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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Klipstein
Forename:	Berta
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	12 March 1927
Interviewee POB:	Bielsko-Biala, Poland

Date of Interview:	11 January 2004
Location of Interview:	Leeds
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	5 hours

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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

NAME: BERTA KLIPSTEIN

INTERVIEW: 46

DATE: 11 JANUARY 2004

LOCATION: LEEDS

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: I am interviewing Berta Klipstein and today's date is the 11 January 2004. The interview is taking place in Leeds, Yorkshire, and I am Rosalyn Livshin. If you can tell me first your name?

BK: My name is Berta Klipstein.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

BK: It's the same. Oh, my maiden name was Bienenstock, Berta Bienenstock.

RL: Did you have any other names?

BK: No.

RL: Did you have a Hebrew name?

BK: Batya. In our family, my father's mother was called Bertha, and all the seven girls in the family were called Bertha, which made it very difficult to differentiate, because three of us had the same surname as well. And three of the others had another surname.

RL: And where were you born?

BK: I was born in a town called Bielsko in Silesia. Now, when I was born in 1927, Bielsko was part of Poland. But until 1918, the end of the First World War, it was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. And for that reason my parents went to German-speaking schools whereas we went to Polish schools, and therefore all my life I've been bilingual. Now, Bielsko is a very interesting town. It was a textile town with many factories; some owned by Jewish people, producing cloths. It was a very prosperous town. And it was divided by a small river from its sister town called Biała. Nowadays it's been united and it's called Bielsko-Biała. But before that, Bielsko was in Silesia, Biała was in the Krakau district. And anybody born on the wrong side of the river Biała, it means in Biała, was born the Galician whereas we were called Yeckes.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 40 seconds

RL: And when did you say you were born?

BK: In 1927, which makes me 77 years the next birthday.

RL: What month was it?

BK: March 12.

RL: Where were your parents born?

BK: My father was born in a little town, a little village called Kolpouszowa in central Poland. My mother was born in a little village called Wegierska Gorka, not far from Bielsko. My father came to Bielsko in his youth and opened a business with his father, an optician's business. As it happens, my husband's father was a jeweller and had a shop in the same street! And both our fathers, my father and my husband's father, died in 1936.

RL: What were your parents' names?

BK: My father was called Samuel and my mother was called Ada.

RL: What was her maiden name?

BK: Wasserberger.

RL: So first of all, tell me about your father's family and his parents, his family background.

BK: I have never met my father's parents because they were dead by this time. I think he was one of several children; most of them were opticians and engravers. Interestingly, my father found some napkin holders engraved by his father in one of the market stalls once, and you could tell it was his father's work.

RL: So his father was also an optician?

BK: I think so, I really don't remember very much. Because I was only nine years old when my father died.

RL: Did you know any of your father's siblings?

BK: Yes. My father went into business with his brother, and I also knew two or three of his sisters who also used to come visiting.

RL: Do you know what kind of education your father had?

BK: My father? Formal education-, people didn't have a lot of formal education, particularly in large families. But my father was very well travelled and I remember him telling me that the nicest place he'd ever been was Budapest. Interestingly, in 1936, when the Polish President Pilsudski died, he just happened to be in Warsaw and went to pay his respects. And because he was of a rather swarthy complexion, people came to see who it was,

Tape 1: 5 minutes 32 seconds

this dignitary from Ethiopia they thought, because he looked so dark. But he didn't have a very high education, I don't think, except that he was a very good optician and engraver.

RL: And what kind of Hebrew education would he have had, do you know?

BK: Yes, quite good, because my father was very adamant that I should learn and I remember going to Beis Yaacov at the age of four. That was probably-. I went afterwards to primary school in our hometown, up to the beginning of the war, when I was supposed to go to a Polish Gymnasium, which was the secondary school. But yes, I learned to read and write Hebrew and speak a little. And generally, we were a fairly observant family, with kashrus and all this. But later, a lot of it went by the board, you know, in our travels, but we recouped it after the war.

RL: Going back to your father and his Hebrew education, do you know anything about that?

BK: I don't remember, because he died when I was nine. He was very ill for a very long time. So I only remember he was sitting at his bedside, but I don't really remember an awful lot about that.

RL: He seemed to have died quite young.

BK: He was 46.

RL: What was the matter with him?

BK: Stomach cancer. My mother tried to do everything to save him and there was a professor in Belgrade with a new cure, and he came to our house. And eventually he went to a sanatorium in Vienna; they couldn't do very much. And he went to Bratislava and he died in a convent of a cancer hospital there. They then brought him back home to a border town called Teschen, where, again, the town was divided by a river; part of it was in Czechoslovakia and part in Poland. And the hearse had to be changed in the middle of the bridge, just to get him into Poland. He was buried in our cemetery in our town; but after the war, when we came back, his stone had been uprooted, and put back since.

RL: If you can tell me now a little bit about your mother's family.

BK: My mother's mother came from a farmer's family. A lot of Jewish families lived in the villages. Again, I've never met her husband, my grandfather; I know that they had a terribly difficult time. My grandmother came, before she was married, she came from a town in the German part of Silesia, to help her sister in a tobacconist's. And that, I think, is where she met her husband. After they were married they had a very difficult time in the Weimar Republic where everything went-. Inflation was horrendous and as a little girl I remember a big suitcase under my grandmother's bed full of Weimar Republic-, thousands and thousands of money. My grandfather established a small grocery shop in town and my grandmother had seven children, two sets of twins. And strangely, of all her seven children, the only next generation was me; none of the other children had any children.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 16 seconds

RL: Gosh! And what kind of upbringing did your mother have?

BK: My mother, being the youngest, had it hardest in a way. And in those days, if you wanted to get married, she had to have a dowry, which she didn't have. And she was persuaded, I think, to marry my father, who was the optician with a business. He was 14 years older. I mean it's hard for me to judge, but I don't think it was a very happy-. I mean my mother did everything possible, but it wasn't a very happy marriage. There were always problems in the family, as far as I remember. My mother had to learn something. She was very academical, well, I mean she was very clever, but she had to learn a trade. And she was sent to Vienna to study millinery. And before she was married she had a salon, a very good one. And she was extremely gifted: she could paint, she could sow, she could knit, she could do absolutely anything she put her hand to.

RL: Did she give that up on marriage?

BK: There was no salon, but she continued doing all her own things. And as I was growing up she kept me in dresses and things. And my grandmother, when I was six, I had scarlet fever, and she taught me to knit. And this hobby I have never given up and it helped me to survive, as I will tell you later on, just by knitting. And into this day, everything in the house, all the grandchildren, they all wear my knitwear, original knitwear, designed by me.

RL: You said that your mother had six other siblings. Was it seven altogether?

BK: Altogether seven.

RL: Where did they live? What did they do?

BK: There was Aunt Rosa who was the oldest and she was a hunchback. And she was in charge of the shop. It was a grocery shop, selling alcohol as well, it was a really old-fashioned grocery shop. And at lunchtime every day, when the siren went in the factories, the people came in to buy some alcohol for their lunch. And I remember as a little girl in Poland, they had little bottles of alcohol, probably 1/8 of a litre, and the seal on top was a different colour depending on the strength of the alcohol. The shop had a big barrel of Sauerkraut and a big barrel of cucumbers. And there were also chairs where the people-, there were two spinsters, Miss Mitzi and Miss Lucie, who came everyday because they had no other social things. It was a sort of centre where people came to spend their time. That was my oldest aunt. Next one, I mean I'm not really sure of the order, I think some children died in infancy, there were two lots of twins. But Aunt Rosa's twin was Uncle Max who, when I was born, lived in Berlin and later emigrated to Sao Paolo and died in Sao Paolo. He lived-, they had no children. And then it was Aunt Hansi, who lived in Germany and got married to a war veteran. And she just happened to be visiting home in 1933. We went skating, she fell, broke her wrist, and could not go back to Germany, which was her salvation because, you know, of the rise of Hitler. She then went to London, emigrated in 1938 probably, and ended up as a domestic help, as many Jewish refugees did, in a castle in Ayr. And eventually she married somebody who met Aunt Rosa and was also emigrating to England, and she married him. Somebody called Max Lichtenstein who was Czech. And they lived in London and it was to them that I came when I came to London. He was by that time actually in the American Army

of Occupation, so I didn't see very much of him. He went back to Czechoslovakia in 1948 during the revolution.

Tape 1: 13 minutes 58 seconds

RL: And the next one?

BK: The next one was Aunt Elsa and Uncle Adolf. Aunt Elsa was working in an office and Uncle Adolf was very highly educated, but because of the boycott of Jewish people, he had to start on his own and learnt all about textile production and had a commission-weaving place. For many, many years, Aunt Elsa and Uncle Adolf lived in one room, near the shop, next to where my grandmother lived and Aunt Hansi. And it was only about 1936 when they bought a fantastically elegant flat which was decorated by an interior decorator. And they only enjoyed it for a very short time before the war started. And it is they and my grandmother who went with us through the war mostly. That was probably it, that's as far as I can remember, because some of the siblings didn't survive.

RL: And your father's siblings, what were they doing?

BK: As I said, my uncle and my father started an optician's shop. But in 1936, there was a family difference and my parents started a shop of their own, similar sort of shop. I think one of my aunts, sister of my father's, was going to market selling things; they had a hard life. Some of my relatives in Moravska-Ostrava in Czechoslovakia, and I also had an aunt called Blasenstein in Teschen, which was, as I said, before the border between Czechoslovakia. I don't remember anybody else.

RL: And do you know what happened to them?

BK: Aunt Rosa died in the Holocaust. Uncle Max died eventually in Sao Paolo. And Aunt Elsa and Uncle Adolf, when they came back to Poland, did not want to go any further and they died in Poland. I can't remember anybody else.

RL: What kind of religious upbringing did your mother have?

BK: I can't answer that really, except that she fell in with my father's wishes and I remember having Melava Malkas and things like that, and the proper Friday carp for dinners all that sort of things. We were a middle of the road Jewish family. I think my father's family was probably more observant.

RL: How many siblings did you have?

BK: None, I was the only child.

RL: When did your parents marry?

BK: When did they marry? It must have been about 1926 because I was born in 1927.

RL: And what happened to your father during the First World War?

BK: I don't remember. That I don't know.

RL: He never spoke about it?

Tape 1: 17 minutes 30 seconds

BK: As I said, I was a very young child and then he was very ill, so we never came to talk about that.

RL: Do you remember, can you describe to me the home that you lived in?

BK: Yes. I was born- when my parents where first married, they had a little flat on the second floor of a house overlooking this river Biała which I've mentioned before, high up. And every morning, about 7 o'clock, quarter to seven, the workers started going to the factories and I could overlook-. They came from the villages and they went to the factories and back again in the evening. They lived there for three of four years, and I remember this flat, I was only about three years old, when they bought a very nice apartment house across the road, quite big. And we had a very elegant flat there and we had a maid, Theresa, who actually brought me up for about 10, 12 years. And we were fairly, well I don't know about these things, but we were fairly affluent except when after my father's illness, things got very difficult financially. The town itself was nice, it was quite unrepresentative of what people think of Poland, you see, because it used to belong to Austria. We had a fantastic theatre which produced a lot of German operettas like Léhar or Czardasfürstin, all those things, and we were brought up on German operettas, which was very nice. It was like a very big theatre in a very little town. And there was a lovely fountain. The town itself was very elegant. About four cinemas, three or four schools. A lot of the population were German, most Catholic and Protestant. And there were German secondary schools. And because we were a textile town, we had one of the best technical colleges in Poland for people, I don't know what, for technicians to weave and to go into the textile industry. And my husband is a graduate of that school, which was very well recognised. And after being graduated of that school you called it engineer, like a graduate of a polytechnic.

RL: Coming back to your home and the apartment that your family moved into, was it a flat within the apartment?

BK: No, no, people live in houses, and houses have got three or four apartments. And ours had a kitchen, a hall, a dining room and about three or four bedrooms and a garden. And I remember my father planted some grapes in the garden and some lilac trees. We had a cherry tree, dwarf apple trees, an arch of climbing roses, raspberries, quite a lot.

