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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Rogoff
Forename:	Ruth
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	14 June 1933
Interviewee POB:	Zwickau, Germany

Date of Interview:	22 March 2005
Location of Interview:	Leeds
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 95

NAME: RUTH ROGOFF

DATE: 22 MARCH 2005

LOCATION: LEEDS

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: OK, so if you can tell me first your name?

RR: Ruth Rogoff.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

RR: Ruth Biron.

RL: Did you have any other names?

RR: Middle names?

RL: Yes.

RR: Ruth Beate Biron.

RL: Are you named after anybody?

RR: After my great grandmother, I believe, yes.

RL: And where were you born?

RR: I was born in Zwickau, in Germany, which is a town near Leipzig.

RL: And when were you born?

RR: 14 June 1933.

RL: So what does that make you?

RR: 71.

RL: Now, coming on to your parents. Can you tell me something about their backgrounds?

RR: Well, my father was born in Dukla in Poland, into a Hasidic family, very religious; he wore 'peyes' and all the rest of it. They were quite poor, I believe, and work was hard to get. His father got a job as a rabbi and a 'Schochet' and a 'Mohel' [circumciser] and so on in Zwickau through a friend of his, and that is how they came to Germany. My father was the eldest of six children, three boys and three girls. And as I say, they were brought up in a very religious, observant family. My mother was born in Rumania into a very Zionist, also a religious but not as Hasidic, not a Hasidic family but a very very Zionist family. When she was 18 -because she was born in Seret, in Rumania, which is the Bukovina, in the north of Rumania and it's a very sort of dead end place- and when she was 18 she went to join -she had three brothers, two older, one younger- and she went to one older brother who was in Germany at the time to live with him and to get a better life. And through her Zionist upbringing, sort of thing, she met my father who at the time was, they were both, very interested in, 'Maccabi' was a very big organisation in Europe at that time, they were both members of Maccabi. It wasn't just a sports organisation, it was also a social sort of club for Jewish young people and she met him there, from what I believe. But they were both involved in Zionist activities, particularly my father. His brothers went on Hachshara, which is a training for Israel, they were always intent on going to Israel, so when Zionism wasn't fashionable, as it was later on, they were very very ardent Zionists.

RL: Now coming back to your father's family, do you know what kind of Hasidim they were?

Tape 1: 3 minutes 26 seconds

RR: No, not really. I know that they were, I know that my father went to a German school and if this means anything to you, wearing 'peyes'. Now for that he suffered greatly. I mean it never occurred to his parents, who were Yiddish speaking -I don't think they spoke German actually because my grandfather always wrote in Yiddish when he wrote- I don't think it occurred to them to have his 'peyes' cut off as a young child. But he went to school with 'peyes' and in that time in Germany, he used to tell me this, he told me two stories of his life as a child in Germany which I found fascinating, sad really but at the time he just took it for granted. First of all being an 'Ostjude', that means a Jew from the East, he was made to sit in a special place in the classroom, because he was considered, even then, as you know persona non grata kind of thing. At school, when he started school -he came to Germany when he was about four or five, but in Germany they started school at about six, I believe then, or seven even- the custom even now in Germany is, when a child goes, starts school, they bring a 'Zuckertüte', which is a sort of a cone in which, the family fills it with sweets and they are given this, to start school, and the family come with them on the first day of school, at least at his time they did. And each child is called up, they come into a hall and each child is called up to the, to a sort of stage where the head teacher with all the teachers that are going to take these junior children are sitting. And as your name was called out, they would go to their teacher and then go off to the classroom with this teacher, with their 'Zuckertüte', and the bigger the 'Zuckertüte', the more sort of proud the child was. But he was the only child there who apparently had nobody with him, because his parents didn't know to come, or I don't know the reason, and didn't have a 'Zuckertüte'. And till he was quite old, you may not believe this, he told the story because he was so disappointed. And when he was old and was in the sort of throes of Alzheimer's which unfortunately caught him -a most intelligent and lovely man, he still- I, we, once -we have a caravan, as you might have seen outside, and we always went through Germany because we always went to Italy every year, we travelled all over the world actually with it, but we often went through Germany to go to Italy- and when I went to -when I went back to Zwickau after the war, it was in the Communist, under Communist regime, so therefore we had to wait till after 89 to go back- I went back to

Zwickau and I bought him a 'Zuckertüte' filled with sweets and I remember bringing it to him, when he was quite old and saying, 'Well now, Daddy, you've got it. You know, eventually I brought it for you and you've got one!" And he was well into his eighties then, so that was that. And the other thing that he reminded me about his childhood which I found very sad was, because he was very frum, he was very religious, he couldn't -they had schools on Saturdays in Germany at that time, I don't know if they still do, but they certainly did then- and of course he couldn't carry his -I mean, not only was he too frum to, he obviously didn't drive anyway, I mean he must have walked to school in any case- but he wasn't allowed to carry his books on Shabbat. So they engaged a girl to carry his books for him on Sabbath. And the kids used to laugh at him because he came in very shabby clothes, his parents were obviously too poor to buy him anything decent to wear, but they were not too poor to engage a girl to carry his books so he shouldn't desecrate Shabbat. That's your sense of priorities which I think is absolutely wonderful. Not wonderful for him, but it's beautiful in retrospect, you know. So that's two stories, and my mother, she always told me, when we complained about the weather here, that in Rumania where she lived, the snow was so high in the winter, her father used to take her to school on a sledge and used to pull her. Then when she got bad chilblain she used to tell me, he used to carry her piggyback you know, to school, so to get there, in the snow. Those are two of the stories of when they were young, which I thought are quite nice.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 4 seconds

RL: Coming back to your father's family just for the moment. Can you describe your grandparents? What kind of people they were.

RR: Well, I don't remember them very well because we left Germany, I left it at quite an early age to go to Czechoslovakia quite early, that is another story in itself, but my grandfather always wore a hat, he had a grey beard, he had twinkly blue eyes, he was very kind and quiet like my father, very quiet. My grandmother was a very put together, intelligent, person who ruled the household in many respects. She was the businesswoman, she was the person who organised everything. And I know that they all, all the chi…, my father was the prince, because he was the eldest, the eldest boy and also very competent. He was considered as the king of the family, you know, he was always treated as the king and, I mean, spilled over into his married life and into his life with us children. But he was always the person to whom, you know, he had the last word. He was very quiet, and very fair, but he was the one, who… there was no democracy.

RL: You say, she was a businesswoman. Did she run a business?

RR: Well, I was under the impression, they were quite well…, obviously they were quite poor, they used to… My grandfather was the general sort of factotum of the 'kehila' there, the Jewish community there. I don't think he was very good at that sort of side, but he had a sort of a, he used to collect 'schmattes', rags, because in those days, well I suppose later on as well, they collected rags, and sold them, as 'shoddy', it was called 'shoddy', you know. And he used to take my father with him. My father used to tell me that my grandfather would stuff all these schmattes into a sack and he would have to get into the sack and jump up and down to sort of push it further down, you know. That's what he did, and he had, I don't know if he had, he had some sort of business of that kind that they were, from what I remember.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 18 seconds

RL: What happened to your father's brothers and sisters? Where did they go?

RR: Well, my father being the oldest, they were all involved in Zionist activities; I mean that they all were. I said two of my uncles were on Hachshara**.** Where did they go? I mean, the sad part is that most of them… My aunt, the one next to my father's eldest sister did come to England, her name was Fay Nachmann when she married Arthur Nachmann in Germany. I was her bridesmaid. And she came, managed to come to England through his connections. He had a brother here who brought him over. The others, Lene was the next one down, she died, we think in Belzec, with her parents. Moishe, who was the one after her, was on Hachshara and managed to get to Israel, Palestine at that time. He must have been about 19, that's all. But he managed to get there before, either in 1939 or 1938. He got there before, on a quota. You know, Britain kept a quota of how many Jews were allowed into Palestine at the time because they had the last word on that. Hanna, who was next to him, was also taken into -I have got documents over there- she managed to survive the war, she was in Plaszow concentration camp, which is the one that, in Krakow, the one made famous or infamous through *Shindler's List*. And then Auschwitz and Ravensbrück from where she was liberated eventually, but she was young, so she managed to work and survive. She married before. She married in 1940 and had a child, both… the child was killed where it was taken with my grandparents, and her husband survived but died shortly after we brought him to England as a result of his malnutrition and severe ill-treatment. And the youngest was Max. Now, I believe he was no more than fourteen or fifteen and he went to, as I say, he was on…, they sent him to Hachshara centre, even though he was that young in the hope that he would be one of the children taken to Palestine as the quota for that, but he… The Hachshara centre was near Berlin somewhere and for a while they heard from him. But after a while they didn't hear from him, and from what we understand, we are not sure, because we haven't any hard evidence, he did die, he did die, but we think he was at Buchenwald, we think. Those were the six children. With my mother's family it was different. My mother lived in Rumania and the Germans didn't come to Rumania till quite late on in the war. The Jews were sent to Transnistria and from there to either Treblinka or Auschwitz. Now, my mother had one brother -two brothers had already gone to Palestine in good time, because it was easier from Rumania; don't forget, you could take a boat from Rumania and sail straight…, it was much easier than countries like Germany, or more in the centre of Europe; two of her brothers had already gone to Palestine- her younger brother was trapped in Rumania, and he and his wife and one small child at the time, were interned in Transnistria, and my grandparents died. My grandmother, I understand, died in the ca…, in Transnistria. My grandfather they don't have, they don't know what happened to him. My uncle survived the concentration camp and my aunt went to Israel in 1947 and made their home there. They have died since.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 40 seconds

RL: And their child?

RR: They had another, she lives, her name is Miriam and she lives in Yerushalayim. They had a … this was the child that was born after the war actually. She was born in 1946 or 47. But the older daughter died actually of cancer, some years ago, a few years ago. That's my mother's family.

RL: What kind of a religious education did your parents have?

RR: A very thorough religious, a very thorough Hebrew education. I mean even my mother's family who were not as frum. And don't forget, we are talking about relative values. My

mother's family were not considered as religious as my father's but -we used to go there for Pesach; I was very young, but the few things that you remember, now I remember, they had a well in the garden, obviously they didn't have running water- and they used to sieve the water through a muslin cloth to make sure it was Pesach… I mean that we are talking about level of observance. So you can imagine -when we are talking about 'not as frum', you know- how orthodox they really were. They both, my mother read Hebrew very nicely and she could speak, I mean when she went to Israel she could communicate, and that is all from her so-called 'Cheder' training [elementary religious education]. You can't compare it to anything that people have today. My father was very well versed in 'Limudey Kodesh' [religious studies] and kept up his Hebrew studies till he was very old. He used to go to all sorts of seminars, Hebrew seminars, and so on. They were very very taken, you know, they were very into all that sort of thing. Not just the 'Limudey Kodesh', but also the Hebrew side of it. And my mother's family was very much into the 'Poale Zion' movement and in fact, my uncle, the younger brother, when he came to Palestine he got a job with 'Mapai' because of his pre-war activities for the 'Poale Zion'. So, that's how involved they were.

RL: What did your mother's father do for a living?

Tape 1: 16 minutes 47 seconds

RR: I don't know. And you know, the strange thing is, I never asked. I really don't know. I have not even thought about it. It is sad, isn't it, that you don't remember to ask the right questions at the right times. I don't know.

RL: You say you visited them for Pesach and what kind of place were they living in?

RR: I don't remember much about it but they said they lived in this backwater called Seret. Whether it is still a backwater, I would think it is. It is on the border of Rumania and Transylvania. It is near a place called Iaşi where there is a big Hasidic, let's say a big Chassidic, people, I think they still go there, the Hasidim. There was some rabbi or something in Iaşi from what I remember. And she lived in this sort of backwater. She always said it was a backwater, she said it was, she hated Rumania. She said that the people were horrible, they were very, grossly anti-Semitic. This is, that was her view of it, and she always begged us, when we sort of said we will take the caravan to Rumania, you know, we must go and see where you, she begged us not to go. And while she was alive we certainly didn't go. I have always wanted to go. I still hope to go back and have a look to see where she lived. Actually my cousin, the cousin, the daughter who went through Transnistria, my youngest brother's daughter, lived in Israel in Yerushalayim as well, she once went back because she was old enough to remember it, because she was fourteen when she came out of the concentration camp. And she went back after the war, with her husband, because she married also a Rumanian boy, a boy who came from Rumania actually, and she went back to Seret and the place where she lived as well. She lived in a place near there, and she said… Apparently she stayed in a hotel, came out of the hotel, walked down the street and suddenly saw something in somebody's window that had been in her house, you know, her mother's possessions, couldn't go any further, went back to the hotel and went straight back to Israel, didn't even stay. Now that I find very sad. I found that very sad, but I mean, Elie Wiesel said the same thing, when he went back he saw things that belonged to his family and you feel that you just daren't even mention it. I must also, I mean it is very strange, because I went back to Prague where we lived before we came to England, because we went from Germany to Czechoslovakia and I went back to the flat that I lived in prior to me coming here. And I had the right address; my mother gave me the right address, so I went to the flat. And I went with

a very good friend of ours, who lives in Czechoslovakia. He is a Czech, not a, not a Jew, a young man we met on holiday once and are still very friendly with. And he came as our interpreter and so on. And we came up to this, I still remember, the place was still the same, beautiful tiling on the walls as you come in, that sort of thing, and went up to the flat and he knocked on the door, somebody came and he said, "Do you know, we've got a lady here who used to live here before the war, can she come in?" and she said, "No, no, no, no, she can't come in, she can't come in! She can't come in." She wouldn't let us in. But it wouldn't have mattered very much, because I don't really remembered anything about it, you know, it was just nostalgia, sort of thing. I wanted to see if I did remember anything if I went there, but they were obviously afraid.

RL: Did your mother tell you any incidents from her childhood? You know, you say, she said that they were very anti-Semitic. Did she ever tell you anything?

RR: Not really. She said they were all, you see, she, in Rumania they all spoke German because it had been under the, you know, sort of German influence, with the Hapsburgs and so on, so all the children spoke German. I don't know if they were educated in German in school, she also spoke Rumanian of course as well, but then her mother tongue at home was Yiddish because they all spoke Yiddish. So I mean, to start with, she spoke three languages. But, no, she always used to say they were all thieves, thieves and vagabonds. So not acceptable in today's climate but that's how she felt about the Rumanians. She said they were all very anti-Semitic.

