

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Sex:	Male
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Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

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INTERVIEW: 20

NAME: CHARLES DANSON

DATE: 10 JUNE 2003

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ

TAPE 1

BL: Mr Danson, could you please tell me about your family background?

CD: About my background. Well, I was born in Berlin on the 22nd of January 1920. My original name is Danielsohn, my father was Dr Peter Danielsohn. He was a physician specialising in internal diseases. My mother, Marga Danielson, née Neufeld, was a professional pianist up to the time when I was born, when she gave it up professionally. She was actually the first pupil of the very famous pianist Arthur Schnabel. Schnabel lived round the corner from where we lived. In the days before she was married she used to play tennis with him before getting a lesson. I also had a half sister. Her name was Eva, we called her Evi, and she was my half sister because my father had been married before. His first wife, my sister's mother, died, of cancer actually, and then my father remarried, and he married my mother Marga. They had actually known each other all their lives, because they were related, very distantly related. I think they were third cousins or something like that.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 23 seconds

I had a very happy childhood, and I was completely spoilt, specially by my sister because I was so much younger than she, nine and a half years younger, and she used to take me out in the pram, and showed me proudly to all her friends, and when I was asleep she used to tickle me till I woke up and cried, because apparently I looked particularly sweet when I cried. Now the first six years I never went to Kindergarten. I played at home and I had friends and we played at home, and when I was six years old I started the Gemeindeschule, which is a prep school, it was about five minutes away from where we lived.

BL: Where did you live?

CD: We lived - first I was born in Knesebeckstrasse, which is a street off the Kurfürstendamm, and then, I think it was in 1934, my father - his practice because of the Nazis began to shrink, and he could not afford this very large twelve-room flat any more, so then we moved to the Lietzenburgerstrasse, which is just round the corner, and there we lived till I emigrated in 1936. Now to come back, I went to this Gemeindeschule for three years instead of the normal four. My parents for reasons best known to themselves wanted me to jump one class so that I could be ready to enter adult life a year younger and I don't think it was a very good decision. One thing - I was fairly good at school, obviously otherwise I

wouldn't be able to do that - one thing, for example in the year which I did not attend because I jumped that year, they were teaching fractions and to the present day I can't do fractions. Anyway and then in 1929 I went to the Kaiser-Friedrich-Schule, which was a normal Realgymnasium, which was round the corner, also in the Knesebeckstrasse bordering the Savignyplatz. And there I was - I was always very happy at school, very happy at school, always, and in the Kaiser Friedrich Schule, I stayed until October 1936. We had a very good Form Master, who was philosemitic to say the least, philosemitic, and he told my parents that they must send me out of Germany because there would be no future for me. So they did that and I had an uncle and aunt living in Glasgow. My aunt, my mother's sister, had married an Englishman. He was a prisoner of war in the First World War, in Ruhleben, which is near Berlin. And my aunt was a sister, a nurse in that prisoner of war camp, and that's where they met and then they married.

Tape 1: 5 minutes 57 seconds

Anyway to cut a long story short, they lived in Glasgow, and when I was sent to England I was sent to a Quaker's school, a Friends' school in Great Ayton, in Yorkshire. And my aunt and uncle paid those fees. The fees were greatly reduced because the Quakers were very good to refugee children, and so, but it was still far more than what my parents could afford. I think they were only allowed to send 25 Marks or so, and it paid for nothing. And then in that Great Ayton school I was not very happy to start with, because there were some other German boys there, and they were all being - bullied is not so much the word, it's too, it's too harsh a word, we weren't bullied but we were being made fun of, because our English was not terribly good. Actually I forgot to say before I was sent to England - I was always very good at English but of course I couldn't speak terribly well, so my parents had arranged for me to have some private lessons in English, and the woman who taught me was a Londoner with the name of Buciarelli, which is not exactly a very English name. I think she must have been of Italian origin. Anyway, I could of course speak some English but we were always being made fun of.

Tape 1: 7 minutes 30 seconds

BL: Which year did you have those English lessons?

CD: The English instructions I had in the beginning of 1936 because my parents were by then considering sending me to England. And now in the school for argument's sake every Sunday we had to write a letter home, and after the letter writing we had to go on excursions. So one of my favourite excursions was a place called Little Fern Deep, which was a lovely place. And of course when I was first asked 'Where would you like to go'? I put up my hand and I said 'Little Fur Deep please, Sir', and then of course there was a lot of guffaws and laughter about that. And then I was in that school in Great Ayton from about October 1936 till December 1937. In the summer of 1937 I did my matriculation there, and I was in many ways educationally far advanced, far better than a lot of the children in my school. It was a co-educational school by the way, and - but one thing I was not good at because I had never been good at, that is maths, so for some reason we had done very very little algebra in Germany, and I knew so little. I had to be given private coaching lessons in algebra to do the matriculation because there were two subjects you had to pass to get matriculation. One was the English language, and I was alright at that, and math, I had to do. And I scraped through, I think the pass mark I think was 36 per cent, and I got 37 and a half or something like that, but that was good enough.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 46 seconds

And then, after matriculation I stayed on for another term, when I did only music - piano, mind you, and theory, and English, and in that term I was made Prefect of the school and we had the great privilege, on the Sunday evening we were invited to the headmaster's house and we could play billiards and toast bread over the fire and that sort of thing, and then of course I wasn't bullied. I could bully the others, which I actually didn't do but I could have done. And in 1937 when I left school...

BL: Let me stop you here. I want to go back to before, to Berlin. Can you maybe describe the environment you grew up in?

Tape 1: 10 minutes 55 seconds

CD: Well, my mother as I said before, was a concert pianist although she had given up the professional playing by the time I was born, but we had a lot of concerts in our house. Chamber music and things like that, we had - the Knesebeckstrasse where I was born was the most beautiful huge flat and in fact it was so large, that in the music room there were two, two Bechstein grands, and that's where the concerts were. My father was also extremely musical. I always like to say, it's not very kind to my mother, but I always think that he was more musical than my mother actually, and he is the one who really awoke my interest, especially in Opera. He used to sit next to me when he came home tired from his surgery. Now he was a real lovely Jewish Papa. His main surgery was in town, in the Grosse Friedrichstrasse 1208, doesn't exist now, Grosse Friedrichstrasse. He used to leave the house about 8 o'clock and used to come home at 3 o'clock for lunch. We used to have lunch at 3 o'clock. He had a little nap, because he wanted to be with the family, and then went back to the Grosse Friedrichstrasse, and came back at half past seven or eight, something like that. And now another thing I remember, and it's a custom I kept on to the present day. My parents were in many ways very simple people, they were musically highly intellectual, my father was highly intellectual in other ways, he was a great authority on Goethe. I remember when I was a child he used to sometimes have a bath with me, and when we were in the bath he used to recite poems from the West-Östlicher Divan, poems which I didn't understand anything about, being about six or seven, but I remember them to the present and I can quote you at great length from the West-Östlicher Divan which I won't bother you with now. Anyway, that was that and as I say my father, he started my great interest in opera.

Tape 1: 13 minutes 40 seconds

BL: Were you taken to operas, did he take you to operas?

CD: He used to yeah, my very first opera I went to was with my mother. She took me to the Städtische Oper in the Bismarckstrasse. For some reason she'd been given some complimentary tickets. And the very first performance, when I was eight years old, was Carmen. I can quote you the cast to the present day. In fact I can quote you the cast of all the operas I ever saw in Berlin. And when the opera was over, my mother asked me 'Well, how did you like the opera?' And all I said was 'I want to become an opera singer too'. And so it turned out to be eventually. And when we moved from the Knesebeckstrasse to the Lietzenburgerstrasse, which was a very much smaller flat, mind you, it was large by London standards, but the music room which had to house the two grand pianos was considerably smaller than in the Knesebeckstrasse, my father used to always refer to it as the

‘Flügelgarage’, and then I used to be given so-called season tickets for the opera. Well they weren’t actually season tickets, my father would write on a piece of paper ‘This entitles my son to opera performances to the tune of x-marks.’ I could have gone twice and sat in the stalls, but of course I used to go twice a week and used to stand in the gallery.

Tape 1: 15 minutes 19 seconds

And then my sister was also extremely musical. She actually studied medicine, but she also had private singing lessons from a very well-known singing teacher, and this teacher, her name was Ranlow and she was actually a pupil of the famous Lili Lehmann. This is by the way. Now, when the Nazis came to power, my father’s surgery - he had a very large panel practice, in German it’s called Kassenpraxis, panel practice, and that began to shrink considerably. He also had some private patients, because he also saw private patients in our home on Saturdays and Sundays. But his main source of income was the panel practice. Now what happened - by then I had either left or he certainly didn’t talk to, tell me about this, children in those days were never told anything unpleasant. Another thing, in our home, money was never discussed. I didn’t know that my father was very well-off, he must have been, he never actually had a car, because he probably was as clumsy as I and well, couldn’t drive, or couldn’t learn. Anyway he never had a car, but was obviously quite well off. And then something happened as I just mentioned, and I can’t remember if it was whilst I was still in Berlin or after I had emigrated to England, but my father was accused by the Nazis, obviously wrongly, to have, he was accused that he had made wrong illegal entries into a poison logbook. Apparently doctors had a logbook in which they had to enter all poisons or drugs containing - , prescribed to patients. And he was accused of having made illegal entries. Now, from then, he had originally a very sound heart, but from that day onward, when he was accused, he had a great heart problem.

Tape 1: 17 minutes 50 seconds

Now he had to find, because he had to - is this of interest to you?

BL: Yes.

CD: Because he had to go in front of a court. Now he had to hire a defence council.

BL: And this is when?

