

IMPORTANT

This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees

Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.

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:	229

Interviewee Surname:	Rosner
Forename:	Eva
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	17 February 1931
Interviewee POB:	Krosno, Poland

Date of Interview:	16 November 2018
Location of Interview:	Essex
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Jana Buresova
Total Duration (HH:MM):	1 hour 22 minutes



REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV229
NAME: Eva Rosner
DATE: 16th November 2018
LOCATION: Essex, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Jana Buresova

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

This interview is with Eva Rosner in Essex on the 16th of November, 2018.

Eva Rosner, thank you very much indeed for kindly agreeing to be interviewed by the AJR Refugee Voices Project. May we start by going to your parents, could you name them and say something about them?

My father's name was Otto Liebermann. And my mother's name was Stella Schacherl.

And where were they born?

They were both born in what is now Poland, which in those days was really still a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And my father happened to be living in Poland and working there from the mid-1920s, probably, looking after his father's - my grandfather's - oil wells, as my paternal grandfather, Alois- he had originally started the drilling operations in Galicia in Poland. And when he became too old to practically look after the work in Poland, two of his sons, my father, and one of his brothers, were involved in running the whole operation between them.

What was your father's brother's name?

Karl - Karl Liebermann. There was another brother, the youngest one. But he was not involved in that business at all.

[0:02:30]

And did your mother work at all?

No. When she was a young woman in Vienna- because both my parents actually lived in Vienna until the 20s, when they got married and went to Poland. And my mother, I think she was a secretary. She worked in an office.

And what were your early memories of family life in Poland?

Idyllic, really. We were very fortunate. It was beautiful countryside. Although where we lived in this- I think it was a sort of bungalow, out in- in the middle of nowhere, it was all surrounded by oil derricks. But we were fortunate; it was a comfortable life.

And was it a family that was observant in Jewish terms?

Sorry?

Was your family observant?

No, no. Both families, the Schacherls and the Liebermanns, were really quite secular.

So, when you started school, did you go to a Jewish school or to a-?

No, there weren't- I don't think there were any. Although apparently- I think there were some very Orthodox Jews around, but I'm not sure where. I know that, because when, when- it was before the war started in '38. That was when the whispers and the fear began to pervade our lives. And I remember my parents whispering and alluding to some terrible things that were happening to Jewish people. And I'm sure it was happening in Poland.

What sort of things did you hear- did you know?

Physical and verbal abuse of Orthodox Jews. And that must have started in '38. Now, that was well before Hitler invaded Poland, but it was beginning to filter through somehow.

[0:05:30]

Were you very frightened...

Yes.

...by what you heard?

Yeah,

Yeah.

Yeah - I was. I don't know about my sister. She's two years younger. She was only about five-and-a-half or six years old.

And how old were you then, in 1938?

I would have been seven-and-a-half, because in- I was eight years old in '39. Yeah, yeah.

And were you born in Poland...

Yes.

...or in Vienna?

Both of us.

What were your memories at school? Were...?

I did go to a local school. I still have school books written in Polish, which I cannot decipher. I've forgotten it all.

Did you experience any abuse, any anti-Semitism there?

No – no. No. My father did. In the winter of '38, word filtered through. I'm not sure whether it was the manager at the mines or a local person. I really don't know. But- my father had to hide. And an old man - he must have been a local old man - he said to my father, "Go into the forest." We were surrounded by wild countryside. And he told him about a wooden hut in the forest. And my father spent quite a few weeks there, hiding in the forest. And he got double pneumonia. And that, of course, was when my mother became very determined. We were not going to stay. We were going to try and get out of Poland.

[0:07:50]

How do they go about that? What did they do?

With great difficulty, because the authorities took away the Austrian passports, reissued them with German ones. There was a whole fuss. And eventually, after tremendous efforts by the whole family, somehow, they managed to get visas and their passports were reinstated. And the visas-

So, their Austrian passports were reinstated?

Yeah, they- they were given them back eventually, at the last minute. And we were to go to Bolivia via England.

And when did- when did that happen? What happened?

That was in '39. That would have been late spring in '39. It was all- I can't explain it. It was all quite terrifying. Now, I don't think my sister felt that so much. But - that's all I remember. A lot of that time is a complete blank. It's just gone. And most of the war years, I've blanked out. Bits come back, but not much. I remember being terrified. And I know that this feeling of fear, it was the adults as well.