RL: What did she do, when she left school?

Tape 1: 21 minutes 40 seconds

RR: She worked in a pharmacist's shop. She worked as a sort of an assistant pharmacist in Germany. I don't know when she left school exactly, but she was about seventeen or eighteen when she went to Germany to live with one of her brother's, and that's what she did. She was very intelligent, and very beautiful.

RL: Did your father have to serve in the First World War?

RR: No, he was born in 1908. So that made him too young. In any case, he was a Pole. He never got German citizenship. I mean they'd never give him citizenship or a passport. His passport, which I have here, says 'nationality Polish'. Actually it was considered as, when Poland was taken over, you know, invaded, he lost all nationality and came here as a … you know, with no nationality.

RL: And when did your parents marry?

RR: 1931. December 25 1931, believe it or not.

RL: Where did they marry?

RR: In Zwickau. My aunt told me, the one who … she died about two years ago actually. I said to her that it was a very strange time to marry, you know, Christmas Day sort of thing. Surely they would have known it was, even … who they were. So she said, at that time large gatherings of Jews were frowned upon. It had already … I mean Hitler came to power in '33 but even before then, there were problems. They didn't allow large crowds, so the wedding

was at home. And the strange thing is I don't have a photograph of it at all. No photo of their wedding. It was at home and because it was Christmas Day, maybe parties and things were acceptable, because that's when they were married.

RL: And where about did they live after marriage?

RR: In Zwickau, they lived there.

RL: And what children did they have?

RR: They had, I was the first one, and my brother was born in 1936.

RL: What's his name?

RR: Zalman. He lives in Israel.

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

RR: I think my earliest memory is that of my father taking me to… I have got this picture of Robert Schumann's statue in Zwickau -there is this statue to Robert Schumann, the composer- and he stood me there and he said "If someone asks you where you were born, don't worry, say Zwickau, because Robert Schumann was born here and he is a great composer, so you should be very proud of being born in Zwickau". That's what I remember from … that's possibly my earliest memory of there.

RL: Do you remember the family home?

Tape 1: 24 minutes 53 seconds

RR: I remember that we lived in a house with lots of -I don't remember if it was the same house as my grandparents lived in, I am not absolutely sure -but I know that my grandparents lived in a house where lots of uncles and aunties also lived in the same house. The house was shared, it had three storeys. An old house in the middle of Zwickau, and there were always relatives living, people… I think we either lived a couple of doors away, because I don't think we actually lived in that house, but I don't remember much about it.

RL: And what was your father doing for a living?

RR: My father then was in the schmatte-business, he was in cloth. And he was very successful. He was so successful, I mean he kept his family -you know, that was the thing, the oldest son always looked after the family- but he also, he managed to buy a car, an old Ford, I mean he didn't buy it old, I just say, one of the first Fords. I've got a picture of that. Of which he was very very proud. You know, he had a car at that time, which was a big thing to have in those days, so he was very proud having this car.

RL: Where was this schmatte-business? Did he have a …?

RR: No, actually, later on he had a factory which was in … I think the place was called Glaukow, which was near Zwickau, and he had to take a non-Jewish partner, because Jews were not allowed to own factories. You know, they were not allowed to own businesses and factories and so on. It reminded me when I saw *Anne Frank* that Otto Frank also had to take

in -he had a factory- had to take in a partner and put it under the partner's name, and my father did just that, and the pity is that after the wall, when the wall came down, you know in 1989 when the Communist regime fell and Zwickau was liberated if you want to call it that - if my father had remembered, and he didn't at that time, the name of his partner, he might have had some sort of restitution for the factory that he owned, 'cause he got nothing you know, it was in his partner's name, he just left it with him.

RL: How many people were working there? Do you remember?

RR: I don't know. I don't know anything about the business, no, no.

RL: And so what, how long were you in Germany?

RR: Well, my father was as I said a prominent member of Maccabi, and Maccabi was a sports organisation as it still is, and they had, they used to have winter sports near the Erzgebirge, which is near the mountains near Zwickau. One side was Germany, and you crossed it you went into Czechoslovakia actually. They mined the Erzgebirge for iron, minerals and so on. But they also had skiing there, so Maccabi had a hut on the mountain and did other sports, walking and rambling and that sort of thing up on this mountain side. And my father, from when he was, well, before he was married, he was a courier for getting people out of Germany and over the border into Czechoslovakia where they could go further because … don't forget it's all right for people to say "Why didn't you leave, why didn't you…?" In order to leave Germany you had to have an exit permit, which meant you could take absolutely nothing with you, to begin with, if you got the exit permit. And a lot of people wanted to take stuff with them if they could or didn't get an exit permit for one reason or another. And he used to be a courier, he ferried people over the border, illegally, and then one day he was betrayed and caught and put in prison. Now that must have been in about 1938, because we left, we had to es… once he was in prison -my mother managed to get him out of prison, one way or another, I am not quite sure how- he realised his number was up, and he was constantly under sort of surveillance, I suppose, of what he did. He could no longer do what he was doing. So he decided to leave, to go , obviously they couldn't take anything with them, so we went on foot, at night, with whatever we could carry, over the border, the route he knew. And left the car behind, left everything. And went into Czechoslovakia from Germany.

RL: Do you remember when that was?

Tape 1: 29 minutes 52 seconds

RR: That was in, it was definitely before Kristallnacht', because if we would have waited till then, he wouldn't have got out. So we got into Czechoslovakia, I have also got letters and so on and documents dated 1938, so we must have been there very early 1938, if not late 19…, no, it could possibly have been 1937, as early as that.

RL: So what kind -before we go on to that next stage- what kind of memories do you have of Germany from when you were a little girl?

RR: Germany, I don't remember anything of really, really, I don't. It is Czechoslovakia I have got more memories of, of when we lived in Prague. Not very many, because I was quite young then as well. I remember where we lived in Prague and I remember there was a park opposite, which is still there to this day, still the same park, not that that is so surprising, it was a park. And I didn't go to a nursery school from what I could remember, because I don't

think it was -my parents wouldn't have felt it was- so safe to send me. One memory I have of our time in Prague was that my brother was quite a young child and my mother said -you know, I was going to play in this park, it was only across the road, so she took me across the road and put the pushchair next to me and said- "Look, keep an eye on him!", sort of thing. And I wasn't very pleased, you know, and anyway, there was a sandpit, we were near a sandpit, so I sat him in the sandpit and let him play with the sand and I played with my friends. And this was a park that was, it must have been, either it was a park with a children's section or a children's park, I am not sure. Anyway, at night it was locked up, so about six o'clock, or whenever it was, I ran off home, I had been playing with my friends, I ran off home. The park was locked up and when I got home my mother said to me, sort of, "Where is your brother?" And in a panic I realised, I had forgotten all about him, I just left him there, I mean. So, then all panic stations, you know. I don't know where my father was at that time, he might have left already Czechoslovakia because he had again to escape from there and we had to find where the park keeper lived and all the rest of it, had to… and we got him back safe and sound. That's my memory of Prague.

Tape 1: 32 minutes 27 seconds

RL: Can you describe where you were living, what kind of a place was it?

RR: It was a very nice flat, it was in a place called, the street was called Popiatova, and it was number 7. No, wait a minute, was it…? It was Praha, district, in the seventh district, you know as in Leeds 7, it was Praha 7, I think it was 42, I can't remember exactly. I have got the address down, because I have been back. It was a very modern flat, because I remember my mother saying sort of they've got central heating, it was centrally heated, she told people, she was very impressed. It was centrally heated in those days, we are talking about 1937/38, it was a very modern, centrally heated, beautifully appointed flat. It was very very nice.

RL: Was your father working in Prague?

RR: I don't know what he was doing. I really don't know what he was doing. I know that he attempted to find work, whether he did or not, I am not sure. Because he didn't speak Czech, of course. He only spoke German and Yiddish and it wasn't easy, I mean he wasn't the only one looking for work at that stage of his life, but in any case in early 1939, I think, I don't know if he went then, the Nazis occupied Prague, in March 39, or was it 38, I can't even remember exactly when, but as soon as they came, he went, and he went to Poland. It was obviously 39, because in 38, 9 November was Kristallnacht, and his family were deported because they were 'Ostjuden'. Again, you know, no matter how long you had lived in Germany, any foreign Jews were deported to no-man's-land in Poland and just dumped there, and left. They were thrown out of Germany with nothing, don't forget. I mean, whatever, whether they had nothing or they had millions, it didn't matter a great deal if they hadn't got out by then. And a lot of the rich people managed to leave for one reason or another, you know, they managed to leave by one way or another because they had money, they could find a place. America took wealthy Jews before the war, or Jews like famous actors, famous singers, famous mathematicians, Einstein and people like that and anyone that was worth anything to them, they would take. Or if you had a very large sum of money, you know, but otherwise the normal, average sort of person, America wasn't interested in. So anyone who wasn't German by that November, 1938 were deported back to where they had come from, wherever that was, and just dumped. Taken in trains and then lorries, and then just dumped. There is no-man's-land between Germany and Poland, and it is still there. In fact we have been back there, we have taken a journey there with the caravan, back to where they were.

And my father went. They found their way back to Crakow and Dukla where originally my grandparents lived, and lived there. My father went back there to see if he could help them. Now he couldn't because he had no means. Nobody could help anybody, this is the point; but he went back there and then he disappeared to all intent and purposes. As far as we were concerned, we had no contact because he couldn't contact us once it was invaded, once Czechoslovakia was invaded, and we didn't know where he was. He had an interesting journey, as you might say. He made his way to the Balkans and got on a ship that took on political refugees. And with his work for Jews, you know, as a courier and so on, he was considered as a political refugee, not just any, and he was accepted onto this boat. Robert Maxwell was on the same boat, as it happens. I don't know what it was called, but he was on the same boat. He came from Czechoslovakia - Robert Maxwell. He had been in the Air Force and he was considered as political, 'cause he was a … he was only young at that time, Robert Maxwell, he was about seventeen. But my father wasn't that much older, I mean, we keep thinking, you know, of our parents as being old, but they were young then. He was on this boat, and the strange thing is, if you talk about quirks of fate, when it came to the Channel, the boat, the ship was so big, it couldn't come into the Channel. So when they got to the English Channel, they divided the people on. There were only men. There was President Beneš and Masaryk and so on from Czechoslovakia on there as well. They came to England. They divided the boat, the men, up into three sections, I believe alphabetically. My father was sent on a ferry to England, by chance. Another section was sent to France, which of course was at that time still free. And the third lot went to Canada. They remained on the boat and were taken to Canada. So, the luck of the draw. He came to England.

Tape 1: 38 minutes 8 seconds

RL: First of all, coming back to Czechoslovakia, did he know anybody in Czechoslovakia, did he have contacts?

RR: No, we had no family, no-one in Czechoslovakia, no-one at all. Whether they had any contacts, I don't know. They might have had friends or someone, I don't know. But people were very careful, whom they used as contacts in those days, because you can't, until you are in that position, you don't know what you yourself would do, you know, you are thinking about your own family. Everybody primarily thought about their own family and their own safety. So, I don't know anything about whom he could have contacted, unless it was Zionist organisations that might have helped him, I don't know.

RL: And how did your mother survive during that period?

RR: I don't know, but she was a very put together woman. She was competent and intelligent and brave and never went to pieces. She just managed very well. Because she, I've got a document put out for you if you… You tried and registered with every embassy for an exit visa and for an entry visa. My mother tried everybody. And my father had originally -I have got the document there- contacted the American. He'd managed to get through to the American Embassy. But you see, you had to stand in queues to get into an Embassy, you didn't pick up the telephone. You stood in queues, mile-long queues, and I have got a document which registered us on the list to enter into America. I've got that, I have only just noticed it actually. And when he left in a hurry, my mother stood in queues at every embassy she could to get an exit visa and an entry. As I say, it was not only an entry visa to the country, but also an exit visa from Czechoslovakia, permission to leave. And without luck, because she was not considered … You see, if you were young and single, you had more chance because they took you as a workforce. And if you had a profession that was of some

consequence you also had more chance. And if you knew the right people, you also had more chance. But she was a young woman with two small children, very small children. So she just stood in the queue and didn't get anywhere. And the way she … I mean, I can hardy believe how she got out because it sounds so bizarre, nobody would believe it. But apparently, what she told me was, that the British Embassy were offering two visas. And because it was only two visas at that time, they thought they would have a competition, it would be the fairest way to chose - very British this. And what was the competition? They made it so that anyone could enter it. They made it a cookery competition, believe it or not. I mean, it sounds bizarre. And she in her desperation thought, well, the only thing -the best thing- she knew was to make a Friday night meal. And she did. And she won the competition. She won one of the tickets, one of the visas of this competition. And this was already late in 39, and things were getting very rough, and they were already… She had a chance to send us on a 'Kindertransport', but they didn't take children under three and my brother was, and she wouldn't separate us. So, things were getting very very bad. And then the one thing I remember very clearly, and I am not sure about dates, was that one evening, late at night, because there was a curfew -all these places had a curfew from eight till six, eight at night six in the morning- somebody knocked on our door. Now knocks on the door in those days were very very ominous, but it was a woman, and my mother opened the door and let her in. It was a secretary, one of the secretaries from the British Embassy, who came and brought my mother -I don't know if she had known before that she had won this competition or what- but she brought my mother a visa, entry visa to England, plus train tickets. And she said to my mother: "It's the end of August now, things are getting very bad, the only way for you to get out, chance for you to get out, is if you go tomorrow morning. Leave everything. Don't take anything with you 'cause you haven't got an exit visa." She didn't have an exit visa to get out of Prague. "Pretend you are going for a day's outing and a picnic. Take the pushchair and take some food and all the rest, put on as much as you can, you know clothes wise. And don't tell anybody, and go." So, I thought -I remember thinking- that it was absolutely wonderful. You know, I mean, I felt it was wonderful. Anyway, the next morning, I remember my mother dressing me in a very heavy tweed suit. One of the things that I remember when I came here, I was a very well dressed child.