RL: On what floor of the house?

BK: To begin with we lived-, the house had an extension, the second floor, and we moved into the most modern part. But because of tenant protection we had to move into the lower floor because there was some reason I can't quite tell you about.

RL: And where the other neighbours Jewish families or non-Jewish?

BK: There was no other Jewish family. No, that's not quite true. There was this big house and there was also what you call a yard. And in this yard there were some smaller flats and I remember there was a Mrs Singer lived there, who was Jewish. And I think there was one other Jewish family, mostly they were not.

RL: And how did you get on with the non-Jewish neighbours?

Tape 1: 21 minutes 38 seconds

BK: You hardly ever mixed with them. I know there was a family of really German Na-, well, there were very pro Hitler. And I got on with them very well because they had a dog and that was a big attraction. No, we had no real problems with them.

RL: And what did your father-, I know you were young when he died, but did he belong to anything at all, was he involved in the community?

BK: Oh, tremendously so. We had a wonderful synagogue which was a prototype of a synagogue, we only spoke about it recently, in Budapest. And as I said, my father travelled very much. He was a member of the synagogue, we all went, we were regular shul attenders and my father was on the Chevra Kadisha. And my mother was on many of the ladies' things. I remember going to, well, we didn't have coffee mornings, but we had things where she baked, exhibitions and things like that, yes, we were very involved.

RL: Did the shul have a name?

BK: No, I don't think so. It was just the Bielsko shul as opposed to the Biała shul, you see. And then there were two or three Stiebels as well. And just before the war an extension was built which had a gymnasium and a stage and it was a meeting point of all the organisations, Zionist organisations. I myself was a member of Hanoar Hazioni and there were others. There were Betar and Bnei Akiva and others as well.

RL: How big was the community?

BK: I couldn't tell you numerically, but it was quite substantial. And very well off mostly, because there were lots of manufacturers and lots of professionals. And this town itself was set in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains and it was beautiful. And all you had to was get on a tram and go to a place called *Cygoiner skilas*, which means gypsy forest, and then you can go off into the mountains for the day or you can go skiing in the winter. And before the war we had built a swimming pool, an Olympian swimming pool. And actually the Polish Women's champion was Jewish called Traudi Davidovitch, and I recently found out she survived. And we also had Hakoah, we had Hakoah swimming and Hakoah football team. And we had a Maccabi, so we had the usual organisations. It was a very nice life before the war – while it lasted.

RL: Where would you go for holidays?

BK: Almost entirely, when I was very young, we went to a little village called Tzschirk. You went on a bus, 45 minutes, and we took usually a house for six weeks. The maid came with us and we just set up business, set up home for the duration. And there again, we could walk into the mountain and there was a swimming pool and that was very nice. A lot of people were in business and they couldn't afford to take all the time off, so usually teachers had what they called a colony, like here, they go Habonim, they went off to camp. But I mostly went there. Not until after my father died-, well, I'll come to this. When my father died in 1936-, in 1938, my mother suffered a lot when he died and she went away into one of the spas. And while she was away we had a proper, fully-grown pogrom in our town. It started with some misunderstanding, with some dispute in a public house and it ended,

allegedly, with somebody being either knifed or killed, I don't remember. But there was a rampage and the population started throwing stones and it was very frightening because I was
Tape 1: 26 minutes 0 second

quite young and I was only in the house with the maid and that was pretty bad. After my father died, in the spa my mother met a man whom she eventually married. He was a divorced man with a daughter who also perished in the Holocaust. He was a traveller for a chemical firm and he moved into our town and when my mother got married again, all the furniture became new and everything was very nice. My mother knew a lot of people and one of those people was a Polish doctor who used to take me out practically every day with other people in winter, with other people skiing, just on the outskirts of town. And I remember the last time we went was in January 1939. It was a nice life there.

RL: So this rampage, this pogrom, was this something out of the ordinary?

BK: Very out of the ordinary. I mean it wasn't out of the ordinary generally speaking, but it never happened, to my knowledge, in our town. It lasted quite a time and people used to paint crosses on their houses to say 'Don't smash our windows'. It was very unpleasant, lasted quite a while, I mean, several weeks.

RL: So where windows in your apartment smashed?

BK: Maybe not, I don't remember in our apartment because had shutters, so maybe not, I don't remember our apartment. But as it happens, they were doing the road outside our house and they kept smashing, you know, taking stones and smashing at the windows; whether they broke them I can't remember.

RL: Were you able to go outside during this time?

BK: Oh yes. Actually, because I was with a maid only, my aunt took me into her house because she didn't think it was safe for me to be where I was.

RL: Did you continue going to school at this point?

BK: Yes.

RL: When was the trouble happening, was this-

BK: Well, it started on the Friday night and it went on maybe a week, maybe longer, I can't remember now. But soon afterwards my mother got married, in 1938, on the day of the Anschluß of Vienna, actually of the Sunday of the Anschluß of Vienna. She got married in the smaller room of our synagogue and I remember it quite distinctly.

RL: And then, did they continue to live in the same apartment?

BK: No, we stayed in our apartment, as I said it was all refurbished, it was very nice. Actually, when my parents eventually emigrated, the furniture that was recovered after the war went with them to Israel.

RL: So tell me about your schooling.

BK: Well, as I said I went to a Jewish school, a Jewish primary school, which was very good. I was hoping to start secondary school in October, September 1939 and of course the
Tape 1: 29 minutes 9 seconds

war intervened and that was it. I must tell you a little bit about what happened after the war started, because the schooling was quite interrupted by it, unless you want me to-

RL: We'll come onto that soon, we are just keeping with before the war. The Jewish school, how big a school was it?

BK: It was quite a big school. I mean we had a class of 60, because that was the only class which was one of; and usually there were 30-odd people, for every year there were two classes. But the one I went to actually had 60. And there were no problems with the school at all. There were 7 classes, so that must have been, what, 15 classes of about 30, plus 30, so that was quite a lot. We also had a kindergarten and a nursery school before that.

RL: Do you remember who the headmaster was?

BK: I remember the headmaster, I couldn't tell you his name now. There were also other schools in town. There was also a Talmud Torah, but it was in Biała, not in Bielsko.

RL: And did this school give Hebrew education?

BK: Oh yes. We had Bible education, we had Modern Hebrew. Unfortunately, the teacher of Hebrew wasn't very good, so I haven't learnt as much as I should have done. Now, on top of that, I learnt to play the piano since I was five. And my mother was adamant that I should have all those skills, so she made sure I played tennis – I wasn't very good. I was quite good at swimming. As I said we had Hakoah and the summer after my father died I spent all summer in the swimming pool, in the swimming baths around there.

RL: And you also mentioned a Zionist group?

BK: Yes, I belonged to Hanoar Hazioni.

RL: And what did you do?

BK: Hanoar Hazioni ran on Scouts' line and we had all the usual flushes. We went out into the countryside and we met for Oneg Shabbat and that sort of thing.

RL: And there were other Zionist groups in the town?

BK: Yes, as I said-

RL: What made you join that one?

BK: Oh, my cousin. It actually all started during the pogrom because I stayed with them and she took me to a Pesach Sheni and I liked it. And funnily enough, my husband belonged to the same group, and also, I don't remember him, because he was five years older, he remembered me wearing white socks! And I had very long hair, I had pigtails, so he remembers me from before the war.

RL: Was there someone in charge of this group, a group leader?

Tape 1: 32 minutes 13 seconds

BK: Oh yes. I mean, the older girls used to take groups and yes, it was very pleasant and we learnt quite a lot. We used to meet with the other organisations we had, you know, assemblies and get-togethers, it was very nice. We also produced a play with a professional director; I forget what it was. We also had in 1938 a visit of the Habimah Theatre. We produced the book, which I went to see, very difficult to get tickets. Yes, we had a good Jewish life.

RL: Did you mix at all with the non-Jewish population?

BK: I didn't know any. Except for Teresa, the maid, I didn't know any. I just didn't know any.

RL: And your parents, did they-

BK: They must have done in the shop and with the tenants. All I did was go to school and-, I was fairly sheltered. Yes, and my grandmother took a lot of time, spent a lot of time with me, taking me out for walks every day and that sort of thing.

RL: Except for the pogrom, did you experience any other kind of hostility at all?

BK: Not that I was actively aware of. Maybe, but not particularly. There must have been after Hitler came to-, yes, there was, after Hitler came in 1933 to power, a lot of people, a lot of refugees, arrived in Poland so they couldn't get to any other place, so of course I was aware of it and they used to come to the house and I used to listen to stories. Just like my grandmother used to tell me stories about the First World War and all the people who used to come to the shop, the same stories. Yes, I was aware of that. As for persecution, you don't look for it when you are still that young.

RL: What happened to these refugees that came?

BK: Well, it depends. I mean, like my aunt, she managed to get to Scotland, but a lot of them must have perished because the war overtook them. You see, we had nowhere to go when the war started.

RL: I was thinking of those that came to your town.

BK: I mean, they came to the house and we may have never seen them again. I was aware that they were a lot of people.

RL: Did you ever think during that period of wanting to go to Palestine?

BK: There was a lot of talk. My parents must have known about it. There was talk to sending me off there, or to sending me off somewhere else. But we weren't very wealthy. My father's illness took a lot of the money. And we couldn't have-. I mean, all our wealth was tied down in the house which they bought. So really they were just dreams more or less, because we couldn't have afforded to.

RL: Who was the man who your mother married?

Tape 1: 35 minutes 20 seconds?

BK: He was a very nice man. He was called Ignaz Tenzer. He was divorced, he had a daughter whom I never met. And he travelled a lot to Katowice; he was a representative for a chemical firm and used to come home quite a lot. I think he came from a very religious family. His father was pretty religious, but I don't know that he himself was all that religious. He fitted in, he fitted in. Yes, and you said, where did I go for holidays? Well, actually, the last holiday I was taken ill, I had pleurisy. And just that summer, we went to a place called Zakopane, you might have heard of, which is just now-, it's got a ski resort. Very often you'd ski on Sunday, you see people jumping, it was a lovely mountain in the Tatra Mountains and we spent all our-, the last summer there. And got back just in time to pack all our belongings in suitcases and send them off into the interior of the country, hoping that they might be saved and that the war will be over before long. And all our belongings, you know, silver, candlesticks, anything valuable, all went in and was never seen again.

RL: Where were they sent to?

BK: They were sent into the interior. There was somebody-. Maybe my stepfather knew somebody who lived in another town and they were sent to that address. Lots of people did that, big trunks full of things, thinking they might save something.

RL: But you yourselves stayed?

