

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	84

Interviewee Surname:	Tenenbaum
Forename:	Joseph
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	13 April 1926
Interviewee POB:	Merano, Italy

Date of Interview:	25 November 2004
Location of Interview:	Salford, Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	4 hours 45 minutes

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

INTERVIEW: 84

NAME: JOSEPH TENENBAUM

DATE: 25 NOVEMBER 2004

LOCATION: SALFORD, MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minutes 14 seconds

RL: Today I am interviewing Joseph Tenenbaum and the date is Thursday 25th November 2004. The interview is taking place in Salford Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin. If you can tell me first your name.

JT: Joseph Tenenbaum

RL: What was your name at birth?

JT: You mean what they called me at birth? Giuseppe Pepino, Josie. I had other nicknames too but I don't think I should give you the list of nicknames they have given me.

RL: When were you born?

JT: 13th April 1926.

RL: And where were you born?

JT: Italy

RL: And the place?

JT: Merano

RL: And how old does this make you now?

JT: That makes me quite old. The next April, I will be 79. Strangely enough, there are certain birthdays that I run after. 76 I didn't like, but 77, yes. It's alright. I'm doing very well.

RL: And what were your parents' names?

JT: My father's name was Salomon Shlomo and my mother's Hannah

RL: And her maiden name?

Tape 1: 2 minutes 7 seconds

JT: Ordower. Since the family came to Italy a few years earlier, one usually doesn't ask enough questions to one's parents, right? Unfortunately, it's too late.

RL: What can you tell me about your parents and their families, where they came from, their backgrounds?

JT: Unfortunately, I don't know because at the age of 6, something like that, my mother took me to her parents, but only for a week or two, but I wouldn't know anything about their background. At that age, one doesn't look at the background, one looks at whether one gets a sweet of if one is spoiled. When I went and stayed with my uncle, he took me on a horse. As far as background, it's very difficult for me to say. Certainly they were from Jews and so all the family. I'm the one who's a little bit less, right? That's it, more or less.

RL: When you went on that visit to your mother's parents, do you know where they were living at that time?

JT: No. It certainly was Poland, it certainly was near Lvov, near Lemberg, what the town was called, I don't know. I'm accused that I'm not interested in things but really I have no memory, that's the truth.

RL: What do you remember of the visit? What kind of memories do you have of that visit?

JT: Since I came from Italy, there were lots of guests there when I came, and coming from Italy, you must know how to sing, so I said I with my sister sing very well, she without me also, but I without her, I'm no good. That was my answer to the singing and I don't think I sang.

RL: How many siblings did your mother have?

JT: I believe she only had one brother. I don't know. Perhaps it's only in my own imagination. I believe he fell off a horse. But that's all I know about him. When we went back to Italy, we would get regards, because it was all by post, from my grandparents. I can't justify my ignoring things but children at that age don't ask questions, right? I came back to Italy. They had bought me a pair of riding boots and all the equipment, all the paraphernalia, including a small whip, right? I pranced about everywhere with that thing. But apart from that, I'm completely ignorant about the rest.

RL: Can you tell me anything about your mother's brother – where he lived, what he was doing or any family that he had?

JT: He had two little girls and their house was quite large, they lived in the same house as my grandparents. For my father's parents, I don't know anything at all. As I remember, I will tell you, alright?

RL: Did your father have brothers and sisters?

Tape 1: 7 minutes 22 seconds

JT: Yes, there's was quite a large family, there were step brothers and sisters, because the father married a second time and I think there were 15, I don't know including my father or, let me say, my father separately, since he was talking. And they all died in the Shoah, let me say, they all disappeared, my grandparents and all. Happily, oh yes, he had a stepsister in Israel, that was the only one who saved herself of the family.

RL: And did you know any of these...?

JT: I met the stepsister when I went to Israel, but only, let me say, for a short visit, I think once or twice I went to visit her, when I was there but I didn't know anything at all. Already she was an elderly lady and no, I have no contact.

RL: The stepbrothers and sisters of your father, where were they living? Were they in Italy?

JT: No, I think they were in Poland. I really have no information of them. You know when one comes to a new country and the children are born there, they think that's the world, there's nothing else, right? And so one doesn't ask. And if the parents were to say, 'Let me tell you about my brothers and sisters', I wouldn't listen, certainly I wouldn't have listened.

RL: What's your earliest memory as a child?

JT: Oh heavens! We had a Kindermädchen, you know? And I remember, I couldn't have been more than 3 years old, she took me in her lap, and she was wearing a cyclamen - do you call it cyclamen? - Cyclamen colour pullover, but it wasn't - what do you call it? - knitted, it was häkelt, what do you call it?

RL: Crocheted?

JT: Crocheted. And I was taken in her arms and I leaned my head against her breast and I didn't want to move - a) because I was scared she would make me get off and secondly, I was fascinated, right? That's the first time I was attracted to a woman, right?

RL: Coming on to your parents, do you know anything about how they met, how they got together?

JT: It must have been just after the First World War because at that time one was afraid to pass from one town to another because it was just after the war, lots of people were murdered and so on in the roads, so my father dressed himself, let me say, in the least elegant way, but my mother remembered already after years and years that when he came, he was without shoelaces. My mother, like every other woman, had a long memory, right? She, how can I say it? I think if a woman punishes a man, she doesn't punish him for what he does now but for what she thinks he is or for what he did 30, 40 years ago, so my parents were no different to other couples.

RL: Do you know anything about your father's education, schooling?

Tape 1: 12 minutes 14 seconds

JT: Yes, wait a moment, I know that he worked, he had studied metallurgy. And I was surprised, you know one always thinks that one's parents are less than others, and he quoted, let me say, Goethe and Schiller and all the writers. No, not only did they read a lot and learn very much, but he also wrote. And I feel terribly guilty because he came here for two years, for the last part of his life, he came here to my sister and he took part of his writing with him. I had the other half and when he came back to Milan, I didn't tell anything to anyone and took it with me to Milan and I had it stolen. Well, we all go about with a guilt feeling for one thing or another.

RL: What was he writing about?

JT: Commentary on the Gemorrah and the Lubavitcher Rov wanted to have it, wanted to publish it and my safe safe was not safe at all. That is my father. They – what do you call it? – if he had said in the family that he was writing, that he was doing this, they would just have – I wouldn't say ridiculed it – but let me say, 'yes, yes, yes', it wouldn't have been taken seriously, right? That's what happens in a family. You know, you never appreciate the people in your family, right?

RL: Had he attended Yeshiva when he was a young man?

JT: I don't think so but he used to tell me when he was 4 or 5 years old he used to go to the Beth Hamedrash every day. I suppose with a Rabbi or something like that and he studied every day and he really loved it. He loved it as, let me say, as culture, as mental '...'. I'll get to the right word later on. But he never, I didn't know until I found his writings that he did it, yes. He used to have a Shiur with the Rov every evening, they used to discuss it and so forth and he never mentioned it. I think they would have said it was just an occupation for old age, yes? They were very – how can I say it? – very direct, yes, in the behaviour of one to the other within the family. I, for instance, I went out and had a fight with another little boy, if I came back and had my nose running with blood or something like that, I'd get a slap because I shouldn't get into a thing, right? That's how it was. Of course if you ask my sister, she'd probably describe it very differently, right?

RL: You know you said that your father studied...?

JT: Metallurgy.

RL: So did he go to a university?

JT: I've no idea at all, I know only that he worked in that because he mentioned it once. You know he never talked about himself, it was just, you know, by the way, and it was mentioned. You know, I believe that since I've had in my occupation and so forth, I've loved it, and I knew that I loved it, let me say I was happy and I knew that I was happy. Now then, I sensed the same thing in him, yes? So, that's all the answer I can give you, that's the only answer I know.

RL: Did he take part in the First World War?

Tape 1: 17 minutes 57 seconds

JT: Yes, he was on the Russian Front, in the Austrian Army, on the Russian Front. He told me, let me say, that when the war was declared, in Lwow, in Lemberg, they were 30 000 Jews who volunteered to go into the army. I also asked him, let me say, what was it like for the Jews in the Austrian Empire, so he said, strict but equal, everybody was treated in the same way, it made no difference, religion, difference, or anything at all, and that was something really very exceptional in Europe, right? So, they felt gratitude toward the Austrian Empire. Oh yes, he was wounded and I think he still had one of the – what do you call it? – one bullet was still in him, it was in his backside.

RL: So do you know where they were married your parents, where they got married?

JT: No.

RL: Or anything about your mother's education?

JT: No. I know that she taught but I don't know what she taught, possibly children, I don't know, but certainly not in Italy any more, that was before she got married. I'm sorry I have so little to tell you about my parents.

RL: What did your father do for a living when you were a child?

JT: He used to supply paper factories with the material, you know from cloth you can work back to paper.

RL: Did he work on his own or did he have any kind of warehouse?

JT: Oh, a warehouse, yes.

RL: Can you tell me something about it?

JT: The atmosphere – if I went there to help, let me say, my help, I would get an icecream. That was my compensation. I might as well confess, he had a partner, and I didn't like him, so I put a bucket of sand on top of the door, yes? With a string coming down to the door. Well, if I survived after that, I am lucky? It fell down, it didn't turn over, the sand was supposed to get on his head, but the whole thing fell on his nose, so I've got something else to be forgiven for.

RL: How big a business was it?

JT: I really don't know. You know, I had no conception, I just played about and after 20 minutes I went away.

RL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JT: Just one sister, yes.

RL: And was she older than you or younger?

Tape 1: 22 minutes 39 seconds

JT: Just a year older.

RL: Do you know when your parents married?

JT: What year? No, I really don't. I wouldn't even know how to calculate it.

RL: What are your memories of Merano, of the place?

JT: First of all, it's a very beautiful place, small town, it was the holiday place of the Austrian, what do you call it? Merano was renowned for being, well, they didn't talk about holidays at that time, but a little town surrounded by mountains, to go up to 1000 or 1200 metres, took 20 minutes, you could go to various mountains in that time. There was skiing. At that time, it was what they call a very respectable place. Also because the air was very good, there were lots of people who had tuberculosis, to alleviate tuberculosis, they used to come to Merano. Yes, that's approximately what it is.

RL: How big was the Jewish community there?

JT: There were two synagogues. One was in the hotel, the Jewish hotel. The proprietors were called Berman. In St. Moritz they also have a place. And then there was the main synagogue. How many Jews? I think less than a thousand, certainly less than a thousand. No, I don't know. After all, in Cheder for instance, there were about, I don't know, there were about 15 children, so let's say if there were 2 classes or 3 classes, there can't have been that many Jews.

RL: How religious a community was it?

JT: Remember one thing, that I left Merano when I was 8, so to judge ... Well, certainly that was a period when one didn't want to appear too Jewish, at least a lot of people didn't say they were Jewish, yes, right? That wasn't the case with my family but there were quite a lot of things. I can give you one little example. Anti-Semitism was already there in 1930 or early. We were 4 Jewish boys, all approximately the same age, we all went to the same class. When we used to leave, when we finished, we finished about 1 o'clock. What do you call it when you finish? I remember they used to chase us and as I was running, I bumped into a young couple, really the young wife, and as I bumped into them, and as the other boys saw there were grown ups there, so they stopped. They still started saying the usual thing, 'Yiddele, Yiddele, Hep, Hep, Hep, Schweinefleisch macht's wieder fett', that's right. Now the lady came up no, sorry, as I bumped into the young lady, now as the boys said that, she lifted up my chin, she said, 'Aber er hat doch kein jüdisches Aussehen', in other words, 'He doesn't look Jewish', right? Well, at that moment, I confess, I'm not ashamed, I felt relieved, because the alternative wasn't pleasant, right? That was also Merano.

RL: What did that mean?

JT: Which one?

RL: The 'Hep, hep, hep'.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 53 seconds

JT: 'Yiddele', you know what it is, right? 'Hep, hep, hep' is the expression like when you laugh about a person, I don't know the exact expression. 'Schweinefleisch' - meat of pork fattens the Jew. That was their saying. You see, two of the boys were really upset. I think I just took it for granted. They didn't touch me. I took it for granted that that existed and that was it.

RL: How often did such incidents occur?

JT: Quite honestly, because quite a few years have passed, in the present that's the only one which, let me say, remains fixed in my mind. There probably were others but I don't remember them.

RL: Where were you living in Merano? Whereabouts were you living?

JT: Well, Merano is so small that wherever you lived, you were always in town. Wait a moment, from the home to the school took, if I went very slowly, took 10 minutes. From the school to the town centre takes 3 minutes, 5 minutes. Just one road. To be out of town, one only had to cross the bridge and one was already out of town. And when one crossed the bridge and went another 3 minutes, one was at the main synagogue. Wherever you went, you couldn't possibly walk far.

RL: Can you describe your living accommodation?

JT: There were 3 bedrooms and there was another little room, a kitchen and a toilet, a bathroom. It was a very pleasant flat because there was in front of it...I so often go back to that, because I live in another part of town. It was really most attractive, there is a garden with lots and lots of trees, yes? Gigantic trees. And I knew exactly when the shade, shadow, you know, from the sun, came, that was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I knew that that was the moment to go out and so forth.

RL: What floor was the flat?

JT: 1st floor.

RL: How many floors were there in the block?

JT: 4, 5, I don't know. I don't think I ever went beyond the 2nd or 3rd floor.

RL: Were there other Jewish families in that apartment?

JT: No, no, no. There were Jewish families very near to us. Yes, I think it was the Shochet who lived, let me say, a few minutes away, and there was another Jewish family. But there was no – how do you call it? Let me say, no district thing that was more Jewish than another. After all, the whole town was pleasant but small, yes? No, no, no.

RL: And how did your family get on with the neighbours?

Tape 1: 33 minutes 27 seconds

JT: Oh, delightfully. Because, you see, the thing is that my sister and I came to England, yes? We came two weeks before the war started. My mother...I don't know now, let me say, chronologically, what exactly happened because my parents never spoke about it but my mother, let me say...We had friends on the 2nd floor and the ground floor and the family on the 2nd floor had 3 children and, I don't know at what point in the war, they were evacuated to the countryside, and they took my mother with them as a child-carer, yes, right? And that saved her life. And my father was taken to prison in Milan and then he was transferred, there was a camp in Calabria in the south of Italy. You know that I really know very little about my parents, now that you question me. When I speak to my friends, for instance, whose parents had been in a camp, they grumbled, because they say they didn't get enough to eat, this and this. My father, I asked him once, so he said, 'we were no worse off than the people living around us, let me say, the farmers and so forth, sometimes they used to bring us oil and other things'. But that was my father, one wouldn't expect of him to say anything. But I'm quite sure it certainly wasn't as bad as the others described it. You see, that was one of the acts, I can say one thing, that had Mussolini, that was the, I think they were foreign Jews who were interned there and to a certain extent that also saved their lives, the fact of being out, down in the south. From what I know, from what I've heard said, but I better not say it, because it's only a saying, right?

