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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Stenham
<b>Forename:</b>	Charlotte
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	18 December 1922
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Hamburg, Germany

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<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	2 hours 40 minutes

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

**INTERVIEW: 143**

**NAME: CHARLOTTE STENHAM**

**DATE: 8 JANUARY 2007**

**LOCATION: KINGSBURY, LONDON**

**INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE**

**TAPE 1**

AG: I'm conducting an interview with Mrs Charlotte Stenham on the eighth of January 2007 in London. My name is Anthony Grenville.

AG: First of all, Mrs Stenham, I'd just like to thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us, and I'd like to start by asking you to state your name, your full name, at birth please.

CS: Charlotte Eva Stenham.

AG: Your name at at birth please?

CS: Yes. No [Head in hands].

AG: Don't worry.

CS: I'm sorry. I'm ... [Laughing]

AG: Try again.

CS: I'm sorry. Have I ...

AG: That's all right.

CS: Have I messed it up?

AG: No, no, go ahead. Just tell me your name at birth.

CS: Charlotte Eva Kohn.

AG: Right. And where were you born?

CS: I was born in Hamburg.

AG: And when please?

CS: On the eighteenth of December 1922.

AG: Right. Could you tell us a bit about your family background? Should we start with your father? What was his name?

CS: My father's name was Sigmund Kohn. And he was born in Schleswig and ...

AG: When was he born?

CS: He was born in 1878, I think. You should have warned me of this, I have all these details [Smiling].

AG: Oh well, just to get a rough idea of his age when you were born. What did he do professionally and what sort of a man was he?

CS: He was a businessman doing import and export and he had his own business. Siegmund Kohn und Kompanie.

AG: What sort of goods did he deal in? Do you remember?

CS: He was in Darm [Skins, as in sausage-skins] and skins.

AG: Darm as in ...

CS: As in ...

AG: Darm is, it's sort of, yes I know, its animals' intestines as it were.

CS: No.

AG: Darm, no?

CS: No, I think it was for food. You know, in the olden days I think sausages were covered in ...

AG: Ah, yes, yes.

CS: Something like that.

AG: Right, right. So it was food covering as it were. Or packaging, but ...

CS: Yes.

AG: Mmm. And did the business flourish? Was he ...

**Tape 1: 3 minutes 19 seconds**

CS: Oh yes, I think it flourished when I was young. I think it was less flourishing as time went on but I wasn't really aware of any difficulties.

AG: Had his family... Do you know if his family had been living in Schleswig for some time?

CS: Yes, they had been living in Schleswig for a long time. I think there was some connection with Copenhagen but his family actually lived in Schleswig. I got computer excerpts from Schleswig, from ...

AG: Oh.

CS: ... and it goes back to sixteen hundred something.

AG: Mmm.

CS: Yes.

AG: Of course Schleswig would have been under the Danish crown.

CS: It was under the Danish crown and at one stage there was a family who left Schleswig, came to Hamburg, and suddenly there was anti-Semitism in Hamburg so they moved to Altona, which is, for me has always been Hamburg, for a while, until it passed, and then they moved back to Hamburg.

AG: Was it a religious family, do you know?

CS: Not at all. Even in those days they weren't religious.

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

CS: I remember him as a kind man, and hardworking, and a father. He was not as young as he might have been because my mother married twice. She lost her first husband in the World War in Flanders. And they remarried, or not remarried, they got married, she remarried after the end of the war.

AG: And had your father studied?

CS: I don't think so.

AG: Was it a family business that he went into?

CS: Yes, er, yes I think so.

**Tape 1: 5 minutes 49 seconds**

AG: And what about your father in the First World War? He would have been of an age to serve I suppose?

CS: My father served in the First World War and he was very proud to have had the Iron Cross, Second Class I believe, and he also had an injury, splinter of some sort, in the leg so he was injured, but I never noticed anything of that.

AG: Do you know where he served, on which front, or what he did at all?

CS: No ...

AG: He must have fought because otherwise he wouldn't have been injured.

CS: ... I don't. He never spoke about it. But he was a proud and convinced German and I don't think he could ever come to grips with the Hitler regime and anti-Semitism.

AG: He felt that this, he was ...

CS: He was ...

AG: ... a proper German and ...

CS: ... a proper German ...

AG: ... as good as any other?

CS: Yes, probably better.

AG: [Laughing]

CS: [Laughing]

AG: Yes, I see. And how about your mother? What was her name, her maiden name?

CS: Her maiden name was Gottschalk.

AG: And her first name?

CS: Alisa Jenny. She was born in Berlin and, while I don't think they were a very religious family, they were more practising than my father's family.

AG: So was that ...

CS: Not at all.

AG: Did they go to synagogue?

CS: No, no.

AG: High days and holidays?

CS: No. They... A year or so before I came to England my mother joined the choir of the temple, which was the equivalent of Reform, and I quite enjoyed that. And they sent me to religious classes, which I hated.

AG: [Laughing]

**Tape 1: 8 minutes 2 seconds**

CS: And I went to school, to a non-Jewish school, until about three month before I came to England when I was turfed out of the last school. I kept changing schools and they then sent me to the Jewish school. But it was about three month, three, four month before I came to England.

AG: I see.

CS: And the school was so full, because, even the... I was one of the last children to join it. And the only thing I learnt in Hebrew there was the... What is Tischgebet [Prayer at table]?

AG: No, well, fine.

CS: I didn't learn much there any more.

AG: Yes.

CS: Which is not the fault of the school.

AG: What sort of person was your mother? How do you remember her?

CS: My mother was very well educated. She was very artistic and I was told that after her first husband died she did anatomical drawings for the Eppendorfer Krankenhaus, which were published, and I did see the book once. And she painted a lot but I unfortunately have nothing. I have one little picture that she did.

AG: Do you know her first husband's name just ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... for the tape? Could you could you tell us ...

CS: Her first husband was a dentist and his name was Isenberg.

AG: And was he, had they met in Berlin?

CS: I don't know. No, because he practised in Hamburg.

AG: Ah. I was going to come ...

CS: And he practised in Hamburg and I had some photos of a grandfather, of her father, who for some reason lived in Hamburg. But was dead long before I was born.

**Tape 1: 10 minutes 23 seconds**

AG: And did your parents meet in Hamburg?

CS: Yes.

AG: Did your mother have any children by her first marriage?

CS: Yes, she had one daughter.

AG: What was the daughter's name? Her first name?

AG: Melanie Isenberg.

AG: When was she born? Approximately. She was ...?

CS: She was much older than I was. She must have been born in the early nineteen hundreds.

AG: Mmm. Did you know her at all?

CS: Oh yes, I knew her, but for a short time when I came to England, and she wrote me nice letters, there was not much contact. And I think there was a lot of jealousy.

AG: Did she come to England?

CS: No. She went to South Africa.

AG: Oh I see. Yes. Long way away.

CS: Yes.

AG: What sort of home did your... [Telephone ringing] Oh, we'll stop for the phone.

AG: Just resuming after the interruption. I was just asking you what sort of family home you and your parents lived in in Hamburg. Where was it first of all?

CS: It was in Eppendorf. I was born there and ... I think my mother lived there before she got married. She must have lived there with her husband. And it was a cultured home and my parents seemed to live a good and social life.

AG: What sort of people did they socialise with?

CS: Well they had non-Jewish friends, but by the time I was, I became aware that things were not as easy and straightforward, I think their friends were mainly Jewish. They were great friends with our family doctor and also the dentist, which came from my mother's previous marriage I suppose, and they used to go out a lot to concerts, theatre and the Regisseur [Theatre Director] of the Hamburger Schauspielhaus. The family were great friends of ...

AG: Who were ...



CS: ... my family. They ...

AG: Who was that? Can you tell us the name if you can remember?

CS: Reichenbach(?). They, they went to America and they did try to bring my parents out I believe but it wasn't successful.

**Tape 1: 13 minutes 39 seconds**

AG: So they had a pretty lively sort of cultural life?

CS: Oh yes very.

AG: And what sort of home did you live in? Was it a house or a flat?

CS: No it was an apartment, it was a flat.

AG: Could you describe it a bit? What size was it and ...

CS: It had two reception rooms, three bedrooms, one of those very long corridors where I had a swing [Laughing].

AG: A swing in the corridor?

CS: [Laughing] Yes.

AG: Gosh.

CS: And lots of little rooms going off the corridor to the kitchen, towards the kitchen.

AG: Did you have servants, kitchen maids or ...

CS: Yes we had ...

AG: ... a cleaner that came in?

CS: ... we had a maid living in. And then another one. And I think that's, after a while, then came to an end.

AG: Presumably that was because of the ...

CS: Yes

AG: ... Party laws?

CS: Yes, definitely.

AG: Yes

CS: Definitely.

AG: And did your parents have any other friends that were in the cultural world of Hamburg that you can remember?

CS: I can't really. I can't really say. By that time their circle had ...

AG: Yes.

CS: ... become smaller.

AG: Yes

CS: And life, I think, was not as easy as it had been. But they kept these things away from me and I was not too aware. And I had friends, school friends, who were partly Jewish and partly not. There were quite a lot of Jewish children in my class.

AG: I want to ask you which school you went to. What was the name of the school?

CS: I first went to a primary school in Breitenfelder Strasse.

AG: Is that Eppendorf as well?

CS: Yes. And where we had a wonderful teacher, who. ...

AG: What was her name?

CS: Valeska Wolf. And after I left, she kept in touch with a lot of Jewish parents. And I do know that she helped my parents a good deal after I had left. They kept in touch with her and she had a big box of photographs, which she kept, and let me have later.

**Tape 1: 16 minutes 36 seconds**

AG: After the war in other words?

CS: After the war. I had made contact with her again. She was a wonderful woman and she was... She went to Holland, following a Jewish family with whom she was great personal friends, and she told me that some sort of pressure was put on her if she does not return. And she did. She was no longer allowed to teach. And she ended... She was in prison for a short while but she ended up clearing bomb damage sites. And I kept in touch with her until she died. And after the war... During the war I was in, at the end of the war I was in the Fire Service [Laughing], fire woman. And I sent her my greatcoat, because she said she had nothing. I sent her my greatcoat with the buttons cut off. And she never forgot that [Smiling]. She was a wonderful woman.

AG: When did she die? Do you remember approximately?

CS: She must have died in the fifties.

AG: What was the name of the school where this lady taught?

CS: I then went for a very short time to the Lyzeum in Kirschmannstrasse (?), but I was thrown out there very soon. Then I went from one school to another, more down-market as they passed, and I hated being changed, changing schools all the time.

