

**NATIONAL**

# Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH  
COMMUNITY**

**ILSE SINCLAIR**

Interviewed by Jennifer Wingate

C410/011/01-06

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ACCESSION NO: C410/011

PLAYBACK NO:

SERIES TITLE: THE LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

INTERVIEWEE'S SURNAME: SINCLAIR nee GUTENTAG SEX F.

INTERVIEWEE'S FORENAME(S): ILSE

DATE OF BIRTH: 5th July, 1921.

DATE(S) OF RECORDING: 20th January, 1989.

INTERVIEWER'S NAME: JENNIFER WINGATE

NO. OF REELS/CASSETTES: 6 SPEED:

MONO OR STEREO: Stereo

ORIGINAL OR COPY: Original.

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Well, I'll start with the date of my birth. I was called Ilse Gutentag. I was born in Hamburg, Germany, on the 5th July, 1921. Before I start on my childhood, I'd quite like to tell you about my ancestors, of whom I know just a little bit. My mother's parents I actually knew, and I'll tell you about it in the course of my childhood. My father's parents, I didn't know. They died during the First World War, and I never met them. They were, I was always told, that they were rather sort of aristocratic people, apparently. They were Citizens of Hamburg which was a special honour that was bestowed on them, and Jews, in particular, were very proud of being Hamburger Bilge as it was called then. My grandfather started a business in Hamburg, which, as I'm going to tell you in a moment, was a sort of a family business, textiles, wools of various kinds, he was a wool merchant, but he actually had a large shop in the middle of Hamburg, in the sort of West End of Hamburg. He started it there. He must have started it in the early 1900, mmm, I don't know, 2, 3, 5, something like that. Now, the story about my grandfather, the tiny little story which I'd like to tell you about showing you how he, how they lived. This is obviously not my own experience because I never met them, but my cousins who are much older than I, who met these grandparents, they had four daughters and one son, and I'm the daughter of their son. They lived in a large flat in Hamburg, and this obviously only had one toilet, and my grandfather kept his own toilet seat, so that when he came home from business or whatever, he had to go to the loo, he would take a little key from his watch-chain, and unlock a padlock, from, you know, unlock a padlock which was round his particular loo seat, and he would then let this down and sit on it! And nobody else in the house was allowed to use it, which always seemed extremely amusing to me! I had pictures of my grandparents, and they look very regal and very pleasant people, and I'm told by my relatives that they were very kind, and lovely looking. My cousin always says they were rather aristocratic looking, but you know, it's all in the eye of the beholder, isn't it. Now, my grandfather's father, of whom I have a painting at home, was born in 1892, something like that, and he went into the Army, and fought against Napoleon.

You must mean 1792?

I'm sorry, I do mean 1792, yes, absolutely right. And he fought against Napoleon in 1812, and his horse was shot from under him, and he got a medal from the, I never remember whether it was the King or the Kaiser, they, I think they said it was the Kaiser, but I couldn't really check this out. He had this medal handed to him, and I remember the story that the King, or the Kaiser, said to him, the equivalent of, "Nothing is so difficult to put up with as a number of good days", making a pun of "Gutentags". So this man was, I can't remember his name, he was called Gutentag, of course, and I've forgotten his first name now, he got this medal of which all the ancestors including myself, are terribly proud, and I have certification to prove that this is so, and all sorts of little bits of paper that prove that. I also have details about

his father's father, who is my great, great grandfather, and he was called Mayer Gutentag, he was born in 1772, just over the border in Poland, and when he was a very young man, he became a wool merchant, and had permission to reside in Breslau during the week, and at weekends he would have to go back to his place of birth, which I'm not sure what that was, it was a small village, I believe, in Poland, and so he was allowed to work in Germany, and then had to go back home at weekends, and he started as a wool merchant, and this kind of business went right through the family. Later on, his son started a business in Berlin, there was also one in Breslau, and then there was ours, started by his grandson, who's my grandfather, in Hamburg. That is about all I know about these ancestors, and I have paintings of these two men and their wives at home, I had them restored, and I have these paintings, so the first one was born in 1772, which was nice, you know.

Have you any idea who painted the paintings?

No, unfortunately not. I showed the painting of the old man to the Curator of the Bristol Museum, who had it restored for me, free of charge, because he thought it was a very good painting. He didn't think much of his wife's painting, he thought that was painted 20 years later, he didn't think the painting was any use, though they are really quite nice things to have, they're heirlooms. I think I can now start with my own childhood.

I was just going to ask you one thing. You say that you have these dates going back to the 1700s, have you any idea at all where the family came from before that? Do you think they were in Germany for even centuries before that?

The man who was born in 1772 obviously later lived in Breslau, and that's where the Gutentags, the family, lived, and had their children there, in Breslau.

Yes, but before 1772?

I could look it up again to make sure that I haven't got the village or the little town, I do remember that my grandmother actually came from Posen.

Where's that? In Germany?

That was in Poland.

In Poland?

Yes. Just over the border as well. That was Posen, it's probably called Posnam now, or something like that. So my, actually, my grandfather was called Hugo Gutentag, and his wife was called Jacobine Gutentag, and there's quite an interesting family tree which I've got, because she was born Brühl, and there is a very large family of Brühl's, they were very much in the medical profession, there is all sorts of Professors of Medicine here, there, and everywhere, called Brühl, and they were related, my grandfather and my grandmother were supposed to be cousins, they are cousins, they were cousins. And so the family tree of Brühls and Gutentags are very much interwoven, they come from the same root, as it were, and there was a well-known

family Brühl in Berlin, and we were the only Gutentags of that tree, if you like, in Hamburg, and my father's business was called Brühl and Gutentag, and it was in a street the equivalent to Regent Street. I always thought it was a bit like The Needlewoman in Regent Street, which is long extinct now. But we were brought up to be very proud of our family's business, because it had been in the family some time, and it was the same sort of business in Berlin, and the same kind of business in Breslau, run by different branches of the family. So I was born in Hamburg, and knew the grandparents on my mother's side. My grandfather was called Mehrgut, he was called Marcus Mehrgut. I knew him as a very kind, very very small man. He died when I was about 5 or 6, so I don't remember very much of him. He was a wine merchant, I remember, and you know, children are awful snobs, and I always felt that my father's family were of much better stock than my mother's family! I don't know why that came about, but that's how it seemed to us. My mother's mother I wasn't at all fond of. She was a grisly, to me, old lady, of course, she wasn't very old when I was born, but she always seemed very old, and I remember my father and I had to visit them every Sunday morning, and but, yeh, it's going ahead a bit, we would have to walk hand in hand to my grandparents' house, which wasn't very far from us. They lived in a flat, and they had a maid at that time, and we used to spend the most boring Sunday morning there, used to have to play games or cards, or something, and we got some sweets in return, they never really asked how we were, or what we were doing, there wasn't much conversation going on, it was,

You went as a duty?

We absolutely went as a duty. I do remember my brother, who is four years older than I, he is called Werner, he held my hand up to the corner, and when we were round the corner, he sort of gave me a push, and that was the last of our brotherly/sisterly love, we used to bicker getting there, because we both didn't want to go. But going back a bit to my earliest memories, we lived in a street called Husumerstrasse, which is still there, I've seen it since. We lived in a large flat, we had six rooms, but they called it 6½ rooms, because the maid's room they didn't count as a room. We had three reception rooms and the rest were bedrooms. It was a very comfortable home, and I lived there until I was 12 years old. We had a middle-class sort of family background really. My mother and father both worked in the business. My mother went every morning at 10 o'clock to the business. They would come home for lunch, both of them, we would have lunch, and then she would have her rest, my father would have his sleep, and he would go back to the business a bit earlier than she did. They would have a cup of coffee, he would have a cigar before he went back, and then they would go back to the business. The first few years, which, of course, I can't remember, I was looked after by a children's nurse. My mother was as unmotherly as anybody could be. She didn't really know what to do with small children. I always had the feeling I wasn't really wanted. I think my brother wasn't particularly wanted either, because she just wasn't the motherly sort. Very interested in the business, very interested in people, but not interested in children. I think she put up with the birth of my brother reasonably happily because he was a boy, I mean, that was my feeling, whether it was a fact, I've never really checked out. My first memories were having a nanny, and having a housekeeper, Anna, who became a very important person in my life, in fact, she was really the most important person, certainly after my father, to me. She came into our household when I was a year old,

and we parted when I left for England, she was there all my childhood, and she was my mother figure, she was really my model as to what a warm, loving person should be. And then we had nannies, and one of my first memories was of the nanny doing homework with my brother, and going through his spelling with him, "Werner, spell '...'" you know, and this sort of thing. We were Jewish, and I knew we were Jewish, but we weren't religious. I remember we used to go to a Synagogue which we called Temple, and this particular Temple we went to when I was very small was in Pohlstrasse, wherever that was, it was later demolished. And I remember my parents taking us on high holidays, Yom Kippur, , that was about the only occasions we ever went, my mother and I would sit upstairs, and my father and my brother would sit downstairs, and these were well-established occasions. I quite liked going. My brother always argued and tried not to go, he hated it really.

Did you go to Cheder?

No, it was, the first four years of my schooling I went to a Jewish School, but there were non-Jewish children there. We had about a third of the children were non-Jewish, about a third, maybe slightly more were non-Jewish, and we were Jewish, it was a good private primary school. It wasn't actually a primary school. It went bust when I was 10 years old. It was run by a philosopher called Dr. Löwenberg, Jakob Löwenberg, in fact, he wrote quite a few books, and he was a very wise, kindly old man. And I started school at the age of 6. So we had what you call Cheder there. We had religious instruction there, I learnt my first Hebrew there, and my Bible classes and whatever.

Can I ask you, I don't think you've given me your date of birth.

I did, actually. 5th July, 1921. I did say it, I think.

Yes, you were saying you had Cheder at school.

So that school, I did, I got my first Jewish instruction there. I had my first and best girlfriend I met at school, at the age of 6, and I'm still very close with her, she's now in South America, in Argentina, we see each other every few years. We're very close, and she was totally deaf, and I learned to lip-read, she lip-read me, and I learned to speak fairly well, because I had to speak distinctly so that she could hear what I was saying, she was a very beautiful girl, and she came from a very wealthy family, and they were really socially, a class superior to ours, and I was always very aware of that, cars and chauffeurs and things like that.

Was your brother barmitsvah?

Yes. My brother had a barmitsvah, and in fact, the Rabbi we had at that time came to England, and I saw him once or twice in London, and I still see his daughter occasionally. The Synagogue we belonged to was rebuilt quite near to where we lived, and it is, and was, the most beautiful building, it's still there, it's now the local, part of the local radio station in Hamburg, and I see it every year when I am in Hamburg, and it still looks like an extremely modern building. By that time though, I went to a different school, a non-Jewish private girls' school.

At what age was that?

I changed schools at the age of 10, and the School was very close to the Synagogue, which we called Temple, and so the Jewish girls in my class, there were quite a lot, I would think we were about 8 Jewish girls, that's a large proportion, we would go over to the Temple to have our Jewish instruction, while the other girls had their Pastor give them Christian instructions, so I continued with my Jewish education in a sense. I had Hebrew lessons, and we had discussion groups, I quite enjoyed it. Now, that must have been, I was born in 1921, so that was in the very early 30s.

Yes, I was going to ask you, there was no feeling at that time that ...

Not in the early days, so for the first year or two, of my new schooling, there was no anti-Jewish or, obviously I was different from the majority of children in my class, or in the School, but there were so many of us, it really didn't make that much difference. The difference crept up on us, of course, as soon as Hitler came to power, which was a very momentous year, in 1933, I was 12 years old. I had my first period that summer. Hindenberg, the President of Germany died, and Hitler came to power, all these things happened in the same year. It was very very traumatic.

Before we get onto those years, there are just one or two questions I wanted to ask you about your grandparents. You said you remembered them. Do you remember where they lived, and how they lived, and what sort of mealtimes you had together, the things you used to do with them?

We did nothing whatsoever with them, except Sunday morning visits. They lived in a flat, not as nice as ours, but quite reasonable. While I was very young they had a domestic help, a maid, and a little later on, after my grandfather died, which must have been in something like 1927, something like that, 1926, 1927, my grandmother moved to a kind of a boarding house, where she had two rooms, a bedroom and a living room, and I remember her having a hairdresser every morning, who came to dress her hair, which was elaborately done. She wore dark clothes, sort of black, long dresses. She wore boots with little buttons, I remember, she became, not exactly senile early on, but a bit dotty, to my mind. She never ever had a straight conversation with me, that I can remember, so I really made no relationship with her, but it was not much different from my mother, because I didn't have really any sort of reasonable conversations with my mother either, but my grandmother was, seemed, at least to me, at that age, totally disinterested in me. She wanted to be visited, but there wasn't any emotional contact at all.

Do you know if she'd shown love to your father?

No, she was my mother's mother.

Sorry, to your mother.

Well, she must, she might have done, but my mother never got on with her mother either, and it's a strange thing, it went down the line. My grandmother didn't seem to



get on with my mother, or rather, let's say, my mother didn't get on with my grandmother, and I didn't get on with my mother. And luckily, that is broken now, because of my emigration, and I always thank Hitler in a way, because I just happen to get on awfully well with my daughters, and I thank God that this is different now. Maybe if I lived in Germany for the rest of my life, that line, that would've gone down the line, but I started a new pattern.

You've broken the mould.

I've broken the mould, that's the right expression, and I'm really grateful for that. My mother and father used to go and have supper with my grandmother on Friday nights, and I can only remember when I was a teenager, they used to take their sandwiches to my grandmother's house, they used to eat their sandwiches there, and as often as they, as they could get me to, they would ask me to join them.

This is Friday night?

For Friday night.

But why did they take sandwiches?

Because in Germany you have your hot meal at midday, and my parents always used to come home at midday from the business, have a hot meal, and in the evening, one used to have bread and,

Oh, I see, it wasn't a Shabat dinner?

It wasn't. And in Germany that wasn't done anyway. They would have Shabat maybe, we didn't have it in our family at all, we didn't light candles or anything like that. They would have bread and butter, and in our case, salami and cheese, and ham, because we were not Kosher at all, we were brought up totally un-Kosher if you like.

What would you have had for your midday meal?

A proper dinner. Like we call lunch.

What? What sort of things?

We would have soup, we would have a three course lunch. We would have soup, and maybe chicken in a sauce with asparagus and potatoes, or we would have steak and potatoes and vegetables. In my childhood, we had soup practically every day.

What sort of soup?

It would be home-made, everything would be home-made, and Anna was our cook, and she was a very good cook. She would serve at table, and so we would have vegetable soup, or cauliflower soup, or a clear soup with noodles in it, or even (dog barking here). Well, about food, we would have very good meals, I mean, I'm considering them in comparison with what I have nowadays. It was a very substantial

midday meal, always. We would have, it was very traditional, we would have fish twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays. We would have liver on Wednesdays, and we would have something like venison, or chicken or something like that on Sundays, or steak, we would always have a pudding. I can't remember what the puddings were, but something like vanilla pudding with raspberry sauce, or a hot pudding, something like that. The meals were very good, but they were always tiring, so we always had a rest after lunch.

Because they were so substantial you mean?

Terribly substantial. I mean they were, it was a habit in Germany for people to have a rest after lunch. It was one of the pains of my life when I was a small child, having to go to bed after lunch, and I resisted as often as I could, but we were made, actually, to sleep, until we were about 6 or 7.

Did you enjoy your food?

I loved my food, always, but I was also very faddy, and I remember, for instance, I had a nanny who would make me finish my, it was particularly my evening meal, which I wasn't too keen on. I would have sandwiches put in front of me, in the nursery, and I would have to finish every morsel, and when I didn't finish it, I would have to sit there until it was gone. It must have been at lunchtime too, that I didn't eat with the family when I was quite small, cos I remember one occasion, I was so fed up with this particular nanny, and with most of my nannies, when she went out to fetch something, I took my plate with whatever was on it, I opened the balcony door, went out on the balcony and chucked the whole thing over the balcony thing, but that didn't finish there, because about a quarter of an hour later, the bell went, ten minutes later, and the cook, the downstairs cook had found what I'd thrown overboard, downstairs in her garden, and took it upstairs to tell my nanny about it, and I got the biggest thrashing of my life.

From your nanny?

From my nanny. Now, my father was a terribly indulgent father, and when he heard, either he heard me scream, or he, I told him what had happened, I knew he would do something about it, and he would dismiss my nannies on the spot, and I would remember my mother wailing, "What are we going to do without a nanny? Anna has got too much to do, she can't look after the children as well. What are you going to do about this nanny business?" And my father would say, "Don't worry, I'll advertise for another nanny." And I remember that my boyfriend who lived upstairs, he might have been 10, or 8 or something like that, we would play a nanny coming for an interview, and I would be my father, and he would be the nanny, or the other way around. Because we would sit outside the sitting room, and watch through the keyhole how my father interviewed nannies. It was always my father, never my mother, but they would be dismissed on the spot, if they were really cruel to me, which they very often were, whereas normally in Germany, in those days, you would dismiss people on the 1st or on the 15th of every month, that was the sort of done thing.

Why was that?

I don't know, it seemed to be, you had to give them notice.

Of course.

And it seemed to be the sort of timing, you would give them notice to go on the 1st, or to go on the 15th, but for any special reason, you might dismiss them on the spot, and that's what my father did with my nannies.

Were they professional nannies, or were they just young girls who just wanted a job?

At first, I remember they were professional nannies, because they were more mature people. Later on, they were young women who took an afternoon job, because I remember when I was a bit older, they only came for the afternoon, to take me for a walk, to do my prep with me, and to help entertain me in some way.

Was this before you went to school?

Oh, also before I went to school, but also when I was at school.

And you started school at 6, was it?

Mmm. You start school at 6 in Germany, you would come home before lunch, so schooling would be from 8-12, and then from 8-1. I would be taken to school, and I would be fetched from school, by tram. We would walk to the tram stop and I'd go by tram to school. The second school I went to, I was able to walk on my own, and by that time I didn't have a nanny any more.

(END OF SIDE ONE, REEL ONE)

I do remember, it's amazing how far back my memory goes, I do remember, a nanny or Anna, taking me on the tram, and I think I was a particularly naughty child, I started being rebellious from a very early age, and I would do naughty things like copying other people in the tram, and Anna saying, "No, you don't do that." And I felt I was naughty, and, mmm, well, a really naughty, normal, I think, little girl. I do remember a few things about my first school, for instance, the first day I went to school, one wore little aprons, and I remember wearing a little lace apron, and I remember the girl behind me wearing a little lace apron, and in fact, she's the woman I still correspond with who lives in Montreal, and now, since I'm 67, nearly 68, I still remember that first day at school quite clearly, which I always think is quite amazing. We had quite a number of non-Jewish teachers, and only some of them were Jewish, and I remember our Headmaster, Dr. Löwenberg quite well. When he died, which was about two years after I started school, or maybe three years, his son took over, who was also called Dr. Löwenberg, Dr. Hans Löwenberg, and as it happens, I met him again, aged 90, a couple of years ago when I was in Hamburg, and I was invited to lunch in the Town Hall, and he was one of the visitors from California, and he made a speech, this is when I met my Headmaster again, which was quite amusing, and he then told me actually, which wasn't so amusing, that my class teacher, who was called Fraulein Schmidt, and whom I loved very much, she was my class teacher for the first four years of my school life, she was the daughter of a poet, a Hamburg poet, called Otto Ernst, he wrote quite a few books, and quite a few poems, and Dr. Löwenberg told me that she became quite an eminent Nazi, which I didn't know. When that School went bust, because I suppose there weren't, I don't know why it went bust, anyway, Dr. Löwenberg he might've emigrated at that time, we had to change schools, and I went to this non-Jewish school. My first teacher there, I think I might tell you about that teacher now, because she became one of my closest friends after the War. She developed into a very strong anti-Nazi later on, but at the time I went to the school, which was at the age of 10, which must've been in 1931, she was my class teacher, and she was still , she was called Elisabeth Flügge, and she was a lovely, positive, amusing, musical teacher. We had excursions with her, she was fun. She made, she was my teacher for the first year in that School, and she made life just a lot of fun. Her daughter, who is now a very close friend of mine, was a year below me, I remember. A little picture, just to paint a tiny picture of something that happened in that first year at School, was when we had a day excursion and we went by boat across the Elbe, we went across the Elbe which is the large river by which Hamburg is situated, we went by boat, this was my class, it was a class excursion, and we went to a little place called Buchsterruder, the other side of the Elbe, and we sang walking there, and we had taken picnic lunches, and this sort of thing. We played ball, it was called "Handball", I don't know what you'd call it in English.

Handball.

Handball, yes, we were two teams, and suddenly a girl was stuck in the mud, and it was bog, and she sank deeper and deeper into the bog, and it was a very frightening experience. In the end we were only able to see her head, she screamed her head off, and Flügge, we called my teacher, who was called Frau Flügge, we called her

Flüggie, and what was unusual in the place, we called her "du" instead of "Sie", and so we were like one happy family with her, this never changed. All her pupils always said "du" instead of "Sie". Anyway, we were not hysterical because she told us exactly what to do, she was totally in charge. We formed a long line, we were all standing in the bog, and we reached out to this girl called Erica, and we pulled her out. It took about 20 minutes, I would think, and with every scream, of course, this girl sank deeper into the bog, and we got her out, totally black, and then we had to find a farmhouse to change her, and we all stripped ourselves of some piece of clothing and put this on her, and it was a most exciting day, of course, we came home, and we had this story to tell.

And you weren't hysterical?

We were not hysterical, we were all just excited.

That you'd achieved something wonderful?

Yes. It was fantastic, and we all had to write an essay about it the next day at school, it was all very exciting.

And she was a heroine, I suppose?

She was a heroine. We always called her something, die Moornixe, or something like that, which Moor is bog in German, and she was like the Bog Mermaid, for the rest of our schooldays, that's what we called her, so that was very exciting.

Was it a mixed school?

No, it was a girls' school.

And your previous school was a ...

Also a girls' school.

Just girls' schools.

They were all girls' schools.

And what sort of conditions did you have in these schools? Were they new buildings, or were they old houses?

No, it was an old house, it was a large private house.

You're talking about your second school?

Yes. I'll tell you about the first one, that was also a large private house. They were relatively small private girls' schools. In my second school, we started with one foreign language, which was English, when I was 10, so I almost immediately started with English at school, and then we started with a second foreign language which was

French. I could have gone on to a Grammar School, but I wasn't particularly brilliant, or even particularly bright, so I didn't. I was just very average at school, and so I stayed in this school, which went up to the age of 16, roughly, to equivalent of 'O' levels, which I never got, incidentally, I left school before then, but that was due to Hitler more than anything else. So that I started with English almost straight away. The School was pleasant, the Headmistress was pretty strict, she was an unmarried woman, called Ria Wirth, she wasn't a very outstanding person in any way at all. It was an orderly, well-established private, private school.

Not boarding?

No.

They were not boarded?

No, no, that was not done in Germany, there were very few boarding schools, in fact, it became one of my ambitions to go to an English boarding school, it seemed to me like the height of, oh, it would be so lovely, and to wear a uniform, now that, maybe I'll mention that again later, would be something that I should .... we didn't wear a uniform.

At the second school you didn't?

Never. German schools don't wear uniforms, so we wore any old thing, but not really any old thing, we would sort of outdo each other, you know, "she had new shoes on", or "she had a new skirt", somebody else had a new jumper, and so we, it wasn't exactly a snobbish school, but it was a very middle-class sort of school. We had one or two more or less working class children there, but by and large, we were middle class children. The parents of my contemporaries were in the business world, or medical world, or they were sort of middle-class people. We always came home for lunch. School was only in the mornings. As we got older, we might have left school at half past one, we would have say, about five or six, or seven lessons, every morning, and we would come home for a late lunch.

What other lessons did you have apart from languages?

We had geography, history, English, German History, mathematics, geometry, algebra, more or less sort of a general across the board education really.

And what about games at school?

Very, games as you know them, very very little. We didn't have a sportsground, we had a school yard, and we used to have exercises sometimes in the school yard. We did occasionally, I can't remember whether it was a regular thing, go to a sort of a sports field, I don't know how to describe it, where we did a bit of running or jumping, but it wasn't a sort of a general,

Not regular?

It wasn't a regular thing to do. We used to play völkerbar, which was a sort a handball in the school yard. We used to have gym, and we used to have singing.

Ah yes, I was going to ask about music.

Yes, we had singing, and we had a retired singer, and we used to, we used to manipulate our teachers like hell. I had a girl in my class who was a pianist, she was really brilliant, and her whole family were pianists, they were musical, they were Jewish, and in fact, her mother emigrated on the same boat with me, she now lives in New York, my friend. And we used to manipulate our teacher, when we, if we begged her a lot, she would allow Marian to play to us, she would play Chopin and things, and that would get us out of having to sing. We used to manipulate our French teacher, when we started French, it was our Headmistress, we used to ask her all sorts of questions, and that would get us out of writing an essay in French, or whatever, a translation or something.

And they were susceptible to that?

They were susceptible, so they were pretty weak.

But obviously quite nice?

They were quite nice, yes.

Tell me, what, what sort of songs did you sing when you sang them?

They were German hiking songs, and German, it's difficult to describe, sort of old, in German it's called "volkslieder".

Folk songs?

Yes, yes, they were old folk songs. We used to have first voice, second voice and third, whatever you call it, and descant?

Descant, yes.

Yes, singing, I was second usually. Some choral works. They used to take us to the opera once a year, which was very nice, and then my first opera with the school was Fidelio, and we used to go through the music of Fidelio. We also went to the theatre when we, in German lessons we had Schiller and Goethe, and so we saw some plays, Schiller and Goethe plays. They would take us on occasional school holidays, for a week, and I can't remember, because by the time it came to those sort of excursions, we Jewish children couldn't join in any more. I mean, I'm sticking now with the time before Hitler really, at this minute, and I'm trying to drag up any old memories that I have.

At this time, you were going to the Synagogue across the road, weren't you.

Yes.

Were you learning Hebrew and Hebrew songs?

Yes.

Religious songs or popular songs?

No, they were prayers more than anything as I can remember, it was really going through the Prayer Book, it was sort of Saturday morning service. And there were some songs that would be sung in the Synagogue, in the services.

Yes. And you learnt to read Hebrew?

I learned to read Hebrew the old-fashioned way. What I liked best, and I think that's indicative of me, I learnt, I liked the discussion groups, the philosophy of Judaism, that's when I started liking group work, if you like. We had a secondary Rabbi at the Synagogue who was very much into the philosophy of life, and we used to discuss Judaism as such, I mean, this was between the ages of 10 and 14, I suppose, or 15. I was very interested in that, and I liked to discuss and put my point of view forward, and listen to other people's point of view and that very much fitted in with what I did later on in life. I had very little opportunity of that kind in my home, because I suppose what I'd really like to say is, that I always felt that I had very little in common with my parents. I felt not understood. This was a sort of theme that went through my life, except that I had a sort of, I had a very close relationship with my father, and I suppose I've got to refute what I said just now, because my father listened to me, and he would take me for walks on Sunday mornings, and it was a funny, peculiar thing, because he would say, on a Sunday morning, "Would you like to come for a walk with me?" And my first reaction would always be to say, "Oh no, it's boring, and I haven't got anybody to play with, and oh, I'd rather stay at home." And Anna always said, "Oh come on, go with your father, he'd like you to come with him. And you do enjoy it, you know you're going to enjoy it. Go on, here's your coat." And she used to push me out, and we used to go for a walk. And we used to go by Tube somewhere, out into the country, or into a big park, and he used to teach me little bits of English, I remember. And he used to talk about his family a little bit, and he used to tell me about his time in England, because my father was sent to England before the First World War. The War started in 1914, and I think he came to England in 1912, can't have been 1912 because he married in 1912, so I don't quite know when he came to England, it must've been before he married, so maybe he came in 1910. He worked in England and in Scotland, in various factories, businesses, he went as a textile merchant, and he, it was really to learn English, and also to see how importing/exporting went, and he had a marvellous time in England, and really thoroughly enjoyed himself.

