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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Ref. no:</b>	27

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Bernheim
<b>Forename:</b>	Elisabeth
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	20 August 1920
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Riedlingen [Donauworth], Germany

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	29 July 2003
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Leeds
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Rosalyn Livshin
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	2 hours and 18 minutes

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

**INTERVIEW: 27**

**NAME: ELISABETH BERNHEIM**

**DATE: 29 JULY 2003**

**LOCATION: LEEDS**

**INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN**

**TAPE 1**

**Tape 1: 0 minutes 36 seconds**

RL: I'm interviewing Elisabeth Bernheim and the interview is taking place on Tuesday 29 July 2003. The interview is being done in Leeds and the interviewer is Rosalyn Livshin.

**Tape 1: 0 minute 56 seconds**

RL: Okay, so if you can first tell me your name.

EB: Elisabeth Bernheim.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

EB: The same.

RL: And when were you born?

EB: 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1920.

RL: And where were you born?

EB: In Riedlingen, Germany. It's a small town on the Danube, Riedlingen an der Donau, it is called, the Danube.

RL: Do you have a Hebrew name?

EB: I don't think so, I can't remember, let's say. I just use Elisheva.

RL: Do you know if you were named after anybody?

EB: I think yes. I think my father's mother was called Elise, as far as I know. I never knew her.

RL: Okay, and what were your parent's names?

EB: Albert and Irma Bernheim.

RL: And where were they born?

EB: My mother was born in Riedlingen, because her parents had a business there. And I think even her grandparents started it, I think. My father was born in Buchau, which is another small town that had a large, well, relatively large Jewish community.

RL: You started to tell me a bit about your mother's family, so tell me a bit about your mother's background, her family background and your grandparents and what you remember of her family.

**Tape 1: 2 minutes 58 seconds**

EB: She had quite a large family, I don't know how many, six or seven or more brothers and sisters. They had a business in Riedlingen.

RL: What was the business?

EB: Mainly selling, you know, I've been thinking about that, seems stupid [Laughs]. But it's called Kurz-, Eisen- and Wollwaren in German, which is not much help. You know, things that you sell in these supermarkets nowadays mainly. Cotton and wool and small sort of jumpers and anything like that, stockings..

RL: Do you remember the shop?

EB: Oh yes. Actually, I did have a photograph. I never thought of that I don't know where it is. I find it maybe for you, if I can.

RL: Whereabouts was it?

EB: It's in Riedlingen on the market place.

RL: So this was your mother's parents?

EB: Yes, this is my mother's, the shop originally was, I think, my grandmother's, because it said Ernst Oettinger, which was my mother's maiden name. But there was also another shop further along the road which belonged to an uncle, a brother of my mother. But it had originally belonged to, I think, their grandparents, because it said Landauer on that. People don't tell you, in those days children weren't told anything.

RL: So who is Landauer?

**Tape 1: 5 minutes 27 seconds**

EB: That was, Landauer. Oh dear, I have a thing here, which my uncle did for us, a *Stammbaum* [family tree]. Oettinger, Landauer was... Ernst Oettinger, that's right, geborene Landauer, so that was my grandmother's father.

RL: So, that was your grandmother's maiden name? It was Landau?

EB: Landauer.

RL: Landauer, right.

EB: A very big family.

RL: So what kind of shop was that? Was it a similar shop to the other one?

EB: Oh, not dresses and things like that. Smaller. Similar, clothing, ours was clothing, but it had smaller items as well.

RL: What kind of Jewish community did Riedlingen have?

EB: None. There were three families. There was us, my uncle and one other family, Weil. At one time, one of the shops, fruit shops had a, what are they called, it wasn't his shop, he was just sort of, what would you say, in charge, and he was funnily enough called Bernheim. But that's all. There was a synagogue in Buchau, which was the nearest town.

BL: And what about kosher food?

EB: Not in Riedlingen, no. We weren't very, my parents weren't very orthodox. We went to synagogue twice a year. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But it was by car, I think it took nearly an hour. But it's all, I can't remember.

BL: You said your mother was one of a number of children. Where did her brothers and sisters go to live?

EB: Oh, I mean, not in Riedlingen. One brother was in Riedlingen. The rest were, let me try and think, in Stuttgart, Halle, in Germany. Different places.

RL: Did you know them at all?

**Tape 1: 9 minutes 10 seconds**

EB: Yes, oh yes. Two of them went to Israel. And I visited them there. The others...

RL: What happened to the others?

EB: They ended up in the camps or... I have to think. One of them, one couple, they lived in Stuttgart, he was a doctor, his wife was his assistant, they committed suicide, just before. I think they knew what was going to happen. So I have, yes, I have to try and think what else. One went to Argentina. My cousins, one of them, they went to Spain and that's the mother of them.

RL: Do you remember your grandparents, your mother's parents?

EB: My grandmother only. I never knew my father's parents.

RL: And what do you remember about her?

EB: It was, she used to live in the same house. It was quite a big house. She had the shop originally, the business. And I don't know when my grandfather died, a long time, quite a long time before. He was born in '53 and died in 1909. My grandmother was born in '59 and she died in '43, in Zürich. One of her brothers managed to get out to Switzerland, and another aunt, one of her sisters.

RL: What kind of a woman was she?

EB: Well, you know, people were different in those days, don't you think?

RL: In what way?

**Tape 1: 11 minutes 55 seconds**

EB: Well, she was sort of, you know... You couldn't talk to people, I don't think, as children. She was alright, she later had a house in Riedlingen, a sort of detached house, just a bit outside of Riedlingen. We used to visit her there.

RL: Because she had that 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party, hadn't she?

EB: Yes, because I sort of, I don't really remember much about that, funny isn't it. 70..

RL: It must have been 1929. So you would have been nine.

EB: Yes. I can't really remember much except the photograph. Funny, isn't it. In fact, I don't remember, you know the only thing I remember we had the rabbi who used to come to teach us Hebrew, m.y brother and me. I presume he came once a week, I don't know. But the only thing, to this day I can see him sitting in front of me. It's stupid. I keep telling this to people. I can see him sitting in front of me and I had to read the Shema and every time I read the Shema, I can see him sitting in front of me. It's utterly ludicrous. Don't you think? I can see him but I can't ever remember learning anything else. Funny. I must have learned to read, I could read.

RL: What was his name?

EB: Schlesinger. Rabbi Schlesinger, he was in Buchau. I think the congregation there must have been what they call 'liberal' in Germany. Because, I'm only thinking, because the synagogue had a bell in the tower. Mind you the women were upstairs but I think even, you know, in Germany the women were in some synagogues still separate.

RL: You say your father's family came from Buchau. What do you know about his family background?

**Tape 1: 14 minutes 46 seconds**

EB: Nothing. Nothing at all. In fact, my nephew is trying to find out something through the internet now. I don't know how much success he has. He was an only son. So, you know, I think they died. So I don't know anything. This family tree I got from my uncle in Germany. Yes, no, he was in Israel by then. He must have researched it or somebody else did in my mother's family, I don't know how he got it. He sent me it.

RL: So you have no idea what your father's father did for a living or anything about them?

EB: Nothing. Not really. I presume they had a business, I don't know. I really don't know. I don't know anything. I know he was born in Buchau.

RL: Do you know what kind of education your father had?

EB: In fact, I've got -I've never thought about it- I've got his prayer books he was given at his Bar Mitzvah. I can show you it later.

RL: Do you know what kind of education he had?

EB: No.

RL: Was he in the First World War?

EB: Yes, oh yes, yes.

RL: What do you know about that?

EB: Not really, I don't know much about that either. No, he was in the First World War, he got a medal, some sort of medal, I don't know. It didn't do him any good.