You sensed it all around you?

Well, there weren't that many Jewish people around, but we knew that we were... at risk.

You see?

Did your family integrate prior to 1938? Did you know that you were Jewish?

[0:10:05]

Probably. They must have done. That was why they were after my father, "the rich Jewish mine owner", you know? But even then, you see, the oil was beginning to run out. Now there's none left. It's all gone. Hitler had the last of it during the war. But it was already quite a business- quite a problem. Because I know my father had to keep trying all over the place, drilling, to see if there was anything worth extracting.

Can you describe how you eventually left Poland?

Well, I- I don't even remember them packing, but I know that they packed clothing and some china - and some pictures. My father's artwork - he was very accomplished. And these crates and suitcases somehow got to Liverpool. They must have been put on the boat. But all I remember is, sitting in a train, travelling northwards across Poland, with my parents, sitting on wooden train seats and the four of us almost frozen with fear. Sitting in that train, not speaking and just sitting there praying we'd get to the port of Gdynia, to get on that boat. As far as I know, I think it was the last time that boat actually left Gdynia, to put to sea, to go to England. And that was in middle of June '39.

And how did you get from where you lived to catch the train? What was your nearest...?

[0:12:34]

I don't remember.

No.

I don't- I just know, we were on that train feeling absolutely- I don't know, just, frozen. And I remember being on the- I don't remember getting on the boat. I remember being on the boat and- just two things I remember. After we boarded, there were a lot of adults standing around, and I was only a short little girl. And, I remember all these huge- big people around me, talking about money. How were they going to manage? We weren't allowed to take money, you see? And then somebody put a coin in my hand! And I thought, "My God, are we that poor?" And then I remember being seasick on the boat. It was a very rough North Sea. That was all.

Who travelled with you?

Parents and sister. I remember we had a cabin. And my sister and I were horribly sick. And mother trying to clean us up and comfort us.

What was- what is your sister's name?

Luiza. She spells it with a "z".

Did any other family member come with you?

No- no. Uncle Charles, who was helping father, he had a horrendous time. He went to Belgium. I think he walked across most of France. I don't know how he got here. He did get here. Eventually. The youngest brother, Arthur, my father's youngest brother, he was in Dachau. And that was before the war. And when he came out, his wife didn't recognise him. But they were- and it was uncle Arthur who guaranteed for us to be in England. There was a guarantee of 100 pounds per head.

That was a lot of money.

[0:15:20]

It was, in those days, yes. So, he must have been able to get money out of Vienna. I don't know how he did it.

Some people were arrested and taken to Dachau, and then released. Did- when he was released, your uncle Arthur, did he come to Britain before you?

Yes, he got

So, he could then-

...he got here in '38?

Yes.

Yeah. Yeah.

And where is in England did you actually arrive at and settle, ultimately?

Well, I know the boat docked at Hull; I'm quite sure of that. And you see, our luggage went to Liverpool, ready to go to Bolivia. But the visas for South America were not forthcoming that quickly. And the war broke out. And we were stuck here. And that was our good fortune.

So, this would have been September 1939?

Yeah.

And where did you stay? How did you manage, your family?

It's a bit of a muddle in my head, but I know that- I think we had- we rented- my parents rented a room in- I think it was Stamford Hill. One room. We didn't have any luggage anyway, it was all in Liverpool.

Stamford Hill in London?

Yeah, Stamford Hill. Yeah.

So, how did you- who helped you get from Hull to London?

[0:17:25]

Well, I remember uncle Arthur met us off the boat, and we all travelled down in the train. I don't know. I'm sorry, I- I just don't have any-

No, that's fine. But you didn't actually stay in Hull for any length of time?

Well, I think there must have been a series of rented rooms. And I know Bloomsbury House was helping. And... Then, uncle Arthur's wife suggested that my sister and I should go to a boarding school to learn English. Now, we hadn't been in England for five minutes.

And we had two older cousins. Uncle Arthur had one boy, he was already about fourteen at the time. And there was another one, uncle Charles's boy, and he was fifteen. And they were in this boarding school. So, uncle Arthur's wife felt that they would look after us. And of course, they ignored us. Teenage boys - didn't want anything to do with little girls. And the culture shock was too much. We weren't there very long.

