IMPORTANT

AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
AJR
Winston House, 2 Dollis Park
London N3 1HF
ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	RV254

Interviewee Surname:	Danziger
Forename:	Hans
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	November 1930
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	3 February 2021
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	3 hours 57 minutes

REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV254
NAME: Hans Danziger
DATE: February 3, 2021
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]
[0:00:00]

Can you please tell me your name?

Hans Danziger. Hans Wolfgang Danziger.

And where were you born, and when?

I was born in Berlin in November 1930.

Hans, thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Can you tell us a little bit about your family background please?

Where to start? My family background- well, as far as I know, my father, Leopold, was born in, [coughs] excuse me, was born in 1881. And he was in the First World War, captured in Russia, had a marvellous time on a farm, and escaped back to Germany after being with the Bolsheviks for a little while. And he- he then set up a fashion company, something about which he knew absolutely nothing. And he was conned out of his money by the manageress. So that was stage one of his business career, there. He had actually learned to be a printer because my grandfather had a printing business. But as was cust- customary in those days, you didn't employ your son immediately. You sent him away, and my father learned to be a

printer with a German newspaper. And he then decided he didn't like typesetting, and all that and- and started to sell printing paper. And he travelled all over Germany. And his whole collection of printing paper, he told me, was in his top pocket. And his luggage consisted of about five cases which needed porters to carry them. And I've still got his little case. It was- it weighs a tonne, and has all glass boxes with silver tops in- which had his toiletries with him. It's still upstairs. And he gave it to me once. I said, "It's too heavy for an aircraft. I can't even take it." It was ridiculous. Anyhow, he met- he claims or somebody claimed that he knew my- he was married. I think it was an arranged marriage; nobody talked about it. He then claims that he went around to my mother's family, and my mother was one or two and he had her on his knee. And he said, "You're a bonny little thing. I think I'll marry you one day." That was his story. I don't know how true it was. Anyhow, when- twenty years later, he did marry her, much to the annoyance of my grandfather who didn't approve of my father being twenty years older. And- but they were very happy. But sadly, sadly, they got married in - what was it? – '29, '30. I'm not quite sure. And it was a miserable time. My mother had studied at the Fröbel Institut and had become a governess. And after the First World War, there were a great many people who had made money but had no manners and they employed her as a governess for the children and then would go to smart hotels. And they would watch her so that they could pick up the right knife and fork and so forth. So she had a whale of a time. So she was quite happy.

[0:03:40]

And- he, they- so when- when I came along, by that time, he'd started a commission printing business, which- where he could work from home. And he was just taking orders. He worked for the Supply Ministry in Germany- the- the Finance Ministry in- in Berlin, printing forms and things like that. And according to him, he was the last Jewish printer that they employed. And they said to him one day, "Terribly sorry, Danziger, but our heads are on the block. If we're found doing business with a Jewish company, you know, we'll be sacked." So, he gave up his- in the letter - I don't know if you glanced at it - he says that his friend Goerner then bought his company at the full price of what it was worth. Most likely paid more. And so he had all my father's contacts. And he very kindly- so he was not Jewish, of course. And he put the money into a bank under a false name, and gave my father the bank book. So that all through the war, my father was able to go to the bank, and take out a few bob when he needed it. So that was a big advantage.

[0:05:06]

Just one second. So you said your father was sent to a newspaper first to train, or-?

Yes.

Which newspaper? Do you know where that was?

No. It was in Berlin, somewhere. One of the German papers.

And the grandfather had a printing business.

Yes.

Where was that? And what was it called?

In Berlin.

What was it called?

I've no idea. I was showing my partner some of the books in there that my grandfather printed. Big German volumes of Schiller and Goethe and stuff like that. And I saw a stamp in it, just says 'L. Danziger'. Well, that's my father. But that's- that's all. But that's all I knew about it. My grandfather presumably came from Danzig. And I've tried to find out through the various organisations, who were quite helpful, actually. But I couldn't really find out anything. My mother's- my mother's side, I could trace back to about 1815, when my grandfather, her father's grandfather, or great-grandfather, whatever, came over from- from Silesia, or somewhere. Or I don't know, may have been owned by the Poles or the Russians at that time. And he came over to what was then Prussia, Brunswick - no – Brandenburg. Brandenburg. And I've got a little certificate upstairs, which my cousin in Israel gave me, which said that, from now onwards, he, he would for ten *gute Groschen* he would swear to allegiance to the Kaiser, and he would become a citizen, and take on the name of Growald,

which was- presuming they had some woods or something, and it may have been a- what, a shortening of *Großer- Großwald*, or something like that. So it became Growald. And-

And- and what was the background of your mother's parents? What did they do- or father?

[0:07:20]

My grandfather, I think- I think was a mining engineer. And unless I'm getting it muddled. It could well be that I'm getting him muddled with somebody else, but I don't think so. He was a mining engineer and worked, doing rest- reparations and things. I may be getting slightly muddled. But I know- no, I think he was sale- he was doing some sales of some sort. I don't know what it was. And he died. I- I can't remember if I remember him.

Right.

Very vaguely.

And you said your mother, your father came- how did he know the family? Or, you said he met your mother as a small child.

No idea. No idea. Many of my father's- many of the acquaintances many mentioned in the letter were actually my mother's stepmother. Because my grandfather's first wife, which is my mother's mother - and she had a brother Günther, who went to the Argentine - she was called Hedwig. And she was about six foot something. And she died in 1909. So my mother would have been about eight. My mother was born in 1901. And- and so then he waited fortnight or whatever, I don't know. And then he married again, Regina. And he had a son. And that was the uncle I had who went to Auschwitz and so forth, but survived, went to Israel. So that's another story there.

OK. So to come back to your father, you said 'commissioning editor' 'commissioning printer'.

Yeah.

Tell us what that is. What is that?

Well, it's- business. You just take the orders, but you pass it on to a- to a printer to do the actual printing. And then you deliver it.

So, a middleman? Middleman?

A middleman. Yes. Yes. So he didn't need office space. His office space was at the end of our corridor, you know. And I was told to be quiet when he did his books. And that was it, you know. So, it was a very convenient way and it seemed to work very well. I mean, we weren't wealthy I can't imagine. We lived in this very- when I was born we- we lived in a district called Steglitz, which is sort of middle. And we- I seem to remember a very small flat, very- very vaguely. I mean, my only picture that I have in my mind is sleeping at the foot of my parents' bed. And they were in a high bed and I was on a little cot or something. Well, I must have been about- must have been about two or- two, at least, because I heard a speech by Hitler, which frightened me, because the voice frightened me. And I remember my father saying, you know, "It's alright, it's alright." You know. That's a- that's a very clear memory; I can still see it. That's the only memory of Steglitz I have, really.

On the radio? You heard the voice on the radio?

[0:10:40]

Yeah. Yeah, he was making one of those ranting speeches which frightened me. But soon after that, there were laws promulgated that Jews were not allowed to live in non-Jewish homes, and had to live in Jewish houses - Jewish owned houses. And I think that's when we moved to Wilmersdorf, which was a sort of- I looked it up one day. It was a- it was slightly bohemian touches. It was near the West End of Berlin and I went to see it a couple of times. There's a railway, underground station, Güntzelstraße. I went to see it. And-

And what- what sort of flat? What are your memories there from Wilmersdorf?

Well, the memories of the flat- is that we lived on the very, very, very top floor. The lift only went to the fourth floor. We lived on the fifth. And the kitchen had a sloping roof. I

remember that. And we had- and we had a very long corridor. [phone rings] I'm sorry about the phone, just leave it. It'll shut up. And the… very long corridor, there was a kitchen.

[audio break]

Yeah.

We- I remember my father saying to me one day, not then but after the war, you know. He said, had the Nazis come upstairs to arrest him, he would have thrown himself over the lift shaft and taken them with him. He wasn't a very big man. I don't know how he was going to accomplish that, but he was pretty fearless. And- so, we lived on the top floor and- and had this very long corridor. Memories. Did you want memories of some of this?

[0:12:31]

Yes. Yes, please.

I used to go to Breslau because my mother was born in Breslau, and I used to go with her sometimes to go and see relations. And I was fascinated by the dining car waiters. And so when we got back to Berlin, I suppose, I don't know, I was about- couldn't have been more than six. So, at six, I pretended to be a waiter. And so they bought me a little red waistcoat. And on Friday nights, I would carry the- I would carry the something or the other, my mother would put on a plate. And I would go down the corridor shaking like this, as if I was on a train. I still remember that. And go into the dining- we had one large room, and- where my uncle, who seemed to be living with us at the time, he would make all the *Brachas* - make Friday night. And he was- he had wanted to be a lawyer. But… sadly, that was not to be. So, he went to, I think it was Leo Baeck, or some- one of those. Or- there's a very famous rabbi whose book I bought a little while ago who taught him. And he became a- he didn't even become a rabbi. He didn't have time. So he became religious teacher; he's- got a certificate. He- he'd got a certificate for teaching religion, but that wasn't really what he wanted to do. And, and he, he lived on this. He lived- then went to a *Hahkshara* in Fulda. But I remember him living with us there, and I think he was there when we left to come to England. In between, I'd gone to Switzerland, because I'd caught something or the other, some bug or whatever. And I needed to recuperate. So, I was only about seven. Could have been just

seven. And my uncle Hans, who seemed to organise the whole- everything, and whose daughter managed to get us to England. He- or he knew some people in Bern in Switzerland, who did exchanges. But they were willing to take me. And I went to this butter- she made butter. And we used to go every morning downstairs into the cellar, where there were these huge pats of butter. And she used to run her finger along the rim and taste it, and I did the same. So by the time I came back to Berlin, my clothes didn't fit, and I was waddling down the platform. My fath- my father had put me on the train, given the conductor a tip and I went to Switzerland from Berlin-

By yourself?

To Bern, by myself. And back again. But- but coming back, my father said, I was surrounded by four Swedish models. It must have been a sign of things to come. And these four models had sort of adopted me, you know. And I was so small and fat. And-

[0:15:36]

Hans, which year was that? When did you go to Switzerland?

Well, if I was seven – '37.

And for how long? For a month, or-?

Yeah, I think I was there for about a month. Yes. And recuperated. And then I came back. And then '38, of course, the- the Kristallnacht, and the schools were burnt down. I went to a school called the Prinzregentenstraße. And when I went to Berlin, on one of my trips with the girls, I did ask a passer-by where it was, and he said it was down the road, but it was now an old-age home. So, that- there was not much point in visiting it, so I didn't actually go. But that was burnt. And, and then I- I remember going to see it, or the other one, I'm not quite sure. I don't really remember the Oranienburger Straße. But we had sort of a daily help. She was not a housekeeper because she didn't live in, but a daily. And she took me around. And she took me to the see the burnt-out synagogue, whichever one it was. And that's another vivid memory. And I'm sure it's not made up. There was a policeman standing there who said it was a *große Schande* [absolute disgrace]. And that I always remember hearing. And we

came away. And then shortly after that, I went to school in the Joachimstaler Straße, which was really a- a Masonic B'nai B'rith lodge- building. And I went to school there until I came to England.

[0:17:29]

So, did you start- what- what was your first primary school?

Yeah-

Was Prinzregentenstraße? And that was a Jewish school?

Yes. Yes, there was a synagogue there, Prinzregentenstraße Synagogue as well. Yes. So I went both times.

And the help was Jewish or not Jewish? The help.

I beg pardon?

The help. You said to help – not Jewish. Because she could take you- she took you to see the synagogue.

When Jews were not allowed anywhere, she would take me. And, and she would do everything. My father told us the story. I think it's mentioned in the letter, but I'm not quite sure, that when I- I don't know how old I was. Couldn't have, could have only been about seven. And God knows what I was doing, roaming about Berlin with my sister. I mean, nowadays, you wouldn't dream of it. But evidently, my sister fell down and hurt her knee very badly. And we couldn't sit down anywhere because there was no yellow bench where Jews could sit. And I remembered that. And I hailed a taxi and said my parents would pay. And he took me to my house. My parents paid. Sylvia can't believe the story of a seven year old taking his- his little sister - good God knows how old she was at the time - in a taxi. You know.

How much younger- when was your sister born?

Three years after me. So, if I was seven, she could only have been four, you know. I don't know what we were doing roaming around.

So, was it quite free? You were quite free? Despite the time, you- your-

Yes.

- that part of your childhood?

I met a- we're at Grange- Grange Road Synagogue, which is a United synagogue. I go there because my brother-in-law went there and took me and he was really responsible for my becoming a little more Jewish than I was. And I've just written to Rabbi Altshuler saying that now that I'm hooked on Belsize Square, and having written to the Chairman of the United synagogue, I told him that I was really hooked on Belsize Square. And he wrote back saying that he worries for my mental health, that he was worried that I would become frum. [Bea laughs] But I said there was no danger about that. That was by the by.

Yeah.

Um…

Freedom, we were saying you- you were still free to-

Yes, well-

- walk around.

Well, seemingly. I don't know. I can't remember who took me to school.

Yeah, to school-

I can't remember coming- I don't remember anything like that. I can't even remember our help's name. All I know is, she was lovely and took us everywhere. And I think father wrote

in the letter she always asked about us, and so forth. And we were very lucky in that sense. And-

And Kristallnacht, so, you remember-?

[0:20:30]

Well, I just said. Kristallnacht, I remember that next day. And after that I went to the school. And, and…

It's likely, you know, the policeman story, it could- that it is Oranienburger Straße, because that synagogue was saved - from completely burning down by-

Yes, I know.

By the police.

I've been there a couple of times.

Could be.

I've got on my wall- I could- afterwards, I could just bring it out to show you.

Yeah?

My father went to the synagogue. And I don't know which one it was, whether it was Prinzregentenstraße, or Oranienburger Straße. And he picked up some pages from a prayer book. And they're in the shape, almost like, like the tablets of the Ten Commandments! Just pure chance. And I worked for- just before I started studying, I saw an advert and I went to work in a, in an art shop, a couple of days a week just to fill in. And they- they made me a very nice box. So it's preserved, you know, no air can get in and destroy it, or anything like that. And these pages are preserved from the-

From Kristallnacht? He picked it-?

Yeah.

He just went and just picked it up?

Yeah – yeah. Yeah. So, I can just show it to you.

Definitely.

Take it off the wall.

So he must have felt this is an important thing to preserve - even at the time.

Yes, there were several, two or three pages. I've given one to one daughter, and I don't know who's got the other one. And-

How- we didn't talk about religion - a little bit- you said, Shabbat. How religious was your family?

We were not really religious. I do remember going to synagogue, sometimes. Very, very rarely.

Which, Prinzregentenstraße? Or Oranien-?

I couldn't tell you. I just know we went as a family, obviously. Because I remembered my- I still remember my mother stopping at a dairy and drinking a glass of buttermilk. And this is - I remember. She was very fond of buttermilk. And I noticed some of my recipes call for buttermilk, especially in the Gretel Beer book [classic Austrian baking and cooking]. So, I do remember going to synagogue every now and then. When my father was younger, he claimed he sang in the choir. But we were not, you know- we were not- we- I think we only did Friday nights because my uncle was living with us and he would insist on it. And- but otherwise, religion didn't sit- except that I went to a Jewish school, you know. My parents obviously felt it was necessary.

[0:23:07]

Yeah. And what do you remember from the school? What- what? Anything? Any of the other children, or what was being taught?

I don't remember anything. I've still got some of the books. My handwriting was appalling. My drawing was even worse. I don't know. I wasn't exactly gifted. And two or three of those books- I had quite a pile, my father must have kept all my works. And several of them reside in the Imperial War Museum. They are- they sent me a form the other day transferring ownership, or something like that, to the Imperial War Museum. I think they're there.

He donated them?

Yeah. I've still got two or three left, just for a laugh, you know.

So how did you get them? Did you come with- how did you get these books?

Right, which leads in a way to the story of after my father escaped from the factory in which he was working? I don't know-

We haven't got there yet.

You haven't got there yet?

No, we haven't got there yet.

But they- they came- because my father had- it was called the *Immigration* or *Emigration* or whatever. I don't know where he thought he was going to emigrate to. We did have visas to go to Venezuela. But he thought that was very far off and he wasn't very keen. And he thought in any case - he was an eternal optimist - the unions would do for Hitler. And he would be out of the picture in a couple of weeks. That was my father's- I never went by his prognostications. Anyhow, he- when things turned ugly, he had packed some boxes, with the family bits and pieces. Bits of silver, glass - all sorts of household goods that my- my sister would need when she got married, and all sorts of household things. Among them were- were

these books, and the letter, and all sorts of things. And when my parents were in England after the war in 1948, and working at- at- in- in Oxfordshire, near Banbury, with Mrs. Hahn-Warburg, who was a big shot of the Jewish Refugee Committee. They worked for her as housekeeper in the country. And, and then one day, the boxes arrived because my father had the- as you say, we haven't got there yet. But- the boxes were to go to his friend Goerner, who had bought his factory- his, his business. And Goerner stored them at the end of his garden in a shed all through the war. They were never – not bombed. Anything that was broken, was broken by this *Spediteur* [mover] who brought them to England. And every time I see their van, I curse it. I said, "You broke some of my stuff." And - sometimes see them here. And- and he-

[0:26:26]

And he kept it?

And- and- hm?

It was there untouched? Untouched? The boxes were untouched?

Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes. And the boxes just- Goerner then sent them over after the war. So they arrived about 1949, I suppose. And I still remember them being dumped in the yard. And there was- everybody was gathering round to see the great opening of the boxes. And my mother was *kvelling* a bit because she said, "I'll show them that I don't- that we come from a reasonable bourgeois family" and – you know. *"Aus einem guten Stall",* or something, my father used to say, and they unpacked the boxes. And a silver box- silver cigar box came out. And it said, Hahnsche Röhrenwerke. So, Mr. Hahn said, "How'd you get hold of that?" So, she says, "Well I got it from my Auntie Gustel!" Cause her husband worked for the Hahnsche Röhrenwerke. He said, "Well, you know, I *am* the Hahnsche Röhnwerke!" So she said, "And he was my uncle!" So, my mother thought we're related now, you know, long way. So there were all sorts of things in there, which it was nice to- to have, you know. I've got my mother's old glasses all beautifully etched and from God knows where, and coffee cups and little mocha cups and all sorts of stuff. And I think there's a box somewhere else with some linen. I think we're still using the napkins. And so it's all pretty well- all bits of the past.

[0:28:08]

What about the Torah? That piece of paper? Was that in there as well, from the synagogue? Did your father-?

Well, I don't know about that, because I found that among my father's personal papers that he had in a case. So he most likely brought that case with him when he came to England. And they all the- I've still got his, his *Reisepass* with big 'J' on it. And I've got- I've got pink passes that were issued by the Allied Control Commission after the war, which showed that they'd been "*Opfer des Faschismus".* And I've got those, which meant that they could, if there was a queue for food, they could go to the front, which of course led to cries of, 'I thought all the Jews had gone and here they are again', sort of thing. And yes, so I don't know if they did them much good.

Right.

But- but my parents didn't stay too long after the war because they then went off to- to this kibbutz in the country where my uncle-

Yes, we'll come back to that. But just back now to the 30s. So, do you remember, was emigration discussed? What was the atmosphere? Did you- you said you had- there was an element of fear. How- how-?

Not on my part.

Not on your part. Okay.

No. In fact, I met at- at- I think I'd started to say and lost track, but in the synagogue we had, we have lunches in Grange Road, once a month. And Alison, the girl who- friend of my daughter's and she said, "Why don't you read your father's letter one day?" - which I did. Last meeting we- I read it. And- and- Oh, dear, oh dear I've lost track of what I was telling you. Sorry – just-

[0:30:11]

Fear. I asked you whether there was fear or-

Yes. I met a man there - sorry about that.

No problem.

I met a man there. Alison introduced us. And she said, “Oh, he's from Berlin and several”- And we had a little chat. He said, “I want to make a terrible confession to you.” And I said, “Go on, then.” He said, “When the SS bands used to march down the street,” he said, “I used to march alongside and go like this.” I said, “Don't worry, I used to do the same thing.” You know, military bands, little boys. So we- we weren't really, I wasn't really aware of anything. I suppose my parents protected me from most of it, you know. And I didn't know much about the emigration until it was nearly time, when my parents told us that we would be going to England, you know.

So tell us what was that like?

Well-

How- what happened?