Tape 1: 43 minutes 33 seconds

I used to have my clothes made for me. I mean that is how well dressed I was. And she put on this heavy tweed suit and all sorts of things underneath and long stockings, you know, not tights, long stockings. And as it happened -it was about the 31 August- it was boiling hot, and I thought I would die in these clothes, but she insisted I put them on. And she got herself dressed. She was very elegantly dressed. She was very beautiful, and she got dressed in a very elegant suit, and she had a silver fox fur. Now, you won't remember but they used to have silver fox in those days with heads that clipped into the tail, you know. But this was a real silver fox fur and worth money, and she put it on, and she just hoped that nobody would think it strange, because it was a fashion item. But it was a boiling hot day, absolutely boiling, that I do remember. And we got on the train in Prague and had to go through Germany. And that was very frightening. Now whether we changed trains or not, I am not sure, but I remember being inspected. The inspector shouted at us and all the rest of it, but she got away with it. And she said she was going to visit friends or relatives or, I don't know what, somewhere or other. We got through Germany, and once the train got out of Germany for Holland, I felt -we felt- fine, because now we were on the way to Holland. We were out of Germany and into Holland. And when we stopped in Holland -I don't know where we stopped exactly because we went to the Hook of Holland to go to Harwich, that's what's in the passport anyway- when we stopped somewhere in Holland, the Jewish refugee committee -there were Jewish refugee committees in most countries, in this country as well of course- came on the train to look for

refugees and gave us food and a blanket each, and they gave me half a crown, which was two and sixpence. I mean, people now don't know what that is, but they gave me money. I thought that was absolutely wonderful. And they begged her to stay in Holland. She told them she was on her own with two small children and they said: "Look, Hitler will never come to Holland", you know, "never come to Holland. Stay, and we will look after you. We will find you somewhere. You are a woman, young woman with two little children." And she said, "No, no". I was begging her to stay, I thought it was so wonderful but she said, "No, no, no, I went through such a lot to get this visa, and I feel I must use this visa. It is important for me to use this visa! And I must go on." And she, we, went on. We got on a boat from the Hook of Holland. I have been back there, I've been to Holland hundreds of times, I can't remember anything. I don't remember being there or anything. It is very strange, I don't remember the ferry. I remember getting to England. And I remember, my first memory of England, it was Sunday, 3 September 1939, the day the war broke out. And we arrived at Liverpool Street Station, I think. And as the train slowed down and we were getting out of the train, the sirens went. We didn't know what they were at the time. When the sirens went, everybody started running, we had to go to a shelter, you know. We went with the crowd, sort of thing, but there was also a Jewish refugee committee on the platform 24 hours a day, and they went with us. We went into a shelter and there was an announcement on the radio. It was a sort of loudspeaker, I didn't understand it of course, which said, that an ultimatum had been given to Hitler about Poland. And seeing he hadn't fulfilled their order to withdraw from Poland, England was now at war. And very sorry, and so on and so forth, and all the rest of it. That was Chamberlain. That was when, eleven o'clock, when we got off that train. It was exactly eleven o'clock and it was raining. The sun was shining and it was raining. I remember the sun was quite bright, and there were little bits of rain coming down. That was what I remember. And the only time I was frightened in the whole time in my memory up to then, was when we went into the air raid shelter, which I'd never been in before, of course. I had no experience of anything like it, and there were sort of channels at the side of the shelter. I am sure they must have been kept in case of fire, filled with water, little sort of channels. And with people pushing and so on, one of my feet went into these channels and my foot was all wet. I remember that, I was frightened. That, strangely enough, that was the thing that frightened me and that is what I remember, my first time in England, my first day.

RL: Coming back to Czechoslovakia and the German invasion. Do you remember anything about the Germans coming…?

Tape 1: 48 minutes 57 seconds

RR: I remember my parents standing at the window. And my mother was crying, and I didn't see but I heard marching feet. I can't remember whether I saw them or not because I don't know if I've imagined it that I saw them coming or not, but I know the day that they walked in. Yes, I remember that much. And I realised that it was something very serious.

RL: And did that affect you, the Germans having occupied…?

RR: Not really, because… Maybe I talked more to my own children and to my grandchildren about serious things than my parents spoke to me. You know, times are different, and children are viewed differently. They must have said something to me. And I realised; I know, I realised it was very serious, 'cause my father disappeared. You know, after that, my father went. And my mother said -when I asked her where he was, you know- "I don't know. We just don't know where he is." And that was the story I was told, "We don't know where he is.

You must tell everybody. You don't know where your father is, your father is gone, and we don't know where he is."

RL: Had you managed to bring anything out of Germany with you when you came to Czechoslovakia?

RR: We must have brought something, with us, I don't remember, but what I do know, because I found out later -in fact I've got the letter here that my mother wrote- was, my mother packed up a trunk. It is a pity I still don't have it, 'cause I threw it away not so long ago. I know, it seems so ridiculous. She had a trunk, a big trunk into which she packed things like linen that she had embroidered for her wedding with her initials and so on. I have still got some of this linen actually. And, I don't know, photographs and all sorts of things, clothes maybe, and that. She packed up quite a big trunk, a big travelling trunk, a wooden one, and she had it in the flat. And when we came to England … I've got a letter here, dated 1940, which asks the woman in the flat below us with whom she obviously was friendly, a Mrs Sudak, to send this trunk to her brother. Now she must have meant the brother in Palestine, not the one in Rumania, because it was all addressed and ready, it must have been to Palestine. And if she did that, then my mother gave her permission to own, to take possession of, all our furniture and all our personal possessions that were left in the flat. They were all hers, everything could be hers, if she did that. And of course we wouldn't know whether she did it or she didn't. But as it happens, she did, because after the war this trunk came to England, with my mother's things in it. And I still have pillow cases with her name embroidered on the, I've given it to my children actually. Which is very interesting, because she actually did it, and it got there! I mean this is, it makes you wonder, I don't understand how they allowed things out through the post. Obviously, this was 1940 we are talking about. Czechoslovakia was invaded, the trunk was addressed to go to Palestine of all places, and it got there! So it seems very strange. But it did.

RL: Did you have any contact with that neighbour after the war?

RR: No, no.

RL: So you don't know if she actually did take…?

RR: No, I don't know.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 56 seconds

RL: And when you went back, oh you have not been back, oh yes you did go back… you didn't?

RR: Yes, I did go back, but I wouldn't know. Actually my father put some of our good possessions, silver candle sticks and stuff like that, things that my mother had -I don't know how he got them to Prague- and money of course, his car he left outside the door, he put expensive things into the Bank of Prague, or Bank of Czechoslovakia, whatever you want to call it. And my mother would never ever allow him to go back and to claim it because it was under the Russians at that time, and if you went in at that time, you might just as well not come out again. She said: "What we've got, we are perfectly satisfied, we are perfectly happy. We don't need it. Don't go back!" My father was always carrying on: "I have put this in the bank." He kept telling me, I remember, growing up, he said: "I've got this in Prague and there

is my car". "Well", I said, "The car is long since gone, I am sure." No, and after the war we never got anything really back.

RL: Was it ever followed up?

RR: No. Never.

RL: Would it still be sitting..?

RR: I wouldn't think so. I think all that disappeared, and it's really not important anymore. I mean, my father got reparations, after the war, for his family, for all sorts of things, and he wouldn't keep it. He gave all his money to the Jewish Day School here, which he was an active … he actively founded the Jewish Day School. And all the money he had in his reparations he gave to the school. And my uncle in Israel also. My uncle Moishe at that time gave his reparations to writing 'sifrey Torah' [Torah books], you know. Charitable, they were, they never, they never took much from it.

RL: And so you came to England. At that stage did you know that your father was in England?

RR: No. We didn't know where my father was, we had no idea where my father was. My father came to England in June or July, I have got records actually of 1939, was desperate of course to know what was going on with us but had no idea, had no contact , had nothing. He was desperate. I remember he told us that in August, July/August, he heard -he didn't speak much English, he was trying to, I mean, he had no English beforehand, so he didn't know any English- he heard the newspaper sellers, the kids that were selling newspapers, shouting: "England in danger, England in danger!" And his heart sank, and he was desperate, and he got a paper and got somebody to translate what was England in danger from. It was the test match: cricket. They were playing Australia. And he always told this story. At that time, all that England was worried about: Being in danger from the test match, from cricket.

RL: So you arrived here not knowing that he…?

RR: No, he was in a … I have got details here, of where he was. He was in a hostel for Jewish men, Jewish refugees, they were divided. In those days they had hostels for men and hostels for women and children, because it was easier for them to put more people into these hostels. Obviously, it was a charitable thing. And he was put into a hostel in London, and given very little money -I mean, obviously- to manage for the week. And he used to tell us that he went into Blooms in the East End, and he used to get a bowl of soup and with it they brought a huge pile of bread. And for sixpence he had a bowl of soup and about six slices of bread. And that really was very … he did really very well out of it, you know. I mean, he wasn't the only one, I am sure other people did exactly the same thing.

RL: And had he found any employment at all? Was he allowed…?

Tape 1: 57 minutes 8 seconds

RR: Not then, you see. No, no. He wasn't allowed, apart from the fact he couldn't speak English anyway. He wasn't allowed but he couldn't speak, he couldn't do anything really. It depended on Jewish organisations really to employ you at that time but by that stage he had to still integrate. He had to learn a bit of English and so on, which he did very quickly. But the

wonderful thing was when we arrived, we were put into a hostel, and the first thing my mother did of course, was to go round the men's hostels to see if anybody knew. She went with a photograph and so on, if anybody had seen him, heard of him, knew of him, had seen, you know, knew what had happened to him. 'cause I mean that's what people did. And she knocked on this door, in this Highams Lane, or whatever it's called, Hostel. And my father opened it. And that was, that is, quite remarkable, isn't it? Just remarkable. And that's how they found each other.

TAPE 2

RL: This is the interview with Ruth Rogoff, tape 2. Do you remember which hostel your mother and you yourself have been…?

RR: No.

RL: It was a hostel in London?

RR: Yes. It couldn't have been far from the other one. I mean, she walked there. So, it wouldn't have been very far, probably in the same place, East End of London.

RL: And after she discovered your father, what happened then?

RR: Well, what I remember was that they obviously wanted to find somewhere to live and somewhere to work, and that sort of thing. And they thought it would be easier if they could send me somewhere out of the way. They couldn't send my little brother because he was a toddler, you know, less than that, in a pushchair. But if they could get rid of me for a bit, they wouldn't have the responsibility of looking after me and could get on with finding somewhere to live. And what happened, what I remember that we were in the street and Rabbi Schonfeld at that time was very … was instrumental in sending Jewish children from Jewish schools in London as evacuees into the countryside. And one of his schools was on the way to the station. They were on the street, I don't know how they were getting to the station, maybe they had busses, you know, coaches, and my father saw these men and women, you know, and he realised they were Jewish children and he spoke to them in Yiddish and said: "Would you take her with you as well?" and explained who I was. And they put a label around me to say my name, how old I was and who I was, and I didn't speak English. And I was -and that was something I remember very vividly- I was absolutely devastated. I don't know what they told me, I don't know what they told me and I wasn't … I know that I was very angry, very upset and devastated because I felt they were abandoning me. I couldn't see their point of view, I was a small child. I couldn't, I don't know how they explained it to me. Anyway, I went with all these children, and I mean they were all a bit nervous, I suppose and so on, but they all had each other, they knew each other and they all spoke the same language. I couldn't speak English apart from anything else. We went to Caerphilly, of all places, in Wales. And I was billeted with a family, a non-Jewish family of course, very nice people, who must have been told things about who these children were. I don't know how or why we were put there, but I was put on my own with this family and they tried to be extremely nice to me and I was extremely awkward. I know I did my best to be as difficult as I could. I don't think I was a difficult child, but I made myself as difficult as I could be.

RL: What were you doing?

Tape 2: 3 minutes 6 seconds

RR: I wouldn't eat. I went to -I think I went to- school. We had sort of, I don't remember much about it. I used to have nightmares. I cried a lot. I was terrified, I used to spend half the night talking, speaking German or Czech or whatever it was, 'cause I thought that I would never be able to speak to them now that I was learning English, you know, quite quickly. I'd never be able to speak to my parents again. You know, every day was like a year to me. I don't know if… I realised that they hadn't sent me away for good because there must have been all these other children as well. But I felt really abandoned and betrayed. I felt betrayed. I felt that I had been very well behaved up till then and they had no right to do this to me. As a matter of fact, I have got a letter somewhere, a letter that these people sent to my parents to say that I had settled down very nicely, which wasn't true, I don't think, but maybe I had? Maybe this was all my imagination that I was so difficult. There were a couple of things I remember about this family. They were very kind to me. They had a little girl, a bit older than me. And they bought me some new clothes. And I told you before that I was a very well dressed child. And at that time the fashion was very short skirts, pleated skirts. And they bought me what they had bought their daughter, and which was, a sort of a dress with a jumper on top and what they called a liberty bodice or whatever it was in these days underneath. And it was long; it came well below my knees. And it was green. I had never worn green, very nice colour, and I had never worn such a … to me it was just horrible, it was just ugly and horrible. And they were poor people. When I say poor, I mean, I don't know if they were poor, they were certainly not affluent people, and they could ill afford to buy me anything, and they did. And then they bought me, and I hated it, I didn't want to wear it. And then the other thing that upset me terribly was they bought me a beautiful painting set, a colouring set, again because they were so kind, and they gave it to me and I sat down and I was just going to start drawing. We weren't at school, it was, when we weren't at school, and suddenly it dawned on me. I said to them: "What day is it?" And they said a date and I said, "No, no, what day of the week is it?" And they said, "Saturday morning. You are not at school." And I knew that I wasn't allowed to draw on a Sabbath and I thought the heavens would open and I would be punished. I really did. I was so … and I started crying, I managed to explain to them that it was Sabbath and that I wasn't allowed, so they said because the war is on, you are allowed to do it and I did. But I always had this nagging guilt. I know it sounds ridiculous, it all sounds so ridiculous, had this nagging guilt that I should not have done it and "Why did I do it?", and on and on and on, you know. And that is a memory that remains with me as well.

RL: How did you find the picking up of English?