RL: Do you know how he met your mother?

**Tape 1: 16 minutes 32 seconds**

EB: No. You know, in those days people didn't talk, did they?

RL: When did they marry?

EB: I couldn't tell you the date either. I was born in 1920, so '19, after the war.

RL: Were you the oldest?

EB: Yes.

RL: And what other siblings did you have?

EB: I have two brothers. One was born in '22 and the other one in '31. I think he was a mistake. Let's say he was a surprise. wasn't planned.

RL: What were their names?

EB: Erik and Kurt. I think Erik. Again, my grandfather's name was Ernst, Ernest and I think that's after... I'm not sure who Kurt was called, named after. A lot of people were called Kurt in our family.

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

EB: He was running the business.

RL: He went into your mother's family business?

EB: Yes, yes. So I presume he did something similar before, I don't know. How old would he have been, 20, 30, 33? He was born in '85, I think, '87. My mother was born in 1893.

RL: Can you remember your home, where you were living? What kind of place was it?

**Tape 1: 18 minutes 36 seconds**

EB: Yes. Oh yes, I mean, we lived over the... A flat, maisonette over the business, the shop.

RL: Can you describe it?

EB: My grandmother originally lived with us, like I said. And I think my parents had the second floor, I think, they never lived, you know, they slept there. But they didn't, they had a kitchen upstairs, but I've never seen it used, I can't remember. Quite a big house, sort of, well not really: A bedroom, a living room, and a bedroom next to it, a kitchen, bathroom. And then upstairs there were bedrooms and in the attic we had more bedrooms. I think about it now, you know, the toilet, in 19... I mean, it's amazing, I think it had a flush toilet but I feel it only went into some sort of, you know, when they used to, what do they call it when it has to be emptied? You know, it didn't have sort of drainage at first and maybe they did later, I don't know.

RL: Did your mother have help in the house?

**Tape 1: 20 minutes 15 seconds**

EB: Yes. We had, I think we had, as I say... It was quite a big house and next to it there was a sort of bridge across to what we used to call 'Magazin', which was a storage place for the business. And next to it was another smaller house which the woman who used to help in the house lived in. She had a flat in there. And we had at one time we had some goats or something, I remember, drew a little cart. Vaguely I remember that.

RL: Where were they kept?



EB: In that little house where Frau Bauer, that's her name, lived. She was, she and one of the people who worked in the shop were the only people I ever saw, let's say contacted, after war. I had contact, I still have with one of the daughters of one of the people that worked in our shop. I still write to her. That's the only one.

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

EB: I don't know, I don't have... Well, I remember going to school, but that was probably before. I know you used to play in the, what they call 'Magazin', the store house, the building. It was quite a big building. We used to climb up and make houses on one of the shelves. I don't know how we got up, but we did. As kids do.

RL: What school did you go to?

EB: The local school.

RL: And how did you get on there?

EB: Alright. Well, I don't remember going to the first school I know the second was *Realschule*, they call it *Realschule*, which is sort of where you go, secondary school, I suppose. I learned French, my brother did Latin.

RL: How did you get on with the other children?

**Tape 1: 23minutes 16 seconds**

EB: Alright. I think. I had one friend, but that's all. I mean, I left school, well, you know, in 1935.

RL: So you were in school, well, up to the age of 15 years. Did you play with your school friends after school, did you meet them out of school? Who did you play with?

EB: No. Not really. My brother. Or myself. I used to read quite a lot, I think. I can't remember ever having someone at home. But maybe I'm, you know..

RL: Did you ever visit their homes?

EB: No.

RL: Who were your parents friendly with? Who did they socialise with?

**Tape 1: 24 minutes 18 seconds**

EB: One or two families. One was a dentist, and one other I can't remember. Not many, two or three families in Riedlingen. But I don't think they had a big circle. But then, you know, people worked. They worked all day. My father travelled. I think he went round the villages, sort of getting orders too. I know he had a car, a small car. He used to call it 'Laubfrosch', green it was, a frog. You know, 'Laubfrosch' is frog.

RL: What would you do in your spare time? What would you do in the holidays?

EB: I don't remember ever going away on a holiday. A friend said, 'Oh, I never had any birthday parties.' And I said, 'Well, I don't remember ever having a birthday party!' I certainly don't remember any. I had a cousin, two cousins, really, one lived in... like my uncle. Eva, I must have played with her or seen her. My other cousin was much older.

RL: So what did you do in your spare time? How would you occupy yourself?

EB: I don't know. I expect we had a garden. We went down there sometimes, quite a way away, two gardens, in fact.

RL: Did you play any sport?

EB: No. I'm not really sporty, no.

RL: Did you learn to swim?

EB: I could swim, just about. One of the gardens was near the Danube. I don't know how, I didn't learn to swim, I just swam, full stop. You know, just breaststroke, I can't do anything fancy. But I never really learned it, that's why I'm no good now. And I remember when we were at school, we went swimming. And some kids made fun of my brother, you know, saying anti-Semitic things about him, because he couldn't swim. He wouldn't jump in. So I did, I had to do. I don't like it either.

RL: Did you have trouble at school?

**Tape 1: 27 minutes 39 seconds**

EB: Not really. I don't remember. That's the only thing I remember. It's funny, maybe the brain just switches off so that it doesn't have to remember, like I said, I'm not very good at remembering things.

RL: And you mentioned that your family were not very religious.

EB: No.

RL: What did they keep, was there anything that they did observe?

EB: Well, we used to close the shop for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And as I say, we used to close the business. And as I say, we went to synagogue. I went to this other family that lived... He was in charge of one of the shops and we went for the Seder there, we never had a Seder at home, not to my knowledge. But as I say, we did learn Hebrew. It's not easy when there are no Jews, you know.

RL: Did your brother have a Bar Mitzvah?

EB: Oh yes. I don't remember where was I? I probably wasn't in Riedlingen. That would be '22, '30...

RL: 1935.

EB: '35. I think I was away already then. I went from '35-'36 to a *Haushaltungsschule* [housekeeping school], sort of, Jewish of course, I think that's when I had to leave school. And it's sort of teaching you all about looking after the house and garden and I remember learning how to milk cows. And It was, I remember, Hachsharah. We had to milk cows.

RL: Where was it?

EB: Wolfratshausen., which was near Munich. I was there a year.

RL: How big a place was it? How many people were there?

EB: It's quite [big], I don't know the numbers. I remember having, I wouldn't like to say, 30 maybe, 40 maybe... There I remember Friday night, Shabbat. It was a Jewish school, of course.

RL: When the Nazis came to power in '33, do you remember things changing at all? Do you remember anything that was different in Riedlingen?

**Tape 1: 31 minutes 6 seconds**

EB: I don't; not really, I'm trying to think what there was. They certainly didn't sort of write 'Jude' on our shop, but then they were only two Jewish shops. And *Kristallnacht* is the only time I think when... They didn't break our window or my uncle's. But the other Jewish shop, which wasn't Jewish, it had just a Jewish person in charge, they broke those windows. Serves them right.

RL: So, your parents weren't affected in any way by the racial laws, by what had happened- were they affected?

EB: I think I'm sure it must have made a difference. Not at first. You know, it's only a small town and I presume people didn't.

RL: What did you think of ... Sorry.

EB: I think we had one teacher who was in the Nazi party. A lot of the people there weren't, they were alright, you know, they weren't Nazis. But I don't know.

RL: Did your brother change school also?

EB: My brother, he went to Sweden to a school I don't remember when. You know, after 15, I really wasn't at home anymore. From '3, because I went to Wolfratshausen, and then I went to Berlin. And he was in Sweden. I don't know how long he was at school I don't think much longer than me. And I think that's when he went to Sweden, a Jewish school of course. I don't know why.