I just remember- I vaguely remember my mother saying, “You're going to England for a while. Things are not what we would want in Germany, and in order to protect you and have a better life, I think for a while, for a holiday, you’d better go to England.” And as I'd been to Switzerland I thought this was quite a good wheeze, and didn't worry too much about it. I said, “Don’t worry. We'll be back soon.” And then this had been arranged by my uncle Hans, whose stepdaughter had been secretary to Baroness Rothschild. And it was through her that we managed to get on a Kindertransport. And my parents had to pay for a Polish couple as well, which was okay. And-

So, they sponsored somebody else?

I beg your pardon?

They sponsored somebody else? Your parents?

Yes, yes. And-

Because I've never- I haven't come across that.

That was the- that's all I know. I- I don't think I would make it up. So, whether it was a condition, you know.

And the stepdaughter of your uncle, you said, she was also from Germany? She had emigrated here before, or?

[0:32:23]

I've no idea. My uncle Hans actually had two other brothers. One who lived in Switzerland. And they only met them after the war when my Uncle Hans died, we went to the funeral in Germany. He lived in- he lived in… he, he, he hid. He left Germany in 1929. And lived in Holland. Thought it would be safe in Holland. And he had said to my father in 1929, he said, "Get out of Germany." He said, something like - my German is a bit awful, but "*Es wird kein Brot mehr gebacken für die Juden in*- Germ- *in Deutschland*." I think, something like that. And my father said, "Ach!" As he always said, you know, "Rubbish - rubbish." And my brother-in-law did some filming in- when they went back to Germany it was my father's birthday. And they were all sitting on the veranda, my father, my brother-in-law did silent films and my Uncle George is sitting next to him. And my father's going like this, and we all fell about laughing. This was my- his favourite- you know, "This is all rubbish. It's all rubbish." Everything was rubbish. Yeah, he thought it was rubbish; Hitler would be gone. And so we set off. I still remember the night of our going when the porter came up. Mr Fischer with the huge moustaches, and he crying buckets. And I remember he brought us oranges to take with us. And- well, he was the one instrumental helping my father with the boxes and- and putting, but you say we're not there yet. So, this is after my father had escaped, he helped.

So this is Mr Fischer, the caretaker of the whole building?

Yes.

Not Jewish?

No. This is why I think it's so important. All these people weren't Jewish.

Yeah, very important.

Yes. And-

So, who took you to the station or-?

I beg pardon?

Who took you to the station?

My parents. They took us to the station and then we went on the train. And then I remember we- in Holland, and the ladies gave us biscuits or something. Then we went on the ship. And I remember breaking my sister's doll which I was carrying on my back in a sack. But it was- they had china dolls in those days, and I turned round and hit it against a bollard and I could hear it all smashed, but she was too little to complain. So, that was that. And then we arrived in Liverpool Street and sat there with the labels around our neck. I remember that. And then we were fetched by the assistant matron from the hostel, which had been established in Putney by Mr Sainsbury and Lord Rothschild. Evidently, they'd had dinner together one night, and were talking about the situation. And they said, "Well, it's all right talking about it - let's do something!" And they said, "Okay," and they put the money together or whatever, and they'd established a hostel and guaranteed twenty-one of us to England. So they paid the fifty pounds that the government demanded, and they signed guarantee forms that we wouldn't become a burden on the state. And - yeah.

[0:36:03]

And how did they choose? Do you know those-?

I have no- well, possibly because it was Lady Rothschild, that got us over here, it may have been that that was the connection that got us into the Sainsbury home. If you- you know. Otherwise, I'm not quite sure. And so there were twenty-one of us in the Sainsbury home.

And including you and your sister?

Yes, yes. And there was people already there when we arrived.

And were you worried? Do you remember were you worried about being separated from your sister? Did you feel a sense of responsibility? I mean, you were three years older. She was-

Yeah, well, we were in the same hostel together.

Yeah.

Yeah. And my parents had stipulated that we were not to be parted. And when evacuation came in August ‘39, my sister and I were sent to old Mr. Sainsbury’s hunting lodge in Leighton Buzzard, with another girl, Miriam Maranz. I don’t know what happened to her. And, and we were there. So my sister and I stayed together there. And then my sister and I went, after that six months, we went to Harpenden, and we were there two or three years, three years, and then she went to boarding school and I went to St. Albans. So-

[0:37:26]

So, you stayed together for-

Yes.

- quite a time.

Yes. Which was- which was good, you know.

And what were the conditions? You said so you spent a night- you arrived? Exactly after your arrival? You spent the night where, before you went to the hostel?

No, no, no, we went straight away.

You went straight there.

Oh, yes, yes.

And what did it look like? What-?

I don't remember, there was a lot of rowdyism, everybody seemed to be going wild. It was all a bit noisy. And all I remember about the hostel was I was made to eat some sort of custard, which was pretty awful. I sat in a room for hours having to eat this custard. In the end, I was let off, I think, I don't know. But the matron and the deputy matron were lovely. And the Matron, Mrs. Barkin I still remember. I went to see her years, years later. She lived in a- in an old nurses' home in Hanover Square somewhere. Or that was her club. I think it was a club. And I went to see her. I remembered her all those, you know, several years later. She was an old lady by then. But it was very well run. And Sainsbury looked after us very well. And don't forget, he paid for me and everything until I was twenty-one.

Did you ever meet him?

Yes, we used to- he was very good. He- when we were in Harpenden, he, this is Alan Sainsbury. So, he was the son of old JB Sainsbury. There was Alan and Robert, two boys – boys! And I remember him motoring down - so he must have had petrol - where he came to Harpenden from London and took Marion and my- me out to tea, which was rather nice. And then I applied- you told me to go to World Jewish Relief and I think- I haven't heard anything since then. I filled out the forms.

OK.

[0:39:42]

But somewhere, somehow the other day I came across something whereby - I don't know where I was looking at - there was some papers or something that Sainsbury had approved my football boots or something. I can't remember what happened. Anyhow. Most things went through him. So, when I was in Harpenden, I remember Mrs. Leaney- I needed a new raincoat or something, and that she would write to the Refugee Committee. He would say, "OK", and then they would send her the money to buy a raincoat. I think she got fifteen shillings a week for looking after us – each – I don't know. And, and- and then I was- when I was at school, I was co-opted onto the football team. So, I was absolutely desperate for football boots and I had to ring or write to the Refugee Committee in London, who then okayed the football boots. And I played in goal; I let all the goals through. And that was the end of my football career. And so I didn't need the football boots anymore - couldn't give them back. [laughs] I was not a sports person. And so, everything went through the Refugee Committee. And Lord Sainsbury, as he later became, paid for everything. Every Christmas, we got a card. Every birthday, we got a card, always personally signed. And it wasn't until he went to the House of Lords and I wrote to congratulate him and so on he- then I got a letter back from his secretary saying, "Lord Sainsbury…" and then I thought, I can't be bothered to write to his secretary, you know, there'll be thousands of people. And I continued to get the odd card and I sent the odd card, but after that I sort of lost touch really, until he died. Oh! No, the first Kindertransport- the first Kindertransport, that Bertha Leverton made the reunion, and he came along to that. And he sat at a table with us and there were Wilfred and his- there two, four, maybe six of us still from the hostel.

From that twenty-one- ?

Yeah, I think so. About four. Yeah. And there was another couple there. And he sat with us, and well, we had a good- and that was last time I saw him, really. And, when I was twenty-one, they asked me what I wanted. And I said, I'd like a book "History of the Jewish People" by- Philip? Is it Roth? One of- one of the Roths- which I've got. And he sent me that. That was the end. Twenty-one was cut off day. But until then, he'd paid all my schooling and he- my- anything I needed. He paid my sister's college fees when she went to Hendon Tech to do a NEB. And - very good. And every year, we would have to go up to Stamford Street, which was headquarters of Sainsbury's, and we would have to show him our reports, and he would give us tea in the office. And, so we always had to go up to London once a year to see him. And I remember that there was a- he died. And I was invited to the memorial service at I

think it was at St Margaret's Westminster - one of those. But I just had an operation, I needed to go to loo rather frequently. So I rang the verger. And he said, “Oh, no problem at all! It’s- you just go through the choir.” So can you imagine during the service, I'm going to get up and go through the choir to the lavatory? You know. I said, “No, I don’t think I can come.” But- so, my brother-in-law went instead with my sister. And although he was very annoyed, because in *The Times* Court column, it said that I had- I had been, which annoyed him no end. [laughs] Yes, I was sitting next to Admiral Ramsey or somebody. Anyhow.

[0:43:45]

So, Marion went, and she talked to Lord Sainsbury’s wife, Pauli. And- and then her, one of her sons came. And she said, “Oh, this is Marion Goldwater,”- you know, and so forth and so on. And she said, “She was just telling me how she used to go and see Daddy at the office - to show him the report.” He said, “Me too, as well.” He said, “I always had to go as well.” So- And that was the end of that, really. That was the last time we had any contact with them.

And did you realise, or did you realise that that was different from other Kinder? You know, or did you think that was just- at the time, did you realise that was a special - not special treatment – but let's say that you were –

Well-

Luckier, let's say, than some others.

Yes - yes. I really don't know. All the other children for some- all the other children went to Reading. But whether they went into separate houses, or whether in a home, I don't really know.

And what about your parents? Were you still in touch with them? Could you receive letters?

Well, during the war I received- Red Cross letters. My father used to- whether or not he was wearing a star, I don't know. But all through the war, I got letters at intervals from the Red Cross. Twenty-five words, you know. I recognised my father's handwriting. By this time I'd forgotten all my German so I had to take them to the German master at school to get

translated. He used to- he told me, he just used to go to the Red Cross and say he was a friend who had had to emigrate. And they said, “Oh, yes?” And said, “I want to write a letter, make sure that the children are okay.” And they said, “Alright.” Never asked questions. And he would write the letters. And then one day after he'd got the false papers, and were living under false names, the letters arrived with his new name Gerhard Ferner. I thought Gerhard Ferner – who’s this? But I recognised my father's handwriting. So I knew. I didn't think too much of it. I thought, well, he’s had to change his name. You know, I think I was a bit thick. And- and so he, he had- he still sent letters right to the end of the war. I don't know if I've got any. I know my sister did, but I don't know what she did with them or whether they went to the War Museum. I've no idea, now. There may be one up- two upstairs around.

[0:46:20]

Just to come back to your father [inaudible]. So you said he worked actually for the ministry, but for the- who exactly did he work for?

I beg your pardon?

You said he worked for the government- for the German-

No, he printed for them.

He printed for them. Yes. Until what time did he do it?

It's in the letter the- whenever when he had to give up his business. You know, they said they couldn't-

And when- when roughly? We'll check it later-

Well, that would be- well, I would- I would imagine [inaudible] that would be ’40 at the latest.

So, that’s quite late, to- I mean, that he managed to-

Yeah, it was quite late.

That they –

Yeah- yeah.

- used him until then. It's quite, extraordinary.

Yes, yes. They said they just couldn't anymore. And they had to give him up. And that's when he sold his business. And then, of course, he was co-opted for labour in- in the factories to shovel coal.

As a *Zwangsarbeit* - forced labour.

[0:47:12]

Hm?

As forced labour.

Forced labour. Yes, he was told to report and, I think he told me once- I don't know if it's in the letter or not. I think they used to get a few *Marks* or something I'm sure ridiculous. But my father always kept his dignity and I think, I wrote in the- it's either in the biography or in the letter or something. He, despite wearing the overalls and shovelling coal, he always kept a white handkerchief up there. And the foreman said to him one day, "Are you trying to be an *Englischer* [German accent mimic of gentleman] *Tshentelmen*?" And my father said, "If that's what you think," he said, "I've always worn a white handkerchief. I see no reason to change now." He didn't say any more to him. And that was it, and he shovelled coal. No, I think he wrote in the letters, "No holidays for Jews." I don't know whether they did seven days. But on the other hand, in the letter, they used to have parties. People came round, the ones that were left.

And your mother, did she- what happened with your mother? Did she have to work as well?

No. No, she was still at home. And… so, I don't know. Well, I don't know - get on to the stage where my father had to leave. You know.

What about grandparents? Were there any grandparents still-?

My grandmother had died in- my father's mother had died in 1927. I didn't remember her at all. Obviously - I wasn't born till '30. My grandfather- little drawing of him there- my grandfather lived in a- in an old age home in the Große Hamburger Straße I think, which is near the- near the Oranienburger Straße. And then he came to live with my parents, but I don't think I was there anymore, because he was thrown out- out of the home. Then I think he came home to live with my parents when they were still in the flat and certain- and he died- I think he- I- I think he died in 1940 or '42. I'm not quite sure. I've got it. I've got it there, in the book.

In Berlin?

Hm?

In Berlin.

Yes, yes.

He wasn't deported or any- thing like that?

No, thank God. He died and- and he was buried in the Weißensee Cemetery. And in 2000, when the Senate invited us all over, my sister and brother-in-law went to the grave, found the grave perfectly okay, took all the ivy and the brambles away. And I didn't see it because I didn't go over until the Thursday, they had gone over on the Tuesday. And I didn't go till the Thursday because my daughter was graduating and I didn't want to miss her graduation. So I stayed. She was at Bristol. And- and then I went over. So I missed going to Weißensee. But then- then I took my second wife and Caroline to Germany. And then my other two daughters said, "What about taking us?" I said, "OK." So, I went with Nicky and Stephi, my eldest two, and we went, and then we went to the cemetery. And I said, "What was your highlight of the holiday?" "Oh," they said, "going to Opapa's." They loved the cemetery best. We had a

photograph taken underneath a sign saying Danziger Straße. So they stood there. They thought that was great. Yes, so the grave is in perfectly good condition. And so- even at that late date, it's all beautifully carved. Adolf- Adolf Danziger - in brackets "Aaron", you know, he'd obviously opted out of. Not a good choice, but still. And so, yes, so- the gravestones there. Not overthrown. And which always amazed me: the Nazis didn't ruin the cemetery at all. Not during the war at all. It didn't seem to go in there. And there were lots of Jews hidden in there during the war, many used to hide in the Grand 19th century, grand monuments, they used to hide inside there. Little rooms – you know. Can we stop for a moment because I need to go some-

[0:51:41]

Hans, what I'd like to do, let's go back to your old experiences, till the end of the war and then we come back to your parents. Tell us, how did you settle in? How did you find it? Regarding the language, regarding everything?

I'm the sort of person who seems to settle easily for everything. I changed jobs quite a few times in- later in my so-called career, having to, because firms were falling like ninepins. All my friends used to say, "He's always got a new job every five minutes." I said, "It's because they always go broke." You know. And when I'd been there for a week, I felt as if I'd always been there. I- I adapt very easily to the lockdown, I was really frightened. After- after a few weeks, I was very used to being by myself. I'm very gregarious; I love my friends. I like to see people. I go out. I have lots of friends - people laugh. One of my daughter's school friends, parents whom we got to know very well. She's- she said, "I'm your number one fan. And I'm going to be the treasurer of your fan club." So we always joke, you know, how many subscriptions has she taken, you know. So, I've made- you know, I have- I'm very lucky I have lots of friends and I like to see them. And so I was very, very surprised at myself that I settled down to a solitary existence. But then my friend and I- she was living in her flat and, and, you know, we decided it was stupid ten weeks self-isolating. So, it's- she's living here now most of the time. At least we've got each other to talk to and go for a walk and- anyhow, back to- I presume we cut those bits out.

[0:53:44]

That's something actually I want to talk to you at the end of the interview about Corona, you know, whether it brings back- how-

No- no.

But- anyhow. Not now. So back to- to your arrival in England.

Yes. Can you just open the doors a bit there? I don't want them shutting. Cause I want a breeze to go through all time. Well, I didn't settle down. I didn't like living in- at the stables because they were very Victorian. I remember, JB- that must have been right at the beginning of the war because the old man still came down to do a bit of hacking. And, and we- I remember he and the groom coming in, because I lived with the groom's family. Well, he- the groom and his wife, the children- Mrs. Leaney, their daughter, to whom we went in Harpenden was already living in Harpenden with her husband, and the other one- I think she still lived at home actually. There was another daughter lived at home. And I didn't like them very much. They were very- it was- I felt a little bit repressed somehow, you know. I'd- I- I wasn't allowed to use a knife. I mean, I was nine years old, you know. And I remember Sainsbury coming in from a hack, and I ran out to hold the horse, and the groom looked at me and said, "Remember your station! Get inside!" You know. And I thought, what is he on about? And then Mr. Sainsbury said, "Let him come out while you're doing that." So I went out and I was allowed to hold the horses. But that was it, I wasn't very happy. And with lunchtimes, I had to go to the pub and fetch his beer. And- it was- we weren't happy. And I was saying to the kids- the toys nowadays - cupboards full of rubbish! We had nothing! Not a single toy.

[0:55:53]

And you were the only children there, or-?

What?

You were the only ones, you and your sister?

This one girl, Miriam Maranz. But then she- she went. So I don't know where she went to. So there was only Marion and I. And then, luckily, luckily, her daughter's husband had been called up for the army, in Harpenden. And Eva said she would take- to look after us. I think we were too much for the old people.

What were they called?

Clark. And, and then we went to Harpenden, and she was younger. Janet worked out that she must have been about twenty-six.

And she- she was the daughter of the Clarks?

Yes. And she was twenty-

And, sorry to interrupt you. And why do you think did they take you in? Did they- did they have to?

Who- who?

The Clarks.

Well, presumably they were told by Sainsburys to take me. Yes.

Yes.

Yes. Yes. That's what I say, we were, we were the only ones to his hunting stables, you know. The others all went to Reading, as I said.

And how long did you say there?

Oh, I think it was only about six months or seven months. I can't remember.

And did you go to school there?

Yes. I did go to school, we went to the village school. And - it was winter. And, we had to go walking around the recreation ground in the winter. There was only my sister and I walking around there: not a soul, not a dog out. And I can still smell the awful metallic smell of the swings in the recreation ground. And ever since then I've had a great aversion for recreation grounds. And there was just one teacher that I remember, Mr. Lester. He was very sweet. He was a lovely man. And, and when I went - we went there, and while I was there, we- must have been there long enough, because I wanted to join the choir at the church, but the vicar, the Reverend Ly- [coughs] the [coughs] The Reverend [coughs] Lydekker thought because I was Jewish, it wasn't a good idea. So I never got to join the choir. I quite fancied swanning around in a surplus, but that wasn't to be. All my friends were in the choir.

[0:58:32]

So everyone knew you were Jewish- you were a Jewish refugee?

Yeah- yeah, yeah, yeah.

What about your English at that point?

I must have- I must have learned English because I forgot most of the German. And- and then we went to- no, I still remember Christmas. And we all sat in the parlour with the lino and those sort of typically English little homes that have a parlour with a best chair that nobody ever sat in and so forth. So Christmas, we all sat in there. And that was my first hug by anybody since we'd come to England. And that was Sister Bacon [mild laughter] of, of the- of the S- Church Army who had been invited by the Clarks because she was a friend of the daughter's. And she was- she was the only one that gave my sister and me a hug. I'd- we managed without. And- and then it was announced that we were going to Harpenden. We shouted, "Hooray!", you know - not too loudly, but - off we went.

How did your sister, who was younger than you-

Three years.

How did she cope with- like at the beginning of the-?

She seemed to be alright. We sailed through it. We adapted very easily. I went to school, came home, had my friends. I don't know; we just adapted.

And you- did you change- ever change your first name? Because that made you stand out, or you didn't mind?

[1:00:06]

No. They asked me what I wanted to be- in Germany I was always called Wolfgang.

Okay.

That's why in the letter, father refers to *'Wölfchen'*.

Oh…

But when I came to England, I decided that Wolfgang was not really very good. And my uncle's chauffeur had been called 'Hans', which I always thought was very swish. So I changed- I used Hans instead. [laughs]

But you didn't offer taking an English- an English name?

Eh?

You didn't think of taking an English name?

No, I felt it would be disloyal somehow to change my name. I never did. I never thought about it. I didn't have to because I wasn't in the army. So, I wasn't- there wasn't any- there wasn't any great urge for me to change my name. And I didn't see the necessity, you know. So, I've always had-

And those people, the Clarks, do you think had they ever met any Jews? Did they have any understanding of anything, or-?

