

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

ROSA YUDT

Interviewed by Milenka Jackson

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My name is Rosa Yudt, nee Berger. I was born in April 1920 in Berlin. My parents came originally from Poland. My father never naturalised, he was always a Polish subject. We lived quite a comfortable life in Berlin. I had one brother, my father was in business.

What kind of business?

Well he was a businessman you know, jack of all trades really. Shops, he tried everything, it was a hard life. He made quite a good living, he tried.

He had his own shops did he?

Yes.

What kind of shops?

There was a textiles one, he went into tobacco trade, wholesale and retail. We had quite a nice living, we lived within the Jewish community, mostly they came from the east, Poland.

What part of Berlin was this?

It was not the best part of Berlin. Where the emigrants from Poland lived, from the north of Poland. Actually the street I was born in was called, *...(poor tape quality)...Strahse.

Does it still exist?

It exists in another name. When I was there all the names were changed, all these streets were called after Jews.

So these streets by those names don't exist anymore?

Well I think they do but of course you wouldn't recognise them. Maybe the names might still be there, I think...

I see.

It was quite a happy childhood really, we had lots of friends. It was really quite uneventful you know.

Were you the elder of the two?

No my brother was seven years older than me. It was quite uneventful really.

Were your parents strict?

No, very happy family life.

Were they observant in the Jewish religion?

Well inclined to but not fanatical. My father worked on Saturday but we kept all the Jewish holidays and kept the Koshe(?) household you know. We were very proud Jews. We never blended in with the German Jews.

I see, you were Polish Jews very much yes?

We were considered, although I was born in Berlin you know we felt Polish, we felt foreign. I've never felt German, strange isn't it. Most of our friends were from that same environment. As a matter of fact the German Jews didn't like us all that very much.

Because you didn't blend?

Because we were probably a bit inferior coming from Poland you know.

What made your parents leave Poland?

Oh well times were very hard. My father left as a young boy.

What year would that have been?

I don't really know. I was too young really to take an interest in the family background. His brothers all went all over the world, he just happened to come to Germany. He was in the *...(poor tape quality)... actually that part of Poland from where he came was actually Austria on account of ...(Poor tape quality)...

I see yes.

And he was in the 1914-18 war in the Austrian army. He was invalided out. So we really felt like, we never felt like Germans, we were not like German Jews, never.

And what about your mother did she work?

Well she helped my father in the business. I went to a Jewish school, my brother went to a Jewish school and we had a big circle of friends and of course we were carefree until ehm more or less 1933.

Can you tell me a little bit more about your parents personalities?

Yes. They were very happy to make a living and bring up a family. They were really very nice good people. Good work, we had the deaf boy (?) always coming on a Friday night for dinner and they always helped other people. Nothing much really to add to that.

And so did they come on their own, leaving their own parents behind?

Yes my mother had her mother still living at the time in Cracow. And her sister still lived in Cracow.

Were you in contact with them?

Oh yes. I think, yes I went there when I was quite small.

Do you remember that?

I remember a little bit about it. They were still living in Cracow when Hitler went in.

And your fathers family?

My fathers family they didn't have roots in Poland anymore. One of his brothers came to England, two came to England and that was all that was left. Oh there was some distant relatives in Poland yes. They never met. And he used to write to them and send them parcels.

So did you feel a little isolated from your family in your youth?

It was only a little family really. I felt it a little bit that other children had grandparents and I didn't. But we had lots of friends. We lived in a block of flats, it was all Polish emigrants, the door was always open. We were all like one big family. I'm still in contact with the ones that are left alive. One lives in Chile, we still write to one another. There's not many left now. I've got one friend who lived in the same place, she still lives in *...(Poor tape quality)...

And what about your brother?

My brother, well he was seven years older than me. He couldn't be bothered with me much I don't think. Being older, he was a little embarrassed at having a little sister. I adored him really, I used to go around and polish his shoes and please him you know. But I think he was a little embarrassed. He emigrated in 1938, he managed to get a visa to Brazil. On the boat, you had to of course at that time, *...(Poor tape quality)... a girl who came from Hamburg, she went to Brazil, he sort of fell in love with her and followed her out after about six months and he married her. Unfortunately he died this year.

Had you been in contact?

Yes, the first time we ever met, I've got two sons you see and when my son got married he came over and that was the first time.

How many years?

A long time, over thirty or forty years. Forty years I think. And then I went over to see them as well. And met his family he's got one daughter.

Can you describe the actual flat that you lived in in Poland as a child?

Where we lived in the *...(Poor tape quality)... Strahse it was not very nice. I don't think we had a bathroom at the time. But ehm it was a lovely house, a lovely warm house. And then afterwards we moved to the *...(Poor tape quality)...

And when you didn't have your own bathroom, did you use a communal bathroom?

I can't remember.

Or were children washed in a tub?

In a tub yes, we were washed in a tub.

Was it cold do you remember, did you have a big stove?

Yes we'd a big stove. I don't think with children whether it matters if it is a beautiful house, it's the warmth in it. The family body that matters as well. I've got nice memories of the *...(Poor tape quality)... Strahse. We used to play ever so nicely there. There were so many *...(Poor tape quality)...

What is that?

Horses and wagons with horses you know.

Was everything delivered by horse and carriage at that time?

No I think there was *...(Poor tape quality)... the straw, the straw I remember, things like that. This was from my early childhood. Yes I do remember the ehm consiege(?) she always had her hands behind her back and she had a jug of water and the children would gather and she would throw the water over, it was very primitive really. But then we moved to the *...(Poor tape quality)... and it was much nicer.

So how many rooms did you have in these flats?

In the first, in the *...(Poor tape quality)... Strahse we only had two rooms and one kitchen. In the *...(Poor tape quality)... we had ehm I think it was four rooms, kitchen, bathroom, living room ...

And your parents were reasonably cheerful?

Yes. Holidays we were sent into the country, my mother rented a couple of rooms, this was sort of in my early childhood, I remember.

Who do you think was the dominant person in the family?

My father. He was a very intelligent man, full of humour, always telling stories. My mother was a good cook.

What kind of food did you eat?

Polish food.

What were your favourite dishes?

I remember we had a big stove on which she'd cook, fantastic, I don't know how she did it.

What were your favourite dishes?

Well she made beautiful sort of fillet of fish, but more like Jewish cooking. Cheesecake, but really I mean you couldn't buy them today. And she did it all on that stove. No, I think she took them to the baker there and he baked them. She liked to dress nicely, she always looked very very smart, she was a big woman.

Did she do her own sewing?

No, no she had a dressmaker. She had very good taste.

Was she good with her hands as well as cooking?

She did embroidery and I've still got some table cloths that she embroidered. She was good like that. She had friends which lived in the same block of flats, there was a family called Kreger(?) and they did, it was hard times though to make a living. And they did ehm tailoring, outdoor tailors. And they did it all in that flat in one room, the father on the sewing machine, one of the sons was doing the pressing. I used to go up there and help them and we'd sit there and talk in the evenings, late into the evening. We were really better off than most of them there with my father being in business.

So these were the first homes of these emigrants?

Yes, it seemed to be, probably more like a ghetto, because people came from other countries. I mean history repeats itself all over again. Then of course afterwards they branched out. But I went to good schools.

Did you got to a kindergarten when you were little?

They wouldn't have me because we were too well off. There was a kindergarten and I wanted to go to it but they wouldn't have me.

So did you have to stay at home?

Yes and I went with my mother when she went to the shop, till all the other children came home.

So what age did you start school?

First must've been five. And that was not a Jewish school it was a primary school. I don't know how old I was when I left there.

Did you enjoy school?

I liked the middle school yes.

So you would've been from five upwards there would you?

The first school would've been five to, I don't know what age. I don't think I was all that happy there. I do remember an incident now there. I forgot to bring my pink folder and the teacher had shoes with heels and we were doing ehm skipping and I always thought she didn't like Jewish people and she made me skip with these shoes with heels and I fell over and broke my ribs. (Laughs) And they all said she was anti-semitic. I must've been about seven.

Now did you already have a consciousness of anti-semitism by that age?

Yes they kept the Jewish people, we didn't mix with any non-Jewish people.

Can you explain exactly the feeling you had that made it impossible, to me?

No, a child accepts it, this was a thing. I don't think I thought much about it but we just didn't mix with any non-Jewish people.

And you had the feeling that you would be unwelcome did you?

Yes.

Did your parents ever say anything about that?

They were so used to it from Poland you know, they accepted it. It was a way of life they accepted. My father always had a longing to go to Palestine.

Did they ever tell you stories of any kind of ill treatment?

Yes.

Can you tell me?

Oh gosh I wish I could remember, my father was telling me about life in Poland how impossible it was, even in Germany he had a big struggle aswell.

Do you remember any specific stories?

I can't really. I was too young.

But you got the feeling, the atmosphere it was there?

Oh yes, definitely. We were never accepted, not even by the German Jews.

The Polish Jews were separate?

It was a separate thing.

Did you feel that the German Jews led a relatively privileged life compared with yours?

Yes. They were definitely more, they were part of the fittings of the Germans you know. They felt very German the German Jews. Even today I don't feel comfortable when I come into contact with German Jews. I don't really know where I belong.

Yes I understand.

The only time I felt really at home was the first time I went to Israel. I felt really at home, not so much now, I don't feel so much at home in Israel now, but the first time it's a good feeling and I really felt at home.

Was that because you felt accepted for the first time?

Yes. A hundred percent yes.

Where as in Germany it was a double rejection, both not being German and being Jewish?

That's right, probably that's what it was. I think that was the first time, even in England I don't feel all that hundred percent, although I get on very well.

So you're at school now?

Yes. You know my parents wanted me to have a good education and they wanted me to go to this school which was a good school, you had to pass an exam to go there. And I remember the day we went in for the exam, a friend she came aswell she was very intelligent and ehm I remember the teacher who set the exam, her name was Frauline Vrice(?) and she had a hunchback you know. It's strange I never met her again. And she set the exam and I passed and Marta(?) didn't. It wasn't fair. (Laughs) And I went and it was nice at school, it was lovely. There was little girls, Jewish in the school and when things got more difficult we were transferred to the boys school, which was also a middle school for Jewish boys. And we were sort of put together.

And this school where you were happy, were the German and Polish Jews there?

Yes. But I didn't feel any difference. There was a cemetry there I rememeber adjoining to the school and for our lunch break we would take sandwiches and walk round the cemetry and eat our sandwiches. We used to pass by that grave,it was ehm *...(Poor tape quality)...

I forget, was it, had several musicians lived in that area?

Well they must have done because streets were called after....

Yes well that's what I thought.

I remember eating my sandwiches round that grave.

My parents belonged to an Orthodox synagogue which was in the Jewish area, you've heard of the Grunewald Strahse(?) ?

No I haven't.

Well that was a very Jewish area. We had all the Koshe butchers there, fish shops, you know. Very very Jewish.

Have you been back at all?

I went back once because I was invited by the Burgermaster from Berlin, that was the only time I went back.

And what did it look like when you went back?

Well I was born in East Germany, that's East Germany. So we were invited by the Burgermaster of West Germany. My husband and I we went by ourselves, they didn't want to know about East Germany they were only interested in West Germany, but we went there ourselves.

How did it come that the Burgermaster invited you?

Well there is a scheme, you have never heard of it?

No.

People that were born in Berlin, pity, I could have brought you some pictures.

Yes do next time.

They invited ehm the Berliners, the people who had to leave Berlin because of the Nazi persecution to take four weeks holiday.

I didn't know that.

Of course West Germany didn't mean all that much to me, I was born in East Germany.

So you went over the w... the gate to see your old home?

Yes. And actually went back to where we walked as we got out of the underground you know, I couldn't recognise much because Berlin has changed so much. There's no trees anymore, they've taken all the trees away, it looked pretty drab, this was a few years ago. Until we got to the *(Poor tape quality) and I remember nothing was changed. There was a cemetery there and Jews were buried there, a whole *(Poor tape quality)... I remember the day that he was buried, we sort of barricaded ourselves in you know because there was a lot of trouble that day and it was not

within walking distance of where the outlet was. But I went through the cemetery to the first grave but it wasn't there anymore. I suppose the Russians must've done away with it. Because so much fuss was made over that burial I remember that day. I just remembered everything as I was walking up that street. It was all the same and the house was still the same.

And it was still a Jewish area?

No.

None of those little shops or anything?

That changed altogether it was all gone, nothing there at all, nothing. You couldn't recognise it. But where we lived was the same, the house was still there. Except the trees were gone. So I thought, I'll ring the bell, which I did and an old man came out and I said to him in German of course, "I used to live here once.." "Oh no" he said, "That's not possible," he said, "The Jews used to live here." He thought all the Jews were killed. So I said, "Well that's right, I am Jewish, I used to live here." So he sort of half opened the door you know and said, "Come in." And apparently he moved in after us and he remembered my father. He was a nice old man really but he had no idea what happened, he thought all the Jews were gone. And I notice that some of the neighbours were looking suspiciously and they sent a little girl in while we were there to ask him whether he was alright. The same wallpaper we had was still on the wall.

What was that like?

It seemed so small and yet when I was a child it seemed so big you know.

What was the wallpaper like?

Just the same you know. I said to him "Have you ever had this decorated?" He said, "Once," but it just looked the same you know. Nothing was changed.

(End of side 1, tape 1)

West Berlin didn't, I didn't feel so uncomfortable in because it was just like another foreign city to me really. That's the only time I've ever went back, I don't think I'll go again. Nothing there for me to go back to.

Can you tell me about any Jewish festivals that you remember?

Yes we had, my mother made a lovely Passover supper and it was beautiful, she always invited other people. Even my father used to sit at the top of the table, with the white overall with the gold braid around it and the cushions on it, it was beautiful. Really it was lovely, Sade(?) and I used to love it and always had new clothes for it you know. We kept it right through we were eating low bread and when my children were small I made it every year aswell. That was really very nice. And Hanaka(?), we used to light Hanaka(?) candles. At Purim(?) I remember the children used to dress up you know. We kept all that it was a very nice home atmosphere. It was quite pleasant in Berlin.

Do you remember when things became really tense?

Yes after Hitler was... I even remember before Hitler was elected, because where we lived, we must've still lived in the Mendelsohn Strahse at the time, because there was not a pub, in Germany, in Berlin they call it the Knipers(?)

What does that mean?

Ehm the pub really you know. And ehm before Hitler was elected there were a lot of parties to be elected, the Communist Party the Social Democrats you know. And I remember as a child, they stood all outside this pub, posters on them you know advertising who to vote for. And of course Hitlers party. That must've been 1933 when he was elected, that I remember so distinctly.