AG: Because you made no friends?

CS: I made no friends. And it appeared to be always obvious that I was Jewish so I never settled in.

AG: You said you made friends at your first school though?

CS: Oh yes.

AG: What was the name of the first school, I don't know if I asked you? The one where ...

CS: It was, it was... I don't know what the school's name was but it was the Grundschule Breitenfelder Strasse.

AG: Right, that's fine. And these friends, they were, you said, some Jewish and some not?

CS: There were lot quite a lot of Jewish children and I was friends with them because my parents knew the parents. But I was friends with non-Jewish children too until one boy, who lived in the same street, pushed me off the pavement and called me a Judenschwein.

**Tape 1: 19 minutes 32 seconds**

AG: How old would you have been then?

CS: About eight. But he was the exception to the rule and when I spoke to my old teacher, whom I visited in Hamburg, she asked me whether I would like to get in touch with a couple of boys that she still had contact with, because they were very anti-Nazi and the parents were, but I said no. I was far too bitter to want any contact. And I don't know what they did, what occupations they had taken. I wasn't interested, which perhaps was wrong.

AG: Did you keep up with any of the Jewish children?

CS: Oh yes, very much so. I have one friend, who is still alive, and we started together.

AG: Could you tell me her name, please?

CS: Yes, her name was Annely Schloss. And she lives in Temple Fortune.

AG: Ah.

CS: And I see quite a lot of her. And we have stayed friends all the time. She came to England with her parents and they quite often invited me for a meal when I was first in London. But they also had to struggle. And through them I got to know quite a lot of people coming from Nuremberg, because her father was from Nuremberg. But, I don't know whether you want to hear this?

AG: We might come onto that later.

CS: Yes.

AG: I'm always interested in what happens in Temple Fortune because I grew up there.

CS: Yes well there ...

AG: Sorry for Laughing in the middle of the ...

CS: [Laughing] Hillcrest Avenue

AG: Oh yes, yes. I grew up in a place called Alberon Gardens. It's just ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... very very near. Just the other...

CS: Off Bridge Lane.

AG: Yes, yes, well, anyway, enough of that.

CS: I do have ...

AG: We'll talk about that later.

CS: ... some very important things to say about people from Nuremberg. But that comes later.

AG: We'll do that in a ...

CS: When I came to London.

AG: Yes, yes, by all means.

**Tape 1: 21 minutes 56 seconds**

AG: Any others of the children in Hamburg that you'd like to tell me about?

CS: I was good friends with Heinz Levi, whose wife, Lotte Levi, works at the AJR once a week with Michael Newman. And her husband, who died some years ago, he was a good friend and, but many of them went to America and I lost contact. I am

still friends with a girl call, who was called Schragenheim, they went to Ohio. And I met them at Florida, [Telephone ringing] Oh god.

AG: Yes, go ahead.

CS: I want to speak about the Nuremberg connection, which came later.

AG: Well, we'll do that when ...

CS: Yes, yes.

AG: ... you get to England. You were you were telling me that you had met a lady who had lived in Ohio.

CS: Yes. She

AG: She went to the States ...

CS: ... married and it was it was pure chance. I read something in the AJR paper and I thought, this is funny, I know about, I know this name. There was a bookshop in Great Russell Street, mainly on, what was Iran before it became Iran, Persia ...

AG: Persia.

CS: ... on Persian history. And I had quite a lot to do with them because I have a cousin who is in Israel and who studied Persian history, and I used to order books for him which they send. So I asked them about their background and found out that this girl I used to know in Hamburg was living in America and I wrote. And she was delighted and I was delighted because we were good friends but this was already much later in the Jewish school. And we used to go to Florida on holiday several times, because we had good friends there. And we met and we are still in correspondence.

AG: Good. What was the name of the Jewish school, did it have a name that you went to?

CS: Yes, höhere Töchterschule

AG: Höhere... ?

CS: Judische Töchterschule

AG: Höhere...

CS: ... or something ... in Karolinenstrasse.

**Tape 1: 25 minutes 5 seconds**

AG: Normally, from what I know, the höhere Töchterschulen were not exactly at the top of the academic ...

CS: I don't think so. Certainly not by the time I went there [Laughing].

AG: Were you academically good yourself?

CS: Yes, I wasn't bad but I wasn't great. But I made up for it years later by doing a degree at the Open University.

AG: Oh. Did ...

CS: And I passed that with flying colours.

AG: [Laughing] Congratulations, look forward to hearing about that. Were your parents ambitious for you educationally, do you think?

CS: Yes, but I don't think they had much chance in getting a good education for me any more.

AG: No, of course, no. Were there any subjects that you particularly liked or that you were particularly good at?

CS: Yes, I liked art and I like music and I enjoyed English lessons, because we had a very good teacher, who did not get out. And I loved reading. It wasn't called literature at the time but it was the equivalent of that. But mathematics and arithmetic were not my strong subject nor were physics and chemistry. And I've never caught up with that [Laughing].

AG: At what stage did it become plain to you or your parents that there was no real future for you in Germany?

CS: When I went to the Jewish school. That's when I became aware.

AG: Yes. What year would that have been? How old were you?

CS: That must have been nineteen thirty-seven.

**Tape 1: 27 minutes 13 seconds**

And I wasn't happy at the school. And I didn't learn much. And one of the teachers was one Susi Traumann, who was an art teacher, and she turned out to be Monica Lewinsky's grandmother [Laughing].

AG: Oh, now, there's a claim to fame. What was her family name, I didn't catch it?

CS: Traumann.

AG: Traumann. So she must have got out if she ...

CS: She got out. She went to San Domingo, I believe.

AG: Ah yes.

CS: And she must have then gone to America where she married Dr Lewinsky. I think he was a doctor. And I believe she was not a very proud grandmother of her granddaughter. But I have one other friend here, in England, with whom I used to play in the in the paddling pool at the Innozenziapark(?) and our mothers were friends and she is a great friend of mine.

AG: What's her name?

CS: Her name now is Miriam Katz, she's widowed, and she lives in Heath View, it's off East End Road.

AG: Off East End Road in Finchley?

CS: Yes. And she is a very great friend of mine. [Looking down] Katie...

AG: This is the cat coming in. She was ...

CS: She is an important person in my life. We are very great friends.

AG: How did she manage to come to England?

CS: She came to England, to Bunce Court [School] before I did and our mothers must have put their heads together and I then came to England.

AG: Right, I see ...

CS: And I think her mother was instrumental in helping ...

AG: So what was ...

CS: ... to get me into Bunce Court but I know no details.

**Tape 1: 29 minutes 34 seconds**

AG: What was this lady's original family ...

CS: Mayer.

AG: Mayer?

CS: Miriam Mayer.

AG: I see. So you were close friends, if you played in the paddling pool you must have been ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... very young?

CS: Yes, very young. We were [pointing at something] about that age.

AG: Right. Oh, about...

CS: We were very young but we knew each other, we were not such great friends later on in Hamburg because she went to the Jewish school and I didn't. But our mothers, we lived not far from each other, and I said our mothers put their heads together and it was in many ways through them that Bunce Court appeared. [Looking to her right] Don't do that Katie. [Looking to her right].

AG: I afraid we'll have to stop the cat doing that.

CS: I'm sorry.

AG: Now I've forgotten where we were...

CS: Bunce Court

AG: ... Yes, go ahead, Bunce Court, yes.

CS: And so when I came to Bunce Court I had a ready-made friend there.

AG: Good, good. Did this friend's parents manage to get out?

CS: Yes, both of them got out. They were sent to Poland during the, after the Kristallnacht.

AG: Ah.

CS: Her father was a scientist. I believe he was involved in heavy water. And they didn't want him to leave Germany but they did leave and settled here in London.

AG: Did he pursue a scientific career? Was he able to, or...?

CS: I don't know. I don't think so. I don't think he was of an age by then. But perhaps.

AG: The British were too stupid to take advantage of his expertise? [Laughing]

CS: Life was not easy for them in wartime, I do know that.

AG: Were they, was he interned?

CS: I don't think he was interned.

**Tape 1: 31 minutes 46 seconds**



AG: Perhaps, moving on to Bunce Court, you could tell me a little about how this came about. How you were placed at the school and how the arrangements were made for you to leave Germany?

CS: As it happened a teacher from the Jewish school was going there as a sewing and handicraft teacher. To Bunce Court, she got a job there. And my parents asked her [looking to her right and raising her eyes], my parents asked her to take me along, to go with me, we travelled together. From Hamburg to Oldenzaal and then to Harwich.

AG: Mmm. So you ...

CS: So I had somebody to go with.

AG: Do you remember saying farewell to your parents?

CS: Yes I do. I still have visions of my parents standing at the platform, and holding people back and waving to them. That was the last time I saw them.

AG: Do you remember what you said to them or what ...

CS: No. No. It was also the excitement of leaving and I it never struck me at the time that I would never see them again. That came later.

AG: Do you know if it was difficult for you to get out of Germany, I mean, for them to get you out of Germany with documentation and getting into Great Britain?

CS: I don't think so, not particularly.

AG: And this wasn't a Kindertransport train?

CS: Oh no, no, no, no ...

AG: No they just put you ...

CS: ... this was well before the Kindertransport.

AG: Of course it was, yes, of course, thirty-seven. Yes, so they just put you on an ordinary train and you went down to Holland ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... and then ...

CS: And then to Harwich.

**Tape 1: 33 minutes 58 seconds**

AG: And who travelled with you did you say?

CS: A teacher ...

AG: Ah yes.

CS: ... from the Jewish school who had got a job there.

AG: Yes. What was her name?

CS: Berta Wagner.

AG: So you arrived with this lady at Harwich and presumably she and you went straight on to Bunce Court?

CS: We went straight on to Bunce Court and I think my English may have been better than hers but it wasn't good [Smiling].

AG: What were your first impressions of England? How do you remember Harwich and going to London?

CS: I was very excited and when we got to Bunce Court, which is in Kent, I was overwhelmed by the countryside because I had always lived at town and...

AG: It's near; it was near Faversham, wasn't it?

CS: Yes.

AG: Yes.

CS: And I had never lived in the country and I loved the country life and I enjoyed my time there but for the fact that I was terrified of the head mistress.

AG: That was? What was her name?

CS: Anna Essinger.

AG: Why were you terrified of her?

CS: Don't put this in.

AG: Oh well, if you don't want to say anything, then ...

CS: She was dreadfully cross-eyed and ...