For about two years?

For about two years. And his English wasn't bad. I've only recently looked through some of his letters, and his English seems appalling when I look at it now. But, to me as a child, he would be able to speak English, and he would teach me little poems, and



he would teach me how to speak English. So, on the whole, I enjoyed those walks. I'd like to come back to the walks later when I talk about Hitler, because there were certain incidents before 1933 that stick out in my mind.

So apart from your father, there was nobody really in your family, who you could talk to, but in the

Well, I could, yes,

Synagogue group, you did.

What happened when I came home from school was that Anna used to listen to me, but she had very little time. I would come into the kitchen and tell her what happen, and then she would, she would put the lunch on the table, and then we would eat. And then I would want to tell my parents something that happened at school, and I would always be shut up by my mother. It would always be, "Don't talk to me now, I want to talk to your father." And she would talk to him about anything that happened in the business. My brother didn't come into the picture very much, I mean, he would sit there, but he went to a secondary, I mean, he went to a Grammar School, he was very very good at school, and he was always held up as, "Your clever brother. Isn't he marvellous." And, "Why aren't you like him?" And so I was a dud.

And you weren't?

I felt a dud.

You weren't close to him then?

Not at all. There was four years between us, and he just didn't bother very much with me, and poor chap, he had to look after me on Tuesday afternoons, when it was Anna's day off, and he used to hate it. He used to have to, he wasn't able to go out with his chums, and he would have to look after me. I don't know whether it's very interesting, but he introduced me to sex at that time, and showed me his penis once or twice, and I was quite appalled! Having seen it in the past when I was very little, but that was my first introduction into sex education! Of course, I never told anybody, I thought that was quite wicked. No, we weren't close, we never talked much about anything, and I knew I couldn't really talk to my mother, she wasn't really interested. Anna was our housekeeper, and her sister, and this I think is quite important to tell somebody something about Anna. She came from a little town called Friedrichstadt, which is in Schleswig Holstein. I visited this town again a couple of years ago, and it's now like a museum town, it's quite an extraordinary, very historical town, built on Dutch lines, because in 1600 and something, there were Jews and Dutch people who were persecuted for some reason or other. The Jews because they were Jewish, and these Dutch people because they belonged to a religious sect, and they were allowed by the then Duke of something or other, to reside in this little town of Friedrichstadt in the state of Schleswig Holstein. In return they had to build up the town, and they built very interesting houses in the Dutch tradition. This little town resembles a Dutch town, it has waterways, all the way through the town, going to the river, I've forgotten the name, it's near Husum, this little town, and yeh, the river is called Eider,

and it's just like a little Dutch town in the middle of Germany, and Anna came from there. It was important to me as a child, because she used to take me home to her father's house, and I used to spend delightful holidays with her, with her parents, her father was a miller, and Anna was my emotional base really, she was very stable, she was musical, she sang all day long, she was positive, she was loving, she was able to cuddle me, she was a lovely person. Very important to me.

Not Jewish, presumably?

Not Jewish, no.

How old?

She must have been, just when I can work back, she was about 36 when Hitler decreed that people under 35 had to leave Jewish employment, and she was just over that age, so we thank God we were able to keep her. She must've been in her what, middle 20s when she came to us, and I was one year old. I do digress a bit, because Anna always told me that when she came to us, I would be in a beautiful cradle, which was in our, we called it "biedermeyer zimmer", which was a room in the "Biedermeyer" style, I don't know what that is in English at all.

Biedermeyer, that's a man, yes.

That's right.

A designer.

A wonderful style of furniture which my parents had inherited from somebody or other, and my cradle would stand in this room, and nobody was allowed to touch me, except the nurse, who would feed me at given times, she would pick me out and feed me and put me down again, and I think I used to yell like mad, maybe that's why I've turned into whatever I've turned into! But they didn't come to me when I cried, so when the nanny, or nurse, or whatever she was, went out, Anna used to pick me up secretly, and nurse me and cuddle me. She always said that if it hadn't been for her, I would never have managed to get teeth, because they never fed me anything that was sort of crusty, so she used to give me little bits of black bread to chew on, so she obviously became the first person who really cuddle me and gave me real warmth.

Were your nurses wet nurses, do you know, or did your mother breast feed you?

I think they might well have been, but I'm not sure whether she actually breast fed us or not. I don't know. I have a suspicion she might not have done. I know I was born in a nursing home, but whether she actually breast fed me, I just don't know, they may well have been wet nurses, and later on they were, what the Germans call "Sautlingschwester", which was a baby nurse, you know, nursery nurse, or whatever. So, Anna was important to me, and later on in life, she would have me to stay with her in her holidays occasionally, at her parents house, which was utter bliss for me. What my parents didn't know was that I had to share a bed with her, and they would have been appalled, so I never told them. She never actually said to me, "Don't

mention it to them", but I never did. Now, their house was terribly interesting, and I went and visited two years ago, I couldn't go inside of course. It's completely rebuilt. It was a tiny little town house, and they had a loft, sort of like a loft ladder that we climbed up, and there was this little bedroom built up in the loft, and we slept there. And in the floor, there was a brick which you removed, and you could get the heat from the sitting room, up into the loft. And when Anna had gone down in the evening, after putting me to bed, I remember taking the brick, putting it aside, and listening to what they were talking about in the sitting room. And I remember her father was a very tall man, as I said before, he was a miller, and his clothes always looked white, because he was covered with flour, of course, he wouldn't wash before he came to dinner or lunch or whatever, and he smoked pipes, very old-fashioned china pipes, I remember, of which he had about twenty, and they all hung on the wall, and he would pick up one of these very long pipes, always smiled, and he smoked these pipes, and there was something very comforting about that. They had an outside loo, and so when you had to go to spend a penny at night, you used to have to climb down that ladder, and get into the yard, and go to the loo. I remember really happy times in that little town. I do know that later on I was aware that there was a little Synagogue in that town, and Anna, in fact, showed me that Synagogue once, it was a little private house, that had been made into a Synagogue, and I visited the house two years ago. It has a little monument outside, which says, "This was the Synagogue which was destroyed on the 9th November, 1938", and so there was a very small Jewish congregation in Friedrichstadt, and Anna was very aware of all of this, and told me about some of the Jews who lived in Friedrichstadt, and jumping the years, two years ago, which would be something like 1986, or '87, I think it was 1986 when I visited this little town, I went to see a very old man who sold me a book he had written about the Jews of Friedrichstadt, and it was very very interesting, because he lived opposite this Synagogue and saw it burnt to the ground in 1938, and he wrote this book while he was a Prisoner of War in England, during this last War, and he had friends at school who were Jewish boys, and so he told the whole story, seen through his eyes, which was very interesting to me.

He was obviously sympathetic?

Most sympathetic, and he was utterly ashamed of what happened then. He was a carpenter, and he was a son of a sort of a small town carpenter. And he remembered the parents of my Anna, and in fact, it was very strange, because I went to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, the sort of Information Bureau two years ago. The man who I interviewed, or he interviewed me, I don't know who interviewed who, knew some of the people I knew when I was a child, in this little town. They were not Jewish, they were friends of my Anna, and of her parents.

Can you tell me any more about this fascinating house she lived in? For example, the floors, and whether there was a bathroom, and where you bathed or washed.

There was no bathroom at all. You, in the little house, it's quite interesting. The sitting room was to the right as you came in, they let the room to the left to a workman, I can't remember what he was about, so on the right there was a sitting room with a great big kachel oven, which was a tiled stove, very old-fashioned tiled stone in which you burnt wood, and that sort of heated the whole house, it didn't heat

it, but it warmed it. You washed in the kitchen, where there was a big sink, and that was cold water only. I would get, I think Anna used to fetch me a bowl of water to wash in our bedroom, in which she would've put some water out of the kettle, and cold water, and I would wash in the bedroom. And I remember something very odd, that was, we, at one time, we slept in a tiny little room which was next to the living room, and that must have been next to, do you call it an abbatoir?

Yes.

Where animals are killed?

Yes. Yes, an abbatoir.  
(END OF SIDE TWO, REEL ONE)

Well, I was talking about the abattoir next door, and I looked for it two years ago, and there was indeed a sort of a drive in, which I think could've been an abattoir, because we used to hear pigs and cows sort of screeching, I think cows didn't but pigs did, and I always wondered what that awful noise was, and I realised they must have been killing animals there. When you got into the kitchen, and you were interested to hear how they heated their water, I can't remember what their kettles looked like, but they must have had a range, it was probably a range heated with wood, on which they cooked, and where they had a big iron kettle. It wasn't an open fire, it was a sort of a closed range on which they cooked. I didn't go to the kitchen much, but I remember a picture, which I think is quite interesting, and I must have, actually, a photograph at home, these women like Anna's mother, used to sit on a seat outside the front door, and they used to clean the vegetables and scrape the potatoes, or peel potatoes and vegetables, outside their front doors, and they used to talk to each other across the street. It was a narrow cobbled street, I remember, and I remember the various people who lived there. These old women, they were old to me then, they must have been in their early sixties when I met them first, used to have straight, long hair, grey hair, which they kept in a knot, sort of a knot at the back of their head, and they wore aprons at all times. They wore black clothes and aprons, they were, I think they were rather longish dresses. I remember a funny thing, that the neighbour who lived on the, next to this little house that Anna's parents lived in, they probably rented it, there was an old lady there who was handicapped, and she was always sitting inside her window, and she had a mirror outside her window, and she could see what was happening along one side of the street, and if she looked the other way, she could see what happened the other side of the street, and I remember she used to observe us kids playing outside in the street. We always used to know how, whatever her name was, I can't remember what her name was, she used to know exactly what we were doing and what we were up to.

Do you think she did it for her own amusement?

Oh yes. And for gossip, she could say, "Somebody went past my window", and "So and so went to visit Mrs. So and So." And I remember playing with kids in the street, and one of the games, this was quite interesting, they used to hang up rings and we used to run along the street, with something like a spear, I don't remember what it was, having to catch this ring in our, whatever this toy, instrument or whatever, was, which was a copy of something grown up people did, because I remember a festival in this little town, when the butcher, who was Anna's boyfriend, I remember, though he was married, and I remember, I think that she had an affair with him, I kind of guessed as a little girl. And he used to ride a horse, and these grown up people used to play this game, riding a horse, with a sort of spear in their right hand, and they used to have to, somehow or other, catch these rings, which were strung across the pathway, and the whole thing was called "ringreiten" which was a sort of a, I don't know,

Ring riding?

Yes. That's what it was.

Isn't that rather

It was sort of like a national game.

Yes, but that's a very very ancient jousting.

That's exactly what it was. An ancient game that they played, and that was fantastic to watch, and we used to copy that when we were children. The other thing we did in this little town, was, the Easter time, and I was there once or twice at Easter, or even more times than that. They used to dye hard-boiled eggs, and we used to take perhaps half a dozen of these hard-boiled eggs onto the dyke with us. The dykes were these sort of, you call them a dyke? I don't know what you would call them, along the rivers. There was the River Eider, and there were little branches of rivers, which was called the Träne, and we would play alongside of this river, and we would play a kind of ball game with these hard-boiled eggs, and, and if you cracked somebody else's egg, and yours was not cracked, you could keep the other person's egg, and I remember once, I ate six hard-boiled eggs all in one go! The best thing about it for me was that my parents would never have allowed it! I was thrilled to pieces, and I don't think I was even sick afterwards! So, as a child, I had a fantastically free time there. Anna was the sort of person who didn't put boundaries around me, she left me free, and yet I felt very secure with her. She would worry like hell if I was lost, but she didn't keep these very strict boundaries which I felt were put about me at home.

And did these holiday trips to Anna's house, did they go on until 1933?

No, they only went on perhaps until I was about 10 or 11, or something like that. I do remember one holiday, most summer holidays, when I was very young, my mother and a nanny used to take us to the seaside. My mother never ever took us alone, because she would say in a moaning sort of voice she "couldn't cope with those children on her own", and we used to just groan when we heard that, because she, I mean, she just, we, we thought she was impossible, we would always go with a nanny, and in a way, I even now, I think we served us right, because one or other of us was nearly always ill, and there we would be sick with chicken pox, or whooping cough or something, so one of them would have to stay in the hotel with us, while the other one had to go to the beach. She would take us to places like Nordernei, or the , which were Fresian islands, with masses and masses of beaches, so when I was a very small child, and my brother, we used to go on these sort of summer holidays to the beach.

Not with your father?

My father sometimes came to visit us, he nearly never came with us. It was always my mother and a nanny. And then when I was about, I imagine 7 or 8, they used to send us, me, probably my brother as well, yes, once or twice I went with my brother to what was called "Kinderheim", which was like a holiday for kids, you would call it a camp, a summer camp. I think that's what it would be, but it would be very strict, and they would be to us, ghastly places. I remember once or twice we went to nice

ones, and I do remember going twice with my brother, and he would kind of look after me, it was quite a comfort having him there. We would be allowed to spend some pocket money on fresh fruit, other than that we were regimented into doing this, that and the other, and it was a bit like school. We would all troop to the beach together, we would make castles on the beach, and we would go to the water all together. The earlier ones I went to when I was perhaps 7, 8, maybe even 9, were quite pleasant ones, and then probably at the age of 10, I went to a dreadful one, without my brother, it was on the isle of Sylt, which was in the North Sea, and it was a very strict institution, however my mother found this out I can't imagine, it was a ghastly place, very regimented, and I remember I was constantly punished for something or other, and I remember once I was punished and I was locked into the loo. It was either a loo, or in the loft, I can't remember which, but I remember the Zeppelin went past, and the worst of being punished was that I didn't have a preview of the Zeppelin going past overhead, and I remember standing on the loo seat and looking out of this loft kind of window, and seeing the Zeppelin flying past, and so I was quite pleased to have seen the thing go by anyway. I was so unhappy there, that when I was visited by the mother of a friend of mine who spent her holidays in this island, and was obviously given my address by my parents, so she came and took me out. I complained bitterly about this ghastly place, and then I remember my brother taking me out, because he was in a holiday home run by his school, and that was lovely for him, he was on the other side of the island, and he visited me and took me out for a walk, and I cried my eyes out, and I told him what a ghastly place it was, and my brother, and the mother of my friend, told my parents about it, and I remember one morning, being woken up, and being told by the Sister in Charge, they were sort of nurses in uniform who looked after us, "Get ready, get yourself up, pack your things, you will be fetched by your father." And nobody could have been more delighted than I. So I packed, got my clothes together, and it wasn't my father who fetched me, it was Anna, and she took me back to her home, because she was on summer holiday, and she was told by my parents, by I imagine a telegram, or something, "Please fetch Ilse, can you take her home with you." And I went to her home, and spent the rest of my summer holidays with her. Because, in fact, they wouldn't have known what to do with me at home, there wouldn't have been anybody to look after me, and so they were a bit stuck.

Did your parents go away on holiday themselves, just the two of them?

They hardly ever went on holiday together. My mother went skiing in the winter, there were pictures of her going to St. Moritz, or to \_\_\_\_\_, or to Seefeld in Austria, and my father used to go to places like Moran and the Tyrol in Italy, in the Dolomites in Italy. He used to go in the spring, and my mother used to go in the winter, and my mother used to take us in the summer until she didn't any more. They, to my knowledge, hardly ever had a holiday together in my living memory. I mean, they might have done when they were first married. They always made the excuse "We can't be away from the business at the same time." But I think they made that an excuse. My parents marriage was a very poor one. It was extremely poor. It was the worst model of a marriage that I could have imagined. They constantly quarrelled. They quarrelled about money, they quarrelled about us. My father was obviously a most indulging sort of a father, and my mother always resented it, there must have been a lot of rivalry going on for our affection, because my mother thought my father

was spoiling me, which obviously he did, but he was my staunch ally. I said before that I was never allowed to talk at lunchtime, so if I had something on my mind, I do remember going into my room, and doing my prep, and my father coming in at 3 o'clock, with a cup of coffee and his cigar, and he would sit by my side, and he would say, "Now tell me all about it." And I would tell him whatever was on my mind. By that time it wasn't a problem anymore, because I was really so furious that nobody listened to me at the time when I wanted to talk about it, but it was nice of him to do that.

It obviously was difficult for him.

Yes.

Between the two of you, I suppose.

It was, quite difficult, he was sort of peace maker.

You told me that you didn't have a religious household, but you went to Synagogue. Did you keep festivals like Passover? Did you have a Seder night?

Yes, that was very interesting. There were one or two occasions my father had a Seder, he made a, he played, or whatever you did, conducted a Seder in our house, in our flat. His sisters came, I really must talk to you about, perhaps you will remind me, about his sisters, because they played quite a part in my childhood. We had a Seder only once or twice when I was quite young. I do remember having to say the ma nishtana myself, so I must have been perhaps 5 or 6.

And your grandparents, did they come?

No. Well, my mother's parents, I can't remember, I don't think they came. I can't see them there. I can only see my father's sisters round the table, and my father, or one of his sisters would play the piano to our songs, we used to sing the usual Passover songs, which don't differ very much from the songs sung nowadays, almost the same tune.

Really?

Yes. Some of them are really old traditional tunes.

It depends where you come from, actually.

Yes. But in Hamburg this was so. Some of the tunes have changed, but some of the songs are very much the same. So we would have Passover, we would go to Synagogue on Ro  
and Yom Kippur.

What about Hunneker?



We did not celebrate Hunneker. I would be invited by some of my friends to celebrate Hunneker with them. On the other hand, I do remember, I think my father did light the candles, there wasn't much of a celebration. I mean, I know we had a minora, and I know we lit the candles on the first day, second day and so on. We would sing the ma atsur, the same tune that we sing now, but there wasn't much else. In fact, we had a Christmas tree when I was a child, we always had a small Christmas tree, and we celebrated Christmas and with German traditional fayre, but it wasn't a religious festival, it was a traditional German festival, it was terribly sad and solemn, but I remember, on the 24th, which was Christmas Eve, my brother and I would be in the nursery, and it would be dark, we wouldn't have a light on, and we would wait for a little bell, and we would then go into the living room, sitting room, call it what you will, where there was a lit Christmas tree, meaning the candles would be alight. They would be real candles, and we would come in, and we would see, now this is quite interesting, not in the Jewish way, but in the Christian/German way, there would be, very difficult to explain this. There would be little places with presents for Mother and Father, and Anna, and Anna's sister, who I haven't mentioned yet, but she comes into it as well, and for my brother and for me. We would each have our little place with our presents on it.

On the tree?

No. Nothing directly under the tree, but somewhere in the room, I mean, there would be a table topped with a little table cloth, and presents for me, that would be my little table, and there would be one for my brother, and one for every member of the family. They would be unwrapped, they wouldn't be parcels wrapped up. For instance, I would see immediately what I'd got, they would be obvious. And Anna would have classical things like, it was, every year the same, there would be material for a dress, and there would be a new apron, and there would be some silk, and there would be chocolates, and things like that for her. And there would be something I would have got for her, and equally from my mother there would be things that we'd given her, or that my father had given her. So that you went immediately to your, to the little things, that you knew these were your presents. And one Christmas abend, I had a little green dolls pram, which I'd been longing to have, and there it was. But

Was this the only time of year you exchange presents? Or did you exchange on birthdays.

Yes. Birthdays yes.

You did a lot with birthdays? Did you have parties?

Yes, we did a lot with birthdays. Birthdays were a big thing. You always gave a party for your birthday, and my mother, that was the one day in the year, besides Christmas, when she didn't go to work, and she didn't go to the business, into town. She would have a tea party for her cronies in the afternoon, with masses of cakes and stuff, and in the evening they would have guests, and they would have a party for her. I can't remember my father's birthday! I can't, because it was August, and we were probably having summer holidays, 20th August. Birthdays were made a lot of fuss of, and Christmas was. Now, coming back to Christmas. First Christmas Day would

be solemn, in other houses religious, in our house it was just, irrelegious sort of holiday.

What did you eat?

Ah! Eat. On Christmas even we had carp, traditional German thing to do. Now, whether it was done in the whole of Germany or only in Hamburg, I'm never quite sure. We had one or two carps swimming in the bath on Christmas Eve, they would be bought live, and they would be put in the bath, and then Anna had to kill them. I never watched her do that, and they would be cooked, boiled, and you would eat them with horseradish sauce, horseradish, which would be grated, and I remember Anna crying while she grated horseradish, because it got up her nose, and she, it would be mixed with cream, and boiled potatoes, and you didn't eat any vegetable with it. So Christmas Eve, to which my grandmother would sometimes come, I now remember, but not anybody else, I can't remember, that was on Christmas Eve, and you had a dessert of fruit, I think, you know, I can't remeber what it was, afterwards. The carp was standard procedure. On Christmas Day, we had goose, and you asked me before, did my mother cook? My mother couldn't boil an egg. She did not cook, but on Christmas Eve, she would come home early, to draw the goose. That was the only thing she ever did in the kitchen, because she enjoyed doing it. Really, a most peculiar thing, she just loved drawing the goose, I cannot imagine why.

But she didn't draw chickens during the year, or anything?

Nothing else, ever, but she came on Christmas Eve, to draw the goose. Another, so we had goose on Christmas Day, and I can't remember what we had on Boxing Day. Boxing Day was the most boring day of the whole year. You had no fun, you weren't allowed to see your friends. I might have taken my dolls pram for a walk, or perhaps gone for a ride on my new bicycle or something like that, but other than that, it was extremely boring. There was something I was going to say about Christmas Eve. Yes. There was one traditional thing that happened in our house. My parents had a man who did deliveries for the business, he would have a blue and white checked cloth, and the goods he would deliver to these clients of my parents, he would, he would have them wrapped in this cloth, and he would carry this cloth on his back, that's what I remember, my earliest childhood, he was called Fritz, and he would come on Christmas Eve and get his Christmas presents, in our house, and I remember him coming with an empty blue and white checked cloth, it would be full of presents when he left, and there was no Christmas Eve without Fritz. Very strange.

Was this a pleasant thing that happened?

Very pleasant. Fritz always came for his Christmas presents. When things were good in business, at the time when the business went well, my parents had about 60 employees, we were always very proud of the fact that they had so many. In fact, my father had this business in the middle of the City, and then we had a branch of this business in the suburb where we lived, which was run by my aunt. This was when things went well, because they often didn't go very well. Something I was going to say about my aunts. My father had four sisters, the oldest of which died when I was a small child, of cancer. She was called Anna Hirsch, and her son died only a few

months ago, in Capeteown, aged nearly 90. Now tante Anna, as I called her, died when I was about four. Then there were three more sisters, one of whom I adored, she was called tante Walli, and she ran the branch business in the suburb for my father, because she lost her husband, I think perhaps at about 50, and she hadn't got much to live on, so my father gave her that job. My father also had two younger sisters, and this was a great tragedy because there was a family disease in my father's family, which was spondylitis, or spondylosis, or there was, it was a spinal complaint, and quite a number of people in my father's family had a back problem, in other words. And these two aunts were crooked and had, were hunchbacks. One was called Fanni, she was the older of the two, and the other was called Olli, and because they were both hunchbacks, I found that very embarrassing when I was a child, and they had no means of support, if you like, other than my father. Because my father's business was an old family business, he had to keep his sisters for the rest of their Hamburg lives, because these two sisters were eventually deported eventually, and they were, they died of, I think, typhus or something, in Theresienstadt, so they were holocaust victims. They were kept by my father all their lives, which must have been terrible for them, because certainly, really embarrassing for my mother, and a great matter of contention between my father and my mother. I suppose there were really more rows about these two sisters than anything else, because my mother resented that a large chunk of the income went to my father's sisters.

And they couldn't work?

No. Now the eldest of the two became a photographer, and I have pictures of myself as a child, done by her, she might have sold a few photographs, but I don't think she did much with it, it was more of a hobby. They lived in a flat in the same street where we lived, in a small flat, and we visited them regularly. At one point, it must have been the first, the forerunner of meals on wheels that I can think of, Anna had to cook for these two sisters, and had a funny contraption by which the soup was put on a sort of thing, a funny sort of contraption, I can't even explain what it looked like. It was stacked plates, and the hot food was put into these, and she carried it round to them every day, that must've gone on for a few years, so that I, in fact, got fond of the sisters as well, because my mother refused to have them to lunch every day. I suppose I can understand that. So there were these two sisters, and they took part in the festivals and various things like that. My other aunt, Tante Walli, I was very fond of. She eventually joined her daughters, of whom I was also very fond, in America, and she died a natural death in New York. Her eldest daughter, Hilde, is my favourite cousin who still lives in New Jersey, and I went to see her last autumn. I regularly see her, she's now 80, she's going to be 85 in May. That's my oldest cousin. Her sister who's three years younger, lives in Lugano, also a widow, and I see her from time to time, I visit her in Lugano. These are the daughters of my Aunt Walli. So they are my father's relations. I didn't mention that my mother actually had a brother, and he must have been the black sheep of the family, because he, I don't even know whether he was younger or older than my mother, I think he was a few years younger. He didn't get on with his parents, and this was really a thing that went through the family, not getting on with your parents, it seemed to be a kind of family, whatever you call it.

Problem?

Yes. He left home, I think at the age of 17, and left home, and wasn't heard of for years. After my grandfather died, my uncle Walter suddenly appeared again. By that time he had married a Spanish lady, and they were living in Cuba, and they had two sons, so I have two cousins roaming about somewhere, one is a year older than I, called Louis Dario, and one is a year younger than I, called Otto, and I have not the faintest idea what became of them. In fact, last year, when I was in Florida, I had the urge to find out from some Cuban somebody or other, to sort of trace their whereabouts, maybe I might do that one day, it may be too late, I don't know what happened to them. This uncle then disappeared again. Apparently he left his wife and went to America, because my brother tells me that he remembers my mother having heard from her brother from America. He died in obscurity in America, after this last War. So that was my mother's brother. Where shall I start now?

(END OF SIDE ONE, REEL TWO)

So now we've got to the time, 1933, when Hitler came to power.

Right. As I said, it was a pretty momentous year for me, because my periods started, Hindenberg who seemed to have been the peacemaker, we thought all would be well while Hindenberg was alive, and then Hitler came to power. Now, the forerunner of this, as far as I can remember, was hearing quite a lot of political talk, I was 12 years old, I wasn't at all particularly interested, but on my walks with my father on Sunday morning, we would encounter various parties fighting each other in the streets of Hamburg. They would argue, they would fight each other, and there would be shots fired at times, and so started for me, a very dangerous time of my life. One became frightened, and my father would say, "Always be careful. You walk straight home if you come up against any of these political meetings. Don't get mixed up in it. Walk away from it." And that's exactly what my father did with me on our walks. We would hear the occasional shot. One momentous occasion, for me, was, when in 1934, I visited a very old friend of my mother's, in the South of Germany, this was in Hessen, it was in a little town called Schlüchtern, where I had been when I was much younger as well, my mother had, my mother had very close friends, very close, long family friends, and that is where I encountered my first anti-Semitism. I would play with local Jewish children, and I remember going to the swimming baths, and on our way back, there were little boys and girls, I don't know actually whether there were girls, but we were stoned. Stones were thrown at us, and we were told we were, you know, nasty Jews, or whatever it was they shouted after us. And it was my very first, and I must say, the only occasion when I was publicly ill-treated, or what do you call it?

Attacked?

Attacked. The other thing that happened at that time, which I remember very well indeed. An old friend of my mother's who was the owner of a soap factory, in this little town, or just outside this little town, he was taken into a concentration camp, his wife moved to Frankfurt, which was nearby, and the house was ransacked by Nazis, young Nazis would loot the house, silver, linen, anything that was at all of anything, was taken away and carted down the hill, and we would stand by, remember I was only 13 at the time, this was in 1934, I would watch this going on, and my friends I was staying with, and my, I had a boyfriend, a new boyfriend at that stage, and a lovely boy to my way of thinking, he was fantastic, he was the first boy I actually fell in love with. And we were helpless and paralysed, to see this going on. So we realised what can happen to Jews under Hitler. I hadn't been aware of any of that, coming from Hamburg, which was largely a Social Democratic town, it was full of sailors, obviously, Hamburg was a very large harbour. It was a Hansiatic town, which meant it was fairly international. Shop owners would pride themselves on speaking French and English, and most people in Hamburg were very much used to an international way of life, they would go to England for this, or to France for something else, possibly to America, and we weren't used to this kind of small town, anti-Jewish activity at all. In fact, really anti-Semitism hadn't occurred to me, so that was my introduction to it.