CD: This was either 35 or 36. Now he had - it was no good having a defence council who would not be able to acquit him, so the singing teacher of my sister, her name was Ranlow, and she had a very charming husband who was also a singer actually, and they were both completely philosemitic and definitely anti-Nazi. But Mr Ranlow had a friend who was a barrister who was in the Nazi party. So he arranged for this barrister to plead for my father in court, and he was, my father was, eventually acquitted of that, but of course he never, he never really recovered from all the excitement. From that day as a punishment, they took all the, they took all his Kassenpraxis. They took that away from him so he was stranded with a few Jewish private patients. And he wrote this to my sister, who had emigrated a year before me to London. My sister emigrated in 1935 in May that year, and she lived in London, so my father wrote all this to her, but I never knew till later, when I had left school in 1937 and went to live with my sister and her husband in Belsize Park. They had just one room with kitchen there. He was, he was studying to become a doctor and he had actually done all, he had nearly

finished his studies when he emigrated from Germany, but he had to do it all again, but he did, he did qualify at the Middlesex Hospital and became a radiologist. So I went to live with them, and they hired for, took for me, a little room in the basement of that same flat. And the reason why, not the reason, the fact that it was a basement, the landlady allowed me to practise my singing there. Because in January 1938 I entered the Royal College of Music. Again, my aunt and uncle paid for those fees, my main study was singing, and I studied with a man called Hermann Grünebaum, who originally hailed from Frankfurt, but he'd come over in the 1890s, something like that, he'd been here for a long time, and he was of course a naturalised Englishman.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 24 seconds

He incidentally was the Chorus master of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, for years and years. He always specialised in singing, and I had singing lessons at the Royal College of Music.

BL: Just to go back to Berlin.

CD: Yes I haven't told you about that.

BL: You mentioned music.

[Interruption]

Tape 1: 21 minutes 58 seconds

BL: Did you ever go to any synagogues?

CD: Yes, I did do, yes. This I'm afraid does not reflect terribly well on my parents. I was very keen actually on going to the synagogue, but I had great trouble because when I was in school, when I went to school I had religion class of course, religious knowledge, but my parents, for reasons best known to themselves, didn't want me to learn Hebrew. So when we had these religious classes and the man, in the first years was a Rabbi from the Fasanenstrasse, and he used to say quite pointedly, after the first twenty minutes or so when we had this religious knowledge thing 'But now, we've got to turn to Hebrew, and of course Danielsohn will have to leave the class'. So I had to go out, and sat outside while the others learnt Hebrew. Well, I wouldn't say it's by the way, but it has rankled with me ever since, because I never learnt Hebrew, but I was keen on going to the synagogue, possibly because of the lovely music and all that. And so, I used to go to the Fasanenstrasse and then when it came to Rosh Hashonah, I used to prepare a, these little sort of lovely writing things you used to give to your parents, and they always po-poed it very much I'm afraid to say. So there we are.

BL: They were not interested?

CD: They were not interested, now the reason being if it - yes there may be a reason. My grandparents on my mother's side, the Neufelds, my grandfather on my mother's side, Simon Neufeld, was actually the first stockbroker, first Jewish stockbroker admitted to the Berlin Stock Exchange. Now they had three children. My aunt Ella, the little one who lived in Glasgow, my mother, and there was a younger brother called Charles, they called him

Charlès, and you see after him they called me Karl, and now of course the ridiculous thing is then I went back to being called Charles you see. Anyway, this uncle Charlès was a surgeon, he was a surgeon in the German Navy and during one of the post-mortems he had to do, he cut himself, and then there was no such thing as penicillin or anything like that, and to cut a long story short, he died of blood poisoning, at a very early age, at about 26 or 27 or something like that. And then my grandmother - my grandparents used to have permanent seats at the Fasanenstrasse synagogue, but when this happened my grandmother said 'A God who allows a thing like that, I don't want to have anything to do with him anymore', and for all I know, she was instrumental in my - I'm not baptised or anything like that - but I think, for all I know, my grandmother was perhaps instrumental in seeing to it that I wasn't brought up Jewish in any way, in fact we never had a Friday evening or anything like that,

BL: Did you have a Bar-Mitzvah?

CD: No, I was not Bar-Mitzvahd, and then I didn't learn Hebrew or anything like that, but for all I know that might have been the reason. But when I was here as I say I was very keen, and when it came to the singing, I also sang quite a lot in the synagogues, for the High Holidays and for many years in Dunstan Road actually, every Saturday and holidays, and later on in Alyth Gardens.

Tape 1: 26 minutes 28 seconds

Because they had a small, specially in Alyth Gardens, they had a choir and they only had a quartet, actually we were all soloists there, anyway to go back to Berlin. Shall I tell you anything else about Berlin? Yes, I loved to go swimming; I went to a place called the Wellenbad in Berlin. I did join, my parents for some reason, allowed me to do this, I did join a Jewish Sports Club, and we went to the Grunewald, and a very good friend of mine, from school, Hans Messerschmidt, we used to cycle out to the Grunewald for that. That they let me do for some reason, and then we also from the school we had a Ferienheim, a sort of, how shall I say, it was a, there were some grounds in the Spreewald owned by the school, and every summer the class used to go out there, and the first years were fine. In the last year there were a lot of Nazi school mates of mine. This school was actually very very, I can't say Jewish - it wasn't a Jewish school, but a very high proportion of the children were Jews, but then in this last, in the last year we went there, there were some fights between the Jewish boys and the Christian boys, I mean nothing terribly serious, but we never went there again.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 8 seconds

Now this Form Master of mine, Dr Kamisch, who was very philosemitic, he wouldn't take us to Kötten anymore, because he didn't want any trouble like that, so he took us for a skiing holiday in Silesia actually. That was the last year I was at school.

BL: What sort of friends did you have? Jewish, not Jewish?

CD: All Jewish, my friends were all Jewish. I didn't have a single non-Jewish friend. They were all Jewish, some of them were, I would say, they were not orthodox, but some of them were quite observant, and one of them actually I remember at Passover time he would only take matze to school you see. But the other one is another schoolfriend of mine Klaus Reichmann, who is now ... of Richmond. His father was also a physician, and his father was, had a lot to do with a small synagogue off the Bismarckstrasse, I can't remember the name at

the moment. Anyway, so I went with him sometimes for the High Holidays and then my friend Klaus Reichman as he then was, he used to say: 'And now, for the next hour you will love it, because the Kantor is going to sing a lot of operatic things'. I used to go to the Opera, I said that before, I used to go so often.

BL: Which Kantor was that? Do you remember the name of the Kantor?

Tape 1: 29 minutes 43 seconds

CD: No, I only know, I only know I also went sometimes to the Prinzregentenstrasse where the Kantor was Pas ... Horovitz. And in Prinzregentenstrasse there was a Rabbi there, very often. Now my father had, the youngest - my father had three brothers and one sister. And the sister was married to my uncle Jacob Grünebaum. He came from Frankfurt, not to be mixed up with the Grünebaum who was my singing teacher, and they were, she of course was not brought up in any orthodox way at all, but he, my uncle, coming from Frankfurt, he was quite religious, not strictly orthodox, no, no, no, they went to Prinzregentenstrasse, which was a liberal synagogue, but I went with him sometimes on the High Holidays in Berlin. I remember, before I went to the synagogue, my aunt Rosa, she took me into the front room, and she said 'You know, Rosh Hashonah, when the service is finished, shake uncle Jacob's hand and say yoshono tauvu' I said 'What shall I say?' And she said 'I'll write it down for you'. So she wrote it down: yoshono tauvu, and I memorised these few words of course and when the service was over, I shook my uncle's hand and said 'Yoshono tauvu' And he said 'Yoshono tauvu! Wo hast denn das gelernt'? Where did you learn that? So I had to confess. These were some moments, other things from Berlin. And now shall we go back to England now?

Tape 1: 31 minutes 33 seconds

BL: Yes, did you ever experience any anti-Semitism?

CD: No, not at all, not at all except for these five and then one year in Köten, but no, they were all, I mean obviously all the non Jewish children were in the Hitlerjugend, and they were in an NSDAP thing and, no, and my form teacher, who was philosemitic, he used to mock the Hitler salute at the beginning of each, each class, because everybody had to get up and the teacher had to say 'Heil Hitler' and we had to say 'Heil Hitler'. My daughter once asked me 'Did you also say Heil Hitler?' I said 'Of course I said Heil Hitler, I had to.' Coming back to that: in January 1933, when Hitler became chancellor, we, the whole school was sent to the Städtische Oper. Because we had to listen to this thing from Potsdam. And my only impression was that for the first time I could sit in the dress circle. That was my own impression of that day, and for the fact of course that we then had to go into the streets, when Hitler and Bismarck - eh, Bismarck! When Hitler and Hindenburg came back from Potsdam we had to watch the cars go by, and that's the only time I saw Hitler actually. No, anti-semitic no, by and large those children were not antisemitic at all. And in fact about six years ago we had a big reunion. There were, I think there were seven Jewish children and two non-Jewish, which is funny, really. They all died at the Russian Front, I think. So that was a very nice reunion, they all, we recalled the days that was. It was actually filmed on the Berlin television, this get-together, because the school still stands in exactly the same place and we went to that reunion. The headmaster took us around and then we went to the staff room, we were given champagne, and I said 'Well that was the first time I was given champagne in the school', you know.

BL: When was the first time your parents, you thought of emigration. Do you remember?

CD: They, well, as I say they never talked about it, but when I was in school here in England, they wrote to me that they were really thinking of possibly emigrating as well and coming out. And they emigrated at the beginning of 1938, and then we, they had one room somewhere, also in Hampstead, and then we all moved to Ashford Court. Now that was, I think it was the biggest of the four bedroom flats, but I think there were twelve of us because nobody had any money, you see. My brother in law was the one who was earning, because he was by then a qualified doctor. My sister, when she came over, she went as an au pair. And she went with some very famous people actually, she - one of her jobs was with the managing director of Decca. Anyway, we all lived in this - there were twelve of us I think - we lived in this four bedroom flat.

BL: This was when?

CD: That was in, this was the beginning of 1939, the beginning of 1939. There was my brother-in-law's parents, my brother-in-law's grandmother, the two of them, they had one child by then, it had just been born, my parents, my sister and I. It was unbelievable. I can't remember how we lived four in a room sort of thing, but we managed, you know.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 32 seconds

BL: To go back slightly, do you remember the journey, leaving Germany and coming to Britain.