So what age were you, you were thirteen?

Yes. And my father was a great optimist, he could never see any black side and he said, "Oh six months, a year I'll give," because he thought he was a madman you know.

Already that was evident was it?

Yes yes. He said the man couldn't last.

Wht evidence did you actually hear or see that Hitler was mad?

Well the way he talked and the way he performed you know. His promises and, the man really didn't look normal.

Did you actually see this for yourself?

Yes yes, that was when he was talking and giving speeches?

This was before he was elected you saw him?

Not before afterwards. But they didn't start with the Jews right away. We still carried on, some people were very clever they left, but I don't suppose my father had the means. You had to have money to take yourself and go somewhere.

So he was already actually openly saying the Jews were...?

Oh yes, oh yes definitely. He was promising the Jews were money makers and he was promising the Germans the moon wasn't he, there was a lot of unemployment of course. And ehm I suppose he made unemployment because he was building up for a war.

And did you feel he had a lot of support among the Germans?

Yes there was a great support because the Germans were very down and out at the time. They were very unhappy, there was a lot of poverty. And the Germans supported him oh yes.

And did you feel they supported his Jewish policies aswell?

Yes because they were jealous aswell, because some of the Jews were in high positions, they were well off you know. I don't say all of them, I'm sure not all of them but quite a lot. And afterwards of course they were very afraid not to support him. They were even afraid of their own children. Because the children went into the

Hitler Youth and they gave in parents, "Look my father said this and this and this," and they gave in their parents. So they more or less felt obliged to support him. In their own heart I don't know. But openly they supported him oh yes.

And did your mother see more what was going to happen or was she equally optimistic?

She was optimistic, she more or less followed my father you know. This was not a great thing for her I don't think. My father was optimistic he said, "It'll be alright, he won't last." And he carried on, he just carried on. But ehm his only concern afterwards was for us, my brother and me you know. And he wanted us to... of course it was very difficult to get a visa to go anywhere, practically impossible, nobody wanted you.

So was that an active movement at that time, to start getting your brother and you out of the country?

Well not as early as that, not until 37 I should imagine. 1937 I think my father realised things were not going to get much better.

And had you witnessed much persecution by that time?

Well we heard a lot of it. I did see, which really shook me, I once had to go to some Jewish ehm, maybe to do something with the emigration, some Jewish authority there and I saw a man there and he was covered all in bandages and he looked such a state I'll never forget it you know and ehm someone said he just came out of Dachau. That really shook me.

So you knew about Dachau already? Everybody knew did they?

Yes. Dachau was the beginning wasn't it!

And what was said about it?

Well, amongst the Jewish people?

Amongst anybody?

The German people didn't say much about it, they didn't want to know. Jewish people really were very worried and concerned about it.

What did they call it, did they call it already a concentration camp?

Laga(?), Dachau Laga(?).

What was it supposed to be for?

I know now what it's for. But at the time I just thought to punish them for being Jews, that's what my idea was. Now I know what it was first. Dachau was really the first to re-educate them by all sorts of means. This poor fellow he looked like, I'll never forget this, what they did to him. And then of course all our friends they tried to get out of Germany. This was our full-time occupation, it was practically impossible.

Was it a matter of hours of queueing?

There were quotas, even if you wanted to go to Palestine you couldn't. There were quotas on Palestine. Quotas to America. Nobody wanted you, nobody, impossible. There were people going around saying they could get visas, they took money from people and the visas never materialised.

What sort of people were doing that?

I don't know who they were, but I know family, friends of ours even sold their bedroom furniture, they slept on the floor to pay this particular... I don't know who they were.

Was it a German, a Jewish person, a non- Jewish person?

I wouldn't know. But the visas never materialised. That was the atmosphere which was terrible.

And did you all feel that, you know, that you were going to be killed or you were going to be...?

No no, nobody mentioned it.

What was the fear?

The fear, we wanted to get out.

Because it was a miserable place to live?

Oh we knew it was dangerous, we had to get out. We felt we had to get out.

What danger did you feel you were in? I mean we know in retrospect, but at the time?

Well that life would be impossible, but I don't think we visualised... No never never.

When you say life would be impossible, what did you envisage?

Pogroms that there used to be, persecution you know.

Yo mean not allowed to do jobs?

Yes that's it.

What kind of persecution did you expect at that time?

As you say, not allowed to do jobs, you know restrictions on all sorts of things, a ghetto kind of thing. You musn't do that or you can't go here, but never extinction. You know if you don't know you can't visualise can you?

No and you don't think your parents or anybody else you know visualised that?

No I don't think my parents did no.

Yes, you just thought it would be total restriction?

Yes my father always thought, oh the world wouldn't allow it, you know. I don't think they were threatened, they said life would be very very uncomfortable and miserable, but not to such an extent.

You say it's good to talk about it, have you not been able to talk about it much?

No no. Not at all. Until later on in my life. When the children were small I would never talk about it. It was too difficult. (Interviewee emotionally overcome)

Was it that you didn't want them to hear about it?

Yes. It makes for a lot of suffering when you keep it inside you doesn't it?

Yes. It's coming out now.

Is it too painful or are you glad to speak about it really?

Yes. I can't talk to many people.

What about your husband?

Oh yes.

You can talk to him?

Oh yes. But there's very few people I can talk to.

Is it easier with people like myself who've been in the same position?

Yes. Definitely. The children, I didn't want to bother them with it.

What about now that they're adult, can you talk to them about it now?

I don't know, not really. I don't know whether they are really interested, not at this stage.

How old are they now?

Ehm I think they feel a bit embarrassed you know. Frank must be about thirty nine and the other one thirty, thirty three. They're very good boys. I still call them boys. But when I was busy you know, I had to work and bring up the children, I was very busy you know, it was not so bad.

This has happened to a lot of people. Many people are writing their stories many many years later. Talking about it later.

You know you sort of take stock of your life. It is hard. But you've got to occupy yourself with other things.

Well we'll come back to that later, shall we go back for the moment to when all of you were trying to get out of Germany?

Yes. As a matter of fact, I don't know where my father got the... Oh yes, he had hoped to get the visa to go to that horrible country in South America, what's it called! Paraguay. He even managed to get hold of an Indian man, he looked like an Indian you know to give us lessons in Spanish. He used to come to the house, it must've been 1937 I think and we took lessons in Spanish, but nothing came of it. And then ehm we were trying to get my brother out you see and my brother got his visa, he left in 1938.

And he went to Paraguay?

No he went to Montivedeo or Uruguay. He managed to get a visa to Uruguay.

Do you know how he got that visa?

He was a young man and it was not so difficult for him to get a visa. He was a furrier, he served his apprenticeship, he had a trade and they didn't make it too difficult for a single man. He managed to get it. My father was hoping that we would follow him eventually, we were still carrying on with the Spanish lessons. But things developed

differently soon after 1938. Hitler rounded up all the Polish Jews in Berlin, only the men. You know the men one morning in October, October 1938.

So were you actually rounded up?

Not me but my father was. It was early one morning in 1938, October, I think it was the 28th and we still had the tobacconist shop. I was working at the time, I had a a job.

What were you doing?

I was an apprentice to become a sales assistant. You had to serve an apprenticeship to become a sales assistant in a bookshop. And the owner was Jewish, Frau Rosenberg, she was a widow and ehm there was another assistant who was fully fledged. You had to serve a three years apprenticeship to become a sales lady would you believe. But I couldn't get any other job being Jewish. I couldn't find any other job.

How long did you stay at school, I hadn't asked you that?

Oh only until fourteen.

So from fourteen onwards you had to be apprenticed?

I had got a job before that, it was a friend of this lady, she was Jewish and that was also in the office, she was manufacturing ladies underwear but high class. It was a nice job, I liked that.

What did you do?

Worked in the office and I helped in the workshop it was in a small workshop, it was private bridal work, beautiful work.

Did you actually do the fine sewing?

No I was more in the office. Her name was Frau Griveline(?) and she employed a German manageress. And I'll never forget once what she said, because in a way it was very clever. They had an arguement once and this manageress said to this lady,

"I wish you what you wish me." And you know I've never forgotten that. It was rather funny. Anyway she couldn't carry on anymore and she recommended me to a friend in a book shop it was, toys and office, it was all sorts, it was a lovely shop.

I'll just go back one second because I didn't ask you a bit about school. Were you a studious girl? Did you want to do more studying?

No. Things were so unsettled, I couldn't concentrate. But I was quite good, I found things easy you know.

And did you actually attend school every day?

Oh yes. I enjoyed school.

Did you have any ambitions?

Yes, but I knew they wouldn't materialise.

What were they?

Well I wanted to complete the study and get on a bit more. But it was too mixed up, what with trouble here and trouble there. We were more or less really, how to get out of it. That took all our energy and all our thoughts.

But you didn't have any career in your mind that you would've liked to do?

Probably, I always wanted to help people, maybe on the medical side, something like that.

But you just couldn't entertain that, you wouldn't have been allowed that anyway?

No. Because our only thought really was how to get out of it. How to survive.

Was food getting short at that time?

Yes oh yes.

Were the Jews deprived of access to food?

No I don't think so. It was just generally short, very short. I don't know whether the Germans got more, I don't remember. But Koshe was definitely finished. We couldn't get Koshe food anymore. Not killed in the ritual way, the called it New Koshe, the butchers changed over to New Koshe, it had to be killed, differently.

So he was still allowed to keep his shop open but they couldn't have the meat correct?

No no. It was new Koshe. And it was short very short. Because I remember when I came to England I was amazed at the food I saw in England. It was rationed actually.

It was rationed in Berlin?

Yes. Butter, chese and eggs it was all rationed, there was very little food there. And it was cold, we didn't have enough heating. It was very unpleasant towards the end.

And was there inflation at that time? Of course the inflation had happened earlier hadn't it?

Oh yes, 1923. It was no inflation, it was just unemployment and very unpleasant, very grim. Really I had no youth, no teenage.

So you got into the bookshop?

Yes and I worked in that bookshop and it was a good class area, actually it was near the town hall there, it was just along the road. And there used to be a lot of Japanese living there, you know high up government positions. And they used to come into our shop. Lots of Germans they used to come in greeting, "Heil Hitler". I never answered. I couldn't say it. It used to be "Heil Hitler" instead of good morning. And they had a German girl there, she was very nice. She was very nice, she knew I was Jewish, she even came to our house. Her parents had outside Berlin a small holding, they invited me there and they all knew I was Jewish and they were very nice to me. They were not anti semitic. As a matter of fact she wrote me letters after I came to England, I don't know what happened to her but she was definitely not anti semitic. And ehm this bookshop it was German people took it over and then I got the sack. It was aryanised(?). Yes they couldn't keep me there anymore so I was unemployed.

What did you do when you were unemployed?

We more or less helped my father, he still had his shop. But of course he had to have Jew on his window.

And what was the shop then?

It was a tobacconist shop. Until he was deported back to, well so called Poland, he was deported back you see. We carried on until October... Oh my brother left already, he went away and we were hoping that my brother would be able to do something for us you know, we were getting ready to leave more or less. We tried everywhere else, there was no other venue.

And you thought he might make arrangements there?

We hoped he might.

What date did your brother leave actually?

He left in 38. 1938.

Which month?

Oh I don't know, maybe February. No February I came. I don't remember when he left. But we were very excited about him going, they really done him well, with new suits and things like that.

People made suits for him in the tailors shops or something like that?

I don't remember that, but I remember he had a new suit which was very nice. Because a cousin of ours got married and we went to the wedding and he left on a Thursday I remember and somebody spilled some stuff on his new suit, we had to get it cleaned you know. (Laughs)

Who's wedding was it?

Actually it was a cousins, a cousin we had there, she got married. We went to that wedding. It was done in the home you know.

Did your mother do the cooking?

No. Anyway so he was gone. And early one morning in October 38 we had a ring at the door and it was the Gestapo outside, not in uniform.

How did you know they were Gestapo?

Because they asked for my father Yacob(?), my fathers name was Yacob. It was six o'clock in the morning we were still in bed. And they told him to get dressed and of course we were up and wanting to know what was happening. Usually somebody knew what was happening you know, when they were going to fetch somebody, they used to leave their flats and sleep somewhere else.

Did they get warning usually?

Amongst the Jewish people they usually heard something that was going on you know. They gave you warning and the men used to sleep somewhere else, they couldn't find them you know. Make things difficult and that was the routine already then. But we had no warning of that at all, nobody had warning. There was lorries standing out there in the street and they told him to get dressed. And they even followed him into the bathroom as he was getting dressed. He didn't know what was... And they just told him to take ten marks, no change of clothing, nothing, ten marks that's all. And then we, he was gone.

So ehm we heard of other families who also lived in the area and it hapened to most of the Polish men. You see my father never naturalised in Germany, he still had a Polish passport. And by the way, when I was fourteen I had to go to the Polish consul and I was issued with a Polish passport. Strange isn't it. I was born in Berlin and I was issued with a Polish passport. So I was never considered German. And ehm my mother said, "What are we going to do, we must find him and take him some clothes," she packed a suitcase quickly and she had his watch and she thought maybe she could sell it and get a bit of money. She said, "You must find him," she said to me.

She was not very, how shall I put it, organised you know. A very practical sort of a woman. So I took this suitcase and I asked people you know, where they'd taken him, somebody said "There," somebody, "There". And I was in a trance at the time and I was carrying this big heavy suitcase looking for him.

You would've been just about eighteen then?

Eighteen. But a young eighteen, not like today, I was like a child really you know. It was very traumatic, I could never find him, never found him. And I've never seen him since.

Oh that's terrible. And you don't know what's happened to him?

Oh yes, yes. Anyway what they did with these people, they sent them back to Poland and the Poles wouldn't accept them, so ehm.....

(End of side 2, tape 1)

And as my mother still had sisters in Cracow, we wrote to them and they tried, they got him out of there, he joined them, he was living in Cracow.

The Germans allowed that?

Yes. Well the Germans took them over, they didn't care anymore, it wasn't their responsibility anymore.

So they just abandoned them?

Yes. They just abandoned them. My mother it was terrible, they not only took the men, but from the provinces they took the women and children, the whole family.

So it was just literally a deportation, nothing more?

Just the deportation of Polish Jews.

And they were dumped?

Dumped yes. With ten marks in their pocket.

And they just had to fend for themselves?

You just had to fend for yourself and the Poles wouldn't let them in. It was a terrible situation. And my father eventually joined my mothers sisters in Cracow and was with them. Of course he told us, it was before the war and he wrote to us, so we knew at least he was alright. But we still had the shop mother and I. My mther was helpless, she was lovely but a bit helpless. I was young you know but the responsibility rested on me. The landlord, the German landlord, he was horrible, he must've been a Nazi, he was pestering us alive to deal with him and I couldn't really deal with him.