Tape 2: 6 minutes 22 seconds

RR: Well, I must have found it very easy. Well, all children find it very easy. I've got -after that, when my parents were billeted with some people in Chelmsford, actually; my teacher at the school that I went to - I have still got a book that she bought me for my birthday in 1944 … no… oh yes, she sent it to me, that's right. She sent it to me and she put… I contacted this teacher actually some years ago. And she sent me a book which said, "From Miss Weller who once had the pleasure of teaching you." I know that I was a very good, well behaved pupil and I picked up English very quickly, and I was eager to learn, and I did learn well and that sort of thing. I was always keen at school, you know. My grandchildren were always very disappointed that I was such a goody-goody, and didn't do anything naughty like my husband did at school.

RL: So was there no provision for the Jewish children over...? You know with it being a Jewish evacuation?

RR: I don't know, I don't understand it, because … to this day I don't understand it. I don't remember what happened. I only remember what happened to me personally. There must have been something, and I must have been all right. And I probably was happy the rest of the time. I don't remember. I wasn't there that long. I remember that I made myself really quite ill, I think, so that they were glad to get rid of me -I am sure, although they said that they weren't- back to my parents, because I was, I felt that I was, shredded without, you know, on my own. That really unnerved me. Once I got back to them then I picked up English. I came to Leeds in 1940. I didn't go to school till September 1940 when I went to Campus Street School, and I won a scholarship just a few years later to Allerton High School at that time, and that was hard for me 'cause I had no, you know, I had to start. I was about seven, I was nearly eight before I got any proper schooling, and by ten I had won a scholarship in English. So I mean, I worked very very hard at it, and never had any accent, Leeds accent, you know, but never had any problem with English.

RL: So when were you reunited with your parents, how long were you evacuated?

RR: I don't know.

RL: Do you remember meeting them again?

RR: I don't remember. It was a few months, that's all. The letter I saw seemed to imply that I was with them for sixth months, but I can't believe I was with them for so long. It was a matter of a few months. And I don't really remember being reunited or anything else.

RL: Where were they living when you went back to them?

RR: In Chelmsford. But I was also at a hostel in the Lake District at some stage. With refugee … the Kindertransport children had a hostel in Windermere. And I went there but I don't know for how long or when, but I remember being there 'cause I remember some of the … this Bertha Leverton, who runs the Kindertransport' reunions, and so on. I remember her there, not much else. But I felt all right there, with other children of my own experience. Let's put it this way, they spoke German, hadn't got parents with them, that kind of thing. So I wasn't there long either, but I don't know why I went there or when I went there. I know I went to the first cinema I have ever been to when I was at Windermere, went to see *Bambi*. And I was totally and absolutely overcome because I had never been to the cinema before, I was totally overcome, and I'll never forget the film, it was the most wonderful experience of my whole life, seeing *Bambi* and crying.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 24 seconds

RL: Any other memories of being in Windermere, in the hostel there?

RR: No.

RL: How many girls, was it girls?

RR: All girls, only girls, yes. I don't really remember. I remember being bossed about by the older girls, I mean telling me what to do, but I didn't … I mean, I was quite comfortable, I

remember being there, as opposed to being in Caerphilly, which was so strange. And I don't remember why I went there, quite honestly, I don't remember when either. But we went back to Ch…, my father was billeted with people who took in refugees, I suppose, and they were not a Jewish family, but they took us in from the kindness of their heart. And my mother, I remember my mother showing them what we needed to do for kashrut and that sort of thing, how kind they were. They made me a birthday party, but I can't remember what birthday it was. I've got photographs actually -I haven't got them handy- of me at this birthday party they made me, and I remember a tooth fell out during this birthday party. One of my milk teeth fell out and I have got a front tooth missing. They invited some local children to it and so on. But then we had to move. We had to move because, as I mentioned to you before, aliens were not allowed to be within 20 miles of the coast, and we had to find somewhere to live in the middle of England. And how did my father chose Leeds of all places? He took a pin, from what I remember, put it on the map, in the centre somewhere, and it came to Huddersfield, and he looked up, or went to the library or asked somebody, "What is Huddersfield? Is there a Jewish community there, is there a shul there?" And they said, "No." So he said, "What is the nearest place to Huddersfield where there is that sort of thing?" And they said "Leeds", and that's how we came to Leeds.

RL: And when was that? When did you…?

RR: 1940. The autumn of 1940. I only know that because I have a newspaper cutting, the Yorkshire … I went to Camber Street School, which was in the Jewish area at that time, the Chapeltown area. And one of the teachers had a brother who worked for the Yorkshire Evening Post and she thought it was an interesting story, you know, I was in her class. And they sent somebody to interview, and I have got a photograph of my brother and myself in a … and they put it in the newspaper with the story of how we got to England and so on. It was dated 7 October 1940, so I obviously went to school that September.

RL: Was your father interned?

RR: No because he wasn't German. Being stateless. He was born in Poland but he had stateless citizenship, he had no citizenship anywhere, that was his good fortune, you see, that he wasn't German. So the Germans did him a good favour by not giving him German citizenship because he would have been interned, certainly. No he wasn't.

RL: And where were you living in Leeds?

Tape 2: 13 minutes 49 seconds

RR: We were living in Chapeltown. First we lived with … we got a room with … somewhere or other. Then we lived in a rented house. We rented a house, and my father got a job with a Jewish wool merchant. It was a … he had factories in Dewsbury. It was called called Stross's. I think they are still there. And he gave him a job, an unskilled labouring job, you know, carrying things, sacks backwards and forwards and so on. And that was his first job. And then, when he knew English better, he went to night school. He learned English and worked really hard at it, and then he became, he worked for the Jewish community, he took a job on with the Jewish National Fund Keren Kayemet, 'cause he was determined to do something of that nature. In fact there are people in Leeds who reminded me years afterwards that they offered him a good job, where he could earn, because he was very clever, he was a wonderful mathematician, marvellous with figures and that sort of thing, and a very clever and astute man. And they offered him jobs as partner. I remember, one chap telling me he offered him a

partnership in his business because he thought he would be such an asset, and he refused it. He said he wants to work with his experience -the way he felt- only work for a Jewish organisation. And he wanted to do something of that kind to help, and he stayed in that sort of work, first with the Jewish National Fund and then for what was then the GPR which is now UGIA, and then for the Jewish school here in Leeds, the Jewish day school movement. It was his brain child, the Jewish day school movement in Leeds, he founded it. He couldn't provide the money for it 'cause he didn't have it, obviously, with the sort of work he did. But he found men who did have money and got them to invest their money in the Jewish day school movement, in the schools here.

RL: Who did he involve in that?

RR: Well, there was the Sillman family, and George Littleton was the main figure in Leeds. He put up a lot of money for it. The school was named … the school was first … there was the Zelig Brodetsky school. And then the Morris Sillman was the Middle School. And George Lyttleton they named the centre, sort of the hall and so on after him 'cause he put a lot of money into the school and did a lot of hard work.

RL: So it was your father's…?

RR: But my father was the one whose idea it was, he always wanted it. And see, after the war … before the war, the idea was in London -if you remember, if you know- to anglicise children. Jewish children from the East End, they did their best to try and anglicise them. They had the JFS, the Jewish Free School, originally, that was anglicising Jewish children from speaking Yiddish into English and making them more English. After the war there was this great Zionist surge to make English children into more Jewish children. And there was a huge surge in Jewish education and interest in Zionism and, you know, state of Israel and that sort of thing, and it rolled that way. And so that's how the Jewish day school movement sprang into life, at that time.

RL: When was the Jewish school actually started?

RR: 1956, with a nursery. And the Morris Sillman, the Middle School, wasn't founded until 1973. But Brodetsky went from 1956, they built it up from nursery, you know, class by class and so on and it's still here.

Tape 2: 17 minutes 52 seconds

RL: The school you went to was just a local…?

RR: I went to the local primary school. But I must tell you, there were about 60 children in the class in that time during the war, and about 56 of them or 57 of them in that class were Jewish children. It was almost a totally Jewish school. I remember at **…** that we lived at the back of the school, and before Pesach, Erev Pesach, my mother used to send biscuits and buns and cakes, anything that was left over -because in those days people didn't keep any Chomez in the house, there was none of this business selling this and doing that, they got rid of everything- she used to send tins of biscuits, and anything that she wanted to get rid of into the school. And the kids used to, we used to, you know, distribute them in my class and everybody used to look forward to Erev Pesach, when they'd get all those biscuits for their break.

RL: Did your mother pick up English?

RR: Very well. Both my parents. My father wrote English so brilliantly, that he was writing for journals and this sort of thing. He spoke, they both spoke with an accent, but my father's written English was absolutely beautiful. He had a very literary bend, which I hope I have inherited. He was very very articulate, especially on paper. He wrote beautifully, you wouldn't know that he was a foreigner, with the things that he wrote.

RL: Was he involved in any war work at all?

RR: Well, he was a fire watcher. Everybody had to be a fire … I've got a document there in which he asks -'cause all aliens had a curfew from eight o'clock at night till 6 o'clock in the morning- and he writes for permission to the police, or to the War Office -I am not sure where this document went, it has got it on- asking for permission to break the curfew, so that he could help in the fire watching, 'cause he wanted to do his bit. And he wanted. He didn't want to be … I mean it would have been more convenient for him, more comfortable, not to have to be a fire watcher, because you had to stay up all night after a day's work, and in fact the work went on as normal. Everybody took in turns, so many people. And he was, he wanted to do that.

RL: Did he have any incidents to deal with?

RR: I don't remember. No, I don't remember, I really don't remember.

RL: And your mother was she involved in anything during the war years?

RR: Not really. She had … we lived in this house, a big house in Chapeltown and she … we rented out rooms. In every room we had lodgers; it helped out as far as money was concerned. To start with, we all slept in one bedroom. And when we had enough money I got a room of my own, and then my brother got a room, you know, that sort of thing. But we always had people living with us, always.

RL: Where were the people from?

RR: Jewish people. A couple from, I don't know, a German couple. I think one. And another room had a young Polish girl and her husband, a pilot. Just people, my mother cooked for them. I mean, you know, they had their meals with us sort of thing and they rented the room.

RL: Were they refugees?

Tape 2: 20 minutes 28 seconds

RR: I think so, I am not absolutely sure. One family lived with us a very very long time, others sort of came and went as things went.

RL: And do you remember any bombing, air raids?

RR: There were a couple of bombs in these days, but I don't, I have vague memories, nothing really, we were quite lucky really. I remember we had to wear gasmasks all the time. You know, we had to have them round us. And I always forgot mine, and that sort of thing, but

nothing, we were not really involved in the war as much as other places that were more industrialised.

RL: Were your family in touch with any members of their family abroad?

RR: Well, I have brought documentation here to show that my father wrote constantly through the Red Cross to try and contact anybody, anywhere. And until 19.., he was still writing in 1943 from what I see from these Red Cross telegrams. Red Cross provided a service whereby you could write so many words, you know, through the Red Cross to an address, and they would be allowed to write so many words back. Obviously it was censored at the other end. I suppose it was censored at this end as well to make sure you didn't write anything that they didn't allow. Because it was war time, don't forget. And so you had an idea of what was going on. But after 1941, I think, there was no communication; they sent these telegrams back saying, you know, "Unable to contact anyone. All Jews left here in such and such, 1942" or whatever, there was no communication otherwise.

RL: How aware were your parents of what was going on in Europe?

RR: I don't know, I don't know, I know that we have a great many letters, I've got a whole stack of letters upstairs, I have carefully filed them away. I found them after my father died amongst his effects, begging us to help them. And that was from when they were deported to Poland, but these letters all stopped at the beginning of 1940, after that no-one, we didn't get anything. How much my parents knew, I don't know. They weren't going to tell me what they knew. I know as soon as the war was over, my father started doing research for his family, and he did find some, you know, he was very assiduous with this and spared no effort or money to bring the remaining survivors over. And my mother's family, those who survived, went straight to Palestine, to Israel. My father's, my auntie came, he got her out, the one who was in Plaszow and Auschwitz and so on, and her husband. They brought them here, and they lived with us in Hillcrest Avenue in, you know, the original house in Chapeltown.

Tape 2: 24 minutes 44 seconds

RL: How did he find them?

RR: I don't know. I suppose there were many organisations out on the search, you know. You might have seen films and so on of people coming out of camps, and putting notices up. They always went back to the town of their origin, always. So they went back to Zwickau, they would have gone back there and put a note up to say that so and so and so and so is alive or not alive. And there were, there were, I am sure, a great many committees and organisations whose job only was to bring people together. There must have been some central place that you could put your name into and from which you drew names and so on. And they did that.

RL: How long did they live with you?

RR: Well my uncle lived with, they both, my aunt and uncle lived with us until my uncle died. He had severe TB from his … he was in Mauthausen concentration camp, then Auschwitz. And he was extremely ill when he was brought over, extremely ill. He died in January 55, before when I got married. My aunt lived longer than that, but she, unfortunately, just as things were going nicely for her, and she had her own home here and so on, and she was beginning to enjoy life again, and had been to Israel backwards and forwards and done things, she died in 1961.

RL: So tell me about your memories of your schooling. First of all the first school you went to. How did you get on with the other children?

RR: I loved school, I loved school. I just loved it, and people did help me and I worked very hard, they really helped me at that first school, they were wonderful, Primary School. And my dream, my ambition, I couldn't think of anything more wonderful than go to Allison High School. I went there when we took what was called a scholarship, and I saw this wonderful place out in the country, it's only about a mile down the road from here, but there were no houses at the time and so on, and it was just too wonderful for words. And I thought there couldn't be a more marvellous place than that. And I did the scholarship and I went, and again, I loved the learning, I was not happy at the high school because there weren't -there was a lot of anti-Semitism at the time- many Jewish children in the school at the time. It had been a private, an independent school, but then became a state school. We are talking about 1945, right, and there was quite a lot of that, and then of course there were the years of the 'Irgun' and so on, before the state was founded in '48. And I was very very right wing, very very Irgun orientated, and thought they were just wonder…, they were my heroes, absolutely my heroes. I went to 'B'nai Akiva' at the time, but they weren't the ones that inspired my Irgun affiliation I felt that I had. I remember my bedroom being pinned, pictures pinned up of the Irgun, of the Stern Gang, of all the … anyone who could do anything to gain independence were my heroes at the time. I remember that very distinctly. And there were big problems at Allison at that time. I mean now, you know, my children, my own daughters went to Allison High School and encountered nothing.

