

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

GERTRUDE LEVI

Interviewed by Gaby Glassman

C410/066/01-14

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IMPORTANT

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F268 Side A

26th April, 1989

I was born in Hungary in Szombathely, which is in Transdanubia, and in, on 23rd April, 1924. My father was a gynaecologist, and my mother was a teacher of English and German, and my father was Hungarian, and, I believe, of quite long Hungarian, long-time Hungarian origin. My mother came from Vienna, and at home we spoke German, because my mother's Hungarian wasn't very good, and because Hungarians never were very tolerant with other people's languages or accents, and, sorry, it was difficult like this to ...

Can you say something about your early life?

Szombathely was a very anti-Semitic town, and my, when I was five years old, my father, who usually on Sunday mornings took me for a walk, took me to a courtyard first, he said he had a, there was a birth of a lady, I mean, of a child, during the night, in a, in a proletarian quarter of the town, and he was rather worried about this lady and the child, and he wanted to have a look, so we went there, and he left me standing in the courtyard, dressed up nicely, I remember, I had a nice red coat on, and, and he went in and said he would be out quite soon. And somehow, suddenly, a door started to open, and children came out from various doors, and, and eventually they started to call me "Dirty Jewish pig", and they started to throw stones at me. By the time my father came out, I was standing there crying, and bleeding, and I asked him what, I am not dirty, I know that I wasn't dirty, because I had a bath, I knew that I wasn't a pig, because that is an animal, and what does it mean, Jewish? And I don't remember exactly my father's explanation any more, but he told me about Jewishness, which must have been, in his own way, because he was an atheist, and he was, first of all, Hungarian, and Judaism didn't mean much to him, so it certainly wasn't the religious meaning of Jewish, but as a, more as a people, as a racial, racial explanation. And, but he did, he must have told me that I, that people resented Jews, and didn't accept them fully, because I do remember that my answer was, that, all right, then from now on, I am Jewish. And that I remembered my whole life, and from then on, I didn't feel myself Hungarian, and I

went through my whole school life, in a way, with difficulties, because I was Jewish, which was not even a very popular thing to say amongst my Jewish comrades, who liked to, I mean, I grew up in a very assimilated, with an assimilated background. My father, my parents were Socialist. My father was a very strong and ardent, very left-wing Socialist. Communism wasn't legal in Hungary, but I don't know, he might have been, I think he was, actually, a member of the Communist, illegal Communist Party, and the result of it was that we... Most of his patients were non-paying patients, and we had, we had very little money in the house usually. As a gynaecologist he could have been a very wealthy man, and, but, for instance, abortions which were illegal anyway, he did abortions, but only out of social, for social reasons, and without any remuneration.

Was that accepted in those days, abortions?

Well, it wasn't accepted no, if it came out, he, he was locked up. He was actually once imprisoned for it, and someone got him out, because someone spilled the beans that he did an abortion, and later on, again, once, he nearly got into prison, and therefore he actually tried to commit suicide, when again something went wrong and the boyfriend who's girl, on who's girl he, he made an abortion, objected, and brought it out into the open, and he did it absolutely, only because they were very very poor, and they were not married, and because the girl would have been in very big trouble if she had the child. And so that this was one... Now, he was absolutely anti-religion. Atheists were not allowed, not permitted in Hungary. You had to belong to a religion, and from your salary, a certain percentage was deducted for a religious tax and it was given to the religion to which you officially belonged.

Like Kirchensteuer? (Church tax)

Yes. So, so we were Jewish, but my father never went to a Synagogue. On the contrary, when my brother, I had a brother, who was five and a half years older than I, and when my brother was Barmitzvah, which he had to be, it was compulsory for him to be Barmitzvah.

Compulsory?

By the state, by the state, yes. You had to do, you had to go to religion lessons, I mean, religion was part of the school curriculum, and it was, it was a compulsory subject. If you failed in religion and you couldn't, which I, for instance, I couldn't learn to read Hebrew, which was rather odd, because later on, I became a Hebrew teacher. I, I had to take some exams in September again, before the new school year started, otherwise, I would have, because of that one subject, I would have had to repeat the, stayed down a class, and repeat the whole year with all the subjects.

Were you at a secular or a Jewish school?

The first four years I was at, well, actually, the first four years normally, Jewish children were at the, children, Orthodox children were at the Orthodox school, and the more, more assimilated children, were at the Neolog school, at, we belonged to the Neolog community, which I would say, would be a little bit like United Synagogue here, roundabout the equivalent, perhaps a little bit more progressive, but not very much more. Their, their services were conducted strictly in Hebrew, and then we had to, at school, we had to attend three times a week, religion classes, and we had to go to Synagogue every Friday night, or every Saturday morning, I don't remember any more, and we had to be there for three hours.

And who checked on this?

Well, the teacher, the religion teacher and the school.

And what happened if you didn't turn up?

Well, you had to bring a certificate why you didn't, from your parents, why you didn't turn up, by your parents there. But the religious education was part of the school curriculum, so you had your lessons in your school time.

So was this also at the secular school?

The secondary school, you had to go back, yes, in the afternoon, for your religion lessons, and that was also compulsory, because up till the age of 18, it was compulsory, well, I suppose not until the age of 18, but up to the age of, I don't know, I don't remember what was the compulsory school-leaving age, but anyway, while you were at school, you had to go to religion lessons.

At what age did you start school?

I started school when I was six, and I was, the first three years, in the Jewish school. The fourth year, I was in a school which was, which was a non-Jewish school, a state school, where I was among 600 children, the only Jewish child, and the reason for that was, that because I was in a provincial town, and the religion teacher, the, in the first two years at my Jewish school, I had a nice teacher, and I got on extremely well with her, and I was a good pupil. In the third year, the teacher was already the teacher of my brother, who was a very very difficult boy, and who used, who used to break his stick, and with whom he had lots of trouble. Besides that, he resented my parents never going to Synagogue, and not fasting on Yom Kippur, and not keeping any Jewish festival holidays, and when I came to, and he was my class teacher, and he treated me terribly badly. He beat me every day, and I was terribly terribly unhappy, and couldn't learn anything in the third year. And because I couldn't learn anything, I, and I failed in, in learning Hebrew, to read Hebrew, so I would have had to stay down, I had to study a whole summer with a private teacher, to get me through, but my father decided that this teacher wasn't fit, he was 60 years old, and he was too old to be fit to work with children, and started a petition, during the summer holidays, to have him pensioned, and all the other parents agreed, but when it came to sign, they didn't sign, so my father, as a protest, took me out of the school for the fourth year, and put me in a school where he knew the teacher, the class teacher, who was a friend of his, and this was in a state school, and therefore I was the only Jewish girl, the only Jewish child in that school, but I had to go back to religion classes, to my old school, and the Jewish children were throwing stones at me, and didn't speak to me. And when I went on the ice rinks, they, they threw me over, and I had a terrible time, the fourth year. Even though they did change the teacher, and the new teacher was a, a

very nice and intelligent teacher, but by that time, I was already in the other school. And, where I had a lot of anti-Semitism. And, because, as I said, of that experience, when I was five years old, I flaunted my Jewishness into everybody's way, I, I was a very proud Jew.

And in what way were there anti-Semitic incidents at the new school? Could you describe some?

Well, they were calling me names. I don't really remember properly, any more, but I got over that, actually, because this was a school where mainly poor children went, and it fitted in very well with my father's socialist views, that I was in this school, but, but I didn't make me very happy, but then I wasn't very happy in the school. There was one other reason why I was taken out of the school, because, in the third year, because I was so unhappy with this teacher, I, my, my learning dropped completely. I mean, my grade dropped completely, I just couldn't learn at all, and, unless, in the fourth year, I had good marks, I couldn't get into the Lyceum, where there was a numerus clausus, and, I mean, let us say, the daughter of a gynaecologist didn't go into the, well, I don't know how it's called in, in, it's Bürgerschule, I don't know how it's called in English, but this was a lower caste, I mean, this was, I suppose, a certain class distinction. You went, if you came from a certain background, you aimed to go to the Lyceum, which was equivalent to the gymnasium, or, from the age of 10, well, it would have been like grammar school and secondary school, but the distinction was, was stronger, and, and I couldn't have got in from the Jewish school, into that.

Because of your grades?

Because of my grade. And my grades were extremely good, I mean, I came first in the other school, except that we didn't learn anything. That teacher was a most pathetic teacher that ever existed. He was a musician, he hated teaching, and he hated, actually, children, I think so. He certainly hated proletarian children, and punished them at every possible occasion. Now, I was in, very much a socialist at heart, by the age of, well, well, I was very much for the underdog by the age of 9, and therefore I, I became a ringleader, because I found out that he wouldn't punish me.

And the punishment was to go, to be on your knees, in the corner, on a dried corn, cob on the corn, corn on the cob, sorry, thing, without the corns on it, which was very very painful, and you had to kneel on that for hours, in the corner, and he never inflicted me with that punishment, but I found out that however naughty I was, because I was, he knew me as a child, and he loved me, because I, I had a very beautiful singing voice, and I could sing anything, and therefore, and his main teaching was singing, and music, and therefore, I was his favourite, and, and also he was a friend of the family. And so I became a ringleader, and he couldn't punish the others if he didn't punish me, and so the others started to like me very much. I was very popular amongst them, (laughs), because he couldn't punish them, and, and so the anti-Semitism wasn't that strong. I mean, I counteracted anti-Semitism with my socialism. Anyway, I survived that one class, with no knowledge whatsoever, we learned one song in History, one song in Geography, one song in, in Physics, and, and I got away about, with that. (laughs) The result of it was that I did get into the Lyceum, but I had a terrible struggle, because I really didn't have the knowledge, the background knowledge, which I needed for that school, it was a very high level school, high standard school, and those people, those pupils who came from the Jewish school, had the background, whereas I didn't, and therefore, I had a very big struggle in the school, and in certain subjects, where I liked the teachers, I got very good, like mathematics, and, and languages, and art. I was very good, but I was very bad in, in history, because I hated the history teacher. Now, our history teacher, I didn't know that she was anti-Semitic. She later on became the wife of the top Nazi of our town, and she was viciously anti-Semitic, and as I was flaunting my Judaism, she really inflicted me, I mean, she really treated me badly, and I just didn't learn any history at all, which was another funny thing in my life, because I became a history librarian! So the two subjects where I failed, well, I didn't fail in history, but where I really had difficulties, became my profession later on! (laughs) Later, when I was 15, I left school, and I hated this teacher so much that I'm afraid I did a rather despicable thing. I sent her a, I put a dead rat into a box, which I covered with nice pink paper, and with a pink ribbon, and that I put into another box which I, it was a blue ribbon, and I did this with three other boxes, and then I made a beautiful parcel and sent it off to her, anonymously. There was never any repercussion of that, but in a way, I never recollected doing it, but I am slightly ashamed of having done it anonymously, but I

think it would have been too dangerous to do it not anonymously. But I still think it's not a very nice thing to do! Now, with hindsight. Otherwise, at school, I, I had a, my mathematic teacher was, well, not anti-Semite, but because I was the best in the class in mathematics, I got on extremely well with her, in spite of my, and she, she accepted me because I was so good in mathematics. I, otherwise school didn't really leave much impression. My French teacher, and my German teacher were the two, two other teachers that have, let us say, some influence on me. My French teacher, she was the best teacher I ever came across. She was a baptised Jew, but she was baptised as a child already, and she was a very religious old maid, a Catholic old maid, who eventually was deported and was with me during my whole time at concentration camp, and, and I respected her very much, except that in camp I didn't respect her, because I found it rather ludicrous when she was kneeling in the middle of a Jewish hut, I mean, a hut full of deported Jews, praying "Our Father in Heaven", as a Christian prayer. But, but later on, I visited her, and I was, I was always very very fond of her, and respected her, in a way, very highly. And, and because I respected her, French was my, besides mathematics, French was my best subject, and I was her best pupil, definitely her best pupil. My German teacher was also, was a baptised Jew, who, who became baptised as a grown up, as far as I remember, and she was, her German was much less good than my spoken German, and therefore I had some conflict with her, but, because, since German was my first language, and at home, we only spoke German, I, I spoke fluently, and I didn't think it was particularly necessary for me to learn any grammar, which I regret today! And therefore, I had only conflict with her. But otherwise, I had no, I had no memories of my teachers really.

Could you say something about the discipline that was applied generally?

Well, there was a, one brother, well, the discipline was very strict in the school. We had to sit with our hands crossed. In the primary school, you had to have your hands crossed behind your back. In the Lyceum, you had to have your hands crossed in front of you, and, and you could only, I mean, you had to, if you had to get up, you had to ask for permission, and you weren't allowed to speak, and you were sent out of the class, or given lines, or sent up to the headmistress for, very often, and your name

would be written into the book, and you had a personal book, which, whatever you committed, was sent home to your parents, and your parents were called in, which happened to me quite often, because I got into trouble at various times. I was, as I said, a little bit, I think my Christian colleagues either hated me or respected me, because I flaunted my Jewishness so much. My Jewish colleagues were a little bit frightened of me, or, or, well, they disliked it, that I, in that school, you, you didn't show that much that you were Jewish, and I made a point of it, to say at every occasion, flaunting my Jewishness.

Was this at the Lyceum?

At the Lyceum. And, and therefore, I, I, I don't know, I wasn't terribly liked. I always had a couple of people who were, a very fat girl, very intelligent, but very fat girl who was hounded by others, hounded by others, and I took her under my protection. I was very strong, and very much fighting, kicking and biting, when it came to it, to protect someone, or to, and, and I couldn't take any teasing at all, therefore I often was teased, and often got terribly furious, and got into fights.

Was it a mixed school?

No. Only girls.

So, all your school life it was girls only?

No, the first one was mixed.

The Jewish one?

The Jewish one was mixed, and the state one was mixed, but the Lyceum was a girls Lyceum.

And was there corporal punishment at all?

Yes. Mainly hitting on the hand. In the Jewish school, we had quite a lot of beating. In the Lyceum, it was mainly hitting on the hand.

With anything?

With a cane. With a cane. But I didn't, I don't know, I don't remember that I was hit in the Lyceum actually. In the Jewish school, I was hit by this, in the third year, I was hit a lot, and I was, and in my religious classes, but also not, mainly in that, from that one teacher I was being hit.

With a cane?

With a cane, and I was hit also before that, because I was left-handed, I was, when I started school, I was writing fluently, but I was writing fluently, reading and writing fluently, but with my left hand, and it was not allowed, permitted to write with the left hand, and therefore, I remember, I was hit in my first year, quite a lot, on my hand, until I got to learn to, until I learned to write with my right hand, and I had lots of trouble with my handwriting, my whole school life. My handwriting was criticised, but my, I mean, I still can write with the left hand, but like a little child, and I am, today, ambidextrous, but, but that was definitely left handed before, and ...

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My home town was on the Austrian border, and therefore we were even more affected by the Anschluss than, than the normal Hungarian people, I mean, who were away in Budapest or somewhere else, because we were so very near the border. We were affected in, besides that, we were, of course, affected, because my mother's family were in Vienna, and they were very much affected that they had to flee, or they were deported, or they were taken, or they were beaten, and, and also because my father had patients over the border, and we used to go quite often, into Austria, over the mountains, on an excursion, and we had friends over the border, so that ...

How did you travel?

Well, by train, you could over. It was 20 kms, or else we went on an excursion and over the hill, over the mountain, into Austria, and so we were very much affected by the Anschluss. I was 13, and my, but the full effect, let us say, came even more when I was, I mean, it was decided, by the age of 15, since I had trouble with some of my teachers in school, that I, that I should learn a trade. I mean, it has been suggested by our Austrian relatives that it's better to prepare for emigration, and it's, I will have more, if I have to emigrate, I will have more from a trade than from schooling, and therefore I was taken out at the age of 15, I was taken out of school, so I had five years in the Lyceum, and then I was taken out of school. I was given the choice of either dental technician, which I didn't want at all, or dressmaker, or milliner, and I choose milliner, for the, for the one reason was that, the mother of a friend of mine, a school friend of mine, was a top milliner, and my friend also was taken out of school, and she started as a milliner apprentice. Actually, she was taken out a year before me, and therefore, I thought, "Well, I would like that. I would like to be together with her." I, I didn't like it, I hated every minute of it. I did my apprenticeship, my two years apprenticeship. Her mother was a beast, as a boss, and treated me, under her, very badly, especially, I mean, I was a paying apprentice, but there was a non-paying apprentice as well, and she was treated absolutely abominably, and I hated every minute of, and I wasn't interested in hats at all, and I wasn't interested in, and the whole surrounding, in the hattery, I hated every minute of it, and I hated sewing, and I

still hate sewing! From that moment on, and I hate hats! But let us say, today, I don't "hate", I "dislike" hats! But I did complete my apprenticeship, two years apprenticeship. Already before that, in my school time, I started earning, I, I started, in my holidays, teaching children, German, and also I did quite a lot of handiwork, various thing like dolls and, and belts, and flowers, and lampshades, which I did, because my father kept me very very low on, on pocket money, and I wanted things, and so, so I had to earn them myself. And, of course, during my apprenticeship, I, I had no time to earn money at all, because it was a full-time occupation, and I, I wanted to, so anyway, I finished my apprenticeship, but decided not to go on, on to a senior apprenticeship, and got my certificate as a, as a qualified milliner, up to a certain degree. And then I, then I went and, one year, I was learning sewing and I was, I really, while I was an apprentice, milliner's apprentice, I did some schooling, every single day, with my father, who was a highly intelligent, highly knowledgeable man, with an incredible, incredible knowledge. He was a, what one calls a "Polyhistor", which is an, an encyclopaedic knowledge, and he had some ideas on, on education, and on pedagogy. My father was not only, as I said, he was a gynaecologist, he was very much involved with politics, gave lectures, wrote articles, political articles. He was also very much involved in music. He was amateur violinist and viola player, and we had chamber music once a week, at home, and once a week, he went into the local orchestra, which was, by the way, a very high standard, local amateur orchestra, and when, in 1940, I think in about 1940, it must have been, the Jews were thrown out of the local amateur orchestra, he was a founder, co-founder of a Jewish amateur orchestra, which was very very successful. It was called "Collegium Musicum", and there was a concert once a month, and where he, which he usually introduced, with a lecture, with a talk about the programme and, and in which then, later on, I played as a, I took part as a cellist, a very bad cellist, but a cellist. I was in that orchestra too. In, also my father got very much involved with, I mean, he wrote a book on the psychology of music, which was, first he wrote it in German, but by the time it was, it was 1934, it was too late to publish it in German, but nevertheless it, a shorter version of it appeared in Freud's magazine, Imago, in 1935, and he then re-wrote it, or re-translated it into Hungarian, and it was published in, the whole book was published in Hungarian, as The Psychology of Music on New Ways. He was one of the first persons to deal with this subject, and actually, he has been

quoted as late as 19, I think, '69, I have got a book, by a French psychologist, and before that, in Germany, his, his work has been quoted.

How did he know about all this psychology?

He knew about everything. He was highly, highly, he was a very very brilliant man. He was a very difficult man, he never should have married, got married, he never should have got children, because he couldn't show his love. He was incredibly stern, I mean, you could only, I, I was very upset, as a child, because he always pushed me away when I wanted to kiss him, and I was a very, I was always wanting to kiss him, and he always pushed me away, only on birthdays, and if you travelled, when you went away, and when you came home, then you were allowed to kiss each other, but otherwise you were not allowed to kiss. I was not allowed to be called anything else but Gertrude, because Gertrude was the full name, and you don't debase a name with, with pet names, and therefore, Trude or Gertie, was not allowed in the house, the same as my brother was called Peter, and he wasn't allowed to, and in Hungary they, they used to call the name Peter, "Petti", and that was absolutely forbidden in our home. I, in a way, respected my father, but I didn't, later on, I, I didn't like him. He was a big womaniser, and made my mother very unhappy. On the other hand, my mother was pathologically jealous, and took me as her confidante at the age of 11, and, and was, was very very highly hysterical, and I didn't, I resented her taking me as her confidante at the age of 11, and so I wasn't very fond of my mother either. My mother had no sense of humour at all, and I had, I actually, pretty much disliked my parents, and my only wish was to get out of the house. It was a very bad, very unhappy marriage, at this stage, when I was a, a teenager, there were constant fights, and both my parents, at different occasions, tried to commit suicide, after fights. I mean, my father was ill, when I was 13, he had, he took 40mg. of morphine, and he, he was ill for, he was discovered, and was brought back, but he was ill for, for six months, he was in hospital, after this.

Did you know, at that age, what he had done?

Yes, certainly, they took me to the hospital the morning after he committed suicide, and told me about it, and I don't remember when my mother took an overdose of aspirin, which was just, actually, she just felt sick, and nothing, nothing happened, and I think she more wanted to have attention, than anything else. But I did not, but somehow, I did not, I disliked my parents.

But how did you feel about your parents trying to commit suicide?

I don't know. I don't know. As I say, I didn't, because they fought so much, and because there was so much disharmony going on, I, I had very big fights with my father, I had one fight with my mother, which actually, it belongs to the story which I didn't tell about my history teacher, but I, I didn't feel much love for them, so I don't know how, how it affected me, I don't remember how it affected me.

Was your mother an affectionate person towards you? Did she show her love for you?

She showed her love more, I suppose so, but because she had this, as I say, because she took me as her, her confidante, and I think she was very lonely, she was very miserable, she hated my home town, she hated living in a provincial town, she came from Vienna, she, I, I, she was always very unhappy, and she was always very miserable, and she always felt terribly sorry for herself, and I couldn't take it, I didn't want part of it.

Was there anybody you could confide in, during that period?

Not really. Not really, because my friends were funny, I mean, first of all, I had this division because of the Jewishness. I confided in a friend, who accepted me, who accepted my confidences, but I don't think, I mean, that she really returned, she never confided in me. She didn't return my, my, my love, my affection to her. She was a very, very very closed in person. I mean, in, introvert person. I was terribly lonely in a way, was incredibly lonely, but I, I confided in my diary, and when my mother is, as a punishment for something which happened with this history teacher, completely

unjustly, took away my diary for one month. From that moment on, I, I, I intensely disliked my mother because it was so unjust, because my, my main friend was my diary. I had an aunt in Vienna, and I occasionally was in Vienna, and her daughter, I could confide in her, but I mean, I didn't see her very often.

Was that your mother's sister?

My mother's sister, and her daughter, and she was the only one who ever spoiled me. All my other relatives spoiled my brother and had no time for me. They also, on my father's side, all their family was Christian, and since my, I flaunted my Jewishness, they didn't particularly take to me.

Did they live in the town?

No, they didn't live, no, we had no family in the town at all. And, no, I was pretty lonely, but I, I didn't mind it that much, because I was very involved with, from the age of 9, I was in, in Zionist, in a Zionist Group, and I was always very active, very involved, a "doer", an organiser, I was organising for charity, doing, making things, or making a performance of a, of a play, to collect money, and I was always organising something, so in every minute was taken up with organising, or singing, I was singing, I was always singing in choirs. I was, later on, I was playing cello, and, and unfortunately I had no proper cello teacher, so my cello playing never got off the ground really, properly, but there was no cello teacher in town, and then one cello teacher came, travelling, once a month, and he found that I was a very pretty girl, and I was extremely musical, I could read music, from the age of 9 onward, I could read, I could sing anything that was put in front of me, and so I was very useful as a proper number for him, and he taught me monkey tricks on the cello, and I was playing very difficult pieces, but I never learnt a scale, or I never learnt a study, the result was that I couldn't play the cello really! I could make...[INTERRUPTION] He put me on stage every so often, with these pieces, to show off, and to get more pupils, as a propaganda, but I, until one day, I, I just made a mistake, and I don't know, my bow dropped, but I couldn't play, really, the cello, and later on, when I, I had, when I was an apprentice, and I didn't have time to practice, and later on, I, I was, I went up to

Budapest, I mean, when I was 18, then I moved up to Budapest, and I was Inzu (?), I had no matura, only three day intelligence test, I got into a training college as a nursery nurse, a nursery school teacher, where only people with a Matric. were accepted, but they accepted me, and, and I, I, but my father didn't want me to leave, and he didn't give me any money to live, so I had to earn my own living while I was studying full-time, and, which made life pretty difficult, and, of course, I didn't have money, or, or time, to play cello, and so my cello, and later on in life, my cello playing always was, either I had money to take, to have lessons, but I had no time, or I had no cello at all, or I had a cello and no, no money! But I never, never managed to have the three together, except for very very short periods, and therefore my cello playing up to today, was very patchy. I occasionally managed to play a little bit of Haydn quartets, or very, or pre-classical quartets, or in an amateur orchestra, at the last desk.

Now?

No, I haven't been playing now, for over 20 years, I didn't touch the cello. I've actually just bought now, some strings, and I decided perhaps I will start again. But I have now started to play the piano, which I never played in my life, and now I am learning to play the piano, and I am practising every day, one hour regularly, yes. But I've been singing. I sang my whole life in, well, my whole life, not the last, the last 20 years, not any more. But in every country, first of all, whenever I was hungry, I would go to a Synagogue choir, or a Church choir, or whatever choir would pay something, and even in France, illegally, in South Africa, illegally, without working permit, I was singing, I was always accepted whenever I auditioned, auditioned in choirs, because my voice was, though not a trained voice, but it was good enough, and because I was such a good sight reader, so I was always accepted for professional singing in choirs, and, and sang in Paris, in the biggest choir, in the Rue de la victoire and Neuilly, in the Synagogue, and in South Africa, even in the radio, also in Paris, over the, even in the radio, but all that illegally, and here, I sang in the Hampstead Synagogue choir. I'm afraid I always called it "my prostitution", because when I sang in Synagogue choirs, since I am not a Synagogue-goer, and I was, I, I, I did it only to earn some money! And, and then I, but for pleasure I sang in madrigal choirs in

Hungary already, and in, in an oratorio choir, and then I, I sang for pleasure in, with the Philharmonia Choir, I used to, I was for quite a few years in the Philharmonia Choir here, when, in its heyday, when it was really the top choir. And, but I haven't sung now for the last 20 years or so. And I haven't got a voice any more, and I can't sight read any more, so, that has come to an end. [Can you stop for a while?]

The cello teacher, was he a teacher at school, or was he a private teacher?

No, he was a private teacher, and, and then later on, another one, they were always private teachers, but that's why I had to, had to pay, and later on, of course, I couldn't afford, after the War, and I had no cello for many years either.

So to what extent was music normally taught at schools?

Only very little, for singing, but no, no instruments, we were taught at school. But I was doing "blockflöte" (recorder), I was doing, recorder, recorder, sorry, I was doing recorder at the training college, and I was doing recorder teaching, for children, at the training college, when I went up to Budapest, when I was 18. I, where I, as I said, I, I earned my own living by teaching German and French, in the evenings and at the weekends. My father eventually paid for my room, but that was all he paid for, and everything else I had to earn myself. This training college was, by that time, we were not allowed to go into a state training college, and this training college was instituted by the Buda Community, Jewish Community of Buda, by a, a, a paediatrician, who became a very famous paediatrician, Dr. Emil Pickler - P I C K L E R, and, and a few other teachers, like a pedagogist, then a Chief Rabbi of the Buda Community, Dr. Benoschowski.

Who do you spell that one?

B E N O S C H O F S K I. And his sister, who eventually became the Curator of the Jewish Museum later, I mean, after the War, who were our religion and Judaism teachers, Jewish philosophy teachers, which, actually, Jewish philosophy, I did a course with him, which was additional to the course, to the main course. I also took

as an extra, language teaching for children, and recorder teaching for children, the music teaching for children, I took as an extra in this course. The course was an extremely intensive one-year course, as nursery nurse and nursery school teacher, this, a most modern methods of pedagogy, and, and it was an absolutely fascinating course, of which I enjoyed every minute. It was very difficult, very heavy-going, and I allowed myself four hours sleep a night, because I usually worked for the, did my homework at night, and since, in my free time, I had to earn my living, and since it was five days, eight-hour day, course, so I didn't have very much time left, and what time I had left, I went to theatre and I went to concerts.

So which year were you going?

This was from 1942-43. In 1943, when I finished, and Dr. Pickler sent me out on various jobs, first he sent me out to, she actually sent me into my home town, to try and adjust two children, a three year old and a five year old, who were completely off their rockers, I mean, they, the five year old was smoking 20 cigarettes a day, and the three year old, when he wanted something, was able to cry for eight hours, full, full sound, so that was completely unbearable. The father was in a work, a work camp, which brings me to tell you about the Hungarian men. The Hungarian male, when they were of military age, had to go into the army, but the Hungarian Jewish male were not allowed to take up arms, and they were taken into work camps.

End of F268 Side B

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Actually, very few males were at home by the time I, that time, I mean, '42, '43, '44, most of the males between 18 and 50, 55, were taken away, and the father of these two children was away, and the mother was ... not the most delightful person I had known. She was terrified of her children, and was completely incapable to do, to do anything about them, and to deal with them, so I had to send her away, and I was in charge of the two children, and I taught them to play and to become children again, normal children again. And then after that, I was there for a few weeks, and then after that, she, Dr. Pickler sent me in to various jobs, once with a, for a few months, with a nursery, a private nursery, where there were children of working people, who, or, abandoned children, who were there, in this creche. They were children from 5 weeks till, till one and a half years, no, until, I think, nine months, or something like that, and, and I had to, I had half, I had the night with them, and early morning with them, and a nurse came in during the day, and, and then she sent me to work in a, in a summer camp, and she sent me from one job into another, she only kept me for a few weeks or a few months, and that's how I spent '42, er, '43, '44, until '44, January, when I was chosen, amongst 90 people who have, who have finished in the, I mean, the training course, in the last three years, because there were always 30 in each year, to be the Assistant to the, to the Pedagogist who was running the, our, our, not sample, I can't think of the name, sample nursery school, but it's not, no, model, model nursery school, of the training college, and I was terribly proud of that and very happy with it, and then I, then I, I, I got ill, I had a funny illness, every fourth day, I had a very high temperature, and I couldn't defecate at all, and eventually, my father wanted me to come home to, to, to be examined, because my father had a notion that I was terribly, that because I was changing my jobs, he didn't accept it, that I was sent into these jobs, but he maintained that I couldn't keep a job, and also that I was, my whole life, I was very lazy, which I never was, but he always treated me, they always, and my father always treated me as stupid, lazy, and, and hypochondriac, which I never was! And this time, I went home, and I was, for an examination, and during my travel home, I had temperature, but by the time I came home my temperature dropped, and I was always then, very weak, on the second day, and then two days I was all right, and then this temperature came again. Now, it never was quite, how, why that was, this

changing temperature, except that when I was a small child, I had malaria, and it might have had something to do with it, but anyway, my father and a colleague of his were examining me, and did all kinds of examinations, and found absolutely nothing, and so by the Wednesday evening, my father said that, since I am minor, and obviously I am a hypocrite, and I am lazy and I only don't again want to change my job, which I didn't want to, I was very very proud of my job then, he, either I go back next morning, to Budapest or he doesn't let me go back. I mean, he always resented my having gone to Budapest, living in Budapest, and every time, when, actually, I left, we had a terrible row, and I always left without saying goodbye. And this time, we had had an even bigger row, because I said, "Well, I haven't seen ..." my brother and I weren't on very good terms, but still, he was my brother, and he was in work, in labour camp, already, for the last two years, and as it happened, he could come home for the weekend, and he was coming home on the Friday, for the weekend, and I said, "As I am at home, now, on Wednesday, I would like to stay already to meet him, and then I go back." And my father insisted that unless I go back on the Thursday morning, I am not going back at all. And so eventually, I left on the Thursday morning, after a terrible row, and without saying goodbye, and my brother came back on the Friday, on Sunday the Germans occupied Hungary, and on Wednesday I was in hospital, with a perforated large intestine. And, of course, my father couldn't forgive himself, having thrown me out, I mean, having had this terrible row, and having said that I am a hypochondriac, and that there is nothing wrong with me, and that they didn't find anything, and, and from then on, my father, who never allowed to, telegram was non-existent, my father was Post Office doctor, medical doctor, and we had a telephone free, but I was not allowed to use the telephone, not that I didn't use it when he wasn't there! (laughs). But, officially, I was not permitted to use the telephone, and, and you don't write a telegram, because you should think in advance, and as I said already, you don't kiss, unless it's a birthday, or, and this very stern father suddenly started to phone every day, to Budapest, to the doctors, to the specialist, and gave a client some money, to bring it up, money to travel, to bring it up to me, and some jewels so that I should sell it, and was begging me, crying on the phone, begging me to come home, and to forgive him. Which was, I mean, a terrible, absolutely terrible thing for me. And I eventually decided that I will come home, but by that time, I mean, on the fourth day we were thrown out of hospital, and then we

had to wear the Yellow Star, and anyway, I didn't go out, I was living in a hostel, in a Jewish hostel, at that time, and I didn't go out much unless I had to, and I applied for permission to go home, and, well, we were occupied on 19th March, I was operated, 1944, I was operated on, on 25th March, then I, on 29th March, we were thrown out of the hospital, and I think, in between, the, the yellow star came in. I was, in the hospital, I had a, I had two offers of people, of false papers, and people hiding me, and not, and everybody advised me not to go back to my home town, but I decided, because my father was really, was crying on the phone, I decided I go back, and so I applied for this permission, and the permission came through on the 22nd April, and, for the 24th April, so that I could travel. 22nd April was a Saturday, 23rd was my 20th birthday, 24th I was allowed to travel. On the 24th I was allowed to travel in a train, to sit only if there was a bench free, not to sit next to anyone. I had a yellow armband, I had a Yellow Star, I had a yellow paper, was not allowed to use the loo, I was not allowed to go to the restaurant car, I was not allowed to speak to anyone, and it was, the journey was scheduled in a way that I should get home before 6 o'clock in the evening, because after 6 o'clock people were not allowed to be, Jews were not allowed to be in the street. Unfortunately, there was an air raid while we were in the train, and the train stopped, and we had to get out of the train, and lie down on the embankment, and we lost an hour, so by the time I arrived home, it was past, a few minutes past 6 o'clock, and I was on the station, and I had to get home. I wasn't, as a Jew, I wasn't allowed to use a tram, I had my cello, I had one or two suitcases, I think I had one suitcase, one very heavy suitcase, and I had to walk, the tram journey would have taken five minutes, the walking took 20 minutes. Twenty-four people stopped me, six of them spat on me, and asked me, "You dirty Jew, what are you doing out here?" And, and that was my reception in my home town, to which I only went back once, after, for four hours to see someone who was 18 years old and who got back from camp, but never again did I put my foot into that town. The time when I went back, I was sick the whole night, after those four hours, but I saw my French teacher, and I saw this doctor and, and this best friend of mine, of us. I mentioned that my father was a doctor for Post Office, employed by Post Office, he was also employed by the railways, and he was also employed in the National Health Service, sort of, which was a limited sort of health service for workers, who contributed to it. The railways were the most anti-Semitic, and already in, I think, in '40, or '41, they sent a

letter that my father should get baptised, otherwise he is going to lose the job, if he wants to keep the job, they are not going to keep Jews any more. Now, we had some very good friends, another doctor, who was also on the railways, and they were always cross with us, we were always invited for Seder with them, and they were always cross with us because on Saturday, Friday night we didn't have candles, and because we never went to Synagogue, and, and they, they were always reproaching us. Now, he also got the same letter. As I say, it was in '40, 1940 or 1941, and, which is important to say, because we were only occupied by the Germans in '44, but this was Hungary, and this was not, the Hungarian measures, and this particular town was particularly anti-Semitic always, it, according to the Jewish Encyclopaedias, this town was the most anti-Semitic town in Hungary, so they both got this letter to get baptised. Now, they sat together, and my father said, "No way. I'm not religious, and I'm certainly not going to become a member of another religion. I was born Jewish, and I am Jewish, but I am not religious, and I'm not going to become part of another religion", and he didn't get baptised. The other person, this nice religious family, Synagogue-going family, the whole family got baptised, and in processions they were kneeling in the street, in the procession, and they, in the morning, they went at 6 o'clock in the mornings, they went to sweep the church, just to show how good Catholics they have been, their whole life! And, well, it didn't help them, because, my father lost the job, and three months later, the others lost their job, he lost his job, in spite of his having got baptised, I mean, he kept it, I think, three months, or six months, something like that, and they were all deported, quite irrespectively of their getting baptised, having got baptised. So my father kept, at least, respect. And in that way, he had more respect even from the Jewish community than, than these people who became, there were quite a few who got baptised because they thought they can save their lives, if they get baptised. This was one thing I wanted to tell. The other thing which I wanted to tell from the earlier period was that I mentioned that I became involved with the Zionist Group, childrens' group, small childrens' group, when I was 9, and from then on, I was always in a Zionist Group, and I tried to emigrate. I hoped that I would be able to emigrate to Palestine, there were two places I wanted to go to, either to Palestine, or I had, actually, an aunt and uncle in Paris, and they didn't have any children, and there was a question of my going and live with them, when I was going to be 15, but by that time, my aunt died, and anyway, so that fell through.

Was this on your mother's or father's side?

My mother's side. My mother had one sister in, in Vienna, and one sister in Paris, and three brothers in Vienna. And my, so Paris was out, but I wanted to, anyway, by that time I was so involved with Zionist activities that I wanted, and I became a Zionist leader, sort of thing, when I was 16, then in a neighbouring town, I was opening, I mean, Zionism was illegal, and I was opening a new hall in Ulam (??), and a new, constituting a new group, and I was standing there with the flag, and the police came and actually, I was with the police for an hour or so, God, I mean, we thought it was a big joke, the whole thing. But actually I was, I was very involved. I wanted to go to Palestine, and I had my papers with the British Embassy, and when, in 1942, '41, '42 ... '41, Hungary declared War on Russia, Britain and America, Hungary declared War!! Big Hungary! Then the British Embassy signed all the affidavits of all those people who had their papers there, and I had one paper missing, my whole group left, and I was left behind, so this is also an important point, I think so.

What was the group called?

Well, we were Hashomer Hatzair.

And the first youth group when you were nine?

I don't know what it was called, I don't think it was, it wasn't called Habonim, but it was, I don't remember, I don't remember what it was called. I know that we went on outings, that we were singing lots of songs, and we were singing, we had Onick(??) Shabat, and we were, we met every Friday night, and every Saturday afternoon, and we met during the week, and we had lectures, and we had activities, doing leaflets and making propaganda for, for Palestine, and read Hertzl, and, so that, and Jan Dutziskin(ph) and Schlenor, who was a big Zionist. Another thing which I think I should talk about, still again from my father, about my father. My father came as I said, right at the beginning, I think I mentioned that my father came from a, old Hungarian stock, so that I mean, he came, he must, his family must have been a very

long time already in Hungary. I don't know how long, I have no proof, the only proof I have got, that my great grandfather was in correspondence and was a friend of, of one of the big diplomats, Hungarian, non-Jewish diplomats, and to be a friend and to be in correspondence must mean that he was already somebody, and, and, and felt himself as a Hungarian. My, I never knew any of my grandfathers, but my grandmothers I knew. My Viennese grandmother, my mother's mother, lived in Vienna, and she was an old matron, I always remember her as an old matron. I have got a picture of her 60th birthday, and she's sat in the big chair, and that's the only thing I know about her, she was a really unpleasant woman, and she didn't like me, and I didn't like her. And why I didn't like her, why she didn't like me, I don't know. I didn't like her because she, obviously she showed no interest in me, and she was very unpleasant and, and I didn't like her. I loved my other grandmother, who was a, at the age of 80 she was still walking out into the vineyards, she had, her hobby was her vineyard and orchard, which was four kilometres away from the village she lived in, and she used to go with her basket, and with her big hat, and my uncle, her son, one of her sons was a rich man, and said, "I take you out with the carriage", and she said, "No way. I go out." And then she worked the whole day in the vineyard, and when she came back, walked back, and people, we were worried that she is so late, and sent the carriage, she was terribly angry "I don't need you!" Anyway, she finally was in hiding in Budapest at the, during the War, during the occupation, with her daughter who lived in Budapest, and who married a non-Jew, and she was in hiding with them, and then she had to, eventually, had to go into the ghetto, because they were, my aunt, I mean, her daughter, who was my aunt, the daughter and her husband, went down into in an air raid shelter, and it had a full hit, and they were killed, and only their son, who was in hiding with my grandmother, with him, were saved, but she then had to go into the ghetto, and she survived the ghetto, but apparently she was so weak that a short while afterwards she died. By that time, she must have been 82, 83, something like this, I don't exactly remember. I know we never celebrated her 80th birthday, because she denied that she was 80!

And was she dressed in Hungarian clothes, I mean, just like any other Hungarian person would be dressed?

Well, she most of the time I remember her being dressed in black, or grey or beige, but normal clothes, no Hungarian clothes, but my father was very Hungarian, and I mean, that was his first feeling, he was, he was in the First World War, he was as a doctor on the front, and he was wounded, and that's how he actually got into the town where we lived, because there was a military hospital there, and there was also a gynaecological clinic, and so, eventually he got better, he started working, helping out in the gynaecological clinic, and said he got stuck there. But he was, and he already couldn't study in Hungary, but he studied in Vienna and in Berlin.

That's how he met your mother?

Yes, in Vienna, he met my mother, and he, and that's why he wrote his book, for instance, in German first. I mean, it was also for a bigger, a larger public, of course, to write it in German, but his German was good enough because he studied at Universities in German. He, but, in '42, he had a letter, oh yes, well, in the First World War, he fought in the War, and he was wounded, and he had the highest decorations which one could get as a medical man, not as a fighting man, but as a medical man, and he was very proud of that. He never went out to demonstrations, and he never put them up, but occasionally he brought them out of the cupboard and showed them to us, he was very proud of them. And in '42 he had a letter from the state that he should send them back, and he shouldn't consider himself Hungarian any more. And for him, that was, well, one of the biggest blows. Now, another important thing from that period was that Hungary was the last country that had, that was occupied. All the countries around were occupied already, and we had refugees from all the places. And yet, I mean, as I said, my father was a highly intelligent person, and he listened to the BBC, which was, by the way, illegal, twice a day, and, and he, he, one day, he, he came, I mean, he would listen, and one day there was something on the BBC about concentration camps, and about gas ovens, and I remember him telling us, and he said, "I think that is too much for propaganda." Didn't believe it. Absolutely didn't believe it. He said, "Well, I know that they must make propaganda against the Germans, but this is a little bit too much." We had people who came from Germany, from camps, not from concentration camps, but from prisoner-of-war camps, they escaped, like lots of Poles, lots of French, who came to the house,

especially the French, because we spoke French at home, so they came to the house. We had a very open house, and, and they, they told stories, and we had people from Austria and from Czechoslovakia, and from Germany, and from, from all over the world, and they said, well, these poor people, of course, they are "Schlemiels". I don't know what you call them, you know?

Yes.

They didn't know how to deal with the situation. One didn't understand it. Even so, we went through the whole thing, and it was near, and still nobody quite understood it. I mean, if an intelligent person like my father didn't understand what was going on, nobody understood. And that is, I think, a very important point. The other important point was, that by the time that the accusation of the, of the, that we were taken as sheep, in Hungary, by that time, we were occupied, the men were away, between 18 and 55, so we had old men, I mean, in those days, if somebody was 60 it was old, considered old. We had the old men, which is a funny thing, I'm 65 now, and I don't really feel that old! I feel, quite often quite tired, and my memory is occasionally failing, not so good any more, and I am slower, but I still don't feel really old. But, in those days, people were old. My 60 year old grandmother was an absolute matron! And I never saw her getting up off the chair, she was always sitting in the chair, and everything had to be brought to her. And she was in an old age home, I mean.

And she was 60?

Yes. A very elegant old age home, but she was ...

End of F269 Side A

F269 Side B

What did your grandfathers do professionally?

Well, they were both merchants. My grandfather in Vienna was a removal, removal, had a very large removal firm, and his wife, I mean, my grandmother, came from Hungary, from the biggest, the most eminent jewellers, they were, conveyors to the Court, and the most elegant jewellers, and he had, I believe, the biggest, largest removal firm in Austria. Now, my, on my father's side, my grandfather had a cement and timber yard, and when I used to bicycle, when I used to visit my grandmother, and I used to bicycle, and spend my holidays there, and used to bicycle in the whole area, on the roadside there were always ditches, and the ditches were bridged over with tiny little bridges, cement bridges, and on each cement bridge there was an MH, which was stood for Mosons Henrisk, for my grandfather's name, initials, and the whole country was

How do you spell that?

Well, Mosons you've had already, Henrisk - H E N R I S K, yes, and the Mosons you have got, M O S O N S. And, and he was a very well-to-do man, and I, I don't know whether my great grandfather was already involved, but I think he was already involved in that, I don't quite know, but my grandfather definitely. But I didn't know my grandfather. By the time I, I was born, my grandfather died, both my grandfathers were not alive any more.

Do you know what they died of?

No. No idea. Heart? Lung? Tuberculosis? I have no idea. No idea. Don't remember. I suppose I never asked.

And did your father talk about his experiences during the First World War, to you?

Yes, quite a lot. Quite a lot. He was in Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and, but I don't remember really, I don't remember. I know that he was in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that he was wounded, but otherwise, I don't, I wasn't particularly interested, I suppose so.

And were there a lot of Jews of his generation who fought for Hungary?

Yes. Yes, very many. Well, most of them, I mean, would have fought, yes. My paternal grandfather lived in a place called Zalaszentgrot - Z A L A S Z E N T G R O T. It was about 60 kms. away from Szombathely, near the Lake Balaton, not far from the Lake Balaton.

And did you see your grandmother?

My grandmother regularly, yes, because she had a house, and also, where there was still the yard, but it was only a timber yard by the time I knew it, and my other uncle, ran the timber yard, my father's brother, run the timber yard, and he, and then they had this very lovely villa up in the hills, with a vineyard and an orchard, which was quite a large bit, I don't remember how big it was, but it was quite a large bit, and we had very good wine, and we used to spend our holidays, very often, our holidays, my mother used to go up with us, and spend our holidays up in the, in that villa. There was no water, and an ox cart used to bring up the water, and when it was raining then there was, then we drank wine instead of water, and there was lots of fruit, and there was lots of grapes, and lots of vegetables too, and my grandmother tended it, it was her great passion, the vineyard and the orchard. And, I mean, she had some helpers, and actually, after the War, one, one, one of her helpers daughters, took over, bought part of it from my, my cousin's part, and our part, we never sold, and I don't know what happened to it. This time I was in Hungary I wanted to go and visit it, and I didn't manage to get there.

How many children did your paternal grandmother have?

My paternal grandmother, there were two sons and one daughter, and they were all three were very musical. My father was the brightest, he went to, finished his studies and went to a Gymnasium, and to University. My aunt became a piano teacher, and my uncle took over the timber yard and also had his own vineyard, from which he exported, he made up a very big large export to England, to England, I think so, of grapes. France, though mainly England, I think, he exported grapes to. And I mean, my parents, we were two, my brother and myself, and I am afraid my brother and I didn't see very much, we didn't like each other very much. I was born, when I was born, then my brother was five and a half, and he was extremely gifted, he sang Haydn's Symphony before he spoke, and he was very gifted musically, and he was a real prodigy, musical prodigy, and very spoiled, and when I was born, my mother was ill for a year after my birth, and instead of my mother coming home, I came home, and I was screaming, and he didn't like it. And up till today, he's, today he's 71, and he still hasn't got over it, that I have been born! We still can't, we don't get on. He is living in London, but I, if possible, I avoid him, I tried for many years, and now I, no point, because he still didn't accept France, and when I was married before, he didn't accept my first husband, when I started my divorce proceedings, then he started - he loved my first husband. And, and he started to egg on my first husband against me. Oh, he's a charming man! Yes, I'm afraid I am, I, I, he has got a daughter, and I am very fond of her, my niece, we have a very good relationship, which I am very happy about. But with my brother, unfortunately we don't get on at all. He never quite made it, and he never forgave the world, the world owes a living to him, and he never, and he fights with everybody, he never could keep a job and he never, he never forgave the world that he didn't, wasn't quite a genius, as he expected to be. He was in labour camp during the War, but he managed to escape. He actually had one finger hurt in a mine, and then he managed to escape to Rumania, so that he wasn't taken out into Ukraine, and he survived in Rumania.

And what was wrong with your mother after your birth, do you know that?

Well, mainly with her breasts, milk glands, they were inflamed, and they couldn't get it, there was no penicillin and things like that yet in those days, and so they had difficulties in getting her breasts under control.

So who looked after you?

A wet nurse who didn't have very, who had a child, and didn't have enough milk for the two of us, apparently I was kept very short and I kept on screaming, I was screaming, and, and drove my father and my brother crazy! I know all that, because my father left a diary, and this is all written down. I was a planned child, I wasn't an accident, but because they were so happy with the first one, they decided they wanted another child, and then from that moment on, everything went wrong, because that's when my father started womanising, during that year, and he never let off after that, and so the marriage was, I really spoilt the whole family. (Laughs). I'm sorry. It wasn't my choice. I don't even feel guilty.

This is the second session with Mrs. Trude Levi, 10th May, 1989.

