

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

JACK SANTCROSS

Interviewed by Gaby Glassman

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F291 Side A

You asked me to tell you about my early experiences, which resulted subsequently, in my becoming a victim of the Nazi persecution. I was born in Amsterdam, in 1934, and we lived in a part of Amsterdam, which was mixed community, which was not a specific Jewish community. My father, he was in a diamond polishing business, and my mother in, before I was born, she worked in a Department Store, in the offices of a Department Store. We lived in Amsterdam South, and what I can remember from that period is that I would play in the street with the other children, and while my parents were at work, I would be looked after by my grandparents, most of whom lived within a short walking distance of where we lived. I suppose the first impressions, disturbing impressions, were the sight of the, either the Germans in 1940 marching through the streets, or otherwise the Dutch National Socialists were marching through the streets. But until we had to wear the stars, which I believe was in 1942, there were no special memories, either pleasant or unpleasant memories. My grandfather would, on my mother's side, would take me for walks along the canals of Amsterdam, where we would watch the sailing boats and the barges as they went about their business on the canals, and apart from that, I would perhaps go to the, a kind of nursery school, but school normally starts in Holland at 6, so I didn't, my school memories are from anywhere before 1942, are not very strong at all. In 19, at the beginning of 1943, we had to move from where we were in Amsterdam South, to a part of Amsterdam in the East, where people had already been taken away, and the houses had become vacant, and it was being formed into a kind of ghetto, and in April, 1943, we, ourselves, were taken away one night. We had already had rucksacks packed with clothes and that, so it was just a truck with Germans that knocked on the door one night, and we had, I had to get up, and we took our rucksacks, got dressed, took our rucksacks and were taken away to a theatre in Amsterdam, which was a gathering point, and from where we were taken to Westerbork.

Is that the Dutch theatre?

That was the Dutch Internment Camp.

May I just stop you here for a moment, can we just go back, I'd like to ask you, for instance, about your going to school, as a Jew, what kind of school was there that was still accepting Jewish children?

As my, my memory is very vague from that period, because I think it was very much a disrupted few years. I, I remember being in a kind of nursery school, and that must have been before 1940, before I was six years old. I remember crossing a large field to go to another school, and that must have been between 1940 and '43. But I cannot actually remember anything from the school itself, it is just completely blanked out. I do know that, I think it was a mixed school that I went to originally, in 1940, and I think, not shortly after that, I had to go to a school reserved for Jewish children. And then, because we moved again in 1943, to another part of Amsterdam, I had to go to another school again, and it's because of that that nothing is really clear in my mind any more, of that particular period.

And do you remember hearing your parents talking about what was happening and why you had to move?

No. It, strange enough, I don't think my parents explained anything to me. I know now that my grandparents, my grandfather died in 1938 of, of old age, that's my maternal grandfather. I never knew my paternal grandfather because he had died before I was born. My grandmothers, both my grandmothers, and, in the case of my mother's mother, she had a sister and brother living with, with them. They were all taken away before January, 1943, before we had to move, but I don't remember anybody explaining to me about the death of my grandfather, admittedly I was only four years old then. I don't recall anybody explaining to me, exactly what was happening.

Did you often think about it?

No. I, I don't think I thought about it either.

And were you an only child?

Yes.

And were your parents out all day, working as long as they could still work?

Certainly my father, yes. As far as my mother is concerned, I, I don't think, not all the time, but some of the time, yes.

What did she do? You said she,

She worked in the Offices,

Yeh, but as what?

Oh, just as a Clerk.

And do you know until when they were able to work? Like, your father has a very Jewish profession?

Well, he wasn't able to continue with that, I think, after 1940. For a while he was, he was taken away, or he had to be, he was sent away to work, to work the land, away from Amsterdam.

Whereabouts was that, do you know?

I think it was in Overijssel, but I'm not, I'm not quite sure, and subsequently, he, he subsequently, before, immediately before we were taken away, he worked in, doing maintenance work for the Jewish Hospital in Amsterdam, he worked in the machine rooms of the Hospital.

That was the CIS?

The Joodse Invalide. At least, I think that's the one it was.

Do you remember anything about playing with neighbours' children?

A few doors away, we lived a few doors away from a corner, and on the corner of the street that we lived, there was a, a grocer's shop, with a basement, and that was a Jewish boy, and I remember playing in the cellars of the shop, with a train set that he had, but what I also remember is that, certainly, after 1940, I think I was discouraged from playing with non-Jewish children that lived in the street, in case it could lead to, to some kind of trouble.

Yes, so up to that point, you think you did play with non-Jewish children as well?

Yes, I, I'm sure I did to some extent, but as I say, because my parents were away at work, and I was looked after by my grandparents, either my paternal grandmother or my maternal grandparents, I wasn't always near where I lived, so I, I suspect,

You went to their house?

I went to their house, so I suspect that I was mostly on my own, rather than play with other children.

Did you resent that? Can you remember anything about that?

No, I, I can't.

Would you have toys there to play with?

I don't think so, no. I, I remember I, like most children of perhaps 6, 7, I collected stamps and I merely remember rummaging through my grandmother's cupboards, looking for old postage, postcards, and taking the stamps off them.

And could you say something about your family life, who you felt particularly close to?

I, I think the person I was particularly close to, because the time he spent with me, was my maternal grandfather, but that, as I said before, because he died in 1938, that could only have been for a relatively short period of my life, and I, I can't really recall being close to anybody, apart from that.

Did you have photographs of him?

No. No, because everything was taken away. I also remember, before we were taken away by the Germans, that there was, somewhere along the Amstel Canal in Amsterdam there was a house where Jewish children could come together, and where I used to go and, to do fret-sawing.

How often did you go there, do you think?

I just cannot remember. I think because of, because of the things that happened subsequently, that whole period has almost completely been blotted out of my mind.

Do you know whether you were allowed to play outside in the street until 1940?

I was allowed to play outside in the street, yes.

And after that?

After that as well, yes, yes.

And once you had to wear a yellow star?

Yes, yes, once I had to wear a yellow star I was still able to play outdoors.

With, with your friends who were also Jewish?

Either with other children, or on my own, or my scooter, or maybe on a bicycle.

What was your favourite activity, apart from collecting stamps?

I think, I think being a street urchin!

And have there ever been any incidents that you can remember while you were outside, or in a shop, or anything like that?

Instance, with regard to what?

With you being Jewish.

No. No. None whatsoever.

You were never shouted at or anything?

No, not, certainly not that I can remember.

And do you know whether your parents considered leaving Holland?

I, I think, I think they might have done, but the means were not there, to, when you say, "to leave Holland", either to flee, if you, to flee you need money, and, and my parents didn't have that.

Did they know anybody abroad?

No.

So that, there were two things really, no money and no contacts.

That's right, that's right.

Do you feel bitter about that?

No, not about that period. I, I, I'm, I'm fairly fatalistic about that, it was a, those were events which were not, could not easily be stopped or easily be prevented, and they were suffered by so many people, and, of course, they should never have happened, but given the fact that they did happen, I don't think I can feel bitter about that, no.

And were your parents sociable people? Did they have a lot of friends?

I don't think, I don't think they were able to be sociable. When I say, they were not, it's not that they were not sociable, but I think they were, throughout their lives they had been so preoccupied with earning a living, and, that there just wasn't time to do much entertaining. What, usually over the weekends, relatives would come round, like the grandparents would, we would go and see the grandparents, or they would come to us.

Were you a religious family?

No, not at all.

Did you keep Friday night?

No. No religion at all. I wasn't, in fact, I knew nothing about religion until much later in my life. I was, I was kept completely unaware of religion.

And do you know how your parents felt about being Jewish?

I don't think they were conscious of it, there was no reason to be conscious of it. They were, first and foremost, they were, they were Amsterdammers.

Did they look Jewish?

Yes.

In what way, do you think?

In their features.

Could you say with more

Well, I think that stereotyping,

Okay, fair enough. Did they have mostly, the friends they did have, were they mostly Jewish?

I can't remember, because I, I didn't know them too well. They were certainly not all Jewish, but as I explained, I don't think there was a great social life. The free time was spent mostly with relatives.

And you say they were real Amsterdammers, were your grandparents also from Amsterdam?

Yes.

Were they born in Amsterdam?

Yes. My, I have a family tree which dates back to the 17th Century, so it is from that period that the family has lived in Amsterdam, from the 17th Century.

So where did they come from originally, do you think?

I know they came from, from Spain and Portugal.

Yes, well, that's what I was meaning, they did.

So does the family tree start when the family moved to Holland, do you think?

The family tree is traced back to, it, really, Flanders, and all the Lowlands, but with connections in, with people having been born in Spain and in Portugal, but also in South America, and in Italy, and in France. Maybe I should explain, this is a family tree which was prepared by the Portuguese Israeli community in Amsterdam.

When did they do that?

They did that in 1942, or '43, '42 probably, to, to try and prevent my grandmother, my paternal grandmother, from being deported. It was to show that she had a right to both British Nationality, because my paternal grandfather was born in London, and therefore was a British Citizen, and to prove also, that she had a right to the Portuguese nationality, and Portugal being neutral, that therefore, she should be protected, and not be deported, but unfortunately, it failed it's purpose.

It was really prepared too late, or was there no way of getting out any more?

It was not only prepared too late, but my father tells me that when he saw the British representatives in Amsterdam, in 1942, or '43, and asked for a British Passport to be issued for my grandmother, the reply was that he had no need for a Passport and it could wait until after the War.

You were just saying about the, the best of the,

I was saying about the, the British representative refused to issue a Passport for my grandmother, which could have saved her, and, in fact, which might have, had they issued one for us as well, for my father and myself, because I have a British Birth Certificate, I'm considered to be British by birth, now, that might have prevented us

from being deported as well, not necessarily so, but it certainly would have been more valuable to have had those documents, than not.

How come you have a British birth?

Because the, because my grandfather was born here, and you inherit, at that time, the Citizenship Laws of this country were such that they could be inherited through to the third generation.

Really?

Yes. My birth actually wasn't registered until much later, with the British Consulate in Amsterdam.

So were you registered both with the British Consulate and the Dutch authorities?

No, not, not at the time, no. The registration with the British Consulate happened much later, only in relatively recent years, that they issued me with a Birth Certificate, as if it had been registered in the 1930s.

So did you, on that basis, have dual nationality?

On that basis, I have dual nationality, yes.

Did that help you in any way?

Well, I, I think the reason that my parents and I were not sent to the extermination camps in the same way that my grandparents and other members of the family were, was because we held the British Nationality, and we had a claim to British Nationality, and at that time, the people sent to Westerbork, were those that the Germans thought they could use for exchange purposes, so, my understanding, and these are things that I learnt later, much more recently, they, my understanding is that people who were sent to Westerbork, to Belsen, were those who, for example, may have had a Spanish or Portuguese, or Latin American nationalities, or Swiss nationality, or British nationality, because they could have been of value, because the Allies, or the neutral powers might have been interested to arrange for the exchange of Germans for German held prisoners, and they also, some of the wealthier diamond merchants were also sent to Belsen for the same reasons. Any, anybody who could have been of a political or economical use to the Germans.

You, if we can just go back to the, what you told me about the Portuguese Synagogue, what they did in 1943, the family tree, that they traced. Did they do that for a lot of people, do you know?

My understanding is, again, I don't know, because I was too young, but my understanding is that they did do it for other families as well, and, in fact, I have inherited copies of one or two other family trees as well, so from my evidence, the fact that I have several family trees, indicates that it was not a rare thing to do.

Did your parents belong to the Portuguese Synagogue, although they were not religious?

Well, yes, we belonged to the Portuguese Israeli community, yes.

And you, you, didn't do anything, so you didn't even ever go to the Synagogue, is that right?

No, no, I never went to the Synagogue.

And your parents? I mean, before the War?

No.

No? And what about your grandparents?

I really do not know, but somehow, I don't think so. I have no evidence to suggest that they were in any way religious. I think, because there was no real need for it, as I said before, just as my parents thought of themselves first and foremost as Amsterdammers, and then as Dutch, I don't, there was no need to think of oneself as being specifically Jewish.

Where was your grandfather buried in 1938?

My maternal grandfather, I don't know. I have no idea where he was buried. I do know that my paternal grandfather had left the, his wife, in the early 1930s, and gone to Belgium, where he died, I think, in 1932, and because at that time there were no burial places, Jewish burial places in Belgium, he's actually buried just across the border in Holland, at Putten.

Is that a Jewish Cemetery?

That's a Jewish, Jewish burial site, yes.

Do you know anything about the degree of observants among the population of Amsterdam, at that time, just before the War, can you recall people going to a Synagogue?

No. I, I, I can't from personal experience, because I didn't know anything about religion, and what I do know is that all over Amsterdam, I believe, in many parts of Amsterdam, there were active communities, there were Synagogues, and going by that simple fact that there were Synagogues, and that, in Holland, there were, in total, something like, I believe, 112,000 registered, or recorded Jews, of whom the largest number lived in Amsterdam, maybe three-quarters of those lived in Amsterdam, I think that would indicate that there was an active community there, there were many Synagogues, and therefore, there must have been quite a few observant Jews living in Amsterdam.

Could you say something about the circumstances in which you lived? I mean, what sort of accommodation did you have?

Yes, in the South of Amsterdam, there are streets and streets of three-storey flats, flat buildings which were built in the 1920s, and we lived on the ground floor of one of those, which meant that we, it was a modern, modern building, we had a front room. I had my own bedroom, my parents had their bedroom, there was a hall that led from the street door through a second door into the remainder of the house. There was a combined bathroom and toilet

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... bottom of the garden in which my father kept tools and a motorbike and garden tools.

Did you often play in the garden?

I know I played in the garden, but whether it was often or not, I, I can't remember.

And when you think back of that early part of your life, how would you say that was?

Knowing what I know now, I would say it was a very impoverished childhood, but I say that in the light of what I know now of what a childhood should have been. At the time, I don't think I gave it a great deal of thought, if any at all.

When you say "impoverished", what do you mean by that?

Impoverished in the sense that I don't think I was stimulated a great deal, I don't think, well, I was introduced to anything of intellectual value, I don't think I had many books, I don't think I was read to a great deal, if at all, I don't think I had many toys. Generally, I think it was an unstructured childhood, a childhood in which I was allowed to just drift along.

Your grandparents or parents wouldn't play with you?

I wouldn't say, I don't think it's a matter of "wouldn't", as I say, my grandfather, he used to take me to the zoo in Amsterdam, and he used to take me for walks, and I know that it must have pleased me a great deal, I must've looked forward to that, but apart from that, I think it was pretty devoid of anything very exciting.

When you think back now, would you say that you, that you had an unhappy childhood, or was it all right?

I think it was bland, is the word. Not specifically unhappy, but bland.

What did your grandfathers do? What sort of work did they have?

On my paternal side, my grandfather was also in diamond polishing or cutting trade, and, and my paternal grandmother as well, and likewise on my mother's side.

And your maternal grandfather, did he work until he died?

I, I don't think so, I don't think so, he couldn't have done, otherwise he wouldn't have had the time to spend with me.

Yeh, so was he retired, do you think?

I should imagine so, yes.

And what did you feel about not having any brothers or sisters?

I don't think I gave that any thought, it was, it was, I think, much later in my life, I think it was, maybe when I was 10 or 11, maybe when I was 11 or 12, that I became aware that I missed not having any brothers or sisters.

And when you moved from the flat that you just described, what sort of accommodation did you have next?

When we moved to Amsterdam East?

Yes.

At the beginning of January, or the beginning of 1943. Oh, it was something similar, but in an older block of terraced housing, but of similar kind.

It was still as spacious?

I think so. We were only there for about two or three months, and I can't remember it, I don't have a, I could find my way there again, but it was in the street called Christiaan de Wetstraat, and I think I know the number still as well, but I, otherwise I can't remember it.

Did you ever go back to your parental home, your first one?

Oh yes. Oh yes, in the, many times after the War, when I returned to Amsterdam, I, I would re-walk the streets of my childhood, many times, almost as if it were obsessive.

Could you describe your feelings that you had then?

I think they were feelings of, it's mixed, one was, I think to reassure myself that my memories were sound, that things had been what I remembered them to have been, the places where, what I had remembered, and the woodwork shop that I used to pass as a child was still there after the War, and I was, I could stand watching the man planing wood, and sawing wood, in the way that I watched him as a child, that the shoemakers' shop was still there, that the tram terminus was still there, and I could still watch the trams in the terminus in the way that I had done when I was a child, so there was that aspect to, just to reassure myself that my memories were accurate, and it was also retracing those steps, they were, it was done with great sadness at the loss. I know that I walked from where we used to live in the Vechtstraat in Amsterdam, I walked to the square where my paternal grandmother lived, and I would walk, go across the Amstel, and walk to Amsterdam East to where my maternal grandparents used to live, and really, that, that was a very small world, but I would, I rewalked those streets many times.

And what made you stop doing it in the end? Was that your move, or did it just stop?

I, I don't, I don't really know why I, first of all, I haven't been back to Amsterdam that frequently, but I, I, I think maybe because it has all changed so much now, where my,

the last time I visited the area where my paternal grandparents, grandmother, paternal grandmother lived, I think there are now many immigrants to Holland, and the area has become delapidated, and the graffiti all over the walls and everywhere, it's, it's just that it's no longer what I remembered it to have been, it's not the same any more, in the way it was in, in the earlier years after the War.

So after you moved to England, did you still, on your visits to Holland, go back there?

Oh, that's what I was talking about, it was specifically after, after I'd moved to England.

Did you take your children back there?

No. I, first of all I haven't been to Amsterdam with the children very often, maybe only once, twice maybe at the most, I think only once, and I think there just wasn't the opportunity, or there was no interest, or they were too young at the time, so, no.

You said you remembered the marches of the Nazis and of the

The Dutch National Socialists, yes.

What particularly do you remember of that, in these very early childhood memories?

Well, I, I think, I think they were a spectacle, marching to music through the streets of Amsterdam. I didn't know any better, I couldn't, it meant nothing else to me than that they marched down the middle of the street, playing their music.

And what did you think of the uniforms?

I don't think I gave much thought to it, they were just people in uniform.

Did they frighten you?

No, no, I don't think so, no.

And do you remember other people being taken from their homes before you were taken?

Yes, there is a, there is a vague memory of people no longer being at their homes, but where they had gone to, or why they had gone, I didn't know.

And did this worry you to the extent that you thought it might happen to you one day?

No, I, I don't think it worried me, I don't think I gave it a great deal of thought. I, I, I think you need to remember too, that, at that time, I don't think too many people had any idea at all, of what was likely to happen to them. It might have been thought of merely as a, as a, as an unpleasant inconvenience.

What did you think about having your rucksacks packed?

Again, I, I, I think, perhaps as a child, I was looking forward to the day when I would be allowed to carry it, but that's obviously the, the attitude of a young child.

That's right, yes. So it was like,

An adventure, going on, yes.

What do you remember of that night that they came for you? Could you describe that?

Well, I remember only from the point where somebody entered my bedroom, and woke me up and told me to, which I think was my father, to, to get dressed because we had to go away. And then I remember doing that, and as I stepped outdoors, finding a truck, and there was some soldiers dressed in uniform, and we just climbed in the truck, and were taken to the theatre in Amsterdam, which was the collecting point.

Did the Gestapo, cos you did say it was the Gestapo came for you?

I really,

You don't know whether they were Gestapo?

As a child of eight, I mean, I really didn't know.

You didn't discuss that afterwards with your parents?

No. I think it was, I mean, as far as we were concerned, I think, they were the Germans, and whether they were the SS or the Gestapo, or whether they were anybody else, it really makes very little difference.

Yes, oh yes. Did they enter your house, do you know?

Yes, I'm pretty sure that they, they entered the house, yes, and stood there while we got ready.

Do you remember them knocking on the door or ringing the bell?

No, because as I explained to you, my first memory of that night is that I was woken up.

So you slept through the first bit?

I would have done, yes.

And can you describe your father's state at that point?

I don't think I can remember, but the fact that my parents had their rucksacks packed, would indicate to me that they were expecting it to happen at any moment, and therefore, mentally, they were prepared for it.

Do you remember any shouting?

No. No, I don't.

Hurrying you?

No, no.

No beating?

No.

And how many people would you say were loaded on, apart from your house, were there other people?

Again, I, I can't recollect any other people until we were in the theatre, and of that all I can recollect is that there were very many people all around, waiting, with luggage.

And did you sleep with a teddy bear or ...

No, I can't remember, I don't think so, I don't think so.

So can you remember whether, what you wanted to take, you know, there's some things a child is specially attached to, whether you were allowed to take that?

I don't think I took anything with me.

Did you miss anything afterwards, I mean, in the beginning, of what you had left behind?

I, I think what, what I missed most, was, was a scooter, which I had, but I'd already lost the use of that much earlier. My father had a small allotment on the outskirts of Amsterdam, and the produce from that allotment, he used to carry back to Amsterdam on a bicycle, but then I believe, in 1942 or thereabouts, bicycles were confiscated, had to be handed in, so in order to carry the produce back to Amsterdam from the allotment, my scooter was used for that, and I think in the process, it, it collapsed, so I'd already lost the use of that scooter, before we were taken away.

So, and you arrived at the theatre, and found that there were a lot of other people there, and it was in the middle of the night, and what happened then?

I, I really, I, all I remember is a crowd of, being surrounded by a crowd of people with luggage, but I really cannot remember any details of that, or, in fact, the journey to Westerbork. I can't remember whether we went there by train, or whether we went there by truck.

So how long, do you know that, how long you were kept at the Dutch theatre?

Oh, I have, I have a vague impression that it was probably till the next day. I certainly don't remember being there more than 24 hours.

And do you know whether you could sit down somewhere, or did you, do you know things like that?

No, I can't remember.

So you don't know anything about the train journey, or however you got to Westerbork?

No, I can't remember how we got to Westerbork.

And you were with your parents

All the time,

All the time?

Yes, yes.

And what about your grandparents, did you know at that stage, what had happened to them?

No, I didn't know what had happened to, to my grandparents until after the War, and then of course, not with certainty either.

What are your first recollections, again, then, of being in Westerbork?

In Westerbork, yes.

So could you say something about that?

Yes, I remember, I remember that Westerbork was a large site with barracks, a large site with a railway line running down the middle of it, with barracks on one side, and also some small houses. On the other side of the railway line I remember there being some workshops, I think there was a Meeting Hall, there were kitchens, there was a laundry, and there were warehouses, where property which had been taken from the houses of Jews, was taken to. I remember that, because, as children, we sometimes managed to get in those warehouses, and amongst all the items that were there, we would find postage stamps and that. I remember the workshops, because from the workshops we would sometimes beg hacksaw blades and plywood, so that we could do a little fretwork. And I remember the laundry, because my father worked there for a short while. I remember the, the railway line running down the centre of the camp, because, as children, we sometimes found iron bars lying alongside the railway line,

and we would, with these iron bars, we would try and lever the trucks, and make them move along the railway line, and caused them to bounce, one against the other.

How many children were doing that, I suppose you were in a group, planning?

I don't think there was much planning, it was just a matter of idle hands finding something to do!

Yes, do you know how many you,

No, I don't, but there were always a group of children of my own age, just hanging around the Camp, just wandering around and trying to find something to do.

So how did you spend your time there? Apart from doing that?

Precisely that.

Just wandering around?

Just wandering around, yes.

There was nobody who sort of had formed a little group with each children?

No, no.

And your mother, did she work there?

I can't remember, I don't think so, but I cannot remember.

Do you have any idea how long you were in Westerbork?

Oh yes, yes, we were in, we were taken away in April 1943, and we, apart from a short break, we were there until approximately the middle of January 1944, when we were taken to Belsen. The short period that we were away from Westerbork, we had been sent to Amersfoort, another Camp in Holland, but that, I think that was only for about a month, and then we were returned again to Westerbork.

Why do you think you were sent to Amersfoort?

I have no idea. There was a large group of us, and it was a fairly substantial transport.

How were you transported to Amersfoort?

Again, I can't remember.

And could you describe, could you describe the living accommodations in Westerbork, and Amersfoort, as much as you can remember?

Well, the, the images which I have of the interior of the barracks of Westerbork and Amersfoort, and Belsen, are all more or less the same, in that they consisted of rows of tiered bunk beds, with, with tables at either one end, or at the side of the bunk beds, with benches, but specific, other than that, I, I really can't remember the details.

And did you sleep in the same room as your parents?

I think they, the men and women slept in different barracks, and I slept with my mother in the women's barracks.

So did most children stay with their mothers, do you think?

That's right, yes.

And can you remember how you washed yourself? You know, what facilities were there?

Yes, well, again, it, it, I don't think I can distinguish, or I can remember in detail, the difference between the conditions in, in, in Holland, in Westerbork, or in Belsen, I think, what I can remember is a wash house, with rows of basins, and a pipe with taps running above it, and ...

And what about toilets?

I remember that, I can't, again I can't specifically remember the difference between Westerbork and, I can't remember Westerbork exactly, I can only remember Belsen, where there, I think there was a toilet in the barrack, and for at night, and then there were latrines away, set away from the barracks, in Belsen.

And in Westerbork, did one wash oneself at the wash basin?

To the best of my memory, yes.

Were there showers?

I can't remember there being showers, no.

And can you remember how the food was dished out, whether there was a dining area, or whether you queued up?

I think again, it was always a matter of queuing up, and it being dished out from mess, mess tins.

And was that the only time division that there was, like, you know, the time that the meals were being served, that the food was being served?

I'm not sure that I understand the question.

You said you were just wandering around, you know, you didn't have anything to do really, so it was rather timeless there.

That's right.

The mealtimes, I suppose they were fixed times?

Yes, yes.

And so was that the only structure, as it were, in the day?

Yes, yes. I would say that as far as Westerbork is concerned, yes. As far as Belsen is concerned, to which I know we'll come later, but there, there were the

The roll calls?

The roll calls, yes.

So in Amersfoort, would you say that that was probably,

Similar to Westerbork, yes.

End of F291 Side B

F292 Side A

I don't think we got enough food, because I can remember, throughout the period of imprisonment, always trying, hovering near there was food, either near the kitchens, whether that was in Westerbork or in Belsen, always hovering around wherever there was food, in order to try and get some more. But again, precisely what we were given in Westerbork, I couldn't say, and I think when I come to saying what we got in Belsen, it, the memories will probably be mainly of the last few weeks and months, everything else having been obliterated.

Had you ever been hungry in your life before?

No. No.

There was always enough?

Oh yes, yes.

And even when your parents had to stop working?

Yes, I don't, I don't think there was, I don't think I ever wanted for food.

And do you remember anything about the food distribution in Westerbork? Like whether people who did get enough, and was there, like later, in the Camps, an exchange of food?

I, I really don't know. Not from personal experience, I know from what I have read in books, but from personal experience, I can't say. I don't think a child of eight, who, as I explained, it wasn't as if I'd had a particularly stimulating childhood, a childhood in which I was taught to think very much about the world around me, I don't think that kind of child is going to wonder and take in what he sees around him. I can well imagine that more sensitive children, or more thoughtful children, would have taken note, and would have discussed the state of things, but I don't, myself, recall ever having done so. I do remember people receiving parcels with, with food, in Westerbork.

Where did you think, or where did you think those were coming from?

Well, they would have been sent by friends and relatives. Again, of course, people who, people who'd had money, which they could've deposited with others, could've ensured, at least, that they were sent, whether they received them or not is a different thing, but they could've been sent food parcels on a regular basis.

Do you know whether your parents still had any communication, any form of communication with the outside world, at that point?

No. I'm sure they, I can't imagine how they could have had communication with the outside world.

I thought by letter, possibly.

I really, I, I don't know, I don't know whom they would have communicated with.

Because their closest had gone?

Well, yes, that's right.

Do you remember whether there was any form of religious observance practised in Westerbork?

Well, I, I, I remember, not specifically Westerbork, but certainly I can remember seeing people at prayer. There were people who, who practised their religion. I know that to some extent this, this would annoy my father, because he considered it to be provocation to, to the Germans.

Do you remember anything about the leadership among the inmates in Westerbork?

No.

Whether there was any form of organisation?

Well, I know from what I've read, that there was an organisation, there was a hierarchy, but again, I must now keep this to personal experiences, and personally, again, it would not have been something that a child of eight would concern himself with. I know there was a barrack leader, both in Belsen and in Westerbork, somebody who had responsibility in the barracks, somebody, particularly when it came to the distribution of food, but over and above that, I really don't have any experience.

What would you say your reaction was, at the time, to the change in your circumstances?