Your boyfriend at the time, he was a Jewish boy?

He was a Jewish boy, yes, and I met him in this little town, he didn't come from Hamburg, he came from near Hanover. So that was quite a nasty experience. In Hamburg, it, all I can say is really, that this way of life, the Nazi way of life, and being Jewish in this, meant that became more and more Nazified, it crept up on us, so that we would hardly know how it happened. It was very extraordinary. It was like, it, it, it's difficult to really explain it. I can at least say that in 1935, probably, when I was 14, that's right, I, my school joined a rowing club, and I was terribly keen on rowing, I'd been used to going on the river, Alster, which was a sort of a lake in the middle of Hamburg, it's the most beautiful lake, and my friend Varian had two boats, one a canoe and one a rowing boat, and from the year dot, when we were both 6 or 7, we were used to canoing and rowing, and so when my school actually suggested, would be be allowed to, by our parents, join a rowing club, where we would do proper sculling, I was as keen as anybody, and we were doing dry rowing, and so I was going to be a member. Dry rowing meaning we would learn how to sit in one of those mobile seats in a canoe, or in a, I don't know what you call it really, one of those long rowing boats, with a two, or four, or six or eight.

They're called rowing boats, sculling I think is a smaller boat.

Maybe it's called sculling, I don't know. I was terribly terribly thrilled.

It's called dry rowing because you're not on the water, you would practice, not on the water, I see.

You practised moving your seat forwards and backwards and what you do with your arms, and these kind of exercises, and we did that several times, and just as I thought, next week, Monday, we're going to go to our Rowing Club, and we're really going to let the boats down into the river, and we're going to have a go at this. I got a letter, I remember as if it was today, and it had a sort of a grey/blue envelope in it, and it said, "Dear Ilse Gutentag", something like that, "because you're a Jew, we are unable to enrol you in our Club, and we regret to tell you that you will never be able to become a member of this Club." And I just sat there and howled. Really, that was the very first anti-Semitic attack on me personally, on me with my name in front of it. That was my first thing, so I couldn't join the Rowing Club, everybody else would go to it.

Had you heard of anything like that happening to anyone before?

Not in Hamburg. Obviously we had friends from other places who were emigrating. There were acquaintances of my parents who had been in concentration camps, and were actually allowed out because they were emigrating, I must have heard, but I can't remember of incidences.

But when it came, you were obviously upset that it was addressed to you.

Yes.

But the fact of you being a Jew, and therefore excluded, was that something you recognised as something that might be going on?

I did recognise it as a common thing. But the other thing I also must say, that it was, I think in 1933, that we had the first incidence of SS men standing outside my parents' shops, and they didn't actually stop customers from coming in, but they would tell customers, "This is a Jewish shop, are you aware of it? And you had better go and find your goods elsewhere." And this would, there would be a big day of, where all Jewish shops had SS men standing in front, and I remember that very well, because the talk, my parents talk would be something like, "Do you remember Mrs. Bloggs coming in and she went to the SS man and she said, 'Shut up, you can't tell me where to go, I've been buying here, my mother's been buying here in this shop for years and years, and I'm not going to allow you to tell me when not to buy somewhere.'" And my parents being very proud and pleased that their customers came in spite of these SS men.

But at this stage they were not physically stopping them?

They were not physically stopping them coming in.

But did many people not ...

Yes, some people were being stopped from coming in, and some people were obviously stopped for good from coming in. They didn't, in those days, have signs to say it was a Jewish shop.

What was the name of your shop?

Brühl and Gutentag. And it was a very well-know, well-established business. This sort of thing, I'm not sure how often it happened, maybe twice a year, but they would have a sort of a day of SS men being employed to stop people going into Jewish businesses. So in a sense, we got used to this kind of thing happening. Another personal experience at around that time, was that I had a girlfriend at school who was called Irmgard, and I had spent two holidays on some lakes in the north of Germany with her, staying at her aunt's boarding house, and we had really good teenage holidays. The last one was an embarrassing one for me, because I knew Jews and non-Jews, particularly boys and girls were not allowed to go out with each other, and we were 14, not 15, yet, and we met some airmen, and they made friends with us, and we were walking with them, and I was very aware that I mustn't tell them that I'm Jewish, not because that would be the end of this kind of a walk, or this friendship, but not to embarrass my girlfriend, because it might get her into trouble, and so I didn't say I was Jewish, and we walked about with them several times, and then it fizzled out. When we got back from this holiday, on our first day back at school, I think it might have been Easter holidays, Irmgard wasn't at school, and I remember thinking, "Oh, she might have had flu, or she must be ill or something." I got home, and I gave her a call on the telephone, and her mother was on the phone, and she said, "Ilse, I'm sorry, you are not allowed to contact Irmgard any more. We have taken her out of your school. She is not allowed to have anything more to do with you, you know my husband is Chief of Police, and whatever he was, and she is not allowed to

be your friend any longer. Please don't contact her." And I never saw her or spoke to her again. I was devastated. She wasn't one of my best friends, but I'd been reasonably close with her, I'd spent two holidays with her, and I was very hurt. It wasn't an awful shock, because I realised things like that were going on. There was one of the few personal experiences I had of that kind.

And she didn't try to contact you, or to write to you,

She didn't even apologise, and say, "I'm very sorry, I have to do as my parents wish." There was simply no more contact, and as against that, I had a much closer friend who was non-Jewish friend in my class, she was called Sottie, her name was Liselotte Zacha, and she was one of my closest friends at school, and the time came when I visited their house, and they had a picture of Hitler in their sitting room, and her mother explained to me, "Ilse, we are very sorry, we have to have his picture here, but my son-in-law, who was Sottie's brother-in-law, demands of us that we show that we are National Socialists." So when I came on a visit, she would turn his picture to the wall, and she'd make a joke of it, and say, you know, "We're quite pleased to not look at him all the time. We love having you, please go on coming to see us." It became awkward for me, and the day came, and Sottie said to me, "Listen, my brother-in-law has said to me, if I don't join the BDM, which is the Bunds Deutsche Mädchen, which is the Hitler Youth Movement for Girls, if I don't join them, my brother-in-law is going to denounce me, and he's going to implicate you, and really, I don't know quite what to do." And there and then, I decided not to visit them any more, and I didn't, but she came to see me, and we would go for walks, and we would go to the pictures together, and she remained my friend, she was there when I left Hamburg, and she's still a close friend of mine in Hamburg now, and she stuck to me really throughout this time, and that sticks out more than the anti-Jewish things, the people who actually stuck to me.

That's a wonderful story.

It is. I mean, she was marvellous. I remember her, she visited my parents after I left Germany, and she was just a staunch friend. She never joined the Hitler Youth Movement, and well, she did her thing during the War, she was married and divorced, and she's now married to a doctor in the South of Germany, and I visit her practically every year, and we're very close.

And she didn't suffer by not joining this Group?

No. She had to go, I believe, oh, we left school together, maybe I come to that in a minute, no I come to it now. We left school together, before the equivalent of O levels, which, you know, posterity won't know anything about, and we never, we didn't have a finishing Certificate, we left when we were 15, because my parents wanted me to be prepared to leave the country, and to learn some practical things, knowing I would have to leave Germany. Sottie left school because she loathed it as much as I did at that time, and she wanted to get on and become an actress, or whatever she wanted to do. But before that, I must talk about the sort of Nazi things that were happening in the School, I think that's quite interesting. Little incidents that stand out about my school life under Hitler. First of all, on Monday mornings, we



would have to congregate in the Schol yard, and we would see the flag being hoisted, the Nazi flag, and we would have to lift up our arms and sing Nazi songs. And that was very embarrassing for us Jewish children, because we had to do it exactly the same as everybody else, and of course, everybody knew we weren't Nazis or National Socialists, yet we had to take part in that, and every Saturday, midday, we would again have to stand in the yard, and the flag would be taken down, and the same procedure. All this time, I knew that my former class teacher, Flügge was a staunch anti-Nazi, and she showed herself as such on one momentous occasion, when we all had to march to one of the stations in Hamburg, one day in the middle of the week, we all wore white shirts and navy blue skirts and white socks and shoes, and we would greet Hitler on one of his very first visits to Hamburg, and all the schools were lined up, and had to stand there in formation, almost, to greet our Führer, as it were. Now, we Jewish children were not told, "Go home, because you're not wanted", because obviously they wanted masses there, so the more the merrier, so we Jewish children had to go as well, and I remember, it was a very hot summer day, and I don't remember the year, it might have been '35, something like that. Hitler wasn't seen very often in Hamburg, because Hamburg was so socialist, so he didn't dare come there very often. On this occasion we stood there in line, on a very very hot summer day, and I fainted, and I was, the first thing I knew about, was waking up with my, former teacher, Flügge, kneeling by my side, and saying, "Go on, pretend you're still fainting, because I don't want to see the bloody man. And just you stay there as long as you like, because I'm not going to stand there and greet out Führer." And that was my beloved teacher Flügge. As school life was beginning to be quite frightening, we had a new teacher for German and geography, she was called Fraulein Angerstein, and she was a definite Nazi. Some time later on, somebody told me she wasn't really as bad a Nazi as I thought she was, but

I thought she was. Every Monday morning, in our German lesson, she would say, "Well, who has joined the Hitler Youth Movement this week?" And a few hands would shoot up. And she would say, "Why didn't you? Are you a Member now? What about you, Inge, what about you Maria? What about you something and something?" And people would hum and haw, and say "Well, my father doesn't really ...." "What about your father? Why doesn't he want you to join the Hitler Youth Movement?" And of course, we realised that she would tell somebody about this father, and they would be put in a concentration camp, so people didn't tell the truth anymore. They would say, "My mother says I've got too much homework to do," but eventually of course, people couldn't think of excuses any more, and they knew it would bring disrepute, and even worse, on the heads of their families, I mean, they would be found in concentration camp if they didn't join. So most of the girls in my class, except Jewish children, joined the Hitler Movement, and in fact, I must say that I think probably I didn't tell the truth when my friend Sottie didn't, because I think she simply had to at that stage. That was one of the reasons why she left school with me, but while she was still at school, she had to join the Hitler Movement, they all did. Our teaching was mainly centred on what Hitler thought of this, and what Hitler thought of that, so our general education was very very poor, and my parents at that time, were very anxious to try and get me out of Germany. What I haven't talked about yet, was that in 1936, in January 1936, my brother left for South Africa, and that was preceded by a nasty little happening, and that was that in the Autumn of 1935, I was 14, we suddenly had the Gestapo at our house, in the middle of the night. We had moved flats by then, and we moved to a smaller flat and a cheaper flat, because

business was going very much downhill in those days, mainly because of Hitler, yes, probably because of Hitler, and the Gestapo came, I think it was 5 o'clock in the morning, to search the flat for Communist literature. My brother was a member of Pfadfinder Movement, which is like Scouts, I don't know what you call it, and he was obviously interested in Communism, and his friends were, and they tried to find some literature, and I'm never quite sure whether they did, I think they didn't find anything, and after, and my brother was taken in for interrogation, they kept him all day, and we were really frightened that he would be taken to a concentration camp, but he wasn't, he was sent home again at night, so he came home, but my father was absolutely determined, there and then, to send him out of the country. And my father wrote to a first cousin of his, who had emigrated to South Africa, and asked him to guarantee for my brother, would he please take him in, blah, blah, blah, long story, he was also called Gutentag, he came from Berlin, and he was willing to have my brother in South Africa. So my brother left the country in January, 1936. I'm not quite sure what my train of thought was before I came to my brother.

Your parents wanted you to go eventually, that's why,

So the next thing was, could they possibly get me out of the country. They had tried themselves to try and get themselves out of the country, but it seemed an utterly hopeless task. Year by year, one was only allowed to take a certain percentage of their money out of the country, in 1933 we could still take a lot out, in 1935 you could take very much less out, because you had to pay a tax to the Germans for leaving the country. My father saw everything through rose-speckled glasses, and that was another reason why my parents quarrelled very much. My mother was a very practical woman, she wanted to get out, never mind whether they would be able to take money out or not, she wanted out. And my father kept on saying, "Hitler's not going to stay, it's going to change. He can't possibly stay." And that was a general attitude in those days. People didn't take him seriously, Jews did not think that he could last. Every year the same thing, they would say, "He won't last another year." And he became stronger and stronger, and so then my parents go to South Africa, my brother had only just got there, there wasn't the possibility for my parents to go there. They tried to go to America, and the quota was that so many thousands of Jews would be allowed into the United States of America, and you know, they would have had a number of 5,000, something, something, something, and that would have meant in five years time maybe. I had a great uncle in America, and my mother implored him to put money down for a guarantee for me, so that I could go to America, but I did have a number, I can't remember what it was, but it meant that maybe in four years time I could emigrate. So eventually, they realised something would have to happen. Meanwhile, they felt I must be trained for something, you can't send a 16, 17 year old girl out of the country without her being able to do something. So they agreed with me that I could leave school, and Sottie and I left school when we were 15. I then went for one year, to a sort of finishing school, it was run by a Jewish woman, and I learned, amongst other things, Hebrew and Jewish philosophy, a bit of that. I learned dressmaking, how to design dresses, I learned cooking, kosher cooking at that. I had never cooked before in my life, and that was quite valuable actually. We had two kitchens, one was milk and one was meat, and that was a brand new experience for me, I'd no idea, I'd never met kosher people before, so it was really new. It was a very valuable year. It taught me to grow up, and of course, there were only Jewish young

people there, Jewish girls. I had quite a nice social time. At that time I started going out with a boy who was half Jewish, and his mother was Jewish, and his father was a non-Jewish lawyer, and they were divorced. He was in this extraordinary situation, that he wasn't really allowed to associate with Jews, and he wasn't really allowed to associate with non-Jews, he was betwixt and between, and it was ghastly, and he turned into a very mixed up human being, but I adored him, I was terribly in love with him, and I thought, you know, he was wonderful, realising at the same time that he was very very weak. At that stage, while I was in this household school, he was in the Land Army, he was, even as a half Jew, he was conscripted into the Land Army. When he came home on leave, we went dancing, we went against all the rules, my parents must have been frightened out of their mind, we would go dancing, I was then, by then, 16, going on for 17, and we would go to night clubs, and we would dance the night away, and I would come home in the middle of the night, and I think my parents wouldn't have slept until I got home. He would have to put an overcoat, somebody's overcoat over his uniform. If we would have been caught, we would have both been put in concentration camps, and our families too. He was literally not allowed to socialise with either Jews or non-Jews privately. It was a very sad situation, and I was certainly not allowed to socialise with him. I had quite a happy time in this school, and towards the end of that year, my parents still hadn't got much further about getting me out of Germany, but my great uncle in America, had agreed to send some money to England, to a cousin of my mother's, to get me a permit to come to England, and we didn't know what I was going to do then, but it would get me out of Germany. So this business of getting me out of Germany, took about a year. Leaving the domestic science school and I was, what was I going to do while I was waiting for my English permit? And I had various interviews and I was very interested in medicine, and so I had an interview at the Jewish Hospital in Hamburg, with the Professor in Charge. There were two Professors, one Professor, I can't remember what he was called, one was Professor Israel, and one was Professor something else. And they took me in as a laboratory technician. This was totally unofficial, it was peculiar training, because I couldn't go to night school.

And you'd had no scientific training, had you?

None whatsoever. But they took me in.

To help you? To help you, or because they quite genuinely needed.

No, they gave me a job, but I didn't get any pay, but my parents didn't have to pay either. They took me for a training, but it was a sort of a half-hearted training. I mean, we were a Jewish hospital, and they obviously needed laboratory technicians, and I think after me they took another two girls on. And I became a laboratory technician in the Jewish Hospital in Hamburg, which was right down by the harbour, and I had a fabulous year there, I loved doing tests, urine tests, stool tests, blood tests, and we had some theory, chemistry, the, she was a Doctor of Chemistry, the woman in charge of the lab, and there was another Doctor, a Pathologist, also in charge of the Lab, these two were in charge of the Lab, and they taught us quite a lot. We never had any real technical training, because we weren't allowed to go to school, to night school, but we learned a lot. We were three girls working there, under these two, one Doctor of Chemistry, and the other one was a Pathologist. And in spite of all the

upheaval around us, we had really a very nice social time, and of course, I remember, November 9th, 1938, when all the Jewish doctors were taken out of the hospital, it was Kristallnacht, it was when the Synagogues were burned, practically all the Synagogues in Hamburg. Strangely enough, the Temple which I belonged to, was not burnt, I think it was almost unburnable stone, it was made of some such stone, and they didn't have windows to the front, so they couldn't even smash those. And it's still standing there, it wasn't, it wasn't ill-treated, but most Synagogues were burnt. It was an unforgettable day, I got to work in the hospital, and there were no doctors, they were all taken to concentration camps, and we were sort of speechless, and then, by word of mouth, we realised what was going on, and Jewish men were just simply taken off the streets and put into concentration camps.

So this was the day after Kristallnacht, or the day of it?

It was the day after Kristallnacht, yes. It had happened the night before, so it must have been the 10th of November, 1938, that I'm talking about. What I didn't, I forgot, but can you bring me back to Kristallnacht in a minute, was that my, my grandmother had died a few years before, but a sister and a brother of my grandmother ...

(END OF SIDE TWO, REEL TWO)

What I've forgotten to say was that my mother inherited some money from her aunt and uncle who had died in very quick succession, in the early Autumn of 1938, and my mother went to Baden Baden which I think is quite well known, as a spa, in the Black Forest, and she invited me to come and spend a week with her. I took a week's holiday from the Lab, and I joined her in Baden Baden, and though we never really got on very well, it was quite a nice holiday. What was important and interesting about that was, it was the time of what is this situation? Chamberlain, negotiating peace at Munich. We were nearly at war, we, meaning I was still in Germany, Germany and England were nearly at war in the Autumn of 1938, and due to Chamberlain's intervention, many people thought it was very foolish, there was a Peace Agreement, and this happened while I was in Baden Baden, and it was very near the border with France, you could look across the Rhine, and you saw the French Army standing there ready for War, and the German Army was on our side, also ready for War, and Chamberlain who we all thought of afterwards as a terribly silly man, he actually saved my life. If I had been there, I would have been stuck in Germany, but as it happened, there was a Peace Agreement, and we still had peace for another year, which enabled me to get out of Germany, which was all I could think about! So we had quite a nice holiday. Funnily enough, I think it's quite amazing that we were able to have a holiday. I'm not sure whether our little hotel was actually a Jewish hotel or not, I guess it must have been owned by Jews. Shortly afterwards, there were no places where Jews could spend a holiday, I don't think, but I'm not quite sure how that went. Anyhow, I went back to my Lab, and negotiations for getting me out of Germany proceeded. My mother's cousin had agreed to take me in, she was living in Middlesex, she was a South African, her mother and my grandmother were sisters, and my grandmother's sister had married a Jew, and they had gone to South Africa, many years before, I think he was a Boer War veteran, and they'd lived in South Africa, where my mother's cousin was born, and had lived, and now she was living in England, and she was willing to take me in. And before I actually got my permit, I had to get my emigration sorted out, which meant going to hundreds of different official offices to get all the papers together, in order to leave Germany, it was hair-raising. I would have to go to this Police Department, and another Department, to get the clear record that I had not ever been in prison, that I was of a good character, that I had been born there, gone to school there, and it was unbelievable how difficult it was to leave Germany. It isn't that they just gave you a shove, and shoved you out, and were pleased to get rid of you, they made it exceedingly difficult. And I had an incident that was hair-raising for me, it might be quite interesting for posterity, I don't know, that when it came to emigration, and I must have had my permit by then, the permit that I went to the letterbox every day for about six months to look for, and which eventually came, it took ages. I had to make a list of all the things I was wanting to take out of Germany, like clothes, sheets, linen, table cloths, serviettes, blah, blah, all sort of stuff, like a small trousseau really, which my parents got ready for me to take out of Germany, and that had to be passed by the powers that be, and my father had bought me, a little while before that, a typewriter, and so I put "Typewriter", and it said, "How old?" and I said, "Two years old", and that was one of the items. And suddenly we got a phone call, or a letter, I don't know which, would I please go to an official in the Free Harbour of Hamburg. Hamburg had a sort

of a, I don't know what it's called, where goods were taken from ships before Customs duty was paid on them.

It's called put in bond. It's called being put in bond.

It's a bonded area, or something, and I had to report to this office, I'd no idea what it was about, and when I got there, I was 17. I got there, I was put into an office with two SS men, and I was interrogated for a whole day. I was probably there from something like 8 in the morning to 5 in the afternoon. I was shouted at, I was totally squashed, I was in tears most of the time, and what was it about? It was about a typewriter. I had said the typewriter was two years old, and they maintained it was new when my father had bought it for me, and I had lied to them, therefore would I please explain the situation. It's unbelievable now, when you come to think of it, they kept me there for all those hours, and it was almost in order to practice how you can get, how you can do Jew baiting, or how you can get a young girl down on her knees, it was a terrible time.

What was the truth about the typewriter?

My father had bought it second-hand, it was two years old.

But they alleged it was new, sight unseen.

That's right, and I'd lied to them.

Had they seen it?

Well, yes, I took it in the next day, and then they looked at it.

Did they touch you?

No, they did not touch me, they simply fought me with words, they made a mess of me, in the way that they said, "You know, you'll never be able to leave this country, and liars like you, I mean, they just have to be incarcerated, and that's what concentration camps are for, and you don't imagine that we're going to let you go out of this country, do you?" And things like that, so that I thought my end had come, my parents would be in concentration camp, and I would be, and I would never get to England. You know, you couldn't think straight any more, by the time they'd finished with me, I was a wreck. I'm afraid I really was pretty weak. The upshot of it was that they said, "Right, we might let you off, if your parents pay a certain sum of money," and I can't now remember how much that sum of money was. But the fact was that my parents' money, like all Jewish money, had been confiscated before that, and my parents, like all Jews in 1939, this was by then 1939, early 1939, they weren't, they were only allowed to spend a part of their money, so they got monthly so much, and they had to keep within that for their expenses. So I was petrified in case my mother couldn't get hold of this fine, because the money was confiscated. So of course, I cried all the way back in the tube, going home, and my parents were relieved to see me again, and it was no problem, because they went to the Bank Manager, and said, "We need this money for, you know, to pay a fine", and they got the money

without any problem, and the next morning I had to go there again, and of course, I didn't know, would they let me go, with the typewriter, and it was confiscated, and the fine that I had to pay. But that was a very nasty experience.

Did you get a receipt for your typewriter and the money?

Yes.

So it didn't go into their pockets?

No. And in fact, my parents were given the typewriter back, and when my parents emigrated in 1941, out of Germany, they, my father, they'd got the typewriter with them. The funniest thing was that I read a letter that my father wrote to me from Shanghai, where my parents ended up, and my father said, "You will be surprised and pleased that when I opened our large suitcase, what did I find, but your typewriter." They had obviously smuggled it out.

How ironical!

Very ironical. And something that always sticks in my mind was that incident, and how difficult it was to leave Germany, until you got all these bits of permit, a permit here, and permit there, you had to get so many papers together to actually get out, let alone get in anywhere, you know, it was quite frightening. I would queue with other Jews in offices, where I swear they had us waiting on purpose. You would sit outside some big nob's office, for about four, five, six hours, with other Jews, trying to get out of the country. It was the most humiliating experience that I have, that I think I have ever gone through. So it built up a sort of excitement, and anxiety, I mean, I think we were all in a permanent anxiety state, that by the time, a man had to come, actually, and help me pack, with a list in one hand, and packing with the other, because you were only allowed to pack the things that were on the list, that were passed by the authority, and Anna, in fact, packed my suitcases, and you know, you had to look at the list and then he packed, and then they were sealed, these suitcases, and so eventually, I can't remember the exact date in March 1939, I actually went on board ship, and the ship was called the Manhattan, and my parents, the last thing they were able to do for me, to let me go first class on the Manhattan, and I left Germany. And my parents were able to take me to the, Rathaus Mark, which was then called Adolf Hitler Platz, which was opposite the Town Hall, and from there, a bus would take us to the ship. And until I was in England, I was still in a total anxiety state, because I didn't know whether they might not take me off the ship somewhere or other in between. And that was how I left Germany.

Did your parents see you off?

Yes. Well, saw me off to the Rathaus Platz, it was the Adolf Hitler Platz, they couldn't go any further, and a Jewish friend of mine, Friedlander, and my old school friend Sottie, were there to see me off as well, and my Jewish friends was one of the holocaust victims, she never got out at all. She and another Jewish friend of mine, had refused to be sent by childrens transport, no, I believe they were too old,

like I was too old, I think the upper age limit for childrens transport was 16, and we were 17.

Did you, ....

Well, they had refused to get out with a domestic permit, because we had heard so many awful stories about girls being abused or ill-treated as maids in English households, and so my stuffy friends, not realising how terrible the situation was, said "No, we're not going to leave Germany and become maids in England." If they had, they would have been free. They both perished. Terrible. These were two close friends of mine. And I, so I got out in March 1939, which was the ....

How did you part with your parents? Did you think that you might not see each other again?

Yes. I was very much aware that I probably wouldn't ever see them again, and I didn't see them again.

But they got out, they went to Shanghai?

Yes, only just. But my father died two years after they got out, they only got out in 1941. They flew to Moscow, and they went by Siberian Express, which took, well, it took 17 days from Hamburg to Shanghai, which was just about the last place any German Jew could get to in those days. Again, my American uncle helped with money and paid the fare, and I only read about this journey recently again. It must have been a very interesting journey, which was paid for by my uncle, and apparently they got food on the train, which was quite good, and they went through Siberia, Manchuria, some of Japan, and then from Japan, they went by boat to Shanghai, and my father died there two years later in 1943, and my mother actually managed to get to Johannesburg, in 1947, where she died at the end of that year, 1948, she died the year before her 58th birthday.

That's young. But you say they got money from your uncle in America. In 1941, that must have been quite unusual.

I think he paid their fare, from America, this was before America entered the War, and so                      could leave the country, I think he just sent them the ticket for the fare.

And they escaped?

No, this was totally officially. It was like a, it was like a, I heard later that it was something like the last train out of Germany, it was an extraordinary situation. I mean, I think it's just amazing. They went by train to Königsberg, which was East Prussia, and then they flew to Moscow, as I said, and I think the fare was paid from America, or else they were sent American dollars, and they were able to pay it in Germany. You see, remember, America was neutral in those days.



Yes. Yes. But I'm just thinking, Jews in 1941, in Germany, it seems strange that they were permitted,

Not many. People were in concentration camps, but the mass deportations started in May '41, and they got out in January '41. They only just got out.

When did they get news to you? After they got to Shanghai, or did you know beforehand?

Yes. What actually happened was that I had an aunt, a great aunt, living in Zurich, and my parents kept on writing to her, Switzerland being neutral, and she used to send me their letters, which was extremely dangerous, because the British thought I was a spy for a while, and I had a letter from the Home Office at one point, asking, "Why are you receiving letters from Germany?" Because they were marked in a certain way, by Customs and Excise, or something or other, and they realised that the letters that I got from Switzerland had actually been sent from Germany. I heard from my parents on and off, all the time, via Switzerland. But it was a dangerous thing to do, and at one point I wrote to the Home Office, and explained the situation, and I never heard another thing. And that's how it happened, so that was one big chapter.

Before we carry on with that, you said you wanted to say something else about Kristallnacht, or had you said everything you wanted to say?