My grandmother, on the, well, on my mother's side, my grandfather was a removal, had a big, large removal firm in Vienna, in Austria, but I didn't know him, he died before I, I came into the world, and my grandmother, I remember her as a rather as a matron, even so, she couldn't have been very old, because we were about, I was about four when we celebrated, four, five, when we celebrated her 60th anniversary, but I remember her only sitting in a chair and not moving. And she came from Budapest, from a very large jeweller family, and they were, it was the largest jewellers, let us say, most elegant jewellers, they were purveyors to the Court, in the Hapsburg Empire, and she married her cousin, who lived in Vienna, and actually, the family, as far as I know, always alternated between Budapest and Vienna, and occasionally someone came in from Prague, so that it was, covered the Hapsburg Empire, and well, I don't know very much more about them.

What about the degree of religious observance by your grandparents?

I don't quite know, but I think they must have kept, probably, candles on Shabat, and perhaps, I think my mother had some religious background, but not very much. My father, my grandmother on my father's side, did go to Synagogue on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana, and fasted on Yom Kippur, but she also had a Christmas tree for the family, and the children, and the Christmas tree was up, up till the ceiling, very large Christmas tree, and we really celebrated Christmas. Christmas was the biggest holiday in the family.

Did you have a Christmas tree too?

Yes, yes, always. I grew up with Christmas tree, and with no Jewish festivals at all, except Seder at other friends' house, but otherwise no, no Jewish Festivals at all. So religion didn't really come in very much, and I think my mother left off everything that was religious. I'm not even sure whether she came from a religious home, no, I don't know how much religious background there was.

Did your parents also have to be seen in the Shul?

No. No, they weren't. No, on the contrary, my father, according to the diary of my father, starts with an interesting story. He had a dream that he is walking up the stairs to the gallows, he is going to be executed, and this, and when he arrives up, and he put his head under the guillotine, he looks at his executioner before, and he finds that it is a local Rabbi. This dream he dreamt on the night before my brother's Barmitzvah, which was compulsory, and where he did have to go to Synagogue, which was the only time he went to Synagogue. Later on, I had a, when I was 14, 13, 14, I had a religious period of my own, and I insisted on being Batmitzvahed and he, he refused to come to the Synagogue, because that wasn't compulsory. But my father resented so much coming to Synagogue, that he had these dreams when he was going to be executed.

Was it customary in those days, to become Batmitzvah?

No, not really. I think it was a trick of our local Rabbi who made every effort to earn as much money as possible, and since, for the Barmitzvah you had to pay specially, he, he instituted it, it was, the Barmitzvah was in a group, they only said one sentence, and the Schemah Israel.

So your father did agree to paying for you?

He did agree to paying for it, yes, very, very resentfully.

And did your mother come?

I think my mother must have come, yes. Yes, I think so.

Could you say something about the accommodation you lived in?

Yes. We had a flat with five rooms. We rented accommodation. A flat with five rooms, of which one room was the surgery of my father, and the other one was a waiting room, attached to the surgery. We had one living room, one bedroom for my parents, and one bedroom, which we shared, as small children, my brother and myself. And later on, he had to sleep in the waiting room, which he resented very, very violently, that he was put into the waiting room. It meant that he had to get up in the morning, at a certain time, because the waiting room had to be vacated. But actually, he, since he was five and a half years older than I, and when he was 18, he went up to Budapest to study, and from then on, he wasn't at home. It was only a period of, I suppose, a year or so, when he was, no, 15-18, I suppose, yes, I suppose, no, I suppose it was five years, four or five years, that he had to sleep in the waiting room. We had a very elegant salon, or drawing room, with, with very beautifully furnished with some Biedermeyer furniture, which my mother used during the day. She was teaching English and German, and also, in both languages, shorthand.

From home?

From home, and, and my father had his surgery at home, so my parents really both worked regularly at home, except that my father went off to see his patients at certain periods. My mother taught about, sometimes, up to 10 hours a day. She was extremely busy with her private lessons. She was also the Treasurer of the Zionist Society, and of the Ladies Guild, and was pretty active in Jewish matters. My father only came to lectures, and, otherwise, and later on, when he was thrown out of the orchestra, because he played the violin and the viola, and when, in the early forties, the Jews were thrown out of the orchestra, then he was a founder member of the Jewish orchestra. But otherwise, he didn't take part in Jewish affairs or Jewish life. He was neither a Zionist, absolutely refused Zionism, being very big Hungarian.

And did your mother also teach as much when you were little?

She did teach very much, yes, I don't know how much, but I started learning with her, English, when I was 9, and, of course, German I spoke from small on.

I was thinking that if your mother was working from home, and you were around, do you remember whether you had to be quiet?

No, I had to, well, we had, we children, we had our room, and the maids used to take us for a walk, and when my mother was free, then she took us for a walk, and we played a lot with other children. We had a courtyard, and we were downstairs, when the weather was all right, we were downstairs on the courtyard, and we were taken, in summer, we went, the whole afternoon, we were swimming, and in winter, when we weren't at school, we were on the skating rink for many hours, so we were very much out of the house, because either, well, when we were very small, I don't really remember what happened when I was small, but I suppose I was playing downstairs in the courtyard with other children. There were always lots of children, and I, I remember having, either, playing, being taken to other children to play, or other children came to us, but we were, we were playing in the courtyard mainly. And, or else we were in my room, it was a nice big, large room, and when I was 16, my father, who was, kept me very very short on money, and we were all together, we had very little money in the house, I know that to buy a pair of stockings, or, or buy a new

dress, was quite a big problem, but we had a library of 3,000 books which was, I mean, from my father, constantly bought books, my parents, let us say, constantly bought books, and we also had, we had a very cultured home. We had a very large music library, we had a newspaper coming from Vienna, we had Neue Freie Presse, we had the, we had two papers coming from, from Budapest, I mean, two national papers, we had the Guardian came regularly from England, and I grew up with that, and, and there was a lot of music being listened to. My father built a radio, and I remember the accumulators underneath the table, and whenever there was an opera or a big concert transmitted, then we had, usually, some guests for dinner, before that, and then everybody listened, with scores, and, and text books, and, and we usually had, for every opera, the piano part, the piano ... I don't know.

End of F269 Side B

F270 Side A

So the piano part of it was, where the opera was reduced on to piano, and the next day, or the day before, they used to go through it, and sing through all the arias, and really work through the opera, and therefore, I knew, and it was also with symphonies and with other things, and that's how I learnt to, really, to know a lot about music.

You were always allowed to be present at the dinner parties as well?

Yes, yes, yes. I suppose, I perhaps, didn't always eat, but I was allowed to listen, until a certain hour, I don't know, I mean, every year it got longer, the period. And also I learnt to read a score very early, at the age of 9, 10, I already read a score. We also had lots of art books, and we had lots of literature, and altogether, my father was interested in, really, most subjects, and sciences, and he knew a tremendous amount, he was an absolutely brilliant man, brilliant polyhistor, who really had a, a tremendous knowledge of, on most subjects, and was interested in most subjects, and read a tremendous amount. Every minute that he was free, he was reading. He was very stern, and we were not allowed to, light music was banned from the house, though I once caught him, I always had to, whenever I went into our drawing room I had to knock on the door, before coming in, and actually, into any room, except my own room, I had to knock on the door before going in, and then get permission to come in, and one day he didn't hear me knocking and after a while, I thought, "Well, he is not in", and I went in, and there he was, sitting with some operatta, light, light music, and singing with it, following it, that kind of music which I was never, I mean, it was the music of the twenties, but the kind of music which I was not allowed to indulge in. Of course, I did indulge in, and did sing the popular tunes when I was a teenager.

In his presence as well?

Well, I tried to avoid, but from the time on, when I was a teenager, my father and I had very big rows, and we had, which unfortunately, lasted until the end. I always

respected his knowledge, but at the same time he was very very stern, and I was pretty stubborn and stood up.

Did your brother as well?

Well, my brother also had big rows with him, but they were, I think, different, because my father, my brother wanted always to become a musician, and my father didn't want him to become a musician. He wanted him to know about music and, and he was very gifted as a pianist, and he wanted him to continue with his music, and he practised about eight hours a day, I mean, every minute that he wasn't at school, he practised. At the same time, he managed to be a very good pupil at school, and my father insisted that he finish his, at least his Matura, equivalent of A'Levels, and only then did he allow him to go up to Budapest to study music fully. He really wanted him to go and do a course in engineering or, I mean, go to university, or do something, and have some profession, because he didn't believe that, as a musician, he could earn his living. But my brother won, in the end, and when he went up to Budapest, my father was financing his studies. I don't think very largely, but he was financing his studies, and his stay in Budapest. And therefore, we were even, in a way, poorer, at home, because, I mean, it cost quite a lot to keep my brother in Budapest.

And what about your mother, did she keep the money that she was earning, for herself?

I don't think so, I think she put it into the household, and I know that she very very rarely bought some clothes. We had two women who came, the white clothes women, the linen sewing women, no, how shall I say it? It's wrong, sorry. A woman who sewed, who did the sewing of the linen, who repaired the linen and the white clothing, and the underwear, and we had one lady coming in, one young lady coming in once a month, to do all the clothing, alter, she had very good taste, and she altered clothing. I never had a new dress, my whole life, actually, until I was 30, what, I think, no, I was 24 when I had the first dress which was my own dress, chosen by me, and that was the only one, and someone bought it for me, which was a maternity

dress, but up till then, since I was the only girl in my mother's family, they were, all my cousins were boys, all my aunts' clothes, when they got tired of it, came to us, and they were altered then, for me, and I had some very pretty dresses, but I never could choose one single item which I choose myself, where I choose the colour, or I choose the material, my whole, my whole youth. When I was 18, no, when I was, for my 20th birthday, my father decided that he is going to, I mean, offer me, to dress me up from head to toe, and the last holiday I spent at home, at Christmas, in 1944, '43-'44, I spent a lot of time with a top dressmaker, and choosing material and having clothes, I mean, trying on clothes, but unfortunately, they were not yet ready, in time when my birthday was in April, and I was going to get them for my birthday. By the time I got them, the Germans occupied us, and I never wore any of these clothes, but, so ... later on, I'm afraid, I was rather spendthrift on clothing! When I finally could afford it, which was roundabout 1950, '52, which was much later! By the time I, I, I was 28 by that time, and by the time that I could afford to buy, occasionally, a blouse, occasionally something for myself. But, but foodwise, I mean, we were very well off, because Hungary was agriculturally very well endowed country, and, and also the patients brought in, the peasants brought in eggs and cream and chicken, and butter, and all that, we didn't have to pay for, because we usually had it as present, as a present, from the clients of my father, who didn't, I mean, they didn't pay much, but they brought in presents. And, and fruit came from my grandmother's orchard, and vineyard, and so, altogether, we, we ate extremely well, too well, if I think back on that! I don't know.

Did your mother cook for the family, or did you have a cook?

No, we had a cook and we had a chambermaid. And the cook was with us for a very long time, until she got married, and we always had a cook. The chambermaid was in double capacity, because she was also helping out with my father, in letting in patients to the waiting room, and if he needed help in the surgery, then she helped out, so, but, and the chambermaids changed constantly, but the cook was with us for a very long time, and we usually had very permanent cooks. My mother taught them to cook, they were peasant girls who came, and learnt. And we also had a woman who came in once a, once a week, to do the washing, of the clothes, so that we were, my,

my mother mended a lot, I remember, I practically never, I mean, any evenings, there was a big basket, every evening there was a big basket in front of her, and she was mending stockings, and mending other things, and putting on buttons, sewing on buttons, which I don't understand that it needed so much mending, because, as I say, one, we had this dressmaker coming in, who dealt with the, well, the bigger things, but, well, we couldn't buy new clothes, there was no money for that. What money there was, it went for books mainly.

And was this also like that in other families, that they would have dressmakers?

Well, yes. You had the dressmaker who came home and who spent a day sewing, and altering clothes. I mean, this was mainly altering clothes, or also, very rarely, something new, I suppose so. But I don't remember going, I mean, ever going to a clothes, a dress shop, to buy something ready-made, everything was made at home. And as long as anything could be altered, it was altered. A new collar put on, a new scarf put on, a new, new something, new buttons put on, I mean, to make it look different, but I know that my mother wore her dresses for a very very long time, and every year it was altered according to fashion, but they were, it was still the same dress.

And your father's clothes? Would he buy them in a shop?

I don't remember. That I don't know anything, I, I, I was totally uninterested, and so I don't remember at all. No, I suppose he went to a tailor, I don't think that I, I don't think he would have gone, I mean, you didn't go to a ready-made clothes, you had a tailor, and most probably the tailor would have been his client. I know that the shoemaker was a client of his, and every six months the whole family went to Mr. Hindveker, the shoemaker, who then measured our feet and made shoes for us, and I think, every year, Mr. Hindveker produced another child, who my father brought into the world, and the shoes were the payment, or, or we paid very little, but that was a reciprocal thing, and it was also, for instance, as furniture. My parents had a very modern, nearly bedsitter, which was, in day time, quite an elegant room, but it wasn't a bedroom, and, and the furniture was made by one of my father's clients, whose wife

produced a child every year, which, with the help of my father, and, and he made furniture for us. And when I was 16, I had a complete, very modern, for those days, extremely modern, beautifully made furniture, with a, like, I mean, in one piece, on the walls, there was a library, a bar, and a writing desk, which today is normal, but when I was 16, was a very unusual, piece of furniture, and I had a bed, which was a couch, I mean, a settee, which opened up into a double bed, and there was a drawer underneath to put the bed linen in it, which, which was very unusual, and very very modern, and I was extremely proud of it. And this was also made by this man who, who was a client of my father. And it was very elegant, so that I had a very elegant room when I was 16.

Did you have a gramophone at home?

Yes. I had my own gramophone, and my parents, my mother, I suppose, yes, my parents had a gramophone, yes, I think so. I know that I had my gramophone because I had some dance records, and when I was 15, 16, we had parties with dancing, at home, but I didn't have any classical records, or not on my gramophone, that was all pop music, and it was very much resented by my father.

And what about telephone?

Well, my father was a doctor to the Post Office, and we had a telephone, it was free. We had telephone at home.

Was that normal for cultured ...

Most, most, yes, yes, most of my friends had telephone, because I did phone, I was, officially, my father didn't permit me to use the phone, so when my father was out of the house, home, I used it, because he insisted that it was strictly professional, since it was free. I wasn't supposed to use it, but I did use it.

And in what area of the town did you live?

In the centre, very much in the centre. We lived, first, on the corner of the Main Street, and the Main Square, and the street leading to the Main Square, and then one, one house further, but it was the centre, and it was a good, a good place to live in, I mean, unless you had a villa outside, I mean, a little bit further out. It was a good place to live in.

And who were your neighbours, what sort of people were they?

Well, we had lots of, in the house, I remember there was, well, the owners were our, our immediate neighbours, who were furniture, they had a large furniture store, and then the chief dressmaker of the town, the most elegant dressmaker of the town, was also in the building. And as it happens, in the house, I don't remember that we had any other professionals than my father, but very near, in the same street, we had a number of doctors, lawyers, architects, who lived, and with whom we were very friendly.

Would they be Jewish or not?

Some Jewish, some not Jewish. We had friends who were not Jewish and who came regularly to the house, but actually, I think most of our friends were Jewish.

And the neighbours?

The neighbours were also, well, the neighbours, I remember, were all Jewish, but I don't remember, we must have, no, we had also non-Jewish. I know that underneath us there was a non-Jewish family, who were producing the local newspaper, yes, just now I remember that. So there were non-Jewish families also, in the house.

Was it a Jewish area, on the whole?

Not necessarily, no, it was a very mixed area, except that the next street was a strictly Jewish area, it was a self-made ghetto street, where the very orthodox people lived, who wear this peyot and, and kaftan, and had their own school, and had Yeshiva, in

the street, and which they spoke Yiddish, they refused to speak Hungarian, they spoke Yiddish, and so we didn't really mix. We knew, I knew one or two youngsters, with whom we occasionally played, because, oddly enough, they had through houses, courtyards with which, which had on both sides, entrances, and on the other side of the ghetto street, we had the schools, and so when we went, when I went through this house to school, and again back, and on the way we used to play with marbles. We had our holes in this courtyard, and then we used to play with these children, but otherwise, really, we were, we had nothing to do with them, because my, well, I was brought up to look down upon people with peyot and kaftan, and also to look down upon people who spoke Yiddish, Yiddish was not considered a language, and I, I didn't, well, I don't suppose I looked, I don't know whether I looked down on them, but didn't consider them equals.

Would these children go to the Jewish school you mentioned?

No, they would go to their own orthodox Jewish school. I, I know very little about, well, I don't know anything about that school, but I remember having, going through this courtyard and seeing, there, there was a woman who was killing the, or man, I don't remember, or a family, who were, where the orthodox people took their chicken to be ritually slaughtered, and their geese, and there were always geese feathers all over the place, and it was, smelt, I must say, it was, it was not, not very appetising, it, and therefore, I suppose, we also considered these people dirty, and smelly, because you saw the blood of the geese and the chickens running in the courtyard, and, and chicken being in the courtyard, and having chicken droppings all over the place, and geese droppings, so we were, which, which, in my circle, let us say, wasn't, wasn't the thing which you saw, except in my grandmother's, in my grandmother's, in the village, there, in the back yard there would be, we grew some geese and chicken, and that was a different thing, because that was in a village, and in a village it was acceptable, but somehow, in the town it, it was below our dignity!

Yes. Did your grandmother also kill the chickens herself?

No, my grandmother never, herself, it was the maids who did that. But we did feed, we did force feed, in my grandmother's back yard, we always had geese which were force fed, and I enjoyed very much force feeding, helping the maids to force feed the geese, that was one of my favourite occupations when I was in the, in the country, when I was with my grandmother during the holidays. It was then, you, you, I believe, you gave a stone or a coin to a goose, to make it's liver grow very large. It really diseased the liver, and caused a liver disease in the goose, but that's how Hungarian geese were, were grown, and, because Hungarian goose liver was very, is, is up till today, a very big delicacy, so you force fed the goose, and in most Hungarian Jewish houses, there was a period of geese eating. I believe it started, if I remember well, it either started or finished roundabout Easter, Pesach time, but it lasted 10 weeks, roundabout 10 weeks that you, you neverly, every week, had a goose, and you had the goose liver, and then the fat was put away for the whole, collected for the whole year, for cooking, though we did, we had much less of that, because, of course, we fattened pork. Once a year we had a pig slaughtered, and we had ham and bacon and, and pork fat, also stored in our larder, and so we relied much less on the goose fat, but in most Jewish houses, goose was eaten so that there should be enough goose fat for the whole year. And, but we had less of that, and we had a much more varied kitchen.

When your parents friends would come for dinner, would your mother have to take special care, like, you didn't have a kosher household, the people they mixed with, did they?

Most, no, all our friends who came for dinner, ate everything. They might have had kosher household at home, but when they went out, they enjoyed very much, eating pig! They didn't, just, just as I have friends here who, who, at home don't touch anything, but when they go out, as soon as they go out, they order bacon!

And what traditional dishes were prepared at home?

Well, we had a, we had a very very varied kitchen. My mother was, during her youth, lived in England for a year, and picked up quite a lot of things. Since my aunt was in

Paris, and she, somehow, we had a very international kitchen, but we also had lots of Hungarian dishes, and all the Hungarian, real Hungarian dishes are made with sour cream, or most Hungarian dishes are made meat with sour cream, so it was a strictly un-kosher cooking. But we had a very varied kitchen, and lots of French dishes, lots of Italian dishes, lots of English, English I remember, we had, Irish stew, and my mother came home with aubergine for the best recipes for aubergine, which everybody hated! And yes, those were the two, only two dishes which I couldn't, I found that I didn't like. Irish stew, now, I didn't realise that I was allergic, actually, to lamb and mutton, but especially to mutton, and up to today I can't eat lamb or mutton, and therefore Irish stew was a dish which I absolutely hated, because I always felt sick afterwards, and they didn't believe me, they thought that I am playing up, but it was actually a fact, that I couldn't digest it.

Where had your mother actually learned her languages? Did she study?

She studied in Vienna, the languages, she went to a commercial,

At University?

No, she went to a commercial course, higher, higher course, not at University, but I suppose it would be equivalent to a Polytechnic, but which was more business studies than, than intellectual, than, I mean, arts, and she learned, well, she spoke French and English, but she only taught English and German, and also language teaching. She, it must have been in, combined teacher training.

End of F270 Side A

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A teacher training and business course, because she did shorthand, besides the languages, in both English and German, and also book-keeping. But I don't know to what degree, but it was, I think, a four-year course, or a three-year course, after she finished school.

And your parents' circle of friends, amongst those people, were most women educated, and did they work, or was your mother an exception?

My mother was pretty much an exception, except for one friend, who also was a medical man, and his wife was also teaching, she was teaching French. But most of her friends, actually, did not work, and my mother occasionally had a "jour", which was a, which actually means, I mean, "day", but it wasn't an open day, but it was a, I mean, like in England, they used to have an "At Home", but it was only an afternoon tea invitation, when lots of ladies came, and where lots of baking, well, the baking was anyway made, we always had home-made cakes and biscuits, in abundance, and, but, but then they were special. Earl Grey tea was a status symbol, and that was served, and, Earl Grey tea, and with milk, because in Hungary, people didn't drink milk, only a certain, that was definitely a class distinction, of drinking tea with milk! And that was on the "jour" which, well, which was, as I say, an afternoon tea, and there were little sandwiches, dainty sandwiches served, and cakes.

So how many people would come?

Ten or 12 ladies would come, and occasionally one of the men would join also, probably my father came in to say hallo and have a cup of tea, and then he went out again, but it was mainly a ladies' affair, and she didn't have it very often, since she didn't have much time, but occasionally she had a "jour", and I had to come in and curtsy, and say, and kiss, kiss every lady's hand, and then I, I answered some questions, and go hot, and be, be seen but not heard.

And would the women just chat, or would they discuss

I suppose they would mainly chat, I think they would mainly chat. But we had lots of guests in the evening, and on Sundays. We very often had people for meals, and it was always very elegantly served, and it was, and there were lots of discussions, because, as I said, my father, my father was very interested in politics, and my mother also followed it, and as I said, we had various newspapers, and so it was, it was a very intellectual conversation, usually round, round the table too, which was a memory with which I grew up. And certainly anything, any event that went, that happened in the world, was commented on, and looked at, and books read, and I remember when a new Thomas Mann book appeared, then we were amongst the first ones to get it, even when it was already banned, oddly enough, in 1942, they were banned, and there was only one person in Budapest who managed to get in a few copies from Sweden, where, in those days, Fisher-Behrmann Verlag was moved from Berlin to Sweden, and we got one copy out of the, I don't know, 12 copies, which came into the country. And musically, I mean, we had writers who came to the town to give a lecture, would be invited at home, and there were, we had a mental hospital, which was a very famous mental hospital, and from England and France, and, and America, even, students came, young doctors came for a few months to study in this mental hospital, and they were always invited in our home, because they spoke languages.

What was the

So that I heard all these languages from childhood. It was a general hospital, the general town hospital, which had a very, for some reason or other, had a very famous mental hospital, a part, which was a mental hospital.

What was it called?

I don't know, I mean, the General Hospital, and, and these people used to come to the house, as later, when, when people escaped, French prisoners of war escaped from Germany, quite a lot of them seemed to be able to come to Hungary, and Hungary offered them an asylum, and gave them work, there were factories which were completely manned by French, French men, and even had their own kitchen, French

kitchen, and their French cook, and they always had some of these Frenchmen come to the house, and so that I heard a lot of French, and a lot of English, already, in my childhood, spoken at home, and had, had occasion to, to practice these languages. I was also, I don't know whether I spoke about it. I was also, as a child, I was terribly proud of our town having been a Roman, the capital of Panonia, it was called Savaria in those times, and we had lots of excavations in my, in my youth, as early as 10, 11 years old, I remember, I used to take all these foreigners, to show them, very proudly, the advance of the excavations, the Roman basilica, and I was following it ardently, I mean, I was really very very interested, and very fascinated by these archaeological sites, and knew every, every stone that came to, that was found new, in my childhood. I don't know where to go from here!

You mentioned that when you were five years old, you were subject to an anti-Semitic incident, and I wonder whether you remember others as you grew up?

Not specific incidents, but I do remember, we were sometimes attacked on the ice rink, by other youngsters who called us "Jews". And later on in the school, there was quite a lot of, perhaps not quite open anti-Semitism, but there was anti-Semitism, you felt it.

What about in the streets?

Well, that only, I only remember that when, in '42, or '41, again, I don't remember whether it was '41 or '42, when the Germans went through to Rumania, and, in our town, for three days, we had, we were practically occupied by Germans. I mean, officially Hungary was only occupied in 1944, March, but this was in '41 or '42, and it was in April, because I remember that German tanks in the town, suddenly appeared on Good Friday, and it happened to be, also, it happened to coincide with the first Seder, and suddenly we were, especially the Square, to which I lived very near, which was the Main Square, was completely covered with German tanks, and from then on, the Jews were only allowed to go out until 6 o'clock in the evening, and some who ventured out were beaten up, and from then on, in my home town, my mother was allowed, well, Jews were only allowed to go to the market after 10 o'clock in the

morning, when most things were already sold. I mean, they got second choice, and only the worst was left over, and that lasted then, the remainder of the War.

So that was ...

That was, the Germans only stayed for three days, but from then on, there was very open anti-Semitism, much more open anti-Semitism, but then, I suppose there was anti-Semitism, I remember, but I didn't pay much attention to it, well, I mean, I, I was a Zionist, I was Jewish, and personally, I wasn't attacked, but we knew it was, it existed, but no personal experience. I can't remember any other personal experience.

And after the three days, could you go out whenever you wanted to?

It lasted for quite a long time, and then it eased up, but for quite a long time, one had to be very careful after 6 o'clock in the evening, and occasionally, Jews were beaten up, who went out. But I don't remember any more, how long it lasted, but it, it faded out eventually, and I know that later on ... well, I don't really know, because that was quite soon after that, I, I moved to Budapest, and I don't really remember, and wasn't particularly interested any more, what happened in my home town. And in Budapest that didn't, that didn't, that was a particular, a particularity of my home town, which was considered the most anti-Semitic town in Hungary.

And what about your father, he was called out at quite unsocial hours?

Well, he went, he never, he didn't seem to, I don't remember that, if he had any incidents, I don't remember.

And would he still be a doctor to non-Jewish people?

Oh yes, certainly, certainly. For a long time, I mean, he was, until the end, he was Health Service doctor, that wasn't taken away from him. The railways were taken away from him quite early, the Post Office much later, though I think, or did he remain until the end with the Post Office? I don't remember. I know that we had a

phone, and the phone was free, so he might have remained with the Post Office until the end, and with the Health Service as well. No, he had lots of, he had actually very few Jewish patients, because his patients were mainly poor people, and except for poor Jews. The fashionable Jews went to the other gynaecologist who was in town, they didn't come to him because they really, I mean, he was actually regarded, partly with respect, partly despised for his Communist, well, let us say, Socialist views.

Did you have a Mezuzah on the ...

No, we didn't have a Mezuzah. What's more, I took off the Mezuzah yesterday, from our door.

Any particular reason why you did this yesterday?

Well, lately, there have been quite a few arson attacks, and since once, during one of the Israeli wars, I was shot at, from the, into my kitchen. I suddenly, I don't know, I started to get frightened and I decided that since I'm not religious, I don't see why I have to absolutely put out, and there were quite a lot of swastikas painted in the area, and we have, we seem to have quite a lot of anti-semitism in this area. I just suddenly got frightened, and I decided that I don't need to, don't need to have a Mezuzah on my door.

Did you want it there in the first place?

I want, we put it there in the first place, and, and a few days ago, I suddenly, at night, was terribly frightened, and since I am a bad sleeper and I get very bad fears in the night, I mean, since the War, I get very bad attacks of fear in the night, I, I decided that I don't need to have another additional fear, and that it's not, as I say, since we are not religious, I don't see that I absolutely have to have a Mezuzah on my door, and draw attention to it, that there are Jews living, not that I ever denied being Jewish, and, for instance, we have got Jehovah's Witnesses coming to the door, and I always tell them that I am Jewish, or anybody else, I mean, we always, we never, I never would deny that I am Jewish, but I don't see that I have to shout it, and draw attention

to it. We are very exposed here, and I somehow don't fancy having petrol poured into my house, by some madman!

What have you been told about what happened to your parents during the First World War, and to their families?

Well, my father was in the Army, and the Austrian, the Hungro-Austrian Army, well, Austro-Hungarian Army, really, and he was out in Herzegovina and Bosnia as a medical man, and he was eventually wounded, and that's how he came to our home town, where he got stuck because there was a very good gynaecological clinic there, and then they asked him to help as an assistant, when he got better, and he eventually was offered a job there, and that's how he got stuck. But he was very proud of being in the Austro-Hungarian Army. The other effect of the War was that my mother had a very large dowry, and because of the inflation after the First World War, the dowry faded into nothing, and she never quite got over it. She never quite got over having left the big town, Vienna, and having to live in a provincial town, in Hungary, and, and the dowry, that her dowry got lost in the inflation, was a terrible blow for her. But otherwise, I couldn't tell you, I don't remember anything, these were the two

In which year were your parents born?

My father was born in 1888, and my mother was born in, either '94, or '96, 1894, or 1896, I don't really know, I would have to check up, but I think, it's possible that it was '94.

And their fathers, did they, were they still young enough to fight during the First World War?

My, both my grandfathers were dead by that time, I think my father, my grandfather on my mother's side died, I think, in 1902, and I don't know when my grandfather on my father's side, but I think most of them were dead already by the time the War was on, so I don't, no, I don't think so. I never heard about them, I mean, certainly not, I never heard about my father, my grandfather on my father's side, having taken part in

the War, I think he was dead by that time. Then I arrived, in my final year at the flat, my mother was in the kitchen, by that time, we didn't have any maids, of course, any more, we were not allowed to have any maids any more.

This was in 1944?

1944, this is 1944, 24th April. I spoke to my father on 22nd April, telling him about my permission, and that I would come on Monday, 24th April, and the 23rd was my 20th birthday, and he said it would be, well, we would celebrate my birthday on 24th, and he was thrilled, and he was crying in the phone, and when I arrived on 24th April, my mother was in the flat, and looked completely disturbed, with very very big eyes, and couldn't speak, and the flat was in a complete upheaval, all the books on the floor, all the papers on the floor, all the pictures on the floor, there was a complete mess, and I didn't know what, as if something hit, hit it, and finally I managed to get, and my mother was completely confused, and an old woman, she was then 50, either 48 or 50, but she was a completely old woman, gone completely grey, and, and half senile, really, and she, with big difficulties, I got out of her, that after my phone conversation with my father, on the Saturday, on 22nd April, some Germans came, and the Hungarian police, and they took my father away, and they searched the flat, and they threw down everything in the flat, onto the floor, and my father was taken away, and she doesn't know where he is. And from then on, my mother, I had to make every decision, because my mother just couldn't make, my mother was really senile, and she couldn't make any decisions, she was crying the whole time when she was, had a complete breakdown really. And then we were told to take in the bicycles to the Police Station, and then to hand in the jewels, and on the 7th May, we were transferred into the so-called ghetto, which meant we had to leave the flat, and we had to move into a room with one other family, in one of the other flats, and this was in the ghetto street.

The one you mentioned before?

Yes, what I mentioned before, in the ghetto street, they, and we were put with another family, in one room.

So how many people?

I think we were eight, or ten, I don't remember any more. And a friend, my best friend, and myself, we collected the children in the ghetto, and took them into, luckily, the weather was very nice, and we took them into the Synagogue courtyard, during the day, and looked after the children, we, having been trained nursery school teachers, we did things with the children to get them out of these cramped, of these cramped conditions. And that when, and also I was sewing, because money was already taken away, and we still had to pay for some food. It was very difficult to get some food, but it was, I don't remember how we got food, but we got some minimal food, and I know that I was baking bread, and I, I started to sew bags, shoulder bags, and was selling them to, to make a little bit of extra money, and that I was doing in the evening, how I did it in those, I don't know, I must have had a sewing machine, cos I remember I did it with a sewing machine, I must have had a sewing machine with me, and I did these shoulder bags, and I actually sewed in into the handle, some jewellery, golden chains, whoever asked me to, and was hiding jewellery in that, because we had to hand in all the jewellery, but people did keep some. And then on the end of May, or beginning of, no, end of June, I don't remember exactly the date, but the end of June, we were transferred, either 30th, it was, I think, the 30th June, we were transferred into a, no, it must have been 28th June, anyway, end of June, we were transferred into the so-called concentration camp, and there we already could hardly take any luggage with us, we were allowed one, one piece of luggage with us.

And where was this?

And that was in our home town, a disused factory, auto factory, and there we were on the floor, on the earth, which was very dirty, and we were lying on that, and then we were put into factory rooms, and, and were mainly outside, lying outside on the grounds.

To sleep?

To sleep. And people who were found that they had jewellery, and some jewellery was found on them, they were half beaten to death and then they were thrown into the camp, to die, or if they could be saved, saved.

And how did the, how was it made sure that nobody escaped from the ghetto street at first? Was there barbed wire round it?

I suppose so. I suppose so, I don't remember.

And do you remember, would they perhaps watch over you?

I don't remember. Yes, there was barbed wire. There was barbed wire put up, yes, certainly, because I remember, we couldn't get out, and some people, some, some people still had friends who came and brought them some bread, and brought them some eggs, and brought them some stuff, and we didn't have any, we were, I was terribly upset that none of our non-Jewish friends who, for years, used to come to us for dinner, and used to be close friends, ever came and did anything for us, and none of my father's patients who he treated for free, did anything for us.

Were they allowed to?

They weren't allowed to, but I mean, people did come, nevertheless. And it was still possible to do it, and, but we didn't have anyone who did anything for us.

So the people who were gathered there, they were mainly women, children, and elderly men?

Yes, elderly men, that's right, and some younger men, how did they escape, I don't know, but I know that Eugene Heimler was, was in that camp. Why he wasn't in, in labour camp, I don't know, like all the other young men, but he, he was in that camp, and he got married just then, very very early, to a very great friend of mine, a Zionist friend of mine, and she died when she was in, she died in Auschwitz, and I don't know why he was there, because there were very very few young, young men.

So was there any leadership among the Jews who were gathered there?

I don't remember. I don't remember. The only thing I remember really, that it was very dirty, that we were terribly cramped, and that on the second day, there was a loud speaker announcing, asking for ...

End of F270 Side B

F271 Side A

On the second day in the concentration camp, the local concentration camp, there was a loud speaker asking for fifty people to go to a certain town, for work, and I insisted that we get into amongst those 50 people, we were about 4,000 in the camp, and I must say, I did one of the, the one and only really despicable deed, which I did during the War, was, at that particular moment, I, my mother didn't want to come, and I said, "We are going", and I pulled her, physically, but not only that, by the time we got to the gathering place, there were 49 people already in the group, and I actually pushed out one person who was there, who I knew, happened to know that she was alone, and she wasn't attached to anyone, and I pushed her out, and so as to get into that. I had a, for some instinct, or for some reason, I was absolutely, I had to get into that group. I had a, some compulsion, which made me, that I had to get into that group.

Did you know, by that time, what had actually happened to the other occupied countries?

Very little, because we didn't accept the stories, we didn't want to believe the stories, and a little bit, the people, the refugees who managed to escape and come over to Hungary, they were a little bit treated as, and had no clothes, or had arrived with nothing, were a little bit treated as schlemmiels, and thought that, of course, they weren't clever enough and they were, they didn't understand it. It was in spite of it, that everything, that every country around us was already occupied, and then we had people from every country telling us stories. The human mind is unable, somehow, to, to grasp, was unable to grasp the greatness, and I mean, a person, it, it went on, later on, I mean, I will have a story to tell, how, after the War, when I was telling stories, the same blank disbelief, I mean was, my stories were received with the same blank disbelief.

Did your parents and yourself, did you believe that Hungary would keep out of the War?

Yes, by that time, yes. In '41-'42, we thought that we were going to be occupied as well, but by '44, nobody expected it, everything has quietened down, as I said, even in our home town, things have quietened down, and nobody expected.

And in '41, '42 did you consider fleeing?

Well, in '41, we did consider fleeing. I was, my mother tried to get to America, and applied for an affidavit, and applied to be put onto the quota, and since I was minor, she included, I could be included, so we two were, and my father absolutely refused, even considering emigration, he said, "In Hungary nothing can happen. The Hungarians won't behave like that." He was just so Hungarian he just didn't want to see, and, and, which was incredible, because he was such a brilliant, he had such a brilliant brain, and he was basically a very pessimistic person, and yet, he was not able to, to see, or accept facts of life in, during that period. He was listening to the BBC regularly, and when there was talk about gas chambers in the BBC, he said, that was a little bit too much for propaganda. I remember that quite quite clearly. So, people didn't accept this sort of thing, what, what was going to happen, and, which is quite unbelievable today, but, but that was the fact.

And had you received letters from your relations who had been able to get out of Austria?

Well, we could only get notifications through the Red Cross, yes, we had some, some communications via the Red Cross, because Hungary was in War with all those countries, so we couldn't correspond with them, but via the Red Cross we had news, so we knew who escaped, and, but with most of them we knew who escaped, and where they were. So I had this absolute compulsion, and was quite, quite violent, because of this compulsion, that we had to get into this group. And we were eventually taken away, the fifty of us, and we were taken into a town called Sarvar.

How do you spell that?

S A R V A R. And there we were put in another concentration camp, which was in a disused factory, and where every barrack was hermetically closed by, by barbed wire from each other, and we were taken into one barrack, and there was my father, of whom we had no more news for the last two months, well, since April, we had no idea, and this was the, this was end of June, 1944, and since 24th April, we had no news of, from my father, and he was there, in that particular barrack, had he been in any of the other barracks in the same camp, I wouldn't have known, but in that particular barrack, he was there. And when he saw us, he, from then on, kept on holding my hand, and asking me for forgiveness, which was an absolute terrible state, I mean, the next few days, we were a couple of days we were there, then we were put into trucks and from this camp, they made something very special, they said that they are going to make special transport from architects, doctors and lawyers, the Jewish professionals. And instead of the usual 90 in the other wagons, we were put 120 into the cattle wagons.

So any wives and children also?

Yes, wives and, yes, with their families, yes. The result was that we were, most every one of us had still one parcel, and we decided once we were locked in, that we would be, we would make from the parcels, a row of seats, I mean, rows of seats, and then we were, knees up, knee to knee and back to back, sit down, and that's how we managed to somehow squeeze in and, and sit, organise the whole, the whole wagon, and at the door we had the bucket, all the buckets, a couple of buckets. Now, it was always a problem for anyone to get up to use the bucket, and, of course, it was anyway, a problem, because people weren't used to use buckets in front of other people, but I mean, it had to be done, and, of course, after a few hours, the buckets were full, and we were not allowed to empty them, and so they overflowed, and they had a special, the Germans had a special trick, we were five days. We had some food with us, I begged some bread, and I had some bread with me still, and some food with us, but we had nothing to drink.

Had you been able to bring some bread in the camp?

I think that was before we, still in the camp ghetto, I managed to make some bread in the ghetto, and, because, I remember I had two loaves of home-made bread in my, my sack, in my shoulder bag, and, and some other food, but we had nothing to drink, and, of course, and it, this was, and it was terribly terribly hot, it was the beginning of July, and there was a heatwave, and was terribly hot, and we were locked in this, these wagons, and they didn't open the door once, for us to empty the bucket, during the next five days. But, and we didn't get anything to drink, but what did happen, that towards the evening, they said, the first evening, when it got dark, when it got nearly dark, it wasn't yet quite dark, they said that we are going to get out, and we should all be ready, standing at the door. So we picked up our parcels and everything, and were ready to go, get out, and then suddenly, when it was dark, the train would stop before, I mean, while it was light, and we were ready to get out of the truck, and suddenly, we are standing there for an hour or so, and in between it got dark, and suddenly, in the dark, the train, with a very very big jerk, started moving again, and we fell over each other, and the bucket, of course, fell over, and we were covered with, with muck, and, and then people were fighting, terrible fights broke out, and slowly we had some dead in the carriage, and my mother went completely mad, and senile, and she was repeating words, and we couldn't do anything about it, and they did that every evening. They repeated this, this trick, that we were going to get out, and then we fell over each other, and we heard the Germans laughing about the fights which went on in the coaches.

Why did the people fight, apart from that they were,

Well, they fell upon each other, and because 120 people,

The irritation?

The irritation and the dirt, and the smell, and the, I mean, we couldn't wash, we were thirsty, we were getting thirstier and thirstier, and people died from thirst. We couldn't eat any more, because we had some food, but we couldn't eat it, because we were so thirsty, and finally, on the fifth day, we were allowed out, we arrived in Auschwitz. I remember, occasionally when, when it stopped at a station, and I

remember the last station I saw Kracow, the sign of Kracow, and, and people were shouting for water, and water, and we didn't get any.

And did the name Auschwitz mean anything to you?

No, no, it didn't mean anything, it didn't mean anything. And we arrived, and then they took us out, and there were these people coming, men, men coming with striped clothes, and, and some others, and they shouted at us, "Get out. Get out." And shouted at us, "Get into line", and then they started separating us into various lines. I was, first, men had to be separated from women, then they, I still was with my mother, and then they looked through and they took my mother away, and afterwards, I learnt that the place where they took her was the gas chambers, so she was straightaway gassed. My father, I hadn't heard from my father after that, but, except that, after the War, I heard that he was seen in East Germany, in '45, April, but that was the last I heard about him. But there, when, I don't know, I didn't go back to Hungary, and that came, my brother heard it from someone, but then we never heard anything any more, so obviously he didn't survive.

And when did you hear what had happened to your mother? How did you find out?

Well, we saw in which direction she was taken, and later on, that direction, there was smoke there, and later on, we finally heard what, what that smoke, where the smoke came from. So it was quite obvious that my mother was taken there, and she probably had to be drugged, because she was, she was in a completely, I mean, she didn't know any more what happened to her, I would say.

Were there other people who had lost their minds?

Yes. There were some others, and then we had the dead. We had, I think, five dead in the coach.

And they stayed with you all through the journey?

They stayed with us, they stayed with us all through the journey.

And did the Nazis look at who had died?

No.

I mean, did they care at all?

No.

And did they realise some people had died?

Yes, yes, they realised, but they nothing, nothing happened. What happened to them afterwards, I don't know. But we had to leave, of course, all our belongings in the coach, and the shoulder bag and everything. By the way, with the shoulder bag, as I said, I had sewed in a beautiful, very thick platinum chain, and a very thick golden chain into each of our shoulder bags, but when I, when we heard that people, that rumours came into, still in the ghetto, that people who were, where some jewellery was found, on whom some jewellery was found, they were half beaten to death, so I made a hole, and I took them out, and I put them into the, I went up onto the loft of the house where we were in the ghetto, and hid it in one corner, took it out, and I didn't have any jewellery with me any more, by the time we arrived in, well, already in the concentration camp. And I, I, when I went back to Hungary, I completely forgot about it, I mean, when I went back to my home town. I must say, I wouldn't even know whether this house still stands or not, and I don't know, and I am not going to go back any more. They might still be there, or someone might have found them in the meantime. And then when we arrived, I was put into one group, and marched, and then into a hole, a very cold hole, where we had to undress, and where we then were shaved, every hair on every part of our body, by men, and we were walking around naked, and then some, one piece of clothing, no panty, but just one, one dress was thrown at us, and we put that on, and then we were marched out, and were marched into a barracks, and that was in Birkenau.

What colour was the dress?

The dress was black, and it was, for some reason or other, I always ended up with very very hot black dresses, wool dresses, which, for July/August, was just ideal wear! And it, of course, didn't fit me, but that doesn't, didn't matter, it was miles too big, and I, I looked anyway, like a scarecrow, I always looked like a scarecrow. I, just what did I want to say? [sorry, can we stop for a moment]... ... I started, and most of the women, started bleeding, starting having a menstruation, and we had no clothes, no underclothes at all, and it was running down our feet, which was, of course - one felt terrible - and, and then we were taken to Birkenau, B Lager, into one barrack where there were, we were put, I think, 1,200 women, Hungarian women, were put into this one barrack, and on each, and in each of the barrack, and then we started life, so-called life in Auschwitz. In the barrack, we again had to adapt there, with the same method as in the, in the wagon, knees against knees, back against back, because otherwise you couldn't sit, there was not enough room. Now, the problem was, that the latrines were outside, and we were given a soup, and I don't know whether that soup made us, gave us dysentery, but anyway, we had to run quite often, and, and when, and at night, if there was any sound from the barracks, then the Germans shot in, and if you got up and started to walk over bodies, there were sounds, people started fighting, and to get out, and once you got out of the barrack and went to the latrine and tried to get in again, you just couldn't find a place, and there were again fights going on. And so it was rather dangerous to be sick, or to be, to have to go to the latrine, but sometimes you couldn't help it. And in the morning, it was, we were woken up quite early, well, if we slept at all.

What time?

I don't know.

I mean, would the sun ...

It was still, no, no, it was still, still quite dark, when we were woken up, and it was incredibly cold. There was not a tree, not a blade of grass anywhere to be seen, it

was only dirty, yellowish-brownish sort of sand, dust, and, of course, we were sticky, and we were dirty, and stinking, and the menstruation stopped after a couple of days, but we couldn't wash, there was nowhere to wash, so we were stinky and dirty, and we were, when we got out of the barrack in the morning, early, then we had to go for a Zählappel, stand five in a row, in front of each other, and then we were given a so-called coffee. The coffee came, every row, every five, they are given one pot of coffee, and then the one pot, so whoever was at the beginning of the row, of the five, drank, and then passed it on to the next one, the result was that those who were the last, the fifth one, hardly got anything, and I was very bad, I mean, the only time when I fought for anything was to get into that group in, in that work group to Sarvar, but after that, I, I fought for others, but I didn't fight for anything for myself, I had no, somehow, no self-preservation, so I was always the fifth in the row, for some other reason or other.

Was there pushing to get to the front?

Yes, oh yes, certainly, very much so. And, and that was with the soup as well, which we got, I don't remember how often we stood Zählappel, whether three times a day? I don't remember any more. But the soup was also given in one pot, and we slurped from that one pot, we drank from that one pot, and it was handed on, and, of course, by the time it came to you, there was nothing.

And would you only get food while you were standing in rows during Appels?

Yes, yes. Otherwise not, no, otherwise no food was given.

And what was this particular part of Birkenau called?

B Lager, and Zigeunerlager, because it used to be the gypsies, before us. [pause]

And during the day, it got incredibly hot, when the sun came up, and we were not allowed to go into the barracks, and were outside, sitting in the sand, and some people started to make seance, they found, I don't know, a piece of broken glass, and made a

circle, drew a circle, and started to make seances, spiritual seances, and others just sat around and talked, and we had nothing to do.

Nobody of that group had to work?

Nobody of that group had to work, and then we had, once Zählappel was starting in the morning, and we had to go out stripped naked, and we were taken, and that was, usually the Zählappel was for every barrack separately, but here we were about 15,000 women, stripped naked, and we stood there from early in the morning, shivering, because it was terribly terribly cold in the morning, and then it got terribly hot, and staying there, and we were there for, I think, 14 hours. They said there was going to be a medical examination, and eventually, Hoss, the Commandant came, and Mengele came, and some others, and we had to pass in front of them, and they looked into our throat, and into the palm of our hand, and for that we had to stand there naked for 14 hours. And they separated us, and anybody who fainted was carried away, and was never seen again. And that was one of the days. One day we were taken to Auschwitz, for a shower, but, of course, we knew already about showers, and, of course, we didn't know whether we're going to out alive from that shower, or were we ... and I remember, I had, I learnt the meaning of, in Hungarian they say it, they call it a "Necksoup"(ph), if you are hit very hard on your nape of your neck, I, I learnt the meaning of it, because we were walking through, on the way to Auschwitz, the stones were terribly sharp, and I found I had very big difficulties walking on them, the stones on the way to Auschwitz, to the shower, were terribly terribly sharp, and I couldn't walk on them, I found it very difficult to walk on them, and I was constantly hit on my neck, and that was really, then, you fell down, and it was really as if they hit you on your head with a hammer, terribly terribly hard, and for some reason or other, I seemed to have more trouble walking on the stones than many of the others. Many of the others managed to. I had very big trouble walking barefoot on the stones, and therefore I was hit a lot.

Were they also very hot?

They were probably very hot, I don't remember, that I don't remember. I remember that they were very very sharp, and I had very big difficulties walking on them. But we weren't gassed, that was genuine shower.

And what happened when you fell down, after you'd been hit?

Well, I would get up and go again into the row, until the next time I was hit again.

They would always give you another hit?

Well, you couldn't, you had to walk, and on the way back, it was the same thing, but I

...

End of F271 Side A

F271 Side B

But we eventually were brought back, and were given another piece of clothing.

Always only a, one piece of clothing.

So the whole exercise had been to have a shower?

Have a shower, yes. It was really, really to have a shower, which was very pleasant, but, which was very good, that one get clean, but of course, one got dirty again straight away, because the sand and the dirt and the ... I know that the one sensation in Auschwitz, was, in Birkenau, was always that one was constantly thirsty, and we only got the liquid, we got the coffee in the morning, and the soup at some point of the day, I don't remember.

What would the soup consist of?

Mainly water, very little in it, well, certainly by the time it reached me! And it was mainly water, and, but, I mean, it was very little.

And who would serve it?