RL: So when you went to that school near Munich, was that the first time you travelled away?

EL: Yes. Yes. No, I mean, as I say, I remember going to my aunt, one of my aunts, for a week. She lived near, I'm trying to think, somewhere near Stuttgart. I'm trying to think of the name. I have to think about it. I don't remember now.

RL: And what did you think about this Jewish school? What was it like?

EB: I think I enjoyed it, I quite liked it. As I say, the only thing I remember well is milking these cows, having to look after them. I don't remember much else besides milking them. Funny!

RL: And you say you were only there for a year?

EB: It was a year.

RL: And then what...

EB: Just a year, and then I went to Berlin to a doctor, no, just outside Berlin, actually. At, what's it called, Freienwalde, or something. I was just looking it up before in my diary. And there again we learnt household things and also, I think we must have had lessons in anatomy, and physiology and helping in the surgery.

RL: So where were you living?

**Tape 1: 36 minutes 22 seconds**

EB: With the doctor there...

RL: You were in his home?

EB: Yes.

RL: And who gave the lessons?

EB: He must have done. I can't for the life of me think whether there, I wasn't on my own, but there weren't many, a couple maybe. I don't remember. I told you, I'm not very good at that business.

RL: So were you there as a help of was it for an education?

EB: It was for education, yes. I mean we helped, I know we did all sorts, I think bookbinding and things like that.

RL: Do you remember his name?

EB: Doktor Happ. Only because I looked it up. I was there a year, I think. I went in household and garden, and autumn '36 In Berlin. Freienwalde it was called, a Doktor Happ. He had a surgery. And then I had a kindergarten. I mean, there was a Mrs. Wolfheim, she was teaching people for training kindergarten teachers, you know, for junior school. Wolfheim, that's right. And I was there until 1939 when she

emigrated and had to close the place. And that was in Berlin. And I know that I lived there, I had a bedroom, just a, you know, bed-sitter, I presume, I had food there.

RL: Where- in the kindergarten?

EB: No, in the house, in Berlin.

RL: Where there other girls also?

EB: I think there were two or three people, Jewish, again, obviously.

RL: And she trained you?

EB: Yes, it was a proper training school for kindergarden teachers. And we had to go to kindergarten and look after the kids and things, obviously.

RL: And how did you get on there?

EB: Alright, alright.

RL: So were you there during *Kristallnacht*?

EB: Yes, I was in Berlin. Yes, yes, until, I have to try, I'm terrible with dates, yes, until the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1939.

RL: So were you aware of *Kristallnacht*?

EB: Oh yes. Afterwards, not at the time, you know. It happened at night, but yes.

RL: Nothing happened to that kindergarten?

EB: Well, when was that? That was in '38, wasn't it. In November, so, no, it seems to be, we were there until March '39 when she got out.

RL: So, do you remember how you discovered what had happened?

**Tape 1: 40 minutes 15 seconds**

EB: I think the next morning when we went out. And we probably heard something at night, but you know I was just staying in the house. But I noticed the synagogue was burnt down where I used to go. I did use to go to synagogue when I went to Berlin.

RL: Which one did you go to?

EB: I don't know. It was called Friedenstempel, somewhere near where we ..., it was liberal again. And I was reading my dairy, and I started off that diary I'd been to an orthodox synagogue, I don't remember which. And we were talking about you know the meaning of when they gave you the names Israel and Sara, the men and

women, and he was talking about that. That must have impressed me as I wrote it in here.

RL: When did you start your diary?

EB: Just then, 1939. '38, Berlin, 25<sup>th</sup> of August, but didn't start it then. Rosh Hashanah 1938, that's when I went to that started with that.

RL: Do you know why you started keeping a diary?

EB: I presume I got it given, you know. I was not a very good keeper of diaries. But I must have been given it for my birthday, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, you see.

RL: And for how long did you write it?

EB: Very intermittently, until '49, it ends. 6<sup>th</sup> of September '49, that's the end. That's when I started nursing, that was the end. It's a shame, it's quite good, reading through it is amazing, terrible. But it's just reading through it, trying to jog my memory a bit.

RL: So what did you think of Berlin?

**Tape 1: 43 minutes 9 seconds**

EB: I quite liked it. I lived quite near the centre, Droysenstrasse (?). Not far from Kurfürstendamm, you know. And we went to this opera once. When we came out we found a notice on the door, 'Juden nicht erlaubt', not allowed, which was too late- I had been.

RL: Did you see much anti-Semitism in Berlin?

EB: I never had any myself, no. Not really, no, not open. You know you had things on the grass or on the busses, 'Jews not allowed'. Or benches in the park.

RL: Did it affect you in any way?

EB: It was not nice, but...

RL: Were you in Berlin at the time of the Olympic Games?

EB: '36, wouldn't it be? No, that would be '36, wouldn't it? No, no, because I only left on the 16<sup>th</sup> and I was probably in Wolfratshausen then. Or maybe I was just, autumn '36. I may, I have a feeling I might have been in Berlin. But it didn't, I didn't go to anything, obviously.

RL: Did you see...

EB: I mean you see these black shirts or brown shirts walking through, strutting around, but...

RL: Did you see any marches or demonstrations?

**Tape 1: 45 minutes 56 seconds**

EB: As I say, we used to see them around, but it didn't affect me. I didn't sort of get involved.

RL: Did you use to follow the news?

EB: You know, you only had radio, if you had anything. Really. And I don't think we had a radio, we did listen, yes. But as I said, I was just living in a sort of boarding house. But it was all Jewish, obviously.

RL: How concerned were you about what was going on?

EB: You know, you think now, I don't know how we couldn't have known. But people, you know, my parents, you know, they said, 'Well the Germans wouldn't do that!' you know. And I know my uncle, mind you, he got out, to Switzerland, he had a business. He had a business in Stuttgart, one of my mother's brothers. And he said, 'Oh, it will be alright', you know, 'It won't be, it won't come to anything, the German's won't do that!' But I'm afraid they weren't the only ones, were they?

RL: So when did you begin to think about leaving?

**Tape 1: 48 minutes 15 seconds**

EB: I think. Me? '38, yes, after, when I came back from Berlin, '39. I think my parents tried before, had been trying, but you know you couldn't get anywhere by then, and I think actually, my cousin in Israel they left long before about '36. and another cousin, he left, he went to Spain, he was a communist. The Germans, the Nazis didn't like communists. He was in Spain. And I think she said her father had got us a certificate to get to Israel, but you know, I don't know whether my parents didn't want it or what. I don't know. People don't, didn't tell you, you know. I think times have changed, haven't they? You know, that they didn't tell you anything. Unlike people now, they want to know family history and wait until everybody is dieing and then they don't really tell you anyway.

RL: So when did you leave Berlin?

EB: March '39.

RL: Why did you leave then?

EB: That's when she, when the kindergarten closed. And I was there until, I was reading here in my dairy, miraculous, it's a good thing that I kept this diary. 31<sup>st</sup> of March it closed. And then I was there another month, because I hadn't given notice at that place and I think I learnt to write and things in English, in that month. And then I went back to Stuttgart in that month and then I left in June. I came to England.

RL: So what did you do in Stuttgart when you came back?

EB: I didn't have that much time, really. I left in April, May, June. I don't think I did anything, maybe helped my mother. And I came here in June, 10<sup>th</sup> of June '39.

RL: So how was that arranged- how did that come about?