BK: No, that was just before the war started. You want me to talk about the start of the war? Because that happened very soon afterwards. We no sooner got back from that holiday, it was the 31st August, that was the first night when the lights went off. And a week or so before they started digging trenches. And our town was very vulnerable because of the very large German population. And even before the war, long before the war, there were pictures of Hitler on the walls of businesses, not so much of the Polish President. And even there was a prohibition for people to speak German in the street, so we knew that once the war was going to start it won't be long. So it was early on, the 1st September, about 5 o'clock, that we heard the first bombs drop. And we had absolutely no idea whether it was real or just a trial. As it happened, it was the beginning of the war, Friday, 1st September. And we spent all day in our cellar, which was adapted specially up to a certain extent, with lots of other people. And all we knew about the war was on the radio, 'bandits this, bandits that', and we didn't actually knew what it meant. But we knew that we had to do something. And as we spent all day in the cellar, it wasn't until it got dark that we decided we can't stay. And we took what we could, we locked up our place, we went to get our aunt and my grandmother and we went to the station. And we got on a train, we didn't know when it was going to go, where it was going to go. Eventually, sometime in the early hours of the morning, the train moved into the interior. And about lunchtime we ended up somewhere near Krakow. And actually our town was not far from Katowice, which you might have heard of, and that is when we saw the first aeroplanes, air battles, which we'd never seen before, and the platform was full of Red Cross people dishing out tea and things like that. I don't know how much food we had, but that was the pattern for the next few days. We were on one train and then we met another train where my aunt and her family were on, going away from the border. And as it happened, our town was handed over without a shot being fired on 3rd, on the Sunday morning, when war was declared in Britain. That day our town became German. So there was never any battle as such in our town. So we were on the train moving east, but because trains were strategic property,

we were being bombarded. And we were told that every time the train was being bombarded you had to go out, lie down, face down, and open your mouth so that your eardrums wouldn't
Tape1: 40 minutes 11 seconds
perforate. And then when things got quieter you went back and hopefully got your belongings and your seats back. And very often we stood for a very long time because the bridges were bombarded, so that was extremely dangerous, being on the train. Because sooner or later we were likely to be hit. So that was Friday night we ran away, Saturday, Sunday. By Monday, it was extremely dangerous, so we left the train. The train went on and we got off in a little village, into a peasant's house, spent the night. It was a lovely autumn, we spent all day in the garden sleeping, and at night we moved. But there was no locomotion, so we used to hire a man with a horse who used to take us a little bit up the way, but not for long, because the peasants or those people were afraid for their own families. So they were only going as far as the next village. And that's how we moved at night. And it was very often you didn't know where the Germans were. Sometimes the reports were they were in front of you, and sometimes they were behind you. Until about the seventh day, we ended up in a town called Kolpouszowa, where my father came from. There was nobody of the family left by then, but we spent the night in an inn I think. In the morning there was an alarm that the Germans had been using poisonous gas, because that was the danger. It was never used, to my knowledge, but that was the danger. So we moved on during the night. And when you moved on during the night, the countryside was illuminated by towns being bombed and burning, so you had some idea. We didn't quite know where we were going, we just knew we were moving away. And there was very little news of what was happening, because it was chaotic. And then suddenly, after 17 days, on 17th September, we found that the Russians had advanced and taken over, so we were no longer on Polish territory, we were now on the German occupied territory. And we were now in Eastern Poland moving further east. And it was extremely dangerous, there was a forest, there were lots of woods, and bandits, you know, people who tried to get your belongings and what you had. And we were just moving east and it was a very strange existence. Because one day we were moving along, and there were lots of refugees, like you've seen, unfortunately, many times since, and then suddenly, we found we were the only people moving east! Everybody else was moving the other way because the Russians were coming. And there was a terrific bombardment and explosions, which turned out to be nothing worse than Polish soldiers throwing grenades into the river to stun the fish.
And we ended up in a town called Koky, which is a small town, and this town was decorated with Polish flags and so on. And we got there and we ended up with a Jewish family who had a barn next to the house in which stood a Polish bath full of petrol. And we spent the night there. But after eight hours all the flags disappeared and the Russians came. And all the night there was shooting and burning and we spent the night under tables, trying to get out of the bullets. And the owner of the bath came, trying to put it on fire. And by morning, about two houses each side were on fire. And we fled in the morning. We just had enough time to buy some metal plates, enamelled plates, because whatever we had had smashed by then. So we moved further east. And it was very funny, strangely, because sometimes you might go to a village and buy a chicken and we were on the cart. Oh, and by that time we didn't have anybody who was willing to take us, so we had to buy our own cart and our own horse and do the best we could. And strangely enough, on one of those roads, on one of those journeys, we met my uncle from Teschen, who was also there. We just shouted to each other, 'We meet you in the next town!' – we never met up again. So we might have gone to a village and bought a chicken and gone onto the cart and plucked the chicken and got into the next village and put it into a pot. And then the shooting started and the chicken still there, and we used to go into the fields. And we ended up in a barn belonging to Ukrainians and during the night we found that the whole barn was full of rifles and grenades. They were very anti-Polish, they

were very pro-German, so it was not advisable to stay for very long. And the front was very close there, because all the night long we could see firing. So we moved east. And as it

Tape 1: 45 minutes 20 seconds

happens, on erev Yom Kippur, we came to a little town called Luck. And erev Yom Kippur was spent on the floor in the town hall. And that was the first time ever I fasted, I was twelve-and-a-half years old.

RL: What kind of belongings had you taken?

BK: What did we have? Very little. Probably what you would take on holiday. There was nothing-. You know, all the valuables went, so it was quite difficult to carry too much.

[Short break]

RL: We just had a short pause there, but just to continue, I was asking you about what belongings you had taken with you?

BK: Very little. But what we took with us saved our life in Siberia later. Just clothes, just the usual sort of things that you'd put in a suitcase.

RL: And you described travelling at night. Can you just sort of explain-

BK: It was terrible really, because as we moved further east the roads got worse and worse. And there were no longer tarmac roads or paved roads; there were usually just planks put across. And the roads weren't very well maintained and sometimes the wheels got stuck in a rut. And on one occasion my grandmother fell out of the cart, I mean the whole cart upset itself, and she was in her 70s then. It was very, very difficult, but it was the only way we could travel in relative safety because they were mostly after the towns, bombarding the towns, and we were on the roads. So we slept in the orchards by day and moved east. Well, it was just a routine setting in: you got up in the morning, you bought what you could in the village and you had your breakfast, went to sleep. At dusk you went on the cart and moved on.

RL: Did you have any equipment for cooking?

BK: No, no, we didn't. I mean we just had to rely on people's ranges, you know, asking them to do it. They were usually allowing us to do it; for a price I suppose, my parents must have paid them.

RL: And how many people were doing the same thing?

BK: There were hundreds of people. I mean, the roads were absolutely full. And sometimes you came to a junction and stopped and you talked to people who came from other directions and you tried to find out which way the armies, which way the war was moving. And sometimes people said, 'Well, if that is the case I won't go any further.' I mean the people with transport, the people who had those carts and horses, and as I said, we ended up having our own cart and our own horse, which was a bit of a problem because we weren't used to that sort of thing. But we just moved; there was really nothing else you could do.

RL: You said that by Yom Kippur you had arrived at-

BK: Yes, at the town of Luck
Tape 1: 48 minutes 34 seconds

RL: And what happened?

BK: Well, it was late at night and we had to stop somewhere. And they let us sleep the night on the floor in the town hall. And the next day was Yom Kippur. And then we had to go and find some accommodation. And then we found some accommodation and my mother found a job, sewing, with a Jewish seamstress who were very-, they tried to get me to learn to sew, but I wasn't very apt at sewing. That's how it developed. I went to school, I went to school in Luck, but the curriculum had changed dramatically. I went to grammar school, but Latin was out, Russian was in, not as the Russian history. But the school, it was quite good. But we knew it was temporary, because all the time we were in Luck, that is from October 1939 till June 1940, the Russian authorities tried their best to make us become Russian citizens. There was an awful lot of movements across, what they called in those days the 'green border', the unofficial border. You must remember that lots of families were divided. Lots of families were caught by the Russian advance on the wrong side, on the German side. And lots of people were going at night and having guards and going back home, home, you know, just to get their families out. Or they had enough of fleeing; it wasn't a very easy thing. There was a lot of movement going on. At the same time, there were a lot of native, ethnic Germans who lived in the Ukraine. And because they were ethnic Germans and because a pact between Stalin and Hitler, they were now allowed to move into Germany. So there was a trek of those people moving into Germany. There was a lot of things going on. But as far as I was concerned, I was just going to school. And at the end of the school year I got a diploma and I got very upset, because it had a picture of Stalin on one side and Lenin on the other side. And the mother of my friend, called Janina, a Jewish girl from Warsaw, said, 'Well, don't worry about that because really it's a recognition of your achievement, not of what's on the picture.' I also went to a music school there and continued with my piano lessons. So I was very interested in getting as far as I could with my education.

RL: Where were you living?

BK: We were living in hired rooms, two rooms. Nothing very much to do. During the week it was alright, it was school. On Sundays there was absolutely nothing to do. There was a Jewish population. And though going for Yahrzeit, when my father's Yahrzeit I went to the shuls there, but it was just an eastern town, very different to what we were used to at home. But there was a war on. And as I tried to say, the Russians tried to make us convert, to change our citizenship to Russian. Of course we knew that once we became Soviet citizens, they would do whatever they liked with us. So everybody resisted. So they said, 'Well, if you are not with us, you are against us. So you please sign this paper and we'll take you back home.' So there were all these people, groups on the street corners, thinking what should we do, what's advisable to do. And eventually, there was a big meeting on a Wednesday, of all the Russian militiamen, high-ranking officers. We didn't know what it was about. And then on Friday night – and everything that ever happened to us was always on a Friday night – in the early hours of the morning, somebody came, they knocked on the door and said, 'Pack your belongings. You are going home. You are going back home.' So we packed our belongings, and because my aunt and uncle and grandmother lived somewhere else, I managed to slip away to tell them that we were being taken. And because we pledged that we'd never be separated, never be divided, they came voluntarily with us, I think they must be they-, not

many people went voluntarily to Siberia like that, but they did. And the Russians took everything we had. And as I said, my husband's [sic] family were jewellers and his mother managed to save quite a lot of jewellery from the shop. And the Russians took all the
Tape 1: 53 minutes 13 seconds

jewellery and gave her a receipt, which, I don't know, wasn't worth the paper it was written on. But as it became lighter, people took us to the main street and there were lorries. And they loaded all our belongings on the lorries and they took us to the railway station. And they loaded us into cattle trucks.

RL: Can I just ask you before we go on to the next stage, if we can just go back over your life there, over those months. How were the Russians towards you?

BK: We didn't have very much to do with the Russians. The Russians were in occupation. Yes, they did an awful lot to win over the population. And they did all kinds of free theatre shows, concerts. And I never forget a film, which was very famous, and you may even have seen it since, which was called *Цирк,* (Tsirk). And it is a wonderful thing of the Russian circus and you see Blacks and Whites and Indians and everybody loves each other. You know, it was one of these wonderful propaganda films, that everybody in the Soviet Union has great brotherly love. I never forgot it and always remember how I took to it. They tried to win the population over. Of course all this time you got the Russian officers with their families who'd never seen such affluence, although it wasn't an affluent part of Poland. And they bought anything in sight. You could see Russians with five, six watches. You could see Russian wives of officers going to the theatre in nightdresses, because they never had lace on their nightdresses, they were completely out of their depths. But things were getting difficult with food and things like that, things were getting difficult because the war was going on.

RL: You mentioned that your mother took a job as a dressmaker?

BK: She tried to earn a living by sowing.

RL: Did you stepfather do anything at this period?

BK: He probably did, but I can't remember what it was.

RL: And your aunt and uncle?

BK: No, they didn't work. It was very difficult to work. They were middle-aged and they managed to subsist.

RL: Did you have much contact with the Jewish community there?

BK: Not the Jewish community. Only with people like us, refugees.

RL: Was there any sort of Jewish life at that point?

BK: Not that we had time or inclination to do it. It was very hard, you know, having lost everything. It was not for very long, it was just a question of surviving from day to day.

RL: Did you come across any hostility there?

BK: Not as such. I mean people were very hostile to the Russians. It was very interesting because when I was going to school-, well, it was customary in Poland that every class had a wall newspaper; the pupils contributed to it. And I was put in charge of the paper and it had to
Tape 1: 56 minutes 18 seconds

have a title. And I called it *Primus*. If you've ever learnt Latin, it means 'the first', primary, primus. And the next thing I knew, I and my co-editor were summoned to the office of the director of the school and he said, 'What do you think you are doing? Who do you try-? What do you try to convince me? Do you try a subversion on me?' And it turned out that the word 'primus' in Ukrainian means 'coercion'. I mean, it would have never occurred to us, we weren't even knowing it, but anything you did, everything you did was being put under the microscope. And then came 1st May, and 1st May was a very big celebration, everything was 'spontaneous'. So for about a week we were drilling in the playground to show our spontaneity, how much we were going to cheer Comrade Stalin when we passed his portrait. And we were marching and marching and marching around. And that was that sort of thing that went on. And then that was when we started learning Ukrainian a little bit, but mostly Russian. So we had to start learning Russian history, but we still learnt a little bit of the classics, the Odyssey and the Iliad, the usual curriculum that was meant for the first year. We had a wonderful Polish teacher who was great.