How awful.

Yes it was an awful situation. And I don't think my mother had all that much money left. In the meantime I put in to come to England and the only opportunity that I could get a visa for, was for a domestic servant.

Now when you say you put in, you mean you put in an application form?

Application form to...

Had you heard that there were vacancies in England?

Yes that's right. I had a domestic permit and my age group was just right.

This was just gossip, you just heard it through the grapevine did you?

That's right, other girls did it aswell, you know we were always in touch, I wasn't the only one. Other girls did it aswell. And ehm as a matter of fact we did have on my fathers side, family in England but they weren't very helpfull I'm sorry to say.

Did you have this family here in England already?

Yes becaue my uncle came from Poland to England.

I see. And they didn't make efforts to help you out?

No not really. They were afraid I suppose if we come we would be a burden to them. People didn't realise you know what it meant.

And have they remained unhelpfull ever since?

Yes, not really very helpfull, I can't say they were very helpful.

So eighteen years old, you needed that family here really didn't you?

Yes. I don't really want to talk much about them. I had to stand on my own two feet. I realised that only too soon.

Are they still alive now?

Their son is still alive.

Is that one reason you don't want to talk about it?

Yes, it has to be forgotten. Best to be forgotten.

So ehm yes and my visa, I was granted the visa and I still had the Polish passport, which was my luck really, I don't think I'd be able to get out...

I see so you got out as a Polish person?

And it is still valid, as a matter of fact I think I'll bring it along and show it to you. Because I had to go up to the Polish consulate every year and they... No it wasn't the Polish it was the German, the German consulate gave me permission to stay in Germany another year, one more year. I don't know what they would've done with me if I'd stayed longer and the last time was only six months permission to stay in Germany. And as luck would have it my visa came through, my passport was still valid, the Poles told me that they wouldn't renew it again because I hadn't been in Poland for the past two years. They said they would take the Polish passport away from me, the Germans said I had six months, so it was really a godsend when the visa came through. But the trouble was the Konig Strahse my mother and I still stayed in our flat in the Konig Strahse(?).

And can you tell me about that?

In the meantime we moved, we had to get out that flat. We moved to an inferior flat in Gollnow Strahse.

Because you were getting short of money I suppose?

Yes. And ehm the shop wasn't doing very well, we couldn't carry it on we knew it was towards the end. And when the Kristalnacht, we were alone my mother and I, because my father was away in Poland, my father was away and ehm we heard on the radio what happened you know. We knew there was going to be trouble, we didn't know what to do so we stayed put. And ehm I must say that there was an old German

couple who lived above us and when we heard the smashing in the street, you know glass, we heard noises up the stairs we thought that... they asked us to come upstairs an old German couple, not Jewish.

Not Jewish?

Yes, not Jewish. And we spent the night up there.

So they were sympathetic?

Yes. I couldn't remember them before you know. They weren't all bad. Anyway in the morning when we went down, we couldn't stay another night in that flat. And we packed up our little valuables that we had, the silver candlesticks and you know. The news was that it was dangerous to go out on the street. Oh yes my mother said to me, I didn't look particularly Jewish, I was very fair, I looked more German for some reason or other. And ehm I said, "I'll go and see what happened to the shop". It was within walking distance. Oh it was terrible all the Jewish shops were broken, the jewellers shop it was plundering, all the stuff was gone. And when I reached our shop it was absolutely in ruins. There was not a thing left.

So I went back and told my mother so she said, "We can't stay here". We had these friends round the corner, very good friends, they were Polish but for some reason they had left their men out, the men were still at home. They overlooked them. We packed up these little valuables we had, anyway we managed to get there without any incidents you know. It was a miracle. When we got there she had a big kiln, these big ovens they had. And we put our candlesticks in there and she put all her valuables in there because it was a safe place you know and it was a terrible day. We saw them in the streets, they were looking up at our window, they were up the stairs, I thought we'd had it you know, but somehow we managed to overcome it. There was no more police protection, we were lost. We knew we were lost.

And did you feel then that it was going to be death?

Oh we knew yes. Because there was no more police protection, they could do with you what they liked. If there is no police protection, there is no law and order is there. And ehm then my visa came through when we were staying with these friends, my mother must've felt terrible, I didn't want to leave her, but she insisted, "You must go". And I left and do you know, to show you how it was, I had to go to the police station to get a certificate that I had not committed any crime and that I didn't owe any taxes, otherwise they wouldn't let me go. I still have that certificate in the house. That I'd never been to prison, there was no police record behind me or taxes, otherwise I couldn't have got the visa you see.

When I got to the police station, I had to do all this myself. They couldn't find my papers, they were in such disorder and this policeman he was such a nice chap, he said, "Hold on a minute," and he had a pile of documents on this desk, I was sorted out already for deportation or something and mine was amongst the desk and he was decent enough to look for it, that was my luck you know. He found it under a pile of papers and he gave me the certificate. I was lucky all along.

It was right on the edge all the time?

Yes, because that was 1939.

Which month was this?

February 1939. I was very lucky. Anyway I got the visa and ehm my mother stayed with me through it and I went.

And were there a lot of you going together?

No I was the only one.

So you were entirely alone, there were no other young people going at that time?

No.

Who was on that train?

It was a boat. On the boat, it was a German boat.

Did you get on an entirely German train?

Yes then a boat.

Was there Germans travelling on it?

It was terrible.

What happened?

On the boat was terrible. It was a German boat which went to America. It was very very cold, the sea was frozen, they had to break the ice before the boat could get out of the harbour. It was bitter, bitter. And there must've been a few Jewish people there but we ignored one another, we were afraid. And ehm it wasn't a nice boat. For that crossing we went overnight, there was no distinction made on the boat. I lost my voice it must've been the excitement. Good job I couldn't speak, not a word. Completely gone. And I was sitting at this table, they were sort of Canadians, Canadian Germans at this table, they came to see the wonders of the Third Reich and they were in glory and excitement about it.

Were they Germans who had emigrated to Canada?

They emigrated to Canada and they came to Germany to see the glory of the Third Reich. They were praising it, I was sitting there at the table you know and listening to them, how wonderful Hitler is doing, terrible.

So the boat embarked where?

Southampton, then onto America.

Where was the point in Germany where you started?

Braemehoff(?)

What about the train from Berlin to Braemehoff(?), you said that was awful too?

That wasn't so bad. I don't remember much about the train journey. But my mother came to the station and some friends.

That was painful I'm sure?

Yes. And I went first to my uncle in Bournemouth, he was living in Bournemouth and he had a little boarding house and that wasn't very good.

This is where you didn't get too much of a welcome?

They not only didn't welcome they exploited me. They really exploited me yes.

Did you have to work terribly hard?

Terribly hard yes.

Had you arranged to go to your uncle? When you got your pass to come over as a domestic was it to your uncles that you were supposed to go?

Not really. But my parents wanted me to go there to the uncle you know. They thought I'd be better off. I would've been better off not to go there. Mind you it was a good experience in retrospect.

But not for an eighteen year old alone?

No. I stayed there, I think it must've been a year.

Was it an aunt aswell as an uncle?

He was my fathers brother. Anyway I stayed a year there then I came to London, I found a job ther as a domestic, looking after a little girl.

You found this job through an agency or...?

Over heresay.

So you would've been nineteen nearly twenty by now?

Eighteen, nineten.

And war would've broken out by then?

Oh yes. War broke out, up to then I still was in cont... Oh yes what happened to my mother was, that ehm she wanted to join my father you see because there was no other hope and she smuggled herself over the border and they were together. They managed to get together with a little suitcase. Everything was left behind but a little suitcase. She smuggled herself over the border and they were together in Poland.

And you knew tht in England?

Oh yes because they still wrote to me until the war broke out and Poland was taken by the Germans.

Were you very relieved to know that?

Oh I was very happy when I knew that. As a matter of fact the only pay I ever recieved in Bournemouth was a cheque my uncle gave me just a week before the war started to send to my parents, it was ten pounds.

You mean you weren't paid?

No. It was ten pounds and I sent it off and the cheque came back because it couldn't reach anymore. And he never gave it to me, he stuck it in his own pocket. Anyway ehm I was very shy because he had a little boarding house there you know and when the guests used to leave they wanted to give me a tip. I always wonder why I felt so ashamed to take it. Anyway ehm I came to London I found that new job wasn't very well paid. I don't know what it was maybe seven shillings a week something like that. Mind you seven shillings was money then. She was quite nice but I hated it.

What part of London was it in?

In Stanfordshire(?) area, Clapham Common. It was a little girl, very spoiled.

Was it a middle class professional family?

It was, he was a middle class man, he was a manufacturer of ladies wear in the East End.

Was he Jewish?

Yes very. And ehm you know the bombs started dropping so she decided to emigrate to Oxford with the child and ehm and I stayed behind to look after him and they got a cousin of my own age to stay behind with him for me. So in order not only to run the house he took me to the workshop, he was doing army greatcoats, he had a government contract and I had to sew the buttons on, the golden buttons on, all for the seven and six a week.

And ehm then I followed, I went to Oxford to stay with her there, with the child but it was very lonely there for me. And I had a friend in Manchester from Germany and she was working as a domestic servant and she said, "Ill find you a job here, come here." And ehm I decided to go and that was an incident really.

I didn't have any money, I thought I had enough for the fare. I packed all my cases, I had quite a few cases with stuff from Germany, hoping my parents would come here. And I went to the station to come to Manchester. The place was Prestwich(?), then when I asked for the ticket at the station, I must've said Prestwick, not realising that there was a Prestwick in Scotland you know and as luck would have it I didn't have enough money for the ticket. It was really lucky because I would've ended up in Scotland with all these cases, my English was not so marvellous you know.

So I thought, what do I do now! So I went to Bloomsbury House, that was you know, and I told them there the circumstances and they lent me some money, enough for the ticket. I had to write an I.O.U. and I paid it back week by week. And ehm this time I went to the station and I said, "Prestwich" and it was a lot cheaper. So I arrived at Prestwich, it was very very late already you know. And I left one case in the left luggage and the other I managed to get on a bus. But it was terrible. I arrived at the house, strange people.

And all this by yourself entirely?

Yes yes. And that night a bomb, at Manchester they had bombing at first and a bomb dropped on the left luggage and that case was destroyed and there were pictures in it. Anyway it was, they were definitely middle class people, Jewish people. He was a very nice man but he was called up in the R.A.F. she was a spoiled young woman you know, I think she must've been maybe a little bit younger than me. Lovely house and everything, very well off. And ehm she used to throw big bridge parties you know.

Wednesday was my half day off and I used to come back and everything was left for me to wash up. Fifty maybe sixty cups you know, she left for me to wash up after my half day off. So I said to her in my broken English, "Well I think it's really disrespectful to me to do all that washing up after my day off." She said, "What am I paying you for?"

So I thought, I can't take any more. So I said, "No I can't do it anymore." I went into a hostel for Jewish refugees in Manchester and I thought, I have to sort something

out. I don't want to do this work anymore, I have to do work to help the war effort or something. You know I was classed as a friendly alien because I was Polish, I had a Polish passport.

Would the British have refused you if you had a German passport do you think?

For to come to England?

Yes.

I don't know. I would've been an enemy alien. I suppose I would've been interned. But I was classed as a friendly alien. So ehm I went into this hostel, it was very primitive you know and there in order to earn my keep they sent me to other hostels to do the cleaning, I couldn't get out of it. And ehm I went to the labour exchange and asked, "Could I do something for the war effort?" They sent me along to a, oh it was terrible, you know it was old fashioned factories in a particular area in Manchester, it was grim, can you imagine it. And it was a glue factory and I was not even near and I could smell it, it was so horrific you know, that was the only job they offered me.

So I thought, no this is no good and I walked along and I saw this, 'Join the A.T.S.', I thought, I'll do that. At least I'd do something with a purpose you know and I went up there and I joined up. It was on the first floor I remember and ehm they asked me "What would you like to do?" and I said, well I didn't want anything to do with domestic anymore I'd had enough you know. So I said, "What could I do?" So they said, "Well you could become a driver or a pay clerk." I said, "Okay put that down, alright."

About three weeks later the calling up papers came and I had to report to a camp in Lancaster. And there the girls were interviewed what sort of job and then she looked at my papers and saw born in Berlin and the anti German feeling was very high in 1941, they thought there was spies everywhere you know, she said, "Oh no you can't do the work you would like to do, you can become a cook or an orderley." I was very upset by that, she was very sympathetic and said, she would take it up with the home office. And life was quite hard in that camp you know. And eventually she called me and she said, "If you pass a clerical test you can become a clerk." Anyway I managed to pass it and I was four and a half years as a pay clerk there.

Was your English quite good by this time?

Yes it had improved. I was the only foreign Jewish girl in the camp.

Can we just go back a tiny bit, had you been quite lonely the whole of this time you were in England up to when you went into the ...?

The army was the best part.

Because you were quite isolated weren't you?

I was not from any group, I was completely on my own.

How did you feel? Miserable?

Yes. I don't know what's happening to the family and my brother didn't write too often, because the letters didn't get through, I don't know. The A.T.S. was the best time, it was alright.

So would you like to talk about the A.T.S. a little bit?

Yes. It was, mind you I lived a lie there.

Did you, in what way?

It was very hard because I didn't tell them I came from Germany. The girls there they were all very very narrow, most of them came from Wigan and Burnley, they'd never seen a Jew before, they'd never seen a foreigner before, they had no idea. Not like today with television, in the mind the little corner is much wider now. A foreigner was a foreigner in those days. So I was afraid to tell them I came from Germany and they knew, they thought I was Polish which was very very upsetting. You know when you tell a white lie it's not good. You don't know which way to turn.

You feel false all the time?

Yes. Not only that you get into such terrible conditions. One girl she was going to Blackpool, Blackpool wasn't far from there, she went to a dance there and there was a lot of Polish officers there and she danced with a Polish officer and she said, you know, "There's a nice girl in my company she comes from Poland." And he was very homesick and he said, "Give me her address and he wrote to me in Polish and I couldn't read a word of it. It was very unpleasant.

And so did that make it difficult to make close friends?

Yes, I could never talk to anybody. I had to be on my guard all the time. It was very difficult. I was afraid to tell them I came from Germany.

What was going on in your mind all the time? Were you sort of trying to feel your way how to live?

I felt a misfit.

Did you feel you didn't know where to adapt to?

Well I kept the Jewish identity. I was always proud of that you know, in spite of it I felt proud of it you know.

Did you go to a synagogue at all?

Yes.

The A.T.S. didn't make it difficult for you to be Jewish?