RL: Could you give me some examples of what you encountered?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 38 seconds

RR: Verbal abuse. To the extent that once I took a girl's head and banged it against a radiator, very hard. Which was not the best thing to do, but verbal abuse … The teachers were worse than the pupils, I would think. The teachers were very very anti-Sem… Not all of them, obviously, not all of them, but the few that were. And they were cruel. And I had no weapon really at that stage to fight back. I just had to take it.

RL: What did the teachers do?

RR: I can't remember. It was verbal discrimination, nasty remarks, including the head teacher, but I mean, it didn't affect my education. Educationally I was treated the same as anyone else. But they were, they were, they were cruel. I remembered it all, I remembered, you know. I didn't forget them. I remembered their names, I remembered the sort of things. I remembered them very clearly, but it didn't, it didn't bother me, it didn't, sort of, stress me to making me feel week and affected. I felt prouder, I felt more superior and more arrogant if you want to put it that way and I thought if I could get the Irgun to come here and murder them I would be very happy. You know, I mean, that's the sort of…, I was quite young, and I would have been quite happy for them to be murdered by the Stern Gang. And hope they would be, and that is how my mind worked, my emotional state was like that. When they were cruel to me, it didn't make me feel vulnerable, it didn't make me feel, it didn't make me feel happy obviously, but on the other hand, I felt it's all right, I know about you lot anyway. You know, that kind of thing, it doesn't matter. We'll get our own back one day. That's how I felt.

RL: And were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

RR: B'nai Akiva. I went to Cheder and B'nai Akiva that was my life. I went to Cheder every night and on a Sunday morning for three hours. Didn't think it was hard, didn't feel it was an imposition, didn't know there was anything else quite honestly. And went to B'nai Akiva, which was my total life. My life was bound up with B'nai Akiva morning, noon and night. Whatever they said, I wanted to do. Whatever they did, I did. I went to B'nai Akiva camps, I went to B'nai Akiva unions, all my friends were in B'nai Akiva. I felt that life was absolutely wonderful. I met my husband through B'nai Akiva, my friends that I had when I was eight years, nine, ten years of age, are still my friends to this day, through B'nai Akiva, you know, that sort of thing. It was wonderful, it was just wonderful.

RL: When have B'nai Akiva started in Leeds, was it already going when you came?

Tape 2: 31 minutes 47 seconds

RR: No, no, it wasn't. In fact, the first person to start B'nai Akiva lodged with my mother. Because we lived in a very convenient place. They wanted to start B'nai Akiva where the Cheder was originally. Cheder was in Cowper Street. It was actually in the house of someone who became a friend of mine, and it was turned into a Cheder. It was a large old house, and they were going to start B'nai Akiva in that on the premises, and we lived so near that... What was his name? I am trying to think of the chap's name, I have just forgotten. He came and lodged with my mother for the time that he was beginning to start B'nai Akiva and took me along with him for the first meeting sort of thing. I wasn't very keen actually, I was quite young, and he had a few other kids there. And it started from that.

RL: Where was he from?

RR: He was from London, I think he was a refugee. Do you now, I think someone told me not long ago to put me into contact with him again. I can't remember his name.

RL: Not Arieh Handler?

RR: No, not Arieh Handler. Martin … I've just forgotten his name. I know it but I have forgotten it. Just gone out of my head.

RL: So he came from London?

RR: He came from London. I believe it was London, must have been London at that time, because Manchester was not as, was not what Manchester is now. In fact, Leeds was a very very large Jewish community during the war, very large. It has gone down from 25000 then to about 7000 now, so it's declined greatly. And he came and started B'nai Akiva, and it flourished because there were quite a few religious Jewish children here and those that weren't were brought into it. And it became a very very big movement in Leeds. 'Habonim', I don't know if Habonim was going then as well. It was, but I mean, I remember Habonim as well, and Hashomer, I would say, were quite strong. Hashomer wasn't as strong as Habonim but Habonim was as strong as B'nai Akiva in Leeds at that time definitely… I mean later on, you know in my teens. They were very strong.

RL: And did it start in a Cheder?

RR: It started there.

RL: Which house was it?

RR: It started in Cowper Street, and then moved. B'nai Akiva then bought a house in Harehills Avenue, and I believe a Mr Fass, who was an important member of the Jewish community in Leeds at that time, put a lot of money towards it. I don't know exactly who found it, maybe he bought it all. I don't know. He bought a house, a large house which he converted into B'nai Akiva premises. And different groups met there, like they do these days, you know, different rooms, different age groups. And there was a big garden. We used to play netball or football or whatever. And we went on outings and Matza rambles, and there was a shul there, and we had services there, a whole life was bound up with B'nai Akiva, my social life.

RL: Who was in charge when you were there? Who became the Madrichim and Madrichot [guides] when you started?

RR: I don't remember. I don't, I really don't remember. Later on there were people like Mr Fass's nieces, who live in Israel at the moment, who still live in Israel. There were quite a lot of people in Leeds who also went to B'nai Akiva, older than me and younger than me, you know, also all tied up with B'nai Akiva, and we are still friends now, to this day, 'cause it's like a family really, you get into it, into an organisation of that kind and it takes over your life. You know, the sort of organisation, 'cause you go there for your social activities. Then you go to B'nai Akiva camps in the summer and you keep… and this sort of thing. Then you marry people through B'nai Akiva that you meet in B'nai Akiva. So therefore it makes it into a kind of a family thing. When Arieh went there, you mentioned that you knew the, you know, that Arieh went there and his wife went in London, and I mean, it is a very big organisation, you know, a worldwide organisation.

Tape 2: 36 minutes 31 seconds

RL: Did it attract other refugees?

RR: Well, I didn't know any other refugees in Leeds. People didn't come to Leeds, refugees, on the whole. I mean, why come to Leeds? Unless you had relatives. But they didn't come, they mainly, I would think, stayed in London. I think people went to Manchester, maybe or people went to Liverpool, but… And if refugees did come to Leeds, people from Kindertransport came to Leeds, I am sure, but I wouldn't know them. And they were spread out and maybe lived somewhere else and I didn't come across them. I certainly didn't come across other refugee children. So, Kindertransport children, I didn't meet anybody in Leeds. There were, I know there were children, Kindertransport children in Leeds, but they, some, were billeted with non-Jewish families, don't forget. Or anywhere, anyone who would take them. Or were older and actually worked, you know, as domestics or in hospitals or… that kind of thing.

RL: Did your parents have any connection with refugees in Leeds, or with any refugee committee in Leeds?

RR: I don't know. I don't know. I know that even at that time, even then, going to the time of war and post war, the German Jewish refugees always considered themselves as superior to everyone else. And my father being an Ostjude, again, and my mother came from Rumania, were considered the sort of sub-species. So therefore, there were German refugees, I

remember, because my mother actually become involved with a Zionist group, you know, like the Wizo Group. She was involved with a group called the Edith Ede group, which was made up practically solely of German Jewish women. But socially, we … oh there were a couple of friends they had who were **….** they had contacts, you know, everybody had somebody from abroad living. But I wasn't aware of anything else.

RL: So who became your parents' friends?

RR: Mainly people from the shul. My father's, he belonged to the Hasidische Shul in Spencer Place at that time. He became the secretary of course, after the first few months of even being here. He became the secretary, and honorary secretary, of course. Never worked for money, my father. Through the shul, you know, he, it wasn't like it is now. There was no leisure. My mother worked six days a week. She cleaned all the house, she cooked all the meals … Don't forget, we didn't even have fridge. In those days you had a cellar, where you kept the food cool. But on the whole you bought every day, it was all rationing, you know. And during war years and post war years, as long as they lived in Hillcrest Avenue, there was no… They moved just after I got married in 1955. I got married in August 1955 and several months later they moved up here and had a house very near here with mod cons if you want to call it, with a fridge and so on. My mother never had a Hoover, you know, vacuum cleaner. It was my job to polish the lino, no carpets. I had to polish the lino every Friday. I used to hate it. That was my job. The furniture was all very difficult to keep clean. My mother used to polish it, wasn't very good for it. She used to polish, she was absolutely obsessively clean. There was no washing machine, she used to have a boiler, and you know, boil the washing in the boiler every week. Put blue in it to make it white and everything was done by hand. She used to iron on the kitchen table. Hours and hours of ironing. Doing all the sheets, which were all cotton. And I mean it was in the days before all that and that took six days a week, all day. She used to cook all the time for everybody else as well as us. As I say, shopping was a major difficulty. You didn't get what you get now. And she used to swap her -when there were coup ration book- she used to swap her meat coupons or bacon, you know, you got coupons for bacon or something, I don't know. Other things that we didn't eat, she used to swap with neighbours for sugar coupons and she used to bake. There was no leisure. Shabbat afternoon, they, my parents used to sleep.

Tape 2: 41 minutes 36 seconds

RL: In terms of a religious observance, was there any change in their religious observance? From there to here?

RR: No, no. We were a frum household. I mean, it was just not something, I didn't know much different, I didn't know any different, it never occurred to me. I mean, I left school early on a Friday afternoon and I had to go home, quite a long way but it never bothered me, nothing like that bothered me. I never moaned about having time off for festivals, of having to have time off for Shabbat and so on, it didn't bother me at all. I mean, some people made them feel uncomfortable, when they had to go out early, or when they were separated. They were, in those days, there was a lot of separation of children who acted differently. There wasn't a political correctness there is now, or the tolerance. I just made my work. I did what I had to do. I never felt a second class citizen ever. I think I felt the reverse. Which wasn't a very good trait but the fact is, that it never, never made me feel uncomfortable. I felt I had something special that other people didn't have.

RL: Did all the Jewish pupils take early Friday?

RR: No, no. There were only a few of us. I mean, those days were exactly the same as it is today. People think today they are a lot more relaxed and so on. I don't know. I think, people were quite relaxed then, those that were, those that observed were the same. I don't think things have changed a great deal.

RL: And was there any problem of you taking…?

RR: I don't know, quite honestly, because I went. There was no problem, because I went. My father said, "Be home at such…" You see, my father's word, my father was a Victorian father. My father said, "Be home at such and such a time, do this, that and the other." And it never occurred to me to question it. I just didn't. It's not that I was so good. It's just that that was the way I had been brought, brought up. And I had no outside influences to make me think I should do different, really.

Tape 2: 44 minutes 8 seconds

RL: Did your parents find it any more difficult maintaining, you know, their religious way of life here?

RR: No, no.

RL: Was there any problems with keeping a frum household?

RR: No, I never, I never heard that they thought of any problems in any way. They, my father mixed in the shul with people of his own kind and... No, not at all. And seeing he worked with Jewish organisations primarily, once he had finished at Stross's, it was, there was no problem.

RL: For instance in terms of lighting the fire on a Shabbat, how was that organised?

RR: I can't remember. I think my next door neighbours did. I can't, I really can't remember. I mean, it was so much a way of life that I just don't even remember, it was not something that was of any great importance to me, because it was just a regular thing, you know.

RL: What festivals stick out in your mind the most from your childhood?

RR: Well, Pesach was always very nice. But I think, our 'Sdarim' now, in my own home, are nicer than the ones my father, I mean going back to, personally, because everybody was very, everybody was very involved. But what I do remember on Shavuot, and this is very strange 'cause it goes back a long… Shavuot, my father went to … the Hasidische Shul was in grounds that had quite a lot of trees. There were lilac trees, and the lilac was always out at that time, and he used to bring great branches of lilac, which he loved. It was his favourite scent. He used to bring them into the house and drape them over everything, for Shavuot. That's what I remember as part of the festivals. But otherwise they were just … My festivals really, it was all in, I was involved with, B'nai Akiva all the time. Not even home, home didn't have as much influence as B'nai Akiva had, when I got into it. Because as you know, when you are in an organisation of that kind, everything you do is taken over by them, so every 'Chag', every festival, I was there celebrating with my friends, and we did everything together. And my home didn't have as much influence as B'nai Akiva did.

RL: Do you remember the founding of the state? What happened?

RR: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. I do. I even remember, in November when they were talking about the votes, you know, counting the votes, that November. The Security Council and the United Nations and all this sort of thing. I remember who said yes, and I remember Great Britain was neutral, you know, they didn't vote either way, which was very typical in many respects. And we were sitting by the radio. And when the vote came in favour, I know my father and mother went out, they went to the shul or something, I don't know where they went, because they were celebrating. And I went into, I rushed off to B'nai Akiva, and we all met at the house and we were dancing in the streets and it was absolutely wonderful. It was absolutely wonderful, it was the, it was a magic day, absolutely magic. I was thrilled; I still am when I think about it. This was the most wonderful moment. And then we saw the newsreels of people dancing in the streets of Tel Aviv, and singing. Newsreel of Ben Gurion declaring the state, and it was wonderful, yeah.

RL: You mentioned going to camps.

RR: Oh yes.

RL: Where did you used to go?

Tape 2: 48 minutes 10 seconds

RR: I can't remember, my husband remembers all the names of the camps. I don't really remember the names of all the … I can't remember where. I went to one every year and then we had reunions. We went to Thacksted quite a lot of times that was the B'nai Akiva Hachshara Centre. My brother also was involved in B'nai Akiva. He went to Thackstead and he went on Hachshara actually and ended up in .... He took Agricultural Science at university and went to Israel when he qualified as an agronomist and has lived in Israel ever since.

RL: Which Hachshara did he go on?

RR: Thackstead. And my husband's sister also lives there; I mean all my family live in Israel now, all my remaining family.

RL: Did you ever think at that stage, or earlier on?

RR: Oh yes, we did think, oh definitely, we were determined to go, but when I married my husband, he decided to study. He was a dental technician and he decided he would like to study dental surgery. And as we had no money at all and no-one who could support us, I went to work to keep him there, keep him at university. And when he eventually qualified, we had three children. He qualified and we thought about it then, and we were seriously thinking of going somewhere, but before long, unfortunately, our third daughter developed leukaemia, and our lives really came to end there. We couldn't go anywhere really. And that's how we sort of never got there. I am sure if we had wanted to later on, we could have done. But it all seemed too late, it was too long, it was too, everything was too late, we felt.

RL: So can you tell me something about your husband, where he came from, his background?

RR: Well, he was born into the East End of London, typical East End family, and remembers a great deal about the East End. Big family, he went to B'nai Akiva. That's where I met him, at camp.

