –*

I don't know. I don't know [laughs]. Maybe during the night or- [laughs]. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. But I have a thing now because of what's happening the last few weeks of the definition of bystanders, you know.

You're researching it or you're [overtalking]?

What?

You're thinking about it?

I'm – it's just, yeah, a few – two or three weeks ago it started – I started thinking about it. I mean I know people are trying to do things. I'm sure people are.

No, I agree with you because I also think, you know, sometimes we listen to the news, so one – the way I deal with it, I try to just continue with –

Of course.

My own work, by doing it. And then I ask the same question, you know, does it mean you're not actually facing things, you just continue with your small, little –

Yes, but no – no, but –

But in the event, what can you do?

No, no, you are doing – no, no, you are doing something. That's not true. That's not true. No, no. No, that's not true.

You know, if you think of protests over people, all kinds of things, people involved in politics, you know. So, it's a question, what does it mean to do something and – they are big questions, you know. Should you protest or do – yeah. I don't know. I don't know. We won't solve this today. But I first of all want to thank you. You waited for a long time.

I know, I know.

We changed this interview many, many times.

I know [laughs].

I'm very, very pleased we managed to do this today. I think we've been planning this for, well, initially for probably more than a year, but –

I know.

Even from December, I guess. **[03:30:02]**

I really felt it was like – do you know that word, *beshert*? [destined]

Yes, I know. I know that word beshert.

You know the word. Well, my –

It's a good Yiddish word.

Is it Yiddish?

Beshert, yeah.

Beshert.

Definitely Yiddish.

This is beshert.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It's not German.

Yeah. Yeah.

Well, it was beshert in the end, so we had to –

It was *beshert* [laughs].

And maybe I thought even, funnily enough, you know, this is just a recent very- in terms of date, you know, the Anschluss anniversary was just two days ago.

I know, I know.

11th of March, so, anyway.

I know.

But in the meantime, Ruth, thank you so much for sharing your story with us.

No. No, no, I'm – in a way, yes, I'm probably glad I spoke, yes.

I know you were reluctant.

Yeah, I know, I know, I know.

But what changed your mind about it? Because at first you said no.

Probably you two.

Ah [laughs].

Probably the two of you. I think it's very much a matter of the people who are doing it. I really think so. Because I could have been totally different. And I can be, and I know it and I've been told and all that, so I know, you know, you reach a certain age and you just know, because you've been told enough times something, so it must be true, you know. You know. If it's just once, okay, people don't get on. That happens. But if it's a regular, recurring thing, you know, you realise. No, I think it's the two of you. No, no. No.

Okay, Ruth. So, thank you so much and –

No, I thank you. I thank you [laughs].

We are going to look at some of your photos, but maybe we want to –

Today? **[03:32:01]**

I don't know. Let's see what – some photographs or documents, what you've got. So just one second, and then we finish.

[03:32:51]

[End of transcript]