Yes, well, I suppose only a small thing, well, not a small thing, I was terrified my father would be taken in, that day, because most Jews had been taken off the streets, men, and he wasn't, actually, he was left free, how, I don't know. My parents spent their time learning English, my father had painting lessons, he was a very artistic man, and they sort of bummed about, they did really nothing in that time, and oh, gradually, what I perhaps wanted to say was, gradually the men who were the doctors were taken away on Kristallnacht, were returned to us, and the Hospital was really crammed full with people who had been let out of concentration camps. And that was my first experience of the injuries people had received in the concentration camps, because I mean, the beds were just full, so that was very very traumatic. Life in the hospital was very very full of anxiety.

Was there much illness?

Yes, there were a lot of illnesses, and there were a lot of, oh, legs broken, arms broken, people who had been beaten, very very sick people, and of course, the aim everybody had, was to get out. And getting out was just the, you know, we were all screaming to get out, let us get out today, and don't wait until tomorrow sort of thing. And in between, I'm sort of quite amused at some things, when I was 17, and I suppose you can't kill adolescence off like that, though we were all grown up before our years in a sense. I did have quite a bit of fun in between. And in fact, my last New Year's Eve Party in 1938/39, I became unofficially engaged to this chap I was telling you about before, who, by that time had been drafted into the German Army, and we took some photographs in my flat, and he had to wear the coat of one of his friends, so nobody would see he had a uniform on underneath, and you know, we promised each other to get married eventually, and for me to try and get him out of Germany, and all

this sort of stuff, which, of course, didn't materialise. He's still around, he eventually went to Canada, and he's living in Germany again, and he's a very mixed up human being. But I still had some moments of great enjoyment. We, I think what it taught us, to make more of any sort of happy hour, than one might normally have had. I mean, I just, if we went out for the evening, we pooled our money, we had a bottle of wine, and we danced through, you know, the whole night, and we enjoyed it with more intensity maybe, than one might do today.

Because you felt, did you feel there was a War coming? Did you feel that?

Less of a war, than that something would happen to us Jews, and that brings me to my own anxiety, I suppose, I think I never went to bed without saying, "Please God, get me out of here." We knew that we would be killed. How we would be killed we had no idea, I suppose we thought we would be lined up and shot, that's really what we thought. Half of you never wanted to believe it, and you felt, no, no, no, they're exaggerating, all these grown ups, it can't be true. The other half jolly well did believe it because, we knew of people who had never come out of concentration camps, we knew of people who had been killed, I mean, there were more and more people who one knew, were never seen again, and this became a real anxiety. My parents used to listen to broadcasts, mainly Moscow, funnily enough, Moscow would broadcast in German, and they would get the real news from there, and we used to name Moscow Radio, Tante Zarita, God knows why. My mother used to write to my brother in South Africa, Tante Zarita tells us, blah, blah, blah, and this was the Moscow Radio station. When I left, very very shortly afterwards, they had to wear the Star of David. I never had to wear the Star of David, but I think while I was still there, I wasn't, we weren't allowed to go to any public cinema, public theatre, public anything, but in Hamburg we had a building that used to be a Jewish, like a Clubhouse if you like, and they would have theatre, I remember I was an extra for Romeo and Juliet, this was by Jewish actors, and run by the Jewish community in Hamburg, and they would show us films, they would have dances, they would put on parties, and so there was some sort of Jewish social life, that was in this one building in Hamburg. There were seats in the parks before I left Germany, only I never walked in a park, so I can't remember it, that Jews only, but I think most of that started after I left, they certainly had to wear the Star of David immediately after I left, I think maybe it started in April, the 1st of April, and I left in March, something like that.

You left March '39, and your parents, you say your parents did too?

No, '41.

Sorry, '41, that's right, so they had to wear the Star.

They certainly had to wear the Star of David. And so the situation became very very critical around the time when I left. And of course, when War started and I was in England, and you know, I started a sort of a different chapter when I came to England, I realised I would never see them again, because I was absolutely convinced that my parents would be killed. We knew Jews would be killed, that Hitler would never go and fight a War against England without killing the Jews first. We just knew. And you know, we had enough proof, that's what he was doing, and we were, so I had no

hope that my parents could actually manage to get out, so when they did get out, and when I heard in 1941 that they had got out, I mean, it was the greatest surprise, and delight, that they were free. It was incredible.

People who wanted to leave, in your experience, did they, they all went through the formalities of getting visas,

Yes.

Nobody actually escaped did they?

Yes, I think some people did escape, only I don't know any that did. But you did read or hear of people who escaped.

Yes, I just wondered if you knew anybody.

But it was so tight, it was so difficult, that I can hardly think that it was possible, of course, you know stories of people who went to Holland, I had another sort of boyfriend, who I was very friendly with, who went to a camp in Holland, he went to Wieringen, which was a preparation for Israel camp, and that place was, used to be, I think a Quaker School, it was near Ommen, which was a Quaker boarding school, and he prepared himself to go to Israel, and he wrote to me, to England, and he was very much in love with me, but you know, he was just a very good friend of mine, and I remember hearing, after I didn't hear from him any more, that he was taken away by the Germans, they woke them all up at 5 one morning, and they sent them all to, I don't know, God knows where, and killed them all, all these young people were killed. A cousin of mine was in Holland, he was killed, and another person, daughter of a very close friend of my mother's, in fact, she enabled my parents to get to Shanghai. Her daughter and her husband lived underground in Holland for two years, and when I went to America the first time, in '67, she told me that story, how they managed to live underground in Holland. I can't think of anybody who actually really escaped without all the formalities. Most of the people I knew had to go through formalities, getting a permit to another country, and getting there that way.

Of course, all the borders were so closely guarded, you couldn't just tunnel under, you couldn't escape over mountains or whatever.

I think people must have done, I think people must have got to Belgium or to France, or somewhere but not anybody I knew.

So you were on the ship, you didn't have any friends who went with you.

No.

Did you make friends on the ship?

Yes, as I mentioned it before, I saw the mother of an old schoolfriend of mine, on board ship, and she was called Mrs. Hess, her son, in fact, became quite a well-known violinist in this country, and her two daughters, twin daughters, one is a cellist, and

one is a violinist, they played with various orchestras in England, she was on board ship, she was the only one I knew. And when I arrived in Southampton, I think it was something like 21st March, 1939, I had to take the train from Southampton to Waterloo, and I was met by my mother's cousin and her daughter. And they took me to their bungalow in Whitton, Middlesex, which is near Twickenham, and I lived there for a month, to start with. I didn't have a room of my own, and this is, well, to me quite interesting, that all my life, I was very aware that I needed a room of my own, and the focal attention of my life, even now, is my desk, and my room, and whenever we moved flats, my room became my sort of holy grail, or whatever you would call it. It was important for me to have my own personal room. And I came to England and I did not have a room. I remember a letter my father wrote and said, "Tell us what your room is like." And in fact, I slept on a Put-U-Up in the sitting room, which they hadn't told us about. In a sense, it was marvellous of them that they took me in, they hadn't really got the room. But the other side of the story was that my mother's cousin lived with her daughter, she was divorced, she lived with her daughter and she lived with her mother, who was my grandmother's sister, she was a bitch of a woman, and she had all sorts of old grievances against my grandmother, and kept on clobbering me with that, which didn't endear her to me. Very soon I moved out of that house, because it was pretty ghastly, and moved to my cousin's brother's house, he was a very nice, he was also related to me, he was my mother's cousin, he was called Henry, and he had married a Tiller Girl. The Tiller Girls were a dance group, and they had gone round the world dancing, and she had met him in South Africa, as a Tiller Girl, and she was delightful, and they took me in, and I didn't have to pay rent, which I'd had to do at my cousin's. I had £100 in the bank, which my uncle had sent me in England, which was why I'd managed to get a permit to come to England, and I lived with Henry and Emily, and their little boy called Bobby, for about two months, and had a marvellous time. I babysat for them, they took me to pubs, they taught me how to drink, they got me drunk, which was very stupid, and I had quite a good initial few months in England.

And your English was quite good?

My English was, I was able to get by, and they were very strict on teaching me, they were marvellous. I was closely connected with Woman House, who were the Headquarters of what I can only think of as the Jewish Agency in England. They were responsible for getting children, children's transport, children settled in families, they were sort of, made themselves responsible for finding jobs for people like me, for training places, they helped us to get into this country. And I had an interview with them almost straightaway, and it was decided that I should go and become a Nursery Nurse, and go to College. It was the only thing anybody could think of. I couldn't think of anything else to do. I could have gone as a domestic servant, but I wasn't terribly keen, and I wanted to train for something, so I booked into Cooks Nursery Training College, it was not a, you don't need to bother to write it down, it's in Uxbridge, and it was a Nursery Training College. I put in for a year's training, and was going to pay with my uncle's money, but I was beginning to be shrewd at that stage, and I said to myself, "I'm not going to pay for the whole year, I'll see how it goes first." It was the first time in my life that I had money, and I didn't want to spend all this, and so I paid for six months, and very soon realised that I was able to take the same exam after six months, as others took after a year. And I thought I'm damned,

I'm not going to spend money for a whole year's training, when I can do the same thing after six months. And so I wrote to my father, this was just before the War, and said, "Will you please explain to the Matron, that my money has suddenly run out, and I can only pay for six months, so that she lets me take the exam after six months." Which he did, and she did, and I only stayed six months, and I got my Certificate just the same, and still had some money left. And so then I became a Children's Nurse, a baby, or whatever they call it. Children's Nurse. And I took my first job. Oh, I must say that I had one or two not very good experiences with Jews. English Jews. That's very unfortunate. I thought, or perhaps Woman House thought that I should take the first job that was offered me, and you know, "You be grateful you have a job offered to you, jolly well take it. Don't be too fussy." And all the sort of rulings, you know.

(END OF SIDE ONE, REEL THREE)

I think it might be quite interesting that my first interview, I remember, was with a very unpleasant Jewish family in the East End of London, and they offered me a very very low salary, and I realised that they thought they'd have a bargain on their hands. I was very rebellious, at that age, I was altogether, I'd been rebellious since the age of 12 or something, and I wasn't going to be done, and I realised I wouldn't like to work for them, I didn't like their attitude, and they offered me less money than I'd seen in papers that, with my Certificate, I should be getting, so I said "No thank you."

Can you remember how much they were offering you?

Well, I only know that the first job I actually took was 15 shillings a week, but they must have probably offered me, seven, seven 7/6d. or something a week, with all in, but it was a ghastly sort of household.

The advantage was you'd be living in, because you'd left your cousin then?

No.

Was your course residential?

Yes.

That was residential, so you'd left.

And there was a few weeks in between. Whatever job I took, it had to be living in. Yes, you couldn't possibly afford to live on your own in those days. And what got me, was the assumption that because I was a German Refugee, Jewish like them, I should, I should be grateful for any job that was given me, and I wasn't going to, to wear that, so I said no. Then the next job, I took on trial. I think, by this time I was 18, and I think I was quite crafty, I said I'd try it for a week, and they, they owned, these people owned a shop in Oxford Street, I went for an interview in Oxford Street, these people had a shop, again they were English Jewish people, and they wanted a nanny, so they said, to help with their two children in, I think, it was Essex. Burgess Hill, that's what it was. They had evacuated the children with an aunt at Burgess Hill, and they wanted me to look after the children. They offered me, I think it was probably 12/6d. or something a week, and free living, and they painted a very rosy picture of this job. And I said, "I will try it for a week." Thank God I did! When I got there, the Irish maid they had, made off to leave, and it was a ghastly house, there was a deaf and dumb boy who went to a day school, and there was a very spoilt, horrid little girl, and an aunt who wanted to be served hand and foot, and of course, I was just the maid. I mean, I was simply the maid of all work, and the attitude of the aunt was, "You're a little German Jewish refugee, and you just do as you're told and be grateful for it." So I stood that for five days, and then I said, "The week is up, I'm sorry, I'm not taking this job, I'm going back." Eventually, I, I mean, I was cross, that people could behave like that, and assume, simply because I was a refugee, that they could take advantage of me.

Was this a Jewish family too?

Yes. They were English Jewish people, and I was appalled, quite honestly. I probably wasn't humble enough, if you like.

Was it Woburn House that was getting you these introductions?

No, no, I got them through an advert in the Nursery Mirror or whatever it was.

Nursery World.

Yes. But I thought being, I'm not so sure, in fact it could have been Woburn House that got me the introduction, it could've been, and I thought they would expect me to take it, whatever, and I was rebellious enough to say "No, I'm taking what I want to take, and what is suited to my ability and my training and whatever." I wanted to be a nanny, okay, mother's help, because I was pretty young, but I wasn't going to be made use of. And then I had an interview with a lady and her mother in the YWCA in Regent Street, and she offered me a job. And the long and the short of it is, I took a job for two couples, the men were both Officers in the Army, and the women were friends, and they moved about with their husbands. One had a child of 2, and the other one was expecting one. And eventually, I was supposed to be the nanny of the one who was expecting a baby, and we would be moving to a certain place where they had built a house, and I would be her nanny. And she was utterly charming, and it turned out, they moved to the parents of the other woman, in Gloucestershire, and we arrived in the summer of 1940, or the spring of 1940, in this fabulous manor house in the Cotswolds, in Gloucestershire. And it was just one of the most amazing years of my life. They treated me fairly well, I was their nanny. There were these two young women, the men would be stationed here, there and everywhere, and we were living with the grandparents of the child I was looking after, who were a very aristocratic couple.

Obviously not Jewish?

Not Jewish. And treated me very well. The grandparents treated me very well. The daughter of the house was rather snooty, but that's neither here nor there. I had a very interesting year with them, because every now and then, the mothers of the children, by that time, in the end there were three children for me to look after, because the first woman had a second child, and the other woman had her first child, so I looked after three small children, and it was delightful. I had a very good programme. Everything was written down. Ilse, get up at 8 o'clock in the morning, bring up breakfast at 8.15, to the Pink Room, to the Peach Room, to whatever. The best thing that happened to me in that house, was that, oh, there were lots of things, one that I got on extremely well with the grandmother of the children, and with the grandfather. When the younger people, I mean, my employees if you like, my employers, had to leave for, I don't know where, but the men were stationed, I wasn't allowed to go with them, because some of these places were what they called "Protected Areas", and foreigners weren't allowed. And the grandparents had decided that they liked me so much, they wanted me as a sort of standby nanny for their daughter, as well as for the

friend's children. They wanted me to be there, to stay with them, so that when the family came back with the children, I would always be there.

When they were taking their children with them?

When they were taking their children with them. In that year I was there, I learned about gardening, I learned about English tradition, I learned about English architecture, because the old man was an architect, and he had converted that house from an old manor house, it was a 16th Century house, and he had himself, kind of rebuilt it, and it was a lovely place. I think Maxwell Joseph owned it for a time. It was beautiful. And I was fascinated and I had a very happy time.

So you spent more time not looking after the babies?

Some of the time, anyway, not looking after the children, and in the time when I wasn't looking after the children, I was helping Mrs. Sturdy in the garden, we would make rock gardens, she would take me on a picnic, we would pick stones from a quarry, and she would explain things to me in English, "You know, Ilse, we do this and that, we do that. And tell me about your home." She was interested in me, she wanted to know about my parents, she wanted to know about my background. And we got on incredibly well. She treated me like a human being, and it was wonderful, absolutely super. I think I learned my speaking my English from them. They, they were lovely people. And towards the end of that year, Mrs. Sturdy one day said to me, "How would you feel if we took on a cook, who was a Jewish refugee like you?" Why she asked me I can't think, but she did. I said, "Gosh, that's a marvellous idea, why not?" And she said, "Well, you know our cook's been stealing, and I think I want to give her the boot." And there was also a parlour maid who I got very friendly with, and I've been offered this lady who wants to be evacuated from London, and she will come as a cook, and I wanted you really to agree to that. I thought it was very funny to ask me, but you know .... And so I met such a close, a woman who became such a close friend of mine, I visited her in the autumn in Memphis, and we went to Florida together, and she's now 85, and she's just a lovely woman. She was a Viennese social worker/psychotherapist, who worked as a housekeeper in London, and wanted to get herself evacuated with her daughter, and she came to live on Melksham Court, which was this place. And so I had a very, very good year in Melksham Court in Gloucestershire, as a nanny. I had a very strict routine. I was paid 15/- a week. I had one half day off a week, and in fact it was the place where I met my future father-in-law. One day, Mr. Sturdy said to me, "Ilse, I'm going into Derseley, to lecture on some refugees, like yourself, on British architecture. Would you like to come with me? Because there were a lot of Bristol Jewish refugees, who've been, who are living there, in a workhouse, because Bristol is a protected area, they're not allowed to live in Bristol any more, so they're kind of evacuated to this workhouse, and they're living there together, like animals", he said, "It's a ghastly situation, so I'm going to lecture to them." And I went with him. I remember him saying, you know, "It'll be nice for you, you'll meet your own kind again." And I remember thinking, "I don't want to meet my old kind, I'm having a lovely time here." And there was something in me that wanted me to stay with English people who weren't Jewish, who didn't remind me of all the stuff I left behind, and there was a very strong feeling inside me, "No, I want time to stand still. I don't want to be



reminded of what happened last year, and what's still going on in Germany." There was a funny sort of feeling going on in me.

You'd closed your mind to it to a certain extent?

Yes.

And didn't want it opened again?

Yes. To a large extent, I closed my mind to all the trauma that was going on early in the War. That was 1940, and I knew my parents were still there, and I didn't really want to think about it. And then I met a lovely old man, who later became my father-in-law, who was a vet, a German vet, and he was evacuated from Bristol, and he became friendly with me. And in fact, very soon after, he and his housekeeper friend, moved into a small place, into digs really, and they shared, they had two rooms, or three rooms, in somebody's house. His son became my husband, but not until years later. But from the moment he set eyes on me, he wanted me for a daughter-in-law. And it was very funny, because he had twin sons, and he had another son in Israel, and he constantly talked about his twin sons, who were both doctors, and he thought they would suit me very well.

Both of them?

Both of them! He didn't mind which of them I met. And he kept on saying, "Will you come for tea on Sunday, because my son Paul is coming from Bristol, and I would like you to meet him." And I could never get a day off on a Sunday. My day off was Tuesday afternoon or something, so I never met him. But I became, you know, very friendly with my father-in-law, and in fact our cook, who was called Senta, the Viennese lady who became a close friend of mine, her father was a Viennese man, was friendly with my father-in-law, and these two men kind of, they wanted to get me married, but I was only 18 and I wasn't going to get married yet, and you know, they tried to manipulate me into meeting Paul, or Carl, they didn't mind who, who were called Schnitzler, and had come from the Rheinland. Well, the job went on, and my friendship with Mr. Schnitzler went on. Meanwhile, I was asked by the sister of my old friend Marian, would I be her nanny near London? She had been evacuated, or she'd taken herself off with her husband, to Surrey. East Moseley in Surrey. Would I be their nanny, and look after her little boy, and they would offer me 20/- a week, and a whole day off a week, and I would be near London, where most of my friends were, and it would be like home. And I was in a terrible dilemma. I liked my job, I liked my friends, I liked my way of life. I loved the place, Melksham Court, but I realised that there was a war on, I realised that I would never meet other young people, I was very isolated from young people, and my friend Senta pushed me out of that nest. She said, "You must get away from here. You'll never meet anybody you should meet. You'll never meet a young man. You must get out into the world, you must do other things." And she said, "This is not the right place for you." She hated me leaving, she pushed me out. And so I came to live with my friends who were called Cohn, and lived with them in East Moseley. She was the sister of my oldest girlfriend Marian, and I had known her from the age of 6. So it was a bit home from home, and I had a very cushy job with them. I looked after their little boy, I would have a whole day off

in London, and my friend Lottie was very fair, and we got on marvellously, and for two years or so, I was their nanny, and that worked fine. Until one day, I met an old friend of my parents, whom I mentioned, who's house was ransacked in Schlüchtern in Germany, who meanwhile, had a soap factory again, or glycerine factory, in Manchester, and by chance I met him again, because he was a business friend of Ernst Cohn's. One day, Ernst said to us, "Max Wolf is coming for lunch, he's a business friend of mine." And I said, "Can't be Max Wolf from Schlüchtern!" And she said, "Of course, it's the same one." And so he decided he would be my father substitute, and he immediately invited me to come to Manchester for a week, and he interrogated me, and said, you know, "What are you doing in this cushy job? Didn't you know there's a War on?" And of course, I was quite horrified, I'd been very comfortable, I'd been a nanny, I did the job I was employed to do, I had a very comfortable life, and I knew there was a War on, roundabout, but he made me realise that I would have to do something much more for the War Effort. So I tried to join the ATS, for some reason or other that didn't work, I then, he said, "Get back into your laboratory work, try and do something there." So, by some roundabout way, I actually got a job in the Path. Lab. of the Surrey County Hospital in Guildford. And they took me on to test the milk that was produced in Surrey, because their laboratory technician had to go to War, and you know, it was a very nice job. So, for a year, I stayed with my friends the Cohns in East Moseley, I helped looking after the child, I helped with breakfast and dinner, and Sundays, and what have you. I went to work every morning to Guildford by train. I became a laboratory technician, and they taught me very soon what I had to do, which were really just technical jobs. Some of it was clearly beyond me, because I hadn't got the technical knowledge. For instance, how to prepare the things that you test certain things in, I would make gelatine in order to test the bacteria, and I found that very tricky. They taught me, and, I also had to inject concentrated milk into guinea pigs, and kill the guinea pigs, and open them up and dissect them to see if there was an TB. I quite enjoyed all of that, and that's what I did. At the same time, I joined the National Fire Service, with a group of German Jews, who lived around Guildford, and we had formed a group of foreign Jews, if you like, to, we formed ourselves into a part of the National Fire Service, to put out fires that were caused by incendiary bombs. We were on night duty every fifth night, on top of the hospital, so that was my little bit of War Effort. We were actually never called to a single fire. But we had lots of practices, and lots of sleepless nights, and I think to paint a picture of those days, of course, there was a War, and there was rationing. Living in the country, we were never terribly short of anything, but we had Ration Cards, and we, we happened to keep eggs in East Moseley, and while I was still living with the Cohns we had chickens and so we ate pretty well. It was wonderful to be on duty all night in Guildford, and go to what was called the British Restaurants, they were all over the place, and have breakfast in a British Restaurant. You felt, in a way, you were a soldier, you were doing your bit for the country, and you were having an early morning breakfast of fried bread, and fried tomatoes, and possibly sometimes bacon and various things like that, and sort of coffee, and there was a great chumminess about the thing. There was also something quite interesting, that when I moved away from the Cohns, they were very supportive, and they, of course, let me go, they realised that that's what I would have to do. And I moved into digs in Guildford, and I was able to afford the room, and my board.

What were you being paid at the laboratory?

I can't remember. I was paid just enough to live on. I was paid enough to live on with the teeniest bit over. I mean, I certainly didn't get money from anywhere else, so I must've, it must've just covered. I don't know, 30/- a week or something, it can't have been, it must've been more. I can't remember how much it was. But my first digs were in a gardener's cottage, on the Portsmouth Road, in Guildford. And that was quite interesting, because I was supposed to be on duty for the laboratory every, could've been every eighth night, or something like that, because at that time, D-Day had come and gone, and they sent back soldiers that were, or airmen, that were injured, and you had to test their blood, and you had to do various tests, and I asked the man who owned the Estate on which I lived, in the gardener's cottage, I lived with the gardener and his wife, and I asked, "Would it be possible to sleep every," I think it was every fifth night, or something like that, "in an office, or somewhere near the telephone so the hospital could get me?" And the man said, "No, you are a foreigner yourself, and I am not sure that you are not a spy, and you cannot live in my house." So I wasn't able to be on duty for my hospital. And I was very hurt. In Germany I was a Jew, and here I was a bloody foreigner again. It was quite hard, but, of course, it was natural, at the same time.

But you were never interned. How was it that you were not interned?

I escaped that completely. A lot of women weren't. Most of my men friends, or boyfriends, or people I knew, men, were interned at one time or another, like my own husband was. But I never, I was never interned. I had an Alien's Registration Card Book. I had to report to the Police every now and then. I had a curfew. I had to be home by, I think it was 9 or 10 o'clock, in the evening. I wasn't allowed out in the dark. There were certain areas in England where I wasn't allowed to live. Later on, actually, we were allowed out, I think I became, there was a Tribunal at some point, and I was a "Friendly alien" instead of an "Enemy alien". And

That was an official title on your papers, or something?

The official title on my little book was "Enemy Alien". No, first "Enemy Alien" and then I became a "Friendly Alien".

Did you ever seek out a Jewish community, near where you were living, or go to a Synagogue?

Yes. In Guildford, no. I never went to a Synagogue. I do remember one Yom Kippur, my first Yom Kippur in England, I went with a friend of mine from the Nursery Training College in Uxbridge, we went to Ealing, I think, to a Synagogue, and

For a special festival?

Yom Kippur. And I didn't go again until much later. In East Moseley we were, I knew a lot of Jews, after all, I lived with Jews, and they were not religious, and then I got to know a lot of Jews in Guildford, and there was no place of worship, if you like, Synagogue, or whatever, in Guildford, and I didn't have the urge, or leaning, or

whatever, and I never, I mixed with a lot of Jews, and we belonged to an International Club in Guildford. It was full of Jews, full of refugees. They were mostly refugees from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and places like that. And you see, the Unit, the National Fire Service Unit, was actually made up of Jews, of foreign Jews. We were a little foreign department of the National Fire Service. It was our way of saying, "Thank you England, we're doing our bit." sort of thing.

Because the other people who might be around to do it were fighting? Or whatever.

Of course.

So I suppose, there was a great deal of discussion among that group of people about the War in Germany?

Yes.

Was there much talk of Zionism as well?

Yes. Except that I didn't meet many Zionists, and I was never a Zionist, so it didn't crop up a lot. What was discussed a great deal, is what on earth happened to our friends and families in Germany. But well, at that time, I moved out in 1944, to Guildford, I knew by then that my parents had actually got out. So when I was in that situation, I knew my parents had actually got to Shanghai, and I had, you know, occasional letters from there. I can't remember how I got them, because America was in the War, the Japanese had occupied Shanghai. The Japanese were not anti-Semites, so they didn't actually hurt the Jews in Shanghai, but they made a sort of a ghetto for them in Shanghai, and my father had died in 1943, and I think shortly after my father died, the Japanese took over Shanghai, and all the Jews, and there were thousands of them, it was the sort of last place where, where people from Germany could go. They had to move into a kind of ghetto. They lived in appallingly poor conditions, but they were not molested by anybody, the Japanese didn't know what it was like to be an anti-Semite.

Any ideas of what numbers of people in this ghetto?

No. I imagine it must've been about 20,000. There were a large number. It must be written up somewhere else. I don't know how many there were. I can only say that when the Germans gave us restitution for if we had relatives that were killed in the Holocaust, I got a restitution, and my brother, for my mother having lived in the ghetto in Shanghai. The rates were the same as if she'd been in a concentration camp. So they considered it to be something similar. But it wasn't at all similar. They were free human beings. They lived in appallingly poor conditions, I mean, economically very poor. My mother actually worked for a dentist for part of the time, as a receptionist. There was a marvellous spirit of companionship and whatnot, amongst the Jews, the German Jews who lived in Shanghai.

And you'd get this information from their letters?

Yes. And also from this friend of my mother's who I visited in California later on, years later, who had survived it all.

She'd been there?

She managed to get my mother and father out. She was there.

And she'd been in Singapore, you mean, with them?

No. Shanghai.

Sorry, Shanghai, with them?

Yes. Yes. There was a large Jewish Agency in Shanghai that helped people to get out, and when they got the last person out, my parents were roughly the last people allowed out, a very funny thing is, I went through letters of my parents, in just the last few days, to be able to remember some of the things, and there were some men in Hamburg, prominent businessmen, who had had affairs with non-Jewish women, and they were put in concentration camps, for one or two years, or three years, and, for instance, there was one who had a very prominent shop in Hamburg, and my mother met them all again in Shanghai. And she said, "This must be the paradise of all the "Rassenschanders". That's what they used to call them, race, Hitler called these people, who had affairs with non-Jewish partners, he called them, "as committing rassenschander", which was shaming the German race, if you like, and by being Jewish, they were, you see what I mean, it's terribly difficult to translate. They were making the German race impure, by their Jewish relationship with non-Jews.