RL: What's his name?

RR: Dov. He was born as David, but everybody called him Dov. And we met there and we got married and, he is a man, a lot of fun and excitement, and he wasn't a good boy at school, so my grandchildren think he is absolutely marvellous. And they love him telling the stories with all the naughty things that he did. Like, during the war, throwing bricks through derelict buil…, you know bombed out buildings, and he used to love doing it and was always caught and given a good hiding for it. And they love all these stories about Grandpa having, being sent out of Cheder 'cause he was naughty, you know, that sort of thing. He became, he did qualify, and so was a wonderful man.

RL: Where was he studying?

RR: Well he, we lived in Leeds. What happened was when we first good married I went to London to work for Rabbi Schonfeld in the Hasmonean actually. I became a teacher in the Hasmonean, and he was still in the army, he was doing his national service. At that time, there was still national service. They had to do two years. And then he, when he finished, I was still in London, we decided, and I was pregnant, so we came to Leeds, so that my mother could help us, whilst I worked. And it evolved from there, you know. We got a house not so far from here, a small house, managed to pay the mortgage on it with my work and keep him at univer.... He studied in Leeds University but he actually took Royal of Surgeon exams from the Royal College of Surgeons in London. And he did qualify eventually.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 45 seconds

RL: I seem to have missed out a little period in your life, from the point of leaving school. And what you did…

RR: Well, I did the usual thing: O-levels, A-levels, went to university, studied languages.

RL: Which university did you …?

RR: Leeds University. And then went on to do a diploma in Education at the same university.

RL: Were there many Jewish students?

RR: Oh yes, there were always a lot of Jewish students at Leeds University. It had always been a very good and popular, you know, there was the Jewish Association and so on.

RL: Did you belong to that…?

RR: Yes, yes, I was quite a busy member of the AJS but I didn't have a lot of time for social activities, 'cause I worked on the side, I taught in Cheder, I taught in withdrawal classes, to earn some money, 'cause my parents were, not desperately poor but they certainly were very very far from being affluent or well off even. And I had my ties with B'nai Akiva and that sort of thing. And then I met my husband, you know… whilst we were quite young. Went to Israel with B'nai Akiva, I went to … the usual sort of pattern. And then when my husband qualified, I was determined to do another degree to further my education. I wanted to go back and study literature which I did. I took an MA in English Literature. Which I've got, I got the masters in 1970. But in 196…, January '67, my third daughter, Helena, was diagnosed with

leukaemia so that was tied up, while she was ill, while I was doing that. And this is her actually. She died in 1973, ten days before Pesach. And it was a hard time.

RL: How old was she?

RR: She was eleven and a half when she died. I had five, I had five children all in all. One was born, the last one was born in December 67, so just after Helena became ill. And the others were born before, four girls and a boy.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 23 seconds

RL: Now coming back to your university days, did you meet any prejudice at university?

RR: Not really, no. Not in those days, sort of living as an integrated world and all this sort of …, loving each other was very much the in-thing, when I was at Leeds University. I mixed with a lot of foreign students, students from India and Pakistan and all that sort of thing. It was wonderful. My student days, my days at university were wonderful, absolutely wonderful, in contrast to my time at school. I had to work very hard at university. I found it hard and demanding, very competitive, very difficult. Because I didn't have the background that my children had, when they went, when they studied, you know. With people who knew what was going on and could help them in their work, or discuss things with them. But I loved it, I just loved it. I mean, I loved everything: the work, the atmosphere, the student camaraderie. You know, all this sort of thing. I loved my time at university.

RL: Which languages were you studying?

RR: Well, I started, when I did my BA, I did a BA Honours in English, French, German and Hebrew. I studied Hebrew as well, I kept my Hebrew up all the time. And then I did English literature, I specialized in English literature.

RL: And you say you were active in the Jewish Society?

RR: I never became president or … I think I might have been on the committee, but I don't, I didn't have time. I had to work as well. You know, when others were playing tennis, sort of thing, I was teaching, private teaching, private pupils, Cheder, anything, you know, to earn some money.

TAPE 3

RL: This is the interview with Ruth Rogoff, and its tape 3. I was just thinking about your Zionist activities and I know you mentioned that you got to meet important people in the Zionist movement. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

RR: Well, my father, in his capacity as working for the Jewish National Fund and the -what was then- JPA, RUJF now, he organised fundraising dinners and was responsible for bringing important people to Leeds to speak at Zionist meetings. And amongst, whenever he … anything like … that took place, he took me along with him, even when I was young. I think even before the state of Israel was declared we had people like Shimon Hacohen, which is -won't mean much to you- but important leaders. And then I met, I had the honour to meet David Ben Gurion, when he came to Leeds. I met Moshe Sharett, he was the first, I think. Moshe Sharett was long before David Ben-Gurion. Moshe Sharett was here, David Ben-

Gurion, Golda Meir, Aba Eban. I think several others as well. And I got the opportunity to meet them and speak to them and I felt, it was a very great honour.

RL: Did they just come for the sake of fundraising?

RR: Yes, yes. They usually came to big important meetings, dinners, you know. It was wonderful meeting them. Because I met them beforehand as well, when my father, he hosted, he looked after them, sort of thing. So, I intro… I was able to meet them, and I thought it … I loved it.

RL: Was there any opposition to Zionism in Leeds at all? That you were aware of?

RR: Not that I remember. Leeds was, Leeds has never been known as being a very religious city, but they were always considered as a very Zionist. I think even long before I came to Leeds. Hundred years ago, there was a big 'Poale Zion' movement here in Leeds and that sort of thing. I don't think there was any oppo…, I mean, there are people who might not have been interested. But opposition I wouldn't know. I know that the, as I say, when I was young, the three youth movements were very strong. The Zionist youth movements I mean. I mean, there were other youth movements, or clubs as you might say. But Habonim**,** B'nai Akiva, Hashomer, were very strong.

RL: When did you first visit Israel?

RR: I first went when I was eighteen. I went with a relative as **…** and then I went with different organisations. And later on, I didn't go when my children were young, 'cause we didn't have the money apart from anything else. Later on, when I became Head of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the Morris Sillman School, which was after I had taught in other schools, where I eventually finished my professional career, I used to take the children to Israel every year, on school trips.

RL: So your first visit, when you were eighteen, who was that with?

Tape 3: 3 minutes 51 seconds

RR: A private one, with a relative.

RL: And how did you feel going there?

RR: I loved it. I mean, don't forget, I was in that world, everything to me was, and of course in those days, the 1950s, it was very exciting. Not… I mean very different from what it is now. I am not saying that it it's not exciting now, but totally different. The atmosphere was different, the people there were different. People were coming all the time, different altogether, the world was different.

RL: So in what way was it different?

RR: Oh, there was great idealism and hope for the future. Problems with the Arabs were not even considered, really, what... It was building of the state and everybody wanted to give their best and ... The world anyway, it was after the war, don't forget. And that was the sort of mood that most people were in. They weren't as, they were more altruistic, I would think. I don't know, maybe it was my, what I perceived, my perception, but I think people were more

altruistic than they are now. I think it is a … although we are so much more affluent now, everybody, generally, the whole world in a way has a higher standard of living, I think people are more panic struck now to have everything, or feel that they need everything in order to live. And I don't think the pressures then were as great, neither were the fears. You didn't fear for your children. When I was bringing my children up, I was nowhere near as frightened of anything as people are now. My children went everywhere when they were young, on their own. When my third daughter became ill, when Helena became ill, I had the others, two older than her and two younger. And the older ones completely looked after the younger ones many times and took them to school and took them here and after were in the house on their own and so on, without me being worried about anything terrible happening as people are now. They went into people… You know and I think my little ones came home from school, on the way home from school they met people on the way who … and went into their houses and chatted to them and chatted to people standing at gates and so on. It never worried me, it never worried them. People now are so paranoid, you know, they got this paranoia about children being abducted, children being assaulted. It never occurred to me. It never worried me, and it never worried them.

RL: Can you just go through the children you have and when they were born and their names?

RR: Well, Linda was born in 1958, in May. Judy was born in June 1959. Helena was born in 1961. Daniel was born in 196…, January '65 and Suzie was born December '67.

RL: And which schools did they go to?

RR: They all went to the Jewish Day School. To start with.

RL: And from there?

RR: Well, the girls went to Allison High School and Daniel went to Leeds Grammar School.

Tape 3: 7 minutes 43 seconds

RL: And youth groups?

RR: They didn't belong to B'nai Akiva, they'd belong to different… It seems a long time ago. It isn't as long ago as when I went, but they belonged to different things. They… B'nai B'rith**,** BBYO, they went to, I think, that sort of thing. And Daniel belonged to the JLB, and… They did go to B'nai Akiva at one time but they weren't very keen. It changed, you know, the youth movement has changed in nature as well as the people who go to them. And we worked, I mean my husband was working, my parents didn't work, at least my mother didn't work, but I did. I kept my … I worked professionally, I worked full. I was a teacher, I am a teacher, a teacher by profession but I work for the radio as well, I worked for Radio Leeds for a while as well, as a freelancer, on literary programmes. And I did a bit of journalism. That's what I would have liked to have done, actually, journalism. I'd have liked to have been a journalist. But I took up teaching because it was more convenient and regular and brought a regular income in, so that I could support my husband to start with. Then later it was more convenient because of the children, you know. I wanted to be home when they were home, and have holidays when they had holidays, and so, that's why I kept, although I like my teaching but I didn't intend to be a teacher.

Tape 3: 9 minutes 24 seconds

RL: So where was your first teaching job?

RR: Hasmonean Grammar School in London.

RL: And then from there?

RR: We came back to Leeds and I worked in a couple of high schools. And as I had my children, then I went…

RL: What was your subject?

RR: English. And then I became editor of the Jewish Gazette in Leeds. It was a long time ago, it was about … before Judy was born, in 1958, maybe, I don't know. Kept that up for a while. And then I taught at Brodetsky, when my children were old enough to go to nursery school, I taught at Jewish Day School, Brodetsky as it was then.

RL: Was that the primary?

RR: That's the primary school, yeah. And then, after my son was born, I taught at Leeds Grammar School, almost by mistake. There was an advert asking for a teacher at that time - just a temporary teacher- to do English, and I thought, well, they had never had a woman teacher at that school. It was the High School, not the Junior School. But I'll try, what can I lose and I did, and I got the job and I loved it there. And I did a lot of teaching at this grammar school, on and off actually, when my child became ill, I, you know, I fluctuated with my work, depending on how well she was and I did part time and then eventually I came back to the Jewish Day School movement. I didn't really want to, because I wanted to continue in my, I taught English, but at the time they were looking for a Head of Hebrew and Jewish Studies and seeing I was qualified in Hebrew, I thought I'd do it as a .. my father was involved with the schools at that time and he begged me to help them out for a term, till they found somebody, so I went for a term, and I loved it so much to be honest, you know. I didn't intend to stay, I thought, I had a job offer for January in an Institute of Higher Education. A very good job, that didn't involve teaching ever day either, it was just sessions, and I wanted to go then. It was the sort of job I wanted to do, 'cause more lecturing than teaching. And I started at the Day School in September, intent on going to this other job in January but I just fell in love with the school and the work and so on, what I was doing and I stayed there for ten years.

Tape 3: 12 minutes 16 seconds

RL: And then in terms of other activities? Did you have time for…?

RR: I belonged to 'Emuna', worked for Israel. I didn't have a lot of time to do anything but I kept up with friendships, I say, I grew up with people from my childhood, had friends. Then we had friends through the university. My husband was at university and he met people who were my friends as well, and then became, others that became my friends, colleagues, other budding dentists and doctors and so on, and we used to have evenings, because we had small children people came to us 'cause we didn't, couldn't have babysitters sort of thing, so people used to come to us and we had, we had a very happy time.

RL: Was your husband involved in any communal activities?

RR: Not really, well, not whilst he was studying.

RL: I mean, after that?

RR: He always belonged to Jewish Dental Society, became president of the Jewish Dental Society. He did become a member of 'Chevra Kadisha' for a long time, 'cause he felt, it was a job he didn't really want to do but felt it was a Mitzva to do it. What else was he interested… His main interest was, he did everything in the house, he did do it yourself work, he made things, he built things, he climbed on the roof, he did the garden. He maintained the house, he was very much, not what you would call a modern father, with the hands on with the children but he did all the fun things with them, you know, took them sledging, took them out rambling and he … but he, he did, we worked very hard to maintain the house ourselves, so we didn't have to call people in, did a lot of decorating and building and that kind of thing. And we bought a caravan after a while. Actually, we had a tent. We went on a holiday in tents every year, with a tent. And then we had a trailer tent and then eventually we got a caravan. And we always had, always took a month off for holiday, we always went to somewhere very exciting, always through the month of August. He closed his surgery and we went away. The children always had, we always went abroad, somewhere interesting, somewhere exciting, onto camp sites, and they had a wonderful time.

Tape 3: 14 minutes 59 seconds

RL: When did that start?

RR: Very early on because I remember my youngest one being tied up in a sheet in Spain hanging between two trees. I'll never forget people being so particular about not having the children in the sun and looking at this and the germs and I don't know what. We all were in a tent, different tents, we had a few tents. We strung it between two trees in a sheet, and that was, she was six months old at the time. She was born in December and this was in June. So she, we started with them, when they were very… as soon as he qualified actually, I mean, obviously, while he was studying, his work came first, that's all he ever did. It took him all his time to do that. So he didn't have time for social activities, and when he had a bit of time he did a bit of work to earn money like teaching in a Cheder in Bradford and that sort of thing, and delivering new year cards and delivering chickens. And later on he worked on a building site and that, you know, anything to bring in a bit of money because it was a very expensive business. That's, and we, as I say, we always had holidays abroad and they were always fun. Children had a wonderful time.

RL: And then when, you say your children, what did they do after they left school?

RR: Different things. I mean, it's a long time since they left school. My oldest ones are over forty, you know, so I mean it is a long time but they have all done, they have all been successful in their own way.

RL: Did they go to university?

Tape 3: 16 minutes 53 seconds

RR: Yes.

RL: Did they all go or?

RR: My oldest daughter didn't, she didn't want to. But she is now, she's married to an estate agent and she is in property design. She designs, refurbishes old buildings and apartments and so on. My second one was always very gifted and wanted to be an actress of all things. I, we weren't exactly overjoyed and we said, well finish university and then do what you like which is exactly what she did.