RL: Now, this film is just about to end, so we'll just stop here.

BK: Good.

Tape 1: 57 minutes 51 seconds

TAPE 2
Tape 2: 0 minutes 4 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Berta Klipstein and this is Tape 2. I just wanted to ask you, in the school that attended there, were there other Jewish pupils?

BK: Well, I didn't know all that many Jewish pupils in the higher classes, but my best friend was a Jewish refugee from Warsaw. And there were other people like us who were refugees and came from other towns in Poland. But we were just leading ordinary lives, we didn't take much interest in the Jewish life because we were only there temporarily.

RL: How did you get on with the other pupils?

BK: Very well, very well.

RL: Did you ever come across any hostility?

BK: No. Except that they tried to turn us desperately into good Soviet citizens, which we tried to resist.

RL: So now if we go on, and you were about to tell me about how you were taken away.

BK: Yes, I started telling you, as most things in Russia happened on a Friday night, early hours in the morning. We packed our belongings. The Russian soldiers who came helped us to carry them to the main road. Big lorries, a string of big lorries came to fetch us and we

were taken to the railway station. It was a very hot day, it was June 1940. And as soon as we arrived there, 40 people were put into a cattle wagon, the doors closed. And until all those people were in, we didn't get anything to eat all day, or drink, until the next day they brought
Tape 2: 1 minute 54 seconds

two buckets full of some slop, which we simply couldn't contemplate eating. And we were standing in that station until late Sunday night. And late Sunday night, the train started moving. And it started moving west, not east, and we said, 'Well, maybe they were telling us the truth, maybe they are taking us home.' But it only went 15km west, to a big junction, and that's when we started our journey east. And we moved for about a day, maybe less. Sometime during Monday we stopped on the old Polish-Russian border and that's where everybody had to unload and board the Russian trains because the gauge of the Polish trains were much narrower, so the Polish trains couldn't get any further. And this train was very strange, because the wagons was level with the platform and the wheels were submerged. And in the commotion, some people managed to escape under the trains and disappear. And we saw how lucky they were. But in the end they were not lucky, because many of them perished in 1941 when the German army started advancing. So from Monday onwards, day after day, we were moving east. There was nobody to tell us where we are going. There was a militiaman with a bayonet standing outside guarding us. And the doors were closed. And there were 44 people. My grandmother was seventy-six, she was about the same age as I am now. And there was a baby of two and there were people in all kinds of good health, bad health. Somebody managed to save 44 eggs, a tray of 44 eggs. And as there were only two platforms, there were two platforms on each side, and that's where people sat and slept. There was very little room when you've got 44 people to a carriage. But during the day we used to get two of the boards and put them across. And one of those boards slipped and broke the 44 eggs! It was the greatest calamity you can imagine. And as we moved eastwards, there was very little air. And my uncle who was with us had an old-fashioned umbrella. And somehow, when the train was in motion, we managed to move the big door, through the window, with that umbrella to open it and get a bit of air. So during the day we tried to sit on those planks. And of course there were no toilet facilities, nothing at all. And after three or four days we started eating the slop they brought us once a day. Otherwise, once or twice, in the middle of nowhere, the train used to stop and people used to get down and move. But by that time there were so many echelons, that's why they called them echelons, you see. Our carriage was one of some sixty, and if you think there were 40 people in each, there were about two and a half thousand people in each train, moving east. And the local population knew about it then. The people used to come and sell bread, maybe, and onions, whatever. So we could supplement our food a little bit. And so we moved. And we thought, 'Well, they are taking us to the mines in the Ukraine, to Dneprpetrovsk, to the industrial towns in the Ukraine. But after a few days, of course the Ukraine was left behind and we were moving on. But none of us had a map, so we could only sort of read in passing the names of town that we were passing by. And then we found ourselves crossing the Volga. So we knew we couldn't be very far away now from Asia, because the Ural Mountains are the barrier between Europe and Asia. And it was Saturday night, it was still light, and we passed near Ufa and Magnetogorsk and we thought maybe that's where they are taking us. But the next morning, Sunday morning, we found ourselves in Asia, we found ourselves in Siberia, and on the Trans-Siberian Railway. And by that time, we must have been moving for about a week.

RL: How did you pass the day?

BK: Well, as I say, there was nothing to do. I mean you tried to sleep, and then you came down from your plank and just sat on those boards and you looked out. Sometimes the

scenery was interesting, mostly it was not. I mean you didn't really do very much and people were pretty quarrelling. Everybody wanted to get as much, as much, you know, as much space to themselves, it was a pretty hostile environment really.
Tape 2: 6 minutes 47 seconds

RL: And what happened about the toilet facilities?

BK: As I say, I mean there was a bucket somewhere, and when the train stopped, everybody just disappeared into the bushes. And it was very hard. I mean you can't even imagine what it was like. So we moved eastward. And then we moved to Chelyabynsk. Then we moved to Omsk. And then the train branched off to the town of Tomsk, which perhaps you've heard of, because very near there they've got what they called *'Академ Гродок'* for scientists learning to do all kinds of new technology. And we moved on past Tomsk and we ended in a place called Asino, which was the end of the line, the train didn't get anywhere beyond Tomsk. And it was a Saturday and the clock said half past six. And they put us into an enormous barn, like a hangar. And we all stayed there. And other people came from other trains, and we all stayed there. And the light was sort of-, didn't correspond with the time of day. And only then did it strike us that we've moved east by six time zones! That it was a different time, you see, it was so much later, because we were moving east. And we spent the night there. And the next morning, Sunday morning, lorries came and loaded us and our few belongings onto those lorries and took us to the riverbank of a river called Chulym. And there was a barge there and it took about 3,000 people or whatever onto this barge. And it started moving upriver. And Siberian rivers are very interesting because in a way it's like the fjords which I've seen since: the water is very low and in the winter the melting snow erodes the banks, so you are really much below. And we've moved east for a few days. The weather was good. We tried, at least the younger people tried, to spent some time on top of the roof. And we moved east. And then one day they said, 'Well, that's it. You are here. Disembark.' So we disembarked. And we disembarked in a little village called Beregovo. And this village was unusual insofar as it was populated. It was populated by people who in 1936, the Kulaks, the so-called landowners, were moved to Siberia. And by that time they were acclimatised and they had their pigs and they had their cows and they had one or two trappings of civilisation. So everybody got off in our barge in that village of Beregovo. And then some people were lucky enough to stay there. We had no say in it; I mean the authorities said, 'You go here, you do this, you do that.' And there was another village, not far, I forgot its name, but we were given a narrow-gauge railway which was used to transport timber from the interior to Beregovo. And it went for a little bit with a little chuffing engine, but as always it broke down very quickly, so we had to push it for about 12km. And by that time it got dark. And the Taiga, you see, we were on the latitude of the Taiga, which looks very oily, it's boggy, and it's got trees and it's got a lot of trees which keep falling over because the roots are eroded. Anyhow, we moved east and we ended up in the middle of nowhere really. It was a little square, like an exercise square, and 15 wooden huts. These huts had been built and were still inhabited by the remains of the prisoners who happened to be Caucasian – I mean Caucasian from Caucasus, not as 'white', but Caucasian from Caucasus – political prisoners. And they lived in those barracks, which were completely infested by cockroaches and lice. And by that time we were infested with them, too, because there was no means of hygiene at all. And we were allocated berths here and there. And there was no water, there was one well, but it was so deep and inefficient that really it wasn't practical. So there was this stagnant water, so that's where we got our water from. And the authorities provided maybe barrel of cabbage, and sometimes they fell over and the cabbage spilled, so back it went and it was used to make the I think the classical soup for prisoners which is called *Щй,* which is cabbage soup. And as always, the Russians appointed somebody to be in charge of the bakery and somebody to be

in charge of the cookhouse. And if you had any complaints, they said, 'Don't come to me. Your own people are in charge of it. So you go and talk to them.'

Tape 2: 12 minutes 32 seconds

And there was no doctor, there were no medicines, there was no cows, no milk, there was absolutely nothing. It was in the middle of nowhere and it was in a part of Siberia called Narymskij Kraj, where once, during his several exiles, Stalin had been exiled, too. All this was very good, because it was summer, it was June and July. But by September, when the river Chulym froze, that was it until the next summer and there was absolutely no communication. And there was nothing in the vicinity. And there were berries in the forest, so we went out and tried to get berries, but there were an awful lot of mosquitoes. And people were lost; it was very difficult, like moving in fog, you know, where you lose direction and you don't know which way you are going. And sometimes you were completely covered in mosquito bites. And of course illnesses were prevalent, Malaria and things like that. We had lots of doctors, but they could do very little, because they had no -. Lots of doctors amongst the prisoners, like us, who had been sent there. And sometimes people were adventurous and they went into the jungle -, into the Taiga and tried to find the next Kolkhoz to get something. But sometimes they succeeded, you know, they might have brought back an egg or a bottle of milk which sold at exorbitant prices. But mostly, it was no proposition because you didn't know where to go. There were no roads, there was nothing at all. And we knew that we wouldn't survive the winter if we stayed there. There was absolutely no means of supporting two and a half thousand people in those circumstances. And what happened to us in this little village – it was also called Taiga, the village was called Taiga – because we went to another place called Taiga, but this little village was called Taiga. So some of the people said, 'We've got to do something, we've got to stage a revolt. We've got to get the authorities to move us because we won't survive.' I mean, what else can they do? You see, when you are in Siberia, people say, 'Well, they can't do very much more to you.', because, you know, you are in Siberia. But believe me, there are places in Siberia which are even a lot worse. So one day, I think it was by then July, a committee captured the little narrow-gauge railway. We captured the railway and as many people as possible were loaded onto it. And the authorities put trees across the line which the people removed, and pushed the railway, because of course we didn't get the engine, the 12km back to Biela. And I don't know how long it took, but by the time they'd pushed it back it was evening. And we were the second lot, you know, and we got onto the train and we were pushed to Beregovo during the night.

And it was really eerie to see the moon reflected in the bogs along. And in the morning we found ourselves in Beregovo. And by that time the people from our transport also were in charge of bakeries and they had the opportunity to barter things with the local population. So they more or less supported us a little bit with bread and milk. And a family, actually from our hometown took us in for the first night. And I did something unspeakable, something dreadful, a real tragedy: they took us in out of the goodness of the heart and there was a litre bottle of milk and I upset it, I spilled the milk, can you imagine! Milk was just like gold. Not deliberately, it just fell over. Anyhow, for the next five days, we were camping on the river where we disembarked. And the weather was good, and it was just like being in the Succah. We made our tents, and we used to go into the village, and we waited for developments. And on the fifth day it started to rain and we were absolutely awash. We were out in the open, we couldn't have stayed there in this field, we had nowhere to go. And that's when posters started appearing all along the field we were in, to said that we have abandoned wilfully our places of work and under a certain section of the Soviet rule we were due to have some severe punishment. 'But', they said, 'if you select some representatives who can come and speak to

us, we'll see what can be done.' So we selected some people and they assured us that nothing is going to happen to them, they are just going to be our representatives to talk. And they talked all day. And in the evening they came back and they said, 'There is no way out. We've
Tape 2: 17 minutes 30 seconds

got to go back and then see what we can do.' So again, we've loaded our things and they got the little railway and they pushed it back to the first village. And we found ourselves in the same village except, as on all such occasions, people-, not everybody went. There were always people who tried to stay and to be in with the authorities. Somebody coveted a certain job, somebody coveted a better barrack, so the best places were taken. And we didn't get back the good places. So we stayed, we were back and we started at square one. And then nothing was happening until the next Friday night, early in the morning: 'Come along and pack your things, you're going.' So again, we went down to the railway and pushed it for about 4km and we came to a little cleared square in the Taiga, meaning the forest Taiga, with four watchtowers.

