

IMPORTANT

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AJR

Winston House, 2 Dollis Park

London N3 1HF

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	211

Interviewee Surname:	Gill
Forename:	Eve
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	15 January 1923
Interviewee POB:	Vienna, Austria

Date of Interview:	9 November 2017
Location of Interview:	Cheam
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 30 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES**

Interview No. RV211
NAME: Eve Gill
DATE: 9th November 2017
LOCATION: Cheam, Surrey, England
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]**[0:00:00]**

Today is the 9th November 2017. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are conducting an interview with Mrs. Eve Gill...

Gill.

Gill- sorry. ...And we are in Cheam. What is your name please?

Pardon?

What is your name please?

My name is – whole name, or? ...Eve Gill

And you were born?

I was born in Vienna.

And when?

On the 15th of January 1923.

And what was your name at birth?

Gottfried.

And your first name?

Elfriede Gottfried.

Thank you very much, Eve, for allowing us to interview you and for having agreeing to take part in the AJR Refugee Voices project. Can you tell us a little bit about your family background, please?

Yes, I can. My mother came as a young teenager to Vienna. She was born in Slovakia, one of seven children. And why she was chosen amongst- there were five girls and two boys. Why she was chosen to go to Vienna, I don't quite know, except that her oldest brother was a surgeon in Vienna at the time. And she had aunts and cousins et cetera, in Vienna. And she was sent to study. Study, not what I call university study, but to learn something. And so, she actually became a qualified bookkeeper. Her background as such was a very keen music fan. She loved the opera because her fa- her brother, a surgeon, was into that. And he took her to theatres et cetera, et cetera. He was unfortunately killed in the First World War as an Army surgeon in Udine in Northern Italy. Sad, but there you go. And in fact, details of his life are with the Wiener Library at the moment.

[00:02:06]

So, she became a bookkeeper. My father came from Romania, one of six children. And again, why he was the one that was sent to Vienna I don't know except the same reason, to learn. And he then became- I'm not quite sure what the title would be. And I don't even know the German title for it. But let's say, manager in a whole- very prestigious large textile wholesaler in Vienna. So, he was a manager. My mother was a bookkeeper. There weren't many Jewish people. They met, they got to know each other, they fell in love and they married. And... after- I think they got married, as I said earlier, I think they got married on the 18th of May 1919. I don't know where. It's so sad. I didn't ask the questions I should have asked, which I didn't. Because- for reasons obviously we'll find later on. And so, they - after working together for a little while in a store, they then bought this shop. I said- this was a small clothing store in the 21st district. And this is the working-class district I may say, but it

wasn't really what I would call a working-class district, because it was very nice. I came along in 1923. And this is the background to my parents.

And what was it called, that shop?

It was just called- '*Kaufhaus Gottfried*' - '*Kaufhaus Gottfried*'

In the 21st district?

In the ...-first district. Yeah. We lived in the same building on the third floor in a flat - very nice flat. Photograph... you have, or I'll show it to you. And that's really, as I said, their background.

Yeah.

They worked very, very hard indeed. Very, very well-known people. Very well-liked amongst all their customers... mainly also because it was a working-class district... people used to come in and have it 'on tick' as we call it, you know. So, you know, everybody liked them. So, what followed was really part of the sad story. So that's my- their background, put it like this.

[00:04:47]

So did the grandparents- were they in Slovakia, your mother's parents? Did you meet them at all?

My, my, my grandfather- my- I never met- only one grandparent, and that was on my father's side. My grandfather who was actually a I got a photograph to show you- a lovely old Jew. They lived in this tiny place in Romania, which because- because it originally was the Austrian Empire, obviously - and then became Romania - Slovakia. So, what was Aus- when my father came, he was an Austrian citizen. Well after the war, the First World War, it was Romanian. So, they- the family lived in Romania and- and I knew that grandfather. Grandmother I never met; she was- had died before I was born. On my mother's side - exactly - I never met my grandmother or my grandfather because they were- had passed away before I- so that's...

And your mother- how long did she live in- in Vienna before meeting your father?

Well, I'm not sure. She was a teenager. But I can't tell you exactly how old the teen age was. All I know is she went to live with an aunt... and some cousins. And the same thing on my father's side. I have no idea how old he was. All I know they both came as young teenagers to be... educated or whatever you want to call it. And the situations- I mean, going back such a long way, things were so different then; you can't really imagine.

Yeah. And you said the- your- her uncle helped her. What was the name of the uncle?

No, it was her- her brother.

It was her brother, sorry.

It was her brother- her oldest brother.

Right.

It was Moritz Greenwald.

Greenwald?

Greenwald, yeah- which was her maiden name. And he was - as I say - a surgeon in Vienna. I did have these lovely photographs which I said I sent on to the Wiener Library which I hope they still have, you know. It was him with his staff in Vienna first of all. There was even a photograph of this funeral- the Army funeral.

Did he- which hospital? Did he work in a hospital?

Yes, he was in the hospital. Yeah. I can't tell you- that I'm not sure about at all.

[00:07:08]

And were your parents a bit older when they married? How old were they?

My father was... Well now wait a minute. No. They were- I mean my father was as I say eight years younger than my mother. So, he must have been I think...thirty? No. ...I don't know!

Around thirty and she was maybe thirty-eight?

I'm sorry! Well, she must have- no, because they'd been- they were married in 1919 and I was born in '23. So- and I know that I wasn't born obviously immediately as you can tell. So, my mother was forty when I was born. So... I'll work it out.

Yeah.

Does that make...?

Yes, makes sense. No, it's just to find out. So, she worked as a bookkeeper before...?

She worked as a bookkeeper. She then worked with him obviously in the store... as bookkeeper naturally, keeping books et cetera. They had only sort of temporary staff. I mean always staff at seasons. All I remember my father getting up at about six o'clock in the morning and going downstairs and getting everything ready. But when we had window dressers et cetera, they were all staff that came temporary to work for him.

Yes.

So, they worked together.

And do you know why your parents settled in that particular district?

No. No. Not at all. I've never asked. This is just it, you see, you- I mean there's a gap in between which you - when you go on with my story- there were ten years between me not seeing my parents. And they were the years where you know... maybe I would have asked questions. And later on, it just... didn't come into it somehow or other. As I say to some of the young people- the older people now, please tell your children and your grandchildren your story, because I'd love to know some more about it but - it's too late now.

So, what are your first memories of growing up in - in Vienna?

My memories?

Your first memories. Yes.

Happy. I had nice Jewish friends - mostly Jewish friends. I think one or two others. I wasn't particularly happy in the first primary school years. I can't even remember that very much. But the *Gymnasium* which I then went to- I wasn't particularly happy there because there was this slight anti-Semitism that came in... or not to- Nazis. And I had one professor particularly in math who was obviously very much... anti-Jewish. I didn't put it like down like that. You know it's difficult to explain that it was just not very nice. And I'm not very good at math anyway. At least I didn't think I was until I went into advertising. And so, I wasn't particular happy, but then then changed at the age of fourteen to go to the commercial college. And I loved that. Now what my- I make the children laugh when I go to talk to schools, because I tell them how different my teenage years were to their teenage years. Now as you can imagine I make them laugh when I tell them that... we had no sex. ...Which they think kind of strange. [Both laugh] Anyway- but that's neither here nor there.

[00:10:37]

That's very courageous that you speak about those topics.

Well, you know when you talk to these teenagers and they're sort of from thirteen up to seventeen mainly, you try to explain to them how different. We had no computers, we have no pop stars. We- we made our own games. We went- luckily enough, living in Vienna, we went swimming in the summer... we went picnicking... we went skiing and skating in the winter. And that's- was our entertainment. Yes, we had parties, we went to the cinema. But it's so - a different life. You've got to try and explain to them, if they can possibly understand, how things have changed. So, we were happy doing that...

And were there other Jewish families in the district?

Oh yes. Well, it was... Quite a few, actually. We had quite a good congregation. Yes, really. And we actually- strangely enough, we had religious instruction in this school... by a Jewish man- teacher. But only once a week... which was part of the curriculum actually. Which- not in the commercial college anymore, but in the *Gymnasium*, you know. And we then of course had- not Sunday school or not *chavurah* or whatever you want to call it. Not the same way as it is here - you know.

[00:12:06]

No... And what synagogue was there? Was there a synagogue?

Yes, yes, oh yes- a synagogue.

What was it called?

It was just our synagogue. The local you know- Floridsdorf, which was a district. Yes.

Floridsdorf?

Floridsdorf – and that's just a synagogue, you know, a nice synagogue - very nice synagogue, yeah.

What do you remember from the synagogue? What- did...?

My parents were- oh yes of course we were members. Yes.

And did you go there a lot?

Oh yes. Yes. Yes - very much. My father was very *frum*, *frum*-

In which way?

Very kosher. My- to, to, to, to illustrate: My father went into a concentration camp... and I only heard that after - many years of after the war obviously - when the soup came around... and they have got a bit - there was a bit of meat in it - he would drink the soup because he had to, but he would not eat the meat. Sounds strange, but that's how *frum* he was.

Yeah.

So, we had a kosher house. Very much so. Not over-religious to the extent he didn't go to *shul* every night. He- but he- he kept a – we kept a-you know, so... that's all I can tell you.

Your mother as well?

Oh yes, of course.

So, you did Friday night and...?

Friday night and Shabbos. He did not close the store always on a Saturday because it just wasn't possible. You know? That district particularly, you had to be open. But all the *yontevs*, every- always, always closed everything like that, you know. Kept very *frum*.

And the other people there knew that you were Jewish?

Oh yes! Of course, of course, of course. Yes. Yes. I mean it was- it was- you know it's so hard to think that even up to 1938, knowing what was happening in Germany... and you knew you got these stories coming through... But you know, we sat tight and we thought, "Well, we live in Vienna..." you know, "and we are Austrians." It is difficult to – to... relate, you know. I just went to a normal school and... I'm fine! You know. Lovely! It's - it's... The fact that there was unrest in Vienna anyway, that was nothing to do with the Jews. That was political you know, between the factions. There was the assassination of Dollfuss, which was one of the sort of- but we weren't- we youngsters were completely unpolitical. No idea, you know about... red, green or any other colour. We were just youngsters! Again, which is... you know, slightly different to what it is now.

[00:14:56]

Yeah. But you said you had this one teacher in school, who you...

That's- that was one- it's- let's say I put it in hindsight... that he was not very nice. Because at the time I - I don't know how to put it. There was something not right, you know. And it's only afterwards we thought, "Well, yes... because he was already a Nazi." And they came out of the woodwork afterwards, you know. At the time they didn't.

And is that why you changed to the school, or was it also for other reasons?

No, no, no, no - I stayed there till I was fourteen and then decided I was not wanting to go to university. I wanted to go into commerce. And the commerce was commercial college obviously, you know. I was very lucky, because I- you know it wasn't always very easy to get in. And I was accepted, you know. So... But the curriculum there suited me beautifully.

Why? What was the curriculum?

Well first of all shorthand typing. But the whole aspect of education altogether you know sciences – everything. Even arts came into it. It just...

And it wasn't with a view to immigration at that time?

Oh no, no, no, no, no, no, no, - not at all. Not at all. Nobody. If-if some of the older people - the 'grownups' as I would call them - we were fifteen-year-old children, not fifteen-year-old adults. So, we just lived life! If the adults, who already thought, "Well things are getting a bit...", some of them did - as you probably know, the Rothschilds of this world - they went, obviously- a lot of people, the very wealthy ones, because they knew what was really going on. And they had facilities to come to this country. But why would we have packed up and... to go without thinking that we needed to?

Yeah. And do you remember- what friends did you have at that time in your school, or...in the neighbourhood?

Oh, I had- I had, I had Jewish friends. I had- funnily enough- oddly enough I only thought about that the other night that I had three very good girlfriends. And there were about two of the boys. I mean just- a, y group. And out of all of those, four of them went to Israel and two of them went to America. Unfortunately, I lost touch with- you know you just- because of what happened to me particularly I just... lost touch with... We didn't all go at the same time obviously, you know. And they- funnily enough, I was only one who went on a Kindertransport. All the others went under different sort of... I don't know how.