The shame of race, that's really isn't it.

That's right, simply. There was a collection of these families in Shanghai, who had been let out of concentration camp, if they had somewhere to go, after two or three years, they let them out of concentration camps, or prison, or whatever they were. I mean, if a Jewish man was found to have a relationship with a non-Jewish woman, he would be given perhaps three years prison sentence, and that was, I think, nearly always spent in a concentration camp. And my parents met quite a few of these people again in Shanghai, who they became very friendly with, and they formed a very close community. Now they had, they went to Synagogue regularly. And I remember my mother writing what a comfort it was, to actually to pray together, and to be at Synagogue together.

Presumably they'd made their own Synagogue?

They'd made their own.

There wasn't one existing in Shanghai was there?

Of course not. But you see, there were Rabbis amongst them, there was one of every kind, you know, all sorts. I think there must have been 20,000 if not more. But

20,000 seems to stick in my mind, but it could be many more. It was a huge number of people. They had a very primitive way of life. My mother had to, at times, go to the next corner to get water. They cooked on a coal burner, they could only put one saucepan on at a time, amongst I don't know how many families. I mean, the conditions were extremely primitive.

Were they given food?

No. They had to buy it and do something with it.

But they weren't beaten, or guarded.

No, they were not beaten, no, they were not guarded. And in fact, I believe they were able to get out of the ghetto at times, to shop, or something, but I'm not sure about that. You see, they could only really write a page at a time, and how I got the letters, I'm still mystified, as to, I think they were able to write to Switzerland, and I got the letters from Switzerland, once America had got into the War. Before then, I think they wrote to America, and then I got the letters from America, I can't remember how it went. Or at first, because China was neutral, I believe, or Shanghai was neutral, they were able to write direct from Shanghai to England. I'm not quite sure how it developed.

Do you still have those letters?

Yes, some of them. But you see, they're not very explicit, they're not terribly, they're not interesting enough, because they, they failed to tell me the things that I now would like to know, but I do know that things were primitive, I do know that they helped each other enormously, my father was very ill, in fact he was terminally ill before I left Germany. He had a swollen spleen, and he had a permanent illness, which I think was something like leukaemia, only it wasn't leukaemia, I don't know what it was, because I was working in the laboratory at the time, and he had a tooth extracted and it was bleeding, and you know, they told me that he wouldn't have many years to live.

(END OF SIDE TWO, REEL THREE)

Well, I do know that my mother wrote a letter saying that my father was going to die, and that he is getting weaker and weaker, and I know now, that there was a tremendous feeling of community spirit there, that they helped my mother a lot, to cope with my father until he died in January, 1943. They had got there in the Spring of 1941, and so he lived for two years in freedom. In fact, in those two years, he worked as a representative for some manufacturers of tapestries and what have you, and tried to earn some living. He earned a little bit of pocket money, I think, it never amounted to more. And my mother did various jobs as a receptionist to a dentist, and various things like that.

Were you able to write to them?

Yes. But not very easily, and not very much. I can't remember how the letters were sent there.

But do you know that they got them?

Oh yes.

Yes, they did. Do you think it was through the Red Cross perhaps?

Well, there were some letters through the Red Cross, but I mean, they were only 20 words in each of those letters, you couldn't do much, I've still got them. I mean, there was no, the long letters were either through Switzerland, I think they were mostly through Switzerland. They were quite interesting, but they were not very frequent. So my father died in '43, and very soon afterwards, the Japanese came, took over Shanghai, and the Jews were sent to this ghetto, and I had perhaps something like three or four letters a year, and my mother had dysentery at some point, and she always earned some money, and she still had some funds from her uncle, American money, American dollars, and she somehow got by, and I think the Jewish Agency there had some funds, I think probably they got it from America, and nobody actually starved, and there was a fantastic feeling of community spirit there, amongst these German Jews, maybe there were Austrians there as well, but I only know about German ones.

How was it your mother was able to leave to go to South Africa?

After the War, both my husband and my brother, my husband and I, and my brother, applied for permits for her to come to England and South Africa, and her permit for South Africa, came before the visa for England, so it was a sort of competition, who gets there first. And my brother had always been my mother's blue-eyed boy, I think she really was very pleased that she got to South Africa.

And she went to live with him?

No. She lived in what they called a Parents Home, in Johannesburg. They built a house that German Jewish people paid for, in which they put their parents, from wherever, and my mother shared a room with another woman, and my husband spent, I think, he was allowed £5 out of England a month, and my brother spent, something like £6 a month, and that's what she lived on. She immediately started working. She became a housekeeper for South Africans who went abroad, and looked after the natives, and so on. She almost immediately found herself a man friend, who was very kind to her, marvellous, and she almost immediately became extremely disappointed with what my brother was doing for her, because in fact he was a bit of a sod, and has an even more difficult wife, and they in fact, did not do very much for her.

That must have been very disappointing for her, after all those years.

She was, I think, very disappointed. He was extremely unhelpful to her, and she wrote pretty moaning letters. But she was delighted that by that time I had married, to know that I was safe in England, and had married.

What was happening here then, in England? You were still working?

In 1944, I got engaged to somebody, and the engagement was broken off. He was in the Army, he was German Jewish, and he also came from Hamburg, and broke that off. And then in 1945, my friend Senta, who was still the cook on Melksham Court, but alongside that job, she had the job for the Jewish Refugee Committee in Gloucester, to travel round the South-West of England visiting children who had come with the Childrens Transport, and she visited these children to find out whether they were okay. She was, in fact, a welfare worker for the Jewish Committee in Gloucester in the day, and at night she cooked the dinner at Melksham Court and looked after them, and at weekends too. And she and her daughter, her daughter was 15 when she arrived, and went to Grammar School there, had a secretarial training, and they lived there, they still lived there. And they invited me to see them in Melksham Court, and they had arranged, in the good old Jewish tradition, for me to meet my husband. They had arranged for my father-in-law to invite me for lunch on my first visit back to Melksham Court, they had concocted it between them, they thought it was about time that I met this man they had wanted me to meet years ago, and that is how I was invited by my father-in-law to go to lunch in Bristol, and of course, Paul was there, who was a very busy GP, he was 37, nearly 37, he was 36 and a bit, and we met. And of course, we knew so much about each other, he had heard about me, and I had heard about him, and he was one of these identical twins, he was a doctor in Bristol, and his brother was then still a doctor in Cornwall, but later in Weston-Super-Mare, and I met him, and we fell in love, and liked each other, because we'd heard so much about each other anyway, we were both absolutely ready to marry, and we saw a lot more of each other, he came to Bristol, he came to London, Guildford, and I came to Bristol a few times, and we decided to marry.

You were 24?

Yes, yes, I was, of course I was 24, it was in 1945. And the War ended, and we married in September 1945, and we married, we were married by the Belsize Square Synagogue Community, who had a sort of Synagogue in Buckland Crescent in Swiss



Cottage, and they hadn't established their thing in wherever they are now, I'll find out where they are.

What's the name of the community?

Belsize Square Synagogue. It's in Belsize Square. Anyway, that's Dr. Saltzberger was their first Rabbi, he was a Frankfurt Rabbi, who ran this little community, which was made up of German Jewish people. And we were married there, because Dr. Saltzberger had been the Rabbi of my father-in-law's housekeeper, from Frankfurt. And my old Rabbi, Dr. Italiener, was also in London, a Rabbi, he was a Rabbi at the West London Synagogue, but I had not had much contact with him, or none at all. That's why I agreed to be married at the Belsize Square Synagogue. So we were married in Guildford in the, you know, civil marriage.

Registrar's Office?

Registrar's Office, and in London, we had a Jewish wedding.

Did you have a white dress?

No, no. It was very much post-War, I mean, it was September, the War had only finished in August, and so I had a nice woollen dress. The nicest thing about that dress were the buttons, which I kept for years, and I had a veil and all this sort of thing.

And who came to the wedding?

Funnily enough, it was a very interesting wedding. Paul, of course, had quite a lot of friends. I had nobody there from my family, my brother was in South Africa, my mother was in Shanghai, my father was dead, but quite a heart-warming thing. I hadn't mentioned that in the block of flats, in the flat we lived in Hamburg, we had an opera singer, Jewish opera singer, who lived upstairs. Her son Kurt was my boyfriend, and she was an opera singer at the State Opera in Hamburg, and through her I got to know operas, and she was a Hungarian opera singer, called Sabiner Kaler, she was a very very well-known woman, she did some singing in England as well, and she came to my wedding. A cousin of my father's came, she was the widow of a Professor, a Berlin Professor, Elsa Bielschowski, she was there. I had hardly any relations there at all, but quite a number of friends. Old friends. And my friend Ernst Cohn, who I lived with, as a nanny, he gave me away. Lottie couldn't actually come to the wedding, because she'd just had a baby, another baby. But it was a very lovely wedding, it was very nice. My Guildford friends came.

And where did you live?

In Bristol. I moved, moved to the Surgery House, in Bristol. In fact, of course, before that, I'd met my brother-in-law, it was Paul's twin, who was a doctor in Weston-Super-Mare, and we lived over the Surgery for six months, and then we moved to a little house which we had built, and that's where we had our first child. And Paul was an extremely busy GP. He had got out of Germany in 1933, he'd just

qualified in Bonn, with his brother, as a doctor, he did his Ph.D. his German Doctorate, in Germany, came via Holland to England, re-qualified in Ireland, in Dublin, after a year, they both did, and worked in various hospital jobs for five years, and then acquired this practice in Bristol. He'd been working in Bristol throughout the War.

And what was his last name?

He was called Schnitzler. And when we married, I married a man called Dr. Paul Schnitzler. And when our daughter was born, I thought, Schnitzler is a terrible thing for children to have to call, you know, at school she would be called Carol Ann Schnitzler, and I thought, we both thought, well, we must change our name. And my brother-in-law Carl, also thought he wanted to change his name, and he had a friend called Hugh Sinclair, who was a famous actor. He rang up Hugh Sinclair one day, and said, "Do you mind if we change our name to yours? We think it's a nice name." And he said, "No, by all means, be my guest." So we changed our name to Sinclair. And at first we were called Schnitzler-Sinclair, hyphenated, and then my husband, and Carl, his brother, they kept on the name Schnitzler as their second, first name, so Paul was called Paul Schnitzler-Sinclair, and Carl was called Carl Schnitzler-Sinclair. And we had two daughters and a son, and my brother-in-law, also had two daughters and a son. My brother-in-law married an English woman.

So the children were born after you changed your name?

Carol Ann was born while we were still Schnitzler-Sinclair. And we then changed it to Sinclair, and the children were born after that.

So is there a large age gap between the children?

Yes. No, between Paul and me there are 12½ years.

Between the children?

Three years between all of my children, each of my children, and there was Carol Ann, and then there was Susan, and then there was Michael.

Did you work after you had children?

Well, no, not to start with. And of course, I didn't have a proper profession, I mean, had I, I hadn't really done anything. And my general knowledge was nil, my life experience was pretty big, but other than that, I mean, as far as scholarly knowledge goes, next to nothing. We, I was busy bringing, having three children, and in the middle of all this, Paul came home one day and said, "I do seem to send an awful lot of patients to Marriage Guidance. I think I've got to invite their Secretary for tea? Would you be willing to have her for tea?" And we did. And when she set eyes on me, she immediately said, "Wouldn't you like to become a Counsellor?" And I was horrified, I thought, "Marriage counselling sounds not a bit what I want to do." And in fact, I hadn't thought what I might want to do, I was just very busy looking after my children. And I said, "Well, if I do anything, I'll just have to wait until I have all my

children. I still want another child." I had two by that time, so I was determined to have a third child, and I had hardly had my third child, when she telephoned one day, and she said, "How about Marriage Guidance?" Meanwhile, she had sent me lots of books to read, and lots of literature, and she'd invited Paul and me to meetings, and we'd gone to Marriage Guidance this, that and the other, and the general meetings were terribly funny. They happened at the University, and everybody appeared in a hat, and the Bishop of Bristol was the President, and the Lord Mayor came, and they were terribly formal sort of affairs, and I thought, "God, I don't want to be connected with this outfit." But whatever I read about it, about the counselling work, I liked. And so eventually I said, "All right, I'll see if they'll take me." And I went for an interview with five prominent Bristol citizens, this was a sort of pre-interview really, and they grilled me for a couple of hours, asked me what kind of books I read and what sort of a person I was, and I thought, "Oh, they're not going to take me." And they said, "Yes, go forward for selection." And then I had a two-day residential selection procedure, and again, I took it with a pinch of salt, and I was so bemused about what they did. We were literally watched having breakfast, lunch and tea. We had five interviews with certain personalities, and much to my amazement, they just took me. And so I started work as Marriage Counsellor, which was voluntary work, I did it one day a week, I had three interviews, I had a certain amount of training, residential training, which went for two or three years, the training, and we started work almost immediately, and we had to write notes, and I was eventually assessed and passed as a Marriage Counsellor. It was all very primitive in those days. That was in 1955. And I spent, I would say, something like 6-8 hours a week on Marriage Guidance, whatever. Committee Meetings, writing notes, seeing clients, group meetings, our groups were run by either psychiatrists or psychiatric social workers, something like that.

And this service was actually quite new then, wasn't it?

It was started just before the War, and then it lay dormant during the War, and then it was started again in '45. So that's early on.

That's early on, yes.

Very very early on. I mean, I think they started in Bristol again in 1947, or 1948, something like that, and I started in '55.

So you were finding it was taking up a great deal of time?

A great deal of time. I was extremely lucky, because we'd had au pairs, girls, it had started off by somebody knowing somebody who wanted to come to learn English, and so I always had a young woman in the house helping me with the children, and with the housework and everything else. I never did, I really didn't ever work myself, domestically, and they, we didn't actually have them as au pairs, we had them as fully-fledged employees, and so they had their day off and Sundays off, and what have you off, but you know, they worked pretty full time.

When they were there, yes.

When they were there. So I was able to go off for training courses and off all together. I had a very, looking back, a very comfortable life. We would go skiing in the winter, we would take the children very early on skiing, we would take them to Devon or Cornwall, take a house somewhere in the summer, sometimes we went to Belgium. We started exchanges very young. I was terribly keen for my children, I mean, more keen than Paul ever was, for my children to get to know Hamburg, and to understand a bit about the situation. We did send the children to cheder, Sunday School. My husband and I both helped to start the Progressive Synagogue in Hamburg. We didn't like the Orthodox set-up. We did send them to cheder which was Orthodox.

Was your husband a bit more religious than you?

No, not really, either. We were both much of the same sort of religious ilk, if you like. My father-in-law was a bit more religious, but my husband wasn't at all religious, but for his father's sake, we would go to the Synagogue. Also when the children arrived, obviously we wanted to give them something. So we would send them to Sunday School, to the Orthodox place, because that was the only place there was, so they learnt Hebrew and all this sort of thing.

Did you, at an early age, talk to them about your background?

No. Very little. They knew we both came from Germany, but I didn't really talk to them much until much later. Because when I got on to my Counselling, and went on all sorts of training courses, I went to America in 1967 to visit a lot of relations and friends, and when I came back, I was suddenly asked, would I like to be trained to become a tutor for Marriage Guidance? And I hadn't a clue what that was. That was before they had Supervisors of any kind. So I was one of the first to be trained as a Supervisor for Marriage Counsellors and Trainers. And so that was a long selection procedure, would they take me, wouldn't they take me. And it was quite amazing when you think how they did it. I was put into a group in Bristol, it was run by a very close friend of mine, who later became Professor of Social Work in Hull, he was a Clinical Psychologist, and he ran this group for three months, which was a selection group, becoming a tutor for Marriage Guidance Council, for the National Marriage Guidance Council, and for three months we didn't know would they take us or not. We were twelve. It was a bit like the ten little niggers. You know, by the time it finished, there were eight left, and so they took me, and I became a tutor, and I worked for 15 years as a tutor for Marriage Guidance, training people, but I wasn't on the training team, but I supervised Counsellors, I ran groups for them, and so on, and it was in the course of my tutor training, that I went on a few psycho-drama courses, and they were very for me, because in one of those psycho-drama courses, I acted out being a 14 year old girl in Germany, and walking as a sort of alter-ego behind myself, which was the leader of the sort of thing, she was a psychiatrist, and I acted out being a 14 year old Jewish girl, in Hamburg, wishing with all my heart I could be a Nazi, and could live an ordinary life, and wouldn't be persecuted and wouldn't have to be Jewish, and all the feelings that I'd suppressed all these years, they were coming out. It was very very traumatic. It went on for something like four hours, acting out my feelings, that I had harboured all these years, that the nicest thing that could've happened to me, if I

hadn't been born Jewish, and I could have been a Nazi like everybody else, and wouldn't have had, you know, all these anxieties. I mean, as I know it now, it's a fairly ordinary everyday kind of thing to go through, but you know, I acted it out. And you asked me, had I talked to my children about it, I hadn't really, until then. And one of the tasks I was left with, by my, the people who ran this course, was, will you go home and talk to your children about your past, and share it with them. And I had to promise that I would. And the next course was, in fact, a year later, and by that time, I had done it.

The children must have asked you where their grandparents were?

Oh, they knew the facts, but they didn't know the feelings behind it. They did know we both came from Germany, they did, I mean, I had sent them terribly early on to half-Jewish friends of mine in Hamburg. In fact, my children are fairly bi-lingual, I mean, my daughters particularly, my son's never really taken to it. But I had several people in Hamburg who were half-Jewish, who survived the War, and my children were sent from the age of 8, every summer, either to Belgium or to France, or to Germany, or somewhere to learn the language, and then they met Anna. I mean, my Anna, they, we took them there. In 1960, we went to Denmark, and we drove through Hamburg, and we stayed with Anna, in her house.

They've seen it.

Yes, they knew about that background. I mean, there was nothing that I hid from them in that sense, but I hadn't talked about my feelings before.

Were you so restrained from talking about it before you'd had this four hour session with your group, did you feel bitter and angry?

No.

What was the feeling? That it was something you couldn't talk about?

Somehow I didn't, I didn't really suppress it consciously, I only suppressed it fairly unconsciously. In 1950 I went to Germany again for the first time, and I met my old teacher, Flüggi, who had been punished by the Nazis at the beginning of the War, and sent to a very rough school, as a teacher. She had what the Germans called, "Strafversezt", she was sent to a school, not a private school, it was a State school, of poor, mostly illegitimate children, she became a teacher there, because she had, all the time, refused to become a Party member. She never ever became a Party member, and she worked actively against the Nazis. And immediately after the War, she became a Headmistress of a Comprehensive School. She was immediately honoured by that, and later, in the early 1970s, she was given the Yad Vashem medal by Israel. And I was largely, I was a bit instrumental in that, in that I sent reports about what she had done and so on, and lots of my school friends did the same, what she had done for Jews, and she had hidden a Jewish doctor for a year in her house, but that was just the end of the War, and she had hidden various valuables of Jews. She had visited Jews just before they were sent to concentration camp. She had packed their things, she had argued, she had gone to the highest of the SS in Hamburg, and pleaded for the life

of the mother of a friend of mine, not to be deported, and she was deferred, this woman, by a year, she was actually deported and killed. But she had actively worked against the Nazis, and for the Jewish people, and Jewish friends, and she had many Jewish friends, and my children knew that, and they met her immediately it was possible to invite her over to England, and for me to visit her, and so after the War, we became friendly, we became friends, she became my best friend. She died in 1983, and I'm very very friendly with her daughter still, very close friend of her.

Where does she live?

Hamburg.

The daughter? Oh, still there.

Yes, yes. So as soon as I could, my children went to Hamburg and went to various people to stay, and you see, I didn't keep anything from them, but what I didn't share with them was the trauma.

That's what I wanted to ask you about.

IT IS NOW 25th FEBRUARY, 1989, AND ILSE SINCLAIR AND I ARE MEETING FOR THE SECOND TIME.

Well, quite a few weeks have gone by, and I spent the time in between working, looking at old diaries that I had with me, in 1937, '38 and '39. I simply entered what I did, and I realised that I was a very sociable person, even as a child, and as an adolescent, and had very many friends, and loved talking to people, which seems to be the theme, my life's theme, in a sense. The other thing I did in these few weeks, was looking at letters my parents wrote from Germany, and later from Shanghai, and I think some of that may be valid to put down on tape. But before I do that, I thought I'd go back to my childhood, because there were certain things that either I skated over, or I didn't mention at all. Like, life in Hamburg would have changed enormously now. When I was a child, for instance, on cold winter days, they would flood various tennis courts in, everywhere really, in Germany, and there would be a lot of skating. Weather in Germany is very much colder than it is in England, in the winter, or it used to be then, and we used to spend much time as children, and adolescents, going to these open-air skating rinks, they were not artificial ice-rinks, they were naturally, it was naturally frozen rainwater, snow, or water out of the mains, and that was great fun. They were floodlit, and there was piped music, and there were little restaurants, and it was where you met boys, and there was a lot of flirting going on, and so I learned to skate from an early age, and that was, that was great fun. Also,

Who looked after the skating rink, was it the local authority?

Yes. Or it might have been private, because, of course, we paid to get in, so it must have been the same people who looked after the tennis courts in the summer, they would look after the skating rink in the winter, and in fact, sometimes it was so cold we would get time off from school, and we would all go skating from school, we'd march to the skating rink and go skating, that was really great fun. And the skates were different. They would be, we would wear boots, but the skates weren't attached to the boots. The skates, they were on a rope, or string, and we hung them round our necks going, and we had a key, and the skates would be screwed onto our boots, they weren't modern skates, you know, boots and skates all in one.

So whatever boots you were wearing, your skates were screwed on to those.

Yes. But we would have strong boots, probably stronger boots than one would perhaps normally wear.

And did you wear special clothes?

We wore, gosh, what an interesting question. Some, I remember some girls, got sort of, almost skating dance outfits, you know, and looked really professional, yes, a sort of, what would you call them.

Short skirts,

Yes, short skirts that stuck out, that's right, and there would be some professional dancers on the skating rink, and it was, of course, lovely when it got dark, after four o'clock, it was all very romantic, and they would play waltzes and we would dance. Well, you know, we would dance on ice. It was great fun.

What age were you?

I must have been something like 9, 10, when I started, even younger probably, and then my brother or older people would take me. No, I would think 9 or 10, I would probably go with my girlfriends, and at 14, 15, we would meet boys. I cannot remember going after the age of 15, and I suppose it was because Jews weren't allowed. I think that must have happened. That was 1936 when I was 15, and from that time on, I imagine we weren't allowed on skating rinks. We were not allowed on any public, whatever the word for that is.

Transport?

Transport we were allowed, because I went by underground to work, which was in 1938, '39, so we must have been allowed on transport. In 1937 or '38, we were forbidden to go to cinemas or theatres.

(END OF SIDE ONE, REEL FOUR)

At that time, the Cultural Centre was formed, for Jews, in Hamburg, and we saw films there, and we had dances, and there were generally social things happening. Theatre groups, and various things, so this Cultural Centre was very important to Jews in Hamburg at that time. I forgot to say on the previous tape, that by reading my diaries, I became aware that I had very strong Jewish interests. They were more cultural and Jewishness was important to me, and I had various friends that were very influential. One of them was a budding Rabbi, who went to the only liberal minded Rabbinical College in Germany, at that time, in Breslau, and his mother lived in Hamburg, and was a friend of my mother's, and we became very good friends. He was quite a bit older than I, and I admired him enormously, and he held services in our Temple, and I used to go to them, but even before then, I saw by my diaries, that I went to services quite often on Friday nights, and seemed to enjoy it, I seemed to enjoy discussion groups a lot, and so I was, at that time, very Jewish minded, partly because I had to be because I was excluded from any, any Christian social life, if you like, and so this Jewish sort of life made up for it, but I was also interested in biblical discussions, and there was quite a strong interest, so for a few years, I was a regular member of the Temple community, and liked it, and enjoyed it very much. And I was, in fact, very moved when I went to see the Temple after the War, they have a memorial stone in front of it now, saying this was the Temple of the Jewish Congregation, until Hitler destroyed it, or he forbid Jews to go there, and it is now part of the German Jewish radio station.

Can I ask, was that the Synagogue that they couldn't burn down?

Yes, that was the Synagogue they couldn't. It's such a modern building, it looks as if it was made of marble, it's a very beautiful stone, very modern, with hardly any windows, certainly not to the front, so they couldn't throw stones, and they couldn't really destroy it.

What was your parents' reaction to your Jewish activity? Were they pleased?

I must say, to my shame, they weren't at all interested. I don't think I had very much, I had no conversations with them about it, I don't think. They might have been pleased, I really have no idea what their reaction was. There was, in fact, very little meaningful conversation between my parents and myself at that time. It was awful.

Or with your brother?

Well, my brother wasn't around.

He'd already gone?

He left Germany in 1936, so, I never, I can't remember having a real conversation with my brother either. We were peculiarly non-communicating family in a sense. My father talked to me a lot as a child, and he talked to me about cultural things. My father would, wanted to introduce me to German novelists, German writers, German



music, and it wasn't, there wasn't much conversation about the here and now, about how I was feeling, or how they were feeling, but there was a lot of fear around with my parents, and a lot of general anxiety that transmitted itself to me. I mean, the talk was about who of their friends had got out, out of Germany, and where could they go. And this was the general feeling from day to day. Have you heard from so and so who is now in America? Or in England. And what can we do about, where can we send her? Meaning me. And there was such a lot of general anxiety about getting out of Germany and what would happen to us, that everyday things and feelings about other things, were suppressed really, or not expressed.

Can I ask, did they hear from people who had got to America?

Oh yes. Oh, everybody did. We had relations in America, and in South America, in England, in, no, not Spain, some people had got to France, and there were various experiences. They had a vast number of relations and friends in other countries.

And there was no restriction about receiving letters?

Not receiving letters or writing, no, but you did have to be very careful about what you wrote, because they were always censored, so you weren't allowed to say, cousin so and so has been taken to a concentration camp, and came out beaten to death, or very nearly beaten to death. You had to keep your letters very neutral. We all knew that letters were censored. We also knew that diaries could be taken out of our handbag and read, and held against us. And there were a lot of jokes, Hitler jokes, Nazi jokes, or Jewish jokes, and they had to, if you wrote them down, my mother could never remember them, and I remember, she wrote them down in her diary, but they had to be written in such a way that nobody could make any sense of them but herself, because we knew we could not use any written word, it might be used against us. So there was so much general fear about, that we lived a very very, I mean, mentally restrictive life too, you could hardly think straight, because you knew that wasn't really allowed, you certainly couldn't talk freely. Somebody might hear through the walls, somebody might hear who you listen to on the radio, so it was a very very restricted life altogether.

Do you think you felt this, would have felt this on your own, or do you think it's because your parents made you aware of this?

I think it was because my parents made me aware of it, but we were all very aware of it, and this general anxiety, kind of transmitted itself, and, you see, as I said before, it crept up on you over the years, so you hardly noticed it coming on, it didn't, it didn't start on one certain day, it sort of crept up on us since 1933, and the years I was talking about up to 1939, just before the War started, when I came to England, and you became very anxious person, I'm sure we were just not normal human beings, we were not free, we knew there were very strong restrictions on us. We were a race apart.

And yet you had a very nice social time, and you were young and you had boyfriends and girlfriends,

Yes,

And you still felt, you still felt that atmosphere?