Do you know the name of the school?

Sorry? No, I don't. I remember the very strange food, and not knowing what was going on.

That must have been extremely difficult for you-

I think it was.

...to be away from your parents, and in an-

After all that, yeah.

...alien environment.

Yeah – yeah. And-

What were the boys' names, the two cousins?

Heinz. He called himself 'Stephen' in England, and Ernst, he called himself 'Peter' in England. They both passed away.

Did it take you a long time to get over that boarding school experience?

I don't know. We had to. We just had to get on with it.

[phone rings- sound break]

Were you very happy to be back again with your parents, and reassured?

[0:20:24]

Well, I think by then, father was interned anyway. Mother was on her own. Honestly, I don't remember very much about it. I know that the evacuation got going. We must have gone to a school somewhere.

Where was your father interned? Was it the Isle of Man?

Yes. Yeah.

And was it roughly 1941, spring-

Yes. Oh, yeah.

...when he was released?

Yeah.

And you, as a schoolgirl- was evacuated? Where to? Or was it many places?

About eleven- about eleven different locations during the war. So, we went to eleven different schools.

That must have been so disorientating and unsettling for you.

Probably. I can laugh about it now, but- I think we would- I know I was just glad to be alive, actually.

Did you find the experience of being evacuated and sent to so many different places traumatic and distressing?

[0:22:12]

Probably. For- one or two locations we were with mother. We were evacuated- we went to Newbury in Berkshire. Apparently, that was considered a safe place. And my sister and I have very vivid memories of that. Because it was when the German planes were coming over, almost...they were almost free to fly about, because the RAF hadn't really got going then. And we were- my mother had made a friend, and she had a little girl. And we had this billet in Newbury and there was a courtyard. We had rooms in the house. I think there were other children there as well - local people. And one day, my sister was upstairs, playing upstairs in one of the bedrooms, I suppose. And I was down in the yard with other children, playing. And this plane came over. And my sister said she actually made eye contact, he was so low. And he took out his machine gun, and he tried to shoot at her. But he managed to shoot down into the yard. So, we all got quickly into the house.

That's terrifying.

It was a bit. Quite an occasion. And then he took off and went away. I don't think we played out much after that.

No, I'm not surprised.

I think then after that we must have moved somewhere else. There was one billet somewhere, mother was with us and we were - I don't know how many of us - in one room! It was the best she could find. Now, she managed to do all this, and she didn't speak English!

Did your father speak any English?

He- he managed to write letters, in English, not quite so polished, but I've got a lot of them upstairs. Yes, he- letters to Bloomsbury House, to various... Yeah. Yeah. And then communicating with uncle Charles before he got to- it was all in French. I've got those upstairs. Some in German. A lot of stuff in Polish.

Did your father manage to write to you when he was interned? Or to your mother?

[0:25:15]

I think he wrote to mother, yeah, he must have done - must have done. Oh, yeah. They had to release him, he was so ill. It was the pneumonia and his heart trouble. So, they let him go.

What did your mother do while your father was interned? [Pause] Did she work?

She had some Continental friends. There was Renee, who was with her in Newbury, with her daughter. And there was another one called Rosel Weiß. Rosi – Rosi Weiß. And she was quite an entrepreneur. She was very good at hand work, crocheting and knitting. And she'd got a contract with a- a West End store to make gloves. So, she roped in my mother, and they spent a great part of the war making gloves. And she earned a little bit that way.

Father, then when he was released, did war work. Very... boring. Routine chemical analysis in a factory. The same test, billions of times every day. We nearly drove him crazy.

Did that make life at home very difficult? Was he...?

We weren't there much - on and off. And then we will all the time being shipped away, because of the bombs. The last year of the war was- for us, it was the best. We were in Cornwall.

And were- were you all living together in Cornwall?

[0:27:27]

No.

No.

No. My sister and I first of all, were in a billet with a very strange woman who... had a very dirty house. And by then I could write quite good English, and all these letters kept arriving, in London, telling them how awful it was. And eventually my parents came down. And this lady put some food on the table and it walked off the plates. So, we were- we were moved to another one. The next billet was brilliant - lovely. A bus driver and his family. They already had three children. But they were so good to us. And it was a good year.