[00:17:47]

It's- it's so difficult to explain because I am the sort of person that I live this life and I enjoy what I do and I carry on living. And I don't- it's only over the last few years that I start looking back. And there are some things you don't forget... But at the same time, you don't want to go back all the time. Very difficult to...

Yeah.

It's strangely- because it's so new. Recently I spoke to one of my friends - one from Glasgow who came on a Kindertransport. And I said to Henry, "When we were leaving on the Kindertransport, it only occurred to me recently that I think it was an adventure. Is that a bad

thing to think?" And he said, "No you are right. I felt exactly the same." You were frightened, but somehow there was, you know, this adventure. So that's... difficult to explain all this. You know?

Yeah. Can you just, maybe just, give us a little bit of a taste of the neighbourhood? Of the things you remember from your flat? From the building? Just to get...

Well, I'll tell you what it was. You had to- to get to the 21st district- first of all it's right at the edge of the city. So, you crossed the Danube, right? And you got to... Floridsdorf. It was a lovely area. We had lots of parks... lots of greenery. Because it was working class district, you know the connotation is: factories, smoke. Nothing like that at all. An edge of the Danube called the Old Danube flows alongside it. So, we used to swim in there you know, for instance. It was easy to get to... picnicking- I mean my parents were very keen. We had... lots of trips to... Vienna Woods. It sounds strange to say, you know. Vienna Woods and another places along. So, the weekends were always full. You know, Sunday particularly used to always go to... wherever it was. It- it was just so pleasant... a pleasant place to be. Vienna itself of course. I- I've only been back to Vienna once and I swore I would never go again. And I didn't. A lovely city. Beautiful, beautiful city. And ...shame about the people.

And were you taken to concerts? Did you go to...?

[00:20:29]

Well, we were just at the age where we would start doing that. Now there's a- a theatre in Vienna called the '*Burgtheater*', which is 'The'. And we as students are starting up from about fourteen onwards- we were allowed standing tickets. And so, we started to go. And I sort of started to learn about Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde and you know, all these sort of things. Yes, we did. And I'm a great reader- I always have been a great reader. I liked it. I'm not an opera fan. My mother was. I love music - classical music. So, yes, concerts and things like that.

So, what plays? What did you see in the Burgtheater? Do you remember?

Well, what did I see in the *Burgtheater*? One I always remember- it was actually a funny-funny- you know it's funny how certain little funny things are? I went to see '*Romeo and Juliet*' - Shakespeare - in New Orleans, where some children with nuns. And you know this

scene where the night after, when Romeo spends the night with his Juliet. He comes out and he sort of... comes out on the balcony. And at that time, I remember he's sort of... more scantily clad. And there was a sort of "Ahhh!" - from the nuns. And I remember all... this story. I can't remember some of the other things, to tell you the truth. There was Oscar Wilde, but I don't remember which.

Don't worry.

It's a long time ago. It's a long time ago.

Yes, it is.

But you know, it was- it was just good. It was good. You just enjoyed being together and doing things. That's all I can tell you.

And did you- did your parents have help in the flat- in the house?

Sorry?

Was there a maid or...?

[00:22:21]

We had a- yes, we had- we had a maid. Until I was about fourteen, actually. Mainly because she was looking after me... and to help obviously with the chores et cetera. We also had a dog. Lovely. But he lived in the store. And- yes. He was a dog called 'Lord', believe it or not - an Alsatian.

Lord?

Lord. He was called Lord. Don't ask- don't ask, you know...

He had an English name?

Mnn?

An English name?

Yeah! I don't know why they called him Lord. I mean it was too- I had him- I mean he had gone by the time I was a teenager, but I had him when I was small. And he was- he was a wonderful dog, yes. And they had the maid, as I said. They used to be girls from the country somewhere or other, you know.

Non-Jewish – the maids?

Oh yes, yes. Of course. But I don't think anybody had any Jewish maids in those days.

And she stayed with you, the maid?

Well, yes, she- she lived in. Yes. She lived in, you know, and did the chores obviously and used to take me for walks and... just a nanny. And then of course by the time I was fourteen, I was allowed to do my things and help my- So it wasn't really necessary anymore.

You were independent?

Yes.

So, you- the... Handelsschule - the commercial school - was in the centre of Vienna? Or where was it?

In the- in the centre of Vienna. Yes.

So, you had to travel?

I had to travel. Yes. Yes. Had to travel there. So...

With a tram, or...?

You know I can't- you know I was trying to think back was it a tram or a bus, and I honestly can't remember.

Aha...

It's- it's very- and when I went back to Vienna they said to- because my parents- luckily enough, my parents had some non-Jewish friends who were very good friends indeed, and who actually sort of managed to hide some stuff away for us when things happened. Not very

much, but just a little. And they had two sons. And after the war, my husband and I and an English couple we went over to Vienna and we sort of met up with them and you know sort of talked about the old days, et cetera, et cetera. So...

So, when- when did things change?

On the 12th of March 1938, when Hitler marched into Vienna. And... Well, I don't have to tell you that the flags were flying and the people were cheering. So, if anybody thinks they were invaded. Well, they weren't invaded obviously. And... Well, what happens? Well, the Jews had to think, obviously - well, what's going to happen now? Well, we don't have to wait very long for it to happen, obviously. You've seen the film called '*The Woman in Gold*'? Yes? Well, it's very true to life. Very true to life, you know.

[00:25:24]

And....we were all right for- for about... a few weeks in our district, strangely enough. I still carried on going to college and Dad's carried on with the business. And... We heard what was going on in the centre of Vienna, the daubing of the swastikas and people being taken up and beaten up and you know people taken away. And... as I say, this went on until May. And don't ask me the date, because I don't remember. I was coming home and I found that my mother was in tears. Dad had been arrested... and all the boys and men in our district that same day had been taken away. We didn't know where until- I think it was about three or four weeks later when we had communication to say they were in Dachau concentration camp. And that was more or less the day I stopped going to college. And my mother was told to carry on with the business and that was under the auspices of a young SS officer. So, what actually happened was- I mean, when the Nazis came in, the very first thing they did is confiscate all the bank accounts. So, there was no money. So, we only had what- coming in. So, although my, my - my parents strictly speaking owned the business, she was then employed, because all the money that was- coming in, he would take. But they give us- gave us money to live on. And... in this- well we didn't quite know what to do at first. But obviously she was told to carry on, so she did. I- and together with all my other teenage friends, not having any schooling, they said that the only thing to do is to learn a trade. And the trade was- well it was a Jewish lady who was a dressmaker. So... I did dressmaking. And there was another lady - or gentleman. I can't remember. I think it was a woman - who was a Montessori teacher. You know, the kindergarten thing.

[00:27:48]

And I did a course in that. I- it was assumed that I could speak English because I had English at school for two years. And one couple asked me if I would teach their little boy English, which I did. And they paid me handsomely; I think you got fifty p [£.50] and hour or something equivalent to. And I hid away that money. And it just went on like this... with all the lovely things that the Nazis did. Scrubbing the streets – seen that? We did that.

When? You personally did that?

Oh yes. Yes- yes. They had a lovely habit- they sort of came in; it didn't matter if you were sick, or if you were old or if you were young. You went out and... get on your hands and knees and start scrubbing. That's when you found out who your friends are- were- more or less. Because there were some people who would cross road and... maybe they were ashamed, maybe they were Nazis - I don't know. There were also the ones who didn't. And called you names and...

And was that you and your mother...together?

Oh yes. Oh yes.

With other people, or...?

Oh yes.

Or just they took you from the shop?

No. No, no, no they- they just came in, said to people, "Out!" - you know. So, it was- you know, all sorts of people.

This was in the time after the Anschluss, before Kristallnacht?

Oh yes, before Kristallnacht.

Before Kristallnacht.

Early on, in sort of you know May... You know. In our district in May. Some of the other districts started earlier.

[00:29:35]

And your father you said was deported in thirty- May '38?

He was to the- went to the concentration camp.

Way before-long time before Kristallnacht?

Kristallnacht was not- not until November the 9th?

Yeah. On this date...

The other thing they did on one occasion, they came along and took all the women and children from our district. And they drove us- put us on lorries and drove us to a factory. Told us to clean the factory. And then said- they promised that once we cleaned that they let us go home. But when- I always explain when I do the tour, that cleaning in those days, as you probably imagine, was a lot different to- so. But apart from that all we had there was some cold water, some rags and some newspaper. And... difficult to clean a filthy place, but my mother- my mother was brought up very strict. I mean- as I said, all these girls and they were made to work. And so, she knew how to do it. One of the things she did - clean the windows with newspaper. It works. You know, it does work actually. And strangely enough, my mother - it doesn't look so on the photograph, but - she was quite fair. And so, they came up to her and said, "You know this is all your fault, because if you hadn't married a Jew... you wouldn't be in this problem." And she said, "Well I am a Jew." But you know, and they actually said she could go home but not me. So of course, she didn't go home. But we did at the end of the day. There were lots of little sort of funny things and... when I speak- do the talk- it's always - funny enough it's always something the youngsters ask - "Well how did you manage?" And it's a terribly difficult question to answer. And all I can say is, "With difficulty." Because... When you woke up in the morning, you didn't know what was- the rest of the day is going to bring. Whether they're going to think of something interesting again to happen to you. You just- you carried on as best as you could. You walked out into the street or... you just didn't try to make yourself very obvious, you know. But you didn't walk too quickly or too slowly; you just- and you just carried on.

And what about your friends and the- the customers in the shop?

Well, the shop was closed. Sorry - I should have. No - sorry - no. The shop carried on. Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry – sorry, I'm going ahead of myself. No- no, there were customers still coming in. Yes. But there were people who you'd known all your life who suddenly didn't want to know you anymore, obviously. Maybe you couldn't blame them. Maybe they- you know...

[00:32:24]

And how were you feeling? I mean you were a teenager, so you were- how did that make you feel suddenly to have all this...?

And that's why I just say to you: I don't know. You just... You grew up very quickly for a start. Because suddenly of course, my mother was on her own. And to- to get about the same way as we used to was more difficult. Those things you couldn't do. Things you weren't allowed to go obviously, you know.

Such as?

Well, you... sit in- sit in certain places in a park or something like that, or- you know you were being watched in a way. But then, as I said, this went on until 9th of November. I came home from some class or other I'd been to. And as I was walking down the road, I met the young SS officer from our store. And he stopped me and he advised me not to go home. So, I always think maybe he wasn't too- he wasn't too bad a guy actually I must honestly admit. He let my mother get on with things, you know. And I asked him why, and he just said, "Well- just don't go home." And... I did go home of course. And I noticed that the store was closed. And I went up to the flat... and when I got there the door was open and there was this... officer in uniform. And when he knew how- when I said who I was, he took mother and me and we were taken to the local synagogue. Because as you probably know on Kristallnacht, famous Kristallnacht, they smashed up synagogues, set a lot of them on fire. There was one synagogue in the centre of Vienna, as I understand, who they left untouched because it was in the middle of some very precious buildings. And so, we were taken there, and there were all the... They smashed it up on the inside to a degree, the synagogue. But there were all the women and children from our district there. And there were old ones, young ones- you name it. You know?

[00:34:42]

There we were. ...This wonderful man with his uniform had a gun in his hand and he just walked around and ordered people to sit and to stand, face a wall or whatever he fancied. It was terrifying, needless to say. And we were there all day- all the rest of the day and all night. And in the morning, they said they would give us some coffee - because we hadn't had anything at all. And there were people sick there, you know, as well - babies, little ones. They would give us some coffee but they hadn't got any coffee pots. If anybody had any coffee pots - and I put my hand up. Said, "Yeah I've- we've got coffee pots." So, they sent me home with a guard. And my mother had a basket, which was a shopping basket. And she always lined it, and I put the two big coffee pots in there. I don't know that they would have done for all of us, but it was two coffee pots. Well, when I got back again to the synagogue, my mother told me afterwards she nearly passed out, because what I didn't know that underneath the paper, she had managed to hide some money. Which of course they found. But as I say, I'm still here. So. You know the answer. It wasn't very pleasant but... anyway. And that was- the end of the day then came, and they said we could go home. And we started filing out. When we got to the door, they stopped Mummy and me, and said, "Not you. You can go home and you can pack a bag or whatever you can carry. Because the officer has seen your flat, and he loves it and he wants to live there. And you've got to go. The store will be closed permanently." So, we got down and we didn't quite know what to do. What we packed, I can't tell you. I assume it was clothing and food. That's all I can say. And how much can two people carry? What was left- I mean, they'd already helped themselves to things. I mean they did that quite early when they came in. Any valuables, of course. You know, my mother- we didn't have them. I mean we were... nice- better class- middle class family. So, my mother had some dresses or something, right? That had all gone anyway, or any bits of jewellery or something like that.