I think I just took it in my stride, I didn't know what was going on, so I didn't give much thought to it, and I couldn't say with certainty, but I would imagine that as with most things in life there is a beginning and an end, and I suppose I expected there to be an end to the experiences as well. I would like to say that one image which stands out in my mind, particularly, from the time I was in Westerbork, is that you asked before if there was any kind of organisation, and I, of children, to organise their activities, and I just have a, only one memory, and that is that one day, a group of children were allowed to go outside the perimeter, outside of the gates of the Camp, into, and play amongst the heather and the dunes, not the dunes, the heather and the sandpits that were there, and I can only, and I know it was a nice sunny day, and I know that there was, I remember it with feelings of, of excitement, and warmth, and pleasure, but I think it only happened once, but that is really the only memory of that kind that stands out in my mind, of a group of children sitting around in a circle, in a sandpit amongst, amongst the heather.

Did you feel a difference in your relationship to your parents while you were in Westerbork, to before? It sounded as if you didn't feel particularly close to your parents, because you mentioned your relationship to your grandfather as standing out, some sort of closeness. Was, did this change?

No, I don't think so.

And did you feel comforted by your mother being close to you?

Comfort implies that I, I was in a state of disease, or discomfort before, and I don't think that was the case either. No, I, I think there was just a, it was just a total feeling of blandness, of inactivity, of boredom, of, of

Can you recall any fears of being separated from your parents?

No. No.

Do you have any memories of train transports to the East having taken place every week from there?

No. I, I, again, I, from what I've subsequently read in more recent years, I know how these took place, but no, I can't, I can't speak from personal experience, I can't remember them. Again, I think it's important to remember that we're talking here of an eight year old child, with a limited, virtually no education, a child of artisan, working-class family.

Could you read at that point?

I think I probably could, yes, but ...

But were there books?

No, there weren't any, or at least I cannot remember there being any books, but certainly I don't, I don't recall beginning to learn to read after the War. I suspect that I could already read. I had learnt to read between my 6th and 8th year. In fact, if I think back, I know that in, before we were taken away, I used to read the cartoons in the Dutch newspaper, so yes, I was able to read.

Today is the 19th October, we are continuing the interview, where we left it yesterday.

I would like to ask you still a few questions about things we did not discuss yesterday. Could you tell me how you felt when you first wore the yellow star, can you remember that?

No, I can't, I can't remember what I felt like. What I can remember, as a child, that they, I think they came in squares, and in order to sew the edges over, I remember cutting them out and sewing them, sewing over the edges, before they were sewn on the clothes, that's really all I can remember about the stars. I, I don't think I had any particular feelings about it. I don't think it particularly bothered me, because I didn't know what it was, I didn't know what was going on.

And do you recall whether you were wearing something with the star on all the time, even indoors? Or was it just on your coat?

I think it was just on outdoor clothes.

When did your parents get married, and how long was it until you were born?

They were married in December 1932, and I was born two years later.

And could you say something about their marriage? You look at it now, of course.

I'm not sure that I understand.

Was it a happy marriage?

I think so, I think these, I think it's important to remember that people from, who came from that kind of background, that is, a working-class background, I don't think they, especially in the early thirties, of the difficulties of the, the economic, world economic difficulties, I don't think that these people had high expectations. I think it was just modest, just to be able to live a quiet life, and to have at least warm clothing and enough food, and to live in clean surroundings, I think their expectations did not go much further, not much beyond that. That's an impression I have.

And you talk about their expectations of life, do you remember what your own expectations were, as a little boy?

No.

What you wanted to be?

No. I, again I, either I cannot remember what they were, because, because of the subsequent events which obliterated all that out of my mind, or otherwise, genuinely, I was just an innocent little boy who hadn't been told, or taught very much.

Yes. Can you recall whether there were any books around the house?

I, I can't, I can't remember. I can't say yes there were, or that there weren't, I just simply do not know.

And to what extent would you say your parent were educated? Because you described them as a working-class family.

Well, I think, I believe they both left school at about 14. I think my mother went to evening classes, where she subsequently, she learned a little French and some English, but apart from that, I think it was in common with the times.

Had they ever been abroad?

No. No. But then I, I think again, mass travel only started after the Second World War, really.

Yes, of course. How come your paternal grandfather was born in London?

My great-grandfather was a cigar manufacturer, and I understand, for one reason or other, that he had a cigar factory in the Old Kent Road, in London, and he, I believe he married someone who was born in London, and whether he met her in, in Holland,

and because of that went to England, or whether he met her in England, I really do not know. But anyway, my grandfather was born in London, and I think, when he was just a few years old, his father, or his family, moved back to Holland again.

And at home, did you speak Dutch, or was it a mixture of Dutch, or Yiddish?

No, only Dutch.

Could you tell me when you were deported from Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen?

It was at the beginning of January 1944, we went by train from Westerbork to Belsen.

Could you say a bit more of what you can remember?

I, no, I believe the trains were ordinary passenger trains, they were not cattle trucks, I don't think, not at that time, and when we arrived in Belsen, there was a long march from the station to the Camp. I remember, the first impressions of the Camp, I remember, we are seeing the Russian Prisoners-of-War on the right hand side of the Camp as we walked towards it, or in the Camp, and political prisoners-of-war in striped uniforms on the left hand side of us. The road ran down the middle of the Camp, and then, the next memory is probably of finding myself in, in the barracks with lots of other people, trying to sort out a, a bed for oneself. I think, at that time, the barracks were clean, and there were fresh straw mattresses.

Did you have blankets?

In my mind's eye, I can see grey horse blankets.

Were you again with your mother?

Yes.

So it was a womens' barracks?

Were womens barracks, yes.

And did you still have your rucksack with you?

Yes. In fact, it, it's an extraordinary thing, but my parents still have one of their rucksacks, even today, which they use as a laundry bag!

Do you still have yours?

No.

What happened to it?

Oh, I really don't know.

Did you have it at the end of the War?

I can't say, I just do not know.

And do you remember how long the train journey took from Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen?

Again, I can't, I don't think there was anything special to it, it's not a particularly long distance, I imagine the whole journey was completed well within a day.

What happened about your clothes? Were you allowed to keep those all, or were you given different clothes?

No. No, because Belsen, initially, was not a Concentration Camp, everybody was, as civilian prisoners, as opposed to the political, or prisoners-of-war, we were allowed to keep all our personal possessions, so nobody wore prison clothes.

When did that change?

No, that didn't change.

All through, you were allowed to

Throughout the period from January 1944 until April 1945 we wore our own clothes.

Really?

Could you please describe the daily routine, what a day consisted of in Bergen-Belsen?

I, as far as my memory serves me, one day was no different to, to another day, except that, except for those days that there wasn't a roll call, and, depending also on the seasons. Roll call, where you, where everybody had to get up early in the morning, I don't know what time, but certainly very early in the morning, and, and assemble on the parade ground, or a square, in the summer it might be annoying and irritating and, if it lasted for an hour, or two hours, it certainly was irritating, but it's incomparable to a similar event in, when it rains, or in the winter, when it snows, and I, I think the feeling of helplessness, and misery was greatest during those roll calls. Imagine, everybody, sick, young, old, men, women, all having to assemble on a parade ground, covered in snow, with perhaps snow still falling down, with no food in one's belly, no proper clothing, suffering from diarrhoea, not being able to do anything, but simply just stand there as objects, while a soldier walks round counting everybody as they stood in rows of five. Go round counting, "funf, zehn, funfzehn", and so he would go around counting the hundreds of people. In the centre of the parade ground would stand the German Officers, or they would have left and come back a little later when the counting was over, for the soldier to report the numbers. I know that everybody would pray that the numbers agreed with the official statistics, because if they didn't, as more often than not they did not, we would be kept standing there even longer, and we would be counted again, and again. I can think of no finer way of torturing

people than to make them feel that helpless and miserable, and when they are sick and weak, and hungry, and cold, to make them stand out in that weather. And it should be remembered that the sight of Belsen on Luneburg Heath is a particularly chilling sight, it's flat and open, and the North-East wind passes over it all the time. Even when I've been there subsequently, I could feel the chill. It is a very cold site.

And so, what clothes did people wear while they were out on roll call?

Whatever they had.

Did they have coats, though.

Well, some may have coats, and some may not. They may have been stolen, they may have worn out, but even if you had a coat, your shoes would be worn out, you would be standing in the wet, the chill would just rise up in your body.

And were the prisoners all mixed for roll call? Like, were the political prisoners stuck in the same roll calls?

No, no, each compound was kept separate, so we're now talking about a Camp, I'm really talking about our compound. The Russian prisoners-of-war were in a different compound, and I don't know how they were treated, and the political prisoners were in another compound again, and we were separated by wire, barbed wire fences, and we had, certainly as a child, I wouldn't have had contact with them.

Yes. What was your compound called, do you know?

No, I don't,

Did it have a number?

No, I don't know.

And you, as a child, had to participate in the roll call, just like everybody else?

Everybody, everybody participated in it.

Even very young children?

Even very young children. Everybody participated, everybody had to leave the barracks, except for, maybe, the odd one or two very sick, or almost dying person, who physically couldn't move from the barracks, might be allowed to remain behind.

And how long did the roll calls sometimes last, if the numbering wasn't right?

It was last, again, it, I, obviously I didn't have a watch, and I didn't know, but it would last for hours on end, that I'm certain of.

And had you, if it happened over the period that you would maybe get breakfast, or a piece of bread or whatever, what happened then about that?

I think it would be distributed after we returned to the barracks again.

It wouldn't be missed out altogether?

I don't think so.

You said that the roll calls did not take place every single day, do you know any reason why not?

No, to the best of my recollection, they may have taken place once a week, or maybe twice a week sometimes, maybe less frequently, and sometimes more frequently, this is what I can recollect, I am quite sure it was not every day, and nowhere near every day.

End of F292 Side A

F292 Side B

As a child, the routine was really punctuated by the times that there would be some food brought into the Camp. I, I think in the morning it was, certainly I can remember black coffee, mess tins of black coffee being brought in, in the Camp, which was, of course, artificial coffee, you know, and maybe some piece of bread, and then subsequently, the rest of the day, would be a question of just wandering around the Camp, and not doing any, not having any specific tasks to do at all, just absolutely nothing, just complete boredom, complete boredom, and then, to the next time that food would be brought in the Camp, I can't remember whether that was at midday or later in the day. What I do remember is that at one time, children would go to the gates to help carry the large tins in, food tins in, into the barracks, in the hope that having helped, one would get a, be able to scrape out what was left in the tins.

Was that so, in fact?

Oh yes, yes. Well, somebody had to bring them into the Camp, and ...

No, I mean that you were allowed to

Yes, yes, if you liked, that was a reward for having done that work.

And did children get the same ration of food as adults?

I'm pretty sure they did, yes. I'm pretty sure it was the same for everybody. And, and really that's what it consisted of, it was either roll call, and, and food, and the rest of the time just, just wandering around.

Was there any difference in the food, between summer and winter, would you get more hot things in winter?

I, I don't think so, I can't remember, but I don't think so. I think it's important to remember, too, that, you see, it was winter when we first arrived there in January 1944, but the conditions had, by the time the next winter came along, the conditions had worsened so much in, in Belsen, because as we now know, that in, in, from about November 1944 onwards, the conditions worsened because the Camps were being evacuated further South as the Allies invaded Germany, and prisoners were being, many new prisoners arrived in Belsen, and, and so we're not comparing like with like really.

And your parents, did they work?

Yes. I know that my mother, for some time, worked in, in workshops where they had to, to take shoes apart, shoes that had been either from, had been captured from prisoners, or from perhaps the field of battle, but they were all collected together, and they had to be torn apart, and I think, likewise, clothes used to be sorted out, or ripped apart for, for rags, or according to the type of material they were made of. So I know she did that, and I know she also worked in the SS kitchens for a while, and my father

had to work in the, in the surrounding woods, to dig up tree stumps and also for some time, he worked in the kitchens.

Did you see him at all during that period?

Yes, I did see him, but how often I saw him I really don't know. I can't say if it was every day, or every week, I just can't remember.

And do you know whether you had free access to go and see your mother when she was out working?

Did I have access to where?

To wherever she was?

No, no, because that would be outside the compound. The kitchens were outside the compound, and the workshops were outside the compound, so I would be on my own, that's what it amounts to.

And were there other children who were in the same position?

Oh yes.

Did you keep each other company, or were you just left on your own?

We were left on our own, and yes, children did play with each other.

Did you find anything to play with? Just what you picked up around?

No, I, I recall that all the children, I think they were German children, who had made a Monopoly game for themselves, and they played with that, but, as for myself, all I can remember is playing in the sand with, with a knife, whereby you draw lines and capture territory, it's a kind of wargame that you do in the sand, that's all I can remember really, but apart from that, nothing.

Where did you get a knife from?

Oh, there were knives! It was a very civilised Camp! Mess tins to eat out of, spoons with which to eat.

Did you witness cruelties?

Not, not specifically, you mean where I might have seen an individual being beaten, or so?

Mmmm.

No, no, I can't recall that, it's supposed to have happened, but I personally can't remember it.

Did you have any specific fears during that period?

No, I, I, I don't think, I think fears is the wrong word, there was a, there was a, there was such an overwhelming state of misery, of cold and hunger, and suffering from, from the lice that were infested in my hair and on my head, and in the clothes that I was wearing, it was the total misery of the situation which I think, I can't imagine what fears there could have been, because it was already as bad, I think, as conditions could have been.

Do you remember whether you had dreams while you were there?

No, no. I can't.

And, do you know whether you went to sleep well once you went to bed, and could you say something about going to bed, like, you were a child, did you go to bed at the same time as your mother and the others?

I, I think, I think I would be, would be told to go to bed earlier than other people, but mind you, considering there was so little to do, and it was pretty cold, certainly for a large part of the year it was cold, so that bed was the only way of, of obtaining even a minimum amount of comfort for any protection from the elements. But undoubtedly, sleep was constantly disturbed because of the mass of people that were all in one place, and that in itself, but on top of the fact that these were all people who were all ill, most of the time were ill, and kept on being woken up by nightmares, or having to go to the toilet, and having to climb out of three-tier bunk beds which in the latter phase of, of the life in the Camp, had to be shared with another person, two people had to share a three-tier bed, I don't think there was any peace at all, either during the day or at night, for maybe the last four or five months.

Did you stay, did you have the same mattress right through that period?

Oh no. The Germans had another very good way of tormenting their prisoners. I think you understand from your own life, that even, even if now you go on holiday, it takes a day or so to settle into a room in a hotel, or apartment, or so, before you feel comfortable and at home. Well, of course, if you're a prisoner and you're in a barracks, you have to get to know your neighbours, you have to learn to tolerate each other, and, and put up with each other's peculiarities, but the Germans were able to spoil that feeling of sensing a little security, by repeatedly reorganising the compound, and making everybody pack all their goods, and appear for roll call, and then assigning them new barracks, so that they then found themselves regularly with a different group of prisoners, people that they hadn't previously been in the barracks with, so this, this happened on quite a few occasions, and as a result, the mattresses would, were not the same throughout the period.

Can you recall whether you slept on the bottom?

No, I, I actually remember sleeping up on the top.

That was while you still had your own mattress, or was that later, when you had to share?

Well, when I shared, I shared with my mother, so it, no, I can, I mainly remember, I can't remember sleeping anywhere but on the top bunk.

And how did you get up there?

By just climbing up!

And did you find it comforting to sleep with your mother, or would you have preferred to be by yourself?

I, I, I don't think the thought of comforting, I don't think anything was comforting, and I really, it's not a thought that I, I recall at all.

Would you say something about whether you felt numbed by your experiences at that time? So you just couldn't feel anything emotionally?

I, as I say, the, the cold and the hunger, and the feeling of, just feeling dirty, and I think that, that, those feelings were so overwhelming that they blocked everything else out.

How often did you have a chance to wash yourself?

I, I really cannot say. I don't, certainly, certainly for most of the time, I don't think there was any restriction, I think, because, unlike some of the older people who had to, who were put in workrooms, as a child, I don't think anything prevented me from going to the washroom as often as I wanted to, but I can't really remember precisely.

And what about your clothes? When they were very dirty, what happened?

I think my, my mother had to wash them, and they were just hung up somewhere in the barracks to dry.

And you had some spare clothes?

I should imagine so, I, I really can't remember, but I should imagine so.

Can you recall whether you had outgrown them really?

No, I, I can't say that either, because I don't think, in the end, I wore the clothes that I came in the Camp with, that's probably because either they had been obtained from others who had died, or who had brought too much with them, or who might have wanted to exchange it, but I can't, I really can't remember that exactly. But as far as growing is concerned, I don't think there was much opportunity to grow.

When I asked you about numbness, when you think back of that period now, do you sometimes feel that numbness again?

Not, I don't, I don't think that I feel the numbness from that, what I believe is that part of me has been numb ever since then. Emotionally, I, I feel, I just feel that my emotions are not the same as, as those of people around me, I feel cut off, I feel in some senses, perhaps more sensitive than others, in other ways much less sensitive than people who have not gone through that experience. Let me explain. I think the death of anyone is much less meaningful to me, you know, than it is to most people around me. I think about it sometimes, and I think, "Well, it's just another death." I've seen so many dead people, you know, in the Camp", I would walk daily past, certainly in the last months, I would walk past piles and piles of corpses, and I believe I've just become desensitised. I know that, I'm conscious of the fact that when, when both my parents-in-law died at different times, that I, I just accepted it as something inevitable and felt no more than that, and I surprised myself. It's as if all the time I live on two levels, one emotionally, and the other intellectually, and the intellectually stands back and looks at me emotionally, and as I say, this is unusual, this is different to how you observe other people behave emotionally.

Can you remember whether you cried in the Camp?

No. I can't remember.

Do you remember other people crying there?

Oh, I, I'm sure that other people have cried, but why they cried I don't know, because it, it could be, there was constant shouting and quarrelling, and fighting, and squabbling, amongst the people, again, that's a marvellous way to, for a child to be brought up, in those kind of environments, it's like being brought up in a lunatic asylum, really. And whether these people then cried as a result of being, feeling that they'd been treated by their neighbours, or by other people in the barracks, or whether it was for other reasons, I really don't know.

Do you remember your mother crying during that period?

No, I don't remember that.

And did you notice anything in her about the effects of her daily experiences during the time there?

No.

Do you think she felt equally numbed by it all?

I, I think so, yes, I don't think there could have been many exceptions, I think everybody became so pre-occupied with his day-to-day survival, that there simply wasn't room for thought of anything else, but how to, how to survive till the next day, and therefore I, I think, I can't imagine people not being totally numbed.

And do you think your mother has the same problem now about part of her feeling cut off, that you described?

You see, we, we've spoken a great deal about my early years, before we were arrested and taken to the Camps. I think it's important to bear in mind, all the time, that certainly the child that I was had very few resources to fall back on when I, I arrived in the Camp. Most children of that age would have very few resources to fall back on, and there is, I'm sure, there is a significant difference in the way one reacted to the Camp experience, depending on the age, and somebody like my parents who'd had what was certainly, for their circumstances, and the times, a normal upbringing, a normal family upbringing, a normal education, at least, normal for the times. They entered the Camp as adults, having already managed to cope, for better or worse, with the outside world, and therefore, to try and make the comparison between how an adult reacts or reacted, and a child reacted, is, I think, not a very sound comparison.

Well, I'm interested in the different reactions?

Well, as I say, I, I, I, I think the very fact that the child has no resources to fall back on, has, has not yet made contact with the harshness of the outside world, has only lived at home in a protected environment, again, a child that comes from an enlightened family, an educated family, where things are discussed, might be a more sensitive child, and might be more emotionally, more affected, by the Camp experience, because it is able to reason and talk about it, and to, to absorb it, to a greater extent, than a child like myself, who, who did not come from that kind of home background.

Do you feel now, a wish that your parents would have shared more with you at that time?

I'm, I'm not sure that they were capable of doing that, I suspect that, through their own lack of sensitivity or education, they, it wasn't something that they necessarily did willingly. It was something that was omitted because they knew no better.

Do you think that they are generally people who keep things to themselves, rather than sharing them with each other?

I don't, I can't, I can't really say, I don't think it's either one or the other, I, I,... I think they are more superficial, they tend to be more superficial than people who enter deeply into emotional aspects of human existence. I think also, because, their own circumstances, their own modest backgrounds, made it necessary for them to give more thought to everyday survival, that is, if you think, my father was born in 1911, so if he started work at 14, that would be 1925, shortly before the long crisis, circumstances were difficult, and the first thoughts, therefore, were to earn a living, and to be able to keep oneself, and likewise, for my mother. I don't think there was a great deal of time to read, or to contemplate, or to, to worry about the finer issues in life. I think that's characteristic of the working classes.

Do you find it difficult to share things now, with people? With your wife?

I, I think that, I think that's too broad a generalisation to say, the way you put it, I'd like you to be more precise.

I'm trying to find out really, to what extent you've had to retain things, because of the circumstances, to what extent you were the sort of child anyway, who grew up in an environment where things were kept to oneself rather than sharing them, and to what extent your upbringing has influenced you to still do it to this day, and to what extent, you know, your experiences.

I, I think there is a, there is a sense of self-protection in, in not talking about certain things, some things one's more vulnerable in than others, for example. Not long after I arrived in England, not long after I arrived in England, for reasons I'll go into later, it, I just felt that, well, not only was I not able to talk about the wartime experiences because I didn't speak English, I wasn't able to converse with other people, but because of, because I sensed there was a great deal of anti-Semitism, and anti-foreign feeling, I just felt perhaps it was better to hide, or at least, not discuss my past. It wouldn't have helped, it wouldn't have made people more sympathetic, and so really, I was conditioned, for that reason, simply for that reason, not to talk about it for maybe 30 years. And being isolated in England, not having regular contact with other people, who had experienced similar things, or who had any special interest in it, of course, didn't help either. On the other hand, I, I think this is the kind of experiences that I had, are so all-pervading, have, have

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Personally, permanently a fact of my life, that it lives with me every day, and that one can't talk about it every day, to other people, that's impossible, this is something one simply has to live with oneself.

And other things, that are not connected to the War, do you find it easier to share those, though?

Oh yes, yes. I have no problem really, I have no problem in talking to you about things that happened in Camp, I mean, what I remember. I, I don't feel I have that difficulty in communicating about it. I simply understand what is of vital interest to me, will not be of vital interest to other people. It might be, but it's more likely not to be of vital interest to others.

Do you have dreams about your experiences now?

It's, I, latterly, I, I no longer have dreams specifically about the experiences, I, I think, since I've really withdrawn a little more from the world, I've become less aggravated and possibly I feel a little more relaxed, but certainly I, I've suffered greatly from anxiety, dreams at night, and constantly waking up and tossing and turning, and perspiring and waking up in the morning, feeling extremely tense, but as I say, about the last twelve months, it has eased.

That is since you gave up work?

Yes.

And did the dreams start straight after the War? I mean, can you recall that?

As long as I can remember, I, I've been affected by restless nights, because of nightmares, but not necessarily every night, regularly.

Could we just go back to the dishing out of the food, could you describe, you know, in what sort of bowls that was served, and who would be dishing up the food, and what?

Again I, I think my memories have been very much conditioned by what happened in the latter period of the Camp, and really all I can remember is that, large tins, they're really like urns, would be carried into the barracks, and people would queue, people belonging to that barrack would queue up with their bowls, I suppose like, just large bowls, enamel bowls, would queue up and maybe the barrack leader would dish it out.

Who would be the barrack leader?

I don't know how they were chosen, but there was always a barrack leader, and there was always a deputy barrack leader, but I don't know how they were chosen.

And would you queue up with your mother or would you just be on your own?

Well, I, obviously, while my mother was away working, during the daytime, it would be on my own.

And she would have her meals at her place of work?

That's right, yes. At least, I wasn't there, that was my understanding, certainly while she worked in the kitchens.

And did you have a mug for a drink?

Yes.

And did you always have that with you, or was that given to you?

You mean, did I bring it into the Camp with me?

No, like in Auschwitz, I know people were carrying that about.

All the time?

Yes, I think it was fastened onto their clothes.

No, I don't think so in Belsen. As far as I can remember, this is something that one would keep on one's bed, or near one's bed.

Could you drink water from a tap?

I, I really cannot recall. I cannot recall that.

Could you describe what sort of food was given to you?

It was, it was just a watery extract of boiled swedes and maybe a few other vegetables, potato soup, or there might be some beans in, but I can't remember exactly, certainly in the latter part, it wasn't even warm food, it was just swedes, raw swedes, which, of course, contributed to the widespread diarrhoea that everybody suffered from.

Did you get anything for the treatment of that?

There were no medicines in the Camp.

And what happened if you were on roll call, you had to go to the toilet?

You couldn't go to the toilet. You just soiled yourself.

Did you ever do that?

Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure that must have happened frequently.

Did people push at all, queuing up for their food? Jump the queue, for fear there won't be enough?

I can't remember any instances in particular, I know there was always quarelling, fighting, and squabbling and, well, I can't remember any, any one instance, I mean, it wouldn't surprise me. I, I imagine people were squabbling about, because they felt that somebody in front of them had been given a little more than they had been given, and so on and so forth, and every combination, every reason for having an argument or a fight, would be found.

Did it ever happen that the, the tin was empty, and there was no more?

I, I personally can't, I think all the time you've got to bear in mind that the age at which I was, and the, and the conditions in which I found myself, I really cannot, apart from broad outlines, I cannot remember any day-to-day events.

Do you know whether, or can you remember whether you took any food from anybody else?

Whether I stole any food from anybody else?

Yes.

No, I can't remember, I don't think so.

And you don't remember others doing it from you either?

No.

Apart from one particular, your mother, your father, you are not sure how often in fact, you did see him, were there any other significant adults who you felt close to during that period?

No one. I think, I think I should, should mention that there were, there were many different nationalities in the Camp, and the different nationalities kept to themselves. There were French and Poles, and many Germans, and latterly there were Hungarians, there were Italians and Albanians, and all these people did not speak each other's language in most instances, they all kept to themselves, their own little tight group. Maybe the, the, the Dutch who were there, were perhaps the most bourgeois of the other prisoners, and I don't think they were in the majority either. As far as I remember, the Germans tended to be the ones that tended to form the, the, the leaders of the prisoners, but I may be mistaken, but that is the impression I have, the memory I have. But I think most people were isolated, I simply can't remember people having time for others. Everybody was too preoccupied with his own salvation.

Do you remember whether, was there a particular place you liked going to, within the Camp?

No, not on a regular basis, but I, I do remember one instance, when the, when the Italians arrived in the Camp, and I wandered through their barracks, and I, I, I remember how fascinated I was by these people who, not only the different language they spoke, but the different smell there was in their barracks, the different foodstuffs that they had brought with them, and things I had never before seen in my life, spaghetti and pastas, and things like that. It really was something quite wondrous to, to come across a group of people who were so entirely different from anyone I had previously come across.

Do you know what kind of prisoners they were?

Oh, they were Jewish.

They were Jewish?

They were Jewish people that had been captured and brought to Belsen. But no, I, I can't remember going anywhere specifically, I don't think there was anywhere, or maybe yes, maybe the, the only one place that, was a, round the fire in the barracks, and occasionally I think there was some coal to light the fire, this big stove in the barracks, and everybody would want to huddle close to that fire, and latterly, I think, there was nothing to fuel it, except maybe bed planks from the bunks, especially as people died, and their bunks became vacant, the planks would be removed and burnt. And certainly, in the latter part, I can remember that occasionally we would get hold of a raw potato and, which we would cook over a little tin, which had holes perforated, with perforated holes, to allow the air to get to the wood that we would burn underneath it, and the wood would come, would be splinters from the bed planks.

Was there electric light in the barracks?

Oh, I, I think, yes, I think at some time or other there was electric light, for how long, I can't remember.

And did you ever have to get up after everybody had gone to bed? Did the Camp guards come in to get you out?

Not that I can remember.

So it was just early in the morning for the roll calls, it wasn't in the evening that everybody suddenly had to all get up?

To the best of my memory, my recollection, yes.

What do you remember of Camp guards?

I, I just remember them walking around the perimeter with a gun on their shoulder, and looking down from the watchtowers around the perimeter of the Camp, but I don't really remember anything apart from that.

Did you ever think they might shoot you?

No. I had no reason to.

Did you witness people being shot?

No.

Did you always have hope, during your time there?