RL: But the neighbours that took your mother with them, these were neighbours in Merano

JT: Oh, yes, yes, yes. We're still friends with them now.

RL: What were their names? What was their family name?

JT: Guidotti G-U-I-D-O-T-T-I. We're still friends with them and they never thought of it as such, right? When I became conscious of what had happened, because I knew that I went, but I took it for granted that I should go together, that that should happen. When I thanked the daughter, she almost, let me say, didn't know what I was thanking her for. There's one thing, you see, Italians are like, well, I'd better be careful how I say it about a whole nation, they have heart, yes, right? That means also that they are emotional. I don't know if that's the right word. So that, how shall I put it? May I give an example? If a British officer is offended, then it is not he who is offended but it is his uniform. The Italians, it is the person who is offended, even if it is the general, he personally is offended. Children, you see, here a nurse puts on her uniform and from that moment on, she is a nurse. In Italy, she remains what she was before, if she's a nice person, she'll be a nice person there, if she's not a nice person, she'll not be a nice person, but the uniform doesn't touch her. And so it is with the nation. Of course, there were many people who told the police that there were Jews living in their house and so forth, but that is normal. You see, I'm speaking about things that happened when I was not present and you don't know what the fear is, yes? I feel almost reticent to talk about it. I almost feel guilty to talk about it because it hasn't touched me. We were, that is my sister and I, were the lucky ones.

RL: Can I just take you back a little bit? I was asking you about your neighbours and how you get on with the neighbours. Were you personally friendly with the neighbours and with their children? Did you play with them?

Tape 1: 41 minutes 38 seconds

JT: Oh, yes, definitely. I tell you what, in 1938, I don't know exactly what date, they declared that all the Jews, all foreign Jews, had to get out of Italy. When it came to that date, we had near us, we had a football field, which was a local team used to play there, and on that date I went to see the football match with my friend, yes? Oh yes, another example, in Merano, since before that it used to belong to Austria, and so every week, as little fascists we paraded, yes? In Milan, it happened once a year.Would you please give me another question?

RL: Yes. So when you say you paraded as fascists, what was all this...?

JT: Wait, I'll tell you something, when you went to school, the thing is that you had to have a uniform, yes? It's not that every day you went in a uniform but if it was an official occasion, you had to put it on and there were various groups, the boys, I don't know, up to the age of 8, the boys from 8 to 11, and so on, all the graduations. I only found out afterwards No, please forgive me, it's not first person's information, so it's not right that I should speak about it.

RL: So as schoolchildren, you would have to put on this uniform and parade?

JT: Yes, yes, yes, you see I have never met any little boy who, let me say, you see in Italy, one does subtly things, one does the things, one doesn't believe it, right? One knows, let me say, that one has to survive. And I don't remember any boy coming to school and saying, 'My father said that I shouldn't go out on parade..... Nothing, one knew nothing about fascism, but one knew that one had to put on the uniform, that's it.

RL: Can you tell me about what school you attended? What was that?

JT: Now then, I went first to elementary classes in Merano, then I passed on to Milan.

RL: So were these non-Jewish schools?

JT: Yes, yes, there was no Jewish school. I mean, you can't make a school with 5 people or 6 people.

RL: How were you treated in the school?

JT: Oh, no, no, very well. If I was punished, I can't remember in all my life, only once that I was punished being innocent, all the other times I was certainly guilty. No, no, I better not go on with that story.

RL: And how did you get on with the non-Jewish children in the school?

JT: Oh, very well, no, no, very well. Yes, I tell you something, the boys who lived around where I lived, this is natural with boys, let me say, they want to see who's the strongest one, so you fight, and after that fight, you become best of friends, yes? But the fight wasn't done because I was Jewish or something like that, right? It never entered their heads about whether I was Jewish or not Jewish, but it was quite normal.

RL: So the boys who called after you and called you Jew, who were they?

Tape 1: 47 minutes 3 seconds

JT: No, that only happened in Merano, at that time. You see the thing is, I left in 1939. The Germans, the tragedy started, look I don't know dates, but I think it was 1943 when they came to Italy, from that time onwards, let me say, it was hell.

RL: What was the period when you were being called Jew? When was that?

JT: 1933, 32, something like that.

RL: But these were not boys from your school?

JT: Oh yes, no, no, no, wait a moment, in Merano, they were boys of the school I went to. Now wait a moment. I tell you, it was a period, the Jews had their emancipation, or their rights as citizens, was about a century old, not even a century old at that time. The Jew had come out, let me say, from Poland, from Russia, and so forth, and so they wanted to participate in society, and I remember, my mother used to take me to concerts, and I remember conversations. You know there was the balcony, so I sat with my legs dangling down, in this, what do you call it, this beautiful hall, and I heard on my left, they must have been Jews, said, 'Ach, Jiddisch, das ist doch ein Jargon' – 'It is a dialect'. It's not a language, it's a dialect, right? In other words, a return to Jewry, with strength and so forth, only happened after the war. I mean, that was the whole of Europe. One wanted to have '...' You know, it came to the point, for instance, in Austria, in Germany, historians of Wagner, subscribers to Wagner and so forth, let me say, were Jews. He hated them, but they gave money all the same, yes, right? They wanted to be accepted. As far as I know, it was after the war, that there was that return.

RL: You've mentioned going to concerts, what other forms of entertainment did you have there?

JT: There was a theatre in the main square and every Sunday they used to have 'Kindertheater' (children's theatre), 'Märchen' (fairytales), let me say, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and all these things. And I remember I had a savings box, which was like a little book, and on Thursday I used to get one lira, and on Sunday I was allowed to take out the lira and go to the theatre. That was regular, the theatre. I enjoyed the children's theatre. A few years ago, I was in Milan, I had a friend, and she asked where would you like to go, and I saw in a newspaper there was a children's theatre, and I went immediately. I'm really fascinated by observing the children and also the children's theatre.

RL: And you mentioned going to concerts with your mother?

JT: Oh, but the concerts were in the main, I can't remember what it was called, and there we had very famous artists, also they used to come to Merano because of their leisure, and they were invited, and you can't be a guest without accepting to play. So I heard quite a lot of things. And also in one of the synagogues that had the hotel, I mean the hotel that had the synagogue, they had great, let me say, great Chazanim. ... and I can't remember the other names. I didn't quite appreciate them but from what I heard, they were excellent things. So we were not exactly isolated, right?

RL: Were there any youth groups?

Tape 1: 53 minutes 8 seconds

JT: I did not belong to any youth groups. I don't remember about youth groups. I do know that on Hanukkah, we all got a bag of sweets. I think we were about thirty children in all the classes and I didn't receive a sweet because I didn't exactly, I didn't learn what I should have learned, right? That was the beginning of my career as a disturber, let me say, in the group.

RL: Was this the Cheder?

JT: Yes, right, yes, correct.

RL: Who was the teacher?

JT: The teacher was the teacher, he was also the Shochet, he was also a Chazan, I think, and he used to go, let me say in the season, he used to go up to Saint Moritz and do it there.

RL: Do you remember his name?

JT: Yes, they were Greenberger.

RL: And do you remember who was the Rabbi of the Shul there?

JT: No, I don't remember that.

RL: Was your father active at all in the Jewish community?

JT: I don't know, I really don't know.

RL: Were they involved in any organisation?

JT: Look, if you ask my sister, she would know everything. I don't, I really don't.

RL: What do you remember about your home life?

JT: What do I remember of my home life? Look, I took it so for granted. I can give you little incidents. My father, on Friday night, my father used to take my sister on his knees and they used to learn together but he never managed to get me on his knees, right? I asked him a few months before he died what was his relationship with his son. He said none at all. When he said it, I really felt bad. I don't know if it was a mistake on his part or what, but one day he said to me, 'You know, Jo, you know how to treat a father' because, let me say, we really stayed together, and that relieved me a little bit. You see, children usually if they are different, if they feel they can't catch up or something like that or whatever it is, they feel isolated, right? I didn't feel isolated, I just thought I were incompetent, right? I was telling my father that I had – what do you call it when you don't go to school, when you should be in school?

RL: Truant.

Tape 1: 57 minutes 34 seconds

JT: Right, I played truant and I told him that I played truant in my last year of my school, so he said, 'That isn't the first time - you did it when you were seven years old'. I told the teacher that tomorrow I can't come to school. She said, 'Oh, that's very nice of you, what do you have to do?' I said my parents were sending me for a message, so she said, 'Alright, you do it and then you come to school'. So I said, 'But I can't, because they send me out of town'.

End of Tape 1

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minute 9 seconds

RL: So, you were just telling me about your truancy?

JT: Yes, now that lasted a week and the police came again and there were two letters, one was from the headmistress and the other was from the authorities. The authorities said, well, they didn't say it was disgusting, but they said, let me say, you should know that in Italy it is obligatory to send children to school, approximately that was said. The one from the teacher said she's really shocked that parents should treat a delicate child like that, let me say, and send him for messages even out of town, that was terrible, right? That was my story. The other truancy was the last year I was in Italy, I used to, oh yes, Jews were not allowed to go to public school, so we had hundreds of children, who had come from, let me say, a lot of schools, and the same thing used to happen with the teachers, they came from various schools. The teachers didn't know anything about the children and vice versa. We were in a hall, which afterwards, I imagine became the gym. I heard, let me say, French, French, French. The teachers were asking the children what was their second language, so I thought if I said English, they wouldn't make a class just for me, so I said 'English'. So, that was the beginning and the next day I didn't appear, I used to go out of the house with a box with something to eat, what do you call it? Brunch? Well, in any case, what the children take to school, sandwiches. I used to take them but didn't go to school and up to the end of the school year I didn't return to school and at that point it was possible to do that because the Italian authorities, they didn't care, they weren't interested in the Jews. The Jewish school probably thought, 'how lucky the Tenenbaum family is, they probably have a visa to South America or somewhere'. And I was out in the streets, let me say, for all that time. And I'm still full of awe for this youngster, who, let me say, who had imagination to find something to do every day. Today when I'm out, let me say, for twenty minutes, and I haven't got an aim or somewhere to go, I don't know what to do, yes, I'm bored. At that time I managed to do it, I can't remember how I did it, but I managed it.

RL: What did you do?

JT: I don't know. I probably went, there was a pond, I can't call it any more, just outside. And I remember once bringing back a jam jar with little fish, yes, right? You can imagine, I don't know how many fish there were in, but to have one ball, fish ball, yes, I think my mother, by cutting off the head and cutting off the tail, let me say, they managed to make one small one, yes, right? I must have been, I don't know what I did., but I never felt bored and I did it regularly, and it's the first time I did something regularly through my life, right?

Tape 2: 4 minutes 38 seconds

RL: And this was in Milan?

JT: Yes, in Milan.

RL: You say you moved to Milan at the age of eight?

JT: Beg your pardon?

RL: At the age of eight?

JT: Yes, right.

RL: Why did the family move?

JT: Yes, it was quite natural, because Merano was a small town. The only industry in Merano was tourists, so you can't make a living with tourists, unless you are an agency or something like that. No, and it was the sensible thing to do. First of all, there is a larger Jewish community. I think my father did the right thing.

RL: Was he still in the same business in Milan?

JT: Yes, but it became larger.

RL: And what did you think of Milan, having grown up in Merano?

JT: I loved it, yes. You see, if you have beautiful things, beautiful scenery around you, you can be full of awe for three days, five days a week, but then afterwards, you just take it for granted, yes, you have no particular stimulus. And I really felt that that was Milan. I do remember later writing about Milan that was also, I'm talking now about after the war, right? It is the place, you see, Milan is not the most beautiful city in Italy, right? Whilst in other places, people ask themselves, 'What does this town or city offer me?', in Milan we asked ourselves, let me say, what we can contribute to this city. One really felt one was part of the thing and it was the most growing, vital city. Unfortunately today it is no longer. Oh yes, Milan was like a blackboard, a clean blackboard, on which you could write your future, right? Today it is no longer that. You felt it, that it was something exciting, something participating, you felt that it was your city, yes? Yes, but, you know, I wrote also, I wrote about the blackboard and this thing, and I wrote that, unfortunately, this is the Milan that was, yes? I don't know, perhaps I'm getting old and one doesn't feel it, but it has changed. You see, Milan was full of little shops, yes? Give you an example, for instance, a shop of ladies' handbags. Now to a shop of ladies' handbags, at least ten representatives from various factories used to come to offer their goods, and the woman in the shop chose of each one the things that she liked, right? So that when you came, every shop in ten handbag shops, let me say, each one was different, each one was alive. Not only that, if I passed a shop window in which I personally was not interested in because it was ladies' things or things like that, I used to pass it, and then I couldn't resist, I'd walk back and look at it again. There was so much taste in it and so well presented, it was really beautiful. Today the things are enormous shops, the shop windows only represent the name of the couture, yes? People go in to buy the name, yes? So, you can't participate to that.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 4 seconds

JT: The other thing that I suspect, the little shops have all mostly closed. Now the thing is, if at one time I would encourage everybody to go to Milan because it was an experience, today I feel that if you go to New York or to Paris or to London, or I don't know, to München, you've got the same shops, the same goods, so it has taken away the pleasure.

RL: Can I just ask you about Milan when you were living there?

JT: Yes.

RL: What was the school you went to in Milan?

JT: Well, I only made one, let me say, one year's high school, because I, let me say, when I left Milan, oh and the racial laws came out, I was, I don't know if in the first year of high school or the last year of elementary school, I can't remember that. So that really, I had lots of opinions, but I don't think I learnt a lot at school, yes?

RL: Was it at first in Milan a non-Jewish school?

JT: Wait a moment, in Milan there were no Jewish schools, neither in Merano. In Milan, there was only a Jewish school once the racial laws came out and I didn't appear, you understand?

RL: So up to that point there had been no Jewish school there?

JT: No, no, they had the Cheder, right? And he was an old-fashioned teacher. He had a belt in his hand, yes? It was a nice fellow but I must confess that very often I used to go to the cinema instead of going to the Cheder, yes? And as I said, before I mentioned the only time that I had been punished not being guilty was one day that I went to Cheder. I knew that my sister had gone to the cinema with her friend, so I passed the cinema. And at that time they used to have little, what do you call it? Photographs, yes? And you could, let me say, see through the dozens of photographs, you could see exactly what happens, yes, right? There was the first couple, which were both blonde and the second couple, which were dark, and so forth. But I had been to the cinema so often, let me say, that I could guess what the story was. So, I arrived at home and my sister was saying about that she'd been to the cinema and I said that I had also been to the cinema. She said that's not possible, so I told her the story, yes? So all of a sudden, I felt 'buff' (gestures a slap). That's enough about my misdoings!

RL: Which synagogue did your parents attend in Milan?