Well, the Kapo would serve it. Then we got a piece of bread every day, and the one highlight was, we got a piece of cheese, usually, in the evening. Usually it was a, something called "quark", "quark", and that, that was a very, very salty and stinky cheese, which was a beautiful cheese, which we loved, except that you got even more thirsty from it. I don't know whether it was as a special addition, additional torture, but we, I don't know, I can't think now. [can we stop?] No, those were the sleeping arrangements. In the barrack, we had no bunks or anything, we were on the, in the dust sitting, and, and we couldn't even lie down because we have absolutely no way of lying down, so very often you didn't sleep the whole night, but you could sleep outside, lie down in the dust, during the day, when it wasn't Zählappels, and you had nothing to do, so you could sleep outside.

And were there any blankets?

No, nothing. Absolutely nothing.

So people decided to sleep outside, that must have felt very cold?

Well, during the day it was very hot, so you could sleep when it was very hot. No, you couldn't sleep outside during the night, in the night, you had to be in the barrack, and in the barracks there wasn't enough space, even to lie down, but you had to, the only way you could place yourself in the barracks was knee to knee, and back to back, that was our night. And that's why it was a problem, that when someone had to go to the latrine, and had to go up, had to climb over bodies, and then when, in the dark, fightings broke out, because people started to shout, and, and, and the Germans started, if those people started to shout, the Germans started to shoot into the barracks, and there are a few incidents which I would like to tell about this time in Birkenau. I was there from, I suppose it would be a month, I always said three weeks, and I don't know why. But we arrived on 7th July, and we were taken away on 7th August. In, so during this time, we didn't work, and we only had Zählappell or these various tortures. Now, my few incidents were, the one was, that in our particular group, we had from our home town, two children who were 12 year old girls, and who somehow managed to pass through the selection, because they were a bit taller, but the Kapo knew that they were so young and right at the beginning, at the giving out of the, at the handing out of the bread, she wanted to give the one girl a smaller portion, and I stood by, and I said, "Give her the same portion as everybody else. She is a person." And she said, "No." And so I attacked her physically, and we had a fight, and then she let me go, and she gave the child, from then on, the bread. And I must say, I wasn't sure whether she is going to denounce me, because Kapos had the right to denounce, and it would have been the end of me, but she didn't, and as she happened to be my Kapo, all the way through, later on when we were transferred Hessian-Lichtenau, she still remained my Kapo, she always showed a big respect to me! And we never had any more problem with each other. But she could have, had she been a nasty Kapo, she could have sent me into gas chambers, into, put me into a selection, which she didn't do.

Was she Hungarian?

She was Hungarian, yes. We actually hardly saw any German in Birkenau. There were Polish Jews, Jewish women, who came, and were commanding us, and commanding the Kapo, and the Polish Jewish women, these were about between 18, or 19 and 24 year olds, which meant that they got there very early, they have been there already for the last four or five years, and anybody who could survive those four or five years, must have become completely dehumanised, so the Germans didn't have to do anything, because these Polish Jewish women, they're worse, practically, than the Germans. I mean, they got their orders from the Germans, but they carried out the orders without any hesitation, and were really nasty to us, and really vicious to us. And so after, I mean, at the end of the War, in the death march, quite a few of them were lynched by people, so it was very sad. At the time, I couldn't understand it, but later on, of course, I could understand how was it that other Jewish women behaved in such a way.

And did they look as if they had been underfed for a long period?

They didn't look hungry any more.

Because as a Kapo, you got more?

Yes. Yes, that's right, as a Kapo, and also as, I mean, once you got over a certain stage, and you were useful, then you, possibly then you got a little bit more. They were also decently dressed, in the striped, striped clothes, but they were clean, they had clean clothes, and they were decently dressed. They had shoes on, not like we.

Were your feet actually barefoot

Barefoot,

Yeh, when you went on the walk, for instance, to Auschwitz, and the stones hurt your feet, did you have open wounds from that?

I don't remember. I don't remember, they hurt, I don't remember now, but luckily nothing more happened, they didn't go bad if I had wounds, so I don't remember. I do remember two other incidents in Birkenau, the one was that, as I said, this spiritual, that some, some started to have spiritual seances, and I didn't believe in it, but I had nothing else to do, so I stood by on one day, and was looking, and watching, and they were, they worked out that Hitler was attacked, and we had absolutely no news. There was no way we could get the news, and they worked out, with this seance, that Hitler was attacked, and, and for some, and they were very jubilant, Hitler was killed. And for some reason or other, I started to shout. He was attacked, but he wasn't killed. And this was 20th July, this, this, when this happened, and I was practically lynched. They started to hit me and said, "Go away", and "You terrible ... How can you say that? And why do you take away our hope? ... And how do you know?" And I didn't know, how did I know, but I knew he was, he was not killed. And I had to shout it as well, I mean, I had no self-preservation, it was a rather odd, I had occasionally these sort of things occurring to me, which, I don't know why I did it, and why I said what I said, but I did say, and I always paid very heavily for it.

Were you, at that point, hoping that you would live, or that you would die soon?

No, nothing. I didn't, I had no feelings about, I was not afraid of dying, and, but I didn't have any hopes of living. I mean, I somehow, it didn't matter to me. I didn't care. I didn't care, and that comes out later on, it will come out much more, how much I didn't care. I got involved in sabotage group, because I wasn't, not because I was so brave, but because I wasn't afraid, I just wasn't afraid, I didn't know what fear was. I had absolutely no, and also, I had absolutely no self-preservation, no, I didn't do anything to keep alive, but I didn't do anything to die!

And did you think about your parents' fate a lot?

I don't remember. I don't remember really. I suppose I did, but I didn't, I don't remember. I was, I, I remember that I thought about my mother when I found out where she was taken, and I thought how, that I was happy for her, that I was glad that it was done straightaway, that she didn't have to suffer, and go through, in the state she was, I thought it was the best thing for her, to die straightaway, and not be put to more suffering. About my father, I don't remember whether I had thoughts or what thoughts I had, I absolutely don't remember. The other thing, one day, I thought I was hallucinating, I heard music. I heard Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, and I thought I was hallucinating, or that I am getting to a stage where I am hallucinating, but I wasn't hallucinating, I was, there were, people started running in a certain direction, where this music came from, and I went also with them, I run also there, and there was a stage, and there was an orchestra, a small orchestra of women, playing, and I mean, since I was so very much involved in music always, I, I, I was very excited about it, and that's where, from other barracks also, people came running, and suddenly there was someone standing next to me and that was, and we recognised each other, and that was my cousin, in the orchestra, she was a very fine pianist, as a youngster, and so, of course, music attracted her too. And she clung to me, and we were very happy to see each other. And she said, "Please don't leave me! Please don't leave me!" But I couldn't do anything about it, at the end I had to go back, we had Zählappel, and she had to go to her Zählappel, and we never saw each other again. But when they finished playing, when they finished playing, since I used to play the cello, I went up to the cellist and started speaking to her, I was very excited about seeing a cello, under these conditions, I told her, "Was I hearing an orchestra?" and then that day, actually, then the orchestra went away, and we were called, we had to go back for Zählappel, and that night, we were taken, taken away, in the evening, and taken to Auschwitz A Lager, where we had to sit on the floor and wait, and we eventually, in the night, we got some food, which was absolutely marvellous, I remember, it was hot cabbage soup, sauerkraut soup, and it was terrific, and we had more, and we had more than one helping, and it was really lovely, and then they took us to tattooing us, and, and they started tattooing, putting our number on, and about 20 people from our group were tattooed, and then an air raid came, and everything went black, there was complete black out, and we were standing there, and waiting, and eventually we were taken out from there, and at 5 o'clock in the morning, they took us into our, on to our

trains, so that, except for those 20, nobody else was tattooed from our group of 1,000, who was on that train that day. I don't know, there might have been other groups on that train too, but I mean, our group of 1,000, there were only 20 who were, about 20, who were tattooed. Afterwards, I mean, much later, I paid a big price for not having been tattooed, not having my number, as a proof, but I come to that later. The odd thing was, also, that when I came to London, [I think it's all right.] Coming back to this cellist, of this camp Orchestra, in 1957, when I came to London, I was trying to get a job as a teacher, and I found that my qualifications weren't accepted, and I was looking for a job, I did various jobs like ledger clerk, and addressing envelopes for Advance Laundry, and various other things, and eventually, someone asked me whether I would like to work in a library, and I was, of course, very keen, working in a library, and then this library was the Wiener Library, but they didn't have a job just then, I then later worked from '59-'64 with them, but at that time, they didn't have a job, but when they spoke to me, they said they would like me to do an eye-witness report, and, and to show me what they wanted from me, they gave me a couple of eye-witness reports to read. And the first one I took into my hand, was from a woman who was a cellist, who happened to be this cellist, quite by accident, the night before I saw this report, we were invited at Peter and Anita Wallfisch, and I didn't realise, and I thought "I have seen Anita Wallfisch before", but only after reading this report, did I realise that she was the same woman I spoke to, as a cellist, in Auschwitz, (laughs) that is to say, in Birkenau, on 7th August 1944!

Coincidence!

The journey to Hessisch-Lichtenau, which was a Buchenwald outcamp, not far from Kassel, was relatively a nice journey, I mean, everything is relative, we were in a cattle truck, but we were, I don't know, about 50 or 60 only, in a cattle truck, and not 120, so it was comfortable, and, and we were, anyway, we were incredibly happy to get out of Auschwitz, we thought anything else can't be as bad as being in Auschwitz-Birkenau. We arrived in Hessisch-Lichtenau, we were taken into a camp, with barracks, which had rooms, and in the rooms there were bunks, approximately, one, two, three, four, five, six, on each side, six double bunk on each side. I don't, six, eight or ten, I don't remember any more, double bunks on, each side, of, in each room.

You mean six high?

No, two high, two high, but six in a row on each side. I was put, I think I somehow managed to get myself into a top one, yes, I was on a top one. It was August, 7th August, it was incredibly hot, and the central heating was on, in the hut, and we couldn't switch it off. I didn't quite understand why this was, but it was a fact of life. There was a very beautiful bathroom, with bowls, I don't remember that there were showers, certainly no bath, but they were bath bowls, I mean hand bowls to wash, there was soap, there was warm, cold and hot water, and it was, I mean, we were thrilled. Unfortunately, some of our mates didn't quite understand, and they, the soap disappeared straightaway, the plugs disappeared straightaway, the chains disappeared straightaway, and, and the bathroom was left like a pigsty after one or two users. The result was that from then on, we had no more hot water, after about the third day, we were not given any hot water any more, and, and we had no plugs, and no soap, and, and we were punished, I don't remember any more how, but I remember we were punished, or well, the main punishment was that we didn't have any hot water any more, and no soap. Then we, we were, and because of the heat in the barracks, there were, we had a, we had a mattress each, and we had a blanket each, and because of the heat in the barracks, there were bed bugs, it was full with bed bugs, and unfortunately, they loved me, they absolutely adore me! And I became quite a welcome guest in any hut, to sleep, because they usually congregated, usually other people weren't attacked if I was around. I could get, perhaps, one or two nights sleep, until they all, all came around me, and then I had to move on, try to move on, because I mean, I was so bitten, to such an extent.

Were they mosquitos?

No, no mosquitos, bed bugs, I don't remember mosquitos, no mosquitos would have bitten me too, but I was bitten by a bug, by a bed bug. I could have given that also as a title to my book. I gave as a title, Bitten by Fleas, that's another occasion. I was always bitten by something! And we had Zählappels, we had, we were taken, we were put into three shifts, day shift from, I think, 6 o'clock in the morning, the

morning shift was from 6-10, can it be 6, eight hour shifts, no it can't be, 8-4, or something like that it was, 8-4 and 4-10 and 10-8, something like that were the shifts, and I didn't mind the night shift, and most other people minded night shifts, so I occasionally managed to change, instead of my morning shift, because I was, early morning shift killed me completely, knocked me out completely. I couldn't sleep in daytime, or slept very little in daytime, and early morning was my best sleep, so that early morning shift, if I had to go on early morning shift I was completely knocked out that whole week, and therefore, if, but I didn't mind night shifts. We were taken, the munition factory was, I think, 6kms. away, 6-8 kms. away, most of the time we walked. We walked through two villages, we had, even though we weren't tattooed, we were given a number, and this number was, had, in a very, very large white cloth, had the number on, and that had to be sewn on to our back, on to whatever clothing we had. By that time, we did have underwear, some underwear, and we did have, and we were given shoes, except that I had a very large size feet, and the shoes which were given, I couldn't wear, and so very occasionally, I got clogs, wooden clogs, and even less occasionally, I got a cloth, to wrap my foot in the clog, to protect it from the wood, but I don't, but that cloth was stolen from me usually, after one or two nights. I usually knew who stole it but I didn't know how to get it back, because there was someone in our barrack who stole everything, and she definitely stole it.

Can you remember the number?

Yes, 20607. Yes, this number has an interesting history, I will tell about it. Anyway, we were taken to the factory, sometimes by train, but most of the time, walking. I mean, in August, September, it wasn't cold, but later on it started to snow, and walking through the snow in barefoot, is not a particular pleasure, but most of the time I had to do that, because most of the time I had nothing to wear on my feet. In the factory, I was first put on to the belt, we were, I was put in a section that was manufacturing grenades, and I was put on the belt. If anyone has seen the film, Modern Times, and Charlie Chaplin, with his two pliers, how he got mad, and when a woman came with a button dress, and two buttons in the same distance he went for the buttons, well, I remember, I saw that film before the War, and I reminded myself of it, because that was exactly the same movement I had to do. I had to fasten these

two, two, two pliers, I had to fasten the cap of the grenade on the belt, and the whole day I had to do this movement, and I felt that if I am going to go, if I will be on that belt for a long time, then I am going to go mad from that work. In spite of it, there was some distraction, because we were ordered to sing, and one day, and since I had a good voice, I was quite often started the singing, and one day, I, well, it must have been the first or second day, I started singing The Lorelei, very well knowing that it was banned in Germany. We were working, not only we Jewish women, under the leadership of some German men, but there were some German women also working in the same room, the same hall, and on the belt, on the other side, and we were singing together ...

End of F271 Side B

F272 Side A

When the foreman came and told us to stop, I, I already had my satisfaction, that at least, for some time, I managed to fool them, fool all the Germans, by making them sing this song, which I knew, well knew that it was banned.

Would you like to sing it now?

All right, I have no voice any more, but never mind!

"Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten

Das ich so travig bin

Ein marchen aus Uralten Zeiten", etc.

I said I can't sing any more! (laughs). I have a few notes still left, very few!

That was very nice.

And I forgot the words too! But on the third day, there was a call for a volunteer to work outside, as a, instead of a horse, and I volunteered, I was pretty strong. In spite of my having had an operation just, I mean, a few months earlier, I seemed to be extremely strong, and I volunteered, and from then on, I was outside the hall. From the hall there was a, a very heavy trolley, flat trolley on to which I loaded the grenades coming off the belt, then I had to go down on, on rails, the trolley was on rails, I had to be in front of the trolley, and at the back there was someone using the brakes, and I was in front of the trolley, going down a hill, holding back the trolley, and against an iron door, which was down in the store room, where we stored, where we put down, offloaded the grenades. Now, also from about, I didn't mind this, even though it was sometimes very cold, and, of course, barefoot again, in the snow, it wasn't very pleasant, but I preferred that to being closed in, and sitting at the belt. For a while I worked with a German workman who was working the brakes, who didn't speak to me, who was very unfriendly-looking, and very unfriendly, except that from time to time, he put into my hand, a piece of newspaper, with either an onion, or a piece of bread, a very small piece of bread, and would push me into a corner, and very gruffly say, "Now you give me back that paper when you've finished eating."

And it was quite, I realised quite soon, that there was something in the paper, which he wanted me to read, to cheer me up. And he did this from time to time, which, whenever there was some news, which was good for us, just faintly good for us, then he, he brought me that, and as I say, we never spoke, we hardly ever spoke, but, and unfortunately, someone apparently, gave him away, apparently he helped a few people, and someone gave him away, and he was sent to Westphalia, to the front, where apparently, most people didn't come back. I never heard of him again. Someone said, or he said perhaps, that he had seven children, and he was, he was a communist, who was, who tried to be, at least, a bit human. In, down in the store room, I had to be terribly careful, sometimes he wasn't there and someone else operated the brakes, and if they didn't operate the brakes properly, which people, if they didn't know how to, sometimes made mistakes, it was terribly dangerous, what I was doing, because I was, I had a bar, an iron bar behind me, coming out from this trolley, the door which was at the bottom of the hill, was a very heavy iron door, opening towards me, but it was always closed, because of the light regulations, and I had to open it when I was down there, I had to manipulate it, the trolley, in a way to stop it, but sometimes it, if someone who's, who didn't operate the breaks well, the trolley rushed off, and I might have been crushed, and also, grenades fell off it went, if it went at a faster speed than the normal speed, than the prescribed speed, and I have one toe half crushed from one of the grenades which fell on my toe. But, but I survived in that situation. And now, at the bottom, in the hole, there was a Frenchman working, and some Ukrainian girls, and I picked up some words in Russian, and some perhaps Ukrainian, and some, and I spoke, I managed to occasionally speak to this Frenchman, and this Frenchman, they, they had radio, they had access to radio, and so he usually gave me the news, and I was able to bring some news, because since I spoke French, that helped me a lot. Now, the other thing was that, sorry, what was I thinking? [I don't know, let us stop.] Already about the third, already the second day, oddly enough, already by the second day, we had an organised sabotage group. In the filling room for the grenades, luckily, some chemists, some former chemists were put, and they worked out that if they increased the production, there is less control, and altogether, they slowly increased to about three times to what the production was before, when the Germans, when only Germans were working there, and they thought, the Germans thought that these stupid

Jews are so, so frightened, or so keen, and they work so hard, and the production was increased by threefold. Now, the reason for this was the following. Because the production was increased to such an extent, and we organised a sabotage group, at each point there was one person, one key person, to ruin the grenade. The first step was the leaving out of the sulphur from the mixture, that was in the laboratory, up in the filling room, when there was no control. The next one was damaging the wing of the grenade, one, I don't remember every step, but one of the steps was, and I already had been given on instructions, on the third day, to damage caps, to not to tighten the caps too much, and the last one was, and that was, and there was a sign, we made a sign on each grenade, if there was control and you couldn't put it through, then you managed to make a sign, so that the next person knew that they had to do some sort of damage to the grenade, and so I was the last one in the chain, and my job, once I was out, offloading, my job was throwing the grenade in a way that the caps were damaged, and I learnt it quite quickly, so that I am quite sure that, I mean, whenever there was a sign on the grenade, that the grenade hasn't been tampered with until then, and I, I am quite sure that, I mean, I have no knowledge of it within other groups, and other places, these sabotage groups were organised, but in my group, I am quite convinced that after a while, there was hardly ever a grenade which managed to come through, slip through in a decent condition, in a useable condition, and therefore, if there were, in many other groups, such organised sabotage groups, then I would say, it must have helped in the last part of the War effort, to stop, because finally, they didn't always know where their grenades came from, on the front, and they, and by the time they would have traced it, quite a long time passed, so that we did quite a lot of damage, and I was very proud of being part of it. Of course, it was very secret, there were about ten of us who were organised like that, and we never spoke about it to anybody else.

How did you find the ten?

I don't know. I don't know who organised it, and how it, how it, that they did trust me, but obviously they did trust me. I don't know.

I was going to ask you too, through that initial period, did you have anybody who you were particularly close, or became particularly close to?

I don't remember, in Birkenau definitely not. I don't remember anyone I became particularly close to, which was odd, because I usually have got friends, but there I didn't, I knew quite a lot of people, but I wasn't very close to anyone. But, oh, there was one, a bit younger girl than myself, with whom I studied together in Budapest, and who was in hiding in Budapest, and she, she, she was found, and she was very much beaten up, and then she was put into that Camp in Sarvar where I went, just before being deported to Auschwitz, and with her I was quite close, because she was alone, and I had no affinity with the people from my home town somehow, but with her, yes, because we studied together. But all my girlfriends got into another group, because they came from Szombathely and not from Sarvar, but, then later on, in Hessich-Lichtenau, I became very friendly with a few people, and first of all with the camp doctor. Now, the reason was, that she was Italian, and I, and she spoke French, and I spoke French, and therefore I became, we were very close friends, and we are very close friends up till today. I spoke to her two days ago on the phone, and I hope that in August she is coming, she just lost her husband and I hope in August, she is coming. But the camp doctor, Luciana Nissim(ph), was a, she was, well, I was 20, and she was 24, and she has just finished her studies at the University, she was, just became a qualified doctor, and she was in the Resistance, with Primo Levi, in the same group with Primo Levi, they were very close friends, and she was caught at the same time as Primo Levi, and was deported, and first to Auschwitz, and because she was a qualified doctor, they put her with our IOOO, her and a Polish nurse, became our camp doctor and camp nurse.

Is she Jewish?

Is she Jewish? Oh Jewish, yes. And she, oddly enough, she, after the War, she was one year away, approximately one, yes, she was away one year, she managed, she was in a much better condition, at the end, because she had decent clothes, she had a room, she had food, decent food the whole time, but she, and, and she told me, she went back, she didn't lose any of her family. Her fiance was there, and she continued,

after one year, she continued life where she interrupted it, and she had, she said she had the most incredible possibility of practising medicine, after having finished, because, with very few medicaments, and with odd illnesses, she was put in charge, and she had to deal with it, and that gave her such a tremendous practice as she would have never had under normal circumstances, so she found that, and she didn't feel Jewish at all, she felt Italian, and she went back, actually, practically untouched by this experience. We spoke about it a number of times, but it's a, it's a very odd thing. She said that for her, it was really a very profitable interval, I mean, besides being, of course, a very sad one, but, but in a way, medically, it was incredible for her to be in charge, and to have this responsibility and be put into this position. Then there were two Czech girls, Slovak girls, twins, with whom, especially with the one, I became very friendly, and then one girl from Transylvania, and, and I never saw them again, which I was very sad, I tried to keep in touch, but I never was able to find them again, locate them again, and so I, I, someone told me that one of the Czech girls died a few years ago, died with cancer, already quite a few years ago, and the Rumanian girl, the Transylvanian girl, when Transylvania reverted back to Rumania, after the War, and her brother, I was very friendly with her brother in Israel for a while, it was quite by accident that I met someone, and it turned out that he was the brother of this Transylvanian girl, but by that time it was very difficult to correspond, at that time, it was very difficult to correspond with anyone who was in Rumania, so I couldn't take up contact with her. And, so I lost touch with everybody, actually, from camp.

Except for the Italian doctor?

Yes, except for the Italian doctor, that's right. And somebody remembered me at one of these meetings, in Hessisch-Lichtenau, but I, but I don't remember her at all. And now I went to Budapest, I had the addresses of a couple of people, but I didn't get in touch with them, because I don't even remember them, I only know their names, and I don't remember them. There was one other girl I was very fond of, she was there with her sister and her mother, and one, we had a Commandant, a tall, quite good-looking man, with a dog, who was a stickler for the rule, but wasn't particularly cruel. On the other hand, we had from, a Commandant who came, who was his Supervisor from Buchenwald, who came about once a month, and when he was in Camp for three

days, then he made all our lives miserable, and we didn't know what was going to happen, and what he does next, because he really was an absolute sadist, and really tried to, to create havoc, and, and was, and get people involved in things which, I mean, catch people out, and punish them really viciously. But our Commandant didn't do that, he always appeared at Zählappel, and somehow I knew that he, he was always, we always got our bread ration, very very exactly, he was very sticky, as I say, to the rule, and one day, he was, he was called to Buchenwald for a couple of days, or one day he was away, Buchenwald, and that day we did not get our bread ration, and next, now, I, as I said, my mother tongue was German, during all this time, I refused to speak German, I absolutely refused to, if they asked me whether, if the Germans asked me if I speak German, I said "No". And one day, the day after the Camp Commandant was away in Buchenwald, I heard that from a conversation of two SS women, we didn't have our bread that day, and they laughingly, the two were discussing, laughingly, how they sold the bread that day, and I was there, and they saw me there, but they thought, they knew that I don't understand German, and then one of them, for some reason or other, went back to one of my colleagues, room mates, who was, anyway, I'm quite sure she was a Spitzli, she was a, what's it called? A, who listened and who told stories, and she told, and she asked her whether I really don't know German, and this woman told her that of course I know German, not only I know German, German is my mother tongue, and I speak more fluent German than any of them, and she, and then, the day after, or a couple of days after, one morning, they, these two women came and took me, and said, "Follow us." And they took me to the Zählappel place, now it, we had already our Zählappel, and it wasn't Zählappel time, and I didn't know what she wanted, what they wanted, and then some others started coming, and we were put into a Zählappel room, but not everybody, just odd people were coming along, all people who weren't well, and eventually, and they were telling us that, since, that we are going to go into a easier, a paper factory, for easier work, and I must say, in, in those days, I had dysentery, and I was feeling terribly tired, and terribly unwell, and I didn't mind if I was taken off that factory, and taken into some easier work, and so I, I was there, didn't say anything. Anyway, when they counted us, we were 207, now the Germans are sticklers to the rule, and my Commandant especially, and the number of people who were going to be in that group, were the number of people who came to Luciana, that day, who registered as

sick, and she had 206 that day. Every day she had to make a, I mean, give them the numbers, and that day she had 206, so only 206 were supposed to be in that line, and we were 207. I, now I wasn't on that list, on her list, of course, but I was put in by these two women, because they wanted me out of the way, because I, I overheard them, that they sold that bread, and they knew that the Commandant knew me. Anyway, I don't want to diverge, they, the Commandant came with Luciana, the doctor, and I, so I was very thin, and I was feeling awful, but I still had my red cheeks, and the Commandant and Luciana, and I don't know whether, on Luciana's advice, but took me out of there, because he had to take out one person, and I was that one person who was taken out. There is, I have, I am in possession of the list, of the list of this 206, where one number has been half crossed out, and over-written, and that's my number!

Really!

And that list, you will have a copy for the Archive, that will be certainly interesting for the Archives to have that list. Anyway, I was taken out. This was a selection. There was no paper factory, these people were never ever heard of any more, they were taken back to Auschwitz, or else they were gassed in the trucks, some of the trucks had, had gas installations, and they were gassed in the trucks. And there was this one girl who was, with whom I was very friendly, whose mother and sister were in, and she volunteered, she voluntarily came into this group. And she was also a friend of Luciana, and Luciana was trying to tell her "Don't go, don't go", and was trying to tell me, "Don't go, don't go." But I couldn't do anything, I was put there, which she didn't know. But anyway, I was, I was taken out, yes.

This is the third session with Mrs. Trude Levi, it is the 11th May, 1989.

I did quite a lot of volunteer work, therefore the Commandant knew me personally. We were often asked to do, to volunteer for things, and if you didn't volunteer then you were chased out, and for some reason or other, on the other hand, if you did volunteer, then you might have been able to get something extra, and I didn't take it for myself, but for those youngsters who we had in our, our hut, the two 12 year old girls, and I used to bring back a soup or something for them, because I felt they needed more, even more than we. And I mean, I should have eaten it, it was ridiculous. I mean, under the circumstances, people who had an instinct of survival would have eaten it, but I, I didn't, I brought it back. It's, I mean, I don't think it was heroic, that was how I was built, and that was how, I had no instinct of survival at all, and one day, the, I was, there was another person that I was very friendly with her, also from my home town, she was much older than I, and, and she, she was, her name was Dukas, Putzi Dukas and I, she was the other one who always volunteered to do works, and therefore the Commandant, and especially when the Commandant's dog died, and it was in the middle of winter, and the ground was all frozen, and we went out to dig, we volunteered to dig a grave for the dog, and the Commandant was always, somehow, I must say, he was always friendly, so that when it came to this selection, he really knew me, and probably was one of the reasons why he took me out.

What was his name?

I have to look it up, I'm sorry. I have got it in here, I always forget. There was one who was called Neumann, and the other one was called, I don't remember what, and now I never know which one was Neumann, whether the one, that horrible one from Buchenwald, or the one which was, who was our Camp Commandant. And these SS women knew that I, I didn't, that the Commandant knew me, and when they found out that I knew German, they put me into this selection. Before that, actually, I forgot to tell, that before that, they offered to make me an "Arbeitsvorstand" - Labour, work, work leader, and I refused. I mean, it would have been, of course, I would have been much better off if I had taken it on, but again, my sense of survival was non-existent, and my, and I, and as an "Arbeitsvorstand", I would have had to push others to work, and I just couldn't do it. I couldn't envisage taking on a job like that. And, and hated

all those who did take it on, and therefore I didn't. And their next resort of getting rid of me, they first wanted to buy me off, and then they wanted to get rid of me, because they knew that the Commandant was, they were afraid that maybe I tell the Commandant that they sold the bread, and, and they were a bit afraid of me, and therefore, they wanted to get rid of me, and that's how I got into that selection. Now, of which then, the Commandant, with, partly on Luciana's advice, took me out. Now, I had a rather ambivalent feeling with this Commandant, he was always very nice to me, personally, because of this volunteer work ...

End of F272 Side A

F272 Side B

As I said, I had an ambivalent feeling with this Commandant, and there was, and therefore, I'm going to tell a story which, I mean, he, he, he usually was not a cruel man, but he did everything according to the rule. Now, one day, two prisoners escaped, two of our mates escaped, and they were recaptured, and we were made to stand in Zählappel, while these two were digging their grave, had to dig their grave, and then they were shot into the graves, the two, and we were warned, in advance, that if anybody escapes, they would be shot, so this was the rule of the camp, and the Commandant kept to it, but, of course, it was a terrible experience, I mean, we were standing for hours while they were digging their graves, and then we saw them shot into the grave. Now, many years later, it must have been in 1952, '53, or '54, I was in South Africa, and with a friend, I went into a, into the mountains, into a guest farm, and the guest farm was run by friends of ours, and one day, there was a terrible storm, and we were having dinner, and a car drew up, and in came a family, a man with wife, and I think, three children, and they were ushered into the, all wet, it was a terrible, terrible, storm, really terrible, tropical storm, and they were ushered into there, and when I saw this man, I started to shake. This was my Commandant, from Hessisch-Lichtenau. Now, my friends saw me going funny, and shaking and they, they asked what was it? And I said who this man was, and so the owner of the, the farm, the guest farm, went up to him, and told him that he should go, take his family, and go into his room, and they are going to be served dinner there, and they can stay until the next morning, because the weather is so terrible, but they mustn't come into the, to the common rooms. I don't know whether he told him, what he told him, or whether he told him why, but he got him out of the room, and I didn't see him any more. Now, I did not know until I read Falper's (??) book, that, that nobody knew what happened to this man, and where he was, and, of course, I met him in South Africa, so obviously he emigrated to South Africa. I do not know why, at the time, I didn't go and denounce him, (laughs) but I didn't have the feeling that I, I mean, he saved once my life, and that's why I say, I had a very ambivalent feeling with this Commandant, and I, up to today, I don't know whether I should have denounced him, but I didn't have the urge to denounce him, and that's a very odd, odd story, I mean, meeting him again, and he didn't recognise me, he didn't know it was me that made, made the guest, I

mean, the host, send him out of the room. Anyway, I, I don't know what happened to him since. His name was Wilhelm Willy Schäfer, and he always was, he always went around with a dog. I don't remember what dog he went around with, and once his dog died. I know his dog wasn't one of the, the German "Schäferhunde", the, Alsatian type of dog, it was a more St. Bernard type of dog, if I remember well, I mean, it was a hairy dog! We were, most of the time, I mean, very often we walked through the villages to go to work, and, and we had these numbers on us, and, of course, we had to go fast, and were chased, and so anybody who tells, that they didn't know about us, is telling a lie, because we went through the villages, and we went into the factory where we worked with Germans, and therefore, and we had this big number, large number, on our backs, sewn on, on the dress or whatever we were wearing, on the back of the dress, and so they knew, and we had our heads shaven, no hair, and some of us were barefoot, so they knew exactly who we were, and they saw us.

How far was it from the Camp to the factory?

I don't know whether it was 6 or 8 kilometres. It was about an hour, over an hour's walk.

And was everybody fit enough to, I mean, did people fall over, and were they left behind?

I don't remember. I don't remember, not, not, I suppose some occasionally did fall, but I don't know what happened to them. I don't remember at all. I know that we were told to go faster, but, and, of course, as time went on we were getting weaker and weaker, because we didn't get very much to eat, and the one thing which was assured when the Commandant was there, was this piece of bread, but otherwise, we didn't get terribly much to eat, the soup was getting thinner and thinner, every day, and so I, but I don't remember. But quite often we were taken by train, and one day, I remember, whenever the train came in, you had to rush on to it, and somehow, one day, I got into a wagon, and I thought I was on my own, because all the others seemed to have rushed into the other wagon, and I seemed to have got on to the wagon where

no one was, none of my mates was, and I, I, it was dark, there was no light in the wagon, and I couldn't see anything, and somehow, it was so peaceful, I thought I was alone, which was a fantastic feeling, because you never were alone, and I suddenly started to sing. I started to sing the Brahms Lullaby, and I started to sing it, I mean, in German, like I always did, and suddenly, a male voice said, "Who is singing so beautifully here?" And he came up to me, and put a torch in my face, and he started to have a conversation with me, he was one of our Wehrmacht guards, and he said, how old am I, he asked me how old I am, and where did I learn this song, and if I ever played the recorder. And I said, "Yes, I not only played it, but I was teaching the recorder at one point, for small children", and so he said, would I like to have a recorder? And I said, "Well, I would love to have one." And he said, well, his daughter has got some recorders, he will write her to send a recorder, and will get, get me one. Well, for months afterwards, I, when he was on guard, and if I passed there, once he gave me an extra soup from the Officers' Canteen, which was very nice, but, and he always said, he doesn't understand it, but the recorder still hasn't arrived, and the recorder actually never arrived, but the soup was nice. I don't know whether, I don't know whether he really asked for it to be sent, or what happened, but I never got the recorder. But he, from then on, he always had a nice word, whenever he saw me, he had a kind word to say to me, and a human sound.

Would you like to sing the Lullaby?

Oh, again? I can't, I think I can't sing, that's too difficult, well, I don't know.

"Guten Abend, Gut Nacht"

I don't remember the words any more. Otherwise, in the camp, when we had a little bit of time, we were, we had a group of people who were reciting poems, so as not to forget it, and I managed to get a stump of a pencil and, and some paper, which were some sort of flyleaves, which I stole in the factory, of one side they were printed, they were orange and yellow, and they were coloured fly leaves, and on the other side I was writing down these poems so as not to forget them, and I managed to get a piece of string, and some, a little bit harder paper, and made myself a book, and also I wrote down all the texts of the songs we were singing, and there was, and because I had quite a nice voice, and people seemed to enjoy listening to me, they always asked me

to sing for them. Oddly enough, I must have, I remember, I sang one Hungarian, I sang quite a lot of very sad songs, of, of hiding, I mean, one Hungarian, one very beautiful Hungarian song, which I sang, was from the Partisan times, when the Hungarian Partisans had to hide in the forest.

When was that?

Well, in the 18th, 17th, 18th Century, and they had to hide in the forest, and this, this was one of the songs. And the other one was a, a Belgian song, at the moment I can't even think of it, what it was, but I remember it was a very sad, and it had something to do with death. But I probably sang, but these are the two songs I particularly remember I sang.

Do you remember the words of the Partisan song?

Well, the Partisan I think I do remember the words.

Would you like to have another go?

All right. (SINGS SONG) That was it.

Did you learn that song at school?

I picked up songs everywhere. I picked up songs everywhere I knew, after the War, when I lived in France, I knew roundabout 150 student songs, French student songs, and later on, when I was teaching Hebrew, when I was in Israel, I picked up, my children used to learn 50 songs a year, or even more, that was one of my methods of teaching them Hebrew, that I taught them songs, and then we came from the words, we made sentences, and, but I, I used songs very very much in my teaching, always, and because I had this very good facility, and I remember, I used to remember the words, I am very sad now, that I have forgotten the words, I find that with Schubert songs as well, I mean, I grew up with Schubert, and Schumann and Brahms songs at home, and with French children's songs.

Would your parents sing them to you?

Yes, my father sang them with me, I mean, I sang them from small on, I followed, I always loved singing, and, and my father would sit at the piano, and play them, and sing them, and then I would learn them very quickly, and I, I, and we had, very often, we had the sessions at home, I mean, I used to ask him, "Come, let us sing again some Schubert songs", or some, and as I could read music, and sight read very quickly, and very early, it was no problem learning new songs. I also read very early, so from an early age on, I could, I could read, and I could sing.

Did you like reading?

I loved reading, yes, I loved reading. What else can I tell from Hessisch-Lichtenau?

I wonder whether you could describe a day there? What it would consist of?

Well, as much as I remember, it would be getting up in the, I mean, it depended when you were, on which shift you were, so the days, these were different in three ways, because we had three shifts. It depended when you got up, and I don't remember any more, the, the times, but I know that the day started with a Zählappel, which, well, normally wouldn't last very long, except when there was something special, they had to pick on us, or somebody was punished, or a special announcement was made, then maybe we had to stand there and wait for the Commandant to come, but otherwise, it, the names were read, I mean, it lasted as long as, as the names were read, and I mean, in the beginning, there were a thousand names, later on, they were becoming less and less.

And these were all Hungarians?

All Hungarians, yes. And so that the day would be started with Zählappel, and the day, I suppose, always finished with Zählappel, or anyway, there was a Zählappel

before the evening was out, and, of course, in, in winter, it wasn't very pleasant to stand for quite a long time, in the cold.

Did it happen often that people were missing?

Not very often.

And the recounting?

Well, recounting, yes, recounting, yes, but, but missing, somehow not very often, but sometimes, because occasionally one changed, managed to change a shift, and as I said, I tried to change quite often, because, so as to get off, actually I managed it that, I think, the last few months, I was never on morning, early morning shift, because I took on night shift instead, which most people hated, they found it the most difficult, and I didn't mind it at all, whereas the morning shift, I was, I couldn't take at all, that knocked me out much more, so, so that was the only liberty, the only energy saving device that I used.

If you were on night shift, you didn't have to come to the morning Appels?

Well, I suppose we weren't back for the Appel then, if you were on night shift, but I am sure, we usually had, twice a day, Zählappel, whatever shift you were on, but I couldn't tell you the times any more, I don't remember either, the feeding, when were we fed, or what did we get. We got a coffee, well, some sort of thing which was called coffee, black. We got some sort of thing which was called soup, and which got always, in the beginning it was, the first few days, in Hessisch-Lichtenau, now it was quite nice, I mean, after Auschwitz, everything was marvellous, but as we went on, it got less, the food got less and less, and times got tougher and tougher, I mean, as I said, the soup was taken away from us, and occasionally, we would be again, given a piece of soap, but usually, the soap was stolen, and, and you didn't get then, another piece of soap for a long time. We were in rotation, on duty, to clean the bathroom, to clean the loo.

What would you clean it with? Would they give you

I don't remember, I don't remember. But I know that if it wasn't clean, we were punished, and I don't remember how we were, I suppose, by standing long on Zählappel, or some food was withdrawn from us, I mean, those were the main punishments.

And what were the toilets like there?

Well, they were inside toilets, they were quite normal, modern toilets, but as far as I remember, yes, and the same as the bathroom was a modern, normal bathroom.

And did you have some kind of paper in the toilet?

I don't remember. I just don't remember. There are certain things which completely slip my mind. I know that, there as at one point, we couldn't wash ourselves, and I used to sleep out at night, and wash myself in the snow, even though you weren't allowed to be out of the barrack at night, but I sleep there, because you were, if you were caught, you were shot, but I slipped out, because I had to wash myself, which, which was, in those days, I found it, myself, rather odd, that I had this compulsion of absolutely having to wash myself, because I remember, as a youngster at home, I loved having a bath, but, but I hated washing myself, and, and but here, I, I really, I risked my life to wash myself.

What do you think it meant to you, to wash yourself in the Camps?

Well, first of all, as I said, we had these bed bugs, and, of course, I was itching, and so washing, any water was refreshing, but also probably, it was somehow, to keep myself human, to keep myself, to keep my self-respect, and I think that was all of the, whatever I did in the camp, I somehow had a feeling, as long as I did thing to keep my self-respect, the Germans couldn't win over me, I won over them. They couldn't take away my humanity. They couldn't take away my, my morals, I had very very high moral principles. I despised everybody who compromised the Germans. I mean, we

had two women whom I knew from my childhood on the, they were cosmetic, they were beauticians, and the two SS women who were in charge of us, used to come in and have, by one woman have their hair made, and hair done, and the other one used to give the massage, and, and do all kinds of beauty treatments, and they received extra soups, and they received extra, they were treated quite nicely, whereas I, I did not allow for any compromise like that. The voluntary work which I did was, wasn't a compromise because we had to do the work, if we didn't do it voluntarily, then we were chased out to do it, and to avoid being chased out, I volunteered, because if you volunteered then you got something extra, if you didn't volunteer you were chased out, and you were not treated very nicely, so I preferred, but the work had to be done anyway, so it wasn't a compromise, but, but to be, I'm going to use a very not nice expression, "arse licking" to the Germans, that I didn't, I didn't do, and I despised anyone who did. I mean, today I understand it, that people had different ways of survival, but I, I didn't, in those days, I didn't understand it, and didn't allow for it either. I had terribly terribly high moral standards, and expected everybody else to have the same. My French teacher, my favourite teacher from my school, was brought up as a Catholic, and she was with me during, but she was of Jewish origin, and she was deported, and she was with me during the whole of my camp days, in the same room, the same hut, and she used to, she was a, an old maid, well, she couldn't have been that old, but I thought she was an old maid, and, and very very religious, very devout, but Christian devout, and she used to kneel in our hut, and, and say the, the, "Our Father in Heaven", the Christian prayer, and she also managed to, to join, to be joined by one of the other girls, who was a Jewish girl, but whom she started to convert into Christianity, and both of them were kneeling there, and I, who used to adore this woman, she was my favourite teacher, absolutely despised them, in those days, and found them so stupid, that how can they, in the middle of, I mean, being deported as Jews, and, and altogether, I didn't think that God had much to do, had much to say, and they were sitting there, I mean, they were kneeling there, and saying these prayers, and it made me terribly terribly angry, and I didn't speak to them, because I despised them for it. After the War, I actually did visit this teacher, she went, she got out alive, and she went back to my home town, and I did visit her once, and I still liked her, I forgave her. But, but during that time, I found it unbearable.

Is she still a Christian?

She is a Christian, but not a, not religious any more, and she's not alive any more, I mean, she died last year. I was in correspondence with her, and she was a very lovely person, and I, as I say, later, much later, I understood that people had different ways of surviving, and their instinct worked differently, but with me, I, I was very intolerant, and wasn't very nice. I couldn't have been very loveable either, but I, I, I had very very strict moral principles. Now, one day, and you will know this story already, they said that we are going to be paid, and we are going to be getting for our work, 3 marks a day, and for three days we were given three marks a day, and then on the fourth day, we didn't get any money, but they opened a shop, and in the shops, they have the two things which we could buy, the one was either, for this, for the nine marksworth of, a sheet of paper, an envelope, and a stamp, to send a letter to Auschwitz, to our relatives, who remained in Auschwitz, who weren't deported with us, I mean, who were deported, but who were not in our, in the same Camp, and whom we were supposed to presume still being in Auschwitz, and so you could write a letter, and you were allowed to post it, I mean, they posted it for you, and that was nine marks, or you had the other choice, and that was a lipstick, and, and I mean, I didn't take, I don't remember what I did with the money. I took, I took the paper, I bought the paper with the money, but I didn't send a letter, because I knew that there was no point in sending a letter, it would never arrive, that that was just a very cruel and nasty joke, a bad joke, but I didn't, and I certainly didn't want a lipstick, I didn't, and I didn't understand it, that so many women went for the lipstick, and there weren't enough, there were more women who wanted lipsticks than there were lipsticks, and the women were really hitting each other, killing each other for a lipstick. They were, there were such terrible fights to have the lipstick and for the right colour lipstick, that, I mean, and I just didn't understand it, I didn't understand it, and the Germans were standing there laughing, seeing how these stupid women, who, who were, who were skin and bone, and were dressed like scarecrows, fought for a lipstick! Now, I didn't understand it at all in those days, I mean, today I understand that, I assume, that it was, that they had to prove themselves to be women, and that was a way how they, that was their survival instinct, that to prove that they were still women, and I didn't understand it in those day, and I found it disgusting that, that they fought for a

lipstick, and again, I, I, I was, to a certain extent, I was an outsider, I didn't, I just couldn't accept the lowering of, of certain standards. I mean, I'm not particularly proud of it today. As I say, I had no survival, I can only explain it, that I had no instinct of survival at all, not because I had a death wish, but I just had no instinct of survival, I didn't do anything particular, to keep me alive. Otherwise, I would have accepted to be a, a Work Leader, which would have given me privileges and I didn't accept it. Now, I don't know ...

End of F272 Side B

F273 Side A

Could you say something about what utensils you used for food?

I can't really, because I don't remember, but I assume we had a spoon, now, I don't remember whether we had all our individual spoons, or whether every time we got a soup, we were given a spoon, I just don't remember at all. I, I could imagine that we were given a spoon, because I think that individual spoons would have been stolen, everything that was, that one had, was stolen. The only thing which wasn't stolen from me was, well, I didn't have anything, but the one thing which was, that was my book, which I made up, that wasn't stolen, but when I was given a cloth for my clogs, if I had clogs, and if I was given a cloth, a duster type cloth to put round my foot, it was stolen within a couple of days, and I don't remember, we must have had some bowls. As far as I remember, the only warm food we got was this black coffee, for which we didn't, which we would get in the same bowl, I think it was in the same bowl, or mug, I don't remember, which, as I say, we had tin mugs, or what, what kind of bowls we had, but, we had something for the coffee, and we had something for the soup, and I would have imagined it would have been the same thing, but whether it was kept and handed out to us every time, or whether we had to look after it, I don't remember. I don't remember at all. I could look it up in Falper's(ph) book, because he describes it all.

Did any of you work in the kitchen?

Well, some people were allocated to the kitchen, but it wasn't, they were permanently in the kitchen, as far as I remember. I, I was never, I had never anything to do with the kitchen. We were, at least I don't remember, or did I have to peel potatoes? Or peel vegetables? I don't remember. That's something that has escaped me. I mean, certain things I just don't remember at all. I don't know whether they weren't important or, or enough, but I don't remember. I don't remember daily life at all, the same as I actually remember very few people from the camp. I remember certain incidents, I remember in, again, I went into another hut where I had, someone invited me to, asked me to come into another hut, and I was talking to someone, and I

remember, we were there sitting on the bunk below, and talking, and above us there were, again, two sitting, or talking, or they were talking across us, and I suddenly heard the girl above me, whom I hardly knew, telling a story about her fiance, who was in labour camp, and who was given, and in the, and she said the word "Koesegl"(ph) which was a town very near us, or, or Szombathely? I don't remember. Anyway, he was in a camp, very near to my home town, and he was invited, some of the labour camp inmates were invited in our home, and he was invited in one home, and there he, he was telling about a very brilliant man, a doctor, who wrote a book about the Psychology of Music, and he dedicated it to his wife, and with the words, "Ohne Disharmonie, gibts keine Harmonie" - "Without disharmony, there is no harmony", and when I heard that, "That must have been in our, he must have come to visit us, because that is the book my father wrote, and that was the dedication which my father wrote into my mother's, into the book which he gave to my mother." So we became a little bit friends, and we were talking, and I knew her fiance. I remember her fiance. There was another odd story, which I remember from those days. Around about December, beginning of December, we heard guns, and we heard that the Americans were in Kassel, and Kassel was 30 kilometres away from us, and, and, of course, there was jubilant that the Americans are so near, and we are going to be freed soon. That was December 1944, and I, and everybody was jubilant, and I had a dream that night, and I had a dream that we were going to be freed on 23rd April, but not before that. And I said, with complete conviction, I said, "Don't be jubilant, because we won't be freed before 23rd April. I don't know whether I will survive, and I will be still alive then, but this group is going to be freed on 23rd April." And I was nearly lynched again, once again, because I was taking away the hope, and they said, "How dare you say that? The Americans are 30 kilometres from us, and we are going to be freed by Christmas." And as it happened, the Americans didn't advance, and we, we were, when we, on 7th April, we were taken, I think it was 7th April, or it might have been a little bit, no, that was 7th April, end of March, sorry, end of March we were taken, the camp was evacuated, and we were told that we were being taken to Buchenwald, and they put us into a train, and on that, a few hours later, or on the second day, I don't remember, the Americans dive-bombed the engine of the train, and the train couldn't continue, and we were in a field, and we were standing there for three days, waiting for another engine to come, and by the

time the other engine came, they told us that Buchenwald was occupied by the Americans, freed by the Americans, they couldn't take us to Buchenwald any more, and they, they took us to Leipzig. And from Leipzig, in Leipzig, they put us into a camp, which was evacuated by the SS, and was a former SS camp, and it was a very very beautiful camp, and when we arrived there, already, one day, there was another Hungarian group there, with a Commandant, and they were in very good shape, much much better shape than we were. They had, their Commandant looked, saw to it that they never had to do very hard work. He saw to it that they were always clean, they always had clean clothes, they were always, had showers, and they had always food, enough, sufficient food, to keep them in good condition. They had an absolutely marvellous Commandant, and he was now the Commandant of this particular Camp, and the first thing was that we had warm showers, and then we were asked to come in, and had a fantastic meal, which, I mean, we were very very hungry, and we were very thin by that time, and very weak already.

Can you remember what you had to eat?