AG: Yes

CS: ... I always thought she was looking at me, but when she was looking at me I didn't realise it and she, I don't think she liked me very much, and she was not nice to me. But I avoided her. I got on well with the others and I, as I say, I loved the country life and I attached myself to the gardener and general factotum.

AG: Who was English?

CS: Who was very English.

AG: What was his name?

CS: It was a she.

AG: Oh right.

CS: It was a double-barrelled name, I can't remember. And I thought this was wonderful.

**Tape 1: 36 minutes 15 seconds**

And there was a music society, which I joined, and ...

AG: Did you play an instrument particularly or did you sing?

CS: I sang and I did learn the recorder. Not very well. Not for long enough. But we had an English teacher who had a gramophone society and I joined that. And I loved that and I think that helped a lot towards my love for music, which was instilled to me at home already.

AG: Had you already been going to, say, concerts with your parents or just listening to it at home on gramophone?

CS: I had been to the odd opera. I had heard Carmen and... But there wasn't much opportunity any more. And they joined the Kulturbund and I went with them once or twice but I wasn't really old enough to be taken along.

AG: What was your reception like at at Bunce Court when you first arrived? How did it work and how were you greeted by the other pupils and the staff?

CS: Well, I had this one friend and I settled in quite quickly and I liked it. And my parents wrote to me all the time. I still have the letters but I can't bring myself to read them again. I will. And then of course war was in the air and it became much more frightening and worrying and I started corresponding with my parents via Denmark, via friends who had gone to Denmark. And that kept up with the Red Cross until they were deported.

AG: When were they deported?

CS: They were deported in November 1941 and that was the last time I heard. I had a Red Cross message that they had changed their address. And I was at that... no, not at that time. I didn't know what had happened or where they going. But eventually I found out through the Red Cross in, with whom I had contact while I was working at the committee later on. And I was more grown-up by then. But it was difficult.

**Tape 1: 39 minutes 37 seconds**

And then the school was evacuated to Shropshire and they did not take me along.

AG: Why not?

CS: I think because there was no money coming through.

AG: Ah.

CS: And I went to Bloomsbury House to find out who my guarantor was. They said. First of all they didn't want to know about me. That was Anna Schwab ...

AG: Oh.

CS: ... who was a very difficult and hard lady. And I was completely lost. I came to London. I knew no one ...

AG: Just before we get on to this, if you don't mind, I'd just like to... because we have very few interviews with people, if any, who've been at Bunce Court. Could you just give me a quick idea of what life was like at Bunce Court and how the regime was there and what you studied?

CS: Life was very easy-going at Bunce Court. It was co-educational and I shared a room with three other people, one of them was from Hamburg. And I knew, I had known her vaguely. She died many years ago. And, as I said, I loved living in the country and it was wonderful. I learnt the facts of life by watching the sheep across from the street giving birth to lambs [Smiling], and but for certain difficulties I settled in well.

AG: Was the difficulties that you were homesick?

CS: Yes.

AG: Yes, of course. And did you find that the school tended to divide between the refugees and the British?

CS: Not really. Not really. I mean the British, the British girls stuck together because there was so many foreign ones [Laughing].

AG: Oh right, yes, of course.

CS: But I made some friends and I enjoyed life. I forgot to tell you something before I came to England. Through my friend Annely, whose father was from Nuremberg, I got to know some girls who had come to Hamburg from Nuremberg to go to the Berlitz School because they couldn't go to any school any more at all in Nuremberg.

**Tape 1: 42 minutes 37 seconds**

AG: I suppose anti-Semitism would have been very bad there.

CS: They were in Hamburg, knew no one, and my friend's father was told, would they keep an eye on her. And I made great friends with one of the girls and we saw a lot of each other. And it was somebody different. And then eventually I came to come to England and I lost contact with them. I never met her parents in Hamburg but... Well, you go on asking me and then I'll tell you how I re-met them. They were wonderful to me.

AG: Did you re-meet them in England?

CS: I was in great difficulty when I was in London because ...

AG: Yes, you were saying you came to London and ...

CS: ... I had no one ...

AG: And this was, what, nineteen forty?

CS: Yes. And I knew no one and I had no one. I was let loose on London. The school had organised for me to learn hat-making, millinery.

AG: Millinery.

CS: And I hated it.

AG: Where did you live?

CS: I lived in digs and they were horrible to me.

AG: Where was that?

CS: In the Suburb.

AG: Hampstead Garden Suburb?

CS: Yes. And...

AG: What sort of people?

CS: ... I was very very unhappy there.

AG: What sort of people did you live with? Who were they?

CS: I don't want this to be recorded ...

AG: Oh well all right, don't ...

CS: ... because they were the parents of the teacher with whom I came.

AG: Oh dear.

CS: They were unbelievably horrible to me. And I was starving and my sister was very, my sister and brother-in-law became very friendly with a man who was a director of the Palace(?) Gallery in those days in Albemarle Street. He was peddling ...

AG: Mayfair.

CS: ... pictures in South Africa. And she said go and see Lottie. So he contacted me. He contacted me already when I was in Bunce Court and he came and visited me and they took me out for a ride and a meal. And I was sick in the car, which didn't make me any more popular. But when I came to London I got in touch with them again and he was very nice to me. He was. Well, he seemed quite elderly. And the story goes, and I must say I do not remember it myself but I was told this, that he said but how do you live. I was terribly thin and my clothes were all too short and too small because I'd outgrown them. And I said, well I buy myself a bun and sometimes it's got raisins in it. So that's always a highlight. And I was told this later on that he was so shocked when I said this. And the committee didn't want to know about me because ...

**Tape 1: 46 minutes 5 seconds**

AG: By committee you mean the Jewish ...

CS: The Refugee Committee ...

AG: ... Refugees Committee in Bloomsbury House?

CS: ... because I didn't come through their, with their help.

AG: Yes.

CS: And they said: 'Who's your guarantor?' And I said: 'I do not know.' So they wrote to the Home Office. I found this out much later when I was working there. They wrote to the Home Office and the Home Office wrote back and said they don't know, they don't disclose information like that. And to this day I don't know who brought me over, who... It was, it must have been a shy (?) [or Schein-, someone posing as a] guarantor and who obviously didn't want to know, and as I didn't contact him and the Committee couldn't contact him because, or her, because they didn't know. My father had business acquaintances in England. He travelled a lot in England. My parents were both very good English speakers. And they didn't want to know about me because they had enough on their plate.

AG: Yes. The Committee you mean?

CS: Yes.

AG: Yes.

CS: And one day I was sitting outside Anna Schwab's office again, crying as usual ...

AG: Oh dear.

CS: ... and the police came and interned all these young men who were working there, who were mostly refugees.

AG: So this was summer nineteen forty?

CS: Yes. No, it was later than that.

AG: Oh right.

CS: A bit later anyway. And I had my first brain wave and I knocked on the door of the staff office and I said, would you employ me because I see you are losing all your young men. And that's when I meant met Joan Stiebel and she said yes. And well, my life became a little bit easier. They gave me money to buy a coat which fitted and I met new people who were kind. But before that I was walking down Golders Green Road to go to the depot, the refugee depot of Bloomsbury House, where they doled out ten shillings to me, and there I met the girl who had come to Hamburg to school and she ...

AG: From Nuremberg?

CS: Yes. And she said, what are you doing here? We lost contact. She went back home. And they must have arranged for their own emigration. And she said, you're coming home with me. And the Oppenheimer family sort of took me on as a fourth daughter. They had three daughters. The other two I didn't know, I didn't know at the time. And they were wonderful to me. And I really did become their fourth daughter. And when I got engaged they said, you can't get engaged, we don't know who you're marrying. So I brought him along and that went well. And Sigmund Oppenheimer gave me away and I have kept up with them until old Mrs Oppenheimer died. She was ninety-two.

**Tape 1: 49 minutes 48 seconds**

AG: What was her first name? He was Sigmund.

CS: Paula Oppenheimer.

AG: And where did they live?

CS: They lived in Brim Hill in Hampstead Garden Suburb but they evacuated. And I visited. They evacuated to Yorkshire. Near, somewhere near Leeds. With a business. And I visited, visited them, and my life changed.

AG: What were their daughters' names, especially the one that you were friendly with?

CS: The one I was at first friendly [with] was Eva and she joined the ATS so I didn't see much of her. And I met the other two. One of them was Susan Sinclair, who has

just died and she was a great friend of mine, and the youngest daughter, Lisa, was, or is, an equally great friend of mine. Eva is very frail now. She lives near here and I see her and speak to her. But the connection never ended. And that was really the mainstay in my life when I came to London, after I came to London.

**Tape 1: 51 minutes 17 seconds**

AG: What were conditions like in London? I mean you must have come more or less at the time when the Battle of Britain began and ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... the Blitz.

CS: Well, I was working at the Committee. I wasn't earning a fortune but it seemed like it. I think I earned fifteen shillings or a pound.

AG: And you were living in the Garden Suburb?

CS: Yes. And I moved away into a house in Hill Top, which was given by some old English ladies to the Committee, because they evacuated to, I think they were Quaker. The headmistress of Bunce Court was a Quaker.

AG: Anna Essinger?

CS: Yes.

AG: I never knew that. I'd assumed she wasn't Jewish but I didn't realise she was a Quaker.

CS: Oh she was Jewish, yes.

AG: She was Jewish and a Quaker?

CS: Oh yes, very much so.

AG: I meant Jewish by religion.

CS: Yes.

AG: Yes.

CS: And they put two people who had come in a rowing boat from Holland ...

AG: Goodness gracious!

CS: ... to England and I moved there, the Committee helped me to get room there and I moved there and, although they were a bit peculiar, I don't want to go into details about them [Laughing], they were very good to me and I started digging for victory in the garden and I grew some vegetables for, and I was very well looked



after. They fed me and they were good to me and nice to me, and I lived there until I got married. And it was near the Oppenheimer's so life was much improved for me. And that's when I joined the Fire Service in Soho. I was at the Soho station. And I do ...

AG: When did you join the Fire Service? Do you remember?

CS: Well it was, must have been, towards the end, in about forty-three.

AG: So then you stopped working ...

CS: No, I worked at the Committee. I was sort of part-time. I worked in the evening I think, three times a week at the fire station. And I liked that.

**Tape 1: 53 minutes 49 seconds**

AG: What did you do at the fire station?

CS: Oh, I had to come down the pole [Laughing]. And I looked very natty in my Fire Service uniform, which I also liked.

AG: Did you actually fight fires?

CS: I didn't fight fires, but when the, not the doodlebugs the next ones, the, not land mines, what were they?