It had to be done secretly, and there was the other half, I mean, we were total split personalities really. There was the one half of us, of me, I can only talk about me really, and I think was very ordinary, common garden, and everybody was like me a bit, and maybe I was a little more, I'm now more aware of how I might have felt then. A lot of my friends now, perhaps wouldn't agree with me, because they are not so aware of what goes on underneath. I mean, I've had plenty of time to think about what made me tick then, and what makes me tick now. And I think I was very, a split personality in a sense, that I was the anxious Jew, who was very very anxious to get out of Germany and be free again, and then there was the young girl, who was determined to enjoy being 16 and be 17, and go out with boys, and have a bit of a cuddle here and there, and I was physically developing, and I was dying to have sex in a sense, you know, I didn't in those days at all, but there was all the natural desire there, and so you took advantage of any party, any dance, and to go out with my boyfriend, and I said to myself, "Well, to hell with all the danger, I'm just going to do it, because you only live once, and who knows what's happening tomorrow, they may put me in a concentration camp, or whatever, but I am going to live today. And that wasn't even thought out carefully, you just followed your instinct.

Do you think in some strange way, it heightened the fun, the idea that it was slightly dangerous?

Yes, I think you're absolutely right. I'd not thought of that before, but I think it heightened the feeling of enjoyment, and secrecy, and of course, in other ways, that goes on now. Anything done in secret is much more fun, and the danger, I think, exaggerated the joy. That's very true. But looking back, I mean, one wonders how I ever became an integrated human being, because you were so full of anxiety, it makes me wonder now why am I not an hysterical wreck? You know, somehow or other, one needed to do an awful lot of settling down afterwards, and of course, you couldn't settle down because of the War, so you were kept on a high about one thing or another.

When you first came to this country, did you feel an immediate sense of release, because you weren't ....

Yes, up to a point, yes. But part of you was still there, and because my parents were still there, and my girlfriends were still there, and also my boyfriend, and we knew in what danger they were, and people in England daren't say the things that we didn't dare say in Germany, like, they're bound to be killed, and when the War starts, and it was the summer of 1939 when I met new people in England, a lot of refugees as well, we thought once the War starts, all Jews in Germany will be killed. And so yes, you were relieved about being out of it, and there was the anxiety had dropped away in a sense, but you were so anxious about those people you left behind, that one anxiety was taken over by another anxiety, so in a sense, one wasn't really all that free. I wonder whether this is the time to talk about what happened to my parents? Because maybe that leads in quite well, because I've kept my parents letters, which, from the

moment War started in September '39, my parents started to write to an aunt of my mother's, who lived in Zurich at the time, in Switzerland, so their letters, it sort of arose quite naturally that she, she was called tante Annie, and she would send me all their letters, they would be very careful not to make, not to mention that the letters were written in Hamburg, and they knew that my aunt would send these letters to me in England, and at the same time I would write to Zurich, it was a neutral country, and she would send my letters to my parents, so there was a form of contact, and they did not say "We aren't allowed to do this, that and the other", because that would have been quite obvious that the letter would have come from Germany, but when they got to Shanghai in January 1941, they wrote about the things they were not allowed to do, or had to do in Germany, and that might be quite interesting, in that, of course, there were seats in parks that were only for Jews, and for Aryans as it was, and later on they weren't allowed to go to parks at all. They had to wear the yellow star. They were only allowed to associate with Jews. When they visited my former housekeeper, Anna, they had to do this secretly, and they were aware that they endangered her life. They were very aware that if a neighbour of Anna's would have denounced them, that would have been dreadful, so there came a time when they didn't visit her any more, and when she went to visit them, because she could have seen anybody in that house, and nobody was watching, and so she went to see my parents. There was, it was a very very restrictive life. And then, just to tell a little bit about what happened to my parents, they realised that the doors had closed all over the world, that Jews hadn't got anywhere else to go, and my mother's best friend had gone to Shanghai, just before I left Germany, and I remember taking her to the station, and they left also by Siberian Express, from Moscow, and so they left Hamburg by train, and it was a very tearful goodbye, and it was in, I wrote in my diary, it was like a funeral, it's very strange, that goodbye to this particular person, who I was very fond of, was, it was just like a funeral, everybody at the station crying their eyes out, and in a way, they were pleased that they got out, but there were my parents and myself left behind. Well, this friend of my mother's became a secretary to the Jewish Organisation in Shanghai, and she worked herself to the bone, trying to get my parents out of Germany. She wrote, she bombarded my uncle in San Francisco with letters, pleading with him to pay for my parents' fare from Hamburg to Shanghai, and deposit a certain amount of money, it must've been a fairly large sum, to send this money to Shanghai, so that the papers could be got from outside of Germany to get my parents out of Germany. At the same time, as soon as my parents had the external papers, they then had to work to get the internal ones, and that was endless, worse than my emigration, I mean, they had to go from A to Z, get permits here, there and everywhere. And I had a letter which I remember my mother sending to my aunt in Switzerland, saying "Uncle has now sent the money to Shanghai, and it looks as if we are going to get out. And we are all set, there are a few papers missing." And to my surprise, I didn't realise at the time, they were allowed to take an enormous amount of luggage with them, which I'm really quite surprised about. They had to pack their stuff with the, what do you call the control? Douane? What's that?

Customs.

Customs man. The Customs man came to the flat, and they had to pack with him, which is what I had to do, and I think they had something like 17 pieces of luggage when they got to Shanghai. That didn't go with them, that went by freight or

something, separately. But they were allowed 10 Marks out of Germany and they had the tickets sent to them from abroad, so that the fare was paid for by my uncle in America. At least, that's what I think. They had a very very interesting journey, which I think is worth recording. They went to the station, they went to Berlin, and they stayed in a hotel at Berlin, and they were meant to fly from Berlin to Moscow. Now, one has to remember that this was January 1941, and Germany attacked Russia in May 1941, so they could not have got out any later. In Berlin, they were told that that aeroplane wouldn't go, so they went by train from Berlin to Königsberg, which is in East Prussia, and they were met by the mother of a friend of mine, who worked in the Jewish Laboratory with me. The father was in a concentration camp at the time. The mother fetched my parents from the station and took them to the airport. They were also, somebody was there from the Jewish Community, because the extraordinary thing was that there were Jewish Communities en route to Shanghai, wherever they stopped, I think, even in Russia, they were members of a Jewish Committee of some kind or another, receiving them, making them feel welcome and putting them on the next leg of the journey, it was quite extraordinary, and I remember my mother writing about this, and they were overwhelmed about the organisation of this, it was fantastic. And so then they flew, and in those days, people didn't fly that easily, from Königsburg to Moscow, and in Moscow they were shown round, they stayed for two days in a very good hotel, now nobody has any idea how liberating that must have been, from being in a sort of ghetto situation in Hamburg, they were suddenly free, and they stayed in a hotel anybody could stay in, and they were shown round Moscow, and they loved it, they loved the Underground, they loved the sightseeing in Moscow, they just, they, they were really like suddenly breathing fresh air.

Is this the Jewish Community in Moscow who showed them round?

Well, I'm not absolutely sure. My mother wrote something about Intourist, so it must have been the Intourist thing, but I think there was a Jewish Community involved in Moscow. And then they were put on the Siberian Express, and I always thought it must have been a nightmare of a journey, but not a bit of it. My parents wrote it was most interesting. They lived on this train for seven days and nights, and they met various Jews who took the same train, and they formed a little Jewish community. In fact, looking back, I think the train must have been full of Jews, because it was just about the last train out of Germany, before Russia entered the War, and after that the door was closed, and all these people were going to Shanghai, because it seemed to have been the last place Jews were able, by hook or by crook, to get to. They went to, I think Manchuria, they got out of the train. My father wrote that it was so fascinating looking out of the windows and the scenery was so superb that, I think they had to be positive, they couldn't be negative, they would have gone to pieces if they'd thought of the trauma they left behind, so they looked forward, and they enjoyed every bit that was coming, I mean, I can't imagine what the loos were like, what the facilities were like, but apparently they were good. They were given good food on the train, all paid for by my American uncle, it was all inclusive.

There was one ticket bought by him, that really got them from A to B without having to show tickets in between? They must have had a courier, somebody taking care of them?

I think they must have had a courier. They probably had a courier, that was never mentioned. But what was mentioned a lot, was that at any station, like in Manchuria, they were met by members of this Committee, and then they went by train to Harbin, now I think Harbin is in China, and there they were met by the Jewish Committee again, and they were taken to a restaurant, and my mother wrote quite vividly how she became hysterical, because there were Japanese and Chinese and English people, and Germans and goodness knows what, and she couldn't take it, she couldn't take not only having Jews around, and she just couldn't, it was just too overwhelming. I suppose it was partly joy of that they were free, and partly sadness that they had, of all the restrictions they'd had to endure for years. So she was totally overwhelmed. They were put in a hotel there, and then they were put on their way. And I think they had to touch down in Japan somewhere, before they were actually put on a boat to Shanghai, but I was never told exactly how they got there. Except that the journey from Hamburg to Shanghai took 17 days. Well, that was part of the journey, because in another letter my father wrote, it took three weeks, well, it is very nearly three weeks, isn't it, 17 days, something like that. Then in Shanghai, they were received again by the Committee, it was called something HICEM or something like that, HICEM, or whatever, I can't remember the name of the Jewish Committee in Shanghai, but they were marvellous. They had arranged accommodation and my friend's mother was really the driving force behind that. They were put in a boarding house in the, I think, French centre of Shanghai, or international centre, I'm not sure which, and they lived in a boarding house fairly well, all paid for by my uncle in America. My father became ill, and he had been ill before, in Hamburg. I knew he was, had a terminal illness, something to do with his spleen, I don't think it was cancer, but it could have been, it was a very peculiar disease, and I knew he was going to die, which he did in 1943, he died in January 1943. So they had two years of freedom in Shanghai. My father tried very hard and did get a job as a representative of various wool factories, and my mother knitted for a Chinese factory, and also for private people, she knitted dresses and jumpers, and they earned some money. They had, they went to cinemas, and they went to, they were again, very much bound up with Jews, with German Jews, and that as a little aside, there were quite a few men of couples my parents had known in Hamburg, who had been imprisoned or in concentration camps, because they had associated with non-Jewish women, and were called "Rassenschande" and they had only managed to get out of concentration camp by showing an entry visa to another country, in this case, of course, Shanghai. And my mother wrote in one letter, "We seem to meet all the Rassenschande here, they're all together and they are quite happy again with their wives, and they're playing happy families" as it were, which is the funny bit about their life in Shanghai. They, they worked from the minute they got there, they tried to get work here, there and everywhere. Well, then, after ... one thing is interesting, they immediately joined a Synagogue, they had liberal Synagogues, and they had Orthodox Synagogues, they had a very Jewish life again, and they had interesting lectures, they had, amongst the Jews in Shanghai were obviously artists, literally, culturally very active people, they had a lot of very interesting happenings, so they had a very good cultural life. The letters they wrote to me, either via America or via Switzerland again, were full of interesting things about China, and Shanghai in particular at that time.

Can I ask you, have you any idea how large the community was there?

I had a feeling, and I don't know what I'm basing it on, but there must have been about 20,000 Jews there, German Jews at that.

Was this Community only German Jews, or were there Czechs, Poles?

Must have been. Must have been, but I am not sure. I only know about German Jews.

Because your parents would have stayed more close to them?

They would have been more closely connected with them you see, I'm not sure whether Czechs or Poles got that way of getting out of Germany, I don't know, but I suppose they must have been out, I really don't know. After my father died in '43, the Japanese took over Shanghai, and there was quite a lot of bombing and shooting, and then there was a peaceful settlement, I can't quite remember how it happened, but I read in one letter, that Jews had to remove themselves to a very dirty, poor part of Shanghai, it was obviously the worst part of Shanghai. There must have been some kind of agreement with the Japanese, or, I don't know how it came about, but the Japanese didn't actually persecute the Jews. They don't seem to have had any anti-Semitism, and they, they left them alone, but they must have had some agreement with the Germans that they had to be put in a kind of ghetto. So my mother had to move into one very poor room, it was called Hung Ku, now God knows how you spell it, I don't know, I don't know, I'd have to think about that. It was, the streets were flooded in bad weather, they had water only for an hour every day, they had to go to a pump at the end of some certain lane, where they had to draw enough water for the rest of the day. They were cold in the winter, and too hot in the summer, they had hardly any means of heating. They had some sort of wood burning stoves on which they cooked. They had a loo which was in a yard, which was a bucket, and with a piece of wood over it, that's the only thing they could use. It must have been a nightmare when they were ill, it was a nightmare when they were not ill. It was pretty ghastly. I still got letters, and my mother didn't really complain an awful lot.

Still via Zurich?

Via Zurich, because when America entered the War, of course, America was out of bounds, you couldn't write letters because they were now in a Japanese occupied town, but they were allowed to write to Switzerland, being neutral, they were also allowed to write the occasional Red Cross letter, which I've still got, I've got some of these Red Cross letters in which you were allowed to say 25 words, and that is how my mother told me that my father had died, and my mother eventually worked as a secretary, or a receptionist for a German Jewish dentist, and I only read one of her letters recently, in which she said that they had the possibility to work in, outside of this ghetto part of Shanghai, that they had to have special permits, these permits had to be renewed every first of the month, and it had to be signed by a Japanese officer, whatever, and they could be ill-treated by these Japanese, which I had never realised before. They had to stand in line and queue, and there must have been hundreds of people, queuing for this special permit, and if they didn't ask politely, in good English, what they wanted, where they wanted to work, what they wanted the permit for, they

were beaten by the Japanese, now I didn't realise that before, I only read it last week in a letter that I found. I had, I always thought that the Japanese left them completely in peace and never touched them, but it wasn't quite like that.

Did they beat women too?

I think so.

Was your mother ever touched?

Never. My mother was never ill-treated by them, or by anybody, personally, nor was my father.

That must be a great comfort to you.

Yes, that was a great help. It was terribly difficult to manage moneywise, and my mother wrote in one of the letters, again, something I wasn't aware of, there were homes bought up by the Jewish Committee, and this was for people who hadn't got any money from abroad like my mother had. My mother always managed to draw, and keep some in reserve of my uncle's money, and use the money she earned for necessities, you know, for whatever. And she said she visited one of these homes a few times, and there were about 30 people sleeping in dormitories ...

(END OF SIDE TWO, REEL FOUR)

This is tape 5 of the interview with Ilse Sinclair, on 25th February, 1989, by Jennifer Wingate, for the National Life Story Collection.

So, that my mother was always aware of how much worse off some people were, who didn't have these additional funds to draw on. My mother also had dysentery at some point, and various illnesses, and there was an amazing sense of belonging. The Community, the Jewish Community in Shanghai, were quite quite amazing. When they had to move to this ghetto-like place, some people started little shops, and the doctors settled down, and the dentists settled down, and everybody had something, and my mother knitted away for people, and they started again. And I got the feeling from these letters that it was very unique, the way the Jewish Committee, and the Jewish people, held together. They visited each other, they went to cultural things, they went to Synagogues, I remember now reading that shops and everything were closed on a Saturday, because they respected the Orthodox people's need for, you know, not working on a Shabat. It was, I got a feeling of tremendous closeness amongst these Jewish refugees, and they became terribly fond of each other. At that time my mother worked for this dentist who she became very friendly with, and they had a reasonable existence, until the end of the War, and then my mother eventually managed to get to South Africa. We applied for my mother to come to England, but her visa to South Africa arrived before the visa for England came, and that's where she went, and that's where she died about 9 months after getting to South Africa, she died of a dreadful illness called pemphigus, so I never saw my mother again. She lived in South Africa, in a place called, "Our Parents Home" which was started by Jews of Johannesburg. And she again lived in a Home, but couldn't sit still, she knitted away again for people, and she became a housekeeper for various South African Jews who went to Europe, and needed someone to keep their homes going, and that's what she did, so she again earned some money, she didn't want to be totally relying on my brother and on us, my husband and I sent money immediately, regularly to keep her. And that's how she died, and that was the end of her story.

Your brother had meanwhile married, in South Africa?

My brother was married twice. He was married first to a Hamburg girl who left him after two years of marriage, and he married again. My brother was an optician in Johannesburg, and became a partner in a firm, and his children arrived after my mother had died. And he had two children. My brother eventually came to England to live, and he lives now in Bristol, and his one daughter lives in London, and the other daughter is at the moment in Hong Kong, but also lived in Bristol. They are both married to non-Jewish people. My brother is only nominally Jewish really, he doesn't go to any service of any kind. He is an introvert, and doesn't talk about his feelings, he doesn't want to remember anything. He is quite a different person from me, he's not outgoing, and he's very insular really.

Are you in touch with each other?



Yes. Oh yes, we are in touch. I don't get on at all well with his wife, who resents me because I am an outgoing person, and I have an awful lot of friends, and I do a lot of things, and she is a fairly depressed kind of person, reads a lot of books, listens to a lot of radio, television, and doesn't make friends. Very peculiar sort of a person.

And she'd like to be different?

She'd like to be different, yes, and I think she envies me, which is just too bad. But they go back to South Africa to use their money, because when they came to England, which was about 2½ years ago, they were not allowed to bring all their money out, which they had their Shares and Bonds and things, he can get his pension sent to England, but he has to spend the bulk of his money in South Africa, so they go every January, and they stay there until March, and they use up their money. They managed to get the interest of their investments sent to England, and my brother manages to get a pension from Germany, so does my sister-in-law. I did not, I wasn't eligible to get pension from Germany, because I never had a paying job. I could have paid several thousands of pounds and manage to get into this German pension scheme, but as my husband had a reasonable pension in England, or was hoping to have a reasonable pension in England, we decided at the time, not to pay these thousands of pounds in order to qualify for a German pension, so I do not get a German pension.

Was this the State Pension, or was this Reparation Pension?

No, this was the State Pension. It was the pension if somebody worked in Germany. It was the sort of ordinary common garden Old Age Pension. Reparations we all got. I, for instance, was paid so much, I can't remember how much, for every day my mother spent in this ghetto-like existence in Shanghai. I got as much pay for her being there, as other people got for their parents being in a concentration camp. Yes, and I got compensated for not having finished my education, and I got compensated for my father's business having been gone bankrupt, or having given up, I got a certain lump sum. In fact, there was a time when I was offered a Government assistance if I would have liked to have start my parents' business again. And that was out of the question, I didn't want to live in Germany, and I didn't want to spend time on this, and I'm not a businesswoman at all, so that didn't suit me, or my brother.

You were offered a lump sum? Or were you given the choice?

I was offered Assistance. I never really got into the details of how much they would have offered me if I would have started the business again, but they would have only given it for that purpose.

And the other money that you got, were you offered a lump sum?

Yes.

Or were you offered a choice of ....

A lump sum. No, not a choice of pension sort of thing.

Was it a substantial amount?

It was a fair amount, I mean, I can't remember how much. My brother and I shared all this, of course. We both got money for lack of education, I mean, you know, he couldn't go to University, and I didn't finish my schooling. I couldn't go to a technical college when I went to the Laboratory, I couldn't do anything like that, so my schooling was totally interrupted, and I got cash for that, a lump sum. The money was the equivalent of, I remember, once we bought a settee and chairs and furniture for our sitting room, and once we took the whole family skiing to Switzerland on it, and that was the sort of money we got, it wasn't a great big ... it wasn't an awful lot.

So, about £10,000?

I suppose it was something like that in all. In all. Well now, I suppose we come to my marriage, and meeting Paul who was then a GP in Bristol, General Practitioner. He and his twin brother had come to England in 1933, and his father had tremendous foresight, and also the fact was that they qualified in Germany, they got the equivalent of their MD at Bonn, so they had done their medical training in Germany and Austria, and various places, and when they, after they qualified, they applied for a job in, I think, Berlin, and they weren't allowed to start the job because they were Jewish. So they came to England, and they requalified after a year's study in Dublin, and they managed to get their Doctorate of their medical qualification in the very very lowest of academic institutions in Dublin, which enabled them to, to practice medicine in England. Their father was a vet in the Rheinland, in a little town called Düren in the Rheinland. And their mother had died when the boys were about 16. There were these two identical twins, and they had a third, an 18 month older brother, too, who studied Law in Germany, and then went to Israel. So my husband was also a German refugee, only he had come to England very much sooner than I had. He had not had an interrupted education, he was 12½ years older than I, so he was lucky enough to have proper schooling and proper education, went to University. In those days in Germany, you didn't stay in one University, you went to several Universities, you had a semester here, and a semester there, and finally they did their Doctorate in Bonn, in the Rheinland. So we were both refugees, he was called Schnitzler, and I married him, and we changed our names to Sinclair when our first daughter was born. My children were born in 1946, 1949, and 1952. Two girls and a boy. And I was very much occupied with them, and I started Marriage Guidance work, which is, I mean, I learnt marital counselling in an institution called the National Marriage Guidance Council, in Bristol. I started in 1955. And I remember it seemed to me a very Christian organisation, and I got drawn into it by knowing the Secretary, and I think I've mentioned it before, that my husband used to send patients there, and so we invited her for tea one day, and she wanted me to become a Counsellor. And eventually I went to a Sponsoring Committee, it was terribly terribly formal in those days, and I really thought I didn't stand a chance, I was Jewish, I was a foreigner, but I thought for a lark really, for a bit of fun, I went into this. I was really seriously interested in it, but I never expected to be accepted, and I was very surprised when I was accepted, and I then started, I had to go through a two-day selection procedure, which was quite stiff too, where we had five interviews with different people, and they watched us at mealtimes, and at all times, and well, I was accepted for that, and I

became a Counsellor. The thing that sticks out was that it was, even then, it seemed to me terribly old-fashioned, women appeared in hats, we had General Meetings with the Lord Mayor of Bristol, with the Bishop of Bristol, who was the President, and it was very very Christian orientated. We weren't taught to counsel people on religious lines at all, it was fairly free in that way, but the workers were a lot of, well, for lack of a better word, they were sort of "Christian do-gooders", and I felt a bit out of place some of the time, and I was by far the youngest, I was just 31 or something, when I started, or 32, it was after my son was born, I wanted to finish my family first, before starting, and so I became a Counsellor.

Were you the only Jewish Counsellor?

Yes, certainly the only Jewish Counsellor in Bristol, and there's never been another one.

Was there, was it a national organisation then?

Yes. Yes. It was, and is, a National Organisation, it's called the National Marriage Guidance Council, which was started in London before the War. I think it was started something like 1938, and it was started by a man called Herbert Grey, he was a Reverend Herbert Grey, and it was a very churchy/religious sort of, it had that sort of background, and it started as an advisory service for people who didn't know where to go for various problems, so they would be directed to go to lawyers or doctors, or other organisations, and when that, they realised that didn't really work, and didn't really help people, and some of the solicitors or doctors, or whoever they went to, couldn't really help them enough, they then started training Counsellors in London, and people became Counsellors.

So that would have been, what, '55, '56?

No, no, no, this was before the War, it started in London in 1938 I believe. And then they might have started in Bristol, I think they started in something like '48, and so the Marriage Guidance Council in Bristol, probably established itself in 1949, or 1948, I don't know exactly. But we were affiliated to the National one, and this started off in all kinds of towns and other places. There was a very, very rigorous selection procedure. And in those days, there were certain rules that you had to abide by, you had to believe that sex outside marriage was not a good idea, you had to sign this, and I, I sort of almost crossed my fingers and signed this thing, because I wasn't at all of that opinion, but I realised I wouldn't be taken if I didn't, and so there were certain sort of ground rules that weren't enforced in any way, you had to believe in, in various moral codes, if you like, or as such had to believe in it.

And presumably that has changed?

Oh much, it has changed enormously.

Together with the standards on the BBC.

The standards, absolutely, changed enormously, and in the days, well, I'll talk about that in a minute, when I became a Supervisor. Nowadays, they take unmarried people to become Counsellors, and you can have been divorced and all that. In my day, you had to have a clean sort of marriage, and not admit to anybody that you might have slept with anybody else ever in your life before, and you had to have a really fairly strict moral code. So that's, 1955-1967, I was, what I would term, an ordinary Marriage Counsellor. And then the Organisation started doing education work in schools and in clubs, and for teachers, because we wanted to encourage teachers to help children with their sexual problems, in a sense, you know, we, we saw that 14 year old and 12 year olds actually did have intercourse together, and they were, it's drugs wasn't so much in evidence yet, but a lot of pregnancies in schools. Therefore, we started doing what we called "Education in Schools". We would go into classroom situations and we would go into youth clubs, and we would talk to them, and we would get them to talk about their feelings. The aim was to make young people more aware of what they were doing, the aim was not to stop them from doing it, that wasn't our first aim. Our first aim was first of all to understand about sexuality, and to, and for the girls to understand what makes a boy tick, and for the boys to understand what makes girls tick, and so we, we enabled them to talk freely to each other. A girl would say, "Well, of course, all a boy wants is to get us into bed", or something, and the boy would say, "Well, they lead us up to this, and then they say no. And this is teasing, sort of cock teasing thing." And we wanted them to understand each other, and to be a bit more responsible about what they were doing. We wanted to teach them about contraception, and we wanted to help them with their very poor relationship with their parents, which was very often in evidence. So we talked to club leaders and teachers, and to Headmasters and Headmistresses, and we were given time in schools and in clubs and sort of, to get this whole thing going. We then started having conferences with teachers in helping them, because we felt it was ridiculous, we were working with various children in schools, and of course, when they leave schools, that's it. So we thought, well, we must go to the source of all this and help the teachers to be more open, and my eyes were opened, I mean, there were so many very authoritarian teachers who didn't really care two hoots what the children did. They, they were very strict in their moral codes, but they didn't really want to have anything to do with it. They were totally not understanding what makes young people tick.

Did they not, or did they go along with your emphasis on accepting what the children were doing? Did they want you to change the children's morals?

They would have liked to do that. But they were overruled by the Heads, and so what the Heads then did, the Headmaster or Headmistress very often thought, "Well, or teachers are not equipped to do this, because they have a very strict moral code, but they don't quite know how to enable children to even talk freely at school." At each school there would only be one or two teachers who were very good at this, but that wasn't quite good enough, so Heads arranged conferences for us, so that maybe out of a certain school there would be five teachers, or four teachers, or even less, they would be paid for to come onto some courses that we ran. Now, I think at that time, I had actually been asked to become a tutor, meaning a supervisor and trainer for Marriage Guidance, and again, I had a very long selection procedure for this. Remember this was in 1967 that I was asked would I become a tutor for Marriage

Guidance, and I said, "What's that?" Because there hadn't been any. My only supervision in all those years of counselling, was by a man who was what we termed a "Field Officer" and he would go through the whole country and see Counsellors. He would assess the work by looking at the reports of the work I had done in a year, and then I would be passed, and for the rest of my Counselling days I wouldn't see another supervisor.

Well, that has changed.

That has changed drastically. I was one of the first tutors ever trained for Marriage Guidance.

Can I ask, is it, this youth training, this youth sex training, was it national as well, or was it just in your area?

Yes, yes, it was national, all areas.

Yes. Is that still done?

Very little. But it is done again, it has woken up again, as it were. Over the last few years it's been started again. It peters out because schools said they would do it themselves, and they didn't really manage it. And also because money was getting so short, we couldn't be paid, and the teachers couldn't be spared from their schools. I mean, in those days, I helped to run a lot of, a great number of courses in various training establishments like Livingston House in Somerset, I went to Guernsey twice to work with teachers in Guernsey, and all over the place. And we would have training by various people in National Marriage Guidance. We would be trained to become what we termed "Education Counsellors". By that time the National Marriage Guidance Council had bought a big place, which was the Herbert Grey College in Rugby, which became our Headquarters, and training of Counsellors took place there. We had a team of tutors doing the training, and I didn't belong to the team, but I did quite a number of training courses for Counsellors in Rugby. We, in our tutor training, we went on various courses ourselves, the tutor training took two years, and I remember one was very relevant to my being a Jewish refugee. I went on two psychodrama courses, run by two Jewish people, one was a psychiatrist, the other one was a clinical psychologist, and they ran these psychodrama courses in Rugby for tutors, that means supervisors. And on one of these, they ran for a week, the course, and we were 20 tutors on the course, and we knew each other very well, and we worked together, and we acted out various things, very traumatic things, there were a few Jews there, quite a few Jewish tutors, and we had some very hair-raising experiences, and I acted out the fact, I became myself at the age of 14, and I acted out what my feelings had been at the age of 14, and for the first time, I was confronted with the notion that wouldn't it have been nice if I could have not been Jewish, if I could have been a Nazi, then I wouldn't have been any different from other people, and I could've worn their uniform, and I wouldn't have had to feel that I was persecuted, and I acted this out, the whole acting out took about four hours, amongst a lot of tears, and awful feelings, I mean, it all came pouring out. It was enabled very very cleverly by the leaders of this group, and it was a very very traumatic time.