[00:37:26]

Did you see it smash- did you see them smashing it up or when you came it was already...?

What - the...?

Your flat and the...?

They hadn't flashed- hadn't smashed the flat up, oh, no! He wanted to live there, didn't he?

Oh, they just took it.

They took things, but they'd taken some of that earlier on already. And as you saw in the film for instance they came in and you know took - I call it looting - but that's- that's different. Anyway. So, we stood outside... and my mother – she was a wonderful woman- she remembered - it wasn't difficult to remember - one of our cousins had emigrated to Cuba a short time before... with his wife and a little girl. And their flat - and that was over in Donaustraße in the centre of Vienna - was empty. How she got the keys? ...Another thing I never asked. And we moved in there and took with them two old ladies. So, for a couple of days, we didn't have anything. No food, no money and except the little money that I saved giving English lessons, which I found. And then the *Kultusgemeinde* came into it, this *Wiener*... well, Jewish organisation. I'm still wondering how then did that...? I suppose it's because the war wasn't on, they- it was an international organisation, wasn't it? They had to let the... Jewish organisation exists. I don't know. But anyway, they helped us. And... Needless to say, my mother's health was... pretty poor at that time because... Well, you can imagine, can't you? All their lives they worked, built a business, built up a home and then – gone! And so she was. Well, there were a couple of times where she didn't particularly want to live, you know? So, it was a bit hard. And...

And all that time did she hear from your dad? Did you know...?

[00:39:26]

Well, yes. We used to get little notes - heavily censored notes. You know. Obviously just, "I'm fine." "I'm..." – what could he say? They had moved them actually to Dach- to Buchenwald, the second camp I think, towards the end of that year. Well, what was happening was that...Two things happened actually. First of all, they tried- I mean the, the, the Nazis said they would allow the Jews to leave. Where could the Jews go? Cause as I say, who wants the Jews? Because all the countries: Britain, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand - all those - had a quota system, as you probably know. And that quota system was full, needless to say because a lot of the people- some of the wise people have left. And it was in hundreds, the quota system. Not- you know. But the Chinese government wanted to... or allowed the Jews to settle in Shanghai. And once again my mother came up trumps, because

I'd never heard of this distant relative who was a young doctor in Shanghai. And she managed to find the address, write to him and he sent a visa for my parents. And the visa was for my father to be a manager of a factory, which was great. But... he was in a camp. Well, the centre of Vienna has a hotel or had a hotel for all I know, called the 'Metropol'. And that was Gestapo headquarters. And every morning the women used to go up there and queue up outside very early in the morning, in the hope of finding out the official- what was happening to their husbands, sons et cetera. So, I joined them one morning, and because I was the youngest one there at fifteen, when they opened at eight o'clock, he took me straight in. And they wanted to know why I was there, and I told them about this Shanghai visa... and... Being very efficient, the Germans had all the lists there. And he looked it up and he said, yes, Dad could be released. Which was wonderful news - except - there was typhoid in the camp. And nobody would be allowed in or out until it's eradicated. The second piece was of course... the British government under the auspices of the Quakers, Christian- Christadelphians and Jewish organisation had started the Kindertransport. So, my mother insists. I didn't want to go, as you can imagine. I mean, how could I? But - Jewish mums - I don't have to tell you. Your name goes on that list and my name went on the list. And... on the 17th of March as I call it or 15th March if they call it, I was at the station with my suitcase and my label together with all the others. And... went on the train... And in those days the trains used to have windows that slid down. And so, we were hanging out the windows and waving and they stood on the platforms waving. No men hardly, just aunties and grandmas - and mums, obviously. And then... they moved and they're gone. And we were on our way. And the train was going to go through Germany to Holland. And... I don't think it's a long journey- if it is a long journey, but certainly a long journey as far as I was concerned. Because we were going through Germany, as I said, and... We didn't think they would let us go. We thought they were playing with us, you know. They'll take us so far and then take us back again. But of course, they didn't. So, we got to the Dutch border and the train went into Holland. And it stopped. And the Dutch women came and bought us buns and drinks. [whispering] They were lovely! Lovely! And from there to the Hook of Holland. And on the ferry- overnight ferry to Harwich, which was a long crossing. I don't know if this- it's probably much quicker now, but we had cabins overnight. Only trouble is we were all seasick. Terribly seasick. So, we got to Harwich. From Harwich to Liverpool Street Station... End of first part. [laughing] So would you like a cup of tea?

[00:44:24]

Just- let's- maybe one thing I just wanted to ask you. So, when was the first time you heard about the Kindertransport?

In November- I think it was about November... it must have been because I'm sure it wasn't before Kristallnacht that- that we heard about it all. My mother applied- that's how I remember it anyway.

And was the idea first, that you can also go to Shanghai with your parents? Was that the idea...?

No- I mean- ...I- I think the whole idea was at that time... that because they couldn't go to Shanghai at that moment because Dad was still in the camp, the safety thing was for me to go to England- or as- Scotland.

Right.

And then maybe join them.

Right.

Of course, it didn't get to that, did it?

Mn-hnn. And just the last thing before we can take a short-

Yes. That's up to you.

The Anschluss. Where were you during the Anschluss? The Anschluss- where were you... physically - when the Anschluss happened?

On the- on the 12th of March?

Yes.

Huh! You're asking me?

Do you remember it?

No... All I remember is that... you see, I was certainly in our district- I wasn't in town. I know that. Or what I call this- inner city. Because I- we saw what is going on with the cheering, so I couldn't have been- so I must have been either at home or somewhere in our district. I don't remember that in detail.

That's absolutely fine. And if you compare your district with those other districts, do you think your experiences were better or worse? Do you see what I mean?

I think it was slightly better. Yes. Because we didn't have- I mean I don't remember for instance... I think- I think the first time we came across anything happening to us is really when they took my father away. But then I wasn't there at that particular moment, until I came home. That's when it started to hit home, how bad things were. Because while I still went to college I, you know, went...

[00:47:00]

Yeah. And where- did you meet- did you speak to your friends? Were some people thinking of going to Palestine and doing some other things? What- what were you talking about with your friends? Do you remember it?

Well, you see, when- after Kristallnacht we were split up altogether. I think there were one-two friends who were- they were twins and one was another- another girl. And that was the three- my closest friends. And I can't recall whether... whether they went earlier than I did or went on- I think they went before I did. I can't remember. I'm sorry. It's... There were- there were certain things you, you sort of you remember very distinctly and certain things you put behind you.

That's absolutely normal. Yes.

Yeah- I can't tell you. All I know is, as I said, three of them went to Israel. The three girls. And two of the boys went to America.

Yeah. But for you - Palestine - that wasn't an option?

No.

No. ...And were you very close to your mother at that time, or...?

Oh yes, of course - yes. I mean I must admit I was daddy's girl always, or my father's- I was - you know. But obviously we, we be very close and it was very hard to... to go... and leave her... because... that's how it was at the time.

But she pushed you to go?

She pushed. Oh, yes. You know- I didn't want to go, but she - she said, "You- you've got to go. That's all there is to it."

Shall we take a short break?

Yes, well you...

Let's do that.

[00:49:06]

We were talking about your...

Arriving...

... at- your arrival. But just to take you back a little bit...

Yes.

Can you tell us about the letter or the poem- you- you received something from your great-aunt? Is that correct?

There's this one in there? Yeah.

Tell us what is it? - Yes.

Well, it's- she always- she was my mother's aunt really, I think - you know. So, I don't quite know the relation. As I-my mother when she came to live in Vienna she lived with this aunt and her three sons. So, she was always like part of the family there. And... Auntie Lisi, as she was called. I always knew her as an old lady. I mean, I don't remember- ever younger. She always wrote poems. Anybody's birthdays... anybody's anniversaries... And it was always if you had a tea party, Auntie Lisi would sit at the end and, and everybody still, because Auntie

Lisi will now read her little poem out. So, when I was leaving, she- I had this little book that I was going to use - a little sort of diary. And she wanted to ask and she wrote this poem in it you know, about that I'm leaving and they're going to be left behind and... they have nothing- well, only death to wait for, evidently- have you read this morning?

Yeah...

And... That's it, you know? So, I obviously never saw her again needless to say. They- they went to Theresienstadt. Most of my mother's family from Slovakia and my... I had one aunt in Vienna - and they all ended up in Theresienstadt. I had some cousins from Slovakia who went to Auschwitz. Two of them survived. And... One of them unfortunately was one of Dr. Mengele's pupils- patients. So, she was never quite the same again. Very clever girl actually. The Romanian ones...funny enough I don't know what some of them- where some of them went to. But some of them went to Israel eventually, after the war. One of them I believe stayed because he became a quite a high communist or something or other. But I lost touch with them.

So, you- who gave you that little journal which you took...?

I bought it!

You bought it?

Yeah – I suppose so.

In Vienna?

Yeah.

Do you remember any other things you could take on your trip?

For my trips to come?

For- yeah. For the Kindertransport. What was in your suitcase?

What was in my suitcase? [brief laugh] One of the things apart from clothes obviously I remember wearing a winter coat which was just as well. And... Well, apart from anything

else in the suitcase my mother had put a large box of chocolate. I happened to be a chocoholic. Well, when I say- I mean I - I don't go mad, but I do like chocolate. Viennese people have a very sweet taste. And I had this Slovak mother who was a fantastic cook. And... what with the Viennese diet and the Slovak-Hungarian diet, I liked good food. So my mother had given me one large box of chocolate which I managed to get hold of. The rest of it was just clothing et cetera, et cetera.

[00:52:31]

What did she cook? What foods- did she make- did you eat in Vienna? What did she make?

What food! Oh wow. [laughs] The usual... I mean, Jewish food first. My aunt in Slovakia had geese. So, we used to occasionally have a goose. Kosher – all kosher. Lots of Viennese specialties... I can't- there's one that's a - a sort of pancake mixture, but instead of making pancakes you almost scramble it like you would eggs. Which translates as 'imperial rubbish'. Kaiserschmarrn- don't ask. Where does it come from? I don't know. Jewish things of course. You know. Not so much things like *lokshen pudding* and that. We didn't know that so much. It was more traditional. I suppose it was a mixture between Slovak...

Yeah...

Hungarian... and [laughing] Viennese. So, you know. That's- was just good food- very good food and vegetables but cooked differently. You know, vegetables done... Something like Sauerkraut but not Sauerkraut. It's sweet cabbage. Very difficult. One done with tomatoes and things. Lots of things like that. So, when I came to Scotland it was a... different diet altogether.

Mn-hnn... So- and who took you to the station? What did they...?

My mother.

She took you...

And my aunt. I had one aunt there and my- I think this Tante Lisi, I can't remember now. But certainly, my aunt, yes.

And which train station was it?

Westbahnhof... which is the station that goes west, obviously.

Did you know any other children who were on the train?

No... No. No.

And what time of the day? Do you remember when was it?

I don't know. But obviously it must have been- I should imagine it must have been in morning, because as I said, we got to the Hook of Holland in the evening to have a crossing overnight. So, as I said I'm not sure how long the journey actually took to go through Germany. But that's... Certain things have no sort of importance to remember somehow or other. So, the time of day, so not really. Certain things I remember the time of day. But not then.

So, what was for you the most dramatic things to remember from that journey? Of leaving and arriving?