CD: Myself?

BL: Yes.

CD: My mother took me, we went by train from Harwich to Hoek (obviously the other way round), and from Hoek then to, obviously it must have been Liverpool Street; now I always seem to remember it was Victoria, but I don't think it could have been unless the train was redirected. When we arrived at Victoria Station, we were met by my aunt, who'd come down from Glasgow, and she took us to lunch at the Lyon's Cornerhouse, and this I remember distinctly, it was a three-course meal including coffee, and was One shilling and sixpence. My aunt said 'Well it's not terribly cheap, because there are after all three of us', but she of course paid for that. Then my mother took me by train from King's Cross to Middlesborough, this place where I went to school, Great Ayton, was some five or six miles from Middlesborough. And in Middlesborough we were met by one of the masters, the Science Master, and one of the German boys, so I could speak a little bit of German with him, because my English was not that good. Then my mother said goodbye to me, she stayed the night I think in a hotel there, then she went back the next day, and...

BL: But she considered you too young to travel on your own?

CD: Yes, yes, she was always very fussy about me and wouldn't allow me to do anything which is not a good thing. I would have been very capable of travelling on my own.

BL: How old were you then?

CD: I was sixteen, I mean these days, I mean, you send children of twelve and thirteen, but she wanted to make sure that I got there alright, you see.

BL: What were your first impressions? Can you remember?

CD: When I got to England? The impression in the, in the bedrooms where we were, my first impression was that I had the most beautiful clothes, they'd all been specially made for me to emigrate, and I had a wonderful winter coat, and I remember I couldn't get it into this little wardrobe, it was a tiny little thing. Otherwise I suffered from the cold, always suffered very much from the cold. Another thing, which had nothing to do with the school, but after school, no, I think it must have been, this winter coat was wearing thinner or something, my sister took me to Woburn House, where I saw Mrs Schwab. I had a raincoat, and my sister said, or I said, she said my young brother he is suffering very much from the cold, could you possibly arrange for him to get a cheap winter coat. And Mrs Schwab said 'No. I've got a son, he's exactly the same age, and he can manage with a raincoat, if he can manage with a raincoat you can manage with a raincoat'. That was my impression of Woburn House.

Tape 1: 39 minutes 31 seconds

BL: I have to stop here because we have to change tapes.

TAPE 2

BL: This is tape two, and we are conducting an interview with Mrs Charles Danson. You were talking about the college.

CD: Yes, I went there in January 1938, started singing with Mr Grünebaum and piano with Dr Lofthouse, and I was there till the summer of 1940, and then I joined the Pioneer Corps. My father had been interned, and we were given to understand that if you join the army, your parents, your father, mother or both, will be released from internment camp, and as my father had this very bad heart condition, I volunteered to do that. He was actually aghast when he heard I had joined the army, but I was just in the Pioneer Corps. And I was in the Pioneer Corps for three years and the thing is, it did not exactly suit me very well, like mixing cement, and unloading heavy bags of things and that sort of thing in the Pioneer Corps, but it was - the company I joined was the 165 company, and my fellow soldiers they were all, they were doctors and solicitors and painters and artists, so after work we had really a wonderful time, and we used to have musical evenings, and we used to have Shakespeare evenings. We used to read Shakespeare plays and that sort of thing, but when it became possible in 1943 to leave the Pioneer Corps for the fighting services, I decided I wanted to do that because I really couldn't stand this depressing work anymore.

BL: So how come you were not interned?

CD: Because I was, I forget the category; perhaps because I went to school here, perhaps I was not such a suspicious character as my poor father. There was no reason why I wasn't interned.

BL: Because when the war broke out, you were living with your parents, in Ashford Court.

CD: In Ashford Court, yes. And my father was interned from there.

Tape 2: 2 minutes 38 seconds

BL: Can you describe - do you remember going to a tribunal for example?

CD: I wasn't there; I don't know where I was. I only came home, and my mother said 'They've collected father'. Apparently they were polite, very polite. The Police apparently came, and they said 'You have to come with us', and they took him to Huyton, I think, on the racecourse in Huyton, and then I was quite aghast about all that, and also it felt strange at college being one of the very few men there, by that time. So I felt awkward, and I also I felt very very - I felt very very English and grateful to this country, sort of having accepted me, and I wanted to do something to fight Hitler, so that's what I did. Of course before I transferred to the Royal Tank Regiment, this was I think in June 1943, we were given the chance to change our names. And that's - we changed our names and were given new army books with new army numbers. And of course what nobody knew at the time but I'm quite sure the Gestapo knew better than we did, that the numbers we were given, the first four digits, were only given to German refugees. So that was not a very clever thing by the War Office, they could have given us any sort of digits, but no, we were given these numbers, and all the people in the British Army who were of German origin, were all, when they changed their name, they were given a new army book with a new name and a new number, and this number must have been well-known to the Gestapo. Well that was way by the way although it could have turned particularly dangerous for me, because....

Tape 2: 4 minutes 43 seconds

BL: Did you choose the name?

CD: I chose the name, yes, and my father was still alive and he approved of it, because I took the first three letters: 'Dan', and the last without an 'h': 'son', 'Dan-son'. Thinking it was, if I was ever captured, the idea never really occurred to me, but perhaps in my subconscious mind, I said to myself that is, 'Danielsohn is a terribly Jewish name, Danson isn't', which is absolutely ridiculous because it's a particularly Jewish name because first of all Dan was one of the ten tribes, and also Dan was a king, a Jewish king, so that wasn't very clever, anyway, and my father liked it because it still kept some portion of the name intact as it were. Anyway that was in 1943, in the summer of 43, and then I volunteered for the Royal Tank Regiment, and we had to do some quite vigorous tests before being transferred. Now there's an amusing thing, we had to do some written tests in English, Maths, History and all that. I passed brilliantly, because the standard wasn't very high, but then it came to the practical things. Now I am a practical idiot. I may have some qualities, but being practical isn't one of them. Now one of the things we had to do in the practical thing, I remember to this very day, there was a bicycle pump that had been taken to pieces, and one of the things we had to do is assemble the thing, which all my other friends - I mean we were all in separate compartments and we couldn't copy what the others were doing, but anyway, it's nothing, I probably couldn't do it today. Anyway, I put it together but instead of pumping, it sucked for some reason. I don't know what I did with it. The other thing was, there were some ball-bearings, we had to put somewhere. I didn't even know what ball-bearings were. I saw these little balls, and I just saw, and these little things, we had to assemble them, and I didn't know what to do, I just put them on there, and when the examiner came in he lifted it up and they just fell down, because I hadn't done anything with them, really. But they were so desperately short of

people, I think, that they passed me for the transfer and we were first trained in Farnborough, for Royal Tank Regiment, and then we were sent up to Yorkshire for the wireless operation. The training wasn't terribly long and not very arduous either. There was none of that square-bashing drill. There wasn't time for it, they needed people there ready to go to the front. In September they said - we were sent abroad, and we were trained on Cromwell tanks. The first thing that happened when we got, when we got over to the other side of the Channel, we were put into Sherman tanks, which are totally different things, everything is totally different, so we were given half a day to get accustomed to them. Anyway, then we were soon sent to the front, and we were in the force that were trying to contact Arnhem. The main Arnhem Battle had been lost by then actually, we were still trying to contact, to contact, other branches of the services, not the Tank Regiment, but infantry and all that. And then one evening we heard that the colonel of the regiment had taken an armoured car to go on patrol, very foolishly by himself - in an armoured car, and he was shot up in the night. And everything was in absolute chaos the next day. The Second in Command, the Captain, I forget his name, he had to take over. He had no idea what was to be done really, he sent us forward, and there was quite a bit of fighting going on, and then towards early afternoon, the fighting stopped, the Germans stopped firing. So the commander of my tank, he was a young lieutenant, he hadn't been in the job very long, he said 'Oh, well, they've probably gone home, to have a cup of tea'. Well the Germans don't go home to have a cup of tea in wartime, you know! 'And so let's now go forward and join the other tanks'. Because if you are in battle the situation is totally confused, you don't really know where you are. I mean the tank commander has some sort of a map and he's given orders by his superior officer but that superior officer didn't really know what to do because the, the commanding officer had been killed the night before.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 12 seconds

So anyway this lieutenant he said 'Let's go forward'. Now I was a gunner wireless-operator. And the gunner and wireless-operator used to change over after a few hours, to leave the monotony and do something else. So I had been the wireless operator for quite some time, so I said to my comrade 'Let's change over now', and he said 'Oh well it's getting late, don't let's bother now, it will soon get dark anyway, and then we go back again'. So I said 'Well, I'm perfectly happy and willing to change with you'. 'No', he said, 'Let's leave it as it is'. So the lieutenant gave the orders to advance and there had been anti-tank gun which had been firing all day long but it stopped firing, and my tank commander thought they'd gone for a cup of tea or so. So they told us to advance, and no sooner did we advance, that anti-tank gun opened fire. The tank was hit, there were huge flames and I remember jumping out. The gunner, who hadn't wanted to change with me was killed outright. If we had changed it would have been me. The commander was killed outright, there was one other, the driver who was also injured but was more or less alright but could hardly move. Anyway, we jumped out, and as soon as we jumped out the tank went up in flames, and I felt something sort of streaming down here, and did that and could see a bit of blood, but you are of course in shock so I didn't pay much attention to it. Then we sat somewhere for half an hour, and the firing had really died down, but I thought I could recall where the other tanks were, and I said to my comrade in arms - he had not died, but he was either asleep or fainted or something - I said to him 'I will see if I can find our tanks, so that we can rejoin, rejoin the company'. So I started crawling forward because I was also injured in my leg and in my finger actually. Right leg and finger, and in that eye, that eye, and so I started crawling forward and suddenly, the little bush in front of me opened, and two German officers emerged holding their pistol at me, so I mean, there's no use being a hero in situations like that. I put my hands up and I was taken prisoner. And I had had a terrible headache, and I said to one of the officers, in English of

course 'I've got a terrible headache, so I'd like an aspirin'. So he said to his fellow officer 'He wants an aspirin, have you got an aspirin?' And he said 'No, I haven't got an aspirin, I've got a peppermint', so he said, in German 'Give him that, he won't know the difference', but of course I heard every word. Then they put me in the sidecar and started driving away, and then I must have fallen asleep, because the next thing I remember I was sitting in a train between the two officers. It was night, the train was rolling along happily, and then it became daylight, and we pulled up at the station, I looked out, and it had 'Hameln. Willkommen in der Rattenfängerstadt'.