And we were being under surveillance and people's names were called out. And if you didn't hear it you were put to the other side. Many families were divided that way. And after a little while they put us back on our little train and we ended up in Beregovo. So we were going backwards and forwards. And that was again the Saturday morning and we were on the bank of the river, not knowing what's going to happen until a barge came. A barge came from higher up the river, which already had quite a few people on it and they loaded us on this barge. And probably of all the things that happened to us before or since, that probably was the worst fortnight we ever lived through. Because by the time the barge was loaded it must have had something like 3,000 or 4,000 people on it. It was just a barge; there was nowhere to-, there was no bedding, you just used your belongings as well as you could. You were staying under the stairs, above the stairs. At night the ceilings fell down onto the people. We were being pulled along by a truck. There were no toilets; you only had to sort of hold on and do it into the river. And at night when the truck stopped we could queue up for some hot water from the engines and people jostled and fell into the river. And people suffered dreadfully from mosquito bites and there were cases of cholera. And every day, once a day, we used to dock on the riverbank in the middle of nowhere, and that's where they took the corpses off and buried them. But we don't know where it was, we don't know how it was. And sometimes if we were somewhere near a centre of population, people were taken off and families were separated. And we didn't know where we were going. And strangely enough, in one such place, we were out and we've met somebody: and we've met the owner of the house I was born in my hometown! He was taken, too. And I think his wife had died then and he was taken in a different direction. But that's how people came across, you know, in the most unlikely places. And after a fortnight of this going around, we ended up in another place. And this time we were put onto passenger trains. Now, can you imagine, after for so long in travelling in goods trains, we were moving in passenger trains. And we were moving towards Tomsk again. So it wasn't until years later when I looked at the map to see where we've been and where we've gone - we've gone nowhere! We were just going around in circles. We were going absolutely nowhere. We were going up the river Chulym, up to Tomsk, into Tomsk, we've just been going round in a small circle. I don't know what the purpose of it was but I think they wanted to break us up. They wanted to break us up and I forgot to mention that those people who went to talk with them in Beregovo were taken away separately and sent to worse camps into detention, because they were the leaders and that doesn't do, to let leaders loose in a population of prisoners.

So this time, we were moving down the train from Tomsk towards the main Trans-Siberian Railway. And that's when it started to happen, we weren't aware of it to begin with, but as we were passing, time and again, they shunted away one carriage, 'You go into this village!', and another carriage, 'You go into that village!'. And this way, the two and a half thousand
Tape 2: 22 minutes 18 seconds

people, some of them actually stayed in the first village, were distributed among the Russian population and we no longer had the power of numbers. And as far as we were concerned, we ended up in a little village called Pichtach, near a town called Taiga. Now, Pichtach had a population of Kulaks like Beregovo. And we were given three barracks for the people who came on the one train, in this one carriage that we were on. And there was a Pole there who stayed there since the First World War. You couldn't distinguish him from another Siberian, from the other people in the local population. There were also people who were like the Kulaks and they said, 'Oh yes, we know. We came here years ago and we thought it's only going to be for a few weeks, days, but it was years ago. And here we are, so you'll get used to it.' And the Russians always said, especially the Natschalniks, the, what shall I call them, the people who were in charge of us, and they said, '*Привикниш.*' – 'You'll get used to it.' Whatever it was, you'll get used to it. And whatever it was, we had to get used to it, there was absolutely nothing else that we could do. And that's how it started. We had a little village shop and the men went to work into the forest and cut down trees, and winter was approaching. By that time it probably was late August and Siberian winter starts early and we had-

RL: This was still 1940?

BK: This was still 1940, yes, this was still the autumn of 1940 and we had to do preparations for winter. So if you wanted to have-. I mean, by that time, the men were very accomplished lumberjacks because they knew how to cut down trees and they knew how to hack them apart and so on. So you went to the forest and you said, 'Yes, I want some timber and I have this tree, that tree and the other tree.' And then you cut it down and they helped you, gave you a horse to cart it back to your barrack and then you cut it down and you used it as fuel. And then winter started and you had a lot of snow and very often you woke up in the morning and the windows were completely covered up with snow.

RL: What were your living conditions?

BK: Well, we all had a room, full of cockroaches. I had a room with my mother and stepfather, and my aunt and uncle and grandmother had one room. In this barrack there must have been-. Those people whose milk I spilled, they were in another room; they were a large family and they had a larger room. There was a doctor, Dr Rosenberg, with two of his sons. There was a dentist, there were about maybe 8 rooms in our-. And I was very intent of learning and I managed to get myself into the village school. But it was only a four-class school and I was too old for that. But I didn't speak too well Russian, so anyhow I went to that school for a little while. But by that time we were pretty exhausted, and one day I fainted, actually in the lavatory; made a frightful mess of myself. The Russian lavatories are completely open, and if you fall, you fall into, you know, into the worst. And because we were by then-, you see, our situation was a lot better than in the revolt village, because we were now on the Trans-Siberian Railway. And you cannot imagine how quiet it is in Siberia, there is no noise, no noise of anything, all completely quiet. But twice a day, the Trans-Siberian Railway went past, once in each direction. The station was quite a way outside the village, so at least you could hear it. And sometimes in the evenings-, don't forget that this

was summer and the nights are white, it never gets dark, and sometimes we went to the train and we saw people travelling. And sometimes somebody might throw you a magazine – you know, there was some sort of outside life, you weren't actually in the middle of nowhere. But I was taken ill, and I was allowed to go to the town of Taiga which was maybe 17km away.
Tape 2: 26 minutes 49 seconds

And to get there you had to get onto the train. And that was a very difficult proposition because every train on the Trans-Siberian Railway has its own, well, conductor, conductress, whose sole object in life is to push you off the train because they don't want passengers. It was just long-distance passengers and anybody on short distances might be regarded as thieves or hooligans or whatever, but we managed to get there. And I got to hospital and that's where I met a most remarkable lady called Olga Philipovna Kawanta**.** She was an aristocrat from the Caucasus. And the whole town of Taiga was a remarkable place anyway. It was a town, a small town, a lumberjack town, where every street was numbered, like in New York, no. 1, no. 2, no. 3, and the hospital happened to be on Street no. 3. And I was taken to this polyclinic-. And the whole town was a town of women. Because all those people were taken from the Caucasus as political prisoners, and the men were sent off somewhere else. And the women didn't know whether they were alive, where they were, nothing at all. Anyhow, Olga Philipovna took a great-, Olga was her first name, and the patronym in Russian, you always call people by their first name and their patronym. And she took an interest in me and she allowed me to stay in hospital for one week. And there I was, age twelve, amongst-, the lady in the next bed was expecting a baby any moment, and there were men and women together, and every morning, there was a radio. It wasn't a radio as we understand, it was a loudspeaker which played; you couldn't alter the station. And every morning started with a song, an ode to Stalin, how we love him, how we depend on him, he's the greatest man ever – that's how the day started. And it was interesting, most of the nurses were wearing yellow berets, the colour of shocking yellow. And then it transpired that they all tinted their berets with acradin tablets which were meant to be for the patients' malaria. It was just the colour of shocking yellow. And they fed us on something which I heartily dislike to this day, and that is called in Russian '*уха*', which is a fish soup but it was really made of bones. And they use *'кисель*', which is concoction made of cornflour – it was very bad! Anyhow, after a week I was discharged. I had no money, I had no means of doing anything. All I was given was a litre bottle of vodka, an empty bottle of vodka, filled with potassium bromide, which was the only thing to steady my nerves, I don't know what it was meant to be. And I had to go-, they discharged me at about 11 o'clock in the morning-

RL: What had been wrong with you?

BK: Well, I think exhaustion. No, I think the other thing that was wrong with me was jaundice. I had a very bad jaundice, there was no doctor in the village as such. But you can tell jaundice by the whites of your eyes going yellow. And I was just exhausted at such a time. And strangely enough, we couldn't buy anything in the village anyway, so all we could do was to barter things. And the few belongings which we happened to put into our suitcases at the beginning of the war went for a bucket of potatoes or whatever it was. But there was this Dr Rosenberg whose wife could only cook with eggs and milk, only the best. And to provide all this, although there were two or three dentists in our barrack, he had to pull the teeth - very painful for his patients - we could hear them shout, but he could get the odd things for his wife. And he had two sons, one called Erik, one called Henry. And we managed to the best we could and we went-. Well, I was supposed to go back by myself, age twelve, with this bottle of potassium bromide, and between Street 3 and Street 1, where the railway station was, I must have been stopped four or five times by the Russians who said, 'How much do you

want for the vodka?', because I was carrying this bottle and they thought, because it was a vodka bottle, an empty vodka bottle, they thought it was for sale. So I had nothing to eat, I had no money, I had nothing at all, and the next train to our village was at 2.30 in the morning. 2.30 in the morning! And I had to fill the day somehow. Well, every station in
Tape 2: 32 minutes 07 seconds

Russia has got a house providing *'кипяток'*, which is boiled water. But for that, you had to have a container and all I had was a bottle. And I don't know how I got through it, and I don't know for this moment how I could have gone back to my village if it hadn't been lucky for me that the person in charge of the village shop happened to be in town. And he took me to the train because it was a huge station. It was a junction station, there were about 36 lines before you got to the right train. And I got myself on the train with him, and it was only about 12, 15km, and in the morning I ended up in the village. That must have been about September, October. And once again, by November I must have gone-, I got terrible toothache, and although there were so many dentists, none of them had a drill. So again, I had to go to that polyclinic, with the written permission of the chief of us, whom we used to taunt mercilessly. Every time he sat down to eat, we said, 'Somebody has run away!', so of course he had to go and see and this person was sitting, eating supper. We tried to get our own back. But to go to town, we had to have his written permission, which was very difficult because he was almost illiterate. He couldn't write. And we had to go to the militia station to have it stamped, where we've been, and that we've come there for a purpose

RL: So who was this chief?

BK: Well, he was just a peasant in the militia. I don't know who he was, he was just a peasant really because he could hardly speak, except that he had the power to come into your room, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and say, 'Go and wash your floor because it's dirty!', and as I say, *'Привикниш.'* – 'You'll get used to it.' – if you didn't like what it was. We called him a commandant. And I had this terrible toothache and I had an open nerve and I could only keep the pain down by putting snow on it to keep it cold. And I got to the hospital and I had to have an extraction. The only thing is they had some anaesthetic, but what they didn't have was a workable syringe. So they got this syringe which they held together with a finger and put some, maybe, maybe not, put some in, and got the tooth out. And by that time my mother had been ill, too, so she was in the same hospital. And she made some clothes for some friends of Olga Philipovna and we were there together. And winter came, and on New Year's Eve, somebody had a mouth organ and they started playing the Polish anthem and we said, 'Not everything is lost. Maybe we'll survive.' There was one large Jewish family, very orthodox, who wouldn't let down their standard, and each one of them perished, because there just wasn't enough to eat. And whatever you could get, we always used to get our rations and once or twice a year, we must have got some margarine, and I said, 'I never want anything better than that. I mean it's absolutely wonderful!' And they used to give us bread, rye bread, and a bucket of whitewash to whitewash your walls, that sort of thing. And maybe, if you were very lucky, they gave you three metres of what they call '*мануфактура'* cloth, you know, some cotton, calico. And then the whole village was wearing the same material, clothes made in the same material. Things got very serious in winter because we didn't have the right kind of clothing. The Russians wore something like, what we would now call anoraks, but-, *forfeike,* more like the Chinese, a sort of jacket, and boots which were called '*валенки'*, which were made of felt, but of course we didn't have any of those things. So going to work in the Siberian winter was no joke. But somehow, the whole population kept quite well.

Now, I mentioned this Dr Rosenberg whose elder son was called Erik. They were Jewish, and he got very friendly with a Polish girl. And incidentally, there were some Poles from Warsaw who could speak beautiful Yiddish, which we couldn't because we were Yeckes from Bielsko. But this girl and Erik set off one Sunday to the town of […], which was not on the railway, which was a few miles off the railway, which was a mining town.
Tape 2: 37 minutes 8 seconds

And in the villages, people said, 'Well, we don't want to give you our buttermilk or our-, we don't want to sell you anything because we rather give it to our pigs and then we've got the meat.' But in town, you've got a little bit of leverage, you could sell things. So they went off on that Sunday and they were walking along the railway line. And they didn't hear the train coming. And the train came, and they only saw it when it was very close at them and they tried to avoid it and they jumped off the track, one in each direction, and got moored in the drifts, because the snow was very deep. And when the train went past, Erik was there, but she wasn't. And she got killed by the train. And she was the only casualty amongst those people when we were in Taiga; she was killed by that train on the way to […].