I don't think it was anything I, I gave any thought to, because really, I didn't know, I didn't know what was happening. I, I don't think anybody explained to me, ever, at that time, what was actually happening. And even afterwards, I don't think, for a long time, anybody actually explained to me what it had all been about. It seems incredible, but it's true. So I, I don't think, I don't think I gave any thought. It's not a question of hope, I think it's just a question of thinking where you're going to, is it time for, for some food to be brought in? Or, where am I going to get some food from? Where am I going to get some warmth from? Or, how can I stop the scratching in my head?

This is coping with every minute of the day?

From minute to minute, yes, yes.

What about fantasies?

Again, I suspect that, that too, has to do with upbringing. I can, I can imagine that a child who's imagination has been, been triggered off by, say, fairy tales in their early years, that that, that those things have become part of them, that those things may well then subsequently trigger off fantasies, but as I say, my life was very much a down-to-earth life in the early years, I don't think there was much development of the imagination, and maybe, maybe that had it's good side, maybe I was not tormented by fantasies because of that. I don't know, it's really difficult to, to know that. I can imagine that if, if, if you're not stimulated by fantasies that they won't, they won't arise, and, and get out of hand at times like those that existed in the Camp.

What can you remember of new groups of people arriving in the Camps?

Apart from the Italians which I mentioned before, I can only remember one other group of people arriving, I believe, maybe February or March 1945, and those were Hungarians who arrived, who were placed in an adjoining compound, and were kept separate from us. And I remember that particularly well, because I remember going to the fence, this barbed wire fence that separated us, and trying to get, get some potatoes from them, begging them for some potatoes, which I believed they had, which they might have brought with them, but that's really the only other group of people that I remember arriving in the Camp.

Did you speak German?

I think I learnt a few words in German, but I really can't say, I think to say I did speak German would be a gross exaggeration, I probably used a few German words.

Were there all sorts of different nationalities in your barrack?

Oh yes.

It was completely mixed up?

It was completely mixed up.

Did you feel even more isolated because of the language barrier, do you think?

I, I, I certainly think that groups of people were segregated because they tended to stick to those from their own backgrounds. Dutch would stick to Dutch, and Poles to Poles.

Do you recall anything about people praying? Very Orthodox Jews?

I, I, where this was, I don't know, but I certainly, in my mind's eye, I do see, see men having, had the straps around their head, their arms and prayer shawls on, and praying, but whether that was in Westerbork or in Belsen, I really cannot say. I'm inclined to think it was in Westerbork rather than in Belsen.

Did you have thoughts about just getting out? Getting away?

No. No. I, no, I just, I can't recall thinking about it at all. Probably there must have been some thoughts of, not so much getting away, but of liberation, or being set free, especially after the Camp had been attacked on, on one or two, or three occasions, by Allied aircraft, who actually, which actually fired shots at the barracks. Maybe that was a sign of advancing Allies.

Any idea when that was? Which month?

No, I can't, I can't date it.

Do you know of any other escape that happened? Of course, you have now read about it, but before, you don't remember a special roll call after people had been reported missing?

No. No. No. I'm not sure that anybody escaped from the Camp, either. I, I doubt it very much, because if it was difficult for, if not impossible, for prisoners of war, who, who were trained maybe to escape and to be able to survive on their own in hostile territory, I think it must be even more difficult, if not impossible, for civilians who had no such special training, and who were already suffering greatly, who had no strength, wouldn't have any connections with the outside world to be able to escape, I, I just, I think it's practically impossible to do so.

Do you still want to comment on the conditions after the influx of Camp inmates from other Camps?

Well, all I know, is that originally, when we arrived in the Camp, the bunk beds were two-storey high bunk beds, and we each had a bunk bed to ourselves, and subsequently, a third bunk bed was added, so I had tiers of three bunk beds, one on top of the other, and each person had his own bunk, and then subsequently these three-tier bunk beds had to be shared between two people, and then latterly, again, the situation "improved", as, as there were large numbers dying, and beds became available again. From what I understand, this would have been the period from approximately November 1944, through to March 1945.

Did you ever fear that you were going to die, as a result of disease?

No, I don't, I don't think it's a thought which I ever had, I don't even know that, although I saw death all around me, that I really understood what death was about. No, I, maybe, maybe it was, it was afterwards that, that I was most ill, and that I was in a state of delirium that I, I was probably on the point of death then.

When was that?

Well, this was after the, after the train journey out of the Camp, and through Germany, in, at the time we were liberated by the Russians.

Would you like to talk about that?

Well, yes, it, shortly, as is now known, the Camp was liberated around the middle of April, 1945, by the British Army, but shortly before that, approximately a week before that, the Germans decided to send a large group, in fact, it turns out to have been about 2½ thousand of us, to put us on a train, and to take us somewhere; where that somewhere was, I really couldn't say, it's, it's speculation, because what in fact happened, is that we were put in cattle trucks and, and driven around Germany for approximately two weeks.

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... from the engine that towed, that pulled the train, the train was frequently attacked by Allied aircraft as it stood still, and those that could would go into the fields, or hide under the trains to seek shelter, and after two weeks, the train had been halted outside a village called Tröbitz, which was approximately 60 kms. from Leipzig, and in the morning we saw Russians on horseback, who allowed us to leave the train, and those who could, headed for the nearest village, which, from which the Germans had fled, and we occupied their houses and stole whatever we could. Shops were broken into and raided, and houses were broken into, and if there were clothes there, they were stolen, and they were just occupied, and, of course, all of us were ill, and so the Russians had to set up an emergency hospital, field hospital, where we were taken to, and disinfected and cleansed, looked after, and in fact, it wasn't until June, 1945, that we were, the Russians handed us over to the Americans in Leipzig, and, who then arranged for our transport back, by train, to, to the Netherlands.

And was it in this field hospital that you were so ill?

No, it was in, in one of the houses, in one of the houses that we had occupied. I remember that, I still remember lying there, and being delirious. I remember, I don't know why, but I remember that I was screaming for a typewriter, which was, which was, in my imagination, was under the bed, that that should be brought out! Most strange, but anyway ... I think, at that stage, I, I was, I was probably closest to death.

Do you know whether you had a specific disease? Did you have typhoid or anything like that?

We had typhus, and typhoid, and spotted fever, which nearly all of us suffered from. I think there was a whole host of illnesses.

And how did you get over that?

Well, as I said, I think, I think, thanks to, thanks to the excellent work which the, which the Russians did. Must have been extremely difficult for them, considering this was an army on the move, that was suddenly confronted with remnants of a train load of prisoners.

Did they have medication?

Yes. I think so.

So were you moved to the field hospital?

Yes, yes.

And did your parents come on this train transport?

Yes.

Both your parents?

Both my parents, yes.

Were there other children on the transport?

Oh, I imagine so, yes, I'm, I'm quite sure there must have been, but I think we were all so, so terribly weak and ill, that really, I don't think our, certainly I don't think my thoughts would have extended to thinking about whom I was with, and where I was. I think it was just a world that had shut in on me.

Do you remember others dying around you, on the journey?

I, I can't specifically remember that, no. I, I just, I just can't remember people actually dying, but then I can't remember people dying in Belsen either, all I can remember is seeing, in my mind's eye, I see piles of, of, of, of dead, and I can't really differentiate between whether that was only in Belsen, or only on the train, or certainly it was in Belsen, I'm sure of that, but whether it was also on the train, I don't know, but, but considering how ill and weak everybody was, there must have been many die.

Did you think the end was in sight, or was it, were you just beyond being able to think at all?

I think, I think beyond, beyond caring, beyond thinking, beyond, beyond realising what was happening.

And what about your parents? In what state were they at that point?

I, I think they would have been similar condition. I know that my, certainly my father was also in the hospital, maybe my mother as well, or maybe that by the time we, maybe that we were back again, back to the house from the hospital, and that we were able to look after her, I really can't say, I just know that we were all ill.

Do you have any memories of your Russian rescuers, as you were getting a bit better?

No. No. Vaguely I can see people in, maybe in white uniform, around me, but I can't remember anything specifically. All these thoughts, I think, are just concertina'd together, and it's difficult to differentiate precisely between what happened in one place or in another.

What would you say was your worst experience at Belsen?

Without, without doubt, the, the feeling of helplessness and misery during roll call.

And do you remember any specific incidents that there was, in fact, some kindness, or was there none whatsoever?

I can only remember one, one occasion that somebody gave me a piece of bread, with some sugar on it, and that is the only instance I can remember, of that kind.

Did you know that person?

No. I, I don't think I did. I think it must have been a recent arrival, I think it was a Dutch lady, and it was a recent arrival, who'd brought that with them, probably from Westerbork. As I say, that's the only instance I can think of.

Could you say something about the image you had of yourself during the period in Belsen?

I don't think it is something I, I can't recall giving thought to, to that at all.

Can you recall the first kindness that was shown to you after you had left Belsen?

When you say "after I left Belsen", I suppose the first kindness were the care that, the care that was given us by the Russians.

But you were maybe too ill to really take that in to the full extent, but I was wondering about the change in, in your perception of the world, like, you know, before, where no person in authority in Belsen, I suppose, would have shown any kindness, and then you, you were very ill, that you can't quite remember, apart from scenes of people in white uniform, but then maybe it suddenly dawned on you that, that some people in this world can be kind? You know, as you were getting better?

It's, I, I, I think I have to go quite a long time forward for that. I, I'll continue then, so we were not repatriated to Holland until the end of June, 1945.

How much better were you by that time?

Oh, I think considerably better, considerably better. But I remember that the children, soon afterwards, the children were sent to what used to be a boys' orphanage in Laren, used to be a Jewish boys' orphanage and the children were sent there, where we had a medical examination, and some tests done, probably for TB, and I, I think the children were sent there so that the parents wouldn't have to worry about them and could get on with taking the first steps to re-establishing themselves back in Amsterdam again. And I remember that I was only there for a very short period indeed, and then I was taken to hospital in Amsterdam, and I still don't remember any kindnesses, and I was in the hospital for about three months, until the end of October, 1945, and then I went to Switzerland for three months, for recuperation. The people I was put up with were elderly people, they had a son who was in his late twenties, really, and they themselves were elderly, as I say, and Jewish people, and they were not unkind, but I, I can't say that they were particularly kind either.

Whereabouts in Switzerland was this?

In Kreuzlingen am Bodensee, that's, in fact, it was right on the border with Germany, and I, I know that it bothered me. I know that it bothered me to be confronted again

by barriers, and seeing soldiers in uniform, at that, those barriers. When I say, it was almost adjoining the frontier with Germany, the same street, it was just a few doors away. And then in, I think it was early, end of January 1946, I returned to Holland, by then my parents had a flat in, allocated a flat in Amsterdam, where we stayed, and I went to, I went to school, really for the first time, although I'd been to a school in Switzerland, I didn't speak German, it was in the German part of Switzerland, and so I didn't really benefit from that very much, except that it was somewhere to go to during the daytime, but I didn't really go back to school until about February or March, 1946, and the real kindness, I think, was that there was a headmaster in that school, who took some of us children who had been in the Camp, for separate lessons, after school. Unfortunately, at the beginning of, or in March '46, my father came to England, and my mother and I followed a few weeks afterwards, because he'd found some rooms in which to stay. So, I, I, I didn't benefit from this kindness for very long. And when I say that I have to go forward quite a long time, that is quite a long time.

And did you live in the same part, in Amsterdam, as you lived before, or was it a different?

Oh, slightly different part, it wasn't, it wasn't too far away, and we lived in the Vechstraat in the flat, and the flat that had been allocated us was in Diamantstraat, so that's maybe ten minutes walk away.

Why were you sent to Switzerland, what was wrong?

Well, I, I, I'd been in hospital for three months, and just the, the consequences of malnutrition for all time during the War, and, and I had, although I didn't have TB proper, I had a spot on the lungs and that, at the time, so it was really meant as a, as a treat.

And did you travel by yourself to Switzerland?

No, there was a group of children, was a large group of children that all went to Switzerland at the same time, by train.

And you said, when you came back from Tröbitz, can you describe that journey? Can you recall anything about the decision making process, who was going to be sent where?

You mean before entering Holland, or after entering Holland?

Well, you left Tröbitz by,

Well, we were taken by truck, or we were collected by truck, and, and brought to Leipzig, where we stayed in a kind of, I think it was a, a barracks complex, not wooden barracks, a military barracks complex, which probably the Germans had, had previously been a German barracks complex, and we stayed there for a few days, possibly, there was a kind of collection point to wait for people to have gathered there in sufficient numbers to be taken back to Holland, to be repatriated to Holland.

So did you also travel by truck?

By Army lorry, it was Army lorries. We were taken to Leipzig, and then by train from Leipzig to, to Holland, passenger, normal passenger train.

So can you remember anything about the formalities?

No.

When you entered Holland?

I, I, I can't.

So what is the next point you can remember, the orphanage?

I can, I can remember that when, you know, back in Holland, initially, my parents and I had been allocated a corner of a very large room in, in a house, I believe it was in Nieuwe or Oudezyds-Voorburgwal (??) on the patrician (??) houses. But as I say, I think I was there for only a matter of days before being sent to the orphanage.

So that's when you were first separated from your parents?

Yes, yes.

And why were you sent to that orphanage, do you know?

Not just me, but I think a large group of people of my age, children of my age, were sent there. As I say, I think to give the parents a chance to not have to bother about looking after a child, to be able to re-establish themselves, to, to settle back again, so that's the reason, and at the same time, to give the Authorities an opportunity to medically investigate us and do whatever was necessary, but I don't know the reason behind it, that's how it appears to me now.

Did you resent it at the time?

No, I don't think so, not particularly. I don't think I was over the moon with it, but I don't think it, I don't think it was a traumatic experience.

Did you get any medical treatment while you were in the orphanage?

I think, again, it was just a few, a matter of a few days, I think we just underwent some tests and,

So as a result of those, you were then admitted to hospital?

That's right, yes.

Did your parents have to go into hospital?

No, I don't think so.

Did they come to visit you?

I think so, but I can't remember it. I'm pretty sure they did, but I can't really remember it.

Were you on a childrens' ward?

Yes.

Was it overcrowded?

No, no. It was spacious.

So they could cope with the, the relatively,

It was relatively normal.

Do you have any idea how many children survived Bergen Belsen?

No, I, I have no idea, but considering that, of the entire Dutch population, only 5% or thereabouts returned, so, after the War, or were left over after the War, I don't suppose it could have been very many, maybe less, maybe considerably less than 100, I really don't know.

When, if at all, did you feel that you were really liberated now, that you could think "it's over"? Have you been able to have that feeling?

Are you asking me about whether I felt that soon afterwards? Whether there was a moment, when I, I said, "Well, it's over now"? Or are you asking me whether I now, today, feel that I've been liberated.

Well, maybe you could give an answer to both.

No, I, I never, I never had the thought that, it was just a continuation of events in my life. I never had the feeling that "this is liberation", "this is a new life", this is, "Things will only be better now". And with hindsight, no, I don't feel I've been liberated, it's lived with me almost every day since then, and it's constantly with me, and if anything, because of, whereas I can, I can accept the events which took place up to the time my return to Holland, whereas I accept those as being part of, and altered the course of history, that was not really, at that time, possible to prevent, I was just swept along with the tide of events. The resentment about the neglect that took place, after my return to Holland, the lack of warmth, affection, consideration, and concern for my well-being, emotional well-being, that resentment has increased, almost by the day, certainly as my awareness, of my consciousness of what had actually been happened, and how things could have, at least, been done better, as they increased, so that resentment increases, which prevents me from feeling liberated. I,

it has only, it has increased, it has caused my, me to feel nothing but contempt for people around me. There is so much hypocrisy, I, I, I'll try and illustrate, quite clearly. People have expressed so much sympathy and empathy for Anne, Anne Frank, here was this poor girl, in hiding, in Amsterdam, hiding from those cruel Nazis and who then was sent to Belsen, and died. And everybody feels so sorry for what happened. Everybody's read her book, praised her book, for how wonderful it is. At the time, I was only a few years younger than Anne Frank. I was not educated. I could not write a diary. I simply did not die in Belsen. I survived Belsen. I came to this country, and I didn't experience that sympathy and empathy, and understanding. Am I to gather from that that it is very easy to pretend that you feel sympathy and empathy, and that you have consideration for the suffering of someone, when you're already dead, when you don't have to give up anything of your own person, when it's only words, because, what's the difference? We were both children, almost the same age, gone through almost the same experiences. What does it mean that if Anne Frank had survived, she would have been treated differently to me, and if so, why? Because she was able to put her feelings and experiences, and emotions of that time, in writing, and that was published, is that why? I don't believe it, I, I, I, just my, as I say, I, I, I have developed a contempt for the people around me, I'm not particularly proud of it, but it's the truth.

That's Jewish and non-Jewish people alike?

Oh, oh, everybody alike, yes, everybody, of a world that has shown the indifference, and the older I grow, and the more people I meet who've gone through similar experiences to mine, whether they were in Japanese Camps in Indonesia, or whether they were Jewish people from Poland or Austria or Czechoslovakia, and who subsequently settled in Israel or in Canada, or in Sweden, it doesn't matter where, in France, and, and, and who, who express the same experiences, who relate to the same experiences, that I know relate, the total indifference of the outside world, a world that can only express understanding and sympathy, sympathy in words and not in deeds. Indeed, I, I, I feel so isolated, I feel I don't want to have anything to do with people who can be so hypocritical, so, to get back to what we were saying earlier, no, I don't feel liberated. I don't think I will ever feel liberated.

And do you feel the Dutch people are equally guilty of being hypocritical?

Oh, the torment that the Dutch Authorities are putting the victims of persecution through, they have a, they have a, in principle, they have a very fine law, very fine Act, to deal with the well-being of the victims of persecution, whether they be Jewish or non-Jewish, but the, the torment they cause people in the execution, of fairly and properly putting that Act into practice, and, and providing people with the benefits that ...

End of F293 Side B

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Just to finish what I was saying just now, the, that the Legislation is very good, in principle, but actually, for the beneficiaries to receive the Benefits that they are entitled to, takes a long time, and means a lot of form filling and bureaucracy, and waiting. It can, it can take as much as six years to get one's entitlement.

Could you maybe say what financial help you have received?

Yes, the way the Dutch legislation works is that it, depending on what your earnings were at the time of your application, or immediately prior to the deterioration in your health, they will set a base level amount and then they will pay the difference between the base level and what you're actually entitled to. As it so happens, although I, I was awarded a pension as from 1972, my earnings have been too high to benefit from that, but in addition, they have paid for medical expenses, for my travelling to Holland and any medical expenses, and various minor things like that. The point is, there are many people who, who would not, no longer have an income, and in that case, they're well provided for, because the pension level is quite substantial.

And which Organisation has given you this help?

Well this is, this is Dutch Legislation, and it's the, it comes under the Ministry of Welfare, of Health and Culture, and it's, it's a, the Executive Branch which reports into that Ministry is called the "Uitkeringsraad Vervolgingsslachtoffers 1940-1945", in other words "Benefits Council for Victims of Persecution 1940-1945", and the Act is called the "Wet Uitkeringen Vervolgingsslachtoffers 1940-1945", the "Act for Victims of Persecution 1940-1945".

And when did you first approach them?

Almost 16 years ago now, October 1972.

Was that at the same time as your parents did?

Yes, yes. We, we heard about it, by chance, really, because we still then had some contacts in Holland, people who'd been in the Camp as well, who happened to mention it to my parents.

And were you examined by a Dutch doctor?

No. I was examined by a doctor in this country. Everything was handled by the Dutch Consulate and they arranged for the medical examination to take place, and the interview to take place.

And how did you experience that?

There was nothing special, quite understandable.

You didn't mind?

No, no.

It's November 3rd, 1988.

I would like to ask you still some questions about the train journey, or in fact, just prior to that, how did people get on to the train? Was there a formal selection, or how was it announced? Could you say something about that?

To the best of my knowledge, it would have been a list with names, that would have been given, probably, to the barrack leaders, on which it would have stated merely that people whose names appeared on those lists, had to prepare themselves with their possessions, to be moved somewhere, but there, there would be no more information that. And, although I don't know, going by other similar occasions when we were moved from one compound to the other, I would imagine that it was not a question of being a special list, or anything like that, it was just a question of moving a number of

people out of the Camp, because the Camp was becoming overcrowded, and the situation had become unmanageable.

And both your parents were on this train. Did you know this beforehand, that your father, in fact, would be on it as well?

Oh yes, we, we, we left the Camp gates all together, the three of us, my parents and I, and we, I remember, we walked down the Camp road, towards the exit. On the way we passed a kitchen, and I remember pausing at one of the kitchens, and in fact, being able to beg for some watery soup. I think I was one of the first to have discovered that there was something there, because after I had got some of this soup, a lot of other people then went towards this kitchen, also to beg some. So the three of us walked up to a certain point, whether we were then transported by truck, or whether we walked all the way, I really cannot remember now.

And how much notice did you get before it happens?

I'm afraid I don't know. Remember, all the time, my age, and the condition in which I was at the time, a condition which meant that I would have been withdrawn very much within myself, concerned with cold, the hunger, and just general filth and that, and would not be aware of what went on around me. Also, because of my age, lack of education, and simply because I, I believe now, that the prisoners wouldn't have known exactly what was going on.

Could you say what your belongings at that stage, still consisted of?

Oh, they would have, no, I can't precisely, but it would probably have been maybe, a pair of trousers, a pullover, or something like that, maybe a blanket, but I can't remember.

And do you remember your feelings, or anybody else's feelings, at that time, leaving the Camp, what did that mean to them?

I, as I tried to explain before, I don't think people knew what they were destined for. I don't think they knew that they were necessarily leaving the Camp, it could've been to be moved to some other compound, so I certainly don't know, and I don't suspect anybody else knew where they were going to, and therefore the feelings could not have been one of elation "We are now leaving the Camp, hoorah!" It was just too, it was just like, just, just flotsam on a beach being tossed to and fro, and so the prisoners were, if you like, tossed to and fro, to and fro. There was never intent or purpose behind any of these things. It was not that one knew what one was about to encounter, and that one could either be hopeful about it, or be upset about it, it was just, I think feelings had become so numbed, that it was all one really.

Do you recall anybody just falling on the way to the train, because they were so exhausted, and what happened to these people who couldn't manage that?

No. I, I can't remember that. I think, at that stage, I, I'm, I personally must have disassociated myself from much of what went on around me. I suspect I was totally

preoccupied with finding food. The reason I'm saying that, I'll now, one, a little incident that happened early on in the, on the train journey is that I have explained how the train used to stop every now and then because it was under attack from Allied aircraft. On one of these occasions, when the train had stopped, and I had wandered out, either to seek shelter in the fields, or underneath the carriage, I remember finding a tin, a food tin, preserved, preserves tin, and I rushed to my father with it, and he looked at it, and it had swollen, it was probably meat which was inside it, the tin had swollen, and that's why it had been thrown away. My father, in fact, the point I want to make is, this obsession all the time with food, at the kitchen, and here with this tin, and my father, at the time, he went to the Germans with the tin, and said, "Look, this tin you gave us is no good", and it was exchanged for one which was good, and so we had an extra tin of food on that occasion. But anyway, I think I've made the point, and explained what I wanted to explain. I think, I think it's difficult to imagine nowadays, that a person can be so completely obsessed with, with just one objective, and that is to keep alive, and to find food, or shelter, or warmth, and not, not be concerned with anything else that goes on around them. But I, I think that is the state that most of us were in, and, of course, most of the people were reaching the, the borderline at which they would be called "Muselmen" or Zombies, if you like.

And after having spent all this time in Bergen Belsen, did you, by then, know why this had been your fate?

No. No. I, I have no idea, I had no idea then, because the concept of being Jewish meant absolutely nothing to me, because it was, it wasn't even a word that I knew, I didn't even know the word of Christian either, it just meant absolutely nothing, and I'll give you an example of this. I remember in Amsterdam, during the War, before we were taken away, I would walk along the Rynstraat, and in the Rynstraat, which was in Amsterdam South, New South, there is a Church, and like all children, I used to walk up, up the steps of the Church a little bit, and then down again, and up and down again, and I remember, I don't know, either my mother or perhaps my grandmother, or somebody, being very angry with me, and taking me away, pulling me away, and telling me I shouldn't do that, in case somebody didn't like what I was doing. Of course, the reason was that, here was a Jewish child walking on the steps of a Church, and that could cause unpleasantness which was to be avoided. But again, even at that stage, nobody explained to me, here was an opportunity to explain to me the difference between Christianity and Judaism, but it meant absolutely nothing to me. Of course, in 1943, when we were taken away, I was only eight years old. But not having led a religious life, I'd never been in a Synagogue, I'd never been in a Church, it just didn't mean anything to me. So, you asked me, did I have any idea why we were in the Camp? And I say "No, I have no idea, nobody had explained anything to me."

And what was your own thought by then, because you were nine years old?

I really do not know. I don't think I had any particular thoughts about it. I really do not know.

Did you see it as some form of punishment?

I, I, not personal, no, obviously one, although I cannot remember precisely, I must have realised that it was a kind of punishment by the Germans, but not that it was punishment by the Germans of the Jews, and that I belonged to that group, no, it, none of it made any sense to me. It didn't add up, I didn't question it, I just followed along with the, the tide.

If we can go back to the train, you kindly let me have that article on "The Last Train", written by Abel Herzberg, and he describes in it, how little room there was on, on that train, and you were on it for a fortnight. Could you maybe say something about how you were sitting there?

We, I remember that my parents and I, we were in a cattle truck, although the train had some carriages attached to it as well, we were, in fact, in a cattle truck, and vaguely in my memory, I remember, maybe sitting in a corner of this cattle truck, the three of us were there, and, of course, while the train was moving, the doors would be closed, so it would be dark inside. I really do not know, I know that, ... I know that it was, it was also pretty unpleasant, and it stank, because a lot of the people were ill and suffered from diarrhoea, but apart from that, I, I really cannot remember the details of it, other than that we were stuck in a corner of this cattle truck, closed, closed, or goods van, it was a closed, closed vehicle.

And for those who were able to go to a toilet, was there anything like that?

No. It was a question of, of doing it on a dish, and then emptying the contents whenever the train stopped.

What about food?

Well, I, I can't remember anything about food or water. It seems to me that there was virtually none at all.

And were the Camp guards, were there some Camp guards with you?

There were some, there were guards in, who had their own carriage or carriages, which were attached to the train, yes.

Did they have food?

I couldn't say. I can't imagine them not having had any food for two weeks.

And sometimes the train had to stop, I believe. Were you then able to get out and find some food in the fields?

I personally can't remember that. I can remember the train stopping frequently, and I can remember very clearly the attacks by Allied aircraft. I can remember going in the fields. I can even remember standing next to a German soldier while he showed me his gun on one of these occasions, but I do not remember anything with regard to food.

In what way did he show his gun to you?

I was curious, and he showed it to me.

Was it the first time that, that you'd shown curiosity to a Camp guard?

No, I think it was just, I, I, I think, I think there's two things, you're asking curiosity. My curiosity was about the gun he had, and my curiosity was not about the guard.

Oh yes, I, I, but you'd been standing a long time, in an environment, where guns were commonplace.

Well, they, they were commonplace outside the perimeter of the fence, not so much in the Camp itself, although in my mind's eye, I see German Officers with, with pistols in their holsters, or at least with pistol holsters on their belt, but, and I can, in my mind's eye, I see soldiers with guns in the, in the watchtowers, but again, that was outside the Camp perimeter fence.

Had you been as close as this to a Camp guard before?

I, I don't know. Probably not. No, probably not, other than when we were, during roll call, when we were being counted, or when they made a search of the barracks. The search being usually to see whether it was tidy or not.

And when the train was being attacked by the Allies, did you, in fact, know who was attacking the train?

Well, I, I didn't know, but I suspect that older people probably would have recognised the markings on the aircraft.

And do you think that people were sufficiently aware of the progress of the War effort, to realise that this would be Allies?

I really don't know, because I was unaware, as I explained to you, I mean, the very concept of war didn't mean anything to me either. I, I had no understanding of religion, of war, I hadn't been taught history at school, I'd been too young, just, it, I wasn't able to speculate along those lines. I wasn't able to, probably didn't even have the vocabulary.

Can you recall when you first heard about what it had all been about, why you were in Bergen Belsen, and what has happened to you?