What was the family name?

Pellew. P E double-L E W.

Did you ever feel, during your periods of evacuation, that you'd been exploited...

No.

...or made to clean...?

Not at all. Not at all. Not at all. They all varied. But in Cornwall, they were so welcoming and we were just like their own family. They were very kind, very good people.

When then did you come back to London and set- all settle in London?

The day after the war- two days after the war finished.

And where did you live in London?

Oh, by then- during the war, my parents had managed to get a flat in Forest Gate. I remember being in the shelter... at night, and father explaining how to count when you heard the rockets, the V- VE [V-1] rockets come over. You could count, before they exploded, and you'd know how far away they were.

[0:30:06]

That's nerve wracking.

Yeah. I remember a big spider going over me in the dark, in the shelter. Yeah. It was one of those that you dig out in the garden and then put a corrugated roof...

That's an Anderson shelter.

That's right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

And did you get used to English food, or British food and...?

Yeah, during the war, there was ration- rationing. It was lovely to get something, we didn't mind except where it walked away. But no, it was alright. But at home, it was always real Viennese cooking.

What language did you speak at home? Polish or German?

Not Polish. I think it- I don't know. I think my parents talked Polish for secrets, because by then we had forgotten it. And... my German got rusty as well. But then I relearned German properly from my husband, because he was from Vienna.

I'd like to come back to that, but in terms of your own education after the war, were you able to catch up on what you had missed?

I'm not sure, because I think originally father had ambitions that his two daughters would go to university. Now, we never made it, but it didn't matter. My sister became a very well qualified nurse, then she became a medical rep. And she had to study an awful lot for that.

And- and what did you do?

[0:32:26]

Well, I realised that I would always have work in a practical field. Not so much an academic field. I wanted originally maybe to be a- a translator. I was very good at French. And my German would have improved had I pursued it properly. But being...being an academic really- and then I wanted to be an artist. And when we came back to London, I went to a- a secondary school which was attached to a technical college. And because I chose art as a special subject, I did a lot of extra art. And I wanted to be a commercial artist, but then I thought, no, I might not even get work doing that. So, I went into the fashion industry. I went to college to study that. And I learned pattern cutting. And then I went into the industry... But people in the rag trade were very, I don't know, unpleasant, jealous. It wasn't- I worked in various factories, but I met one lovely, wonderful friend there, in one of them. And she was from Vienna. She was also a refugee. But that was the only person that I really found was a decent colleague. And eventually I left fashion, and studied all over again in night school. And I went into the food industry.

What did you study in that?

I started off with bakery. I wanted to teach bakery. And then the training college told me that I would never get work as a teacher in bakery. It's a man's world. So, I went into catering instead.

[0:35:16]

Did you feel happier in that?

Much. A much happier sort of world.

Did you ever regret not having an academic career?

No. Not really. I managed to earn a living. That was - okay.

And did you stay in catering?

Yeah. I ended up teaching for nearly thirty years.

Ah. Where?

Locally, here. One of the colleges.

Which one?

[laughing] Well, first of all, I did part time teaching. Night school. And then I worked full time in- oh, it's now got a different name. In those years it was the Southeast Essex Technical College. And I was asked by the Southwest Essex College in Walthamstow, to help out; they were short of staff. So, I went there I think one day a week or something. And then eventually I moved over the- the Southeast College in Dagenham. I think they closed the department or something, so I went over to work full time at- at Walthamstow. And I stayed there for over twenty-five years.

Did that give you a lot of satisfaction?

[0:37:13]

Yeah. I enjoyed teaching. Because I was dealing with sixteen years up, not children. They were young adults, or adults. It was interesting.

And you were passing on a skill.

Oh, yeah.

A life skill.

Well, we were working towards external exams all the time. That's a bit of pressure there. But that was fine.

And what were your parents doing while you were teaching? What was their work, in the meantime?

Oh, well, father- when the war ended father got a position as a research chemist in a paint factory in Stratford - Stratford East.

And your mother?