JT: The Ashkenazi synagogue. Milan at one time used to have Ashkenazi, when we came to Milan, and the Italian, let me say, synagogue. By the way, I had my Barmitzvah at the Italian synagogue because that was the main synagogue, because all the others had been closed, yes? The only one that was allowed to be open was that one. There were the Italian community and there were the Ashkenazi. I don't know if there were some other, let me say, small synagogues in some places. Today they are all from Iraq, Iran, North Africa, Egypt, you know, they have been chased out years ago and they have formed a new community and they are most active.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 13 seconds

RL: You say there was an Ashkenazi community and an Italian, how well did they mix the two communities?

JT: Well, I tell you, Oh G-d if this comes out, you see the thing is the Ashkenazim think that they are it, yes, right? Not that the others take any notice of that but that's it, as far as, let me say, kashrut is concerned and everything else. There is personal relationship, yes, but I don't think there's so much relationship if one becomes official.

RL: Did your parents tend to mix with other Ashkenazim or were they friendly with any other?

JT: Well, their friends, let me say, were non-Jews and also the Ashkenazim because we went to the same synagogue and also the others. You see, amongst the Ashkenazim, we were ones of the first Jews, right? I don't know of what we had more friends, perhaps, let me say, the Ashkenazim, but because they lived near us, yes?

RL: Was there any animosity between the two communities?

JT: Animosity? I remember being present at one, I don't know, I've never been to a committee meeting and so forth, so I wouldn't know, but in the Shul, I remember the president of the Italian community made a speech, I can't remember what it was about, but when he finished it was silence, yes? I can't open my mouth, I mustn't say. I was shocked. I went up to him, I can't remember what I said to him, but I went up to him.

RL: How was your Barmitzvah celebrated?

JT: How was my Barmitzvah celebrated? I didn't read the Sedra like the children do today, only the, what do you call it what comes after the Sedra?

RL: The Haftorah

JT: The Haftorah. When we went home, a few friends came in and I went out and played, right? So it wasn't really, usually the Barmitzvah boy is at the centre, he has to be there and he has to make a speech or something. Nothing! I disappeared. I do go occasionally to the Italian synagogue but since I'm used to the pronunciation and also not only the pronunciation, I can't follow. I know, let me say, the main things, but the rest I can't follow. I just have to continue praying by myself in a certain way. No, but you see what, let me say, helped a lot, was that the Jewish school, let me say, they had a thousand pupils. Since it was the only school, so all the Jewish parents sent their children to that school. That made it so that the friendship between the families, it didn't matter what you were, Eastern or Western or whatever you were, let me say, became friends. A few years ago, they created another school, the Lubavitch School, and that's my personal opinion, I can understand that they want more Jewish subjects, but I think it did a lot of harm too, because I can see with the older generation, they all know each other, they like each other, they meet, yes, and so forth. They know everything, everybody, all the families, whatever group they belong to. Today they don't know anything from each other.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 20 seconds

JT: The other thing is this, which is negative, is that a lot of the group, let me say, they went to the Lubavitch school, but there were also other Jews who were less religious, yes? But they sent them to Jewish school because they felt they wanted them to belong to a Jewish school. Before they had broken off, a number of Rabbis used to teach at that school, at the main school. When the other one was formed, they no longer teach there. Now then, these people used to say, what am I sending them to a Jewish school if there is no Jewish education there? Or, let me say, I let you judge, right?

RL: Can I just come back to when you were at school? You've just mentioned before about the racial laws. How did they affect? You've mentioned the fact that you could no longer go to a non-Jewish school, and therefore the Jewish school was formed. Did they affect the families in other ways? How did the racial laws affect you and the Jewish community besides the school situation?

JT: As far as I'm concerned, nothing at all. As far as I know, my parents neither.

RL: So it didn't affect the business?

JT: Wait, oh yes, that yes. They confiscated, they've stolen, or I don't know what you call it, life became difficult for the people who worked, yes? The universities, for instance, all professors, all Jewish professors, they even had a vote, I think, and very few, the number I can count on my hand, who didn't sign that the Jews should be taken away. How can I say it? I, as a child, didn't suffer anything at all, I wouldn't have noticed it in any case, and my parents didn't talk about it, yes, right? So I only found out about it later on, when I came back to Italy, all the various things. But the way my parents told the story, it was more funny than, let me say, tragic. They always told us the nice things. For instance, when they escaped to Switzerland later on when my father was released and a little town, near Milano, they had to pass through to go to Switzerland, I don't know how, I don't know if the lord mayor knew my father or whatever it was, the Germans were already there, and he took them, he crossed in his official car, he took my parents right across the town, so they should be at the other side to be able to go into Switzerland. So beautiful acts have happened.

RL: So was that the Lord Mayor of Milan?

JT: No, no, no, it was a little town,

RL: Where was that?

JT: I really don't know, I don't know, now I can't even ask my parents. No, I really don't know where it was.

RL: So did both your parents go to Switzerland at that point?

JT: Yes

RL: So your mother had left the family in the country?

Tape 2: 26 minutes 0 second

JT: Look, you see I knew that my mother had been in the country because my mother told me but when it happened and how it happened I don't know, and, as I said before, my parents never, how can I say it? They used to pick the pleasant things, yes, right? And it wasn't done out of, it was just; let me say, the humour of a family. We used to even tease them about it.

RL: Coming back to when you were in Milan.

JT: You mean before?

RL: Before, before. So the racial laws were already coming out, was it at that point that your father's business, the storeroom, were confiscated, while you were still there?

JT: Yes, yes.

RL: Did he have to do...?

JT: Wait a moment. I think that was the moment, right? I can't take my father's word. You see, I've never sat down with my father and questioned him. We'd get little incidents, but the incidents were part of another story he was telling, you see?

RL: Were there any restrictions on you going to the cinema or the theatre?

JT: Wait a moment, no. Well, we didn't go to the theatre, probably, I don't know why, but for instance, the cinema, no, I couldn't have survived without the cinema.

RL: When the racial laws started to come out, what was the feeling between the Jewish and non-Jewish population at that stage? Was there any change at all?

JT: Do you know, it is like, my only answer would be what I, no, please forgive me that I hesitate, because all I know is little things that have been told to me. When things went wrong, yes, right, my parents didn't talk about it, so I only have the better side. Besides that, I had my head somewhere else. So. I tell you, if you had questioned my sister, she would have known everything. Since she was a little older and a girl and felt responsible also about me. I'm quite sure she suffered a lot more. Even my coming to England, well, to me it was an adventure, yes, but I'm quite sure it wasn't for her. Both towards my parents and towards me, yes, so.

RL: How did it come about that you were sent to England? How did that all happen?

JT: Well, we had a friend who came to England, yes, before, and I think she must have applied for help. At that time, they only accepted, let me say, grown ups, if they had some family who wanted to come to be – what do you call it? – Housemaid. She found two families, one for me, one for my sister. The law in Britain was that they would accept children up to a certain age, I don't know if it was twelve or thirteen, as long as they had a family who guaranteed they wouldn't be a weight to the state. I came to the family - you know the Cassel Fox house - to the Foxes. I think that Mrs. Fox, let me say, must have seen one of my photographs and she fell for me, yes, right?

Tape 2: 31 minutes 23 seconds

JT: So I was her little refugee. Whenever someone came to the house, she used to say, 'Oh, just wait a moment. I want to present you my little refugee!' They were very nice but I probably was like, you know, Christmas, the children, you say 'what do you want?' 'I want a dog'. So I was the little pet in the thing but exactly like the children who get tired of the pet, yes? So I was there for about a week and then I was in, I remember in Merano, in the mountains, the cows used to ascent up to the, what do you call it? To graze up in the mountains. So, after a week, I was put into another family, right? Well, my first surprise was that they called it lemonade, yes, but it didn't taste of lemon, but it had many, many colours, right? And I was fascinated by this drinking many colours and not having difference of taste. We lived separately. She was for a few days, or perhaps a week, in a Church of England, do you say priest? No, it's not a priest. Well, in any case, a churchman. They were really nice people and very thoughtful people and I think after a day or two they went to the Jewish community and asked if they could find them a Jewish family because they thought that it's not right that a Jewish child, let me say, a religious Jewish child, should be brought up in our home. I think that is really very nice.

RL: Can I ask before we stay in this country, going back to Italy, what caused your parents to send you and your sister?

JT: You see that in Italy the home was very open, yes, right? There were always people coming, let me say, from Germany, from Czechoslovakia, and so on. And it was always full of people who came and I remember listening to someone saying that considering the armament that was being built up in Germany, it is not possible that they won't go to war, right? And that was early 38 or perhaps even earlier. So, let me say, one knew, not in details, but one knew what happened in Germany and so it is, let me say, to save one's children. At that time, they certainly didn't know they were going to Switzerland or, let me say, anything at all. They just wanted their children to be saved.

RL: But, I mean, that was Germany and you were in Italy, so what made them send...?

JT: Wait a moment, a) the racial laws in Italy, yes? It is true that Mussolini, you see, being, let me say, an ally a Germany, and he had to give, let me say, his contribution of Jew-baiting, yes? So either one was blind completely or otherwise one understood, let me say, that this was only the beginning, yes? In Germany, it took years before it came to where we wanted to get to, so it was an act of intelligence, a sacrifice definitely, for parents to send away their children, but it was a way to save something.

RL: How did many other Italian children...?

JT: I didn't know anyone. I found out after the war that a lot of Italians went to America, yes? There were also probably other children but I've never met any children who came from Italy. Oh yes, a family who were our friends in Merano, who came to England, I think approximately the same time.

RL: How usual was it for families to be sending their children away at this stage in Italy?

Tape 2: 37 minutes 17 seconds

JT: I didn't know of any family. That my parents knew other families, I've never heard them speak about it, but it doesn't mean that there weren't. You see, how can I say it? To go to the

States was more easier way. Why? Because in the States they had quotas at that time and the Italian quota at that time wasn't so high, yes, right? So, let's say, to go to America, the whole family could go to America, while to England, only the children could go to England. And we had no direct family in America.

RL: I'm just wondering what made your parents do that when most other parents didn't seem to be doing that?

JT: Look, that isn't a fair question because... Just the other day, I met here a friend and she said, 'If I had the choice, I wouldn't send away my children'. It's like, let me say, that is destiny, yes? But that is a choice which each one of us does. I'm grateful to my parents that they thought this way. Yes, it must have been a great sacrifice for my parents.

RL: Did they ever think of trying to emigrate?

JT: You mean why we were in Italy? The thing is that when Jews came out of Poland, yes, they didn't think of going to Germany, they usually thought of going to America, yes? Some stopped in Germany, others stopped in England. My father came to Italy, because, you see, for instance, Galicia was the most eastern region of the Austrian Empire and Sud-Tirol was the most southern one and I believe he also had a friend in Merano. I don't know if that is the whole reason for it but that's how we came to Merano.

RL: And then when he looked to send you and your sister, did the family themselves, did your parents, ever consider trying to emigrate at that point when you left?

JT: There was no possibility. We came here on 14th August. War broke out on 1st September, I believe, 1939.

RL: So you came in 1939.

JT: Yes, yes. Look, I went, I think, for three days to school and then we were evacuated.

RL: Do you remember the departure from Italy, leaving your parents?

JT: I don't remember the, what do you call it? Let me say, when we went to the station. No, I have no definite recall of the thing.

RL: Or the journey?

JT: Oh, the journey, yes. We passed through Paris and my parents bought us a bottle of Double Kummel, probably to give it to the people who would receive us. Unfortunately, in Paris the case dropped and so did the bottle and so the case was full of sugar. But, yes, that was all.

RL: Did you and your sister travel by yourselves?

Tape 2: 41 minutes 58 seconds

JT: Yes, yes, yes. I remember in the train, I think it was French or something like that and we tried to speak a few words of Italian, or perhaps it was English, I can't remember, and he said,

‘England? England, pleuve, pleuve, pleuve’. I didn’t know what pleuve, pleuve, pleuve means but I found out later, yes!

RL: And so you went through Paris? Where did the train go?

JT: I beg your pardon?

RL: Can you describe the journey?

JT: Describe the journey? Not very much. I’m more conscious of the crowds in the stations because we came to Gare de Lyon and then we passed on to Gare du Nord. I don’t even remember how we got from one station to the other station. You see, that’s the trouble of being indifferent in life. You know, now you make me feel terrible! No, I don’t even remember my sister telling me off, which is surprising.

RL: Where did the train take you to?

JT: To Calais, to Dieppe – Calais, I think it was. The boat ride was horrible. Not to show the sickness, I went down to the bottom of the boat. Yes, had I stayed up there, I would definitely have been sea-sick. I didn’t want to feel it and I didn’t want to show it, so, but, yes, I’m not a sailor.

RL: And where did it land?

JT: Well, the normal one, I don’t know what it’s called. Help me out, please, give me a few places.

RL: Dover?

JT: Probably Dover, yes. It must have been Dover. I can’t swear by it, right? But probably it was Dover.

RL: And then?

JT: Then we went to London Victoria and then I think our friend met us and she put us on a train, let me say, to Manchester. What on earth happened in Manchester? You should have chosen someone else!

RL: What were your impressions of England and of Manchester?

JT: Now then, you know I told you, let me say...By the way, the family where I stayed, the second family, was a very old road, you know where the shopping centre is, they had a shop. Well, one day my sister came to visit me and I was crying. And she said, ‘Why are you crying?’ I had been to Heaton Park. G-d, I’ve already got this far, so I might as well finish it! So, she said, ‘But why are you crying?’ And I said, ‘They are so ugly’ – not the family, but the people in Heaton Park, right? That was a youngster of 13. I must have been terrible.

Tape 2: 46 minutes 17 seconds

Now I’ve said it.

RL: Who was the second family that you went to?

JT: All I can tell you that most of the family had red hair. I can't remember their names but they had a hairdressing shop, let me say, there on Bury Old Road.

RL: And what did you think of Manchester as a town?

JT: What did I think of Manchester as a town? Well, you see the thing I made friendship very quickly and very easily and therefore, let me say it, as I get accused even today, I travelled a lot for my work in Italy and abroad, and when I '...', please help me, 'What did I say just now?'.
RL: I was asking about Manchester as a town and you were saying that, I don't know, because you...

JT: I should remember that.

RL: What did you think of Manchester as a town was the question.

JT: Now then, I think I just accepted it, yes? As I wanted to give you an example, they used to accuse me in Italy that I only go to towns where I've got friends, right? And it was true. If they asked me, let me say, about the town and so forth, I hardly noticed it, yes? I adopted two families, one was the family Reich, you know they were just a few houses higher up they used to live – Herschel Reich and his family – and the Haffners, they used to live across the road. Only a short time ago, Moshe Haffner said to me, 'Do you know when you used to come to my house, I used to hate you'. Why? Because his mother...I used to help, let me say, washing up, and she probably took me as an example, right? That he should be something like I am and, listen, I would have hated it even more than he did. That's it. Do you...? No, no, I'm not supposed to say anything at all that's not a part of our conversation.

RL: You say you attended school for a short time here?