Strangely the, I, I think that maybe I first learnt about what had taken place overall, once I'd started school in England, in 1946, roundabout the Autumn, because I think that's when the Nuremburg Trial took place, and I remember that, at school, in class, the teacher drew attention, and I think children were asked to bring newspapers into school, and pictures were cut out of the German Officers, and that's probably the first occasion when, when I might have learned something about the overall picture, but even then, it wouldn't have meant very much to me, because I wouldn't have known

what Belgium or France or Italy was, I wouldn't have known what Great Britain was, I hadn't, I hadn't been to school, I hadn't been taught geography, I probably didn't even know the names of different towns in Holland. My world had been a very small world in Amsterdam. I think it's incredible now, but I think that's only to be expected if a child is brought up in a, either in a house where there were few or no books, or few or no grown-ups who explained these things to him, and if the child, as in this case, did not have a regular schooling, or had no schooling at all, where was it supposed to get the knowledge from? And that was the situation.

Can you recall you asking your parents after the War, why all this?

No, no. I mean, I can, I can remember my parents talking with other people, or relating various incidents and events that happened either in the Camp, or on the train, or after we'd been liberated, it wasn't that they avoided talking about it, but there were things which I knew, things which I've been talking about now.

So would you say that it was kept away from you? It was just something that maybe your parents assumed you knew?

No. No. I don't think there was any assumption on the part of my parents. I don't think it occurred to them. I don't think they, they felt it was necessary to, to say, or explain anything to me. I don't think it occurred to them.

Have you discussed that with them later? The fact that they didn't share with you?

I, I, I, I can't remember, I may have done, and I suspect they may have said that, "We didn't see any need for it", or "It didn't occur to us".

Do you think it would have made things, I mean, you can say in what way it would have made a difference for you?

No. I, I think just general knowledge, I think, would have helped, if somebody had put everything into context for me, but there wouldn't, it wouldn't have done much good if they had done that soon after the War. If all this had been done maybe after I had had some education, then that would have been different, but I don't think it's made any difference, it would have made any difference when I was 11 or 12, or 13.

Would it have made any difference had you known it before going to Bergen Belsen?

Ah, that's speculation, and I really don't know that. It might have made things worse if I had been a religious Jew, and I had known how much hatred the Germans had for me, as a child, I might have felt extremely scared and insecure all the time, whereas now I, I lived in a state of ignorance, and it probably bothered me less than it might have bothered somebody like Anne Frank. So it may have had a, a good side to it as well.

Could you tell me anything that you can remember about the moment of leaving the train?

I remember clearly that the, I'm in this cattle truck, or goods truck, I remember the doors were open, and looking outside and, and seeing Russian soldiers on horseback. I believe what actually happened is that my father left the train ...

End of F294 Side A

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What actually happened was that my father had left the train and gone into the village, which was very nearby, and had met, after a little while, he returned, and I went with him, because I remember that we broke, that all of us who were able to, we went into this village and broke open the shops, the Germans having fled by this time, and there were still things to be stolen. I also remember that in a farmhouse, attached to a farmhouse, there was a, a pigsty with a pig in it, and a Russian soldier shot it dead for my father, who had a small penknife, with which he tried to, with which, in fact, he did cut part of the pig, as meat, which, which was then cooked. We also, after, after the shops had been raided, we moved into the, all of us who could, moved into the houses, which the Germans had also vacated, not necessarily every person to a house, or every, or sometimes a group of people would have moved into a house, and that's what we did as well. I've been, I can't remember exactly, I think the Russians distributed food, and, to us and those who were sick were taken to an emergency hospital, a field hospital which they had set up, I believe, in a building, maybe a school building or such, and this, this lasted until about the end of, June 1945, as I think I mentioned previously.

And the date you went to Holland, from there?

We finally repatriated to Holland, I think it was 25th June, 1945. Liberated towards the end of April 1945, and repatriated June '45.

And were you having a normal diet by then, or was food still very scarce?

I, I really cannot remember. Do I take it you mean in Holland, once we were back in Holland? Or do you mean,

Well, just,

The period in Germany still?

That's right.

I honestly can't remember. I suspect that most of us were too, too weak to eat very much in any case, so I really can't say. I can't remember any more what, what food was given to us.

And then you, you were brought to Amsterdam, and from there you went to Switzerland, first to Laren.

From Amsterdam I went to a former Jewish boys, orphanage, where we underwent medical examination. From there we were taken to a hospital in Amsterdam, where I was for two or three months, about three months, and then November, December, and January, I spent in Switzerland, and returned to Holland again in February 1946.

And you showed me those exercise books that you, of things you wrote while you were in Switzerland, maybe you could say something about your experience in a school in Switzerland?

Well, I, the, the, I was put up with an elderly couple, the husband was a tailor and had, had his workshops downstairs, and they lived in a flat. They had an elder son who was in his late 20s, and they were quite an elderly couple. I would say they may well have been in their, in their 60s, the husband could have been in his late 60s even, maybe. And unfortunately, only part of the time I went to school in, this was in Kreuzlingen am Bodensee. I think probably I went to school because probably the lady didn't know what to do with me, the other children being at school during normal school hours, and I was probably getting bored, so I was in a Swiss school for some time, and I can't remember any more for how long, but I don't think it was very long, but it was really a question of, of, of just minding me, because I remember sitting in the back of the class. I didn't speak any German, I had, obviously I had picked up a few words, but I couldn't speak German at that time, and so I was put in the back of the class and given some sums to do and some, some writing to copy. A story to copy from a text book into an exercise book. But apart from that, I don't recall anybody making any great effort to, to help me in any way. I was going from one world of, one bewildering world to another bewildering world. Really it's quite appalling, I think, what happened. I must say, I do want to put on record that I remember one or two of the Swiss children inviting me to their homes for, for tea, after school, because in that part of Switzerland anyway, they had the habit of going home and at about 4 o'clock, and having tea, similar to the custom in England. And I remember that. I don't have any really unpleasant memories of that period, but no particularly happy ones either.

Do you know why these people took you into their family?

Oh, I think, I think it's because they were religious, they were religious Jewish people, and I suppose they regarded it their duty to take in Jewish children who had suffered in the way that I had.

Do you know whether they got any financial assistance for having you?

Oh I wouldn't, I don't know, but I wouldn't have thought so. I would have thought this was just their way of helping out. They would have been approached by the local Jewish Associations, and asked if they would be prepared to take in a Jewish child.

You say they were very religious.

Well, well, they would keep up Friday evening, they would say prayers and that, and this was all new to me, and quite meaningless to me. I think again, I would just like to put on record, I, how, how I was forced to be independent all the time, I had to make things, I remember, I must have been very hungry for knowledge at that time, because there were books in this house, and I would be in the habit of reading in the evenings, and looking over these books, and I think they had religious books as well, which quite fascinated me, with pictures in them. And I remember that on one occasion, I, I had been reading in bed, probably with the bed light under the blankets,

and I must have fallen asleep and the blankets had started, had become scorched, and they were extremely angry with me. I remember that! I think it's worthwhile, at the same time, to just record another incident, which is just a habit which I would have picked up in the Camp, and that is that, some time, sometimes I would go to the Post Office with a little hand, or to the railway station, with a little hand cart, carrying parcels for the tailor, which would then be despatched from the railway station to his customers. I would take them in this hand cart, and on one of these occasions, I had returned via a railway line where there had been some very large blocks of coal from the railway engines, and I had come home very proud, with a huge block of coal, and, and, of course, in law-abiding Switzerland, the poor people were quite aghast that I had done that, because that was theft, I had stolen this coal, and they were extremely angry with me, and I think it's another indication of how there was absolutely no understanding. I had done this, probably because I, that was a natural thing, you scrounged whatever you could scrounge, and I'd seen this coal lying by the railway line, not doing anything, and I had taken a block home, and expected the people, perhaps, to be pleased that I had done that, and instead I was told off about it! But, I'm telling you simply to illustrate the habits one picks up, living under those circumstances, and that takes quite a while to perhaps lose them. But unfortunately, a world that hasn't experienced it, or hasn't any understanding of conditions under which one has lived, will, will not know how to deal with it in an appropriate manner.

Can you recall any other incidences like that, that clearly illustrate that because you had been living in a world that had made people adopt different values, and those values became legal within that different world, those very values later clashed in the other world outside?

In the so-called "normal world", back to normality. N, I, offhand I can't, they may occur to me later on. I, I, I do know, another instant, well, there are several instances, in fact, at school in England, and now we're talking about the period from April 1946 to let's say, let's say about 1947, maybe the middle of '47. My first experience of an English school, within, within weeks of entering an English school, in Kensal Rise I think it was, which is near Willesden, we, the children, had been playing in a playground, and it had been break, and on the way back to the classrooms, some of the boys had put me up to letting off a cap, a pistol cap, you know, the little cap thing, that we then used to play with, to let it off as we walked up the stairs, which would then make a rather loud noise, and this had been heard by one of the teachers. And when we got back to the classroom, the teacher had asked who had done that, well, in the first place, this was within weeks of my coming to England and I probably didn't speak two words of English at that time, and I wouldn't have known what had been going on, but the children, the other children pointed to me, and, and I was hauled in front of the class and caned. This has made me extremely angry. I remember it, for two reasons. One is that even the Germans had not physically assaulted me, I think the first time that anybody, apart from my parents giving me, perhaps, a swipe, and the first time that anybody had physically assaulted me was a teacher in school, and a teacher had done so, to a child that was unable to speak the language, was unable to defend himself, was unable to say anything, and he was humiliated as well.

In front of everybody.

Absolutely disgraceful. I mean, if I could get hold of people like that now, I, I, I would, I really feel I could throttle them, I really do, because they, they were, they're such disgusting individuals, and to do that to a child who had been through what I had been, even if it had been a terrible thing I had done, and this in itself was nothing, it was just letting off a cap as we walked up the stairs back into the classroom. Even if it had been a terrible thing, one would still not do that, I don't think. One would try and have some understanding for why the child might behave in a certain manner and that he might not realise that what he was doing was wrong. The other incident is, soon afterwards, in, in July 1946, my parents moved to a house in Wembley, and I went to a school in Alperton, and again, I still, of course, didn't speak any English, and I, maybe I couldn't, maybe I didn't want to, but maybe again I didn't know what was going on, there are probably a lot of reasons. There would be singing and I absolutely detested it, because I would stand out because I was, I was already marked as a "bloody foreigner", and a "bloody Jew", and I didn't know the words, maybe I didn't feel like singing, maybe there was not much to be joyous about for me, at that time, and so, with some other children, who didn't like singing for, maybe, other reasons, we used to hide under some prefabricated huts which stood in the playground, and read comics. And on one occasion, this sadistic geography master sent his sadistic preferred pupils to haul us from under the hut, march us up to the Headmaster, and again, without any discussion or explanation, we were all caned. The caning itself is immaterial, but when I think back now, about the fact that these people never asked themselves why somebody behaved in a particular way, that they had no perception, were unable to put themselves in my position, but instead, always imposed their standards, their values, on me, without respecting my standards, my values and my preferences, that is something which made my school life extremely unhappy, because these kind of incidents continued right up till I was 16. Then it, I had, not only had I to forsake my own cultural heritage because my parents decided to move to this country, the fact that I had barely learned one language and I had to learn another language, without any special coaching, and nothing of what the little I'd brought with me, from my past, was in any way valued, or shown any interest in. That, that still makes me very angry.

Do you think that the teachers, in fact, knew your background?

Oh yes, oh yes. I have no doubt that my mother would have explained that to them, yes. I don't want to give the impression that every single teacher was like that. One or two may have been a little gentler, and shown a little more understanding, but in the main, I was expected to perform in exactly the same way that the English children, who had not experienced anything like this, and little or no concessions were made to me, and little or no extra help was given me, so, right from a very early start, really, from, it dates back from the Camp, if not already from before the Camp, I have, I've been able to rely only on myself.

And during that first period of your school life in England, did you ever have a Jewish teacher, or did you meet with Jewish children? And was there a difference in approach to you?

No. I did, the schools I went to, subsequently I went to a school in Ealing, called Clark's College, which was a little bit like Pitmans College then. Now they've all

disappeared those kind of schools, but there was a chain of them around the London suburbs, and there were Jewish children there, but I can't say, no, they didn't show me any consideration, or, but I think maybe that may have been my own fault, because by then I would've stopped talking to anybody about it, and I wouldn't mention what I'd gone through, so that may be my fault, I suppose.

So once you had the language ability, in English, can you recall whether you talked about your experiences?

No. No. As I say, from, because my early experiences here were so unpleasant with "bloody foreigner", and "bloody Jew", being called these all the time, that I, I, I think already from a very early stage, maybe from, even from when I was 12 or 13, I would've not talked about it any more, to anybody, only perhaps with my parents or with other people, the Dutch people that we met occasionally, but apart from that, not at all. It simply didn't have any value, it wasn't safe to do so.

What,

It invited more antagonism and more unpleasantness.

Could we just go back to Holland again, for a moment. Was, when you went to Switzerland, did you know that it would be for a period of three months?

Oh, I, I think so, yes. I think I was probably told that I would, you know, this would be a holiday for three months, convalescence, yes. This, I knew there was nothing traumatic or bad about this. I think, I think it was very unfortunate that I was with these older people. Had I been in a family with children of my own age, I think it probably would have been a marvellous experience, it would have done me a great deal of good.

Did you keep contact with these people afterwards?

Yes, for a little while I, for some years, I wrote to them, and they, we used to correspond occasionally. My mother sometimes wrote to them as well. Of course, we recognised that it was very kind of them to have had me, it was all well-intentioned. In actual fact, I think it's probably some four years ago now, my wife and I, we, we drove through Switzerland to Austria, and I, I wanted to look up the house again, and that, and show it to my wife, where I'd stayed, and we went there, and I think it had, where the tailor's shop was, had been converted to a keep fit exercise place, and, of course, the town had expanded, and the border hadn't, it was still right next door to the border! But I made enquiries of one of the neighbours, and I believe even the son, in the meantime, had died. Not only had the old people died long ago, but the son had died as well, I believe, and they, there was still a grandson alive. But that was really my last farewell to that part of my life, as the people were not there, there was no point in taking up contact with the grandson.

And how did you feel going back there?

Oh, oh, quite neutral. I'd not been there long enough, it was just curiosity really. I, I had, in fact, been back there once before, and that was when I, when I was in Switzerland, I lived in Switzerland from 19, from July 1958 till December 1958, so, and I had, in fact, travelled back there once before.

And the people were still

No, no, no, no, they were not there then either.

So did you see the son at that time?

No, I don't think so, not then either.

You just wanted to see,

I just wanted to see the place, I wanted to refresh my mind of where things and what things were.

So when you came back to Holland, could you say something about what support there was for your family?

Again, it was not something that would have been discussed with me by my parents, and, of course, I had been away for some time as well. All I can say is that, I thought I had already mentioned this before, but every, originally, when we first returned, we were allocated a corner in a large room, in a, in an old house. By the time I returned to Holland, my parents had been allocated a flat in the Diamantstraat, and I think they had been allocated some furniture as well, some basic items of furniture, because everything that we'd had, had been taken away, in fact, within days of the Jews being taken away during the War years, their property would be removed, with a removal van, and taken to the quays and loaded on to barges, and then moved to Germany, I don't know, but taken away.

Was this one particular removal company that specialised in removing Jewish property?

Yes, but I can't remember the name. Perhaps you can remind me!

Puilen? Pilsen?

Pilsen, Pilsen, but also I believe [INAUDIBLE].

Oh I didn't know about that one. [INAUDIBLE] also, but they, yes. Yes, and in, in retrospect, I've been extremely angry with my father. Many times I've reproached him, why did he not go back to the home from which we had been forcibly moved? Why did he not knock on the door, seize the people and turf them out of our home that they had no right to occupy? Especially as the people who would have moved into the houses of Jews who had been taken to the Camps would not have been good Dutch people, they would have been sympathisers with the Nazis, and, and I am still angry, and I say to my father, "Why did you not do that? Why did we not go back to

where we had been forcibly removed from?" Admittedly, it wasn't our property. It was a rented flat, but that's beside the point. And it's that kind of restitution which did not take place. That's where the Dutch Government failed to support the returnees. And I think, I think that's terrible, because the best way they could've been helped was to try and reinstate them again, to the best ability at that time, to reinstate them into the, in the conditions and situation, the environment from which they had been removed in such an ugly and unpleasant manner. My father's argument is that he, and others like him, were then too weak, they didn't have the strength, which is possibly quite true, to do that kind of thing. But this is where they should have had the support from the Dutch Police, the Dutch Government. I cannot, I cannot imagine the situation, that if I were forcibly moved from my home, taken away from this home now, and somebody were to move in, even if they were squatters, and I were to return, where I would not go to my house and regard anybody who lived there as being an intruder, and, and would not throw them out, and if I could not do it myself, seek force, seek assistance from other people to do that. That, that would've, to my mind, that's the only, would have been the only just course of action.

This, your present home is not rented.

It makes no difference. It makes absolutely no difference. The fact is that we were forcibly removed by enemies of the country, and, and no good Dutch person should have wanted to move into that home, should have wanted to take advantage of the fact. I mean, that's a personal feeling, I appreciate that, but I cannot imagine a decent person, with a clear, good conscience, wanting to live, wanting to take advantage of such a situation.

Was there food rationing?

End of F294 Side B

F295 Side A

... I suspect there was, I think, I didn't enter back into normal life, really, until February 1946. Really, well, I was secluded from the outside world, so I don't really know. All I can remember is, I can certainly remember very well, the Ration Books that existed in England when we came here, and that existed, I think, for another five years until 1951 or so. And, and I can certainly remember the Ration Books before we went, or the Ration Cards, that existed in Holland, that existed in Holland before we went to the Camps. But as I say, I, I, I don't know from personal experience, I can't remember, I expect there was, I think there was, from what I've been told.

And your parents didn't have a penny on them when they came back from the Camps, I suppose? How did they support themselves and you?

Well, even if they, if they had a penny left, I believe, in, in, I know when I was in the Hospital, I think it was in August or September 1946, all the old money was made invalid, and new money was introduced by the Dutch Government, so any money he might have had, would have been worthless in any case, I believe. But I, I believe that what happened was, that everybody was allocated with, was given some money, and was given a few bits and pieces, I know it wasn't very much. I think it was quite a while before my parents had anything at all. But I, I do believe that, I think my father probably started to work, not all that long, back as a diamond polisher, not all that long after he returned from, from, from the Camps, but I can't remember when he re-started work again.

Did he get back his old job?

Oh, I think that probably would have been out of the question. I really don't know, because, and I don't think that's very important, because there were different diamond polishing factories. And, and there was so much disruption. I really don't know, I don't know much about it at all.

And did your mother try to find work?

No, I don't think, I don't think, my mother didn't really work any more after the War.

Do you still have your Identity Card?

I have a British Identity Card, but not a Dutch one.

Did you, you don't recall having one?

A Dutch one?

Mmmm.

No, no, I don't.

You did say something before about starting back at school. How long did that take until you went back to school, from the time of your return from Switzerland?

Oh! Probably straight, almost straight away.

And how long were you at school in Holland?

Probably no more than two months. My, let's say I, I can probably check it up, but I don't think it's very important, I think the first few days of February 1946, I returned to Holland, I know that round the middle of March 1946 my father went a few weeks ahead of my mother and I to, to England, and we followed him in, in, once he'd found a flat, in April, 1946, so I would have thought that at most it would have been two months that I was back at school in Holland.

And do you recall whether you were able to form any friendships during that period? That admittedly was very short.

No. I, I remember, I remember talking to some children outside the flat in Diamantstraat. I, I remember saying that I, I think, remembering to another child, my age, that I, I was going to England. And I have a feeling that they didn't believe me, at the time, that I was having them on, but I can't remember really any other contacts that I had with children.

And at the school you were at in Amsterdam, were there any other children who had gone through the same as you had?

Well, I think, yes. The only reason I remember that, is because, that after school, after normal school hours, the Headmaster took a small group of us in his, in his study, to give us some extra lesson, and really that was the, as far as I can remember, that was the only person and the only occasion that somebody gave us something extra, and he did that to, as I say, a small group of children, and I think they were all children who had returned from the Camps.

And did you only know that because of that extra lesson, would it otherwise not have been apparent?

I think so, yes. I think that's correct.

Did you talk about your experiences to them, once you knew that they ...

I don't think so, I really don't think so.

What can you remember about your home life during that beginning, after the War?

I'm afraid that, that I can't. I can't remember much at all. It's all pretty long ago, and a lot has happened since then. And I don't think anything significant, there was anything significant. No, I really ...

So nothing stands out. When you think back of it now, would you say it was just back to normal? Though, of course, some of the family wasn't there any more?

It, it was, it was back to the beginnings of being normal. My father going to work, my going to school, and my mother being at home and having a meal ready, yes.

And can you recall whether your parents were anxious about news from relatives?

No. I, I don't. I can't remember. But I really, no, I just do not know. But then, it's because they weren't in the habit of discussing these things with me in any case.

Do you know, when, in fact, they heard when your three grandparents died?

No, no, no. I think, I think knowing, considering what we had lived through ourselves, and obviously they would have known about the extermination camps, I don't think they, considering their age, I mean, they were elderly people, I don't think they had any illusions, and I, I don't think they had any expectations of them, of us seeing them again.

Could you feel again, or do you think your parents could feel again, like Amsterdam people, after all they had gone through? And the desertion they had experienced?

I don't, I don't think that would have, anybody who had lived in Amsterdam before the War, and who had been brought up there, I don't think would have recognised Amsterdam for being the same place after the War.

Could you say a bit more about that?

Well, I mean, it's the fact that all, all the streets along which they would have walked, or cycled, where they knew that friends or relatives lived at one time, or where they themselves might have lived, or where they might have visited, all those places, all the people in all those places, had disappeared, it was like a ghost town from that point of view. All the pleasant memories had disappeared. Many of the properties had become dilapidated and destroyed, because in the last phases of the Occupation, many of the older properties in the, in the East of Amsterdam in particular, they were dismantled, because the wood was needed for heating, and for cooking, and there wasn't the spirit any more there. I mean, you couldn't go to shops any more to buy the things that you used to buy from the same people that you used to buy them from. You couldn't go to the theatres any more, where you, you might have gone to before. It was, as I said, it, it was, certainly for the older generation who had been brought up there, I, I can well imagine it must have appeared like a ghost town, it must have been very unreal.

And the houses, was everything still more or less upright? Or had parts of Amsterdam been bombed?

Well, again, I can't, I can't remember that too well, because I, between returning from Germany and, and leaving to go to England, I hadn't been in Holland for very long, so I hadn't been to many places, and Amsterdam had been hit by bombs, in fact, even

while we were still living in Amsterdam, not, maybe three or four months before we were taken to the Camps, there were bombing raids on Amsterdam, and I remember, in the same street, a house had been struck, so, in that respect too, Amsterdam would not be the same, but I can't remember in detail.

What about your religious life at home? Was there any change after what you had gone through?

No. No. Non-existent. Absolutely non-existent.

Do you know what the reason was, why your parents decided to go to England?

Well, I can only go by what they say, and what they have told me. They said that they found the situation in Amsterdam so unpleasant, that is, they, they, they, they, around each street corner there was unpleasantness for them as they moved around Amsterdam, and so that was one very good reason, no longer to feel happy to continue to live there. And the other reason was that, my father's prospects, as a diamond polisher, were better in London where there was a requirement for people with his skills than they were, at that time, in Amsterdam. So, it was, if you like, there were two reasons, one was a material reason, and the other one was the, the, just general unpleasantness of, of, of having come back to an Amsterdam which was now devoid of everything that you loved and was dear to you.

When you just said that your parents didn't know what was round the corner, was it the approach of other people to them, do you think, that they found so unpleasant? Or was it more those who weren't around the corner any more?

Well, I, I think what I meant was, that, the fact that you, that no longer would they encounter, as they went about their normal everyday business, no longer would they, they encounter people who, whom they would greet and stand and stop and talk to. But, but on the other hand, it's also true that the way that we had been received, we and others in similar circumstances, had been received on our return to Holland, was again, not one that made them feel particularly welcome, to, to be back in Amsterdam, or in Holland.

Did your parents have their Dutch Nationality still, at that time?

No, we, remember we, we had dual nationality, so it's not a question of, of did they still have Dutch Nationality at that time, or not.

Well, was it, I mean, did, after everything had been taken away, what was their

Your Nationality can't be taken away, I mean, the fact is that my parents were born in Amsterdam, but the fact also remains, that my father was also British, because he was the son of somebody who'd been born in England, and so, I mean, the fact that you don't have a piece of paper, doesn't take the Nationality away from you, does it? So I think that, what, if you mean, on what documents, if the question is, on what documents did he travel to England? We travelled on, as far as I understand, we travelled on British Passports, because these had been applied for after the War, in, in

Amsterdam, and they had been, of course, issued, and, and we came here, not as immigrants or refugees, we came here as people entitled to, to, to live in this country.

And did your father know anybody here in the diamond trade before he went over here?

No, no, I don't know, I think, I think he may have been given a few names and addresses, but I don't think any more than that. Possibly he had written, possibly, knowing my father, possibly he had already arranged to, to be able to start work with, with somebody, with a firm.

And did he come back for you?

No. My mother and I, we, I don't think that was the intention. My mother and I, once he had arranged for somewhere to live, we followed him.

And can you recall being told about your parents' decision, or reactions?

No, I can't, no.

So you don't know at all what you felt at the prospect of moving here?

No. No.

And what are your first recollections after you arrived here? Or leaving Holland?

I don't, I don't have any particular negative or positive memories about arriving in England. I, I just, again I can't remember, all, I only remember that where we lived in Willesden, we lived near a, just round the corner from a swimming pool, and I, I know I was upset because I wanted to go swimming, and I was probably, or I wouldn't have been to a swimming pool since before the War, because, and then it wouldn't have been very often then, but I was told, by my parents, my mother, that I wasn't allowed to go to the swimming pool because I wasn't strong enough yet, which I remember, was a great disappointment to me. I mentioned to you that I, I had a scooter in Amsterdam, which had become damaged and unusable because it had been used for, one of the things that my parents had promised, was that they would get me a bicycle, to replace it, and in fact, this is what happened at, not long after we arrived in England, I, I got a bicycle, to compensate for the lost scooter.

What were your feelings then?

Oh, I think, I think I was very pleased with that, yes, yes. Freedom to be able to move about, yes.

Was that the first thing that was bought specifically for you after the War?

Yes, I would say so, I think so, yes, yes.

Did you get that for a birthday, or was it just something ...

No, it was just a long-standing promise.

Did you go by boat from Holland?

Yes, yes, from Harwich to the Hook of Holland, or from the Hook of Holland to Harwich, rather! And then the train to Liverpool Street Station.

What luggage did you have with you?

Oh, just a few suitcases, couldn't bring much. I can't really remember, but, but other than some suitcases, I couldn't be precise.

What were your first impressions?

First impressions of England?

I just, I, really, I cannot remember what my first impression of England was. I don't think it, it meant very much to me, that I'd moved to another country, to another culture.

And what sort of accommodation did you have in Willesden?

It was a very large house. It still stands there. I think we had three rooms, probably a bedroom each, and a very large sitting room that looked out over a back garden. Quite, quite spacious accommodation.

Had your father been able to save some money by then?

It was rented, well, it was rented accommodation, and I think, I think his earnings were quite good. I don't think there was any financial problem, I mean, it's not as if one was suddenly, had a cradle of wealth, but I don't think they were wealthy at all, but I don't think there ever was poverty. I mean, I think he was comfortably paid out of his income.

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Could I ask you what it felt like, your first day at an English school, can you recall that?

No. I, I, I just can't remember the detail of any of those things. I, I just had the feeling I was caught up in a kind of whirlwind, really, and I, I think it was all bewildering, and no, I just cannot remember it.

And do you have any idea how long it took you to learn English sufficiently well to, to converse with the other children?

No, even, even that I don't know. I think it's difficult for a person to, certainly for a child of that age, to remember, himself, how good or bad he speaks a particular language.

I wonder whether you can explain why you don't recall anything of that particular period, because it must have been very traumatic for you.

It, it's not that I can't remember anything of the period, it's, it's that I can't remember the detail of the period. For example, I can, I can remember going to school on, on a bicycle, I can remember, I can remember there used to be an ice-cream salesman standing outside the school, it's just the detail I can't remember. I think that's probably because there were so many different things happened, and, and probably because I didn't speak to anybody about the things that happened, every day, so it didn't become consolidated in my own mind. I mean, even, even today, today, there, the trivial everyday life, I tend to forget very quickly indeed.

I was wondering about the absence of any feelings. You went to school, but you couldn't speak the language, and after all you had gone through, you must have felt quite helpless again.