Tape 2: 14 minutes 15 seconds

Hamelin, welcome to the city of the ratcatchers.

[Interruption]

Did you have no pain?

Tape 2: 14 minutes 36 seconds

Oh yes, that I forgot to say, I forgot to say, when I was taken prisoner by these officers, I did that and it was all bloody, and the one German officer said to the other 'What's the matter with his eye?', and the other one said to him 'Das Aug'is pfutsch', that eye is gone. And that is the first I heard about it. And then as I said they put me in the sidecar, and I must have fallen asleep, they took me in the train, and in the early hours of the morning, it was daylight, the train, stopped at the station, its said 'Hameln. Willkommen in der Rattenfängerstadt', 'Hameln. Welcome to the ratcatcher city'and I said to myself 'Well, I'm not all that welcome here, really'. Then they....

BL: Were you worried that they would find out that you were a German Jew?

CD: Well of course I was very worried. I mean what I heard, what we were told to do is 'If there's ever any chance, if you're shot out of a tank, the first thing you must do, throw away your army book' and of course all you're allowed to give is your name, number and rank. And the army number I had on one of these fire-proof little things which you carried round your neck. Anyway, so then we....

BL: You threw it away?

CD: I threw it away as soon as I got out of the tank, the army book. And then as soon as we got to Düsseldorf, they took me to an army hospital, and there I was the only Englishman prisoner of war, and I was in a room by myself, and an eye surgeon came in to examine me, and I said - he told me that that eye had gone, that he had to do something to remove what was left and so on, and that the next morning I had to have an operation. Then the next morning, the eye surgeon, I will never forget his name. I'll tell you why, a man, he was, the eye surgeon was called Dr Hoffmann. He came in the next morning and said in German 'Well, good morning, let me look at you' and I answered in English. And he said 'No, no, no, Mr Danson, you can speak German perfectly well, after all you spoke German in your anaesthetic, of course, with an English accent'. So it then flashed through my mind immediately, that this man cannot be a Nazi, because nobody speaks his mother tongue with a foreign accent. So by that he gave me to understand, that if I spoke German, ever, I should always continue to do so with an English accent. So I was in that hospital for several days.

They very kindly arranged for me to have an artificial eye fitted, because if it hadn't been done the socket would have shrunk, I would have never been able to get one in, you see.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 13 seconds

So I was there for several days. Then this German doctor, Dr. Hoffmann, came one day and he spoke to me about what I'd done in civilian life. I told him that I was an opera singer and then he said 'Oh, you're an opera singer! There's a Kumpel'. A Kumpel is a sort of mate of yours, 'The German soldier next door to you is also an opera singer! I'll let him visit you, you can talk about opera till the cows come home!' So we did that and he said what parts he'd studied, I what I'd studied, what he wanted to do and I wanted to do and so on, that was all quite pleasant. And then after a few days Dr. Hoffmann came back and said 'You know I cannot keep you here any longer because although you are not well, you're certainly fit enough to be transferred to a prisoner of war camp. Now I will warn you that the conditions will not be as pleasant there as they are here. But I can't do anything, I'll have to send you there'. Anyway, so I was sent, the journey I can't remember. I was sent to a German prisoner of war camp called Fallingbistel, Stalag 11B, which was in the Lüneburg Heath, very lovely surroundings, actually. Now there, to start with, I was put into the prisoner of war hospital, because I was still quite ill. Now all the other prisoners of war in that hospital were parachutists from the Arnhem drop. Now, as soon as I opened my mouth and spoke they must have known that I was not a Kosher English national, you know.

BL: Were there any other refugees there?

Tape 2: 20 minutes 0 second

CD: No. I was the only one. And they could quite easily, to improve conditions for themselves, they could have said to the Germans, to the German Army Major or whatever 'You know, that man, he isn't English, he's got a strong German accent,' to better their conditions. But to their everlasting credit they didn't do that. Now also there was an Army Major, he didn't live in that wing of the hospital but in the camp, now he was a medical officer, he was the British Medical Officer. He came round one day, I mean he had spoken to me before, and he of course had a pretty shrewd idea of who I really was, or what origin I really was, so he said to me one day 'You know - do you speak German'? So I said 'Yes, I do speak German.' And he said 'You know, I've got to do the rounds every day with my German equivalent, the German medical officer. I've got to do the rounds with him, and tell him things, and I've got to make notes, he gives me notes. Now these notes, which he gives me, must be translated into English. We - at the moment - we've got a Dutchman here, but he isn't very good at it, if you can do this job for me, then I can arrange to keep you here in the hospital, where conditions are considerably better than in the camp. You get a bit more food, you get more Red Cross parcels, and you can stay with the people you know by now anyway, if you could do that for me'. I said 'Of course I'll do that with the greatest of pleasure'. And now I knew, my father had been a doctor, I would know, the German medical terms perfectly well, but I wasn't sure that I would always know the English equivalent you see, so I said 'Yes I'll do that with pleasure, but I will have to have a dictionary, because there may be some of the terms I don't know', so he said 'Yes, of course, we'll arrange that'. So then I stayed actually in that hospital all the time till we were liberated by - they were the Desert Rats, I think. They liberated us in April 45.

BL: The British?

CD: The British.

Tape 2: 22 minutes 45 seconds

They came because we - every night we heard our bombers going over and one morning, all the German staff disappeared. The camp was just inhabited by the prisoners of war. So we knew that our people must be coming because, in fact, we'd heard gunfire for quite a few days before. So they arrived and they liberated us. And the first thing they did, the food was in very short supply, the first thing they did, they distributed these cans of army beef and so on, and some poor people opened the tin and swallowed it and then died immediately from ... their stomach hadn't been used to that. Anyway, then we were flown back to Leeds and from Leeds - we were there for a few, for week or so - first thing I phoned my mother to tell her I was alive. She had gone to live with my aunt in Glasgow. And then from Leeds I was sent to London and my sister and her husband had by that time bought this house, and I was discharged from the army early May but the leave was - I wasn't actually discharged till September officially, and then I lived here, and I applied for a government grant, which I got. Then I went back to college.

BL: Did you leave earlier on health grounds, were you discharged earlier than other people on health grounds?

CD: Because I had lost an eye, I had a very bad knee and a very bad finger, and I got a pension for it. And...

BL: Because otherwise they might have kept you in Germany?

CD: Yes they might have done, yes, if I had not been a prisoner of war and not injured they might have kept me there, but we were all flown back, and all the disabled people were discharged.

Tape 2: 24 minutes 50 seconds

So then I went back to college, and whilst I was at college, one day the phone rang here at home, and it was the director's secretary, and the director of the College was Sir George Dyson. And the director's secretary said, the director's secretary said 'Oh, Clive Carey, the director of Sadler's Wells', whom I knew, because he had the opera class production at college, 'he wants you to come to Sadler's Wells and bring some music with you'. So I went to - so the director's secretary said, the Director of Sadler's Wells Clive Carey said 'Come and bring some music with you'. And I went to the college and 'Come and see George first'. So I went to the college and he said 'Ah, Danson, there you are, and you brought some music, I tell you what, Clive Carey wants you to sing something to him and Lawrence Collingwood. They've got an opera going, they might be able to give you a part', which was surprising, because nobody whilst being a student was allowed to do work yet. But as the Director himself had said so, that was of course OK. So I went to Sadler's Wells, where I met Clive Carey, whom I knew from College, because he was - he produced operas at College. I was in the opera class there and he said 'Oh, this is Lawrence Collingwood, this is Charles Danson. Charlie boy, would you like to sing something for us, from the stage?' So I went on stage and sang *Ricordita harmonia* from *Tosca*. And then I came down again from the stage, Carey said to Collingwood 'Well Laurie, would you like a word with me or something?' And

Collingwood said 'No! Give him the part.' And the part was, it was an opera by Vaughan Williams, called *Sir John in Love* which is the *Merry Wives of Windsor* story, and I was given the part of *Master Slender*.

BL: Was this your first part in England?

Tape 2: 27 minutes 8 seconds

CD: The first professional engagement ever, yes. Because I was still at college, we were not allowed to do any work actually, and I didn't. Because of 'Deutsche Obrigkeit', being afraid of authority, to the present day I don't do things I wasn't supposed to do, stupidly. Anyway, the first part, yes. So I was given this part, and of course, Vaughan Williams came to all the rehearsals. I've got the programme here, came to all the rehearsals and one day he said to me, Vaughan Williams said to me 'Would you like to do *Messiah* for me, at my Dorking Festival?' I said I'd love to. So I think it was after the - we did about fifteen or twenty performances of it, but then afterwards I went to do the *Messiah*, you know, the tenor solos in the *Messiah* and then actually, Vaughan Williams recorded it, privately, for his own purpose. Unfortunately, actually I've got the recording, it's actually dreadful sound-wise. It's a great pity because it's the only orchestral recording I have, but my daughter actually put a lot of my recordings on CD for me only a few weeks ago. But the *Messiah* unfortunately is very bad. Anyway, then I went back to College, then I finished at college.

BL: Which year are we talking about?