JT: Wait, wait, no, a week after we came here, we were evacuated to Blackpool. Now then, at that time most grown up people, even teachers, went to war, yes? They were called up in the army, so that the, what do you call it? The classes were put together, the first elementary with the second elementary, the third and the fourth and so forth and the Kindertransport, from Germany and Austria and so forth, came about, I don't know if it was 9 months before or a year before, so they put them all together in one class to teach them English. But I had come at the last moment and I didn't know a word of English, so I thought I'd be very intelligent. So they put me in, I was 13 years old, more than 13, and they put me in the class with the children of 6 and 7 years old, first and second elementary. I don't know how long I was there and then they promoted me and I was put in with those of 8 and 9, something like that. That was the only school I did because by the time I reached 14 years, I took a rented room and there was a lady, let me say, who used to cook for various boys, so I stayed there.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 24 seconds

RL: Where was that?

JT: Beg your pardon?

RL: Where was that?

JT: You want the chronological order or may I just have a try? Yes, alright. Now, I did live in Cliff Crescent, you know the street off Bury New Road at the time. The only time when my sister and I lived together was in, I can't remember the name of the street, but it was near there, off Leicester Road.

RL: How long were you actually in Blackpool?

JT: In Blackpool? Wait a moment, certainly until the end of the school year, yes? No, how is that possible. August. They kept probably the school open because there was no alternative. So I don't know if there was just a school to justify, how do you say? No, if I came there in August, and certainly before April I was already in Manchester, yes? That means it was only a few months and it was probably then to keep all the Jewish children together, since it was only the children who were evacuated.

RL: Where were you staying? Where were you living in Blackpool?

JT: In Blackpool, first of all was a family, a non-Jewish family, I think the state gave them twopence halfpenny a day or something like that.

RL: And how did you get on there?

JT: Oh very nicely, yes. Yes, yes. Everything was new and I enjoyed the novelty, yes, right?

RL: Was there any difficulty with religion at all?

JT: No, no. There was the fact that, let me say, the food, I believe they must have been instructed what to give us to eat. Wait a moment, was my sister there too? I can't remember whether my sister was there. No, no, no. I think they were very nice people.

RL: So, you ate with the family?

JT: I beg your pardon?

RL: You ate with the family?

JT: You ask me questions, really. No, I really don't know. It is terrible to interrogate me, one can't get very far, right? No, I do remember small incidents, that he took me out once fishing. There's a park in Blackpool which has a lake and he took me out fishing. And I was shocked because we fished, how do you call it? That long fish like a snake?

RL: Eel?

Tape 2: 55 minutes 10 seconds

JT: Eel, yes and it fluttered all about and I was scared stiff, right? Because I thought, you can fall in this water, but I don't want to fall in this water. No. Listen, my sister is missing

somewhere in the picture. I can't remember if my sister was with me in all this. No, please don't ask me about that thing, please. Thank you.

RL: So you were evacuated for a number of months and you were put into this younger class to learn English and then you came back to Manchester?

JT: That is correct

RL: When you came back to Manchester...

JT: Did I go to school?

RL: And where did you live? What happened to you at that point? Take me through this period.

JT: I can tell you but I don't think it's chronological, certainly it's not chronological. I do know that my sister, oh yes, something has come back to me, I stayed at Cassel Fox, you know, in the hostel, they had a hostel, Cassel Fox.

RL: Can you just tell me about that? What do you remember about staying there in the hostel?

JT: In the hostel? Do you know, the reaction of each boy was very different. There was one thing, you see the thing is that one knew already that, let me say, there was no comparison between what happened in Germany and what happened in Italy and how can I say it? I would never have expressed anything because they didn't know about their parents at all. Neither did I, but one never thought, let me say, that something would happen in Italy, yes? Or at least I didn't think it would do. I was the fortunate one, right? And such I was also to the other boys. I listened much more than I talked. It was the only, it came naturally to me, yes, but it was the only correct, fair way to behave. I never felt, let me say, that I was a victim, yes? Incidents? There were boys, let me say, who were conditioned their whole lives, or at least at that time, that they were away from their parents. They became victims also of the other boys, yes? They were ridiculed also by the other boys. You see it is not like a thing between adults. You see, boys react in a way, let me say, if you accept to be the victim, then you are also my victim, yes, right? Right, I'll keep quiet. Well, I've always had, let me say, I was always in the middle of incidents. The first time Mr. and Mrs. Fox brought me there to show me the hostel before I came in, they were having racing, jumping, racing and so forth, and they got points. And since I was the outsider, so they gave me the list, let me say, to make out the points and I did it and then I left and I had it with me. They have never forgiven me for that, right? Because each one wanted to know how many points he got to the rest. Can you imagine how it is terrible, let me say, if you win a race and nobody will ever know about it!

End of Tape 2

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 0 minute 5 seconds

RL: So, you were just telling me, I asked you about the Cassel Fox hostel, and you were telling me about your first visit to the place and the sports day and you walking off with the

results, starting off on a bad foot really. What other memories do you have of the hostel and of the boys?

JT: The boys occasionally complained about food, you know like boys do? Let me say, about food, that the people were too strict, whatever it was. I as usual didn't notice anything at all. I made friendship, yes? And one boy in particular, let me say, we were very good friends, because once we started working, we did the same work, we took the same course and so forth. He had a most unfortunate, well, an unfortunate life, how can I say it? His parents, he never saw them again. His sister was murdered. She went down to one of the - is it called Hachsharah or something like that? - one of the things there. And it seems she did auto-stopping. What do you call it when you ask passage on the car?

RL: Hitch-hiking.

JT: Hitch-hiking. And she was murdered. Look, I enjoyed it, yes, right? To meet so many boys from different homes and from different things, let me say, I was curious and I wanted to know, something like that. It's not that I went out to ask but I liked to have different friends, yes? The ones responsible were the Mr. and Mrs. Weinberg, I believe, or Weinberger, I can't remember. You see, the thing is, from a logical point of view, they couldn't have been any different. They would have to have to be strict, especially with about thirty boys in there. Now then, I left the hostel once I started working, I believe.

RL: How long were you there?

JT: How long was I there? Less than a year, that certainly.

RL: And what did you do before you started work? How did you pass your days?

JT: Now, wait a moment, how did I start working? I remember coming to my 14th birthday and I hadn't started working and my friends had started. I started my first job, right? I went to an interview and the director - I didn't know what it would be, yes, what the work would be. I went to this interview and he said, 'Well, if you are as good as you look, then you must be very good'. Now the very good, let me say, I, yes, right, when I started working, it was a car show room in Peter Street, Peter Square, is it called Peter Street, from Deansgate going up to the library, yes?

RL: Yes.

Tape 3: 4 minutes 41 seconds

JT: At that time they used to have only second hand cars and they needed to be dusted and so forth. The first day I was there, I had already learned what I should do. There were certain fires, what do you call them, fires? Yes, right? Where you put in the paper and then the wood and then the coal. After I had done that, I was supposed to dust the cars or clean the cars. In the evening, that was already the first day, they gave me the post to put on the stamps. And I had never put on a stamp on a post because I'd never written a letter before, so I licked them. And that was the most terrible evening that I ever had, well, not that I ever had, but my mouth felt awful, really awful, yes? I didn't last very long. I don't know if I wasn't worthy of the job or I didn't like it, I don't know. The next job was in a garage in Lower Broughton. The garage had two walls and a half, so the rest was open to the...and it was terribly cold. I might as well

tell you what his opinion was of my being a mechanic. After a few weeks he said to me, 'Jo, you must be good at something, but as a mechanic you're no damn good at all', right? That was his comment on my qualities as a mechanic. I tried to stay always next to the stove, whatever I did, I stayed next to the stove. One of the only things I do remember was that one day one of the cars, the bonnet had been bumped, so one had to straighten it with a hammer and then I was supposed to put on paint and there was a pump, you know, an air pump, yes? So I sprayed it the first time and it ran, I sprayed it the second time and the third time and it still ran, and each time I used to clean it up with acetone because that's the basis of the paint. At a certain moment as I did that, the car became silver – I'd gone right through to the main frame and believe me, let me say, since then I believe in miracles, because the next time when I sprayed it, right, it stuck! I don't know how I did it but it stuck. It is true that that car went away with only one strata of paint but it went away with paint. One becomes so part of the work one does that... I remember somebody, I'd given him petrol, he gave me, what do you call it, when you give money?

RL: A tip.

JT: A tip, he gave me a tip and I thought it was too little. I was going to throw it. I don't think I threw it but that's what I felt like doing. That means I really had already become a garage boy. I didn't last very long there. Also the reason, apart from my misdoings in the garage, which I don't have to mention them all, I earned 12 shillings and 6 pence a week and the - what do you call it - the rent that I paid was 18 shillings, so I left there. And this lady had a brother who had a storeroom, yes? They used to come in with sacks with cuttings of silk and wool and things like that and I had to separate one from the other. That didn't last long either. I think I must have made an enormous lot of changes, to the point that at a certain moment my sister sent me to a psychoanalyst, right? I think the psychoanalyst, what disturbed me is that he tried to impress me. He had two volumes, one on Stalin and one on, what do you call it, the founder of Communism?

RL: Marx?

JT: Not Marx, no, the leader, Russian leader. Well, in any case, he turned the two volumes towards me, so that I could see the, what do you call it. Perhaps he did it innocently but I thought he didn't do it innocently. The thing is he was a Freudian psychoanalyst, so whatever you do, you've got problems with sex, sexual problems. So, at a certain moment I said to him, 'Look, had I been a Christian, I would have become a friar, yes? So, 'You see, I told you', yes? So I thought you're a silly fool.

Tape 3: 10 minutes 42 seconds

Had I been a Christian, I would have liked to become a friar because you get three meals a day, you can study all day, yes, and you've got a roof over your head. That was my career as a thing. I didn't last very long there, I think it was three visits or something like that and off I went again. I changed jobs very often. Wait a moment, oh yes, I worked for, they used to do adverts in the newspapers, saying that we've got sheets or bedcovers and things like that. I wasn't particularly good at it but I was asked to write a, you know, a presentation of what I had to sell. So I wrote, let me say, that we had blankets that are cool in the summer and warm in winter. I was very proud of it. I don't know how proud the owner that I had written that, yes? The next job was in a, what do you call it? I was unemployed, so a friend of mine said to go to the - what do you call it - to the labour exchange, yes? And they offered me various jobs and I hoped to drag it out as long as possible because I got paid well not doing anything at all.

So, the third time I was there, he said, 'Listen, you have to accept something'. I always refused because I have a good excuse because of Shabbat. So, he said, but this gentleman, he has got a Jewish name, so he was sure that, yes, right? In any case, it was a cloth shop up Oxford Road, it had about six or eight windows, it was very large. I had never done, let me say, shop decorating, do you call it shop decorating, yes? I started off Monday. I cleared up the whole window, one of them, and I started telling the girls, let me say, to give me cuttings of various things and they really did give me cuttings of cloth, 1 ½ metres, 2 metres, things like that. This is to a person who knew nothing about window shop decoration. The thing is, I was so incompetent, usually the window decorator looks at the reflection of the window pane, yes, and I didn't know how to do it, so every time I had to go out, look at the window, and turn back again. Now each time I looked at it, I didn't like it, so I used to undo it once again and ask for other cloth. There was a bus stop just outside and people use to gape at me, let me say, doing all this game, of going and coming back and doing it all again. Really, I had a large crowd. I don't know whether they kept me because the large crowd looked in the window, sort of thing, but in any case that was it. I arrived, I think it was Wednesday, something like that, and I said, Look, I can't continue working for you. I've been working on one window, there were 6 or 8 windows, I've been at one window for three days. They said, 'No, no, stay here, it is very nice', like that. I left there and really, I don't know why, but they paid me for the whole week. The next job was, let me say, I think it was that the next one, I went to work for a laboratory where they made frames, you know, frames for glasses, right? And they were hand-sawn. You know the little saws that the boys use for aeroplanes, well, they were that saw, you used to draw it around and cut it and so forth. There were two grown up people there, the manager and somebody else, because all the others were in the army, and about 4 boys. I was the eldest, I was about 15 or 16 or so. I was told that, let me say, they should work, let me say. I didn't want to command, so I thought, let me say, I'll do something different. I used to work very, very fast, yes, and then pile up all the work I had done, and since everybody knew that was my pile, they couldn't be lower. They used to plead with me to calm down. That was most unfair on my part, really. Oh yes, after having worked there, I believe I went to Yeshiva.. I'll tell you in a moment how I came there. I went to Buxton because I had an operation of appendicitis, nothing particular, but they sent me for a week or two, let me say, up to Buxton. And when I came there, the first meal, the waiter, let me say, two or three tables started laughing very loudly. What had happened, when I was doing the frames, I thought I had a brilliant idea. There was one man who was blind in one eye, so my idea was, let me say, that you take a pair of glasses, let's assume he only saw with the right eye, by turning round the glasses this way, he could read if you turned round the glasses. So, what did I do? I filed this side and they turned.

Tape 3: 17 minutes 52 seconds

In Buxton there, the waiter was telling everybody my story. I didn't say that it was me. It came to the point, it was so funny, that all the other tables said they wanted to hear it too, so out loud in the middle of the hall, he put down his plates and he started telling the story. That idiot of an optician, let me say, in Manchester, who made these glasses. What had happened, I'd filed it, yes? Now then, the frame was thick. I bent it round, so it comes up to there, but to turn it right round, it wasn't possible, because the joint wouldn't permit it, because this would become shorter and so forth. So that when the optician in Buxton received the glasses, they were that wide, in other words, they were opened up but they didn't go round. That was my career as far as that was concerned. Sorry, I shouldn't deviate from my story. Let me return back to Manchester. When I was in Blackpool, one of the teachers, Mr. Joe Greenberg, he took a liking to my sister and myself, and more or less he became my tutor. Even afterwards I used to live at their house. Yes, I'm really deeply grateful to him, let me say. That I got

anywhere at all, I owe it to him. The thing is, I was in Blackpool. He used to teach in a grammar school, I think French and mathematics, something like that, and he came to Blackpool, to a Jewish school, because he wanted to be in a Jewish surrounding. He advised me on almost everything, let me say, books to read and things like that. There was Mr. Greenberg and then there was the Haffners, who had a lot of books, and ... and ..., so I was spoilt, yes? The thing is that, at that moment, I had left school when I was 12, something like that. I hadn't gone to school from then on - I can't count that school where I was in Blackpool. I wanted to study, yes? I desperately wanted to study but I couldn't go to university because I didn't have the matriculation and I really don't know up to this day whether it was kindness/consideration, let me say, of the Head of Department. Well, I'll tell you the story, perhaps it's easier. At a certain moment, at that time in the university there were only classical subjects, all the rest was at UMIST, and so I was allowed to take the first year, even if I hadn't taken the matriculation or the university entrance exam, but to take the second year, during the summertime I had to study, let me say, to get through, to be accepted to the second year, otherwise they would never let me in. And I don't know whether it was Dr. Lipson, who was the Head of Department, or it was Mr. Greenberg who influenced him, he probably said, 'What will the boy do, let me say, 'if he doesn't continue studying?' I'm sorry to repeat it but I was spoilt, yes, right? Well, in any case, I took the first year and somehow managed to get through to the university entrance exam, did the second year.