I don't think it was a question of feeling helpless again, I, I think it was probably a, I didn't know any better. It was probably a continuation of feeling helpless, but I didn't know any better because I, I hadn't experienced a period in, in which I was equal with other people around me. If you like, I, I suppose there has always been a feeling of being the outsider, of being separate, my experiences have been separate from anybody else of my own age group, really, and, and because I was not in contact with others who had been, who had gone through exactly the same, I, I was, in fact, an outsider of the communities in which I lived.

So what can you remember of your school life? Like you remember the futility of the exercises you had to do in that school in Switzerland, could you say something about, you know, your impressions of the work you had to do in English schools?

Well, the impression I have is that it, it was normal school work, but the only thing I would say is, that much just passed me by, because I didn't, I didn't speak any English, therefore, during classes like geography or history, or chemistry, I really wasn't able to, to follow, didn't really know what it was all about, because it wasn't

possible to explain it to me, and it meant nothing to me, what happened in the classroom, and, and it, it, I think it was also very difficult for me to concentrate, it always has been difficult for me to concentrate, and I think, if you don't understand what's going on, as I didn't, the mind wanders more easily, and becomes distracted and, so, I think the whole schooling was a pretty meaningless exercise for me. The only, the only subject in which I was able to achieve, if you like, considering the level of the schools and that, and the classes, the distinction was in algebra and arithmetic, and trigonometry, but when it, trigonometry slightly less than arithmetic and algebra. When it came to geometry, again, where reasoning is important, where a good knowledge of language is important, I, I didn't do well.

Did you have any extra lessons to help you with your English?

No. I, I didn't in the school. I think occasionally, there was a teacher living in the street, I think, just on a few occasions, he might have given me a little, a few lessons, but no, in the main, I didn't.

How long did you, do you think you did have a problem with the language?

I think, I think it's very difficult to say. I think quite a long

End of F295 Side A

F295 Side B

I think I had a problem with my English for a very long time, because I, simply because I didn't, I wasn't taught it in a very structured manner. It, it was picked up, and therefore, first of all, because, for a long time, I hadn't read any books because I had no Dutch books available to me, I know that has nothing to do with my English, but I'm just pointing out, and because, because I didn't know English well enough, I couldn't derive any pleasure from reading in English. And because I wasn't taught English properly, as a foreign language, and because I didn't have any, any knowledge of grammar, it, I had just picked the language up, and therefore, it took much longer, very much longer than if I had been taught it properly. Or, if I had been in, in an English-speaking environment, and even today, I still, I still find it strange not to speak Dutch to my parents, so as long as I lived with them, I, we always spoke Dutch.

And so now, what do you speak to them now?

Dutch, yes, even now, yes. I find it unnatural not to speak Dutch to them.

So even in the presence of your wife?

Sometimes, yes, not always, but I'm speaking mainly when I'm on my own, but even, yes, even when my wife is there, then I will still speak Dutch to my parents.

Well, that's something that goes back a long time.

That's right.

What can you recall about being invited to other children's houses, did that take a long time until you actually were invited? Were they welcoming to you as a newcomer?

I, I didn't visit the houses of, of many children. I know, occasionally, I, I did go to a party, a birthday party or so, but I don't think I even enjoyed it very much.

Could you say why not?

I think mainly because I was, all the time, all the time I felt I was the outsider, and, and I just, I just didn't feel comfortable, I just wasn't happy. I, I think it all, it all has to do with simply having lost that period of my childhood, not having learned to, to play, and to relate to people of my own age.

And did you in fact, want to go to these parties?

No. No, as I said, I wasn't particularly, no, I didn't mind really, I didn't, I didn't care a great deal for it.

Mmmm. But it wasn't that your parents made you go?

Oh no, no, no, this is nothing to do with my parents, no.

So what sort of attitude would you say the, the other children had towards you, in the beginning?

It was that the children at school, from the children at school I suffered a great deal of, of, of jeering, teasing, and being called a "bloody Jew", and a "bloody foreigner", and I mean, I've said this, there's no need to go over it again, and to harp on that, and you know, I played with some of the boys in the playground, played with marbles, and I met, sometimes I met some of the children on my bicycle, and, I had contact with them, but it was very, very superficial, it was, maybe when I was a little older, maybe 14 or 15, I would, on the Saturday evening, would bring records along and we'd listen to records at each other's houses, it was always at somebody else's house, never at our house.

Why was that, do you think?

I think, I think because my parents didn't give me any space of my own. In fact, it wouldn't have been possible to sit somewhere with my friends, without them interfering or interrupting, or, or, it just, I don't think they, they understood the way things were done in England, where young people had much more space and freedom.

Did you think that was particularly English?

Well, I didn't have any experience of anywhere else, and I thought it was particularly English, yes, yes. I mean, I just, I think, I think my parents were very possessive, and I'll give an example. When, maybe when I was 12, or 13, my parents had a radiogram, but even if I was on my own in the house with my mother, I wasn't allowed to use it. She would say, "Oh no, no, in case something happens, and then what will your father say?" So I wasn't able to play records on my own, even when I was on my own, and to the extent that it even was so with the vacuum cleaner, "Don't touch the vacuum cleaner, in case something goes wrong, and what will your father say?" So, it was a constant, it wasn't very pleasant, it was a constant forbidding, "Don't do this", "Don't do that".

And did you recall that also from before the War, that it would be like that?

No. No, I can't remember that, but then I was too young, because in 1940 I was only six years old, so ...

And was your father the person who was ruling the household, were you frightened of him?

No, I wasn't, I wasn't particularly frightened of him, no. No. It's just that, that they maintained, in a way, they pretended they were still living in Holland, for example, they would, they still eat, or until recently, they still ate exactly at 6 o'clock. I was surprised, recently, to hear that now they eat at half past six, because they find 6 o'clock a little too early. Of course, this, this didn't fit in with anything that was done in England when I was younger, because, in England, people would maybe have tea at 5 o'clock, and then they'd go out, so when I was older and wanted to stay at the swimming pool, I couldn't, because I had to be home at 6 o'clock, whereas others

stayed on till 8 or 9 o'clock in the summer, and I had to be home. And there was, there was no compromise, there was no accommodating, there was, ... likewise, when they went out on, on a Sunday, maybe visiting friends, to play cards, I had, I was dragged along, I wasn't allowed to go and do my own things, I was dragged along, I feel I was treated like a parcel, and I just had to sit there and be bored, while they played their boring game of cards, and I had to try and amuse myself somehow or other.

How old would you have been then?

13, 14. Well, certainly, 11, 12, 13 and 14, yeh.

And were your friends, or your schoolmates, were they allowed to stay at home by themselves, at that age?

I can't, I think so, but I can't really remember, but I think so, yes. I mean, it's the same with, I know I was, I was very annoyed that I had to wear short trousers until well into my teens, my parents wouldn't buy me long trousers, whereas all the other boys wore long trousers. Now, I don't feel I, my parents were very adaptable to the way things were done in England.

Do you think that they settled well over here?

I don't know. I'm inclined to say no, and then I ask myself the question, "Would they, would they have settled better in Holland had they remained there?" And, and I'm not sure I can say "yes" to that. I think it has something to do with their personality. Maybe I, I feel they may have finished up happier if they had remained in Holland, but I could be mistaken.

Did they know anybody apart from people your father worked with, when they came over here?

No. They, they didn't know anybody. There was nobody here, at the time, whom they knew.

Did it take a long time for them to make friends?

Well, I, I think they met other, some other Dutch people who were working in the same industry, and one person was, in fact, married to a lady with two children, who had also been in Belsen, and through them, they met one or two other Dutch people.

And now, are they mainly, what sort of friends do they have now? Is it still more Dutch than English?

No. I think also, because many of the people they had known have died, because my parents are quite a good age now, they, my mother is 81, and my father 77, so I think they now find themselves in the position a lot of elderly people find themselves in, where the people they once knew are no longer alive.

And did they join any Club or any Organisation?

No.

Did you?

Yes and no. As a teenager, I, I used to go swimming a lot, and I belonged to the local Swimming Club, and then I used to go ice skating a lot, a lot, at the Pool, and I had contact with people there. When I was older still, maybe 18, I, I did go on, a few times, to a Jewish Club, where I met my first wife, but again, I, I didn't really feel I belonged there. I didn't feel I had a great deal in common. The other, the other problem was that, I simply didn't have the means to, to do very much. I didn't have a great deal of spending money. For example, where, where a friend of mine received, a Jewish boy who lived nearby, received £3 a week pocket money, I might receive 5/- a week, pocket money.

Would you discuss this with your parents, and ask for a rise?

His attitude even today, I know exactly what he would say, "What other people do is up to them, what other parents do."

When you went through adolescence, were there a lot of conflicts with, between you and your parents, or was it as smooth as can be expected? Could you say something about that?

Oh, I don't think, I don't think there was a tremendous conflict. I think mainly it was a question of, of being at home, as I said before, by 6 o'clock for a meal, and, and maybe not later than 9 o'clock when I was maybe 14 or 15, not later than 9 o'clock in the evening. And maybe there were conflicts over that, but not about any other things really.

Would you say that you were an easy child, or not?

I, I think that's difficult to say, what's meant by "easy". I was probably fairly obedient, and, but, but probably I kept within myself, my unhappiness. I, yes, I would, I would say there wasn't any point in talking about that, because I didn't feel that there was any empathy, for how I felt.

And did you have the feeling at any time that you had to be obedient because your parents had gone through so much that you,

No,

didn't want to cause them any further pain?

No, no, no, it never occurred to me.

And it doesn't now?

No. No.

Could you say a bit more about your school life, how it developed, and how it ended?

It, I don't, I don't think it developed in any sense, it was just, it just became a routine, and I wasn't, I wasn't particularly happy, it was meaningless, I, I, much of it, I felt, didn't relate to me at all, for example, Scripture, it was, I didn't have to bother with it, I usually sat in the back of the class, because I, I wasn't keen on it, it didn't mean anything to me, and my parents didn't want me to follow that. History didn't mean very much to me, because, I don't know, as I said, it took a long time before my command of English was, was sufficient that I might have understood, and by then it was too late for anybody to bring things into context for me, and so it really, if I learnt anything, it was by rote, and not because I understood it, and, and likewise, English literature, which obviously I had to do, it didn't really mean a great deal to me.

Did you learn German at school?

No, I didn't, I didn't learn German at school, I, I did, after I'd been in Switzerland, in 1958, and then I came back to re-do examinations, then I went back to school, and then I did, in fact, follow classes in German, but I already had then, a modest command of spoken German, having been in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, and having read German books as well. No, the, I, French was the language we were taught at school. So you asked me how did it evolve, and, well, I just, let's see. At 16, I sat the examinations which were, whatever they were at the time, but I didn't, I didn't pass any of those. And I didn't want to stay at school any longer, because I couldn't see much point in that, and, and so I, I then went out to work.

Doing what?

Oh, I became an apprentice motor mechanic.

And did you find the job for yourself?

Yes. Yes. I got that by going to the Labour Exchange, as it was called.

And how long did you do that for?

Till July 1955, and then, and then I married my first wife, and I went to Rhodesia, where I worked as a motor mechanic, and for a while, ran a small garage, very small garage, on my own account, and then came back to England again in 1958.

So you met your first wife at this Jewish Club?

Yes. I think it still exists, in the Finchley Road, I have a, it's in a big house, I think it still exists, but I'm not quite sure.

So did you have a chupah?

Yes.

Where did you get married?

In Wembley.

Which Synagogue? Was this Reform, or a Liberal?

It's, I don't know, it's the one along Forty Avenue, I don't know what it is.

You don't, was it United?

I really, I don't know, it didn't, I think it was the only time I've been in a Synagogue. We, I remember, we did want to get married in a, in a Spanish-Portuguese, but I think they, we were very poor, and I, I'd been an apprentice motor mechanic, and my wife was a, was a typist/secretary, and so we didn't have any money, and they wanted too much money, and so we couldn't get married in the Spanish-Portuguese.

So what made you go to Rhodesia?

I wasn't very happy in England, and perhaps also, like most young people, they want to see something different of the world, and I, I had, I knew that in South Africa, they needed motor mechanics, but I didn't want to go to South Africa, and I reasoned that if, if that was the case for South Africa, then maybe the same applied in Rhodesia, that there was a shortage of motor mechanics, so I went to Rhodesia House and looked in the papers, and there were lots of advertisements at that time, so I just applied for one of those jobs advertised, and I was offered a job, and that's how I came, that was all quite straightforward and easy.

And did you settle well in Rhodesia?

No, not really. Initially, initially, because we, we had to, because we didn't have any money, we had to rent a room in a house, where the people were constantly quarrelling and fighting with each other, and, and then finally we, we did manage to get a flat of our own, with our own furniture, but it was just a small flat, just really one room, bathroom and kitchen, and, for a little while, I was, I helped, I was in contact with the, with a group of Dutch people, and we set up the Netherlands Association in Salisbury, at the time, and for a short period, for about a year, I was the Treasurer of the Netherlands Association. But I don't think my wife felt particularly comfortable in, with those people, and no, I can't, I can't say that, and I can't say, I, I didn't really like the attitudes that existed there, there was a lot of, a lot of people there who, who maintained different standards to the ones that I'd been accustomed to, about the immigrants, they talk big, and yet when they, they were always broke, they were always separating, and they were always drinking, and they, they were not things that I cared for very much.

What sort of background did your wife come from?

She actually had a much better education, she'd gone to a Grammar School, and her mother, unfortunately, had died when she was 13, and I think that, died of cancer, and I think that, that had affected her quite severely at the time, and her father had, he was a shopkeeper, he had a small clothes shop, and he, he had married for a second time, and there was a young child, and I don't think she was very happy in that environment. I, I think she'd perhaps been too close to her mother, and, as I say, it had affected her.

And were they British Jews?

Well, yes, in the sense, yes they were British Jews, but they originated, or the father, certainly, I think, originated from Romania.

So when did that family come over to England?

I think they were all born in this country.

And what was your parents' attitude towards the marriage?

I, I, I don't think they had any attitude towards it. I don't see why they should have had.

Were they pleased?

I, I think so, yes. I mean, yes, I think they accepted it, rather than being, I don't think they had any, they expressed any particular feelings.

And was it important to them that you married a Jewish girl?

No, I don't think so, no.

And it didn't matter that she didn't come from a survivor family?

No, not at all, no.

What did your wife do in Rhodesia?

She worked as a secretary.

So did you go to Rhodesia straight after you got married?

Yes, all within a few days.

It must have been quite hard.

I think, I think it was made harder, again, my, my feeling of isolation. I remember we were, it was a, we flew to Rhodesia. It was a three-day journey in a small Dakota, and on the plane there was a Jewish lady who lived in Salisbury and she spoke to us, and we got talking, and she, she said, "Oh you, you must join the Jewish Community,

to, and meet people." And this is something we did immediately, on our arriving in Rhodesia, we went there. But the first thing they asked us was for money, and we didn't have any money. In fact, I'd sold a stamp collection in order to pay for the fare to go to Rhodesia, and in order to, to even belong to the Community we had to pay for this, for that, and the other, and we had to say "Goodbye", we hadn't got it, and that's it, and that is the welcome we had from the Jewish Community in, in Rhodesia, until later, when there as the Israeli/Arab War, they managed to find me, and send me a kind of blackmail letter, that unless I contributed to, to the Fund, then, then my name would be published as being someone who had not contributed, and that is how nice the Jewish Community in Rhodesia was, at that time.

Were there any survivors there?

Not that I know, I had no idea at all. Really, what I am saying is, I think I've given two instances of how, of, well, I've mentioned three instances of, of how unhelpful the Jewish Community has been wherever I've met them. First of all, when I came here as a child, living in the middle, in Willesden, surrounded by Jewish people, and not one offered to help, even with just advice, not financially, but just advice, advising my parents. And then that, wanting to get married in the, in the Spanish-Portuguese, and, and what it comes down to is money, rather than helping somebody who might not otherwise be able to afford it, and again, in, in Rhodesia when help would have been very welcome, and, and it all came down to money. I'm afraid that all these kind of instances which I've come across in my life, they have made me very contemptuous.

Did your parents join a Synagogue here?

No. No, there was no reason. My parents simply were not brought up religiously, they had not gone, although they were married, in fact, I think they were married by a Rabbi, but it, at my mother's parents' house, at home, not in a Synagogue. They were not religious people, and, and there was no good reason for them to join a religious community.

Is there anything you feel you want to mention about the period in Rhodesia?

No, it's, it was, it was interesting. If there weren't all the troubles there now, I would really like to go back there again, because there were lots of things that I didn't visit, I didn't while I was there, and I would like to, because the countryside is really most interesting and beautiful, and, but apart from that, there was nothing special to what happened in Rhodesia.

End of F295 Side B

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What did your parents feel about you going so far away?

I, I don't think they were terribly happy about it.

But they didn't try to stop you?

No, no, no, they didn't stop me, but I don't think they were terribly happy about it.

Had you finished your apprenticeship by the time you went away?

No. I hadn't finished it, but I'd had enough of it.

How much more did you have to do?

I can't remember, but probably at least another year or so.

What made you come back from Rhodesia?

Well, my wife and I had grown apart from one another, and I don't think I wanted to stay there any longer, I didn't, I didn't enjoy it anymore. I didn't enjoy the work I was doing, and I think the main reason is that, that we didn't feel that we wanted to, to remain married.

And did you come back together?

Yes, we came back together.

And what happened then?

Shortly afterwards she went to, to live on her own somewhere, and I went to, and I went to Switzerland.

So what did you do in Switzerland?

I worked for a company that had, in fact, had a garage group, and also ran touring cars for visitors, and had a petrol station, obviously, and I did a little bit of everything.

Was it a job you managed to get in England?

It was, again, it was a, it was a job that I'd seen advertised in, oh no, it was, I had placed an advertisement in a Swiss newspaper, and this was a company who had responded to the advertisement, but it was only a short-term job. At that time, and maybe still today as well, I don't know, but at that time, it was quite common for young people to take on seasonal jobs in the Swiss Tourist Industry.

Was there anything special that made you take a job in Switzerland?

I just, I just fancied going to Switzerland, that's why I placed the advertisement in a Swiss newspaper.

To what extent do you think that was connected with your previous time spent in Switzerland?

I don't think so, particularly.

And in what mental state were you after your marriage had failed?

I, I was obviously upset, but at the time I'd, I'd had more or less enough of it, and in fact, my wife, she, she had written to me in Switzerland and said she was going to come over, and I just wrote back, I remember writing back and saying that if she came I would just put her on the train back again. I'd had enough of the to-ing and fro-ing, and I realised that we, we'd grown apart. We'd married too young, we'd met too young, we'd married too young. And I bear her no ill-will. If I saw her today, I would still be friendly with her, but that ... as I say, I, I don't, I think I was more frustrated at the time that I wasn't able, that the poor education I'd had, and the fact that I was, felt I was stuck in, in a rut, really, which was to do with the motor car business, and, and the fact that I wasn't able to get help in any way. I remember when I was in Switzerland, I, I'd read an article which appeared in, I think it was a speech held by Adenauer, which, at the time, seemed to imply empathy with, with the victims of Nazi persecution, and that Germany had to help, and I think this set me off to apply for help so that I could go back to school and, and, and, and have a proper education. And I know that I applied, and it was considered,

Applied to whom?

Well, I think it was submitted via the German Consulate in, in Switzerland at the time, and eventually it went to Lower Saxony. Unfortunately I destroyed the papers, I wish I'd kept them now, but I know that I, I asked for help, at that time, from Germany, and, and this was denied. I didn't get any help that way at all. But that, the main, one of the most momentous events, I think, in Switzerland was, I thought I could do something with my languages, which I now realise were not a very high standard, but at the time, I had the impression that they would be waiting for me at the United Nations with open arms, so that I could perhaps work for them as an interpreter or translator, and I went to Geneva, and I remember seeing a job application form, but when I read through it, and they were asking for Degrees, and scientific papers published, etc., etc., I knew very well that I had to do something about it, and that was really the main reason I, I, this was probably about October 1958, I then, at that same time, I was reading a great deal, I bought, I was buying books regularly, in German. For the first time I was looking at Göethe, and, and Thomas Mann and other German writers, and that really determined me to return to England, and resume my education, or really start doing something about it, which is what happened in, just before Christmas in 1958, I returned to England, stayed, again I stayed with my parents, and my parents financed me, and in January 1959, there was an extension to the London Polytechnic, in Westminster, it was called City of Westminster College, it's still there as a kind of College, but I don't know what it was, where they catered for older people who still had to do O- and A-levels, and, and

that's where I went full-time, for about, I think it was a year and a half, and then I continued there in the evenings, while, during the day time, I first of all worked in a credit control department in the City, and afterwards, as a library assistant for Middlesex County Libraries. That was until, so that was from January 1959, to July '61, in which period, I got the necessary O- and A-levels, and then I went to the University of London, in October '61, to read Dutch Language and Literature. But as I say, you asked me before, about how I felt at the time I was in Switzerland, and as I say, the, the, the main feeling which, which, was one of great frustration and anger, and, and disappointment, and I, simply that I wasn't being helped by anybody. Everything, everything I had to do, I'd had to do for myself, and that's not very good, it makes a person extremely self-sufficient and independent and, and becomes a way of life.

And what about your personal life, to what extent do you think that your War experiences sort of interfered with your daily existence during that period?

Much less so then, apart from the loss of education, I think much, much less so then, than, than subsequently.

Were you able to concentrate on your studies?

I have always had to struggle with that, it, it's always, it's always been extremely difficult for me to concentrate on, on reading, or writing, or even listening to music, or being able to relax and sit in a cinema, or a theatre, and enjoy a play, or, except that in the earlier years, I didn't associate it with, with things that had happened to me during the War years. But no, I already mentioned I found this difficult at school, and this has always been a difficulty for me.

And what about sleep? Did you have sleep problems?

Again, I did, but not to the same extent that I had at a later stage in my life.

But you mentioned about nightmares, did you have them during your school periods here?

Yes, I, I, I did have them, yes, but intermittently, whereas in a later stage in my life, they, they were far more regular, almost every night.

So when was that, that that started?

I can't really say, but I would, if I were to hazard a guess, I would say probably in the mid-sixties, late-sixties, that it ...

And was there always a regular theme that was present during nightmares?

I don't think so, and I, I really can't remember the detail, but I don't, I think, I think they just varied greatly, but it was always, really, it's always being in a position of, of having to fight everything around me, and in fact, this is very much how my life was characterised, having to fight the outside world. And that's simply because, because

in my life, I, I, I didn't find anybody who, who put themselves in my shoes, and who reached out a hand, and who gave the kind of help that, or even showed an understanding for what I had experienced, and what I'd missed, and what I'd gone through, even if it hadn't been for the Camp experiences, but the very fact that I didn't have any schooling, had to struggle with learning another language, and, etc., etc..

The outside world that you just mentioned, in your dreams, was that the world in Bergen Belsen? Or was it the outside world in England?

It would be different layers superimposed, one on the other. There'd be, there'd be intermingling of, of, of the War years, and the Camp, and events in the Camp, mingled with everyday things that, current things, but as I say, I really can't, I can't remember the detail, I, and as I say, it was in later years that I would, I began to sleep more restlessly, and, and wake up in the morning feeling very tense and tired.

And can you think of any particular reason why you became more restless during that period, in the sixties?

No, I'd, I, I, I can't myself, say why that is. All that I can associate it with is the fact that when my children reached the age that I was in the Camp, and that I, I was able to compare what I had missed in my childhood, with what they were enjoying at that time. And I think this, this opened my eyes, and that started making me feel very depressed and very angry, and I think that just, that just grew and grew in subsequent years. But I think it also has to do with the great responsibility and dependency, and, and the fact that as one grows older, it becomes more difficult to suppress those feelings.

Can you recall instances that you were living here, but were suddenly taken back to an experience, in the Camp?

No. No, I can't. You see, I can, to a large extent, I can accept the Camp experiences, what I cannot accept is what happened afterwards, the, the indifference I encountered afterwards, that makes me angry all the time, much more than what happened in the Camp itself.

When did you first seek help for your problems?

To the best of my recollection, it would have been around 1972 that I first approached a family doctor with the way I felt.

And how did he react to your description of your problems?

It was a lady doctor. "Oh, I never had any idea what you had, that you'd been in the Camps. I'll give you some Valium, and some other rubbish, and something to sleep", like Mogadon, and that, that went on for quite a while. It, it, I don't know how it came about, maybe I had, maybe by chance I'd heard, or read something, about the, that woke me up to the fact that the way I was feeling, had to do with what I experienced during the War years, and it was really early, earlyish, about March 1978, that I felt that I needed help, and, and that I was pointed in the direction of Professor

Bastiaans in Holland, as being the only person it was felt who might be able to help me.

Who pointed you to him?

Professor Linford Rees, who was then President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, in, in England. I'd never met him, but I thought if anybody would know of, of a psychiatrist who would have some experience of dealing with people who had gone through these kind of events, then it would be he, but he said there was nobody, he knew of nobody in this country.

Yes, so what did you do then?

Well, I phoned, I phoned Professor Bastiaans and he immediately gave me an appointment, and I went over to see him, and it's a completely different attitude altogether, somebody who knew, it wasn't, it wasn't unknown, it was common, he met with it every day in his life, and it was obvious that was the case, and it was the first time I felt that somebody knew what it was all about, and that, in itself, is a great relief, because to know that others who had gone, undergone those experiences, suffer, and have suffered, and suffer in the same way.

So you'd really been struggling for a long time by yourself.

Oh absolutely, this is what I'm saying, and, of course, it, it, it, it has moulded my character, this self-sufficiency, this independence, and it's not one that fits in too well with, with the more socially-minded environment.

So what treatment did Professor Bastiaans prescribe for you?

Well, he felt that the only way that some of these emotions that, that were suppressed, the only way that they could be brought to the surface, was using LSD. So what happened for the first three or four years, I, I would go to Holland about three times a year, for, for LSD sessions.

Did you improve?

Well, I, I, I think what it, it made me understand the problem much better, it, it helped to, if you like, it helped to form some of the connections between what I felt emotionally, and what I knew intellectually, so in that sense, I, I feel a lot happier. At least I now know what the cause of many of the problems that I experience is, or, are.

Had you not received help in 1978, do you think you would have been able to carry on without? Or had you come to the end of the road?

Well, I was then only working about three days a week because I was so fatigued the rest of the time. No, I, what it would've meant was, that I would've stopped working altogether, that much earlier.

Could you describe all your symptoms at that stage?

Mainly it was extreme exhaustion. I just, I just had no, just had no energy, couldn't concentrate, and couldn't really think, think straight. I think that's really it, feeling tense, but feeling very exhausted, and exhaustion, I think, was the main problem.

And did you suffer from sleeplessness?

Oh yes, I, I, at that time, whereas now I usually fall asleep very quickly, but wake up very early, then I would find it very difficult to fall asleep, have disturbed sleep, wake up, bathed in perspiration, and then in the morning, even then not wake up early, wake up latish, and feel very tired. And the pattern has, has in fact, changed quite dramatically.

And would you get up during the night?

Maybe, maybe once, nothing, nothing special. As I woke up, I would probably go downstairs, have a drink of water, and go to the toilet, but that's all.

And did you have any specific fears that were recurring all the time?

No, not, not, not really. I can't say that, no.

And any obsessions?

No.

That you had to make sure everything was safe?

No.

So,

But as I say, I, I think, mainly, it's what still exists at the moment. First of all it was a complete lack of knowledge of what the, what the symptoms were, and how they were related to me, and how they were related to my past experience, and then overriding all this, is something that has always existed, this, this, this rage with the outside world, at, at being so hypocritical, and not having helped when help was clearly needed, at every stage of, certainly in my, the early stages of my life.

What does it feel like now, you have been asked to give your story?

I, I'm happy to give it, maybe that some, some stage in the future, somebody will find this of interest, but apart from that it, it, it doesn't mean a great deal to me. I'm happy to co-operate, and that's, that's about as far as I feel about it.

After all the years that nobody wanted to listen,

Well, that's, of course, not quite true, because, because since I've seen Professor Bastiaans I've been able to talk about it as much as I've felt I wanted to, or been

capable of talking about it, so this isn't as if this is the first time I've spoken about it, I've spoken about it many times since, since then.

But that was in Holland, and I know that you attended the Workshop for Survivors in 1980.

Well,

In England.

Yes.

Was that the first time that somebody really did take an interest?