No. No. I don't remember, but I remember it was a marvellous meal, and, and then we were told too, that we were allowed to have a rest, and then we were going to have, I don't know, a meeting, or something, and we went into our barracks, we were given clean clothes, and we were given shirts, and we were given everything, clean underwear, and everything really in good condition, and the bunks were ordinary mattresses, and, and with sheets on, and I remember, I was in the lower bunk and I had, I became very friendly with one girl, with a very simple girl, a very very nice girl, I became very friendly with her. She was there with her sister, but the sister I didn't particularly like, but this girl, I, I was very friendly with, and I don't remember her name, which is a terrible thing. I just don't remember her name, and I was looking through the lists, and I can't, I just can't recall her name. And she was in the upper bunk, and we usually, when there was an air raid, we usually, I mean, we had air raids in all the, wherever we were, and we were always jubilant, because finally, these were the, this was against the Germans. And we never thought, I mean, we thought of it, that it could hit us, but we didn't worry about it, and this girl and myself, we were never afraid. Most of them, when there was an air raid, most of the people used to lie

down on the ground, lie flat on the ground, and we always laughed, and didn't bother. And this time, again, everybody layed down on the ground, and, actually, the camp itself was attacked, was bombarded, and this friend of mine suddenly started to shake, and she said, "Look, I'm terribly frightened", and so I said, "Well, all right, let us lie down." And I took her hand, and the next thing, her head was split, and a shell split her head, and she was dead. And her sister started to scream hysterically, and I said, "Well, let us take her to the doctor." And during the bombardment, I went to, I run through, out of the barrack, holding, carrying her, taking her to the medical barracks, though I knew that it was absolutely in vain. But I wasn't afraid. I wasn't afraid at all, and, but, of course, she was dead. But her sister came with me, and I don't know, they, either they, what happened then, I don't remember what happened to the sister, but she was, I know that she was screaming. Our barrack actually burnt down to the ground, and I was, because we were resting, I was only in a shirt, in a sleeveless flannel, grey flannel shirt, and nothing, I had nothing, well, a panty I had on, but otherwise I had nothing else on, and my dress, everything, all my clothing burnt down, which I was given, and then when, a couple of hours later, we went back to look in the ashes, to find something, oddly enough, in the ashes, there was my book, unburnt. That was the only thing which I found.

The book was unburnt?

The book was, the book with the poems and with the songs was unburnt, in the ashes! And, and I was absolutely thrilled, because that was my most important possession.

Do you still have it?

No, I lost it during the death march, unfortunately, it got lost. I don't know, I, I think I lost it during the death march, or else I lost it later on, but I haven't got it. I can still see what it looks like, tied with the string, and some grey, harder cover, which paper, which I managed to scrounge from somewhere, so called "organised", because we didn't steal, we "organised". And I usually didn't steal either, but this, except for paper and pencil, that was only thing which I did steal.

And the people actually made the poems themselves during the time in the camp?

These were mainly poems which we knew, Goethe poems, and Hungarian poems, and, and no, I don't think they were poems made in the camp, I don't remember any. No, these ones were things which we remembered from before and we put them down so that, so as not to forget them. I think I should add that there was a point when, in the factory, there was no, some part of the material, of filling material was missing, and then we were put out to work. We had to, there were big heaps of very very heavy, big boulders of stone, and we had to carry it on to another place, and we were already very weak, and it was terribly hard work. And also, I remember, I had to carry soiled bags, which were standing out in the rain, and, and they were terribly terribly heavy, and I had to carry these soiled bags from one place to another, and then these, this lasted for a few days, that, because there was no work in the factory, they made us, these stones, they made us put onto another, and heap up onto another place, and the next day, we had to carry them back, onto the first place, so it was sheer torture, and nothing to do with the production.

And men and women had to carry these heavy

Well, we were no men, we were only women.

So when you spoke about the chemists, previously, they were also women?

Yes, they were women, we were only women in the camp. Only in the downstairs in the off-loading area, were men, well, actually, I only remember the one Frenchman who was, whose name was Paul Morrell, and he was from Bordeaux, and oddly, I still remember his name, the one who gave me always the radio, the news from the radio. And there were the German Foremen, but otherwise, it was all women.

And how old do you think the oldest woman was?

I think she was roundabout 60. We had one woman who was, yes, who was the oldest, but she was very very strong, and she was the one whom I called yesterday,

"Spitzli" and I actually meant to look it up in the dictionary, because I still haven't got that, the word for, as I say, not traitor, she was a traitor to us, but traitor wasn't the right, right. What do they call them in the Prison Service when someone is a ... they are telling tales about the others. Yes, I have to look it up, I don't remember that, that word, I'm still missing.

And how old was the youngest?

The youngest was 12. There were two 12 year olds.

Oh yes, you, mentioned them.

Yes, two 12 year olds, whom we had. At least, I think she was 60, the one woman. She was the one, definitely, who told that I, that I speak German, who told the SS women that I speak German. Yes, she would be.

I wondered how long each shift lasted, do you have any idea?

Eight hours. Eight hours, and of course, then, one and a half hours walking there, and one and a half hours walking back, or something like that, something in that area, so it was a, 11 hour working, I mean, time.

Yes, and then the Appel as well, still?

And then the Appel, yes, Zählappel, yes.

And was there heating in the factory, and was there heating in the barrack where you ...

Well, I don't know whether, in the factory there was heating, because I was working outside, so I have no idea.

What about in the barrack rooms?

In the barrack, in winter we had no heating, but in summer, we had heating, which didn't make it pleasanter. No, that was one of their sadistic, really sadistic things, which we had in the camp. With heating in the barracks, because the bed bugs, of course, came out much more.

And what about light?

There was light, there was light, and it had to be turned on at a certain time, but I don't remember when. The SS women came and turned off the light, these two SS women who were in charge of us.

And you also mentioned that you secretly stayed out at night to wash yourself, did you just stay out for a very short period, because it was very cold in the snow?

Yes. Well as, as long as it took me to wash myself from head to toe, and then I would go in.

And in the barrack, what did you sleep on?

Well, I think I did mention that we had bunks, and on the bunks we had a mattress made of, I don't know, straw, I think filled with straw, no sheets, no cushions, no pillows, and I think we did have a blanket, yes, we did have blankets, very rough blankets.

Was it sufficient to keep warm?

Probably not in winter, probably not in winter.

Can you remember whether you were cold at night?

No. I, I remember that I was cold, but I don't remember at what period I was cold. I remember having been cold, and I remember sweating terribly because, that is to say,

being very very hot, in summer, because, of course, we had, it was hot outside, and we had the heating on, so it was pretty unbearable.

And did you keep your clothes on?

I think most of the time we kept our clothes on, yes. Well, we didn't have very much more, we had a shirt then, a flannel shirt, and, and a panty, that was all, the other clothes had on, and then one dress, so that we didn't have a coat or anything like that to, to, possibly I was in my shirt when I was in the barracks, most probably took off my dress, but not in winter.

And did you get a spare one at any time?

No, no, but they were changed from time to time.

So you didn't have to wash it yourself?

No, we didn't wash it ourselves. Well, you had to wash it sometimes, because it got dirty, and if you were dirty at Zählappell, you were punished.

So what did you wear if it was wet?

You wore it wet, or you, you were without. I don't remember. These are all details which, oddly enough, I don't remember at all.

And at night, you each had your own bunk?

Can I go back still to the dressing. There is one thing I remember. Again, my lack of sense of survival. When we were given new clothing, then again, the women used to hit each other, fight, to get some nice, pretty things, and I didn't go near it. I waited until everybody had their dresses, and I went in then, and took, picked up whatever was left there, and put it on, and I always looked like a scarecrow! I usually got something black, and it was, it looked terrible. I looked terrible.

And what, what other people thought was nice, what did that consist of?

Well, there was clothing put there, there could have been anything that was in colours, and also some people managed to somehow get a needle, and made it, altered it, and tried to make it fit on them, and I didn't do anything. If it was long, then I wore it long, and if it was short, then I wore it short, and if it was big, then I left it big, and I didn't care what I looked like. I absolutely didn't care what I looked like. I don't know why, but I just didn't, well, I had this from my youth already, that I always, I remember my, my friends, I mean, before we were deported, used make up, and I refused to use make up, because I always said, "Anybody who likes me, if they don't like me the way I am, then I'm not interested." And I didn't try to make myself more pretty, and therefore, I don't, I had no vanity, and up to a certain extent, I'm still today, not really vain. And, I mean, I like to be nicely dressed, but I find it that I'm much less vain than most of my friends. I never look what the fashion is, I wear what I like, I enjoy wearing, and I never watch whether it's fashionable or not. I sometimes take out a dress which is 20 years old, because I feel like putting it on, and it has nothing to do with today's fashion, but I, I enjoy wearing it, and I have to feel comfortable in it. It's, so I'm not vain, that's another thing which I am lacking. I don't dye my hair, I never dyed my hair, as it happened my hair is not too bad, the colour of my hair is not too bad, but I, I never dyed my hair, I never intended to dye my hair. I, but I give today already, I make, I find I have no faith if I don't dye my eyebrows, that's the only ... concession, I make. I mean, today, I wear also lipstick when I go out, but sometimes I forget!

And during the night, do you remember whether it would be quiet in the barrack, or would people have nightmares?

Yes, they did have nightmares. There was occasionally screaming, there was occasionally, I suppose I was up quite a lot, because of these bed bugs, and I was always, I, since then I was always a bad sleeper, and I remember, I was a very bad sleeper then, I never got very much sleep, and so I heard moaning, and crying, and yes, certainly ... and people having nightmares, yes.

Did that affect you in any way at the time?

I don't suppose so.

And you mentioned that you, yourself, had one dream, did you have nightmares there?

I don't remember.

Can you remember other dreams?

No. No, that's the only one I remember, because it had such consequences, the girls started beating, the women started beating me, and, and I had to run away because they really were so angry with me that I take away their hope, and it was the second time I did it, and I'd also, I didn't understand myself, why I had this compulsion, I mean, I had three times compulsion doing something which I didn't understand. One, to get into this 50, and whether, and I still don't understand it, but I met my father through that, again. The second one was with this, the 20th June, 20th July, when I said that Hitler wasn't killed, and I was right. And the third one was this with the 23rd April, which happened to be my birthday, and I said, I wouldn't know whether I would be alive, but, and our group was disintegrated on 23rd April, and I said that in December, and why, I don't know, and how, how did I know? Why did I say it? I have no idea. I can't explain it. I mean, this is one of those, these phenomenons which, which I just don't understand.

Do you still have that now? Certain premonitions?

Yes, very rarely. I have a very good friend in France, and when I went to South Africa, we wrote to each other sometimes, we didn't write to each other for six months, and our letters always crossed each other. And when I came to England, I was very poor, and one day, for some reason or other, I was, I had an occasion to go to Paris, and I decided I am going to phone her, and we never ever spoke on the phone

with each other, and I went to the phone, the phone was ringing, and it was her, ringing me! And I had with her, a number of times, odd happenings like that. And I had with one other friend, this sort of, but I don't even remember them any more. But I do have this, this funny thing, that, I think of someone ...

End of F273 Side A

F273 Side B

I think of someone and then I get a letter. As it happens, this week it happened again. Someone with whom we write to each other, once a year, at Christmas, and for some reason or other I wanted, I decided I want to write to him, and, and I was really thinking, for at least a week already, and I wanted to, I decided I am writing on that day, and that morning I had a letter from him! And it, it's quite, I can't explain it. I mean, it's a coincidence, but it's an odd coincidence, and I do have this happening, and the same thing with the phone. I mean, people with, where I have no contact, or, or suddenly I start thinking very intensely of them, and then the phone will ring, or a letter will come. I don't know why, but I, I can't explain it, and I usually am not, not superstitious, but this, it's a fact, which, which my husband recognises, who is also not superstitious, and he also says that, yes, it does, it obviously does happen. Funny you get a letter when you spoke, just now spoke of that person.

And what happened during the Holocaust with your concept of religion?

Well, I wasn't religious already before, and, and I certainly, it fortified me in my agnostic, agnosticism, or let us say, atheism. I certainly didn't believe that there was a God, and because, if there was a God then I expected, then I would have, I mean, where was the God? And so I, I became an atheist, and have been ever since. So religion didn't, I didn't understand those who could believe, either.

Can you recall, you mentioned about your teacher who was saying her Christian prayer, can you remember others praying?

Only on Yom Kippur. I mean, I remember, this was Yom Kippur, I was, I was angry, because I said, "I'm not fasting on Yom Kippur." That some wanted to fast, and I certainly said, "I'm not fasting on Yom Kippur, we are badly enough fed, and I don't see why I should do anything, religious act."

Had you ever fasted on Yom Kippur?

There was, there was a time when I fasted on Yom, well, 13, 14, I had this very religious period, and then I passed it and did everything, but after that I didn't fast, and I certainly wasn't going to fast in camp. And I came up against some, we had some fights, because they were, most of them decided to fast, and I said, "I absolutely refuse to fast on Yom Kippur. I have no allegiance to God." And to me, Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana were definitely religious holidays. There were only two festivals that I accepted in Jewish, in Judaism, and one was Chanuka, and the other one was, was Pesach, freedom festivals, or historical festivals, but again, I mean, the mumbo jumbo of Chanuka, I didn't accept, but I accepted it as a Maccabeans, the Maccabeans fighting the Romans, and winning, but not, but I didn't accept any of the other festivals. And up to a certain extent, that is my Judaism still today. And I have difficulties with, even with Seder today, because in the Hagada there is so much about God, which I, I find, I mean, we are invited to Seder to some friends, and each of us reads some of it, and I am always embarrassed when I have to read. Lately, I have become more anti-religious than I used to be, before it didn't, for a while I was teaching Bar Mitzvah, preparing children for Bar Mitzvah, I always told them that I am not religious, but I didn't mind teaching them the text, but I did, I, I, I, today I have got difficulties with it. If I don't absolutely have to go to Synagogue for, because of a wedding or, or something like that, I, I don't go near a Synagogue, because I feel that it's hypocritical for me to go, I just, it just doesn't mean anything to me. I don't belong to a Synagogue. In a way, I would, I sometimes think I should I belong to a Synagogue, pro-forma, but because a Synagogue means religion, I don't belong to one.

And so the, you found that religion was only visibly observed on Yom Kippur, by the others?

Possibly some observed Shabbath as well, I don't remember whether they managed to get candles or not, I don't remember. The people I was with in the barracks, were very assimilated Jews, I think most, I can't remember anyone who wasn't assimilated except for this, I mean, this one Christian, and the other one who tended to become Christian, she didn't become Christian, by the way. She wanted to become a nun, but she didn't become a nun, she became a psychoanalyst! And, and she's impossible! I

met her, I actually looked her up last year, two years ago in Vienna, and we spent a morning together, and it was really painful! But it was, it wasn't the same with my ex-teacher, that wasn't painful, that was very nice again, but this one, she, she's completely twisted.

And how do you think people knew when it was Yom Kippur?

I don't know. I don't know. But I suppose we had some sort of idea of, of the days, of the calendar. Oh yes, we knew, we knew the dates. We knew the dates, but I don't know how, no idea. Possibly at Zählappel the date was said every day, could be, that every morning the date was said, but we knew the date.

And was Chanuka celebrated in any way?

I don't remember. I don't remember at all. I don't remember about Pesach either, actually, I don't know whether Pesach, we were still there, perhaps we weren't there any more, so I don't remember at all what happened, I mean, that was a time we were on the death march, or we were taken away from the camp, so I don't remember at all. But, and Chanuka, I don't remember whether it was celebrated or not.

Can you recall how you were woken up in the morning?

I don't remember how we were woken up, but I suppose the SS women came in, and woke us up, and then they chased us, to get quickly to the appel, because I, I suppose they wanted to get over too, because they, then they were off duty.

And I wonder how much supervision there was all the time. I'm picturing you going from the camp to the factory, by foot.

Well, we were accompanied by, by SS, by Wehrmacht men, I think they were mainly men who were accompanying us, but possibly one of the SS women came with us.

And with guns?

Yes, with guns, certainly, always with guns, and, I mean, the camp was guarded with guards with guns, yes. They had a camp exit. One group went into the local factory, which was the sulphur factory, and they came back, after a short while, they became completely yellow, they called them "The Yellows", and they had, they were better fed, they had better treatment than we had, but, but very often one of them suddenly got poisoned, and then would die. It took about a week for them to die, and they were screaming, you could hear them from the medical barrack, the whole day and night, screaming. It was terrible torture, they died under terrible torture, and it was, it was a terrible thing to hear, one of "The Yellows" dying, because they must have gone through absolute agony, and it lasted, I don't know, between five days and a week. And that was terrible. And then someone else was taken into The Yellows. And The Yellows had access to radio, they had access to food, they were better dressed, they were treated quite differently. Now, there were a couple, it was actually, somehow, for some reason or other, it was an organised Communist cell, the Yellows, and I'm quite sure that our sabotage group was also organised by the Communists, but I know that the Yellows were definitely organised by the Communists.

And these were all Hungarians?

All Hungarians, yes. And what I did not understand, quite understand then, though people were saying it constantly, and I didn't want to believe, because I didn't believe that sort of thing existed, that was lesbianism, and that was an odd thing, because there was a, Luciana, the Camp Doctor, Luciana Nissim had, one of the nurses was a Polish, very attractive blonde, Polish girl, Polish Jewish girl, Sonia, and she was picked up by one of the Communist Yellows, a very manly woman, Hungarian woman, and they were lovers, and everybody knew they were lovers, and yet somehow, I couldn't accept it. I remember that that was one thing, lesbianism was something which I, I had very big difficulty in accepting, it was later on, also, I came across it in France, when I was in prison, and I, I just couldn't accept the existence of lesbianism, I was very very naive, anyway.

Had you ever been able to talk to your parents about sex with your parents?

Well, my father was a gynaecologist, and my mother was a very modern educationalist, and when I was nine years old, then she bought a beautiful orange-coloured covered book, with the embryo, and with the whole procedure, how a child was born, and I was, in a way, I was very very proud that my mother considered me big enough to tell me about all this. On the other hand, I resented it no end, and didn't accept it, in a way, I, I had a, it doesn't really belong to here, but perhaps I should tell it, just to show my make up. [oh sorry, I had my hand in front of it.] When I was five years old, I went to play with two boys, and they had a garden, and in the garden there was a sort of glass house, a conservatory, and we were playing in there. And I remember, we were playing doctors, that was, I took off my panty and they were examining me. (laughs) And the maid came to fetch me, and she looked through the window, and saw me there, and rushed in, and told me what a terrible child I was, and what a dreadful thing I did, and I'm going to have a baby, and from then on, this maid was blackmailing me for everything, that she was going to tell my parents what a terrible child I was. And whenever I wanted to do something which she didn't want me to do, she was blackmailing me, as long as she was there. And I was absolutely terrified, and I thought I had committed something really terrible, and I remember, I didn't play then after that. She never took me to play with these two boys any more, and I thought, I mean, I was really something terrible, terrible, terrible, I have committed something, a terrible thing, and so much so, that as I said, when I was nine, my mother explained everything to me, and I used to, very proudly, give all my knowledge, hand on my knowledge to all the other children, and all the mothers hated. My cousin's mother, certainly hated me, and yet, later on, when I started to menstruate, and if, for some, I, I, the last two days, I was always in a complete panic, in spite of it, that I actually had my menstruation later on, I had my menstruation ten days long, and every ten days, I had usually twice a month, I was menstruating. I was always in a constant panic that I'm going to have a baby, from that time on. There was some, something I just couldn't, couldn't, this woman terrified me to such an extent.

And when you say later on, when you had ...

Well, I was, I don't know, even when I was 18, 19, 20, I was still occasionally terrified.

When did the frequent menstruation start?

I had it right from the beginning, really. I had always very very heavy menstruation, and for a very long time, and, and it came after ten days, I had it, and then it lasted ten days. I was ten days on, ten days off, my whole life, until I, I, I had my, my menopause.

Did you talk to your father about that?

I suppose so, but nothing, nothing happened. Well, certainly after the War, but as far as I remember, it was already before that. I didn't have headaches, or I didn't have much other trouble with it, but it was very heavy bleeding and very heavy, and I was always, well, I know that I was always very anaemic, and for years, I always have been treated against anaemia, for anaemia, I have to drink iron, and had iron tablets, because of anaemia, and later on I had the injections, after the War I had injections, because of anaemia.

But you were already anaemic before the War?

I was anaemic already before the War, which nobody ever wanted to believe me, because I had always, red, very highly red cheeks, and nobody wanted to believe me that I really was very very anaemic!

And you said you resented your mother giving the book.

I, I, I, in a way, I was very proud, in another way, I was, I resented it, yes.

Do you know why?

Well, I didn't want to be so grown up, and I didn't want the responsibility of knowing everything. My mother made me confident a bit too early, it's a funny thing, I didn't want to grow up, be so grown up, I wanted to be a child like all the other children were.

And did you menstruate right through, did you have your menstruation right through the period

No, no, no. We had this menstruation period, the first two days, or, I think two days, and then it stopped, and then all, all along, until about, well, I was liberated, what, in '44, '45, April, and I think round about October I started again, menstruating. Until then, I didn't menstruate.

October '45?

'45, yes, from '44 August, well, July, till October '45, I didn't menstruate. Somebody said, I remember, at the camp, there were rumours that they put something into our food to stop us menstruating, because, I mean, finally we weren't, if you are, I mean, sometimes menstruation stops if you are emotionally upset, or, but, but I mean, I, I, how would it have stopped with everyone at the same time, after two days? I mean, every one of us had her menstruation, and every one of us, it stopped after two days, and then we didn't have it any more. So, I mean, it couldn't have worked with everyone in the same way, unless they, they drugged us. And I think they must have drugged to stop the menstruation. But all during that period, I didn't have any menstruation.

Were you ever sexually abused?

No.

During the period?

No.

And do you know of any other cases?

No. Well, those who were led away to be sexually used, we never saw them again, no. They were saying that they were looking at legs, and that they were taken away, that some people were taken away to be sexually abused, but I, I don't know, I supposedly had very good legs, and had nobody make me an offer, luckily! Because I don't think I, I think I would have, that would have made an end, and I would have tried to commit suicide. I am pretty convinced that since my instinct of survival wasn't so strong, and my moral instinct was bigger, I think then, I would have, would have tried to commit suicide.

Did you ever think of committing suicide during that period?

I don't think so. I don't think so. Perhaps in Auschwitz once or twice, I thought, "Well, it would be an idea to go into the electric wire", but then I didn't, not seriously, not seriously enough to attempt anything, or to really take it seriously. Probably the thought came up, I mean, what's life about? And why should one go on living?

And out of the group of 1000, did anybody?

Out of the group of 1000, no, I don't remember any suicide in our group. I know about suicide, about a very good friend of mine, but she was in A Lager, Auschwitz A Lager, she committed suicide, but, but she committed suicide, because her fiance married someone else, at the last minute. He thought that she had money, and through that money he could get out, perhaps, but, but I, otherwise I didn't know of any other suicide. [long pause] So, as I said, in the ashes, the only thing I found was my book, which I never understood, how was it that it didn't burn? But it was completely intact.

This was in Leipzig?

This was in Leipzig, in this SS camp. Well, since the camp was practically completely burnt down, all the barracks, they put us, a couple of hours we were sitting outside, and then they put us on to the, they took us through Leipzig, and they said they take us into another camp. And they took us about, I don't know, about seven miles out of Leipzig, or, no, seven kilometres out of Leipzig. I know that we walked a couple of hours or so, and then out of, out of Leipzig, through Leipzig, which was completely bombed out, it completely in, I mean, the streets were, the houses were completely destroyed, the parts where they took us through, I mean, it was complete devastation, and in a way, we were, I was very happy, I was very jubilant, because, I mean, this was finally against the Germans.

And would people look at you?

I suppose, I don't know, I mean, it was an hour after the bombardment, so I suppose they were busy finding their own things, the people who were around, or finding people. I don't know whether anybody took any notice of us, I've no idea, no idea. Anyway, they took us to a camp, which was originally a male camp, and part of it was fenced off, and there were men there from Buchenwald. The camp was called Thekla, and was outside Leipzig, and the men were, quite a few men were, when we came, at the fences, and somehow one, one could talk a little bit, and I mean, since I again, once again, my French came handy, because there were quite a lot of Frenchmen there, and I managed to get, again, news, radio news from, through them, and one of them, managed to get me through, I was in, I mean, it was very cold, it was 7th April, this was on 7th April that it happened, and it was very cold, and I was in a sleeveless flannel shirt, this was the only thing I had on, I didn't have any clothes, I didn't have anything. Everything was burnt down, and, and this man, somehow managed to get me a Buchenwald jacket, a striped jacket, and he got me also some soap, and a piece of bread, I remember. And then we were there for two or three days, something like that, I don't know exactly, two or three days, 23rd, 13th possibly, a little bit more, because I think we were ten days on the death march, and we finished the death march on 23rd April, so this was the 7th April, so we might have stayed there six days, five, six days. Eleven days on the Death March, something like that. And during that time, every time there was occasion, I spoke to this one man.

Who was he?

He was a prisoner, he was a, from Buchenwald, he was in Buchenwald camp, but I mean, a Frenchman, who survived up till then, and who was deported from France, not Jewish.

So did he give his own bread?

No, I don't know where he got the bread from, but he got bread and he got, got, he managed to get things, and he gave them to me. As I say, I got a piece of soap, and I got this Buchenwald jacket, and I got a piece of bread from him. And every day he gave me, passed me a little bit of bread, and then, and we became quite friends through the fence, though we were not allowed to speak each other, we were not allowed to speak to the men, but somehow I managed, I don't know how, I don't remember how, but I managed. And then, then, we started our Death March, which must have been roundabout, well, the 12th or 13th of April, possibly 11th, I don't know, I mean, roundabout there, and then we started the death march, there were, the affairs, the suitcases and the belongings of the SS people were put on to big trolleys, and we always had to pull these trolleys, and otherwise we were in rows of five, like the usual, the Zählappell rows, and, and I was in a row, we were then six friends, with Luciana, I mean, Luciana had five friends, and somehow, again, because I was a friend, but I was somehow still an outsider, I was always an outsider, why, I don't know, but I somehow never quite belonged to any group.

Did you feel that you had always been an outsider?

I always felt my, I always was an outsider, yes, except in the Zionist Group, I think there I wasn't. There again, I was a little bit, because of the religion, because I didn't accept the religious part, so I was an outsider, even there, in a way. But I, I, anyway, there again, there were five in a row, Luciana and four others were in the row, there was Greta, and there was, there were the two Czech girls, and there was someone else, I think Judith, who is in Budapest, they were, yes, Judith, were in Budapest, and well,

they were in the five, and I was in the next row, with people who, for whom I didn't care, but just to be together with these five, and at one point, these five slipped out, the whole row slipped out, we were next to a forest, I don't know whether it was the second or third day, but they slipped out, now I thought they all went together, but they didn't go together, because Luciana a few, a couple of years ago, we spoke about it, and Luciana said she only went with one, and she didn't know what happened then to the others. She didn't even know that they also slipped out, and I couldn't, because, one row could slip out, and you didn't see it, they didn't notice it straightaway, that a row was missing, but if there would have been four only ...

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If there would have been only four and the rows had been made up of five, it would have, they would have straightaway found out, and they would have punished the other four, and I didn't want to risk that, I didn't want to do that to anyone, so I didn't, didn't slip out, and I continued. Now, every time, when we had a rest, which wasn't very often, then this Frenchman would come up to me, and see, suddenly he would appear, and would ask whether I am still all right. And we didn't get any food, we didn't get anything during this death march, and we were being chased, and had to go very fast, and, I mean, it was snowing, and it was cold, and bare foot.

And nothing to drink either?

I don't think so, perhaps in the evening we got something, when we stopped we got, perhaps, something to drink, but, but certainly nothing to eat, and, and anybody who fell was straightaway shot, and was left on the road, and, and we were chased, we were made to go very fast, and, but every time we stopped, this man would arrive, and I think fourth or fifth day, he didn't come any more, and I thought, "Well, perhaps something happened to him", anyway, he didn't come any more, and on the tenth day, in the evening of the tenth day, or the ninth day, anyway, it was 22nd April, that I know, we were taken over the Elbe, on the side on which we were, were, was, the Americans were advancing, and in between the, the Americans occasionally came and followed us with aeroplanes, very very low, and they dive-bombed and shot off, or dive-shot, and shot off some SS, and so the SS put on Buchenwald jackets, on the third day already, I think so, so that they shouldn't be recognisable, and as soon as they heard an aeroplane, they came into the lines, so that they couldn't pick them out, the Americans couldn't pick them out, because they dive-bombed like this, and then they took us, we arrived at the Elbe, at a place called, on the other side, I think it was called Klingenheim, on this side, yes, and on the other side, it was called, there was a bridge, and on the other side it was called Riesa. And there we made camp. They took us into, in the middle of the forest, into a clearing, and actually, it was the first time we got some food, but before that, the only food I have had during those ten days, I found a potato, a raw potato, and I, that was, but that must have been at the

beginning because Luciana and the others were still there, because I remember I had a piece of glass or something, and I split it, or with my nails, or something, I split it into twelve parts, and gave everybody two pieces of this raw potato, and that we chewed, this piece of raw potato, I mean, it was a large potato, but I mean, for six people, it wasn't very much. And that was the only food we had. But when we put camp down here in Riesa, then we had, we were given handful of raw rice, and a horse was slaughtered, and we were thrown pieces of horse meat, to eat, and we ate it raw, and, and chewed up this rice, raw. And in between, there was, the Russians were now dive-bombing and they were constantly round, about, round that clearing, they were constantly putting down little bombs, or shooting, and the SS didn't dare to go out, because they, they didn't bomb us, but all around, and anyway, I think they must have had a council, because they decided they'd rather get into the hands of the Americans than of the Russians, and so next morning, we slept on this clearing, and next morning, we were taken, very early in the morning, at sunrise, we were taken over the bridge, back to Klingenheim, and this was the most beautiful sunrise that I ever saw in my life, I mean, it was incredible the sunrise, it was so beautiful, over the Elbe, and I remember, I, I could hardly walk, but I, I, I really, I mean, it was somehow a revelation, it was such a terrific impact it made, that sunrise on me, and then we arrived at the other end of the bridge, and I dropped, I couldn't walk further, I had dysentery by that time, and I couldn't, and I was constantly leaking, and I couldn't walk any more, I was, by that time, I was 39 kilogram, and I just couldn't walk any more. And they kicked me around a little bit, and they pushed me with the gun, and they said, "Dies keine Kugel mehr wert", and left me. And that was the end of my being with the group, and the group, those who still were there, they went on.

How many do you think there still were?

Well, I don't know, we started off roundabout, between 15 and 20,000, and by that time, we were down to, I don't know, a couple of thousand, or something like that, not very much.

And did you wear shoes?

No, I didn't have shoes.

You just walked barefoot?

I was barefoot, yes. I was barefoot. And it was very cold.

Weren't your feet bleeding?

I don't remember, no. By that time my feet were, I think, pretty hardened, I mean, I was most of the, most of the time I was barefoot, and very seldom had these clogs, since the shoes which they gave, they were made of human skin, the shoes, and wooden soles and human skin, but they were too small, they never fitted me, and so I always, occasionally, I think, two or three times, I got foiled by some clogs, but when the clogs broke, then nothing, then I was barefoot.

Were most people barefoot?

No, most people did have shoes, I remember,

Was this your size?

Yes, because I had 42, size 42 feet, and it was very difficult. I still have difficulties in getting shoes which fit! (laughs) So that it's, and now I don't care anything about it, but they must just fit and feel all right. As long as they don't hurt, it's all right, I couldn't care less what they look like. But ...

And so during the death march, at night, for how long did you stop? And at what point did they say that you wouldn't walk on at night?

I don't remember.

Did you walk in the dark at all?

No, we didn't walk in the dark. Most of the time we didn't walk in the dark, I think so. I think when it got dark, or when it started to get dark, then they, they let us sit down, or lie down, wherever we were.

And how did you sleep during the march, during those nights?

I don't know. I don't know. I mean, I don't know whether I slept, I don't know whether I didn't sleep, I only know that the death march was not a holiday! It was something very serious, and I mean, you were pretty sure that you wouldn't survive it, and it was just dragging on, dragging on, yourself, so whether one was sleeping, or whether one was just in a torpor, because one was so overtired, I mean, hungry, tired, completely exhausted, complete exhaustion, I mean, it was a culmination of everything already, so ...

And did people lay down, though that meant they were exposed to the cold?

Yes. Yes, certainly, yes. Well, every morning, there were people who just stayed there and didn't get up any more, and they were shot then, or just left lying, if they were already in such a state that they, I don't know, I mean, we were chased on, so we didn't know what happened to those who, who remained, but I know that always we were trying to say, "Please get up. Get up. Come on. Come on." And some just refused to. And we were always getting less and less, I mean, the Germans didn't care any more, very much, whether we were in little groups of five or not, I mean, all that discipline has gone, it was just that they were chasing us, chasing us, "Quicker! Quicker" "Schnell! Schnell! Schnell!", and when you didn't go, then they pushed you with the butt of the gun.

Did you,

And we had to change, we had to take turns in pulling their trolley, and that was terribly difficult, because, I mean, we were so terribly weak, and you couldn't, you had to push it, pull, and then that, of course, didn't make it easier, and they were worried about their belongings.

And did you lie together, in a certain way, to keep warm? Or warmer than you would have otherwise have done?

I don't remember, I suppose so. I suppose so, I don't know. I don't remember anything of that really. I mean, anything more of that death march. I mean, all my energies were concentrated in, in, in going on, and holding on as long as, I mean, if you already, you felt that it was the end of the War, and you felt that it's now, now, it's already worthwhile surviving, I mean, by that time, that was a point. I remember that was the one thing that I thought, "Well, if I've gone through up till now, now I don't want to die any more." And oddly enough, I had one thought the whole time, that I mustn't die, because it would be unfair that I should, that I am still a virgin, and I should die as a virgin, I don't want to die as a virgin! That was, that was, I don't know why, that was an absolute mania, I mean, that was a funny thought with me, I remember. That I don't want to die as a virgin. But I mean, it wouldn't have, it wasn't a matter of my wanting to sleep with a German, or anyone like that, or wanting to sleep with anyone, but just, just that one experience, I shouldn't be dying without, it's not right that I should be dying without that experience. I don't know! That's again something I only remember now. Funny, I didn't remember it all these years.

Apart from thinking about that, not wanting to die as a virgin, did you have any other thoughts, that kept you going, or that focussed your mind, during that period?

Well, only that I didn't want to go back to Hungary. That whatever happened, I am not going back to Hungary. I don't know where am I going to go, but I am, if I survive, but Hungary, I am not going back. That was a definite thing in my mind, but otherwise I had pretty much an amnesia, I, I forgot things, I mean, after the War, I mean, for quite a while, I had, for the next few months, I had pretty, holes, in my memory, which will come out later, I mean, I will talk about it later. Anyway, I didn't, I think I didn't want to die by that time, I mean, the, not that I wanted to die before, but I didn't care. But by that time I, I decided that I really would like to survive, because, I mean, the Russians were here, the Americans were here, you heard them, you knew that it was the end, and you saw the Germans fretting, and so you

knew it was the end, so now that was the point where you felt, "Well, there is no point in dying any more. And we won. So, one should remain alive. But I couldn't go on, I couldn't walk on in spite of it, and I knew that I would be shot, but they didn't shoot me, they said, "Dies keine Kugel mehr wert" - "She's not worth a bullet any more", and so they left me on the road, next to the bridge, and I somehow, on my, I remember, I couldn't even get on my force(?), I was sliding on my tummy, and having dysentery constantly, constantly leaking, and I was sliding on my tummy, and somehow I got into some shrubs, and then I saw a house, a barn, or some, a house with stables, and I managed to crawl, or to slide on my tummy into that stables. There were horses or cows, I think horses, and it was nice and warm in there, and I, I stayed there for a while, and then a woman, a young woman came, and she found me there, and she said, "Wait", and she went in and brought me a piece of bread, and then she said, "You mustn't stay here, because there are still German soldiers out there. Crawl ... there is a barn, and go into the barn, try and get into the barn, you will be better off there." So I eventually managed to crawl over into the barn, and hide in the straw, and suddenly I heard Hungarian spoken, and there was this 12 year old maiden girl, with her mother, from my home town, and they also hid, they also got off the group and hid there, and we didn't quite know what we were going to do, but I mean, anyway, we are hiding at the moment. And then night came, and well, we were too tired to get up anyway, so we were just lying, and then at night, it got dark, and suddenly the door opened, and some men came in, with a torch, with a revolver, with an open knife, and they started to dig in the straw, and they saw us. And the one, when he saw us, wanted to lie down, try to see, whether he can lie down, and then he noticed we were really more or less skin and bone, and I learnt a few words of Russian, I understood that they were speaking Russian, and I learnt a few words of Russian, and anyway, they could see in what state we were, and I managed to tell them that we were from concentration camp, so he left me alone, and then he, they went off, and they came back with another one, who was a bit higher up than they, who spoke German, and they came back with stretchers, with three stretchers, and they put us on stretchers and took us into a farm. Apparently this, the Russian troops were on the other side of the bridge, but these ones were people who were prisoners of war, and who were working in Germany, as prisoners of war, in the farms in this area, and when they came into the barn, they were looking for Germans who were

hiding, because, I mean, the Germans were treating them very badly, these prisoners of war, and they were, and now they were hiding. It was, everything was in chaos by that time. This was, by the way, my 21st birthday, it was the 23rd April, and it was my 21st birthday, and so I had this sunrise, this terrific sunrise on the morning of my birthday, and, and my liberation, and I said it would be 23rd April, and it was, that I said in December, and it was 23rd April, I happened to survive. In, so, they took us to a farm, and they explained to us that they are going back, that they are patrol only, and they came over only to hand down some Germans, but they are, at 6 o'clock in the morning, they have to go back on to the other side of the river to join their Russian troops, and that they are going to take us with them, and take us back to Hungary. And the other two agreed, but I said, "I don't want to go." And they said, "Yes, you must come", and so while they were sleeping, I, I crawled away, and I hid in another part of the barn, of the farm, under the straw, and in the morning they were looking for me, but they didn't find me, and they had to leave, they had to go back at a certain time, so they had no time, not much time, I heard them shouting, and I heard them looking for me, but they didn't find me, and they left me. And so I was on my own, and then I crawled, after they left, a while after, I, I crawled out, and, and I heard some French spoken, I was on the first floor, I think, so, and down in the courtyard there was a window on to the courtyard, and there were some men, some ten men, and they spoke French, and they were very happy and gay and everything, and they were washing there in the well, and so I crawled down the stairs, and, or I shouted to them, I don't remember any more. Anyway, they found me, and they said that 29 kilometres from there was a place called Wurzen, and in Wurzen the Americans are liberating, officially liberating people, that's the headquarters, the liberating headquarters, and they are going to go there, these 29 miles, and I should come with me. And well, they saw I couldn't go, and they said they are going, and then the one said he is going to stay with me. And he stayed with me, and looked after me, the next few days, and couldn't have been very long, somehow he fed me, he got me on to my feet, just walking, leaning a little bit on to him, because, on the 29th, this was the 23rd, that was already the 24th, and the 29th we left, I left with him, but until then, he really fed me and really looked after me, and was absolutely marvellous with me, and I think the night before we left, I, we slept together, I mean, I fell in love with him, because he was the first human being, and we slept together, and finally I wasn't a virgin any

more! Well, actually, he told me he didn't do anything to me, I thought that I was a virgin, because he said he wants to take me to France, and he wants to marry me, and I am a virgin still, which wasn't true! But I didn't know.

This is the fourth session with Mrs. Trude Levi, and it is the 18th May, 1989.

I wonder whether you could tell me something about your feelings at the time of liberation?

It's a difficult question, I don't, I don't really remember. I suppose I was exhilarated that I came out alive, that, that I was free, but I mean, in a way, I think I was still hungry, I was still afraid of eating too much, and not getting, I mean, I was very very weak, physically, and I wasn't yet sure whether it really was the end, until the, until then on the 29th, we got to Wurzen, but I, I didn't, I don't really know, I don't really ever remember. I mean, it was at the same time, a contact with somebody who treated me humanely, and I suppose I was, I was very happy to be free, but, but everything was still unsure, everything was chaotic, and I don't know, I don't know.

Was there a point later, that you felt, well, this is now for me, the liberation. Now I am free...?

That was much later when I was in France, when we arrived in France, that was when I really felt liberated. Somehow, while we were still in Germany, we were travelling through Germany, and I am going to tell about that, I, I, I don't think I still had, I mean, probably I felt free, and everything, and we were, at one point we were emptying an SS, an SS storehouse, where we found, I don't know how many boxes of cigars, and various other things, and since I was a smoker, and even during the camp I smoked any leaves or anything, I, whenever I could lay my hand on, on a match, to

have some light, I would smoke, and I smoked absolutely anything. I, I, I mean, we then smoked cigars, and that was freedom, but it wasn't, but I think the real freedom came when I arrived in France, when I felt that I was out of Germany.

How could you get hold of matches in the camps?

I don't know. I don't remember at all and I don't think I very often did get hold of matches, but somebody, some others were smoking and perhaps we handed out cigarette from, I mean, fire from one to another, but I know that I, if I laid my hand on a little bit of paper, any kind of paper, and I picked up some dry leaves and rolled it into a cigarette, and was smoking it, I mean, I had no cigarettes during that time, but whenever I could lay my hand on some light, then I would smoke, I would smoke, because I found smoking very difficult, I mean, I was craving as much cigarettes as I was craving bread.

And at what age had you started smoking?

I started smoking when I was 15, when I started in the milliners, as a milliners' apprentice. They were all, in the milliners, everybody was constantly eating sweets, and I remember, I did not want to put on so much weight, and I did not want to eat so much sweets, and so, and my father offered a cigarette to me, my father was a heavy smoker, and he offered a cigarette to me, because he did the same thing with my brother years earlier, that he offered my brother a cigarette, and my brother took it, and smoked two puffs and threw it away, and never smoked again, so he hoped my reaction would be the same, but my reaction was exactly the opposite and from that moment on, I never stopped smoking, until now, about, I don't know, about nearly 30 years ago, I stopped smoking, a short while after I came to England I stopped smoking, but I, I didn't, but in those days, I mean, from the age of 15, and I started straightaway smoking 20, 30 cigarettes a day. I rolled my own cigarettes and in camp, I remember, I missed cigarettes terribly, so I smoked, as I say, any paper I could lay my hands on, I rolled up with leaves, dry leaves, and just smoked it! Probably I only took two puffs because it wasn't much pleasure, but it's a feeling of starting off something, and I didn't smoke it down till the end, but I did smoke.

Were other people doing that too?

Yes, certainly. Certainly. And occasionally somebody, I suppose got a cigarette, and perhaps you got a puff from a cigarette from someone, but I don't really remember, I, I only remember rolling up cigarettes. I don't know how I got light.

I still wanted to ask you something about Hessisch-Lichtenau. You were there with a group of 1000 Hungarians to start with,

Yes.

And can you tell me what other nationalities there were in other parts of the camp?

No there was a, this camp was just for the 1000 Hungarians.

So it was really very small.

It was a small camp, no it was, nobody else was there, except that the doctor was Italian, and the, one of the nurses was Polish, but otherwise there was no, no one else in the camp.

And how come that the doctor was Italian?

I don't know. I don't know, she was a fully qualified doctor, she just qualified as a doctor, she was in Auschwitz, and she was brought with us, to be our Camp doctor.

There was no doctor among the thousand?

I don't know. Possibly not, possibly there was, I didn't know of any, but she was, I mean, I didn't know the professions of many people.

And could you say something about how the sick were looked after? You described the "Yellows".

Yes, well, there was a medical hut, where the, the doctor had a room, and the two nurses had a room to themselves. ...

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I never was in the sick room, I never was in the sick bay, so I can't really describe it. I don't know, I know that I occasionally went to Luciana with some complaint. I had dysentery, and I, I wasn't feeling well, and I was very weak, but, but, and Luciana never put me into the sick bay, so I don't, I can't tell you about the conditions in there.

And other people who were admitted to the sick bay, were they also returned again?

Well, there was only this one selection, on that one day, that there were 206 people, who went to see the doctor, and those 206 on that day. I don't understand it, how, in the morning, 206 could, could have been at the doctor, but that was the figure, and, and I only found out from Luciana that that was why this selection was 206, and not 207, or 205, but because she had 206 on that day, on her list.

I see. So people, normally, who were admitted to the Sick Bay, did they recover sufficiently to

There were people who recovered, yes, yes. Those who were, I mean, didn't die, they recovered, they were returned, yes, yes. Cos there was only that one selection, and, and more died from the Yellows than from others, the yellow poisoning.

And if there were only 1000 people in that camp, it was really quite labour-intensive for the Germans? Because you still needed guards and everything.

Yes. I don't know whether we had very many guards.

How many would you say?

I don't remember, but I don't, I don't remember we had very many guards, we only had one exit from the camp, and that was guarded, I don't remember that the fences were guarded otherwise, I mean, they were electrified, I think so, but we didn't have any guard dogs, or anything like that. As far as I know, only the exit was guarded,

and then there were the SS women, and I don't know how many there were, but we had two SS women who, who were our SS women, what other barracks had, whether, how many barracks they had under them, I don't know, but two we knew personally, who came every day, who, who woke us up, who gave us our orders. I don't know, I just don't remember at all.

How many barracks were there?

I don't know. I mean, I could look it up in Falper's(ph) book, but I don't know. I wasn't, I suppose I wasn't interested in these details, although I was interested in, as I said, I don't know, in survival I wasn't interested either. I, yes, I, survival of, survival morally, that's what I was interested in, not to be vanquished by the Germans, morally, and that was my main concern, and that's why I was involved in sabotage work, and that's why we, I wrote down, I stole paper to be able to write down the poems of our, of, which were remembered, and the songs which were remembered, but that was important, to keep up culture, to keep up, and to keep up moral, decent behaviour, that was for me, not to steal, not to do anything, not to denounce people, this was, for me, the main driving behind my thinking. I mean, I, the main driving force. Otherwise, it wasn't survival, it wasn't, but that while I am alive, not to be dehumanised.

You described escapes during the death march, I wonder whether the thought ever occurred to you, or other people, during your march through Leipzig,

No, I don't think that anybody else, anybody escaped then. And it certainly didn't occur to me that I could escape. I mean, we hated the Germans so much, we didn't, didn't think that the Germans would help us, I mean, in a bombed, and anyway, everything was flat, where do you escape? I mean, if you are in a row, and, and among ruins, which is pretty flat, you can't, if you walk away, they see you straight away, so that I don't think there would have been any possibility of escaping anyway, you would have been shot, by, I mean, in those days, at that period, the Germans still shot anyone who would have stepped out, so there was no way of escaping there. And later on, in the death march, I mean, people escaped when we were near a forest,

when, when those five whom I said, escaped, that was in a forest, and therefore they could, could disappear, they could slip out easily, because it was a very thick forest.

And do you think that they just planned that during the death march?

I don't know. I don't know. Actually I would have to ask Luciana, that was the first time we spoke about it, and we just, because I said the five of them went out, and she said, No, she was only with one person, and she didn't know that the other three went out and followed her straightaway, but they never saw each other. They definitely weren't together. [pause] Well, Charles arrested Paroldo, because that was his name, this Frenchman's name, and decided, well, that I was, I could stand again, and we were slowly going to start our 29 kilometre march to Wurzen, and to be officially liberated. And we were, happened to be extremely lucky, because just after a very very short while, I mean, a few hundred yards, very slow marching, we proceeded very slowly, because I was still very very weak, and I couldn't walk fast, and he was walking me, a tractor came, pulling two lorries, two open lorries, and, and, with a French flag on the lorries, and there were 38 French people on these two lorries, and the one, there were 10 women and 28 men, and, because this was a Frenchman, they took us aboard, and they were also on their way to Wurzen. And that made an organised group of 40 people, with a tractor, with something moving, I mean, with organised transport, and therefore, when we arrived in Wurzen, we stayed there one night, we had a sort of celebration, we were fed, our names were taken, as liberated by the Americans, but, but then it was, because we were an organised group, and because we had our own transport, we were given permission to go to France, with this organised transport, and we were given vouchers to, to be able to, to take lodgings wherever we found, in any village or any town, and to, what's the word? I can't think of the word. To, not confiscate, but to, to requisition, requisition food, and, and lodging, on our way to Metz.

But you say that,

No, the funny thing is, I don't remember whether it was Metz or Mainz, but it was one of the two, no, it must have been Metz, Metz, the liberation centre, and we were the

first, so we were the first people to return, the first 11 women, who returned from concentration camp, who entered France, and therefore they made very very big celebrations, and we were given money and, and champagne, and clothes, and, but then, sorry, you wanted to ask me something.

Yes. You said it was an organised group, so what organisation was providing these ...

Well, the organisation was, no, there was no organisation, but because we were 40, and we had our, 40 French, 40 people who wanted to get to France, and because we had organised our transport, and the Americans didn't have to organise transport for us, so they let us go, as a group, and they didn't, didn't hinder us, and didn't, on the contrary, they facilitated, and they didn't keep us in the camp. I mean, I met up with my, I met some of my, my ex-camp mates, who were there, in Wurzen, and waiting to be repatriated.

And the group of 40, were all the others French?