CD: That was in 45. Then I finished in the summer of 45 and I started looking for jobs, which was not easy, and isn't easy to the present day. Anyway, another teacher at college, who was a singer himself but also a producer at the same time, was a man called Sumner Austin. He said 'You know, I know of a small opera company, they're called the Imperial Opera Company, and they need a tenor for small parts, and they don't have an awful lot of work, but they do a few months a year, it will give you something to start with. And so if you like to do that, I will arrange with the director V. Laurie, to sing to him for an audition'. So I sang for him and did an audition and to cut a long story short, I got into that company. And the first tour we did was a week's tour to Exeter. And the operas - I was engaged to do the small character part of *Borsa* in *Rigoletto*. It was only a small part, what they call in Italian a 'comprimario' part, but it was something. That and also *Don Basilio* in *Marriage of Figaro*. Now the first one was *Butterfly*. Now I had nothing to do with it, of the millions of operas I had seen for some reason I was never keen on Puccini, I had never seen *Butterfly*. Anyway, in the first act the *Goro*, which is the marriage broker in *Butterfly*, was quite an old singer, he collapsed and died on the stage. And I don't know how they finished the opera, they probably didn't do it at all. Anyway, Laurie came round to me and said to me 'Now listen, Charles, we're doing *Butterfly* again on Wednesday. If you can learn the part of *Goro*, between now and Wednesday, you can sing it'. So I stayed with some friends of mine, friends of my sister's actually in Exeter, and I had never seen the opera. Well I had seen it in the dress rehearsal for this Imperial Opera Company, but I had never really seen it, didn't really know it at all. So I borrowed a score of *Butterfly* and all that Monday night and the whole of the Tuesday and the whole of the Tuesday night, I learned the part. It is a small part but it is musically complicated. Later on I sang *Pinkerton*, which is the big part, and it's much easier to learn than the small 'comprimario' part. However, I did learn it. And I went to Laurie then on the Wednesday morning and said 'Yes, I've learnt it'. 'OK, I take you through the steps and where you stand and that sort of thing'. And the *Pinkerton* was Tudor Davis, a very well-

known tenor, and he said 'Charlie-boy, don't you worry, I've seen this opera perhaps 250 times and I know every part. If you should feel that you are going to dry up, turn your back to the audience, no, I will turn my back to the audience and I'll sing it for you'. But I went through it alright, and that was the beginning of me doing the *Goro*. And from that then I later on then graduated to the main role, I did *Pinkerton*, and *Rodolfo* in *Bohème*, *Camillo* ...

BL: With this company?

Tape 2: 32 minutes 40 seconds

CD: With the Imperial Opera Company. And *Alfredo* in *Traviata* and the Count in *Barber of Seville*. Now also during those first three years, a very good friend of mine was Berthold Goldschmidt. He had coached me through lots of things and he said to me one day 'You know, would you like, you know because you've got so little work, would you like to do a season at Glyndebourne in the chorus?' So I said 'Yes, I'd love to'. After all, you know, some famous people came out of that chorus, like Janet Baker, people like that, so I said 'Yes, of course, I would love it'. And he said 'You can sing to the chorusmaster'. I can't remember his name now, (turns to his wife, left of screen) John Pritchard, thank you, and I sang to him and he said 'Yes, sure, sure, lovely, you can do the season', and then he said 'Would you like to understudy Richard Lewis'? And I said 'Yes certainly I would like to understudy Richard Lewis'. I understudied Richard Lewis in *Ottavio* and *Belmonte*. But he never fell ill, he was a dear man and we were great friends, but he would have sung being brought in on a stretcher, you know. I never got a chance to sing that. But I did actually three seasons at Glyndebourne. And then I also did some Oratorio work.

Tape 2: 34 minutes 19 seconds

BL: Actually in Glynebourne and in companies like the Imperial Opera, did you meet other refugees? Were there other refugees? You said you met Goldschmidt.

CD: No he only recommended me for Glynebourne, where he himself conducted occasionally. You know he was a lovely man, a wonderful composer, a most magnificent musician. But he would tell John Christie what should be done, you know, and John Christie - it was after all his opera house, his wife Audrey sang the soprano parts - he didn't like to be told by Berthold Goldschmidt what should be done, you know.

BL: Where did you meet Goldschmidt?

CD: I met Goldschmidt, he was - my father-in-law's wife knew him and told him about me, and that's how I got to meet Goldschmidt, and then he coached me in a lot of parts. And then one day I came in, there was a big hand-written score lying there, and I said 'What...', and he said 'Oh, it's an opera I have written, an opera I have written, *Beatrice Cenci*. Actually I have just won, anonymously'. There was a - British composers were asked to compose an opera by the Arts Council, and it was an anonymous thing, otherwise he would have never got it. Anyway, he was picked, and his opera was to be given a first official hearing with piano at the Arts Council. And Goldschmidt said 'I tell you what, would you like to do me the tenor part?', which I did and it was the first time I'd ever sung at the Arts Council. Which could have worked out alright with connections because Sir Stuart Wilson was the director of the Arts Council. He was a tenor himself and they were all there. By then you see my hearing had begun to go, and I more or less decided - , I mean I did the synagogue jobs, the jobs were few

and far between, an Oratorio here, an Oratorio there, a few months with the Imperial Opera Company, but we were married and we had a child.

Tape 2: 36 minutes 51 seconds

BL: Can you tell me where you met your wife?

CD: I met my wife at friends of my mother's and her father's. They were called the Schiffers. They lived in Ashford Court, we met there. We met there, we were introduced there, and Ruth was told 'Oh, can you come on Monday night, there is a, two young friends are coming, and one of them is a singer.' So Ruth being very musical, she plays the violin herself, she was a pupil of Norman Bings, you know. And so my friend Fritz and I, we were invited there that evening, and then, we arrived at quarter past, half past eight or something, she wasn't there yet. Then she arrived and sometimes Ruth tells me, she said to herself 'Now which...'. Fritz and I were sitting on a sofa, and she tells me she said to herself, 'Now which of the two is the tenor?' So then we introduced ourselves and haven't looked back since. And incidentally, with those Schiffers my mother had an almighty row, we never met them again. It was one of these things.

BL: When did you meet?

CD: We met in 1947. '47. We married on 17 December 1949, and then we moved into this house. I mean I lived here ever since I came out of the army you see.

BL: In this house?

Tape 2: 38 minutes 31 seconds

CD: Yes, but my sister and her husband and the two children, my nephew and niece, they emigrated to Chicago. And we were then renting the house from him at the time and we kept on doing that. Then Ruth one day said 'You know, this isn't good, it will never be any good, we must try and buy it off him.' So then we eventually bought it off him. So then the hearing began to give way, about '57, '58 or something like that, and then I had to look for something I could do, which didn't need a lot of training, but was comparatively safe. So I became a travel agent.

BL: We need to stop now to change the tape.

TAPE 3

BL: This is tape three and we're conducting an interview with Mr Charles Danson. You were just telling us that you became a travel agent.

CD: That's right. It must have been 1958, I think. I had to do something which did not need a lot of training and which was a fairly secure job, so I became a travel agent. I started at Polly Tours. I went through all the various things there: reservations, ticketing, what have you. Then, after about a year, and the pay was not very much, I mean it was enough to live on but I thought I could do a bit better, so I had heard a friend of mine was working as a travel agent in a firm called Pall Mall Safe Deposit Travel Bureau Limited, which was part of the Pall Mall Safe Deposit. The Pall Mall Safe Deposit was - the chairman was man called Gerson,

Jack Gerson - and the travel bureau was run by a man called Louis Dorfman. So I had an interview with him and he asked me some questions which I could answer quite easily, so he offered me a job there. So I became - I left Polly Tours and went to Pall Mall Safe Deposit Travel Ltd and I worked there on the counter. Now one of the accounts, one of the very large accounts Dorfman had, was Ibbs & Tillett Limited, who at that time, together with Harold Holt, were the largest concert agencies in the country. I knew Mrs Tillett, who was the managing director, extremely well from my singing days, because I had had some jobs with her. I also knew Ian Hunter, who was the managing director of Harold Holt very well, and Holt and Ibbs & Tillett - they both had these accounts with Dorfman. So he let me do all that work whilst I was at Pall Mall. And then one day, I think Mrs Tillett must have talked to Dorfman, he said 'You know it would be a good idea if you went to Ibbs & Tillett for half a day, you can be here in the morning and then go to Ibbs & Tillett in the afternoon, do a few tickets, take a few tickets with you and do that travel business from there'. So I started doing that because Dorfman being very clever, he knew that I knew all these artists, personally. People like Cherkassky and Barenboim. And Barenboim came to me, he must have been about fourteen, short trousers, and he's the one actually who told me about Dan, because Daniel came with his father and mother to Ibbs & Tillett when I was working there, and the father, I said to the father, or rather the father said 'Danson? Danson'? I said 'Yes, actually, I don't know who Dan was.' And the father turned to Daniel and said 'Daniel, tell Mr Danson who Dan was.' And then Daniel Barenboim told me he was a king and of one of the ten tribes. So I knew ... extremely well.

Tape 3: 3 minutes 23 seconds

So that was one of the reasons Dorfman sent me there. So I went there for half a day, and then after a few months, there were - I was getting a lot of business from these artists because they knew me, and I probably did it the way they wanted because I knew what artists need, you see by way of travelling. They come for the easy connection, not to worry and all that, and Daniel Barenboim once rang me at home at three o'clock in the morning, I remember. He said 'I'm stranded in Alexandria, and I've got to go to...' I forget where, and 'Now Charles what shall I do?' I said 'Daniel, I am in bed, I can't do anything, I'll ring you in the morning'. Anyway I knew what they wanted. And then I went there for the whole day. And then Dorfman and Mrs Tillett discussed 'Let's open an Ibbs & Tillett Travel Ltd', and Dorfman said 'You will be the director of that'. Fine. I became the director. Not that I had any money, I was a working director. I never had any cash interests or percentage in it, but I became the director and then I had to engage some more people. I had four people working for me and I was in Ibbs & Tillett for many many years. I was very happy there because I knew the people. I knew a lot of people, you know, and it was pleasant to talk. They were not businessmen. I also had a large business account with the 3M company across the road. I was always afraid of losing that account, they were as hard as nails, real businessmen. I mean artists, me included, are not business people you know, and I knew what they wanted, so I could please them.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 12 seconds

BL: Where was this?