Well, that certainly was the, that was the first time when, when I was in contact with a group of people who'd shown an interest, but, of course, what had happened was, that the reason I, I went to the Survivors Syndrome Seminar, was because I was seeing a therapist at that time, at University College Hospital, who had, in fact, who had been in, been made aware of this, and who had suggested that I might like to go there, and so again, I had already been speaking about it in England as well. But I had private therapy, or individual therapy or group therapy there, and I found that within the group, even though there was a daughter, a student at the University, the daughter of somebody who had also been in the Camps, I found that people steered away from it, they, they were not interested in, in hearing about my experiences, not about the Wartime experiences. In fact, I left the group because I found it irritated me more than it did any good.

So you had therapy simultaneously with, or

That I saw Professor, yes.

How long were you in treatment for?

Oh, I, I think maybe for a couple of years, I can't remember exactly.

And how, how had you got to UCH?

Well, because ...

End of F296 Side A

F296 Side B

... The, as I was saying, the medical officer of the company where I worked, he happened to have met this lady at some previous date of his career, and, and he arranged for us to, to meet, and that's how I came to go to University College.

Did the individual treatment help you in any way?

I think it helped to some extent, but not greatly because I, I think the problem has been is, and this is the difference between somebody like Professor Bastiaans and other people who I've met, he's the only one who dares, himself, go into the less pleasant aspects of, of what happened to me during the War, whereas everybody else seems to skirt around it, and they, they make it too easy for me, and on my own, I can't, I can't get into the less pleasant aspects, and I think the same goes for the therapist at University College Hospital as well, that, really, it, she wasn't able to, she didn't make it possible, she didn't facilitate my being able to penetrate a little deeper. Just from that period, there's one image that has stayed with me, and which I can recall very easily, and I mean, and that's that I imagined my, both my grandmothers having to enter the train at Westerbork to go to their respective extermination camps, and I remember then, her being able to bring that a little bit further, and asking me what I would like to do. And I said, "Well, what I would like to do is to put my arms around them, and, and protect them, because at that time, they had nobody else to support them, and to help them, and to comfort them in any way." And that's quite a nice image, which, well, it isn't, of course, not a nice image, but in a sense that that's the way I felt, but that's the only meaningful image that I still recollect from, from that meeting. But as for the rest, I, I, I don't think it helped me a great deal. As I say, I think all the therapists I've seen since then, they, they skirt around it, they, either because they don't know themselves what actually happened, what the circumstances were, or maybe because they feel too intimidated, too scared to delve, for fear of what they might stir up, but really why I think they're failing in their job. I, I would personally, I mean, for the same reason that I went back to, to Belsen, three times now, because I want to be in touch with, with my feelings, with, I know that a lot of people wouldn't do that, but, but I think that's wrong, and I'm quite happy to, to, to confront the past, and to come to terms with it. Unfortunately, because it's been so suppressed, repressed, I, I can't always do it on my own.

Did you terminate the treatment?

Well, the therapist at the time, I, I felt that the individual therapy had to stop and that I should, there was, there was a short changeover period where I had both individual therapy and group therapy, and then it became just group therapy, but the, the problems that people in the group brought with them, although of course I recognise, I don't want to appear unsympathetic, they were important to those individuals, they were quite banal in, in relation to the kind of problems that I had come with, and some to a greater degree than others. Obviously all these people had been, felt they had been badly affected by their experiences, but really they were, they were the, they were not the kind of traumatic experiences, they were, they were mostly family related experiences, relationships with parents, and, and, and for me, I felt it was quite, quite meaningless, and in the end I said, "Well, there is no point in my

continuing to go there." I wasn't getting anything out of it, I felt I was giving more than receiving.

And did you ever seek any other treatment after that?

I, when, when Professor Bastiaans, I think this was round about 1985, when, when he, when I knew that he had to retire, and he also had difficulties in getting LSD because the manufacturers, Sandoz, had stopped manufacturing it, and my doctor said he'd, my GP here said he had no idea how I could be helped, he didn't know of anything. I then wrote a very brief letter to the Secretary of State for Health, pointing out there was a great omission of people who had been through the Camps, and were not being looked after, there was nothing, and that something ought to be done, and I received no reply to that for quite a few months, and then I heard from the local manager of the Local Health Authority, who also knew of nobody who, he, he said he only knew of a Professor in Norway, and, and then I had, then I had some correspondence with Downing Street over this, and, but in the end, no, there is nothing here. I did briefly see somebody, very occasionally, in Twickenham, but that was quite unsatisfactory as well, and, and he had a community nurse who practised hypnosis, hypnotherapy, and he tried to hypnotise me, and that went on for about three or four months, but he was never able to hypnotise me, and so again, that's something that I felt was pointless in continuing with.

And how did you meet Shamar Davidson?

Oh I met him at a Conference in, in, in, in, at Imperial College, and what happened there was, I, I, when, when I knew that I would not be able to continue seeing Professor Bastiaans so I wrote to him and asked him if he happened to know anybody in England, and he then wrote back to me and explained he was coming to England for a sabbatical, and that we would meet then, and we would discuss the matter, and that's how I met Shamar Davidson.

Was he helpful?

Yes, in the sense that I saw him a few times in Oxford. He, his approach, of course, was quite different to Professor Bastiaans'; he was a very kindly man, a much much easier man to communicate with than Professor Bastiaans, much more open and outgoing, and helpful person in, in the sense, but not, not really in contact, my feeling was that he was not really able to go beyond the very superficial, and I, and I somehow disagreed, he wanted to look at the positive side of survivors, their achievements, despite all their adversities, without first addressing the great difficulties such as the ones that I've been talking about, that, and coming to terms with those, before looking at the more positive aspects, and, and so I, I, I liked meeting Shamar Davidson, because he was a very kindly person, but from a medical point of view, I don't think that it helped a great deal.

So where are you now, in terms of getting help?

Frankly speaking, not very far. I, a few weeks ago, when I was in Holland, I met an Organisation in Amsterdam, and I think they might be able to help me. They are the

Outpatients Department for Jewish Mental Health, in Amsterdam. I think if I, if I lived in Amsterdam, then possibly they would be able to help me. The prospect of, of going over there on a regular basis for a 50 minute psychotherapy session, I mean, it seems to me, to be ridiculous, and, it, it really would, it's outrageously expensive, and I can't see that's justified. I don't think, I will go and see them later on this month, I have already written to them along those lines, maybe they have better connections in England or in London, that they might know somebody. They did suggest to me that they had connections in England, and otherwise, I think the more time that passes by, the less chance there is, the less survivors there'll be about, and the less chance there is of getting proper medical help.

You mentioned to me about a pain you felt for a long time, that you can't get rid of, could you say something about that?

Well, it's just tension, it's just that at times I feel extremely tense, and, and that's, that's the pain, I feel it in my arms, and my shoulders, and my neck, and that again, interferes with trying to concentrate on anything, because if you can't relax, if this intrudes all the time in, in whatever I might be doing.

Do you have any other somatic symptoms?

No. No, I, not really, no.

I know that you have translated, in the past, for Professor Bastiaans, you have translated articles that he wrote, from Dutch into English, could you say something about that?

Well, I, I think it started because when I first met him, so that I would know a little bit more about his thinking and his treatment, he, he gave me an article of his which had been published in medical journals, and I wanted, and so that my wife could know about it as well, I translated that one. I then sent him a copy of that, and I think on a subsequent occasion, he was, he needed something in English, I think a lecture he was giving, and while I was at the clinic in Holland, and he asked me if I could help translate it. And really, what happened then is, that I subsequently translated a few more articles, which he was happy for me to do, because they did not then exist in English.

I know that you have very strong feelings about the loss of 300 years of Jewish lives, in Holland, and in particular, of Sephardic Jewish life. Could you say something about that?

I, I just feel very very sad that here was a town and a country, which, which Jewish people from the Iberian Peninsula, in the main, had been, originally been able to make their own, where they were welcomed after a little while, they were welcomed, they were able to live in peace, in harmony with the world around them, they learnt to live in harmony with the world around them, the Dutch accepted their different ways, the Jewish Community added considerably to the Golden Age of Amsterdam, the merchants with their connections, their ships, who, who brought so much wealth to the Netherlands, which enabled Amsterdam to prosper, I just feel that the Jewish

Community contributed considerably to make Amsterdam what Amsterdam is best known for. The expansion that took place, the beautiful canals and the, the houses around the canals, all took place during the 17th Century, during that Golden Age. That Community suffered in the 19th century, with the rest of the Dutch Community, and all its poverty that existed then, during the Industrial Revolution. The Jewish Community helped in, in overcoming those economic difficulties, that all the Dutch people faced, they were truly part and parcel of Holland, and I just feel it's so sad that the Germans should have come along and destroyed that, almost overnight, that within a few years, there was nothing left, because now, there is no longer that Community that belonged so very much to the life, certainly of Amsterdam, if not to other parts of Holland. I, I think it is a great, great loss to Holland, but Amsterdam in particular. But, of course, to the Jews worldwide, as well, that that well-integrated Community that lived in Amsterdam, that that disappeared almost overnight.

And do you feel sad that you, yourself, haven't been able to, to carry on your long links with that Community?

Do you mean, the Dutch Community?

The Sephardi community like you live over here, and your children.

But there is no Sephardi community there, and it, of, of the hundred and, the 108,000 Jews who lived in Holland at the time, the majority of whom lived in Amsterdam, a total of only about 5,000 returned after the War. Many of those were young people who were, who subsequently went to Israel and settle there, others went, like myself, went to other countries, so in actual fact, of the, of those 5,000 very few, perhaps, continued to remain in Holland, and, and they themselves could no longer reconstruct the Community that once existed, up till 1942, '43, so I don't think that if, if I had continued to live in Holland, that it would have made any difference as far as that is concerned. The Community had been wiped out. It, it, it really is a most dreadful, dreadful thing to have happened in that way. I understand that, it's perfectly true that, that towns and countries evolve, and they, they don't stand still, things change, and if those, if there had not been the extermination of Dutch Jews, then Amsterdam would not now be what it was in 1940, quite clearly that would not be the case, and things would, would have changed. But that would have been natural evolution, and in the meantime, there would be further contributions by the Dutch Community, to the life of Amsterdam. But that, that was wiped out overnight, and, and I think there is no recovery from that. I just, just don't see that that's possible.

I know that you didn't practice Judaism at home at all, but I don't think I actually asked you whether you celebrated Christmas, before the War, and after the War?

No. We, the only thing that was, that was participated in, was celebrated in, was St. Nicholas, but that, because it was a celebration for children, and has, had no religious overtones to it at all. It is more a pagan kind of festival.

And you celebrated that with your grandparents, and aunts and uncles, before the War? And after the War, they were no longer there. Could you say what that felt like, to celebrate St. Nicholas in England?

It was just, it, my mother tried to make something of it but a child and his parents can't do that on their own, it needs to have other children there, it needs to have relatives. It was, it was not something that I cared for any more. I, I, I, I just feel that, after the War, I wasn't able to really enjoy any kind of, of reunion or, or celebration of that, or any party. I don't think, I don't think, festivities, I don't think I could, gave me any sense of pleasure any more. Admittedly, there wouldn't have been so much before the War, because of, simply because of my age. So really, I'd never really learnt, apart from St. Nicholas, I'd never really learnt to enjoy festivities, and after the War, I, I couldn't bring myself to enjoy them, there was nothing enjoyable about it.

Do you feel that you can enjoy things now?

Not really, no. No, I, maybe, maybe when I, when I drive through, through a nice countryside, when I drive through Switzerland, or, as I did, I think, last year, through the Pyrennes, that makes me feel more cheerful, and, and, and happier. But not things to do with people.

Could we go back to your studies now. You mentioned you went to London University, did you finish your course in Dutch Language and Literature?

Yes, I, I sat my Finals in 1964, and got a Second Class B.A. Honours Degree, in Dutch as the main subject, with French as a subsidiary. During the period I was at the University, I also studied Italian, but as an extra-mural, as a, just for my own personal benefit.

Is that how you met your wife?

No. No, no, I met her, I met her before. I was, we, I actually, I married my wife about five, six months before I went to University, so in March '61.

So how did you meet her?

I met her at a club, or disco, at a club, really, at that time, discos didn't exist. It was just a dancing club, just a social thing.

And as your wife is Italian, was that the reason for you taking up Italian?

Oh while I was, yes, certainly, while I was at University, I knew there was the chance of following Italian lessons, and because I enjoyed studying languages, and this was a very good reason for me to, to learn some Italian, yes.

When did you divorce your first wife?

I, I honestly can't remember, I think it was, I think it became final at the beginning of '61, but I'm not, I'm not 100% sure, either the end of 1960, or 1961.

And what did you do after you left University?

I worked for a company where, that was in automobile components, supplier to the motor industry, and I, I joined them because I thought perhaps, I joined the Export Company, in London, because I thought that my knowledge of the motor industry, as well as my languages, combined, would, would make, could be of use to, to the company, and would help me as well. But it, I wasn't really very happy there, and I was stuck in an office most of the time, which wasn't the way I wanted to lead my life, and, and then in January 1967, so after about two and a half years, I, I joined IBM, in sales, and that at least, got me out of an office, and enabled me to step out into the world a little bit, instead of being shut away, which was the case, when you work in a workplace, like a garage.

And you married your wife, while you were, or just before you became a student at university.

That's correct.

How did you support her?

Well, she worked and I had a grant, and we lived with my parents, so we were not well-off, but it wasn't, it wasn't a desperate problem.

Is your wife Jewish or not?

No, she's not.

How did your parents take that, and how did you react to that?

My parents didn't react to that at all. I think, you see, I should explain, my, my mother's brother, he was, he was a bit of an anarchist, but that's beside the point, the thing is that he, he had as a common law wife, he was living with a Christian woman. On my father's side, his sister had married a non-Jewish person, so there really wasn't, there wasn't really a strong feeling of, of Jewish identity on either side of the family at all. It, it, it was something of long-standing, it wasn't just something of recent years.

Yes. When did you have your first child?

In October 1962.

So this was all while you were still living with your parents?

That's right, yes.

And that worked out okay?

Moderately!

Was he named after anybody?

No. No, we, in, in naming both our sons, we, we, we thought of giving them names which would be easily translatable, both in Italian and Dutch, so the eldest one is called Nicholas Edward, that can easily be translated in Italian or, or Dutch, and the younger one is called Lawrence John. So nothing to do with names on either side of the family.

When was Lawrence born?

In August, 1965.

Did your wife work while the children were young?

No. No. She, from several months before the birth of our eldest, before Nicholas' birth ...

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... my wife didn't work any more. In actual fact, she didn't return to work until a long time thereafter. I think, I think it's an opportune moment just to explain a little about my wife's background, just briefly. She'd had a very good education, if you like, a grammar school education, she'd matriculated, and would have been able to go to university in Italy. Unfortunately the family was, didn't have the means which would have allowed her to go to University. Her father was, manufactured gloves, and had a small shop in Florence, where my wife helped out, but obviously for somebody who wanted to be a teacher, which she had wanted to do already from when she was a girl, that was a most unsatisfactory way of spending your days. So, as a result, with, I think with the excuse, she won't admit it herself, but with the excuse to learn English, because that would be useful, she came to England, and that's how we met. But, of course, her ambition was still unfulfilled, and she didn't have much knowledge of English at the time, although she'd learned it at school, she really couldn't speak it very well at all, and it was school English. So what happened was, after Nicholas was born, I encouraged her to sit O-level examinations, and subsequently A-level examinations, which would allow her to go to University here. In fact, from 1971-1974, she went to London University to read Italian Language and Literature. She did it as a full-time student, and graduated in, in July 1974. So exactly 10 years after I went to university. We were in fact in exactly the same colleges. Because Bedford College was a women's college, I had to register at University College London, but the Department of Dutch was, in fact, in Bedford College. She registered at Bedford College, where she read Italian, but had to go to University College for lectures. So we have exactly the same experience, the same two colleges. And then subsequently, she, she did a year of teacher training at Kings College, for the PGCE, and after that, she started teaching. So I'd like to add that, perhaps, I'm quite, this is something I'm quite pleased about, that both my sons also went to University, so in fact, all four of us have been to University. I think that's quite an achievement really, in most families.

Certainly.

It's November 16th today.

I would just like to ask you something about the book that you have told me about, which has just been published, and in which you appear. I would like to know about your reaction to the book.

You're referring to a book by Anton Gill, entitled, The Journey Back from Hell, which was published Thursday last week. It, about three years ago, Anton Gill wrote to me and asked me, he'd been referred to me, in fact, by Professor Bastiaans. Anton wrote to me, explaining that he'd been commissioned by Grafton Books to write this book, an account by survivors, with the object to show, to show positive, the positive effects and how they had actually achieved to settle back into "normality", and he asked me whether I would co-operate, and, of course, I said "Yes." Subsequently Anton interviewed me, and he also attended one of the LSD sessions that I had with Professor Bustians. So, of course, when I spoke to him last week, and he told me that the book had finally come out, after nearly three years, I was very anxious to read it, and, and I found it very compulsive reading, really. I'm fascinated by the accounts of the other survivors. I'm, I'm fascinated how, in the final analysis, that feelings which are expressed to you here, are, are shared. My own feelings are shared very much with the feelings expressed in the accounts by the other survivors in this book. There are, of course, differences between the older and the younger survivors. I think probably those who had managed to go through a sound schooling, before their arrest, and who may already have been living as adults in society, in their own countries, will have reacted to the Camps entirely differently to the younger people. Of course, they, they will have, it's obvious to me they, they suffer in a different way, because they may have recently been married and lost very young children, and their young wives in the Camps, or wives who'd lost their children and their husbands in the Camp, and are the only survivor, and lost their parents, and really are the only one, and then weren't able to return back to Central Europe, or chose not to, because there was nothing there any more, because the, the, the Nazis had done such an excellent job at clearing the whole town or village, of any remnants of Jewry of that particular place or country. It's, I found it particularly interesting that there are two, two issues, which struck me, in which the survivors seemed to be divided. The one is the question of guilt. It is quite clear to me, there is one group of survivors who seem to be asking themselves all the time, "Why me? There were better people than me. I'm not all that marvellous, my elder sister, or my younger brother was a much better person. Why should I have survived and not them?" And there are others who say, and I agree with this, this is my view as well, "The question of survival really has nothing to do with us. It maybe something innate in us, it may be that we had a stronger constitution, that is quite possible." But really, in the main, I would say that it was, it was just, just a fluke, just chance. It's toss of the dice really, whether you made it or didn't. And I think, in this, most survivors are agreed, that if the conditions had prevailed, in some cases, even a few more days, then there wouldn't be any survivors now, because most people, certainly a very, very large number of people, wherever they were, whether they were in Belsen, or in, or liberated in other parts of Europe, on the death marches from the Camps to, who knows where to, that they were all on the point of, of dying. So really, in the final analysis, if people had been clever, if the Allies, in fact, had delayed the liberation by a few months, then they wouldn't have found anywhere near as many survivors.

You mentioned that it was sheer luck that those who did survive, survived. Do you think that for you personally, there were other factors too, that helped you to survive?

I, I, I really don't, I really don't think so, because after the, after we were liberated, after the train journey, we, most of us were really on the point of death. Even the people who went on that train, they were either already, they died on that journey, they were already dead, or they were on the point of death, and, and I'm, I'm quite sure, I mean, during those two weeks, certainly, there would have been nothing that anybody could have done for themselves. We were shut in that train, and, and in fact, there was a spot of, most people suffered from a spot of typhus, at that time, and there is nothing you can do to avoid that. It was a contagious disease, and, no, I really do not think, although I can accept that if you got yourself in, in a particular position, a particular work detail, that you might be a little better off, but I, I think it is so slight, you could influence matters in such a slight way, that certainly as a child, there was nothing I could do. As a child, I had no say in the matter at all. And as I said to you before, it was like being washed ashore with the tide, and ebbed, to and fro. And really... But I, in thinking about, and reading accounts of other people, it strikes me that nobody, in the long term, could have done anything about it themselves. They might have delayed it a little bit, yes, it's true, by their actions, but in the final analysis, nobody, if you're living in the midst of a contagious disease, there's nothing you can do to avoid it, however smart you are.

And do you remember whether you, at that time, had a will to survive? Whether you were fighting to ...

No. No, I don't think, I really, I don't think I was conscious of that at all. I don't think the question, well, I wonder if there are any children who are 10 years old, who say to themselves, "I am going to survive this", I mean, really children children, not children who have been brought up, perhaps in a more intellectual environment, or in a rougher environment, from an early age already, and therefore who are little toughies, but ordinary City children, I doubt whether a 10 year old is going to say to himself, "I'm going, you know, I have the will, I'm going to survive", certainly I didn't.

Would you say what your most important need was, during the period in the Camp?

There were probably two obsessive, or two needs which became an obsession. One was to find warmth, and the other one was to find food. I suppose they're very closely interconnected, because if you don't feed then you feel colder, and, on top of which, we were all diseased, with various illnesses which went in the Camp, typhus, typhoid, diarrhoea, spotted typhus, it's difficult to say which disease one suffered from at any one time, but let's say that, that we were, we were on the point of starvation, very seriously undernourished, suffering from oedemia. If you feel ill, you feel miserable, you feel cold, you feel the cold much more, and therefore, I would say that the two things which would have given comfort, in the first instance, were certainly food, and warm shelter, like warmth from a fire or so. Undoubtedly there's a third one, because we were all so filthy, we had lice, and fleas crawling all over us, through our clothes, and it was impossible to get rid of them. We were constantly

scratching ourselves, and I suppose, cleanliness is the third one. If, if there had been water that one could have washed oneself, and one's clothes with. It, it really was, we, we, we had, it's been well-described by those who liberated the Camp, it's been well-recorded, I mean, we were all on the point of just giving up all hope of further existence.

Could we just go back to the book. Could I ask you what you felt when you read about yourself, in that book?

Well, I, I am pleased that, particularly my, not so much the, not so much the account of my actual experiences during the War, and what happened, those are covered very briefly. I think that the, the fact that my very strong feelings, and my great anger had been expressed in print, so that hopefully, it will sink into more people, what was not done, and how this affects somebody like me, in later life. That is, I am now talking about unhappiness which was avoidable. I can come to terms, to a large extent, with what happened during the War, and in the Camps, insofar that circumstances were such that it would have been difficult to have helped us there and then, at that time. What I cannot excuse is what didn't happen, in normal circumstances, after the War. Now I'm not talking, it's not as if I had been in a DP Camp, where perhaps help was not easily to hand. What I'm talking about is, at the end of June, being back in Holland, yes, the country had, had suffered greatly, all people had been badly affected, especially by the severe winter of '44-'45, I accept all that. Nevertheless, the fact that not more was done for us, and certainly, the fact that by the time I arrived in England, a year later, not more was done, when so much was known about how we had suffered in Belsen, in what condition we were found, when the papers here had been full of it, when everybody could not have been unaware. That, I find, inexcusable. I cannot come to terms with what was not done in normal, everyday, civilised society, after the War. The total absence of empathy, consideration, help, it, I don't think I would ever come to terms with that, because it's just impossible. The fact is, so, really, that, in a way, I was, I wasn't pleased, of course, and yet I was pleased to read that there are other survivors who came to different parts of Britain, to Birmingham, and to Northern Ireland, and whose accounts are almost identical to my own, in this respect. The total lack of empathy, the total lack of help from the Jewish community, who should have been more sensitive, if anything, than the rest of the community, and yet who all sat back and avoided it, pushed it away from themselves. It was all right for us to have to live with it, but they didn't want to be disturbed in their everyday life. It,

The isolation really carried on?

Well, it was a different kind of an isolation, and what I'm, what I'm trying to say is, that I can accept, I can come to terms entirely with the fact that conditions were such that, at first, nobody knew of the concentration camps, when I say "nobody", I mean, the countries outside of Germany, the Allies did not know about the concentration camps, hidden in the woods throughout Germany, the conditions that prevailed in those camps, and therefore, if you don't know about something, there's nothing you can do about it, although, of course, I now know from Martin Gilbert's book that the British Authorities had, in fact, been made aware of what happened, what was happening in the camps, but that aside, that, the isolation that existed there, I, yes, that

I can accept, I have no, I really have not much of a problem with what happened in the camp. The problem I have is in, in the isolation that took place, the further isolation that took place after the War, and is even almost taking place today still. It is being repelled all the time, and I'm glad too, to read again that this is not a personal thing, it's not me, it is my experiences which made me into the kind of, into that kind of person, with those experiences, that the other people don't want to have anything to know, that other people don't want to know about, or have anything to do with, and it, it really is, it, it, it just is unbelievable. And let me say something, that, because I feel so strongly about hypocrisy, I cannot contribute, I will not contribute to any charitable funds. I think people like me, and therefore those in Africa, those in Biafra, and those in all the other countries, they have a right to be helped, and that right should come from one Government to the other. As a person who could've done with help, I should receive that help, as of a right, that once the need is established, once it's recognised there is a need, I should be able, and I shouldn't be referred to charitable organisations, and nor should anybody be referred to charitable organisations, to get what they ought to be entitled to in a civilised society, and, and as a matter, I don't mind paying my taxes, I don't mind paying more taxes, if I know that as a result, people with needs will have those needs met, but I will not accept that people with needs, have to go begging for it, because most likely the service they're going to get, is going to be very inferior, because the aid giving organisations will always turn round, "We're doing the best with what we have available", and, and that's not good enough.

Could you say something about where you feel you belong, about your identity, maybe just after the War, and now?

I, I don't, I don't think I gave it a great deal of thought after the War. I, I, I think, I have to say I think, it may not be entirely satisfactory, but I think a child, I'm generalising now, a child identifies itself with other children of a similar age, and I don't think it matters a great deal how those, where those children come from, how they were brought up, as long as they are children, and are interested in the same kind of activities. I think that, that's the important thing, and really, I wasn't able to identify myself very much with, with young children either, because I was being repelled. I was, I was unable to relate to those children, to communicate with those children, simply because there was the language barrier, and, and because of the xenophobia that existed here, and the, and the anti-Semitism. So I, I really, it didn't occur to me to ask myself that, that question, "Where do I feel at home? Where do I feel I belong?"

But looking back now, where would you say you would have felt at home?

Well, I, I must say that even in Amsterdam, when I returned to Amsterdam in, in February 1946, I remember very well, outside, being in the street, outside the flat, and not even feeling comfortable with the Dutch children in the street. They were, they were playing games that I knew nothing about, that they had been brought up with. I felt myself alienated then. To me, I just felt lost. I felt, I felt that there was nothing to share with those children really. But I, I think, had we, I think it depends a lot on my parents, of course, as well, but I, I imagine that had we, had we perhaps lived in a small town, in Amsterdam somewhere, I would have been, I could have been a lot

happier. And especially if there had been some attention paid to the disruptive influences which had played a part on my life. Obviously, I had picked up patterns of behaviour in the Camp, or during the War years, which were unsuitable for everyday life in post-War, in a Post-War society. But I think all of us needed to be helped with that, and it was not something that should have been left to us to sort out. Children are not, unless it's pointed out to them, unless things are explained to them, I don't think it is possible for them to, to suddenly rationalise and say to themselves, and say, "Oh yes, that kind of behaviour was all right in the camp, but it's not all right in, in, in normal life". That's impossible. So I can, I can imagine that, with proper care and attention, in a pleasant environment, I would have been able to identify with other young people in Holland, without any, well, after a few years of, of suitable training, without any difficulty at all. If I could've bridged the gap between pre-War and post-War, because the foundation was there, of, of a Dutch life. In England I, I really, and this again is what interests me to read these new accounts of others, by other survivors as well, in the book, is that it's, it really is, it's as if other matters which occupy ordinary people who haven't had these experiences, which tax their minds, which they find interesting, and of concern, as if these are totally unrelated to my experiences. They're almost naive and infantile, because they don't touch on the very essence of life in the way that we survivors have had to deal with the very essence of life. Really, I can't think of, it is rare that there is something, for example, in the cinema, or on the television, where I feel, "Oh yes, that was really worth spending the time on. That was interesting. That was meaningful, to, to life in general." Most of what I see on television, I know I'm not alone in this, but it really is so superficial, such a load of garbage, even, even the self-importance of the headlines in the daily newspaper, I really, a year, 100 years, an event, it's all so insignificant, in my view, to man's existence on earth, and it's all this self-importance. No, I'm sure if I didn't, if I didn't receive any newspapers for a year, I wouldn't, I would hardly notice anything different, without having, if I hadn't been, a few people might have changed position and that, but it really wouldn't make an iota of difference to me if I didn't read the newspaper, for a year. Or didn't watch television for a year, and so, it, it, it is, it is this isolation which exists between our experiences, and the ordinary everyday experience of most people, where nothing really eventful happened, and maybe the most eventful thing, I think, that might happen in their lives, shall we say, a bad car accident maybe, or being involved in an aircraft crash. But really, nothing more happens in their life, and, and therefore it is very difficult to feel at home, or to identify oneself with people like that, and, of course, the worst thing is that, living here in, in England, the country wasn't even occupied, so there isn't even that to share, that experience to share. At least if I lived in Holland, most of my contemporaries would know how horrible it was, would remember that, and I, I think I've mentioned this to you before, when I listen to the Dutch radio, I have the impression, certainly when I hear about how many people have taken, and are about to take, early retirement in Holland, my, I have a suspicion, I have no evidence at all, of course, because I haven't looked into this, and I'm not a scientist, to do so. I have a suspicion that if so ...