RL: What was your subject?

JT: Optics, optometry, I don't know what they call it.

RL: How old were you?

JT: 19, something like that, 18, 19. When I had finished there, well, I hadn't changed even there, you see? I can mention two incidents. One was the lecturer had given, we were about 30 students, he had given the students a, what do you call it, an exercise, well in any case, a problem, yes? As soon as I finished, I was the first one to finish, so I went round the boys and said what was their result and each one said something and I said, 'No, you're wrong. You've got it all wrong'. In any case, I thought I was very proud that I'd finished and I'd finished first and all the rest of it. In any case, as we came to the end, the professor, let me say, read out what the answer was. Amongst 30 boys, I was the only one who didn't get the right answer, right? So that was one side.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 54 seconds

The other side was that Dr. Lipson used to help me and one day he said to me, 'Well, if that is your opinion, look, go out in the corridor, sit down there, you can sit down there for an hour, and if you find somebody who you think is more intelligent than you, then come back and tell me'. Well, that's all very well, I sat there and I must confess I didn't find anybody, right? As you can see, I was spoilt, even there. When I finished, let me say, when I got the piece of paper, I hated it, I hated the subject. Yes, I had had ideas. Since I hadn't gone to school, for instance, since I was that age, about science I knew hardly anything at all. For instance, light going through a lens, it finishes at a certain distance at the focus. If you have 5 lenses, then you can work it out either with a single formula or five separate formulas. I didn't know one, I didn't know the other, so what did I do? I bought an exercise book, a big exercise book with little squares and I did big proportions, yes? And I got there. That's alright to get there but, well, that's enough about that story. Oh yes, that was my 2nd year there, I said I don't want to continue, and they said, 'But you have been in optics for many years. To learn to cut a frame

or to be an ophthalmologist or to be an optician, it's all the same thing'. I was foolish enough to fall for it, so I finished the course and when I got that piece of paper, I left for London to visit a friend of mine and I remained there for a year, right?

RL: Can I just ask you, you had mentioned previously that you went to the Yeshiva. Now we've missed that, can we just go back?

JT: Oh yes, right. I thought the only place where I could enter without an examination was the Yeshiva. Apart from that, I thought I in the family am the one the least religious, yes? I thought if I studied I would come nearer, let me say, more religious. It is true, I don't think I became more religious, but I certainly have great respect for our sages, yes? The thing was, they put me almost immediately in the 2nd or 3rd class, and I asked them, I pleaded with them to put me in a lower one because I had no background, yes? How can I say it? My Hebrew wasn't hardly, I even had difficulty in translation, I wanted to start from the basis. To start Gemorrah, let me say, immediately as you come in is very interesting and all one needs is a little bit of imagination, yes? They said to me, Dubov was his name, he said, 'No, no, you are very good', right? You know there are phases in one's life when other people think you are intelligent, yes, right? And I miss it still now, the fact that being unprepared to do something, let me say, certainly that interested me and I enjoyed it, but I should have had a solid basis, right? I never, this is another confession, I never mentioned that I came from a religious home. So, there you've got a Jew comes from Italy, they'd never heard of a Jew coming from Italy, so if he comes from Italy, let me say, one has to be very careful with him. One mustn't over-, overweigh, over-?

RL: Overburden?

JT: Yes, overburden him with many things. I even had a girlfriend and even the Yeshiva knew it but everything was accepted, yes, right? It even came to the point, because at Yeshiva one plays also football, now then at that time during the war, you couldn't get a football just by going to the shop; you had to register as a sports club. And I registered the Yeshiva as a sports club, right? So, as you notice, let me say, I get from one spoiling to the other.

RL: How long were you there?

JT: One year, one year and some times.

Tape 3: 31 minutes 16 seconds

RL: How big was the Yeshiva at that stage?

JT: First of all, it was, you know when you come up, opposite the Crumpsall Shul, there's a street going up, the first building, let me say, on the left hand side, was the Yeshiva. I don't know, perhaps 40 boys were there, 30, 40 boys were there.

RL: Were there other refugee boys there?

JT: No, no, I don't think so. Some of them were also there not to get into the army. At my level, yes, one can enjoy many things, right? And I enjoyed the Yeshiva. It's almost, let me say, when one learns it, I can only give the example of my father. One of the Gemorrahs is Baba Metziah. He was already 90, I don't know how many, 94, 95. He gave this lesson, they

invited him, it was his birthday I think, something like that, and all of a sudden I realised, let me say, that it is philosophy of life that it had, while that before when I'd learnt it, or heard other people, it was just a Metziah that was found or not found, that was seen or not seen, let me say, it doesn't mean anything. When I heard that, let me say, I looked at it completely different to it, yes? Also I feel, let me say, that the beauty of our religion is that we present people, like Zokein Yaacov and so forth, as people who have got faults, who tell untruths and everything else. It is people who become that and therefore we can become it also, right? While if it is, many people want to present them, if not as godly people, at least as saints, but rubbish it's saints, let me say, they had to fight through life, or for instance, I don't know they gathered an enormous lot of animals, what do you call it? Would you help me put the word?

RL: Flocks?

JT: Cows and everything else, camels, I imagine. Now then, they are not simple people, they are not people who sit down by night to study and think spiritual things. They were normal people, right? I got into trouble very often with my theories, yes? At that time I even came to the theory that since we are made in the image of G-d and we have free choice, yes, right? People talk for instance about Shoah. At the best they say they haven't got an answer but very often they don't want to admit that they feel that we have sinned, yes, right? But it is rubbish. If we have free will, then the people who is nasty, let me say, I don't know any other word, if he is nasty, then there will be a victim and the victim will be a good person, correct? Now then, you don't ask why the victim has been a victim, you ask why the nasty one has behaved in that manner. The other thing is that we are in G-d's image, therefore we can create and the thing is, just like G-d created but he created all men, we can create ourselves, and G-d is not there to give us a slap if we do the wrong thing or, let me say, a caress if we do the right thing. It's just a matter that we are made in a way that if we do the right thing, it makes us grow. Well, I owed it all to Yeshiva, even if it was a short time. They used to say to me that I should stay there and I should learn, that I could become a Rabbi and all the rest of it, but, let me say, they wouldn't have liked the Rabbi I'd have become, right?

RL: After Yeshiva, what did you do, once you finished that year in Yeshiva?

JT: Wait a moment, I went to London, as I said.

RL: Was it university first?

Tape 3: 37 minutes 13 seconds

JT: Oh, wait a moment, I beg your pardon, yes. Yeshiva was first, then at university and, as I came out of university, I went to London and my friend was Victor Hochhauser, yes?

RL: Can I just ask you, while you were doing these different jobs and in Yeshiva, where were you living?

JT: Oh, I understand. Now then, the Yeshiva used to subsidize, let me say, subsidize the means I had at the Yeshiva, and where I slept, they paid for it, so I had no economic problems. And as I came out, finished the Yeshiva, they said, 'You can't continue, you have no intention of becoming a Rabbi, so what are you going to do?' So, that was in the Yeshiva, sorry, we must go on, to where we had arrived, so after university I went to London and I

intended only going for a few days or a week and I stayed there for a year. And Victor said, 'You can't go about doing nothing', yes? So I used to go about with him, you know to the Albert Hall and everything else and so forth. So, how useful I was, I don't think I was very useful, but I was a friend, right? The only positive thing I did in that year was that the Vienna Philharmonic had been in London and it seems a group of people had bought all the tickets in the, what do you call it? Not the gallery.

RL: Stalls?

JT: The stalls, yes? I don't know how many rows of the stalls, all the front rows, right? And these people couldn't come, so the thing is they didn't know what to do because it's a terrible thing for an orchestra to come in a hall and have the seats, let me say, empty. So I asked for the tickets and I went to the queue of the ones who went to go up to the 7th Heaven, you know, the gallery, and I said, 'Look, I've got these tickets, they can't come. I'm allowed to give them but there's one condition that you should give me your ticket and I will give you this ticket for the thing, which is much more expensive but we offer it. I was part of the group, I was the only one I said who'd arrived to England. It was an Italian group, never existed. So I exchanged the tickets, so that when I went back again to where they sold the tickets, the cheap tickets went away like hot cakes, yes, right? And that was my only act that I can be proud of, as far as the rest is concerned, it was merely a matter of friendship.

RL: Where were you living in London?

JT: Wait a moment, I was living in North East, wait a moment, near Stamford Hill. I can't remember what the name of the street is but it was not a main road in Stamford Hill but one of the side roads.

RL: What was it that you were living in?

JT: Beg your pardon?

RL: What was it that you were living in?

JT: Oh, just a family who rented a room

RL: Whilst you were in UMIST, where were you living, when you were at university?

Tape 3: 41 minutes 46 seconds

JT: Now then, for a short time in Welbeck Grove, that was the only time during the whole youth that I lived in the same house as my sister. Oh yes, I lived with the Greenbergs for quite a long time and then, when you come to, on Bury New Road, after a petrol station, the first little street going right.

RL: Kings Road?

JT: No, no, it's a small, narrow street. Did you ever know a Mrs Adler?

RL: I know the name.

JT: Yes. It was there. The only funny thing I can do... Should I continue on this?

RL:

Yes.

JT: I was already an optician, yes, right? The thing is that the other boys, there were about 5 or 6 boys who used to come and some slept there and others used to come in for meals. She used to cook, she used to have, let me say, a fire there, and every time one of the boys came, they started off at about 5 o'clock, she used to take out the food, take out a portion, and put it back again. I worked outside of town, I didn't want to work, let me say, in Manchester, I didn't want to have my friends as clients, yes? In Duckenfield, right? By the time I came, she must have put it in or put it out, because it was after 8 o'clock in the evening, the food. And every time it was cooked again. When I came, let me say, it had no taste, so that's how I learnt to mix things, I put in anything, anything just to give it a taste, it didn't matter what it was, right? People are still disgusted with me how I mix my food. That was it.

RL: So this was after you returned from London?

JT: Yes, yes.

RL: So by then the war had finished?

JT: Wait a moment, I do remember the day, I still lived at the Greenbergs, I remember the day that Italy, you know at that time one thought that the war would be finished in Italy, there would be nothing, but what happened is that the Germans entered into Italy and all the tragedies start from that moment. Repeat your question, please.

RL: I was talking about the war finishing.

JT: Oh yes, I remember the day, let me say, that that happened. I was at Reich's house in Wellington Street, they lived at the time. No, I just, let me say, I felt light and free, yes? I can't put words to it, I can only say it felt as if all the oppression, for lack of a better word, had disappeared, yes?

RL: Had you been following the course of the war?

JT: Yes but in a very, you see the thing is that the news that was given was never a detailed information, yes? After all, you don't want to frighten people.

Tape 3: 46 minutes 42 seconds

What did we know, let me say, that it was very near, that the invasion could have come very easily, that there was partly intelligence, partly lack that made it so that it didn't happen. I do remember going to the cinemas and coming out and looking at the sky with a flag, things like that. What difference I could feel? Yes, since at night we had blackout, so when there was a fog, there was really a fog, I mean, you really didn't see across the room. But one, you know, one says that up to a certain point you see and after that it's the imagination, yes, so here it was also a matter of imagination. One was enwrapped by this fog, it was a friendly fog, and finding one's way home, it was a pleasure, it was a game one played with oneself, no words, one didn't share it with anyone because one was afraid, let me say, that they would be practical, that I'd get a practical answer to my imagination and I didn't want to hear it.

RL: Did you experience any bombing raids?

JT: Yes, I remember, I worked in the garage at the time and I lived in Northumberland Street and during the night I think I heard, I must have heard the bombs that come down. In the morning, I went in the garage, down Bury New Road, and then towards Lower Broughton. As I looked down Bury New Road since it was higher, you were looking down and you could see, oh yes, I remember now, that the town was burning and you could see flames and so forth, the smoke. Now then, and you know what my prayer was? That a bomb should drop on the garage. And I walked to the garage hoping that it was happening. Nothing happened. It was still standing. At least I would have had a justification for leaving the garage. That's it.

RL: Did you belong in Manchester, did you mix, were there any youth groups, any activities?

JT: I tell you what happened, you see since one grows up and what happened in Italy, despite the fact that the surface was very calm, you knew that it was the beginning of a tragedy. I apologise, would you repeat the question?

RL: I was asking about youth groups.

JT: How did I come to this? Listen, they are quite right when they say that I jump from one subject to another subject. No, I never belonged to a youth group. I came here and since at that time, let me say, since I really had it in for fascism, I didn't want any 'ism', yes? Socialism, communism, fascism, nothing, right? That was more or less what happened. I have grown since then but at that time that's exactly what I felt. Besides that, I remember being at a hospital and when I came into the room - I've got a doctor who takes care of me, yes, right? - and as I was going to sit down, he said to me, 'Mr Tenenbaum, you have a total refusal of other people's ideas', right? And he's right, he's right. And it must have been already when I was a youth because something similar my father said about when I was a child. I was probably like a child, it's like I saw things but I didn't participate in the thing, right? It's like having a camera in one's head. I've been accused, let me say, of I'm not interested. All the mechanisms, all the things happened in me but I certainly didn't share it with other people.

RL: During the war years here, did you ever come across any anti-Semitism or any anti-foreign feeling?

JT: I personally, no. What I felt personally, it's sometimes very difficult to know.

Tape 3: 53 minutes 32 seconds

May give an example of Italy? I talk in parables, it's terrible. Instead of answering directly, I go around telling stories. I worked in most hospitals in Italy and I used to go to Naples regularly. I have there friends, they are ophthalmologists, I used to stay at their house, let me say for over 30 years I was at their house. Every time I was there, it was my home there. I had a discussion with the wife. It was about, I can't remember exactly but it was something to do with Jews. And I turned to my, to him... and I said, 'Look, I'll ask your husband and if he agrees with you, I'll accept it'. So we turned round to him and I told him and he came out with so much hatred about Israel, you can't imagine. And I'd known him over 30 years, 35 years, and he'd never, never showed anything at all. I must apologise, you see in Italy one loves the person, it doesn't change anything at all about the rest is concerned, yes? As they

say in Italy, if you're simpatico, you're accepted. They would never say into your face something that could be unpleasant. Let me get back to my story. Sorry

RL: Right. I was also wondering did you have to register with the police when you turned 18?

JT: Oh yes, that was the time when I went to the labour exchange, which was also, let me say, where you were supposed to register. I was 29 years old. My friends told me, 'Look, go there, at least you get a few shillings to live, you can't be without money'.

RL: Were you not younger? Was this after you qualified and you'd been an optician?