[00:55:03]

Getting to Holland... Getting to- well, leaving, first of all... which was obviously... it's- it's- it's difficult sometimes, because there are times where I speak in public. And it gets to me. And I find it difficult to go past the goodbyes. And other times like just now, I manage to sort of just talk to you about it.

The goodbye is the hard part...

Of course. The last time you see your mother standing on the platform... I have often wondered in my older... life, how they did it. How the mothers did it. Because not one of them knew where you were actually going... or if they would ever see you again.

Yeah...

Now I've felt- I mean I often thought about my cats. I couldn't bear to think what would happen to the cats. How did they feel? But they are children. But they did it...

Yeah... And you said, relief to arrive in Holland...?

Arrived in Holland, yes, as I said. It was absolutely wonderful. The Dutch women actually... And of course, you suddenly knew you were free! It actually happened. You were no longer - you know - afraid to be... whatever. And then of course... But then... as I say, you went to - fo you want me to go on from there?

Yes, please.

I mean you got to Liverpool Street Station. And some of us had homes to go to immediately. And some of the children had to go to holding camps; there was one in Dovercourt, for instance, you know. And- and Liverpool Street Station- I think it was quite overwhelming at the time. Incidentally, I don't know anybody knows and certainly some people- well they would know at AJR obviously- this fifty pounds [£50.00] that people had to pay to the government to ensure that the child would not be a burden on the government. Now very often when I speak, people don't know that. Which is a slightly different story to what is happening now, obviously. So, they had to take you in and... deposit this money, which fifty pounds is equivalent about £2000 pounds I understand.

[00:57:36]

So, there I was at Liverpool Street Station, and I was met by this young man... who was going to take me up to Glasgow... where I was going to live as an au-pair with his family- his wife and four-year-old boy. Au-pair means that you would help in the house and get schooling, as I understand it. But it wasn't quite like that, was it really? The journey absolutely was wonderful, because it's a pretty countryside. It took a long time, that journey. Not like - you know - four hours, as it is now. So, we went ...through all the different stations... and got to Glasgow. And went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Levine, a Jewish family. ...It wasn't quite what it was supposed to be, because they or she particularly didn't need an au-pair; she needed a cheap maid. And that's what she got. They- the place they lived was close to a university so much better class district, but still, what they call 'tenements' in Glasgow. So, we had a ground floor- or they had a ground floor flat. ... My accommodation- in a kitchen is a recess - Pardon me- was a recess. I don't know what it is now. And that had a curtain around it and there was a bed and a cupboard. That was for me. And... this is how- I'm not- I never have been a spoilt person so I can't sleep anywhere really if it comes down to it. But the trouble with that was that the kitchen was used as a living area. So... when the *mishpoche* came around or the... friends came around, everybody sat around in the kitchen. And... I couldn't go

to bed. I'm sixteen years old by that time, which we understand is not the easiest thing to...you know. The fact that I was tired, because... My job was basically: about six o'clock in the morning to get up, clear the grates, light the fire, get the breakfast ready. And then I literally worked in this little... thing that you get from- I showed you. It came from the... archives. It said actually in that end that I- "She worked me far too hard." Anyway.

[01:00:30]

And even- afternoon I used to have to take the little boy for a walk... Now first of all the food, as I said earlier, was strange. There was a lot of fish that you don't get in Austria because it's inland and we don't- you know, you get herrings and things. So apart from being strange, there wasn't a lot of it. Not for me. I did eat a lot of potatoes. So, I actually put on weight. But sweet things... no. And I always- the one thing that always stuck in my head is when I took this little boy out for the walk, she used to give me a few pennies to buy him a sweet bun. And God forbid I should take a tiny bit of this money but tell his mother and she would go bananas. That chocolate that my mother gave me - the box of chocolate. This is honestly true; I rationed myself to half a chocolate a night...because I craved it. Well, there was this Jewish organisation... And I'm trying to remember what it's called. And we were allowed to go there once a week. And they gave us tea and biscuits. And I must admit, I wolfed those biscuits like there's no tomorrow. ...So even all that- I mean I suppose would have been bad enough, but there was no love or affection or anything like that. I was just a maid - a cheap maid. The fact that I came- that I was Jewish I don't think- it didn't even come into it somehow. She did have a sister and a mother who were occasionally quite kind. But it was a very lonely, very sad experience. And as I explain, I couldn't- I did correspond with my parents- well, my parents, sorry - sorry. My dad was released in- from the camp in May '39 and they left for Shanghai in June. So, I corresponded with them obviously until the war broke out and the Japanese invaded - I have a lot to thank the Red Cross for incidentally, because when things were difficult, we used to get little cards through from them- through the Red Cross. But I couldn't write to them and tell them the situation, because what could they have done in Shanghai? It would have made them unhappy. So, I was very... And it's this little booklet which you say you like- well, little diary thing...

[01:02:59]

You'll find in it that I say a couple of times I prayed to God that I could possibly get away. And... war broke out obviously. And she had another baby. Things were slightly better then but it was just - you know. Really it wasn't a frightening work- work didn't bother me. It was just the fact that there was just- I did correspond with one or two people. And I corresponded in fact with a girl in England. And do you know, I say this time and again- I'm so ashamed I can't remember her name... I can't remember much about her at all. But she lived with these Christadelphians, this Christian group. And one day, as I said, it was October. This couple arrived and... the, they introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Cuthbert and they were Christadelphian - friends of the people in England. And they'd heard about me and would I come and have tea with them one afternoon on my half day off. Which I did. But you can imagine. There I was- I had to tell them how I felt and how bad it was. And they said, "Well this is not possible. You can't live like that. We will go back and we will get your suitcase. And you have to come and live with us." And we did that. And when Mrs. Levine heard what was going to happen, she went out of her mind, and she screamed and shouted. She ordered me into the kitchen, but I was out that door so quickly you couldn't see me for dust. She wouldn't give me my belongings; she wouldn't give me my suitcase. She was going to report me to police. She was going to have me sent back to Vienna which was rubbish, because war had broken out anyway. Lovely Jewish lady. Anyway, I went back to live with the Cuthberts and after I think it must- two or three weeks she gave me my- she had to give me my suitcase. She did report me. It's in this thing that went to the Home Office et cetera, et cetera. And then she was found not being... that I worked far too hard there, et cetera et cetera.

What did she report you for?

[01:05:16]

Well, for- for leaving. [laughs] for- for having the audacity to- to leave. And I suppose- I don't know- the money obviously came into it. I don't know. Anyway, I came to live with the Cuthbert's. And they had no children so I was told to call them Aunty Jean and Uncle George, which I did. And... then- I couldn't do anything for them as hard as I worked for the Levines, they were the opposite. "No just a bit of dusting. Just don't do anything..." Now, they were very strict. This is quite a strict religion. Not quite as strict as some of them, but no cinemas or entertainment or- no makeup or anything like that. So... a lot of Bible reading. They bought me a lovely Bible which I've got upstairs. Yeah? But they didn't try to convert me. Not- no, not at all. But we went to the church twice on a Sunday. And anyway, I came to

the conclusion, "I can't live off people. I mean I can't just..." Imagine. And I didn't want to. I needed to do something- do it. And I got to know this Czech couple. And they had a little four-year-old and eventually they offered me an au pair job, again. And that was very close by to where I lived with the Cuthberts. I didn't fall out with the Cuthberts, although they did one unkindness. They- they sort of- anyway, I'll come to that in a minute. I went to stay with the Bergs, this Czech couple. And that was fine, the food was great! It was lovely. He'd started that Refugee Club in Glasgow I mentioned, and that was wonderful, because we had people now who taught us. We had lectures. There were some from the university some amongst the Jewish co- and- because there were older people there as well. And we had literature and science, geography and you know, music. All sorts of things which was absolute- just brilliant. And stayed with the Bergs. And again, it came to the stage where- first of all I thought, "I'm sure I could do something better than just..." which- basically, I was just a maid again, really.

[01:07:37]

Also, although I didn't fall out with the Bergs as such but she and I used to have a little sort of... differences. Put it like that. And one- one particular difference, the discussion spilled out into the garden- the rather heated discussion. She had a wonderful habit- my half-day was on a Saturday. And she used to come back from town about four o'clock in the afternoon, so half of my half-day had gone, and we used to have a little...you know, contretemps about it. And I said- tell people this: three times in my life I was really very lucky. And all I can say is that life is so much stranger than fiction. Because there we were in the garden, and suddenly a voice from across the fence - a man's voice – said, "Come on hen. Get yer suitcase." 'Hen' being a sort of Glasgow endearment. "Get yer suitcase and put it over the fence." And that's just what I did. And I walked through there... into their house. Mr. and Mrs. Lochhead. And I thanked them. "No," they said, "it's Aunty Jenny and Uncle Alec to you, dear." And that's when I started breaking down because... they saved my- I became a human being again you know? I started to enjoy life. Because they were wonderful. Gosh. They were- they were absolutely the most blessed, blessed people. They stayed- Aunt Jenny and Uncle Alec the rest of their lives. When I moved to London eventually, and you know, got- you know. They used to come down. I went up to Scotland. Always went on holiday with them and Uncle Alec always paid for everything. And we used to have fun because when we used to stay in these hotels- she was very blonde. I've got some photographs I must show you. She was very tall

and very blonde and he was very tall too. And I was very dark. And Uncle Alec used to say, "I bet they're sitting there saying 'I wonder what their relations are... Do you think she was a daughter from his first marriage or something?'" So, we used to have- but we had fun - we really had fun. She was a first-class secretary. She was secretary to the chairman of Scottish Oil and he worked for Scottish Oil. And as I say, how can you have fun during a war? But that's exactly what we did. We really enjoyed ourselves. And they were just so lovely – so, so, so lovely. And I have a lovely letter that my parents in somewhat broken English wrote to them after the war. Thanked them so much for looking after me. The only drawback was originally when I went to live with them- because there I was allowed to use lipstick, you see, again. Yeah? When the Cuthberts got in touch with the parents over the Red Cross to say, 'they were rather sorry to say they thought I got in with some bad people', which wasn't a very kind, Christian thing to do, was it? However...

[01:10:40]

Who were the bad people?

Well, the Cuthberts who wrote to my parents to say that I'd gone to live with these Lochheads who maybe... But they were wonderful – lovely, lovely, lovely people. Church of Scotland, so not Jewish people.

And they heard you arguing and that just- they just called you into their house because they felt...?

Well, they'd seen me, obviously living there. Maybe they'd already seen things that I didn't realise they'd actually seen, you know. But they- I came in. And I sort of stayed with them. And they wouldn't take any money at first. And I said, "Well I'm now seventeen years old and I've got to do something." And war work was the law. And Aunt Jenny said, "I don't want you to go into munitions because that's a tough sort of-" But there was a local, close-by factory that made at that time men's... suits. And they were destined to do uniforms, so that was war work. So, she went down because she knew the owner... who was an Englishman – Mr. Peacock. Yes, Mr Peacock. Mr. Peacock said he'd give me a job. And I was so lucky, because being who I was, he was so understanding. He said, "No I'm not going to sit you down at a machine. I'll teach you. I'll let you go right through the factory, learn it from cutting and machining, hand stitching et cetera..." And the education I didn't get in the clubs

or [inaudible], I got there, because I worked with these Glasgow girls. And my goodness that was an education in life. And they were absolutely brilliant - absolutely brilliant. Yeah. One schoolboy asked me when I was talking, he said, "Could you speak English when you came?" And I said, "Yes, I did, but then they sent me to Glasgow. So, I had to start all over again." But I got quite Glaswegian at one stage. And so, I stayed...

When was that? When did you start the war work?