EB: You know, I didn't realise, well I know now, but I hadn't been told at the time I think my parents arranged, it. My younger brother came earlier, he came in March, April on *Kindertransport*, they tried to get him out, but he had a lot of, much more trouble. You were asking about anti-Semitic. He was at school and somebody said that he was saying something about the Nazis when we was four. So they had to send him to Buchau to stay with somebody. But I wasn't at home anymore by them, you see. So, and I..

RL: And you? Sorry, go on.

EB: Pardon?

RL: You're saying they sent him on a *Kindertransport*.

EB: Yes, he came with a *Kindertransport* to a family.

RL: What part of England?

**Tape 1: 52 minutes 42 seconds**

EB: In London, a Jewish family sort of took him, it wasn't one-hundred percent successful. It was very good at first, but he was difficult and maybe they expected more of him, I don't know. I think he was eight when he came and he hadn't been at home since he was about five, four. You know, it's very difficult, must have been, or maybe it's just difficult, I don't know. Actually the place I got was, my cousin, the one that lived in Riedlingen, she got married just before and moved to Paris with her husband. And she gave me the place. Otherwise I wouldn't be here.

RL: So, had she organised it then?

EB: Well, she or her parents must have gotten it, I don't know how it was arranged. But you know, you could only come to England as a household help, with children or cleaning or whatever. That's the only way you could get in, as you know by now. Unless you were a child and she and I got this place, which she should have got, which she didn't need because she got married just before.

RL: So where was the place?

EB: In Edinburgh, actually very nice. They were missionaries. The husband was a missionary, somewhere in Tanzania. At that time and they came over here on holiday for three months and then the war broke out and they got stuck here and he got stuck over there. Very nice people, I'm still in contact with their daughter.

RL: What was their name?



EB: Galbraith. And I was only there I think three months, because as I say, they rented a flat there in Edinburgh for this holiday. And then they got stuck here.

RL: Can I just ask, you other brother..

EB: Until October.

RL: Your other brother, what happened to him?

EB: He came back. He was in the O.R.T. in Germany he was with the ORT. It's an engineering school and the whole school came over to Leeds. They only just got in, in August. '39. Literally in the last few days.

RL: Where was the school in Germany?

EB: In Berlin too, I think .

RL: And how many children?

EB: I don't know. I honestly can't tell you anything about that. Because in fact there is a, as I say, I know he was with the O.R.T., but how many they were I don't know. There were only boys, in fact he was quite active afterwards, in trying and trace them and things. And then he was, I think he must have been working in some factories and things here, in Leeds. That's why I came to Leeds.

RL: What were you able to bring over with you?

**Tape 1: 56 minutes 57 seconds**

EB: Ten pounds, or ten marks, I don't know which is more. No. You could bring... I brought clothes and things, in trunks, you were only allowed to bring one silver knife and fork or two, maybe it's two, yes, two.

RL: Did someone supervise your packing?

EB: How do you mean? My mother did the packing.

RL: But was there anybody there to make sure that you weren't taking anything?

EB: Oh, yes, I think they, it was supervised to make sure. I had about three trunks or four trunks.

RL: So did you have to bring them with you?

EB: Well, I came through Hamburg; I presume they were sent off to the ship. I came by boat from Hamburg, from Hamburg to Leeds, to Edinburgh.

RL: Were you travelling on your own?

EB: Oh yes.

RL: How did you feel?

EB: Pleased to know that I get out and sad, obviously, to be leaving your parents.

RL: Do you remember the day of departure?

**Tape 1: 58 minutes 31 seconds**

EB: Yes. I think, I'm not sure whether my mother came as well, or my father came. I know one of them came to Hamburg with me. I remember, and the ship. I wasn't going to let the Nazis see that I was going to cry for them.

RL: Can you describe the journey?

EB: No. Honestly, it's a blank. I don't remember anything. I remember arriving in Leeds. And you know, it was very difficult, as I say, my English wasn't brilliant. I don't presume. That's, I would imagine, that's why I wrote in German. It's an hour.

RL: Well, yes, the tape is coming to an end, so we just stop there.

**Tape 1: 59 minutes 39 seconds**

**End of Tape 1**

**TAPE 2**

**Tape 2: 0 minute 30 seconds**

RL: This is the interview with Elisabeth Bernheim and this is tape two. So, I was just asking you about the journey and what you could bring with you. One thing that just occurred to me –you know you said after you left Berlin you went to Stuttgart. Now why was it Stuttgart and not Riedlingen?

EB: My parents had to sell the business in '19... I'm trying to think of the date, I'm terrible with dates. They soled the business in 1939, that's right and they moved to Stuttgart, they sold it before, I think.

RL: And what were they doing in Stuttgart?

EB: Oh, no, January '39 then they moved to Stuttgart. Yes, that's right.

RL: What was your father doing there?

EB: I think he just ... No nothing then because you know, he had to sell the business.

RL: What were they living on?

EB: I don't know. I expect they must have had savings, I presume.

RL: Did they make arrangements, were they trying to leave?

EB: They were trying to get out, but by then of course you couldn't get anywhere. They tried. Reading in my diary, they put their name down for America and Israel, Palestine at that time. There was a two or three year waiting list for being put on the list by then. I don't remember. They were in a flat there. And as I say, I wasn't there very much, just the odd holiday. I don't really remember much of it. I can visualise the place. But I didn't really, I wasn't living there long.

RL: So you came over, do you remember the boat trip, the journey, I was asking you about your memories of the journey.

EB: You know, I can't remember much of it. The cabin and that's it, I don't know how long it took, it must have been a couple of days, mustn't it? I don't remember, sorry.

RL: And then arriving..

EB: And then arriving and the being met by Mrs. Galbraith.

RL: So can you describe your first few days and your impressions?

**Tape 2: 3 minutes 45 seconds**

EB: I don't know. I think I was sort of overwhelmed. It was very difficult being thrown into a completely different language and everything. But actually no, not really, I remember that much. They had three children not all that young. You know, at school age, more or less. I think she did it really just to help to get people out. Very nice people, very nice. I mean all was strange, obviously. I remember getting a library ticket, I thought wonderful, getting free books, at Edinburgh library. And we went, I remember going on holiday, just after I got there. I remember going to Arran for a week, I think they rented a cottage there, maybe a month. And that's when war was declared.

RL: What did you think of Edinburgh?

EB: Oh, very nice. I don't think I saw so much of it, funnily, funny. You know, you don't when you are living in a place. And I mean, I don't remember what I did actually. I suspect I helped with the kids and with the house, but it wasn't sort of a... I was part of the family really, there, as I say.

RL: What was different to what you were used to?

EB: I expect the food, I can't, you know, you don't have cereals for breakfast in Germany. I don't remember what we used to eat, it's a long time ago. I know playing rounders with the kids. I had never heard of rounders.

RL: And how did you manage with the English?

EB: I must have managed reasonably. I mean, I still have an accent, I don't know why. I did learn English as I say, that month I was in Berlin, sort of more concentrated.

RL: Were you in touch with anyone else in the country?

EB: Yes. Well, my brother was here, he came, as I say, just before the end of the, the beginning of the war, just August. He was here and as I say my younger brother was here. And I was in touch with the people he was with.

RL: And did you hear from your parents in Germany?

EB: Yes, we had letters, at first, of course ordinary letters and then we had these sort of Red Cross things. Quite long, I've got a whole bunch of them, again in German, which my nephew asked me to translate when I got round doing it, which I did and I was looking at those. Finished in '41. I think they were more bothered about us, they didn't say much about themselves. But again reading this diary and looking at that, I'm not sure that they weren't sent somewhere else from Stuttgart in Germany. First, I had a feeling they went to Bodenhausem or somewhere, which used to be quite a big Jewish community. My grandparents came from Bodenhausem, which is another small town but with a big Jewish community.