They were all, well, 39 were French, I was the only foreigner, but I was accepted because, because Charles said that he was going to be, that I was his fiancée, and he was going to guarantee for me, all the way, and that he's going to take me home and marry me at home, in Toulon.

Were there many Jewish people among that group?

I don't think so, I don't know. I don't know, I don't remember at all. They were French first of all, whether they were Jewish as well, I don't remember. I know that the people who were deported, the men were mainly either prisoners of war, or, or some of them, possibly, were even volunteers, who went to work voluntarily to France, but they were, I think most of the Frenchmen were not from concentration camps, the men. The women, they were all concentration camp inmates. Now, the men, I don't remember any, which doesn't mean that I, that there couldn't have been somebody from concentration, some of them from concentration camp, but they were mainly prisoners of war.

And how had they managed to get hold of the lorries?

That I don't know. I mean, by the time we got to them, they had this tractor, and they took it from a farm, and I don't know how they organised themselves, because by the time we got to them, they were 38 already, and all French, and so I don't know at all.

At which border did you enter France?

At Metz. That's all I know. Now, I know that these IO women, because they came from concentration camp, and because they were the first IO women, they were then flown to Paris, but because I was with this man, this Charles, I was left to go by train, up to Paris, and not, not by....

Were the trains running normally?

I don't know whether trains were running normally, but we were put on a train to Paris, and then we were three days in Paris, in a sort of, it wasn't a hotel, but, because it was bunk beds, so it must have been the Youth Hostel type of thing, and then, then we were going on by train, on our individual, I mean, because we went to Toulon, so we went on to Toulon from, but I know that we always had stops, because we did stop in Lyon, for instance, and we walked around in Lyon, and I remember that I was in Lyon, on a bus, and I don't know how, but somebody started speaking to me, and when they heard that I come from concentration camp, they took me, it was somebody who was Jewish, and they took me to a place, and they gave me lots of clothes, and lots of money, and by the time I left Lyon, I think I had about three or four suitcasefuls of, of stuff, and lots of money. By the time I arrived at Marseilles, again we stopped, and again we were celebrated. And then, when we arrived in Toulon, then the Red Cross received us. At various points in Lyon and in Marseille, there was a band on the station, and playing, and celebrating our arrival back from France, from Germany.

How did they know you were coming?

Well, it wasn't just us, there were others too who came from, I don't know, how did they know, I don't know, but there was celebration all along, we were celebrated, and ...

And to get to Paris, did you have any money at that point?

Well, to get, we got some money in Metz, from the French Liberation Centre, yes. From Metz on, everything went absolutely beautifully, and I mean, I remember I was absolutely, I mean, I found it out of this world, France was one of my dreams, my whole life, to be in France, to be in love with a Frenchman was marvellous. Now, this Frenchman was a very simple man, he wasn't an intellectual, but I found during the camp life, that, in a way, intellectuals behaved much worse than, than the simple people, and since I had this background of socialist thinking, anyway, I had, and then perhaps because of the French films which I saw, before the War, and where there was, the workers were glorified, and the equality was glorified, and the French Liberte, Fraternite, Egalite, was, with which I was brought up, and was my, my ideal, so it didn't matter, at that point, that Charles was a completely uneducated, simple man. He was human, I mean, he treated me with respect, and he treated me marvellously, and he was marvellous to me. He fed me, and looked after me, and, and finally I appreciated that he stayed back, he was five years a prisoner of war, and he left his comrades for me, to look after me, and that I, I mean, I was incredibly grateful to him, so it didn't matter, it was more, weighed more than intellectual pursuits at that moment, and therefore, I, I didn't mind. And we went, we eventually arrived in Toulon, and in Toulon we were questioned by the, we were received by the Red Cross, and, well, first the Police, and everywhere Charles guaranteed for me, and said that I was his fiancée, he wanted to marry me.

Could you say where Charles had been caught?

No, I don't know at all. I don't know at all. I absolutely don't remember about anything. I have got a picture of him, but that's all, I mean, and the consequent behaviour, and the behaviour which was completely different until we arrived in

Toulon, than afterwards, that I can talk about it, otherwise I don't know anything. Anyway, when we arrived, so the Red Cross received us, and they, we spent quite a long time with them, and they asked questions from us, and then Charles said he would like to, yes, and they said, now we can go home, and Charles said he would like to leave me there, because, since he was away five years, and since his mother didn't know he was coming back, he wanted to, first, go home, and it would be a big enough surprise for her, if he arrives, and he comes back and fetches me. And so I stayed with the, and he comes back within an hour to fetch me. And I stayed with the Red Cross, and they were asking lots of questions about camp and everything, and then I, I did not ... he didn't come, I was waiting and waiting, and a couple of hours passed, and he didn't come, and after a while decided that they speak to the Police about it, because, I mean, they wanted to close shop as well, and the Police went to fetch him, and he came, and he took me home with him. Home was on the third floor of a very dirty, very old building. I only came across one room, a kitchen, there was a passage with doors, but I have never entered any of these doors. The one room, there was one bed. In the kitchen there was a curtain, behind the curtain there were two buckets for our use, and which were emptied then, through the window, into the courtyard, which was a little bit more than I, I expected in my future life! That was my first shock. Mama was a washerwoman, which didn't worry me, I mean, I still had my socialist thinking, thinking hat with me, and I was, and there was a sister, a very beautiful blonde girl of 16, and I had to share my bed with her. Well, bed was shared, actually, mainly, the first few days, the first evening, Mama and sister took me down into the port, into one of these, well, bistros in the port, a pub sort of thing, lighted, I mean, it was outside, lighted with, with coloured lamps, and it was just like in a film, there were negroes there, and sailors there, and I thought it all very fascinating, the only thing which I couldn't understand, why wasn't Charles there? Charles disappeared, and I actually haven't seen him for the next few days at all. And I was only with Mama and the sister. And the night was, and in this bistro, this pub sort of thing, and occasionally either Mama or the sister or both, disappear, and they wanted me to dance with the sailors, and with the negroes, and with the, with the people who were there, and I refused to dance with anyone, and I didn't want to drink, because I said, I'm, "Charles is my fiance and I only want to dance with him. Why isn't he here?" And I didn't understand what was happening, but, until about the third day,

when I suddenly realised that, I mean, Mama started to get nasty with me, that I didn't want to dance with the other men, and in daytime, I remember that I helped her, doing ravioli, and, and also we went, they had a sort of allotment, and I helped her, digging in the garden, and I was willing to do any work, and take part in any, in any work, but the night jobs which I didn't understand first, and when I realised what it was all about, what was expected from me, that I was expected to earn some money, and by that time, I went from 39 kilograms, until over 90 kilograms, and I was suddenly very fat, and I always had my red cheeks, and I looked a big, healthy, fat girl, and

In what space of time was that?

Well, that was about a month, and I suddenly, I blew up. It wasn't normal, well, first of all, I ate very much, I was constantly hungry and I constantly ate. Secondly, as later, it turned out, I had a sort of, something which they called in French, "anemie grasseuse" which was an anaemia, which caused me to be blown up the way I was, so I went up, eventually, to 98 kilograms, within a very very short time, and was incredibly fat. And then later on I was treated with injections, but I, I come to that later. So, so I, I refused to, to sleep with the men, and earn money, and Mama got nastier and nastier with me, and on the fourth day, I said to Mama, that "Look, there is no point in my going on and going on with this, I am not going to do what's requested from me, I'm not going to earn money that way, but since I am a qualified nursery nurse and a nursery school teacher, and since I speak French, maybe I go back to the, to the Red Cross, and I am sure I can get a job in a, as one of, I mean, working with children, which I can do, but I, I am not going to work that way, and I want to see Charles." So they produced Charles for me, and Charles said I should put on, because in the meantime I had clothes, so I was putting on other clothes, but now he said, put on my, to put on my flannel shirt, my grey flannel shirt, the sleeveless one, and my Buchenwald jacket, and to leave everything at home, and let us go to the Red Cross, to the station, and speak to them. And when we arrived to the station, just before that, he was very charming again, and when we arrived before the, before the, I mean, before we went in, he said I should wait there for a moment, he sees whether they are there. I don't know why I agreed to it, but I still trusted him, I still felt that it was only Mama who was difficult, but I still trusted him, and, and he went in, and a

few minutes later, he came back with two policemen, who had handcuffed me, and dragged me into the, into a cell, and put me there with the chairs there, and said I must sit down, and stay there. I was handcuffed in a cell, alone, and locked up. And I didn't understand what happened to me. I mean, I, I, the whole thing was so, so quick, it went so quickly, but I know that that was the point where I felt, "If that can happen to me, after Auschwitz, that in France, I am being put into a cell, and someone whom I thought I could trust, gets me into this situation, then I don't want to live any more." And I found a piece of broken glass on the floor, and I started cutting my wrist. I still have got a very small scar somewhere, yes, here, it's a very small scar still left there. But actually I didn't manage, it was a very, it wasn't a very good piece of glass, it was a very thick piece of glass, and it didn't cut very well, and I didn't manage to cut properly, then I was taken for interrogation, in front of a policeman. But there was one thing, while I was, well, two points. The one thing was, that while I was sitting there, I suddenly remembered things which I didn't remember all the while. I had a slight amnesia, we were in Paris, and in Paris, I didn't remember that I had an uncle there. It completely escaped my memory, and I didn't remember anything. Whereas, while I was, I mean, this gave me such a shock, that I suddenly remember I had an uncle in Paris, I remembered the name of the Frenchman, Paul Morrell, who was working in the, in Hessisch-Lichtenau, in the factory, in the offloading, who was from Bordeaux, I remembered that I had an aunt in, in Lausanne, and I remembered her name. I remembered that an aunt of mine from Vienna went to New York eventually, via Mexico, and she must have been in New York, and I remembered her name, and so, when the policeman asked me, I gave all these names, and also, I mean, I had, of course, a disadvantage, that I had no number, because I wasn't tattooed, I had absolutely no papers, no number, and it turned out that Charles actually told the police, that he made a mistake, and that I was a German, he found out that I was a German SS, and obviously he can't marry me. And that's how they, they took, that's why they handcuffed me, and that's why they treated me the way they treated me. But after I had the conversation with them, and I told them all the various other things, they said, well, they can't do anything about it, they will find out whether I am speaking the truth. As I say, by that time

End of F275 Side A

F275 Side B

By that time I was a big healthy looking, very fat girl, and, and nobody would have thought that I was, I came through concentration camp, and, and I had no number, I had absolutely nothing to prove that I wasn't a Nazi, except these names, which then could prove it. So we had to wait until, and from Toulon they transported me, I don't know whether, I think the same day, they took me to a camp, in a place called Bandol. Bandol was on the seaside, and we were, the camp was on the top of a hill, and we had the sea in front of us, and it was with beautiful view, but I was put with German SS, with French Miliciens and with Italian Fascists, in that camp. And I was the only Jewish person there, and who came from a concentration camp, so obviously, and I didn't want to speak to anyone, because, I mean, I didn't want to have anything to do with any of these women. The one thing, I don't remember, I remember that I enjoyed the view, I remember that I enjoyed, I, I, the kitchen did, was good to me, because I had a terrible craving for onion. Now, onion has got a very big iron content, and I must have had a very lack of iron content, I never ate onions in my life, we never had raw onions in the house, my father absolutely never allowed it, so I never had raw onions, and yet onions were, but occasionally, I mean, onions were really, I really had a craving for onions. And I used to go to the kitchen to beg onions, and they would give me onions and I would eat them like, like apples, so I suppose, the smell I omitted, that kept everybody away from me! But I don't remember having much spoken to anyone in the camp, except to the kitchen staff, and that I don't remember, but I was three weeks in that camp, and I remember very little about it, well, practically nothing. And then from there I was transferred into a prison, which was called Prison St. Pierre, in Marseilles. By the time, when we arrived there, I was called in to the, called in front of the police, and the police said that they have checked up on the information I gave them, and they found it is true, and that I did speak the truth, and that, they contacted Paul Morrell in Bordeaux, and he testified that I spoke the truth, and they, they contacted my, the last, they contacted my aunt in New York, and they had an answer from Lausanne, and also, but they didn't yet have an answer from Paris, from my uncle, but they had, that came in a few days later. But they, but everything was true, what I said, and that I would be freed, of course, very soon. They only have to get my papers from, from Toulon. Now, Toulon is the

capital of the, the administrative capital of the Department of, the County of Var - V A R. Marseilles, on the other hand, is the capital, the administrative capital of the county called Bouche du Rhône, and, and they had to get the paper from Var to Bouche du Rhône, and the Prefect of Var, had lost two sons in the Resistance, and he didn't believe my story, and he wouldn't hand out my file, and this lasted for four months, and therefore, until that file didn't arrive, they couldn't let me free. In the meantime, they called in the Jewish Community, and the Jewish Refugee ORT, ORT Centre, and they came, and they made me say the Shema Israel, and made me quote a Hebrew, I mean, the Prayer Book, and so that I could read that, again, it was certified that I was Jewish, and that I was speaking the truth, and everybody worked on it to get me out, but they couldn't get me out until they, didn't get that file. The prison, so I was imprisoned with French, Italian and German Fascists, Nazis, and the prison was rat infested, we were 40 in the room in which we were living, I eventually made friends with two women, the one was a young girl whose father went as a voluntary worker and took her with him, she was, by that time, she was 18, and they were in Germany for four years, so she was 14 when her father took her to Germany with him, and she was in prison, it wasn't her fault, and she was very upset about having been in Germany, and having been, and, of course, being imprisoned, and therefore I did, I was willing to speak to her, and another woman who was, somehow got involved, she was half-Jewish, she was in hiding, and she was taken as a voluntary worker, her one way of getting, of not going to concentration camp was that she went as a voluntary worker to Germany, and somehow, I, and she was terribly upset about being imprisoned, because she, she did this a a hiding, instead of hiding, so she, and I, I became friendly with these two women. But with the others, I pretty much refused to speak, or have anything to do. And at the same time, they didn't want to do, I mean, I was a, I was in my, the only clothes that I had was my grey flannel shirt, and my Buchenwald jacket, my striped Buchenwald jacket, which wasn't a very fitting thing, they all had money. Somehow they all had money, and they managed to, to bribe the guards to let them out onto the beach, and they got in food from outside, whereas I didn't have a penny to my name, because Charles never brought me any of the money, he kept everything, he kept all my clothing, all my, everything that was given to me, stayed with them, I never heard from them again, and was taken away from me, and I was left with the one piece of, with my Buchenwald jacket and the grey flannel shirt.

Do you still have that?

No, I haven't got it. I don't know what happened to it. I don't remember what happened to it. But this was the only thing which I was left with. And, and I ate, I was incredibly hungry. Now, the prison food wasn't very good, and it was, I remember that there was very much beans, and very heavy food, and very very thick soups, and I, and because many of the prisoners didn't even touch it, because they could pay for their own food, and had food brought in from outside, I had, I could take as many helpings as I wanted, and I did. So I grow fatter and fatter, and bigger and bigger, in there. I became, I was befriended by one of the policewomen. A French policewoman who often talked to me, and I mean, I was terribly upset, of course, being there, and the whole situation was so incredible that it was, I mean, that that should happen. But again, I was learning lots of French songs, I always loved singing, and somehow, I was learning lots of French songs. And I continued, no, I had a book, which I still have got, where I wrote down French poems and French songs, I still have got that. And I, I, that was, I suppose, with what I amused myself, I suppose I got books to read. I, one day, no, it was, it was the 14th July, Bastille Day, my whole life, I had this wish to be in France one day on Bastille Day, and now here I was, in prison on Bastille Day, and I was crying terribly that day, I remember. I was terribly terribly upset. One could hear the celebrations outside, the music and dancing and everything, and I was in prison, and at night, I, when we had to lie down, and everything was quiet, and people were asleep, suddenly I was woken up, and this French policewoman called me, took me out, outside, and there was a big plate of cookies, and fruit, and sweets, and with a little French flag, for me, there, for the 14th, which he brought for the celebration of, so that I should have something special. And I mean, I adored her, I really loved this woman. Now, in the, there was one thing which worried me. I was terribly, in spite of everything that happened to me, I was terribly naive, and quite often, mainly French women, were sleeping in one bed, and one other bed was untouched, two women were sleeping in one bed, and I didn't understand, and I only learned about lesbianism the first time, really, in, at that, at that occasion. I mean, in the prison. And I, I, I was, I found it absolutely abhorrent, and I was horrified with it, I just couldn't accept the thought of lesbianism, I mean, and it's

an odd thing, it's, I mean, today I don't find it abhorrent, but there still is something prude in me where homosexuality and lesbianism, I still can't quite accept that as normal behaviour. I mean, I don't know why I can't accept it, I am usually not a, a pretty open-minded person, but I, somehow it's a behaviour which I, I still find that I can't fully accept it today.

And how was it considered in Hungary?

I don't know, in Hungary I didn't know that it existed. Oh, the only thing in Hungary, lesbianism, I didn't even know that existed, I never heard the word. Homosexuality was something we had, the Corso, where people went to walk from 6-7, between 6 and 7, and on Sunday mornings, and there was one man there, who behaved very funnily, who walked, and who had always a little handkerchief, and a handbag, hanging from his arm, and all the children were running after him and calling him names, and that was the, the homosexual of the town, we knew about, and that was a figure of laughter, and a figure of fun, but I, I never even thought of it, what it meant, really. I didn't, I remember I didn't think of it, we just were thinking it was very funny that this man wanted to be a woman, or behave, walk like a woman, and behave like a woman, so that was my only encounter with homosexuality, and I didn't realise it really existed normally, amongst many people. So anyway, one day, four months, after I had been four months in the prison, I had very bad toothache, and the policewoman took me to the hospital, to the dentist, and I was handcuffed, because that was the rule, that she had to take me out handcuffed, and I was sitting there, in the waiting room, when in walked two men, the one was a cripple, with, on, on crutches, and in a pretty bad condition, and the other one came with him, was helping him, and this, and I was looking, I looked at this, this invalid, and then I asked the policewoman, could I please speak to this man? And she didn't understand why did I want to speak to this man, and I said, "Well, you will understand if you allow me to speak to me. Please may I ask a question from him?" And so she said, "All right, go ahead." And so I asked from him, if he has been, on 7th April, in a Camp called Thekla, and from there on a Death March. And he looked at me, and he said, "Gertrude, what are you doing here? And how is it that you are in that position?" And this was, of course, a sign, for this woman, that I knew this man, and he knew

me. And this was the man who gave me my Buchenwald jacket, this was the man who gave me my Buchenwald jacket and the soap, and who came for the first four days, during the death march, always looked me up. And this was the same man who suddenly was here! And when I told him what happened to me, he said, "Well, don't worry, we are going to free you." He was then staying in a camp called Chamoins les Bains, which was a beautiful hotel, just outside, outside Marseilles, which, a superb hotel in the middle of an absolutely gorgeous park, which was the Headquarters of the SS during the War, and now it was converted into a convalescent home for people who came from concentration camp, and he was there, and all the others were concentration camp, people who were in concentration camp, and he said, "Well, we take you out, and, of course, you come and stay with us." And I said, "Well, I'd be grateful if you get me out of here, but I don't want to come there", because I already, in the meantime, I started corresponding with all the people I took up contact, and it was agreed that my uncle said that I must come and stay with them in Paris, and, of course, that was my big dream, going to Paris, and to live in Paris, and I adored this uncle from childhood on. Now, I don't know whether I told about this uncle before. This uncle, his name was Garston Vidie, he was a real Frenchman, not Jewish, - V I D I E - yes, he married the sister of my mother, who, who was, who was, I think his third wife, and he, he was an absolute charming man, and he adored his wife, but he was, I think, I don't know whether at that time still, but he was a womaniser, and she was very jealous, and she was pretty unhappy with him, in spite that he adored her, and we never knew, but in 1935, a bus run over her, whether she committed suicide, or whether a bus run over her, we never knew. But in my, before that, it was always planned, they had no children, Gaston was my Godfather, I still have got a poem which he wrote when I was born, and he, but the plan was always that I am going to live with them when I am 15. And, but, by the time I was 15, I mean, the War started, and I didn't go and live with them, an my aunt died by that time anyway, so this was, wasn't on any more, but by this, now, in 1945, when this happened, he was married again. He was 62 years old, a very good looking man, I mean, like a film, like in the French films, cigarette hanging out of his mouth constantly, and he was a, he was a real French charmer! And his wife was 35 years old, a French woman, and she accepted the fact that the place was full with photographs of my aunt, who was his favourite wife, and it was, and during the War, at the beginning of the War, some of

my relatives passed through Paris, and he was incredibly helpful and was, was absolutely marvellous to them, and he always kept in touch with, with the family, with his third wife's family, with my aunt's family, and when he heard that I'm alive, he straightaway, the first letter he wrote, "... and of course you must come and live with us", and his wife also accepted this. So I was looking for word that when I am freed, I go up to Paris, but anyway, I, that day, after the dentist there, the policewoman took me back to prison, and in the afternoon, about 20 men came down, and brought me a fantastic food parcel, with all kinds of fantastic food, and they said, "Don't worry, tomorrow you get out." And the next morning, they came with the French flag, 50 of them, dressed up in the Buchenwald jackets, and they went to, to Toulon to get the file from the Prefect.

So this had all been arranged through

Through this man, yes, through this man. And they first came to the prison, and they showed me that, and they said now they are going to Toulon, and then, a couple of hours later, or three hours later, by the end of the morning, they came back with the file, and they deposed the Prefect actually, they caused the Prefect to depose, which I was always very sad about, because it was stupid of him not to hand out my, I mean, he was on the right side, but he didn't hand out my file, which was stupid of him, not to believe my story, so anyway, they came back with the file, and then the prison let me free.

Could I just ask you what you did during the day, during those four months?

I don't remember. I must have been reading a lot, and I spoke to these two women, and I was writing down poems and songs, as I say, I have got still, a little booklet where I wrote down, but I don't remember. Oh yes, I did, yes, I got, I knitted something, and I was the worst knitter ever in my life. I remember, I had an SS pullover, a green SS pullover, and I started knitting a, I undid it, and I knitted a, a swimming costume, which I never could wear, because it was absolutely hopeless, but I knitted a swimming costume, or started knitting a swimming costume, but I was the most hopeless knitter! I remember at school, when we were, when we had to learn to

knit, we had to learn, we had to do a white sock, and within one year, I didn't manage to finish one half, I mean, one sock, and I was terribly terribly bad at handiwork altogether, in school, but I mean, knitting was, was something terrible, so I wasn't a very good knitter. And I also managed to, yes, I, I knitted, I remember that green wool, from this SS pullover which I, which I got from that storeroom.

Do you think you were fairly desperate to try to occupy yourself in some sort of way, at that time?

I don't remember, I just don't remember at all. I don't remember at all what happened, what I did, how I passed my days. But I think, I should go back a little bit, and I should tell about that trip from Wurzen to Metz, because I didn't speak about it, I, I said that we could requisition things, and I remember I learnt to suck eggs then, we used to take eggs, raw eggs and the French taught me how to suck eggs, and to pick snails, it was the men who were actually cooking, there were, we were always, we took a calf or a lamb, and we, and they, they, they slaughtered it, and they then cooked it, and distributed it to us, but it was the men who were doing the cooking, and not the women, that I remember. And we ate extremely well during that time, and I was always with, with Charles during that whole time, I think that, that was, I don't remember now anything.

How many days did it actually take, the journey?

I think ten days we were underway, and then one day, we found an SS storeroom, and we ransacked that, and we, we found, I don't remember what else we found, but we must have found these, found pullovers, because I had this green SS pullover, that was one thing, and the other thing was the, I got 40 boxes of cigars, everybody, there were hundreds and hundreds of boxes of cigars, and each one of us got 40 boxes of cigars, and I remember from then on, we were smoking cigars the whole way, back to, to France, and so it must have been the second day, or third day, because I remember the whole day, smoking cigars.

Was petrol available?

Well, we had requisitioned, we had vouchers for petrol, so there must have been available. I know that we had everything we wanted, we didn't have any problem, in those ten days, we had everything we wanted, and if we didn't have it, then we took it!

Yes. And while you were in the camp, had there been a special food you'd been craving for?

Onions.

Just onions?

Onions. Onions were, I think, the most, and it was very odd, because we never had an onion in our house, I mean, they had for cooking, but a raw onion was absolutely banned from our house, no, no onions, raw onions, were allowed to come onto our table, and I never had a raw onion in my life, and yet onions were, the first time I had an onion was, this, this worker who was, this German who brought me the newspaper, he brought me, occasionally, a very tiny onion, and I remember, it was fantastic, it was just as good as a piece of bread. And that was the first time that I ate onions, raw. And onion, and I was craving onions! As I say, it must have been that I needed, I was very anaemic, and I needed iron, and that's the only reason I can, because later on, I mean, I never again craved onions, but at that period it was onions which I was constantly craving, so it must have been the iron content of the onion. [pause] So, just before lunch, these 50 men came back, jubilantly, with the file, and they took me up to Chamoin les Bains, into this hotel. They gave me a beautiful room, and there were prepared already for me, clothing, and flowers, and, and cakes, and chocolates, and sweets, and fruit, a big bowl of fruit, it was fantastic, it was absolutely fantastic. It was a beautiful room, with beautiful curtains, very elegant room, and then we had lunch, and after lunch, I think I said I wanted to try on these clothes, and I went in and started trying on the clothes, and suddenly there was a knock on the door, and I said, "Who is it?" And they said, "Your cousin is here." And I said, "I have no cousin here. What, what sort of funny joke is that?" "Yes, your cousin is here."

So anyway, I got dressed, and I came out, and there stood my cousin, Gucki Berger, who was my, the son, the third son of my Viennese, my favourite aunt, who, at that time, he, he emigrated to Palestine from Vienna, and now he was with the British Army in Italy, and from my aunt, he found out that I was in Marseilles, and he got himself false papers for me, he got himself some free time, he got himself a jeep, and, and ...

End of F275 Side B

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He received vouchers for the NAAFI, and he had false papers to, with which he wanted to take me into Italy with him, and also, he brought bottles of wine, and, and, and stamps, and all kinds of other things, cigarettes, to bribe the guards of the prison, to try to get me out of the prison, from Marseilles, and to take me with him. As it happens, it was, he arrived the same day, when I was just taken out, he arrived a half an hour after I was taken away from there, and he has been told that I am up at Chamoins les Bains, that I just got out of prison, and suddenly, there he stood, in, in front of my door! Now Gucki was my favourite cousin, on the, on my mother's side, he was the youngest son of my, my favourite aunt, and, and I was always very fond of him, and he was always very, he was four years older than I, and we were very fond of each other, and he was always very nice to me when I was in Vienna, and he heard from his mother that I was in Marseilles, and so he came to rescue me, and, but I said I didn't want to, I already arranged, I wanted to go to Paris, and so I didn't go with him to, to Italy. Yes, so, we spent a few days together, it was absolutely marvellous, and the best thing of the whole thing was that, he could get doughnut from the NAAFI, and I just, we went back, getting doughnuts and doughnuts and doughnuts, I mean, I couldn't have enough doughnuts, I went completely mad with doughnuts!

Unfortunately, on the fourth, third or fourth day, he lost his cap, and without his cap he couldn't go into the NAAFI any more, and anyway, he had to, to, to get back, he leave was running out, or I don't even know whether he had leave, or whether he had took out again with false leave, to do the whole adventure. But anyway, slightly disappointed that I wasn't coming with him, he went back to Italy, where he eventually got married, in 1946, to a Polish girl. There was a camp with people who were refugees, a refugee camp, and he married, eventually, a Polish Jewish girl, on the 8th June 1946, the same day, when I married in Paris, my husband! (laughs)

Which was rather odd, because what I did not know, that he actually wanted to marry me, he was actually in love with me his whole life and he wanted to marry me, but I didn't know that. And anyway, he was my first cousin, and I don't know whether I would have married him, but, but, but that was a very odd coincidence later on. But anyway, he went back, and I stayed, I think, a week, in Chamoins les Bains, and then I went up to Paris, and in Chamoins les Bains, I think there were also some... Well,

people who were in camps didn't all have very high moral values. I know that we were drinking, going down into a sort of bistro, and under the counter we used to have, I just can't think of it, it's a drink which, which causes, which can cause blindness, but I didn't know that, it's like pastis(ph), but it's a, it's a very potent drink, and I remember, we used to drink that. Maybe I remember later the name, I can't think of it now. Anyway, I went up to Paris, and I was received, with open arms, by my uncle and his wife, Maude. Now, Uncle Gaston was a man who, was a Bohemian, and he never really worked much in his life, but he somehow managed to survive. He, once upon a time, he had a, was selling obsolete aeroplanes to China, he had some sort of export/import business in America, he owned a race course in Casablanca, but he always lost everything, and, and I mean, he had his fourth wife, and he, he wrote articles in newspapers, he travelled all over the world. He, the flat was not very clean, but full with the most interesting objects, very many of them, I mean, Indian, very, well, I thought they were pornographic, but actually, they were Indian objects, and, of course, they were not pornographic, they were just religious objects, or, I mean, since the Indians have got, they are very open with sexual sculpture, and I was, I was a little bit horrified, I was still very prude, and, and the flat was pretty dirty, but they, and they were very very poor. Now, he occasionally wrote, when there was a competition in a newspaper, which seemed to have been quite often, he usually wrote an article, sat down and wrote an article, and he then won the first prize, and with the money, he would invite actors and writers, and, and, and make a champagne and caviare, or oyster dinner, and splash it out. And then he and his wife would stay in bed the next few days, and they had the coffee percolator at their bed, and some of, some neighbour would bring in a, would bring in a bread, and would bring in the newspaper, would be thrown in, but they would stay in bed. Now, they had dogs, and they had very small dogs, absolutely horrible little animals, with very thin legs, and squeaky voices, little black things, funny little black things, and the dogs were also in bed with them, and I found the whole set-up rather upsetting. They were very very kind to me, and really marvellous, but I found it upsetting, and also I felt, now I am healthy, I am big, I am free, I am in Paris, I should earn my own living, and not be, they were obviously not, they couldn't afford much. Every meal was a bit of a problem, I mean, she occasionally got up and went shopping, but usually they stayed in bed, and, and I, I, and then I did a very big mistake. I committed a very big

mistake. I was incredibly grateful for their kindness, and for their having me there, and I wanted to do something. Now, I didn't have anything, I couldn't buy anything for them, I couldn't give them anything, because I didn't possess anything, and I decided that I am going to clean the flat, and started cleaning, and, and, and he got very enthusiastic about it, and started telling his wife that that's how it should be, always, which didn't endear me to her, which was quite obvious, and altogether, he thought that I was, he liked me a lot, and I think she became a little bit upset about my being there. I mean, I was 21 and she was 35, and, and she had a pretty tough life with him, and so the situation had a bit deteriorated, I found that it was tense, and I, anyway, I wanted to get out. And I went to the Jewish Community, and they eventually got me a job with VITSO, in a VITSO children home, and I was thrilled that I could work again, with children. Now, this home, was, there were 40 children, who were hidden, between 5 and 15 years old, boys and girls, and the Home was run by two elderly French women, who hid these children during the War. They were Jewish children, whose parents were deported, and these two women had their home, gave up their home, and took in these children, and were hiding them, and were looking after these 40 children, all during the War, and were nursing them, and looking after them, and now VITSO took over the place, and they sent me out, they gave me instructions that I am going to be in charge of this Home. Now, quite obviously, these two women resented me. I mean, a 21 year old girl should come, I mean, for four years they were looking after these children, and caring for them, and saving their life, and now a 21 year old girl was sent out, to be above them, to boss them about. I mean, I wasn't boss, but since I was in charge, I had to give instructions, and I don't think I was a bossy type, but, but it was, the situation was impossible. Besides that, there was no material, no coal for heating, there were no potatoes, there was no soap. When I was engaged I had been told that I would be, I would have two evenings and one afternoon free every week, and also that I would be sent some help to clean the place. Now, after six weeks I still didn't have any help. Also a social worker was going to come out every week, and for six weeks, no social worker came near me, and I, I had 12 children who were ill, well, up to 12 children who were ill, and I slept in the Sick Room with them, because somebody had to look after them. The one woman was doing the washing, and the other woman was doing the, the cooking, and I looked after the children, the bigger children went to school,

and the smaller children, I did with them nursery, I mean, work, playgroup, and, but I found it terribly terribly, it was just too much for me, and also, I, I didn't have one hour free for six weeks, and I eventually collapsed.

Were you physically ...?

I physically collapsed. I was incredibly fat, and I collapsed. I, I eventually collapsed, well, I phoned constantly, to VITSO, that they should send me help, and that to send me out, I mean, staff, which I needed, and, and also, I mean, as I said, I didn't have soap, I didn't have coal, we were freezing, we were hungry, and, and also I, I just couldn't cope any more. And I had these two women who were really not very kind to me, which at the time, I resented, but today, of course, I understand that they must have very much resented, and I think that it was incredibly insensitive of VITSO to send me out there, and to do this job. Anyway, I, there is one little incident which I think I should mention, which was rather amusing. My name was Gertrude, Gertrude, and they said that this is too German a name, and they don't want to call me that, but they, they are going to call me Germaine, and they called me Germaine, which I found rather amusing! But since I didn't like my name, Gertrude, anyway, I, I didn't mind what I was called, at that point.

What about the children, were they ...?

Well, I want to tell about them, yes. Now, the children were in a, that was another thing why I found it so terribly difficult, because the children were in a terrible, terrible state, I mean, these were children whose parents were deported, who had, and there was one boy there, especially, with whom I had very big difficulties, he was the one 15 year old, he was the oldest of the lot. Now, his father was a German SS, his mother was a French Jewess, and it was, I had been told that the father wanted to divorce the woman, and he actually had her deported, and she didn't come back, and the boy knew this story, and he constantly, and during the War, this SS man constantly came to visit his son. He didn't denounce the other children, because the son was also in hiding there, so he didn't denounce the place, but he all, constantly came there, and, and the, this boy then heard rumours about what happened in

Germany, and he wanted confirmation from me, that it wasn't so bad, and that the Germans weren't so bad, and, of course, I was the last person to, to be able to give him this confirmation, and he was a terrible bully, and he really terrified all the children, and terrified me, and, and I found the whole situation such that I couldn't cope with it. I mean, I just wasn't, I wasn't strong enough, I wasn't strong enough to cope with such a situation anyway, neither physically nor mentally. And eventually, I, I went to Paris, and I collapsed in the street, to go to the office, and I collapsed in the street, and they had to take me off the job, because they saw that I, before that, already, they sent me a helper, a 16 year old French girl, to clean the house, but she was so lazy that she was more trouble than help. She was another child added on to my problems, and, and I found with VITSO's attitude, really very bad, over the whole affair.

Did the children actually know about the fate of their parents?

Well, they knew that their parents were killed, yes, they knew about it, yes. And they were in a very bad state. Most of them were pretty disturbed children, and, and I wasn't, I certainly wasn't the right person, at that time, to work with disturbed children, since I had my own problems. I mean, concentration camp, and, and prison, didn't quite prepare me for this sort of, for a mental attitude of peace, and tolerance, and so that I mean, I was absolutely the wrong person to be sent out there.

And did the children get any professional help at all?

No. None whatsoever, not at that time, I don't know whether later, but at that time, definitely nothing. As I say, even the social worker, who was supposed to come once a week, didn't come out, and came out, I think, in the first six weeks, once, and it's, and I was there about two months, or a little bit over two months, when I, when I decided I just can't continue any more, and I went in, and I collapsed. And then they discovered that I had this thing which was called "anemie grasseuse", which I don't know what it's called anyway, but that was causing my being so incredibly big and fat, and they said that I can't, I have to rest, and I can't work, and when they joined, took me over, and started giving me tickets for a canteen, I stopped working, but I

wanted to go on working, but I felt I couldn't work with children at that point, I wasn't the right, in the right frame of mind to be able to work with children, and so I wanted to work something else, but I had no working permission. My working permission was done by VITSO, for that particular job, and they offered me to go into another home, where I wouldn't be in charge, but I just felt that I couldn't, I really couldn't cope with children, and I decided I have to look for some other work, but I couldn't get any working permission. Now, I had a friend, whom I, I met, somebody gave me her name, who was a young woman, a French, Jewish Frenchwoman, who was my age, with whom I still am friendly today, who came from a Polish/Yiddish, very simple Polish/Yiddish background, who was married to a Frenchman, who hid her during the War, and she was a very intelligent girl, she went to school, and had some education, but at that time, she was working in a shop, and she befriended me, and she had some, some people who were weavers, and she knew a weaver who wanted help, some help, and I mean, I had, I was willing to take any job, and this weaver, was a weaver who worked just with one loom, on his own, and he wanted someone to make bobbins for him, on a reel, just to turn a wheel the whole day, and make bobbins, prepare the bobbins for him, and so I was doing that. Of course, it was illegal work, and therefore he paid me very badly, and I didn't mind, I mean, I even coped with that, but what I did not cope with, that he wanted to sleep with me, I mean, this was, and I was, at that time, so afraid, I mean, since my, I went with Charles, who got me into prison, the first man with whom I had anything to do. I didn't accept a cup of coffee, I didn't accept anything from a man, I never went out with a man, I never went to cinema, I never went, I mean, in the Canteen, I met people and, and I must say, there were always men who were, invited me out, and I absolutely refused to go out with anyone, and,

It's the fifth session with Mrs. Trude Levi, and it is the 24th May, 1989.

At the time, I lived in a hotel, in a very cheap hotel on Rue St. Denis, for a moment I don't know, which quarter it is, but I was on the fifth floor of this hotel, in a very small room, and I spoke to no-one, except the concierge, except the caretaker, and I didn't know anyone in the hotel, and I never invited anyone up into my room, I was too scared, and I used to have my meals in the canteen, because I had tickets from the Joint ... When I, when I arrived from the prison, I was offered a sum, as a refugee, to start again, and I said, "I am young, and I am strong, and I don't need any charity", and I didn't accept it. But by this time, actually, I felt that, I mean, I have been used by VITSO, and I, I saw that how others have been accepting things, and getting things, and I was really in absolute poverty, because what I earned was just covering my room, and so I did accept meal tickets from the Joint. And I ate in a canteen, and the canteen was near Metro Barbus Roshoshoa, I don't remember any more the street where it was, but it was there they had a canteen. And I ate there with other refugees, and there was a Polish refugee, a young man who used to come and sit next to me, and we had nice conversation, but I never allowed, I never accepted any invitation from him, or never went out with him. But one day, we were talking about a book which I was reading, and he asked me, and I, I just finished it, and he asked whether I would lend it to him, so he came with me, and he actually came up to the room, I didn't even allow him to sit down in the room, I gave him the book, and I told him that he must go away straightaway, and that he did. Five minutes later, there was a knock on the door, and a very good-looking young man was standing in the door, and he said, he was a Frenchman, who was in my home town, one of these Frenchmen, and he found out that I was living here, and that he knew me from my home town, when he was in, prisoner of war, and he used to come to our house, and finally I let him in, into the room, because he convinced me that he knew me from my youth and everything, and suddenly he attacked me. Well, I, I defended myself and I threw him out, and when I came down next time, the caretaker said I was very lucky that I threw him out, because he actually was from the moral police, police, to try me out, whether I let men into my room, whether I am a prostitute! And then I found out that this hotel was full with prostitutes, and it was a hotel for prostitutes, who had to be registered, and as I wasn't registered ... so they kept an eye on me! And the first time I had a man in my room for exactly one minute, they straightaway followed it up. So when I found that out, of course, I was absolutely horrified, because again, my

complete innocence and naivety, I didn't realise, I have been living there for the last three or four, or five months, and I didn't realise what was going on around me, and I straightaway tried to find another room, which I did, and that was in the Jewish Quarter, in the Rue des Blancs Manteaux, on the, I think it was on the fourth floor of the hotel, it was, anyway, the top floor of the hotel.

Had you had any boyfriends before the War?

I had a very big love. I had no real boyfriends. I mean, we were in love with each other when we were 17, both of us were 17, and for one year it was love on both sides, except that I lived at home in Szombathely, and he lived in Budapest, and he came to Szombathely to, he came to Szombathely to give a concert, he was a cellist, and, and I played in the orchestra, and we fell in love at first sight, and then for one year we corresponded, and he came again, I organised the concert for him, and he came, under very very difficult circumstances, because, at that time, the Police didn't want to give permission for concerts by Jews, except to the official Jewish Orchestra. The official Jewish Music Society said that it was too late in the season, and I couldn't, and they wouldn't do anything, and I did it with a stolen stamp of the, well, with the help of another student friend of mine, who was a, who was very much in love with me, and he stole the stamp of the student society, and we issued tickets and that. As it happened, we filled the hall, and it was overflowing, people were standing in the, in the passage, and it was an immense success, the concert, which everybody said that I couldn't do it, so I was very proud of myself, and we were very much in love with each other, and we were holding hands and going for little walks, but I think we even kissed once! Completely innocent love, which after a year, his mother wrote me a very very nasty letter, I was, I was two months, three months older than he, and she thought that I was misleading her young son into terrible crimes, which, I mean, I was completely innocent, and she wrote me a very very nasty letter and broke off the whole relationship. And afterwards, we became very good friend. We are good friends until today, and I was, later on, we lived together, and he with his wife, and I with my husband, lived together in France, in the same hotel, and they worked together in one quartet, with a view of having an engagement, which never came through, but we never, and he treated his wife so badly that I was, I was very very

happy that nothing came of it. And he treated his women very badly, and I was very happy, but he is a great friend until today. A very famous cellist.

So his mother finished the relationship.

His mother finished the relationship in a very very nasty, oh, I saw him, I saw him, but it was finished, and he had, he then became a big boy and had, had affairs with women, lots of affairs with women.

And what about you, did you have any relationships with anybody else?

No, I was in love with him. I mean, I went out, I walked, I met, met boys, I had nice friendships, but I was in love with him, and so nothing else could happen, and here nothing happened either, so I was completely innocent before the War, and very very much in love.

End of F276 Side A

F276 Side B

So I, I moved in the Rue des Blancs Manteaux, in a hotel, and in the Canteen, where I was eating, I sometimes ate in the evening there too, I heard next door, a choir singing, and since I always sang in choirs, and I was a good sight reader, and had a, probably a good enough voice, because every time I went for an audition, I was accepted in choirs, professionally, singing professionally, I went in for, I thought it was an amateur choir, and I went in to ask whether they would audition me, and would accept me in the choir. It turned out that it wasn't an amateur choir, it was a professional choir, and, in principle, they were not allowed to take me because I had no working permission, but he took me, there was a, the conductor was a man who became, later on, quite well known, composer, Jacques Berlinski, and Jacques auditioned me, and straightaway engaged me for the choir, and illegally paid me. We were singing in the Neuilly Synagogue, and we were singing at weddings, and at receptions, and also in a radio broadcast programme, called, "La voix d'Israel", where, I mean, I was not a solo singer, but once it happened that the official alto solo singer didn't arrive, and actually I did the broadcast! Which was rather odd, because I never had a trained voice, but my voice was good enough, and sure enough and useful enough that they, that they employed me. I also sang regularly in another choir, I started singing regularly in another choir, in the largest synagogue in Paris, in the Rue de la Victoire, with Leon Algazi, as a conductor. There, I sang every, I think every Friday night, and every Saturday morning, I don't remember now, with the Neuilly Synagogue, I did special services, with Berlinksi, and the radio broadcasts, and we also gave concerts. And, I mean, it was all because I was working illegally, I was very badly paid in each of them, but, paid much less than the official price, but doesn't matter, I mean, I earnt a little bit. I did, I had to earn as much money as I possibly could, because nothing was enough, I mean, everything was so little, whatever I did. Now, when I left that weaver, my friend Bert, my French friend Bert, got me to another weaver. This weaver had a row of machines, it was already a weavers' factory, it was already a weavers' factory, where the bobbins were on a machine, and all I had to do, every time a thread broke, I had to knot it. Now, I was not very fast, and I was very very bad at the job, so it didn't last a very long time, because I was pretty hopeless at it. They were very kind to me but I was pretty hopeless at it, and so

I, again, I worked illegally, and was, of course, badly paid. In the meantime, I applied, because I was in concentration camp, I had the right to apply to the Sorbonne to be admitted for a course, on the Sorbonne, and I applied for Psychopedagogy, and for, for music as a secondary subject, music, history of music, and aesthetics. And I got a scholarship, which was about enough for my travel, it was absolutely ridiculous, the scholarship, but I mean, it, every little bit helped. And I, I got a job in the Hungarian House, in Rue Vaugirard, in, to write addresses, from, and help in the Office. This job was from 2 o'clock in the afternoon, until midnight, every day, and I, and so I, unfortunately, I couldn't attend the Psychopedagogy lectures, because they were in the afternoon, so I never ever attended my main subject, but I went to my Music History lectures, and I did pass exams, I mean, I went for a couple of years. Paul Marie Macon, my professor, was a Rameau specialist, and an incredibly chauvinistic Frenchman, for whom only French music existed. He accepted Cesar Franck who was a, who was a Belgian, as a Frenchman, but Beethoven, we had one lesson on in two years, Mozart we had one lesson on in two years, Bach we had one lesson on in two years, on the other hand, we got to know someone called Mehul and some other minor French composers, who I never ever heard again.

From which year to which year, were you there?