RL: What were you eating for food?

BK: Well, as I said, we tried very hard to barter whatever we could. And we worked, we worked by cutting down trees and chopping them. And everybody had to work. And we got our rations, which weren't adequate, but they were something. And occasionally we got something better, like margarine or sugar or something like that. And there were berries, there were mushrooms in the forest when we could get them. But things were running out. I mean, how many things can you have to barter? We didn't have money, but even if we had money it was worthless. There were nuts, in fact, Olga Philipovna had a huge bowl full of pine nuts on her range, you know, so those things you could eat. So you ate whatever came. And that's how the winter went.

RL: And how did you manage for clothes?

BK: Well, whatever you had you had. There was nothing you could buy, anything at all, whatever you had-. We looked just like the Russian population, just like the Siberian population, you couldn't really tell us apart. And then it was still winter when my mother came to town. And I was again in hospital, and I was desperate to go to school. And Olga Philipovna had a friend, another woman, who was the director of the school. And between them, they were trying to get me a place in school, providing I could find somewhere to stay, providing I could find accommodation somewhere. And they brought me books on Russian grammar. So there I was in hospital, trying to learn some Russian grammar. And my mother happened to get a job in an atelier where people could come and have clothes made for them, so she was a seamstress and she was working there. And it lasted for a little while until they wouldn't let us stay any longer and we went back to Pichtach, to our village. I was desperate to stay, and they found me a place with one of the teachers, Anastasia Afanasjewna. That was a real story. She was about 35, lame, and she lived in a real Siberian household on Street 5 in that village. I was supposed to help with the housework, whatever it was, and cook. And they had special saucepans called *чугунэе*, which were pear shaped, and you put them with a little prong right into the middle of the oven, just like a pizza, right into the middle of the oven. And she was desperate to get married. And eventually succeeded to get married to a young man who couldn't read or write, he was only 19 or 20 years old. But to get married she had to go and have a civil marriage, but he didn't have any clothes. So her brother had to stay away from work so he could borrow-, her future husband had to borrow his clothes! And she was a

teacher at that school and his role in life was to scrounge some money from somewhere, just to buy some things, you know, to live on. And there were two brothers in that household, and their mother and father. And I was given a little few planks in between the rooms, near the furnace, near the range, where it was fairly warm. And it was a very, very strange household. And I never got anything to eat because I was supposed to cook in the morning.
Tape 2: 42 minutes 20 seconds

And when I went to school in the afternoon, everything was eaten by the time I got home. And that went on for a little while and it was quite untenable. Until one of the girls in my class-. It was very strange, the first thing the children asked me – by that time I could speak Russian very well – they asked me, 'How do you swear in Polish? How do you do this?' And for example, the history books said that life in Poland is very bad. 'A Polish peasant only gets about 10 matchboxes for every sheep.' Matches in Russia were absolutely abominably, you only got one or two matches to light in a box. I mean, things like that. And then I was rather good at school. I came in the middle of the year and I learnt-. Oh, I forgot to mention that when we were still in Siberia in our first village, my friend Janina sent me some books, so I could continue learning. And one of those books were poems by Pushkin. And there I was, walking around the Taiga, learning Pushkin poems in Russian. Anyhow, this girl asked her parents and they said yes, I could come and live with them. And they were two sisters, Zhenya and Galina, and I have got a picture of Galina. And they were a very nice household. The mother was a directress of a crèche for children. The father I think was an accountant. And the family was kept together by the babushka who looked after everybody and pickled cabbage and that sort of thing. And I stayed with them for a while. But before I left them to go back, at the end of the school year I had to get back to the village, the mother was taken to prison because apparently she embezzled something - which she didn't, you know, that was a practice. And while my mother was still there, we had a room somewhere with someone, and it was the middle of the winter, and you walked the street with huge wads of snow on either side of you, which was piled up to go anywhere, because the snowfall is absolutely horrendous. And that was the winter in 1941. And I knew that I couldn't possibly go on like that because nobody would keep me. I mean, that was just exceptional, just to keep me. And that was my first encounter with algebra and things like that which I started learning. So I thought I'll have to go and learn by correspondence courses, somehow I had to get some books of correspondence courses. But it was the end of the winter, and in the spring we came back to Pichtach. And the nights were white, so every night you never saw-, it was always white, it never got dark. And had things gone on normally we would probably still be there today. But something unexpected happened. Well, actually we were the Polish prisoners. We were taken from Poland. But there was one family who said, 'Well, we might have been taken from Poland, but we are really Germans.' So when in 1941 the war broke out on 22 June between Germany and Russia, we were on their side, we were allies, but that family were Germans, so they were the enemy. The 22 June was a very important day because that was the day when we got an allotment and we planted our potatoes. Of course we weren't particularly good at planting, but my mother got a Russian woman to plant for us and she made her a dress instead. So our allotment was miles behind the village, near the railway station. Oh yes, I forgot to mention, how did we survive? Russia has certain shops, to this day, called *'Берёска*'. You can't get things in shops in Russia, but if you've got any gold, if you've got any silver, if you've got anything like that you can buy anything mostly. So on New Year's Eve, Mrs Rosenberg sent her husband on a train to get her gold teeth exchanged for products, for food. And whatever happened, he lost them between the house and the railway station. It was a calamity, you know, everything was just–, he lost them, they disappeared. So she sent him back. And after hours of looking he found them: they were glistening in the snow, he found them. So that was another way of surviving. Now, the 22 June, we planted our potatoes,

and a few days later we were all called into the clubhouse, which was a leaky-roofed barn. We called it the clubhouse. And somebody from Taiga, one of the militiamen, came to say, 'Look, we are now at war with the Germans and you are our friends, you are our allies. So the presidium of the Soviet Union decided that you are going to be allowed to leave Siberia, only

Tape 2: 47 minutes 57 seconds

we wouldn't advise it because there is a war on and wherever can you go? There is no transport, there is nothing to eat. You can go legally, you can go, except to certain towns which are closed to foreigners. But you are our allies now.' And that was the Saturday morning. And between then and noon, something happened and it's quite indescribable. Everybody seemed to have had something left, a suit from civilisation, and people dressed up, people looked like Europeans! And people even had a camera and we took a picture with our commandant who came and wiped his mouth. And there we were Europeans; we were allegedly free people now. Well, the problem remained: how were we going to get away, where should we go and what are we going to do to eat? Well, Dr Rosenberg came to the rescue. He said that in the First World War he was a prisoner in Kokand in Central Asia and it's a wonderful place, full of fruit, full of sun, and it's the place to go to. So we decided that's what we are going to do. Now, what we are going to eat? By that time, our potatoes were ripening and the land in Siberia is very fertile. If you plant a bucket of potatoes usually you get out ten. But that year they had potato blight and we got the most tiny little shrivelled things, but never mind, we harvested our potatoes. And between then and 8 September we ate potatoes morning, noon and night in every possible guise you can imagine. And every crust of bread was dried in the sun for the journey. But how are we going to get transport? So we sent two people to the main district city of Novosibirsk. And after some negotiation they hired two goods wagons which were going to be brought to our village and we were going to be shunted to anything that went in the direction we wanted to go to. So on the 8 September we loaded all our belongings and there were 75 of us then. And two people didn't go with us, because they found their mother who was taken away from the barge journey. And we were going south. And we went down south, to the town Taiga. And that is where this picture was taken with this girl Galina when we left, we just said goodbye to her. And we subscribed and bought a mandolin. And the two carriages they sell had a little platform and for the next two weeks going south through Kazakhstan we were playing the mandolin, having a lovely time, young people, you know, with not a worry in sight, not a cloud in sight. So we started our journey.

RL: Were your parents with you?

BK: Oh, the parents were inside the train, you know, and the young people were just-. Just like we were being sent to Siberia, it took us two weeks to get to Siberia; and we didn't know it at the time, but it took us two weeks to go south, too. So we started the journey. And we moved to a town called Barnaul, which was quite early in this voyage and we sent a telegram ahead to say that a group of 73 people are coming and are going to be in Barnaul by 6 o'clock that evening, and would they please provide food. Well, of course it was unheard of. You had to be someone very high up to have so much chutzpah, to send a telegram like that. And of course the train was three hours late, but the food was waiting! So we got something that day. And then we moved down to Semipalatinsk, which is quite well known now because of the space programme. And in Russia it's like this, if you see a queue you stand in it and then you ask what it is. So we stood in that queue and the queue moved on and then we asked, 'Well, what are we queuing for?' They said, 'Oh, you are queuing for sausages, only they are not ordinary sausages.' I can't think of the word in English now, they were 'b…', which means dromedar sausages! So I think even that was too much, you know. That was too much for us.

So we moved down. It was interesting moving through the desert, it's mostly barren. At night you see desert fires, the grass burning. And practically on every telegraph pole you see desert eagles. There is very little, just ruins of something or other, but no towns between Semipalatinsk and we were making for Alma Ata, which is now called Almaty in the new Russia, post-Soviet Russia. And just before then there was a fantastic cloud of birds, I've
Tape 2: 53 minutes 39 seconds

never seen anything like it, just circling ahead. And we went through Alma Ata. And we went further down, through Shymkent, and into Tashkent and every time we never knew where we were going. It wasn't a passenger train. We were in two carriages, and those carriages were put on a siding and sometimes they shunted us to a Lok, sometimes it was a car, anything. And sometimes we were standing on a siding for two or three days, we just had no idea at all where we were going. I got some books for correspondence courses from Novosibirsk, but I no longer needed them. So when we passed through Novosibirsk, my mother and I went to town to get our money back, which we did. And when we got back we couldn't find the train! But they only moved it to a different siding, so we were alright. So eventually we arrived in Kokand and that was our final destination, that was the destination that Dr Rosenberg recommended. And by the time we were in Siberia we had a few homemade utensils. And one of them was a little through, made like a barrel with some metal around it, where we washed our clothes. But during the journey it dried out so much that all those pieces fell to the middle, it fell apart. We disembarked in Kokand and the first thing we were told was to be aware of pickpockets. And there we were and we landed in the middle of a terrific sandstorm. We had nowhere to go, so we spent the night in the garden of some official building, completely covered with snow, er, sand, it got into everything. And then we started looking around and trying to find somewhere. We found quite a nice room, and my aunt started making clothes for people and I went to the local school. By that time I must have been about 14 years old and I had my ears pierced when I was about 8 days old, and all the girls have earrings, but I have lost one of the earrings, so at school they called me *'девушка с одной сериошка'*, meaning 'girl with one earring'. And I went to school. It was just the beginning of the year; we came there in September, October.

RL: Is this 1941?

BK: That was still 1941. And things were fairly normal until December. That was the time when the war in Russia was going really badly and a lot of people came; new immigrants who managed to escape. And one day again, I think it wasn't a Friday this time, they said, 'Pack your belongings, you are going!' So we got our belongings, and this time they gave us a very nice meal in a very nice hall and put us in a passenger train. And again, for a week we were going up the line and down the line and we had no idea where we were going. And we kept sending telegrams whenever we went somewhere to Ilja Ehrenberg, who was a Jewish writer. He was the one who wrote-, no, it was Pasternak, Ehrenberg was another one who wrote. And we kept saying, 'Please, we are in a terrible situation, do something for us.' But of course, before any-, we were in the middle of nowhere, before any answer could come, we were moved on. And then we were told 'Disembark!'. In the middle of nowhere, in a field: 'Disembark, you've arrived.' And some people were really very unlucky, because they stayed in this location. Which really what they wanted was to move us from towns to *колхос* to pick cotton. But somehow we managed to get back to town and of course we've lost our room. And we got back and we tried to resume.