RL: On which side of the family was that?

EB: Still on my mother's. As I say, nothing from my father's side at all. No, because his parents died, I don't think anybody... I could never find anybody..

RL: How long were you with this family?

EB: I was there, I think I got there on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June '39 until October and then they left and went to Glasgow. And I got a job with a Jewish family from June to October '40.

RL: So where was the Jewish family?

EB: In Edinburgh, still.

RL: Do you remember their name?

EB: Oh yes, Nathan. He was a dentist.

RL: And how did you get on there?

**Tape 2: 10 minutes 15 seconds**

EB: Maybe I shouldn't say anything. I mean I found, I was with two Christian families, who were very nice and treated me like part of the family and the Jewish family treated me like a maid, full stop. I did go to the Seder with them.

RL: So what were you expected to do?

EB: I was expected to do household things, cleaning and things. I can't remember, I can't think that I would have been much good at cooking. I think, cleaning.

RL: Did they have children?

EB: They had children, they had three children. I expect I did look after them too, but as I say, I wasn't very, they weren't ... Maybe it was me that we didn't get on so well. I don't know, really. As I say, they treated me like a maid. I sat in the kitchen, eating in the kitchen and expect for the one Seder, when I went to his parents I think it was. And because I don't speak Yiddish she said, 'She's not a Jew, she's a goy.'

RL: I wonder why they said that.

EB: Yes, I wonder. They were very old-fashioned sort of, you know. It did not impress me, I'm afraid. I don't speak Yiddish, they don't speak Yiddish in Germany unless in the east people came in from Poland.

RL: Did you understand Yiddish?

EB: I can, some, because of its German roots, obviously, but I couldn't speak it and I can't understand everything either.

RL: Did you have a day off or half a day off each week?

EB: I must have had, yes, I must have had. I don't much remember what I did, I must just have looked round Edinburgh.

RL: Were you paid?

EB: I was thinking about that. I presume so, but it can't have been much, I shouldn't think. I remember the first job I had I got 35 shilling a week. Ridiculous, if you think.

RL: So how long were you with the Jewish family?

EB: Until we had to leave Edinburgh after the outbreak of the war. Until June 1940, when we had to leave Edinburgh, because, you know it was a protected area being near the sea. I don't know what they thought I was going to do. And that's when I went to Leicester, because my uncle lived in Leister.

RL: Now, who was he?

**Tape 2: 14 minutes 10 seconds**

EB: His wife was a cousin of my mother. Her mother and my mother were sisters, yes, or was it? Anyhow, cousins they were.

RL: What was their name?

EB: Wolf. Woolf. They came from Ulm, which is not far from Riedlingen, we used to go there. I did see them.

RL: And were they husband and wife?

EB: Yes. I mean we knew them quite well in Germany, because we did go and visit them occasionally. We got there by train. But it's not far, on the Danube, maybe an hour, maybe two.

RL: What did Mr. Wolf do?

EB: He was a dentist. And he was a dentist here. He came, they came in '37, '38, well before.

RL: Did you have to appear before a tribunal?

EB: You know, I mean, a lot of people were interned in the Isle of Man. But nobody was really interested in me. No, I never was before anything. I presume I must have been, because I had a German passport, near to the port there was the police..

RL: And you don't remember?

EB: No. I don't remember.

RL: Did you have to tell the police when you moved?

EB: I think you must have had. Yes, because as I say, we had to move because it was a protected area. That's why I went to Leicester, which was well in land. And my uncle lived there. And again, I was with a family there.

RL: So, did you live with your uncle?

EB: No, no, I got a job there. With this family, Fortune they were called.

RL: So was that a Jewish or non-Jewish..

EB: No, non-Jewish. They were Quaker, very nice people.

RL: What was their name?

EB: Fortune. He was the editor of the Leicester Mercury.

RL: And what did you have to..

EB: Later, it was in the war, I think he was helping with the air..., you know picking up people that fell into the sea, air rescue or sea rescue.

RL: And what did you do with that family?

EB: Again, help with the children. Well, they had a child, only one child. And help in the house, cleaning and things. But they were very nice. And then I went to my uncle's on my day off, I must have had a day off.

RL: How long were you there?

**Tape 2: 17 minutes 51 seconds**

EB: Again, I'm terrible with dates. I came to Leeds in March 43, because my brother, Eric, that is my older brother, he came with O.R.T. and they came to Leeds. And so I thought I might as well be in Leeds. And the minute I came he left for ..., well, maybe a month or two later he went into the army and that was it.

RL: And where did you go in Leeds?

EB: I had a room, with a Jewish family for a short time, which someone got me, I would have thought my uncle or my aunt knew. It didn't work out all that satisfactory. It's difficult living with somebody. So I got a sort of bed-sitter again, not far from there. And I worked in a shop in town, a grocers. Quite a long time.

RL: And is that where you received, how much was it?

EB: 35 shilling. That's the only number, I don't remember numbers very well, but I remember that. Actually, I was looking through that diary, very lucky I had this, isn't it? And I know we paid, you know the family my younger brother was with, they decided that they couldn't keep him, look after him. It was too expensive. And as I say, he was not very cooperative, or maybe they just didn't get on. And they sent him to a boarding school to a Jewish, you know, refugee council for I think for a few years. And when they said they couldn't afford to keep him we paid towards his keep, my brother and me. I don't know, I mean we didn't get very much.

RL: So which boarding school did he go to?

**Tape 2: 20 minutes 27 seconds**

EB: Wennington, it was not far from Leeds

RL: So did you go to see him?

EB: I did. Once or twice. Actually, as I say, it was sort of more like a, I'm not sure what, very free. He probably would have needed more discipline, I don't know. But again he, it was very difficult and I think they had difficulties with him there. He was very difficult child, he was difficult when he grew up. But I think he was a child, he was eight when he came and he was born in '31, so not much time before Hitler, was it. And after that he went to, later he went to one of the hostels in Manchester. On Wilmslow Road, we did go and see him once or twice. Actually, I had forgotten, I did go once or twice he had some friends in Sheffield. People, I think I don't know how, they were involved with the school, I think, and they invited him. But, I'm afraid he's died, so I can't ask him. And he wouldn't remember anything.

RL: Did he marry?

EB: No. My older brother married, he has two sons.

RL: So what did your younger brother do for a living?

**Tape 2: 22 minutes 24 seconds**

EB: He was a baker, eventually.

RL: And where did he live?

EB: Manchester, Didsbury.

RL: And did he have his own business?

EB: Yes. I think he first trained as a cook and didn't like it much. And then he got in with this, somehow he got friendly with some fellow and then he had, they started their own business in Didsbury.

RL: Did he have his own shop?

EB: Yes.

RL: And what was it called?

EB: 'Dutch Oven', and it was on, what was it called, Copson Stree. But his partner died and then... He is not a business man, I don't think he ever was.

RL: And when did he die?

EB: He died three or four years ago. Four years ago. My other brother died too, he died in '83. He had cancer.

RL: Did that one marry?

EB: Yes, that's the nephew I have in London.

RL: Can we go back to you? As you went from job to job and from house to house, was there anyone to help you find positions, were you in touch with any refugee...

EB: I think it was a refugee organisation, probably, that found, the one in ..., it must have been. I can't sort of... How I got to Nathan, I don't know. And in Leicester – I don't know whether it's my uncle, I don't know. It was in Leicester. And as I say, they helped, I think they knew somebody here in Leeds and I came to Leeds. And I was there ever since that, quite a long time, really. I'm trying to think – I started nurse training in '49, you see, so I was there from '43 until '49. But you know I thought I can't go on for ever working in a shop.