This was '45, end of '45, well, actually I think, yes, end of '45, '46, '47. In this choir with Jacques Berlinski, I used to come regularly, and one day I came to the rehearsal, and Jacques said that there is no rehearsal, and I was a little bit angry that he didn't let me know, because I could have done something else, he said no, he on purpose didn't let me know, because a friend of his is coming here, who is a Hungarian violinist, and he wanted me to meet him. And this was my future husband, Stefan Deak, who was, who was, Stefan was, had also no working permission, he came out in, I think 1938, or '39, he finished his studies at the Music Academy, and had his Professor, and Virtuoso in Hungary, and as a violinist and as a viola player, and then his father, who was a very rich man, packed him up and, and enrolled him at the Academy as a pupil of Gertler, who was a famous violinist, and the teacher of, who was in Brussels at the Academy, the Director of the Academy, and a Hungarian, famous violinist and violin teacher, who was also the teacher of the Queen of the Belgians, and was under her

protection, and he packed Stefan off so that he shouldn't have to go into the army, and, or later on, into labour service, this saved him from going into forced labour service. So he was in Belgium, and when Belgium was occupied, then he went to, as a refugee to France, first to Lyon, and in Lyon he was, I think, locked up for one month, in, in prison, but he got out, because someone provided him, he looked absolutely unJewish, he looked extremely Hungarian, and somebody managed to, to alter his passport, the religion in his passport, from Jewish to Protestant, and so he had his own passport, but it was not Jewish any more, but Protestant, and from Lyon, later on, when the Germans moved on, he went to Marseilles, and in Marseilles, the last year, he was in hiding with Spanish anarchists, and what I did not know, and I only found out much much later, 15 years after we got married, that he was already then in treatment, as a schizophrenic, and he had electric shock treatment already at the time, when he was in hiding, and that he had a breakdown, his first breakdown then. When I met him, he was very depressed, in a very bad condition, but then we were, most of us were pretty, in pretty bad condition, because we all lost our families. His father died in 1942, in cancer, his mother was deported from Budapest, on the way to Vienna she was killed. His elder sister was killed by a bomb in Budapest, and his younger sister, who was 10 years younger, was the only one who survived from his family, and she was in hiding during the War, and she survived. And this younger sister, was a little bit of a, a complex for Stefan, because he treated, she was very gifted, very gifted violinist, and he taught her, she was a very gifted musician, and he taught her, she was actually more gifted than he was, and he taught her, and since she was ten years younger, he treated her as his baby, practically, and, which had later on, very strong repercussions. He was always very very keen on little girls, and missed her terribly. He missed her much more than anybody in the family, and his breakdown came in, actually, in '42, after his father died. Up till then his father regularly sent him money, but after that, no money came forth any more, and, and that's when his breakdown came, when, when he had no more money from home, the regular allowance didn't come any more. And in spite of it, that actually, at that time, he was allowed to play in the orchestra in Marseilles, and he played in the Marseilles orchestra under the baton of Paul Pareil(?), who was a very famous conductor, but after the War he had no working permission. And so, at the time when I met him, he had no working permission, he moved up from Marseilles to Paris just about, nearly

the same time as I moved up from Paris, from Marseilles to Paris, and then we met through Berlinski, who introduced us. Now, Stefan was very reticent, he was Hungarian, he was a musician, he was Jewish, he was, he knew my big love, and I just heard that my big love married someone else, so I had no hope. He knew a lot of my friends, because I knew a lot of musicians, and he knew a lot of my friends, alive and dead, and so we had this in common, and we had in common that we were Jewish, non-religious, and, and Hungarian speaking. This was the tie. On the other hand, there were lots of things which, which they are not compatible at all, but he was, I must have, must have been my mother-instinct, or whatever it was, anyway, he was in such a bad condition that I somehow felt sorry for him, and I should have re-read Stefan Zweig's book, "Beware of Pity", and then perhaps I wouldn't have married him. But anyway, we moved together, because he had no money, I had very little money, and one room was cheaper than two rooms, and we decided we are going to get married. We couldn't get married straightaway because we were waiting for our papers to come from Hungary, for which we applied, birth certificate, which we needed, and it took quite a few months until it came. We eventually got married in June, 1946, when we already, by that time, we lived together already for, for some time, from January onward, I think so, we had been living together. I should have, if I had been more experienced, I would have had a warning, also, of his behaviour, because his studio, he had a studio, and the studio was in the most incredible mess, and dirty, and filth, and I tried to clean it up, I cleaned it up, but it was pretty difficult, because he just threw everything on to the floor, and it was very very difficult keeping some sort of order. He, but we, we didn't know what to do, what the future, he actually attended the same course at the Sorbonne as I did, but he didn't earn any money at all. I was brought up that a classical musician is something special, and therefore I accepted it that he didn't do absolutely nothing, that I did the shopping, I did the cooking, I did the cleaning, I did the, as it happened, I did the earning, I was working, and he didn't do anything at all, he was at home. Now, at one point, a friend of ours, well, actually, a cellist friend of ours came to Paris, to play, and we, oh no, before that already, in 1946, yes, sometime in 1946, I met an old friend of mine, a cellist, who was there with his wife, and he said that he is looking for a viola player, and when he heard that I am married to Stefan, he knew Stefan, and he said, whether I think Stefan would be interested, because they had a, a hope of getting a contract as a

quartet, to Radio Hilversum, and they wanted to practice for four months, and then go to Hilversum, and I knew the violinist, the first violinist, no, I knew the violinist, who was a superb violinist, who was going to be the second violinist he was going to be the cellist, the first violinist was someone who lived in Holland, and who was a much older person, whom I didn't know, but I knew the name, and then there would have been my husband. But since there was no hope for us, this was a marvellous thing, and we agreed, of course, we had to live, during that time. The idea was that we go down in Cannes, into a small hotel, I don't remember why they choose Cannes, but Cannes was, at the time, not very, not an expensive fashionable place, and we would be living in Cannes in a hotel, and they would practice there. And we got from the Student Union, lent us some money, lent us actually 10,000 francs, I think so, at the time, to, to live for the four months, to live, and we, we went to Cannes, and for four months we were there, actually we were there, I think, a little bit less, because after a while, it turned out that the first violinist was very bad, and altogether, there wasn't much hope that this is going to be a good quartet, and for some reason or other the Hilversum contract didn't come through, and so we actually wasted months and months and months. Then we went up to Paris again, and I started, I got myself a job with the American Joint Distribution Committee, as a typist. Now, as it happened, I had no idea about typing, I never typed in my life, but the receptionist, when I went for a test, was saw that I was absolutely desperate, and I said, "I have to have this job because I just don't know what to do, and I'm at the end of my tether." And he locked me into a room, and then he came in and did the typing for me, the test typing for me, and I was accepted. And then on the job, eventually, I learnt typing, but actually, I didn't need to type. I never used typing in the Joint, so I didn't even know, I didn't even learn typing, I remember now, because I never did any typing after that. But to get the job, I had to do some typing. And I was, I got the job, as a general dogsbody, with the very lowest pay, a so-called local staff, I was helping out the receptionist, I was helping out in the archives, because I had languages, actually after a while, they put me into the archives to scan newspapers in various languages, we had to cut out bits of paper which, any paper which mentioned Joint, the American Joint Distribution Committee, so I, I, it was very interesting, I enjoyed it very much, and it was a lovely job, but I was terribly terribly badly paid. Now I was, we were rather, the local staff was rather upset, because we were really badly paid, and there was,

there were the South Africans, and the Americans, and even the English girls, who came, and Australian women, who worked on the staff, they were paid about ten times as much as we were paid, and they had a right to a food parcel once a month, and we local staff, who were really starving, didn't have the right to a food parcel, which we never quite understood. Why was it that the Joint didn't? And I saw quite a lot of things which went on in the Joint, and I must say, I was very very disillusioned. I came there very naively, and I thought what a wonderful organisation they are, but I was very disillusioned after I have been working in there, because I saw how much money was spent on, on various things like, like the Head of the Joint getting a Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur medal, when, and I mean, which was partly paid for by big receptions, and, and we were treated very badly, and we were still starving. At one point, Starke heard about a, a conductor, musical director, who came from South Africa, from Durban, to make auditions, to take musicians to South Africa, to Durban, for his orchestra, and he told, because we were again, desperate, and actually, Stefan applied to go back to Hungary, he applied to the Russians, and luckily, the permission didn't come, because this was the very last thing I wanted to do, but we didn't know what to do, because we just saw no hope of living, I mean, with the Joint I could work, but otherwise I couldn't work, anything else was illegal work, and, and I, I just couldn't earn enough. I was doing, in the evening, I was doing shirts by the piece, and I was very slow and very bad at it, and absolutely hopeless, and it nearly broke me.

What do you mean shirts?

Sewing shirts, piece, it was paid by the piece, very very bad wages, I mean, it was, what's it called? Slave work, but there is another expression for it, I can't think of the word now, there were these ateliers, I mean, so that I was doing, I was working seven days a week, and in the evenings, to try and make ends meet and we were still hungry, I couldn't feed ourselves. Now, Stefan, I went with Stefan to the audition, with this South African musical director, and he played very beautifully, and there was a Russian lady, who was doing the interpreting, because we didn't, I mean, most of the musicians didn't speak English, and this musical director didn't speak French, and I told her a little bit our story, and I said, "We are absolutely desperate to go, to get this

job, because we just don't know what's going to happen to us." And she said she is going to speak to this musical director, and see whether she can help us, and actually, he didn't want to take Stefan, because he found that he was too good, and he wouldn't, probably wouldn't stay, because this orchestra was, as it turned out, not a very good orchestra, and, and most of the, very many of the musicians who came out after one year, after their one year contract expired, left, and went back again, and so he didn't want, he really wanted mediocre musicians, and not very good ones, but because she persuaded him, eventually the contract came through, and Stefan got the job for South Africa. Now that was a day, it must have been before I got the job in the Joint, because that day, I remember, I was sewing the whole day, shirts, and I earned the equivalent of about sixpence, because I was so hopeless at it. It was really terrible, I worked 11 hours, and I came home, and I was crying, I was crying the whole way home, because I was so tired, and so exhausted, and so hopeless. And when I came home, by that time, we lived in another hotel ... Before we went to Cannes, and we lived still in the Rue des Blancs Manteaux, in June '46, our papers came through, and we decided to get married. We didn't do, we were living together, and we were going to go to the Registry Office. My French uncle said that I could invite a few people and he would make a little, a few sandwiches, I mean, he was, he himself was very poor, so not a big reception, but he said he would do something for my wedding, and that was all we expected, but what I decided, that I am going to bake a cake. We had, of course, I couldn't bake in my room, but there was a Hungarian baker in the same street where I bought my bread, and I went down to, I, we only usually only bought our rations, because we just had no money at all, and only bought what was cheap on the rations, and I went to this Hungarian baker, and I told him, "Look, I am getting married. Do you think you could bake something for me, if I make something?" And he said "Yes". So I decided to make a poppy seed cake. He gave me some yeast, and I think he gave me some flour, a little bit of flour. And I went from one pharmacy to the other, because poppy seed in France was considered to be a poison, and you could only get about half an ounce a time, so I went from one pharmacy to another, and only pharmacies, and so I went from one pharmacy to another until I got enough to stuff my cake with, and I, and I took it to the baker, and he ground the, the poppy seed for me, and then I took the, and I made the cake, and I took it to him to bake, but before I went there, there was, in the same house, the hotel was next door,

there was a little grocery store, and every month, once a month, I went down to get out our rations, but nothing else. Now, this time, I bought some raisins, and I think I also bought some nuts, and something else. Anyway, the lady who, we never spoke, I never spoke to her, but this time she came up to me, and she said, "Look, you have been coming here for quite a few months, and you always bought only the rations." ...

End of F276 Side B

F277 Side A

You bought the rations only, every month. What has happened? Is there anything special? So I said, "Yes, well, I am baking a cake, because it's my wedding in a couple of days time, and the baker promised to put it into the oven for me." So she started to ask me, "Where are your parents? Where is your wedding?" And I said, "Well, we are in the Registry Office." "And where do you come from?" And I told her, we started to talk a little bit, and then she said, "Look, I have to rush away now, but would you do me a favour and come back in half an hour? Can you come back in half an hour? And I, I have to tell something important to you." And when I came back, that she spoke to, they were Russian Jews, and she spoke, they have got a little Russian committee, and she spoke to the members of the committee, and they already hired a hall, they want, they don't think that we should have such a miserable wedding, and if I have got some, we have got some friends, we could invite 10 friends, and they are making a dinner for us, and a wedding reception for us, in this hall. It was somewhere near Rue St. Lazare, or Metro St. Lazare, and they, they already hired the hall, and they would take us there by car, and we should be ready, I mean, the evening of our wedding, and they take us there, and we should invite ten people, we can invite ten people. So this was very exciting and very nice, and was very moved, and I invited the ten friends, and we eventually arrived in this hall, and there was a beautifully set table with flowers, and lots of wine, and, and there were 30 Russians, and the ten, like our ten friends, and they all brought presents, and they brought gold rings, because we had no money for gold rings, we needed a ring, but all we could afford were silver rings, and we just couldn't afford to have gold rings. So they came with a tray of gold rings to try on, which one fitted us, and we got two gold rings, and eventually they even produced a sheet, and four men were holding it, and the Rabbi, and, and put us under the chupah, and made a wedding. As we were not religious, we didn't take it very seriously, and there was, I remember that when my husband had to stamp on the glass, to break it, he said, in Hungarian, "Who is going to pay for the, for the shoe, for my sole, the repair of my sole?" So we didn't take it, of course, only the Hungarian friends understood it, we didn't take it very seriously, the whole thing, but they also produced a Kutuvah, and everything was done in order, and we had, actually had a Jewish religious wedding ceremony, and lots of beautiful

presents. And they took us home by car, and next day, we had a robbery in our room, and every one of the presents which the Russian Jews gave us has disappeared, and when I went down into the shop, to thank them, and to tell them what has happened, that how terrible, what terrible thing happened, the shop has closed down, and has disappeared too. I never ever saw any of those Russians again. The shop actually has closed down, and I don't know whether they moved somewhere else, or what happened, but I never ever saw these Russian again. And if I wouldn't have had witnesses for this wedding, I would have thought I'd dreamt it up, but actually I have got witnesses for it, that it happened, that has happened, and not only that, but later on, when I wanted, when I started my first divorce, and I wanted to, I went to the Consistoire, to see about, about the Jewish wedding, to, to cancel the Jewish Wedding, and to ask for a ghat, it turned out that we were never ever registered, so the whole Jewish wedding was, I don't understand it up till today, what sort of a farce it was, and who, who robbed us. They actually only took away the presents which the Russian Jews gave us. None of the presents which our friends gave us, had disappeared! So it's a very very weird story, but it's a true story, and I have witnesses for it, that it has happened. (laughs) And I never ever saw any of these Russian Jews again, so I don't know. But we had the dinner, and we had, it was a very beautiful reception.

You laugh about it now, but what did you feel like at the time?

Well, I laughed about it then too, because we didn't take the whole thing seriously, we were not religious, we didn't expect a religious wedding, the whole thing was completely unexpected, we got a very good dinner out of it, and we had two gold rings! But otherwise, the whole thing was as if we had dreamt it up! But as I say, I have got witnesses that it has happened, and that I didn't dream it up, it was a true story! No, it didn't, we laughed about it, even then. We were back at square one, and, and then came, after that came, I mean, after a while, came this audition with the South African musical director, and, oh that came only after we came back from Cannes, of course, and by that time, we didn't live any more in Rue des Blancs Manteaux, but we lived in a place called Hotel Welcome, in corner of Rue de Saints, the Hotel is there today, I believe it's a beautiful hotel, a very nice three star hotel

today. I have never been in it. In those days it was anything but a three star hotel! It was a miserable little room, and the loo was in the staircase, and it was one of these French standing loos, and it was a very very small room, you could hardly move in it. There was a cupboard in it, there was one bed in it, which we shared, and there was a little rickety table in it, and one chair, and it was, we were very very cramped. But we enjoyed it. It was a hotel where there were a number of Hungarian musicians living, and it was fun, and we were altogether in a very good musician company, at the time, and it was really fun. We still went, continued going to University, and no, I stopped going, because I, I then finally got that job with the Joint, and started working full-time in the Joint and gave up the, I mean, I gave up already, before we went to Cannes, the job at the Hungarian House. I was still singing in the choirs.

How old was your husband?

My husband was eight years older than I, so I was, by that time 22, and he was 30, yes, when we married he was 30, I was 22. We, he was still at home, doing nothing, we met a Hungarian gypsy who tried to persuade him to come and work with him in his orchestra, and would have paid him extremely well, and he went and did one session and came back that he can't do that, I mean, it would have saved us, but he refused to do it. By that time, I must say, I wasn't so convinced that it was justified, that he did absolutely nothing, and that only I had the struggle, because not only that he did nothing, but by that time, he started going shopping, but he did, whenever he went and got our rations, like the sugar ration or the cheese ration, he ate it up, both our rations, and I didn't get a, ever any sugar or any cheese, neither did I get much bread, that he usually ate that too, and I didn't think any more that it was such a good idea, the whole thing, our whole marriage was such a good idea. Eventually, one day, but this was before I went to the Joint, I came home, extremely exhausted, after having done shirts, and Stefan wasn't in the room, he was in the room of another violinist, of a, called Robert Gerler, who became, who went then to America, and became quite a well-known violinist there, and Robert was, he was, Stefan was sitting, very very depressed in Robert's room, and Robert said, "Stefan, tell Gertrude what has happened. Tell her." And he said, "Well, it's not", Stefan said, "It's not important, anyway, I can't do it." And I didn't know what they were talking about.

Finally Robert told me that the contract came, and he has been accepted for the job in South Africa. And Stefan said he can't do it, because he's mad. He is sick, and he's mad, that he can't do it. And, of course, I went raving mad, because I said, "Well, we have been waiting for that, the whole time, and finally something, there is some hope that he can earn some living," and he said, "Well, he can't do it." And from that day on, he started to do all kinds of mad things. He went up on to the Eiffel Tower to throw himself down, he, but then he walked down again. I came home, and he was sitting there, cutting his wrist, but I mean, he timed it for the time when he knew that I was coming home. He was doing all kinds of weird things, and weird behaviour, and only a few months later did I find out, I bought a book once, at the Bookiniste, on the Quay of the Seine, and I, and because, for my Psychology course, but I thought, Psychopedagogy course, but it was a medical psychology book, and I put it in a corner, on a shelf, and it turned out that Stefan read it, and he worked out every single symptom which was there, written for a schizophrenic, and he absolutely repeated, but that I found out much later. At that time he was just, just a symptoms game. And I was at the end of my tether. Eventually, I called in a friend who was a doctor, and he came and he said, "Well, he has to go either into a mental hospital, or I have to get him on to the ship to this South African, on the South African job, and we will see that he, and perhaps if he gets there, once he gets there, and he's in a real job situation, he will be all right. We either risk that, or he goes into a mental hospital. But as a non-paying patient in a mental hospital, in a French mental hospital, that is the end of him. He will never come out of it again, because that's how the system works. They will keep him for his life there, and he will deteriorate." So he advises that I get him onto the boat for South Africa. Now, he, he said he is not going, and one night, I woke up, one of the things which he did was, that I woke up one night, and he was throttling me, he was trying to kill me, and in the meantime, I mean, and I mean, I woke up, and started to scream, and then he left me off, and he was crying, and he said, Yes, he wanted to kill me, because then they would put him under the guillotine, and they would kill him, and then it would be the end of him, and he can't go on. Anyway, after that, one of my colleagues at the Joint, because I was in a terrible state, I mean, I just, I was working 14 hours a day, I was doing any job, I was writing addresses at night, I was going into the choir, I was working the whole day in the Joint, and, and in the meantime, cooking and seeing that we have clean clothes, and I

mean, I just, I was just, it was just too much, I just couldn't cope any more, and, and this madman. So this colleague of mine, said, "You can't ..." I mean, that day, I arrived crying, in the Joint, I mean, they knew about my problems, and she said, "You are not going home any more. You come and stay with us, we have a second room, and you come and stay with us." And eventually, I got a room where she lived, and I moved in there. I used to go back to Stefan and cook his meals, in between work and other jobs, but I didn't, I didn't live with him any more, and by that time I decided I have had enough of this marvellous marriage. What I did not say, that our wedding night, he cried through. That was my first inkling, my first time that I realised that the man was sick, which was on our wedding night, where he cried through the whole night, and, and from then on, actually he quite often behaved oddly, but until this contract came, it was still all right, but the moment the contract came, and there was a question of his having some responsibility, then he went completely mad, and the situation became completely untenable. So eventually, they, he had a priority passage to South Africa, and anyway, I decided I don't want to go to South Africa with him, but I'm going to put him on to the boat, and see that he gets there, but the rest, I will see what's happening. He had a priority passage. I was going, I couldn't go with him anyway, and I was going to follow him six months later, but by that time, I decided that I am not going to follow him. But I got him onto the boat, it was a very very difficult job, because wherever he was, he didn't want to move from there, so if I got him, I got him out of the room, and I got him on to the train, and from the train he didn't want to move, and I got him onto the boat, and from the boat he didn't want to move, and this went on, non-stop, until I managed to get him on to the boat, and hoped that things would be all right. I mean, as I say, it was a decision which I took with the doctor, together, who said, "Well, this gives him hope. If he goes into the mental hospital in Paris, there is no hope for him, whatsoever", because the situation was absolutely dismal in there, in the mental hospitals at that time. And so he got to South Africa eventually, and he was in a very bad state, but the orchestra got him someone to shave him, and to, to clean him, and get him to the orchestra, and he played beautifully, and he worked perfectly. Now, I decided I am not going. I started divorce proceedings, and that's when I found out that that Jewish wedding was not registered at all, and I had no Jewish wedding, officially, so I only started the divorce with the non-Jewish, with the normal wedding, and a lawyer friend started it,

a lawyer friend of some friends was doing it for me. In the meantime, the Joint was telling me, I mean, my salary still was very bad, the Joint was getting smaller, and they said that eventually they would have to sack me, and there's absolutely no hope for me in the Joint, to stay in the Joint, and I have still no working permission, and that everybody is trying to emigrate, I have got a visa to go to South Africa, and they think I should go to South Africa. And I didn't want to. And I said, "I certainly am not going back to Stefan." So some of the South African women who worked there, I must say, the South African women and the American women, who worked at the Joint, they all took me under their wing, and spoiled me, and were marvellous to me, and were trying to help me. They were absolutely lovely.

Were they French, or had they come over as refugees as well?

No, no, no, they came to work with the Joint, they were foreign staff of the Joint.

So they were all foreign?

They were all foreign, who were working in the, well, the main Joint Office was in Paris, the Headquarters of the Joint was in Paris, and they were working at the Headquarters in Paris, and they were very well paid, and, and lived in very beautiful conditions, and they, they, but they helped me very much. And the one arranged, in Capetown, for me, to get a job as a nursery school teacher, because I said I would like to go back and work again with children, and she arranged that a job was awaiting me in Capetown, and finally, I, and by that time, the Immigration Department, I mean, I was a very very small fry really, the lowest of the low in the Joint, but by that time everybody took an interest in me, and the Head of the Emigration Department said, "Look, if you don't like it, you go to South Africa, if you don't like it, we pay your trip back." And by that time, as I say, I saw quite a lot of corruption in the Joint, and since I didn't take the initial offer of money, I felt no, I felt that I can accept it from the Joint, I have been working very hard, under bad conditions, with the bad pay, and so what have I got to lose?

Did you pay for the journey yourself?

No, no, no, the Joint, the Joint paid, no, the Joint paid for the journey going, cos that was a part of Emigration. It was Emigration Policy that they paid for refugees to go to different countries, but they said they would pay me my journey back as well, if I found that I really couldn't settle and I hated every minute of it.

And do you know whether they, to what extent they supported other refugees and survivors financially?

Well, they did support, in a very, they did support, I mean, everybody that was kept alive, and they had canteen tickets, and they had, and when they emigrated they helped them with their visa, and they helped them with emigration, and they had to go to the places, where they emigrated, and helped them to settle, certainly. But from, well, the very minimal amount they could get away with, and that was all right, but as I say, I, in the beginning, didn't accept anything from them, and then when I saw that they spent much more money on representation and on parties and that the foreign workers got food parcels but didn't, who were starving, and were on rations, didn't get food parcels, the foreign workers also had a canteen, a very good canteen, an American canteen, which we weren't allowed to use, so we were hungry, because the food situation was terrible at that time in France, and so I, we didn't ... so I had no, no bad conscience, by that time, to accept anything from them, because I saw that so much money was wasted, that I didn't see that there was anything wrong in my also accepting. The last few weeks I was put into the main archive, the Filing Department, and there I worked with a, the Head of the Filing Department was an American lady, whom everybody hated, and who was absolutely wonderful to me, and taught me everything about filing and archives, and, and I got on extremely well with her, Mrs. Tannenbaum, she was really quite outstanding. Everybody hated her, she was a, a cantankerous woman, but I got on extremely well with her, and she was lovely to me, and I learnt a tremendous amount, and later on in life I was very grateful to her, because I did lots of work which I couldn't have done if I hadn't had the training by her.

How many people were working at the Joint, at the time?

I don't know, 120, 200, many. There were very big Departments, very large Departments, there was a Medical Department, Emigration Department, the General Staff, the General Headquarters. As I say, the General Headquarters were then in Paris, and everything was directed from Paris, so that it was a very very large organisation, and it had offices in various places in Paris. I don't know exactly, but I'm sure there were at least about 180 people, in every Department there were round about 60 people, certainly. And of this there were usually about 20 foreigners, I mean, Australian, South African, American or even English, and the rest was so-called "local staff", were French, or immigrants, and the French and the immigrants were terribly badly paid. And so eventually, I, they got me on to the train, before that, there was another interesting thing happened. I had no papers, now, the South Africans said that I can only go out if I had a valid passport. Now, I had no valid passport because I didn't go back to Hungary, and I had no passport, this was in 1948 already. Before that, when I came back from London, where I accompanied my husband up to Southampton, I was so starved, because I used to tell him that I had lunch at the office, which I didn't have, and therefore I didn't need food in the evening, and I was absolutely starved and terribly terribly weak, and therefore the French Health Service sent me into a, a convalescent home, to feed me up. And this convalescent home was actually a home for former concentration camp inmates mainly. It was in the Alps, in Haute-Savoie, in a place called Combloux, it was a student home, it was only for students, and I was there for one month, to be fed, and then in March, I eventually left, but before that, I needed a passport, and I had no passport, so I went to the Hungarian Embassy, and I had another big row there, because they said I can have no passport, and while I had a rather big row, somebody came out from another office, and this was a man and asked what, what's happening here? And he started to ask me questions, and when he heard my name, which was Mosonyi, he asked whether I knew anyone of the name Daje(??) Mosonyi, and I said, "He was my father." And my father was a big socialist, very left-wing socialist, and he wrote lots of articles in newspapers in periodicals, and this man knew him, and he, not only he knew him, he was the Secretary to the Ambassador, who was Count Karolyi, and Count Karolyi knew my father as well, or knew of my father, and when he heard that my father was deported and killed during the War, he said that I should

come back in a couple of days, and he will see what he can do, and he actually, they issued me a passport, which they had no right to do, but I had a passport, it was actually a false passport, because the Embassy didn't have right to issue a passport, but they did issue me one, with a passport for one year. Now I didn't know that it was a false passport, but they issued me with one, and then I got my visa for South Africa, which, actually, everything else was done by the Joint, because I said I didn't want to go, and if they want me to go, then they must arrange it. I want really, I really wanted to stay in Paris, because I adored Paris, I was hungry, and I was, it was difficult, but I had my friends there and I loved Paris, and I didn't really want to leave. And then I, I went to, eventually they put me on the train, and the whole Joint, well, not the whole Joint, but there were 50 people at the train, and in the, as I got into the train, I asked the Head of the Emigration, I was going to Genova from there, and I asked, because I was arriving roundabout midnight in Genova, and I asked "Where do I go if nobody is"

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... Emigration, "Where do I go if nobody is waiting for me in Genova?" He said I don't need to worry, somebody will be there, but if not, go to the Hotel Bristol. And I, when I arrived, now, I must say, that up till then, I always was very very responsible, and I never, in my life, did anything irresponsible, but this time I just, was, felt completely irresponsible, the whole was going to be an adventure. I felt that I didn't want to go, they persuaded me to go because they said that all the emigrants are waiting for visas to go somewhere, and, and can't go anywhere, and have got trouble getting somewhere, I have got a visa, a permit to go to South Africa, and I don't want to use it, and that can't be, so I must go, but since I didn't really want to go, and I wasn't interested at all in going, so I took it as an adventure, so if it works it works, if it doesn't work, then I come back. And I felt completely irresponsible, and, and the whole trip was then, became a completely irresponsible trip, and therefore, rather amusing. I went, I arrived in Genova, and there was nobody there from the Joint, so I asked where the Hotel Bristol was, and I went to Hotel Bristol. Now, it turned out that the Hotel Bristol was the most expensive hotel in town, in Genova, and I booked in there for the night, because I didn't want to sit on the street, and he told me Hotel Bristol, and next morning, and I had something to eat in the hotel, because I was hungry, and I had no money on me, and then I went, next morning I went to the Office of the Joint, and they asked me "Where did you spend the night?" And I said, "At the Hotel Bristol." And they started to shout at me, and I said, "Well, Mr. Pines told me to go to the Hotel Bristol if nobody is there to wait for me. He said somebody will be there to wait for me, and will take me somewhere." So anyway, just then Mr. Pines phoned from Paris, asking whether I arrived safely, and when he has been told the story, he rather laughed, he found it rather funny, and because he told my Hotel Bristol, by this time I became a VIP, because Mr. Pines, the Head of the Immigration, was phoning from Paris to ask how I was, and that, so I became a VIP. I very kindly offered my help during the days that I spent in Genova, in the office, but, and in the meantime, I went to look at, they put me into a boarding house, a very nice little boarding house, and I enjoyed myself no end, it was very lovely, being in Genova. I had no, no responsibility, I got my meals, beautiful Italian meals, the weather was nice, and Genova was beautiful, and I really enjoyed it. And then

eventually, five days later, I was put onto the boat, and Mr. Pines also said on the phone to the Head of the Emigration Department in Genova, a Mr. Schwarz, that he should take very very good care of me, and as it happened, my suitcase has disappeared when I got on to the boat. Everybody else's, we were 13 on the boat from the emigration, and everybody's suitcase was there except mine. Well, at the last minute it was found, it has been put onto another boat, but at the last minute it was found, and it was restored and Mr. Schwarz said, "Now you are on the boat, now you are safe, now everything is going to be fine." And we went off, and I, somehow, got together, I didn't know really the other people on the boat, or wasn't interested in the other people on the boat, I do not know why I didn't join the other people who were there from the Joint, aboard, but I joined an Italian group. I decided it would be nice to learn Italian, Italian is a beautiful language, and I'm going to use this trip to learn Italian, so I joined an Italian group. I suppose they accepted me because I was a, quite a good looking girl, and so I suppose they accepted me, and I spent the evening, the day and the evening with them, and next day, we arrived in Naples, and in Naples, they said we could go down to Naples, while the boat is going to stand in Naples for the day. Now, I had a printed timetable, and on this timetable it said that the boat is leaving Naples at midnight. So we went down with this Italian group, I had no money, I had altogether, I think, for the whole trip, I could bring out from France #5 worth of money, or even less, I don't remember any more, but very very little, I had practically no money, and we came, we went down, and with a whole group of Italians, and went round in Naples, and enjoyed it very much, went to the Museum, and went to see things, and then somehow, we lost, we lost the group, and I remained with one man alone, by the name of Pietro Rambaldo, I still remember it, funnily enough! And Pietro Rambaldo was not a very bright young man, was a rather stupid young man. He was very nice, and he courted me, which was very charming, and I enjoyed it, I mean, the whole thing was fun, and I didn't take it very seriously, but he, we, at, at 6 o'clock, half past six in the evening, our money, his money ran out, because I had no money, and his money ran out. I actually left my, I only had a camera, and I had a jacket on, and this was in, in March 1946, 1948, sorry. I had my camera, an old camera, I had my jacket on, I left that morning, my watch, on the boat, my passport was on the boat, I had absolutely nothing, no papers, nothing at all. And at half past six, we decided we go back and have a nice meal on the boat, and then we

come down again for a couple of hours before the boat leaves, we were really enjoying ourselves and it was really lovely. And we went to the port, we found that the boat has changed its timetable, and left at 6 o'clock! And there we were standing with nothing! And Pietro was terribly upset, and I started to laugh, and he thought I was the most fantastic woman on earth, because every other woman would have gone into hysterics and would have cried and screamed, but I stood there and laughed! And found it so funny, because the day before, Mr. Schwarz said, "No, nothing can happen to you, you are on the boat"! So anyway, we discussed what we could do, and we decided that, he, he said he would be, he is going to Kenya to work, he was during the War in Kenya, as a, as a prisoner, or, and he was going out now, to Kenya, to work as a draughtsman, and why don't I come with him, and he will marry me. And I had not the slightest intention of marrying him, but, at the same time he said, Well, even if I don't marry him he will see, he will guarantee my passage, and there is an office of this Kenya Office in Genova, and we can go there. And we went, well, we couldn't go that day, and we had not a penny to our names, so we couldn't, we slept out on a bench, it was quite warm, we slept out on a bench in a park, and then next morning, we went first to Lloyd Triestino, to the ship company and show them that I had the printed timetable, and what has happened here? And then we went, and they, they said they are going to send a telegram to the boat, that we are going to join them in Port Said, and we have to go up to Rome, and get a passage from, a flight from Rome to Cairo, to get onto the, to catch the boat in Port Said, five days later. Well, it all sounded very adventurous! And then we went to his firm, and his firm said we should go, gave us money, and they said we should go up to Rome, and there they will deal with it, they phoned them and explained the situation. So we went up to Rome, and it was terribly terribly difficult to get flights in those days, I mean, everybody wanted a flight, there were very few flights, and his firm got us on to a flight, and he was guaranteeing for my ticket as well. The only problem was that they had to pay in dollars, the flight company asked for the money in dollars, and these people could only pay in sterling, the only foreign currency they could provide was sterling and not dollars. And I said, "Well, now that we have got the flight, and now that we have got the guarantee for the ticket, I can go to the Joint, and ask them to convert the sterling into dollars, and I went to the Rome Office of the Joint, and when I came in there, there were about fifty people waiting, sitting waiting to be heard, at

the reception, and I went up to the receptionist, and I said, "Look, I must, very very urgently speak with the Head of the Joint", and she said, "What do you think? Who are you?" And I said my name, and he said, "What did you say?" And I said, "That's my name, and I worked in Paris at the Joint", and he said, "We were looking for you everywhere, where have you been? We know that you missed your boat." What happened, what I did not know, that we were 13 on the Tourist Class from the Joint, emigrants, but there was one person, a South African worker, from the Joint, who was travelling First Class, and she had the list of all the people who were on the boat, and when I didn't come back, she was notified, so she telegraphed to Paris, she telegraphed to Genova, she telegraphed to Rome, and she telegraphed to South Africa that I disappeared, so when I arrived in Rome, everybody knew already about it, and they straightaway ushered me into the Head Office, to the Head of the Rome Department, and I told them the story, what has happened, and showed them my printed timetable, and that it was the first time in my life, apparently there was a board put out that they changed the time of the departure, but since it was the first time in my life that I was on a boat, and that I left the boat, I had no idea, and we both didn't see it, so we, they said, they are willing to convert the money, but they don't allow this Italian to pay for me, they are going to pay for the flight, and I have to sign that I am going to pay it back, which I did, I said I agreed to it, that when I start working I am going to, they can reduce it from my pay, and, and I, but by that time, actually, already three days passed, and we had no money, because we didn't tell the firm that we had no money, we only asked for the flight ticket, and we were sleeping out rough, and we didn't eat, and Pietro was madly in love with me, which was rather funny, because I wasn't, and I found it rather amusing. As I said, he was a very nice chap, but he was very very stupid, and I had not the slightest intention of, of having anything to do with him, and I was, if he had paid for my fare, I would have refunded him, obviously, if he had guaranteed for it, I had not the slightest intention of accepting it from him, but, anyway, the Joint said, but the Joint said, that they can't, I need a, an Egyptian visa, and they can't do anything for me, it was March 1948, which was a rather critical time, and they said I must go to the Egyptian Embassy, and speak to the Ambassador, and get myself a visa, without telling him that I'm Jewish. If I tell him that I'm Jewish, I'm lost, I mean, March 1948 was not the best time to go to Cairo as a Jew, and they said, since I, they don't think I want to go into concentration camp

once more, so I'd better not tell him that I'm Jewish. Anyway, I went to the ambassador, and for some reason or other, I had a very nice conversation with him, I even sang to him. I sang student songs, French student songs, I had a very big repartory, large reportory of student songs, and I remember I sang these student songs, and I got my visa, and he phoned in front of me to Cairo that when I arrive on the plane, the next day, which would be at 5 o'clock in the morning, or the day after, it was, I don't remember any more, I think it was the day after, they take me off, they get me on to the boat, I mean, with my, with Pietro, together. And, but with Pietro there was no problem, I mean, he had the papers from the firm, but I had absolutely no paper, nothing whatsoever. Now, next day we went to the airport, and we were boarding the plane. Now I had no passport. I had a paper of, for an Egyptian visa, that they allowed me to go in, but I wasn't in Italy, because I had no entry permit to Italy, I only had a transit permit, and the transit permit expired five days before, and I had no passport, so for all purposes I was not in Italy, so how can they let me out from Italy, if I'm not in Italy? And this went on for quite a long time, I was put on the plane, I was taken off the plane, I was put on the plane, and finally, I think they must have decided that I'm less bother if they leave me on the plane, and let me get out of the country without further ado, than if they keep me there, because then I, they have to give me refugee status, or whatever, because I had no papers. I had no money, I had no papers, I had nothing. They couldn't do anything with me, so they decided to let me out. And in, on the plane, they fed us beautifully on the Egyptian plane to Cairo, and then when we arrived in Cairo, when the doors opened, my name was called up straightaway, and two policemen came and took me off, and they took me with them, and Pietro as well, and they said they are going to put me onto the boat, but the boat has left Port Said, and now it's on it's way to Suez, so they will take us to Suez. In the meantime, it, it turned out that, oh, they gave us a fantastic breakfast, and I mean, it was really a fantastic meal, because we didn't have a proper meal since we left the boat, five days earlier, and it was marvellous, and also, but they asked me a number of times if I am not Jewish, and I, this was the only time in my life that I ever denied that I am Jewish, but I mean, I wasn't going to, it was good that the Joint warned me to say that I'm not Jewish. And I was singing my way through, I was singing again French songs, student songs, entertaining the Police with French student songs. Eventually they took us out into Port Suez, and the head of Port Suez was

there, and I was singing songs there too. He even took me on, he wanted always to take me alone, but I didn't, wouldn't budge without Pietro. He wanted to take me into Suez, to show me Suez, but I, only without Pietro, and I decided it wasn't quite a good idea, and I didn't go, and then, then he took, he took us on a motor boat, on an inspection of the, it's still going strong, it's a very famous, very very rich, one of these very rich tourist ships, luxury ships, I can't think of it, what it's called now, I mean, it was an incredible ship, and he took me to see it, took us to see it, and poor Pietro was seasick the whole time on the motor boat, and I was laughing and singing, and was enjoying myself, found it terribly funny, all, and eventually, our ship arrived at 2 o'clock in the morning, and they took us on our ship, and it turned out that because we didn't turn up in Port Said, they left our passports in Port Said, they left our luggage in Port Said, no, the luggage was in the hold, sorry, the luggage was in the hold, and they our berths, berth,

The berth?

Berth, to some other immigrant, because this was an immigrant ship. This was a ship called "Toscana". The Toscana was a cargo ship before the War, it was a troop carrier for 400 people, troops, during the War, and it was converted now into an emigrant ship, and there were 1200 on the ship, we were so incredibly cramped, that it just was, I mean, unbearable. The cabin in which I was had no port hole, no aeration, there was absolutely no air there, and we were getting into hotter and hotter climate, and we were, we all took up our blankets on to board, and we are sleeping upstairs, and we are getting Krätze. What's Krätze? Anyway, some infection which goes in between the fingers, which attacks in between the fingers, and terribly itchy.

Eczema?

A sort of eczema but it is a specific eczema, which was an infection, which everybody got on board. It was filthy, it was terrible, and, but it was still very funny, and they had a terrible storm before they got into Suez, and I missed that storm. Everybody was seasick apparently, and we were in Rome, in Cairo, and in Suez in the meantime! And eventually, we arrived in South Africa. I think it was on 8th April, or something

like that, beginning of April, I don't remember exactly the date. We were actually two days, we had two days delay, because there was a storm, and the ship couldn't go so fast, and when we arrived, my husband was downstairs, I was on the third floor of the boat, and my husband was down below, filthy, dirty, with a very big beard, shouting obscenities, in Hungarian. Now, there were a couple of other Hungarians on the boat, and nobody else understood, but he was shouting obscenities. We arrived at 6 o'clock in the morning, and my passport has not arrived yet. And my passport hasn't arrived, the whole day it didn't arrive, and there was a mail at 6 o'clock in the evening, and finally my passport arrived. In the meantime, everybody was let off the boat, except myself, because I, my passport hasn't arrived, and it was a question that they take me back, and because they were delayed they were going to turn back straightaway, but eventually my passport arrived, and they let me off, and one of the South African girls, with whom I worked in the Joint, notified her family, and her mother and her brother-in-law came to fetch me, and they took me with them, and they, the Jewish community hired a room in a hotel, and I was going to stay in a hotel, in a very small hotel, Jewish hotel, for a few days, until things sorted themselves out. Because what the South African Embassy told me in Paris, that I am getting a temporary residents permit for three weeks, which then would be converted into a permanent residents permit, and then I can work, but the first three weeks I wouldn't be able to work while I have a temporary residents permit. Now, as it happened, one week after I arrived, Smuts fell, and the Nationalist government came in, and my temporary residents permit expired, and it wasn't, and the permanent residents permit didn't come through until 1951! And I had no papers. I was, I had no residents permit, I was not allowed to work, and since I came, my visa was really issued because my husband was in Durban, I wasn't allowed to move on to Capetown, so I was stuck in Durban.

It's the sixth session with Trude Levi, and it's the 28th June, 1989.

Stefan was visibly pleased that I was there, and he was getting better every day, and we didn't stay together, but we started to meet more often, and eventually we decided that we are going to live together again, and we will try once more, whether things work out between us, and he got, he, he went regularly to the orchestra, and started to shave himself, and wash himself normally, I mean, once the orchestra came back from the tour and he went with them, off from holiday, and he, and we were trying to find a, accommodation. Now, accommodation in Durban was incredibly difficult to get, in 1948. During the War, though they had no danger from the War, except that they had a Japanese ship once, three miles out at sea, but otherwise, they had absolutely no attack, but they didn't, I, I believe they didn't build any new housing, and quite a lot of people came out to South Africa after the War, and it was terribly terribly difficult to get accommodation, and I went from one address to another, I looked in newspapers, I phoned, I tried to get something, and was absolutely unable to get anything, and one day, I was standing at a bus stop, and waiting for a bus, which didn't come, somebody gave me, actually, the wrong information, and I was at the wrong bus stop anyway, but a lady who also was waiting for, or who came to wait for her correct bus, started speaking to me, and when she heard that I am, I was really desperate, because I was standing there for nearly an hour, waiting for that bus which was not coming, she said, well, maybe she can help, because she has got a flat, and she could really put down a bed in her son's flat, and sleep there, and no, she could, well, first she said that she could share the flat with us, and we could stay with her, and so I went to look at it, and it was a very nice two-bedroomed flat, and she, or was it a one-bedroom? It might have been a one-bedroom flat, yes, it was a one-bedroom flat, and she, she let us stay there. So we moved in there, and after a short while, she, her name was Mrs. Evans, and she was a very simple woman, very nice woman, and her son lived downstairs in another flat, and eventually she said, well, it's not right that she should stay with us, and she will let us, she will put down a bed in her son's flat, in the passage, and she will sleep there, and we can use, have the use of the flat, which was quite marvellous of her. And she actually didn't charge us a higher rent than what she paid, only, only what she paid, so she didn't earn anything on it. Some time later, it, it turned out to be, it turned out that she wasn't even allowed to do that, and eventually she lost the flat, and we were kicked out, well, I was kicked out of the flat. Stefan

got better and better, and I got pregnant, and we were very happy, and everything was, and he started playing solo, and he had quite a lot of solo engagements, and I was in my, I was in my fifth month, when Stefan was so well, and actually so high, that he started to become a genius, considered himself a genius, then, then superman, and then God! And was dictating, writing his new ten commandments, and was running amok, and one day he came, he went to see one of his pupils at midnight, and woke up the whole family, and I mean, this pupil was, I think, 14 years old, and he said he wants to marry her, and wants to sleep with her, and wants to take her home now, and he's going to marry her. And he came home, and woke me up and ...

End of F277 Side B

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He woke me up and said that I had to get out of the flat, because he is bringing Gloria home, and she is going to be his wife from now on. But of course, it was all in his imagination. In the meantime, he was also practising frantically, and learning a concerto in one day, it was an incredible speed, and he was playing it, he played, actually, at that period, he played suddenly a Beethoven concerto which was a most beautiful Beethoven concerto I ever heard, and it is not only imagination, but I had actually proof for it, many many years later when I met someone who heard him, a musician, who heard him, about 20 years later I met someone, and she remembered that she never heard the Beethoven concerto played so beautifully as he played it that particular occasion, and that was the occasion when the next day, he went completely wild, and one had to, we had to call the doctor, and they had to take him into a sanatorium, because he was, he had a complete breakdown. I mean, he went completely overboard, and well, the Jewish community looked after him, I mean, we only started, we had no money, we only started. We bought ourselves a kitchen, the only time I ever bought anything on hire purchase, it was a kitchen table with four kitchen chairs, and we still owed money on it, and luckily, and I was terribly worried about it, what am I going to do, because how am I going to pay? Because he was then, I had no working permission, and he was, I was pregnant, and he was in and out of a sanatorium, for which a, a very expensive sanatorium, for which the Jewish Community paid. Now, the Jewish Community stepped in, and they were absolutely marvellous except for, for the fact that they controlled every step of mine, whatever I did they controlled, and they, they, I had no freedom whatsoever, I mean, well, I will tell about this later, I suppose so, but they, they wanted to help me, it was a short, short time after that, Stefan went first into the sanatorium, and he only stayed, he had electro-shock, and insulin shocks, and he always only stayed for a little while, then as soon as he got better they sent him home, and he might have been home for one day, or for two days, or for one week, and then broke down again, and that went on for a month, and then finally, when I was in my, in December Ilan was born, so it must have been, no, actually in the sixth month, they decided, or seventh month, the doctor decided that he is going, that they are going to try on him, an operation which hasn't been done very much, it was at an experimental stage, but I mean, he was too

impossible at that time, that I just agreed, because I didn't know what to do with him, I mean, we couldn't go on like that, it was obvious that the Jewish Community is not going to keep him, I don't know for how long in this very very expensive sanatorium, also they sent him home every time, and I was terrified what's going to happen, because every time he thought up something else. He, they, they decided to do a lobotomy on him, which was an operation which, in those days, they knew very little about it. They made two holes in the, in the head, and the surgeon, with a knife, went in through the holes, without seeing what he was doing, cutting some nerves, and most of the people who had this lobotomy, either became vegetables or died, and he was the only one of his whole batch, when they operated, who came out not worse than he went in. Actually, a bit better, because in between, he has been rather violent as well, and his violence, and his threatening behaviour has disappeared, but he still went up and down, and, and well, mainly up, he didn't have depressions, but he had delusions, and, and this was in December, then they, and, and at the same time, I was, I had been told that I, well, as I said, that I have to get out of the flat, and they took away the flat, the Council took away the flat from Mrs. Evans, she was evicted, and we were evicted, and the Jewish Community got me a very beautiful little flat, one-room, one and a half room flat, I mean, one room with a glass partition, and with a kitchen and a bathroom, but unfortunately, only for a few weeks, but anyway, I was in there, so the operation was in December, the operation was not successful, but he was being sent home constantly. I'm just trying to think, yes, he was at home, he was at home, and when I was in my eighth month, I went for a check up with the doctor, and he found that my kidneys were affected, and that whether the child survives or not, to save my life, I had to, I had to have forced labour straightaway, so they took me in straightaway to hospital, Stefan was just at home at the time, and as soon as he heard I am going into hospital, he says he has to practice, and he was playing while I was waiting to be fetched, he was, he was practising and he didn't even say goodbye to me or anything, and I was taken into, to the nursing home, and, by some friends, and, and they let the water off, and for the next five days and five nights, I was in hard labour, because Ilan just didn't want to come out, I mean, the child just didn't want to come out. And in the meantime, he started to run amok again, and he appeared day and night, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock in the morning, 1 o'clock in the morning, any time during the day he appeared in the hospital, being completely befuddled, and, and disturbing

everybody, and making a racket in the nursing home. Eventually, after five days, Ilan was born, well, I mean, a child was born, and oddly enough, for some reason or other, we expected a daughter, and we had names for a daughter, but we didn't have a name for a boy, but as it happened the child that was born was a boy. Well, my husband came in, and he saw the boy, and heard that it was a boy, and then he didn't, he looked at it, he went off, and went to the Registry Office, and went to the Registry Office, and said to the Registry Office, he wants to register a child, we were talking about what name, and he said he doesn't know any name, and so I said, "Ivan". Two of my childhood friends were called Ivan, who I was very fond of, they are called Ivan, and was the only name that occurred to me at that moment, so we said Ivan. And so he went to the Registry Office, and he said he wants to register a boy called, a new born baby, called Ivan Deak, and he, and they asked who is the father, and he said he doesn't know, and they said who is the mother, and he said, "My wife", so they said, "Well, do you think your wife has been with somebody else?" And he says, "No, I don't think so, but I don't know, it's a boy, and I don't have a boy, I am expecting a daughter. And so I don't know who is the father." And they phoned to the nursing home and told this story, and that's how I know it, and, but then he was running amok, and he was completely mad, and they took him in again to the nursing home, and he was sedated, and I, on the fifth day that I was in the nursing home, Ilan was two and a half pounds weight, and he wasn't put into a...

Incubator?

Incubator, but I was trying to feed him, but my milk was so bad, and so, I think, to have not been very calm at the time, myself, which is not quite amazing, my, one day, I mean, on the fifth day, Ilan was brought in, and was, and I was just going out to, to the loo, and he was brought in, and they said, "Well, he will be all right", and they put him in the middle of my bed, and when I came back from the loo, his head was hanging down the bed. He moved so much, he was constantly moving, he moved so much, and I who was a nurse, qualified nursery nurse, decided I have had enough of that, if they don't know anything about bringing up a baby, and I dressed, got my things together, and walked out of the nursing home, and went home. Unfortunately, my home was invaded by a so-called friend, who came to, well, who came to see me,

who was down from Johannesburg, and came to see me at the nursing home, he was a friend whom my husband befriended, and who used my husband quite a lot, up till a few months ago I still had trouble with him, and this is now, now 50 years past, or 40, yes, 40 years gone, and I still have trouble with this so-called friend. Anyway, he stayed, he asked me whether he could, while I am in the nursing home, whether he could stay in the flat, which I allowed him, but when I got home, he stayed on, and it was only a one room flat, and he didn't want to move out, and I had big difficulties in getting him out, and I came home, when I came home with Ilan, and I put Ilan on to ordinary cows milk, with, with water and he calmed down, it was the first proper sleep that child got, and a few hours later, after I came home, there was a knock on my door, and a lady was standing there, and she said, "My name is Sophie Jackson, I am a child specialist, and I'm going to look after your child, and you're coming every Monday to the clinic, to this and this address." And Sophie became a wonderful friend, and really looked after Ilan and then she became, she was also a General Practitioner, and she became our General Practitioner as well, and she was a wonderful friend for many many years, and still is a friend, up till today. Ilan looked, was a very very ugly child. He was covered with hair, even on his face, and I used to go to this clinic, and the women didn't, never said anything, but then suddenly he became, when he was, I mean, he grew beautifully, and he grew, actually, very, became a very big baby, and he became an extremely beautiful baby, and when he was about three or four months old, then these women who were at the clinic at the same time as myself, said that how sorry they felt for me, having such a terribly ugly baby, but how beautiful he is now. Anyway, I was, after Ilan's birth, Stefan was still sent home, and then he went, one day, we had #3 in the bank, and he went and, no, we had #3, and we had, with #3 he went and opened a bank account and, because he was a member of the orchestra, so they allowed him that day he was quite normal, because there were days when he looked quite normal, and acted quite normal, so he went to the bank and opened the bank account, and that day, he issued cheques for #300, and brought home a stamp collection, a new suit for him, a stamp collection for Ilan, a new suit for himself, a watch, all kinds of things he bought, and that evening he again went completely high, and I had to call in the medical people, and they had to take him back to the nursing home, and I was terrified of leaving him alone with Ilan, and I, and the doctors were already, for weeks they were trying to persuade me to agree to

certify him, that he should go into a hospital, and, because I felt that I could never leave him alone with the child, and I didn't know, and I saw that things weren't going to get better, I, I did actually certify him, and allowed him to go up to Pietermaritzburg Mental Hospital, the place where he was operated on, and from then on, somebody from the Jewish Community took me up once a week, on a visit, to see him, and I, and I went, because I mean, I just was too terrified, and in between, they still sent him back once or twice, but he always had to be taken back, and, of course, he wasn't earning anything, and I was not allowed to work, but I was doing all kinds of things, I was writing envelopes for the Zionist Federation, and I mean, I was doing illegally, whatever job I could do. I was baking cakes for Bar Mitzvah's, I was making truffles for sale and some other biscuits for sale, I was, then I also started doing hats again, and working as a milliner, and the Jewish Community wanted to help me. Actually, they gave me money, but I didn't want them to give me money, I didn't want to be a charity case, but I asked them to come and have hats and cakes done by me, and occasionally, I had someone who came for hats, and the first two hats, oddly enough, were done for the annual biggest race in South Africa, the July Races, and they were actually put on, filmed, my first two hats, they were so successful, but I wasn't a very good milliner but I made a few hats, and, and then also the women weren't forthcoming, and they rather gave me money. Also they, they, they give charity on a scale which, which frightened me, which made me very very miserable. Someone decided that I had to have a, I had to have some clothes, and the word went round in the Jewish Community that I needed some clothes, and next day, two ship trunkful of second-hand clothes, were deposited in my room, or someone decided that, that my, in between, I was, the flat in which I was, they decided I couldn't keep it, and I was put into another flat, which was a room with a kitchen in the room, and an outside shared bathroom and toilet, in the courtyard, and, and I had, there were mice and rats in the place, and cockroaches, and it was a terrible place, was on the beach, was in a very beautiful beach, but it was an absolutely terrible place, and I was, of course, utterly miserable, and I was with, with Ilan there for, I think a couple of months, and then, in the meantime, they got back that flat in which I was, and I could go back to the flat again, I don't know why I had to leave it, but ... and I, I had very little money. The Jewish Club had parties and whenever there was a party, the sandwiches, the dried up sandwiches which were left over, were put into

boxes and were delivered at my place, or they had, one day, I had two bags of boiled potatoes delivered, brought to me, which made me rather miserable, because, I mean, I couldn't use two bags of boiled potatoes, and, of course, I had to throw away lots of it, because I couldn't eat it and it went bad, it was hot and it went bad.