JT: I think so, yes, yes.

RL: I was thinking of during the war years, if you had to register with the police then?

JT: Now when you say register with the police, do you mean to go into the army?

RL: No, because you were an alien.

JT: Oh, now then, the thing is that...May I not answer?

RL: OK, we have to finish here anyway because this tape's about to end.

End of Tape 3

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 0 minutes 1 second

RL: This is the interview with Joseph Tenenbaum and it's Tape 4. So, you were going to tell me about registering at the age of 29?

JT: No, I didn't go there to register, I went there because I was unemployed. And when he interviewed me, he asked me, let me say, how was it that you were not in the army? I really didn't know. I lived in my own world and I didn't know. But he said 'how old are you?'

Tape 4: 0 minute 41 seconds

JT: And I said 29. He said, 'Well, at 29, it's too late', right? Look, that I'm grateful to Britain because in Italy they would have taken you and put you into prison straightaway for not having done it. But I quite innocently, I really didn't know.

RL: Were you in touch with your parents at all?

JT: Wait a moment, I believe it was after we thought that Italy thought it had finished the war, we got a message from the Red Cross, yes, about our parents, that they were alive. I don't know exactly when that happened but I think it was approximately at that time. Well, what can I say? Yes, one felt...I don't know one boy of the hostel who hadn't lost his parents, I really don't know one whose parents were still alive after the war.

RL: Were you still in touch with all the boys from the hostel?

JT: No, I was in touch with one, this friend of mine, who unfortunately died a few years ago. I considered him my younger and wiser brother, yes?

RL: When did you meet up with your parents?

JT: What actually happened, after they finished the war, my sister and I were stateless, yes? Now France didn't permit the crossing of France to stateless people because at that time there were lots of refugees who came from the various countries. So I think I didn't go there for two years or longer to Italy: a) I didn't have the money; b) let me say, the French wouldn't have let me go there. Exactly when I came to Italy, I don't know, but it was I think two years later, something like that.

RL: How did you feel going back?

JT: It was, what do you call it? How can I put it? It is at a moment of one's life where, let me say, one tries to suppress all the things that are unpleasant to one. But suppression means reducing the affection that one has or what one is prepared to give. I don't know for how long but for quite a long time I had great respect for my parents and hoped to reach, let me say, to love them. It came after a time, but it took too long, right? At least one felt that it took too long. As far as my father is concerned, I told you, let me say, before, what I thought and so on. The last year of his life when we were together in Milan, I was really delighted to have him as company and it was reciprocal and I learnt to love him.

RL: On your first visit back, how long did you stay for?

JT: I think a short time because I suppose I must have been working here and so I had to go back.

RL: How did it feel being back in Italy?

JT: At that visit, let me say, I can only see the house, the park, as you want to say it. No, I had no feelings about Italy at that moment, it was just a matter of my feelings towards my parents and that one has to start almost life again, yes?

Tape 4: 6 minutes 24 seconds

Sorry, no, I was thinking something very... You see, my father and I, you see, he died at 99 years old, he was 99 years old. About 4 or 5 months before that, I was no longer his son. He recognised everybody, he knew everybody's birthday, he knew everything at all, he learned every day, nothing, except that I was his friend of the youth, yes? And that was delightful. My friends, when I told them that, they were upset because he didn't recognise his son but we went on like a house on fire. Really, let me say, we enjoyed each other's company. He told me, 'Do you remember when that and that happened?' Well, he used to have a woman who looked after him during this day. I used to leave home about 8 o'clock in the morning, the woman came at half past eight, she stayed til 5 o'clock. At 5 o'clock she phoned up my studio and she said she's going now and put my father on to the phone: so, 'Who's this speaking?' 'Jo'. 'Jo who?' 'Your son, Jo'. 'Ah, I'm so delighted to hear you. When are you coming?' So I said I'll be there in two hours. Well, I had a patient and I accompanied part of the way and I arrived a little late. We have a long corridor and he was on the wheelchair at that time. We had, I don't know about the distance, but a few yards. We both smiled at each other and I

said, 'Father, I'm really sorry I'm late'. He said, 'It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, but it's that so and so, my son, who promised to be here at 7 o'clock and he's not arrived yet', right? So you see it was quite pleasant whatever happened, it was nothing – people are very foolish, they think, let me say, that a person, let me say, who...It was a beautiful relationship, yes, right?

RL: Coming back to some kind of chronology, you were back in Manchester, you came back to Manchester from London. What did you do when you came back to Manchester from London?

JT: Unfortunately, I had to go back to optics. The thing is that I had a practice up in Prestwich, you know the main road in Prestwich, it was a small place and I used to read a lot there because I had very few patients. And when somebody looked in at the window and I saw that they were tempted to enter, I used to shoo them away. Well, in any case, I used to close the practice and not be there for 3-4 weeks. I used to come back and I'd have letters waiting for me from the doctor – 'Mr Tenenbaum, please be so kind, when you come back, please get in touch with me, because I've got lot of patients who are waiting for you'. In any case, that was my attitude to work. May I jump a little bit and I promise to come back? My parents were still in Italy all the time. I received a letter from my father, stating that he had answered an advert and that I had an interview in a month's time, something like that. I answered, saying 'Father, I can't come because I've got my business'. This wasn't true. I did work but, let me say, I could have done also without it. I had to go back to answer to the thing, to the advert, and at that time in Italy to get a job was really very difficult – you had to know somebody who knows somebody else and so forth. The thing is when I came into the room, it was a very large firm, it employed about 2000 people, as I came in, the managing director said to me, 'You are my man'. I didn't want to stay there. I thought I just have a holiday in Italy. So, I sat down and then was the conversation, let me say, of things. So he said, 'How much do you want?' And so I thought if I ask him the double not of what I earned here but the double of which I could possibly earn here, he'd say no to me and I could go home and he said yes. So I said, 'Look, I don't know the Italian laws'. He said, 'You mean the taxes?' So I said, 'Yes'. So, he said, 'netto', in other words, they pay the taxes for me. Look, the conversation went on and every time I tried to find a way out not to accept the job, he found an answer to every one, right? As I say, 'Prima Klasse A', in other words I can't go a higher grade. Well, in any case, that was my – as I said, I was spoilt everywhere!

Tape 4: 12 minutes 47 seconds

And that was my saving because here at work I used to test eyes. I was considered good but I wanted to do something that could give, let me say, satisfaction to me or pleasure to me and satisfaction to the others. I then worked in Venice for a year and a half.

RL: So, first of all you had your own practice on Bury New Road?

JT: Wait a moment, is that Bury New Road? Yes, Bury New Road, yes, just near the top where you go into Prestwich.

RL: When did that finish?

JT: Wait a moment, 1959 I think.

RL: And 1959, what happened then?

JT: I then went back to Italy.

RL: This was the job that you got?

JT: Yes.

RL: What firm was it?

JT: Wait a moment, no, the firm in Italy was Salmoiraghi. Now then, Salmoiraghi, they were a state-owned firm. I tell you, let me say, in Italy, so that the industry shouldn't collapse, the government took over, right? To give an example, this director who interviewed me, he became the director of Alpha Romeo afterwards, so you see it's all a big family.

RL: That wasn't the first job that you got was it when you left Manchester?

JT: Wait a moment, when I went back to Italy? No, that was the first job I got in Italy.

RL: So was that 1959 as well?

JT: Wait a moment; you make me work so hard!

RL: Sorry!

JT: Now then, I think I went back to Italy in 1958 or 59, right? There in Italy, he asked me what I wanted to do and since I didn't have my graduation from Italy but in England, they couldn't accept it, so I became manager in their, what do you call it? In their practice in Venice..

RL: What made you go back to Italy?

JT: My father wrote to me saying that we're none of us getting any younger, right? Well, more or less one understood that he would like at least one of his children to be with them and that was that. Well, in any case, that step to go back to Italy saved me.

Tape 4: 16 minutes 14 seconds

RL: Were you happy to go back?

JT: I wasn't happy to go back but I was happy once I started the work that I did because Italy had only one factory near Venice that made contact lenses but they used to make stamped contact lenses. Print, yes? You say stamp? Right! They asked me what I want to do, so I said I want to go back into contact lens work. I'd done contact lenses quite a lot. So that I got through a certain factory here in England owned by Nissel, a Hungarian Jew who owned the factory, and I got him a contract with Salmoiraghi with the Italian firm, for making lenses. And since there were so very few, I don't know, 10 or 20 ophthalmologists who fitted contact lenses, right? I said it's useless to manufacture lenses unless one teaches. And once I had said it, they thought it was a good idea, right? I wasn't so happy when they said it was a good idea. So they said, who can teach them? And so I said, I will do that but I'd never taught in my life before. It's true that students when they did their last year used to come to me to do practice

but that's quite a different story. They sent out cards to all these freshmen people and they received over 200 answers that they want to participate. And I thought, 'G-d, you're a fool. You get excellent salary, you are spoilt, you, let me say, you have got a car to hire whenever you desire, if you go anywhere further than Florence, you can take a plane. What an earth did you have to mention that thing?' Right? Now then, the day that it came to teaching, there were about 15 people there. I sat in front of them. Listen, I didn't know what to say. You know sometimes one says intelligent things before being intelligent, yes? I got up and I said, 'I know and you know that you have never seen a contact lens before', right? 'If anything I say during the whole course that doesn't seem logical to you, I am wrong', yes, right? Look, I tell you something, it changed the atmosphere immediately. You know in Italy nobody ever admits, at least at that time, no-one will ever admit to being wrong. Besides that, I've never been to a lecturer who says, 'I am wrong'. Having admitted that, they immediately, let me say, they believed their opinion is valid my opinion and since I didn't go to school, as I said, from 11 till I was 18/19, I had to do everything in a simple way because otherwise I wouldn't have understood it, yes? It's not that they don't understand – I wouldn't have understood it! I give you an example, you know what astigmatism is, yes? It is a steeper curve and a flatter curve at 90 degrees. Now then, you know people are very strange, if you tell somebody the formulas and everything at all and yet one can't hold it in your hand, right? It doesn't mean anything. If they stopped and think about it, they'd realise it doesn't mean anything to them. They only know that this formula solves the problem. Well, I took an orange to explain. I took out the insides and then I cut on the two sides, right? Now then, then you have a short and a flat curve and a steeper curve at 90 degrees, right? And it was remarkable because over half of them were ophthalmologists. All of a sudden, it became clear what an astigmatism was. Up till then they only knew that when they do with the light, then the movement is different, yes, right? And the rest of the course was all done on a similar thing, yes, right? I better make it shorter because it becomes a bit too long. In any case, I remember at the end of this course, it was the first time they cried, yes, right? And after they left, I sat down for a long time – I had lost a family. It was really that I'd found my skin, yes? And the thing is since I had to invent everything, I knew about the eye, how the eye is made and so forth and I knew what the eye needed to be healthy and the rest I didn't want to know, right? I also came to the element, that Goethe, I can't remember which book I read it, let me say, but Goethe said that it is not worthwhile re-thinking something that has been created 2000 years ago. I thought the opposite. I thought the thing what you should do, let me say, is to ask yourself. I remember that one of the first things, which had nothing to do with optics sort of thing, I asked myself why is it men have hair on their chests, right?

Tape 4: 23 minutes 42 seconds

And do you know, I've no answer. I asked everybody but I have no answer whatsoever. But if you turn it round and you ask why do women not have hair on their chests, you've got the answer. You don't want the poor child, let me say, to suck hair and milk at the same time. Now then, when unconsciously I said, let me say, that I could say to them that if I make a mistake, that if you think I am wrong, then I'm wrong, simply because I recreated the thing, yes, right? I didn't care what the book said. If I did read it, I did it, let me say, with my presumption, certainly presumption, it convinced me of something else but in relationship to what I already knew. People who listen feel that. There was another incident, I don't know whether the second course, they asked me a question and I went to the board and I started drawing the eye and I started drawing the eye and by drawing the eye, at a certain moment I said to myself, 'You're a fool. You don't know the answer', yes? So I turned around, I was prepared to give them an answer whether I knew anything or not but luckily I was saved from doing that, I turned round and I said, 'I don't know the answer'. There was such a pleasurable

relief amongst all of them, that, how can I say it? They helped me to keep on my feet, yes, right? At the end of the course, I went back home. You have seen Greta Garbo in the cinema, yes? Usually, she finishes off where she puts her hand on the doorpost and puts her head, resting her head on it. I was in the same situation. All of a sudden, I hear my mother from the back of me. So she said, 'What are you doing? Praying?' So I said yes. So she said, 'Without a kipa?' Right? I thought it was very funny. But it was really, I was praying, because I remember also that, I don't know how long the course took, but I remember, oh yes, I remember another incident. I had never given an exam paper, after all I had never taught and I didn't know how to prepare an exam paper and I wouldn't have known what is difficult and what is not difficult. So, three days before the end of the course, I said to them, 'Look, I'm not going to give you neither a – what do you call it? - an oral exam nor a written exam. I want of you that each one of you should ask a question to me.' And that I would judge, I didn't say that, but I wanted to judge by their questions. You know that in the Yeshiva the first thing they tell you is that the important thing is the question not the answer. You always say an intelligent casher, you don't say, yes, right? From that moment on to the end of the course, I've never seen people, old people, young people, let me say, read everything that they had done during the length of the course. And it was delightful because it wasn't a weight for them. But the thing was this, even better, psychologically it was excellent. Why? Because they were ophthalmologists and they were opticians and each group didn't want to make a bad, what do you call it? Bad example, bad...

RL: Bad impression?

JT: Bad impression. You can imagine, the ophthalmologists with the opticians, let me say. Listen, they worked so hard. I said even before, 'I don't want any excuses. As far as I can see someone else has already asked the same question, so they had to even prepare more than one question. It saved me but it was delightful also for them.'

RL: Was the course on contact lenses?

JT: Yes, right. I did it for 10-11 years. In that period, I was invited to the States, to Japan, I lectured in Germany, in Switzerland, in France, also to Israel. Yes, in Israel, you see, I came there, so they invited me to talk to them, to the association. I thought, I didn't prepare anything, I'd been going around for 10 years talking about these things, I thought I just say in English what I had said in Italian.