RL: Were you in touch with any Jewish people in Leeds?



**Tape 2: 25 minutes 19 seconds**

EB: Yes, I used to go to synagogue, there is one, well was, in town, which I used to go to until ... It's no longer there now, because there are no longer Jewish parts in the middle of the town. It was very nice. But then ...

RL: What was it called?

EB: I'm trying to think. They called it *Englishe Shuhl*, because it was mainly, it was mainly sort of English rather than Polish people that had been emigrating. I'm trying to think, it's terrible.

RL: Were you ever invited to anyone's homes?

EB: Actually, no, not then. Well, then I found the reform synagogue, that's been started in '43. I remember I found it, first we had it just in the church hall and then I found I got involved with that. And really, now I belong to Sinai.

RL: So did you get to know members of the community?

EB: Yes, but only, mainly, these were mainly refugees that joined at first.

RL: How many refugees were there in Leeds?

EB: I don't know, quite a lot. And all the friends I had at that time were refugees, mainly.

RL: And where did you meet them?

EB: At the synagogue. You know, well, we had a youth section. Mind you, it's very difficult when you're working. And then I was nursing., you don't have time off like normal people. But we had a youth part.

RL: So was this after you started nursing?

**Tape 2: 27 minutes 56 seconds**

EB: No, I came to Leeds in '43, I think. Yes, March '43 I came to Leeds.

RL: So you began to meet people?

EB: Yes. I mean I met people, my brother was here. And I had a few people, but as I say the minute I got here he left. And he never came back.

RL: When did you find out what had happened to your parents?

EB: We received letters from them until about '41, the end of '41. And then my, - I was reading [looks in the diary], it's amazing, I don't know if I, without this I wouldn't remember anything - my grandmother was by then in Switzerland. And she,

you see you could get letters through to Switzerland, I presume, from Germany still. And she found that they had been transported in 1941, they were sent to Riga. Yes, December '41, they were sent to Riga, with a big transport from Stuttgart, the south of Germany, I suspect. And looking at the book, you know I was thinking in the book that, how are they managing, you know, it's cold up there- were they be able to take warm clothes with them? Things like that. And I think they were working. My mother, we had a letter from some sort of relation, I think, of my cousin. I don't really know how she got my address or. I think it was one of my cousins. And she wrote, she was together with my parents, in Riga. And she lived through it, obviously. And after they got there they were sent to Jungfernhof in Riga. I presume it was a ghetto there. And I think they were working. And my mother, she was sent, I thought it was earlier. But according to my book it is March '42. They were sent, she was sent in a big transport of 1700 people just outside Riga to the woods and they shot them there. And we know because they took their clothes from them, or maybe they made them take them off before obviously and sent the clothes back through Riga. And they, the people there had to sort through them. And this relative found these clothes of my mother. My father, he lived quite a long time in Riga, until '43, and then they were sent to Salaspils, which is a camp, I've heard of that before, and then to Auschwitz. Her son and husband died there too.

RL: This cousin?

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 15 seconds**

EB: This relation, it wasn't a cousin really.

RL: Where did she go afterwards?

EB: She went back to Germany, amazing; I couldn't, with he daughter. I never heard from her again. Maybe it's my fault for not writing to her. I don't really remember how I got the letter. And I couldn't find the letter; I was looking high and low. But I found it in here, I had written it out.

RL: So she had written to you after the war with the details and then you didn't hear from her again?

EB: No. 1947, the letter from her.

RL: So was that the first you knew?

EB: Well, yes, the first official, you know, I mean, we tried to find out through the Russians and the Red Cross but ...

RL: So you said in 1949 you decided to make a job change?

EB: Yes.

RL: How did you reach this decision about what to do?

EB: I think a friend of mine decided she was going to train as a teacher and I thought it is time I do something else. I tried the teacher, but somehow I wasn't accepted. I wanted to become a nursery teacher. I'm glad that I didn't, because that wouldn't have been me somehow. Maybe, maybe I would have been alright. I prefer nursing. And I always liked, I wanted to do nursing, I applied. I wouldn't get in nowadays, because I didn't have GCSEs or anything else. I mean I left school at 15.

RL: So you applied- where did you apply to?

**Tape 2: 34 minutes 35 seconds**

EB: St. James's here in Leeds.

RL: To do...

EB: Nursing.

RL: To do nursing. Was this a full-time course?

EB: Oh yes. Yes. I mean it was just nursing in a hospital, not like nowadays when they just do it theoretically. We had a month theory and then you just went on the wards. And had lectures in between.

RL: Were you paid?

EB: Oh yes. Not much, I don't think. I don't know how much. I didn't write it down anywhere. But I don't think we got very much pay at that time.

RL: So can you give me some of your memories from that period?

**Tape 2: 35 minutes 19 seconds**

EB: I enjoyed nursing, I mean it's hard work and it's different from what it is nowadays.

RL: How has it changed?

EB: Oh, a lot. I mean we had to do everything, we had to make the beds, we gave the people their food, we cleaned the lockers and goodness knows what. Nowadays nurses don't do any of this lot. Actually, I went to do midwifery and worked as a midwife afterwards.

RL: Was that an extra course?

EB: Yes. Oh yes, it was another year.

RL: Another year. So how many years was it until you were qualified as a nurse?

EB: Three years, with the midwifery, '49, '53 I started working, yes.

RL: And where did you work?

EB: Here in Leeds. Again at this district community.

RL: And which district?

EB: Around here.

RL: And where are we, which district is this?

EB: Headingley. Sorry. You don't know Leeds, no? It's very nice.

RL: So how was the job organised? What did it entail?

EB: How do you mean?

RL: How many days, how many hours..

EB: Oh, you worked, full stop. No you got, I forget how many days off we got, not very many. We used to have a day off a week. And I think a half day off if you worked the night before. But as a community, you see, you were working, except on your day off, you were on call. I forget how many nights, most nights. With bad luck you were up all night and all day.

RL: Would you deliver people in their own houses?

EB: Yes. Oh yes, this was, I mean, people had babies at home.

RL: When did that change?

**Tape 2: 38 minutes 5 seconds**

EB: Hm. I mean you still have now. I saw the doctor yesterday and he said they are trying to have the babies at home again. But I don't think it's very good, personally. And he didn't think much of it. Because I think people aren't, the nurses or the midwives aren't trained nowadays to, you know, be in charge. They rely on machines nowadays, they have machines to listen to the babies heart and this and that. We just had a Pinard foetal stethoscope. And you know, take blood pressure and things. But, you know, you have to rely on your own... You know what's normal, and it's a normal thing to have a baby, despite all the things nowadays.

RL: What would happen if things would go wrong when you were at home?

EB: Well, you would get the doctor. The ambulance and get them into hospital. But this is what I mean. You have to know what's normal. Or what's not normal. And I don't think people nowadays would know. Because they are so reliant on machines, you don't have, you know. If there's no progress you would get the doctor. Actually, the doctor comes out anyway. But I often meet people, I meet loads and loads of people and, amazing, they recognise you. 'Oh, you delivered my son thirty odd years ago.'

RL: So would you be with the mother throughout her labour or would you just come ...?

EB: Well, no, yes, it depends, you would stay, they call you and then you go out and see them and examine them and make sure that what's happening and if they're getting on. And then you stay until they've had their baby.

RL: Was there any pain relief in those days?

EB: Oh yes. Yes, certainly, gas and air, Pethadene, the same as you get nowadays. Obviously, you couldn't do anything else.

RL: And you could administer the Pethadene and the. ...

EB: Oh yes, yes.

RL: You say you're not so much in favour of home-deliveries today?