What did you feel like, anyway, receiving so much charity?

Well, I, it was terrible, I mean, I didn't want the charity, I wanted work, I wanted to be allowed to work, but that came in dribs and drabs and I earned a little bit, but then one day, I went to a milliner, and I, I think Ilan was about two or three months old, and I went to a milliner, to see whether I could get some work at home, and the milliner herself wasn't there, but there was an assistant of hers there, and I spoke to her, and she said, she asked for my address, and she said, could she come and see me in the evening. And she came to see me in the evening, and this woman was called Nina Jacobson, and she was a Jewish young woman, younger than myself, from Johannesburg, and she said she really wanted to set up on her own, she was a milliner and she wanted to set up on her own, and if we could make an arrangement, that she could work in my flat, she would give me work, because she can have plenty of work, she has plenty of work, and plenty of clients, but she hasn't got where to, in the room where she lives is a very small room, and she can't work there, there is no, not much light, she can't work there, and so we came to an arrangement, and we became very very great friends, and she, through her, I earned then money, and she also helped me to look after Ilan, so I could go out to do my, whatever I had to do, and, and I could, because, because she, and I could go and visit Stefan, and she looked after Ilan, she was, she became a wonderful friend, and she's still a friend up till today. And, but I saw that there was no future, and I was getting very depressed, actually, because I saw no way out, my permission, my permanent residents permission didn't come through, my working permission didn't come through, and whatever I was doing, I was doing it illegally, and I, I could only do it illegally, and something had to happen, and also I was getting into a state, I found I went to visit Stefan every week, and it was somehow, and the Jewish Community was owning me. They, one day, Nina had two friends from Johannesburg down, and they invited us to go to a night club, and we got, Nina even got a babysitter friend, I mean, a friend who was looking after Ilan,

and so it was the first time I could go out at night, and we went to this night club, it was a, I must say, it was terribly boring. A night club in South Africa meant that you took your own drink with you, you had a meal there, and then you were dancing in a dark place, and it was, I found it utterly boring, and uninteresting, and we didn't stay very long. And next day, two ladies from the Jewish Community came, and said they heard that I went to a night club, and in my situation this wasn't fitting, and I shouldn't have gone. And then I felt really that, that it was time that I did something about my life, because that, I am not going to, I mean, this wasn't a life that I, I am being controlled, I mean, I didn't do anything bad, I didn't do anything bad, but that I'm not even allowed to go out an evening, and I have to tell, account for it. Also, another incident happened. The wife of the conductor, of the Musical Director, Mrs. Dunne, who was a very nice, but rather stupid lady, I went to town, I had to go into the City Hall to the Music Department, and I met her, and was about quarter to twelve, in the morning, and she said, "Oh, my dear, how nice to see you. Come, let us have a cup of tea", and this was very nice, I mean, I wasn't yet such an addicted tea drinker, and quarter to twelve wasn't quite teatime, it wasn't lunch time either, it was nothing, but all right, she wants to drink a cup of tea, let us have a cup of tea, so we went into a hotel lounge, and she whispered something to the waiter, and the waiter said, "No, Madam, I am sorry, but we don't do that sort of thing." And so she said, "Well, come let us, let us go, my dear, next to the tea room", and I didn't know why she changed her mind, or what happened. Anyway, we went to the next door tea room, and there she went up to the counter, and ordered the tea, and we were talking for quite a long time, and then the tea arrived, and two double portions of cheese, toasted cheese sandwich arrived with the tea, and as soon as it was put down on the table, she got up, and she said, "My dear, I was just waiting, you must be very, I was just waiting for this to arrive, you must be very hungry, I have to run now." And she left me with the two, double portions of tea, and cheese sandwich, and, and I, I started to cry, and didn't touch it, it went out again, I went out as well, because, I mean, it was so, somehow, demeaning, the whole way it was done. And I just felt, I mean, something had to be done. And I decided to approach the Jewish Community, that, well, I spoke to the doctor, and the doctor said that there is absolutely, I have the papers still, up to today, that Stefan had schizophrenia, and there is no hope for his complete recovery. On the other hand, if I stay in the country, they will have to send him home from time

to time, always until he breaks down again, and, and that's going to be life from now on, and, and I was terrified, because I knew I couldn't leave him alone with the child, and, and I didn't know what to do, so I decided that I'm, I have been offered that I could go to Israel, and I, I, and they would pay for my journey to Israel, and I was thrilled, and I thought, "Well, I am going to take Ilan, and I am going to go to Israel." And when Ilan was six months old, in the month of August, of 1949, yes, month of August, I went with him to Israel. And the Jewish Community bought some furniture for me, and packed it in a container, and I had lots of gifts from different people, and, and I went to Israel. And they arranged for me, a few nights in a hotel in Tel Aviv while I'm arranging my affairs, and I had a very distant relative, who was actually a very famous lady, she was the first Jewish woman emigrant from Austria, called Anita Cohen-Müller, who was the first Jewish woman pioneer from Austria to, to Palestine, and I went to Aunt Anita, and introduced myself to her. She wasn't very friendly first, but then she became friendlier, and first of all she said that my child must get a Hebrew name, and she suggested Ilan, and I accepted it, because it was very near Ivan anyway. Many many many years later, I, and because it was a nice name, Ilan means ...

End of F278 Side A

F278 Side B

Ilan means a sapling, well, actually a tree, the poetic name of a tree, and there is a, a festival, which is the New Year of the Trees, Rosh Hashana ha Ilanot, or Haka Ilanot, and I found out only later, that, many years later, that actually the day, 14th February, 1949, was a Rosha Hashana ha Ilanot, so he was really born on the New Year of the Trees, that's the day when, in Israel, all the schoolchildren go out to plant trees, and it's also called Tu Bishvat, which is the 15th of the month, B-Schvat, 15th of the month B-Schvat, and so, he, from then on, he was called Ilan, and later on then, we registered him, re-registered him for Ilan Ivan Deak. And Anita helped me to get him in, into the WISO baby home in Jerusalem, so I went up to Jerusalem with Ilan, and also she gave me a letter of recommendation to the Beth Hachalutzot, to the Womens Hostel in Rahavia in Jerusalem, where I then got a place, in a room with three other women, three other girls, and Ilan was accepted in the baby home, and I used to go and visit him every day, and Sister Rosa, who was leading the, the baby home, was a very kind lady, and I got, became quite friendly with her, and I moved into the Beth Hachalutzot, but the first, before I moved into the Beth Hachalutzot, I was put into a hotel in, spent the night in a hotel, in a very miserable hotel, in Jerusalem, where I was bitten by a flea, and unfortunately, this flea, a few weeks later, it turned out that was a spot fever, or Fleck typhus carrier, and I, I was then later, one month in hospital, between life and death, from this, from this bite of the flea. This is, by the way, the name of my book, Bitten by the Flea, this is the origin of it. I, I stayed about three weeks in the Beth Hachalutzot, because the Head of the Beth Hachalutzot drew my attention to the fact that there was a Ulpan, an experimental Hebrew Course, intensive Hebrew Course starting. Today, there are many many Ulpanim in Israel, but this was the very first one which was started, which was in an absolutely experimental stage, and I got in, not the first week, but the second week, they took me on, and it was, you could only get in to the Ulpan if you had a profession, which was useful for the State, but useless without the language. And as I was a nursery school teacher, and they were very short of nursery school teachers just then, they let me into the Ulpan. So I moved into the Ulpan where we were four to a room, we had one iron bedstand, and one nail to put our clothes on, hang our clothes on. It was in an old building in Bacha, outside, the outskirts of Jerusalem, and it has

been the, part of the pipes, water pipes have been destroyed during the, the Independent, War of Independence, and also all the wash basins were destroyed, and there was only one wash basin, one half-broken wash basin for 70 of us to wash in, and there was enough food, the food consisted of aubergines and, and fish fillet, well, fish fillet is not what we understand here, under fish fillet, but from Scandinavia, they used to get boxes of compressed frozen fish, and they used to cut off a slab, and then fry it, and that was a fish fillet, and that was what we lived on, and halva, with, and I think we had olives as well, that was mainly our main food supply, but there was plenty of it, we weren't hungry, and we had to sign that once we start working, we start paying back part of our tuition fee, and our fee for staying in the Ulpan. The Ulpan was four hours study with a professor, and intensive study with a professor in the morning. It was, the teachers were absolutely incredible, incredibly good, and then four hours compulsory homework study in the afternoon, with the supervision of a tutor, and then we had so much homework that I used to work until midnight, I, I was studying. And I only took off the one and a half hours when I went to see Ilan, which was half an hour walk into, into town, or it was perhaps longer, and then seeing him in the Nursing Home and coming back. I didn't have any money at all, so I couldn't buy anything, but I didn't, I was very happy.

How easy did you find it, to mother him, in the very beginning, and how did you cope with your feelings later on, when you had to earn a living, and had to leave him in this home?

Well, I found it terribly difficult to be separated from him, that was a terrible shock for me, because being a, I found it very easy to mother him, because I was a qualified nursery nurse, and so I had dealt with babies, and I had not the usual problems of new mothers who don't know what to do with the baby, but I had absolutely no problems. I was, and he was an incredibly good baby, and very easy baby, and I established a routine very very quickly, and had no problems whatsoever, and he was smiling, and a grateful, lovely, lovely, lovely baby. It was absolutely wonderful. Everybody admired him because he was so beautiful, once he got over this first, initial stage of, of being an ugly child, who didn't, who wasn't quite ready to come out of the womb, who would have needed another month to come out of the womb. But I had no

problems whatsoever with him. By the way, while he was, I mean, still in South Africa, because he was so small, he couldn't have a Br'ith, and I wasn't particularly interested in his having a Br'ith since I wasn't religious, but the Jewish Community insisted on having a Br'ith, so when he was five weeks old, a Br'ith was made in my home, and about 50 people came from the Jewish Community, and they brought all the things, they brought all the, they made a very nice Br'ith and Ivan was even then smiling, he was sedated by, with drops of cognac, and, and he was, and he loved the cognac, he adored it! He smiled, and even that wasn't a problem, he was, and he actually got the Hebrew name Yehuda, but we, we somehow, we never, or we never used the name Yehuda, and that was after Yehudi Menuhin, but we somehow never used the name Yehuda, we used the name Ilan. I think, at the beginning, I still had a bit of a hang up, that Yehuda was a name like Moshe and Isaac, and the Biblical names, which were not really being used, and it took me some time, in Israel, to accept it, that these were absolutely normal, everyday names.

Did you have fears about producing a healthy child? About your own ability, after what you'd gone through?

No. Oddly enough, not. At that time, I didn't have any fears at all, but then the doctors told me that I must never have another child from this husband.

Were you aware of any other survivors who had gone to South Africa after the War, who you met there, in Durban?

No, not really. Oddly enough, I didn't meet any other survivors. Let us say survivors, emigrants yes, who, who went during the War, German emigrants, who went because of the War, to South Africa, yes, but not, not people who were in concentration camp. On the contrary, I was the very first one, as far as I know, who arrived in Durban, from a concentration camp. Now, when my husband arrived in Capetown, then he was interviewed, he was interviewed by newspapers, and again when he came to Durban, and he was telling them that his wife, he is waiting for his wife to come out, who was in Auschwitz, and when I arrived, then also, they, they, people asked me lots of questions, and the Jewish Ladies Guild asked me to come and

talk to them, and tell them about that they wanted, because I was the first concentration camp survivor who they came across. And I spoke to them, and told them all about it, all about my experiences in camp, and, and when I finished, and I mean, this was '48, March or beginning of April, and I still didn't have any money to buy any clothes or anything, because I, when I finished, one of the ladies came up to me and said, "Well, yes, my dear, it's a very sad story, and, of course, you suffered a lot, but I am sure that you exaggerated a little bit." And the other lady came and tapped me on the shoulder, and said, "My dear, if you would dress a little bit nicer, you would be quite a pretty thing." And that was the only reaction I got, after having spoken for about two and a half hours. And these were women who actually were, either themselves Kishenev, I mean, as children, went through the Kishenev pogroms, and that's why they were emigrated to South Africa, or were children of people who emigrated to South Africa, and it was quite, and then afterwards, I, for quite a long time, I didn't tell anyone, because I felt so upset about these remarks, that people just didn't believe me, and people didn't understand, and didn't want to know, didn't want to hear what has happened. I mean, later on, I understood that it was so enormous that people just can't believe.

And you, yourself, to have to speak, to be asked to speak about these experiences, when they had only happened to you quite recently, at that point,

I had no problems. I had never had any problem to speak about my experiences, oddly enough. It's, I never suppressed anything, and I think that's why I came through healthy, all the years, could cope with all the other things, because I started out, straightaway, and I didn't hold back, I didn't, might not have remembered everything straightaway, but later on, certain incidents only came back later on. The proof of it is that later, when I made an eyewitness report, much later, when I, many years later, I read the eyewitness report, I noticed that I left out quite a lot of things which I must, couldn't have remembered then, and I only remembered them much later, so I must have suppressed something, but, but basically, I, I, I spoke, and I always spoke.

And for whom did you have to write this eyewitness report?

Well, this was much later, when I came to England to the, for the Wiener Library. Three weeks after I started to be in the Ulpan, I suddenly collapsed, I wasn't feeling very well already, the last few days, but then I suddenly collapsed, I, and they had to take me into hospital, and found that I had that I had this Fleck Typhus, and I was in hospital within life and death for one month, and then I was sent away, no, it couldn't have been, because I went back to the Ulpan, then I was sent back, sent away, a couple of weeks, to convalescent home. Now, while I was ill in hospital, my colleagues from the Ulpan, still brought me in the, the homework, and I tried to do as much as possible, and I kept up, actually, with the course, pretty much, even in, being so very ill, even during the time that I had such high temperature, and they weren't allowed in, because I was infectious, but they handed in the homework and I handed it out always, they fetched it. And I, but I didn't see Ilan, of course, during that time, and when I came out, I think, very soon afterwards, it turned out that there was a polio epidemic in Jerusalem, and we weren't allowed to visit any more. So I wasn't allowed near Ilan. Ilan was on the third floor of the nursing home, and I was allowed to come into the courtyard, they used to bring him out onto the balcony, on the third floor, but I wasn't allowed to go near him. And that went on for quite a few months, and I phoned every day, and, or I went there and asked, and I phoned, and one day, I phoned, and they always told me he is, one day they told me that there is a measles epidemic, but he hasn't got it, but they now put him into one room after the other, so that he should get it, because they believe that he should get it, and get over it. And so he had the measles, the last one, he was the last one to get it, and he had it very weakly, and during the time that he had it, there was already a, a, oh gosh! Chicken pox epidemic, and again, they decided he should get it, and so they again put him, once he was over the measles, they put him with the chicken pox people, and again, he was the last one to get it, and he got it again, very very mildly only, and, and I was phoning, but I wasn't allowed near him, I still wasn't allowed to visit him, and then one day, when I phoned and they said, "Oh, he's fine." I met two of the girls who lived in the same, by that time, I was back, finished the Ulpan, well, I actually didn't finish the Ulpan, but I had really, altogether two and a half months in the Ulpan, but three and a half months in between the hospital, and they, they needed someone in Beth Olim Talpiod, in the, in the immigrant camp, for the nursery, and they sent me out there to work. And they, and, and, and so I moved back into the Beth

Hachalutzot, and I, I, I, I had, I mean, two of the nurses, I met two of the nurses who worked in the baby home, and they said "Did you speak to anyone? Did you speak to anyone in the nursing home?" And I said, "Yes, I have just come from phoning." And they said, "What did they say?" And I said, "Well, that he is fine." They said, "Well, look, we are not allowed to tell you anything, but we tell you, and don't please to tell that we said it. You go in now, straightaway into there, and break in there, and go up there, and get him into hospital. The child is very ill." And so I went in, and, and brushed through the porter, and, and really very violently went through, and went up to the floor, and there was Ilan, very very thin, and he saw me, and he stretched out, he gave a big smile, stretched out his arms, and I wanted to take him into my arms, and he pushed me away and started screaming, and screaming very loudly, and it turned out he was ill. And I spoke to Sister Rosa, and straightaway he was transferred into hospital, and then I was allowed to visit him, and he had meningitis, had developed meningitis, and I was allowed to visit him in hospital every day, but he didn't allow me near this bed. As soon as he saw me in the door of the ward, he, he started screaming, and it took three months until he allowed, I was allowed to stand near his bed, or touch him. He'd never, he didn't forgive me for having abandoned him, I suppose so, all these months.

How old was he by then?

By that time he was 1 and a, one month and a year old, 1 year and a month old. And the last five months or so, I haven't been allowed near him. But first I was ill, and then I wasn't allowed near him, go near him, and it took three months until he, he allowed me, really, to get him, get near him. He used to be an extremely friendly child and he always smiled, and always happy, and he smiled on everyone, but when he saw me, he started screaming. And it was a very very, and I, I know for me, it was a most terrible thing to happen, that I wasn't, that he, he thought I abandoned him, and, of course, I didn't, but he, I couldn't explain to him that it wasn't my fault that I couldn't go near him, and I am quite sure that what happened later with him, that this was one of the, 'cause he was always, in a way, a very insecure person, and that this was one of the reasons that he was so insecure. This experience, when he was a baby, that I abandoned him. Well, I worked in Beth Olim Talpiot, as a nursery school

teacher for not very long, because I couldn't see Ilan, I suppose I wasn't, and my state of mind, working with children, somehow, I, I, I wasn't relaxed enough, I felt that I, I wasn't really suitable at that point, to work with children, and so I, and in the meantime, I went to evening classes, and did some more studying Hebrew, and I passed a government exam, and I got myself a job in the Ministry of Finance, as a filing clerk, which was on a very low salary, but it was a little bit better than at the nursery, and I mean, I needed to earn more money, because I, and also, through being a government clerk, I, I had some hope of getting some accommodation of my own, because, I mean, my aim was to get Ilan home, I mean, to get a home where I can take Ilan and be with Ilan together. So finally, I got myself a so-called flat. The flat was a rather odd flat. It was the original military prison in Talbie, next to a house called, house and garden called Beth Yamal. This military prison, which was a military prison under the Mandate, now became the mental hospital of Jerusalem, and there were four cells for solitary confinement left over from the military prison, in the garden of Beth Yamal, which was an old Arab house, and these, these cells had a shower room, and a loo attached to it, and, but the shower, there was no water, and no electricity at the time, and I received two of these cells, they broke through the walls, so that they were interconnected, but they had iron doors, and barred windows, barred, iron barred windows, these two little cells, and that became my flat. And next door to me, there was a Bulgarian painter, Rumanian painter, with his Bulgarian girlfriend, called ... I can't think, he became very famous later on, but I can't think of his now just now, it will come to me. And we eventually painted this house white, and the doors green, to make it a little bit more, well, looking like a house, and we also introduced some electricity, and introduced, had the water supply restored, and the electricity supply restored, and this was, by the time it was restored, it was May, April 1951, and I was very happy, and I just started to make arrangements, or was hoping to start to make arrangements that I would be able to bring Ilan home into this place, and that I would be able to have him looked after during the day, when I had a visit from someone who came from South Africa, who said that Stefan was out of hospital, that he was back in the orchestra, he was perfectly all right, and he was terribly upset about our not being there, and wouldn't, and, I really should come back to him. And I was, I loved being in Israel, for the first time in my life I felt somewhere home, I felt much more at home than I ever felt in Hungary, or anywhere

else, and I really wanted to stay in Israel. Now, I knew that Stefan was absolutely unable to support the hot climate, every time it was hot in South Africa, he had, we had problems with his mental state, and that there, he was always on the verge of breaking down, and I felt I couldn't persuade him to come to Israel, because the only orchestra for him to play in would have been the Tel Aviv orchestra, because he was too good for any of the other, half-amateur orchestras, and that Tel Aviv climate would have been the same as the Durban climate, and he had to get out of, if at all, he had to get out of the sort of climate which Durban climate was, so I couldn't persuade him to come to Israel. So I decided, I had to give him another chance, finally, he was the father of our child, and I, a very great friend of mine, childhood friend, youth friend of mine, who was also in Hasha mer Hadsahia(?), from my home time, was there with his family, and he asked me to rent to him my two cells, my flat, which I did, for a very, I mean, I just had to raise enough money to travel to South Africa, and I took six months unpaid leave from my job, and arranged everything, that I go away for six months, and in six months I will see what's going to happen, either I come.....

End of F278 Side B

F279 Side A

Either I come back to Israel, which I hoped I would, but, or, or else I stay in South Africa if things work out well, until we get our, in the meantime, in Israel, I received from South Africa, my permanent residence and working permit, so I, I could actually work now, in South Africa, otherwise I wouldn't have gone, I certainly wouldn't have gone back, but like this, at least, I knew that I wouldn't be a charity case any more if anything happened. Anyway, I, I did go back, and I, and I found Stefan in quite a good shape, and he was in the orchestra, and, but I wasn't very happy, I was pretty miserable, I was very very homesick for South Africa[sic] and I wasn't sure whether I was going to stay or not stay for, I mean, for quite a while, and I, I was actually thinking that I am going to go back to Israel, except that this very good childhood friend of mine, sold my flat. Sold the lease of my flat, and I had nowhere to go back to. It would have meant that I would have had to put Ilan again into a home, and I would have had to go again into Beth Hachalutzot, into the hostel, and there was just no question of my wanting to do this again, and starting right from scratch again.

And Ilan had not actually been living with you in Israel,

No.

This only happened in South Africa?

Yes, because it was just, I was just really trying to organise, and Ilan now was with me, and I mean, I was so happy that Ilan was with me, that I decided, well, I had to stay on.

And how long had he been in hospital with meningitis?

I think about two, or two and a half months, but luckily, the meningitis didn't leave any, anything behind, I mean, it was, he was completely cured, which was absolutely phenomenal.

And did he go back to the same ...

He went back to the baby home, and I could visit him, then, regularly, but, but as I say, I was going to take him home. I was already starting to make arrangements, and when this came, this whole change came. And I went, I didn't, sorry. ... In South Africa, I straightaway got a job as a nursery school teacher in the Jewish Nursery for, I mean, I started straightaway working. I was in charge of all the Hebrew and Jewish education in the nursery, for a few months, and Ilan started coming with me, into the nursery school, and actually, things started to settle down, and my husband seemed to be all right. Every summer, when it was hot, then he was just on the verge of a breakdown, but he didn't quite break down, it, we weathered it over somehow. He was rather funny. He, we didn't any more live together, sexually, at all, I mean, that actually, since Ilan's birth, we had no relationship any more, I was running his household. I enjoyed my job quite a lot at the nursery, and I enjoyed being with Ilan, and life started to be quite interesting, but I didn't want to, I knew I didn't want to stay in South Africa, that we were waiting now, we had a chance of eventually getting our South African Citizenship and passport, and being able, as a South African, being a member of the Commonwealth, being able to come to England, so back to Europe, which I thought was still better than being in South Africa, if already I couldn't go back to Israel, but I was terribly terribly homesick for Israel, and well, it took another seven and a half years. In the meantime, I, one day, in the infants school, the teacher got ill, and the Headmaster asked me to come and help out with the, with the class, with the Hebrew class, and that the teacher didn't come back, I stayed on, and then from then on, I eventually was pushed up every year. I started doing afternoon classes, and I was actually pushed up till matric. well, A level standard, when I got my first A level pupils, I stopped working in the nursery, when I got my first A level pupils, then I, I didn't want to take them, because I thought, "Well, I didn't have my matric", but my headmaster persuaded me to do it, that he would help me, and I am absolutely, I always was hopeless at exams, and my two students came out with honours and I just managed to scrape through! Which showed that I was quite a good teacher, but hopeless at exams. And Ilan and Stefan never built up a decent relationship, it was always pretty awful. Ilan was terrified of Stefan, so Stefan never touched him, and eventually, I decided, I had an occasion of putting him into a

boarding school, when he was barely more than six, he went into a boarding school of which, friends, very good friends were running, because I felt that I couldn't, we needed my earnings too, because Stefan didn't earn very much, and we wanted to save up a little bit of money to be able to get away as soon as we could get away, and also, I mean, he, in the meantime, became the leader of the orchestra, as a normal member of the orchestra, he had as much money, he was a self-employee and he earned as much money as a bus conductor, he was on the level of a bus conductor, that was the, the view of the civic community in, in Durban, that a bus conductor, and an orchestra musician were on the same level. Later on, he got, he became the leader of the orchestra, and he had lots of solo performances, and he was paid a little bit more, but not very much more, and, and I, so what we earned, and we found that life was pretty expensive, I mean, we started getting in a bit of furniture and things, and so we had a simple, two-roomed flat, in one room we lived, and then the other room was Ilan's room, and we lived, and I worked, I took on very many private pupils, and it was, because life was pretty expensive for us, and the standard of living in South Africa was very high, and, of course, our standard was much, much lower than the general standard of living. Also, because we wanted to save money. And eventually, when it came nearer to having our citizenship, we moved, we gave up the flat, and we moved into a very very cheap boarding house, so that I should, we should be able to save up some money to come to England, for the fare, and also to have something to start with. And Ilan was in the boarding school. He seemed to be quite happy in the boarding school, I was rather sad about it, but it was better because, because he really, he and Stefan didn't get on at all, and I felt I couldn't leave them alone very much.

And was it a common thing for children to do?

No.

To go to boarding school?

Oh well, it was common, and not really that much at that early age, not really that much. There was another reason too. I mean, Ilan, he wasn't yet four, when at the nursery school, one day, he said, at story time, that he wanted to read the story. And

so they let him read the story, and they thought he read it word perfect, and they thought, "Well, he knew it by heart", and he said, no, he didn't know it by heart, he read it, and so they brought out a book which he hadn't, a book which they never used before, and gave it to him, and he read it as well, so he could, he taught himself to read, we never knew how. And the next day he came, and he said, by that time, I wasn't working any more in the nursery school, I was working upstairs in the primary school, infants school, the primary school, and he, he came upstairs, oh yes, and he came the next day, he said, "And today I'm going to count till 150. I can add and I can subtract." And he proved it that he could do it, and the third day, he, he said, "And now I am going up into the real school, I'm not staying at nursery school any more." Now, the real school started, infant school started at five, and he was only four, not quite four at the time, and, no, sorry, he was four, because it was April, and now school started, school year started in January and it was April, and he was four in February, and this was in April, and he threw a tantrum and the nursery school teacher came up to the headmaster, and said, "Well, what should we do? We can't contain Ilan, he is absolutely, he is screaming his head off." And the headmaster said, "Well, let him come up, he will anyway get bored in the school soon", well, instead of getting bored, in four days time, he was actually head of the, he caught up with the children, and in four days time, he was the best in class! And then next year, he jumped another class, and then when he went to boarding school, he jumped another class, so he was two years ahead, really, of his age, and it was a bit of a problem, because obviously, two years children, two years ahead, are quite different, and have different requirements, and emotionally he wasn't up to it, but intellectually he was always top of the class, and he did some fantastic things, I mean, he taught himself to read Hebrew within three days. He stole a book, and he taught the whole, he learnt, he taught himself the whole vocabulary of the book, of 60 lessons, in three days, and then he confronted me with it. And he was incredible, he was quite quite incredible, he was really brilliant. Anyway, at the boarding school, he was two years ahead, and when we eventually got our papers, he was 8¼ when we came, he didn't want to leave South Africa. He had made some very good friends. He was 8¼ and this was in 1957, September, August, we left South Africa, and we came to England. He was then put in to a normal, into a school, and he was put with his own age group, and he was utterly miserable, and bored, and couldn't fit in at all, and eventually, and got into

trouble at school constantly, he was never fought before, he absolutely refused to get involved in any fight up till then, and then he suddenly started fighting, and was very very difficult at school, and, and he was very disturbed, and he was bed wetting again, and altogether terribly terribly disturbed. And so, through a friend, I got him to a, to the Anna Freud Clinic, Child Guidance Clinic, and they found that he had 167 IQ, and the reason he was so, it was mainly because he was so bored, and also because his relationship with his father was so bad, that he really should go again to boarding school, he shouldn't live at home. And again, we were going to be separated, and they suggested Dartington Hall, which was a very progressive school, where he could go at his own space, and he eventually went to Dartington, they, well, it was a very expensive school, and there was no question that we could afford it. I couldn't get a job as a teacher, because my qualifications weren't recognised, and I found that I was doing, addressing envelopes at Advance Laundry, and working as a ledger clerk at a roof insulating manufacturer and getting any kind of, taking on any kind of work, whatever I could get, and eventually, I got work as a Hebrew teacher. What I forgot to tell, that when I left Israel, then my Ulpan, the Headmaster of my Ulpan, gave me a certificate that I was allowed to teach Hebrew outside Israel, that I was good enough to teach Hebrew outside Israel, and so I, wherever I was teaching, I had this certificate, but I found that it didn't, in England, they didn't accept it, and they didn't accept my qualifications from Hungary either, and I just couldn't get a, religious, Jewish religious schools wouldn't accept me because I wasn't, I told them that I'm not religious, and the Zionist schools only took Israelis, and didn't take non-Israeli teachers, and the normal schools didn't accept my qualifications, so I couldn't work as a teacher, and I, I did any job that came. Anyway, Ilan got a grant and a school grant, and a scholarship to Dartington School, and first he was very happy, but again then, the problem came that he jumped classes, and because they just couldn't keep him down, he was so much brighter than the other children, and eventually he was, when he was 11, he was with children who were 13 year olds, and had no friends at all, was terribly lonely, because 13 year old children have quite different requirements to 11 year olds, and so he was, he was pretty miserable there too. But he insisted on staying on, and he stayed on until he was 17. Now, Dartington he didn't, Dartington did not believe in exams, but Ilan very much believed in exams, and he worked on his own, and he did eight O'Levels, and four A'Levels, and two Scholarship levels, by the age

of 17, without the help, against the help of the teachers, because the school didn't believe in exams, and so he didn't take part in anything that Dartington offered. Dartington was an absolutely marvellous school for drama, and for music, and for everything, but he didn't take part in anything at all, anything creative, he was just swotting on his own.

And he wasn't interested in music?

At that time he rejected it. On the contrary, he rejected music and Hungarian, he rejected for a very long time, until I divorced my husband finally.

Did you speak Hungarian to him? Or, what language did you communicate in when he was small?

Actually Hebrew, for a while, and then he refused to speak Hebrew, then it was English, then we went over to English. Hungarian I never really spoke to him.

Also in South Africa?

No, first Hebrew, and then I tried to keep up his Hebrew, and then, but actually, he only started to speak very late, I mean, it was well, well after two. He only spoke a few words of Hebrew when we left Israel, when he was 2, we left May, May '49, 1949, and he was two in February, so he spoke only a few words, very few words, he spoke very little. But I spoke to him, I kept on speaking to him Hebrew, for quite a long time still, so I kept up his Hebrew, but he spoke only English for a long time.

Had he just been assessed at the Anna Freud Clinic, or did he also ...

No, he has been only assessed, they said that he didn't need treatment, but he needed to go to a school where he is, he can go at his own level, and not at a school where there are 45 people in one class, as they were in his school, and where the teacher hasn't got time to give any individual attention, and where he is kept back, kept down. Well, he was 17 when he finished school with his four A levels, and two Scholarship

levels, and then he decided he wanted to go to university, and he decided he didn't want to go to Cambridge or Oxford, because he would have lost a year, and he was, of course, too old to lose a year, to lose in a hurry, and anyway, he felt that by that time, he wanted to stay at home, and so he went, applied to Kings' College in London, and he, he was undergraduate then in Biology at Kings' College, London, for three years, and he became, there again, the most brilliant student, and his professor used to take him to conferences where he then was invited to other conferences, as if he would be a, a post-graduate, and he was invited to universities as if he would be, and during his time as undergraduate, the professors treated him absolutely like a, like a much more mature student, and he always knew what he wanted, he knew who he wanted to work with, what research he wanted to do, and he was incredibly brilliant, and after Kings' College, he decided he wanted to go to Oxford, and work with a certain professor in Oxford, who, when he went to an interview, who said that he wouldn't, he had no place, but after having spoken to Ilan, he said, well, he would make space for him, and he would accept him if he has got outstanding marks, and Ilan had the outstanding marks, and then he went back to the professor, and he said, "And now I want to wait a year, because I want to travel a year." And the professor let him off for a year, and he travelled, and he loved languages. He was, by that time, by the age of 17, he was speaking French, and he was speaking German, and a little bit of Hebrew, and English.

And that had been self-taught, the four languages?

Well, he went in the summer, he went to France, because he wanted to go to France, and he went to a French family, and then I arranged also with a German family, to go to them, and he learnt German, and he tried to learn self-taught Hungarian, he always tried to learn Hungarian, but it defeated him, he had a block against Hungarian, he just was unable to learn Hungarian, and, and music he, he didn't particularly, he tried to play, he tried to learn the violin, and he didn't, he couldn't learn the violin. He could make the notes, and he had brought out a nice sound, but he never made music. It was terrible to listen to him when he played the violin, cos he didn't produce one musical sentence, one musical phrase. When I, then he turned over to learn the clarinet, and he did exactly the same thing, he brought out beautiful sounds without

making one musical phrase. He, he, well, then he went and travelled, and he, he went first, I arranged with a friend, in Italy he got himself a job, sweeping a, and helping in a Volkswagen storehouse, parts, parts storehouse, and he, he learnt Italian during that time, and he spoke fluent Italian after three months, and then he went to Spain, and worked in Spain, and learnt to speak Spanish, and then he went to Greece, and learnt Greek, and in the meantime, he also learnt Russian. And then he went to Israel, and enrolled in an Ulpan, and got his Hebrew back. So actually, he had ten languages.

Ten!

Eventually. And by that time, I, I left my husband, I met Franz, and I left my husband, but I think I'd better get back to myself a little bit. I eventually got a job at the Wiener Library, with assisting the Librarian.

And which year was this?

This was in 1959, and I went to evening courses to learn librarianship. I was also singing in the Philharmonia Choir, and I had lots of private pupils on the weekends and in the evenings for Hebrew, and also for German, and I had, I was also singing on, in the beginning, I was singing on Saturdays, and on Friday evenings in the Dennison Park, the Hampstead Synagogue Choir, but I gave that up quite soon when I didn't absolutely need the money, because I hated it so much, because I felt such a hypocrite, going to the synagogue, and I hated the sermons of the Rabbi, who was constantly only preaching against the other synagogues and the other congregations.

And did you, had you been to synagogue in South Africa? To the services, or in Israel?

No. I never went to synagogue in Israel, not one single time did I enter a synagogue in Israel, and in South Africa, I only entered the synagogue for a wedding, and not for nothing else. Oh, and I had a, I actually had some Bar Mitzvah pupils in South Africa, and that I, I told them that I am not, my Headmaster knew that I wasn't religious, and he allowed me to prepare for Bar Mitzvah, because he saw that I was

very positive towards everything Jewish, and I, I did teach the Bible, but not, because the Bible was made for me, as a horror book, and when I was in Israel, I suddenly discovered that the Bible was a beautiful book. I, I did not, I knew how to teach it it to make it interesting, and my pupils usually, when they had their Bar Mitzvahs, they came and stayed on, either for O'Level Hebrew, or for, for Jewish history, and they usually didn't keep it up, because then they had too much to do.

End of F279 Side A

F279 Side B

This is the seventh session with Mrs. Trude Levi, and it's October 11th, 1989.

I worked in the Wiener Library from 1959 till 1964. The first year, I was studying librarianship in the evening, because the, Mrs. Woolf, Mrs. Ilse Woolf who was in charge of the Library, thought that she might want to go part-time, and she wanted me to be able to replace her when she wasn't there, so I took it very seriously.

Unfortunately, it was, she was a ... for some reason or other, she was pretty jealous of me, I mean, when she saw that I took it seriously. She only had German and English, whereas I had, by that time, quite a number of languages, and people came from all over the world, and I was able to speak to them, and I was able to deal with Hebrew and with French material, which she wasn't able to, and she somehow, she built up a resentment, and after my, the first year of my exam, when she saw that I really took this thing seriously, she started to very much sit on me, should I say that she was paranoid? Which is the truth. My, the person who was, worked there previously, only after eight and a half months had nearly a nervous breakdown, and, and it was a very, it was very sad, but I mean, it was very very difficult to work with her.

Anyway, I still, I, I found the job very interesting, and kept, kept on, for four and a half years, but I, after a while I gave up the studies, for various reasons. First of all, in my first exam, where again my, my teacher thought that I was one of his best pupils, because I am so bad at exams, I only managed to scrape through, and that rather discouraged me, that I knew that I know the material, and yet I, I wasn't able to show anything in an exam situation. I completely broke down in an exam situation, and secondly, the second year, I had a teacher at College, whom I found very very bad, and I found that I had very big difficulties altogether, learning. It was mainly memorising reference books, and I, I was hopeless at memorising without seeing the material, and unfortunately my so-called "in-library training", which Mrs. Woolf was supposed to do, didn't, didn't happen, and the books, I couldn't consult, I wasn't given the occasion to consult the books, and it meant I had to go to other libraries to consult the books, and since I still had Ilan at home, I think so, at that time, yes, I had Ilan at home at that time, still, and I, I was working full-time, and I had to run a household, it, I just, and then by that time, by that time, I started up a friendship with, with

Hayek, with my, with someone in the library, a friendship which lasted for the next eight years. I, I did not, I just didn't continue with my studies, and also I was so discouraged by Mrs. Woolf, that I, I gave up studying in the evening. At the same time, I was still singing in the Philharmonia Choir, which I enjoyed very much, but it also became too much, and I also had to give it up eventually. I had to give it up mainly because I resented, I felt it was wrong that professional choir singers couldn't get jobs, I knew a few who could not get work, and in the meantime, we were doing recordings, professional recordings, I mean, without pay, and I found it wrong, and I couldn't say anything against it, because it was the Philharmonia I was in, and my husband's job was with the Philharmonia Orchestra, so I, I, it was the last, I was the last person to be able to criticise the fact. I was a bit sad leaving it, because I mean, it was highly interesting, working with Klempere and Giulini and Salvalisch Kindemith, all the great conductors, and with this great orchestra, and with this very great choir, but I, I opted out. In the Wiener Library, I was also, I mean, the work I found very interesting, but I was rather unhappy because there were various crises, like the Eichmann trial, and various other things, when the BBC and all the newspapers came and used the Library for their background, and members of the library suddenly would point to me, tell these journalists and reporters that they should ask me, because I was a survivor, and at the time, I resented being, I was very badly paid, and I resented being a guinea pig, and I still didn't enjoy very much, talking about it. I mean, I didn't mind talking about it, but I felt that I was being used, and, and I, I, I resented that, so eventually, my relationship with Mrs. Woolf also deteriorated, and I just couldn't stand it any more, and in '64, 1964, I gave notice and left. My next job was with Overseas Development Institute, which was actually, which was actually the very first body I ever worked with, that wasn't Jewish, and not only the very first, but it's the only body I ever worked with, which wasn't Jewish. I worked as Assistant Librarian in the Institute, and it was very interesting, and, but they told me that the Library is a, that the Institute will have to scale down, that they will have to, that there is no future for me in it, and eventually I was lured away by Dr. Robert Welch, whom I knew privately, to become Editorial Secretary, at, to work as Editorial Secretary at the Leo Baeck Institute.

In which year was this?

This must have been '64, '66 I think, or, '65, '66, some time there, and I worked for eight months as Editorial Secretary, and I enjoyed it very much. That job came to an end because I didn't know shorthand, which I actually told, when I was engaged, but it wasn't noted, and after the period of the editorial work came to an end, I, I suddenly was called in to, and was given dictation, and I couldn't do it, so it came to an end. I still went on working for them from home, doing indexes for Vol. IO and II, I think so, of the Leo Baeck Yearbook, which I did from home, and I went back to there for a few, a couple of months, to work with the Overseas Development Institute, and then I got the job at University College, to look after, to be the Archivist of the Gaste Papers.

In which year was that?

That was in '66, that was July '66 I started at University College, and I stayed on for 22 years! I was sitting in the Mocatta Library, and was working on my own on these Gaste Papers, which were papers which were mainly in sacks. Moses Gaste was a Haham of the Sephardi - Spanish and Portuguese Community, he died in 1939, and he never throw away anything that came into his house, and there were round about 170,000 items, mainly in sacks, and some in files, but in, not in orderly way, not in an organised way, and I had to make, they were in II languages, and I had to make sense and build up an Archive, which I eventually did. I was sitting in the Mocatta Library, the Mocatta Library was part of University College, but it was a library of the Jewish Historic Society of England, and the Librarian who was running it, was, was there for 40 years. Well, by the time I started, he was there 30 years, and he, for some reason or other, he was also doing quite a lot of other things, and he usually, when there was a request by phone, he would say "We don't know it", or "I don't know it", or "We don't have it." The result was that, nobody ever came to this library, it was completely, it was an absolutely beautiful library, but completely dead. When he retired, I, since I was sitting in the library and when there was a phone call, and by that time, I knew quite a lot about the library, when there was a phone call, I used to answer it, and I used to, though I wasn't in charge, though I was allowed to answer it, and, because the person who was then put in charge, had absolutely no

background knowledge of Judaica, or of the library, so I used to deal with matters of the library, but somebody else was in charge, and that went on for quite a few years, and in the meantime, I built up, I mean, I used to answer questions, and I used to answer letters, and the result was that I, but, of course, not in my own name, but for the Librarian in charge, and I also started, I have been asked to do the cataloguing for the library. So eventually I was doing the job, but I still, officially, was not, has, was in charge of the Gaste Papers only, and, but in the meantime, the Library became, became a Library, the word went round that there is lots of material in this library, and not only the Mocatta Library and the Gaste Papers were used, but also the Anglo-Jewish Archive, yes, the Anglo-Jewish Archives have been stored there, and the Archivist who changed over the years, there were four different Archivists in my time, they came once a week, but when people came from all over the world, especially for genealogical enquiries, I used to be able to help them, because the material was there, and I knew the material, so, eventually, I became, I, I was nominated and kicked up, and was given the full grade as a Library Assistant, and, Assistant Librarian? I don't know now, I forgot the title, anyway, the full grade of, as if I would be a University graduated Librarian, and I was put in charge of the Mocatta Library, of the Hebrew Collection, in the main library of University College, and, and, of course, the Gaste Papers, and helping out with Anglo-Jewish Archives, so that I had a, I mean, it still was a part-time job, it was only 20 hours a week, 20 hours? Yes, 20 hours a week, but I was now fully recognised University Librarian. In the meantime, I was doing, since I needed the money, I was accepting quite a lot of other jobs. I was working constantly for, from 1959 onward, I was working for the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, sifting out from the Gaste Papers, all the Zionist material, and copying it, and sending it to Jerusalem. I was working for, on the Weitzman Letters, for the Weitzman Intitute in Rehovoth for Yogeve and Weisgal, who were editing the Weitzman Letters. I was working for private individuals in America, who were doing genealogical enquiries. I was working for the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem, getting material together for Gershom Sholem, trying to find letters of Gershom Sholem, well, Gershom Sholem correspondence, and any job, actually, that came my way, I accepted, which meant, and in between, I still was, for many years, I was teaching privately, Hebrew. And I did anything that came my way. In 1969 I met Franz, and I decided to leave my husband, whom I found that he

could now, was able now, to cope quite well on his own, and I felt that I still had a right to have my, a life of my own, and, and I then asked for a divorce, which came through in October, well, end of September 1970, and we got married three days later, and have been happy ever, ever since. I was, I retired from University College, London, in 1988, July. I also did two bibliographies for the Survey of Jewish Affairs, and Yearbooks, 1983 and '85, and, and after I retired, I sat down and wrote my autobiography! I think I'd better continue now with Ilan. Ilan, after, well, he finished his doctorate in Oxford. After that he went to Pasadena, to do a post-doctorate, and after having been two years in Pasadena, while in Pasadena, he went on holiday to Mexico, where he met a very nice French girl, and, Isabel, and he had himself transferred to Paris, to the Pasteur Institute. While he was waiting, let us say, he applied for a job, already the year before, in Zurich, at the University, at the Zoological Department, the Department of Zoology in, there was a research job in Genetics, teaching and research job in Genetics opening, and he applied for it, and though normally the job was really for someone at the age of roundabout 35, and with a full post-doctorate, he has been, after he had a couple of interviews, he has been given the job, and eventually, he went to Zurich, from Paris. He married Isabel.

And which year was that?

[I think we should switch off]

I have to work that out. Do you want me to tell this on the tape? So he, Pasadena, he finished his Doctorate in Oxford in '72, 1972, then he went to Pasadena for two years, which brings us up to '74. '75 he was in Paris, and the end of '75 they got married and they went to Zurich, and he was in Zurich from '75 till '79, when he committed suicide. He had a Professorship at Zurich University, and published a number of papers, and was pretty successful, and went to a number, was invited to a number of conferences, and after he died, another five articles came out, which he had half-prepared, and, and just about three months ago, a letter came from his Professor, from Professor Harris, from the Department of, from Oxford, where he did his doctorate, that his ideas for his, which he developed in his doctorate, have been taken up by, and, by a Japanese body, and have been developed, and he has been, I mean, that his ideas have been acknowledged, and they, with the new techniques, now it has

become quite a big thing, what he has, I mean, his, his ideas. Also, the, one of his doctorate students, who is now, has the professorship which he had, in Zurich, writes to us from time to time, and I mean, we have become friends, and tells us how much his ideas are still alive, and are being used up to today, which is now ten years, ten years have passed since, which, of course, is a little bit, some slight consolation. His daughter, Marina, is now 12, a very bright little girl, lives in Paris with her mother, who has got another child, and he had also an illegitimate son, Jonathan, who is now 18, and very very bright, and went up to Oxford just now, in, we are now in 1989, and he is doing a Degree in PPE, in Oxford, and is very very much like his father, in spite of the fact that he never ever saw his father, and knew nothing about his father really, but he reminds me tremendously of his father, because he argues in the same way, he, ... he ... he is, seems to be just as bright as his father was.

Could you say something about what led Ilan to commit suicide?

Well...(sighs)...it's all, I mean, we, he didn't leave any note. My, my idea is, I found that there was, when he was in Pasadena, from then on, there was quite a big personality change which took place in Ilan. Ilan used to be incredibly organised, incredibly tidy, and suddenly this has changed, and he became pretty disorganised, pretty, he, he found that he spread out in too many things, and, and was, he, he was also getting depressions, and headaches, and he wouldn't go and see a doctor, or a psycho-analyst, which I tried to persuade him. The trauma of having had an illegitimate child was, whom he refused to see, because at the time he was 21, well, 22 by the time the child was born, and he was, he wanted to get on with his doctorate, and with his studies, and he was ambitious, and altogether the affair which led to this child, lasted three weeks, and after that he felt that he didn't really, wasn't particularly interested in the mother of this child, and he felt if he would see the child, he loved children, if he would see the child he would probably marry her, and he felt it would be the wrong thing to do, and therefore, he refused to see this child, but it was a very traumatic experience for him, and he, for years, I wasn't allowed to, I, I, I was approached at the time, when the girl decided to have the child, whether I am interested in taking up the role of grandmother, and which I accepted, fully accepted, and the result is that I still have got a beautiful relationship with my grandson, and we

are very fond of each other. And, but, but he never saw his father. His mother got married, and has two other children, and her husband adopted Jonathan, but as I say, we had, there were some very difficult periods, because his mother, in a way, really wanted him to be cut off from me, but it did, but eventually, we, we still are on good terms, even though I, there was a year when I wasn't allowed to see Jonathan, and there were many other years when I was allowed to see him only in, in the company of his whole family, he has now two little brothers. Now, this was a traumatic experience for Ilan, and for years he didn't want me to speak about Jonathan at all, but I knew that it, that when he came here, I had to put away the pictures, and he always went through my papers and looked for the pictures, though he didn't speak about it, so it was something that was weighing on him. He then got married to Isabel, and the marriage was a rather stormy one, and Isabel hated Zurich, absolutely, couldn't settle down, and eventually left him, then she came back to him, and then suddenly got pregnant. I know it from other people, that both didn't want a child, to have a child, and the whole, her whole pregnancy was incredibly stormy. And, but they, I mean, she decided to keep the child, but it was terribly stormy marriage, and eventually, when Marina was born, he was a very very good father, she, in a way, she nearly was the one who didn't do much for the child. He, he fed her, she didn't want to feed, feed Marina, so he was feeding her with a bottle.