AG: The V2s.

CS: The V2s came over, which were soundless, I was assigned to go up on the roof with some of the officers, in Rupert Street, one of the tall buildings, to monitor and watch what was happening. And I saw them coming over and I heard them explode but nothing happened to me. And, yes that was, that was quite exciting. I saw the excitement of it and I enjoyed that. And I did that until after the war, until the end of the war, and then I was discharged.

AG: What was it like living in London and travelling in to Bloomsbury in the Blitz?

CS: I went by underground and I was horrified to see people sleeping in the underground. And, where I stayed, they went to a shelter but I refused to go. I stayed in the house.

AG: Were there bombing raids at all round there?

CS: Oh yes, there were quite a few damaged houses and while the Oppenheimers were in Yorkshire their house was quite badly damaged. But it was put right again.

AG: And what about in Bloomsbury? I mean the damage was probably even worse there?

CS: Yes, but it wasn't too bad and one took it in one's stride.

AG: Ah.

**Tape 1: 55 minutes 53 seconds**

CS: Yes.

AG: What was your impression of the way that ...

CS: I was happy at the Committee. They were good to me and they were interested that I would be okay. It was largely Joan Stiebel.

AG: Could you tell me a bit about Joan Stiebel?

CS: I worked for her. She was in charge, she was in charge of the running of the Committee and very efficient she was. And I also knew Alice, at that time I think she was called, I'm not sure, Alice Franks, who works at the Wiener Library as a volunteer, and I speak to her from time to time. And I was a pretty girl and people took an interest, especially Leslie Prince, who was the solicitor and one of the governors or something of the Committee, which was quite unpleasant.

AG: Oh.

CS: But Joan Stiebel extradited me out of there [Smiling].

AG: What was she like?

CS: Who? Joan?

AG: Joan Stiebel, yes.

CS: She was a lovely woman. And after the war I wanted to put a plaque up for my parents and I phoned the Wiener Library and I spoke to somebody and I gave my name and she said, you aren't Lottie who worked at the Committee? So I said, yes I am. And so we took up contact again, which was very nice. And I used to... Whenever there were any sort of functions at the Library, and we went to it, I always saw her and spoke to her. And I visited her a few times. She was living in Weymouth Street, I think. But I lost touch with her now. You know, later on, she was so old then.

AG: We're going to have to make a break there because the tape's coming to an end.

CS: Right.

**Tape 1: 58 minutes 25 seconds**

**TAPE 2:**

AG: Charlotte Stenham tape two. I was just asking you about the work that you did at the Jewish Refugees Committee. You told me a bit about ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... Joan Stiebel.

CS: Yes.

AG: I wondered if you ever met Otto Schiff himself at all?

CS: Who?

AG: Otto Schiff.

CS: Yes, because Alice Franks was his secretary.

AG: Oh right, yes, yes.

CS: And it was the holy grail, I mean I didn't have much connection with him, but we said good morning and...

AG: What sort of gentleman was he? How do you remember him?

CS: I think he was a very nice man. Very much nicer than Leslie Prince [Laughing].

AG: What sort of work did you actually do there?

CS: I started there carrying these folders, you know the records of all the refugees, up and down the stairs. And I mean the stairs. They didn't believe in me or the others walking, [shaking her head], taking the lift, and I worked for Lily Schiff who was nice, very nice, and then they sent me to Pitman's for three months, evening classes, and wanted me to learn shorthand typing and accountancy. Well, accountancy, you know, bookkeeping, that was out altogether. And I didn't learn a great deal of shorthand typing. I could type but not, shorthand was never my strong point. And then I continued to work for Lily Schiff and I... She had a lot to do with the Tracing Department, and I did a lot of that. And I had quite a nice job there. And then there was Major Davidson. Did you know Major Davidson? He was the recruiting officer. And he had a very very English secretary who left. He had her for years. And he saw me and he said, would you like to work for me, so I said yes. And I did. And that was a nice and very cushy job. I could continue to do some of the tracing and I had the key to the drinks cupboard. And when the soldiers came to see him, he wasn't in all the time, he was always at Chester Square, that was one of the War Office places, I gave them a drink and I filled the bottles up with water [Laughing], but you needn't put that in [Laughing].

**Tape 2: 3 minutes 0 second**

But I had a nice job there and he was nice to me. And I got to know Mrs Davidson. And they invited me once or twice. They lived in Eyre Court. And ...

AG: In St John's Wood?

CS: Yes. And he was a nice old bloke. He, he was not popular but he was nice to me. And, you know, it was a step up.

AG: When you say he was the recruiting officer, does that mean for refugees ...

CS: Only for refugees ...

AG: ... who wanted to join the forces?

CS: Only for refugees. And he worked a lot at Chester Square. That was a part, War Office department. What he did there I don't know. Whether it was also only for refugees but there were quite a lot of refugees who joined the Pioneer Corps and made it. And, as I say, he was not popular. He wasn't popular with anybody, I don't think. But I liked him, he was nice to me. And as I say, it was a cushy job.

AG: Could you describe the building at Bloomsbury House a bit please?

CS: Well ...

AG: It was in Bloomsbury Street?

CS: In Bloomsbury Street. And there was another house exactly the same where they had an awful lot of Cypriot refugees. Nothing to do with the Jews. And it was a very big building and they were there for many years. And then they moved to South Kensington. And I moved with them but by that time I was getting married. And I stayed there for a while. And then I... I don't know whether I stopped or I got, no I stopped. But I think it was the right time to stop otherwise they would have given me notice because they shrank.

**Tape 2: 5 minutes 13 seconds**

AG: As you mentioned that you're getting married, could you tell me how you came to meet your husband ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... please?

CS: I was a great sports person ...

AG: Oh.

CS: ... and I always went to Parliament Hill and I got a few medals from the London County Council. You wouldn't think so.

AG: What for? What was your sport?

CS: Well, my husband always said it was side jump, Seitensprung [having an affair] [Laughing]. But, yes, high jump and running and I took part in LCC competitions and

I won quite a few medals. And I enjoyed that thoroughly. And he came to England from Palestine, at that time Palestine.

AG: Where was he born?

CS: He was born in Leipzig. I can show you. I want something off you anyway. He was born in Leipzig and went to Palestine and worked there. First I think he went to a kibbutz and then he became part of the Palestine Police with the gorgeous fur hat. And then he came to London.

AG: When would that be?

CS: Well that was ...

AG: During the war or after?

CS: No, it was during the war, at the end of the, I think it was in forty-one, forty-two. And he joined the Merchant Navy in Haifa harbour. It was an Italian ship that was carrying sugar and that was captured and damaged, and he worked and helped repair and when they started to sail it again he asked to be taken on. And he became, I think, the ship's carpenter or something. He was an Able-bodied Seaman. And he travelled all over. It was during the convoy period. And he was in South Africa and he was in Central America. They landed everywhere and had to have repairs. And eventually they landed in Scotland and he got his discharge there. Came to London, where he had a brother, and he stayed with this brother in Belsize Park, opposite the fire station [Smiling], but I had nothing to do with it. And his brother was a great sportsman, and I knew his brother, and I got to know him.

**Tape 2: 8 minutes 2 seconds**

AG: I haven't asked you what his name was. I should ask you his original, his German name. Could you just tell us for the film?

CS: His original German name, I think it was, even in those days, [...] because he came from a fairly traditional [Jewish] family. Sternheim.

AG: Sternheim?

CS: Yes. But he changed that to Charles. And I met him on the sports ground and he was not much of a sportsman, but we got married nonetheless. And his brother joined the army and he was killed very quickly in India, by a sniper. He was shipped out to India. And...

AG: What was his brother's first name?

CS: Henry. Heinrich, Heinrich Sternheim.

AG: They'd no relation to, there was a very well-known German dramatist called Sternheim.

CS: No. No. We've, I have tried to establish a relationship but I didn't succeed [Laughing].

AG: Ah, yes.

CS: I have made a family tree, which is quite interesting, of my family. But no, I didn't establish any relationship with that one.

AG: And I didn't ask when your husband Charles was born?

CS: Well, he was ninety-one now, on the first of January, so we have to work it backwards.

AG: So that would be, 1915, I make that.

CS: Yes, that's right ...

AG: Or ...

CS: No, 1916 ...

AG: 1916.

CS: 1916 he was born.

AG: Right. Oh yes, of course, the first of January 2007, yes, so 1916. And you said he was from a more traditionally Jewish family. Was he ...

CS: Yes, but ...

AG: ... religious?

CS: ... that was all knocked out of him while he was living in Palestine.

AG: Oh really. I'd have thought Palestine would be the place it would be knocked into him.

CS: And what little [Smiling], what little was left I knocked out of him [Laughing].

AG: I see.

CS: Well, I didn't, but as I wasn't brought up to anything much that fell by the wayside.

AG: He didn't want to stay in Palestine?

**Tape 2: 10 minutes 33 seconds**

CS: No, he was not all that happy there. He was... And he wanted to join his brother here. And he had a sister too living here, who died many years ago. No, he didn't want to stay in Palestine.

AG: And how did he keep himself in London during the war? Or did he join up?

CS: No, he then joined the Home Guard and he did war work and he went into precision tool making. And he loved that. He really enjoyed that. But of course it wasn't what he wanted to do for life.

AG: Where did he work? Did he work in a factory?

CS: I think so.

AG: Do you remember?

CS: No. No.

AG: Well, it doesn't really matter.

CS: No I didn't. I don't know what, where he worked. In I think it was a factory. And he was sort of apprentice there and he really enjoyed that.

AG: Did he get on with the other ...

CS: He got on with everybody. And his English, which was not wonderful, became good. Then he had a number of jobs, because he didn't really have a profession, and he worked for a sort of stationary firm, which was not a great success. And then, through the Oppenheimers, he got introduced to some publishers of children's books.

AG: Oh.

CS: And, Brymax, they still exist under that name but nothing to do with the Rosenfelders, who were also from Nuremberg. And ...

AG: Were they the owners of the firm?

CS: Yes. Old Ernest Rosenfelder was the owner. And he started working there and made a great success of it.

**Tape 2: 12 minutes 51 seconds**

AG: What did he do?

CS: Well, he helped with all the printing and publishing and he was good at getting on with people. And he really enjoyed his work there. And he got into all the councils, the LCC and so on. He had very good connections because he made them. And he worked there for a good few years.

AG: Where was it based?

CS: At first they were printed here and then they rejoined the firm that he was, he either owned, what Rosenfelder either owned or associated with, Pestalozzi Verlag, in Nuremberg. And they printed there. Beautiful books and children's books.