No, not at all. Mr. Clark once said to me, “You know,” he said, “it's only Jews who put their noses into the glass when they drink.” And that was the- [half-laughing] that was the only thing that I remember: one of his sayings. I don't think he meant it very anti-Semitically or anything like that. It was just one of those things. And I thought it was a bit odd, but didn't take too much notice. And when I went to Harpenden- when we went to Harpenden, because these people always felt you've got to have a religion we then had to go to the Methodists. And- because Trevor down the road goes to the Methodist church, so we were sent with Trevor down to the Methodist church, which was very nice. And I loved the vicar- the, the minister's daughter, who was blonde and about twenty-five. [laughs] And we went to Sunday school, and I joined the first Harpenden Boy Scouts. And I became a second. I couldn't become patrol leader because I- I think I was too fat or something. When I think it was wartime, streets were blacked out. And I had to go by myself in the dark, to the Boy Scouts hut, which was up a dark alley. And there I remember I was still frightened of the dark. And I was frightened of dark for years. And I always thought that the SS were going to jump out and get me. That was one- the fear I had of the dark. It took a long time before the fear of the dark vanished. I don't know why.

Did- that you had from Germany?

Hm?

From Germany? That you brought-?

Yes. But in- in Germany, I wasn't afraid of the SS. It didn't bother me. But when I came to England- and I didn't hear about them, but I think I saw a film once or something on the news. I don't know. It somehow became frightening. And I became very frightened of the dark till quite late.

[1:03:26]

And in Harpenden the- the daughter, was she more affectionate and more-?

Slightly. It was very English, not too affectionate. But we felt safe. And so I was what, ten, eleven? Marion was three years younger. And she had a miscarriage. And my daugh- my sister, at eight, was sent out into the streets to go and fetch the doctor. Things- you know, dark streets. [phone rings] Oh, god. Can I- do you mind?

Yes.

[audio break]

Do you think it helped you that you were together with your sister?

I think so. I think so. I don't remember my talking much to her, or we discussing anything deep. Quite used to not being with my parents. We just took every day as it came. As I say, we had no toys. My only toy was a round – where I'd ever found it – bit of wood, which I used to fasten to the window – catch, and play bus drivers. That was my whole- that was my only toy. And Marion had a- a rabbit called Johnny. And that was it. Considering the amount of toys that- floating about nowadays. We just- we just didn't have anything. And we managed. And there was a garden. We had a dog who smelled terribly, but we loved him. And I went to Boy Scouts and I had friends - people there. And I was in- so, that was just pretty uneventful. We slept under the stairs, be okay when the bombers came over. But I think there was only one bomb on Harpenden, or two at the most. We weren't important. And then- and then I started, you know, Refugee Committee started saying that I should start preparing for Bar Mitzvah, you know, getting on for thirteen. Oh, before that- before that I had- I'd gone to the change from the junior school to the senior school as it was then. I hadn't pass- I didn't pass the 11 Plus. I think I was put in for it but I didn't pass. And then one of the teachers who lived in my road and with whom I used to go for a walk, thought that I belonged to a grammar school and not in that. And she told the headmaster, and the headmaster wrote to the Refugee Committee. And Lord Sainsbury said "Yes, yes, send him to the St. Albans County School", which was a grammar school. And he would pay the fees at five pounds a term. So, then I went- I used to go by train from Harpenden to St. Albans every day, until- and the headmaster of the Hebrew classes lived at the end of the road. And he used to take me Sunday mornings to the Hebrew classes in St. Albans where- there were no Hebrew classes in Harpenden. And so- and he taught me only the Brachas. So, I didn't do the whole- I never got around to doing the whole thing. It was impossible. So, he told me-

and then I was made Bar Mitzvah in St. Albans- little synagogue, Clarence Road, Rev- Rabbi Landy. And-

[1:07:12]

And they supported you, the daughter? I mean, they- the daughter of the Clarks? They-?

I don't think she came. She had nothing to do with that.

Right. So, it was like a separate-?

Yeah. Yes, I just used to go along there. And-

You were quite independent?

Hm?

You were quite independent?

Yes. I used to go with Mr. Wolfson. And his daughter-

[sound break]

Yes. So, we were talking about your Bar Mitzvah. You said you-

Yes.

That they organised that for you.

They- the- I don't know who organised it. The Synagogue Committee organised it, and- which was very nice of them. And there was a Russian couple- a fa- big fat fellow- I can't think of his name now. And they organised a party for me. Now that was nothing to do with them, really. They were just members of the community. And they said, "You can have a party. You can invite all your friends." Which I did, from school. And – it was lovely, really,

very nice of them. And I can't think of his name now. He was Russian. And- and from that day on, of course, I ceased going to Sunday school, which I had been doing. Been going to Cheder in the morning and Sunday school in the afternoon on a Sunday. So that kept me busy. Yes, so- so that was the end of that really. And, and I- of course, shortly after that, I moved to St. Albans because the Refugee Committee felt that I should live with Jewish people. And so they asked around, and most of them being refugees or - evacuees is the word - from London, couldn't, hadn't. I used to go and stay sometimes with a school friend of mine, Victor. But otherwise, but they couldn't take me full time. And it wasn't until the Vasens piped up and said they would take me. And he was- he came from Hamburg. He'd been a- had a hotel in Hamburg. And they came over on a- I don't know how he got over. She got over on a work permit as a maid. Anyhow, they came over and he joined the Pioneer Corps, had been wounded in the evacuation at Dunkirk at St. Malo, had gone to recuperate in the hospital in- in Oxford, and invalided out of the Army. And he taught- while he was in hospital, he taught himself watchmaking, and he opened a watchmaking shop when he got to St. Albans. And so he had a little watch-making business and they took me in. And then he said that his very- a very good friend of his in Hamburg had a son and daughter who were also in England. And the son, this boy, Willy, was living in a hostel in Leeds. And he would take him as well, so he could be like a brother for me. So Willy came to live with- he was older than I, a couple of years. And he- funnily enough he had learnt watchmaking as well. So, that all went together. He worked with Emil. I was still at school.

[1:10:41]

And did they have children?

No.

No.

They had no children. They didn't know how to treat- how to treat teenagers. We were very, very good teenagers; we weren't like teenagers today. We didn't smoke, drink, go out with- nothing, nothing. It was all- they had no idea of what young people- I mean, I was young, I fancied the girl next door, she fancied me. And I said, "Can I go out with Margaret?" "Why do you want to go out with Margaret? Why don't you go out with Wilfred?" I thought, you

know, obviously, he hadn't been taught about the birds and the bees. And so, no we used to talk to each other. She was at the window. It was a bit like one of those things. I used to feed the chickens. The chickens got very fat, 'cause I used to feed them all the time so I could see Margaret. And that was my romantic life. And the rest of the time we had to clear the garden of stones, which we used to chuck over the fence. And we used to joke about it and say, "Do you want this one?" "No." "Do you want that one?" "Greenberg can have it." And we used to chuck it over the fence. And when poor Henry came home, and Mr. Greenberg said, "I want you to clear the garden of stones" we felt quite ashamed really because he had double the amount of stones that we did. And they- they didn't really understand anything. I remember once saying to him- it was the- we had a club at the synagogue. And I said we- we were going- we were going swimming. So- "With whom are you going- with who you go swimming?" I said, "We're going with- Geraldine's coming." She was the daughter of the warden at the- "*Vhy* you want to go bathing *vis* Geraldine?" I said, "I'm not bathing with Geraldine." I said, "We're going swimming, not bathing." It was pretty awful really, and it was it was- it was cold, then it was hot, then it was- so, the insecurity didn't seem to get me. I remember more about the insecurity afterwards, than when I was actually there, because as I say, I adapt very easily. But it was- if we misbehaved, or what- what passed for misbehaviour in their eyes, they used to say, "I *srew* you out! I *srew* you out!" I mean, I didn't have the guts to say to him, "That's the past tense, and you should really use the future." But didn't have, you know. So there was always, "I threw you out!" And when I came home from school, not only did I have to do my homework, I had to take the dog for a walk. Start the lun- start the dinner. That's where I learned to cook. And, you know, it- it was alright. And then one day Willy had to leave because Vasen wanted to open a shop in Watford. And he said, "Willy can go and manage it." So, Willy said, "Well, I need to find accommodation." He said, "No, no, no. There's a- a flat above the shop, you can stay there." So Willy said, "No, no, no." He said, "If we ever argue or I have to leave, I would not only lose my job, I would lose my flat at the same time."

[1:13:55]

So, this was "*eine Frechheit sondergleichen*" [the height of cheek]. And he had to leave. And he chucked him out. So poor Willy had to go and live in London. And so I was there by myself. And then shortly after that, I don't know, cut time - I don't know - frame. His mother was living with us, old *Oma* Vasen - she was very nice. And her parents who weren't - she

wasn't Jewish, and her parents had come over after the war, and they were looking after them as well. And they came to live in- in St. Albans. He got them a little flat, and I think they came to where we were living. They were sitting in the living room and I said, "I'd like to listen to the wireless. Would they mind awfully moving to the next room?" Well, this was reported, and it was trans- it was made that 'I had thrown his mother out of the room'. I said, "Hardly" you know. "No, no, no, no! Ring Willy and get- go to London." So, I rang Willy and I said, "Can I stay with you?" "Yes." And he said to Willy, "How much does it cost to live in London?" And Willy, very foolishly because he was very, very, very frugal said, "Three pounds." So Vasen said, "Well, you're earning one pound. I'll give you two, and go and live in St. Alb- and go and live in London." So I went to live with Willy in Stoke Newington in St. Kilda's Road, where we had the top floor and the water drip through - we had a bucket. And we lived there for a little while. And - with a Jewish landlady. I mean, I was still in touch with St. Albans; it wasn't – you know. We used to go there. I introduced my first wife to them, and so forth.

[1:15:44]

But then my parents came over in 1948 eventually. And old Mrs. Weitz said they can come and stay with her, so she gave them a room. So they had my room upstairs and I moved downstairs. And Sainsbury paid. And Sainsbury and the Refugee Committee paid for their living expenses. And my father used to go every month or every fortnight he had to go to Woburn House to collect- collect the money. And it was there that he met the Hahn-Warburgs, who said, "Are you looking for work?" And my parents said, "Well…" Because after they'd been here three months, there was talk - or six months – there'd been talk of them having to go back to Germany. And, and Sainsbury said, "Would you like your parents to stay?" I said, "Well, obviously." So they said, "Well, we'll pay for another six months and see how it goes." And in the meantime, they'd met Mrs. Hahn-Warburg, and she said "I need a cook/housekeeper." My father wasn't allowed to work. So she said, "But, you know, obviously…" So, they went to live in Middleton Cheney. And they- they were quite happy there for a while but my father, it irked him that he wasn't allowed to work. And he was a handyman, but whenever- my mother would only take a job on condition that we could come down at weekends. So Mrs. Hahn said, "Oh, of course!" So, we used to go down weekends. So, as soon as I arrived in Banbury Station I would phone and they would send- either she would come or her son would come. Somebody would pick me up from the station, take me

to Middleton Cheney. It was about a quarter of an hour's drive. And I had a room there. My parents- they were very nice. My mother always said, “Have you said Good Evening?” “Yes.” I used to go upstairs to Mrs. Hahn’s room, have to retell everything I've done all during the week. And then she would tell me what they'd been up to. And there was some: “Your father!” “What's the matter now?” “Well, Smith told us,” - he was the gardener – “your father threw a whole pack of cigars out of the window. What- what reason?” My mother said she was going into town, would my father want anything? He says, no, nothing. Do you want cigars? No, I've got cigars. I don't need anything. Right. She came back and brought him cigars. He was so furious, he shredded them out of the- out of the window. So, the gardener of course duly reported this to the Hahns, so, that Mr. Danziger has been throwing- so, he had quite a reputation there. But he- you know. They stayed there for four years, actually. And- and-

[1:18:32]

[Background noise very loud- inaud]
But just to come back to you- so, you came from an English family to this continental family. And that that wasn't much- sounds not much better, or- for you. It didn't feel like you’d come to somebody from a similar cultural background - at that point it didn’t.

No, I didn't compare cultures for a start.

Yes.

I just took people as they were. And, although I used to go to synagogue regularly because the Shamash used to go around to the shop and say, “Are the boys coming?” because he wanted a minyan. So of course we had to go. That's where my- met my friend Ernest because we used to cycle to school together. And he lives in Israel now. And we used to go to school and they used to hire the Town Hall because there's all- all the Jews came out of the woodwork when it was Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But otherwise they stayed away; it was a scramble to get a minyan. No, I went to school and-

But German thing, the fact that they were from Germany, that that didn’t- didn't help you?

No.

And did you speak to them in German?

Because all the other- I- I relearned some German with them-

With them?

Because I'd forgotten my German totally.

Right.

I remember when I was in Harpenden, the boys used to say, "Go on then! Go on then! Speak German to us!" And I didn't know any German. But I used to read *The Beano* and *The Dandy* - two comics. And all the Germans always said *Schweinehund und*- or something else. And *Achtung!* So I remembered. So I said, "*Achtung* and *Schweinehund*." Oh, they were very pleased that I could speak German. I only got it out of *The Beano*. [Bea laughs] And so my German was non-existent.

With the Vasens you-

Hm?

With the Vasens you had to relearn it?

[1:20:26]

I relearned it from them, yes. So that was something. But then you see, I- having gone to St.- having finished school- The Vasens wanted me to finish school at fourteen, or fifteen. I can't remember - when it was legal. And- and the headmaster said, "This is ridiculous. Why can't he take his… School Certificate?" You know – GCSEs. So they wrote- Headmaster, I think, wrote to the Refugee Committee, and the Refugee Committee wrote to Vasen and said, "We suggest- Lord Sainsbury sugg-," – well – "Mr. Sainsbury suggests that Hans stays on." They said, "Alright…" You know – curmudgeonly, let me stay on. And they got me a tutor in

maths cause I was terrible. And then I- I passed, much to my [head]master's surprise. Anyhow. So, I passed my school, but I didn't get matric. So I- you know. Anyhow, I wouldn't have been allowed to go to university even if I could. So, not much in it. Um-

And your sister was not with you at that point?

My sister was living with some other people. And then was- was told that she could go to Stoatley Rough in Haslemere, where she was very happy. She loved it there. Very nice. And I used to go down and see her sometimes.

And what was-

[sound quality is fixed]

What was her experience with her new family?

Oh, she was quite happy with them, for a little while. She didn't stay there very long. I think they- they were also in St. Albans or, near there. And I used to see her. But she quite happy there.

A Jewish family?

[1:22:26]

No. She wasn't.

So, the Refugee Committee suggested for her to go to Stoatley Rough?

Yeah. Yes. And when she finished Stoatley Rough, they asked her what she wanted to do. I think, I don't know who suggested, but I think, father in the letter said, you know, "Mother had a good,"- you know. Might be interesting to work with children or something. And I think- I don't know where she got the idea from, because she hadn't read the letter at that time. And she went to- they said they would pay for her to go to Hendon Technical College.

Can't remember where she lived at the time. And- oh, she lived in Willesden, in a hostel in Willesden. That's right.

Which hostel?

Willesden Lane somewhere. And- yeah, she lived there. And- and she went to Hendon Tech and got her NEB. Did a little bit of work, and then she got married, so she never worked very l- very long. And she was okay. She also- we got through it all. I don't know. My wife, Janet, whenever we had a bit of trouble with Caroline, my wife would always say, "Weren't you ever a teenager?" And I always said, "No." "Weren't you ever a child?" And I said, "No." We just- we didn't have the sort of normal childhood. When I think what Caroline puts up with the children, those two little dwarfs, who make a mis- shouting and screaming and- I mean, she's got the patience of Job, you know. We just-

You couldn't-

We-

Couldn't do that?

We had to just behave. We had to we seen to be- no, we had to be good. Or else, you know. I suppose something was always hanging over us. It wasn't very secure, you know. That's-

And do you remember thinking about your parents at that time? What were-

We did- we did, but somehow, they had faded a little bit into the background. As I say, we lived day-to-day, you know. We had to- children- I mean, I'm no psychologist. I must talk to Georgine, the psychology lady about it. But, you know, we didn't- we didn't go into the deeper things. We- we carried- it was, you know, day-to-day you had your school, you had your homework, your friends and- and- and, and the new people with whom you were living.

And do you feel now that the Refugee Committee was right to take you to a Jewish family? Do you think that was a good-?

[1:25:00]

Well, I, I- yes, I- I think I appreciate that, because even the lady at the- the- the head, head lady at the Sunday school, I think I told you, she gave me a bottle of water from the Jordan and said she would never convert me because my parents would not approve, and she would never suggest that I convert. And, but I was still welcome to come to the Sunday school and even carry the banner should I so wish. And [whispers] I used to carry the banner. And, and I was very happy there. And they were very nice people. And so I sort of carried on, you know.

So the Vasens you said they wanted you to finish school, what did they expect you to do? What did they want you-?

Well, go to work. Learn the trade. Because, if the Jews were thrown out again, I would have a trade on which to fall back, and earn a living, which was very wise in a way. You know, whatever it was. But he said, "Yeah, well, what do you want to do? So, do you- come into the shop" - at the time. So he said, "Willy's doing watchmaking, do you want to do jewellery?" So, as I was quite good at drawing, I thought, well, that would be a good idea. I'll design jewellery. And so, while I was at the Vasens, we went to see- he wrote around and everybody wrote around, but there was just nothing. Colleges wouldn't- just reopening and there was just nowhere that I could learn. It was impossible. And he knew nothing and not enough to teach me to give me an apprenticeship as a jeweller. And I don't think, I don't know- much- he didn't seem to have contacts in Clerkenwell or anything like that. So on the way back, we went via Golders Green where a friend of his lived, and we went in and he was telling him that there was just nothing. And so his friend Joseph said, "Well, why doesn't he- if he likes drawing, why doesn't he go and draw dresses?" "Draw dresses?" "Well, you know, he'd have to go and visit a factory." And I- "A factory? Oh, my God!" You know. He said his son was doing very well in the fashion business. So, they said, "Okay", and I went- we went to see a man in Margaret Street. I still remember him with his stomach hanging out, to have- had an interview with him. And he said, "Well, if he wants to go- be a designer, and so forth, he'll have to learn, he'll have to have an apprenticeship and so forth." And then the Refugee Committee must have written to the Jewish Board of Guardians, as they then were. And the Jewish Board of Guardians said they had an apprenticeship going with Mr. Anker, who is a refugee from Berlin, who had three sons who had businesses. And one of them worked with Mr. Anker. And I would- I could go there! So, I went to work for him. And he was a nice old

man, he treated me more like a son. And I don't know if I told you but I- my- my lunches consisted bread- bread, margarine, and Marmite as I thought this was healthy. My suppers consisted of semolina, milk, and Ribena because I thought that was healthy. And that was about it. Shabbos I used to treat myself to a roll and something else. So meanwhile, during the week, Mr. Anker could see that I was- rather miserable meals, and he always pretended that his wife had given him far too much, and therefore he would have to give me some herrings and some apple and some of this and that. So, he used to half feed me during the week as well. And then weekends, of course, my girlfriends' mothers used to feed me as well. So I managed.

[1:28:59]

So, you didn't have a lot of money - at that point?

Two pounds- one pound or, three pounds. One pound went to the landlady for rent, and I had two pounds. Sixpence a day fares from Stoke Newington to the West End and six pence back, so that's a shilling.

And the Refugee Committee didn't support you then?

No, no. No, by this time, no.

Because you were- how old were you?

Working.

Yeah.

And the Vasens were subsidising me to the tune of two pounds. And I started off at ten shillings which is 50p [pence], as I tell people - 50p. And then after a little while, Mr. Anker said I had golden fingers; I would be a success. And therefore he raised my money to a pound, which was very nice of him. And trouble was, he had come from Poland. And he spoke a very Yiddisher type German which I picked up. Because I- I was in those days not so good now because as you get older your mouth changes and therefore my accents are more

difficult. I don't speak French in the same accents as I used to. Not that I speak French fluently, but you know, I was- but I was quite a good mimic.

Yeah?

And so of course, I picked up this Yiddish German. When my parents came over to England, they were horrified! [Bea laughs] So, I had to change fast. So of course, by this time, I was no longer with the Vasens, you see, I was living in London.

Yes.

So- and what with my landlady speaking Yiddish and, and my boss - Yiddish German - my German really deteriorated into a Yiddish – it was terrible. So my father was absolutely horrified because his German was impeccable, you know.

But were you- were you happy then to be independent in a way, to come to London and be-?

[1:31:06]

Well, yes.

Or-?

Yes, yes, it was better. I mean, I adapted again. Saturday morning, I used to go down to the public baths, have a bath. Harry, the bath master, used to go with a bucket and the soap. Then you'd have cubicles, you'd go in your bath. And if you wanted more hot water, you shouted, "More hot in number three, Harry!" And Harry would come along and turn on the hot in number three.

Where was that?

In Stoke Newington. And then I would put on clean clothes, and take the dirty ones to the laundry. That was another expense. And I would go and buy my lunch. And then I would go

back home and have my lunch at the window, which I set my table. And- and I used to hear all the frummers singing [inaudible] round-about. So it was very nice.