Tape 4: 30 minutes 18 seconds

But what happened, let me say, all of a sudden, I got blocked, yes, my mind became void, completely. You know when you're so sure of yourself that you don't take any notice of things. Well, in any case, to make it short this story, the thing was that the people had been divided in two groups, the ones who enjoyed my being blocked and the ones who tried to save me from being blocked, so at a certain moment one of them said to me, what must have been a humourist probably, 'Mr Tenenbaum, if we were to ask you questions, would it be easier for you to answer us?' So I must have nodded. Wait a moment, just before then someone suggested, 'Perhaps we can take you a cup of coffee', right? Wait a moment, in Israel they don't know any halfness, they come in with a cup of coffee, big like that, full to the brim and it was boiling hot and they also gave me also a great big piece of cake and I in silence sat down and sipped the coffee and ate the cake and then that happened with the, let me say, 'If we ask you questions?', right? You know Haydn's, Symphony, I don't remember which number, they have candles in it, and as each musician goes out, he puts out the light of his

candle until there remains only one and that is exactly what happened. Slowly, slowly, they got up and they walked out until I was there sitting with the secretary and I think one other person. Well, I must say that I have been invited again in Israel but it was another... I came from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, I came with a friend, with a girlfriend. Now then she stayed at her friend's house. I walked out of the hotel – it was one of the hotels along the beach - and I thought, 'G-d, you are really an idiot. How can you come, you speak in another language, not prepare anything?' Well, in any case, I had to laugh about myself. I come up to my friend's house, I ring the bell, she opens the door and she said, 'Well, how did it go?' I was laughing and I said, 'Fiasco'. She said, 'You are the usual Jo Tenenbaum. It goes perfectly well and you always say Fiasco'. That was my introduction to Israel.

RL: Did your girlfriend live in Israel?

JT: Yes.

RL: How had you met her?

JT: Ah, now we want to know how I met my girlfriend! I was standing Ben Yehuda, right? And there was a little bar there and this girl was sitting there and I was walking up and down, let me say, as an excuse to look at her. All of sudden, she said, 'Will you stop walking up and down? Sit down and don't make a fuss about the whole thing'. Well, in any case, we became friends. I even went so far as to get her a flat. Well, she lived by herself, right? But I paid for six months and then she accused me afterwards, let me say, that it was a terrible thing because she didn't earn any money and my paying her flat for six months means that she was, let me say, she got used to living better, to have to go back, I wasn't there I must say, to normal life was terrible. I asked her but she left me, right? She said, 'But what have I done that you like me? You see I'm not every woman's first choice as you notice.

RL: Did you live in this flat at that point?

JT: Yes, I lived one and a half years in Israel.

RL: When was that?

JT: 1970 -71.

Tape 4: 35 minutes 14 seconds

RL: And what had made you decide to do that?

JT: I wanted to go to Israel, to live in Israel. I went to the Ulpan first, that's in Nazareth. Well, I might as well tell you. The top of Nazareth was the Jewish part and the bottom was the Arab part and they had a small hospital and I found out that – they are Christians in Nazareth, the Arabic – and their hospital was a fate bene fratelli hospital, which was the hospital where Italian fryers, who also had a hospital in Milan and I had worked in that hospital in Milan and made friends too, so I went there and offered my services. I was welcomed, I was introduced to a group of children. You know, there is really a presumption on my side. I hardly knew any Hebrew, I already asked if there were lessons in Arabic, yes, right? That's typical Tenenbaum, don't worry. Now then, I can't remember whether the 3rd or 4th time I went down, we were sitting, there was only the secretary and I, and at a certain moment, he said,

‘Well, come with me, please’, so I followed him and we went to various rooms and we came to the operating theatre and he walked inside and as I walked inside, he said, ‘Well, you can also look behind the door’. All of a sudden I realised what had happened. He took me for an Israeli agent, who had come to spy on him, right? Because already the previous time I had been there at the hospital, he’d asked me if I could intercede with the government to let them have a room or flat for a doctor which they want to call in from Italy but it didn’t register with me. But after that, let me say, I was very careful, I didn’t go back again. I didn’t want to get involved with things, which, well, it was the sensible thing to do. The thing is that I enjoyed it because of the girls and so forth. Since they go to Catholic schools and all the teachers are mostly Italian, all the people there speak Italian too, right? And since the bus to go to Jerusalem from there, you can either go by the coast way or you can go the internal way and the internal way is beautiful, really beautiful. It reminded me so much of Tuscany. Look, it has, you know, the sight towards the sea is disinteresting because it has variety but beauty, it is much more...

RL: Was this your first time in Israel or had you been there before?

JT: Let me think, I think that was the first time I was in Israel. I went back again afterwards.

RL: How did you feel going to Israel?

JT: Right, the first thing that I felt that in Italy one can live without ever facing life, yes? In Israel, it isn’t possible. There’s no way out. You have to give yourself answers, right? It took me longer than one year really to have accepted it and loved it. I went back to Italy because of my parents but life in Israel is much harder than, what do you call it, in Italy or anywhere in Europe.

RL: Had your parents died by then or they were still alive?

JT: No, my mother died in 1980, my father in 1985

RL: And they didn’t mind you going to Israel? Was that alright?

JT: No, that they didn’t mind. G-d, this is like a confessional! You’re terrible!

Tape 4: 41 minutes 12 seconds

RL: I was just thinking because you left England to go back to Italy because of your parents and now you’re leaving Italy and they’re still there.

JT: That is true! Wait a moment, I just want to, you know I never got married? I remember I was in London at the time and I received a letter from my father and he said, ‘What are you waiting for? What do you think you are, the Aga Khan?’ Yes? Now then! Right? Let me say, who will have you as an old man, yes? And since then my friends who got to know me in London call me Aga. You know you asked me before how many names I have, right? Now, to them I’m Aga. Now let me go back again to the main string. I went back to Italy and my father said to me, just like the other time when I came from England, that I should come to Italy, that we’re getting older and so forth and I accepted it immediately. At the time, I thought it was the right thing to do. A few months later, I remember we had a discussion about something and my father turned round to me and he said, ‘Jo’, I don’t know if he said

‘Be honest to yourself’ but he said, ‘If you really wanted to stay in Israel, you would have stayed in Israel’ and it was the truth. I realised in that moment, let me say, I took the opportunity to have an easier life, right? Luckily for me, let me say, I didn’t realise the moment that I said it but it was the truth all the same, right?

RL: What did you do when you returned to Italy?

JT: Wait a moment, oh yes, I had my practice, there were 3 doctors, a gynaecologist, an ophthalmologist and I can’t remember what the other one was and I. I also travelled, I travelled for my work. I think that I’ve worked in most hospitals, except in Trieste, I never reached Trieste. As I said, you know, it continued in a certain way, I still was invited to give seminars or something like that, but the fact that I had from up in the mountains - yes? - I had made friends up and down, and there I even had my room in their house and my name... target? No, what do you call it?

RL: Plate

JT: Plate, and they had my nameplate on the door and that went down right to Sicily, right?

RL: You specialised in...

JT: Well, I tell you something, I have to confess again. You know I wrote, I’ve got it here, ‘People only boast when they are no longer worthy of praise’, right? Well, in any case, I was the contact lens fitter, I was considered, as far as pathological cases are concerned, there were two famous clinics in Europe, one was in Lyon and the other was in Barcelona, and all their patients they used to send to me. I was tops, right? I was invited ‘...’ Yes, I was good! You see the thing is that I went also over the tops, right? I give you an example, you know the Congress of ... you must have heard of? No? Really not? Well, it is one of the largest firms. Well, before they started off the Congress they said to the Chairman of the Congress, ‘Please, you are a friend of Tenenbaum, you tell him not to do his usual show’, yes, right? Yes, I tell you something, I loved my job and I knew that I loved it; I was happy and I knew that I was happy; without knowing it, let me say, a tragedy is not a tragedy until one is conscious of the tragedy. Everything that happens to a child, he is not conscious that this is a tragedy, he just feels it and he either cries or something like that.

Tape 4: 48 minutes 38 seconds

I realised then, let me say, that really that’s what it felt like, to the point you see...Before I start telling you this, I must tell you, let me say, that I exaggerated. You know in the Torah and also in Christianity, they say ‘Love your, Veohavto reicho comocho - ‘Love the next person’. Now then, I went over the top. If people used to come from far away, I used to get them a room in the hotel, I didn’t charge them more, but I charged them less. That’s boasting! But I came to the point, let me say, I managed to reach my age without having anything at all. Now then, not for nothing we are given, we say we have to choose between good and bad, yes? But one has also responsibility towards oneself and towards one’s family and things like that. Well, when you are really enamoured, you don’t see anything at all. After all, I was so spoilt, I’d got so much money, let me say, I was..., yes, right? I didn’t go to nightclubs or anything like that. But you know to say to someone when they say, ‘How much is it?’ and you say ‘Nothing’, it’s such a pleasure, yes, that’s it. And I had the possibility to buy all the books I wanted to. It’s almost, let me say, like I was spoilt once again. Wait a moment, we are in Israel? Where are we now?

RL: When you came back to Italy and you had your own practice.

JT: Yes, now what happened is the practice closed because at a certain moment one of the ophthalmologists said that he hasn't got enough clients to be able to afford keeping this studio and he said he would go, and he really did go, to a clinic, where he paid a percentage of what he earned. When he had the studio, he had to pay every month a salary, whether he had one client or ten clients or twenty. There he only had to pay a percentage. So he started off. Then another one said that his wife had given him, let me say, oh no, no. One of the doctors, the women doctors said that she had inherited an apartment from her grandmother. The rent had already doubled, it was only two now. We put in adverts, but, we had answers to the adverts, so I could have answered, because I was responsible for the studio, but they wanted, let me say, to do one hour or two hours or so forth, but to put in one hour or two hours, I needed a secretary to do all that and I didn't, foolishly I didn't. I made a lot of mistakes too. After I had closed that studio, I used to do work only for ophthalmologists, I used to go from one place to another, hospitals or ophthalmologists.

RL: Did you get involved in the Jewish community in any communal way at all?

JT: No, I tell you even worse. If they knew in the synagogue where I went with work, they probably would have come, but I never said anything. They only found out because one of the friends of ours, he went I don't know where, southern Italy or wherever he went, he went into an optician because he had something to repair, so they asked him the name and he said, 'Tenenbaum' and they said, 'You are related to Tenenbaum?' sort of thing and then he went out telling everybody. But I tried to keep away because, I don't know, can I take it to the extreme please and give you another parable? I always thought that I dreaded, let me say, marrying a woman who needed contact lenses, waking up in the morning and her telling me that she has got pain in her eyes or something like that. Well, the Jewish community was the next step and that is part of the reason why I didn't say anything at all.

RL: Were you involved in any charitable activity or any kind of organisation?

Tape 4: 55 minutes 22 seconds

JT: To me, I thought, I realised that afterwards, while people make money first and then they give charity, I started off giving charity first, right? The opposite way round! You see I had also that intelligent behaviour that I used to say to someone who came, let me say, 'I give it you cheaper but please don't tell anybody'. Now then, since if he had told somebody, then I probably would have had more clients, but I didn't want even that. G-d, it's a boasting manual! Now then, now I've come to a phase, if you want me to afterwards I can go back, I haven't retired but my mind has retired because when you do only pathological cases, you need your instinct, and if you start doubting about your instinct, then it is no good. I do things... You know, there are a long list of questions that you're supposed to ask to have the feeling right, because when they say they're happy, I become doubtful and I ask them questions to get the fault in the lens. And today I notice a day or two later that I haven't done something that was particularly important. So it seems that it has come to the moment where I should say, 'Listen, you've had your time, I enjoyed it all', right?

RL: This tape's about to end, so we'll stop.

TAPE 5**Tape 5: 0 minute 6 seconds**

RL: I wanted really now to ask you about how you see yourself in terms of identity?

JT: I always felt that I was happily given a lot of gifts. I carried them up to a certain height and then I do something, let me say, to ruin them. If I want to be nasty to myself, I could say it's almost a death wish. When it comes to the point where I could relax and enjoy the things, I just do something that it collapses. It's almost, let me say, that one says that one follows a road, but the thing is to come to the end of the road. I fall in love with the road and forget the end. '...' When I, let me say, analyse the thing, I know that I have done the wrong things, because the truth is one first has to, let me say, to create the pile and then one can be generous, yes? One shouldn't do it the opposite way around. We have quite a lot of arguments, my sister and I, and I know had I behaved differently I could have been of help to the family, I could have been of help to society. I started off when I came to the continent and so forth, and really I think I wanted to show them what is their loss, the fact that so many Jews had been killed. As I began to, let me say, the first words that I said, even before the ones I mentioned before, was that my name is Joseph Tenenbaum, that it is the name of Jews of Eastern Europe. I always felt - you know people feel that the world owes them - I always felt that I owed the world, yes? In a certain way, I don't know where the thing came from, I never talked about it because it isn't a subject that one can talk to people.

RL: Why did you feel that you owed the world?

JT: I don't know. I just felt, let me say, that I was born and I owed it. I've never managed to define it even to myself. You see, up to the time I came to Italy, you know I came back to Italy, before that I did my work, yes? I was good at my work, right? But...May I tell you just one little incident? That was in that place in Duckenfield. A little boy comes in and he says, 'Are you the optician?' So I say, 'Yes'. And he says, 'Mummy says that you're the optician who doesn't let ladies have the glasses that they want'. I was so presumptuous that I thought that I knew better.

Tape 5: 6 minutes 7 seconds

I think I...You know one can't dissociate oneself from the world but when we have arguments with my sister, I wrote a saying, let me say, that had I thought that I was right, I would not have raised my voice. I knew when she told me off that I hadn't done this and that and the other, that I'm guilty of that. You see people are nice to people whom they like and I like people, yes, right? You know I could probably have survived had I had a secretary outside the room, I'd just say 'Good Day' to the pigeons and then walk out and the secretary said, I don't know, 'Two Hundred', yes, right? That would have saved me. You know the thing is that I never thought about money, yes? It is really, you know each person's brain is made in a particular way and today they have the whole theory, let me say, that if there is a cell missing, you behave in a certain way: it's not your fault, it is the cell that is at fault! Well, in any case, I always felt that I am like that. May I say one in Yiddish? My mother said it to me: 'Die Welt muss sein wie die Welt und du musst bleiben ein Schnorrer' and they added to that 'Geld, Schmeld', yes, right. In other words, let me say, that I have no concept of money or things like that. Now then, I console myself or at least I try to that people felt quite happy. Will you permit me not to talk in that certain sense about myself?

RL: I just wondered, you know you were born in Italy, then came to England, then went to Israel, then went back to Italy, in terms of national identity where do you lie?

JT: Where I would like to live?

RL: No, not where you would like to live but how you would describe yourself in terms of national identity.

JT: Now then, certainly not English. I couldn't describe myself as Italian for the simple reason that Italians wouldn't permit myself to describe myself as Italian. You see even when I speak in Italian, I've been punished, yes, right? The thing is this that you should never imitate as a child the grown-ups because it is the mirror of your future. You see my parents, both parents, spoke quite a lot of languages. My father spoke each one of them, he spoke them well, he wrote them well, he spoke without an accent. My mother spoke an equal number of languages, badly each one of them and I used to imitate her. Now then, when I speak Italian, let me say if I'm going on a train, they'll say, 'By chance, you're not English are you?' Because I still have the - what do you call it? - going up and down of the English. A few months ago when I was here in England, before coming, I called a friend of mine, I told her about my Italian in Italy. I said, 'Do me a favour! What is my English like in England?' Silence! So I said, 'look, for once tell me the truth!' So she said, 'Oh, you're so continental'. I speak English with a slight Italian what-do-you-call-it and I speak Italian in the same manner. Now then, let me get back again to the main subject. You asked me, let me say, how I felt. Years ago, I would have liked to, oh yes, I've worked in Venice, and after a few days I was making friends with the barman, you know there was a bar near where I worked. And I went inside and it was quite a large bar and he had a mirror right around the wall and the mirror was inclined so that you could see that nobody could pinch anything. And he said to me, 'Where are you from?' I understood, let me say, from originally, so I said 'Italy' and as I turned around I saw him saying to another client, 'That fellow's mad!' Because I came from England and they said to me I walk like an Englishman, I talk like an Englishman, I dress like an Englishman, right? Now you know about my language. Please take, put me on the right road! Where am I?