No not at all no. The only thing I was upset with and that's A.T.S. because you get, that left a bad taste, that was the only thing, I never got it at home. You get a sort of character certificate. The way that she phrased my character certificate, it wasn't that commander, before we had a very good commanding officer, she was lovely and she took a great interest in me

(End of side 1, tape 2)

You were telling me about your commanding officer?

Yes I remember her name now the Honourable Mrs Collier, she was very nice and I told her I was very worried about my parents. I wrote to the Red Cross it didn't do any good. Now I had a cousin who was from Poland and she lived in Paris and all her family were also in Poland and I felt she knew something. And I told this to my commanding officer and she said, "Ill get you leave to go to Paris. And maybe you can speak to her and find out something." And the war was just finished and I went to Paris, I had to travel in uniform you know, it was quite an experience. And she did know because one aunt survived, she was still in Cracow and she told her.

And the aunt in Cracow had been in Cracow all through the war?

All through the camps, she and three cousins survived. And what happened was that from Cracow they were put into the ghetto, Cracow ghetto until March, they were there until March 1943 under bad conditions. Then the trouble started, my father was sent to a camp, a concentration camp near Cracow and they just picked him out of the crowd and shot him.

So that was quite soon after they'd taken him?

Yes. My mother suffered a lot. (Interviewee emotionally upset) She was in Auschwitz but I think the Russians were coming or something and they sent her to another terrible camp Stutthof, have you heard of it?

Not that one no.

It's near Danzig. It was a terrible place, 85,000 were killed there. She starved to death. My cousin you see she lives in Israel now, she knew all the details.

Is that the cousin that was in Poland at the end of the war?

Yes she survived, she lives in Israel. Poor woman she suffered a lot. So I know all the details.

Is it better to know the details than not to know them do you think?

Yes. I think so. Yes I think so. Anyway when I left the A.T.S. on my character record, because this commanding officer was another one, she phrased it like this, "This alien..." I was in the A.T.S. for four and a half years.

Fighting for the British.

Yah not only for the British, I wanted to help, I wanted to destroy the Germans, that was my idea, doing something positive. "This alien... trustworthy, honest, hardworking..." I'll show it to you, I've got it. I still am upset about that. And I went back to the office because I was so upset and I told her, she said, "But you are an alien." So where do you feel at home. This is still with me. That's why, I mean I don't... Israel is so important to us, with all it's faults.

We were talking about the general effect on you as a person of these experiences, what do you feel about it?

It's left a mark I'm sure about that. I really don't trust all that many people.

Did you feel that that particular statement about you being an alien was a particular let down?

Yes very hurtfull.

Was that one of the factors that made you feel you couldn't trust people?

No no, not only that no. People always seem to gang up against the circumstances of people. I felt I had to rely on myself. Oh it's left a mark. And it's with me all the time. But my husband is good, he understands.

Did you get depressed during or after...?

More so now, I didn't have time before, I had to work, bring up children.

Wht about immediately after the war did you get terribly depressed then?

No I don't think...

Not even when you heard all this in Paris?

No it didn't sink in immediately no.

Have you done anything to sort of ehm work your way through it recently, when it's upset you recently?

I've tried to see somebody but ehm I've got to be occupied, I try to be occupied.

Have you read much about it?

Oh yes. I don't want to read anymore. I have a book out just now and I've gave it back half unread. Of course this is really, I don't know whether you've read it, Himlesag(?) it's about Cracow in the camps, about the concentration camps round there. This man was a marvellous man, a German, you should read it it's really interesting. Himlesag(?) by an Australian writer, Connely I think his name is. He actually won the Booker prize for it. It was in America, he went into a shop to buy a suitcase in Oakland and it was a Polish survivor owned the shop and they started talking, he said he was looking for a story to write a book and this man said, "I can tell you a story," it's worth reading. I read it in English a few years ago and I saw it in the library in German but I can't read it.

Did you find any of the books were helpfull?

No. It's up to yourself all the time I think. I don't think anybody can help you. I don't know whether talking about it is really good, I don't know. I don't often talk about it. I can't talk about it.

Just with your husband?

I could talk to somebody who's really understanding and sympathetic. We belong now to a group in Hove, they founded a new group it's called J.A.C.'s(?) have you heard of them?

No I haven't.

It's going all over, it's very strong, it's the Jewish Association of Cultural Activities and we met everybody Wednesday. And a subject came up once about should we forgive the Germans, some of the public speakers you know were speaking, the English Jews and they are more self pitying you know and I think they expected me to say something and I couldn't. I couldn't because I don't want to talk for people just to... it doesn't really mean much to them you know. I couldn't speak.

You mean you are the only refugee amongst these Jewish people?

yes I'm sure I am.

And didn't they want to hear about your experiences?

I couldn't talk to them about it, because I felt it was like, maybe they wouldn't understand, it couldn't be like sensational, I couldn't say anything, didn't say anything.

But they do know where you come...?

No. I don't think so.

They don't know anything about you?

They know I'm foreign, but I can't talk to them. I can't talk to many people about it. Somebody who understands it yes. I don't want pity.

Did you feel any pity during the war in England?

Probably yes. It's just one of those things. You can't put the clock back. I don't know how people feel they went through much more than I did, they were in the camps and things, how do they feel?

Have you talked to any?

Yes, but they don't seem to be so embittered either, it's marvellous really isn't it?

Well they vary don't they?

They vary yes, they don't really come out...

But you've kept in touch with the few people you did know?

Yes.

The girl in Manchester?

Oh yes.

Your friends?

Oh very much so, well we've got a common bond. I've never found that with anybody other than... I can't get that with friends.

Have you made close friends with the English at all?

Not close, acquaintances. I'm afraid to be too

What do you fear?

Sincerity really. I suppose that's what conditions made me like.

Do you feel that from quite an early age you couldn't trust people because of what was happening in Berlin?

That's it yes because of what was happening.

Did you attend the reunion of the transport of children and survivors last summer?

We went along to one of them, but I wasn't one of that group. I don't belong to any group.

This is the problem isn't it?

Yes.

You don't feel like attending the one that's coming this summer?

Is there another one?

Yes there is.

Oh I read about that one children transport. Yes I'd like to go along.

You might feel more in touch with that one.

Though I can't associate with people.

Because you came alone it really made you feel separate?

Yes absolutely separate yes.

Could you tell me now what happened in your life immediately after you'd discovered what had happened to your family?

Well I was still in the A.T.S. and although the war was over, waiting for my discharge papers and trying to think what I'm going to do with my life. As a matter of fact I had a boyfriend who'd just come back to me, who was living in Palestine at the time. He joined the British army in Palestine and was taken prisoner of war in Crete and was sent to Germany in prisoner of war camps.

Was he Jewish?

Yes.

What nationality?

Czechoslovakian.

And where had you met him?

He was released, the war was over and he was released, he came to Manchester where I was stationed.

Whereabouts in Germany had he been a prisoner of war?

I can't remember that. There was quite a few of them.

So they didn't give him any different treatment because he was Jewish?

No. He was captured under the Geneva Convention they had to give you a convention at the time. And he was treated like any British prisoner of war. Which was amazing really. Anyway he came to Manchester, on his way home I suppose. And there was a Jewish Ex-Service Club and that's where we met. And you know I was sort of playing with the idea of going to Palestine at the time, after I was released. That was one idea and ehm or going to join my brother who was in South America, that was another idea. Anyway I didn't know what to do. Finally I was released and I went to London, came to London and ehm, I located a friend who had a furnished room in Hampstead, in Belsers Park Gardens(?) a big room. And we decided to share it.

How old were you by this time?

Twenty five. We decided to share this room and it was an amazing house you know, it was all German refugees and Austrian that lived in this house. And ehm we paid thirty five shillings between us, seventeen and six each for that room. And I had to try and find a job. And ehm I managed to find a job and it was to do with Palestine at the time. For the United Palestine Appeal in Great Russel Street, it was quite an interesting job.

What did you do?

I worked in the office in charge of the paying out again, always with money. (Laughs) Paying out and general speakers, it was quite interesting really yes. And

ehm I earned five Guineas at the time it was, five guineas a week. Just about managed to survive on it but ehm food and everything was still under ration you know and between us we managed. And there was ehm one of my colleagues working there, she invited me one Friday night for dinner to her house. And that's where I met my husband yes. And that's how it developed you see.

What was your husband doing at the time?

He was, also he was in the army and he was not doing much, he just also came out of the army, wasn't doing much you know, never had a chance really, although he was always very studious. He never had a chance.

How did he come over?

Oh my husband actually. You see it's a very interesting story, I hope I've got it right. His father was born in Warsaw and left there as a young man because some of his family were in Antwerp and went to Antwerp. And ehm from there when the Germans came, I think the first world war 1914-18 to Antwerp, he managed to get to England and ehm in one of those Jewish shelters they had, he met his wife. They got married and my husband was born in England, in London. But then after the war he decided to go back to Antwerp and my husband was educated in Antwerp, he went to school in Antwerp until the age of thirteen and his brothers and sisters were all born in Antwerp. My husband was the only English one of his family. Then his father was a bit of a wandering, wandering Jew really, he went and established himself in Ireland, my husband was thirteen then.

What was his job?

Nothing, he just put his hands to anything, never was... He had a very colourfull personality, he started manufacturing ties and all sorts of things you know, to make a living.

So it was usually business was it?

Business yes. And my husband went to school in Ireland aswell. Then they came back and lived in England. And ehm they were a very nice family. A traditional Jewish family.

Do you mean by that Orthodox or...?

Yes on the Orthodox side yes. Particularly his mother.

Did they welcome you into the family?

Yes but ehm his mother had sort of, you know it was always the Jewish custom, as he had an older sister, she wanted the daughter to get married first. She wasn't very keen on the sons getting married first and it happened that we got married first, she wasn't very pleased about that. The daughter really ruled the family there, she was very temperamental. A very intelligent woman really, but she was a big worry to them. And all her thoughts were with her daughter you know, none of the other daughters got a look in or the grandchildren, it was always her daughter. I didn't get a great deal of warmth from them somehow because of it. But you know you get used to anything. So we sort of established ourselves, well we didn't have very much money and we had to make a living. And it was very difficult.

What did you do?

Well we started, as we didn't have much capital, we started as a dry cleaning business. Oh we did work hard, we worked very hard.

How long did you run that?

That was in Essex Road in Islington, which was very bombed at the time, very miserable, of course it's come up since then. It was very miserable and we lived above the shop you know.

It's a hard job that isn't it and unhealthy?

Well we didn't do the cleaning, we did alterations and repairs, we used to send it out to be cleaned and made very little profit in it aswell.

Did you do the sewing yourself?

We did some of it, I started to learn doing invisible mending of the stocking repairs. Twelve o'clock at night I used to do it, for sixpence a ladder.

That's terrible, that's miserable isn't it?

It was so hard. Then our first son was born, he was born there in Essex Road and then we only had a five year lease on the shop, we had to move out. We had to find another one and that was in Edmonton(?) and we also had living accomodation. That was a bit better. But we managed, we weren't all that miserable. But we were very busy and that helped I think. It helped me I think.

How did you feel at this time... going back to when you and your girlfriend were in the flat together. How were you feeling in yourself?

You know we were very busy, we were very busy trying to build up a life, I don't think it sunk in all that much. It's sunk in now. It hadn't sunk and there were lots of many others in the same position, we tried to survive and establish ourselves.

Did you find that knowing others in the same position helped?

Yes.

Were you friendly together in this house you were living in?

Yes we kept together yes. We all had the same experiences yes. I didn't feel isolated, I felt better then. Didn't allow myself time to think really just get on with whatever you had to do. We worked all day and then we came home to prepare our supper meal, it was very primitive.

Did you have any energy or money for any pleasures at all at that time?

Not really no.

No recreation?

Yes we ehm, I can't really remember about recreation, things were pretty grim after the war. We were just pleased with little pleasures really. We didn't ask for much.

Can you remember anything that you did at all in your free time?

Well I always was very ehm. Palestine and Israel I was very concerned, because I thought, this is the only hope for the Jewish people. And I worked for this Zionist organisation, I was involved with it.

What did you do?

We used to go to meetings and protest marches, there was no immigration to Palestine at the time, we'd go on marches. I remember a particular march, it was a time that Bevan when they closed all immigration you know, terrible all the people suffered you know, they wanted to get out of Germany and they couldn't and this particular march was a big demonstration and we went along shouting "Open the gates of Palestine," you know. I was involved with that and there was lots of activity in that respect. I thought at the time that was the only hope for the Jewish people to get their pride back you know.

Did you want to go there yourself at all?

Yes in a way I did, if I wouldn't have met my husband I think I would've done yes. But that of course changed everything. And ehm we worked together and we made a go of it you know.

Did you know many people who did go to Palestine?

Yes there were quite a few. Lots of the refugees emigrated, not many stayed behind in England. Quite a lot went to America and where they could find a relative, they joined them. Some stayed behind you know but quite a lot emigrated out of England yes.

What about those cousins that had survived, where did they go?

My cousins in the camps, they were three sisters. One had developed T.B. in the camps and she was sent to ehm Switzerland, no ehm her name was Izlala,(?) she's still alive, she developed T.B. she was quite ill.

Where did you say she was sent?

Sweden to recuperate and she was there in a hospital. And ehm she was rather good looking you know and ehm she met her husband there, her future husband and she's still living in Sweden.

And she's better?

Oh yes.

Have you seen her at all?

Only once I met her and that was only about three years ago. Her daughter got married to a Frenchman in paris and she invited me to the wedding and we met up.

How did you feel meeting again?

She was a lovely woman. She was actually together with my parents in the ghetto. Yes she told me quite a few things. And ehm she married, she was very young in Poland, about fifteen, she married at fifteen a Rumanian and ehm that's why she didn't have to go to the ghetto. She wasn't in the ghetto with them, but she supplied them with food. They used to smuggle it into the ghetto because she was outside the ghetto. But eventually somebody gave her away and she was ehm, she ended up in the concentration camp.

Do you know what nationality the person was who gave her away?

Polish.

Non Jewish?

Oh yes. But she survived but with T.B. One sister is living in Israel she had a very tough life. She actually was together with my mother to the end and she told me everything. And she is suffering greatly.

Physically and mentally?

Well yes.

She never really recovered?

No.

What is wrong do you know?

(End of side 2, tape 2)

Yes, and he was much older than her, and he was a kind, he was a kind man, yes, but they were not all that suited, and they put up a butcher's shop in Kiri (??) and I don't know, and worked very hard, and she had two children, one daughter, one son. And the son went into the Army, the Six Day War, actually, it was, and he came back, he was in a terrible mental state, he wouldn't speak for six months, the things he saw, you know, and feeling depressed, and he's still suffering with his nerves.