[01:12:41]

September, I went to- 1940, I came to stay with the Lochheads. And I stayed there. And I stayed in the factory and then the war ended. And I got a job in a- an office for a little while as a [inaudible] operator; they taught me. And then as I said, slowly my friends disappeared. My closest friend went to New York where she still lives. And the other friend is still in Glasgow but in several- and then I told you about the- my other little excitement with the marriage. But... then I moved to London and stayed with friends. John's parents- mother actually, in Holland Park, no less. Has anybody seen 'As Time Goes By' you know, Judi Dench? Yeah? In one of those houses there, funnily enough. And I'd been- during the war I came down on holiday once and stayed with them for a month. But then the- the flying bombs started so I went back to Glasgow again. Anyway. So, I came down as I say. And... this is the second time where life is so much stranger than fiction, because- I had to get a job, obviously. And Barkers of Kensington- and you may not have heard of Barkers of Kensington. It's before your time. It's like a Selfridges, but it was in Kensington. Very high class. They had an advert for an office job and I went down there - I always remember - on a Friday morning. And I saw the gentleman. He said, yes, I could have the job. In fact, I could start on the Monday morning. And this is where the life comes in... On the way out, I got on a bus and I had the 'Kensington Post' in front of me. And literally jumping out at me is an advert for an advertising agency in the West End. And I went straight there. And it was just after lunch. Saw the company secretary who said yes, I could have the job he thought, but he couldn't give me the final okay until he discussed it with one of the other directors who was still at lunch. And I said, "I've got this job offer at Barkers for Monday... any chance...?" By five o'clock they rang me and said I could have the job.

[01:15:07]

And as I said to you, thirty-seven years in advertising. And I worked myself up. Got a little flat... in Notting Hill. Ladbroke Grove, not Notting Hill. Did alright. And... 1948 I got my parents a visa to come from Shanghai. And I met them at the airport. And it was absolutely-well, you can imagine – can you? Almost ten years? And the only trouble was... I think in other people from Kindertransport who were lucky enough to meet their parents, it was difficult. Because they saw me sixteen years old. Of course, I wasn't sixteen years old, was I? However, it sorted itself out. They got a little flat just around the corner. Cause we realised we couldn't- it wasn't feasible to live together, because first of all what I had was quite small. And secondly, I mean, you know you have to have your independence. That was a different story to what it is now. Anyhow, they were just around the corner so I used to eat with them. Now my father would not accept charity. So, he got a job as a packer in a factory. And my mother as I said, eventually got this job to look after a couple of brown people. So became a sort of home help through the council. ... [with emotion] it's- that's one of the things that absolutely makes me so sad because... my father was a business man. He had his own business. He was a well-known person. And there was a packer in a factory. And every Friday night he came in and he put his pay packet in front of my mother. And the only way- I couldn't- I couldn't help them in those days. I didn't earn that sort of money. I only just earned enough to live on. My mother dished him out his pocket money. But he smoked- he did smoke terribly. Players Weights, which were the cheapest little cigarettes. And that's what this man had.

[01:17:42]

Anyway. Apart from that, they loved being here. They absolutely loved it. They'd learnt some English while they were in Shanghai so they did quite well. My father belonged to the shul. There was this little tiny shul in Kensington Park Road. I don't know if it's- exists even anymore. It's a lovely little shul. It really was- the upstairs, you know - really, really beautiful. So, he used to be a real regular there, you know. Every Shabbos you know, they could really rely on him. And... Mum was quite a home-body; she quite liked being at home. But Daddy and I used to go to some concerts. We used to go to the Proms, you know. But weekends we all went out. We went Kew Gardens or Richmond Park. We went along the river, you know. And they had some mutual friends. And another gentleman who'd been in - in the camp with Dad. And that's when I found out some of the- my father didn't speak about it except- the only other thing he once said, when they got up in the morning, he used to go

along the ranks to see who had died during the night. Anyway. So, this was really good, you know?

[01:18:59]

Can you tell us a little bit- what did your parents tell you about that time in Shanghai?

My mother loved it. My father didn't mind- I mean they- he did all right because he had this job. My mother became a sort of housekeeper to somebody. But living in Shanghai was a ghetto. I mean it was not very- they had no sort of air conditioning or anything like that. And there's- the heat in Shanghai apparently can be very- and they both had tropical diseases apparently at one stage. My father was in hospital- in- sort of lost his hair and all that sort of thing. But the community was good. You know the, the Jewish people got to know each other. So, you know, my mother quite liked talking about it – Daddy didn't. I mean he just said, "Well it was all right." You know. So, as I said, they... really, really enjoyed- loved- loved being here. My father was a very young-looking man, and very tall and good looking. And then... 17th of November 1953 he had a fatal heart attack, when he was only sixty. But... I suppose all the years and everything. You know. So that was that. And anyway, we had to go on. Then the third... life being stranger than fiction. I met my husband. And that was such a coincidental thing as well. Do you want to know how?

[01:20:44]

Yes, please.

I had a boyfriend who was an amateur racing driver. And we used to go Goodwood racing - motor racing. And- because he was a member. And on one occasion he said to me he couldn't go, but if I wanted the tickets to give it to some of my colleagues. And I had a colleague who was very crazy about motor racing as well. And on this day, this- Dennis, my husband- his firm, the accountants firm, was on the top floor to the office I worked in in Bond Street. At that time our office- we had the building there. And this colleague of mine, Teddy, was talking to Dennis. And I said to Teddy, "Did you want tickets for Saturday for motor racing?" And he said, "Oh, I can't go." And I turned round to Dennis, who I'd known was upstairs but I mean- didn't mean anything to me. "Would you like tickets?" And he said, "Are you going?" And I said, "Well no, I can't go because I mean I need transport." "Well, if I borrow

my friend's car will you come with me?" ...Forty-seven years later. So, we started going out. And he was still studying - had to do the finals. And in June we got married. |And as I said, we were forty-seven years... He was the most wonderful, wonderful, wonderful man and the most- and everybody who knew him and my mother adored him. I don't know what my father would have done, but... he wasn't around. My mother thought her son-in-law- I don't want to say the pr- what, but 'the shone out...' as you know. [laughing] He could not do wrong. And he- he was so always very good with her. And he was absolutely lovely, lovely, lovely. And thirteen years ago, I lost him... but... there you go. That's it. But I've got... lots of nice friends and I've got family and I've got my home. So, what have I got to complain about? That's the gist of the story.

[01:22:59]

So, let's go just back a little bit to when you arrived in your first family. Were you ever in touch with the refugee organisation? Did they follow up what's happening to you?

Well, as I said, I'm trying to remember who... the people here were in Glasgow. What were they called? I think it's probably in this... This is...Oh, I can't remember what they were called...

Don't worry...

It was a Jewish organisation, obviously. Well, if you can complained to them- it's just- nothing was done. Nothing was done. Yes, they gave us a cup of tea and biscuits. You know. But as far as what- we were left to our own devices. So, when we started this club and all that it was all through us, what we as refugees did. There was a youth hostel in Vienna which was for the boys, because they were... I mean you've probably- or have you seen or heard about the... 'The Pianist of Willesden Lane'? Yeah?

Yeah.

Well, it was a sort of hostel like she talks about. Incidentally, that book has got lots of things wrong with it. I didn't see the play. Well, I did see it- eventually we saw it on the DVD. But there's things in there which are not quite as it was. But that's...

Such as?

There's a bit of artist's licence in the- in the story. I don't... I mean, you've read it or seen it?

I've seen the play.

[01:24:48]

Yeah? Where she says for instance- I mean she started working in the East End, right? One minute she had absolutely nothing at all. And the next minute she's, you know, at the Conservatoire. And she has a concert and she has two new dresses. And she has all this. I mean, that's just little- I'm, I'm- when I read anything that's factual, I pick holes into it if it's- And there are certain things and she talks about what was happening. Well, I don't think it was quite as - as good for us as- lots of people were very lucky. Lots of the children were taken in by ministers, by all sorts of people and, had a fantastic life. And were just like- I always remember reading about the Attenboroughs, who took two girls and then were told- the boys were told "you're going to get two sisters".

Yeah.

So, the sad story with me is that- I have to say- was Jewish people.

Yeah.

And I find that absolutely... appalling. It wasn't just that she was not nice. She was so- I mean, fancy- I have one suitcase. She won't give it to me? Because I don't want to work for her anymore?

Yeah. It sounds very cruel...

It was cruel. It was found that she was obviously not a suitable person.

And there was no question of you going to school? No...

How could I? There wasn't any time for me to- school. By the time I did all the...the work I had to do and things I had to do. And it's just... You know, it just sort of... It's not the work. It was just the whole atmosphere – everything, you know? I mean you, you feel you want to just... I mean the Lochheads didn't have- have anything to offer me as such. It's just a happy home. Which is really all, all you wanted, you know? I mean at first, they wouldn't even take

a penny from me. It was when I started to do the work and I said you've got to let me pay something. And I sort of paid ten shillings, you know, which is... was nothing! I got...

[01:27:00]

But do you think- was it like a symptom in a way... of a complete non-understanding of where you came from? I mean, they didn't understand...

What? The- the Levines?

Yes. Or was it that it was an opportunity to have a cheap maid and they just using it?

It was an opportunity to have a cheap maid. I'm quite sure of it. But how could you not understand, being a Jew? That you know, I mean I didn't go there- I told them what was happening in Vienna, what happened to us... that we lost everything, et cetera. So it wasn't that she was ignorant and didn't know. She just was not a very nice person.

Yeah.

I don't think he had much chance you know. I don't- Didn't remember much what he was like but he didn't seem to be... it was her – it was her.

And what helped you to cope in this situation? You had a diary?

I wrote the thing- little things in a diary but not ... I don't know. I don't know how I coped. I mean, you just- I just- I got terribly homesick. Not homesick to the Vienna I left, but the Vienna I knew. And obviously missed my parents. You know?

But you always- were you always so- had malnutrition? You didn't have enough food?

Well, I didn't have malnutrition because I put on weight, because I ate potatoes. There was always lots of potatoes. I mean all the things that- I mean I had suddenly sole- steamed sole. To me, I mean it's- I don't like it to this day actually you know. And to me it was such an alien thing to have to eat with sort of dried- sort of steamed- boiled potatoes with it, which you know. And all the sort of finer things. I mean... I know the Glasgow diet's different altogether anyway. Whether you live- you know. And I can't remember- do you know I don't remember them being particularly religious. I honestly can't remember. I don't remember any

Shabbes or anything like this. I used to go to shul in Glasgow - used to. In fact, when I lived outside Glasgow with the Lochheads, which was quite a distance, on Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur I used to walk all the way from there into- into the centre of Glasgow to shul.

[01:29:11]

And how was that? Did people there give support there, or...?

Where, at the shul?

Mn-hnn.

I didn't know anybody. I just went you know like a, just went there. And slowly people used to say, you know - you know "who are you?" or "What...?" You know. But... I mean I, you know. I just look back on it as...as... a pretty rotten time.

Yeah...

But it's gone. It's- it's all- I've had too many happy years to... live back on it. I just remember it. You know. You remember things that you never forget, do you?

Yeah... Because you were in a situation like other of the- the women who came on a domestic visa. You- you were...

I mean, a lot of people came as domestic servants. My friends in Glasgow- their- the- the daughter, they came from Germany both of them. And she came with her mum and her parents - and she lived with them. And they- originally when they came before they lived together, he was a- he became the chauffeur and she became the- the housekeeper.

Yeah.

And that was- I mean you didn't mind that. You're quite happy to... to - to do a job. As long as it was - you know - a job and you were a human being. I wasn't a human being with that woman!

You we're not treated with respect.

No! Respect? That was the least of it I think. I mean all- you'll understand when I tell you, a sixteen-years old... girl? I mean...

In the family? You had a- bad experiences? As a girl?

Well, I didn't have any bad experiences, I just had medical problems, didn't I?

Right...

You know what I mean. And in fact, one of the reasons why I put on weight. Because for, for nine months I sort of- my whole clock was upside down. But I mean there was no privacy, you see?

Yeah.

Where was the privacy? There just wasn't any privacy. It must have been some time in my life- I mean I couldn't read a book. Where could I read a book?

And do you feel let down by the...

...organisation?

...refugee organisation? Yes.

Yes. Yes. But then I wasn't the only one, I mean other people had the same sort of problems.

No, but we're talking about you.

Yeah.

Were you- were you angry with...with the...?

[01:32:00]

I was- I don't think I was angry. I was upset...

Yeah.