Mother worked at home. And she- I don't know how she managed it, but she made contacts at Fortnum and Mason in Piccadilly. And she was a marvellous needlewoman anyway. All the Viennese ladies of that vintage were very good with their hands. And she made children's dresses, children's clothes, all of them hand-stitched. For part of that time, my sister and I were helping her. My mother had a couple of ladies who did a special sort of embroidery and that was integrated into the designs. Money was short. After the war, somehow the parents had scraped together enough money to put down a deposit on a house in Ilford.

And during this time, did you or your parents come- become more involved in religion at all?

Involved in where?

Religion - at all?

No. Well, my parents sent us to Hebrew classes, which, I don't know- didn't go down very well. And - I didn't pursue it.

[0:40:11]

When did you meet your husband, and where?

I met my husband when I was still at college in- it was college in London. And it was the fashion college. In fact, I left before the course was finished, to go to work. And I met him at my grandmother's - my mother's mother. My grandmother was friendly with some other refugees who lived near her. I don't know how she'd bumped into them. And I met him through my grandma.

Did she approve?

I think she was guilty of organising it. [both laugh] Somehow.

When did your grandmother come to Britain? How did she manage to get out?

In '38. One of her unmarried daughters got here first. You see, my mother had two sisters and a brother. The brother went to Brazil- no, to Bolivia. He went to Bolivia before the war. I think they were going to join him, but anyway, they ended up in London. And one of the aunts learned English. She started learning English seriously, in '38. She got here first, got herself a job and managed to get her mother and her other sister to England. They were here actually before us! Must have been.

And when did you marry?

In 1950.

And what work did your husband do?

Sorry?

What was your husband's work?

He did a lot of things. He was fourteen when he got here. Came on the Kindertransport with his brother.

From? Where from?

[0:42:56]

From Vienna. Straight from Vienna... During Kristallnacht, my husband's parents said to them, "Quick - get out on the street." So they walked around. But somehow- my husband was always crazy about football. And I don't think his brother was, but my husband was often in '38, attacked by the brown shirts. Always interfering. And I don't know how they came about, but his brother was taken in by the- I suppose- I don't know, was it the Gestapo, or what? They took him into prison! Now my husband's mother was a bit of a battle-axe. And

she went to the headquarters, the Hotel Metropole, and she gave them a mouthful. She- she ranted and raved, and they let his brother go, on one condition. He come to England. Get out quick. Get out of Austria. So she got them on the Kindertransport. And they came here in '38. And my husband was interned.

Was he in the Isle of Man also?

Well, first of all in Dovercourt - in the winter. And they nearly froze. And then to the Isle of Man.

And what was your husband's brother's name?

Egon.

And what was your grandmother's name? Her first name?

Wilma.

And the daughter who came to Britain in 1938?

Sorry?

And the daughter who came to Britain in 1938, what was her name?

What- my two aunts? Helka - Helen and Käthe – Käthe is K Ä T H E with an umlaut on the A.

[0:45:32]

Did you, with these other relatives, were you close to them once you were in [inaudible]?

We all lived fairly close, yeah. Yeah.

Did that make you feel better than when you were going to all these eleven different places as a girl?

Of course, of course.

It made a big difference?

Of course. Yeah. We were all- all in London, in the London area.

And on your husband's side, was your husband very religious?

Pardon me?

Sorry- was your husband very religious?

Well, he came from a kosher household.

How did you cope with that?

I didn't- he coped the other way around.

How did your mother-in-law feel about that? Did she object?

She probably didn't like it, but she put up with it.

And where did you marry? Did you marry in a registry office or a synagogue?

No, no. no. In a- in a synagogue.

Which one?

[0:47:03]

Beehive Lane, Ilford. It's a United. I haven't rejected my origins at all.

Is that important to you?

[Eva nods.]

How do you feel now, having lived in Britain for many more years than you lived in Poland?

Oh yeah. Well, I'm grateful! Grateful to be here. To be still alive.

Do you have English friends who have no connection with Judaism or Jewish culture?

Yes.

Like your neighbours here?

I'm not that close with the neighbours, but we're all very friendly. We help each other but we're not in each other's pockets.

And have you been back to Poland, or to Vienna?

Well, my husband wanted to go back, because his grand- parents- well, and his mother. His father was from Czechoslovakia and his mother from Poland. And he wanted to go back, but it was a- a very unhappy visit to Poland. We both were happy to get away from it.