Did it include what you might have felt towards the Jews?

Towards the Jews?

If you had been a Nazi?

Sorry, I don't quite understand.

You said that it would have been nice to have been a Nazi,  
if you'd succeeded in having been a Nazi, what would your feelings have been been,

No, we didn't go as far as that. I mean, it was just my feelings that I was ashamed of being Jewish. Partly ashamed, really and truly I was quite tired of being Jewish too, I don't know why, but I was. But it would have been that much easier, and I wouldn't have had all this trauma if I hadn't have been Jewish. It was the pain of the whole thing that really was acted out, and I had never done that before. And the outcome of that was, that I was told by the group, and by the leaders, that I, oh, they asked me, of course, had I told my children about my background? How much my husband knew. And I said, "Well, of course the children knew, and I'd sent them to Germany, and we'd talked about it." But I had never talked about my feelings about it, I told them facts, but I hadn't told them about the trauma behind it all, about, what I, and I hadn't actually been in touch with my own feelings about it. I hadn't allowed myself to be in touch with that. And because I'd now acted it out, I had to promise the group that I would go home and talk to my children about the feelings, which I did, not terribly well, but I remember coming home and asking my three children to come together, and I just cried my eyes out and told them about my feelings. And I had, in that way, kept my promise to the group, but it was very hard, it was very difficult.

What were your children's reactions?

They knew and guessed some of it, and they understood most of what came out.  
They were very very supportive.

They were.

Oh very.

How old were they then?

They were in their teens, all three of them, I think my oldest daughter was already at University, they were in their late teens. They found it partly embarrassing I think, to feel my feelings, and partly they guessed at it, and it was very difficult, because my eldest daughter and my son are not, they, they gloss over emotional things, and so they didn't really get into it very much, but my middle daughter felt more with me and for me. And my husband wasn't at all sort of emotional, and he took it all with a pinch of salt. So that was that. Well, out of the, can I leave the, or would you like to know something more about the, that traumatic sort of thing.

Yes, yes, do carry on.

I don't know if I have any more to say on that. I think I became more acutely aware of, what I learnt mainly was, to take people through trauma and how helpful that can be, which, of course, I was aware in Counselling that that's what you do. But I hadn't been aware of how psychodrama can help, and how, analysis, in a sense, can help, though I wasn't ever in analysis. But again, I realised that how, unless you work through things yourself, you can't really be of much help to other people.

But, you also have to have an audience, if, for example your children had not responded, and you say your husband brushed it off with a pinch of salt, he didn't really tune into you, or what?

No, not really.

Was that very hurtful to you?

Not really, no. I knew he wasn't, wasn't made that way. Because he hadn't actually experienced any of this himself, because he left Germany in 1933, and except for getting his father out of Germany, just before the War, in 1938, he hadn't, he hadn't experienced any real anti-Semitism, or any trauma himself. He got out, Hitler came in and he went out, he and his twin brother, and they went out both doctors and they really never gave it an awful lot of thought.

Do you feel therefore, that you have come to terms with the pain that that period in your early life caused you? The upheavals?

Well, I think you don't ever come to terms with it completely. I mean, it would be naive of me to think that it hasn't still got quite an effect on me.

In terms of what? Depression, bitterness?

I often cry over it, I can still ...

Is that anger you feel?

No, it's pity.

For yourself?

For myself.

Not aggression?

No. No, I'm not angry, funnily enough, I mean, I suppose it's all, I feel sorry for this poor little thing, well, not poor little thing, because I didn't really suffer terribly, but it seemed such a pity to, that's a terribly mild statement, it's not really enough, no, I'm, I'm, I don't know, I seem to be really peculiar. What I recognise much more is the people who were anti-Nazi, and I appreciate that, much more than being angered by the hostility and by the ghastly situation in Nazi Germany. It was terrible, and we did

suffer, but of course, luckily enough, I didn't suffer as much as a lot of people. But it also got me in touch with people who were so incredibly brave, and I keep on thinking that I have a lot of English friends, how do I know whether, what their behaviour would be under the same circumstances? And therefore, I think, I've been so lucky in meeting so many really super people, actually in Germany, like my old school friends, and like my old teacher. And so that no, I'm not bitter.

(END OF SIDE ONE, REEL FIVE)



Well, so I think that in some sense, I seem to have digested my childhood. I look back on it with some sadness, and in, with maturity, also great joy that I got out of it, and that in fact, I made my life in England, which suits me down to the ground, and that I've here become a person who I can live with much easier with myself, and I don't know that that would have happened in Germany. I feel much more rounded, and much more content, and somehow I feel that in a way, if it hadn't been for Hitler, and all this sort of thing, I perhaps wouldn't have become the sort of person that I am now, so in some sense, I'm almost grateful, it sounds really completely peculiar.

Do you have any guilt feelings at all, that you, you say you didn't really suffer, but you did, but do you have any guilt feelings that you got away with it, in a way, more easily than a lot of your compatriots?

None at all. I haven't got any guilt about any of that, I don't think. I have great sadness that two girlfriends I had, several girlfriends, my aunts, and various people who I was closely connected, it's a sadness, but there isn't any guilt.

Do you think you've actually worked through the traumas, or do you suffer from bad dreams, or did you ever?

Never. I don't have any bad dreams, no. I have none of that. You see, after all, I didn't really go through such terrible things. I think maybe I did have some dreams during the War, but I can't remember them. I mean, memories are bad, like being interrogated by those SS men, and memories, I mean, the harshness of the whole situation, only, I was only confronted with that a very few times, personally, and my parents, and we, we didn't actually have those personal experiences, so I felt I'm lucky, I have no bad dreams, I can't say that I've actually come to terms with the trauma, because I mean, in a way it's there, but it's in the past, and it doesn't interfere with my life now.

What happens when you speak to somebody who has had similar experiences to yours, or worse experiences, but experiences that you can relate to? Does it awaken any bad feelings in you?

Yes, it does a bit, and I can cry with people. It does awaken a very sympathetic sort of bit in me, and a sort of a feeling, "I know what you're talking about". And yes, I might cry with people, but it doesn't upset me for longer than that moment.

When you see programmes on television, for example,

Yes, I do cry.

Do you read a lot on the subject?

Yes, I do. I read a great number of books. And I haven't allowed myself to read about actually concentration camp victims, what they got through, but I'm interested, I

want to know what they've gone through, and I do get affected by it, but it doesn't leave me with any, with any bad dreams, or anything like that.

Have you had to counsel anybody who's been through an experience that has upset you? Or that you have had yourself?

I have counselled the children of refugees like myself, and recognised some of the things that they have gone through, yes. I have gone through with people, in psychodrama, really dreadful experiences, and I have, it's like living with them through their awful time, like the woman who hid in a Polish village, but she had actually not been in a concentration camp, she managed to survive by having hid, by having been kept in hiding. No, the answer is not, not many. I do read a lot about it, and I'm very aware how lucky I am, but it doesn't, it doesn't actually affect me in a long-term way.

So that if you come to interview somebody yourself for this project,

I think I'd be all right, because I feel, as an interviewer, I realised interviewing a lady the other day, that one is very busy with the technical aspect, you've got to see that the batteries don't run out, and you've got to see that, you know, that the room is warm, and that there's no noise, and all the rest of it, so I think that I would be so busy technically, that I'm not going to allow my emotions to run away with me. I will be affected, I don't think it matters, I mean, I think even if I do cry with my interviewee, I don't think that would matter terribly, because it wouldn't take hold of me, I don't think. After all, I do endure, or listen to an awful lot of trauma, after all, concentration camps aren't the only trauma that people bring in counselling, and you know, there may be incest, and there may be personal trauma, there may be death and illness, and ghastly things that I deal with every day of my life, in dealing with my clients, and that is also trauma, and it doesn't actually affect me that much, maybe for the moment, and funnily enough until I write my notes, until I have written my notes, and then I forget it, I can distance myself from these things.

That is, that is the ultimate professional attitude of course.

I think so.

Is there ever anything in your day-to-day life now, that ever takes you back in a flash to any of your early experiences? A smell, or a sound, or a colour, or anything that makes your past life terribly vivid to you?

No, I can't remember any of this.

Or music?

Well, music makes me feel sentimental and sad, or happy, or whatever, I do listen to a lot of music, but no, it, well, you know, they are only things like I remember the boyfriend who was killed in Holland, when he was taken out of camp in Holland, Kelli Friedlander, who was killed in a concentration camp. He introduced me to Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, and every time I hear that I'm reminded of him, because he, one

day, when we went to his home, he played me this, and I found it so moving, I hadn't known it before, so that would remind me. There are certain Caruso, if I ever hear his, my parents had Caruso on record, and so that evokes some memories. But no, generally about the trauma of Hitler, Nazi times, my childhood, I can't think that I am, it doesn't touch me in that way. What happens, of course, if I meet people who have had similar backgrounds to me, and I do ask them about it, and I'm interested in what they have to say, and I identify with some of that, that's how it comes out. In my daughter's, son-in-law's congregation, there are quite a few refugees and people who have come from Germany and have similar experiences, and so we exchange ideas on that.

So, in a way, that's very interesting, because that brings me really, to the next point I was going to make, ask you. How you see your experiences from this distance of time, how you put yourself in context, you just said it gives you a certain rapport with these people. How would you sum up your, your life?

Well, I think, I mean, there are quite a few more things I want to say. I think I have come together much better over the last few years, I feel a more together person, because I have worked with other people in their trauma, it puts it into perspective more. There are trauma of so many different kinds, you don't have to have been in a concentration camp to have experienced trauma. And there are so many personal tragedies and death and illness, and terminal illnesses particularly, and that sort of thing, that I see it a lot more in perspective, and I feel that I'm a more rounded person because of the experiences I've had, and I'm, I'm really more content with myself. I used to think I was incredibly childish, and immature, and that stemmed from the fact that I never came up to scratch with my parents, I was never clever enough at school, I was never nice enough to my mother, and I was never anything something enough, and so I came away to England feeling perfectly inadequate really, and I felt inadequate for a very long time. And then came the years when I became a wife and a mother, and I seemed to do that reasonably well. I think my mothering to my children has been quite good, and then my counselling became quite good, and my tutoring and supervising became quite good, and all the experiences I've had since then, made me feel I'm a more together sort of person, so that I'm quite, and I'm hopefully not at the end of my days yet, so I feel I'm still learning, and I'm still, I feel okay about my past. I feel I have really, you asked me if I had come to terms with it. I think I have really come to terms with it more or less. I feel it's helped me to become a more rounded person. You know, nobody's perfect, and I'm far from it, I've got all sorts of, you know, funny bits about me, but, and I can now talk to my children about it, particularly to my middle daughter, and no, I'm in a way, it sounds a silly thing to say, almost grateful that there was such a thing as the Hitler regime, and in a sense, when I go back to Germany now, I, I'm glad I didn't have this background for the rest of my days. I wouldn't like to live in Germany now. Germans, in a way, don't suit me. I'm not very English, you know, I'm aware that once a foreigner, you're always a foreigner in England, and my accent, and the older I'm getting the more accent I seem to have, and I get back into thinking of certain words in Germany, I would not have liked to have ended my days in Germany, and I feel England has done an awful lot for me, just that they took me in as a refugee, but the English way of life suits me. Well, not everything, obviously, but it just suits me. Whenever I'm in Germany I think, "God, I couldn't live here for any tea in China. I wouldn't want to live here."

How much are you part of the Jewish Community of Bristol?

Well, that's quite a problem, because I, my daughter, middle daughter married a man who, from being a Lecturer at the Bristol University, in Indian religions, and he taught Sanskrit, he's an American Jew, and they married and he became a Rabbi, he became a reformed Rabbi, and so they are now living in Surrey, which is a sort of commuter belt, near London, and I have three grandchildren, and I belong to their Community as an out-of-town member, and so I feel very much I am a member of that Community. I like them, and I'm accepted by them, and I'm the Rabbi's mother-in-law, and so that makes me into quite a sort of an acceptable person. And my Jewish life happens in Weybridge now. I go to their Friday night services sometimes, but very often to their Saturday Shabat morning services, and my grandchildren are being brought up in a very Jewish atmosphere. And they have always Friday night, all the ritual. They do eat kosher food, so that when my family, my daughter and her husband, or the children come to my house, I give them vegetarian meals because they don't eat meat in my house. But I can accept that, and that doesn't matter to me. I am still not religious in a sense, but I am a proud Jew, and I, I am very pleased now, I found it very difficult at first to accept, that I have this Jewish sort of nucleus family life that I see there, and that I'm part of. I find that very pleasing. And some of their discussion groups, and various things. They, after all, they live two hours, two cars away from me, so I'm not always there, not all that often, and I get on very well with my son-in-law now, and my daughter and I are pretty close, and she is also a Counsellor, she is a Medical Social Worker, and works in a hospital near where they live, and she has these three small children, and she is a marvellous daughter, in the sense that she wants her children to be really as fond of me as one can be, so she throws the children, the grandchildren, at me, every now and then, and says, "Mummy, aren't you going to have them for half-term, because they'd love to come." And there's no hesitance, and I'm going next week to look after them for a week, three of them, while my son-in-law's taking his wife for her 40th birthday, to Italy. So I'm going to look after the whole family, so that allows me a Jewish way of life, and I haven't become religious. I'm not a religious person. I'm, I don't think this is the time to talk about my religious feelings, I haven't got any, I, I'm a Jew, I'm pleased to be Jewish, I think I'm recognised by my non-Jewish friends as, I can talk about it, I feel at home with it, I'm not an uncomfortable Jew as I was when I was a child. I feel comfortable about being Jewish now, but I felt acutely uncomfortable as a child.

Because of the circumstances?

Because of the circumstances.

How old are your grandchildren?

My grandchildren are 7½, nearly 6, and 2¼.

Do they talk to you about religion, because obviously they're more religious than you are?

Oh yes, they're much more religious.

And are you open with them, do you tell them what your feelings are?

Well no, not yet, they're too small. They come to my house and they realise that they don't have meat, and they realise Grandma isn't kosher, but that's as far as it goes. We get on terribly well, but religion isn't one of the subjects being discussed yet, but they know I'm not, you know, I don't go to Synagogue. Now, in Bristol, I am part of the non-Orthodox Community, and I can't remember what they're called, they're not Reform, but,

Liberal?

They're not even Liberal, they're ...

Progressive?

Progressive. They're what's called Progressive. And in fact, many years ago, my husband and I were instrumental in starting them, because my three children went to cheder in Bristol, at the Orthodox Jewish Community, and we always felt it wasn't right for us. And so we helped, with lots of other people, to start the Progressive Synagogue going, and I am still a part member, they know that I belong to the Weybridge lot, so I pay half my subscription to the Bristol Community. I do know quite a few of the Orthodox Jews in Bristol, in fact, I know a great number of Jews in Bristol, but mostly my friends in Bristol are non-Jewish people.

From Counselling? That's how you met them?

From Counselling, and from the childrens', I made a lot of friends from the childrens' schooling. I mean, the parents of the children who went to school with my children. I think perhaps I ought to talk briefly about my children's schooling. Do you think I should at this point?

Yes, that would be lovely.

Well, as my children grew up, there was the question of what kind of school do we send them to. And because I had such a horrible time at school, and because my husband was a very very busy doctor, who really couldn't be bothered to think about what schooling he wanted for his children, he left it entirely to me. Whenever I wanted to draw him into discussing it, he would say, "No, look, this is your thing. You do what you like, ask me and tell me, but then, you know, you make up your mind." So, in a way we made up our minds together, but it was me really. We sent the three of them to very good Public Schools in Bristol, which were, as well as boarding schools, they were day schools, and my eldest daughter started at Badminton School at the age of 4½, and so did my second daughter, and they stayed in that same school until they were 18, until they went to University, and I had connections with the school, with one of my half-Jewish friends, also from Hamburg, was a teacher there, and that was really our way in. And why I liked the school enormously was, it was politically pretty Left-Wing, it was very very open to people's ideas, it was modern, it was artistic, the Music Department was particularly good, the Crafts, Arts

and Crafts Department was very good, and they, their Language Department was extremely good, and I had made up my mind that I would see that my children had as many exchanges with children from other countries as possible. I felt that languages were the thing. They needed to learn French and German because it was near, and because I had connections with half-Jewish people in Germany I wanted to send them to, and I did, and in fact I sent my middle daughter, at the age of 8, to a half-Jewish friend of mine in Hamburg where she stayed for a month, and went to school with her daughter. So my children learned German and French very very early on, and we had constant exchanges, we had children back, and they went over, and in a way, it was heartbreaking leaving this 8 year old child in Hamburg, and when she came back, she spoke practically fluent German, with a most appalling accent, but there she was, she was into the language. And my eldest daughter, teamed up with a half-Jewish child in Hamburg as well, who was half Danish, and so she exchanged with that girl, they later exchanged with French children. My son wasn't so amenable, he wouldn't be sent so easily, but we travelled a great deal, and so I would take him with me to Germany, and dump him with German friends of mine. They were always half-Jewish people, they were sort of Jewish people who had survived the War by doing War work, cleaning up the streets and this sort of thing. They were, in fact, friends of my half-Jewish ex-boyfriend, and that's how I got into these, got friendly with these families. Well, the school I sent them to was Badminton School for the girls, and Clifton college for my son, and I was absolutely delighted, because they got all the things I never had. They had freedom of speech. They had a lot of foreign children there, they had black children there, they had, they had lots of exchange systems, so that my eldest daughter spent three months in France, before she was, I think she was 13 when she went to France for three months, spent three months with a doctor's family in . And so they're very good linguists now, and there is a, it was pretty Left-Wing, so it was, there was a great Socialist element, which was so good to my having been in Nazi Germany, which was so Right-Wing, and so I felt they were acting out a lot of my hidden desires, if you see what I mean. They were having the sort of childhood that I would have loved, as a child. They wore a uniform. I remember the times in Germany, when you know, the Hitler Youth Movement, they wore a uniform, and so on, and I was never allowed to wear a uniform, and there was a time when I was, I think, 15, 14, 15, when I always wish my father had sent me to an English boarding school. It was a sort of an ideal that I had, and of course, I never went, and so my children were actually at English boarding schools, as day children, and I took great pride in the fact that they did the things that I would have liked to do, and they, we started them on music very very soon. My eldest daughter started on the piano, and then played the violin, and my middle daughter got a cello by the time she was 8, and the cello was practically bigger than she was, and she played in the orchestra, and they played chamber music, and my son played the clarinet and the piano at Clifton College, and they all sang together. And I remember, a day I never forget, when they sang Verdi's Requiem together at the Hall in Bristol, Clifton College and Badminton School, and Clifton High School, it was a girls school, and they all sang together, and to me, it was the height of happiness, in a sense, they, they acted out my dreams, and that was terrific. And I think, when I think back, they were almost the happiest days of my life, that was my children's schooling, very funny that! Of course, when I ask my children now, you know, "What do you think about your schooling?" They say, "Oh, it was too Conservative, wasn't it." And but, in fact, they

would all three agree that they did like their schooling very much, they loved their school life, and they became very integrated personalities.

When you saw them having all the things you didn't have, didn't that cause you to feel pangs of regret for yourself?

Not at all. Funnily enough, not at all. I wasn't envious. I, I was overjoyed. I felt fantastic, that I was able to see them doing this, and I, I was in the Parent/Teacher organisations, and I promoted this and that, and I went to all their concerts, and all their school meetings, and I was part of it, and in a way, I suppose I acted out, I didn't seem an onlooker, and I didn't seem envious of any of it. I didn't, it was fine for me.

How do you think they felt when you told them that you hadn't had an education that you deserved and wanted?

I think they just felt sorry for me, but they didn't, you see, I think, however close your children are to you, they can't really get under your skin. Maybe they didn't even want to. I think they recognised that I had a hard time, but you know, I was there, and I acted perfectly normally, and I didn't suffer from any deep depression, I became a perfectly normal human being,

And an accomplished Counsellor!

Yes, I mean, I was perfectly integrated, you know, they didn't really suffer from that. What I would like to mention, but it is not very relevant to posterity in a sense, that my son had a dreadful accident when he was 12, he was run over, he was on his bicycle, he was one of the first, well, we allowed him to, to ride to school on a bicycle, and he was run over by a bus, and my husband and I were in the cinema, and were called out by a man walking round the cinema, saying, "Is there a Dr. Sinclair in the house?" And my son was in the hospital, in the BRI, the Bristol Royal Infirmary, and he had a severed urethra, and a four times fractured pelvis, and he very nearly died. And it's an interesting thing, it's not only because it was tremendously traumatic, I mean, for several days and weeks, we didn't know was he going to live, or was he going to die. And he survived it, and I went to the hospital three times a day, and he was in a mens ward, and he had a great deal of pain, and he had lots of operations, but one of the first things he asked me, was, "Mummy, do you think I can have children?" And he was only 12. And I had to say, quite honestly, "I don't know. I can't tell you." And in fact, it was one of my biggest fears that he couldn't ever have children, and it came true, because he can't have children. But I had a, our Chairman of the Marriage Guidance Council in Bristol was a doctor, and she used to say to me, "Ilse, you never know, there are so many advances in medicine and so on, and he may, you know, it is possible, and all the rest of it, and I think that was when the seed was planted in me, to becoming a sex therapist, in a sense. I was very interested, and I talked with Michael a lot about it at the time, and in fact, it's a typical surgeon's story, because the surgeon, we knew him very well, the urologist, and one of the many operations Michael had to have, after the operation, he was hardly round from the anaesthetic, when he called us into the room, this nurse's room, near the ward, and he said, "You know, I'm not sure whether Michael can ever have sex. And I don't know, there have only been eight other patients before him, that I have successfully

operated on, with a severed urether, and I am not quite sure whether he can perform at all." And that was my greatest sadness, and I could hardly believe it, and I had sleepless nights over that. And my husband and I were deeply distressed about this, and then I had a lot of help from other Counsellors, and this Chairman doctor, who said, "Come on, he's only suggesting, a typical surgeon, he'll tell you the worst, and it is possible ..." and I think one thing I must say, when Michael was 18, meanwhile he'd had various operations, and it became clear he was going to do medicine himself, he'd had so many very unsatisfactory anaesthetics, so that he eventually became an anaesthetist, and he's now a Consultant Anaesthetist in Oxford. Well, when he was 18, we, oh, before that, another thing happened, one day, when he was 17, the telephone rang, it was the Headmistress of the girls school close by, and she said to my husband, she asked him, was Michael at home, and did he know where a certain girl was? The girl was aged 16. And so my husband went to wake Michael up, and said, "Do you know where whatever her name was?" And he said, "No, I took her home, I took her to ..." She was a boarder at this boarding school, another school, and he then, and so another phone call later, the Headmistress said, would Michael find this girl and bring her back to school, because she wasn't at school, she hadn't turned up. And he disappeared, and he came back very very shortly afterwards, and I called him into the bedroom, it was about 2 o'clock in the morning. And I said, "Michael, how did you know the girl, where the girl was?" And he said, "I'll tell you tomorrow." And in fact, out came the story that the girl was sleeping in Michael's van, in our drive, and she, it was too late for her to go to boarding school, I think had missed the 10 o'clock, or something, but he didn't actually sleep in the van with her, which was very interesting. Well then, that was one story. The girl incidentally was expelled from her school after she took her exams, so I realised he was sort of sexually active. We talked with him about the dangers of sleeping with girls under age, and you know, with , I became quite excited at the thought that he was sexually okay, and then came the confirmation of this, because my husband and I were very active in starting the Brook Clinic going in Bristol, which was the Clinic helping young people with sexual problems.

(END OF SIDE TWO, REEL FIVE)



This is Tape 6 in the interview with Ilse Sinclair on 25th February, 1989, with Jennifer Wingate, for the National Life Story Collection.

My husband and I had actually helped to start the Brook Clinic in Bristol, they had already established in London, and they were a clinic, not helping people with sexual problems, as much as, they were giving contraceptive advice to young people, that was their main thing. At around this time, but I mustn't be diverted from what I was going to say, I had helped to start a youth counselling service for young people in Bristol, but maybe I come back to that later. Just to finish the Michael story, one day, he came into the kitchen, and he said to me, "You know, Mummy, Claire and I have been to the Brook Clinic", and that was one of the happiest moments that I could recall, because it became apparent that my son was actually sexually active, and he was okay, and it didn't matter so much whether he could have children or not, that would be established later, but he actually could, and these sort of fundamentals for becoming a sex therapist, I mean, it all helped me to become more aware of where I wanted to help people with their sexual problems, so that was one of the things. At that time, I had been working in youth clubs and talking to young people, and more and more girls would come up and say, "Please Miss, can you tell me, I have a girlfriend, and you know, I think she's pregnant," and I became aware that it wasn't the friend she was talking about, but the girl herself, and so we made, I made an appointment to see this girl at another time, and we didn't have any premises to take them to, and we couldn't very well say to them, "Come to Marriage Guidance premises", because these were young people, sometimes 12, 13, 14 years old, and there were a great number of young girls that were pregnant, and couldn't tell their parents, and couldn't tell their doctors, and they were absolutely at sea, and at risk, and whatever, so quite a few colleagues and I started a youth counselling service in Bristol, which we called Off the Record. And it was the very first youth counselling service in England, and quite a number of other services were started all over the place, and we became sort of advisers to them on how to start a youth counselling service.

This was under the aegis of the Marriage Guidance Council?

Yes, it was half under Marriage Guidance Council, and half under the, whatever you call it, patronage of the Bristol Association of Youth Clubs. The money was half and half, the Committee consisted of half and half, and I was on the Committee, and this is how we got started, and there were times when I sat for a year, in a room, in premises of the Bristol Association of Youth Clubs, waiting for clients to come in, until eventually they came, and it was far more worrying, and far more traumatic than any marriage guidance counselling I'd ever done in my life. We would have young boys of 15, 16, thinking they were gay, we would have people, pregnant girls, and people, young boys and girls who were on drugs, they wouldn't want, they didn't want to go to the doctor, they didn't want to tell their parents, there were suicidal people, and it was far more acutely worrying than anything I'd ever had in Marriage Guidance. And we had, a friend of mine, who'd actually trained me to become a tutor for Marriage Guidance, he was a clinical psychologist, and without him, I don't think I

could've managed. If I had a potentially suicidal young person, if I was seeing that person every day, I would ring my psychologist friend, and he would tell me what to do, what I could be doing, and he would sort of say things like, "And how are you coping today? And did you sleep all right, and are you going to do your shopping, and your children," and he would see that I was all right, he was obviously, I mean, this was the beginning of supervision for me, and that was very necessary.

What was your policy about telling parents or doctors?

Well, of course, we would enable them, and we would help them, and we would ask them to, could we talk to the doctor. We would never do anything behind their back, we would never ring a doctor or a parent, unless they gave permission. And that was where it was terribly useful to be married to my husband, because I had some, I had a list of doctors who were sympathetic in London, or in Bristol, I had, I knew of places where they could have abortions, because in those days abortions were illegal in England, and there were people who, who did it, private people, and there were private Organisations who did it, and between us, we had the know-how for quite a great number of problems. By talking to them, perhaps three, four, five times, perhaps more, they would be softening up about perhaps either letting us tell their parents, or by being able to, them telling their parents themselves. My husband would send some of his patients to me, and I would send some of my clients to my husband, or to other doctors I knew, and somehow between us, we covered quite a number of young people.

Did many of them have abortions?

Yes. Yes, quite a few of them. And very often with parental consent.

And that would have been done through your psychiatrist?