You didn't go to synagogue at that time?

No. No, the only time we tried to go to synagogue was- Willy came- Willy, by this time had been to Israel. In 1948 he'd gone to fight in the War of Independence. He came back - about a couple of years later, I suppose. And he came back and he- I remember him writing saying, "What do you want me to bring you?" And I said, "A Tallis." So he bought me a Tallis and I still use it to this day, brought from Israel in 1948. And so, he came- he came back. Can't remember if we lived together for a while, but then my parents had come, you know, just- I think he just met them, they just overlapped. They came '48 and he went away '48. So how far have I got? I don't know. What was I saying before? Sorry-

[1:32:56]

Yeah, you were saying-

Lost my track.

It was about your Yiddish German.

Oh, the Yiddish German. Well, I soon changed again, you know, my parents- under my parents' tutelage-

Yeah.

I changed again.

So tell us now please, what your parents' experiences were.

Hm?

What were- your parents experience? So, from the time you left, you talked a little bit about your father-

Yeah.

In the factory. What happened? Because that's, I mean, you basically didn't see them from '39 to '48.

Forty-eight! Well, my parents- my father was working in the- in Daimler-Benz. And, and then one day, they were told to stay behind - the Jews. And my father thought, well, this does not bode well. And so he put his hat and coat on, and went. And the gatekeeper said to him. "A bit early, isn't it?" And my father said, "I've got a dental appointment." So he said, "Yeah, okay, see you tomorrow." He obviously hadn't been told to keep the Jews in. So, my father went. God knows what happened to all the rest. And my father went straight on to the underground, took off his Star, went on to the underground, rode around. And I don't know for how long. He then phoned some friends of his and they said, "Yes, Lotti's with us." And so he knew my mother was safe with them. And then he- he went to see them. Then he went to the- to the house, to- you know, went home. And the- Fischer, the porter, had made an arrangement with him, that if there was trouble or the Nazis were upstairs, he would turn a cup upside down in his porters' lodge. So my father went past and he saw the cup upside down. So he didn't go up. Then a couple of days later, he went back again. There was nothing there. So he went upstairs – and this was night time. He went upstairs, he broke the seal on the door, because the Gestapo had sealed the door. He started getting the boxes ready because he'd already got some box- the boxes ready. And the porter came rushing up and he said, "What are you doing? Are you mad?" He said, "There's some people saying there's a light on in the Danziger flat." So they turned the lights off. So, my father said to him, "Take what you want, whatever you want, just take it and get the boxes to Goerner." So he said "Yeah, okay." So they did up the boxes, and they manhandled them downstairs to- to the porter's lodge, and from there, they went to his friend Goerner's place. So- these were all non-Jews.

Goerner who? What was his surname?

That was his friend.

Yeah.

Goerner.

Goerner-?

I don't know what his first name was.

Oh, his surname was Goerner?

Yeah, yeah. And it's most likely in the book- in the- in the letter. And- and so, then father went to some other friends also mentioned the book, I'd have to look up the names. I mean, I don't know it all off by heart.

Don't worry – don't worry.

And one of them said, "I've got a- you can- you can be a- I'll employ you as a night watchman." So during the day, my father went out of the district where he was known, and went to different places. And, and then at night, he had a safe place to go as a night watchman. So he was safe at night. By this time, my mother had been questioned by the Gestapo where my father- asked where my father was. And she could answer honestly saying she hadn't a clue. And they left her alone. They said alright, off they went. And then she went- then her friend Helli was working at- at an electrical plant, Siemens. And the foreman there quite fancied her. And then when it was time, all the Jews stayed behind, he said to her "Look, I know you're not that keen, but do you want to go with them? Or do you want to come home?" So, she said, "Well, I'll come home with you if my friend Lotti can come." So, he said, "Alright, bring your friend Lotti, but you'd better hurry." And so he got them to his house.

[1:37:53]

And he put them up. He hid them in- there was an old railway carriage at the end of his garden with the chickens in, so he threw, he threw out the chickens and installed Helli and my mother in the- in the railway carriage. And he used to bring them little bits that were-

apart from feeding them, he used to bring them bits of felt and that to make hats, which he then sold in the factory. Nobody asked where he got them- got the hats from. Anyhow, I don't know if I told you, but he- he was a bit of a drunk. And when he was drunk, he used to sing anti-Nazi songs, which again, was not a good, it was not a good thing to do in those days. And so, my mother got very frightened and said to Helli, "Look, I don't think we ought to hang around here." You know. So, whether Helli stayed with Walter, I don't know. But my mother went, and stayed with some other friends, one of whom was not Jewish. Had been married to a Jew, and had divorced him because the Germans were always nagging non-Jewish wives to divorce. And she had divorced him, and I think after that had the most guilty conscience going. And she married- then she married again a non-Jewish fellow. And I think he helped my parents- helped my mother. And they found my mother a job with some woman who had dementia by the sound of it. And so some raving old Nazi. Well, my mother didn't look very Jewish and so that was okay. Then there was the story of- we saw the photograph up there - another time I would show you - of this Nazi officer in the photograph book. And we said, "What on earth's he doing in there?!" You know. "Well," she said, "you don't judge a book by its cover", as it were. And she said she was somewhere at a party or something, I don't know. And this officer was there. And he said to her, "I'm sure," you know, "ask your husband's permission, but honoured Lady – *gnädige Frau* - if you would care to have my arm should you want to go out, I would always be- here's my phone number." And she phoned him. And he took her out. If she wanted to go shopping to some shop, where she wouldn't be allowed normally, he would take it to the shops. And of course-

And he knew that she was Jewish?

Hm?

He knew she was Jewish?

[1:40:26]

He knew she was Jewish. He didn't ask any questions; he didn't want to know. He never asked. He never said anything. But obviously, why should he bother, you know? And, sadly, sadly, he was killed by the Russians at the end of the war. And his- both his sons died on the Russian front- they were both doctors. Very sad. The ones who do good get killed. She said

he was a very good man, who just used to take her to the shops, you know, and that was it. He worked at the Supply Ministry so he could-

So did she have any false papers or-?

Not at that time.

Not at that point, okay.

She had no papers, he knew that. And then there was- then there was a policeman, who was the lover of one of my- I had- one of my aunts was still in Berlin with [inaudible] minor cousin. The husband had gone to South America with the eldest boy, and she couldn't get out. It was too late. And, and so Gerhard and my Auntie Anni were still there. And Gerhard was a- I hated him, he was a horrible boy. And he used to say to his mother, "If you don't give me this, I'll denounce you." And this policeman said, "If I ever hear you talking to that, again, not only will- you won't denounce your mother, but I shall denounce you by the scruff of your neck." And after that he didn't- kept *stumm*. Didn't dare talk like that again. But whether he was my aunt's lover, or my aunt's sister's lover, I never quite got to the bottom of it. Anyhow. He risked his neck, and said that Leo and Lotti could come and spend New Year's Eve with him. So they could be together, because they were separated, don't forget. And then I think he was the one also who got them false papers, saying that they'd been bombed out from somewhere. In my book I've written: "It was Dresden, but my lovely brother-in-law couldn't say you've written a reasonable account of your parents' lives. All he could say was "You've got the date wrong. Dresden wasn't bombed until…" That's all he could find fault with. So I said, "Sorry about that." So it was somewhere else - not Dresden. And they had false papers. And then they could, you know, could live 'above ground' as it were-

[1:42:50]

And what's the- what was the name? What did she have? Do you know?

'Ferner'. Ferner.

Ferner.

And it was also at that time that I think my mother- my father had gone in to a baker's shop. Whether that was while he was still underground or not, before the papers or after papers, I'm not sure. I think it was before the papers. And he'd gone into a baker and schmoozed the girl there, because he was very good at that. And she said, "I would advise your mother- to your wife to come at six o'clock." And they- my father was very trusting, went home, my mother had a look for she knew- she was very good judge of character. She went in and she got all the bread she wanted, because Jews were only allowed to buy stale bread and not modern bread, and, you know. And so, well, she gave them bread - kept them supplied. They became very good friends. And it was only after the war they discovered that her cousin, who was half-Jewish, was hidden upstairs. So, they were hiding her cousin because his mother had been shlepped to a camp. And I went to see what she- a couple- I rang her the other week, she's about ninety-something now. She still lives in Berlin. Sylvia and I went to see her, and - last year, she was so pleased that I keep in touch. I can't- you know, she was my father's- my parents' close friend and helped them during the war. You know. After the war, my father helped the porter by sending him food parcels. And also, to Goerner. I think they were in a different- my parents I think were in the American sector, I'm not sure, or the English sector, and they were in the Russian or some- I don't know. Anyhow, they used to send food parcels to them.

So, once your father also had the papers, then what did he do? Then-?

I can't remember what he did. I don't think he did anything.

[1:44:54]

But were they then together or still-?

They were together.

They were together.

Yes! And they went out to live in Zehlendorf, which is another distr- I was asking was she- I said, “Was Zehlendorf bombed or what?” And I never got a very clear answer. I think centre Berlin was pretty bombed, but I think some of the outlying districts-

So, they went to Zehlendorf?

Yeah, they lived in Zehlendorf. And I don't think they did- I don’t know what they did. I suppose my father had a few bob from the bank account. And I really don't know anything else about their life in Zehlendorf; my father never spoke about it. Or, well, the only bit was they had to build when the Russians came, they had to build tank defences. My father was also a fire watcher, he was the only fire watcher, only Jewish fire watcher in, in Germany. He he used to go- have to go fire watching at night. And when he got into the basement, he used to say- he always used to say, “Good evening, gentlemen!” And they always used to say “Good evening, Danziger. Heil Hitler! - and that.” But he said he never in all those years said, ‘Heil Hitler’. He said, “I couldn't bring myself to say it.” He never did, and he said they never questioned it. And then, of course, when the Russians came, they had to hide- not only finishing hiding from the Gestapo they were then hiding from the, from the Russians. Because they were raping, and - my mother had to be disguised in the basement. So when that was over, they came out. So, there were- there were many people, all non-Jews who helped them, hid them, gave him false papers, took them out. And I can't say enough about them. My father tried with Yad Vashem to get honours for certain people. But I don't think it ever went through, you know, he was moving around, and then he died and so forth and so on. And so, I don't think it all got- but some of his papers and I think the- I don't think this. I'm not sure, but other things are lodged with Yad Vashem, as are some papers. And with the Wiener Library, I think, but I'm not 100% sure. I suppose I could check. We were going there actually, but- and then the COVID thing started, so that all died a death. And-

[1:47:17]

Yeah, because- so both your parents were one of the Jews, the Jews- part of Jews who survived in Berlin, which is quite a large number, relatively speaking.

I don't know how many.

Yeah.

I thought it was 500. But somebody said it was more

Yeah.

My friend Ernest said there was less anti-Semitism in Berlin, obviously than there was in- in Vienna.

Yes, I think of all cities, there- there was the highest number of Jews actually surviving-

Yes.

Was in Berlin.

Well, my Uncle George, who was really not my uncle, he was my father's cousin but we called him 'Uncle' because he was so old. George had a patisserie in Berlin, which he had to give up because- in case he poisoned the Aryans. And then he went to live- they had a little, little wooden house on a sort of a little allotment or whatever you call them, a little dacha sort of place. We used to go there weekend sometimes. So it was quite liveable-in - proper place, you know, and I've got a photograph somewhere up there. And my- George went out to live there and when- because his wife wasn't Jewish. And when the war came, some Nazi came knocking on the door and they were quaking. And he said, "I hear you're a baker, do you want a job?" My uncle said, "Yes." He said, "I don't want to know anything about it. I don't want to see anything. You want to do the night shift, do the night shift." And he gave him a job in the- as a night shift. And when George got home in the mornings, they used to have those post boxes like they have in America, you know, where you put the post at the end of the garden? He used to look in there and the neighbours had been putting sausages and a bit of cheese and a bit of this and that because they knew he was Jewish and, and she didn't have ration books for him. So, they used to put food in for him sometimes extra bits and pieces.

And did your parents talk about that time when - later on?

[1:49:15]

Later on? Yes. We talked about- well, I met George and then we talked about it. And George never came out. He was- stayed in East Berlin. My father kept saying, “Come to the West, come to the West.” “No,” he said, “I've got a dog and I can't leave him and I don't care. I get enough to eat and I'm not bothered.” And he used to come out for holidays to my father. The German, West German, changed passports, took in the East German one, gave him a West German one. He came to England on it. Anyway, back came the passports again and went back to East Berlin. Well, East Germany. And he was- so, he survived like that. Then of course, I don't know if you know the story of the women, when they were all the- not all the Jewish women, all the Jewish men who were married to non-Jewish women were arrested. And I think George was- I'm not sure if George was among them or not. George's brother had committed suicide, shot his dog, and then shot himself. He couldn't face it anymore. But I don't know if George was arrested in that. And, you know, all the women collected at the Rosen- Rosenstraße prison and shouted, “Give us back our men!” And then a huge crowd gathered, I read somewhere, something like 2000 people. It was a huge thing! And evidently, the governor of the prison, phoned the Gestapo and the Gestapo phoned Goebbels, and Goebbels - told him what was going on. And Goebbels said, “I don't want any trouble. Let them go.” And he let them all go. They all went back home again. My father's brother survived like that. He was married to a non-Jewish woman. He was Secretary of the Berlin Rowing Club. And he survived-

[1:51:06]

In Berlin?

In Berlin. But my father never got on with him, so it wasn't exactly a big reunion. He never spoke about him. His name was Ernst, and- I don't know what it was, but my father and he didn't get on. So.

Okay, Hans, so we were just coming towards the end of the war and your parents' experience, but you would like to add some things before we-

Yes-

-continue.

I'd like to just add my father's nerves of steel. The fact that before the war, the Jews were obliged to put 'Israel' in front of their names. And my father refused. As he said, his name was not Israel, and nobody was going to tell him what to do. And so he was hauled up before the magistrates, who sentenced him to three weeks in Spandau. And he went- he went to prison. And my mother, who was absolutely terrified of what they were doing to him inside, came to meet him at the prison gates with bags of sandwiches in case he'd been starved. He came out, and he said, "Put those away. I couldn't eat a thing more." And she said, "Why? What's been going on?" And he said, "Well, I don't know. It was very nice." He said, "My cell door was open, I could do what I want." And in the evening, when everybody'd gone to bed, he said, the warders used to come round to his cell, and say, "Come on Danziger, tell us. What are these idiots doing to the Jews? Just explain to us." And he would be telling them all that was going, and he said, "And they were quite amazed." They said, "We, we- we don't know half, being in here, what's-" I mean, they were prisoners in their own prison, you know. Another time- so that's my father in Spandau. The other thing was my father was also- he'd been somewhere and came up through the railway station to come through the barrier. My mother was waiting for him. And somebody jostled my father. My father turned around and offered to punch him in the face. My mother nearly died. I mean, they had no papers, nothing. My father said to her afterwards, "If I had cowered and gone like this, I would have been, you know, they might have been saying, 'Are you a Jew or something?'" He said, "As it was, nobody dared question it." And one day, he was on the, on the tram having been to the country to fetch some stuff, and- eggs and butter and so forth from a farmer, black market. And he was on the tram and some Nazi with a big swastika in his buttonhole said to him, "What have you got in your case?" My father said, "I've got butter, eggs, sugar, a bit of this, leg of chicken." The chap says, "Yeah, yeah. In your dreams." [Bea laughs] My father said, "'Just shows you my son, always tell the truth." So- [cameraman comment re noise in mic] I'm sorry.

[1:53:56]

So he was confident? He was-

He'd got nerves of steel, we felt.

Yeah. Okay.

There was also another piece, which was I thought was very sad. It's in my father's letter there, but I'd just like to add it in. He says here that Jewish business had to give them up and they're now working - this is from the letter - as factory workers and so forth. *My dear children, it has now started, all Jews are being evacuated to Poland. And this terrible destiny has affected many of our friends. Unfortunately, Tante Trude and Tante Herta among them, and they find themselves in Lodz, now known as Litzmannstadt. Nobody knows what will happen to them. Only one can take things one is wearing and everything else has to remain where it is.* Then he wrote- he wrote that. Then he wrote that my mother had put together things and these- he says here that: *As we daily await notice to leave our flat, followed by being taken away to whatever, Mutti has put together all the things we cannot take. I have packed two boxes, which I mentioned before filled for you, my beloved children. I have packed all the good crockery and hand towels, tablecloths, covers for tables, silver spoons, and various other things. And these will be a bottom drawer at Frau Müller. The other box which I want to pack and I know the exact- when I know the exact date of our transportation will contain glasses and linen, and also things which a girl needs. If Wölfchen* – that's me - *wants any of these things, I'm sure you'll give him some things. Now pay attention. All the papers that you may need later: There are your birth certificates, immunisation certificates, Mutti and Papi's birth certificates, marriage certificates,* which I have all upstairs, *are all in the deed boxes, and you will find Mutti's jewellery, which of course goes to Mulle, and Wölfchen gets Papi's pocket watch*- which I can't find. I've been trying very hard.

Who is- who is Müller?

[1:56:06]

My sister. They called her Mulle.

Müller?

Mulle: M U double-L E, I don't know. It's a nickname.

Wow. Unusual.

I was just known as *Wölfchen*. So, and he says here, this- then here are the names, you see? *The letter to you- this letter to you, the deed box. The packing cases are in storage with our friend, Mr. Theodor Goerner…* His name was Theodor; you asked me. *…of Röenthal Straße, and one day they will be for you if Good Luck has it in for us. Mr. Görner has your address. And when times become quieter, he will let you have this letter* - and so forth. These are all in the letter there. And then he mentions people. And he says that I should write to- to Sissi who was the what was- who was the housekeeper, Frau Richter. And he said, '*You know how much she loved you'.* And it was a list of people to whom we should write. Well. And he gives us the address and he said, '*You know how Frau Richter loved you, and took you on the river and boat rides and so forth and so on'*. He also says, '*Opa is not very well. He will be eighty-seven on the 24th of April, lives in retirement home. Try and write to him. If he's still alive, he will be pleased to have a letter from his grandchildren. Adolf Danziger, Schönhauser Allee'.* There's a postscript: '*He died in 1942'.* And he was buried properly in the Jewish cemetery.

You said – you said.

And he also, he says- talks about Auntie Anni and Gerhard, the dreadful cousin that I hated. '*He's fourteen years old and a big boy'.* And he gives her address in the Schwäbische Straße. And there's also '*Herr Geheimrat, Doktor Hagemann'*, whose address is the same as ours, obviously lived in the same house. And '*who will know our whereabouts until the end'*. So he was obviously not Jewish either. And he would know all the details and would let us know what had happened to our parents. He then talks about various aunts and uncles and people who'd gone to Amsterdam and, and so forth and so on.

Okay.

[1:58:36]

And there were just a couple of other things. Oh, yes, now this is where- no, this is where he said: '*Grandma doesn't live with us anymore. And she's moved with Herbert, and'*- and also: '*Sissi, Mrs. Richter, dear children, cannot imagine how often you're in her thoughts, and how*

much she loves you. Miss- Mrs. Richter always was and still is, in these terrible times, most helpful to us'.

And did you see her after the war?

No. I never knew where- by the time I got these papers, 1948, '49, you know. Whether my parents were in touch, I don't know, may have been. He gives us their address - they lived in Steglitz where obviously we used to live: '*The Richters will also be able to tell you about us. And Mrs. Richter has got your exercise books. Jews are not allowed to keep animals which means we are forbidden to have your canary…*' and so forth and so on. And-

Okay, thank you. Well, maybe we can-

Yeah, so, I think that was just-

We can- afterwards maybe you can find the letters or send us a- a copy.

Of what?

Of the original letters, we can see them – maybe.

A copy of- the German?

Of the- yeah, yeah, the original letters.

[2:00:00]

Yes. Not the translation?

Not the translation.

I'll try and find a copy of the original in my father's case-

Ok.

And I will photocopy it and send it.

And scan it – scan it.

You'll have to give me your address, or where-

Scan it- you can scan it or send it.

No, I can't scan-

You can't scan it. Yeah, I'll give you my address. But what- we'll talk about the letters, but what seems to me is how, what strikes me when I read it, how organised, you know, that he really thought about everything. And to list everyone, and where you can find something, and almost make sure you have got these memories and know what happened in case- you know, he- that he was aware of-

Yeah.

Fully aware of the situation.