Tape 5: 13 minutes 32 seconds

RL: Well, you're on the right road! So where does that leave you?

JT: Wait a moment, now then, my friend in Naples said to me a short time ago, 'You know, Jo, you're neither a Jew nor a Christian', right? I don't know about that but how can I say? Certainly a Jew, yes? To Israel it took me some time but once it happened, I feel very strongly about it. Let's say if I had my choice it would have been an Italian Israeli. Yes? Right? That's it! They invited me to come to Israel, so I said, 'Yes, if you keep me!' Because here I can still work to keep myself but in Israel it would be rather hard. In England I used to come to England every summer and used to work as a locum. I used to go from Manchester down to Wales and up to the Lake District. I enjoyed it and you know what I enjoyed most? I used to go not only to old age homes but also to...Mentally ill people - what do you call it? Well, in any case, they were delightful! I thought they were really delightful. How can I say it? It is almost like a child coming back. The others, before answering or before asking, they would think three times which way they should do it so that it could be to their advantage or not. Here I had natural human beings.

RL: Coming back to your identity, do you feel in any way English?

JT: I have no, how can I say it? You see I have lots of friends, English friends. You see, being with English friends made me more alien, not alien because I wanted to be alien, but because they considered me alien. You see, whatever I said, I have a good example from Italy. I'm in a car with an acquaintance, we're travelling. He told me he works for Barclays in Milan. We talked about England and so forth and he said, 'You're English?' 'Were you born in England?' So I said no, I said I was born in Italy. So he accepted that. Two hours later he spoke about me as Italian, something like that. Three minutes later, he said, 'You English, you're strange people' or something like that. So every time I wanted to participate, I was pushed into the other category. I was the example of what is negative about the other country, yes?

RL: Where do you feel most at home?

JT: You see, I sometimes answer myself that the reason why I didn't get married, for the same reason that I don't know where I feel more at home. I remember one day speaking to my sister. I had two girlfriends. So she said, 'Well, which one do you want?' And I said, 'I like them both'. So she said, 'Imagine they're here in front of you and you have to decide which one' and I couldn't decide. Now then, when I'm in England, for instance when I talk to you now in English, I can't remember the Italian. You know it is like going on a train. I speak English and I go with this train. But to change to Italian I have to wait until the train stops at the station, I get off and take the next train the other way around. I would be a terrible, what do you call someone who translates immediately? What do you call it?

RL: Simultaneous.

JT: Simultaneous interpreter. I would be terrible because at the present as I'm talking, I try to, I can't think in Italian. It's just a single track mind, yes, right? That's it!

RL: So you don't know where you feel most at home?

Tape 5: 19 minutes 45 seconds

JT: I tell you, at present, since part of the idea was to come to England, I miss Italy. It doesn't take long. You know at my age I've become the uncle and the grandfather of lots of little girls. And when I told them that I come to England, they felt terrible. You see, please forgive me, I just make a jump. I very often make friendships, on the bus for instance, two bus stops and we're friends, right? I notice one thing – if one says something to the person which is genuinely felt by me, they dissolve. I often ask myself what is the conversations that the husbands have with their wives. It could only be practical conversation because otherwise I can't understand why a person who is a complete stranger should almost feel, let me say, as if one opens a gate. No, I like people, I can't get away from it, I just like people. The fact that they may have faults...I'm in Manchester, yes, of course I'm in Manchester, now then friends say to me, 'How can you be friends with them? They are that and the other', you know the negative things that people bring up. So I say if the only way they could possibly go back to normal, if you think they're so terrible, is to have a friend who has confidence in them, who likes them. In any case, I like friends, I like people.

RL: In terms of Germany, how do you feel towards the Germans?

JT: Wait, there are two things. The first time I was invited to Germany to give a seminar/congress, it was terrible. I didn't sleep at night, I couldn't get over it. I went there and I had also unpleasant experiences, short-lived. Let me tell you, one was at the congress itself. I went out, at the bar or something, I bought something and I paid. When I came back again, all of a sudden the barman came in, he opened the door and shouted, 'He's a thief, he gave me false money' - that was myself! I'd just changed at the bank. That was one of them. The other, no, I didn't have any, you want to know what I felt, correct? They once asked me, I'll go back to this story next, they once asked me what do I wish the Germans. I said they should always be rich and - how can I say it? They should always have what one desires of life, the good things. Because what was in my mind that they shouldn't have come to other thoughts. I was told off for having that thought but I think it is the only sensible one. You can't kill people, you see, if people have everything that they desire, their heads are in that thing, they can't see the rest. Now, going back to Germany, the first lecture that I gave, it was delightful, because it was the first time I ever lectured in German. I'd lived in Merano, you know, they spoke a Tirolean German or something like that. And I didn't even know what the word is for cornea, so there were about five people who shouted out the thing and so it happened the whole length of the lecture, that any time I missed a word or didn't know a word, they shouted out the word and they enjoyed it, it was almost like a theatre. I learnt that compared to the English - an Englishman who speaks English, he speaks like a person who has arrived; the German speaks with the desire to arrive or to give the impression that he is almost there. When a German speaks, he becomes straight and goes up physically - 'Er spricht immer so Hochdeutsch', you know everything goes right up to the ceiling. The thing is that the cleanliness of the Germans has become a pathology. It is no longer something that you enjoy, I enjoy for instance having a shower, because I think if I didn't believe in G-d, I believe in the water, it helps to revive me, it cleans me. For them, it is, how can I say it? It is part of their aspiration. The other thing is that they do things very correctly but, as my friends once said, the difference between a normal person and a person who's mad, I don't know what to use, is that at a certain time the normal person stops, the mad person continues, that is with logic, with everything else. In a certain way, yes, that is what happens.

Tape 5: 29 minutes 7 seconds

RL: Can I ask did you ever or have you ever received any restitution or compensation?

JT: No, no, I didn't want it. There was a question of receiving. I also went to the Jewish community in Milan and they said I should apply for something but I didn't do it. You know, each one of us has his attitude, I didn't want that. It wouldn't have made me any richer and it would have been all out of proportion. Something has been done. It is done, right? You know, in Italy people forgive. They murder your son and the mother forgives him because she feels that is her duty as a good, well, in any case, to forgive, right? One says that only God forgives. It isn't a matter that one carries the 'astio', let me say the - hatred is an exaggeration, but that feeling, not that, but one can't undo things that are done. They are done and one lives on. I believe that we each, each human being has within himself good and bad. At a certain moment, let me say, one comes to the surface and at a certain moment then the other part comes to the surface. After all, the - what do you call it? - what happened in Poland or what happened in Russia, each one does it according to one's character, exactly like they do the work on an automobile, the negative things that they do the same way that they do the positive things. Since I made friends, I also received a beautiful book as a present. I was consultant, I have been a consultant to quite a few contact lens factories, that was also Zeiss,

Salmoiraghi and Bausch and Lomb and so forth. You see, while in Italy, they are quite, I don't know if to describe it as emotional people, sentimental people, they will do according to their own head. In Italian, if the government says he should do a thing, he'll do the opposite, because the government has told him so. I tell you a story about the seatbelt, what do you call it? The belt that you wear? What do you call it? Car belt?

RL: Seatbelt.

JT: Seatbelt. Now it came out that other countries have seatbelts, we'll have to also have seatbelts. Now then, people didn't buy seatbelts, so the government decided to compel the manufacturers to have seatbelts in their cars, so they had seatbelts but they didn't wear them. Then one day the government got annoyed with the Italians, let me say, that if you don't wear your seatbelt, you'll get fined, so the next day in Naples on the market they sold pullovers, light-coloured pullovers with a black stripe across from right to left and from left to right, so it appears. And I once asked one of my friends, 'Why don't you wear it? After all, it's for your safety'. So she said, if somebody holds me up, you call it hold me up? Let me say, when they take away your money, something like that, how am I going to defend myself? Wait a minute, I've not finished yet. So it comes, all of a sudden I come to Naples and everyone has their seatbelt. So I said, 'That's strange. You never wanted the seatbelt'. 'What do you mean we never wanted it? We were the first ones who wanted the seatbelt'! Now all this is a game of Macoli. Is he called Macoli? The writer? He was a Member of Parliament in the last century? He wrote books. [Disraeli]. No, it's not the right name but I'll give it to you one day. He said, it's beautifully applied to the Italians, when the government is a bad government, the Italians are remarkable, if it's a good one, they're no good. Mussolini said, 'It is not so much that it's difficult to govern the Italians, it's useless to govern them', right? So you've got the answer. While in Germany an order is given and the order is executed, right? So that, as you see, in Italy for instance if any Jew was saved, it was because he was saved by an Italian, correct? They just decide for themselves. If they're nasty, they're nasty because they are nasty, not because someone told them to be nasty.

Tape 5: 36 minutes 14 seconds

RL: Coming on to something slightly different, do you think that your experiences of being a refugee have affected you in any way, psychologically or in any other way?

JT: Yes, yes, definitely! I have learned that the next person is like you, right? That, how can I say it? You know, people talk about, for instance, America, they will make a statement about the Americans, in other words it seems as though the whole of America is there, it would never enter my head to do that. I was in America, in the States, last year, I was invited by friends, and you know their criticism of their leaders was much harder, much more strongly said than anyone could have done here and besides that, for a European to talk badly about an American, it doesn't cost him anything. On the contrary, in Italy it becomes popular. They do the same thing. People do the same thing about any nation, they either hate them or they love them, but they do it to the whole lot – you know, the Italians are that, the English are this. And it has remained in me. It is mainly a matter, let me say, you know when I left England to go back to Italy, I didn't want to go and for a reason. Here I managed, I don't want to say to manipulate the people, but to become, not only friends, but to know how to treat them. When I go back to Italy, they're all charming and so forth, what an earth will I do there? It is true that I managed it very well and it helped me to come with an English accent. Look, the

Italians, they love foreigners more than themselves and the English are topmost ones. I'm sorry, I must go back always to the same story, so please get me off the hook.

RL: Also, in terms of religion, do you think your religious views have changed over the years?

JT: Now then, as a child, even as a child, I couldn't pray. I used to go to synagogue with my father and so forth but the prayer didn't mean anything to me. Perhaps if I had learnt Hebrew first and then prayer, I probably would have appreciated it. I came to, the very first thing that I came to love was Yishayahu, yes? And the other one is Kohelet? Why? Because they were dialect, yes? There was no softening. It was life! To tell me, what do you call it? Not, Kohelet, the other one, King David, what is the other one?

RL: Tehillim?

JT: Not tehillim, I'm sorry.

RL: Shir Hashirim?

JT: Yes, Shir Hashirim Now then, they can tell me anything that they want, that there is reference to the Torah and so forth. I know, for instance, that Yitzchok, let me say, went to the fountain and found a girl and he liked her. Why? Because she was beautiful, right? Don't tell me that it was something spiritual and all the rest of it. Once I'd realised that the beauty of it, as I started off two hours ago or three hours ago, was that they were normal people, and had reached great heights as normal people and life is not the absolute but the possible, life is to reach the possible, not the absolute. And if we have been given the both sides, the good and bad, it is our pleasure, I was going to say to play with it, but you see I love learning, yes, right? But the thing of praying, I still can't pray, yes? I feel, one says that one shouldn't mention God's name in vain, but in a prayer to praise so much, it isn't, how can I say it? It is not acceptable. If a couple, if the husband says too often to his wife, 'Love you' or something like that, I would be suspicious, right? That's how I feel about it.

Tape 5: 43 minutes 14 seconds

It is true, let me say, when I read Yishayahu, I need the translation, my Hebrew's not good enough, it is beautiful, it is poetry. And yet people look down on poetry. I don't know what it is. I can't think what they think when they read, let me say, the Prophets. Because the Prophets wrote, not only about punishment and the things, but they wrote also that we should enjoy it. I always feel that poetry is like an egg that grows itself on itself and prose can be exactly the same thing, as long as you form it with a few letters per line and you don't put it vertically on the paper. You see, there are so many beautiful things that one misses and I think one of them is, one says the expression that we'll be punished if we don't enjoy what God has given us. To feel that one has to do duty, one should enjoy it. You know people very often do it because it is a Mitzvah to do the thing and it seems, let me say, they're doing a favour to G-d. Now then, you should do it because it is against your feeling; at a certain moment, you should be that person who refuses to do it because it is wrong, not because you say you have been given an order to do it and you do it because it is an order. So you see, I think I do feel it. You're in the right place, you're an excellent interviewer. You see, to each person we can only say certain things, you can't say the same thing to two different people, and therefore if I said something interesting or something like that, you see we are half ourselves and half reflection of the person we speak to. So therefore, I thank you.

RL: Thank you. Is there anything that you would like to add, because we are getting towards the end now, is there anything that you would like to add or say that you feel we might have missed out?

JT: There was something that came to me but I was in the middle of a conversation, so I didn't want to interrupt it and now I have difficulty to get it back again.

RL: I tell you one thing, I'd like to hear you speak a little bit of Italian, maybe a rhyme or something that maybe you learned as a child or that your mother would say to you, something from the past.

JT: Wait a moment, if I read you, let me say, a few things in Italian? Wait a moment! E' molto difficile passare dall'Inglese all'Italiano. In questo momento la mia testa e' completamente....No, I can't speak!

RL: You gave us a little bit. What were you saying?

JT: I can't get back into Italian.

RL: I know, you said.

JT: Wait a moment, I just want to show you something.

RL: You can't walk, you've got the microphone!

JT: Oh, I'm sorry. Well, I'd better not! We are all bound to each other now. Alright, never mind! I'll do it another time.

RL: Well, thank you very much.

Tape 5: 48 minutes 39 seconds

JT: Thank you very much! We are almost at the end, no?

RL: We're just finishing now, yes. Is there any message you'd want to give?

JT: No, because a message limits. It is like, I always described myself as someone who's got lots of sharp little edges, so many that I look almost perfectly round. To give a message, no, no, because a message is a final thing and I feel that the thing goes on. Yes, please forgive me if I don't leave a message.

RL: Thank you very much!

JT: Thank you! And thank you too! The gentleman is behind the camera and that is why you can't see him!

Tape 5: 49 minutes 52 seconds

THE END