RL: What?

RR: Finish university. She studied with Marcel Marceau in Paris after that, did some work in theatre for a while and then actually switched to, I don't quite know what precipitated it but she went into garden design and she now has a business. She has her own business, designing sets for films and big events and in, in, in. When I say design, I mean gardens and sets for car exhibitions, big firms when they want to set up modelling things and so on. She has got a very successful business in Paris. She's married to a lawyer. Well, he became a lawyer whilst she, again, whilst they were married.

RL: Is he French?

RR: He is an Israeli actually. He is, lived in Israel from a very early age and his family all lives in Israel.

Tape 3: 18 minutes 37 seconds

RL: And how did they come to live in Paris.

RR: Well, she went to Paris to study, and he, he also, he was at the Sorbonne. And they met at the Rashi Centre, so, that's how they met.

RL: OK. And then?

RR: She has two children. My oldest daughter has no children.

RL: Where does your oldest daughter live?

RR: She lives in London. And my, Helena, the third one, she died, when she was eleven and a half. My next one down is Daniel, who now lives in Spain, because he worked in, he had business dealings in Spain and Portugal and in the end bought a property in Spain and lives there for the time being. He has three children. No, sorry, he has got two girls.

RL: What did he study?

RR: Well, he did a series of things and ended up with business studies and went into computers and now does property development at the moment. And my…

RL: Who did he marry?

RR: He is married in Spain.

RL: Where is his wife from?

RR: London. And my youngest one, she went to university, got a BA honours degree, married a local boy, a Leeds boy, although she went to London University. But he saw her, believe it or not, very romantically, saw her one Rosh Hashanah in shul, when she had been on a trip to India, and he saw her from downstairs and he immediately apparently fell in love with her, so he says. And met her when she went out and that was it. And she just spends her time having babies. She has got five children. The youngest is three months old, the oldest is just being Bar-Mitzvah.

RL: And where do they live?

RR: Very near here, in Leeds.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 59 seconds

RL: So she married a Leeds boy?

RR: Yes.

RL: What does he do?

RR: He is a lawyer too.

RL: OK. So, where did you live after you were married? Have you gone to different houses?

RR: Well we only had two, after, well, after we married we lived in one room in Golders Green, because we had no money. And I was working, Dov was in the Army. But when we moved to Leeds, my parents helped us to get a small house not far from here and as soon as my husband qualified we moved into this house that we are in now, we have been here for over forty years. And we'll stay here, 'cause my children come back a lot and I have always got the house full of grandchildren, or someone staying with me which is very nice.

RL: Did you become naturalised?

RR: I became naturalised through my father. My father became naturalised. He was very proud of that. He loved England and imbued me with a great sense of debt to England for giving him what he had. And I've always felt very patriotic here, you know. People have been, I have had a very good life, and when immigrants keep talking, you know, about you can't get this and you can't get that, it's just not true, because I had to battle my way through everything that everyone else had to, including poverty, and always found that with a bit of hard work you can get anything you want and become anything you want.

RL: How would you describe yourself in terms of nationality?

RR: Well, nationality, I am British, but I am, as far as I am concerned, my Jewishness comes first, but my allegiance is to Britain. What shall I say without getting involved? I am a Jew first. And so my allegiance to my people and my religion, I would say, of course, comes first. But I am very proud of being British, and I am very grateful to this country for everything that it has given me. I feel it is a wonderful country and wonderful people. I have always felt that. And I love England, you know. I love English literature, I love English history, English culture. I don't necessarily feel English, I don't really feel English, the truth is, although I

speak English, I don't really feel English. But I feel, I feel very English when I am abroad, if you know what I mean. But I love England, and the way of life here, I do.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 12 seconds

RL: Do you have any kind of continental identity at all?

RR: Yeah, I feel, I feel very at home when I go to Europe. As I say we go every year and I speak a few languages, so I think if you can speak a language you can feel more at home because you feel you can communicate with the man in the street, with ordinary people. So, I can communicate and I can manage very well really, and I feel an affinity, yes. As I say because we are going to Europe so often, so, you know, I feel very European as well, I feel at home.

RL: It is interesting, the feelings, you know, like you say, you don't feel English.

RR: Well, I don't feel English because my life is not an English life. I have not been, because I am a foreign child, if you want to call it, child of Europe, of foreign parents. I don't feel English. I feel totally at home in Israel for example, because I feel … I could, you know … everyone, everything there is what I can identify with. And I can't say the same about England. I mean, I can't really identify with a lot of English culture because I wasn't brought up in that sort of culture, but I love a lot of what there is in England. I love the literature, the history and that sort of thing.

Tape 3: 26 minutes 4 seconds

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

RR: It is difficult to say because there are so many European countries that are put in the same package. You see, when we went back to Poland and went to Auschwitz and so on, and went back to Poland to where my father was born, I felt the Poles were exactly in the same pot. The Germans, I don't go to Germany for a holiday, we go through Germany, and I never feel comfortable. When I say "go through", because we have got the caravan, we go through Germany because that is the best way to Italy. I speak the language, I understand them, they always wonder when I speak, you know, where I learned it from, sort of thing. I never let on because otherwise it would involve me in too many, with too many problems. I don't want them to get on their defensive, you know, if I speak to them. I mean, after all it is a superficial visit, so on the whole I try not to get too involved because then emotions come into it and it's not a good thing. I feel very, I feel quite bad. I mean, it's difficult to say, because if we are talking about somebody who has been born, is the same age as my children for example, they can't bare the same blame as their parents or grandparents. But I do feel if I see Germans of my … older than me -that is becoming less frequent because everybody is, I am so old myself now- that anyone older than me … We don't usually meet them on campsites. But anyway I often wonder what they were doing. I sometimes ask them what they were doing. Because I feel, because of their, they, even if they were not involved actively, by their silence they gave affirmation to everything, and I feel they've got to shoulder the blame, you know. That's their punishment, in the same way that I suffer the results of the Holocaust, within me, and I do. I mean every time I peel a potato and throw the potato peel in the bin, I think of the girls in Auschwitz who used to lick the soup if it was spilt on the ground. And potato peel would have been a great luxury for them. And that's how I feel, why should I have to carry, you know, I carry, every time anything happens, anytime things bad happen to me, I relate it to the

Holocaust. When my daughter died, I thought to myself, well you can imagine how I felt. Well, I can't even describe how I felt. But I said to myself, at least my child is dying without being terrified, without, her mother is here, her father is here, her family is here, grandparents around her. She has known nothing but happiness all her life, all her life she never had a bad moment except for the illness which she suffered with great stoicism and courage. But otherwise she forgot about it, you know, as soon as certain things were over, and was happy. And those children weren't. And when bad things happen, I mean, my husband is seriously ill at the moment, and I have to think to myself how lucky we have been to have been together so long. But I mean, I don't really feel that, because I am shattered by it all. But having said that, I always feel lucky to have come through what I have come through, survived what I have survived, avoided what I could have, you know, had to endure. So, it does affect me all the time, everything, every day, if something happens, I think, you know, what they were doing then and how sad it was. I have got some documents on there which, one of the telegrams talks about, you know, when, "Not so bad at the moment", and it says, "Our little Sally is zuckersüß", you know, sweet as sugar, and that child was taken by a German soldier, an ordinary German, it wasn't Mengele, it wasn't Eichmann, it wasn't one of the bosses, it was an ordinary chap, he took that child and threw it and smashed its head against the wall. You see, so, when you say, how do I feel, it's all very, how can I feel, when it affects me all the time. And it has to affect them all the time and if it does, hard luck. I don't suppose my children are as affected as I am. They know all about it and so on but that's the burden you have to bear. The sins of the fathers. My fathers, my ancestors committed no sins and I have to bear the burden of their suffering, so that's how I feel.

Tape 3: 31 minutes 20 seconds

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

RR: Oh, definitely, definitely. I made them very strong. I mean, they may have, probably would have been strong anyway but courage was a word that is important to me. Independent, to manage well, with courage, fortitude, great sense of family. I value my family very very much. And I am only very very lucky that I have such wonderful children. I mean I have complained about them so bitterly, so often, especially when they were teenagers, young, and they did this and they did that, and they said this and that, and they, and they ... But since the advent of my husband's illness, which was just over a year ago, nobody could have more wonderful, supportive, kind children than I have. Nobody. I mean we are hardly alone. I mean, I am beginning to grumble because there are so many, all the time, you know. They don't leave us alone, my son has come. He came yesterday. My daughter from London is coming on Thursday. The one from France has been coming every other week. They phone me six times a day. The one in France never leaves us alone. I mean I warned her not to phone today, I said I have got this on. I am sure the phone calls you heard, I mean they have been absolutely wonderful to both us. They made us a marvellous surprise party last August. It was our 49th wedding anniversary and we thought really that we wouldn't see our 50th. So they made us a beautiful party here, catered, invited our closest friends, only our closest friends because, and it was such a lovely, spontaneous and beautiful affair, it was wonderful. They are very very wonderful children.

RL: How interested were they in your experiences and in your refugee story?

RR: It didn't really come up a lot. I mean we sort of did talk about it now and then, and they know, they know the story really, 'cause they spoke to my … don't forget, my parents lived in the next street and it was through my parents that they got all these stories. They loved going

to my father and mother and talking to them about things. They didn't talk to me about them, they talked to them about them. They were very close to them and found out all sorts of things that even I didn't know. You know my father would tell them stories and sing them songs that drove me mad when I was a child but they loved it and that's where they got their information from, primarily.

RL: When did your parents die?

RR: My mother died in 1992, my father died in 1996. Or was it 1994? Do you know I can't even remember exactly. '94? Anyway. No, he died in 1994, I believe. I can't, I can't remember exactly. I will say, I think about him every day. Whenever he died, you know.

RL: And did he eventually retire? How did he spend his last years?

RR: He never retired. He worked for nothing for the Jewish Day School as their secretary and bursar until he was eighty. He retired, not because he wanted to but because he was not capable anymore.

Tape 3: 35 minutes 50 seconds

RL: And when you did revisit first of all Germany, was that just a passing through in the caravan or was that a special visit?

RR: Well I went, the first time I, you see, Zwickau was, as I say, in the Russian Zone, so until after 89 there was no visiting. We went to Germany as such, passed through many many times with the caravan, but there was no point, we couldn't go into the Russian Zone. We didn't want to, because it meant going through the corridor, it was too dicey, especially with the caravan. But after 89 I went back, on one visit I went to Zwickau with my daughter, my second daughter, the French one, and we went to Czechoslovakia first. And our friend, as I mentioned, we had a friend in Czechoslovakia, took us in his car to Zwickau. And then I went with my husband to Zwickau, I think we've been twice. With the caravan, and I went back to --- I don't remember it of course --- to see it, I don't know why, just for nostalgic reasons and so on, that's all. I don't think I'd go again.

RL: How did you feel going back?

RR: Strange. I didn't feel that I'd been there before, you know, this is where I this, this is where I that. The only thing remembered was, say, the statue of Robert Schumann when I went there, I remembered that bit.

RL: You were going to show us that picture.

RR: This is a book I bought about Zwickau, and this is the picture of the statue of Robert Schumann, the composer, and the one that my father told me to be very proud of because I was born in the same town as he was. Now, whether I actually remember seeing that or because he … I don't know, nothing really. I was amazed at how pretty it was, it was very very pretty, it's very pretty, Zwickau. I didn't think it was so pretty. Because my mother used to say it was very much like Leeds. And I didn't really find it like Leeds. It's got beautiful parks, and it's very green, although Leeds has also got very green spaces, but I didn't feel a nostal… I mean, I would never want to go back; I would never want to live in Germany, have anything to do with them. I felt, I walked around there and I looked round the people and I

thought, "Oh, you don't know who I am, but I know who you are", that kind of thing. You know, I always feel that in Germany, "you don't know me, but I know all of you". "I know who you are and what you were like and what you did, but you don't know me at all. But I am here, despite your efforts." You know, that's how I feel.

Tape 3: 39 minutes 0 second

RL: And on your visit back to Prague?

RR: Well, Prague again, I don't … I was too young really. I went to the park where I'd left my brother, I had to have a look at that. And I went to the flat. And we have very good friends in Prague, and of course I went to Jewish Prague, you know, the old part of Prague which is so pretty and so lovely and so on. But I went as a tourist. I don't remember it as, I don't really remember it, as a child. But my parents loved Prague and the Czechs, Czech people were very nice. They always spoke very highly of the Czechs. So, I've got a warm feeling towards them, you know, when this … from my parents sort of thing. It was quite different when I went to Poland. We made a specific pilgrimage to Auschwitz. And, with the caravan, and in fact we got a campsite very near Auschwitz, and I must say that neither of us slept well. And I remember asking somebody the way to somewhere or other and he said, "When you go out of this site, just turn right and take the road to Auschwitz". And when he said that, I completely freaked out, you know. I just couldn't speak anymore. He was just giving me directions, this chap. And I found it was just quite unbearable. And my husband went to pieces when we went to Auschwitz. I mean, he really did. He found the visit, although he had lost nobody, personally, himself there, he found it … We took a video camera with us and we've videoed everything, taken films of everything everywhere, including Zwickau, including Prague, including everything. When we went to Auschwitz, he filmed just the outside. The gates which said "Arbeit macht frei", you know, work gives you freedom. And I don't think he could film anything else, he didn't do anything else. I went to Birkenau and so on and he … Dov and I lit a candle and all this sort of thing, but he found it quite unbearable and too hard. I found it very hard, but it is strange the sort of things that unnerve you. When you go to Auschwitz, there is a sort of, they've got a kind of museum there that you go into to start with and they've got huge display cabinets full of relics of what people had taken from them when they arrived there. For example there is one full of human hair. And there is one full of suitcases with names on, you must have seen it in all … that kind of thing. And there is one with Talisim [prayer shawls] in it, patched and Tsitsith [fringes], and all that, but the thing that unnerved me more than anything else, you may not believe that, you'll find that very hard to believe, there was one display cabinet with stuff they took out of the suitcases, all different things, and amongst them was a whole collection of shoe polish and little brushes, little tins, you know, little tins of shoe polish, and that completely unnerved me. And why did it unnerve me? Because my father, I told you, he was really a sort of Victorian father, he polished his shoes every night very carefully. He always had the most gleaming clean shoes and wherever he went, he always took a little tin of shoe polish. And when I saw this tin of shoe polish, it just unnerved me, when you think of all the other, you see these little shoes and sandals and little babies' toys and unimaginable things that people take, every … handkerchiefs, and I was unnerved by this tin of shoe polish, you know, just… That is the sort of thing that when people said, "Pack one suitcase", people put that in. You see, people don't think about that. What would you put into a suitcase if you were told you could take one suitcase? Now, what would you take? And it shows what sort of things people took. What they found was important.