CD: In Wigmore Street and Harold Holt was next door. You know, it was upstairs, Ian Hunter, I mean, was upstairs. So I did that, and then Mrs Tillett died and the firm, Ibbs & Tillett Travel, was taken over by Irish Airlines, or Aer Lingus, of all people. They were taken over by them and there was a very young man, who was the manager in Pall Mall and he was

my boss as it were. Dorfman had sold his business also, and I couldn't get on with him very well (the new manager). He had a wife and she knew everything better and this man - I won't mention his name - he said 'I'll get my wife to work in your office as well'. Well she really was the boss, you know, and there was a lot of stress and strain and then, to cut a long story short, I had a nervous breakdown. I couldn't stand it anymore, the atmosphere. And then I was ill for about six months and finally the doctor said 'I can't give you sick notes and sick pay anymore, you have to try and do something again', because I still wanted to work, you see, I was only 55. And then I wrote hundreds of letters of applications for jobs because the doctor had said to me 'You must do something where you don't sit in an office by yourself, where you don't have a lot of responsibility, even if isn't well paid, you've got to have something which is secure and where you work with other people.' And I made lots and lots of applications and then one day I saw an application in the Evening Standard for somebody, they wanted somebody in the Metropolitan Police, Marylebone Magistrate's Court, the Fixed Penalty Office. So I applied for that and after a week or so I had a letter back I should come for an interview. So I went for an interview in Marylebone Road. There were a panel of three people there; I didn't know who they were. One was the boss of that department and they fired questions at me and I answered them all satisfactorily and then the man in the Middle, who was the real boss, he said 'You know Mr Danson, you got a wonderful education, you got a matriculation certificate, you've been an artist. This is a very simple job, you know, do you really think you would be happy doing it?' I said: 'I would be extremely happy doing this. I tell you quite honestly, I have had a nervous breakdown, having been the director of a travel company, and my doctor said to me I must do something that is not a lot of stress and strain and where I work with other people'. And he said 'Well if you think it's not too low a job for you, we'll consider you.' And then I left, and one of the other men came down with me and said 'You know I don't think there is much difficulty'. Anyway, I did not hear for two weeks. I did not know then how the Civil Service works. I hadn't heard for two weeks, and I thought if I haven't heard in two weeks, it's out. Anyway I was then writing off more and more things and Louise said 'You're getting more and more nervous about this, why don't you ring Mr. Stone and ask him whether there is any chance of you perhaps getting the job'?

Tape 3: 9 minutes 26 seconds

And I being me I did not want to do that but she, as always, is right. So I forced myself to ring up and I spoke to Mr Stone and said 'It's Mr Danson' and 'Oh Mr Danson, I've just written a letter to you this morning, I'm offering you the job'. So that's the Civil Service for you, you know, nothing is done in a hurry, ever.

BL: So you got the job?

CD: Yeah, so I got the job and I said 'Oh, I'm delighted, and I certainly will accept it, and when do you want me to start'? And he said 'Can you start in two weeks time'? And I said 'I certainly can start in two weeks' time' and I said 'Nine thirty?' And he said 'Oh no, eight thirty, but we finish at four,' which was very nice. So I did that job for a year, it was quite boring. I got a slightly better position after some time but then Mr Stone also left. He had to retire. The new man was also very pleasant, but up to that time they could work in that job till they dropped, as long as they could do the job, but the new regulations came out for the Civil Service or the Metropolitan Police, saying that three months after your 65th Birthday you had to retire. Because we had a man there who was almost 70 and he was happy working there, and so anyway, it came to April - April 85 and I had to leave and then I came back here. I haven't done anything much since, really. Well, I go to the Wiener Library and anyway, then I wasn't

very well actually. I did a lot of walking in the Cotswolds, we went to Amersham and did all these things and we had a nice time. We went on holiday twice.

Tape 3: 11 minutes 41 seconds

BL: Did you do any singing?

CD: Oh no, I never did any singing again. It completely stopped. Not even for pleasure, no. When I started with Polly Tours with the Travel, I did a lot of singing in the synagogues, you know, the Dunstan Road - I sang there for quite a few years. We also had, got lot of weddings on a Sunday. There was also a wonderful bass, Martin Lawrence, you might remember the name. He was a very famous singer actually and he got a lot of weddings himself and he asked me to come along. I worked a lot with him at the weddings and it was always good pay because it was always cash in hand and very good, very well paid.

BL: How did you become involved in the synagogues?

CD: How did I become involved? That's a good question. I heard that they had professional singers in the choirs. So I wrote to Dunstan Road, which was the nearest to me and there was a man there called Wien, very nice, a wonderful musician. He did a bit of conducting and things and so I sang to him and he said 'Yes, I need a tenor badly'. So I did that for quite a few years, every Saturday morning. Friday evening they didn't need a choir. Choir - it was really solo singing. There was a quartet of people who did the Saturday mornings and we got some weddings, and High Holidays as well, and Pesach as well. And then I - no, I didn't fall out with him - for some reason I didn't like the atmosphere anymore, and then I phoned Hoffmann, who was at the St John's Wood Liberal Synagogue. I did quite a bit of singing for him, and they at that time didn't have a Friday evening service. But he said 'You know, some of the young people would be delighted to do Friday evenings, so shall we, just you and I, do a Friday evening service'? So he gave me the things what to sing and we did quite a few Friday evenings there. And then I also got in touch with Suzman at the Alyth Gardens Synagogue, and he didn't need anybody for every Saturday, but he wanted somebody for the High Holidays. And there I did quite a few - four or five of the High Holidays. The Rabbi at that time was Philip Cohen, whom I knew from Dorfman because he was a client. I knew him from my travel agent days and he was happy to have me there, and we did quite a few things there.

Tape 3: 14 minutes 34 seconds

BL: Did you yourself belong to the synagogue?

CD: No, I didn't belong to it, I was never a member. I only was engaged to do these things. John Shirley Quirk actually was a very well-known bass baritone. He was not Jewish actually, but nobody must know that, and he also did the singing there. I remember one Yom Kippur. In the morning we sang and then the choir had about an hour off, you know, and then we went downstairs and we all unpacked our sandwiches and Philip Cohen came in. He was a charming man. He saw us and he said 'I hope you haven't forgotten the bench' - to say grace! So that was very funny that. Yeah, but otherwise I didn't do any more singing.

BL: How come you never sang for Belsize Square Synagogue?

CD: No, I never sang there, never. I would have been more, probably more familiar with those tunes from my childhood memories than the... no I never went there.

BL: (Question unclear)

CD: Yeah, they've got a very good service; they got a Kantor and an organ. No, I never went there. Well, that brings us up to date, more or less. Then we did a few things we like to do, go on holidays occasionally. We used to go for a lot of walks, which I can't do much anymore unfortunately. I don't go out now, I don't feel well enough. When we went to this *Lohengrin* dress rehearsal, this was the highlight of our day, a couple of weeks ago. It was in the morning.

BL: You said you started working as a volunteer the Wiener Library.

CD: I do work in the Wiener Library. I've been there - I forget - it's eight or nine years, I think, and I work in the department where J. Ziegler is in charge sort of thing. But everybody is in charge.

BL: Why did you become involved in the Wiener?

CD: I tell you, now I tell you that. Now I had a very good friend called Peter Messerschmidt, an old school friend of mine, Jewish schoolfriend of mine. He survived Auschwitz. I went to visit him and his wife often in Berlin. And one day he said 'You know, for my son Dani, I've written my memoirs, including everything, our schooldays, I mentioned our schooldays'. His father was the architect of the Jewish community in Berlin. Peter himself wanted to be an architect. But under the Nazis was not allowed to become an architect anymore. So he learned (did an apprenticeship) and became a brick-layer. And it saved his life because when he was taken to Auschwitz, they needed brick-layers, and he survived that way. He was also in the Death March. Anyway, one year when I went to visit him and Miriam and Dani in Berlin - I went often back to Berlin, I must say, I still love Berlin. What I love best is walking aimlessly in the streets; go to the opera of course. Anyway, so Peter said to me one day 'You know, I've written my memoirs'.

Tape 3: 18 minutes 3 seconds

And he showed it to me, and he said 'Take it home, read it'. I was there for a week or ten days, so I read it and came back and said 'You know, there's an institute in London called the Wiener Library, do you know anything about it?' He said 'No, I don't'. I said 'It's nothing to do with Vienna. It's called after the man Alfred Wiener, who started the whole thing' and I told him about it. And I said 'You know, I think they would love to have your book. Would you like me to take a copy, would you allow them to have it?' He said 'Yes, sure, if they want to have it, they can have it'. So I came back from Berlin, and Ruth and I went to the Library to hand over this book and we got talking. We knew about these archives and things and press cuttings which they do, and Ruth said to me before we got there 'Why don't you speak to somebody, they might - it gives you a bit of a routine, if you go there once a week you might like to do it, you meet interesting people of your background, of a certain intellectual capacity, why don't you ask them'. So we went there, I gave them this book, which they were highly interested in, and then 'By the way, I'm retired and would be quite interested to work here. I speak German fluently obviously, could you do with somebody?' So the girl, Rosemary, said 'I just ask them upstairs if they can do with somebody. The person who is

in charge will come down'. So a few moments elapsed and the door opened and there was J Ziegler. I said 'It's you!' Because he is a very very good friend, he and his wife, of my cousin, my late cousin and his widow. So he said 'Oh, if you would like to come, come by all means'. And that's how I started.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 10 seconds

BL: What about your social circle? Were there many other refugees?

CD: They're all refugees with the exception of one, whom we call the baby because he's only about 52. He is the son, of course, of refugees. Because you must either speak or read German or French or whatever.