... because they just- was nowhere to go to. You know nobody who -until the refugee club started. And that was really a, a great godsend because you then started to be with people. And ... you know. And to, to, to... learn and... We used to have in Glasgow, once a year, we did a sort of- I mean Glaswegians are wonderful people actually. We had what we call this sort of 'performance'. So, we did national things. You know, we did a... Czech dance... and we did some... oh, or little sketches and in front of this Glasgow audience. In fact, Scottish audience, because- I didn't go- we went as far as Edinburgh. I mean Glasgow - Kelvin Hall, Edinburgh - Usher Hall. And some of them who were studying travelled up to Aberdeen even, to do this. And people knew we were refugee children and they applauded us. And you know. And that was really quite lovely. And I've always been interested in theatricals, so I did amateur dramatics a bit. And we had people who were professionals. We had a director who was a director in a German- theatre director in Germany, who then – you know, in the club.

Yeah? What was his name? Do you remember?

No... I can't remember. I don't remember any of those- I mean, their names. My friends in Glasgow who became the- the Jewish caterer in Glasgow - they're now retired of course, they're the same age as I am - they know everybody. The Jewish refugees and their Jewish Glaswegians you know. And the people you mentioned they probably, know you know. But I... I- because I lived a different life altogether. I mean, once I left Glasgow and then made my own life. And I had friends and very - at that time- very few Jewish friends - because in my business, you know. One or two Jewish friends at that time... Eva- you know Vivienne's mother for instance and her grandmother... and their dad. So...

Do you feel that children shouldn't have gone to private homes? That it would have been better- I mean some people went to hostels or... you know, sort of...

No...

...they stayed together?

No, no - no, no. The private homes were good - if they were good!

Yeah.

Because a lot of them I mean were excellent. Out of- out of all the people I knew, I don't remember anybody in my boat.

You think you had, among your friends, there were...

[01:35:03]

My friends, yeah. Yeah. I mean- I mean somebody went to... work. One or two had to work in a factory- there were quite a few students who were allowed to study at Glasgow University. And some of the older people of course. I mean Eva's mother, she was a- or grandmother, sorry, not Eva's mother. She did- was she corsetry or something? I mean, that was her job. Her, you know, her business.

Yes.

So, there were- people managed to do to something they used to do you, you know? But not... my age was this funny age... I mean.

You were a very difficult age. Because...

Difficult because the schooling was...

You missed out on the schooling and you were too young to do a proper job in that way.

Well, I think during the war we wouldn't have been allowed to do anything other than war work anyway.

Yeah...yeah.

It was very- I mean, you know that the Australian and German refugees were called 'Enemy Aliens'.

Yes. But what happened to you?

Well yes, but the men were interned. The women weren't, of course. The girls weren't interned. The only thing is the restrictions. I mean the- these Lochheads for instance had a flat in Largs, which is along the Clyde. I wasn't allowed to go there, because it's - you know,

in case you signalled the enemy ships, you see? The fact that you were a Jewish refugee at that time, didn't come into it. Change of- things have changed...

But were you- did you have to go in front of a tribunal?

[01:36:45]

No, not, no, no, no - no. You just had to report to the police regularly. I can't remember whether it's once a week or once- something like that. You had to go regularly. You had the little you know, book... and... I went there. I mean they were very kind; they weren't nasty. Even the people who were interned, I mean, they weren't badly treated, as such. And the people in Isle of Man- I mean you had the Amadeus String Quartet you know. ...But... I mean my- my friend who is in New York, she went to Edinburgh from- from Germany. She came from Essen and went to- and she lived with this family – a doctor's family. Fine! Lovely, you know?

Yeah.

I mean loads of them were very, very lucky indeed.

But the problem was that there were no mechanisms in place to... to...

I mean you were here, you were safe - and that was it. You know.

Yeah.

[01:37:38]

I mean, yeah, I mean obviously I told people about what was going on, but they obviously couldn't do anything or- I don't know. No.

And did you talk about your experiences later on? Was- was it something you tried not to think about?

Not very, not very often. I mean I've only started talking the way I've talked to you today... over the last four years now when this started, you know. And it's only because Sutton Council asked that for Holocaust Day if we would do it.

And before that, you didn't...?

No, I mean obviously you sort of if anybody asked or what you know what happened or so you would tell them. But you're not sort of into details like I told you just now.

And your husband? Did you talk to him about this?

No, not really. I mean... maybe- well, obviously when we went to Vienna, we sort of discussed things. He knew obviously what had happened because... I don't think we- I don't think I sort of talked the way I talk to you because you know it's- you realised it probably was a good idea just- you know, that was past and we have a life and we enjoy it. And that's exactly what it was.

Yeah.

Amongst ourselves, I suppose. But even then. I think it's only- I mean once in Glasgow, they started years ago to talk, because the Berliners - you know the Germans - asked them to go. They- when they go over there, they're asked officially to go over there. They speak to the Jewish Museum and they've been all over Glasgow. They spoke in the Scottish Parliament... and they go to prisons and they... you know. So, they were much longer into all this. ...That's how it is. You- you can't live life in... you know, in the- what happened.

No, of course...

You've got to live in the- in the present, otherwise it would drive you mad, wouldn't it, really, you know? You would sort of find that you couldn't cope. So, if you're lucky enough, as I was, to... hit it. I mean, the Lochheads were just out of this world. I mean they were just so kind. Incredibly, incredibly kind. I mean, even to the extent that when - when my divorce came through and I couldn't afford it, and Aunt Jenny and Uncle Alec paid for it all. You know? And... I mean they were just... Wherever they are, I hope they get all the rewards you can possibly think of.

[01:40:40]

You stayed in touch with them? You...?

Oh, I stayed in touch. Unfortunately, the first year when- I mean when we were married, and Dennis hadn't met them obviously. And we went shortly after. We- he had to do his finals. Because we decided to get married although he had to do his finals. But we made a pact that he would- he would come home, have a meal and then he'll would study. And- because he was a certified accountant rather than a chartered. They're all the same now. And... he- when he'd finished the final, he- he got through immediately. We went up to Glasgow and Uncle Alec- Aunt Jenny was already in hospital, and Uncle Alec died at sixty as well. Aunt Jenny went on for seventy-four, I think, seventy-five. But... he was... he was just...

And did your parents meet them?

Pardon?

Your parents?

They didn't meet my- they didn't meet- Jenny did but Uncle Alec had you know, had... Yes, funny isn't it, that both my father and Uncle Alec died at sixty which was very sad.

Yeah.

But... But I was sort of part of the family up there, you know. That was- they sort of- again, they weren't- they were Scottish- Church of Scotland but not very, you know, I think they went to church once a year at you know, Christmas or something. But wonderfully kind, very good-looking people. You know, really lovely people.

So, them and together with the refugee club, that was your lifeline there, or how...?

Well, I mean the refugee club was - was wonderful because you did meet now people that were in the same boat as you., to a degree, you know. Well, in the same boat. They had ...it dispersed. I mean it so happened that out of the Slovak medical students - one of them became head of one of the new foundling hospitals. Another one was head of one of the hospitals in Glasgow. A third one went to Canada and wrote the most wonderful book for his family. And unfortunately, I haven't got the book. I've wish to- I have had it lent to me and borrowed- and friends of mine borrowed it and said why wasn't it published. But he only did so many copies mainly for the family. But what he went through he went to the wilds of Canada and with his wife. He married a Glasgow- Jewish Glasgow girl. And he had to do

dentistry all- and I mean they all became somebody. The married one, they broke up unfortunately. She went to America. He went back to Prague. People became, you know, everybody did- out of my... group they did... quite good. You know?

[01:43:44]

And just go back to the reunion with your parents.

Yeah?

That- it wasn't so easy?

It was tough.

Yeah.

Tough. I mean...

Did they look similar or did they look different from when you left them?

Well, my father first of all originally had lost quite a bit of weight. You know? And he put it on again when they lived here which was quite good.

Did you pick him up at an airport?

I picked him up at the airport. Yeah – yeah - yeah. They flew back which was very nice indeed. You see, after the Americans came into Shanghai, my father worked for the Americans. And then- just for a little while, obviously, because they came here. Yeah, so I forgot to say, in '49 I went- became a British citizen, which was slightly different. Cause I had to go to Scotland Yard - the old Scotland Yard. And they took me up to this office on my own. I swore my allegiance and got my piece of paper. And I always say, when I came out into the street again, I think I was about ten feet tall. I was so proud- because I love this country. And really, I don't care what happens now. And now things are pretty horrible. But I wouldn't- I get his argument and I've said to them only the other day in Kingston. I don't why it is that a lot of Jewish people born here criticise it and I tell them to go and live somewhere else because they wouldn't like it. They wouldn't like it, I promise you.

You were happy to become a British citizen?

Boy, was I happy. I still am.

[01:45:20]

And how do you see yourself today? How would you describe yourself?

English. No, I really, really- I have no- I mean, when this thing was it a year or so ago when they started talking, you could start applying for Austrian or German? Makes me like a red rag to a bull. When the Nazis gave us ultimatum or gave us the opportunity to leave, we undertook never to return. And my God, I don't want to go back. And never have I wanted to go back. It is a shame! It's a wonderful- I did go back skiing twice in my life. And I must admit, it was lovely. But...no.

But to Vienna, you went back once...

Once, that's it.

When was that?

I'm trying to remember. I'll have to look at the album up, one of these days. My- Dennis is gone thirteen- it must be twenty years ago. So...

And that was a difficult trip to do?

Sorry?

It was a difficult trip?

It was a difficult trip. It was- ...I mean we had a lovely time because we went to all the various places. I mean he had never been to Vienna, my friends had never been to Vienna. So we went, you know Schönbrunn, and all this sort of places. We went to the opera, which was wonderful. I just I- I didn't like the atmosphere. And the Viennese- I mean what absolutely got me- Kingston shul had a young rabbi and rebbetzin. And they've now gone to live in Israel, I believe. She- it was last year I think sometime or other. They had a... conference in

Vienna, all the rebbetzin. I said, "Of all places, you had to go to Vienna? That one only Nazi country?" Because they are Nazis over there again. It's always been there, you know.

So how did you feel when you arrived in Vienna?

[01:47:24]

Well in a- in a way it was- we had a very nice hotel. Vienna is lovely. I mean you know the surroundings and... And meeting up with these two couples as I said, who are not Jewish. Who are both dead- all dead now. We went to the Vienna Woods, I mean we had meals out and you know it was... Spanish Riding School... What's to not like? It's the people.

Did you speak German or English with most...?

Well, I spoke English most of the time - I said to you. And we went into one or two shops. And somehow or other you could almost see they, 'Oh she's one of them.' Other people know. But I mean... maybe other people don't feel it, but I- I felt it. I felt...

Did you look for your... flat?

I said to you, I went as far as the house. And... No, I didn't want to go in or anything. I don't know who lived there anyway.

Did your parents go back to Vienna? You said they had to...

Yes, they had to go back because of business. You know, to see if they could get some sort of recompense, you know. But...

Did they?

This went on... I mean, to begin with, no, nothing. Because they claimed that- that the Nazis took it all and it was nothing to do with the Austrian government. That was the first great... But, like I said, you know. And... Eventually there was a lady in Golders Green called Mrs. Mahler. And Mrs. Mahler was a Jewish lady. Her husband was a relation of Gustav Mahler as it happened. And... she was affiliated to the Austrian government in some way. And she did a lot of negotiations. So, she took over and through her they were... You- can you imagine? There was a business. There were bank accounts. They weren't exactly poor. And I think the

whole amount of money was about £2,000 pounds, right? Over the years, after my mother had already gone, there were things coming through from Austria. And there was a-a meeting and it must – again – must be about... Again, about twenty years or something ago.