EB: I don't think it's me not being in favour. I think the people nowadays aren't trained to be able to. We had 6 months in the hospital and 6 months on the district so that you knew what to expect. But I will never forget the patient I had when I started on my own, and I realised there was something wrong and we called the doctor. And it had the cord around its neck. And I mean I had the job. It was alright, but it was frightening. No, it wasn't the cord, it was the cord prolapsed in front of the baby's head, obviously it cut off the blood supply and it had to come out quick. Which is unusual, but there you are. It was alright. But it's not the sort of thing you want at home. But there's nothing you can do.

RL: How often would things go wrong and you'd have to send for an ambulance?

**Tape 2: 42 minutes 35 seconds**

EB: Not all that often, but it did happen. I mean I once had one of the doctors, the obstetrician do a forceps at home. But not often either, once, I think.

RL: Did people die in childbirth in those days?

EB: No. I am that ancient? In those days and at that age, no. Well, I don't know, nobody did. I'm glad to say. I mean obviously we tried to get people into hospital if you were at all worried about them.

RL: How many community midwives were there in Leeds, was there one for each district, were there more than one?

EB: Yes. I wouldn't know how many, quite a lot.

RL: Was there more than one for each district? Was there a group of you?

EB: Well, at first I think, you were just with the district and then you were with the doctors, a group of doctors. But you were on your own, really. And then at night, you know, you were on call or not on call. If you were on call you got called all over Leeds.

RL: Ah, so you didn't stay at your district for nights?

EB: No. But I don't think we were on call every night, only a couple of nights a week.

RL: And how would you get to the houses at night?

EB: Luckily I had a car by then, I had a bike in the first year, I did it on a bike.

RL: And when did you, how long did you do this for?

EB: Until I retired.

RL: When was that?

EB: 1980.

RL: 1980. And you were still doing home-deliveries? All the time?

EB: Yes. I mean we didn't do just home-deliveries. You looked at the people who were coming out of hospital, the first and second day.

RL: Sort of the follow-up?

EB: We didn't do as many. In the first few years I did far more. But you still have now, but not many.

RL: So you would visit the woman, the mother after she came home?

EB: Yes, yes. I mean somebody has to visit, when you had your kids, somebody came in after. That's the community midwife. But we saw the people before, we booked them and saw them all through. Mind you, you don't always deliver them, it happens sometimes when you're not on.

RL: And did you join any organisations or societies in Leeds?

EB: When?

RL: Well, throughout, since you came here? Were you a member of anything?

EB: In those days, hm, mainly the synagogue. I'm trying to think, I didn't have time to do much else.

RL: So you can't think of anything you might have joined?

EB: I used to go walking. But I'm not I'm trying to think what I joined. I did since then, since I retired.

RL: What have you done since you retired?

EB: Oh, I belong to everything. The National Trust, you know, and go out with them. I think I was a member before, I think. But you don't have time, you see, you don't have time to do it when you're working everyday and at night, on call at night, it's very difficult. I learned Hebrew in intervals, very sporadic, you only get so far and then well, I'm still doing it.

RL: What else have you been involved in since you retired?

EB: I belong to, as I say, the National Trust, I belong to various wildlife organisations, RSPB and...

RL: Are you a member of the AJR?

EB: Yes, actually, I don't belong to the AJR. It's called the Holocaust Survivors' group in Leeds. And it's now associated with the AJR.

RL: And when did you become involved with that?

EB: When it started, nearly. Not quite at the beginning when it first started, I couldn't ...

RL: How long has it been going?

**Tape 2: 49minutes 5 seconds**

EB: Quite a few years now, four, five years maybe.

RL: Who started it?

EB: I think it must have been a group. What's her name? Silman. I'm trying to think of the first name. I'm terrible with names, with people's names.

RL: Trudie

EB: Trudie. That's right. She's very good.

RL: And what does the group do?

EB: We have talks, monthly talks. And they now have a group sort of just talking, seeing each other once a month. We've been down to London twice, went round to the Jewish Museum the first time.

RL: How many members does the group have?

EB: I don't know. I should think there are usually thirty or forty people there at the meetings.

RL: And did you know these people before?

EB: Yes, some of them because they belonged to our synagogue. But we met in St. Anne's, we had a holiday in St. Anne's, and we went there for a day from Leeds, just to meet them for lunch, had lunch there, it was very nice. They are now trying to get the children, the second and third generation involved, they're trying. I don't know.

RL: So did these people come over before the war or after the war, what you call the Holocaust survivors?

EB: I think most of them were here before. Some maybe somehow from the camps, I don't know, because they're pretty old by now.

RL: You said you were active with the synagogue. What kind of thing happens there?

EB: Oh, everything. We are very, very busy, lots going on. We have a Living Judaism project now. I mean lots. Trying to get people to go and get involved. It's very good; it does get people, so many people. We have a new minyan, it's called new minyan, which is really a second service on Shabbat, the main service, afterwards. And they made an arc, a small arc, a sort of portable arc. Which we can have in another room, in sort of, just not an ordinary service but a more sort of different service. Recently, we had what they called a Sinai experience. It was a Friday night Shabbat and Sunday. And on Shabbat we had the new minyan outside. It was wonderful. I don't know what the neighbours made of it. So. But people came from all over. Not just from Sinai, from Manchester, Sheffield, trying to see what's happening, the Sinai experience.

RL: Who's the Rabbi of that synagogue?

EB: Morris. He comes from Australia. I can give you one of these, I've got a spare one, if you're interested. It's quite interesting. But I mean Leeds is very active, other synagogues too, we had a theatre programme recently, wonderful. An amazing amount going on every day, performances for a full week.

RL: Who is organising that?

EB: The Shaliah. Oh, it was wonderful. I can show you the programme of that too.

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

**Tape 2: 54 minutes 13 seconds**

EB: British.

RL: Did you become naturalised?



EB: Yes.

RL: When did you do that?

EB: You know, I read it. I think I wrote it down. I think it was after the war, '49.

RL: Do you think you have any kind of continental identity?

EB: I don't know. I presume I must have, I don't class myself as German. I couldn't live in Germany again, some people do.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

EB: No. I don't think so. I don't feel German. I mean I have an accent, there you are. People ask you where you come from and I say, 'Germany, a long time ago, before the war'. I mean I never speak German. I used to speak German in Israel, when I went to visit my cousin, she lived in Israel. But she has just died.

RL: How do you feel towards Germany?

EB: Well, you can't blame people now. These people weren't alive then. As I say, I couldn't live there; I wouldn't want to live there.

RL: Have you ever revisited?

EB: I went twice. Once I just went to Munich, I don't know. I went to have a look at Riedlingen, to see a couple of people that I knew. And once I took my younger brother to show him sort of because he didn't remember much. But that's it.

RL: Did you meet people that you knew?

EB: Yes. Well, that old lady, Frau Bauer, our cleaning lady. I visited her. She was in an old age home by then. And I met one person my mother used to be friendly with, the dentist's wife. But that's it. Really. I just wanted to look, show him where we used to live.

RL: How did you feel being back there?

EB: I felt peculiar. It hadn't changed vastly. I think it has changed more since then. But this was a long time ago, just after the war.

RL: How did people react to you?

**Tape 2: 58 minutes 10 seconds**

EB: I don't know, they seemed to be alright. You know, if they recognised me, maybe they remembered the name, maybe they didn't.

RL: Do you receive any compensation?

EB: Yes. Lots of education we got and we got some money from ..., not very much. You know, the business had to be sold, forcibly really and I don't know how much they got for it, really. You know, I haven't a clue, I haven't ever seen any money, but we got a bit from that. I think we got something for my parents' death, you know dying in the camps. But again, I don't ...