BL: I don't mean in the Wiener Library. In general, your social circle.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 34 seconds

CD: My social circle. We've got very few friends now, because they're more or less all dead really. I am not a terribly sociable person anyway. I love best to be at home, listen to music. I used to love reading books. I can't read a lot now because my good eye has a bit of trouble, it's watering a lot, and I don't really like to go out. I love to be at home, which is very bad. I know you should meet people and see people, but as I say Ruth is not terribly social but much more than I, it does not take much to be less, you know. And so we love to see our children, who come occasionally, and that's it. We lead a rather boring life. Mainly I used to love to go out. We didn't love to go out, but we did go out, to concerts and things, but we hardly ever do that. For one thing because we are not very conveniently situated for transport, for one thing and also I get very tired at night, you see.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 53 seconds

BL: Do you go to any of the *AJR* events?

CD: I do go to the Christmas parties.

BL: I don't mean the Wiener Library.

CD: No, the *AJR* events no, we never go anywhere, really.

BL: But you are a member of the *AJR*?

CD: We are both members of the *AJR*.

BL: When did you join the *AJR*?

CD: It must have been in the fifties or something like that. It's my father-in-law, we talked once about it and I said we really don't belong to anything and he said 'There's one thing you must belong to. It's the *AJR*, because it's your background and you must belong to that'. But no, we don't go to any of the events really.

BL: But you thought that was right?

CD: I agreed with him, yes. I'm very happy to be a member of that. I read the magazine with pleasure, I don't always agree with everything which is in it, nor do other people but I enjoy reading it. Of course. Another thing which I get from Germany is that *Aktuell* thing, I don't know if you know it. You see when we first - I went to Berlin several times after the war. The first time I went, actually, when I was still in travel, the Huddersfield Choral Society had arranged to do two *Messiahs* in Berlin with Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting. And I arranged the plane, the charter plane, so there were some seats vacant and I went over with them. I don't know why I'm saying this actually, what's it got to do with the *AJR*?

BL: You said about the magazine *Aktuell*.

CD: Oh yes, thank you. Then I had read about it that you could get invitations from the Berlin Senate and I was a bit reluctant. I don't like to accept favours, but my friend Peter Messerschmidt said 'Don't be an idiot, you are not, they are not losing anything by you not going and if they are willing to pay for it, you've been here several times and paid for it, why don't you go for free?' So we did that and when you do that - we had a very nice week there - after you get on the list you automatically get this *Aktuell* sent twice a year, and you also get a very nice calendar once a year. And that's how I came to speak about the *Aktuell*. But to come back to the *AJR*, no. I read about these events, you know, but we never go.

BL: What was it like to go back to Berlin for you, for the first time?

Tape 3: 25 minutes 1 second

CD: Mixed feelings in a way of course. The first time I ever went was when I went with the Huddersfield Choral Society. What I like best when I am there, apart from seeing my friend Messerschmidt who is dead now unfortunately, but he and she were the only people I knew, I love to walk the streets. The first time I visited the old school I introduced myself, the headmaster said 'Oh yes, we have lots of people coming here to look at it'. He took me round the old classrooms, I liked that. I loved going to the Opera, for one thing it's about half the price of Covent Garden, and at least as good, if not better. So I liked to go to the Opera and in those days, when my hearing wasn't so bad, I also loved to go to the theatre. I'm very keen on theatre really. And I was too young really to see any plays. Well I wasn't too young but I always went to the Opera. You see I never went to anything else. And so there wasn't really time. I remember my mother took me to see *William Tell* and the *große Schauspiele* at the Schauspielhaus. But that was the only thing. I once went with the school, with the English class, It's nothing to do with German. We saw a play by Shaw. I think it was *Candida* or something. And to concerts I also never went in Berlin. I used to go here. You see when I was in Ibbes & Tillett, all the years at Ibbes & Tillett, I only had to say 'I'd like to go tonight' and I would get a complimentary ticket. The other thing, and I think this was one of the highlights at Ibbes & Tillett, nothing to do with work, but Mrs. Tillett had a client, he was the chairman of Rio Tinto Zinc. And he owned - because you can still do that - he owned four seats in the sixth row of the stalls. He used to take all his business people, but of course he couldn't always go and he didn't want to go twice. He used to ring up Mrs. Tillett in the morning and say 'I don't need the tickets, does someone want to go?' And I'm the one who always wanted to go. The others didn't like opera, they only liked chamber music. So I used to ring Ruth at two and say 'I've got a couple of tickets for *Tristan*' and she used to hastily rearrange meals for the children, somebody to be with them when we didn't have the au pair anymore, and we

used to go there so – there always were these wonderful seats, always free tickets, which was a great saving, you see.

Tape 3: 27 minutes 40 seconds

BL: When did you become naturalised?

CD: Oh, that is a good question. Oh yes, I must show you that, glad you asked that question. It was in 1946. In 1946, the great thing was it didn't cost anything, I think it was five pounds or something like that. Which would have been a lot of money, I got that free.

I wanted to say, on discharge from the army, I got a piece of paper - I've got to show it to you - that I'm discharged as an enemy alien and on discharge I will have to report to the police, once a week or something. This is after having fought in the army, being in the Pioneer Corps, fought in the Royal Tank Regiment, having become a prisoner of war in Germany, having lost an eye and other injuries and after that I was back to the state I was in before, having to report once a week to the police. Mind you when I became naturalised of course that stopped. But it's absolutely ridiculous but I mean, there you are.

Tape 3: 28 minutes 50 seconds

BL: You both became naturalised at the same time?

CD: Oh yes, once a week.

BL: No, you became naturalised, you both got the British passport at the same time?

CD: Yes.

BL: You and your wife?

CD: But I didn't know her then.

BL: Oh sorry. Of course you didn't.

CD: So also, you see I still had to - well I was studying and when I was still studying I got this job at - I may be wrong, I was offered this job before which I shouldn't have taken really, because I needed permission from the director, which I probably wouldn't have got. I had to get to get permission to do that job, because I was not allowed to take any job, paid or unpaid. That was in the registration (document), which I haven't got anymore. That I threw away when I got my naturalisation papers.

BL: Did you feel you ever experienced any sort of anti-refugee sentiment? I mean when you went to the Quaker school, you said it was difficult.

CD: It was difficult partly because of the English and then all boys liked to make fun of people who were not exactly the way they were, and I've always been very bad at sports, you see. The only sport I liked was swimming. That we did in the pool in school but the other things - football I hated, because I was always cold you see and I loved to - I didn't develop a cold (swimming). Anyway I got colds. I used to be on sister's list, which was the excuse

that I didn't have to do football. Cricket I didn't mind but to the present day I have never understood it, never understood what it was all about but I didn't mind it. And I used to stand around because I'm very clumsy you see. I couldn't catch balls and things like that. But otherwise it was, as I say, the last year at school was quite pleasant. I never hankered to go back to Germany and I would never contemplate going back to Germany. I like to go to Berlin - we liked, loved to go to Munich - because with the people, if it was somebody our generation, one always had a feeling 'I wonder what he did during the war'. 'I wonder what he did just in 1935, '36?' You never know. We have actually got one pair, who are 15 years younger than we. We met some very very nice people many years ago when we were on holiday in Lipari. These are lovely German people, he is also retired now, he was a headmaster in Düsseldorf, and they are - philosemitic isn't the word, you know but they are the only what I call 'real' Germans we've ever been in contact with. Otherwise I usually feel not very comfortable being there. You sit at the table, you have an escalope, you have a beer, very nice, and then I'm very happy to go back to London.

BL: How do you define yourself in terms of your identity? Do you see yourself as British?

Tape 3: 32 minutes 18 seconds

CD: Well I like to say when I first came I wanted to be more British than the British, you know. When somebody I travelled with on the bus would say 'Must be German, must be German' but that I feel even now. You see, I might have said this before. When I left school, I didn't have a trace of an accent, when I left school in Yorkshire, but then I spoke German with my parents, and - the accent is always there. So whenever I speak after all these years, after all I've come in 1936 and we meet some people, not that we meet many people now, we used to meet people and after two sentences then they say either 'You speak very good English', or 'Where do you come from?' Well, when I am in Berlin and speak German nobody says to me 'You speak very good German where do you actually come from?' And this is a thing, well I've come to live with it but you never feel that you're really accepted as an English person. That is the way I feel. I don't feel bitter about it, don't get me wrong, but I wouldn't, as I said before, I wouldn't like to live in Germany ever. I like to be there for holiday, I'm perfectly happy to live here but I know, I will never be English. Even if I had wanted to, which I did want to in the beginning, but then you get, you know - all the time people say 'Oh, he's not really English, and Jewish to boot, you know' - you feel, you know 'Alright, then let me be the way I am'. I'm perfectly happy the way I am.

Tape 3: 34 minutes 5 seconds

BL: And what impact did being a refugee have on your life?

CD: What impact did it have being a refugee?

BL: Or how different would your life have been had you stayed in Germany?