End of F279 Side B

F280 Side A

He was changing her nappies, and also because Isabel was very resentful that she didn't have an interesting job, couldn't get an interesting job. So he was actually doing the household as well, because he believed that since she didn't have anything interesting, and he had interesting things to do, he should be doing also the, the bad, the unpleasant jobs. But he was a workaholic, and he was very ambitious, and he had very little time, actually, for Isabel, and Isabel was extremely unhappy, and eventually, when Marina was about one and a half years old, she took Marina and went back to Paris, and he was terribly upset about, about them leaving, and he used to, and that I know from some colleagues of his, that he used to go on, work from 7 o'clock in the morning until 2 o'clock in the morning, in the laboratory, then on Friday morning, he would go to the supermarket and do a big shopping spree, and, in a, in a trolley, then he went to University, worked the whole day, and in the evening, took the night train to Paris, with the shopping, and took the shopping for them, for the whole week, to Paris. Now, he was unable to sleep in a train, and so he worked through the night again, and arrived terribly terribly exhausted on Saturday, in the morning, in Paris. Now, unfortunately, Isabel had an idea that she was in a small flat, and she needed to get out of Paris into the country, for the weekend. The result was that they were, they had a car, and they went out into the country, and then on Sunday, they would come back and would usually sit in a traffic jam for hours, and then he went and took the train, the night train again, going back to Zurich, and arriving back Monday morning in Zurich, completely exhausted really, because again, he didn't sleep, and that went on for many many weeks, and he had very bit depressions, and headaches, which wasn't amazing, with such, with this kind of life, and also, at the same time, I mean, his father was having, for the last ten years, suddenly he started breaking down, ten years, no, not ten years, last four years, sorry, last four years, he suddenly started to have very very big breakdowns, where he had to go, and he became manic depressive, and he had to be taken to mental hospital, and, and spent various periods in mental hospital, and then he came back again, and was all right for a while, and then he had another breakdown. He got himself into a complete mess, in every way, because his flat was completely neglected, he's starting, he started not to, not to, I mean, to, whenever he had a suit on, or a shirt on, which

was dirty, he just would leave it on the floor and go out and buy new stuff. The result was that he built up a wardrobe on the floor, really, a dirty wardrobe on the floor. I mean, and often incredible quantities, spend incredible amount on clothes, also, when he was manic, he would sign anything, all kinds of insurances, all kinds of holiday exchange things, and all kinds of grandiose ideas, going to, he went to Bahrain to give concerts, where he didn't earn a penny, or he went to India, and then he had a breakdown in India, and, and things went, I mean, really pretty badly, but in between he had good periods, and he still was working with the Philharmonia until the next breakdown. And at one such occasion, he went to Lausanne, this was in 1979, he went to Lausanne, with the Orchestra, and Ilan, who had, by that time, this terrible schedule, and was really a workaholic, for some reason or other, decided that he wants to have still some relationship with his father. He never had a proper relationship with his father, but this time, he found he needed it, and he said he is going to come to Lausanne, and he took off two days from his work, which was, for him, an enormous sacrifice, and went to Lausanne, to see his father. Stefan was in a terribly bad state, just then, and when he was in a bad state, he had fixed ideas, and you couldn't talk to him about anything else, and when Ilan arrived he said, well, he had a day off, the next day, I think so, but he said he was going to go, in the evening he had off, and he said he has to go to a concert, which was some absolutely insignificant concert, which took place in Lausanne, and Ilan said he is too tired to go to a concert, he came to be with him, and wanted to talk to him, and Stefan had decided he had to go to this concert, and so Ilan went to sleep, on the bathroom floor, in the hotel, and Stefan went to the concert, and when he came back, then Ilan was asleep, and when Ilan woke up, Stefan was asleep, and this went on for the next two days, and they couldn't communicate at all, and Ilan went back to Zurich, terribly terribly disappointed. And it was the first time that he spoke to people about his father, and about his father's illness, and it was quite obvious that it meant very very much to him, and that he was really upset about it, and he had, at the same time, he somehow drew a parallel between himself and his father, because he had these depressions. In a way, he never understood his father's illness, and he, he despised his father for it, to a certain extent, and at the same time, he had a fear that he would have, because he spoke next time to Isabel, and he spoke to some colleagues, that he wouldn't be able to be a good father, the same like his father wasn't able to be a good

father, and he, if Marina had, if he wasn't there, and Isabel married again, then she would probably have a much better father than him, and, and he, he, at that time, somehow, he went to a conference, and he apparently gave a not very good lecture, not a very good talk, and since he was always extremely critical of others, he found that how can he be, he who is so critical, give such a bad talk? Also, one of his, he developed a, a new method of treating Genetics, of dealing with Genetics, and it has been sent back, he sent it for publication and it has been sent back, and it hasn't been sent back completely, but for some corrections, and he sent it back, but for some reason or other, he imagined, because in a phone conversation to me, he was telling that it hasn't been accepted, which was not true, by the way, but he somehow imagined everything was going wrong, and also he was, I think, afraid of becoming like his father, whom he despised, and then he fell in love with someone, with one of his colleagues, with whom he was very friendly, and who was very fond of him as a friend, but who had a relationship, and didn't want to have another relationship, a deeper relationship with Ilan, and refused him, and he was trying to blackmail her, and she threw him out, and he went and committed suicide. So all these factors together were somehow, overwhelmed him. But I think it was mainly the fear of becoming like his father, and whom, whose illness he despised, which was, and the fear that he wouldn't be able to be a good father, were the final, I mean, were the, and also that, that Isabel left him, with the child. She first, they first started divorce proceedings, but then they decided they didn't want to divorce, but still he wasn't sure what was going to happen. In his last four days before his, he committed suicide, I had a phone conversation with him, and suddenly he asked about Jonathan, and said that he, and I told him that his mother got married and had another child, and Jonathan was adopted, and he said he hoped that he was happy, and he was very happy that he never saw him, because he couldn't bear to be separated from both of his children. So it was, that proved how traumatic it was for him to have Jonathan.

Did you realise that Ilan's situation was as serious as it proved to be?

Well, we did realise that there was something wrong, but he had, he was supposed to come, pick up Marina three days later, in Paris, and come with her, to us, four days after the, I mean, the date of the suicide, and he had the ticket, my last conversation

with him was about where I pick him up from the boat train, when, and at what time I pick him up, he already had the ticket for himself and for Marina in his pocket, so we thought that we will talk to him when he comes, four days later. But unfortunately, four days later, he wasn't alive any more. So ... well, actually, it was, I think a week before, I mean, four days before he committed suicide I spoke to him, but he was supposed to come four days after, arrive four days after his, his suicide.

How were you able to get over that loss, after all you had been through?

How was I able to get through? Well, of course, it was a dreadful shock, in spite of it, that somehow, I, I don't know, I, it was always there. It was always there, he didn't, he didn't really enjoy living. I mean, very often when we spoke, when we were together, I always had the feeling that he didn't really enjoy life, and he couldn't quite cope with life. He was, in one way, he was always pushing himself, I mean, it was a terrible blow, it was a terrible thing to accept, it is now ten years have passed, and it's still a terrible thing to accept. I will never be able to quite accept it.

How did he do it?

He took a poison which he used for his experiments, which he had in his laboratory, and a poison which, within five minutes, completely ruined his brain, no, I think within, within half a minute, completely ruined his brain, and within five minutes, it was over. It was a very very quick, he knew exactly that it was a very very quick death, that he chose. But he...[can we switch off?] I feel I can best say what I wrote down in my book. [reads] "On July 29th 1979, I was working in the garden when Franz called me. There was a telephone call. Ilan had an accident, and was dead. He, actually, it was not an accident, he took an overdose of a poison which he used on his experiments. Time does not heal, but it does help one to accept a bit more easily, but it hurts. The wastefulness of it all, the senselessness. I sometimes get terribly angry with him, still today, but mostly I pity him for what he had to go through, and am angry that I was not permitted, at least, to try and could not help." Gosh, this is a bad sentence! What did I do here? So, well, luckily I have got Franz, and that, of course, helped me. His father, I am still looking after his father, and he had his ups

and downs, and eventually had to leave the orchestra, and was, for longer periods, in mental hospital. I, now, the last period, he was for 19 months in the Knapsbury Hospital, because he couldn't live on his own any more at all, because he was unable to remember his medication, to take his medication, and so he was constantly either manic or depressive, and if he's under supervision, and takes his medication, he is pretty even, and nearly normal. I managed to get him now, into an old age home, the Leo Baeck House, and he seems to be quite, as happy as he possibly can be now. He is now 73 years old, and a pretty old man, much too old for, for his age. Slightly depressive. Not, not speaking, hardly speaking to anyone, and reading the whole day, or going for walks. I mean, I still do whatever I can for him, I go and visit him, which is more than anybody else does, because there is nobody, no one else comes to visit him, which I find absolutely atrocious, especially since he worked for 27 years in the Philharmonia, and not one soul ever asks whether he is even alive still, and also he had some friends, and nobody ever asks after him, or goes to see him, and I have got lots of pleasure with his grandchildren, with Ian's children, both Jonathan, who lives, well, who now went up to Oxford, and, and Marina who is 12 and lives with her mother, and I mean, her family in, in Paris, and, and hope that there is no, that the grandchildren haven't got any genetic defects. Unfortunately, both have got an inheritance from both sides, because in both families there are mental disturbances. Jonathan's grandfather is a depressive, is in deep depression, and is, most of the time, and Marina's mother was in treatment, and is on lithium, and her father is on lithium constantly, so, and if I add to it, my brother, who is, who I can say, is, is certainly not normal, he has never been in treatment, but who is very, who has got a, a persecution mania, and is highly paranoid, then I am afraid, I'd better not think about the, of what can happen to my grandchildren, but I hope, and up till now, they seem to be fine, and normal, and hopefully it will, they have the right genes, and not the wrong genes, a combination of the right genes, and not the wrong genes.

Do they know of the reason, the cause of their father's death?

Marina does, Jonathan does not. Jonathan never asked questions about his father. He knows that he is dead, he knows that he has got a half-sister, they haven't met, because up till now, Marina, I mean, up till last year, when Marina found out that she

is a, that Jonathan exists, and that I have another grandchild, not only her, which she resents very much, didn't even know, I mean, but she knew about her father's suicide, that he committed suicide, but she doesn't speak about it any more. She used to speak a lot about her father, but she's now stopped speaking about him, and asking questions about him. But also, she is cutting herself off from me, and from, seems to be cutting herself off at the moment from this part of the family, this side of her family.

Is her mother Jewish?

Yes, her mother is Jewish, not religious, I mean, but she is Jewish, yes. She is living with someone, has been living with someone for the last eight years, and has a child, another, a second child, and it's rather tragic, because Marina is very jealous of her little brother, with her other grandmother whom she adores, there are five grandchildren, where she has to share, though I believe she is the favourite. But with me, all the years we had an absolutely beautiful relationship, she used to come twice a year for ten days, and we had a very very beautiful relationship, but she, she always thought I, that she is my only grandchild, and last year, when, by accident, she found out, through a letter which she, which got into her hand, rummaging through my desk, which was written in French by Jonathan, to me, as his grandmother, and it was a very beautiful letter, which she read, and his photographs which she came across, she found out that all the time she wasn't my only grandchild, and since then, she resents it very very much, she feels that I cheated her. It wasn't my fault, because I always wanted the two children to meet, when they were small already, but their mothers absolutely objected to it, and her mother was very very angry with me that Marina found out about Jonathan, which wasn't my fault at all, but, and now Marina is resentful with me, that I, in spite of it, that she knows it wasn't my fault that she didn't know about it, that I never lied to her, but that she isn't my only grandchild, and now, at the moment, she doesn't come any more. But, of course, at the moment, she's also in, a teenager, and since she doesn't know English, and it was my company mainly, I mean, during her stay, she only had me as company, obviously it's becoming not any more so interesting to be with granny for ten days, from morning till evening. So, our relationship is, at the moment, a little bit edgy, but when I speak to her on the phone, which is about every two weeks I phone her, I have a long phone conversation,

she is always very nice, and we write to each other, so I think, eventually, the relationship will come back, will normalise.

Could we just go back to your marriage to Franz. Could you tell me something about his background?

Franz was born in Berlin. When he was 15, fifteen and a half he went to Palestine with a group called "Werkleute", which was a Zionist Group, a Berlin Youth Group, and Youth Aliyah. He went to Ben Shemen where he then went to school, and when he finished school, he, in 19... no, then he was sent to Sha'ar Ha-golan kibbutz, and from there, and Gan Yavniel I think he was also, and then he went to, then he went back to, to work in Ben Shemen and for a short period, and then the Haganah told him, in 1940, that he should volunteer for the British Army, and so he volunteered for the British Army, and for the next seven years he was in the British Army. He was trained by the Royal Engineers, and was in all the nice places, like Tobruck, and Battle of Tobruck, and in Egypt, and in, in Syria, and in all kinds of places. And then eventually, after the War, they, because he was trained, he, he went back to Israel, but he was in British uniform, in 1945, and by that time, it was not very nice thing to be in British uniform in, in Israel, in Palestine, and he felt, and yet at the same time, quite a few of his schoolfriends, who didn't, who weren't in the Army, or who were in the Jewish Brigade, or some of them, actually, built up their career already by that time, and he, he had nothing but his British uniform, and he, and they didn't, because he was trained by Royal Engineers, the Army didn't allow him to demobilise, and he eventually, and so he didn't, and he found that because he was in British uniform, quite often Jews were throwing stones at him, and he then left Palestine, and was, and volunteered into the Intelligence Corps, and was taken to Austria, in the British Army, in the Intelligence Unit, and, and there he fell in love with a woman, an Austrian woman, divorced woman with three children, who was older than him, I mean, he was then 24, he left his family when he was 15, and I suppose it was a little bit a mother figure, as well. Anyway, he married her, and she didn't want to leave Austria, and so he stayed in Austria, in Carinthia, and eventually, he brought up her children, and eventually he, 15 years later, they got divorced, and he then had an offer of a job, he got involved with architecture, in the meantime, which he always wanted to do. He

did a couple of terms of architecture in, at Haifa University, before he was mobilised.

A friend of his was ...

End of F280 Side A

F280 Side B

A friend of his was a lecturer in Architecture, in Haifa University, and allowed him to attend classes there, and then, but then he was, went into the army, and he then, but he always wanted to become an architect, I mean, be involved with architecture, and he had occasions in Vienna to work with a firm of architects, and worked there for, I don't know, ten years, or something like that, and then one day, he came on holiday to England, and he was offered a job here, through friends, and, with a firm of architecture, and he thought he would like to try it for six months, and took six months leave, and eventually he stayed here, this was in 1967, and we met in 1969.

Was his first wife Jewish?

No. She wasn't Jewish, she was real Austrian Catholic, but non-religious Catholic, and [pause] I don't know, what else should I tell about him?

So he continued to work as a...

As an architect, yes, yes. He never qualified, but he again, the same thing happened to him, like to me, that he was, even when he wasn't yet a British Citizen, and he, since he hadn't got his qualifications, he wasn't allowed to become a member of the Institute of British Architects, the Royal Institute of British Architects, he was an international representative of British Standards, of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and, and he has been kicked up, and today is a very internationally recognised consultant in architecture, well, he specialised in Material Science, and in, he doesn't design buildings, but he, he knows about materials, and climates and the relationship of materials, and is a Consultant in that field, and seems to be recognised, although he has no qualifications. It took him longer than if he had the qualifications, the same as it took me longer to become a University Librarian, because I had no qualifications, but we seem to both, made it, somehow!

And what's the age difference between you?

Four years, Franz will be 70 next year, he was born in 1920.

And what happened to his family?

Well, actually, his father was taken by the Germans, and was taken to a work camp, and eventually was brought back, and died in Berlin. His mother, he didn't know what happened to his mother, he went back after the War, to look for his mother, and only now, a few months ago, we found out, from a, a book, which was compiled by the Germans, after the War, that she actually has been deported to Auschwitz, and that was the end of her, but we only found that out a few months, in Nuremberg, no, in Fürth, we came across this Gedenk Buch, for victims of the Holocaust, and there we found his mother's name. And his sister, he managed to get his sister out, to Palestine, and she was one of the Founders of Hazorea, the kibbutz Hazorea, but unfortunately, he, he had one child, and she died in childbirth, the second time, and because she had a very special blood condition, and she really wasn't supposed to have another child, to become pregnant, and she eventually died. I don't know, I never, I didn't speak much about my first husband, and about his, his background and past, I suppose I should, should say something about him. Stefan came from Hungary, he studied at the Music Academy, I had a diploma of Professor of Violin, and Viola, and also a as a virtuoso, and he, he was partly smuggled out by his father to avoid going into the army, having to go into the army, well, actually into, later on, labour camp. He was taken, smuggled out to study in Belgium, to continue his studies in Belgium, with a Professor called Gertler, who was a Jew, and then when the Germans occupied Belgium, then he went, he walked to France, with the other Belgian refugees, and was in Lyon for a while, and he managed to get, he didn't look Jewish at all, and since he had a very Hungarian name, and he looked extremely Hungarian, had very Hungarian features, he managed to have his passport altered, to have his religion altered, from Jewish to Protestant, and so he got away with it for quite a long time. He was, and his father was a very rich man, and until '42, sent him, kept him financially very well. His father died of cancer in 1942, and then...

In Hungary?

In Hungary, and then the money stopped coming, and he eventually went on to Marseilles, and at the last year he was in, he was in hiding, he somehow got, got, known some Spanish anarchists and French anarchists, and he was hidden by them, in, in Marseilles. He was for, a while, I think, in Lyon, he was, for a while, he was in prison, about four months, or two, something like that, but apparently because he had money, it was no problem whatsoever, one could bribe the, he had everything, I mean, it wasn't very serious. Now, what I did not know, that in Marseilles, he must have had a breakdown already, and he was in treatment, but that I only found out 15 years into our marriage, that he already had breakdowns, and he had already electric shock treatment, in Marseilles, during his year, actually in hiding. Before that, before he was in hiding, he was actually so well-off in Marseilles, that he played in the orchestra, with a very famous conductor, Paul Pareil(ph), who was then the conductor of the, of the Marseilles Orchestra, and who took him, and let him play, work in the orchestra, but then he had to go into hiding, and the last year he was in hiding. And, and at the end of the War, he came out, very poor, but, and he had a, and he found out that his younger sister, who was in the, who was being hidden during the War, survived, she was ten years younger than he. His...

She survived in Hungary?

She survived in Hungary. His mother was deported and taken on the road to Vienna, and must have been shot, never found out what happened, but a lot who were taken, walking to Vienna, very many of them, most of them died. And his elder sister, was hit by a bomb, or a shell, in the streets of Budapest, and died from that. So from his family, the only person who survived was his younger sister, who is also a violinist, and to whom he was extremely attached. At the same time, he had, his father, somehow, must have terrorised him, as he must have terrorised everybody, and I think his mother was depressive, what I heard. I never knew them, of course, and what I later heard from people who knew them, they were a very odd family, and, and there seemed to have been some genetical, I mean, inheritance, already, that he had his breakdowns, but he always had it under pressure, I mean, when we got married, on our wedding night, I found that he, oh, after that, he was in Marseilles for a while, then he went up to Paris, and occasionally, illegally, did a little bit of music, but he

couldn't get any working permission after the War, and he, most of the time he didn't work, and he was, he had a, some money, and meal tickets from the, from the Joint, after the War, and occasionally, he became friendly with a French, Jewish French conductor, who was leading a choir, and that was a choir, that was one of the choirs I worked in illegally, and he, occasionally, got also illegally an engagement to play at a wedding, in a synagogue, or a wedding reception, or at some other occasion, Jewish occasion, and so he earned a little bit of money, very very rarely, some extra money illegally. But he couldn't get a job because he had no, definitely no working permit. And he was very hungry, because what the Joint gave it wasn't enough, and, and when I met him, he was in a pretty sad state, but then we were all in a sad state, and I didn't realise that he was ill, I mean, he was, let us say, more depressed than most of the others, but I didn't realise that it was an illness, and not just ordinary, I mean, depression, post-War depression, because he, he didn't have a job, and because he couldn't earn his living, and because he was a charity case. But then, then he started having, I think I talked about his breakdowns.

Yes, you did.

In our marriage, so I think I covered that ground. So I think that's it.

And could you say something about the, your present life? Whether you have a lot of friends? What your interests are?

Well, first of all, I have got an enormous amount of friends, and good friends, I am tremendously lucky. In a way, it is perhaps because I work on it, because I always kept up friendships, because if friends needed something, I hope I was always there, but I also, I definitely kept up friendships in correspondence, from all over the world, wherever I, and I made very easily, friends, with people, through my worked, when I worked in the University College, people who came, and, from the States, and stayed for two, three months, and to work on their doctorate, or do some research, and I used to invite them, if I liked them, I used to invite them home, and we became very friendly, and then perhaps we would go and visit them, and kept up correspondence, and whenever they come to London, we have, I am friend, I have friends who were

Ilan's friends, I mean, this young woman who, who did post-doctorate, or his ex-Assistant, or, or the woman who he was in love with, I am still, we have a beautiful relationship, and we keep up correspondence, and see each other whenever it is possible. I have got lots of friends from South Africa, lots of friends from Israel, I have got young friends, young people who come to, Israelis, or others, who, who needed a job, and I had money and I could use them, and give them some work, help me with the Archive work, I became very friendly with them, or research students who came, and we still keep up friendship and correspondence, the result is that I have got an incredibly big correspondence, and very many people coming to stay, and wherever we go, we have got very very many friends, and we meet friends, I mean, it's, America, France, well, Paris, Israel, and Hungary, are especially very dangerous countries, because I, really have so many friends there, that usually the time is always too short, and everybody is a little bit hurt that we don't have more time for them. I always had a very open house, and lots of people for meals, and, and as I say, if friends need something, usually they, they find that I am, I, if I can help, I, I try to help, and we have a very very incredibly large amount of friends, and I mean, we find the same, that if we are in a situation where we need support, we do have some very very good friends who are supporting us, so that it's, it's reciprocal, but it's very beautiful. Sometimes it makes life a little bit complicated, because I find, I just, the time just is too short!

What about your interests?

Well, music was always something that meant a lot to me, my whole life, I mean, I was always singing, I grew up in a family where we had chamber music. I had a lot of, lots of friends who were musicians, I still have got, one of my best friends is a very well-known singing teacher, an internationally well-known singing teacher, another great friend is an internationally well-known cellist. I, in other countries, I also have got musician friends, and I used to play the cello, and I used to sing, which I somehow gave up 20 years ago, both of it, more than 20 years ago, but I always wanted to play the piano, and now that I retired, I started learning to play the piano, which I never did before, and I'm practising every day, an hour, at least, and I enjoy it, and take lessons, and I enjoy it tremendously. I am interested in art, go to exhibitions,

go quite a lot to lectures. At the moment, mainly to Jewish political and history subjects. I am interested in people, very much in people, and therefore I have got lots of friends. I enjoy cooking, I enjoy having guests. I also enjoy working in the garden, though I find it more and more difficult because my legs and my back don't like it that much, but I try to do as much as I can. I read a lot, I read a lot, I am interested in politics, and we discuss a lot of politics, and follow what's happening in politics. I'm, my ideas are, well, middle way, more Left than middle, let us say. I used to vote for Labour Party, I used to be definitely socialist: a socialist, I mean, my ideas are still socialist ideas; I realise that communism is something that doesn't quite work because it, it's against human nature, because people aren't the same, so they can't be treated the same, and they can't achieve the same, and therefore, they can't have the same conditions. But I do believe that everybody should have the same chance in the world. I care about what happens in the world, though I must say, today I do ver little fighting, I don't know, my, the limit of my fighting is that I signed up for now, my latest limit is, let us say, that I signed up for Charter 88, and I try and support them, I try and convince other people to sign up for it, and support the idea of Charter 88, but I don't go to demonstrations, because I can't stand crowds, and, I'm terrified of crowds. I do enjoy swimming, but I don't like swimming pools which are closed in, therefore I don't go swimming in England, but I go swimming when I have occasion, in the summer, in, in hot countries, and I usually go swimming. I, my, one of my big hobbies is walking in the mountains, and collecting crystals, and looking at plants, and seeing flowers, and that we do together, with Franz, I mean, we, we are happiest when we are out in the mountains, and when we can walk, of course, walking is getting less and less strenuous nowadays, but we still do as much walking as we possibly can, and we love it. And we both love eating! Unfortunately! And especially now, because I am putting on weight, and I shouldn't!

And would you say that the fear of crowds that you have, is attributable to your experiences?

Most probably. There is one other thing, which only, which I only realised, there is one fact, which I only realised lately, I often wondered how was it, that before the War, I was many many years, very very much, very deeply involved with Zionism,

and I wanted to go to Israel, and I, and yet after the War, I didn't do anything, didn't try at all to go to Palestine. And lately, I've been thinking about it, and I came to the conclusion that it must have been, first of all, there must have been several reasons, one of the reasons was that after I came out from concentration camp, and I was together with lots of Jews, one crowd, I found that they weren't better than non-Jews, they were just as rotten, could be just as rotten, and therefore, perhaps, my identity was, I mean, I didn't feel that I absolutely necessarily had to live in a Jewish community, and certainly not in such a close relationship as a kibbutz, and for some reason or other, I think the only way I would have seemed, to be able, since I didn't have money, to go out to, to Israel, would have been to go to a kibbutz, and at that time, I felt that I, I couldn't bear being, not being able to decide on my own fate, and most probably, that must have been the reason that I didn't even consider going to Palestine, at the time.

What does Israel mean to you today?

Well, eventually, I got to Israel, of course, in 1949, and was there till '51, and I, I loved it. I was there at one of the most difficult times, when I was very very hungry, because it was Seder time, and, and I had, I had Ilan, I mean, everything, I talked about it, about that period, and it was very very difficult, but it was the only place where I felt at home, and when, in '51, I went back to South Africa, supposedly for six months, because I left everything open, and I meant to come back to Israel, but I didn't come back to Israel, because my flat was sold, and I would have had to start right from the beginning again, and I didn't want to be separated from Ilan again. I, I went, I was terribly homesick for Israel. For many many many years I was homesick, but I never could afford to go there, until 18 years later, in 1969. I went back to Israel, first for four, well, I planned a seven week stay there, I had four weeks in an Ulpan in a refresher course, and three weeks holiday, and I loved it, I loved it, but by that time, I met Franz, who came to join me the last three weeks, and we had, then I came back to England, because there was Franz, and also, I mean, I had my job, which I actually liked, but I mean, I couldn't give up just, I wasn't in the position to start again. I didn't have the courage, either, to leave everything, and start again in Israel. Also, and I still was homesick, but not, I don't know, I thought Israel

somehow had changed, and today, when I go back to Israel, I love it, I am very happy. Sometimes I feel I would like to live there, and sometimes I feel I wouldn't like to live there! I, it's, I have got a very ambivalent feeling. It's partly because I have got my home here, I am not integrated in England, most of my friends are not English, but are continental, I tried, for many many years, to build up friendships with, with some English people, and I found it pretty impossible to break through their insularity, even though I worked with them, and I am thrown back into my ghetto, mainly, which, in a way, I, I am sorry about, because in every other country, I felt I was part of the country. Here, I don't feel as part of the country, but I, but my home is [gives address], and that's where I am at home, and this really is a home. And also, it's already, I mean, I, I started so many times in a new place, that I'm too tired to start again, and yet, at the back of my mind, it's always still there, that I quite would like to live in Israel.

What does it mean to you that there is a Jewish State?

Oh, it's terribly important to me. It's terribly important for me. I mean, I am a Zionist, I support Zionist causes, and I, and it's, it's very important for me, and had I stayed there, most probably I would have built up a life that would be probably very happy, but ...

End of F280 Side B

F281 Side A

We have just had Yom Kippur, and we discussed fasting. Could you say something about why you feel that it's now not meaningful for you any more?

Well, the first thing is, it's a religious thing, and for me, religion doesn't mean anything to me. I'm absolutely, if anything, I am anti-religious. If I look around in the world, how much trouble religion caused, and unfortunately, my experiences working in the library, with the religious Jews, with quite a number of religious Jews, my biggest burglaries, were done by so-called Hassidim, and my biggest cheatings were done by so-called religious people, and I found them, that they keep all the observances, but they don't keep the, but, but the one thing which is my religion, is "Do not do unto others what you do not want done to thyself", they don't keep it. That I'm trying to live according to that, that saying, that's my religion, but otherwise, I don't have belief, really, I don't believe in anything, I mean, and in my own age, but I haven't got a, I am today, I would say, a confirmed atheist, and so, since Yom Kippur is something religious, since Yom Kippur is something which I object to, absolutely strongly, which, which is that if you sin, and if you are absolved of your sins, of your sins, and you finish it off with Yom Kippur, then it's all right again, well, I try not to, not to do anything, I mean, I am sure I do things which I shouldn't do, but I try, to my best of my ability, to be responsible every day of the year, and not come back and regret it one day, and if I regret it, then it's not one special, specific day for me, so since I don't believe in God, I don't have this obligation. The only reason for me to fast, would be to show solidarity with other Jews, but it's the wrong day, it's the wrong purpose for me, I'm, I'm absolutely, let us say, an inside revolt. Then there is another thing. I don't, when I did fast, I didn't find it particularly difficult, so I don't find it a particular sacrifice. On the other hand, I, I was so often hungry, that after the War, I said to myself, and I was still, after the War, quite a number of times, on starvation lines, that I never again voluntarily will, will fast. So it has no meaning for me, and therefore I, I don't fast. And I don't feel solidarity towards anything religious, that has any religious connotation. I, for me, the festivals that mean something in Judaism, is, let us say, Chanuka, partly, not the miracles, but partly it's a freedom festival. Pesach, which is a freedom festival, but, but otherwise, but I mean,

I don't, don't, I eat everything, I am not kosher, I eat pork, I grew up with pork, and I eat everything, and it has no meaning for me, so ... and I like food, and I don't see why I should deprive myself for something I don't believe in!

And is food so important for you that you actually shop around and go further afield to get exactly what you would like?

Yes. Yes. The same as I spend time preparing it, and I enjoy preparing it, and I enjoy inventing new dishes, and I'm supposed to be a very versatile cook, and I enjoy it.

And what about your health?

Oh, that's a big problem. It's not a big problem really. I have got arthritis, I have got very bad arthritis, which doesn't show much, but I, I have, there isn't a movement which I do, which is not painful, and I have had this for years. I have got an, oh, every single movement in my joint is painful, and I live with it, I tried, we tried various medication, and inflammatory medication, and the side-effects were of, each one of them, the side-effects with me, were so awful, that I preferred the pain. And occasionally, if it gets very bad, which lately it is getting more often very bad, especially at night, I take a pain killer, but for many many years, I didn't even take a pain killer, I just lived with it. And then very very rarely, there is a day, when the sun shines, and it has been dry, but I mean, I haven't had this actually, this last summer, I didn't even have one day like that, but I know that before, once or twice, I suddenly had no pain, and I realised that there must be people living like that, and not knowing what it means to be constantly in pain, that every movement that I make is, is painful.

And is it just your hands, or all over your body?

No. Every, every, there isn't a movement that I do, which isn't painful, which is, which is, which doesn't hurt. But I, I'm so accustomed to it that, I mean, when there is something new coming, when my knee gets worse, or my neck gets worse, I had lots of accidents too, I was wearing a collar for a year, because I had whiplashes. I have, I

broke my back, and I was laid up for three months, on my back, because, and I have got two, well, three slipped discs, which cause me quite a lot of trouble. I had a knee operation, I had an operation on the foot, which, which went wrong, and now I have got toes which are on top of each other, very arthritic, and very painful, constantly, and I can only wear very, I mean, I can, it's, I have had very very big difficulties in getting shoes, I never have an elegant shoe on, I always have only shoes which have got the height for two toes on top of each other, and, I mean, the one without a joint, they took out the joint, and now it's like, it's like that, and it's, well, one foot is completely ruined. But, but I still walk, and it's very painful, and I still do it, and I still garden, and there are days when I can't, when it's so painful that I can't, but, and I have got a very bad arthritic jaw, and I have nearly constant pain in the ear, and in one half of my, my head, but I live with it, and I try not to think of it, and when it gets very bad, then I take a pain killer, as I say. During last night, I, for instance, had a pain killer, because it was so bad I just couldn't sleep.

And do you suffer from nightmares?

No, not any more. Not any more. I used to. I didn't suffer from nightmares, I had what, and that I still get occasionally, but I, much less nowadays, I had, for many many many years, I had terrible anxiety symptoms at night, and I had to have sleeping pills, because they knocked me out to such an extent, I, I am a bad sleeper, I used to be a bad sleeper, I used to go to bed, sleep for half an hour, and wake up and be awake, and not be able to, I was an insomniac for many many years, and that wouldn't have worried me, if I could have come down and read a book or something, done something, but I woke up, and I was absolutely petrified, terrified. And I, I, who never knew fear before the War, am terrified, I am very very frightened, of noises, of, of anything unknown, I mean, I get terribly, I get terribly frightened. This house is locked up like a fortress. My, my, my fights with Franz are that to lock up more the car, and lock up everything, and I mean, I, I don't, if he goes away, if he's not at home, I don't go out at night, because I don't dare to come home. I don't dare to get out of the car, and get into the house, open the door, because I am sure that somebody is going to knock me down. I'm absolutely terrified, and I mean, unreasonably, and sometimes I overcome it, and now at night I find I overcome it, but it used to take me

three, four hours to, to be absolutely petrified, and not dare to move, and I need to drink, and if I take a glass of, once I had the courage to stretch out my hand to take the glass of water, I was all right, but sometimes it took two, three hours, to get over that, and therefore my, my doctors put me on to sleeping pills, and tranquillisers. For many many years, I have actually, for 41 years I, I had sleeping pills, very very big doses, and I reduced it more and more and more, and as soon as I retired, I said, "No more sleeping pills and no more tranquillisers for me", and now I've got myself off completely. And, and I still get occasionally, not often, very rarely nowadays. But I, for many many many years, I had terrible, terrible time at night. But sometimes in daytime, I would sit here, and, and suddenly, I wouldn't dare to get up. I have to go to the loo, and wouldn't dare to get up, because there is something out there, and, and would just be absolutely petrified. I, that, that was one, that was the one thing that remained to me, somehow, some sort of shock, some sort of edge, but I never did much about it. As I say, I was on sleeping pills to be able to get me over, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to go to work, because I wouldn't have been able, I can sleep, I am an owl, and I can sleep in the morning, when it's light, when it started to get light, then I could sleep, but at night time, I was, I was absolutely terrified.

And did you go to work by train or by tube?

Well, for a short while, afterwards, whenever I could go by car, I went by car. I hate, I hate the tube, I don't enter a tube if I can help it, because I, I don't know, partly I am allergic to it, I get a terrible pressure, but partly I hate... No, I don't go into trains if it's, if I can help it. I always went by, many many years already, I went by car. And I go everywhere by car, and I must say, I have an invalid, I got it when I had my operation on my legs, and luckily, up till now, my doctor always renewed it. I have got an invalid thing, yellow, but I don't know whether next time they will renew it, but, because I have a new doctor, and I am not that incapacitated, but, but, then I will move around much less even, because I can only go by car.

And do you have any other physical symptoms?

Not really, no. No, I, no, that's my main.

No blood pressure or ...

Blood pressure, no, I have got, on the contrary, I have got an incredibly low blood pressure, very very low, that low that it, it's ridiculous, and people say it doesn't exist, and I should be, I'm very tired, very often tired, which is not such amazing with such a blood pressure, but doctors tell me that I will have a very long and very miserable life, because if one has such a low blood pressure, one is always tired. And very often I have to really push myself to, to do things, because, because I am constantly tired, because 85 over 58, is an incredibly low blood pressure, and it's very difficult to live with, but I managed to, all these years! (laughs)

And do you sometimes get depressed?

Not really. Very very rarely, very rarely. I mean, some, very rarely, I feel that what's the point? When I think of the world, when I think of the people, how, how stupid the world is, how, how absolutely idiotic, and sometimes if I think of my son, of course, then I, I do get depressed. But when I think of the world, how stupid they are, how much money they spend on, on ammunition, and on, on things which they shouldn't spend, and how happy, how peaceful and happy this world would be, and how nice this earth could be, if, if one, if people weren't, if people wouldn't ruin it, and I never will, I never will understand them, so I never will understand this world.

Do you think that the Holocaust could happen again?

Yes. No, no doubt about it, and anywhere. Here just as much as anywhere, especially, I mean, when I hear the stories which Franz tells me, about what the army, the British Army did to the old people, how absolutely cruel they were, and how dreadfully they treated them, and if I read about the, the child abuses, and the rapes and the, all the cruelty, then no reason that, no reason why not. Yes certainly.

Were you able to talk to your grandchildren about your experiences during the War?

A little bit, I didn't have much occasion to. I mean, Marina was too small still, I didn't yet want to burden her much about it, I mean, I found it's not necessary yet, but I could if she asks. And I, I, for instance, wrote to her the other day, about my being, after I was at the training session to the Anne Frank place, I wrote to her about Anne Frank, and I wrote to her about, yes, I can, but if she asks, no, no problem. With Jonathan, we spoke about it, because, first of all I gave him my article to read, and we talked about it, and secondly, he had Green, Reverend Green came to his school, and was speaking about it, and he was very impressed, so that with Jonathan, yes. But as I say, with Marina, up till now, not particularly, because, because I found, well, I didn't want to burden her, she has enough with her father's death, and enough other, I mean, problems to sort out, so I didn't want to put some more. For instance, Ilan never wanted to hear about it. I was quite willing to speak to him, but he was, he didn't want to. He, altogether, he did not want to be Jewish, he very much resented being Jewish, he very much resented, I mean, he didn't want to get baptised, because he was not religious, and he didn't, the same as my father didn't want to, give up his religion, I mean, opt out of Judaism for, for going into another religion, even when it was put before him that he is going to lose his job unless he gets baptised. He refused to, because he said he is not religious and he is not going to use another religion for his own purposes, but, but, but Ilan, Ilan hated being Jewish, Ilan really loathed being Jewish. When I was teaching at Ellis Gardens, I was preparing children for Bar Mitzvah, and Ilan's Bar Mitzvah came up, and for me it wasn't important at all, that Ilan should be Bar Mitzvahed, but I had to have him, because I couldn't possibly be a Bar Mitzvah teacher, and my own son not having a Bar Mitzvah! And Ilan spoke Hebrew, read Hebrew, so there was no problem with him, and he had a memory like a, I mean, like an elephant, so if I once went through with the Parsha with him, he could do it, there was no, no problem about spending a year, every week, with him. But, so, we decided he is going to be Bar Mitzvah, and I had a small party for him, and everything, and he did it very badly, he actually did it very badly, terribly monotone voice, and, and the Rabbi, Rabbi did something very very stupid, because at, in his speech, after Ilan's Bar Mitzvah, he reproached Ilan, that, that as his best teacher's son, he should have done nicer, and that was really about the worst thing that could happen to Ilan, I mean, in front of the congregation, that he let me down, which I couldn't have cared less, I mean, really, how he did it, as long as he got over it. And

we never spoke about it, he didn't object to doing it, as far as I remember. There was no, no objection, perhaps he asked me "Why do I have to do that?" And I said, "Well, because I am teaching, and I, I might lose my job, and we need the money." I probably told him that, and therefore I think that since you can do it, it's not a burden, why not? And you will get a beautiful party, and will get the nice presents, and so you will be rewarded for it. When he was 30, last time when he was here, before, 29, aged 29, he suddenly burst out, "You made me go through a Bar Mitzvah ceremony, you made me take a vow, by threatening me", and that's how he built it up in his head, "That I'm not going to get anything to eat any more, that we are going to starve, if I am not going to be Bar Mitzvah." Now, this is completely out of keeping with me, I did not say that, but it was so, such a horrific experience for him, that he built it up. I mean, that was terrible, it was really so stupid, and he had this, "How can I be de-Bar Mitzvahed?" It was really worrying him, and that came out the last time he was here, I mean, Franz and I were there, but it was such a violence, with such a hatred. And yet, at the same time, he went to Israel, there he enrolled to, to get his Hebrew again up to standard, he enrolled in an Ulpan, which was on the border, which was being shelled constantly, in Gesher, and he was there for six weeks, and nobody told him he should go to Israel, or he should go to an Ulpan, and he could have gone in an Ulpan in Jerusalem, or anywhere in a safe place, no, he went to one which, ... so that it was very odd.

I know how proud you feel that you now have your own home, after all those years of struggle. Could you say something about that?

Proud is the wrong expression. I am not proud, I am happy, it's a big thing to have my own home, and I mean, to have, I had, all the homes I had weren't really very nice, very ... I mean, at home, in Hungary we had a very nice flat, and it was a beautifully furnished, elegant home, except that the atmosphere, and, and I mean, when we had chamber music evenings, and cultural, it was a, it was a home, and yet I hated it. And then after the War, I was in terrible rooms, really ghastly rooms, then Israel, I was, my, my flat were two ex-prison cells, with iron bars, and doors, and in between, various hostels, and then in South Africa, the first flat we had was a rat-infested basement flat, which was absolutely horrible and did quite a long time, until we got a

decent, two-roomed flat, for the three of us, and, and in, and in England, when we came, then we stayed in room, and the one room we stayed in, for, for the first, nearly two months, was absolutely abysmal, awful, dirty place, where we had to share the bathroom with, I don't know how many people, about, about 22 people, and I had to cook on a one-ring, on which, which was on the floor, and really was, I mean, absolutely awful, until I got a flat finally, and I had no money to furnish it, and it took quite a long time, until I got some decency into it, and put it into, into a shape that I wanted it to be in, but, at the same time, I was very little at home, because my life with my husband wasn't, wasn't a good one, and because he was a pig, and he threw down, if he ate an apple, the apple core went onto the carpet, and, and he was terribly terribly dirty, and so I didn't enjoy being, having my home. And therefore, today, we have got this house, I mean, afterwards, I moved in and I, for one year, I was with Franz, well, not for, for half a year, with Franz in his very small flat, which was a delightful flat, which he made out of nothing, in a very old house, but he converted it into a very beautiful little flat, and, and then we bought this house, and it took a long time to get it set up, but it's a home, it's really a home, and we have lots of guests. And I mean, even in the one with my husband, I had lots of guests staying, and, and it was always an open house, and I had lots of people coming for meals, because I always cooked, and I always was, I think, pretty hospitable-seeming in South Africa, but even in, in France, where I was in the most awful little, dirty little hotel room, I had guests, and I cooked meals, so that I tried to make it as homely as possible, but the, the situation was always such that there was very little time, and very little, ways of making it home, but this one is really a home, and I really love it, and Franz loves, is a very home-loving person, and that makes it wonderful. We used to go a lot to concerts and theatre, and, and I must say, we go out less and less, because we enjoy being at home, and because, perhaps, because I am too lazy to book, or haven't got the energy to book in advance, and then when we decide we would like to go somewhere, then we find it's already sold out, and ... but we see a lot of friends, and that's, we are together with a lot of friends, we go to lectures, we go to concerts occasionally, we go to theatre occasionally, but very rarely, I really can't, and go to, a lot to exhibitions. We are both very interested in art.

And could you say something about the meaning of death for you, in view of your experiences, particularly?

I don't know whether, when I will get older, and I am now over 65, past 65, when I, when I will get older, whether I will be frightened for me, today it doesn't frighten me. It doesn't, that's what life is about, both living and death, and it's a normal procedure, and it's, I don't, shall I say it, I don't need to have a, a grave, I don't want to be buried, I want to be cremated, and I want to be thrown away, and that's the end. I don't believe in afterlife, I, it doesn't worry me. It doesn't frighten me, either. What really frightens me is, for instance, if Franz would die before me, being alone, that frightens me, altogether, being alone, I am very bad at, at being alone, for longer periods. That I, I have difficulties in being alone, but I don't like big crowds, but not, not, so that, let us say, that today frightens me. But death doesn't frighten me at all. The death of somebody else, of losing someone, yes, but, but my death is finished, finished, and I don't feel this thing any more. I don't believe that I go into the, down, and hell, and I don't believe I go into heaven, and

End of F281 Side A

F281 Side B

And what do you think of the, of Germany, of the Germans, today?

What I always thought. The, it's, well, first of all, I don't hold the young people guilty, and I feel that one shouldn't make the young people feel guilty, it's wrong. Guilt feelings breed hatred, and resistance, and, and it can only worsen things, and they are not responsible for what their, what their parents did. I feel sorry for them, because they, very often they have got this feeling that it's their country which is wrong, and they have to so much prove that they aren't, or there are others who have to prove that it's, everything was, that everything was right, and I try not to meet, I first of all, if I, I very rarely go to Germany. I don't like going to Germany, but I do go to Germany, I have got, for instance, a young couple of friends, well, they are now in their fifties, but they were five year old when the War was finished, I mean, non-Jewish friends who, who, whom I respect very much, who want to know what has happened, who are interested, who are fighting prejudice, are fighting racial discrimination on every, every line, and I go and visit them, because she's in a wheelchair, and therefore not so easily, can travel much less easily, and I'm very fond of them, so I go to Germany, but usually, they see that I don't meet their parents, for instance, who never spoke to them about the War, who refused to speak to them about the War, and what they did in the War, where they were, or what, what part they took. I try not to meet people at all, of my age or older. I absolutely avoid, because I mean, my one experience was a, a cat that raised its paws, and was called Adolf, and therefore I don't, I mean, in a house where there was a picture of someone in a SA uniform, and a charming old lady, but, but I don't know whether it was her husband, or her brother or who it was, with the SI uniform on, but this picture still was there, is there. Harten Kreuz and, and I don't, don't particularly enjoy meeting this sort of people. I, but I, I mean, it's unfortunate that it could happen, but I think it can happen anywhere. I don't think that the Germans are worse than any other people, perhaps they were more obedient, though I don't think, the English army people are just as obedient, and just as rotten. And I think they are just as racist as any, as the Germans are. They are less violent, perhaps, but I don't know, I don't know whether the next generation won't be just as violent, and if, and if I think of it, that the Falkland War,

how people were all shouting patriotism, and as soon as it was, I mean, everybody shouted, and how one can swing public opinion, and that Mrs. Thatcher has been in power for ten years, and that she is doing rotten things to this country, and to people, and that she is part-dictator as far as I am concerned, because there's no one stronger than her, and because her cabinet can't say anything any more, like in the previous cabinet, I mean, with previous Prime Ministers, other people had something to say too, but with her, there is nobody else, so if she finds the right way, and if she would feel like it, she could rouse just as much the Englishmen to do atrocities as, as anybody else.

And what do you feel about Hungarians, today?

Well, with Hungarians, I, I usually avoid non-Jewish Hungarians. They were rotten, and, and they were always anti-Semitic, and, and I don't think they are better today. I'm sure. But I mean, actually, in every, I try and judge people as individuals, as much as possible. It doesn't, but in, and I keep it in my mind, I have it at the back of my mind, that the best individuals, I mean, we had fantastic friends in Hungary, my parents had fantastic friends in Hungary, and they behaved atrociously when it came to the crunch. But then in camp, our Jewish friends behaved also atrociously, so there are very few heroes in the world, who are willing to go against the public opinion, and against the mass hysteria, so I don't, I don't fully trust anyone. As long as I, as somebody is decent to me, I am decent to them, and I believe them, as soon as I find they are doing something which I, which I find that it's, it's not decent, and one doesn't do it to another person, then I, I'm not interested in them any more. But I don't trust, I don't fully trust, really, anyone.

And what would you say has been the most important message that you would have, out of your experiences?

This. That I can't trust anyone fully. As I say, I am willing to, up to a certain extent, but as soon as there is a sign of, that they don't live up to certain pre-conditions, or, I, I just don't want to. I don't trust anyone, I don't trust the people, I don't trust individuals.

And my final question to you is, you're Hungarian by birth, and you have lived in several countries, and you are also Jewish,

Not also, I'm only Jewish.

Well, that's what I was going to ask you.

My only identity, that's the only identity which I didn't change, I never was sorry that I was Jewish, I never was ashamed that I was Jewish, I never wanted to get away from it, except when I am together with, with, with fanatic religious fundamentalists, then I, I don't feel, I certainly don't feel any identity with them, but, but I am, I am not, I mean, that's my only identity. That's the one thing, the one sure point in my life which never changed.

So do you feel British at all?

Definitely not. And I don't feel Hungarian either.

Thank you very much.

End of F281 Side B

End of Interview