RL: And you mentioned going to Israel. Whilst you were in Germany, what was your opinion of, say, Zionism? Did you ever come across Zionist Hachshara, it would have been.

EB: Oh yes, that was Zionist, obviously, I wouldn't have minded going to Israel. I don't know. It's too hot; honestly I can't do with the heat there. I only go in spring and autumn, you know.

RL: I just need to stop here, because the tape is coming to an end.

EB: It's finished, yes.

**Tape 2: 60 minutes 0 second**

**End of Tape 2**

**TAPE 3**

**Tape 3: 0 minute 33 seconds**

RL: This is the interview with Elisabeth Bernheim and this is tape three. We were just talking about Israel. When was the first time you actually visited Israel?

EB: Oh, now you're asking. Just, let me think, '52, '53, just after Israel was founded.

RL: How did you feel about the creation of the state?

EB: Oh, very pleased. I mean, obviously you knew all about it anyway. I mean it had, I mean, even before, I mean there were all the negotiations with the Arabs and ... Yes, well, I had two uncles and their families there. So ...

RL: How did you feel when you visited?

EB: Oh, it was very nice, lovely. The first time you were overwhelmed, smelling these orange blossoms, getting off the plane. Must have been autumn, spring, spring. Very nice, yes, lovely. But I mean it has changed, obviously. Nothing stays still. it is much more commercial now than it used to be.

RL: Did you ever consider living there?

**Tape 3: 2 minutes 34 seconds**

EB: In a way I would have liked to. I couldn't live in this heat, I just couldn't, even then. And somehow, I don't know, I think if we had gone from Germany you know.

RL: What does Israel mean to you?

EB: It's Israel, isn't it? I don't know, I mean I've been quite a lot of times, 10 times, I think it's wonderful, but, again, it's just, people make it, don't they? I think it used to be much more idealistic. Now it's like everywhere else maybe, don't you think so?

RL: Do you still visit?

EB: Oh, I used to go every three years. And as I said my cousin has just died. I stayed with my cousin, so it's a bit difficult. But I'm talking with my cousin's daughter and she said - her husband has just died - and she said, 'Well, maybe some time you'd like to come along'. You know, it's difficult when you... In fact I had a thing here, I would have liked to have gone on this tour in October, September, September with the JNF, I went on one a few years ago, wonderful. And I stayed on for another week, or two weeks to see her, which I would have liked. I didn't want to go and tell them I have just been, very difficult when... I didn't want to put, impose myself on them, it was different when she was alive. I mean I have quite a lot of cousins there. Well, I had. Now I still have two. They are younger, they are more of the age of my younger brother. So I didn't really know them as much.

RL: Your older brother, where did he settle?

EB: In London.

RL: And what did he do?

**Tape 3: 5 minutes 27 seconds**

EB: He, I don't know, he was a manager or something, engineering, actually it's a woodworking ..., I don't know what they do, a business in Barkingside, down in London.

RL: And whom did he marry?

EB: She was, again, from a refugee...

RL: What was her name?

EB: I'm drying out. Lucy. But her father came from Hungary, I think.

RL: And what children did they have?

EB: They have two, boys.

RL: Called?

EB: Roger, David and Roger.

RL: And what do they do?

EB: Oh, something to do with, - I've only seen them – banking, and the other one is in computers. He's just gone living in France now.

RL: And are they married?

EB: Yes, well, they both have, no, one of them has three children and the other two. One of them in London, I go to next week. His wife comes from Iran.

RL: Iran?

EB: Iran, right. Sheva.

RL: Jewish?

EB: Oh yes, yes.

RL: How at home do you feel in this country?

EB: Well, I've never lived anywhere, well except for Germany for a short time. I've lived here all my life.

RL: Who are you most comfortable with?

EB: How do you mean?

RL: In terms of people, who do you feel most comfortable with?

EB: I mean I have lots of friends and I know, some are not Jewish and they know I'm Jewish. And I go out, weeks with them on holidays. I suppose both Jewish and non-Jewish.

RL: Have you ever experienced any anti-Semitism in England?

EB: Not really. You know, you can..., people say things, okay. But not on the whole, no.

RL: Do you think your experiences have affected you in any way?

**Tape 3: 8 minutes 33 seconds**

EB: I don't know, I mean I wasn't in a camp. I think people who were in a camp, that's different, don't you think?

RL: But it was hard to leave your parents and come..

EB: Well, yes, I mean, obviously it wasn't a sort of normal childhood, maybe, but then, things changed. I mean people didn't expect that much in those days either. Going on holiday and all that, birthday presents.

RL: So, psychologically, do you think it left a mark or..

EB: I don't know. I expect, no, I don't think so. I think you have to live life as it is and you can't...

RL: And religiously, in terms of religious belief?

EB: I think I'm more, no, definitely more religious than I used to be, I mean I go to synagogue every week. Either Friday night or Shabbats, and I think I'm more 'Jewishly' involved than I was as a child. But then maybe that's because we lived in a place where there wasn't a place with a Jewish community, I don't know.

RL: Do you think there is a sort of German-Jewish heritage in this country?

EB: I don't know. As I say, a lot of people in our synagogue came from Germany. And so maybe and I mean in the reform a lot generally came from sort of refugee background. I mean Rabbi Green, he was in the camps, he was much more, I thought he was a wonderful man. I read lots if I've got time. You can see all the piles of things I'm supposed to be reading which I don't have time for.

RL: What do you think you would have done if you hadn't have to leave school in Germany when you did? Do you think your life would have taken a different course?

EB: I'm sure it would. I mean I just wouldn't like to say it, I don't know. I can't somehow visualise living in Riedlingen, but. I think I was on to do nursing and at the time I would have been either nursing or a doctor or whatever.

RL: Is there anything else you'd like to add? Or any message you'd like to give?

EB: I don't really. I don't really. I can't think what else. I was never... As I say, I'm much more religious, 'Jewishly' religious, religiously Jewish than I used to be or than we used to be at home. But I'm much more involved in things nowadays.

RL: You never married, did you?

EB: No.

RL: Well, thank you very much.

EB: Thank you. Is that it? I hope it makes some sense.

**Tape 3: 13 minutes 49 seconds**

### **Photo 1**

EB: This is a photograph of my grandmother's, Emma Oettinger's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1929. My father is the first left, Albert Bernheim, and my mother next to him in the front, Irma Bernheim. It was taken, I think in Riedlingen.

**Photo 2**

EB: This is again my grandmother's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her name is Emma Oettinger. First left sitting on the chair is Eric Bernheim, and third left, I am there, Elisabeth Bernheim. And it is taken in Riedlingen. 1929.

**Photo 3**

EB: This is a photograph of my parents, Albert and Irma Bernheim, probably in 1919 and I think taken in Stuttgart, as far as I know.

**Photo 4**

EB: On this photograph, on the left is Elisabeth Bernheim, then Irma Bernheim, my mother, Eric Bernheim, my brother, and my father, Albert Bernheim. Taken in Riedlingen, I'm not sure of the date. Probably 1929 maybe.

**Photo/document 5**

EB: This is my identity card, Elisabeth Bernheim, 1938, issued in Berlin.

**Photo/document 6**

EB: This is a passport of Elisabeth Bernheim issued in 1938, in Stuttgart.

**Document 7**

EB: This is a page from my passport, showing the permission granted to land at Leeds, the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1939.

**Photo 8**

EB: This is a photograph of my brother Eric Bernheim in 1944, taken in, I don't know, in Leeds.

**Photo 9**

EB: This is a photograph of my brother Kurt Bernheim, about 1948, taken in Manchester.

**Tape 3: 17 minutes 51 seconds**

**END OF INTERVIEW**