AG: Where did your husband work?

CS: At Kings Cross. And then the son appeared and edged him out.

AG: Oh.

CS: And by that time he had also connections with one of the big factories in Newcastle, you know, on the, on one of the trading estates where a lot of people ...

AG: Team Valley?

CS: You've got it.

AG: Yes.

CS: And he started working for Freddie Ingram. Do you know him?

AG: No.

CS: The Team Valley Brush Company.

AG: Yes.

CS: And they made artists' brushes of a very high standard.

AG: I've seen their adverts in the old AJR ...

CS: That's right.

AG: ... Journal. I've seen them.

CS: And they're great personal friends. They became great personal friends. And my husband became the London office here. He opened his own office. And he made a great success of that.

AG: Where was his office? Still in the same area?

CS: No. Here in Finchley.

AG: Ah.

CS: Opposite Finchley Central station.

AG: Ah yes.



**Tape 2: 15 minutes 14 seconds**

CS: Where Barclays Bank used to be, the old Barclays Bank, which they closed down and built themselves a new one now. And he made a great success of that and he did very well. And he enjoyed his work. And then he took over an agency of framing, picture framing, and that was a great success too. And he did a lot of business. For the brushes he was so well introduced with all the councils. London and Warwick, and wherever, and so that was very... All the schools had Team Valley brushes because the, he dealt with councils. And then he took over this agency for frames, picture frames, and that was also a good, a success ...

AG: Wow.

CS: He did a lot of work with Boots and he also did something with spectacles, spectacle frames, which was a sideline, but it also was quite good. And he really did very well for himself.

AG: So he was just a ...

CS: He was self-employed ...

AG: ... basically a very successful businessman?

CS: Yes. And he never went to university because ... he couldn't in Germany and certainly not in Palestine. And he worked until he was seventy or seventy-five. And as I say we became great personal friends with the Ingrams, who owned the Team. Freddie Ingram's father got the factory in Team Valley and it was the, they were the manufacturers. They had I don't know how many employees, two hundred fifty or something.

**Tape 2: 17 minutes 21 seconds**

AG: Do you know the family's original name? It can't be Ingram.

CS: Ichenhäuser? Ichenhauser? I think it was.

AG: I know it was a substantial firm ...

CS: Yes. Yes

AG: ... because I've seen the adverts. Do you know anything about it at all?

CS: Yes. Freddie came down to the cremation and I speak to him very often. As I say they have become great personal friends and after he retired we continued. And they came to us, we stayed with them, and visited, you know, all the time. And the men telephoned all the time and I'm a good friend of his wife. So that was very... He was a very popular man.

AG: Do you know where the family came from in Germany?

CS: Yes, of course, from Nuremberg [Laughing].

AG: Oh, of course, yes, yes.

CS: Either Nuremberg or Fürth, but I think it was Nuremberg.

AG: Well, same difference, yes.

CS: And they did this in Germany. And that's why they were taken up by the government here and got the money to establish themselves. They had a beautiful factory, very... I've been up there several times.

AG: Could you describe it?

CS: Yes. It was on a trading estate. If you want me to I give him a ring now.

AG: Not now but ...

CS: Yes. It was on a factory estate. It was a big, big modern factory and it got bigger as things went on, with a canteen and... They were very good to their employees. They, typical sort of German I suppose, they looked after their employees. And as I say, they became really big. And very, you know, very modern beautiful factory with all the conveniences, canteen and rest rooms and, they all sat there and pushed these hair... I was fascinated seeing that, how they make these brushes into the ferules, into the metal ferules. And he sold the factory about five years, six years ago and is living the high life. He's got children living in Israel. Loads of children. He was married twice. And they travel a lot. And they're lovely people.

### **Tape 2: 20 minutes 7 seconds**

AG: An area of high unemployment that must have been. It's Gateshead, isn't it? It's the Team Valley. It's ...

CS: Yes, well ...

AG: ... yes, it must have been high ... ?

CS: ... it was of high unemployment, that's why they put them there.

AG: Yes.

CS: The same as this, there was a slipper factory somehow. No they went, they were in Wales at the ...

AG: South Wales.

CS: ... Treforest.

AG: Treforest.

CS: Yes.

AG: Yes, I've heard of that as well.

CS: But they, I think they were the only factory helped by refugees in the Team Valley Estate. I'm not sure about, I don't know about the others. And they had parking facilities and... It was very modern. Started with English money, to a large extent, and they gave... Well, as I tell you, they alone had over two hundred people working for them. And it eased the unemployment very much in the area.

AG: Yes. Did your husband himself employ people or did he just have sort of a secretary in an office?

CS: He had a secretary. I helped him with the office once a week or twice a week. Once a week, I think. And he had a secretary and he didn't need much because he communicated with councils. He travelled. And they were very well introduced in Holland. He went to Holland, to Amsterdam, a lot. I often went with him. And he also established relationships with these people, with these factories. And he enjoyed his work and he did well.

AG: Talking of work, I was going to take you back. I don't think I asked you properly about what work you did, what it was like working in the ...

CS: At the refugee...?

AG: ... in the Fire Service?

CS: Ah [Laughing].

AG: Because you said you started there in about forty-three. I mean ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... there must have been a lot of bombing still?

CS: Oh there was.

AG: And did you have to ...

CS: And when I spoke, when I spoke, especially to the Oppenheimers, they said how can you, it's so dangerous, and in Soho of all places. But I did it in Soho because it wasn't far from Bloomsbury House.

AG: Yes.

CS: And, well, it was a bit of a hoot.

**Tape 2: 22 minutes 46 seconds**

AG: Well, did it seem like that at the time? I mean presumably ...

CS: It did seem like that at the time.

AG: What were the other people you were working with? Who were they?

CS: Well, they were all English and ...

AG: What did they make of you? I mean, how did they behave towards you?

CS: Well, I got on extremely well with everybody.

AG: Because you were still an ...

CS: I was ...

AG: ... enemy alien weren't you? Or, well, you weren't [British].

CS: Well, I wasn't really.

AG: No, but you ...

CS: I did try. I did try when I was so very poor and so miserable here. You know there were the tribunals?

AG: Yes.

CS: And I was just old enough to go to one of these tribunals and of course I was 'C', which was the easy one. And then they started a little bit of internment [Laughing], so I wrote to the Home Office and I asked them whether they would intern me.

AG: Oh dear.

CS: Because [Laughing].

AG: Oh dear.

CS: Because I thought that would make my life a little bit pleasanter and easier but it was the death knell for internment. They, I don't think they even answered me. I don't know.

AG: Mmmm. That's a sad story. But you, going on to the slightly happier time, considerably happier time, you seemed to enjoy the Fire Service.

CS: Oh I enjoyed the Fire Service.

AG: Did you actually go to fires and bomb sites?

CS: Yes and, as I say, I was on, I was a lookout in Rupert Street, which is the very heart of the West End.

AG: Yes.

CS: You know, near Leicester Square.

AG: Yes.

CS: And I went up there with some of the firemen or fire officers, whatever they were, and I was very accepted, completely accepted and they were nice to me. And being English they didn't ask questions and I didn't inform, I didn't volunteer any information. I think I got a recommendation from the Committee. And, as I say, it was something completely different and everybody thought I was completely nuts [Laughing].

AG: Surely, if you went to sites where there'd been a recent air-raid you must have seen some ...

CS: I've seen some dreadful ...

AG: ... harrowing ...

CS: ... things yes, yes. But, I mean, it was shocking but I coped with that quite well because I was young and I didn't lose anyone there. You know, it wasn't a personal thing.

**Tape 2: 25 minutes 22 seconds**

AG: What impression did you get of the population in London during the bombing raids and the Blitz?

CS: Well, I was always good at making friends and I became very friendly with the secretary of Lily Schiff, who said you can't stay [here]. Oh, first of all I had, the Oppenheimers had a British traveller [travelling salesman], while they were still in Nuremberg, Harold Christie, and he lived in Slough. And when they left, when they were bombed out, they were in Wilson Street, in the City.

AG: Oh. My father had his offices there.

CS: Really?

AG: Yes, yes.

CS: Was he bombed out too?

AG: No, that was after the war. First of all he was in Bishopsgate.

CS: Ah.

AG: Where he, I think they were, yes, they were bombed.

CS: Yes.

AG: Yes, I know Wilson Street. Anyway it's now under the new Liverpool Street Station.

CS: That's right.

AG: Yes.

CS: And they had their offices there ...

AG: Right, yes.

CS: ... and they were completely bombed out.

AG: Yes.

CS: And I think the, or was it only the house, no, I think it was in Wilson Street. So when they evacuated they said you've got to have somebody and they got in touch with their traveller, Harold Wilson, not Harold ...

AG: Ha ha, yes, he's someone else.

CS: Whatever ...

AG: Christie I think you said his name was.

CS: Christie, of course, Harold Christie, and they introduced me to him. And they lived in Slough. So I spent a lot of weekends in Slough. He would wait for me somewhere with the car, he had a car, because he was a traveller. He continued working for them. And they took me down to Slough. They had two sons and one was of correct age for me and he was, he became a boyfriend for a while. And they were lovely people. And I mixed easily and I had quite a lot of English friends. I met where they, near Slough, no, not near... I became friendly with the secretary, who was a little bit older than I was, at the Committee, and she took me down to where they had rented a small flat in Surrey. Forget the name. And they took me down there. And I stayed with them at weekends and we came back together. And there I met nothing but non-Jews, who were all lovely. And when Jean got married I didn't go down with them any more and I went to these people who made me very welcome. And they also had some family tragedy and I eventually lost contact with them. And I met other non-Jewish people with whom I got on well.

**Tape 2: 28 minutes 47 seconds**

AG: Did you ever encounter any anti-Semitism?

CS: No, I didn't, not ever.

AG: And what about friends with...? Did you encounter in those early days British Jews at all?

CS: Not a lot, no, not a lot. Because, I mean, I encountered some who worked at the Refugee Committee.

AG: Of course, yes.

CS: And they were okay. But, not, they didn't become friends. Yes, one young man who joined the army I became quite friendly with, but it was a temporary thing [Smiling]. No, I really had no... I really met British Jews more when my children started going to school.

AG: Ah, we can come on to that later.

CS: And, you know, on the school run.

AG: Yes. Yes. When did you, I didn't ask, when did you actually get married? Do you remember the date of it?

CS: I got married in forty-three, I think.

AG: Where did you get ...?

CS: Or forty-four. I got married at Alyth Gardens.

AG: Ah, yes, that's the North Western ...