This in Israel?

Mmmm.

Yes.

And she's really broken, a broken person.

Is she? Yes.

Yes, and the other sister went to Paris. And she still brings presents, and they're, they're financially, they're very well off.

She's done better, has she?

Yes, yes.

She's better mentally and physically?

Yes. She was the youngest, she was the youngest and it didn't have such a wide effect on her. Of course, I don't know, you don't know how people feel really, you know. You don't know how they really feel. But she seems to cope.

Yes. And what do they do?

They were in business, and financially, they're very well off. She's got one son. I think she's very good to her sister in Israel, she is.

Is she?

Yes.

So these three are your closest relatives, aren't they?

Well, yes, from my mother's side, yes.

And the one on from your father's side? None left?

No, not really, no. No. And ...

So do you want to go on with how you and your husband were getting on in London?

Yes. We worked, eventually we managed to buy a house, and I had to work with my husband all the time. It was all so hard.

Did you manage with bringing up the children and working?

Yes. It was hard, but I never had a moment to think, I think that was the best therapy for me, yes.

Did you tell your husband what you'd been through and how you felt?

Oh yes, my husband had great understanding.

Yes.

My husband, oh yes, he was very helpful, I must say, yes. And as I said, now that I'm retired, this is the worst part.

Yes, you've got time to think about it.

To think, and sort of take stock of your life, and I suppose we're, we're the lucky ones, aren't we. Some people had worse experiences than I had, those ones that were in the Camps, the survivors, but even so, it's still, it's still with you all the time.

Yes, it's 100% for each person isn't it.

Yes, probably turned out something completely different than we might have done!

Do you ever think about what you would have liked to do? I mean, when you think about it now, can you look back and think?

I can't, no.

You didn't allow yourself ever to have,

No, no,

Ambitions or

No.

Hopes?

No. Just come to it.

How was your physical health? Were you well when you were having your children?

Yes, not too bad, it was more, not too bad physically, you know, not too bad physically. It was not easy to, I didn't seem to fit in properly, you know. Which way? Socially, socially, I didn't seem to fit in properly.

What happened? Can you describe it?

I couldn't get on with English people, there was always, always some sort of barrier there.

Was there?

Oh yes. I could never let go. No. Never talk from the heart, you know, always afraid there's some anti-Semitism or something, you know. Unconsciously.

Yes.

I could never talk freely, although, I liked them, you know.

There wasn't anybody you felt at ease with?

None, non-Jewish people I'm talking about now.

Yes, non-Jewish.

Non-Jewish people, yes.

There wasn't anybody you felt at ease with?

Maybe one or two, one or two.

You didn't form friendships?

Not close friendships, not close friendships, no. There was, probably my fault, I suspected anti-Semitism all the time! It's funny?

Did you? Yes.

Of course, that's what it's left me with. And English parents, they didn't understand me, so I really was, socially, I was a bit, I just couldn't mix with them, and German Jews I couldn't mix very well either. Probably most people like, the same category as I was, you know, Polish emigrants that lived in Germany, I felt more, I still feel more at home with them.

Yes. And the refugees that you'd met, that you'd lived with in the house,

Yes, that's right, we found we'd got something in common, you know, and sort of a common bond between us.

Yes. Yes.

I even feel that today, yes. And, of course, it was difficult for the children, I suppose it must have left them with something.

What do you think?

I don't know if it has, I never gave it a thought, whether it was something rubbed off on to them, in that respect, it might have done.

Do you want to talk a little bit first about how you felt when you were expecting the boys? You just, you've got two boys, haven't you?

Yes.

Were you anxious, particularly anxious during your pregnancies? Was it very important to you to have children, make a family?

Oh yes, I was very very

Did you feel it was extra important?

Very important, yes. The only trouble was, I didn't have enough time for, to give to them, to try to make it, you know, trying to make a living really, so I was really sort of in half, you know, I felt I should be more with them, and you know, I felt I should be there, you know, and it was very very difficult, very difficult.

Were you anxious?

Yes. Very anxious, little things used to worry me.

Did they?

Oh yes, yes.

Nothing went wrong, though? You had healthy pregnancies?

Yes.

And deliveries?

Yes. Yes.

And how were they when they were younger? There was no problem with them?

Oh not, just like normal children really.

And you didn't worry unduly?

No. No, most of our thoughts was how to make a living!

Yes, it was really,

I was always in a predicament, you know.

Yes, yes, you were always short of money?

No, not short, just enough, but you know, to give the children a nice environment and a nice home, you know, and a good education. That really took most, most of our time. It wasn't easy.

No. How did you manage when you were trying to work in the shop and look after babies?

Well, first we lived above the shop, it wasn't so difficult, but then we moved, I had to, I couldn't drive a car at the time, and I had to take three buses to get to the shop, and I tidied up everything, saw the children off to school, and I always was home when they came home, 4 o'clock, three buses again, 4 o'clock, with heavy shopping, oh, I worked very hard, and always was home when they came home, it was very difficult, yes.

Yes.

Did you have an idea in your mind of how you wanted their home to be?

A warm, a warm, warm home, you know. Yes, yes. They always had plenty of friends they could bring in, they used to bring in all the neighbourhood kids, and were very happy.

Did they seem happy?

They seemed normal children, yes. Seemed normal children.

And they didn't feel any ...

No, because I didn't talk about it much to them, not at, not when they were children. I didn't want to burden them, and I didn't want them to feel any different, you know.

No. What about later on? Did you say anything later?

Well, later on, you know, when it all came out, and they saw programmes on television about it, and, oh yes, yes.

What did you say?

Well, they understood by the time this all

Yes, yes,

They understood by the time, and I suppose they accepted it. They never knew my family, so

What did you tell them?

Well, I told them exactly what happened, you know. Children are very adaptable, I think, aren't they.

Did they ask many questions?

Not too many, no. They accepted it, they accepted it, yes, yes.

Did you feel they were sympathetic towards you?

Yes, oh yes, but they didn't show it all that much, you know, boys, they didn't show it all that much.

What about now? Do you feel they've given it a lot of thought?

There again, they're busy with their lives, very busy with lives, I don't really know.

You've never discussed it with them since they were older?

No. I just keep on telling them little bits and pieces, yes.

Yes, and are they interested?

Yes.

You feel they do

I think, as I said before, I think they are probably a little bit embarrassed about it.

Are they?

Yes. That's the feeling I've got, I don't know how true it is.

Have you? Do you feel that they don't accept it as much as part of their background as you feel you'd like them to?

I wouldn't like to say, really, I really don't know. I feel embarrassed myself, sometimes, to talk about it to them.

Do you?

Yes. Because they're so busy and they've got their own families now, and ... I don't really want to burden them with it too much.

What does it feel like if you wanted to speak to them? Is it that you feel, you don't want to burden them, or you don't want to embarrass them, or ...

Yes, that's it.

Or you don't want to ask for sympathy?

Maybe I do, now I do talk more, it comes out. They've probably heard it all over again! Before, they've probably heard it all before, you know!

But they don't act impatient, do they?

No, no, no. No.

Do you feel you'd like to share it more with them?

No, not at this stage. I think, I think I can cope with myself.

What about your daughters-in-law?

Oh well ... I really don't know.

Do you think they have any understanding?

Maybe a little.

Are they both Jewish?

Yes, yes, yes. But, thank God, they never had to learn, they've never had that experience in their families. And it's very difficult to put yourself into another person's position, isn't it. Very difficult.

Yes. Let's go back to the childrens' childhood a bit more, did you keep a Jewish home?

Yes.

You know, you kept all the Festivals?

Well, we were not Orthodox.

No.

We went to work on Saturdays, and, but they went to a religion, a Jewish religion, they didn't go to Jewish schools.

I see.

But they went to religion, which is called Jeder, and they learned Hebrew, and they had Bar Mitzvahs, and Friday night, we always had candles. And oh, they were, they mixed with Jewish children quite a lot. And, and I think they're proud Jews.

Are they?

Now. Now, yes.

Yes.

And you didn't hesitate to be openly Jewish?

Oh no, no. Never. Never. Never. No. No, never. And it rubbed off on the children. Oh yes, they're proud Jews, I must say that I'm quite pleased about that, yes. As a matter of fact, the eldest one, his wife and children, they still very often go Saturday morning to the Synagogue for a Service, they keep, Anna, my grand-daughter, went to a Jewish School, and she reads Hebrew very well, and they know all about it, all about the Jewish religion, and they're, they're, they like it. And in that respect, I'm very pleased. They belong, they feel they belong, you know?

Have they mixed well with the,

Like any other person, they mix well, yes. Yes, I think they've grown up very well, they can stand on their own two feet, yes, which I'm very pleased about, yes, yes. They established themselves, their families, and they work hard, very hard-working.

What do they both do?

Frank is, the eldest one, he's doing quite well, he's in the fashion business, and he started in this Firm, and he's a Director now, and I think he must be very good, he designs patterns, and he practically runs the place. He goes to Paris.

He must be talented.

He must be talented, yes, he always liked sketching, and yes, he is making quite a nice living. And Paul seems to be doing well, he's in the computer business. Seems to be doing very well. His wife just had another baby, he's got two daughters.

I was going to say, how many grandchildren have you?

Three grand-daughters, yes, very sweet really. It's a pleasure, to enjoy their children, yes.

Did you name your boys after anybody?

My eldest son was named after, soon, right away, after my parents. His name is Franklin, my mother's name was Franklin, and his second name is Jacob.

Yes, and your other boy?

Paul was called after an uncle, yes.

And then, after their first school, did they go to the same school all their youth, or did they change schools at all?

No, no, they changed schools, yes. They changed schools.

(SMALL GAP IN RECORDING HERE)

You were telling me about the grandchildren, weren't you.

Yes. We enjoy it, we enjoy it.

Let's go back a little bit to your early married life, you were still running the dry cleaning business.

Yes.

Now did you change at all?

Change what? Change work.

Any other kind of business, or did you do that, for your husband's entire career?

Oh yes, we were, it kept us fully occupied.

I mean, he didn't take up any other trade? It was always dry cleaning?

Well, no, no, no. When we moved into the other shop, we changed over to become a gents outfitters.

I see, that's what I meant, yes, yes.

Yes, we became gradually, we started off in a peculiar way, we went really, my husband wasn't really, was more studious really.

He felt he should have gone to university, did he?

Well, he, well, something on a different line. Business wasn't really his line, but we were just, circumstances just throw you into it. And you know, like some people love business and they make a terrific success of it, we, we just, we made a living, a good living, and that was that, you see. And, well, we did, we had a lot of trouble with the dry cleaning business.

Did you?

Oh yes! Things didn't come up clean, and people brought it back. Oh dear! And there wasn't much profit in it, and anyway, we were left over, people didn't collect the

stuff, you know, and after a year, we just put them in the window, and they went very well, we sold them, you know, from then, we sort of worked it up gradually, we took on trousers, and we started selling trousers, and we, we become a sort of a, a gents outfitter in the end.

Did you like that better?

Yes, that was much more interesting. That was really interesting, yes. But we kept our customers, you know, they kept coming back, and they brought the children back, because we sort of took an interest in them. We could sell them any old thing! And it was a way of life, you know. We were there 30 years.

30 years!

In this business, yes. We retired from there.

Did you?

We were glad to get out of it. Yes, we were glad to get out of it.

Did you feel frustrated all those years?

Well, we had enough, no, we had enough, yes. We had enough, but there was no way out. There was no way out until, of course, when the children got married, we had time to think about it, well, it was a bit later than that. A bit later! But we were always, we had other interests, we were interested in the Anglo-Israel Friendship League, the Israel gang, which was really to attract non-Jewish people, educate them to Israel. We had a very good Chairman, who was not a Jew, Dr. Smith, he was a wonderful man, and we were involved with that for 15 years, I think, until he died.

What did you do exactly?

We were on the Committee at the time. We were the Membership Secretary, and that was very good, we enjoyed that, yes, we met some nice people there.

That's good. Did you feel at home there?

Yes, because we had a common interest, you see, very much so, yes. Very much so. They were very nice people. And at one time we went with the CND, when it first started in existence, and we mixed a lot with non-Jewish people, we were also very well, we made friends, you know, common interest again, you know. We were always interested in something. We always used to take the children to museums, and that, you know, on holidays, we tried to make it interesting.

Where did you go on holidays?

Well, when they were young, not grand holidays, to England, and we took them to Brittany once, when they were small. It was very nice, nice holidays, yes.

Cornwall, Devon, Wales, you know. We used to shut the shop and go, that's a thing we insisted on doing, yes. I hope they had a nice, a good childhood.

What do they say about it?

No, they don't talk about it, no.

They don't say.

Not yet. They're also too busy. I suppose when they're older ...

Yes, how old are they now?

The eldest one is nearly 40, and Paul is 33. They're very very busy.

Would you have wanted any more children?

I would have loved to have had a daughter. I always wanted a daughter, yes, I would have loved to have had a daughter, yes.

And did you make some women friends in these Organisations?

Yes, yes,

Or anywhere else?

Yes, yes. As a matter of fact, when we were in London, we met up with one of them, and she invited us for dinner. Her husband died last year, and we've known her a long time. Yes, we made some friends. Unfortunately, lots of them have died.

Yes. Now, did you begin to feel more at home at this stage? When you'd established yourselves?

Yes. Oh yes. Didn't worry, well, I've had my husband and the family, you know, it didn't worry me so much then. I didn't feel so, I didn't feel lonely, no. I didn't feel lonely. As a matter of fact, I feel more lonelier now, now the children have grown up.

Yes. What made you decide to come down to the sea?

To the sea. Well, we had a house, which, with a garden, and it was, at that stage, we didn't want it any more, it was too much for us. And we liked Brighton, because first of all, it wasn't far from London, and the sea and the fresh air appealed to us, and we decided to do it, to sell up and go.

Yes. Did you have time for any hobbies besides these Organisations you worked on? Or were you too busy and tired?

Too busy. Too busy, yes. Well, hobbies like, nothing profound really, we used to go to evening classes, different subjects, but never really had time, never had time. Now, I've got more time, I really must do something.

How long have you been retired now?

Three years, we've been here three years now, yes. I mean, we belong to a Club now, which is quite interesting.

Do you like retirement?

Mmmm. I don't know really! I would like to do something, I would like to do something with a purpose, you know. Yes, I don't know what. My husband does Red Cross driving, volunteer Red Cross driving, which he finds is good for him. But I haven't found my niche yet! I want to do something. I have to do something about it.

You've felt a little bit low since you've retired, have you?

Well, yes. It seems a bit empty, you know.

Does it?