[01:50:11]

We had a... letter to say that a representative of the Austrian government was coming to Eng-London. It was by the university, whatever this place was near the university. And there was a meeting there and she would talk to us about the situation... which we did. And that was not just us refugees, or people like you'd been there but grandchildren and children et cetera. And she said that the Austrian government was terribly, terribly sorry of what had happened. And they were starting a sort of compensation scheme. But they had allowed- I don't know how many million they said at the time. But that had to be proportioned. So, if you were the Rothschilds, who had lost ten paintings, they would get a higher proportion of this money than my Dad would get for a shop. Seven years it took them to pay something out. A little dribble here and then something else. Well again it was- unfortunately my mother had died and I didn't want to go. My husband said, "Well, that's silly. You've got to go because..." whatever. Well, the consensus was, when she had finished speaking and explained, one of the gentlemen shouted out, "You know we'll all be dead by-what it happens anyway?" Well, it was going to the grandchildren as well. So at least it is something. But eventually as I said, I got, I think the whole five thousand pounds or something - whatever it was. But I do get a pension from Austria... Not because I was working. But this Mrs. Mahler said, "You can claim for inter- interrupted studies." So that's what I get at the moment.

What about the flat? You had a flat as well. Or was that rented? Or was- did that belong to you?

[01:52:18]

Well, no that was rented. The flat was rented. But no, we didn't- obviously. It's just- what happened actually was that before my parents went to Shanghai, what- there were things in the flat that they didn't want. I mean... clothing... household things. So, when they eventually left, they had actually trunks. So, their – pardon me – there are things in that, that they took with them. They took duvets, and carpet and- because they thought they were going for life to go to Shanghai. So, you know? I mean, money never... The sad thing is, as I said to you

earlier on, talking about my dad, that you know... you ended up almost as a pauper. And I mean you could have- he could have said, "Oh, well I can't work and I need help and assistance." And he probably would have got it. But I mean that's not how they were inclined.

But how was he... emotionally? I mean, when he was here- you said your parents were happy to be in London.

Oh gosh. Very happy - very happy.

So, you were sad for him, but accepted- did he accept...?

Well, he, he, he, he...

...He- his reality, or...?

Well, what could you do?

Yeah.

I mean if you didn't accept it, you only made yourself worse didn't you really? He was happy to be here and - and liked, you know, liked the surroundings and liked to shul he was going to. And- I mean he died so very suddenly neither my mother and I knew what to do. I just went and let the *machers* in the shul tell me what to do. I went to Lemman Street where you had to go. And the first I knew where, it was Rainham in Essex, which is- my both parents are there. And for the last three years I haven't been able to go there, it's such a long, long complicated journey. And I haven't been. But I'm sure they'll forgive me for not going. And- but what can you do? You know? But as I say, he was happy because the shul was good, he enjoyed it and he liked the people he met there. And- and you know, we were together.

And what about your Jewishness? You grew up quite orthodox. How...?

[01:54:59]

I'm- I'm, I'm Jewish... And I keep all the religious... well I keep Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach – all the various things. And more- almost more so now, because I have all these Jewish friends, you see? And I belong to, as I say, to the Jack's and we have a - a really good crowd of people. I'm not orthodox, in other words I don't keep a kosher home. I don't

eat the things that are really not kosher. But I do, you know. I have a little thing in my garden with one of the pots that says, "You're nearer to God in the garden than anywhere else on earth." And I do honestly feel nature... and I couldn't go to the *Yizkor* last time because- I can't remember what happened. And the- the president said to me, "I thought you'd be there for *Yizkor*." And I said I couldn't come, but I said, "Never mind." I said, "I sat outside and did my own *Yizkor* outside." Because you don't have to go to the- I don't always get this much from the shul, because I don't- not good at Hebrew. Can read a little bit of Hebrew. And the, the, the United is quite into Hebrew who- as you probably- I don't know what- are you reform, or – what- are you anything?

More United.

Yeah, yeah - yeah.

I belong to a United synagogue.

My- Vivienne belongs to Havurah which is a different thing altogether, you know. And they have got a much more- they go to Limmud. You don't go-

Yes, I go to Limmud.

Do you go to Limmud?

Yeah.

Now, my friends. You going to go this January?

Not sure, not sure.

Ah. Because my friends- their grandson and his- and their granddaughter, are organisers at that Limmud...

Oh!

Yeah? ...and have been for the last few years.

OK...

And so...

I wanted to ask you, what impact do you think the Kindertransport have on your life? Those experiences, on your later life?

[01:57:15]

I'm very grateful to Kindertransport, obviously. Very grateful from every point of view. It has always amazed me that the instigator as I understood it originally were the Quakers. And I don't know much about Quakers. And yet one of my friends that- in fact the people I went to Vienna with, friends of ours, she was a Quaker. She didn't sort of practice it or so, but her attitude was... And... Well, I think it was a wonderful thing to allow 10,000 children to come. The fact that they wanted 50 quid each, well, I don't know how that worked out. It's more than some other countries did, put it like this.

Eve, do you sometimes think what- what would have happened if you hadn't been forced to emigrate? What sort of life you would have had in Vienna?

It has occurred to me. I can't... visualise it now. I can't quite visualise it. I think if I had been unhappy, I'd have thought maybe it would have been better. But because I was so happy in my marriage... I used to- I mean to illustrate for instance. I mean, Dennis wasn't- I mean he told me he was a choirboy when he was a little boy and he was actually born in India, funnily enough, because his father was in the Army. But... He used to say- I said, "I'm going to shul." And he said, "I'll walk with you." And I said, "No, that's all right." "No, I'll walk with you. What time are you going to be finished?" Well, whatever time. And he used to stand outside and wait for me, you see? Until one famous occasion the police moved him on, you see? Said, "What are you doing here?" So, he said, "I'm not coming any more, you know. They moved me on, there." He- he met some of my Jewish- people I got to know, and they all respected him. And he respected what I did. Now we went to Israel together Dennis and I. And we went on a group. I was only- there was only a Jewish gentleman and myself, and the rest were Welsh Chapel... French Catholic - you know. And we went everywhere together. We went into shuls... we went into churches... the usual tour, you know? We had a- Israeli Army Major lady who was our guide. Fantastic. And the last night we had dinner. You know the usual sort of thing. And she came around to us and she said, "You all get a certificate. You're a pilgrim to Jerusalem. Would you like your names in Hebrew or in English?" And

we all said in Hebrew. And when she gave it to Dennis and me, she said, "I'd like to say something. I wish the world could be like you two. You respect each other so much... and that's- that's lovely."

[02:00:39]

And that's exactly what it was. Now I've got these- relations, as I call them. None of them are Jewish. None of them particularly religious in any way whatsoever. But I'm Auntie Eve and I get respected and when I worked with these girls in Glasgow for instance, I wasn't a refugee. I wasn't a Jew. I was just one of them! And that's how I am. You know- I've got these lots of Jewish friends now because of what I do. And in fact, next Tuesday I'm talking in Kingston shul too. They haven't heard me talk yet. And I got talk- I didn't want to do it because I mean, it's difficult. I mean I'm telling them about the Jewish thing. You don't really- but I'm talking to them next Tuesday, so they are going to hear all my story. But it's- whenever I've done the talk and I must- I really am proud. I'd be a liar if I said I wasn't. It's always so well received and everybody seems to- and I get letters afterwards thanking and saying how much they appreciate it. But it's so important. And I'll tell you one fun- funny thing I always put into my talk - I didn't bother now. Is- when we were going up to Glasgow on the train – it's a long journey in those days, as I said – there used to be these small signs on the stations - by our side placards. And I honestly thought every station was called 'Boveril'. That's true!

So, you enjoy giving the talks and doing– you're doing Holocaust education, really.

[02:02:16]

I enjoy it because I hope that it's going- as I said, I talk- I spoke to, to this group - to this college I mentioned to you. There was a- they asked me to go - not prize giving but to -when they got their certificates. They said, "Would you give certificates out?" And when I got up, she said, "Will you speak about yourself?" I said, "No I will not speak about myself. I've had the talk. I'm just going to give them the certificate and wish them well." But I got up and there was- it's a pretty ordinary crowd of people, as you can imagine, you know. And I said- and I said, "You all here today. Have you ever met a Jew?" And they said, "No." And I said, "Well, this is me. I'm a Jew. Am I any different?" And that's all I said. And that's what I want to know. Because a lot of people say 'the Jews' and they've never met a Jew. And this was a

bunch of people who go to the pub and, you know, and you feel, "I'd like them to see we're not all that different after all."

And what's the main message in your talks? What is it that you want to convey?

Don't let it happen again. And that's what they actually do on the Holocaust [Day]: Let us not forget. You know, the talks. Not- don't let it happen again. Because actually now, I mean I have what I call a commercial at the end, right? And the commercial at the end - because I tell them how much I love being in this country and how grateful I am - and then I say, "There's a little commercial if you bear with me for another couple of minutes. And that is, are you aware what the Jewish refugees who came to this country actually did for this country?" And some people will not know. And I said that actually, "Well I have got amongst my bits..." It was the 'Telegraph' published it in 1999, I think, or something. And it was called "*The gift that Hitler gave to this country*". And there were photographs of those - judges, lawyers, Lucien Freud - all those people right across - but I only pick out two. "Do you know what happened with the Paralympics? Doctor [Ludwig] Guttmann who went into- And I tell them about the Stoke Mandeville Hospital. That is the beginning of the Paralympics - now worldwide. Do you know what happened in Edinburgh? Do you know what happened in Edinburgh?"

Go on. Maybe...

Sir Rudolf Guttmann - Sir Rudolf Bing. Sorry. Guttmann... Was the start of the Edinburgh Festival. A Viennese Jew, who after the war in 1947 said "It's a sad town. We'll have to do something." And he started a classical music festival which has become what it has become. There were a lot of applications, and some of them there was no room for, so they went on 'the fringe' - 'The Fringe'. An international festival all over the world. And he was Knighted by the Queen, obviously. He was also Director of Glyndebourne. He became the director of the Metropolitan Museum [Opera] in New York. And these were Jewish refugees. End of commercial.

[02:05:48]

So, do you see yourself as part of this group of Jewish refugees?

Of course, I'm a Jewish refugee... of course I am. That I haven't forgotten now. No, not at all. I mean, it's – I'm proud of it. Proud that I managed to come here and got lucky enough to come here and, and, and- maybe my- do my little bit in advertising, which...

We didn't talk about it much. Tell us a little bit about your professional...

Advertising?

Yeah. What did you do?

Well, it was a small company called George Cumming Ltd. It was in Davies Street - do you know where Davies Street is? Almost ...Soho. And as I said I went there and they told me it was quite a low-down job. In other words, a learning job almost. And it was called in those days a 'voucher clerk'. Well, I wasn't a voucher clerk, because I was lucky enough that the media manager. Do you know what a media manager was?

Tell us.

It was the people who buy the space in the newspapers, radio and television as it became later on. We buy the time for the commercials, et cetera. So, this was the space buyer, became a media manager, media director. So, it went- the title became better as it went on through the years. And I became his secretary. And we had some - a small agency - but we had illustrious clients. Standard and Triumph Motors... Bryant and May Matches, Wilkinson Sword... industrial ones... What else? Spears Games... There were lots of them. Now this is in 1948.

[02:07:46]

You couldn't buy a car, but you had to advertise it so that people wouldn't forget there was such a thing as a Triumph motorcar. So that's really what it was. And I just worked myself up and eventually became a buyer in my own right and had my own office in Bond Street. And then eventually the- Mr. Cumming who was an old... Churchillian figure died, and the firm was sold to Australians. And the Australians eventually sold it to- amalgamated rather- with a company in Piccadilly, Braun's Advertising. And then... a Jewish American came in and bought things up and that's when it started going really away. Because American advertising is a different story altogether. And then I had seven years of- of that which wasn't all that nice because the language started getting very rife, and lots of nasty things happened. I was okay

actually. But I didn't like the work anymore. I adored it - the staff. It was really exciting and lovely. Then Dennis kept saying, "I wish you would pack it in. Pack it in! Don't go anymore! You hate it, you hate it!" And I said, "No, I want them to fire me." And they wouldn't fire me until one lovely, lovely day. They called me in and said, "Head office" - because we were a sub-head office - "wants to reduce staff." And I'd been- I was the oldest one there because I mean advertising is a young thing, apart from the Saatchi's, of course. And would I consider resigning if they gave me a year's salary? Yes please! And they said, "Oh, no, you've got to go home and have a word with Dennis." I said, "Shall I ask him permission?" So, I came home, I said, "Can I have a confirmation" "Oh yes please...resign, please resign." "Yes, I know." Lovely. I'd had thirty-seven years which was enough anyway. And it changed a lot after that. I couldn't do what- you know what they're doing now in advertising? I was just saying- funny enough, I met up with an old boss of mine about a month ago after thirty-odd years. And he's still involved. And he told me one of the huge new agencies they've got one huge large room and it's just computers. They haven't even got a waste bin. And they sit there all day just on these comp- I would die doing this. But it was good when I was in it. I loved it.