CS: Yes

AG: ... Reform [Synagogue]

CS: That was where the Oppenheimers were and ...

AG: Alyth Gardens is ...

CS: ... their eldest daughter got married there so I got married there and then we joined, we had to join...

AG: The synagogue? Yes, it's in Golders Green, for the tape. Yes, sorry, go on.

CS: Yes. Well, it was very nice and the Oppenheimers arranged the wedding and we had a little reception there and it was lovely. They were wonderful.

AG: There was a refugee rabbi there, if I remember correctly?

CS: Yes, Van der Zyl.

AG: Werner Van der Zyl.

CS: Yes, he married us. No. Yes, he married us.

**Tape 2: 30 minutes 43 seconds**

AG: Am I right in saying that Rabbi Leo Baeck himself was associated with it?

CS: Well, not at my time.

AG: No. No, of course, because he only came over after the war. Yes, sorry ...

CS: And we really didn't participate. Once we were married we didn't go. But when the boys were old enough they had lessons. They were bar mitzvah there. And then I had a major fall-out with Rabbi Marmor, a major fall-out. I'll tell you about it. I have told the new rabbi there, Rabbi Laura or something, Klausner or something, I told her about it because she was very kind and she rang me up and she wants to come and see me because nobody was here when my husband died.

AG: Oh.

CS: It didn't matter, they made arrangements with Katz from Hendon and he officiated and he was very very very nice. Also a Reform Synagogue. But she rang me up afterwards and apologised that they couldn't do anything and so on. And I told her and a man called Edward Cohn... Cohn, I think, came to condole, which he did off his own bat. I think he's a community officer or something. I have no idea. He was a nice man. But Rabbi Marmor, well, that comes later when, when my sons enter the picture. He was an absolute bastard, that's all I can say. [Grinning] And he turned me off completely. I have not darkened Alyth Gardens for at least forty years.

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 45 seconds**

AG: So, going back to your marriage, were you able to have anything like a honeymoon at all?

CS: Yes, we went to Torquay.

AG: Oh, very nice.

CS: And we had a very nice time there. And we palled up with some, I think they were Quakers, some very nice people there with whom we stayed friends for a while. They lived in Richmond or somewhere and then that fizzled out. And we always made friends easily.

AG: Where did you live when you were first married?

CS: When we first married we lived in Lancaster Grove.

AG: That's Belsize Park.

CS: Directly opposite the Fire Station, which was of great interest to me [Laughing].

AG: Was that a rented flat?



CS: Yes, it was a rented flat and it was the top floor. And my husband's brother was living there but as he joined the army we took it over and we lived there very happily for a good few years. For about three years I would say, four, three, three or four years. And it was convenient. And they were nice people and everything. One of these big houses in Lancaster Grove.

AG: Were the other tenants in the other flats also refugees?

CS: No, none. And then we heard of a block of flats in south London, which had been rebuilt by the war damage people, and there was no key money. That was at a time when my husband was going from job to job without settling. We didn't have much money. I was still working. And we moved to south London. We had a lovely flat there and had a little garden.

AG: Where? Which part of south London was it?

CS: Near Crystal Palace.

AG: Oh, right down there.

CS: Yes. And we settled in well there. Made one or two neighbourly friends and quite interesting ones, actors and so on. And we lived there and my older son was born at King's College [Hospital].

**Tape 2: 35 minutes 23 seconds**

AG: Ah.

CS: And...

AG: What year was he born?

CS: He was born in fifty-one.

AG: And what's his name?

CS: Robin. Robin Henry, after the brother who died in India, who was killed in India. And we had a lovely flat, very nice flat, a ground-floor flat. It was actually a lower ground-floor flat. It was ground floor in the front and in the back it dropped away and I had a little garden, which I loved. And we lived there for four years I would say. And it had certain disadvantages because it was rebuilt by the war damage people, and was centrally heated, and when the central heating came on the floorboards shrank terribly. And I had cockroaches [hands covering her eyes].

AG: Oh my goodness.

CS: They came through the floor. And that was dreadful. I used to put jam-jars over the cockroaches when I came home from work and my husband had to clear them away. But that was okay, that was the only disadvantage [Smiling]. And we didn't have any Jewish friends there. Yes, there were some people with whom we had

contact but, you know, we were neighbourly with quite a few people. And then my husband started working for Brymax and we moved back and we moved here to Woodside Park.

AG: Sorry, go on.

CS: We moved here to Woodside Park and we lived in Walmington Fold in a semi-detached house. And we had horrible neighbours, who were anti-Semitic I'm sure. And when Robin used to move his cot, he used to stand in his cot, and sort of moved the cot till it hit the wall, they always complained. And we were unhappy and we had the money then and we moved to this house.

**Tape 2: 38 minutes 1 second**

AG: So that was the first place that you bought, the one ... ?

CS: Yes.

AG: Where was it? I didn't catch the name?

CS: In Walmington Fold, it's ...

AG: Well, yes, Woodside Park.

CS: ... very near here.

AG: Oh right.

CS: And we moved here and we've lived here for over forty years.

AG: And when was your second son born?

CS: My second son was born in fifty-five.

AG: And what's his name?

CS: Jeremy.

AG: Any other names?

CS: Yes but he dropped them all.

AG: He didn't like...

CS: Jeremy Peter Simon. But he didn't like any of them. And I made it Simon because my husband wouldn't allow me to call him Sigmund [Laughing], which is understandable. And he's just Jeremy Stenham now.

AG: Before we go on to your family life, I'd like to ask you a bit about things back in Germany. I mean, first of all, after the war, when you started trying to find out what had happened to your parents, how did that go?

CS: Well, that was pretty dreadful. I found out, through the Red Cross I think, that they were deported to Minsk. They were one of the first deportees in early November. And I had an aunt who was deported to Minsk too a week later. And, as far as I know, my parents did get to Minsk. I mean I have no proof, but I do know that the train that my aunt was on, a sister of my father's, was apparently exploded outside Minsk. And everybody must have died. And that is absolutely all I know. There is a book out by someone called, I've got it lying there, I'll tell you afterwards, of one man who apparently survived the Minsk ghetto. And I can't read it.

**Tape 2: 40 minutes 26 seconds**

AG: Quite likely they were shot when they arrived.

CS: Yes.

AG: Yes.

CS: There was a broadcast once by an airman who flew to Russia, after the war, he was in the air force. And he talked on the radio, and I happened to hear it. And he went to Minsk and he mentioned in a few words that he also saw the ghetto of Minsk. And I wrote to him via BBC, via the BBC, and... no, it was, yes it was a broadcast. And he sent me a tape of his broadcast. He went twice and the second time he had quite a lot to say about the remaining Jewish population in Minsk. But I think they were mostly nat[ives], you know, people who came [from], who lived there all their lives. And of course, yes, I wrote to them and I got a card, a postcard back eventually, which I can show you, which was written in Hebrew letters but it was in Yiddish, I believe. And they just spoke about the monsters who annihilated everybody. So I really don't know anything, which is perhaps just as well.

**Tape 2: 42 minutes 17 seconds**

AG: What about your husband's parents?

CS: My husband's parents were sent to Poland, and they had family there and they managed to survive for a very long time. But before the war [ended] they disappeared from the face of the earth and nobody knew what happened to them. And we tried to find out but we never did because Poland didn't keep records and it was much more primitive, I suppose. They were not in Warsaw, they were not in, we don't think they were in Warsaw. I think they were in Lodz or somewhere. Anyway, we never found out what happened to them, but they definitely didn't survive because everything was done to try and trace them. And they just disappeared like so many.

AG: And after the war ...

CS: This was a very depressing time ...

AG: Yes.

CS: ... after the war.

AG: How did you feel about Germany and about Hamburg at that time?

CS: Dreadful. And I never really got over it, but for Wilfred.

AG: Ah, perhaps you could explain for the tape, for the film, who he is. His full name is Wilfred ... ?

CS: Wilfred Weinke. And, as I say, I answered. He advertised for something, for some information, and I wrote to him.

AG: Where, could you say, just for the tape?

CS: In the AJR, he advertised in the AJR paper. And he wanted some information. I honestly can't remember what it was, but it was applicable and I answered him and I got a very nice letter back from him and he gave me all sorts of information of what I could do and said if we ever come to Hamburg would I let him know, he'd love to meet us, meet me. And we were invited to Hamburg and ...

AG: By the ...

CS: By the ...

AG: ... by the city?

CS: ... Senate, yes.

AG: Oh by the Senate, yes.

CS: And we stayed at the Esplanade Hotel, which was very nice.

**Tape 2: 44 minutes 56 seconds**

AG: When was this approximately?

CS: It was good few years ago.

AG: So nineteen-eighties?

CS: No.

AG: No?

CS: I would say the late seventies.

AG: Oh right, a really long time ago.

CS: Something like that.

AG: Yes.

CS: And I wrote to him, and I said we are staying and we'd love to meet you, I'd like to meet you. And he came, and we came, he came with somebody, with a man who was a friend of his, called Vonderwalde who I didn't really know in Hamburg but my parents were very good friends with the Vonderwaldes and my mother played the piano for them. He was a violinist. And they were very good friends. And as far as I was concerned there was always a mystery about the son. In fact he was caught by the Gestapo early on and he was put in prison. And his parents emigrated and in some shape or form they managed to get him out. And his parents emigrated somewhere, to South America I think, and I never had contact with them again but the son came to England, which I didn't know. And I didn't really know him because as I say one never talked about this in front of me. And he brought him. And I chatted. It was quite nice to chat to him because the connection was there through the parents. And Wilfred was lovely. And we met him several times, went out for dinner with them, with him and his wife, his partner. And we became great friends.

AG: Was that the first time you had gone back to Hamburg at all?

CS: Yes, it was the first time. And then I went back again. No, I had been there once before, I think to see the solicitor. And that was a very unhappy thing because my sister had manipulated certain things and ...

AG: Was this to do with restitution?

CS: Yes. And let's leave it that I did not see anything, any restitution, other than the, what we call the 'Dummheitsentschädigung' [Laughing].

AG: [Laughing] I've never heard it called that. No, because that's for ...

CS: The 'stupidity

AG: compensation'.

CS: ... because my schooling was badly interrupted and so on. A lot of people got that.

### **Tape 2: 48 minutes 3 seconds**

And I also got something for loss of life for my parents, but very little. And as I say, suffice to say, that my sister behaved extraordinarily badly and I have no contact with her. Well, she's, she's past it now anyway. But... And she pulled the wool over the eyes of the solicitor so it didn't get me anywhere. And then we were invited and we did go. And I met Wilfred. And then we've been there once more, and then I went with my grandson a few years ago, three years ago. I took him along and that is an extra story, very interesting one.