RL: We just stop here because the tape is about to end.

BK: Am I telling you too much?

RL: No!

Tape 2: 58 minutes 2 seconds

TAPE 3
Tape 3: 0 minute 4 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Berta Klipstein and it's Tape 3. So you were telling me about his roundabout journey you've been on and how you'd arrived back.

BK: We arrived back at the turn of the year. And we tried very hard to find somewhere to live. And we found one room in a very interesting house. It was a house fairly European, because most Uzbekan houses are built of mud pads, but this one was built of brick. And it was built like a U-shaped house in the Street of Rosa Luxemburg who was a great German communist. There were four dwellings in that house; it was all on one storey. The first one was inhabited by a very famous Uzbekian actress who was very exotic and very highly always made up. I can't remember the other two tenants in that house, but we were right at the end. And the owner, it was just two rooms, with nothing at all besides, the owner was a washerwoman called *Tiotya Dunya* – *Tiotya* means aunt – we called her *Tiotya Dunya*, with her daughter Marusya. She also had a son, Mikowai, who was in the army. And the daughter had a baby. And we lived with *Tiotya Dunya* for three and a half years and never did I transgress into her room. She had to go through our room to go through work. And she was a wonderful interpreter of dreams. So every morning when she went to work, I said, '*Tiotya Dunya,* I had such a dream today, what does it mean?', and she told us. But she was the salt of the earth and she couldn't read or write. She was just a washerwoman. Now the sad thing was that the daughter had a baby, and she had to work. And she had to take this baby on the way to work to the crèche. Except when the baby was ill, when she couldn't take it there. We would have taken care of it, but she would never let us. Eventually, the baby died. So for three and a half years we were living there. And winter turned to summer. And summer is exceptionally hot, it's just like equatorial Africa, it's very, very hot. And it's very unusual, because when you look up you see the snow-covered mountain, Pamir Mountain, the top is covered in snow, on four sides of the town. But where you are it's very hot. And the town itself was quite a big town. And it was the old town and the new town. We lived, most people lived in the new town and it had furry white serra firs and on each side of the serra fir was what you have in those Uzebekan towns called an arek, which was a channel with water and the Uzbekans went in with a bucket and used to toss water either side. And then of course there was the old town which had a proper *souk* where you could get anything. Spices, you know, people were just sitting on the ground selling umpteen coloured spices. And then there were huge vehicles, carts, which they called *arba*, which was just a platform on two huge wheels. And they had some, like basketing, all the way around, and they were filled with melons, watermelons. And you could buy some milk in the market. But the milk was being highly watered down and therefore anybody coming with a jug, not a jug, they were tins, tin containers of milk, had to have a viscometer put in to see that it hasn't been watered down too much. If you needed some fuel you could buy some chopped wood and an Uzbek would carry it home for you, and he would always say half in Uzbek and half in Russian, '*Курсак пустол*.' 'My stomach is empty.', so you had to give him some bread at the end of it. And then we had to learn some words of Russian, of Uzbekan, just to make ourselves understood in the market, because the women wore purdah, not black, grey. All you could see is the eyes.

And all those houses were just walls, mud walls. And once we were looking for accommodation, we just went in and the men got things thrown at them because there were only women inside it and they weren't supposed to be there. And those houses were very primitive: they had no floors, they had a hole in the roof and something burning wood in the middle and the smoke went up. We didn't have anything to cook on, and what you cooked on was what we made, was called a *mangalka*, which is basically a tin bucket where you cut a little door at the bottom and line it with bricks. And you burn your fuel, which was wood, and that generated the heat to cook. We were very poor, we didn't have anything to cook, and

Tape 3: 5 minutes 50 seconds

what really kept us going that summer was a tree in our backyard, which was a mulberry tree, which is very, very sweet. And we used to gather the mulberries and that kept us going. You could also get a lot of sugar beet which also had sweet things. The sheep in Uzbekistan are very interesting. They've got a thing at the back called the *kurdyuk*, which is full of fat. Of course we didn't have the money or anything like that. Now, one thing you could buy in the market – which will probably revolt you – was to buy congealed blood, but it was a good source of protein. And you could buy some sour milk, and something called *katyk*, which was something like, well, I don't know, something like sour cream or Devon cream, something like that. And there were lots of tomatoes and things like that. I also forgot to mention that while I was in Siberia I got a very bad attack of malaria and I was very ill. You were alright during the day, but at dusk you get very high temperature and all your limbs ache and then you shake. But I got it there. And it went. But a lot of people in Kokand got the tropical malaria which was much, much worse. And of the 73 people who came down with us, most of them, more than half of them died in Kokand because of the malaria, because of very dreadful skin diseases where you couldn't stop scratching, because of typhus and typhoid and the most long list of amoeba you can imagine which gave you dysentery. And people were so exhausted and there was nothing left to barter with. And half of those people died in Uzbekistan. We were now in the summer of 1942.

RL: What were you doing?

BK: I was desperate to go to school. And I'd finished what you call the 7th class of school, but then I had no money and I had somehow to earn, get some money. And the town we were in had a very good technical college, which was a petroleum college, training people to exploit oil fields. And the advantage of this was that you not only got an education, but you also got a stipendium, which gave you some money to live on. But you had to subscribe for one month stipendium for war bonds, whether you liked it or not. You didn't have to subscribe, they took it away anyway. And I got a very good education, really very good education. We really got a very good education. And when I say that, you know, I've been through a lot of educational establishments since, both in Poland and in England, and it always stood me in very good stead. And my Russian was excellent, I mean there are some letters in Russian which don't sound, which is a hard silent and a soft silent. We once did a dictation and I was the only one who got it right. On the other side, I was a very great naïve girl, because we had to write an essay in Russian, and I wrote what happened to us in Siberia. And the teacher said, 'Don't show it to anybody!' You see, I didn't know, I didn't understand. By that time the Mendeleyew Institute of Chemistry from Moscow was evacuated into Kokand and they had the building during the day and we had the building during the afternoon. And there is one picture of me in that school in that class. And a particular course that I was taking was the installation of instruments and remote control instruments in refineries, in oil fields, that sort of thing. And we had, we learnt an awful lot: we learnt

hydrostatics, we learnt kinetics, we learnt everything, absolutely everything, and it was very good. Our teachers, some of them were Uzbek, some of them were Russians, some of them were Koreans, and some of them were also detainees. I mean they were just sent there for some dreadful transgressions, like one of our very good teachers who in the 1930s was sent as a delegate on a conference to Denmark and of course when he came back he was no longer politically reliable, so he was sent there. And one of our teachers called Pogrowsky, he was a real gentleman, and he was teaching us how to crack petroleum, how to crack coke to make petroleum. And he had a 1906 very good gabardine from London, he was telling us all about London fogs at the time. So we really had very good teachers. Of course the director of the

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establishment was an Uzbek, because he usually gave the native population a chance to take up these things. And you didn't have a knife or fork or anything at all, because people there mostly eat like they eat in the east, by sitting on the floor and eating with their fingers. So if any people came, Europeans, they used to borrow it. And a lot of teachers who taught us were teachers from the Mendeleyew Institute in Moscow, so we really had very good people. But we couldn't always learn because there was a shop where we got our provisions, and if there was a delivery of anything, bread, whatever, we had to go and get our food, never mind the lessons, because there was absolutely nothing else we could do.

RL: How did you get on with everybody?

BK: As best I could. I wasn't perhaps as rough-, I was very innocent. If I think back, we were mostly girls except one very nice young man called Boris Zimgorod. He was very good looking, but he just happened in our class because he didn't make it into the next class. And the next thing we knew he left school and went into spy college! And I mean, those girls, they were very-, they went to parties and things. I didn't mix with them, I wasn't that sophisticated. No, I got on very well. We also had a very good looking head of the Komsomol Party, Yuri, blond, I think powdered, and he disappeared with lots of girls in his office, trying to put them politically correct, you know. A lot went on there, but we survived.

RL: Were you the only Jewish student?

BK: Oh yes. In fact, none of the people, you know, like my generation, there were others, nobody learnt, nobody went to school, I was really very unique. I can't think of anybody else that I met before or since went through the education system. Most people just prevaricated, 'It was going to end one day and we are going to take up the strings from there.' But I couldn't.

RL: Did they know you were Jewish?

BK: Of course! But I mean, maybe they didn't, because there were so many people from all over the place. It wasn't an issue because there were people from all over the place. And we didn't know when the Jewish holidays were, there was absolutely no way of telling. But in the old town, they had some very nice mosques which were turned into warehouses, there was nothing there. And once in a while there was a park, where people, generals, or some high-ranking officers came, and they were giving talks about the war because there weren't even newspapers. The only newspaper that you could have was those plastered to the walls, but we had such a struggle to survive that there wouldn't have been time for that. And that's when my knitting became handy because I had to earn some money. So in the morning I might have

gone to the market, to the shop with my mother and my aunt to earn some living, and in the afternoon I went to school. And in between I had to knit to make garments for people, which was rather difficult because there was no yarn. So the only thing, people had old-fashioned pullovers which were cut from a piece and every row that you pulled out had to be knotted on to the next row, and we made some very nice things. And it was very hot. Summer was dreadfully hot. And just to sleep, we had to sleep with the door open out on the step, which was rather dangerous because there were scorpions everywhere and you found them in your bed, you found them in your pockets, and my poor grandmother got bitten by one, which was excruciatingly painful for about 12 hours.

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And somehow, one night someone climbed over us and walked away with all the dresses, materials that my mother was sowing. But the people were most understanding and they didn't hold it to us. But even then, it was such a struggle to make a dress. My mother had to say, 'Look, I have to wash it, so can you give me a little bit of soap, or can you give me a little bit of charcoal, so I can get enough charcoal that I can iron it out?' So that's how we really survived. And on a Sunday we used to go for a very long-, it was miles and miles, into the market into the old town. And I had two jars and I used to buy this Devonshire cream called *katyk*, and I had a net basket where I tried to steady myself, steady those things in the basket. Somebody knocked into me and they said, 'Look, you haven't got it anymore.' They were absolutely accomplished pickpockets! My uncle, we used to go and stand in the queue for bread, he always had his money in a black glove that he wore. And people said, 'Your poor husband, what's wrong with his hand?' Of course there was nothing wrong, you really had to be very, very careful not to be mugged.

RL: Did your stepfather work?