Well, he didn't- I don't think any of them quite knew what the end result was going to be. Except that he hadn't heard from anybody who had gone on a transport. And-

Yeah.

I don't think he- I don't think he quite realised. I don't think anybody quite realised what it entailed.

So, let's come back to when they survived, they found themselves in the Russian- no, you said not in the Russian zone. They were in the American-

I think so. Yes.

- Zone. And then, did they go back to their flat or how did they-?

No-

Pick up the pieces?

No, no, no. They lived in Zehlendorf. And after that, I think my Uncle Herbert, who had been in Auschwitz, survived Belsen. He was on the death march - held up by two friends because he was like a skeleton. And he survived Belsen. His girlfriend who was in England, and who I used to see during the war, you know, she lived in Golders Green. And she waited. She said she wasn't going to marry anybody or do anything until she knew if he was dead or alive. And after the war – there's a paper upstairs somewhere, and it said as follows: *We have found Herr Prowald, Herbert Prowald* - and it was 'Growald'. And she then joined the American Censorship Corps in order to get to Germany. Took her nearly a year, I think. In the meantime, Herbert had been recuperating in- wherever they recuperated after Belsen. I have no idea. And he joined the American Joint Committee. And they organised resumption of the Haksharah sort of kibbutz in Gehringshof of near Fulda, in Hessen.

Gehringshof?

[2:02:30]

Gehringshof, it was called.

Yeah?

That was the name of the place. And it was near Hattenhof, which was the village, which was near Fulda, which is an old Cathedral town. *Der Heilige Bonifatius* is buried there. [both laugh] And- and- he was English! And - nice town. And so, Herbert - they organised this. It was called Kibbutz Buchenwald, and it was for the children who had been in concentration camps to come there and learn farming in order to know something when they got to Israel on the illegal ships. And many of them went off on illegal ships.

It was called Kibbutz Buchenwald?

Yeah.

Because they had many Buchenwald survivors, or-?

Yeah, I think so. And of - must have been. Wasn't called that before the war, obviously. And, and then Herbert- Ille got out there and they married in the kibbutz. Her parents were there; I've got photographs. And then they went off to Israel. I don't know if it was legal or illegal. I'm not sure. I've got some photographs of them on a boat. Anyhow, they got to Israel, and my parents stayed on for a while. And, and from there it was that they came to England. So they lived in the country.

But how did they themselves then go- get to the kibbutz?

My uncle invited them, because he said, "Why are you staying in Berlin, which is *zertrümmert* [destroyed] and got nothing? Why- what are you hanging around there?" My father said, "Well, so what?" So he said, "Well, come out into the country." So they packed their bags. They got on some train journey with some special admission to go to some- God knows where. And as the train stopped in, I think last at Fulda, they quickly opened the carriage doors and got out, took all their things and scarpered and went- got to the kibbutz. And they lived there. My mother did- she acted as a sort of nurse because she knew a bit about nursing, children's nursing, and so forth. And my father did the books. And they were- so that's- there- they settled there.

And they were not tempted to go themselves to Palestine - to Israel?

[2:05:01]

They wanted to come here and see us! That was the first port of call, obviously. And- yeah, and so, said they'd always wanted to come here. And finally, finally, it was arranged with Geoff who- Commit who- Refugee Committee, and Mr. Sainsbury, they finally vouched for them after how many times, and offered to pay this, that and the other. And they finally got a visa. Took much longer than the SS Division from Italy, but still, that's another story that gets on my nerves.

But can I ask you, when was the first time after the war you- you were actually in communication with your parents?

I've no idea.

Do you remember what-?

As soon as- I've got? I've got a few letters- I've got a few letters, but I wouldn't like to hazard a guess as to which the first letter was. As soon as there was a postal communication my father wrote, and he knew where I was. Obviously, he must have written to either the Refugee Committee or somewhere. They'd go with the Red Cross, or- well, anyhow, he knew where I was by the- writing the- the Red Cross letters.

Yeah.

So a letter came. He was much exercised by the fact that his tailcoat had- dry cleaner had lost his tailcoat, and his summer suit. I thought things they've been through, and all he's worried about is his tails. And- he was an amazing man. He came to England and he saw, it was a- like, I don't know if it was to do with my life afterwards. You know, I had a girlfriend and she worked for a kosher caterer. And we used to go to the- used to go to the dances or Bar mitzvahs- we always had to check what it was. And the caterer said, "Can my secretary come?" And the people always said, "Yes, no problem." "Can she bring her boyfriend?" "Yes, yes." He said, "Look, we'll- they'll pay." You know. So, she and I used to dress up and go to these dos on Sunday nights, and where we sat with the toastmaster and had dinner, and then we could dance all evening. And that was all very pleasant. And in order to do that, I asked my boss with whom I was- the Yiddish man, whether I could have his dinner jacket and he said, "No." I said, "But you don't need it." And I nagged and nagged and nagged. And he finally gave it to me and he said, "We'd better alter it to fit you." So we altered it to fit me. Trouble was, it had a few moth holes – it was beautiful - had a few moth holes down there, so but nobody saw it usually. And so that was okay. But when my father came to England he somehow saw it and said, "It's got moth holes." I said, "Yes. So what?" "Ach! How can a boy go out to parties in a dinner jacket with moth-?" I said, "Pops, we don't wear dinner jackets to parties. It's only when I go out with Betty to these dos I need a dinner jacket." "No, no, no,

no." So he went to Burtons and he bought me a dinner jacket. Fifteen pounds. Had it made for me. I couldn't persuade him that we- I didn't go to parties where- he said, "When I went to parties when I was young…" I said, "Yes. That was in the 1880s." He said, "I wore tails and white gloves!" I said, "But we don't do that anymore." He somehow hadn't got the hang. And "What do you wear when you go to the Opera?" I said, "A pullover." You know. And he always wore tails. Well- so, he made me a dinner jacket and I'm very pleased to say that only a few months ago, I was invited to a synagogue dinner and a wedding. The wedding's had to-been postponed till April. I don't know if I shall go. The synagogue dinner, my daughter and I went and so- but I had to take the trousers to be altered for two occasions. I said, "Just let them out a bit", which he did. And I still wear the same dinner jacket that I had made in the 1950s. It still fits.

That's nice. [laughing]

Yeah.

So, can you tell us, what was it like to see your parents after all these years? Where- where did you pick them up, or-? Tell us about this.

[2:09:18]

I picked them up in Liverpool Street. They came over by boat, of course. It was a very odd feeling, obviously. These are my parents. You know? There was no rush of emotion; it was a very odd feeling. I- I had to laugh, because in those days, everything was on ration and points. And my mother tipped the porter with a tin of sardines for which he was jolly grateful because they had no money. And they came- they came and my landlady was very pleased, and she put them up in the- in- Stoke Newington. And I remember we had our first lunch. And Mrs. Weitz, who'd never done this before, laid a table in her living room. And she brought out her best *cholent* or whatever, and made them very welcome. It was very sweet. And I remember my first lunch with them. And- I won't say I was embarrassed, but my father took my mother's hand and kissed it and said, "I wish you a good appetite, my love." And she said, "Thank you, Leo." And I got this, you know, the slight embarrassment having been used to the English ways of no emotion, nor nothing, you know. And I have a silver vase, little rose vase that stands on my mantelpiece in front of my wife's portrait, which I usually keep a

rose in or something. My wife s- my father said to me, “That was Mutti’s rose vase. I always kept a rose in there.” And he was a very romantic person. And so, he was always- he was terribly polite and everybody loved him. He was a marvellous character. But as I say, it was very odd. And sometimes my father would say to me, “Don't you want to spend an evening in with Mutti and with me?” I still carry guilt complexes to this day. Because I said, “Well, not really, I'd rather go and see my girlfriend.” You know. I was- I was twenty! I mean, hormones and everything, you know, it was. There- here were these people suddenly appeared on me doorstep, my parents I hadn't seen for nearly ten years, suddenly telling me where I should- There was- This feeling was very difficult. It took some time, before I adjusted. And my mother who had diabetes, and during the war, had kept herself going. She had diabetes when my sister was born. She kept herself going during the war with no medicines, only, you know, eating bread and sugar when she needed it. Keeping a terrible- but of course it was playing havoc with all her organs. She managed several years. Died in ’62 or so. And the professor said to us at the end, the diabetes has just eaten her away, there's nothing I can do anymore. But she kept herself going. And it was- I didn't have- she was very angry much- lots of the time. She was a very odd lady. I remember, I went to Switzerland, because my first wife Liesel had- her uncle lived in Switzerland, Zurich. Because my wife worked for British Airways, British Overseas Airways, we used to get 10% fares to go over there. So, my friends always, “Oh, are you off to Switzerland again?” “Oh, yes.” It was only three pounds. We used to go to Switzerland. And – oh God, why was I telling you this?

About your mother, the diabetes-

[2:13:14]

My mother had diabetes. Yes. But why- what had Switzerland got to do with it? I- I don't really know. Anyhow, we- I don't know why I digressed. Old age. So, she was always very ill. Oh, no! We went to Switzerland and my uncle Hans was living in Zurich at the time. And he asked us out for dinner. And Liesel’s aunt said, “Oh, oh! The Baur au Lac, the poshest hotel!” So we met him there. And as soon as he saw us, he turned around and walked out the front door again. Liesel and I looked at each other. And he said, “Ach! These hotels. The food's the same in all international hotels. Go to a real Swiss place.” And he knew exactly what he was doing. And I said to him, he said, “So, how's your mother?” And I said to him, “She's angry. She's upset. She shouts a lot.” “Ah! No change there then.” So I thought, well,

it can't be totally then due to the diabetes and the illness, because I was putting it all down to the illness. Because when you're ill, you get foul tempered. But she wasn't- she was- she was often angry. And I think the loss of her children for so many years played very heavily on her. And possibly I didn't appreciate it enough. Although we did try. I remember when my parents were working for the- they'd left the Hahns and worked for Lady Stewart and then they at last, they worked for the Marchioness of Dufferin. And we were down- My parents always said, "Can my children- have got to come for weekends?" And Lady said- what's-her-name said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." And my friends always used to laugh because without thinking I'd say to my sister, "Are you going down to Lady what's-her-name's?" "Going down to the Marchioness this weekend?" You know, and they always thought it was terribly funny. I remember we were down there once, Liesel and I, and my mother was in a foul temper. And Father said, "I think we'll go and feed the chickens." So we- we went out and fed the chickens. And the dog came with us. And my mother stood at the door and whistled and called the dog back. And Father turned to us and he said, "You see?" he said, "Not even the dog's allowed to talk to us." He- he knew her and he had a lot of patience with her. And I always had marvellous conversations with my father. I could stay up half the night talking to him. We discussed politics, religion, all my terrible nefarious doings. He was very understanding. He was very moral. He said, "I don't think you should be doing that." You know, I could tell him anything. And, I had a good relationship with him. But sadly, sadly, I was saying to Silvia the other day, I can remember one walk with my mother when they were with the Hahns, walking down the lane. And we- suddenly there was a very close- suddenly, there was this close bond, suddenly. You know, and I remember a car coming this way. And I said to her, "Good God," I said, "It's like Piccadilly down here." And she laughed! She sort of let out, you know- I've never seen her laugh so much. It wasn't such a funny joke, but still.

[2:16:37]

And what the what your sister? How- what- what was her experience-?

Same. Much the same. Much the same.

Bonding with your parents?

Much the same. When they were- when they had moved back to Germany, I think I told you on the phone they-

Yeah. You haven't told us- now. Yes?

Well, they- my parents were working for the Marchioness. It was all right. But at the end, I think Lady Dufferin had lost a last ring. And a secretary phoned and said, “Mrs. Danziger, could you look for it?” My mother says, “It’s not here.” And then my parents were going to Germany because the Germans used to pay for a *Kur* [sanatorium treatment]. You know, my mother could go for a *Kur* every year. And Germans paid. And when they got to the port, Dover or wherever, my mother was practically strip-searched, which could only have come from Lady Dufferin letting them know, “These people are going on holiday; my ring is missing.” My parents were terribly, terribly upset. Came back. And my mother said, “I think we've got to get out of here.” And my mother rang London, and the secretary said, “Oh, don't worry, Mrs. Danziger. Lady Dufferin had it all the time, so don't worry.” And after that my parents were really fed up, and had been on the way from the *Kur* - I don't know where it was – they’d called in at the- in the village where they'd lived with the kids, near the kibbutz. And the Mayor said to them, “What are you doing working your socks off? Why don't you come and live here?” You know, “Paul's got a flat and Mrs. Sorok can be your housekeeper. We've arranged at all! So, why don't you come back?” So, my parents came back to London. We had a big discussion and I was earning four pound, five pound a week. There was no way I could keep them, and my brother-in-law couldn't either at the time. And so they went back to Germany and stayed there. We went out- we used to go over there, fly over. We’d go- my big holiday we used to pack the- pack the Mini and drive over. And the girls still remember it and- which was always nice. Until my mother lost her temper every five minutes, you know. She would say to my sister, “How do you want your birthday cake?” And Marion would, “Whatever.” And Marion would say, “I don't mind,” “What do you mean you don’t mind? Do you want chocolate or vanilla?” “Well, I don't mind.” “Right! That’s it! That's it!” And she would tear off to the baker, half chocolate, and half vanilla. So, you know, she was a very difficult woman. And I don't hold things against her but she used to say to me, “When you come back from one of your travels, can you bring me a small bottle of whatever. I would forget. And then there would- all hell would break loose. And- and then she was also very odd. She would- my brother-in-law who was a very good schmoozer, would say things like- I hope this doesn't- No, no, my sister died, so she won't hear this.

Don't say anything you don't want - on the tape.

[2:19:35]

But he was a very good schmoozer.

Because we can't take it out.

No, no, no. He used- he used to- he pretended he couldn't speak any German. He couldn't speak German much. But you know, Mutti, and *schön* is beautiful. So instead of *Mutti-chen*, he used to say *Mutti-schön*. And she swallowed all that, you see. She thought it was lovely, "My son-in-law. He says I'm beaut…" You know, and he was really winding her up. And she took it all in! And she would send- she sent him gold watches! And my wife used to be furious. "How can your mother send him full- and she's never given you anything?" I used to put up with it, you know, I was like black sheep of the family. When it was my parents Silver Wedding, all her German friends who were in England and lived around Swiss Cottage and all that crowd we had a- there was a lunch somebody had arranged in Baker Street. And they all got up and made German poems in honour of my mother, you see? And I didn't because I was sort of English by this time. So I got it in the neck for that. And I usually got it in the neck for most things. I could talk to my father, but my mother really was very, very difficult. And I've, I feel very, very sad that I couldn't have a relationship with her. And whenever I think of my parents, I immediately think of my father.

Yeah.

[2:21:00]

And it's very sad! And, and I think, Marion- we both felt the same way, you know. It was- it was just- it was bad. It was bad. And I could see why she was suffering. It was just awful. But I think she had this vision that she'd left these eight and five year olds out of her sight. And as soon as she got back, she would take charge again. By this time, I was an eighteen year old-

Yeah.

With girlfriends, and- and it wasn't the same. I didn't- I had little memories here and there. But there was no emotional- although obviously when I was little, I was very close to my mother. We used to go, as I say, we went to Breslau and, and- and all that.

Yeah. It was a difficult situation.

It was very-

When- how many years did your parents spend in England before they went back?

I would say about- they came '48 – '58. I would say it was just over ten years.

Oh. So in that ten years, they were in sort of domestic situations?

Yeah, three domestics: Mrs. Hahn-Warburg, Lady Steward and Lady Dufferin. That was three. I suppose they spent four years, three years, two years - three years. Yeah. Three years, three years, and four years, so that's ten. And then they went back and they lived- so, '59. Maybe they went back about '59. Because '61 was my father's birthday – 1881 – '61. And we were all over there. And we were sitting in the loft. I don't know why we were in the loft. And the radio said that these Berliners were putting the wall up. So I went, we skated downstairs and we said, "Listen, the East Berliners are putting a wall up." My father with his usual, "Oh! Rubbish! Tomorrow morning, General Clark will take three tanks and knock it all down." [laughs] Needless to say, General Clark didn't take his three tanks. Perhaps it would have been a good idea if he had, I don't know, history may have been different. Called their bluff. I don't know.

[2:23:20]

So, you know when this was-

Hm?

August - August '61.

Well, my father's birthday was August the 13th you see.

Thirteenth, that's it, yeah.

Yeah. So, yes, they put the wall up. And, so, I remember that. And then we used to go over for his birthdays. And we had- the housekeeper- they, one year we- they put- there was sand. And then they put a big circle of 81 candles in the shape of 81. I've got pictures.

So were they happy? How-?

Well, they- they lived quite happily. Talking about the 81, when it was my birthday, they wanted to replicate that and they kept me in this room. And then they said, "You can come out now." And they'd put candles outside in the garden…the same way. Well, they were quite content in a way. My mother was very good with people. She- she- I learned this from her. She used to say- she was in the village and I said, "Well, why don't you buy everything from Mrs. So-and-So?" "No, no, no, no, no," she said, "we live in a village and you have to keep everybody happy. So, I buy this from Mr. So-and-So and that from So-and-So." And she would do that. And when I- when my second wife lived in a village in Wymeswold and I used to go down there weekends, long weekends, because I worked in a factory in Nottingham. And I used to spend two days down there. The rest of the time I was in London in the showroom. But I used to spend two days. I used to say to my boss, "When do you want me? Monday, Tuesday or Thursday, Friday?" And he used to say, "Whenever." And I'd- so I'd have four days together with Janet and Caroline, you see, and the rest of the time back in London. Nicky was at college and so forth. And- I did the same down in the village; I used to buy some things here and some things there. And it was very useful because somebody told me about a letting agent, which I wouldn't have known if Janet had done all her shopping in Nottingham, you know. So, it- my mother taught me quite a few things. They taught me- they, they taught me certain manners, certain ways of going about things. Etiquette. Some of the things I learned from people with whom my parents worked. I thought, well, this is how you do this and how you do that. And so, I'm very gr- you know. They're- they were marvellous parents. And of course, there isn't a night goes by when I don't thank them for saving our lives, you know. Which-

[2:25:58]

That they made the decision to send you?

Well, in the letter my father says, "This life is," – if- you read the letter properly, but I mean, you'll see that it says, "If these things- but life is unbearable, and we don't want to put you through it." I think it may only be six months or a year. Or he obviously wasn't thinking that it was going to be long term. But-

And your father- your mother passed away and your father stayed?

In '62.

Yes?

And my father- we kept saying to my- Richard, by this time was quite successful in the property business. And he said, "Pops, there's as a flat going opposite the Common." My sister lived in Gunnersbury Avenue, the A4- opposite Ealing Common. They had- they'd bought a big house and they had a lower flat. And he says, "A flat going opposite. David," who was the doctor, "lives two minutes away. David look after you. You live there. We're here." My father said, "No, I've got used to the village. I've got- I can read the newspapers. I can listen to the radio. I've got my television." Which wasn't an awful lot of good to him because he'd got macular gen- degeneration later on. So he couldn't read. And his television viewing was pretty dodgy, because I remember when I went over there one day, it was all - terrible picture. And I said, "How can you see it?" "No, well, I can hear it." So, anyhow I straightened the- got the focus right, and so forth. And I still remember, you know what macular degeneration is?

Mn.

[2:27:48]

You can only see on the outside if you don't look. And I still remember being there. And there was a- a railway going past. And the engine driver was waving to a naked woman on the first floor who was leaning out of the window naked. My father says, “She looks good.” I said, “I thought you had mac- macular degeneration! You can't see anything.” So, I don’t know. He was- he couldn't really, but he was very funny. I remember he came to England one day, and we took him back to the airport and my wife said, “I’ll get your ground hostess,” which you had in those days, “to take you.” “No, no, no. I don't need it. I want to go to off-duty-free because I've got to bring back for the postmistress and this one and that one…” So, okay. So, she said, “No, I insist.” So, she got some lady who said, “Certainly!” And she- my father said, “Tell me, daughter, is she good looking?” So my wife said, “Yes. She's very nice looking.” So, he said, “Okay, then.” [laughs] He was a lovely- he was a lovely man.

Did people know that they were Jewish in that village?

[2:28:54]

Yes, yes. First of all, because the kibbutz had been Jewish.

Yeah.