Yes. Yes. Being busy all my life, you know. And I'm not the type to, just to do nothing. Although I still have got a home to run, and we get visitors coming, which keeps me busy. We go up to London and try and see exhibitions or the theatre, the theatre, or something, you know. But I could, I should do something. I think I ought to, I must do that, yes, and good.

Do you like your home?

Yes, it's, we've moved into an apartment, a flat. It doesn't seem to be so much work, so I really have

It overlooks the sea, doesn't it?

Yes, it's very nice, yes. You don't feel hemmed in there, because the views are very nice, we're on the sixth floor, and it's all very nice views. Yes, we've got a cat we brought with us! She keeps me busy! And not with, nothing very eventful. Maybe that's a good thing, I don't know. I try and read, knit, go out as much as possible, walking. I make the best of it now. It's not bad. I try to make the best of it.

What do you feel about it all when you look back?

I don't know, it's really very difficult to say. I suppose I'm one of the lucky ones, I survived it, and I've still got my husband, and the children, the family. There's got to be lots to be thankful for.

Do you feel it could happen again?

Yes. I do, yes. Really I do. I think it could happen again, yes. But so many terrible things are happening in the world anyway, now, isn't it terrible the atrocities you read in the papers today, in every corner of the world, it really is frightening. And not only from a Jewish point of view, but from any other point of view.

What do you feel about what's happening in Israel?

Yes, it's very sad really, very sad. I don't understand it. I think they really ought to have come to some terms, and talk. How it really is split, 50% of them want to talk, but they don't have them to talk to. It's a very sad situation, because it's beautiful what they've done there. I don't know how or what, it doesn't, it doesn't look very hopeful really, does it.

What do you feel about the violence?

The violence in Israel?

Mmmm.

I just don't know. That really turned the other way. I mean, the Jews in Europe, they weren't like them, you know, except for the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, people just, well, they knew couldn't protest against it, and it seems to have gone the other way, become more aggressive. Maybe that's a normal reaction, I don't know.

What do you feel about the Arabs?

Very sad. Yes, very sad. Very sad. So it's really a dilemma, and I can't see how they're going to solve it. It's a dilemma, but I don't know how, it's a great pity. It's a great pity.

What do you feel about the Polish people, for example, who betrayed your cousins and other Jews?

Well, from what I gather, what my parents used to tell us, that the Polish people were always very anti-Semitic, and they were quite in favour for the Germans, they didn't show too much protest, from what I gather. The same goes for the Ukrainians, a lot of them say they were even worse than the Germans. So it just shows you that, anti, you know, anti-Semitism is, is there, and it just needs

Do you feel it's still there now?

Well, there is not many Jews left there now, is there?

No.

Only a few. I don't really know how they feel about. There was a programme recently shown, it showed how that they've still got that feeling towards the Jews, the anti-Semitic feeling towards the Jews.

What about in England, do you feel that there's much anti-Semitism here now?

Personally, I've not come across it a lot, no. Not personally, no.

Do you feel it's improved, compared with, for example, during and just after the War?

To talk personally, I've not experienced it. I mean, I've ...

(END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE ONE)

But you haven't had actual experience of anti-Semitism in England?

No. No. No. Maybe only once in the shop, I don't know what had happened. It was a customer, and he said something about "You people" you know. "You people". And I got very upset. But I said, you know, I told him off. I told him off.

What did you say?

It was ... I can't remember. I said, I just said to him, you know, "My parents died in the camps, and I don't want to hear this any more from anybody," you know, and all this sort of thing. And I think he was very upset, he was a bit frightened of me afterwards, because he still used to come in the shop, and he used to open the door, and he used to say, "Is she there? Is she there?" But then, you know, he more or less came in and apologised, and that was all right, yes. He really didn't mean it that way, I suppose! It was rather funny. But I certainly wouldn't stand for it, and if anybody, I would stand up for myself, yes.

Did you feel that sometimes these things were said in a rather unthinking way?

Maybe. Maybe, yes. But I don't like to hear anyone, and I certainly wouldn't stand for it now.

What do you think about in Europe? Do you think there's a rise in Fascism there? At the present time?

What, in Germany, you mean?

Well, in any of the European countries?

Well, yes, probably there is, yes, yes, yes. But I don't know, with the youngsters today, I just don't know. They seem to be, I suppose they have got, they don't foresee any future, you know. They feel so lost.

You mean the unemployed ones, do you?

Yes. Not only the unemployed, but there seems to be no hope for the future for them, for the youngsters, somehow.

Why do you feel that?

Well, the way the world is going, it seems to be all for destruction, destruction and bombs and everything, and youngsters feel very, they've got nothing to hold on to. That's why such a lot turn to drugs.

What do you feel they should have to hold on to?

I don't really know. Maybe, religion maybe, religion may be a good thing. A person needs something to hold on to, and I feel the youngsters feel they're lost. And they express themselves by the way they dress, and their music, and I'm not saying all of

them, but a big percentage. The ones that are studious and have a profession to look forward, they're quite different. And it seems really frightening, because they are the future generation, aren't they. But, there's clever people than me, to know about this problem, I think that's a great problem, because there will be the future.

Do you feel the people learned a lesson at all, on the Holocaust?

No. No. I don't think so. I wish I, I wish I could think that, because it would have worth it. That's why I was so pleased about Israel, you know, the establishment of a Jewish country, would be something. Would have meant something for all these people to have been, for the people to have died, you know, to, at least there's a Jewish State now, but, with all their trouble, I don't know. It seems they have died in vain. So, I wish I would know the answer. I think we just have to start, keep on living and make the best of every day. It's no good thinking too much it really. We've had the best part of our life anyway!

Could we go back to your childhood just for a moment, and you describe to us a bit more about the Jewish Quarter, in the part of Berlin that became the Eastern Quarter, and which really doesn't exist as a Jewish Community any more.

Yes. As I said, we lived in a tenement flat, and they were mostly emigrants from Poland, Rumania. Poland mostly. And

And they'd mostly emigrated when, do you know?

Must have been before the First World War, just before the First World War, 1914, 1913, yes. Like other, other people went to America, or England, there, my father unfortunately, went to Germany, I wish he would have taken the other side, it might have been that we would have been better off. Lots of them went to Germany, and I suppose life in Germany was all right at the time, and, and they were all sort of trying to establish themselves again. They were mostly tailors or, tailors mostly. My father was a businessman, and they worked very hard. The living accommodation were not wonderful. And family life was very close, and everything just, it was a warm family life.

Why do you think it was so close?

Because they were poor, and they were isolated. They had to, they were very close, very very close family life, family ties, yes. And we were happy if we got a new dress, you know, it was a terrific thing to get a new pair of shoes, and a new dress, it was a big occasion, you know, and or when we had, on a Yom Toff, on a holiday, very good food, you know, sitting round the table and having good food, it was all very joyful, you know. Little things were very joyful. And, and we mixed very well together, you know, the children played together, and the door was always open to other people's homes, we were in and out, playing.

Did you know all your neighbours?

Yes, very very close. We were really like sisters and brothers, really, all of us, yes.

How many families do you think there were in your tenement?

Oh, a lot. A lot. I mean, I've still got, even today, I feel warm feelings towards them.

Would you say there were hundreds of people in one building?

Well, it was a big, big tenement place, it had three yards, one, two, three yards, and there may be 100 families, yes. Yes, there may be 100, about 100 families. I had one close friend, her name was Susie, she, unfortunately, couldn't get out, she was killed.

And you did feel at home amongst them?

Yes. It was very very very homely. Even with the, I suppose it was poverty, in one way, wasn't it, there were poverty, we, we felt very, well, children don't know any better really.

Do you think your parents were very anxious? You know, the poverty may not have, you may not have worried about it, do you think they were worried or anxious?

My father was, well, he got on with it. He was working hard, and he made a living, we weren't all that poor, we weren't all that poor. I know they bought me a piano, I had piano lessons, yes. Went to quite a good school, you know, that's, that's what they were striving at, all the time, to better themselves. And they were only concerned about us, really, they weren't thinking about themselves, they were only concerned about us, to give us a better future, and it took all their time to do it. And that was, it was a warm family life, and with the friends as well, we were all in the same boat, there was no jealousy, and people said what they meant, you know, no hypocrisy, which was nice. I think that's not exists today! It's very difficult today. I mean, you couldn't go just to anybody's house without an invitation, could you? It's impossible, but we did it, and always welcome. "Sit down, have a cup of coffee", or something, you know. Always pleased to see you. There was always that warmth which doesn't exist today. You don't really know what people, when they're saying something, do they really mean it, you know? It's a completely different world. Yes. And I've got nice thoughts about my early childhood really, very nice warm thoughts, very nice. Even my father taking us to the park, you know, something like that was nice, you know.

Do you remember your mother teaching you things, you know, about life?

Not much, no. No.

Did she tell you about, you know, where babies come from, and all that kind of thing?

No. No. No.

Where did you get your information?

I suppose from the children. We talked about, amongst ourselves, oh no, no, no, that was never mentioned, no.

Were you scared at all?

Yes, I suppose I was really, yes, yes. Yes.

What did the children say to each other?

Well, there were lots of stories going round, you know, and, no, it wasn't as free and open as it is, as we are today. The children know, with the knowledge, which I suppose is much much better, much healthier. But no, we never talked about it, no. We were very shy really. Very shy. I remember even when I was 14, 15, if some adult spoke to me, I used to blush, you know! We were very shy.

Did she tell you at all about when your periods would come? What it was about?

Oh, no. You know, she didn't know. Because I was away, I was away actually, when I had my period, and I was a bit scared then.

Where were you?

I was, oh, an uncle came from abroad, and he had, was staying somewhere, and he took me there. And taken me near Berlin, and I got my period there, and I was really worried, and I, we had a phone then, in the shop, and I phoned, and my answered, and I wouldn't tell him, you see. And I must have sounded quite alarmed, I said, you know.

You didn't know what it was?

I had an idea, you know, and my mother phoned back, I told her, and she said, she would come down on the Sunday to see me, and arrived with so many sanitary towels! But that's how I, that's how it happened, that's how it happened, yes! Very strange, very strange. And when I went to the chemist, you know, to buy some sanitary towels, and a man was selling, I wouldn't ask, I bought a packet of soap, I bought a bar of soap instead, you know, I was so ashamed to ask him for the, for the sanitary towels. I mean, what youngster wouldn't be ashamed today, would they, to ask, which completely different, completely different. Very young, and really, probably, we thought it was wrong, if you were, to go out with a boyfriend, you know, with a boy, was, they didn't approve of it. They didn't approve of it.

So did you actually not go out with any boys?

No, I didn't go out with many boys. Once, I made arrangements to see somebody, and then I found out that my mother followed me, to see who it was! Yes. Yes, we were brought up that way, very, not like today, the children are everything today, they know more than we do, I think, about things today! And not many girls fell by the wayside really, you know, they married young, and they weren't, no, no children born out of wedlock, I remember, in, in that generation. Oh it's a terrible disgrace really.

Do you think it's better not to know too much?

Oh no. I think girls must know, I'm sure, oh yes, it's better to know about, and treat it naturally, much healthier, yes.

You were just going to say something?

But I always more or less kept to that standard of living, you know, even in the ATS I wouldn't go out, it was so impressed on me, you know.

You felt you'd been more strictly brought up than some of the English girls, did you?

Yes, definitely, yes. Oh definitely, definitely, in that respect, definitely, yes. It didn't do me any harm. It didn't do me any harm. But, of course, when I was in England, I felt I was responsible for myself, you know, and I wouldn't ... I lived a clean life, yes.

Did you feel, in particular, that you had to take good care of yourself?

Yes, I felt I must do, yes.

Yes, there's nobody else to ...

No, exactly! I thought, you know, that would be the finish if I didn't, yes, yes. So you become a bit self-reliant, I became self-reliant. I suppose, in some ways, I came out stronger, because of it.

Do you feel that all the events of the Holocaust have affected every bit of your life?

Oh yes. Yes, I don't know what I might have been if, I, if it, probably something completely different, something completely different. I don't find it all that easy to socialise, you know. Just to talk small talk, I can't, I can't do it. I just can't do it. And I feel a bit out of it, out of it.

It feels too trivial, does it?

It's so trivial, yes, to get excited over stupid little things, you know, I just can't, I can't be bothered with it, no. And I suppose, maybe I'm a bit on the heavy side, in that, people might consider me, you know, probably a bit of a bore! You know, I just can't do the small talk, particularly with women.

But friends don't find you boring?

No. Well, it depends, I mean, I could talk to people that, don't just feel that they're not trivial, you know, but you come across an, women, you know, that have the small talk. I'm afraid that's the people I seem to meet, you know! I find it very difficult to get on with them.

Do you find you measure events against that kind of suffering?

Maybe I do, unconsciously, I might do that, you know. I say, "What does it matter? What does it matter?" You know, "all these silly things". All the material things, doesn't seem to worry me a great deal. I mean, we uprooted our home, and that, that just didn't mean anything to me. And somebody would say, "How could you live so many years in a house?" I said, "It means nothing to me, it's bricks and mortar." It didn't mean anything to me at all. We had to sell furniture, I didn't mind selling them. It didn't affect me at all, but some people can't do it. Maybe, probably I haven't got roots, that's what it is. I mean, I could really move tomorrow, it wouldn't worry me.

Do you feel that you don't put roots down?

Roots. Exactly, yes. Exactly, now that I've come to put it into words, that's probably the feeling, yes, I haven't got the roots, yes. That's, that's what it is, yes. I could quite easily emigrate now.

Could you? Really?

Yes, yes.

You don't feel attached to England?

Yes, I like it, it's a very pleasant country to live in, very very nice. Lovely life, but I don't feel 100% involved, no. No, no. No, I could, I could emigrate quite easily.

Is there anywhere you feel you'd particularly like to go?

I think I would have liked to have lived in Israel, but I don't think my husband would, could do it now. First there was the climate, and the way of life, now, it's not very easy. I think I might have been happier in Israel, I would have felt more at home.

Would you?

Yes. Yes. Yes. But life in England is very pleasant, yes.

Could you describe those little streets you mentioned before?

Oh yes.

In the Jewish Quarter, in Berlin?

Yes. Well, the first, where I was born, that was the Mendelssohnstrasse.

There was a little Jewish Quarter you mentioned.

Oh the Brenner Gerestrasse, yes.

Could you describe that?

And there were a lot of Synagogues there, and quite a lot of Orthodox Jews, with beards, you know, and all the kosher butcher shops, and this was more, and a lot of market stall holders, I remember. It was very colourful, you know.

Was it markets every day?

Mostly towards, for Thursday, Thursday was the most, because people used to buy chickens, for the Shabbat.