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... in Holland, are taking, or have taken early retirement, is linked, somehow or other, with the many years of Occupation during the War. I believe, in fact, I have the impression, I would have to look it up, Holland was probably occupied longer than any other country in Europe. I think Holland was invaded first of all, and Liberated almost last of all. The Scandinavian countries were Occupied later, Belgium was occupied later, France was certainly Liberated much earlier, already in September 1944 I believe Paris was liberated, and I think that one winter of '44-'45, must have made quite a difference on a large part of the population, and I, I don't know if anybody has looked into this, but I would certainly recommend social scientists in Holland to look at this, because I think it would be a very interesting subject for research. So, it, going back to your question then, who do I identify myself with? I suppose, in reading the book, reading the accounts of people, so many, which they've given so many years after the Liberation, I think, I agree with what some of the other survivors have to say, that we belong to an elite group. It's like a club, and I, I, it gives me a warm feeling to read that I'm not isolated, that my thoughts are not in isolation, although I've come to them, I would say, in isolation; by myself. I'm, it gives me a good feeling to realise that other people have come, other survivors have come to the same kind of conclusions and have experienced the same, now that they're able to talk openly about, find themselves able to talk openly about it, that they express thoughts very similar to mine. So I, I really feel that I identify myself with those other survivors who are able to talk about their experiences and have come to terms with it, or at least, are able to talk about it openly and freely. I think that I would feel, I would feel, not be able, I would not be able to identify myself with those survivors who have not yet wanted to accept the fact that their experiences during the War have affected their life for good or evil, is neither here nor there. I think I would be impatient with those survivors who were still denying to themselves nowadays, their wartime experiences. So, in summary, I, I find I can identify very easily with those survivors who are prepared to talk about it and openly.

And to what extent do you still feel Dutch? To what extent are you able to feel British? Jewish?

Well, I, I, I recognise that there are things about the Dutch which irritate me. In fact, this morning, I was listening to the Dutch radio, and they were going on again, as they do almost daily, about money. A few cents here, and a few cents there, and it really, although I, money is, of course, important. But to have so much radio time expended on these petty discussions, it's obsessional, and I think to myself, "Thank goodness I'm not living in Holland, I couldn't stand this, as if this were the most important thing." Because certainly, it isn't discussed to the same extent on, on, on British radio and television. On the other hand, I've just recently been to Holland, and even my wife, who hadn't been to Holland that often, and obviously hasn't got any particular feelings, there's no reason why she should have any particular feelings for Holland, when we came back, had to admit that everything was so much cleaner and more civilised in Holland, and come back to England, and you see the filth and neglect that's everywhere. And I'm not just talking about paper in the streets. But to me, for example, we visited Delft, and Gouda and Leiden, and we walked around there, and when you walk around these towns, around the streets and that, you don't see garish

advertisements, garish shop front designs, as you do in England. They don't scream at you, they, they sort of blend into the, into the style of the, of the buildings themselves. It is that kind of civilisation. It is not, it's not necessary for Joe Bloggs the butchers to, to stand out in red and blue and green, and somebody next door in a different series of colours, so that it really, it's absolutely dreadful, and it's this garishness which, which really, I, offends me, that I see, and from, there is a, there is a kind of civilisation, peacefulness, about walking around in the smaller Dutch towns, which agrees with me greatly. And we also went to see the Kroner Muller Museum in, in the Hoek of [INAUDIBLE] and it was so nice to see teachers going round with, oh, with parties of school children. And we also went to the Rijksmuseum. Did we go to the, no, we went to the Stadeling Museum in Amsterdam. It doesn't matter. Bbut to see teachers with parties of school children, sitting down, either on the floor and that, and explaining and discussing, there is such a nice relationship there, that it, it is a friendship, a relation of friendship between teachers and pupils. Whereas in this country, and I know this, because it happens in my wife's school as well, teachers in this country often tend to be so very autocratic, so really, it is the simplicity of everyday life, which I like about Holland. I, their obsession with the pettiness of money, and a few cents here and a few cents there, the fact that they carry their money in a purse, irritates me, as opposed to just carrying it loose, to carrying the change loosely in one's pocket in this country, in Britain. I, I accept that, outside of London, and we haven't been around England a great deal, and therefore, when I talk about England, or Britain, I see it in the eyes of someone who's lived, who's experiences are based, in the main, almost solely on life in London, and I accept that that's not true, because again, a few months ago, we'd gone to Chichester, Petworth and Chichester for the day, and, and we noticed a kind of calm and peacefulness that we noticed in Delft and Gouda. We noticed that there as well, it's a completely different life, people are much more, much calmer, they walk around more peacefully, you don't have the pushing and shoving that you have in London, there isn't the filth in the streets. There is still garishness, still the monotony and dullness of seeing exactly the same business concerns in every high road and high street, or shopping street, and that, but there is a vast difference and earlier this year, I think it was, we'd been to Winchester, and again, life there is completely different to, to what it is in London, so really, it's not fair. On the other hand, I feel that if, while on the one hand I would like to live somewhere outside of London, yet I feel that I would feel isolated there, because there, I would encounter people who had, maybe, less experience, apart from their holiday on, on the Cost Brava, or maybe the South of France, or Brittany or Normandy, they, they would be less able to understand, and, and maybe just realise that maybe people who come from Holland and Italy are exactly the same as they are, and I think we would, and if they went, went, the church-going people went to Church of England School, Church of England service every Sunday, or regularly, they, they might feel our free-thinking perhaps out of line, so I don't think I could feel comfortable there either. I don't know what the answer is, but, I think, in the final analysis, I would, I would probably be most comfortable in Holland, maybe even in Italy, I really don't know.

And what about the Jewish element in you?

The Jewish element, well, there's one thing, if I'm with Jews, they can't call me "Bloody Jew" without my laughing at it! I can't, you know, I know that I won't be

discriminated on those grounds, I might be because I'm not religious or observant, or because I'm not Ashkenazi, if they happened to be that. No, I can't really, I feel quite comfortable being, being with Jewish people, but no more than with non-Jewish people, having worked for so many years in a, in a multi-national Company, where obviously the vast majority of people, almost all, are, are not Jewish, and those Jews who are there, blend into the background, because they are assimilated Jews in any case. I feel comfortable in both. I feel I can go to a Synagogue and attend a service, and I'm happy, although I don't understand the Service, but if I were invited to a Bar Mitzvah, I feel no discomfort at all, I'm quite happy. And if it were a Christening in a Church, I'd feel totally comfortable with that as well. I, I, I stand neutral on that point.

And among your friends now?

I think, I think when you, when you say "friends", frankly speaking, we have no friends, and that has to do a great deal with the isolation and lack of trust that I have in other people, for, you know, I feel very much for, for people, for me to be friendly with people, means that they must, I must feel comfortable in talking about my background, it's necessary for them to know a little bit about me, and before I do that, I have to test them out, and, and I have to observe them, and I find there is so much racism in so many people, that I haven't wanted to, to befriend them, closely, in fact, I prefer to just drop them, and this has happened, people we've befriended as a result of our children going to the same school, for example, where we might have visited each other occasionally for a meal, and then in, in the course of conversation, they would make comments, not anti-Semitic comments, but anti-black people, for example, or, or talk about minority groups, in a perjorative manner, made me think, "Well, I can't have anything in common with these people. I don't want to have anything to do with people like that." And so really, we don't have any friends, we don't have anybody coming round here. I'm not, I'm not too concerned about it either. It would be nice if it were different, I agree, but

They've got to be the right people.

Yes.

And what do you feel for the Germans now?

The, I, I don't think that the younger generations, anyone born after 1945, maybe even much earlier than that, anyone from my own generation, that they should, in any way, be held responsible for what happened. I certainly wouldn't, I would be extremely angry if somebody held me responsible for the deeds of my father, or my grandfather, for that matter, and I think most reasonable people would, would say that I was justified in feeling angry about that if somebody helped me, after all, if I wasn't in a position to do anything about it, then, then I shouldn't be held responsible for it. So I really, I sincerely mean this, I, I, in general, as a generalisation, I have nothing against the younger generation of Germans. However, any, any German, whom I judge to have been of voting age, either at the time when Hitler first came to power, or subsequently, they're capable of being a guard of a concentration camp, or fighting, or having committed any of the atrocities, those I have no time for at all. As far as I'm

concerned, they are non-people. Germans considered the Jews "untermenschen", I consider those Germans, as far as my life is concerned, non-people, and if I were to discover that any of them were, could have, in any way, been guilty, I would have no difficulty in, in hanging them from the first tree. So, however, however, I do want to record this. In 1978, just before I saw Professor Bastiaans for the first time, I was actually responsible for running a small recognition event, which took place in, in Belgium, and I was staying in a hotel in Brussels at the time, and in fact, after Belgium, I went to Holland to see Professor Bastiaans for the first time. In the evening, I was watching television, and Dutch television in Belgium, and, and they were showing the neo-Nazis, young new Nazis, demonstrating and espousing their thoughts, and I can tell you this, this made me so angry, and so sad, I sobbed to myself in that hotel room, and I did everything possible to ring up the radio studios, to say that I was coming to Holland and if, I would be happy if they wanted eye witnesses of the events that had taken place during the War, would they please contact me, because here were these neo-Nazis, and Revisionists, denying that this had taken place, and this made me so angry, when I was just about to visit Professor Bastiaans because it was troubling me so greatly, and here were these little shits denying this, and you have no idea, how angry, and how sad I felt at that, that really upset me terribly.

And you were on your own in,

Oh yes, I was on my own. Yes, because I'd gone there, first of all I'd gone there by car, and making the arrangements for the others to, to be received, and that, so So, young Germans, who profess to be neo-Nazis, or Revisionists, they are as bad as, as, as those who committed the horrors. But I, obviously I wouldn't generalise, hold that against the entire German people.

Did you ever write any testimonies to, to stand as a witness in trials?

No, no, I didn't, because I was too young. And I, there would never have been anything that I could have added to what was already, not already, in fact, on film, the film that had been taken on the liberation of the camps, and that, I consider myself to be pretty down-to-earth and a realistic person, and I recognise where the limitations of a child survivor are in that respect.

I know you went back to Bergen-Belsen several times. When did you make your first visit, and could you tell me about that?

It was on, I, I linked it to one of the visits to, to Professor Bastiaans, to Leiden. I have a feeling I went there before one of the sessions, because I particularly wanted to be sensitised by the experience, and I thought this would be useful for the LSD session as well. I always travel by car, because, at that time, there were still some people whom I wanted to visit, so it's much easier to be by car, but the other thing is that I, I don't like being treated like a parcel, as one tends to be treated when flying, and I certainly can't stand trains after all the train transports I experienced during the War years, so travelling by road is my preferred method. And I, I decided I wanted to go to Belsen, maybe it was 1979, 1980, somewhere around there, would have been the first time. Really I had, I had no idea at all what the Camp was like. In, in my

imagination, the barracks were still standing there, everything was still exactly the same, because I simply hadn't read up about it, I had no idea, even, who had liberated the camp, because we weren't there, we were on the train, and I didn't even know if any books had been written about it.

So your interest was, only started when you started reading about it?

Oh yes. It, it bothered me, it was in the back of my mind, was it ... in fact, it got to the stage when I was beginning to, to question myself, whether it really all had taken place, whether it was real, and, and it was getting pretty confused and that, so one of the things I, it's not true, already for a long time, I'd wanted to go back to Belsen, but I thought people would think I was mad that I should want to do that. I suppose, I knew a long long time ago, that I should try and get some psycho, psychiatric, or psychological help, a long time ago, but that, you had to be half crazy to go and see a psychologist or a psychiatrist, so I didn't do anything about it, and it's the same really with, with going to Belsen. Anyway, on one of these visits I, I went there, and, and I must say, that, the journey, at the time I was staying with a, with a, an acquaintance of the family, I was staying in Nijmegen, so I drove from Nijmegen, I drove to, I drove to Hanover, and then to, via Celle to, to Belsen, and the close, certainly after I'd left, once I'd passed Hanover, and I was approaching Celle, which was meaningful, because it was the nearest town to Bergen-Belsen, I, I felt both sad and excited by, by it, and I couldn't wait to get there quickly enough, and, and then when I did reach the camp, parked the car outside, and walked there. I was most surprised to find that there weren't any barracks, there were no barbed wire any more, it was, in fact, it's a memorial site, and I was very surprised and struck by this, and I, I, I felt like crying and sobbing, but I didn't want to because there were other people there, and it would look as if one was putting on a show, being dramatic and that, so I really contained it, but it was a very emotional experience, and, and then I walked through the museum, and the pictures, and, and that, and I was a little angry, because in the Museum, they had lots of books about the camp, in a case, in a glass case, display case, and I was very annoyed because there was nobody to ask if one could purchase any of these books, because I would liked to have purchased, and learned a little bit more about the camp, and there was a, a small book, in German, which you can take, which relates the story of the camp, how it came about and, and what happened to it in the end, and these are free books that one can take with one. So, I was pleased, in a way, that, at least the image that I now had of the camp, was what it in fact, turned out, what it turned out to have become, a memorial site, and I was pleased it hadn't been covered over, that I was particularly pleased to see the many parties of schoolchildren being conducted round the site, and, and that it wasn't just something that was forgotten, that, that pleased me immensely, that there was an interest by so many people to, to learn about, and, of course, in the car park outside the camp, the fact that there were cars with number plates from so many different countries, that was pleasing as well. As I say, the, the fact, the fact that there wasn't anybody to talk to, I found a great irritant. The other, there was one other irritant as well, and that is the fact that the old German Army barracks nearby Belsen camp, which existed during the War as well, and maybe even before the War, are now used by NATO troops, and as a result, you see many soldiers in uniform, walking round the camp, and I must say that, to see people in uniform, walking around that camp now is, I found, a great irritant, and very painful. I don't think that military uniforms have a place in the

camps. It is certainly right that soldiers should visit these Camps, and, and because maybe, if ever they find themselves in the position of, of war again, that, that they will be reminded that one should behave oneself, at least fight along proper civilised lines of fighting an enemy, but that one doesn't go out torturing people, and creating the inhumanities that the Germans, and so from that point of view, I think it's absolutely right that, I don't, I suppose that's the reason why they're encouraged to visit the site, if they're encouraged, but I think it's right that they should, but not, not in military uniform, if I had any say in the matter. In fact, in fact, I seem to recall that, in fact, I, I wrote this to the authorities in Germany who are responsible for the site, in Hannover, and I can't remember, I think I must have destroyed the letter now, they, they had a good reason why people should be allowed to walk about in uniform. Obviously, we're never going to agree on this, because I will always see this from a different point of view to anybody who had not been in the camp. When I drove away from Belsen, I was anxious to, to find out if there were any books, and fortunately I stopped at a small general stores where they had some, had some books as well, some paperbacks, and, and there I picked up, I was, I was, I think myself very lucky, there was a paperback, which is, in fact, a diary, written by a lady called Hannah Lévi-Hass who was the Yugoslavian lady, a resistance fighter, who found herself in the camp. The diary was published by a German publishing house, and, in fact, let me just look it up. Here, I, here we are. The diary was published by, let's see, 'Rotbuch Verlag' in 1979, so my visit to Belsen must have been after that. I suspect it was about 1980, my first visit, it's entitled 'Vielleicht war das alles erst der Anfang', and I, I was very pleased to, to buy this, because I wasn't even aware that anybody had written diaries. And I know that, I then drove back to, to Nijmegen, and I know that I, I couldn't let the book go, and I was, I can read German reasonably well, and that, it's much easier to read it for me now, because I don't use German regularly, or hardly ever, in fact, but I could read it, and, of course, because it talked about events which I had experienced myself, it is that much easier to, to understand what the author was writing about, and, and I was so pleased, I was incredibly pleased to, to read this diary, because the ...

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This Hannah Lévy-Hass was, in fact, a school teacher, in Yugoslavia, and what pleased me so much, because, I don't remember anybody concerning themselves with school children, Hannah Lévy-Hass, in her diary, writes how she used to, though it wasn't permitted, she used to try and look after children, gather a group of children around her, and teach as much as she was able to, with the, either the limited materials or no materials at all, and to actually read of somebody who had done this, although I had no personal experience, as I say, of her, it really pleased me, and it, I was very touched by it, and to the extent that I wrote her a letter via, and sent it to her via, 'Rotbuch Verlag' which finally reached her, in which I simply, I, I expressed everything that I've told you just now, and, and I really wanted to thank her on behalf of all those children who had not survived the camp, for her generosity and her warmth, and her kindness, in, in what really was a hell. And as I say, I can't remember other people concerning themselves with others. And I understand that. Because there was no time or energy for that, but the fact that she did, I was also very impressed with the way she, with her observations about how people behaved, and in fact, this bears out what I've just said, the fact that people were so incredibly selfish, but I, I think, to know more, I would recommend anybody from reading that book, and incidentally, it has been published in English now, as well, it has been translated. In its translation it's called, 'Inside Belsen', and published by the Harvester Press in the UK, and Barnes and Noble in the USA. So I, I really, from a survivor's point of view, I can really recommend that as a, as of outstanding value to anyone wanting to know what life was like on a daily basis in the camps, and how people behaved towards each other. Anyway, so, that was the first visit.

Can I just ask you there, what it felt like, driving up to the camp, in your own car, and then walking through the gates, just, there was nobody, no supervision there at all, no camp guards, no barbed wire?

Well, I, I think the fact that it no longer looked like a concentration camp, I think, it may seem strange to you, but it, it, I, I just had sensations, obviously, deep sensations, of, as I said, excitement and sadness, of being there, it was like a chill running through my whole body, there was something terribly eerie, apart from the fact that I think it was in the Autumn, and it was indeed, it was chilly and that, which, of course, emphasises the feelings that one might have had of the cold and misery in the camp at the time, and that, but, apart from that, I subsequently, many years later, I visited Dachau camp, where there are, in fact, barracks still standing, and I think that's different for somebody who'd been in Dachau, to go back to the camp, and also because it, it isn't in the woods, it lies along a road, a main road, that must be quite a different experience. But no, had there been barracks there, had the old kitchens still been there, and you know, things like that, the main road, had I had to walk up the main road, through the barriers, and then, yes, I would have felt entirely different, but, as it was,

What did you recognise?

There was absolutely nothing that one can recognise. There's just nothing at all.

So what did that, to the fantasies you had?

Well, I'm, I'm very pleased because, I mean, I had no fantasies about, I, I could see, I now saw what there was, previously, I'd merely wondered, it wasn't fantasies, but I'd merely wondered what it was like, and I still saw it as the camp that I remember from when I was there, and now I saw what they had done with it, and I read, I had read why they had done with it, and, of course, it all makes sense, and it's perfectly reasonable, and so, I, I really can't, can't add any more to that. I'd like to just, the second time I visited the camp, was with my wife, that was on our way to a short holiday in, in Germany and in Denmark. We again, we went by car, and it was on the way, and we stopped, we stopped at the camp, and, and, of course, this was a, this was a different, it felt entirely different because, first of all, because I now knew what I was going back to, so it was more like being a guide to my wife. There weren't any surprises for me, it was a different time of the year, it was roundabout the middle of August, so it didn't have the chill and the cold that it had when I visited, which may have been October, or, I think it probably was October previously, but I was pleased to have been able, to at least, let my, or share with my wife, or show her, where it had been, and what it was, and let her go through the Museum and that. At least when I talk about it, which isn't very often, but at least it can make a little more sense to her, and give her a little greater understanding. The third time was on the occasion of the, a commemoration of, of the 40 Year Liberation of the camp, that was in April, 21st April, 1985. That, of course, was an entirely different experience altogether, because, first of all, on previous occasions there have only been a few people wandering around, you know, in, in, and it's a big, it's quite a large site, and therefore even a few busloads of schoolchildren, once they start walking around, don't look so many, but now there were hundreds and hundreds of people there, and to be there again, with a number of people, that more closely resembles the number of people that were there during the War, of course, the numbers were much greater, but the fact that you were with so many people, that gives a different impression altogether. The fact that there were, the Press was there, the media were there, I was interviewed by somebody from Radio London who does the Jewish Programme.

Michael Freedman?

Yes, I gave an interview to Michael Freedman, and also to, to an interviewer from, I think it was CBS. Cos that's completely different, and I spoke to one or two other people who were not Jewish, who'd been involved with the Camp, or with the camps. I think I spoke to a German political prisoner, of camps, not Belsen, but of camps, and that, all that makes a difference, it makes a big difference if there are a number of people there that you can talk to, and share your thoughts with. The loneliness and the isolation, the feelings of loneliness and isolation disappear. I must say that, on occasions, when, on all occasions that I've been there, but particularly the first occasion, I, I would have liked to have said to the, I would like to have gone up to these German children, and said, "Look, do you really, would you like to speak to somebody who had actually been here during the War?" But then I always think to myself, "Well, you know, perhaps people will consider this to be, you want to make an exhibition of yourself, or you want to appear self-important and that", and that holds me back from doing that, although, as I said to you earlier on, before the interview, that I would be happy now, if somebody invited me to, to accompany a

party of young people interested in going to the camps. I would be happy to do so, particularly Belsen, because, because it's meaningful to me, as long as I, I was invited to do it, but to push myself forward on my own account, I, I don't think would be right. I, I think it's important that I, I just mention something else. There is one thing, and that is, about the camps, about visiting the camps, and that is, I have a very distinct feeling that part of me remained behind in the camp when I left it, physically. My childhood is there, but I suppose this goes for anybody, if you, if you go back to the place where you were born, and where you spent some years, part of you is in that place. Part of me is in Amsterdam, when I go, and part of me is in Switzerland, where I was only for three months. Part of the factors which influenced me, came from where I was, and when I left there, part of me was left behind, and this, this applies, I think, to everybody, to all of us, even though it may not be recalled day in, day out, by those who remain behind, and may even be forgotten, nevertheless... So, as I say, I, I feel that part of me has remained behind in the camp. And when I go there, I have a feeling that I'm visiting that part of myself. I feel I'm, I'm, I've come to provide some comfort to the, me as a child, in all his misery. I see myself there, in my misery, in my cold and hungry, and filthy, isolated, and, and totally dejected, and that's a very strong feeling in me. And when I'm not there, even now today, or yesterday, or last week, I might have thought to myself, "Perhaps I should find an excuse for going back there again, because the little me, the boy Jack, is wandering around there, is there all on his own", and really, it sounds crazy, I know, but really, I do feel that, and I said to myself, "It is time that you went to visit him again. Bring him some comfort. Let him know that he's not forgotten. At least you are still thinking, still remembering him, and he's not been left in the lurch by you too, as Jack the child was left in the lurch by so many people subsequently." It, I, I used to go, I went to the Hanover Fair, on, on three occasions, for my previous, for my employers and that, so it was very convenient, because I had to be in Hanover, so it was very convenient for me to go into Belsen on a couple of occasions as well. Now, I really have to find an excuse to go there, and it's much more difficult, and I, again, I have to say to myself that "it was crazy what you say", but it's how I feel inside that's important.

Could I take you back to 1967, the time that you joined IBM?

As I said to you, joining IBM meant that I didn't feel imprisoned any more. When I, when I, when I was still at school, and subsequently in a garage, and also working for Joseph Lucas in an office, I felt I was imprisoned, I was always anxious to be in contact which was going out, which, in contact with the world outside the school. I was always curious, if I had to go to a dentist, for example, and maybe other people feel exactly the same, it was like, to be in the streets, when other children were in school, I suddenly discovered a different world to the one that I encountered after school, or, or during holidays, or so, it really was quite a different feeling, and, and the same feeling I had when I joined IBM, I joined, I became a salesman for IBM which meant that I had an area in London, where I called on, on businesses, to sell IBM equipment, and I enjoyed that very much. I, I, I earned very good money, I was very, materially, I, we did well in those years, it was, it was a kind of work which suited me very well indeed, but the greatest thing about it, was the freedom it gave me to, to determine to a large extent, my own day, without having people looking over my shoulder, and wondering whether I was picking my nose or not, so to speak, and

that, and so I really did enjoy that a great deal. And, and really, I can say that my life took a very normal course from then onwards. There were no special events. Almost every year, at Christmas we'd go to Italy so that my, or in the summer, so at least once a year we would go to Italy, so that my parents-in-law would be able to have contact with their grandchildren, and I think, for economic reasons, in 1974, we were thinking of emigrating to Canada, but that had a lot to do with the fact that I was earning a lot of money, at that time, with IBM, and the taxes were very high, and generally, I think we had, the Wilson Government was there, or a Socialist Government, and I just, there was a lot of discontent, a lot of people were leaving England at that time, so I was thinking of joining IBM in Canada. We took it to the point that I went, I'd done some homework, and I felt that if I went to Canada, then I would want to go to Vancouver, British Columbia. IBM's Head Office in Canada was in Toronto, if you first had to go there for our nation meeting, both my wife and I went there, and, and then subsequently went to Vancouver, but we decided in the end, that it would mean much, far too much disruption, and so we decided to, we had a nice holiday, a wonderful holiday. British Columbia is really very nice, and we came back and decided we, it wasn't for us, and that, soon afterwards, I became a Manager, leading a team of IO salesmen, and I did that for about four years, till 1978 in fact, and it was very successful. Every year I met the targets, exceeded the targets, in fact. I got all the recognition to the extent that really, it became a bore, in fact, all the recognitions, what IBM calls its "100% Clubs", Professional Performer Awards and things like that, and there were obviously, there is the normal kind of friction at work, that exists in any environment. I, I don't, I don't think there was anything special about that at all, really, what happened then, as I explained before, it, from about '77, '78, that is when, really, the past started to catch up on me, and so from, I, I then decided that it wasn't good for me, for the business, for the people reporting to me, to continue as a Manager, and really, from the summer of 1978, from about August, September, 1978, I left the Branch Office, and I went into Head Office, but I really, for ten years, I didn't do anything very meaningful, occasionally, but on the whole, nothing very meaningful at all, and in, within IBM, although I tried to involve everybody who needed to, like, for example, the Medical Officer, the doctor, and, and higher management, and tried to make clear, gave them copies of some translations of some of Professors Bastiaans' articles, I, I, for any of those people to, to really understand what it was about, and what I was talking about, I think it was extremely difficult for them. I think they thought it was just a, a general nervous breakdown that I was suffering from, which it wasn't, because I went to work almost every day, certainly after a while, I went to work nearly every day, admittedly, because of how I feel in the mornings, I, I didn't used to rush it, certainly not in the latter part, I'd, I could turn up when it suited me, and I would go home when it suited me, and I made it quite clear. So really, that's what happened, and, and the organisation kept on changing. That didn't make it particularly easy. But that was in the nature of things that affected everybody. And divisions were created, and then, dismantled again. And, and, and ...