When did you visit, roughly?

I think it would have been about thirty years ago.

What made you both unhappy about the visit?

It was the- [Eva sighs] the vibes. When you talk to- when we talked to people who lived in that town, where his grandparents lived, there was this feeling- they didn't want to- it's difficult to explain. My husband was looking for landmarks. He wanted to know, where was the cemetery? Nobody knew. Nobody confessed to understanding a bit of German. We didn't

speaking Polish, you see? It was like a blank wall. And they sensed that we were Jewish. Didn't like it. It was a very uncomfortable feeling. We wandered around a bit. And of course, a lot of development had been done. The town looks different.

[0:50:28]

What was the name of the town?

Biala. Biala-Bielsko. It wasn't that far away from where we were, but I didn't- I never had any wish to go there at all. Ever again.

Did you feel that there was anxiety in case you both wanted to regain property or something like that?

No. No, just a dislike of Jewish people.

Anti-Semitism?

That seemed to come over. We also went to Warsaw because I think my husband was trying to maybe do a little business in Warsaw. We just- that didn't come to anything and we wandered around, saw the memorial. And the whole thing was so sad.

There is still a lot of anti-Semitism in Poland.

I know.

Yes.

I know. There is in Vienna.

Did you feel that as strongly in Vienna or...?

[0:51:45]

Oh, well- you see, one of my aunts, the ones that lived in Ilford with my grandma, a few years after the war she went back and made contact from her youth club. And she met up with a guy. And they did get married. It took him a long time to persuade her. And she went back. Now she was well into her fifties. He was already seventy. And her sister and Fred and I, my husband, we went to see her ever such a lot. Fred was very nostalgic about Vienna. He always wanted to go back to look at the house where he lived and, "Oh!" So, we went backwards and forwards. But Fred also did a lot of business in Vienna. He was an exporter of British goods. And he sensed it more than me because his German- his Viennese German was perfect. Even after my husband- my aunt's husband died, she- she stayed in Vienna. And there was very open anti-Semitism. She- she had- she was at the receiving end one day. It was heart-breaking. She was an old lady!

[0:53:26]

What happened?

Well, she sat on- she had no garden. She had a flat. And she used to go to a little park to sit on a bench. And she sat there one day, and a woman came and sat there and she said to my aunt, "Isn't Vienna lovely? No more Jews."

Says it all.

She didn't go there anymore after that. Yeah. That was not that long ago. You know? But- my husband witnessed an awful lot of very open anti-Semitism in Vienna. On his business trips, sometimes there were fascist demonstrations. Unbelievable. It's different when you see it in a paper, reported, in writing. Different to be there.

Yes. And what else did he experience? What else did he experience like that? Directly?

Well, he had – maybe I shouldn't talk about this, but he did a lot of business in Germany as well. He sold reproduction furniture for many years. Like this stuff. And he had very good customers. There were some customers in Berlin – no, Hamburg. And the lady who owned this huge emporium, she used to come over quite a lot. I met- I met all these people. He used to take them out, take them to dinner. Some of them came here. And one day they were

somewhere having a meal and this lady said something about, "Oh, the good old days. Good old Hitler." - Yeah.

How did he cope with that?

He gave her what-for. He coped very- he was very quick. And he had tremendous presence of mind. She had an earful. Oh, yes.

[0:56:14]

Were any of these things said in front of you?

I wasn't there for that one. He came home and told me.

But on other occasions?

Hm?

But on other occasions?

Probably. Probably.

How did it make you feel when you heard about these experiences?

I was very glad that he had such good presence of mind. Because you see, people that do that it's- they don't think. You see, it pops out. And if someone can quickly shut them up, and put them down, that's good. It's the only thing you can do. But I think the younger generation are very different now. Very different. Certainly, the German ones are.

Do you feel any hatred or resentment to the older generation in Germany and Austria?

Probably. I never thought about it. I feel- I feel it was so criminal really, because of all the people that we lost.

I was about to ask you.

You see the people that we left behind, that couldn't get out. All the families. My friend, the one I met in the clothing factory, she lost every single person. Not one member of her family-

Who did you lose? Which family members did you lose?

More on my father's side, really. Well, on both sides. It was the older- the two grandfathers, of course they died before the war anyway. But there were- there would have been more uncles and aunts, you see? But there aren't. All those generations have gone.