Tape 3: 43 minutes 49 seconds

RL: Have any of your children…. Were your children with you on that visit or just the two of you?

RR: No, no, no.

RL: Coming back to England. Did you join any refugee organisations?

RR: No. My parents never did either. No.

RL: They didn't become members of the AJR?

RR: No, they weren't interested, no. They really did not. My parents became integrated in the society, you know, in the world that they lived in. They never joined Jewish refugee organisations or mixed particularly with refugees or anything of that kind.

RL: Did you join AJR?

RR: No. I just, a few years ago when they started the Holocaust Survivors Friendship Association, I joined. Somebody asked me if I'd come, and I went and that's how. I helped to choose that name, you know HSFA, helped to choose that name. I was ambivalent about that sort of society. Because we really have nothing in common, the people who come to this HSFA, we've got, the only thing we have in common, well, it might be considered, is that we are not English born, but even our experiences as refugees are so very different, our whole outlook on life is so very different, our attitude to Judaism is completely different. There are very few people I have anything in common with, except that we weren't born in England.

RL: So do you keep any contact with the group?

RR: Oh, I am a member of the HSFA and I always go to their meetings and support them, because I feel … Oh, for years, I haven't mentioned that, for years I lectured to schools and colleges and groups on different aspects of the Holocaust.

RL: How did you start doing that?

Tape 3: 46 minutes 5 seconds

RR: How did I start doing it? I can't remember. I really can't remember. It was many many years ago, when it started, giving talks about it. I have been doing it for so long, but I don't remember. So if anybody wanted someone to talk about it, they'd contact me and I'd go out and so on. I don't remember how it started. I even talked to the -I even gave a lecture one year, you know- the American base outside Harrogate. There is a big American base. I was their guest lecturer a few years ago. I've got the badge and whatnot next door. I just wanted, I felt, that it's a story -not my story, I didn't talk about myself- I just talked about, for example in some I talked about children in the Holocaust, in others I talked about different aspects if they wanted anything particular, and so on. I have got a library of Holocaust literature, a whole library next door, I mean, a great many books and I immersed myself in it. Everything that came out I read, so that I was in it. My special favourites are Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, although there are many others that are of great interest. And I felt it is the sort of story that people ought to know. And I get very angry and upset when people try to compare it to Rwanda or genocide of different kind. Not that that is any better, it isn't, or any less terrible,

but the Holocaust is unique because it was the destruction or the attempted destruction of a people for no reason whatsoever. Because whatever host country they were living in, weren't their enemies. It's not like others, they've got: this one did that to me, therefore I am doing it back to them, they burnt my village, I am burning theirs, they did this, they did.... I mean, the Jews living in all these countries were normal citizens going about their normal lives like normal people doing nothing to anyone, and therefore it is totally different, it is taking an innocent group of people, not because they were doing anything against the state, not because they were doing anything to undermine the country, not because they were criminals of any kind, but just because they were born Jews, therefore they had to be eliminated. Now, that's not happened to anyone before, you know, not anyone. It's just not the same thing. You got civil wars, you got rival factions, in Africa, in here, in Ethiopia, in all sorts of places but this wasn't a civil war. There was no army, no band of men, there were no guerrillas, there was nothing. There was no attempted coup to overthrow the government or kill the king or whatever country they lived in, so it's incomparable.

RL: What kind of reception do you get when you give lectures?

Tape 3: 49 minutes 21 seconds

RR: Depends where I… Well at one time, mostly it was stunned amazement, horror, because they really didn't know. I was surprised that the headmasters of the most prestigious schools, and I'm not mentioning the names, of really prestigious schools in England, because I have been to some very prestigious schools, had no idea. Well they had all heard about the war and they had all heard about the Holocaust, you know, but they didn't really know what it was about at all. They had no idea what it really meant, you know, a knock on the door, get out, go to here, go to there. When you are least expecting it. Why didn't you run away? Where was I going to go to and how could I get out, you know? It's like people, when I went to a specialist schools for older children, or even Jewish schools, I spent a lot of time talking to Jewish students. And they say, "Why didn't they try and escape?" Well they did try and escape from the camps, a lot of them did. And what happened was, you escaped, you know, as Primo Levi always said, you are wearing striped uniforms, you are wearing clogs, you've got a tattoo on your arm, you are shaven, how far are you going to get in a hostile country, in Poland. Who is going to … It's not like a prisoner of war who can go and get shelter, who looks like anybody else, you look like the man next door. What were they going to do? And then when they caught them, they brought them back and fried them alive or whatever they did to them. And made everybody else watch and killed I don't know how many others because of this. I mean you have to bear all that in mind, they didn't do that to prisoners of war when they tried to escape. They did some awful things but they couldn't do that because they were prisoners of war. But Jews were not prisoners of war, they weren't people, they could do what they wanted, so… And when they did it, I mean, they were very brave, those that did. And some did. They were starved. How much energy did they have? And as I say, it was a hostile environment, wherever they were, there were people who couldn't and wouldn't help them. And those that might have done, were too afraid to, and you couldn't blame them for that either. Because those that helped them were great angels of mercy, the non-Jews that helped, you know, the righteous gentiles really were, because they didn't just risk their own lives, they risked the lives of their families, and if you were in their place, would you have done that? This is the question, you know. You have to be a really great person to be a righteous gentile. I have got a lot of respect for them.

Tape 3: 52 minutes 7 seconds

RL: Has the reaction of audiences changed over the years?

RR: Yes, in schools it did. This started off, when the Intifada started in Israel. What about the Palestinians? You know, and it was such a silly question. You know, and it, but it threw me. You know, how, had we taken them and put them into gas chambers and taken their children and thrown them against a wall and you know. It's a civil war, if you want to call it anything else, you know. It's a civil war between two factions of a population, leaving rights and wrongs out of it. They blow us up, we go in and knock their houses down, and whatever happens in, you know, this sort of thing, but we are not talking about millions, one and a half million children massacred, cruelly cruelly massacred, on their own with no-one to comfort them. This is, that used to unnerve me, more than anything else, it did, it really unnerved me, when I got questions like that. And you find that people who go to talk about the Shoa, you know, about the Holocaust, in schools now also get those sort of questions.

RL: Have you stopped giving lectures now?

RR: I haven't stopped but I don't have the same energy. I haven't done it for a while. I don't want to go into schools anymore. I prefer to give my energy over to Jewish schools, teaching them if I can, because you can't do everything. And I am more interested in our own knowing, more, because don't forget, it's a long time ago, now, than going to the outside communities, and I find that I get very upset, maybe more easily now than I used to, I don't know. It's emotionally very draining, very difficult.

RL: How safe do you feel in England?

RR: Well, I feel that if I could, had to leave in any country, leaving Israel out of it, because I would feel very comfortable there, England is the best country in the world, and the English people are the best people in the world, that's how I feel. I feel the English people, the ordinary English man in the street, I am not talking about the football hooligans, I mean, you get, I am sure you get football hooligans anywhere and the yobs and the this and the that, the ordinary is a decent, tolerant person, and I would feel safe here, or safer here possibly than as … I would feel safer here than in the States, not that I know a great deal about America, I don't, it's a huge country. But I feel happy with English people.

RL: Has your past and your experiences affected your relationship with God in any way?

RR: I don't know, because I, I mean… Whether it has affected my relationship with God, I do believe in God. I spend my time arguing with God, but so did Elie Wiesel. I believe there is a purpose in life. I feel I've had my, a very big share of some of the troubles, because I've worked very hard and life has been hard many times. And although it became very good at times, I believe, I have paid very heavily for it. But I can't, I can never sort of despair completely because I still feel fortunate that I am here. You know, I do feel fortunate that I am, I have survived all this and I have had the benefit of a wonderful marriage and wonderful children and fabulous grandchildren whom I love and who love me. Not everybody has got that. I have got a very close relationship with my grandchildren. I mean, I see, there's one with me nearly every day, in turn, you know, they take it in turns on Friday nights, that's it, they alternate. And that's a wonderful thing, and even the ones from abroad. I mean they are all quite young, the eldest are only thirteen, so… but I have got a very strong relationship, even with the ones abroad, I speak to them on the phone regularly, and… I have got a very close relationship with them, which is a beautiful thing.

Tape 3: 57 minutes 22 seconds

RL: Is there anything, any kind of message that you would like to finish with?

RR: Well, the message is that I have always got faith in people. When you think, you know, you say the world is a bad place, you think of the wonderful people who foster children, who do voluntary work with a smile on their face and have had troubles themselves, very bad troubles, the world is full of very good people. That's the first thing, and then I believe that Jews should live a Jewish life. I believe very strongly in Judaism. And that it is important, and that someone somewhere will always carry it on. Those that lapse, lapse. But, you know, Am Israel Chai**.** That is what I believe, anyway.

RL: Thank you.

Photographs:

RR: First on the left is my paternal grandfather, Zichrono Livracha**.** His name was Arieh Leib**,** no Arieh… Baruch, Arieh Biron, and the photo is taken in Zwickau before World War II. The middle photo is of my maternal grandmother Miriam, Lea Miriam Freia and it was taken in Rumania where she lived, again before WWII, and with her is my maternal grandfather Meir Freia, also taken in Rumania.

This is a photo of my parents, July 1931 before they were married, in Zwickau, Germany. My mother Deborah, Devorah, called Dora usually and my father Jakov Mordechai, Jacob Biron.

This is a photograph of my Auntie Hanna, who is the bride, married to Zrulik, her husband. I believe, it was in the ghetto in Cracow, when they were deported from Zwickau to Poland in November 1938, but this takes place, I believe in 1940, in the Cracow ghetto. I think, well as you see, it is a wedding photograph, and in it are my grandmother, who is almost next to the groom, my late grandfather who is the extreme left, my other aunts are standing near, next to my Auntie Hanna, the bride, and the rest of the people there are friends and relatives. And this photo is very remarkable because it was carried by Hanna through all the concentration camps Plaszow, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, and survived from 1940 till she was liberated in 1945.

Tape 4: 2 minutes 45 seconds

This is a photograph taken in my maternal grandmother's home. It's Rumania, Seret, Rumania, the car is the car that my father owned and was very very proud of. I am standing first on the right, in a velvet suit as you can see, with a white collar. I was always dressed in those kind of clothes. And with me are, I don't know if they are relatives or friends whom I can't remember and can't name at the moment.

This is a photograph taken on 7 October 1940 of myself, Ruth Biron, with my brother, Salo Biron, in the garden of our home at 3 Hillcrest Avenue, Leeds 7. We had just come to Leeds and the Yorkshire Evening Post wrote an article about us, and I am wearing the sort of clothes that I would have worn when I came, with the pompoms and the white socks which caused great amusement in school. And caused me a great deal of distress because the kids thought I was very weird to wear that.

This is a page from my mother's passport, Deborah Biron, it says, 'Permission given to Deborah Biron and her children Ruth and Salomon to enter England, it's a visa permission, to

enter England for the period of maximum of three months and must not take any employment during that time. And there is a stamp on it, from at Harwich, the 2nd September 1939. That was at night because we actually arrived in London on 3 September 1939.

Tape 4: 5 minutes 2 seconds

This is a document which refers to my father as an alien, saying that he had to report daily to a police station, that he was not allowed to make use of any car or bicycle at any time, and they had to keep a curfew from 8am to 6pm, daily.

This is the lower half of the document of my father, Jacob Biron, and it shows the signatures of police at the police station until June 1940 after which he obviously must have moved out of the area that aliens were discriminated against in this way. Well, he must have moved to Leeds after that and here he didn't have to report to the police station because he was inland and away from the coast.

This is a copy of one of the many Red Cross telegrams that my father sent to… this went to Cracow, where the, my family were in the ghetto already, asking for news of them. They were allowed to write so many words, both sending and the reply and obviously were open to censorship. Here it just says, you know, 'We have arrived, we are in England and to say that Dora and the children also have arrived and just want news from you', this is to the family, 'and we will send money as soon as we can.'

This is the reverse side, the reply, where it says, 'My dear ones, we are delighted that you have come 'gesund', healthy and well, and Doris there with the children. Unfortunately there is no news of Max, who was the youngest. And 'Send money.'

This is one of the last Red Cross telegrams to be sent. It was sent by my aunt, my father's young sister, the one next to him, who also came to England. And she says, 'Dearest parents, we are happy to tell you that we are with Jakob, with my father, that we are with him. And we just want to know how you are, please send us news.' And it is signed Arthur and Fay, their name was Nachmann.

This is the reverse side to that telegram, and it says that 'Jews are no longer here in the Cracow ghetto' and it is dated the 14th August 1942, and that is actually the day that my family were, they would, had already left to go to Dukla, in the hope of, Dukla is very near Cracow, that is the town, or village I should say, where my grandfather, grandparents were born. And they were deported on that day, on 14 August 1942, they were deported to Belzec concentration, extermination camp.

Tape 4: 8 minutes 38 seconds

This is a wedding photo of my husband Dov and myself, 14 August 1955, when we were married at the Beth Hamedrash in Leeds.

This is a photo of me in 1970, having just received my Master of Arts degree as, in English Literature and I have my five children round me at the time. There is Linda, with the dark hair on the right-hand side in the background. Judy standing in the left, she is the second down, Helena next to her and Daniel and Suzie in the front.

This is just a sample of my twelve grandchildren, these are, this is Samuel Port, the eldest child of my youngest daughter in Leeds, and Rafael Nakash, who is the son of my daughter Judith and Jean-Pierre Nakash in Paris. And it's the Thursday evening before their Bar Mitzvah a few weeks ago and they are just having a practice in the shul. The date, the Bar Mitzvah was on the 5th February, so this must be the 3rd, 2005, in Leeds.