And at the time, I said to Herbert, I said, “How comes that you were still going in the kibbutz till ’43? That you weren't arrested until 1943?” He said, “Well, I don’t know.” He said, “The villagers used to say ‘the Jews have got the best vegetables’ and we used to sell all our vegetables to them.” So they didn't shut the kibbutz until ‘43 when everybody was arrested, including my grandmother, who’d gone to live with him. She was gassed first day. And, and they lived there. So everybody knew they were Jewish. And- after my mother died, somebody came to my father and said, could my father lend them a few thousand marks. My father said, “Terribly sorry, sir. I'm a pensioner. Where do you think I would get 2000 marks?” - or whatever it was. “*Naja, die Juden haben doch Geld.”* So, they certainly knew they were Jewish. There wasn't any overt anti-Semitism, I must say. But little things like that were sort of ingrained. And the people opposite I remember the- the, the- the baker- the Fleischmanns, with whom they became very friendly. And they had a nice daughter and- and they were very friendly with them. And my mother used to- to buy things. And my mother died. And I went over to see my father. And my father said, “Oh, Fleischmann’s got a party

tonight. Go over and," you know. I said, "Okay." So I went over. And it was going on. And a man, when I think back, presumably was just- this must have been then in the 60s.

Yeah.

So, this man, this man who may or may not have been in the Army, I don't know, put his arm around me and said, "D'you know what? It's time to forgive and forget." And I – ugh- I took myself out of his embrace. And I said, "I think I'll decide whether to forgive and forget. I don't think it's really up to you." And, I said, "I think I'm rather tired. I'd rather go home." My father said, "What's- what time do you call this? This is rather early; I didn't expect you till two or three." And I said- So I told him, he said. "Ach! Well, he- well, he didn't mean anything." I said, "You're always making excuses for everybody." So, he was very good natured. He'd have tea with an SS man. We were horrified. And he said, "He was a young boy! He was brainwashed! He was in the Hitler Youth. He joined the SS. He thought it was the marvellous thing since sliced bread, till he got to Russia and he saw what was going on." And he said, "The scales fell from his eyes! He realised what he'd been led into! Everything was destroyed! Where- what was the great Führer doing, killing people and so forth?" So-

So, are your parents buried there? Where were-

Hm?

Where- where were they buried? In the village?

[2:32:05]

No. My mother died in- in Germany. And we- she was cremated in Germany. And I had her ashes flown over to England. And she's buried in Pound Lane cemetery. I didn't want her buried in Germany. And when my father died, the housekeeper rang me. So, I said, "I'll take the next plane over." And I took the next plane over and the- the undertaker said, he told me he said, "Listen, I've screwed the coffin down. If you don't mind," he says, "because all the villagers wanted to file past and pay their last respects. And the priest came and sprinkled him with holy water." I said, "I'm sure that's not going to do him any harm. And may even do

him positively some good, but" I said, "I'm sure he won't mind, but" I said, "I don't want all the villagers." He said, "No, I thought you wouldn't." So, it- and then my father was cremated in Germany. And meanwhile, I'd said to the sexton, Mr. Forman in Pound Lane that my father's urn was coming as well. I remember him- a macabre conversation when I would ring him up and say, "Has my father's urn arrived? Has he got lost in the post?" You know, we used to think it was dreadful. Anyhow the urn arrived. So, he said, "I buried it next to your mother." And he didn't even tell us! We couldn't even have a burial ceremony- ceremony over here. He just took it upon himself to stick it into the ground, you know, next to my mother. We did have a burial service for my mother, which was beautiful. Actually, it was very, very nice. And- but so my father and my mother are buried in Pound Lane. My first wife is buried in Pound Lane. Her aunt is buried in Pound Lane, some of my friends are there. So-

So, you brought them back to England?

Yeah, I didn't want them to be buried in Germany somehow. I mean, I have no- I feel- I feel reasonably at home there. But then when I think of it, I feel reasonably at home in Paris when I- you know, when I used to go- Janet and I used to go every six months to Paris, see the shows and things. And so I'd felt quite at home in Paris. So, I feel at home in Europe, and I always feel I'm European. I don't feel English or anything like that. You know, I just feel European somehow. This is why I didn't like Brexit. The idea of Brexit it's nonsense. I won't go into that. So-

So, let's just come back to your own development after- professionally.

Well, one card was empty.

Oh, this card? Yes. Yes.

One was-

Perfect. Yes, we were talking about your parents and that you brought them here. What was the name again - this kibbutz, you said? So there was the Hakshara. Was that before the war and after the war? in the same place? And what was the name of the village again?

Hattenhof.

Hattenhof. But you said the kibbutz was called-?

[2:35:10]

Well, it was on a place- on a big farm called Gehringshof. And then the village was called Hattenhof, which was near Fulda in Hessen. And- yeah, that's-

What is interesting is that it was there before and after.

Yes. What made them go there, I know not. It was just a *Hakshara* and they were training people to go to Israel.

Okay.

Well, Palestine.

Yeah. Okay, but let's come back to you. So, please tell us. So, we- you were working. You left the- you were working with the- with this man? In London?

Oh! Oh, that's my apprenticeship.

Yes. That's where we left it-

Yes. Well-

In your story.

Well, while I was- after four years, I was being used as a cheap tailor. I thought I'd learned all that I could learn, not that I was big head, but. And however nice it was, I decided I needed to learn more. And was he prepared to teach me? But he wasn't. He didn't really know. It was: one of his sons cut his patterns and the other son did his designs. His- one of his sons, Leo,

had been to the Reimann Schule in Berlin, which was very prestigious, and had- was designer at Dorita before, you know- which was a- a big thing. He earnt an absolute- absolute fortune in those days. And- so, he did the designs, and Willy cut the patterns. So, the old man couldn't really teach me anything; he only knew tailoring. And I wanted to get on. And I thought if I'm going to be in this business, I want to get to the top, I don't want to be hanging around the bottom. So, I asked him and one day I was out with, with Leo the designer. And I said, "Leo, I want to be a designer. How- how do I set about it?" "Well," he said, "you buy a book and you tear a page out." I said, "I don't think it's as easy as that. There must be more to it." Anyhow, a friend of my wife's- no, I had a girlfriend at the time - my first wife, obviously. She said, she's working for another refugee lady, Mrs. Heinitz, who's got a- and she'd be willing to teach you pattern cutting and so forth. So, I reluctantly left. And he said, "Pfuh! Who's going to pay you for learning?" I said, "I've got somebody." So, I left. And I went to work for Mrs. Heinitz for a while. And after Mrs. Heinitz, I felt I'd done all I could there and I worked for some other Jewish refugee company making swimwear and so forth. And I learned- learned how to use machinery. So, I learned the business going round from company to company, learning something all the time. And then- and then I can't remember where I- Oh, I know, I was working as a designer - forgive me - in children's wear in South Molton Street. Terribly posh. We did weddings for the high society and things like that. And I didn't know what I was doing. But I had a book. I used to look it up the night before and then do it. You know, I really was 'flying by the seat of me pants'. And, and then one day, a very nice lady, she- the widow of a German- of an Austrian banker, whom I'd met at Mrs. Heinitz's. We became very close friends - lovely lady. And she fell in love with my children- 'still in touch with her grandson now, still.

Mn-hnn?

[2:38:45]

Anyhow, in those days she had left- Mrs. Heinitz was working in Curzon Street, and somebody came in and said, "Anybody know a good designer?" And she said, "Yes, I know Hans Danziger. He's marvellous." She didn't have a clue! So, I got hold of him. He said, "Shall we meet?" "Where?" "Hyde Park Corner." So, we met at Hyde Park Corner and he said, "Okay." And I said, "Don't you want to see sketches or anything?" He said, "Well how do I know you've done them? A friend could have done them." I said, "That's true." So he

said, “Well, you want to be a designer? You can be my designer.” He said, “I've just sacked my designer because he was cheating on me - and I don't like crooks. So, you're on! And if you can't do the job, I'll kick you out.” And that was my first step into designing. And I thought here was a- man's giving me a chance. So I went there. Tidied up the designs- the- the patterns, which were in a terrible state, and took out the ones I wanted. Again, as I say, flying by the seat of me pants. I wasn't very good at pattern cutting. But I used them. And I made- made the first collection. Obviously I must have had a flair, otherwise I couldn't have done it. And- which was successful. And we went on, and I was made a Director, which meant I could be given less money. But still, what could I do?

[2:40:12]

What was the company called?

I was called *Cleverline*. And-

Cleverline?

Yes, but it’s long since- he died a couple of years ago.

Was he a refugee or-?

No.

No.

He was English. He'd been a fairground boxer, and all sorts of things. And he'd worked for somebody as a salesman and he thought well, I could do this myself. So he left, took the designer with him, and started his own company. The designer then cheated him. And so Vernon was looking for somebody else. And that's how I got in there.

And were those women's fashions or-?

Yes. And-

So, what were you cutting? Dresses, and-?

Yes. And- and then he said- and then, you know, we were rubbing along, and I got fed up. And I said, you know- he used to give me a bonus every summer, and we used that to go to Germany. It was alright, but I said, "I'm not really making any money." And I- so, he said, "Alright…" So, we bought another factory to get bigger, which gave him a nervous breakdown, sadly. And he couldn't cope with the extra stress. And- although it made him more money. And I stayed with it, well, he made me a Director and so forth and so on. And- but in the end, I couldn't stand him anymore, because we used to argue, and he used to drink and I- and so, after eleven years, I packed it in. And I saw an advertisement which said 'Designer wanted' or something or the other, and I rang them. And the chap said to me, "Where are you working?" I said, "I'm not going to tell you over the telephone. I don't know who you are." - you know. He said, "You can take my word for it." Somehow, I don't know, I trusted him. And as soon as I told him, he said, right, come for an interview immediately. So- because we were quite successful. So, I went to him. And he introduced me to the owner of the company, who was a charming old gentlemen, English. And- or originally Russian, I think, his parents. And they said, "Well, we'll form a company for you." So they started- we got a new name. And his brother-in-law - who had been married to his sister, his sister sadly died – Sam became Sales Director and I became Design Director. And we had a company and after about six months negotiations, finally drove out to Slough where there was a huge factory. So he said to me, "Do you want it or don't you?" And I thought, "Well, I've- I've never run a factory in my life." So, so I said, "Yes." So- he said, "Right, we'll get it then." So he bought a factory for me, set me up. And we lasted - highly successful - one season. And everybody kept saying, "Oh! You're copying Cleverline." And Sam had to explain to all the customers, "No, he's not copying Cleverline. He is the designer who used to be with Cleverline, and this is his look." So they- they said 'okay', so they bought - very well. And then we sold well until March and then Mary Quant came along and did minis, and old lady prints. And the summer season came and the customers came, and they said, "Well, we didn't sell so well, but we'll buy again." And we said, "Why are you buying again when you didn't sell them?" "No, no, we love your things!" But sadly, sadly, it all went downhill because the new look, you know, Mary Quant and that look came in. And my look was-

[2:43:40]

So what was your look? What was- describe a little.

Well, mine was- Mine was more staid for- Don't forget, before Mary Quant and that, your mother wore the dress and she passed it to her daughter. There was no ‘teenage’ fashion, there was no ‘young’ fashion. And there was nothing at all. Just before I left the la- the children's designer, he'd come back from Paris with ideas for young teenagers: twelve, thirteen, fourteen year olds. There was nothing for them on the market.

Right.

And I was getting quite excited, but then I left because he was paying me double. I do remember, they were Hungarians, these, these – South Molton lot. I remember saying to them, “Look, I'm sorry I- but I have got to leave.” “So vhy you are leaving?” So I said, “I have got more money.” “Vhy you need more money? Does Liesel need silk stockings?” [laughing] So I- this was an argument for my staying on. She didn't need silk stockings. Anyhow I left, and I was with Vernon eleven years. And I used to see him every few years. I used to go and see him. I keep in touch with everybody. And the old man Anker I went to see- well, I left old man Anker, went somewhere else and then I met his son in the street and he said, “Dad would really like you to come back.” I said, “Okay.” So, I went back to the old man who said, “I'm so glad to see you, son.” You know. What could I say? So, I worked with him for another year. Then I got married. That was ‘53. I got married. And as soon as I came back from my honeymoon, I got the sack! So, my father said, “I'll beat him up!” I said, “You’ll do no such thing.” You know. It was- business was going downhill. Instead of telling me honestly that he couldn't afford me and I was first one out, and he was going to close the business. I don't know what was the matter, he was too proud, or something. And that's when I went to work for other people. So, there was a bit of messing around and then I went to- I can't remember who.

[2:45:40]

I always seemed to have something. And when I didn't, my wife here, she used to say, “Go to New York and see Mrs. So -and -So.” And I said, “I've just lost my job.” “Yeah, never mind.

Just go to New York." I went to New York to see my friends, came back again, there was another job. And- I had a reasonably good reputation. So, I was- I was okay. And-

And were you known for something in particular, or- what was it?

I was just a good- I was a reasonably good designer. My stuff sold and people knew the firms, you know. But it was all old continental and smallish family, mainly family firms. I've never, never really worked for big, big, well-known corporations.

And were there- were there- that's what I meant with the Continent- where there lots of Continental-?

Yes.

Was that a sort of-?

There was- I went to a lecture by somebody at the Jewish Book Club recently,

Yes - Anna Nyburg.

Yes.

She wrote about that.

[2:45:33]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And there lots of companies like that. And Sylvia bought dresses from them in the past. And so, I worked for them. So of course, and they always felt, 'he fits in with the family'. You know what I mean? I always soon became part of the family. And- and then, I don't know. And with the old man, well, the factory packed up because of the new look. And he said to me, "Can you change your handwriting? Because this is no longer going to work." So, he said, "You've got three weeks." So, I said to my assistant, "We've got to change our look." And he said, "I suggest that you do wedding outfits. Five foot two wedding outfits on the lines of our company." His company was Peggy French, who did a

certain look. He said, “You can borrow ideas if you want to. Try five foot two wedding outfits.” So we had three weeks to put a collection together, which we did. And then I came home. We were in Wembley at the time. Telephone rang at 10:30 at night. Mrs. Brownstone said, “Your future with us is assured.” So, I said, “Thank you.” So, then he set up a showroom with- next door. And we started, so, you know, selling. It wasn’t long before I was overtaking the parent company. Because the hemlines were rising. So, a lot of people who were taller, were buying my things because they were already short enough. They didn’t have to buy his things and shorten them. Do you know what I mean? Because I was doing through lines and so forth. And that lasted about four or five years and then I got fed up. I thought I can't do the same look over and over and over again; it’s driving me insane. One day I'll have to leave and then people say that ‘you can only do that’. So I left to go to somebody else. Big mistake. He was just awful. I won't go into it. A dreadful fellow. And I needed- he sacked me because of some lunatic thing that he did and I objected to.

[2:48:43]

And then I worked for a company called Bernard Freres, who took me on and they said, “I’ve never paid that sort of money.” I said, “Well,” you know. So, we- I joined them. I did a very good autumn collection. They'd never had an autumn collection; they’d relied on summer. And it sold extremely well. So, I was blue-eyed boy there. And- and then I met an ex-girlfriend of mine on the underground and she said, “Oh, what you are doing?” And I told her. And she said, “Oh, come and work for us. Come and work for us. Because my father,” - her father had died. He was a brilliant designer. And she was designing, and the uncle felt that she needed somebody else. And her mother did as well. So, I left. They were all really upset but I left and went to join Margaret, because I thought then I- with Margaret I could have my own company. But - I couldn't. I couldn't raise- you know, I couldn’t- the company was going down like- I couldn't bring it up like that overnight. You know, it was a long uphill struggle. And he was an accountant. He wasn't a designer, her uncle. So, in the end, he said, “I leave you children and you can work on an overdraft.” Well, there was no way I was going to work on an overdraft and put my house on the line. I said, “I've got a wife and two children. There's- I'm not risking my property and putting money into a business that I don't…” You know. So, I left and I don't know what happened somewhere else. Oh no, of course not- I went- he said to me, “If your boss- If your ex-boss keeps nagging you, give in.” So, I said, “All right.” So, they were nagging me, “Hans come and look at this. Hans come

and look," I said, "You know, I've left, you know." So, I went over again, and he said, "What do you think? What do you think?" I said, "It's awful. It looks as if somebody's thrown things at the wall." He said, "Exactly." So, he says, "Come back." I said, I'll come back if you make me a Director. So, he said, "Okay, okay, anything." [laughs] So, I went back. And I was there another few years till he messed up the business.
[2:50:50]

And that went. Then I worked for Zandra Rhodes. I saw an advert saying, '*Willing to travel to America*'. So, I rang up and I said, "I know somebody in America who will give me a room." "Come. Then you don't have to stay in a hotel." So - save money. So, I went to work for Zandra and she set up a business for me, making less expensive things. I mean, her things were selling for 4- or 5,000. Mine were going to sell for 500 - a snip. And so that was all right. So, I worked for her- I think we did one or two collections. And then she ran out of money. So, she closed my studio. Then she had to close her studio. And that was the end of Zandra, who still keeps going. And that was- so, after Zandra I worked for Frank Usher. I don't know if you've ever heard of them. Because they were good names, you see? I said I'd worked for Zandra. They said, "Oh! Okay." So I worked for them. They gave me a company too. That was funny, really- I mean, are you interested in this?

[2:52:00]

Yeah – yeah!

Cause-

Go on.

It's all the old stuff rehearsing. Well, I was working for somebody freelance doing something and the agency rang me. And they said, "Frank Usher's looking for somebody." I said, "I've got a job! Why do you want to offer me another job?" "No, no, no." I said, "You want the commission so I change." So, she said, "No, no. Go and see them. At least go and see them," I said, "All right." So I went to see them. And the first time, he'd forgotten to turn up. This was the son of the owner. That was nice. I'd schlepped out to Mill Hill. Then I- we arranged another appointment. And we sat and we sat in the waiting room. And the girl said, "Is he

always like this?" I said, "I have no idea." And then he dived into the room and he said to this girl, "Terribly sorry to keep you waiting." He said, "I'll see him, and I'll only be five minutes." I thought, 'charming', you know. So, I went in with him. So, he said, "Well, tell me your story. What – what- what do you want?" I said, "What do you mean, what do I want?" He said, "Why are you here?" I said, "Because you were advertising." So, he said, "I'd forgotten about that. What do you want to do?" I said, "Well, if you really want to know, I want to run a company." "Okay, you want to run a company? I've got a company. Now tell me about yourself." So, I had about five minutes to tell him about myself. He said, "Yeah, that's good enough. You'll have to meet my mother." So, I- I met his mother, and- who was a dragon. And she was saying, "So, vat you do here? And vat do you do zhere?" And I managed to answer all. And afterwards she- we left the room. And he put his arm around me, he says, "That gave her." So, I worked for them. Made a success of the company. And blow me down they said, "Well, since it's successful now, you can do something else and we'll give some so-and-so a chance to run it…" because of some internal politics. And I got fed up, you know. So, I left. And they kept saying, "You can keep the car, you can do this, you can do that." And I didn't want to do it anymore. And I left and some supplier said to me, "Hans, for God's sake, don't get another job. We'll keep you going with clients - do freelance." So, I did freelance. And a friend of mine - a friend of mine - a girl I knew- a lady I knew who had worked for a company- I saw that they needed a designer so I went in and said, "My wife is looking for something." And I went to see her and I said I was- it was Celia and I knew her cause- so she said, "I've got nothing for your wife cause I'm- got the job that she would want. But I need somebody to go to Hong Kong for me. Have you got time?" I said, "I shall look into my busy diary." Had nothing in there, of course. So, I went to Hong Kong for her, sorted it out. And she said, "Oh, God, thank God I can sleep at night. And - you're on." So, they- they said, "Can you do the next collections for us?" So- so that was it. So I was in there. But then the woman who ran it messed it up. That was my muzzle! I just- everywhere I went. Perhaps I was like the touch a death on them. Whenever I arrived-

Yes, you went to lots of different- many different companies-

[2:55:10]

Well, the woman who messed it up, she'd been working for the Liberal Party, and she'd been instrumental in giving the man who owned the company a knighthood. So he felt he owed her

one. So, he employed her as a managing director. What did she know about the fashion business? We had meetings and we'd say, "Oh, you can't do that." And she said, "Oh, it's a learning curve." Well, the learning curve went like that, she messed it all up. Total, total, total mess. And the chief designer was buttering her up and telling her everything she wanted to hear, which of course didn't help. So, the whole thing was a disaster. And then, by this time, my wife had got the chance to- to have half a shop in Primrose Hill. And, she said to me, "For God's sake, you're messing about. Work with me." So we had this built. I had an insurance policy due. My wife said, "Do you want to retire on it?" I said, "Well, not on that money." So, we built this, and we worked in here. That's why we still call it the studio. It isn't really, now. We worked in here for about seven years. Janet was designing. This was the office, there was my table. Here was Janet. And we worked together for about seven years in here.