What was the food in the market, can you remember?

Oh, chickens, and carp, carp, I remember, and fruit and vegetables, you know, but that was the cheaper, that was the cheaper end, I think, it used to be cheaper to buy there, to shop there. And lots of Synagogues, I remember, and it had a very Jewish atmosphere, not a bit like, probably you might have been like in Poland, a street, or somewhere like that.

I've seen a street like that in Paris.

Yes,

Have you been to the Jewish Quarter in Paris?

Did you see them in London as well, where we were just now? Oh yes, we were, we were there in Paris, in the rue de Chez, yes,

That's right. Little shops selling Jewish,

That's right, yes. But you have them in London as well.

Whereabouts?

Well, we are strangers now in Golders Green, but of course, much richer, and Stamford Hill. Stamford Hill is, you would feel, feel the air in there, you know, all the, from Jews, it's like a ghetto, ghetto atmosphere, you know. And so it's not quite dying out, it's not quite dying out, because that's the same atmosphere as it was there.

Is it?

Yes. But it was poorer, poorer, yes, definitely poorer.

And were there other children who were much poorer than you, for example? Who weren't so well dressed?

Yes, oh yes there were, yes. In particular was one family, they were very, very poor. There were lots of children, lots of children.

I mean, were there any barefoot children, or was it not as poor as that?

Yes, lots of poverty, barefoot as well.

Really?

Yes, yes. were quite poor for some people, because I don't suppose they had any social security or anything like that.

No.

And, yes, it was grim for some people, more, very grim, yes. We weren't, I suppose we were considered to be quite well-off.

Yes.

Yes.

How's your health been in the last 30, 40 years. Have you been well?

Yes, except that, you know, a bit of nervous trouble.

That was the depression that you were telling me about?

Yes, yes. And sleeping leaves a lot to wish for, even today.

Do you have nightmares?

Yes.

Do you?

Yes, get them now and again, yes.

What dreams do you have?

Well, you know, to do, probably, also with the, with the Holocaust, you know, it plays on my mind. At times it depends, I've just been reading a book, I didn't finish it quite, because it's, it played on my mind, Shindersag (??) Have you read it?

Yes, you told me about it.

And that played on my mind, and I had dreams after that.

Did you?

Yes. Like I was being gassed, you know, and now, it didn't have any effect on me, I was alive all the time, and they gave me a bigger and bigger dose, and I was still alive, you know, things like that.

Did you always have nightmares like this?

On and off. On and off, oh yes, they've been reoccurring, yes.

And did you have nightmares during the War, when you didn't know what was happening?

No. No.

Only afterwards?

Yes. After what, when we found out exactly, I mean, we didn't even imagine things like that during the War. I was very hopeful, I was very hopeful for what's going to happen after the War, I had lots of hopes. Little did with think that this would happen. It was shattering. Yes. It was shattering. And then, of course, the worst part is now, when I come to think of, cos now we know all the, we know it all, and we've got to live with it. It'll stay with us, we've got to live with it, it seems to be, you know, there's nothing we can do about it now, it's an established fact and you've got to come either to terms with it, or there's nothing else you can do. But it is important for the future generations to, to know what happened. So maybe, let's hope it'll never happen again. But I don't know.

Did you have any other nervous troubles besides being depressed and sleeping poorly, and having nightmares?

I don't know whether I might have been, I don't know, I just don't know.

But nervous troubles didn't run in your family?

Oh not at all, no. No, we were very happy, of a happy disposition, really, you know, and optimistic, not pessimistic, so, but I cope, I cope.

Do you think your brother coped all right?

He also had a hard life in Brazil.

Did he?

Yes. Very very hard life. First with the climate, and, and he was miserable, yes, the last few years, he was very miserable. Yes, I'm sure it had an effect on him yes. It had an effect on him, I'm sure.

I expect he was,

And he never opened out, you know, even when we met, never opened out.

You couldn't talk together about what had happened?

No, not really, never.

He was the inhibited one, was he?

Yes, yes, he was the inhibited one, yes. But secretly, I always wondered whether he could have done more to help those, you know.

Did you?

Mmmm. I never said that to anybody. But I don't suppose he could.

Did some people help others to get out, once they'd got out themselves?

Yes, yes.

What did they do?

Well, they sent them visas, and things like that.

I see, I see.

That's what we were hoping for. But apparently he said he tried, yes. I suppose it was not easy.

Have you got some suspicion that he didn't try hard enough?

Yes. Secretly, I've never voiced the matter, but secretly I had that feeling, yes. Because he met his wife, on the boat, you see, and he was very much in love with her, and he followed her to Brazil, and married her, it must have taken all his time, that, you know, to do that, you know. He was a young man.

Do you feel he was preoccupied?

He was preoccupied and then, then it was too late, you know, there wasn't much time, I mean, he left '38. After that, we missed the boat, more or less.

Yes. Do you think this has any bearing on the fact that he couldn't open up to you?

Probably. I wondered. I wondered about it, yes. It probably had something to do with it, yes. And we only met three times during, during these years, for short periods, you know, but it wasn't very close, it wasn't very close, you know.

Did that make you extra sad?

I was sad about it, yes. The first time I expected so much, I was so excited, the first time we met. I felt a bit left out!

Had you been close before?

Not really, because he was seven years older, yes.

The age gap, yes. Did you feel he wasn't thrilled enough to see you?

He didn't show it. No warmth, no warmth, no. I'm glad I didn't go to South America when I thought I might, after the War, it wouldn't have been, it wouldn't have been any good.

Why, because of the political situation there?

No, no. But family ties, I don't think it would have been very successful.

You don't think you and your brother would have,

Oh, we would've got on, but it wouldn't have been, I wouldn't have been, it wouldn't have been of much benefit for either of us.

You feel that England was a more suitable place for you, do you?

Yes, yes, yes.

(END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE TWO)

Yes, well, as a matter of fact, I've just remembered, I've got a letter here, which I wrote to him, from Berlin, it was dated 31st October, 1938. This is the letter I wrote to my brother. And he actually gave me this letter when I saw him the first time, and this is really, it's written in German, you know, and it was just as my father was deported, back to, as I told you, you know, and I'm telling him about it here, and here ask him, I'm telling here, "We're not like human beings any more." I'm trying to translate it, you know.

Yes, do, it'll be very interesting.

"We, we don't know which way to turn." I was only just 18 at the time, you know. And, and "we can't cope." "But in spite of it, we've got to hold our head high", I'm saying! "Our only joy is that, is that he's not with us here any more," and that's my mother and I, this only joy, but I'm asking here, "Perhaps you can do something for, for Papa - father". "I know it's all very difficult, but doesn't any hope exist?" I'm asking him here. That is the letter I wrote to him at this stage. That was a very good letter.

Yes, yes, maybe you could photocopy that for us?

Yes, yes, that is a very good document, yes. It is in German. But this I could do, it is really, it's a very good, that really expresses the difficulties, that expresses everything. And I also asked, Can we have some relatives abroad? In Paris? You know, and I asked him whether he could write to them and ask them for help, because we couldn't ...

And you really feel that his inability, or lack of,

I don't know.

You don't know what the reason was?

I don't know. As I said, he was preoccupied, nad he was a young man, fell in love with his wife, and it was '38 already, and by the time he realised, it was too late.

And he was in a new country too.

New country, he had problems, he had a lot of problems, it wasn't his fault. I don't blame him in a way. I don't blame him. And he probably wasn't also, well, when he left it wasn't so bad. The trouble started after he left, he probably also didn't realise what was happening.

No.

I mean, you can't, can you? I mean, nobody can visualise it.

No, no.

So, he was not a happy person, I imagine he was not a happy man. Disillusioned, I would say, disillusioned.

Yes. But he never went up and told you why, or what he felt?

He said that he tried, tried to talk to them, he said he tried, well, tried to talk to them, he said he tried everything he could, to help us.

I see.

But they were a long way away, South America is not Europe any more. It's not Europe. He became a, he was not a European any more, when I met him.

Wasn't he?

No, no, not a European, no. Different way of life completely. Completely.

Yes. And you felt it affected him greatly, all the same?

Oh yes, yes. Yes. He was not a happy man, far from it. Very withdrawn in himself.

Was he?

Oh yes.

So did you feel that you've done better really, because you can be more open?

Yes, I've done better, the ATS done me good, because I felt I was doing something with a purpose, you see. That done me good, that helped me a great deal. And then I ... I was probably a bit more fulfilled.

Was there anything else in the ATS that you did? You mentioned being a clerk.

Yes.

You did that all the way through the War, or did you do anything else?

Yes, yes, that's right.

And where were you stationed?

In, near Oldham, Lancashire, near Manchester.

The whole time?

Yes, we didn't want, didn't want to leave there, I was very happy there. It was important work, in a way, of course, it had to be done, of course, before computers. Now, it's a computer could have done all the work.

Do you remember any specific events during the War?

Oh, what, in the ATS?

Well, where you were, in the area where you were.

In the end, I was stationed with a Jewish, privately billeted, with a Jewish woman, whom her husband was in the Army.

Had your Commanding Officer chosen that for you?

No. It was, we could find our own digs, yes. And

How did that work out?

Yes, wasn't too bad. Wasn't too bad. Although she was terribly terribly houseproud! You know, she had a carpet and lino round it, and I was only allowed to walk on the lino! And she was very very houseproud, and I promised myself there and then, if ever I have a home, I won't be like that! Yes, every morning I would be at the bus stop at 8 o'clock to go to, to the work I was doing, to the office, and there was a man always at the same time, at the bus stop, he obviously looked a Jewish man. But we only said "Good morning", and I remember, it was the day when Italy capitulated, and we spoke about it, you know, and so he said to me, "I told my friend, my, my, my wife about you, and she would like to meet you, would you come for tea on Sunday?" And I agreed to go, but the next day, I thought, "I don't know this man. I'm not going." You know, and I didn't go. Well, the next morning, it was on a Monday morning, so many years ago, and I remember quite clearly, he brought his wife to the bus stop, and she said, "Oh", she said, "We were waiting in for you, and you never turned up." And she seemed such a lovely woman. So from that day on, we really formed a very close friendship. They were really lovely people, very nice people, and I felt very very happy in their company, you know. They had no children, and were very nice.

Where had he come from?

He was born in Ireland.

And he was Jewish?

Yes. And he was Jewish, and she was born in Manchester, and we kept friends all the time. She used to come and see us when the children were small, she was more like an aunt with them, you know. Unfortunately, they're both dead now, but they were really very very nice. I remember them with great love.

So that helped you a bit?

Yes, they were lovely people, yes.

And they knew about you.

So they were sympathetic, and made a little home for you, did they?

Yes, because I remember, I don't know whether I remember now, I had a letter after the War, from my cousin, telling me what happened, you see. I was still in the ATS, at that address, and I came home late, to the, my billet that night, and I found that letter. It was already, I think, 11 o'clock. And I opened that letter, and I was very upset.

This was when you first heard that your parents had died?

Yes. Yes, yes, the first time.

I see, so you didn't hear that in Paris?

Not 100%, the details I got in that letter, you see.

Excuse me, but did you get the letter first, or did you go to Paris?

I got the letter first, yes, I got the letter first. I can't remember now, I've still got the letter at home, so I can read the date up. I went to Paris first, no, I went to Paris first, and they just gave me some inclination. Oh, the letter must have come first, I just can't remember now. I remember there was a letter, with the details, I think it must have come afterwards.

It came afterwards, after Paris?

Yes.

So in Paris, you were told your parents had died?

Yes.

You hadn't known until you went there?

That's right. Not 100% at Paris. They told me about the three cousins, and, yes, they did tell me about my parents died, but they didn't know the details, that's right, they didn't know the details, and then I get this letter, and I was very upset about that. And it was 11 o'clock at night, and my landlady was asleep, and I just went round to these friends, with the letter, you know, and they were in bed already, and I woke them up, and they were very very nice, yes, I remember that. And I went to Paris first, yes, and I stayed with my cousin, and she had the news through that, but not in detail, there was no details when I was to Paris.

So how had she found those details out afterwards?

The letter wasn't from my cousin in Paris, it was from one of the survivors.

One of the survivors?

Yes, one of the survivors.

I've got it. Your cousin in Paris had not been to the Camps, is that right?

No, she lived in Paris, she was there during the Occupation, she survived the Occupation.

In spite of being Jewish?

She went to South, she went to the South of France, yes, yes, and survived it, and then they went back to Paris. And I knew,

So you got hearsay information from her?

Only hearsay.

And then afterwards you got the correct

I got a letter from her, exactly that's what happened, now, when I come to think, exactly that's what happened, that was the confirmation in detail. And it was very very upsetting. I've still got the letter at home, and I went straight round to them, and they didn't mind me waking them up.

And did it feel like a little home there?

Yes. Yes. She loved my husband, she was one of the family afterwards. And the children, she always sent them birthday cards, and she came and stayed with us. She was a good friend really. Yes, they were really nice people.

Perhaps you had more friends than you thought about?

Yes.

Now you describe it.

Yes, yes, oh, they were extremely nice people. Yes. Lovely people.

Is there anybody else you can remember you had a good relationship with?

Well, they were, they were tops, they were the tops, yes, they really were.

Anybody else you can remember?

Yes, there was another one, a woman, when I was in the business in Essex Road, and Franklin was a year old, and I couldn't cope with, you know, looking after the shop and the child, probably, so I phoned the Labour Exchange, and asked whether they had somebody on the books for a help in the house and the child, and they sent this woman along. Her name was Bessie, she was, came from Devon, lovely woman, and

she was married, just when the First World War started, and her husband, they were only married a week, and he was sent to the Front, and was killed, in the battle of the Somme, and she said she would never marry again, and she absolutely loved children, she adored children, and when she saw Franklin, she said, "Oh, isn't he a dear!" you know, she spoke with that Devon accent, and she loved him, and she was a really wonderful friend to us, yes. She really became like one of the family, you know, a substitute aunt. She also remembered all the birthdays, and she was one of the family, and I think Frank still likes her. As a matter of fact, when he was 18, she bought him a ring, with a signet, and he still wears it.

Did you go on, you went on being friends with her, after she stopped working for you?

Oh yes, oh yes. Franklin, every Saturday, when he could drive, he went and fetched her, and brought her to us, she spent the whole day with us, yes, she was, and you know, when she died, she didn't have much, but she left it all to Franklin. She loved him, and she wanted to be cremated, and we all went to it, and we had a stone put up, "Always remembered by the Yudt family" for her, you know. She was a lovely woman, yes. She loved the children, but Franklin was the favourite, the oldest one. He could do no wrong. Sometimes if I gave him a little smack, and you know, she used to cry when I smacked him. I didn't smack him often, you know, but she really loved him, yes. I've still got very nice memories about her, yes.