Where were- where did they perish?

Who?

Your family members. Was it Auschwitz or...?

[0:59:04]

No. My father's mother died in Theresienstadt. The most strange thing- during the war, we were living in Forest Gate. And I remember my father waking up one night, and he was in a dreadful state - of grief. Terrible! Had a migraine. And my mother was with him trying to calm him down and, I don't know, it was terrible. And it wasn't till years afterwards that he found out that very close to that day, to that night, his mother had died. It wasn't till after the war that the Red Cross offered the news of the date and place of where his mother had died. So, it was like a- a I don't know. A-

Like a premonition?

Yeah, but it was almost exactly the same- it's uncanny.

And other family members? Where- where did they go?

Don't know.

Where did they perish?

I don't know. The most closest ones were here. Or in America. My father's sister went to America. I don't really know.

Did you feel the loss of family members, when perhaps English children had a much larger family circle?

We never saw- we were more together with the ones that we had around during the war. The more distant ones, and the ones in Czechoslovakia we didn't really know. Didn't really know them anyway.

[01:01:42]

When did your husband die?

In February, this year.

What- what did he die of?

End stage kidney disease. I nursed him for the last two years. We turned this room into a sort of special room.

Did your husband's death make you feel that you wanted to turn more to religion at all?

[Eva becomes emotional] Sorry.

It's fine, it's fine- it's ok. It's ok.

He was terribly ill. [pause]

Is your family supportive?

Yeah.

Family members?

His- his cousin's family are fantastic. You know, the cousin who was in Auschwitz, she worked for Mengele. That's how she survived. Because she was an artist. She did drawing for him. And she saved her mother. When her mother was deported, she jumped on the train, went with her. Can you believe it? Yeah. Her- her three, her two daughters have got- her two daughters are grandmothers. And they're a lovely family all of them, they're lovely. They phone. They come over.

[01:04:19]

And are you a member of the AJR?

Always have been. Well, Fred- Fred was in Young Austria.

Oh, yes?

I think that is what developed eventually, didn't it? Into the AJR?

No, they're two separate organisations.

Did you ever know Richard Grunberger? He was the editor of the AJR [Journal]. They were very close friends.

Yeah.

Fred did a lot of voluntary work for the AJR, because he- he was a trained singer. Not professional, but he sang with the Philharmonia for ten years. And he gave recitals for the AJR in the different homes, and so on, and-

That's very worthwhile. I'm sure they appreciated it.

He loved he loved doing it. He loved he loved doing it. And he gave talks also. And he gave talks to the local group until he became too unwell, he couldn't do it.

Did he give talks to school children also?

No, no, no. Adults.

And did he feel a sense of satisfaction from that?

Oh, he loved it, yeah. He should have really- have been an opera singer, but again, I think the war came in between and- you see, he caught up with his education somehow. By his own efforts.

[01:06:24]

Young Austria was like a club.

Oh, yeah.

Yes.

Very much.

Yes, in- in Paddington.

Yeah, I got to know a lot of them. I think they're all gone now.

Did you go there regularly?

Sorry?

Did you go there often?

Where?

To the Young Austria.

No, I never belonged to that. I was too young. I only met Fred when I was about seventeen, you see? So, but I knew people in it because the Grunbergers and all sorts of other people, we used to go on what they call “rambles”. We used to go to Richmond.

Did your husband go to synagogue on his own?

Not much. I still belong to the synagogue where his parents belonged, and they’ve been gone a long time. He never wanted to move. But it’s all different people now.

[01:07:45]

Yes. Is there anything else that you would like to say that perhaps we haven’t covered?

I don’t know.

Did you or your husband ever try to obtain compensation of any kind?

Oh, gosh. Oh, yeah. Not Poland. They won’t- they won’t budge. I haven’t got the energy anymore. My sister and I- well, my sister’s got most of it now. There’s still a lot of documents, a huge trunk full of it, from Poland from the oil industry. But the Austrians did compensate a bit, but from the resources they had, they shared it round, you know. So, my two cousins, Peter, Steve, Luiza and me, they gave us a little bit for what was lost in Austria. And Fred got a little bit as well. But you see, my grandfather had... share- I think he was a part owner of an electricity work. I think that’s where the oil used to go for energy, for the electricity. But that’s all- it was a- a- a nominal sum that we, you know- they did what they could. But all that paperwork for Poland, is not worth keeping, really. Unless my sister’s children want to do something, I don’t know- up to them.