And what- what was it? A boutique in Primrose Hill?

Yes, she had a little boutique. She shared with somebody.

What was it called?

Well, it was called Keturah Brown because it- it was- belonged to the girl. But my wife called it - which was a laugh really, because my- my wife had had her own company in Nottingham, which was originally called WebZeb because her name was Weber and her partner's was Zebrowski. So, WebZeb.

Yeah-

And then- and then she had a- then- and did the dirty on her, and Janet had to go by herself. So she called it Solo. And then she came to London. I gave- I got her a couple of jobs and so forth, but then their company folded as well, as happened in the clothing business. And so then she got this place. And I said, "What are you calling it?" "Janet Weber." "No, no, no, no." And once she came up suddenly, "I'm going to call it Charlotte Danziger." I said, "What? My mother's name?" So she said, "Yes." That was- so, we've got the label- I don't think I've got any labels anymore. Charlotte- she's insisted on calling it Charlotte Danziger. Which was quite- I said, "Mother would have been pleased", you know. So that was that.

And we ran that, and then after a few years, the lease was- [inaudible] wanted us out, and Janet got another job. And she was very happy to work for other people. They loved her because she was very good. She was much better than I was. She was really, really good.

[2:57:53]

She was a designer as well?

Yeah. We'd met at a place I was eight years called Davisella. And I'd got a- after the Bernard Freres thing fell, I worked for another company. And they evidently- I- I went for an interview and they took me on, and evident- a model girl phoned me in the- at night. And she said, “I hear you've got this job.” So, I said, “How do you know?” She said, “Because my boyfriend's one of the directors and I live with him. And they said, do you know a good designer. I said yes, Hans Danziger. So they said we've already got him.” So- so, that was it. But they were mad. They were mad as frogs. Terrible, and messed up awfully. They kept excusing themselves because I was a bit older, you see? They knew. They kept saying, you know, “Don't worry, don't worry.” But I was. And then I met somebody quite by chance who was working for this Davisella company. And he said, “Why don't you come work for us?” Which I did. I think there was somebody in between. Anyhow, I worked for them. Oh, I went to see them and I didn't want to mention anything, but my- a very good friend of mine was an uncle of the owners. Right? But I didn't want to say that because that’s- so, then when he- he said, “Alright, come and work for us.” And I said, “Do you know so and so?” “How do you know him?” I say, “He’s one of my oldest friends.” So- again, I was- became part of a family. It was like a family company again, you see? So-and I was there until they folded and then I was freelance. And then- then Janet said, “Why don’t you work with me?” And we worked together till she retired. And- and then after, I think I told you- I’d had it up to here with the fashion business. I didn't want to know anymore; it was all going down the hill. I didn't even know people. In fact, it changed so completely that when my young daughter opened her boutique in Brighton, she went to a fashion show. And I didn't know anybody. I looked down the list. There was nobody I knew. And suddenly, I saw one name. And it was a girl- lady, who was a designer with a company I'd worked for in the 80s. And so I thought I'd go and see them. So, Caroline said, “I'll meet you for lunch.” And I thought, oh, yeah - that’s why she's brought me, to buy her lunch. So, I went along to see them. And Jill saw me. She

said, “Hans!” - you know. “Where are you - haven’t seen you for twenty years!” You know. “You haven't changed!” “Good.” So I went and we had a chat and I said, “How's Mr. Goodman?” “Oh,” she said, “he’s over there. He’ll be here in a minute.” I thought he was dead. So he came over, he saw me, he said, “Hans. How are you? Do you want a job?” I said, “I'm eighty-five! I don't want a job now.” So - that was that. So, you know, people- I’ve kept in touch with all sorts of people until they've- until they've gone, practically. And- so where was I? Oh, then- then of course, packed up. And I said to Janet, “I've always wanted to study.” And I talked to John's father, who is Professor of psychology at Sussex. And he said, “I'll send you some details about the Open University.” So, I said, “Good.” And I did a twenty week taster course, after which the tutor said, “You will definitely be able to cope with the, with the work.” So, then I start-well, I wrote a couple of- I had- you had to write a couple of essays. And I think I wrote them a bit like a detective story. So, he wrote back, he said, “I think we’ll have to change your style a little bit.” And I do remember the first one as well. She said, “Try and work in a more academic way.” So, that, you know, so of course I had to write in an academic fashion. Well, I did. And- we did a- we did a founda- first it was a- taster course was a bit of everything. And then we did a foundation course, which was excellent! Marvellous!

[3:02:06]

In which subject?

Hm?

Which subject?

Everything. The foundation course was everything - a bit of everything.

Okay-

Totally brilliant. And I fell in love with Greek theatre, of all things, and so did two or three others. And I decided to do Greek history the following year. So, I signed up for Greek history, which was very interesting. And then I thought, well, since I've done the Greeks, I might as well do the Romans. So, the following year, I signed up for the Romans. And I

thought what was to come after the Romans. So I thought I'd do the Re- Renaissance, you know. So, I did the Renaissance. And then we- I spoke to one of the tutors, and- no, this was after, even- So, after the Renaissance came the Enlightenment. I did the Enlightenment and till- and till Romanticism. And I spoke to one of the tutors who used to teach at the Sorbonne, used to come over because she loved teaching OU, for weekend courses. And I spoke, we had a drink. And I said to her, this is what I've done. She said, "Brilliant! You've done a Humanities course. Follow the line through." The joke is, Sylvia bought me a book about- it's called *The Silk Road* by Peter- whatever his name is, Professor at Oxford or something, who thinks that everything happened in China and round that part of the world? And he said, "Everybody goes and does the Greeks, the Romans, Renaissance…" and reels off the whole thing that I'd done, which is a pure nonsense, because, you know, this has all come in. So, I thought, have I wasted my time? No, I haven't. I felt that I'd had some sort of liberal education these- which I'd lacked in all the years I was in the, in the- in the fashion - I hate the word 'rag trade' - I kill people who say that. So, yeah, so that's how I landed up doing that. It was the happiest years of my life. I made a little speech on my 80th birthday or something, and I was saying - this is before Janet died - and I was saying, "If you want to get out of the washing up, do an OU course", because Janet always used to say, "Leave it. Leave it. You've got an essay to finish." So, I've got- be able to pop upstairs. And then- I did- I finished- I finished-

So you got a BA? You did the BA?

[3:04:28]

Yeah, I got a BA Honours. Told you – First. And, and- and then I stayed on to do a year of Latin. I did a year of Latin. Didn't do me an awful lot of good, but still. It was not a very good book, terrible book. In fact, one of the people says it's the worst thing she'd ever come across. I Googled her and she turned out to be a very high flying judge come to do a course at the OU – Latin. She said it was a rubbish book. And- and the tutor said, "Yes, not a book I use at school. But, you know, what can I do? It's the OU book." Too technical. Anyhow, cut a long story, so I did that. And then sadly, I was diagnosed with kidney stones, Janet- which I had every four years - touch wood, not now. Janet was diagnosed with cancer. My first wife died of cancer in '46. Janet died 2011. And I gave up, you know, obviously. And then she died, and a friend of mine who was doing a Master's said, "Come back and do a year of

psychology." So, I said, "I don't want another degree. I've had a- six years." It was six- you know. Enough. So, I did one year psychology, which was great. Gave us the basics, so when I go to psychology U3A I know what the- what she's talking about. And I can put in my four pennies and got a book upstairs I can gen up on, you know. So, no but the happiest- the happiest six, seven years, because as I say I was doing what- I just loved it. I loved researching, loved having all my books around me, you know. Whereas had I been- well, I had no options! In those days, you had to- I- In a way, I'm grateful because the man taught me something, you know.

So, do you feel if you hadn't been forced to leave, if you stayed in Germany, what would you have – become?

[3:06:28]

If you've read my father's letter, you will see that he says, '*As for Wölfchen, there is always a good- an opening for good looking young man in the hotel business*.'

Aha.

'*And Onkel Hans*,' the main fixer of the family, as you will have gathered, '*has many connections in Switzerland*.' And of course, if you read the letter, you will see, '*First of all, you will have to go as a cook. And you will have to learn the business on- from the ground upwards. And then I think it would be a good idea if you learned languages, Spanish being quite important*.' He was writing. '*So, you will learn French, German and Spanish. And then you will- Uncle Hans will most likely get you some good hotels. And you…*' So. This is the career of my friend, Terry Foreman, who is now- lives in America, whom I met at the OU and whose father was the sexton who buried my parents. And Terry helped his brother out every now and then who had a funeral business. Not- and Terry was in my book: '*If something should happen to me, ring Terry Foreman who is the son of…*' - so on and so- When I was at the Open University, we were going home one night, and he said to me, "Are you Jewish?" I said, "Yes. Why? Are you?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "What's your name then?" He said, "Terry Foreman." I said, "Don't tell me you're the son of this- Old Man Foreman." He said, "Old Man Foreman's my father!" He was the sexton at Pound Lane. So, I said, "Your name is in my book for you to bury me in case I should snuff it suddenly."

[laughs] So. So, Terry and I became very good friends. And he lives in America. Sadly, his wife died this year.

[3:08:20]

So, you think you would have gone into hotel business? That was what your father-?

Well, he- he did exactly that. He started off. He learned to cook at The Savoy, went to the Georges V. He did- he followed the same sort of route as my father was saying there. And Terry, he comes over- they have a thing called Savoy Gastronomes, where they all meet, all the big hotel managers from all over the world, who had been trained at the Savoy. And they get together and I've been invited to some of their do-s, which are very nice. So I go along with Terry and I take my wife or- my daughter I took last time. So, yeah, so Terry did exactly that route that I would have taken had- I think, had I remained in Germany. I don't think I was academic. I didn't- I didn't think I was, and I don't think- I don't know. I was thinking of doing a Master's, but then I thought, I can't really think of a subject that I really, really, really want to research. You know. I was thinking of doing it, but you know it's- I couldn't think of a subject, you know.

Maybe it will come up.

Yeah. I think it's a bit late now. So, I think it's bit late. But you never know. Anyhow, the prices have gone up enormously. I suppose I could afford it. But-

So, in terms of your- the fashion career, what- what are you proudest of, or what's the most important thing you've done?

In what way?

For yourself and- I don't know, is there any particular design or anything which stands out - for you?

[3:09:55]

No… I suppose. I suppose I enjoyed working for Zandra just for a short time, because it gave me a chance, flights of- you know. Could design things, and- I don't know. And it was a chance to do something. We were trying to get into Europe because she was mainly selling in America. So, she wanted me to try and get into Europe. And we found a very good agent who was actually willing- we went, we had an interview with her. She was Zandra's agent doing American things. But she said she was willing to drop a very, very good French house in order to take me! And we came- the chief designer and I came back, we were totally chuffed, you know that she was willing to drop this Christian Audigier. In order to take me. And Christian Audigier went up like this, and I went down like that, you know. [laughs] And Zandra was no good with money. So- she was a very good self-publicist, but that's about it. Ben was the designer there. She was, she's a very good fabric designer, but also in a rut. You know. So- but I was quite happy doing that. I mean, the Frank Usher job when I took on that I was very proud of doing that, rescuing from nothing- considerably- I was proud of the fact. Actually, my wife said to me, "You won't last, because it's- you're wearing yourself out." Because I did work hard. I said, "Because the whole thing is on the floor, I've," - you know. And all my staff kept saying, were sneering and saying, "And why do you think you can do it when we've had three other managers who couldn't?" And I was determined, you know. and we did it. We were successful. And her son, who was my boss- and the old lady, I remember the fashion show, when I was showing my first collection there. And the old lady was talking German to the German agent. And she didn't know, well, she knew I could understand. But she wasn't conscious I was listening. And she was trying to chuck out one of my model girls. And I said to Robert, I said, "If she goes, I'll walk out if that door now." He said, "Don't worry, she won't." I said, "Your mother's threatening." He said, "Don't take any notice of my mother." So, it was very successful show. And I still remember- I'll say I'm proud. I was really, I suppose, because they were clapping and people were coming from downstairs to listen what was going on. So, that was quite, that was quite good. I quite enjoyed that. As I say, it was all foolish afterwards. And they'd gone as well; didn't do them any good.

[3:12:46]

Yeah. Tell us about how did you meet your first wife?

At the Ahdut Youth Club?

So we haven't talked about it. Tell us about Ahdut. What was it?

The Ahdut was a Jewish Youth Club, which was started by the Jewish Refugee Committee. I can't think of the name- lady - blonde lady – who ran it. And she- they gathered all the Jewish kids, refugee children, people come- many Kindertransportees and others. And in fact, one of them, Robert Kirk-

Yeah, we interviewed him.

Yeah. Well, he was a member. And I- I wrote to him, we had an email or something. And then I said, "I'll invite you over. We'll have a party." And then I said to Tom-

Yeah.

I said, "We'll invite the Kirks and we'll invite so and so,"- But one of them is in an old age home, she's a bit gaga, the other one's gone. So there's only Tommy, Freddie, and I. There's three blokes left. And, and- and that's about it. And Bob Kirk and Anne, but didn't know them really very well. I said we'd all get together and then this COVID thing came up. So, we never really got-

But you knew them from the Ahdut?

Well, you know, I must have seen them there.

Yeah.

Anyhow, I was living in St. Albans most of the time. And so I didn't really- I went every now and then. And then the secretary Greta said they were having a dance, and they needed more fellows. And so she wrote to me, she said, "Please come to the dance." So I said, "All right." It was at St. Peter's Primary School next to the Windmill Theatre in the West End. So I went, and there was this very pretty girl. And I danced with her and that was that. And we- I messed her around five years or so before we got married. Dreadful, because in the end, she threatened to go to Israel. Either I could make up my mind or she'd be off. So, I married. It wasn't- it wasn't the best idea, I suppose. I don't want to talk about it. But it's very sad for

my daughters because I've got two lovely daughters with her. Yes, she was good lady, but it just didn't seem to work out. And she had many problems and was very sad. Her father was killed in Lodz. Her mother came over here as a servant, worked in the clothing trade as a finisher, worked in the evenings as a waitress at the Waldorf, worked her socks off to keep Liesel. Got her back from the evacuation, and then, after the war, her brother in Switzerland started wanting her to smuggle watches or something. And the other brother came back from South America and wrote horrible poems about her. And the woman put her head in the gas oven and finished it all. So, that had a terrible effect on her. Can you imagine-

Her mother?

An eighteen year old coming home finding her mother's dead in the gas oven? So, she had- personality disorders were hand washing and things. And it wasn't the happiest of marriages, sadly. Then she died in ‘46. She had a sarcoma. The girls miss her a great deal. She was a lovely lady, she really was. And it was very, very sad. And I feel guilty that we didn't have a happier life, you know.

[3:16:19]

When did she die?

Forty-six- uh- ‘76. She was forty-six.

Right.

Forty-six.

Young.

Yeah, she died in ‘76. And then, by that time, I was working with the Davisella people, where I was eight years. And Janet was the designer in Nottingham. And I was a designer in London. We used to go out for a drink sometimes. And then Liesel died, and- we started going out together. She was very- she's was very English, which was quite a change from Liesel, being Austrian, but she was very English. But she never bothered me. I could burst

into tears suddenly, and she wouldn't- it wouldn't faze her, you know. Very good. And one thing led to another, and the other led to Caroline, so. And then we got married some years later. And we were very happy, actually. Because, as my brother-in-law used to say, "You live at the same pace", although she was fifteen youngers- fifteen years younger than I was. And- so, she died when she was sixty- well, I was eighty. Eighty - she was fifteen years younger. So, sixty-five.

And did you talk to your children- to your daughters about your past and-?

Which past?

About your own personal history, about coming on the Kindertransport?

[3:18:46]

Well, yes, and no. When they are asked sometimes they would- we would- we would talk every now and then. But, you know, they've got their own lives. They're all busy, busy. And I don't sit down and do old mens' talks to them, you know. But it was- sometimes they would- I said to Stephi the other day, I said, "Joel's at home. Has he ever- have you ever read by thing?" "Yeah, I think I did. I did - I think." I said, "Oh, good." I said, "How's about if Joel reads it?" You know, my grandson. I said, "It would do him good to know." So I texted him. I said, "It might, you know, do you some good. You're not all that busy before you go to university." Please God, he goes. You know, I told you he had a brain tumour. And- I hope he manages. I hope he stays. So- who can tell? And, I said to him, he should read the history so he knows something about his ancestors. And he wrote back saying, "It's a jolly good idea." But whether he has or has not, I don't like to nag. And I told my eldest daughter, I said "Emil's finished. He's a dentist now." And I said, "Perhaps Emil would like to read it." So, Nicky said, "Yes, a good idea. I'll try and get him on to that." But Lauren, who's a doctor, she's far too busy to do any reading. She's too busy to do any reading but she- she'll read it one day, I guess. It's for the children, and-

And Hans what- what impact do you think did the experience of the Kindertransport and the separation have on your life and maybe also on your later life?

[3:19:38]

I can't- how can I compare what- how can compare what I would have been? I might have been in the hotel now swanning about in- in the Ritz! Who knows? But I don't- I don't know. I always- funnily enough I always had a hankering to work in a hotel, you know. Or the law, but I think law would have been a bit boring. But hotel would have been quite interesting. Not as a dishwasher obviously. I mean, although the fashion business- the one thing I will say about it, although I spent my whole life - and that wasn't a happy thing with Ja- Liesel either. It was very obsessive. You, you, you eat, drink, every day, my designing was done at the kitchen table or on the loo. I didn't sit at a desk all day drawing beautiful pictures. It- so you were obsessed with it all 24 hours a day. Not only that. I was reasonably bright, bright enough to see that the way some of my bosses were treating the business as a *Milch* cow wasn't the right way to keep the business on the straight and narrow. And the first man Vernon, who gave me my first design job, I told you he'd been a boxer. He went to the accountants and he said, "I'll tell you what: keep me straight, don't let anybody take my business away from me. Don't let me make any mistakes, or I'll smash your teeth in." And they said, "That sounds like a good bargain." So- [laughs] And they used to ring us up. And they said, "Look, you're overtrading." And we'd say, "What's overtrading?" And they would explain it to us. And we'd say, "Okay." And- or "You're doing this wrong." And that's how I learned, for eleven years. So, when I went to other businesses, I had a very good idea. And "I see you're doing this, why don't you stick to your business?" You know? You're the design director; stick to design and don't interfere with the financial side. But I suppose because I wanted to keep my job. But- I'm afraid many people in our business used to treat it just to take money out and not pay their bills and things like that, and many went under. It didn't have a very good reputation. It was sad. And so, when I went to Zandra, I felt at least this problem- she's not taking money out, and she hadn't got any money, but at least she wasn't robbing the business. And, and Frank Usher, the same. I felt, this is a decent business that's not being robbed. You know. If fashion changes, all right, people go down because of fashion changes and, and companies are not allowed to change. Janet was very lucky. She- she tried to change always. She was very good. She could tell.

[3:22:40]

But I meant, also, just to come back to the question of the impact, also on the- you know, the sort of longer impact emotionally with the separation from your parents and then the- rapport to rebuild it or-

Quite honestly, my sister and I used to discuss- discuss this question. You know. And we just felt there's nothing we can add to it. I- I can never understand, for instance, all this business about the great impact on the senet- second generation and the third generation and- I just wonder how much of this is-? I don't know. We didn't have this great impact. And my children certainly don't have any- I mean there's nothing, no impact on them or my- from my experiences. I mean, it doesn't impact on them at all! They've got their own lives. She runs a boutique. The other one's in the NHS. Nicky's been a frightfully successful musician. Well, music teacher. And as I was saying to Sylvia this morning, "How many people still get invited to their ex- ex- ex-pupils' weddings?" You know. So, they've all led their own lives. And I don't think my being a- Nicky and Steph were saying to me, they said, "We had a good childhood that- despite the fact the marriage wasn't brilliant", you know. They said, "Oh, we had a happy childhood. We didn't notice anything." And certainly, you know, they knew about mummy's - peculiarities, which I told you how it- I think how it had affected her- her life had affected her. And so they realised that but I don't think they put two and two together too much. And I've got a letter there, which I'm waiting to give to Nicky, with her grandfather's – that's Liesel's father's - writing his last letter from Lodz to his mother- to her mother. And it's a bit difficult to read the writing.

[3:24:41]

So do you feel-

It's heart breaking.

Do you feel because your parents survived also, that-

I think that must-

That that made it easier?