AG: Before we come on to the grandchildren, what was it like when you went back to Hamburg the first time or the first couple of times?

CS: Well, it had been rebuilt to a large extent and I found my way around quite easily in what was called town, the West End, and also where we lived and where we went, Stadtpark and things like that. I found my way around quite easily, I was surprised how easily I found it. The first time we went was when we met my old teacher who said, and you don't want to come back to the Heimat? And I said no. It sort of... I didn't like the word 'Heimat'. But that's as may be.

AG: Did you go back to your parents' apartment?

CS: I wouldn't go in. I went to the house and I looked at it, and it stood. It looked a bit dilapidated but it was okay. And I don't think there was a lot of damage round about there because there was still the same shops that I remembered and it was all right. No, I wouldn't go. I, I could have but I, I didn't want to.

AG: How did you feel going back?

CS: Bad. I felt bad about all sorts of things. I felt bad about seeing the places again. I felt bad about the solicitor and how things went wrong. My parents had good pictures and things and I suspect that my sister's got them or got something for them. Well, she's definitely got something because I've seen it on a photograph, I recognised it.

**Tape 2: 51 minutes 12 seconds**

And then I went back, oh, three years perhaps ago. No, my husband also came, but I did most of the things, of the walking around, and showing him places of things but as you say that comes later.

AG: Yes, perhaps we could continue, well, your family life got as far as the birth of your two sons.

CS: Yes.

AG: And you're now happily settled up here in this house ...

CS: Yes.

AG: ... in Woodside Park in West Finchley.

CS: And they went to Woodside Park. This is Woodside not West Finchley.

AG: Yes, sorry.

CS: It's, West Finchley is again ...

AG: Different

CS: ... a separate part.

AG: Yes.

CS: Not that it makes any difference. Sorry.

AG: It's like when people say that we live in Hampstead. We don't [Laughing].

CS: Yes, quite.

AG: Sorry, go ahead anyway.

CS: And...

AG: You were happy with them going to Woodside Park, the school?

CS: Yes, yes, especially when we moved to this house. And Jeremy was born in here, not in this house, in the first house, at Barnet, and he was brought up here and he went to nursery school and then he went, both boys went to Frith Manor School, primary school. And Robin went from Frith Manor to Dame Alice Owen's and we took Jeremy away, because he had a very bad teacher. The headmaster changed and we took him away from that school and put him into a little private school here.

**Tape 2: 53 minutes 21 seconds**

AG: What was that called?

CS: Miss O'Kennedy's.

AG: Yes.

CS: She was a harridan, but boy was she a good teacher. And he did his eleven-plus and then he also went to Dame Alice Owen's, in the city, and they both went there until their 'A' levels and Robin went straight to University.

AG: Which University did he go to?

CS: Lancaster.

AG: What did he study?

CS: He studied economics and politics. And Jeremy didn't want to go to University straight away. He got some very good places offered but he wanted a gap year. That was the beginning of the gap years, which turned into three years, and he went to University in the fourth year.

AG: What did he do in the gap period?

CS: Well, first he worked for few weeks only at a local garage. And there he met a pop star, whose name I do not know. And he chatted him up and he said, why don't

you work in the pop industry and recommended him to Morley's Studios in Willesden. And there he worked for three years, learnt sound engineering and enjoyed it, and we didn't, because he was a very bright lad and it was a great disappointment to us. By that time, by the third year, UCCA said they cannot keep him a place at University and struck him off. And he made great friends with a lighting engineer at Morley's, who said, Jeremy what are you doing here? This isn't a job for you. Writing letters for these idiots. Because most of them couldn't even read and write, or not very well anyway, and he took that to heart. And then I think somebody stepped on his toes a bit. So he left, reapplied to University, and he got into London University. And he had a taste of money, because he earned quite well, and he went in for accountancy. And he passed the... he was a somewhat older student and he applied himself. And he passed with flying colours.

**Tape 2: 56 minutes 32 seconds**

And he went to Price Waterhouse and did his charter there, in two years.

AG: Go on.

CS: And then they sent him, Price Waterhouse sent him out for auditing, which he didn't like. And he went to, he was auditing at UBS, you know, the ...

AG: The Swiss bank?

CS: ... the Swiss bank. And he got to know one of the bosses who said, look, why don't you come to us? And he had just been given a car at Price Waterhouse, so he said, I can't because I've just got a car. So he said, I give you a better car, and how much do you earn and I give you more money, and he joined UBS. And he says he made the big mistake that he stayed with UBS because he was happy there and he is still with UBS and has a very good job and earns a lot of money and is happy, quite happy there. But he said he should have changed because he would have risen on, to a partnership, which he didn't, but not to worry.

AG: We ought to break there because the tape's coming to an end.

**Tape 2: 58 minutes 2 seconds****TAPE 3**

AG: Charlotte Stenham tape three. You were telling me about your sons. What about your elder son, what did he do after he left Lancaster University?

CS: He left Lancaster University and thought he would like to become a hospital administrator. So a grave mistake was made. I don't know whether you want to have these details, but I'll tell them anyway. And you know, they have a board at University where they recommend jobs, and they sent him to the wilds of Scotland where he was very unhappy. It was nowhere near a town and no contact and... So I went to Alyth Gardens and I spoke to Rabbi Marmor and I said, can you make contact for my son in one of the towns so that he has somewhere to go at weekends. So he looked at me and he said, you people only come when you want something. So I said,



thank you very much, I will not darken your doors again, and I haven't. But I have now told the Rabbi. And he left the hospital administration, and at one stage he thought he would like to join my husband, but it wasn't right for him. And he got a job with the Open University. And he moved to Stony Stratford, which is a small village near Milton Keynes, and he's worked for the OU almost uninterrupted all these years. He did have something else in between, but he went back.

**Tape 3: 2 minutes 27 seconds**

AG: What does he do with the Open University?

CS: Well at one stage he lectured, but he now does, he looks after disabled students, that they have all the equipment they need whatever their disablement. And, so he travels around quite a bit. And he's a bit more rebellious, bit left-wing, but he works there. And I was so impressed by what they were doing that one evening I... I used to read the adverts in the Radio Times and I saw that there was an advert from the Open University and as I had replied to [sic] keeping chickens and having bees, which nobody allowed me to have, I decided, on the quiet, to join the Open University. And I sprang it on the family, who were shocked out of their minds.

AG: When was this? What sort of age were you?

CS: Jeremy was just doing his A-levels.

AG: I see, so it was sort of late sixties?

CS: His O-levels. No, his A-levels, yes.

AG: Sixties, yes, seventies?

CS: And I did join and I did take a degree.

AG: In what?

CS: In humanities, arts, humanities. And I liked it and I felt good about it because at last I got the education I would have liked to have had earlier. And he still lives out there and he met an extraordinarily nice girl and they had two children.

AG: What's the name of his wife and his children?

CS: His wife's name, his partner's name, was Suzanne, and, I still have a wonderful relationship with her, and they had two children, Patrick, named Paddy, and Claire, who are both grown up now. And Jeremy started a relationship with a Danish girl and they have two children. They now live in Mill Hill.

**Tape 3: 4 minutes 58 seconds**

AG: What are their names?

CS: The children's names are Nina and Max.

AG: And your daughter-in-law?

CS: My daughter-in-law's name is Liisa, with double 'I'. She's not my daughter-in-law, she's my son's partner.

AG: Oh right, I see. Sorry.

CS: My daughter-in-law, as we put it [grinning].

AG: Right, right. And are their children grown up as well?

CS: No, Max is only, he'd just had his birthday on Christmas Eve, and he's thirteen now.

AG: I see.

CS: And he comes to see me every week after school. And he goes to King Alfred's, as his sister Nina did. And they live in Mill Hill, which is lovely, near here. And, I must say that my, both my sons are wonderfully supportive, and are wonderful sons. Robin has changed partnership and is now with a girl called Jackie Morris, who is a fabulous artist. She illustrates children's books. I can show you some if you want to. She's fantastic. She also writes and she's a very nice girl. I get on very well with her. And Suzanne has also got a different relationship. But I get on very well with both of them. And the grandchildren are lovely, especially Paddy and Claire, who are... with whom I'm very close. And Max. Nina is in Canada now doing snowboarding instruction at Whistler in her gap year. And then she's going to Brunel. She's got a place at Brunel University.

**Tape 3: 7 minutes 16 seconds**

AG: To do what? Would you know?

CS: I think economics and business studies.

AG: And what do the two grown-up children of your older son do? Are they working?

CS: Well, Paddy's a little bit unsettled. He learnt, he worked in the local pub for a while after school. They sent him to various courses. And he knows how to administer. At the moment he is between jobs. And he is a lovely boy. And Claire goes to University and is doing business studies and economics but her main interest is in catering. You can now go to University and learn catering, and she loves it.

AG: Where is she at University?

CS: She is at Ealing, which also used to be a Polytechnic and has now got University standard, and she's very happy there. And Max, of course, is still at school. And Nina I will see in six months or so, six or eight months, when she comes back. She's, as I say, in Whistler at the moment.

AG: One thing I was going to ask you, your sons seem to have had a fairly regular English educational upbringing.

CS: Very much so.

AG: Was there any Jewish influence, or did you get to know Jewish, British Jewish people, or were they bar mitzvah'd or anything?

CS: Well, they were both bar mitzvah'd at Alyth Gardens and Jeremy always went with my husband to Kol Nidre because he thought my husband would like it. And my husband went with Jeremy because he thought Jeremy would like it.

AG: I see.

CS: And I would not go to anything because I don't believe. And I certainly wouldn't have gone to Alyth Gardens [Laughing] after my brush with Rabbi Marmor. And I don't go at all. I cannot believe that there is a god who could allow what happened. And, I must say, that both Alyth Gardens and Jewish Care have been wonderful during the last few weeks, when my husband wasn't so well. Well, he wasn't really bad, but when he died... He died over Christmas and it was very very difficult to make arrangements. And both Jewish Care and Alyth Gardens came up trumps, I will say that.