CD: Well, I think, if there had been no Hitler, if we would not have had to emigrate, first of all, my father, whom I dearly loved - I loved my mother too, but I was much closer to my father, for many reasons, we had this great interest in literature, I mean interest in music, of course, my mother being a musician, he was the opera fan - he would have lived much longer, obviously, because his heart was perfectly sound till this thing started. So, also there wouldn't have been a war, I wouldn't have been shot out of a tank, the hearing wouldn't have gone, and

I probably would have also become a singer. And I probably would have had a very much longer career in singing, which is the only career I really loved, you know, and even if I wouldn't have become famous. Obviously not, because my voice was good, it was very good but certainly not outstanding, so I wouldn't have become a member of the Staatsoper, but there were - in every small town there is an opera house. I would have had jobs in these smaller towns, and I wouldn't have had to change until the voice eventually went. So that was one reason. Otherwise I have not made real English friends. The only real English friend I had was my, I say 'co-star', the woman who did the soprano leading parts with me in the opera. She was English, English to the core; you couldn't have been more English. Her father was a vice-admiral. And she was a real only, the only real English friend I had but then for some reason I didn't meet a lot of English people for some reason. At college, I didn't make many - I don't make friends easily you see, because I'm fundamentally an extremely shy person. And Ruth always says 'I don't know how you ever did these opera parts'. You see it must be because I led a sort of 'Walter Mitty existence', because I was happy as anything on stage in any part I ever did, be it a character part or leading tenor part. But I don't make friends easily, I'm... therefore I didn't make any friends at college actually. Mind you, it was partly that interruption by the war. In the war, the only friend, real friend I made was my friend Fritz, who is still alive. He's a bit older, quite a bit older than I. The others I didn't really take to, you see. I'm really only interested, this is probably stupid, in people who've got an interest in music. That is my one great love, or has been anyway. And I never, all the friends I had, even my German friend and Peter Messerschmidt, they were totally unmusical or not interested in music. For some reason it didn't seem to matter then but then when I came here, I didn't - apart from this colleague of mine, Barbara Lane, I never met any people, except Ruth's cousin Inge. She is, of course, highly musical. She is one of the few people with whom I can talk my language. There are one or two others, but - I've got another friend, Hilde, and we did, I didn't mention it, we did we did a long tour of the *Fledermaus*. It was arranged by the Anglo-Austrian Society, we toured a lot with Karl Hamburger, doing the piano, and some other people did it too, but mainly Karl Hamburger; Bernard Kiefer did it too, but I did the *Eisenstein*. In the Imperial Opera Company I always did *Alfred*. I did a few *Eisenstein* but I mainly *Alfred*. But with this Imperial Opera Company I always did *Eisenstein*. And this friend Hilde, who did the *Adele*, with her I can speak music. She's more interested in operetta and on the light side, and I'm more interested in serious opera. So apart from Inge... My friend Fritz, he's quite interested in it but otherwise I have never met anybody, who's really interested in music; and if they're not interested in music, the conversation with me soon dried up, you see. So I can't think of anything else. I'm happily married to my lovely wife. For 53 years we have been married, never a cross word and we know each other pretty well. We know what we like and what we don't like. We try not to step on each other's toes and so, and I love my children. Unfortunately we don't see them very often. The older one lives in Hampshire, she will come for Father's Day. The other one, the younger one is completely disinterested in music, although when I gave her this, when she saw this CD which Jaqueline had made she said 'Oh I'd love to have it'. You could have knocked me down with a feather because when Jaqueline did this video a few years ago, I said to Helen 'Would you like to see it?' And she said 'I'll see it when you're dead'. I said 'Thank you very much'. So I was surprised when she wanted this CD and then she rang me the next day and said 'You know I cried when I listened it'. You could have knocked me down with a feather.

BL: We have to stop it because I think the tape is coming to an end.

TAPE 4

BL: This is Tape 4. We're conducting an interview with Mr Charles Danson.

BL: You were talking about your children and I wanted to ask you whether you ever discussed your past?

CD: I've talked about it. The older one has always been very interested in it. I must say... I may have mentioned before they are both adopted. Now the older one is one hundred percent Jewish, even looks - well I would say she looks a little bit like Ruth but she certainly looks Jewish and the younger one is only half Jewish. Her father was Jewish we were told. I myself doubt it because you couldn't look more non-Jewish than Helen. And the grandchildren, you couldn't be more non-Jewish; and with Jaqueline I've always had the interest of music. She's very keen on music; or rather she is, after I sort of talked about it. She loves to go to the opera and she loves to discuss musical things. She started to learn the clarinet; she did it quite nicely although she is not actually musical at all. All the more reason I admire how she did learn that clarinet. And the younger one, whom I also dearly love, actually is not musical. I love her very dearly but she just isn't musical. And also she lives far away, well, far away, she lives in Bedfordshire. She unfortunately doesn't drive and we see her very rarely but I love to see her. She will phone tonight, and we love the grandchildren, of course.

Tape 4: 2 minutes 8 seconds

BL: How many grandchildren do you have?

CD: Three. All three boys. So there we are. But actually I did at one time - when the children were small, I wanted to give the chance which I never had, of going into the Jewish religion - and we did a Seder evening, I think two years running and I got the Haganah. I had been to a Seder myself once in my life as a young boy because some friends of mine, who lived in the house, they always did Seder evenings. So I got a Haganah and looked up what I disrespectfully call 'the stage directions'. You know what you have to do, when you have to pour the wine, when you make the matze, ... (inaudible) and so I did that with them twice, two years running. And I gave them the chance but they were not interested. They both - actually they both - we sent them both to Sunday religious school, yes we sent them both to religion school. We gave them the chance but you can only lead a horse to water, you can't make him drink. So I've got no bad conscience from that point of view, we've done our best to give them the chance and now of course they've both gone their own separate ways. The older one has got one Jewish friend and the other one has got no Jewish friends at all.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 39 seconds

BL: And you lived in such a Jewish neighbourhood here.

CD: Yes it's a very Jewish neighbourhood. Mind you it's more Arab and Asian than Jewish now.

BL: Probably used to be.

CD: It used to be a very Jewish neighbourhood, yes. Because the nearness of the synagogue is an attraction, you see, for the people, because they can walk there. So, but otherwise I've had a perfectly happy life. Well I wish I could be healthier than I am, but you can't change that. I mean, make the best of it!

Discussions with wife. [Inaudible]

CD: Yes I said that didn't I? I said the older one was always very interested in everything we do.

BL: Did you ever take the children to Germany?

CD: Yes, Jaqueline I took, twice actually. Once, once she had passed her, the equivalent A-levels, and she had gone once with her school actually, without me. And then once we said 'We will send you there to stay with some friends of mine, the Messerschmidts, and we'll send you there' and she loved to go. And then unbeknown to her, I went also. She didn't know and my friend Messerschmidt knew that I was coming and that she didn't know. And he said 'Oh I'm going to meet a friend of mine, we've got to go to the station. They've got a lovely bungalow near Klaussee. We've got to go to the station in Wannsee to meet him there. Would you like to come with me?' And Jaqueline being Jaqueline always everything is - she loves to do everything, she said 'Of course I'd like to come with you'. And then, she sat there, the train rolled up and I got out, and she was completely aghast, you see. So that was a very nice surprise. And then we - I think I went another time with her. Helen had never been interested in going to Germany.

Tape 4: 6 minutes 25 seconds

BL: Is there anything I haven't asked you you would like to add?

CD: I can't think of anything you haven't asked and I've probably talked too much, which is not my way normally but once you get me going on that subject, I talk about it and I hope it's of some interest to you and whoever is going to see this one day.

BL: Is there any message you've got? Anything important, looking at your experience?

CD: No I can't think of anything really. Sorry perhaps I didn't hear your question properly, I'm getting a little tired.

BL: Any message, looking at your experience, is there something of particular importance?

CD: Don't go into the music business as a singer or whatever in this country, unless you are particularly outstanding, because you'll have a terrible job. Take a job and do the music as a nice sideline, and when the sideline gets bigger than the main job, then just go into it. That's all I can say really. So I think that is about all I can say. Lovely meeting you...

BL: OK, Mr Danson thank you very much for the interview.

Wide shot.

PHOTOS.

Tape 4: 8 minutes 15 seconds

1. My grandfather Simon Neufeld, first Jewish stockbroker admitted to the Berlin Stock Exchange and grandmother Fanny Neufeld née Schlomo (from Hamburg). Taken in Berlin.

2. My father's brothers and his sister Rosa. My father Peter Danielsohn at the piano, Günther who played viola, my uncle Alwin played violin and Ernst, who played cello. And my only remaining cousin Jenny in Tel Aviv is sister of uncle Ernst, who was the youngest of them all.

BL: And where was this taken?

CD: I think it was also in Berlin.

3. Simon Neufeld, my grandfather and wife Fanny. Walking in Berlin Christmas time 1924. Walking along the Kudamm.

4. Evi, my sister and myself Karl Erich, must have been 1924, certainly in Berlin.

5. Myself in 1927 aged 7, in the Knesebeckstrasse flat in Berlin, shows early interest in music.

6. Danielsohn family. My father, my mother, my sister Evi and myself, and in the background my uncle Jacob Grünebaum, my uncle, the husband of my aunt Rosa. Taken in 1924 in ... on the Baltic coast.

7. Taken in 1924 in Berlin, my father, mother, sister and myself. The other girl in foreground is my sister's best friend Lilou Borhardt.

8. 1924 on our plot in the Grunewald outside Berlin. My parents had grand ideas of building a house there. It never came to anything. Herbert Eckersdorf, the other little boy, is a friend.

9. In 1926 after my first day at school with Schultüte, which were filled with sweets given to children coming out on the first day. Photo taken outside our flat in Knesebeckstrasse.

10. 1935 my father and myself, in Lugano, on holiday at the Hotel St.Gotthard.

11. Myself in Berlin in 1935 when I was 15 years old.

12. Myself in 1940 after joining the Pioneer Corps.

13. 1941 in the Pioneer Corps with group of fellow comrades-in-arms. In Kempton. We did a review called *Dinner is served*.

14. Myself in La Traviata when I was in the Imperial Opera Company in 1948.

15. Photo of myself taken 1950 as *Rodolfo* in *La Boheme* at the Imperial Opera Company.

16. 1948 Glyndebourne Festival, when I sang in the chorus of *Don Giovanni*. I'm standing in front of the open gate

17. Wedding photograph taken 17 of December 1949 at Hampstead Town Hall Registry Office. Me and Ruth.

18. Brochure printed to send to agents. With what sort of repertoire I was mastering at the time, what I looked like, where I studied, hoping to get jobs through it.

Tape 4: 16 minutes 24 seconds

19 Leaflet of *Fledermaus*. Concerts in costume, arranged by the Anglo-Austrian Society. We toured the country over a period of two years. I did part of *Eisenstein*.

20. Our daughters Jaqueline and Helen. Jaqueline on left, Helen on right.