Well, it would, and again, through the Brook Clinic, because the Brook Clinic was very much involved with sending them to various places and having it. I mean, there was sometimes, they wanted to keep the baby, and sometimes they went through, and of course, we wanted to actually enable them to have contraceptive advice and actually use contraceptives, before they got into this stage, so we were concerned with an awful lot of problems, sometimes too late, trying to get at them, or with them, earlier and earlier, so that, you know, these things didn't happen. We had quite a few drug experiences, we had people dancing on our tables in the office under the influence of LSD, and, and we had some hair-raising experiences of people, you know, trying to throw themselves out of the window when they were high, and we were also, once or twice, I remember, a colleague of mine was nearly attacked by the father of a child, who had talked about father's incestual attempts, and she had had counselling from my colleague, and the father came to the office and wanted to attack my colleague. It was a very very exciting, traumatic, and very alive, I felt, I mean, the sky was your limit into what we did. We worked with all ages. Well, now at the same time as all that was happening, my husband got more and more involved with old people, and he started a service in his part of Bristol for his patients, who had retired from the Bristol Aircraft Company, which is now Rolls Royce, in Bristol, they had actually made Concorde, and this was a large factory of about 20,000 workers,

and they were a lot of, a great number of those were my husband's patients, and he started a service for old people, and I can't remember quite how he started it, but anyway, he got it going, he did a lot of money raising for it. He started a workshop for retired people, men and women, he would get contracts from factories making fountain pens, and making, putting little, I don't know, little round things into square holes or whatever! So they made a lot of things, he was actually able to buy a workshop in Bristol, and he had a map in his study which told of people who were willing to take patients, of people to, elderly people to the dentist or to the hairdresser, or a chiropody service, meals on wheels, if they had to go to hospital, he had got it organised. And he got a visiting service going, for old people, and he didn't want to just look after old people, say, over 80, he wanted to make people over 60 feel important, and that they hadn't finished their lives when they were only 60+, they might have retired from their jobs, but they were absolutely essential. So he would go to an old patient of his, maybe an old lady of 80, and he would say, "Mrs. Bloggs, could I send you Mrs. Somebody Else, and she would visit you once a week, and she might be able to do some shopping for you, talk with you", and this woman might say, "Oh, doctor, I don't want a stranger in my house. No, no, no." And then he'd say, "Well, would you do it for me? You know, you would help me in this new service that I'm trying to set up." "Oh, I'd do anything for you, doctor." And then she would, and then he would come again, perhaps two months later, and say, "Well, how are you getting on with Mrs. Jones, who comes to see you?" "Oh doctor, you're not going to take Mrs. Jones away from me, are you? Because she's so lovely, and she comes once a week and so on." So he started a visiting service, and this was long before Age Concern, before there was a general thing in the country about helping elderly or retired people.

How was it financed, or was it voluntary?

It was, he just raised the money. He got quite a few high ranking business people in Bristol together, to help them raise money. He went to, you know, all these mens and womens organisations, professional organisations, he made speeches, he gave talks, he was on the radio, and there were a lot of his patients, business people, who were his patients, were involved in helping him run it, and he raised enough money to buy this workshop. Women would make certain things which they could sell, and men would feel they were important. They had group meetings, they had all kinds of things. It was called SHEE 7, which meant, Self-Help Enterprise for the Elderly in Bristol 7, and the end of that story was that, after my husband died, they built a block of flats, sheltered accommodation in Bristol 7, for the elderly, and they called it Sinclair House, after my husband. And I was invited to the opening of that, and that was the sort of ... I was just sorry he didn't live to see it, because it was very much appreciated. He, he travelled a great deal, he read a great deal, he went to Holland to find out how they did things, and to Germany to find out how they did things, and so he left his mark in Bristol.

That's a wonderful thing to be remembered for.

Yes, it was incredible. And so sometimes we said, you know, we are covering all ages in Bristol, because you know, I covered young people, and middle-aged, and middle range,

And he sort of took over where you,

Yes, he took over where I left off, for the elderly, for the retired.

When did he die?

He died in '77.

What, was, had he been ill?

He had a heart attack, just after he retired. He had a great big retirement party, and a few months later he had a heart attack, and then he lived another three months, and then he died of a heart attack.

How old was he?

He was only 69. He died just after his 69th birthday, and in fact, I was already in sex therapy then. I worked, I became a sex therapist a year or two before, and I worked with a psychiatrist in Bristol, at the Bristol Royal Infirmary, who trained me to become a sex therapist, but I learned more about psychotherapy from him, than I learned sex therapy, we were really beginners at the time. And I was trained by the National Marriage Guidance Council to become a sex therapist, and I then became a sex therapist supervisor, and trainer, and trained other Counsellors in co-therapy, and sex therapy, I've now been a sex therapist for about 12 years, 13 years.

And that's what you practice now?

Yes, I counsel anybody, for marital problems, for sexual problems, for bereavement problems, for identity problems, and I work privately now, I'm retired, and I work privately at home, and I've never been so busy! And of course, one has to get as old as I am, which is 67, to feel that I've almost arrived, I mean, doctors know me, and I get referrals, I get more referrals than I actually can cope with, and I see single people with problems, and I see married problems, and I see them with sexual problems, and other problems, and I work in co-therapy with a colleague of mine, so that some couples with very complicated marital problems, we see them together, a male colleague and I, a very experienced Counsellor, see this couple together, because we feel that there's cross-identification, if you like, and it's useful to have another person, sometimes you can sit back and you can see what's happening there, and you can play that back to them, and they feel they've got somebody of their own sex to identify with, or not to identify with, you know, whatever.

Are you still seeing young people?

I'm not seeing terribly young people. I do see young people, I mean, in their early 20s, quite often.

But not, not the very young.

No. I think I'm very much out of that kind of thing now. By the way, Off the Record, it's a very very thriving concern in Bristol now. They bought their own house, and they're, they're independent, and they do a great deal of good work. For several years I was one of the selectors for the Counsellors of Off the Record, and we also trained University Counsellors for the University Counselling Service, and over the years, I've been involved with all sorts of, at one time, too, because as a tutor for Marriage Guidance, I ran groups of marriage counsellors like various places like Taunton, and Wells in Somerset, and Newport in South Wales, and Cardiff, and on various days I would have to go there once a fortnight and run groups of Counsellors. And there was an experiment we did in Newport, maybe ten years ago, maybe twelve years ago, and we, I ran a group of Catholic Marriage advisory people, and marriage counsellors, who were not Catholic, together, and we found that there was very little difference really, and they, they were, you know, a very very good group to run.

But I would've thought that the Catholic attitudes to extra-marital sex was different from the national attitude?

Their moral attitude may have been different, but they were terribly good at accepting what existed. Ideally, they wouldn't have liked these things to exist, and if anybody had asked for advice, they would have said no, but since they got clients who did sleep together, and who had affairs outside of marriage, or who did use contraceptives, or who did have abortions, of course, they had a priest by their side, who was their adviser, and they would be advised against abortion, but then when somebody did have an abortion, they would have to counsel these people quite often, and so they were, people just like us, their own personal and moral viewpoint wasn't as important as helping people with problems.

But would they refer people more frequently to take advice from a priest, than you would counsel your people to go to the Church?

They wouldn't actually, because if somebody went to a Catholic Advisory Council, they wouldn't actually be advised by the priest, they would do their own ..

Yes, but would they, do you think they, the Catholic Counsellor would advise clients to go to a priest, to confess, for example?

They might mention it. They were far more liberal in their attitude than one gives them credit for, far more liberal. They wouldn't advertise their liberal attitude, but they were, and I took my hat off to them, they worked under fairly difficult conditions, because their, their conscience came into play, obviously. But their prime objective was to help the clients in front of them, and they knew it was no good coming with moral attitudes, and "you shouldn't", and you know, "you mustn't", they didn't want to make people more guilty than they were already.

And they didn't want to antagonise them?

Exactly.

By forgiving them, more or less, they would keep them in the fold?

That's true, I mean, quite often, obviously clients would leave them and come to us, or come to one of our Counsellors, because they knew they would be more tolerant of various things. But I got to appreciate them, and to see that they were trying to do exactly the same thing that we were trying to do.

I wonder if you could tell me a bit about your eldest daughter?

Yes, she was really, I suppose the most intelligent to start with, of all my children, and she did terribly well at school at first, and then she sort of came down a bit, because she was fairly lazy. She's a very outgoing person, she was brilliant at languages, and she became an optician, actually, because she was as good at languages as she was at scientific subjects. It took her a little while to pass her exams to get into University, but she went, eventually she went to Manchester, I can't remember the name of the thing. The Technical College in Manchester's affiliated to the University, and she did Optics, an Optics Degree at Manchester. [JENNIFER/CAROL - Would this be UMIST? - MARION] And she stayed up there, and she liked Manchester so much, that after she got her Degree, she worked for one firm and she's still there. She's the Ophthalmic Optician in a very very large firm, which has been taken over umpteen times, and she has a very happy, outgoing life. She is a great skier, and she's not married, she hasn't had very many boyfriends, she's had some, she's very sociable, but for some reason or other, she never got a companion to share her life with. I think she finds, she's fairly unadaptable and she would find it very difficult living with another human being. She has her little house, and well, she's a very very sociable outgoing person, and a lovely person. She's very pretty, and she's very intelligent, and we get on fine, but not at a very deep level. And the fact that she went to University first, and then my second daughter, who wasn't nearly as bright as her sister Carol Ann, the second one is called Susan, and she only managed two A levels instead of three A levels, and she went to Germany, she was the one who was sent to Germany at the age of 8, and learned to speak German very fluently, so that came in handy for her A levels, and she went to Keele University, against our expectations, we didn't think that she was really university material. She thought she would become a social worker, but not necessarily trained by a University. And really surprisingly she slid into Keele University, and she had a very good four years there. She did, first she started off with German and Psychology, and then she went into the Social Works Department, and became a Probation Officer. And she in fact, got to know a musician, a violinist, who played with the Lindsay String Quartet, and they were four musicians who were resident musicians at Keele, and she married the second violinist, who was Michael Adamson, a Canadian, and they went on living at Keele. As soon as Susan got her Degree at Keele, she became a Probation Officer, and she married Michael, and he went on playing in the Lindsay String Quartet. Well, they eventually moved away from Keele, I can't quite remember, oh yes, because Michael at one time, he made up his mind he wasn't going to play the violin any longer, opted out of the Lindsay String Quartet and became a computer analyst. And eventually went back to Canada, and decided he wouldn't take Susan to Canada with him, and the marriage broke up. We're never quite sure why that was, it was a very unhappy time for all of us, for her in particular. And she had started counselling, as a Probation Officer, and she got counselling for herself then, and got a lot of help from a local psychiatrist, and from local people, and

she then went to Israel for a year, and came back from Israel the year before my husband died, and worked in Bristol, and she didn't want to do social work at that time, because she wanted really a rest from it, became a receptionist at a doctor's surgery, she really didn't want to do anything very traumatic, or emotionally taxing, she wanted an easier job, and that's where she met her now husband, who was a Lecturer at Bristol University, and became a Rabbi. That was Susan, and she is now a medical social worker. And she was really the easiest of all my children, she was very adaptable, and she, in a sense, is very much like me, she understands me, I understand her very much, and we're very close. And Michael did his medical training in Bristol, because when he was a student, a medical student, he had to have a very serious operation to finish of his injuries he received when he had a severed urether, he had to have what is called uretherplasty, he had to have a bit of skin taken from his perinoeum, and stitched into the urether, to widen it, because he had various strictures, so in his third year of medicine, he had to take another six months off, I think it was, the first operation went wrong, and the second was right, but it was useful to be at Bristol, because the same surgeon who had operated on him before, operated on him again and again, and eventually the operation was successful. That was after his second MB, and he was well into doing, becoming a doctor, and he then, he finished his medical training in Bristol, and became, funnily enough, an anaesthetist, I think, because he had so many anaesthetics, some of them were bad, some of them were indifferent, and some of them, very few of them, were good, and I suppose that's how he drifted into anaesthetics.

In what way bad, they hadn't worked, or the reaction was bad?

Oh, some of them were ghastly, so that he was either not quite out, or else he had a terrible time when he came round afterwards. I remember my husband and I going to the theatre while he was in hospital, and on the way back from the theatre we went into the hospital to see him, and they had moved his bed, and we were wondering what on earth was the matter, and they said one lung had collapsed, and all this was due to a really poor anaesthetic, we think. And so he had dreadful experiences as a patient, and I think he drifted towards anaesthetics, partly too, because he did not want to become a General Practitioner like my husband was. My husband was an incredibly hard-working General Practitioner. He had to get up several times a night, very early in the morning. At the time when I married him, you know, he had, there were childbirths, I mean, he was, women had their babies at home, and he would sometimes be out three times in the night, and he was incredibly hard-working, he was very very popular in Bristol. He was really one of the most hard-working doctors I knew. I am a patient now, of one of my husband's disciples, who came and helped my husband in the practice after he qualified, and when I saw him yesterday at 8 o'clock in the morning, I keep on saying to him, "Why do you start surgery so early?" and he says, "Well, Paul taught me that's what you do, and that's what I still do. And you must start early, and you must finish late, because otherwise you haven't done your stuff." And there you are. In retrospect, I wasn't actually envious of my children going to university, and having professions, all three of them, but it was, I suppose, you asked me how I felt about their schooling, well, I suppose my feelings are the nearest to envy as makes little difference. I was proud of them going to University, and there may have been some uncomfortable feelings at some points where I wish I

could have done that, but in a sense I was so pleased for them that they did. They did what I couldn't do, and that was quite a good feeling.

You didn't feel yourself at an educational disadvantage because you hadn't been to university?

I did indeed. I mean, that brings me to, I felt acutely uncomfortable about my lack of education, about my lack of cultural knowledge, and I am aware that I do certain things, like, during my training as a counsellor, or as a sex therapist, or as a tutor, I would have to read highly technical books, and I would get into the habit of letting my friends who were probably cleverer than I, or who had had a better education, I would let them read the books properly, I might sort of look at them here and there, and read a few chapters, and I would get them to explain the gist of it to me. I was acutely aware of not being academic, I would have liked to have been academic, but I realise now, that even Hitler hadn't been, I am not naturally an academic, I am a much more practical person. But I feel very inferior. I think perhaps now I've come to terms with it. I've had a very strong, over all these years, a very strong feeling of inferiority, about my lack of learning, about my lack of schooling, about not having been to university, and maybe at last, I've come to realise that life is a university, and that what I've learnt by doing, is probably as good as what I've not done by going to university.

But what you have achieved is phenomenal.

Well, it's been good really.

And you said before how good it felt because what you have done is, it's an achievement on anybody's standards.

Well, thank you for that. I do feel that, I feel perhaps I've come to, gosh, it almost sounds as if I'm ready to die, which I'm not, I've come to recognise that it isn't so important to have had university training, that you can get there without it, that in fact, the feelings of achievement are even bigger than if I'd had all that learning. But there is still a niggle here and there, about not having academic anything, I haven't got a Degree, probably, you know, in ten years time Marriage Counsellors will have to go to university. You know, what started off as doing in spare time, as a mother of three children, and a busy General Practitioner's wife, in my spare time, has turned into a profession, in a sense, and yet there's still sometimes a little bit of a niggle that I went in by the back door. But I don't let it touch me very much.

Probably more that you missed out on the fun that you would have had at university as well?

Yes. It was very hard work what I've done, but you know, I've had fun. But I think you've touched on quite a raw bit there, because I sometimes feel I haven't got a real sense of humour. I can laugh all right, and I can have fun, but I think Hitler has taken a sense of humour away from me. I think that's a very raw bit of me, that when people laugh about certain things, my children giggle their heads off about something,



and I don't think it's funny, and I sometimes think I had too serious a youth and childhood, and adolescence, and maybe it took a lot of laughter away from my life.

(END OF SIDE ONE, REEL SIX)

Well, as a sort of epitaph, I suppose, I, three years after my husband died, I met a man who became, my, my, the man in my life if you like, he was a London solicitor, Jewish, and we became very close. And he died five years later, and it wasn't until after he died that I became very very depressed, and the depression lasted longer than I would have expected myself it should have lasted, and I took advice from several of my friends, and I went for counselling for myself, to the London Agency, Jewish Counselling Agency called the Raphael Centre, because maybe mistakenly, I felt it, I ought to talk to a Jewish Counsellor, because what became apparent at that time was, by mourning Ronald and his death, I was suddenly plunged back into the pain of losing my roots, and my childhood, my adolescence, and leaving Germany, suddenly loomed larger than life, and became a terrible traumatic thing. I remember reading old letters, not from my parents, but I can't remember quite what, reading books, seeing things on television, anything that had any bearing on concentration camps, on Nazi Germany, any of those things, suddenly evoked very very strong emotional response from me, and I was overwhelmed and devastated, and I thought, that's not normal, what have I been doing all these years? I wasn't really affected by it then so much, and suddenly, because of this trauma of Ronald's death, I was aware that I was completely at sea emotionally, I was, I was distraught, so I went for counselling, and I came to London once a week and had personal counselling, by a very nice woman, an American psychologist, and I cried my eyes out during the time I saw her, and talked an awful lot about my childhood and my adolescence and all that, and I was more aware, I became more and more aware of what I now know happens quite often in bereavement situations, that bereavement can suddenly evoke something that you have pushed under, and obviously the trauma of Hitler and my unfinished education, my feelings when I was young, had been pushed under by the War, and by having children, young marriage, counselling, and whatever, and I hadn't spent any time at all, really getting into the nitty gritty of mourning about it, and suddenly I was doing it, I was having loads of crying, I sort of opened my mouth at the counselling session, and I just cried for the whole hour, and I realised that suddenly all these broken roots, and all the old feelings that I had part suppressed, or completely suppressed, and pushed under, having to put a brave face on it because of the War, and then my husband, and then the children, and then you had to be forward looking didn't you, and positive and all that, and all that was sort of wiped away and I could be me, really be sad and upset, and go to pieces, if you like. I think it was quite a good feeling to allow myself to go to pieces, and I did that for about nine months, until I had enough. But that got me going into thinking again more positively about me and my life, and I then began talking into tapes for myself and for my children, I wanted to give my children something to perhaps tell their grandchildren, or to tell them a bit about me, what was I like, what made me tick, and in a way, that's how I came to be involved with this particular Project that you've put on. It seems to suit my time of life, and where, what I'm at, and hooked into something that I've just gone through, so this is a very fitting end really, to what the last few years have been all about, and I'm now involved again with another man friend, and I'm very much enjoying the companionship. And this is a man who was Ronald's best friend, and in fact, who I've known for 15 years, who's also a Counsellor, and he's actually not Jewish, but he was married to a Jewish woman, who was a cellist, and again, I'm doing what I have done

more or less all my adult life, and that is to choose people who are cleverer than I, and who have had academic qualifications or education, so that in a way they can, they can make up for my ignorance, and so in a sense, I can ask them. It's not only that, I'm proud of them knowing I can go out, I go about, and say, "Oh, well, I'll ask him about it." We're going to the theatre, we're going to the opera together, and we're doing things together, and my life has again, taken on a turn for, you know, there seems to be a future ahead of me. And we're not going to live together, we're not going to get married, but we have a tremendous companionship and all the rest of it together, and I'm ending on a sort of positive note, so that I again feel, I am a fairly positive human being and though I said before I haven't got a sense of humour, I have got a sense of fun, and as I do know how to live well, and I do enjoy it enormously, and I do enjoy the moment, sitting perhaps next to a man in the theatre, and I'm not alone any more. I've never actually minded or been lonely, but I've been alone quite a lot. And so I'm really ending on a more positive note.

That sounds very hopeful.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

END OF INTERVIEW

(END OF SIDE TWO, REEL SIX)

**BRITISH LIBRARY NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE**

**NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION**

**INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET**

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Ref. No.: C410/011

Playback Nos: F130-F135 inc.

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Collection Title: LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

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Interviewee's surname: SINCLAIR nee Guttentag Title: Mrs.

Interviewee's forenames: ILSE

Date of Birth: 5th July, 1921

Sex: F

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Date(s) of recording: 20/1/89; 25/2/89

Location of interview: Interviewee's home

Name of interviewer: Jennifer Wingate

Type of recorder:

Total no. of tapes: 6

Speed:

Type of tape:

Noise Reduction:

Mono or stereo: Stereo

Original or copy: Original

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Additional material: None

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Copyright/clearance: Full clearance given

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**F130 - SIDE A**

**Early life: grandparents, great grandparents in Hamburg. Medal from 1912. Great great grandfather Mayer, woolmerchant in Breslau. Grandmother from Posen. Hugo; Jacobine Bruhl. Both parents worked in business. Looked after by nurses, Husumerstrasse. Went to synagogue/temple in Pohlstrasse.**

**Religious activity: School. Cheder - Jakob Lowenberg. Few other Jewish children. Meals and visits. Brother was barmitzvah.**

**F130 - END OF SIDE A**

**F130 - SIDE B**

**School days: Teachers - Fraulein Schmidt; Otto Ernst; Elisabeth Flugge.**

**Games: Friends: Moornixe.**

**Education: Headmistress of new school - Ria Wirth. No uniform. Curriculum. Game - volkerbar. Music and songs - volkslieder. Plays - Schiller and Goethe.**

**Not understood as a child. Did not get on with mother. Walks with father. Father in England as textile merchant about 1910. Maid, Anna from Friedrichstadt, Shleswig Holstein. Little town of Husum. Little Dutch town, river Eider. Room in her house - Biedermeyer zimmer. Cradle. Left when she cried as a baby.**

**Maid's house: loft and chimney. Anna's father, a Miller, smoked pipes. Sautlingsschwester Kachel oven.**

**F1030 - END OF SIDE B**

**F131 - SIDE A**

**Abattoir**

Cooking range at Anna's house. Description of people there. Children's game copying adult game with horses, spears and rings - Ringreiten Elder.

Easter. Trips to seaside - Trane, Norderney. Holiday camp - Kinderheim, Isle of Sylt. Zeppelin. Parents went skiing at Seefeld.

Seder only occasionally. Songs - ma atsur.

Celebrated Christmas. Lots of presents. Celebrated birthdays. Carp on Christmas Eve - traditional, bought live and put in bath. Mother never cooked but drew the Christmas goose.

Aunts: Tante Anna; Tanate Walli - spinal problem, spondalosis.

Aunts died in Theresienstadt from typhus: Fanni; Olli.

Uncle lived in Cuba: Louis Dareo. Cousins: Otto.

#### FI31 - END OF SIDE A

#### FI31 - SIDE B

1933: saw people arguing in street and shooting. Visited friend of mother in Hessen Schluchtern. Stones thrown at her and friends. Witnessed Germans ransacking house. Excluded from rowing club, river Alster. SS men outside parents' shop warning people that it was a Jewish shop. Warned to stay away from non-Jewish friend, Irmgard. Another friend - Liselotte Zacha. Hitler Youth Movement for girls - Bund Deutschermadchen. Non-Jewish friend who remained a friend until today. Had to salute Nazi flag and sing songs. Teacher anti-Nazi. Hitler visited Hamburg. New pro-Nazi teacher - Fraulein Angerstein. Pressed pupils to join Hitler Youth Movement. Parents wanted to get her and brother out of Germany. SS man searched their flat. Brother member of movement like scouts - Pfadfinder. Brother went to South Africa. Relation in America sent money to England for her. Left school at 15 to learn domestic things, only Jewish girls. Went out with half-Jewish boy. Laboratory technician at Jewish hospital. Kristallnacht: their Temple not burned because unburnable. All doctors taken to concentration camps on 10th November, 1938.

#### FI31 - END OF SIDE B

**FI32 - SIDE A**

Went to Baden Baden with mother. "Munich" at that time. Saw French army across the Rhine.

Agreed that she would come to family in Middlesex. Number of formalities before permission to leave Germany. Exhaustive list of things to take out of country. Interrogated for a day by SS about a typewriter. Came to England by ship. Parents saw her off to Rathaus Platz.

Parents went to Shanghai by Siberian Express in 1941. Father died in Shanghai. Mother went to South Africa.

General feeling that "Something was going to happen to the Jews". Listened to broadcasts from Russia in German. Star of David worn after she left. Came to England and stayed with family. Trained at Nursery Training College.

**FI32 - END OF SIDE A**

**FI32 - SIDE B**

Took jobs as nursery nurse with Jewish families. Taken advantage of by Jewish family. Got job with two families. Lived in country - Meklsham Court. German Jewish cook.

Job in Pathology Laboratory in Guildford. Staying with friends - Ernst Cohn. Became "friendly alien". Joined fire watch.

People who had affairs with non-Jews - Rassenshande.

**FI32 - END OF SIDE B**

**FI33 - SIDE A**

**Parents in Shanghai. Wrote and received letters. Mother to South Africa. Met husband. Rabbi Saltsberger. Opera singer came to wedding - Sabiner Kalter. Cousin - Elsa Bielschowski. Changed name from Schnitzler. Trained as marriage guidance counsellor.**

**Took children to Hamburg. Sent children to cheder. Became marriage guidance counsellor trainer. Met "Fluggi" old teacher. Sent to hard school. Awarded Yad Vashem medal.**

**RECORDING CONTINUED 25/2/89**

**Read letters from parents from Shanghai. Life in Hamburg. Flooding of tennis courts for skating.**

**F133 - END OF SIDE A**

**F133 - SIDE B**

**Cultural centre. Visits to Synagogue on Friday nights, Temple. Memory prompted by her appointments diary. Father interested in culture. General feeling of fear. Parents felt fear. Received letters from abroad from people who had left - censorship. Restrictions of Jews. Wanted to leave because of anxiety. Also wanted simply to have fun.**

**Corresponded with parents via aunt in Germany, also when went to Shanghai. Parents left for Shanghai in January '41. Took 17 pieces of luggage. Flew to Moscow from Berlin, trans-Siberian Railway. Met everywhere by Jewish Committee. Went to Manchuria and Harbin. Settled in Shanghai.**

**Father died January '43. Both worked. When Japanese took over in '43, went into Ghetto, bad conditions. Permits needed to leave ghetto. Japanese beat some people. Joined synagogue.**

**F133 - END OF SIDE B**

**F134 - SIDE A**



**In Shanghai, mother knitted and father worked. Jewish community very active. Lecture. Shops closed on Saturdays. Mother died in South Africa of Pemphigus.**

**Brother left South Africa, gets interest but not capital out.**

**Family got German pension. Only for those who worked. She received reparation. As much for mother in Shanghai, other for parents in the camp. Compensated for loss of education, and for father's loss of business. Offered money to start business again.**

**Husband came to Great Britain in 1933. General practitioner. Father a vet in Duren.**

**She became marriage guidance counsellor then sex therapist, then tutor. Underwent psychodrama, started by Herbert Grey.**

**F134 - END OF SIDE A**

**F134 - SIDE B**

**"Digested" her childhood. Glad to be in England. Feels content. May not have if not for war. No guilt. No dreams. Trauma still there but in the past.**

**Has been a good mother. Feels a "together" person. Come to terms. Talks to children about it.**

**Jewish life in Weybridge because that is where her daughter and Rabbi husband live. Close to grandchildren. Pleased to be Jewish, but not religious.**

**Bristol Progressive Community, her children went to cheder in Orthodox Synagogue. Her daughters went to Badminton, son to Bristol. Son run over, nearly died.**

**F134 - END OF SIDE B**

**F135 - SIDE A**

**Started Brook Clinic in Bristol with her husband. Contraceptive advice for young people. Youth counselling service under Bristol Association of Youth Clubs, and Marriage Guidance. Pregnancy and drugs advice. Called "Off the Record".**

**Husband started "Self help for Elderly, Bristol 7". Sinclair House named after him. Husband died.**

**Ran groups of counsellors in various parts of England, Catholic counsellors.**

**Details about children.**

**FI35 - END OF SIDE A**

**FI35 - SIDE B**

**Gentleman friend died. She became very depressed. Recalled feeling from her German youth. Went to Jewish Counsellor. Pain of losing her roots.**

**Now has another gentleman friend and is feeling well. Feels she has a future.**

**FI35 - END OF SIDE B**

**END OF SUMMARY**