### **Tape 3: 10 minutes 29 seconds**

And after their bar mitzvah they didn't really want much. They were scouts, they were Jewish scouts, at the Jewish scout troop in Alyth Gardens, which they quite enjoyed. But I don't think we gave them enough support to stay, to practise, which I now regret. But they both would never deny their Jewishness, ever, either of them. I think Jeremy had a brush with somebody once at UBS. And, in Stony Stratford and Milton Keynes there are not many Jews. Robin boasts with one Jewish friend he's got there. And, as I say, they both do not deny that they're Jews, ever, but the children, the grandchildren, have not much contact. And, two or three years ago, we went to Hamburg and we took Paddy along. And Wilfried was very good. He went with us everywhere. My husband wasn't walking too well, so he didn't always come with us, and I wanted to show Paddy where I lived and what was here and there and we showed him where the Synagogue was. The children know, of course, that there is a Jewish background. And we went to the house where we lived, and this was just at the time when, what was called the Stolpersteine had started. And Wilfried had told us about it, we were there for dinner and he had told us about it, and he had shown us one. It was completely new, nobody knew anything about it yet.

### **Tape 3: 12 minutes 58 seconds**

AG: For the tape, Stolpersteine are plaques in memory of Jews that are laid in the pavement ...

CS: On cobblestones, which were put outside houses and apartment houses where Jews had lived.

AG: Thank you.

CS: And while I was talking to Wilfred and he said, would you like to go up to the flat, I come with you? I said no. Paddy sniffed around on the floor and he said, granny, look, there are two stones with your parents' names, and he found them. I hadn't noticed it. It wasn't really known yet. And we were both shattered. And it was a very very good thing for him because he suddenly realised, he saw what had happened, because they give the date of deportation and death. And that was a big event and I want to try and go with Claire now.

AG: Who had arranged for these Stolpersteine in memory of your parents?

CS: I asked Wilfred and he said he didn't know. He only knows of the happening, that this was happening, in quite a lot of places, but he'll find out. And he did find out for me that a man called Peter Hess had done this, whose background I do not know. But I wrote to him and thanked him, and I had an extremely nice letter back from him saying if I have any more relations who have lost their lives would I let him know and he'd organise that that should be done. And he did. And I sent him a Christmas card every year and... He phoned me this year and thanked me because I sent him a Christmas card that Jackie, Robin's partner, has done for the musicians' fund or something. And he thanked me for the beautiful card.

### **Tape 3: 15 minutes 14 seconds**

And, then of course, the Sunday Times published a big article about these Stolpersteine and what they mean and who did them, the men in Cologne, you probably know.

AG: Yes.

CS: And I bought an extra Sunday Times and I sent it to the AJR, because it was still new and I thought they'd be interested. But... [shaking her head]. I send it to Myrna Glass and she didn't get it. She wasn't there. And it disappeared and it never saw the light of day again. Which, for which I was very sorry, but I did what I could. I think I sent them a second one, a photocopy or something, but nothing happened. So, that's as may be. But that was a big happening.

AG: What did it mean to you?

CS: A great deal. It was also so shattering because he discovered it and he was absolutely besides himself. He was about eighteen, seventeen or eighteen, when this happened. And it has opened a completely different field for him by seeing this and by his discovering it. In between I was interviewed by the Imperial War Museum, who have got tapes. And very recently I was interviewed, Wilfred got that organised, asked me whether I would, and I said yes. Three schoolchildren, I would say the equivalent of A-level students, German, from Hamburg, came with a camera and they interviewed both me and my husband, or my husband and me, and they were very nice and very inexperienced and very interested. And one of the girls writes to me and I write back to her.

**Tape 3: 18 minutes 4 seconds**

And they have submitted... This is apparently a scheme in Germany, certainly in Hamburg, where all the schools send all children to do this, to make a film and interview. And I've had a letter, just now for Christmas, from one, the one girl who says they're most successful and they think they might win the competition. And once it's all sorted they will send me the film, which is very nice. They were nice youngsters.

AG: Did your husband ever go back to Leipzig?

CS: Never. Jeremy wanted to take him and he said no, he doesn't want to go.

AG: One question I'd like to ask you concerns your own sense of your identity. Do you feel British, or English, or German, or Jewish, or how would you describe your identity?

CS: I feel Jewish and I feel the next best thing to being British, English and British. I have quite a lot of non-Jewish friends and neighbours, who accept me completely, and laugh because I am so British [Laughing].

AG: In what way do they think you're British?

CS: Well that I feel happy here and settled, and I'm grateful for having been allowed to mix and integrate. Like my parents, both my husband and I feel very integrated. My husband has a much stronger and slightly, had a much stronger and slightly Saxonian accent and couldn't quite get away with it. I get away with it, but after a while they say, are you, were you actually born here?, which always annoys me.

**Tape 3: 20 minutes 25 seconds**

And I have wonderful neighbours, who are not Jewish, and we are really... they're wonderful. And I have met somebody at the Open University with whom I'm great, I met two people at the Open University with whom I'm great friends. One is Jewish, lives nearby, and is wonderful friend. And the other one is not Jewish and we became friends, and this is my connection with the acting world because she is an actress and she did the Open University.

AG: What's her name?

CS: Bridget McConnell. No, you don't know her. And she lives with Geoffrey Whitehead, who is a well-known actor. And we are very great friends, really good friends, you know, sort of family friends. We see a lot of them and they came to Synagogue now, not to Synagogue, to the cremation and we had one evening when people came to the house. And the Rabbi came. And they were here. We go to the stage door when Geoffrey is in anything. And he's always on radio and television. And we have another great friend who's in the acting world, but she is sort of Jewish, she is South African Jewish.

AG: Who's that?

CS: Not practising. Doreen Mantle. She was in 'One Foot in the Grave' and she was in some dreadful series now. And, again, extremely good friends. So they always joke that, because not many of our Jewish friends mix in these circles [Laughing]. And, well we feel integrated. We have never come up against anything other than interest, human interest.

**Tape 3: 23 minutes 14 seconds**

AG: One last question, and that is simply if you have any message or anything that you'd like to say to anybody who might see a copy of this interview on film, or to your grandchildren, if there's anything you'd like to say arising from your life and your experiences?

CS: I think they will be very pleased and very flattered. Both our friends and the grandchildren, and of course my sons. But as I say, they are not really actively Jewish other than knowing that they are and admitting to it.

AG: Good.

CS: And they were very impressed by the instant help that both Jewish Care and Alyth Gardens gave. They said they didn't know that there could be such efficiency and activity and kindness. And that's been good for them.

AG: I didn't actually ask where your husband now rests?

CS: Well, at the Golders Green Crematorium.

AG: Right. I think we've covered more or less everything.

CS: I think so.

AG: In that case I'll just say thank you very much indeed, Charlotte Stenham, for doing this interview.

CS: It was a bit mixed up wasn't it?

AG: No, no, not at all. I don't think so. No, I think it was absolutely fine and thank you again.

CS: I'm very pleased.

AG: Good.

CS: Fame at last [Laughing].

AG: [Laughing].

CS: And of course you've seen the book that Wilfried wrote?

**Tape 3: 25 minutes 31 seconds****Photographs**

AG: Who are the people in this photograph please?

CS: These are my parents, eight months to a year before their deportation.

AG: Could you just say their names?

CS: These were my parents Siegmund and Alisa Kohn.

AG: And where was it taken?

CS: It was taken in Hamburg, in their apartment, sitting down in my room.

AG: And when was it taken, approximately?

CS: It must have been taken in nineteen, nineteen thirty-nine, yes, nineteen thirty-nine.

AG: Thank you very much.

**Tape 3: 26 minutes 31 seconds**

AG: Could you explain, please, what this photograph is?

CS: The artist, Mr Boothby, who lived in Hamburg, approached my mother in the park and asked whether he might use me as a model for an advert for food. I'm the little girl on the left, the dark-haired little girl on the left.

AG: And was this much displayed, this advert?

CS: It was displayed all over Europe. My father saw the picture in Scandinavia while he was travelling there.

AG: Thank you and when was it taken, approximately?

CS: It must have been taken in nineteen, around nineteen twenty-five or nineteen twenty-six at the latest.

AG: And where was it taken?

CS: At the studio of the artist.

AG: And was that Hamburg?

CS: In Hamburg.

AG: Fine, thank you.

**Tape 3: 27 minutes 45 seconds**

AG: Who are the people in this photograph, please?

CS: The firewoman is me with my husband, who was not a fireman [Laughing].

AG: What uniform is he wearing there? He seems to be wearing a uniform.

CS: That must have been the Home Guard. Is it?

AG: Probably, yes. And when was it taken?

CS: That must have been taken in nineteen forty-four.

AG: Thank you, and where?

CS: In Hamburg.

AG: No ...

CS: In Belsize Park.

AG: In Belsize Park, lovely, thank you.

**Tape 3: 28 minutes 41 seconds**

AG: Who is the person in this photograph, please?

CS: That is Paula Oppenheimer, who was extremely good to me and they always spoke of me as their fourth daughter.

AG: And when, about when was this taken?

CS: It must have been taken around nineteen eighty-six or eighty-seven.

AG: And where?

CS: In her home.

AG: Where?

CS: In ...

AG: Where was that? Was it London?

CS: Cromwell Close.

AG: Is that in London?



CS: Yes, in London.

AG: Fine. Thanks very much.

**Tape 3: 29 minutes 19 seconds**

AG: Who are the people in this photograph, please?

CS: That is my son Robin and his two children, Claire and Patrick, and his partner Suzanne.

AG: Thank you. And when would this have been taken?

CS: That must have been taken around nineteen eighty-six.

AG: And where was it taken? Do you know?

CS: In London.

AG: Thank you.

**Tape 3: 29 minutes 51 seconds**

AG: Who are the people in this photograph, please?

CS: That is my son Jeremy and my husband Charles.

AG: And where was this taken?

CS: It was taken in the garden about ten, fifteen years ago.

AG: So it was somewhere in the early-ish nineteen nineties?

CS: Yes.

AG: Fine. Thank you very much.

**Tape 3: 30 minutes 20 seconds**

AG: Who are the people in this photograph, please?

CS: That is my son Jeremy with his partner Liisa.

AG: And where was that taken?

CS: Can I have a look?

AG: Just say whether it was in London or not.

CS: I think it was taken in Denmark.

AG: Oh right. Yes. And when?

CS: Fairly recently. In the last year or two.

AG: Thank you.

**Tape 3: 30 minutes 55 seconds**

AG: Who are the people in this photograph, please?

CS: These are my grandchildren, Max and Nina. Jeremy's children.

AG: And where was this taken?

CS: This was taken by a photographer in London.

AG: And when would it have been taken? Approximately?

CS: Nine years ago.

AG: Say something like about nineteen ninety-seven?

CS: Mmm.

AG: Fine, thank you.

**Tape 3: 31 minutes 47 seconds**