[02:10:28]

So, you continued working after you got married?

Oh yes, yes. I worked from '59 until I stopped that work.

And then you said you were also- you volunteered here.

And then I was home for a year. Did decorating... gardening. And then Dennis came home one day said, "There's a boutique opened in the village." Because I love to do something you know. And when I went in, it wasn't boutique, it was Cancer Research actually. And volunteers, so I worked for them for seventeen years, yes. Lovely. I enjoyed it.

And you've been here in Cheam for many years?

Fifty. Fifty years. So, we've been married sixty years this year. Ten years we lived up in London.

And do you feel you belong to here? To...

I belong here.

...this part of the world?

Very much so. Yes. Well, never regretted- I mean things have changed, because I'm afraid that there's- lots of people have died off in the- in the years. We had very- close friends. But I have wonderful neighbours. I've got a young couple next door with two little boys. I've got a very nice, young – well, later middle-aged - couple next door. They have no children. I've got these Jewish friends of mine living up the road. The shul is in Sutton, down the road. You know I've got friends there. The... Yeah, I can't- And I've got my niece, and all the family there. Yeah. Can't complain. I truly love it- love it – love it.

This- particularly here?

Yeah. I like- like living here. I've always with – both Dennis and I we're real walkers- for a start. So, we did- this part of the country is very good because Surrey- I mean, we are two stops away from Epsom. And once you get out you can walk... I mean you could be anywhere, you know, going there. And I've got some non-Jewish friends. One of them belongs to the RSC Club, which they have a wonderful place in Epsom. It's a lovely- it's a golf course and beautiful. You go down there for lunch and it's- it is- no complaints. Lonely occasionally, not because I need to be, but I miss my other half a lot. You know? You talk about soulmates, well, he was just that. Still is. Anyway. So, we were really lucky, really. It's a lot more than some people have.

[02:13:00]

Yeah.

And as I say, friends are lovely.

And... how did you get on with his family?

Dennis's family?

Yeah.

Brilliant. Brilliant. I mean his brother died ten years ago now. He was older than Dennis was, who is funnily enough is born in Palestine. He- in the days when it was Palestine obviously and because as I say, his father was- their father was in the Army. And he has as I say, had a son and a daughter. So, I don't see- the Bournemouth ones I don't see very often because obviously they're down there. The ones here - they're all married now. So, Denise and her husband are... That's not very good photograph of her...

We'll look at some a bit later...

Some of the, some of the you know, photographs...

Yes.

That's my niece and her family.

Yeah...

Only there's an addition to that now. Well, there are two additions actually.

If you hold it and show it to us. Yeah. Yes. We're going to look at it.

So yes- they're a nice bunch. And... Yeah, I mean I'm just Auntie Eve. You know, there's no... I mean whether they think you know, 'she's a Jew' I don't think so. I mean Denise, all her friends have been to my talks, because, you know, 'Oh, Auntie Eve's, you know, when...' "Oh! Can we come?" "It's me. Of course, you can come." So...

Did you ever - speaking of being Jewish - did you ever experience any anti-Semitism in England?

No... no. That's what I say. I mean, I have a - a friend- when we moved in here fifty years ago, after we'd been here about a week or so, this lady appeared on the doorstep and she said that she was one of the wardens from St. Dunstan's Church which is the local church. And perhaps once we settled in, would we come and have some tea with her and her husband. They just lived down the road. So, after she had gone - a very smart, very elegant looking lady - and... Dennis and I looked at each other and said how will we break it to them that we're not particularly 'either churches or anything else' people? And... thinking that she was one of... So eventually, as I say, four weeks later she did- "Well you're now settled in. Will

you come?" And we went down there and almost the first thing her husband Vin – who unfortunately died two years ago - said to Dennis, "Are you a whiskey man? Oh! Dennis says, "I knew I'd arrived!"

[02:15:56]

Then we became friends for life. He died, as I said, two years ago. And she and I are best of friends. And I've got another friend who funnily enough, is a Berliner non-Jewish Berliner. And we're terribly close friends as well. Unfortunately, she had a stroke, so she doesn't walk very well. But you know, I don't- "This is the Jewish lot. This is..." Who cares? You know. Everybody gets... It's- I always say I don't care who anybody is or what they are, as long as they are decent people. You know?

Almost the last question I wanted to ask you. Is there anything you miss from Vienna? From Austria?

No. Nothing...nothing. It makes me very angry when I hear people want to go back and all that sort of thing because I just don't see how they can do it. I don't think- because with all due respect, and it's a sad thing to say, they're much worse than the Germans are. Much worse than the Germans are. I don't- I mean it shows in the elections they recently had. It shows you. Okay, everybody blames the, you know, the, the you know their foreigners and all that sort of thing.

[02:17:26]

Eve, do you have a message- I know I already asked you what message do you give to the children- but do you have a message for anyone who might watch this interview?

Be grateful you're living here. I really mean that. I know we hear about the people who keep saying Israel. Well, I don't want to live in Israel. I don't think it's the... milk and honey...

You're happy to be...?

I always have been. I finish off by this. I always have been and always will be so very, very grateful I was allowed to come here. I really am. Because this country's done nothing but good for me. With little exceptions for their rule, but I mean, basically I have been lucky.

Very lucky. I mean... What is there not to be lucky about? It's giving me a good life. Maybe some of it I contributed to. I don't know - I hope I have. But... otherwise, I don't know. I mean... As long as people tolerate what I do, I'm only too happy to tolerate, within reason, what they do. ...Thank you.

Ok, Eve. Thank you very much for this really fascinating interview, and for sharing your story with us.

Well, I hope you... hope generations to come or somebody you know might say, well you know, I really – I just can't stress enough how grateful I am. When I sit out in my garden - and it's not very good at the moment because obviously it's a bad time, you know? - I just think well how many people haven't got this? You don't have to have money. I'm comfortable. Thank God I am, you know? And ok, I have no children. Maybe that's a little bit of a regret, but I've made it up with the family. I mean I - you know - maybe I wouldn't have been... any good at it. Who knows? But- and I say, I've been so lucky to have met these Jewish people that I get really on very well with. Very, very... charming, charming lovely people.

You feel you have a community around you?

Yeah. I mean there's one lady in particular - one up the road, I mean, a Jewish lady. And I mean she's - she's an angel that woman you know. She's always willing to help, anybody needs a lift you know. Not just me, you know. And you realise you get to know people, you know? And we have a laugh, which is important because I think laughing is a great help. And I have my music. I love my music. I love my classical music.

Aha...

Yeah

What do you like? What sort of music?

[02:20:58]

I... I like Bruch's Violin Concerto. I mean, I don't know if you're classical in any way whatsoever. I listen to Classic FM and put it on and listen to it because I love the music. I like- I love Jonas Kaufmann. I don't know who... Do you know who I mean?

Yeah.

The tenor? German? Really great - fantastic voice. Yes.

Ok. Thank you again. We're going to look now at some of your photographs.

Well, there's not much to look at...

Just one moment...

[End of interview]

[02:21:26]

[02:21:49]

[Start of photographs and documents]

Photo 1

This is Israel Meyer Gottfried, my grandfather. My paternal grandfather, who lived in Romania- lived in Romania.

When was this taken?

It must've been in the very early 1920s... 1920s. Towards that- I'm not too sure at all.

In Romania?

No, in Vienna.

In Vienna?

Yes. It was taken in Vienna. He must have come on a visit.

Photo 2

Yes? This is a war picture. Obviously, my father was injured, and I'm not quite sure what the injury was. But he is the gentleman sitting down. That is Jakob Gottfried.

He's on the left?

He's the one sitting down.

Yeah...Thank you. Yes please.

Photo 3

On this photograph I do not know who the lady on the far left is. The next one was an uncle called... Oh my goodness what was his name? I said a minute ago... can't remember. Then is my Aunt Anna. And the last gentleman to the right is my father.

And where was it taken?

It was taken in one of the holiday resorts and I do not know which one it is.

And when?

How do I know? I don't know...

That's fine.

[02:23:32]

Photo 4

My mother as a young woman. Unfortunately, I do not know the date when it was taken. But it was obviously done as a photograph that you did for identification of some kind.

Photo 5

My photograph as a first modelling engagement, taken approximately at the age of five.

Where?

In Vienna. By Edith Lokal, which was one of the top photographers in Vienna at the time.

Thank you.

Photo 6

Winter in Austria. I'm not sure where, but probably somewhere near Vienna Woods.

Photo 7

At home with my parents. And once again I am not quite sure what date. But that's before all the trouble started.

And where is it? At your house?

In Vienna. In the flat – did I say that?

And the address please?

That was 2 Wilhelm-Raabe-Gasse – *zwei*

Thank you.

Photo 8

Ah. The building which is Schloßhofer Straße *dreiundfünfzig* - in other words Schloßhofer Straße fifty-three. The shop, or store, on the corner - because it's a corner building - was my

father's store. My parents' store. And on the right-hand side on the top floor, on the third floor, was the flat we lived in. And this is an official postcard which for some reason or other was on sale in Vienna. And it very kindly showed where I lived.

Photo 9

This is a passport photograph that was put on my certificate, on my way to England with the Kindertransport. Obviously taken in 1939.

Photo 9 - Reverse

This is a photograph- this is- sorry. This is the back of the photograph that you just saw a minute ago, which entitled me to leave lovely old Austria.

[02:25:57]

Yes please...

Photo 10

Aunt Jenny and myself. That was Mrs. Lochhead, who I lived with in Glasgow, outside our house. And probably- I think it was about 1942.

Yes please...

Photo 11

Jenny and Alex Lochhead who were the wonderful, wonderful people who took me in and made my life absolutely beautiful and bearable again in Glasgow. Obviously during the war. I'm not quite sure what date.

Photo 12

This is the date that Dennis and I got engaged. It was- I think New Year's Eve actually, in 19...57! I had to think for a moment when I got engaged. Yes, sorry, it was well, '56 /'57 actually because New Year's Eve. So... a long time ago. Sixty years actually now. And... what a wonderful man.

Photo 13

This was great-aunt Liesel who always used to write poems for every occasion. And this was on the occasion of my leaving on the Kindertransport to go to Britain. A sad little poem because it was a 'goodbye'. But I treasure it.

Thank you.

[02:27:30]

[Brief comments not attached to chosen photograph]

Yes, what do we see there?

Document 1

I kept a little diary when I went to Glasgow. And this is obviously one of the first pages. I tried to write in it regularly but unfortunately this situation didn't allow me to do that. But anyway, this is the beginning of it, as I remember it to be.

Document 2

Yes please... is it the files? What do we see here? Just in general...

It's a file sent to me during last year, detailing the application for me to come to this country on the Kindertransport.

And you got it from World Jewish Relief...

I got it from the World Jewish Relief sent to me after they applied- after they told me that they had these documents, did I wanted them?

It's your case file.

Yeah.

Thank you.

Document 2 – Content

Yes please. What do we see here? Is it the same file?

It's the same- another page of the same file... appertaining to my... coming to this country on the Kindertransport.

And here we can see that... they know that you had to work very hard.

And it proved that when I claimed that I worked extremely hard at the Levines that I was talking the truth and didn't make any stories up at all.

Eve, thank you very much again for sharing your photographs, your story and...

Thank you very much for asking. I hope...hope it will do good. You know if anybody wants any information... while I'm here! [laughs]

Thank you very much.

Oh, not at all. Thank you for taking the trouble of coming.

[02:30:23]

[End of photographs and documents]