So from when on did you, did you actually find that you couldn't work full-time any more? How much after you had first experienced that,

Well, I think from, from the time that I first, when I first made my appointment to see Professor Bastiaans, which was in April, March/April, 1978. From then. For example, I mean, I'll just give you an example. I mean, in that, in the sales year 1972,

or the calendar year 1973, I, I'd qualified, of two managers at my level in the whole company, of maybe 40 or 50 managers of that level in the division, for what's called "The Golden Circle", it was a trip to Hawaii. My wife and I, we went out a week beforehand, but I needed almost a whole week just to get over the journey, I was absolutely exhausted until about the Thursday or so, it really, so that, I think that took place in about May, 1978, so ... so really, what it amounted to, that there was some struggle within IBM whether I was to take early retirement, whether I was to take early retirement with enhancement, because of my health, but I always maintained that IBM had another option, which was to be made a Disability Beneficiary under their Accident and Sickness Scheme, and I always maintained that if you think that I can't, and if you believe that I can't do a job in a way that is demanded by the company, similar to other people, then that's for health reasons, and therefore there's only one thing, and that is to make me beneficiary. And there was a long struggle, but in the end, they were all convinced and persuaded by this, and so that's what I am. I remain an employee of IBM but as an inactive employee, benefitting under their Sickness and Accident Plan. When I reach 63 I shall become a, a normal pensioner, and that's really it. So really, apart from that, nothing, it was just a struggle within IBM, but apart from that, nothing exceptional happened, so really what we're talking about is, we're talking about a period when my eldest son reached 8, or was thereabouts, my youngest five years old, which was round about 1970, till '78, over which, over a period of about eight years, when very gradually, very imperceptibly, the situation, my health situation, just became worse and worse, and the more I became to realise how the two were connected, the worse that went. And then a period for 7, 9 years, from about March 1978 till October last year, '87, so it's nine years, nine and a half years, in which the work I did, I went through the motions, but it was really quite meaningless, certainly I, you know, there were more important things going on in my mind, than that, and now, for a year in which I've been free to, to allocate my time in the way that I think is best.

It's December 7th today, and this will probably be our last session.

Are there any situations in the here and now, that suddenly remind you of the past?

Yes, I, there are various things. I, I think one which is, which certainly is something that happens regularly. If I'm in a theatre or a cinema, I've always felt uncomfortable, been restless in any case, it makes it that much worse, and also, I think the combination of finding it very difficult to concentrate, plus, plus the fact of finding myself in a theatre or a cinema, that causes me to think of the, of the time that we were taken from our home to the theatre in Holland, and that, and every time I'm in a cinema or a, or a theatre, I have the same feeling, I'm very conscious of that, and it's an irritant, but there's something even worse which happened this year, in our neighbourhood here. To control the crowds going to the Stadium, and rather to prevent them from parking in the residential streets, that the visitors do so, parking in the residential streets here, the local authorities decided to put barriers up, and this, these barriers are put down, they're unmanned, so they're just put down and locked, and it is quite possible for me to, and it's happened on a number of occasions that I will take a route of this area, of this estate, and find my, my way blocked by a barrier, and, and then I have to turn back and that, and this makes me so furious, on top of which they've also put up a few towers, very tall towers with cameras on the top, which are remotely controlled, I believe from the Stadium, from a control room in the Stadium, so that they can observe the traffic flow, and that. Now these two factors had made me so furious, also because there wasn't enough consultation with the residents, that in fact, since, since March, since the current rates year, I have refused to pay my rates, because every time, this reminds me of the barriers in the camp, and that, and every time I drive along these streets, I can't help but see these barriers, and they're all over the place. I'll show you some photographs of them, and they're everywhere, all around the Stadium area, the streets have got these red and white poles, in the upright position, and they're there as a permanent feature, it really is a disgrace, I've never visited a town where you have these kind of things, and, and really it does, every time, I am reminded of the camps, and I think this is so indecent, so inconsiderate, that I'm prepared for them to take me to Court over this, because I do not believe, having lived in this area for such a long time, I do not believe that this is part and parcel of a normal townscape. I can think of no town where this has taken place, it's a disgrace. And I've taken this up with the Council, first I got a whitewash letter, this is something I should take up with the Stadium authorities, but they're not my elected Representatives, they, those in the Town Hall, of course, this, this is a very bad Council we have here, in any case, at the moment, they just haven't responded properly to my letters, so, but there is another example, and, oh, people in uniform as well. I don't, I'm quite happy to talk to a policeman, or to anybody in uniform, on my terms, if I ask them something. When they try to, if you like, pull rank, or, or take advantage of their so-called position of authority, then I become really quite difficult, I will not allow myself to be pushed around by them, and I have no respect, I'm full of contempt if they start, if they behave like normal human beings then fine, but not otherwise. So again, people in uniform, they, they, I can't, if they take advantage of that uniform, I can't have any respect for them. Because they've got that uniform, doesn't mean to say that they're somebody I should respect. Any idiot can put a uniform on, of some kind or another, as happens with security guards,

who can't find any other kind of job, they, they go and do, that kind of thing, so not just policemen, but any, customs officers, anybody like that.

And have you ever been in trouble over this?

No, I, I just ignore them. I mean, I've had it happen, for example, again, this is in relation to the Stadium, I remember when my son was, oh, ...

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... As I was saying, I remember, I wanted to take my son and his girlfriend to the station, again, on a day when there was an event on at the Wembley Stadium, and, and I was not allowed to stop at the station, to let them out of the car, or in front of the station, to let them out of the car. I was not allowed to turn right, and I said, "I'm just ..." I just refused to take any notice, I said, "I'm sorry, I live here, I'm a local resident, and if I want to stop and drop somebody off, then that's what I'm going to do." And that's what I did, but there's nothing they can do. In fact, what I, I did in fact report the matter to, to the local police station, and I was subsequently told that he, he'd left the force, that particular officer I had the argument with, but, but I think that's a kind of irritation which other people living around here have as well, except that, for me, the fact that it's somebody in uniform trying to dictate to me what I shall and shall not do, and, and I can give you another example. A few years ago, the 40th Anniversary of the liberation of Belsen camp, I, I attended the Remembrance Ceremony there, and as I drove up the road, in the woods, to the camp, a German policeman, or soldier, tried to stop me, and indicated that I would not be able to park on the, in the car park by the little museum, outside the front gates of the camp site, but that I had to park somewhere along the road, and I said, I just refused, I, because the parking place, I could see, was being reserved for all the official cars and coaches, and I said, "I'm sorry", I said, in German, "if it was good enough for me to have been here during the War years, it's good enough for me to be here now", I said, "Just get out of my way", and I just drove on and parked on the parking place, and nobody bothered me any more. And it's that kind of thing, when, when I consider that authority to be unreasonably used, when it's, in fact, being abused, or, being inconsiderate that I, I over-react, I know, but I'm prepared to take that on.

In connection with the football matches in Wembley, would you rather confront the authorities with the fact that they have put up these barriers, or has the situation become so unbearable for you, that you are considering moving?

No, no. The point, in the first instance, I'm confronting the authority, I'm challenging them, I, I, as I say, I refuse to pay my rates in the hope that they will take action against me, so that I can actually bring it out in court, because as I say, I think it's improper. If, in the final analysis, I mean, if it wasn't for my wife working nearby, I think we might well want to move in any case, a little bit further out, because it's, it's, it's, the area is becoming over-populated, and as I say, we have a looney Council, and this is well-known, and it has been for, already, for a while, like this, it's going to get worse, because many large houses are being demolished and blocks of flats put up, all round the area, so, but I, I think this is a problem that you, that you find in other areas, and which are problems for other people, and which might be for other people, a motivation for other people to move as well, out of an area, but, but yes indeed, I mean, the [INAUDIBLE] such an area, that maybe when my wife is, is, if she wasn't working nearby here, and therefore moving would be, make it very inconvenient for her to go to work, maybe yes, then, I think that would be a very good reason for moving. We have talked about it, and I have thought about it, but it's such an irritant, but, in the first analysis, the first place, I will fight the authorities. There's little that they can do to me, I mean, the worst thing they can do is take me to Court and have, and have somebody declare that I am liable for, for the rates, and, and that one has got

nothing to do with the other. My way, withholding the rates, because they put these barriers up, and watch towers that, that, the two are not connected.

If there's no change in their policy, are you going to pay the rates in the end?

Well, if I'm instructed to, I mean, it's a little bit like the Press, when, when they've been forced by the Government to reveal their sources of information, they, they will not reveal their sources of information until they have been taken to court, where a judge gives a judgment stating that the newspaper shall declare their sources of information, or otherwise the journalists have to go to prison, therefore in a similar situation, if I'm, I shall not go to prison for it, I mean, that would be stupidity, because in the end I would still have to pay, and they could, they could always take possession of some, of some of my assets, so, in the final analysis, once it's been to court, yes, then, and I have to pay, then I would have to pay it, yes. But it's a matter of principle, it's not, not for any other reasons, just that I think it's an improper thing to have, in any case.

Could we talk now about the way you feel you have communicated your experiences to your children? Did you talk about it at all, if so, when for the first time?

I, I wanted to, I didn't want to burden them with my experiences. I didn't think there was anything they could do about it. In any case, there was little point of discussing it with them, so, I didn't want to bother, I didn't want to burden them with it, so, in fact, I didn't do any, didn't tell them, didn't speak to them about it, until, I think, my eldest son was about 16, the youngest was about 13. I think by then, also, because they were covering it in history at school, and, and I don't, I don't feel that I had a particularly favourable reaction from them, I didn't have the feeling that they wanted to know a great deal about it, and so, it hasn't really, we haven't really talked about it. In a superficial way, yes, but not, not in any, in a feeling of intimacy or empathy, so I, maybe it's for the better, I don't know, but, but, I'm not really very happy about the, the fact that we haven't discussed it at great length.

And have they ever asked you questions about it?

The odd question, but obviously, in a way that it was obvious to me that they didn't want me to go on at any great length, but they would barely ask me about it.

Do they know you are being interviewed?

Well, the eldest one is, is not in England at the moment, but the youngest one, yes he does, yes.

Did he show an interest in listening to the tapes?

No. No. In fact, I gave him a copy of the book as well, you know, Anton Gill's book, which he said he wanted to read, I gave him, he asked me about it, and he wanted to read about it, but in actual fact, he hasn't, he hasn't devoted the time to reading it, with the excuse that he's been too busy.

Do you think he will read it?

I, I don't know, he might, he might not. I really, I really don't know. I'm, I can't say.

Do you think he's afraid?

No, I think, I think, my feeling is that, they're, they are, I think they, they're not dissimilar to many others of their generation. I think it's a generation that's very self-centred; hedonistic and self-centred. They have very little time or concern for other people, and other people's ideas, unless they have been from their own generation. I, I, I think it's a malaise of that particular generation, I'm afraid, because I've noticed, not just in my own children, but, but in, they're, the people, that other, people their own they went to school with, and their relationship with their parents, or what they've done with their life, and when they've visited here, listening to the way they talk and that, they are so completely wrapped up in themselves and it's just unbelievable.

Do you know whether they have discussed it with your parents more than with you?

No, I don't think so. I don't think they have discussed it with my parents, I don't, I'm not aware of it, and I doubt it very much, they hardly discuss it with me, only in a very superficial way.

Do they know why you stopped working permanently?

Oh yes, oh yes.

And what was their reaction to that?

Really, "but what are you going to do with yourself?" "Aren't you going to get bored?" Trying to rationalise it.

Did they, did it come as a shock to them that you were not well enough to carry on working?

No, I don't think so, because I'd, I talked, obviously talked about it as a possibility, so, it was a question of, reality gradually creeping up over a number of years.

And have they sometimes asked your wife questions, that they weren't, didn't feel able to ask you?

Well, if, I'm sure they have from time to time, but about what I don't know, and if they have done, I really don't know. I mean, I wouldn't know the details, it could be anything, but I can't say.

Have they ever had contact with other children of survivors?

They may well have done, because I, I, I, I don't actually know, but I would imagine so, because the school they went to, they would have come in contact, they went to

University College School, and they would have come in contact with lots of other, well, lots of Jewish children, or children from parents who might well have, from my generation, who might well have been survivors themselves, but not specifically. I really don't know.

How would you describe your relationship with them?

With my children? I, I don't think it's, I mean, it's not what I would want it to be at all, but I don't think it is much worse than I believe the relationship that exists between many of their contemporaries and their parents. As I say, I think it's the generation that was born in the early Sixties, just at the start of the Beatles era, that was affected by the youth cult, where, I think, they got the impression that the entire world exists solely for them, to entertain, and to, and to, to work and worry over them, and that they have no obligations in return, I really genuinely believe that. But I, I think they, they would have suffered inevitably from my own, the fact that my own childhood was telescoped into such a very small period, the fact that would have meant I wasn't able to do things with them, because I didn't know them themselves in the way that a parent who had a normal, happy childhood, themselves, would be able to relate to their children. That doesn't mean to say that, right from when they were born, I mean, I changed their nappies, and I fed them, and I read stories to them, and things like that, but they, I, I think they, they're probably, they've probably missed out on something, I've no doubt about that, but on the other hand, I think maybe my wife has compensated for that.

Was it important for you to have children?

It wasn't something I really thought about a great deal, no, it wasn't, it wasn't all that, I mean, there was a period when I, I really felt very strongly that I didn't want to have any children, I didn't want to bring any more Jewish children into the world, or half-Jewish children, in respect of the fact that they would be recognised as Jewish, if the wife wasn't Jewish is neither here nor there, but who, who, who might themselves fall victim because, because of that, so, yes, there really was a period when I didn't, I didn't think that I wanted to bring any children in the world. On the one hand, I think, on the one hand I think it's preferable, the fact that my wife is not Jewish, on the other hand, maybe as I grow older, maybe it's a pity that my wife wasn't Jewish. I don't know, because what I'm really thinking of is that, I think it's additionally difficult, had my wife been English, a non-Jewish English person, I think that might have made things a little bit easier, I, I, I think the problem is that the children, the children must have inherited as well, is this inability to identify with any particular group, I'm not able to, because if you're not religious either, or observant, either in, in Catholicism or in Judaism, it means we don't belong to a Church, we don't belong to a Synagogue, the children certainly don't feel English, although they were born here and always, have always spoken English, they don't feel English, they don't feel English, they feel that they're part, partly, they're of a mixture, and my wife doesn't have any family, she wasn't brought up in England, she wasn't brought up here, and I don't really feel that I'm English, although I spent, of course, what is it? 42 years here now, but it's, it's, it's unable to identify with any particular group of people, and I think that, that is something that the children feel as well, I suspect. But they, they may not have a need for it either, because, I mean, it surprises me that they have not

used the opportunity of, of maintaining contact with their school friends, especially as they live in London, and they went to a school in London, down at University College School, the, the Old Gowers Club, and that, and the eldest son, he played cricket with them, until he went to China, and the younger one hasn't shown any interest at all, which rather surprises me a little bit, in a way. Maybe he doesn't have the need for it. I don't think he has a great, he has much contact any more with people he went to University with, when he went to Sussex University, Brighton. I don't think he has a great deal of contact. My oldest son went to Warwick, and I don't think he has any contact with any of the people he went to university with there, so ...

When your children went to university and left home, as a result of that, was that separation difficult?

No, wonderful, wonderful! Bit of peace in the house! Seriously. I didn't have to listen to their horrible pop records, and the noise they used to make, and worry about them coming home late, and, no, that was no problem for me at all.

Did you find that you had the need to spoil them materially, because you didn't have things yourself?

No, not materially, no. For both my wife and myself, there was, after having enough to eat, and, and, and be warmly clothed, and have somewhere decent to live, by decent, I mean, somewhere that's dry and warm and comfortable, the, the most important objective to pursue was to ensure that our children had the best possible education that we could give them. I've always felt that that was the best legacy I can give the children. If they've been properly educated, then the rest, at least they're properly equipped, and, and to, to do with their life whatever they can, and, and, and only in that sense have we, maybe in inverted commas, "spoilt them", they only ever went to two schools and their universities. They went to prep school and then to UCS, both of them, at exactly the same age, both went to university. But in, in, in every other sense, where they never had excessive pocket money, I didn't believe in that, and I felt that, that, during holidays they should go and do some work, and find out what it's all about, find out what life is all about. The elder one did add a little, but the younger one, he's, he managed to avoid that! But no, no, I'm,

And when they were younger, was toys

No, they just had, had adequate toys, they had enough toys, they were not short of anything, but it wasn't overdone, that was all, I would say, quite normal, their Legos, their cars, and their puzzles and things like that, but, but nothing too, any, no expensive toys.

And did you feel that your family life was happy, or was it different?

As I say, I'm very much aware that I didn't have the patience or the inclination to, really, participate, apart from which, there was so much to do as well, there was a lot of work to do in the house, and that, there were the cars to look after, my weekends were usually quite busy and then, then the time was taken up, and take them to swimming, and take them to music lessons, taking, carrying and fetching and that, and

then I felt duty-bound to take them to my parents once a week, and that, for them to see the grandchildren, so really, there was, there was very little time in which to get everything done, and at the end of the day, coming home from work, one needed a little time for oneself as well, but ... I've really forgotten quite what the question was.

How would you rate your family life?

I, I, I think it was fine in, I don't think there was anything special about it. I think, obviously, if I'd been, if I had been more contented in myself, if I'd slept better, if my sleep wasn't so disturbed, if I wasn't often tired and irritable, you know, and I think life would have been much more pleasant, but, but I, that has to do with, really has to do with me, and how I felt myself.

So do you think the rest of the family was happy?

I, I think that's difficult for me to say. I, I would say, on balance, yes. On balance, yes. But I really think that would, that would, that's something they would be the subject of an interview with, with each one of them, really. I mean, things can always be improved, they could have been better, and I recognise myself, that things could have been better, and there could have been a happier atmosphere, a more cheerful atmosphere, but I don't, I can think of a lot of families with things very much, very much more unpleasant, or really unpleasant, in comparison.

Do you feel that you are happily married?

I, I think so. Again, I think the problem lies within me. If, it's very difficult if you, if you can't find contentment in just reading a book or listening to a piece of music, or if you don't feel particularly happy in going to a theatre or the cinema, for the reasons I've already given, and that, and, but that's all, that's all on my side, it's not, it's not on other people's, so it's not the fault of other people, and I also recognise that if, it, it, it can't be very pleasant to have, to have to live, or to have dealings with, I mean, I'm thinking of other people outside the family as well, to have dealings with, with a depressed person, a person who does not, who finds it difficult to feel joyful, cheerful about things. That can be a drag, well, it is a drag, not can be, it is a drag.

Has your wife ever complained, or has she been very supportive all the way through? Because really, for her, it's even more limiting than for the children now, who have left home.

Well, I think that's true, again, I, I don't think it, I don't think it, things have, in fact, I mean, I have felt in myself, over the last year, a little bit better in a way, not having to deal with the extra aggravations that enter one's world from the outside, and have been a bit more isolated, more protected from that. She has her work which keeps her busy and occupied. I, I'm sure there are, life could be more pleasant, but I mean, I mean, the other thing, I suppose, is, we have virtually no contact with, with other people, because I, I just don't feel a need for it any longer, I don't trust other people. They don't give me a warm feeling, being with other people, it's not because I'm hostile, I, I feel quite happy to be friendly with people, but I just don't feel I have a real need for them. I, I've spent too much time by myself, have to be, had to be so

self-reliant, already, from, in the Camp, where I had to spend days amusing myself doing nothing, and at school, not being able to communicate, or not feeling that I was being absorbed in a friendly environment, and I was cast back on myself all the time, and there were so many things in life, that I've learned to, I've learned to accept that I can, I can, I can live quite easily without other people, not, but as I said, not that I particularly want to.

Do you think your wife has accepted it completely?

Accepted what?

The isolation in her life?

I, I don't know, I don't know. I don't think so, I don't think she's particularly pleased with that. But on, on the other hand, I, I think she too, possibly, has an identification problem with, with English people. I think she would, in a way, she would perhaps be quite pleased, at the moment she, I think she thinks she'd be quite pleased to perhaps live in Italy, because people are more open, more outgoing and friendlier there. Obviously, to go and live in an ideal situation, this is not a natural way of going, but I mean, the fact is, one doesn't have any relatives, one doesn't have any school friends, really, and, it's just a fact of life. I mean, the same problem exists in, in, in countries where people are moved around by their employers, and the same problem of isolation exists in the United States, for example, and it's well-known that these are just ordinary people without any special experience, that happen to work for an employer who moves them from one town to the next, from one side of the States to the next every, every few years, and, and this causes marriages to break up and people to feel they're terribly unhappy, and dissatisfied with life, because they're unable to put their roots down anywhere. And, coming back, again, I would, to, to perhaps a half question you asked me about how ...

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My wartime experiences may have affected my life today. Just as I've spoken about the importance to us, that our children should have a very good education, and so, likewise, we felt that two things, we felt that a stable environment is important for our children, and although I worked for a multinational company which is famous for moving its employees around, I have just point blank refused to do that, and I know this, this must have affected my career, this obviously made life more difficult, it made it more difficult for the company to find suitable work for me in the past ten years as it moved its offices and its various departments around, and maybe, in a way, I would still be working, actively working if I moved, say, to the Basingstoke area, because that's where much went to, but, so we felt that a stable environment for the children was important, but also for us, I mean, I felt this very much so. I remember very clearly that in, in the early 50s, what, maybe 1950, no, maybe slightly earlier, '49 maybe, my father was thinking of moving to South Africa. In the end he didn't do it because of the apartheid policies, but he was thinking, and I remember, I mean, I was grown up, I cried, I couldn't stand the thought of having to be on the move once again, so I know very well how important it is, was for me, not to be constantly, you know, not to have to live like a nomadic person, and pick up, and so, that certainly, I mean, that's, it's, it's exaggerated and I have great difficulty in trying to explain this gently to people, in, in IBM, that I wasn't, not only that, it was the fact I didn't want to take the children away from my parents, but I think I felt duty bound that they should have regular access to the children, and it's a little pleasure they'd have denied, when they live nearby here, so that's one reason why I felt I shouldn't move away, but their schooling, but also, very much myself, I couldn't stand the thought of having to disrupt everything.

Did you ever think of moving to Israel?

No, never. No. I've never been to Israel, and I have no desire to go to, well, I have, I would like to go to Israel, purely because I recognise it might be interesting, historically interesting to visit, but as far as the people or anything else to do with the country is concerned, I have no wish at all. And the very thought of people being at loggerheads, with all the different sections of the community being at loggerheads, and I'm not even thinking of Jews and Arabs, I'm thinking of one group of Jews with another group of Jews, and the very thought of having all the hassle of getting on a plane, being searched and being checked, and having to arrive several hours beforehand at the airport, and that, and all the security measures, I'm, it really is, it becomes a very, of the, of the, if I drew up a list of places that I might want to visit, I mean, I think Israel would really come right at the bottom, almost at the bottom.

Do you consider it as more meaningful because it's a Jewish country?

No. I don't, I don't, because I, there are people there that I would be at loggerheads with as well. I mean, who, who are so fanatical, that I just don't feel that I have anything in common with them. They can call themselves Jews, and they might consider themselves very much more Jewish than I do, which I don't do to any great extent, and maybe that's the problem, but I don't think so, even though there are Israeli born people there who are observant, I think, and who can't stand the extremists

either, the fanatics, but for me, this is, this is something to be avoided. I can do without that hassle. And that's really how I see it. For me to go to Israel, it's a load of hassle. Hassle at the airport, hassle from the security and the messing about, and the hassle when I go, so I would only go there for, purely from historical, because I recognise it would be very interesting to go there, if perhaps, if perhaps the people weren't there. Sorry about that, but that's how I feel.

Have your children ever been?

No, no.

Never expressed the wish either?

I don't think so, no. They've travelled to Turkey, and they've travelled to, by themselves, and they've travelled to Greece, and to other places, but no, they've never expressed any desire to go to Israel.

Have you always felt this way about Israel? Or did you change?

I, I've never had any special feeling about it. I've never felt that that's a country I must go and visit because there were people like me there, that I would find, perhaps, find it pleasant, or warm, or enjoyable, that I might make agreeable contacts there. I've never, I've never considered Israel that way, and as I've grown older, and I've met Israelis in this country, or young people from Israel, I've met them here, and I've noticed how obnoxious they were, how arrogant, and, and extremist in their views, that they're just often rude and selfish, they've just turned me against them, and, and then when, again, as I grew older, and I, I read of all the, the nonsense and disagreement that exists within Israel, amongst the Jewish people, of all things, I think they should, they should know better how to treat others, and they should decide to put their differences aside, their religious, factional differences, aside, and try to, to, to live agreeably with each other, because that's what everybody needs, and I think there, to live, to be, to be calm and pleasant, and when I, when I've seen the way they live, that's just something that I can't become reconciled with, and then on top of which, I'm very angry, or I feel anger about the fact that Israel has sort of claimed that it speaks on behalf of all the survivors, and whatever, the victims, and that's just nonsense, I mean, Israel has received money from Germany on, in respect of, probably in respect of people like my grandparents and my relatives who, who were nothing to do with Israel, who were not interested, weren't interested in Israel, and would not have had anything to do with Israel possibly, and the Israelies, they've not cared a damn about, about the Aspira[??], and have just milked it, they've just begged, and I, they're parasites, I really do, they really do, they're parasitic, and all this makes me, this makes me really not want to have anything to do with the people there, and I don't feel I have anything in common, I don't feel there's warmth or kindness from these people. I don't feel they're generous.

When Israel was at war, did that make you react in a particular way?

No, not at all. I was completely indifferent to it. It's their problem. If they want, if they can't live in peace with their neighbours, they can't do the decent thing, they,

there are people there who've, who've had experiences worse than mine, whose stories are well-known, if they, if the message hasn't sunk home, that you do not do unto other people which you would not like to have done unto yourself, right, then I, there, I, I, if you haven't learnt that lesson, then I'm afraid that you have to suffer the consequences, and, and so the wars there, I think the troubles they, the troubles they experience stem from their arrogance and lack of consideration for other people.

What is your outlook on the future?

Well, that is a very wide question, could you be just a little more specific? The future of what? My future, the future of the world?

Do you feel that another holocaust could happen?

No, I, I mean, I don't really know. I don't see it, I don't feel threatened by it, I don't think so, but then ... when you say that, you know, I can't help but think 500 years ago, that the Jews in Spain and Portugal were persecuted and massacred and driven out of their country, that was a kind of holocaust as well, and yet it happened again the world hadn't learnt from that and became more humane, although there were the humanists in the 19th century, and still we had what happened in the 20th century. I don't think, in the immediate future, no, I don't think it will happen, but at some time in the future it could well happen again, yes.

And what do you think of the present day Germans?

I believe, I thought I had already mentioned that. As far as I'm concerned, those Germans who were either children, say, of my generation, or even a few years younger, who could not have had any influence, or could not have done anything during the, before the War, before 1945 I should say, say, anybody born from about 1930, 1928, 1930 onwards, I don't hold them responsible, they, they suffered a great deal from their, from the bad leadership, they, they had to suffer. I don't, for a moment, imagine that Germans of my generation have happy memories of their childhood, and, and their children would have suffered in roughly the same way as I think my children would have suffered, to some extent, from my experiences, but they would as well, and I think they will have suffered from the guilt that either they had been made to feel, or they felt of their own, for what their parents and grandparents had done, but, so the younger generation, anything born after '28, I think they're like any other people, once you've judged them on what they personally have actually done, and not the sins of their fathers, I mean, I would apply this in any case, always, you know, you don't hold somebody responsible for the sins of his father. But the older Germans, those who might have been in a position to have been camp guards, or, or in the SS, or Gestapo, and that, I'm sure I've said this before, I mean, I cannot, I do not trust them, and I wouldn't believe it if they said, "Oh we are nothing like" Really, they are all guilty, because they could all have acted against Hitler's uprising. They could have been active, and, and they were active, in bringing the holocaust about. They were inactive in preventing Hitler from coming to power, and they were active in promoting his thinking, and therefore, as far as I'm concerned, I would, if I knew of any German of that generation who had actually done something I would be quite happy, I would have no, although I wouldn't, I wouldn't kill a bird, I would feel

horrible killing a bird, or any other animal, I would have no, I don't think I would have any compunction of killing a German of that, I would be quite happy to do that. I don't care about the morality of not behaving like your tormenters behaved by doing something like that, but this would be, the tormenters did it without just cause, this would be with perfect just cause. I mean, I'm furious that so many of that particular generation of Germans were able to escape to Latin America where the whole colonies were set up, and they were allowed to, to live out the rest of their days, that's scandalous, and this, I'm sure this was done with the knowledge of the Allied Powers, and, and with many Germans as well, who must have helped them, influential Germans who must have helped some of these people, probably to save their own skin from, from being implied that they had also done something which wasn't perhaps entirely correct during the War years, and they probably were blackmailed in helping the real culprits from escaping Germany during the War. In fact, I was talking to my wife about this only recently, and I feel quite convinced that must have happened.

Could you say something about the way you would like to contribute, having had the experiences you've had, to a better understanding?

Well, I, I now have the time, and I, I'm willing to share my thoughts and experiences with anybody who, who is interested and wants to know more about it. I can't do more than that. And share my time, my thoughts, and my experiences with other people, in whichever way they feel I can best contribute. It's their choice. I, I'm not, they, they know their own needs better than I do, and they must tell me what their needs are, and how I can help them, and then I'll do it.

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