Or as a-

Mnn?

...or as family archives.

Yeah, probably. Yeah.

Would you have a message for your family who might be viewing this film of your interview in the future? Is there something that you would particularly like to say?

[01:10:26]

I never thought about that. I don't know. Are you recording every single thing? Oh, my God. [pause] That's a very difficult one. That's difficult, because... my sister brought them up not to be Jewish.

What...?

Well, it's- in a way, she did and she didn't. One of her boys... you see, my sister married a non-Jewish man. And one of her boys married a lady who is half-Jewish. But she's half-Jewish from the wrong side, you see? My nephew is really Jewish, but he's rejected it. And the other nephew, he's got a partner, and she's not Jewish. And the daughter married someone who is not Jewish. But she's the only one who more or less embraces- she's interested in the past. But none of the three have any familiarity with Jewish customs, or rituals, you see? But they know that they're Jewish, well they were born Jewish. You see?

Did they reject-do they reject their Jewishness?

No, oh, no. My sister taught them- she felt, no- she felt that if they were not Jewish, they had a better chance in the world, of surviving, because of what happened in the past. You know, under Hitler, there were these categories. I don't know. I would never reject the fact. I know what I am and I'll never be different.

Are your sister's family in a way, closing off the war and their background and their Continental background as well?

To a great degree, yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Does that sadden you?

[01:14:14]

In a way it does. Because they're all- you see, they've got what I call a lot of the Jewish trait, and ambition. And survival instinct. They've got it anyway, you see? One of them- one of the boys- boy, he's over sixty – he got flat feet, you know? It's- it's there. You can't really take it away from a- take it out of a human being. Yeah...They've all done well in the world.

The- we come back to your own feeling that you said at the start of the interview, that your identity is important to you.

Mnn. All the neighbours here know I'm Jewish. It's fine. Fine. Although I haven't got a mezuzah on the door.

But it's in your heart.

Yes. I hope so.

Is there anything else that you would like to add or to expand on, that we've discussed?

Not at the moment, no thank you.

Then I'll say, thank you very much indeed for your time, and for sharing with us your experiences for the AJR.

Thank you for coming.

Thank you.

[End of interview]

[01:16:14]

[01:16:32]

[Start of photographs]

Photo 1

Well, that's my mother's father, holding me, by the window. I think in their home in Vienna. In the flat. *[When?]* Well, many years ago, but I would have been about two years old at that time.

So, what year, roughly?

I can't work it out. Born, '31 – '33. Probably in [19]33.

Photo 2

That is my paternal grandmother, my father's mother, taken in 1936.

Where? What was her name?

I've forgotten.

Was it Wilma?

Well, that was taken in Vienna. Probably in a photographer's studio.

Photo 3

Oh, my maternal grandmother holding me, in the garden in Poland.

When?

That would have been, again, probably 1933.

Photo 4

That is my mother as a young woman. I'm sure that was taken in Vienna about 1937.

[01:18:42]

Photo 5

My sister, Luisa is on my left. In looks, she takes after my father's mother. She was blond. Same sort of bone structure on her face. And I'm on the right. And I take more after my mother's side of the family.

Where was it taken?

I think that was possibly taken in Vienna on one of our visits to the grandparents in the summer.

1935?

In 1935, yes.

Photo 6

That picture of my father's parents, his mother on the left, his father in the middle. My mother, Stella, on the right. Myself as a little girl in 1936, with my grandma behind me. And then my sister in front of my mother. Taken in Vienna, definitely.

Photo 7

That was me, in 1949. In- probably in Ilford.

Photo 8

My grandmother Wilma on my left. On the left of the photograph. Probably taken about 1950 in Ilford.

Photo 9

That picture, with my husband. We were out celebrating ten years of marriage. 1960. That was taken in the dining hall at Glyndebourne.

Photo 10

My parents, Stella and Otto Liebermann. Taken in Wanstead Park, Ilford, in- probably in 1972 or 1973.

[End of photographs]

[01:22:14]