I think that must have a lot to do with it. This is- I think my experience has been different from so many other- I mean, my friend Tom, his parents survived because they went to Switzerland. My friend Peter's parents survived because they went to Spain, or somewhere. But all my other friends – Greta's parents, this one's parents, Ilse's parents - they all, or most of them, died in the- in the- in the Shoah. I'm afraid most of them did. And they all count me very lucky that I had my parents.

Yeah.

And I wanted- I wanted people to know how many non-Jews were involved. As I said, when I'd been to Berlin, I sent the letter to Mr. Nemetz. You know. He said, he took it around the office with a box of Kleenex, because, you know, they realised what had happened. You know. I- I- funnily enough, Sylvia and I – I don't know if I told you this – Sylvia and I were in Berlin, to see this Uschi, this lady who'd helped my parents. Last year we went. And we were debating how to get to- go with me anywhere, and you'll be guaranteed that everywhere is closed. This is my life. Doesn't matter which part of the world I go, they're always closed. And sure enough, Potsdam was closed, but we didn't realise until we got there. And we were on the underground – U-Bahn, debating. And I don't know, I- I spoke some German to somebody, and another man said, "Can I help you?" cause he heard us speaking English. And then- I'd walk, I started to walk down the stairs. And Sylvia said to him, "He can speak German because he came over to England on the Kindertransport." So the man said, "Oh, get him back, get him back." So we started speaking, and he was a PR man - he was writing things. And we had a long conversation. And then we- he text- we, we emailed each other. And I said, "You can have the story if you want to." He said, "I'm going to a publisher. I'm going to a big publishing [thing.] See if we can get it published." And then he wrote to me a little while ago, saying, "Publishers say it's very interesting, but it's not long enough." I said, "Well, I'm not prepared to write a novel." I said, "If you want to write something, you can take the information - *Gesundheit* - it's yours. So I said, "If you want to write a story built around that…" I never heard anymore. So-

[3:27:28]

And how do you feel when you go to Berlin? How- how- does it affect you or-?

No. It's, it's, it's like another town, as if I go to Paris, if I go anywhere else. I don't know. I- I feel- I think it's funny bec- because my father used to talk about places. And because once I said to him, “Can you take me to Berlin?” And he said, “No, it's not the same as when I was young. It's all new, and I don't want to know.” And he didn't- he would never take me. But he used to talk about all these places. So, when we went to Berlin, my sister and I used to look at each other: Oh, he used to say Schönhauser Allee- and this one and the Hausvogteiplatz, and this - you know. We became familiar with all the names of the- the streets and the places. So, when I go there, it seems reasonably familiar. It's only from our father talking. So, I feel reasonably at home there. But I'm afraid I haven't- you know, people, this Uschi lady, she's very political. And if you talk, I talked to her the other day, well, what with my hearing aid and the phone being not very good. And she talks nineteen to the dozen. I- every now and then I heard a few words. She's banging on about the *Antisemitismus* and *ich habe das gesagt und den und das geschrieben und* [I said this and that and wrote this and…]. This goes on and on and on, you know. So, there is a lot of anti-Semitism, I think, but obviously, going there two or three times I haven't experienced it, and- so, it hasn't affected me. And the town is a town. You know, so-

And you said you feel very- you feel Continental or your feel European, or-?

Yeah.

How would you describe your own identity?

Hm?

How would you describe it - your own identity, now?

An old Continental curmudgeon. As I signed myself the other day to somebody on the committee, I said: *Curmudgeon*. So she wrote, ‘*Dear Curmudgeon,’* next time.

That's a good word.

Old miserable guts, because I'm always complaining about this, that and the other. No, I don't complain but I've got my- I’ve got opinions, you know, and- about- well, I get involved about

Israel. That annoys me what's going on. And anti-Semitism and I can- I had arguments with girls the other day on Zoom a bit about the- we saw a programme but about- about racism. And I said, you know, "What about us?" You know, we're supposed to see black people and know their history and all that. So, what about somebody looking at me? Does he know- this is- they're talking about things that happened 200 years ago; I'm talking about things- my family wiped out seventy years ago. My aunty shipped away, and off they went and never saw again. And as for Holocaust deniers, I'd like to ask- see one and say to him, "Tell me, all these relations, went on a holiday to Poland and never came back. They liked it so much there."

And do you feel there should be more done here in this country in Holocaust education or-?

[3:30:41]

I think there ought to be lots done in schools. I'm not keen on this Holocaust Memorial in Victoria Gardens. I'm not for it. I'm not sure whether even stir up anti-Semitism by people saying, "Trust the Jews to put up a hideous place, bang," you know, "in our Parliament." I don't think it's up to the British. They don't- they were not the guilty ones. I mean, they were guilty in other ways of not doing enough, perhaps, but they weren't guilty in killing people at least. So, maybe- and the Smiths brothers up in- there's a Holocaust Centre up there, which is, which I'd love to go and see. I haven't managed it yet. We will. I think the Centres haven't stopped anti-Semitism. I think education in schools, seeing people, talking to them, explaining- I know there have been a lot of people. But I've offered and nobody's ever taken me up on it. So, I've- I sort of gave up now, you know. I, I wanted to go and help children read or something. But that never got off the ground either. I don't know. Perhaps I'm the wrong sort. But- so, I- I mean, I'm getting- I'm ninety nearly, for God's sake. [laughs]

Spring chicken.

What?

Spring chicken!

[3:32:05]

Yeah - exactly. So I don't know. I think I've managed all these years, so I- I can't really start. I don't want this business. I don't want to be a victim of circumstances that my life has been changed irrevocably. I mean, as I say, I might have landed up in a hotel business. So. So, I landed up in the fashion business, but now the break came with the Open University for whom I'm ever thankful. And that was my break. And then I feel I'm a different person, to what I was. I was obsessed by the fashion business, I was de-obsessed by the Open University, thank God, and I'm now a somewhat different person. I have more confidence, and I can do more things. So, I give talks at Chiswick House- well, they're not- they're shut now, but I give talks there. An hour and a half, you know, take tours, and so forth. And I enjoy it. And I write talks for the Open- for the U- U3A. I write talks on, give them one on psychology or one on history. Or, what I did the other day, I read them some Roman poetry and things. So, you know, I have different interests now.

And having just had this COVID situation, do you- and you know, people have said there are sort of resonances of Second World War, or- anyway. Do you see any? Did you feel- you felt- You said you were- you could cope with it quite well?

Yes. Our next talk at the U3A on comparative religion: *Has COVID 19 impacted on your faith?*

Aha!

Well, I shall have nothing to say about that. It has nothing to do with my faith. I don't think the Almighty operates in this- in this world, except I was supposed to water the- we have a- a garden at the surgery, a therapeutic garden?

Mnn.

And it was my turn to water on Saturday. And I wrote to the chap who sort of runs it, I wrote to John saying I really didn't want to go and water, so I phoned the Almighty, and he decided to do the watering for me. So, John wrote back saying, "I know you- you do have good connections." So-

And do you feel that has changed, your religion, or importance of religion throughout your life?

[3:34:42]

My sister and brother-in-law were basically responsible for my keeping an interest in Judaism. And, and because- so, I went with them to Grange Road Synagogue and so forth. And they're a lovely community. Although I'm not a member, they treat me as such, and- only because of Marion and Richard. And I'm very well in there, and so is my daughter - which makes us laugh. She hasn't been near a synagogue for 60 years, and suddenly she knows everybody there. [Bea laughs] And- not this daughter, my- my eldest, Nicky. They're just lovely! And the cons- my cons- the consultant who deals with my kidneys and waterworks and things, his wife I've known since she was so high. And she's a friend of my daughter's you see, so- we're, you know, so she's well in there. And so, I do go to synagogue sometimes, but I do like the Belsize Park thing. That's more my scene; I would go along there. I-

How come you've become interested in Belsize Square synagogue?

Hm?

How come you've just become interested in that or- in Belsize Square?

[3:35:50]

I don't know. I think I just Googled, I may have just found them by accident. Yes, because I Googled several synagogues. I mean, I am truly interested in Jewish things. Because when Janet was alive, I used to go down- when I saw that Louis Jacobs was retiring, I said, "Oh, I must go and hear him." And I used to motor down to… Swiss Cottage-

Abbey Road.

John's Wood there, Abbey Road - and listen to him. They were very nice, always accepted me there. So, I went there for a few months till he retired. And I wrote to him - and he wrote

me. I've got a nice little letter from him - saying how inspirational he was. And he was. And I- if I'd carried on, I would have been even more interested. But it's- I'm interested in so many things. I'm a bit of a flip flop dilettante, you know, I thought to myself, what's the point of sticking to one subject now? You know, and what am I going to become? A doctor or something? You know. You've got a doctorate, haven't you? In what?

Social anthropology-

Ah!

And history.

Oh! That's fascinating.

Okay, Hans, is there anything we haven't discussed or I haven't asked you, or-?

No, I shall think- I shall think of it after you've gone.

We can always do a little zoom interview afterwards. [laughs]

Yes… An after-Zoom.

Is there any message you've got for anyone who might watch this later, this interview, based on your own experiences?

[3:37:30]

Oh, I don't know. All I can- to echo Tony Blair: "Education, education, education." I think education, to know people's past in the- I've written a piece in there. Do you want me to look at it?

Sure!

So. At the end, at the end of this book, I wrote it under the heading of [inaudible], which I presume you know?

I know, but tell us, what are Exitus?

So I wrote, '*I just cannot resist writing a few words of advice for my grandchildren. It can be seen as pompous, or as remiss were I not to do so. You can choose. First of all, the dictum found in most religions that want to treat others as you would wish to be treated by them. Secondly, the Ten Commandments make a pretty good basis for life, as do many of the ideas from the Bible. They give you values by which you can live, but no doubt your parents will have instilled many of those in you. However, there are some other notions that I want to reiterate and feel you should consider. Always ensure that every idea accords with common sense. Do not be influenced by every passing mode or trend in any sphere or endeavour - except fashion, of course - unless it does encompass common sense. Be proud of your heritage and family. From my own life experience, I would strongly advise you never to lose your sense of curiosity about everything, and never stop learning. The Jews are known as the People of the Book, and the highest calling is to study. But I guess you knew that from your parents. I sincerely pray that the future does not turn out to be as bleak as presently envisaged. Brecht wrote a poem in which he's asked future generations to forgive his generation for the mistakes they have made. However, many of these were the result of force majeur, or mistakes made by ordinary people. Some tried, but had little power to influence the world. Nevertheless, one must always try before getting too old and cynical. Doubtlessly I shall think of more things about which to write as soon as I've finished this. So the deed is done to the best of my ability*.'

[3:40:04]

When did you write this?

Hm?

When did you write- when did you write this book?

When?

When? Yeah. I mean recently, or a few years ago?

No. A few years ago. I've got- I think- I'll give you the date. I think- no, I don't know, I thought I saw it somewhere.

Doesn't matter, just-

Hm?

I don't need the precise date. I just need-

18th of November 2006.

Okay. So, some time ago.

That was- I was doing it while I was doing the OU. Every now and then I would write a bit of chapters or-

And what motivated you to- to write it? What-?

Well, I felt- I felt the girls didn't, you know, they've- as I say, they're all busy, busy, busy, and they don't ask. And there may become a stage where they want to know their background. And so, it has my parents' story. My story, Marion's story, a bit of Liesel's. My life with Janet. Move to trade and everything. And there's also a very - a family tree. Well, everybody who traced back to the late-18- whatever it is, and also Janet's family, 1800-and-something. And, and I know they haven't really looked but there will come a time possibly when they would want to. Maybe my grandchildren will have some interest. I don't know how interest- I think some are more interested in the past than others. I mean, I often wonder with this, you know, like the Black Lives Matter business, how many actually have given a thought to the past before all this? You know what I mean? And the- the slavery and all that. And I think to myself, I don't want to bang on about how I've suffered, because I don't feel I've suffered that much. Alright, some people to whom I speak, like Sylvia, for instance, they have a different life. Janet has a different life as well. And they thought, well how did you manage that? And

I- we just ploughed on. You know, we- we took things as they came. We lived much as we do now; we lived day to day.

[3:42:42]

Yeah.

A friend of mine I phone every day, she- she's horrified by this. She's- she's a people's person. She teaches Yiddish. She just wants to be out and talk to her friends. And she can't. All she sees are her children, you know. She says, “Much as I love them, but…” Now, I don't see my children. I think Caroline might try and come down. But I said, “Be careful - you know - the shop.” I miss- well, I miss- I see Nicky, my eldest because she lives in Ealing. So, I can sit on the- I can sit on the- on the wall and she sits in the porch and we talk. And- but Stephi’s in Manchester. The only thing is if they can get it together to come down, because I know they've been hibernating. Especially Joel because he’s the one will catch anything with his immune system. But I know Stephi and Ian, they've been working from home solidly, especially- they started working from home when Joel became ill. And town- town council said just work from home and the NHS, Stephi’s boss said no problem, you know. So, she works from home. Well she is a therapist, so normally she sees children. But she- she's doing others you know, arranging other things. I don’t know- She gives lectures, and so forth.

[3:44:12]

Hans, one more question I wanted to ask you. You have- you said you've donated some things to the Imperial War Museum and Wiener Library. So, you have done that? You? You made sure some things go there, or your sister, or-?

No, no, no. I can't remember what it is that's gone.

Okay.

I don’t know. I don’t know what they've got - except my books.

But you organise it? I mean- You-?

Yes, I did that. But I don't know how much of this- there's stuff in Yad Vashem, but I- whether it's this or something like- I'm not- I really am not sure anymore. I've lost track.

Okay.

So, I don't know what it is that's- that's gone.

But you kept here the- this thing your father- maybe let's put that in the picture. If you just- o in the meantime, I'll say thank you very much, Hans, for this interview. But- yeah, let's do that first. Thank you for this interview. And then we'll, we'll do- we'll do- we'll look at some of your photos. Or you could show us. I can't come close to you, but you can hold it up.

Yes. But do you want me to hold it up now?

[End of interview]
[3:45:23]

Just one second.

I hope the whole thing hasn't been too disjointed.

It was perfect.

Are you sure? It could sound very boring to other people.

[Start of photographs and documents]

Can you please tell us about this photo?

Photo 1
This is a photo of my grandfather, who died in 1942 at 87. And my father's sister, Trude, who most likely died in the Lodz ghetto. It's a photograph taken before the war, obviously.

And their names please?

My grandfather was called Adolf, Aaron, and Danziger, obviously, and she was called Trude. And, sadly, I don't remember them very well. But- well I remember my grandfather very well, but I don't remember her.

Thank you.

Hans please tell us about the- the bottom picture.

Photo 2

The bottom picture was taken before the war and sent to Baroness Rothschild, because she wanted to see what we looked like before recommending us onto the Kindertransport, which I thought was pretty awful really. But that was the photograph that my parents sent. And it was on the basis of this photograph that we are landed here.

Thank you.

And yet, not yet. Not yet. The same, please, for the top picture.

[3:47:28]

Ah, right. OK.

Because that's- Yes, please. Tell us about the top picture.

Photo 3

The top picture was taken just after the war. It was the first picture my parents sent us, having survived the war, and this is how they looked. This was 1945.

Yes, please.

Photo 4

The lady on my left is my first wife Liesel, who came from Austria, sadly died in 1946. [age of 46]. And the lady on my right is my lovely lady Janet, who sadly died in 2011. And they were both good wives. And - what more can I say?

Thank you.

Yes, please.

Photo 5

These are my three lovely girls, Nicola, Stephanie and Caroline. And Nicola and Stephanie are from Liesel, and Caroline is from Janet. And I love them dearly. And they love their Daddy and Papa. And Opa- oh, no, I'm not their Opa. [Bea laughs]

Photo 6

This is a photograph of my sister Marion and- and me. And sadly she died last year of kidney failure and, and paralysis and all sorts of other things. And it was very sad. And she decided to end it all. She withdrew permission for dialysis and died. And she was in Nightingale Home. She was not a well- girl. And it's very sad and I miss her very much. And she has two lovely nephews, one of whom I see. And- they're good boys.

Thank you.

Yes, please.

[3:50:06]

Photo 7

This- this photograph was taken in 2009 when I graduated from the Open University, with my late wife and my lovely three daughters.

Thank you.

Hans, can you please read this? This is a letter you received from your father.

Document 1

This was a letter written by my father and packed in the trunk. He didn't know, and you'll hear that he didn't know when or- when we would receive it. It was written in Berlin Wilmersdorf in 1941 – December:

My Dearest children, when and how this letter will reach you, we do not know. But we surely hope that this will happen, because a dear friend of ours will do everything to let you, my dear children, have these lines. We only hope that this is not the last sign of life from us to you. On the contrary, we firmly believe in reunion with you. But since we do not know what the present government still has in store for us, one has to be prepared for the worst. And for this reason this letter has to be written. Well now, my dear children, you will ask yourselves for what precise reasons your parents have torn apart our lovely family life and sent you to foreign parts. Apropos of that, I have especially to remind you dear boy, and you will remember that this all happened shortly after your first year in school in '37. You went to school in the Prinzregentenstraße, and in Easter '38 you were promoted to the next class. On November the 9th, [8- 13-] 1938, the synagogue and schools were burnt down and you then had to attend the Joseph-Lehmann-Schule in Joachimstaler Straße. On the same day, all Jewish businesses were destroyed in Berlin and the whole country. And in all public parks yellow benches were put up for Jews only. And on one occasion when you came with Mulle from the Falks, Mulle fell over and had a bleeding nose, and you got a car to take you home, as you couldn't put Mulle on any of the benches because there were no benches for Jews in the [inaudible Park and you were afraid to put her on another bench. And now all Jews have to wear yellow Jewish stars with the inscription 'Jew' including children from the age of six. The children cannot play in any of the parks, cannot do sport and can neither visit a cinema nor theatre, or go to a concert. And everything is prohibited to us. And in the evening, we have to be home by nine o'clock. And in the summer by eight o'clock and in the winter, eight o'clock in the winter. Housewives are only allowed to do their shopping between four and five in the afternoon. At no other time are we allowed to enter a shop, and we are not allowed to visit restaurants at all. Sweets, fruit, fish, and such like are unobtainable for children or adults. And now we can no longer smoke, as tobacco has been banned for Jews. And so, you can see from all this, that life has become very difficult for own- for all Jews. All Jews have had to give up their businesses and they are now working as ordinary workmen in big factories.'

Thank you.

Bad - bad times.

[3:53:36]

Yes, Hans, please tell us what- what are you holding your hands, please?

Document 2

This is a- these are leaves from a prayer book, which were found by my father in the courtyard of the synagogue, possibly Oranienburger Straße, after Kristallnacht. And as you can see they are singed and burnt and were flying about. And he picked them up. And luckily I found them in his effects and I've had them put in a box frame so they stay safe and are not- don't deteriorate any further.

And what shape is that? What do you think? What- you put them in-

Looks like the Ten Commandments, doesn't it? Purely by chance. No, it's just- he picked them up.

And it's German and Hebrew.

Yeah. Yes!

So possibly a synagogue where you could have had your Bar Mitzvah. So to speak-

[3:54:39]

Would have had-

Would have had.

Yes. Would have had. Yeah. But, oh well. What could have been. What would have been. I don't live in the past really, I just- well, I don't - I, I'm not a person who walks around with

regrets. What's happened has happened, and I deal with it. And- my- my sister used to say, you know, when the kids grumbled, “You could have done this,” and “You could have done that.” She says, “Well, tough luck. Deal with it. It's your,” you know, “we've done the best we can.” And I say, I’ve brought up my children the best I can. Maybe I could have done better, I don't know. But I was saying to Sylvia the other day, “Should I have been this sort of person?” My brother-in-law, who should have been an actor really, he loved amateur dramatics. He used to change his persona on a weekly basis, you know. One day he was this, one day was that. And well, I do admit, I did it in psychology class, I was telling them, you know, when we were young one day- I used to wear- I used to wear a duffle coat- Not this one, but another duffle coat. I smoked a pipe, which nearly choked me. And then I smoked cigarettes because my painting tutor smoked cigarettes. And the smoke used to go into my- I couldn't know- even know where I was putting me brush. So, you know when you're young, you’re always try to adopt and find a character. But then, then I had to work for me living, I was too busy to find a character, you know. Before I got a decent job, and when I was still messing about going from here to there, finding my sole identity in painting glasses [classes]. I pretended I was an artist, you know. And then that gave way to earning a serious living as a designer. And then after that, of course, I didn't feel the need any- after the OU, I didn't feel the need to pretend to any more identity. I am what I am, and that's it. Take it or leave it. “Deal with it” as my sister used to say.

[3:57:02]

[End of photographs and documents]