What about anger, have you felt very angry sometimes, when you think of everything?

Yes. Oh yes. Oh terrible.

What did you do?

Even now. Even now. I don't really like going back to Germany. I went back one year to the Schwarzwald, very beautiful and everything, very nice, but I don't, I still feel very angry.

Did you feel terribly angry all the way through your youth, and in the ATS, and afterwards?

Yes. Oh!

Did you express the anger openly?

Not so much during the War, after the War when all the news came out. During the War, no, not during the War.

Were you able to express the anger openly?

I don't know, maybe, maybe it was a bit short-tempered, I don't know how it affected me, I don't know. I just don't know how it affected me, I just took it, that's how it is. I don't know what it would have been like otherwise.

Do you want to tell me about,

I lived in the Mendelstrasse, yeh, they also lived in the Mendelstrasse, and they had two sisters and parents, a family, and the husband was taken to, I don't know which camp it was, in the early years, maybe Dachau, and he died there, anyway, they asked her the mother, his wife, to come and collect his ashes, and she had to pay for it, I remember distinctly, and these were, the ashes were buried in Weissen, in a Jewish cemetery, that I do remember. That's a fact. Terrible. That woman, oh, she was marvellous. I heard, the girls came to England, and she was left in Berlin, I remember, but she was a very strong sort of woman, and she, lots of things happened to her during the War, terrible things, and she survived them, and then she tried to smuggle her way into Palestine, and the boat was torpedoed, and they found her quite, nearly dead, and they brought her to Palestine, and she survived there, and then she came, and I met up with her again in Manchester, she's dead now. A strong woman, she was.

And she was a friend of yours when you were small?

A friend of my mother's.

A friend of your mother's?

Yes, yes. Very strong, strong woman, was terrific. To be admired, you know, she was strong. It makes some people stronger, you know, all the suffering made some people stronger.

What do you think it did to you?

I don't feel sorry for myself.

Do you feel stronger?

Not so much now! I suppose at one time, I did, yes, not so much now. Still very touchy about it, when I talk about it.

Yes.

But I must keep myself occupied, I know. This is my problem at the moment, to find my, the right niche.

Yes, you miss the children, and your work?

Both. The work, yes. You know, you can lose yourself in it. I tried to take up some evening classes, I tried to take up painting on china, but it wasn't enough, it isn't enough, not enough.

What about the grandchildren?

Yes, but living here, we don't see all that much of them.

How often do you see them?

Well, we go, we go to London, and they come here when they can.

Do you spend time with them?

Yes, we visit them, yes.

I mean, can you spend time individually with the children?

Yes.

How old are the grandchildren?

Well, the eldest one, Emma's 14, we're very close to her, she's a lovely girl. She's busy, she works hard at school.

And the others?

We feel quite close with her, yes. The others we don't know all that much.

How old are they?

Kate is, she's sweet, she's always very pleased to see us, she's three, and the baby's only a few weeks old.

So it's early days yet.

Yes, yes. They're very busy. They've got their own life to lead.

Do you feel a little bit out?

Yes, because they all, the, they've got their own families, you know, they're well-established families, you know, the girls they married.

Do you feel that your daughters-in-law keep you out a little bit?

Well, they're more to their families, I suppose that's quite natural, although the oldest son's wife, she is closer to us now, that's all right.

Do you feel it's such a different background, do you?

Yes, probably also at first, you know, when they were younger, you know, they don't understand, I'm different to what they're used to. I must be to them, musn't I?

You'd like to be closer to your daughters-in-law?

I would have loved to be close, yes. Maybe I was too keen, over keen, yes. Yes.

Were you?

But thank God they've got their own family.

Maybe it'll develop.

Yes, when they grow up.

Because the babies are only small, aren't they.

That's right, yes. I hope so, I really hope so, because I mean well with them!

Yes, yes. Yes.

Would you like to say some more about your husband?

Yes, my husband's been a great help, he's understanding, you know, and he's been a great help, I've been very lucky really, yes. Helped a great deal.

And you felt you were well-suited, did you?

Oh yes, definitely, yes, because I'm all right with him, yes. Yes, I was lucky.

It made you feel more as if you belonged?

That's right, yes, of course, I don't know what it might have been otherwise, could've been terrible, there's so many women that haven't found a partner, it must be awful loneliness. So, I consider myself, in spite of everything, quite lucky.

Did he enjoy the boys?

Yes, oh yes. Yes, he's a good man, yes.

Has he been well?

Yes, yes, thank God, yes.

And he didn't get too despondent about having to do the businesses that he ...

No, no, no, we soldiered on! So,

Do you want to say anything else about your married life?

No, I think I've more or less covered everything.

You think we've finished everything, have we?

Yes.

(END OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE ONE)

END OF INTERVIEW

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NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Ref. No.: C410/006

Playback Nos: F179-182 inc.

Collection Title: The Living Memory of the Jewish Community

Interviewee's surname: YUDT

Title: Mrs.

Interviewee's forenames: Rosa

Date of Birth: 25.4.1920

Sex: F

Date(s) of recording: 21.1.1989 and 30.1.1989

Location of interview: Interviewer's home

Name of interviewer: Milenka Jackson

Type of recorder: Marantz

Total no. of tapes: 4 x C60

Speed: -

Type of tape: Cassette

Noise Reduction: Dolby

Mono or stereo: Stereo

Original or copy: Original

Additional material: 1 photo and several copies of documents

Copyright/clearance: Clearance given

Fl79 - Side A

Home and family background in Berlin.

Parents originally migrated from Krakow in Poland due to bad conditions there.

Rosa born in Berlin, but family remained Polish.

Did not integrate with German Jews.

Lived in fairly poor Jewish Ghetto, but family slightly better off than neighbours.

Father ran small businesses and made adequate living.

Home warm and happy. Orthodox Jewish, but not fanatical.

No extended family in Germany, so felt isolated from birth.

Kept some contact with grandparents in Poland.

Felt anti-Semitism from earliest childhood - parents had become accustomed to it in Poland.

German Jews led relatively privileged lives.

Still does not feel comfortable with them.

Happy memories of home and playing in the ghetto.

Returned after the War and found former home, now in the Eastern Sector, quite altered.

Felt truly accepted 100% only in Israel.

Feels nowhere is truly home.

Fl79 - End of Side A

Fl79 - Side B

Describes Jewish festivals.

Remembers political campaigns just before Hitler came to power.

Hitler recognised at the time among their friends as a madman.

Saw Hitler herself at a rally, after his election.,

Attitude of non-Jews to Hitler described.

Parents optimistic that he could not last at first.

Gradually realised that life was becoming impossible.

Only those who had money could leave.

No country wanted the Jews. Even Palestine had quotas.

Gradually parents realised the two children must leave.

Brother, 7 years older, and qualified furrier, got visa to Paraguay.

Family hoped to follow.

Life grim with restrictions, but even now people did not envisage extinction.

Frightened by seeing man who had been in Dachau.

Had to leave school at 14. No further education allowed to Jews.

Couldn't study properly; all energy taken up with attempts to escape.

Rosa employed in shops from age 14.

Father still kept shop, with "Jew" written on window.

"Heil Hitler" atmosphere prevailed, and Rosa lost job when bookshop she worked in was "Aryanised".

F179 - End of Side B

F180 - Side A

Germans rounded up Polish males, including Rosa's father, and deported them to Poland into no-man's land, to fend for themselves. Poles didn't want them either.

Rosa's father joined his mother and sisters in Krakow and was able to phone family in Berlin.

Rosa never saw him again.

Mother and Rosa still had shop.

Mother rather helpless, so Rosa had to take responsibility at age 18.

Money very short and shop hard to run.

Rosa herself applied for visa to England as domestic servant.

While waiting, Kristallnacht happened. Description.

Terrifying, knew they had no further police protection and life too dangerous to remain.

Shop wrecked.

Granted visa and exit permit through series of lucky chances. Visa only just valid.

Travelled entirely alone on German train and boat.

No group, and has therefore felt totally isolated ever since.

Description of journey.

On mother's advice, joined paternal uncle in Bournemouth.

He ran small guest house. Was unwelcoming and unkind.

Exploited her with overwork and no pay. Stayed with him one year, moved to London.

Heard that mother had smuggled herself over German border into Poland and joined father.

Remained in contact with them until War broke out.

New job in London with Jewish family as nanny to spoilt child. Overworked and underpaid again.

Moved to Oxford with mother and child to avoid bombs. Very lonely,.

Girlfriend in Manchester suggested she moved North.

At first, worked in refugee hostel as domestic, then as nanny again.

Tried to escape domestic work. Couldn't face work in glue factory offered by Labour Exchange.

Applied to join A.T.S. Taken as "friendly alien". Home Office allowed her to do clerical work.

A.T.S. was the best time, stayed three and a half years.

No anti-Semitism in A.T.S., Jewish observance allowed.

Anti-German feeling among British made her pretend to be Polish.

Hated living a lie, and prevented intimate friendships.

Always felt a misfit, but kept Jewish identity; was proud of it.

Fl80 - End of Side A

Fl80 - Side B

After War, A.T.S. allowed her to go to Paris to meet cousin and learn what happened to parents.

Both parents died in camps. Father shot. Mother starved to death.

Three cousins survived from the whole family.

One cousin went to live in Israel.

Rosa made to feel permanently alien by an A.T.S. Commanding Officer who described her as an Alien, on character reference.

Still feels upset about this.

Feels importance of Israel because of this.

Feels scarred by experiences.

Lacks trust in people's sincerity, fears to make close friends.

Always had to find strength inside.

Did not get depressed when young, but has recently.

Kept busy. Did not talk about it to her two sons.

Good husband who is understanding.

Tried to get some help without much success.

Has never been part of ANY group, not even Jewish Cultural Group she now belongs to.

Feels British Jews don't understand, and she does not want to make an exhibition of it.

Still in close contact with great friend in Manchester who had similar experiences.

Immediately after War, had to decide what to do with her life.

Had Czech Jewish boyfriend who had been in British Army and imprisoned - Geneva Convention applied.

Considered going to Palestine with him. Instead, went to London and lived in house full of refugees. Shared room with one.

Worked as pay clerk for United Palestinian Appeal Office in Russell Square.

Life primitive and hard with little recreation or money.

Met husband at colleague's house on a Friday night.

He was English born Belgian Jew, educated in Belgium, but returned to England before War.

Husband also just out of Army.

Details about husbands family.

Did not feel wholly welcomed by husband's family.

Husband studious, but also had insufficient education, so had to try to start business.

Neither really liked business.

Had dry-cleaning shop at first.

Hard and miserable work. She was invisibly mending stockings - sixpence a ladder.

First son born. No problems except having to work in shop as well.

Had not fully registered losses, too busy to think.

Joined Zionist organisation, took part in protests and marches against British policy in Palestine.

Many refugees who had relations in America or Israel emigrated.

Three cousins who survived camps went to Sweden, Israel and Paris.

One cousin was broken by experiences, and her son badly upset by Six Day War.

Fl8O - End of Side B

Fl8l - Side A

Youngest cousin in Paris has done well financially.

Rosa and husband eventually managed to buy house in London (Islington).

Still didn't fit in socially.

Blames self for always expecting anti-Semitism.

Need to help husband make living overrode her wish to look after children full-time.

Was physically well, but anxious.

Doesn't know if this rubbed off on to boys.

Two sons learned about Holocaust from TV when a bit older. Accepted it, not discussed much. Reluctant to burden them.

Had Jewish, but not Orthodox, home. Worked on Saturdays, did not send boys to Jewish school, but did go to study classes, have Bar Mitzvah, etc. Friday candles.

Both have grown up well and successfully.

Elder son - director of fashion firm. Younger - computer business.

Both married Jewish girls and are proud Jews.

Three grand daughters a joy.

Elder son named after her father, younger after an uncle.

She and husband changed business to gents outfitters and did that for 30 years, it was better.

Also CND members.

Took children on country holidays and cultural visits museums, etc..

Boys now 40 and 33. Would have loved to have daughters.

Is not enjoying retirement very much. Feels purposeless and lonely, and at times depressed.

Trying to make the best of it.

Feels sad about situation in Israel, and feels world is a threatening place.

Feels Holocaust could happen again. Did not experience anti-Semitism in England.

Fl81 - End of Side A

Fl81 - Side B

Only one anti-Semitic comment made to her and she defended Jews hotly. Always would.

Feels sad for today's young people. Many seem lost. Perhaps they need religion.

Feels no lesson has been learned from Holocaust.

Disappointed that Israel did not fulfil promise.

Millions have died in vain.

Recap on Jewish quarter in childhood East Berlin.

Discusses Jewish migrations in Europe.

Tenement life in Ghetto. Poverty and isolation brought closeness, and neighbourliness.

Parents strove for better life for children at any cost to themselves.

Strict upbringing, shy girl. Boyfriends forbidden, she didn't mind.

Mother did not instruct on facts of life or menstruation.

Later in England, led pure life in order to protect self in isolated position.

Holocaust has affected every aspect of her life. Cannot make trivial small talk.

Has serious values.

Has no dependence on material goods.

Has no roots.

More details of Jewish Quarter - markets, Synagogues, Jewish food, poverty.

Physical health good, but felt nervous. Slept poorly, nightmares for many years.

Dreamed of gas ovens.

The worst part is now, knowing what happened and living with it.

By nature a happy optimist.

Brother in Brazil had miserable life. Not open with her when they met.

Secretly she wonders if he tried hard enough to get parents out.

But he was young, in a strange country, in love, and didn't know the future.

She wonders if he felt guilty. She would have liked to be closer to him.

Fl81 - End of Side B

Fl82 - Side A

She has letter she wrote to brother at age 18 begging him to get them out. (She will photocopy)

He became disillusioned by life, and South American behaviour.

She feels her own life has been more purposeful and fulfilled.

Describes where billeted during War. With Jewish woman, by her own choice.

Met another Jewish family who treated her like family.

Learned details by letter from cousin survivor about what happened to parents, and this family comforted her.

One friend her family had in Berlin was told by Germans to collect husband's ashes after they had killed him, and was made to pay for them.

Some people have been made strong by their experiences.

Rosa does not feel self-pity, but is always sensitive about what happened.

Felt stronger in youth than now.

Quite close to eldest grandchild, aged 14.

Daughters-in-law from established Jewish families and Rosa feels a little pushed out.

Sons very busy. Would like to be closer to them all.

Husband has been very good and they have got on well.

Considers self lucky in spite of everything.

F182 - End of Side A

F182 - Side B - BLANK

END OF SUMMARY