BK: My stepfather worked in an office somewhere, I never found out exactly where. We all did what we could because it was so terribly difficult. There was no water, for example, there were artisan springs, and they were about maybe two or three miles, you had to carry a bucket of water. So I mean washing was very difficult. And if you wanted to wash really well, which only happened once in a while, you went to what they call a *banya*, which is like a sauna, but you had to wait for the right day and the right time, you know, all this. But that was time-consuming and you didn't have the time to consume. And what actually started me on my knitting was that there were a lot of women who were Spanish, who came after the Civil War in Spain. They came to Russia, which was a-, they were communists, they came to Russia. And of course when the war started they came to Uzbekistan. And one of those women, I think she was a student, she brought me a cardigan which was half knitted and she said, 'Finish it for me.' And it was a pattern I had never seen before, I wasn't very accomplished then, and I learnt, you know, and I really did that. But had I just gone to this Petroleum Institute, after two or three years, I would have qualified, and then I would have been sent God knows where to an oilfield, to Chechnya, to anywhere! I mean you had to go where they sent you. And I was absolutely desperate to go to university, but our education was only what they called *sjemy letka*, seven years. So you had to get a certificate, just like a GCSE, and for that I had to go to evening school. So I had to do all that as well. But in between I got my first boyfriend who I still see occasionally. He's still living in Israel and he married a girl called Berta! He married before we did. And he used to take me sometimes to go dancing and we sometimes saw shows. It was very hard to get any shoes, for example, and there were people, mostly refugees, who learnt to make boots for people. But they looked wonderful when you bought them and they just disintegrated, you couldn't just wear them,

they were made of paper! It was really very, very hard. When you went to the market in the old town, it was very picturesque: people, little boys going around and they used to sing *'Malamusdaki sawitnawoda'* which means in Uzbekan 'cold water', and you could buy cold water. And it was interesting, I mean if you think back of it, it was a real Cooks tour, but when you are in the middle of it, it was very hard. And when you were a military family and your husband was in the army, there were some soup kitchens where you could go and collect one hot meal. And you had what we used to call in Polish *menashki,* which were just like the Tefal cookers you get now, but small. You've got three or four tiers and you carried it along and people used to come and get it away from you and eat it up or spill it. And the same when you stood in a queue to get your bread, somebody came and ate it up before you could, so I

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mean you had to have your wits about you. And because you stood in the queue for hours and hours and hours and a lot of Uzbek women stood there too, you were absolutely infested with lice, which was very dangerous, because we were living by that time in *Tiotya Dunya's* room. There were six of us, my aunt, uncle and grandmother, my stepfather, myself and my mother. And we had no beds or anything, we had orange boxes, whatever we had went into those orange boxes and we slept on top. And one night I was sleeping on the wall – after the scorpion and after our burglary, I was sleeping on the wall, on the table – when suddenly I could feel somebody was outside, behind my head. And I must have cried out and *Tiotya Dunya* must have thought she heard me and she said, *'Wstawai*, Mikowai*!',* meaning 'Get up, Mikowai!' And my uncle, who was very German, he said, 'Who is Mikowai? Who is Mikowai?' So, you know, there were the lighter moments, too. My aunt, unfortunately, contracted typhus. And because we were in such close proximity, I mean the chances were that we were all going to get it. And she lost all her hair because she always shaved her hair, but she survived. And none of us got it. So that was quite good-

RL: We just had a little pause there to adjust the lighting. So you were telling me about your aunt who caught typhus.

BK: Yes, my aunt got typhus, but she survived. And unfortunately, my grandmother was going from bad to worse. And one day, when my mother was walking the streets in Kokand, she came across one of my cousins. Actually, the cousin whose parents took me in at the time of the pogrom. And she went through a similar process, but she had been married and she was working in the local isolation hospital as a nurse. And another doctor from our part of the country, who was my husband's sister's generation, a good friend, he was working in the same hospital. And at night, on the way home from the hospital, he often used to come and drop in and examine us all, because by that time we were all terribly, terribly ill. But of course we had no electric lights or anything like that. The only lighting we had is what they call a *kotylka,* which is just a little container filled with oil with a wick. And later somebody made a great improvement by cutting the bottom off bottles and putting it in as a chimney, so it was more or less a lamp, which was a lot better. He used to come, and his name was Manek Bresznow and he's still alive, I tell you about him in a moment. Anyhow, he used to come and see to us. And there was also a Russian doctor who used to come in. And if we didn't have money to buy the medicines, he gave us the money! And one day I queued for hours and hours in the hospital to get pomegranate powder, little sachets of pomegranate powder for dysentery. Only they used pomegranate skin to grind it down and then they packed it in pieces of newspaper, just like the Russians roll their cigarettes in newspaper, that was the only thing available there. And things were happening, things were happening in the world. By that time it was 1942 and all this time it was always touch and go whether we shall have enough grain

to last the winter. And a lot of the grain was being infested by rats and a lot of people got very bad jaundice from contamination. But then things started-, even to our part of the world, started to percolate, that there was Stalingrad and things were happening. And things were getting a little bit better, but they didn't really. 1943 came, and just to make it more bearable we used to take sheets and soak them in the precious water which we had to carry from the artisan wells and hang it on the window just to get the evaporation to lower the temperature. It was really very, very hot. But by 1942 something very unpleasant was happening, because now the Poles were the allies of the Russians, the Polish Army was being collected, gathered in a town called Yangiyul near Tashkent. And in pre-war Poland there were quite a few

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officers, Jewish officers in that army. And those people were being dismissed of the army as being unfit, whereas nuns or anybody who was not Jewish was put into uniform and declared fit. And echelons came and took those people out of Russia. And this is the army which ended eventually in Scotland; they went through Iran into Palestine and eventually a lot of them died in Monte Casino, and some of them eventually landed in Scotland. As it happened, my husband's brother was one of the lucky orphans who went there. My husband couldn't have gone because he was dreadfully ill with dysentery and diphtheria and kidney disease, that for six months he couldn't walk because he was so weak. Anyhow, he went, and he told of some dreadful stories about Jewish children who got onto this transport being thrown into the Caspian Sea, because they didn't want them and they drowned there. And eventually, they did come into Israel and that's where my husband's brother stayed, with lots of other people. His wife was one of those people on this transport.

RL: Was that the same transport as the one that was called the 'Teherani'?

BK: It could be, I don't know. Anyhow, a lot of people went out of Poland, er, Russia, but they were mostly Poles, not Jews. And people heard about it all over and they sold the last of their belongings to get to those assembly points. And the last train went and a lot of people were left behind and there was nothing for them to live. And there were doctors, some of them Jewish doctors, who were selling them narcotics to commit suicide because there was just nothing, they just couldn't survive anymore. You know, you get very weary, and a lot of people at that time converted to Catholicism and who wore great big crosses just to show that they really weren't Jewish, that they had nothing to do with Jews, they just wanted to prove they were Catholics, just to get out of the country. So that was 1942. And that was Yangiyul, and the last transport left and people were left behind. Now, something else was happening. At this time, the tide of the war has changed and people were-, the Russian Army were moving on, from Stalingrad to Kursk towards Berlin. I forgot to mention that when we were in Kokand, one of the sons of Dr Rosenberg, Henry, who was a couple of years older than I, we spent hours in the summer under the mulberry tree, and I was teaching him all I've ever learnt about atomic theory and Darwin and palaeontology, and he learnt. He was also interested in learning. And unfortunately, he came from a town called Przemysl, which was right on the border, it was in the Russian zone. Actually, the town was divided, and he was in the Russian zone, and he got conscripted into the Russian Army. And he took part in the advance on Berlin, and he used to write letters, and it was just incredible how he was brainwashed, he was completely taken in by all the propaganda of the Russian machine. I don't know what happened to him, but after Siberia we met quite frequently in Kokand. Now, another thing was happening then. There was a Polish writer called Wanda Wasilewska, she was a Communist writer before the war, quite well-known. But somehow, between the years,

she forgot her Polish and she wrote a book called *Raduka* or *Tecza* in Polish, which means a 'rainbow'. And it was written in Polish, but such bad Polish, you could-, the words weren't really-, it was written just like an amateur. But she was appointed the head of a political movement called *'Swjosec Polski Patriotov'* which means a 'Society of Polish Patriots'. And this Wanda Wasilewska army, they made themselves into an army and started advancing to Poland. Everybody wanted to do something to get out, to do something tangible. And one of those people who went there was my husband actually, he went into this army, too, but another person who went was my stepfather. And he had just advanced with this army and they entered Warsaw, and you probably heard about the Warsaw Ghetto and you probably heard about the uprising? The Poles had an uprising in Warsaw and the Russians were on the other side of the Wystula River, trying not to advance so that they would lose and then they

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would have an easier time trying to take over Poland. But things were moving and 1944 ground to an end and eventually 1945 came. And my stepfather actually managed to advance with the army and come into our hometown of Bielsko-Biała. And I don't know exactly what he did in the army, but he achieved something that I've never heard anybody else achieve: he managed to come all the way from my hometown back into Kokand. And he knew that my mother wouldn't go without her sister and my uncle, so he got permits for all of us to go. And by that time it was May 1945, and we were the first family in Kokand-, there were quite a few Jews amongst the refugees, who were actually leaving to go home. And the whole town came to see us off. And it was a very difficult journey because we had, for example, something like a rucksack and in it we had a pillow and as we scrambled to get onto the train somebody slashed the rucksack and the feathers were going everywhere! You had to have your wits about you. But we got on actually on 2 May [sic] and we ended up in Tashkent, which wasn't very far from Kokand to Tashkent. And we waited all day for the night train to Moscow. And for about five days-, we were told it was an army train, and everybody talked the war is going to end next week, next month, next year – everybody was speculating and there was no news, no radio. And we just kept buying our onions or whatever it was on the way. And it was very interesting because, well, unfortunately it hardly exists now, there is the Aral Sea and the two river tributaries, the Amudar'ya and Syrdar'ya. And in one place there was no salt and people just got an awful lot of buckets and buckets of salt and the train was very heavy because of all the salt. And in the next town they sold all the salt, you know, at the price of gold, because there was no salt. It was such a bad distribution of anything in Russia that you could do it. So we moved there and we just talked all this time until on a Tuesday afternoon, we arrived in Moscow. And we had to change trains to go to the Kiev Station. And it rained and I was just about to stop, a tram went by, and I was just about to step into the road when someone said, 'You know, the war is over!' And there we were, on the Tuesday, in Moscow, the war was over. And the next train to Kiev wasn't due for about three or four days, if we could get on it at all, so we tried to get somewhere to stay the night. It was very exciting, because there were lots of rockets going up and things, all night long, because the end of the war has come. And we were very afraid to sleep anywhere because we thought they were going to kill us, you know. There were so many people-. I remember we found an axe somewhere in that house and put it under our pillow, just in case. But nothing happened. And the next day we went to the Red Square. And it was a very cold day and it was snowing a little. And there was the Kremlin and some bustling there. They were filming how the population rejoices. And if you think of, I don't know if you've been to Moscow, but if you think how huge this Red Square is and there were maybe 200 people on it. And they were filming on a lorry, and then the lorry moved to a different location with a different background and everybody moved there and cheered, it was the end of the war! And then we got very hungry. I don't know what my

stepfather's position was in the army, but he had an exceedingly good coat, military coat. And he had no insignia on it because he was only a private. But people looked at him and everybody saluted him because they thought he was so highly placed that he doesn't need any insignia. And then it was a public holiday, everything was closed anyway, so we went to one restaurant no. 45 and we were queuing and we explained that we wanted to have a meal. And they said yes and we sat down, there were three of us. And another person came and said, 'Can we sit here?', I said, 'By all means, sit down.' And the cashier came, 'You mustn't sit with those people, they are foreigners.' And they went off, and that was that day. And then the next day we went and had a look at the very famous store called GUM, which is the only big *магазин*,(magasine) where they sold everything. And it was 10 o'clock before they opened. And there were militiamen on white horses going around. And when they opened it, you could have bought things cheaper in the market, everything was just such bad quality and

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such high prices. Maybe if you had a local residence pass you might have got something. But there were lots of shops which had things to sell, but you couldn't get in because there was an old babushka asking for the right pass, and if you didn't have it, well, you didn't have it. And just to go back a little, while I was still a student at the Petroleum Institute, one year we were sent to the other side of Tashkent, to a place called Shirshik, for practice. We were going to work in the factories. Of course I wouldn't be let in because I was a foreigner. So they didn't let me in and I had to come back. And it was a dreadful town which wasn't planned at all and it was completely polluted and houses were just in every possible direction. And I had a friend, she was Estonian, she used to live in Kokand and she lived in Tashkent, and I decided I was going to visit her. And I got on a tram and I looked out and there she was walking. So I thought, 'Well, if I don't get off the tram now I'll miss her.' and I fell off the tram! And when she saw me I was in a very sorry state. But that's how a good friend started the speech at my son's barmitzvah, the day that I fell off the tram in Tashkent! Anyhow, I went back to the city, and we were in Moscow now, waiting to go to Kiev. And it was very interesting seeing the underground in Moscow, which is really something to see; which was just like palaces, with all kinds of statues, very elegant, beautiful lighting, every station different. And there was the rejoicing that the war was really over and we got to the station in time for the train. But of course everybody wanted to get onto the train, and my mother somehow managed to bribe the officials with some soap, so we were let on the train before it came into the station. And eventually the train was full; it was so full that a lot of people had to be on the outside with all their belongings. And it was in the middle of the night when the train slowed down, going up a hill, and there were terrific screams, people from outside got on the train and started throwing out their belongings while the train went on. And we got to Kiev and on Sunday-. Sunday, Monday, I don't know for how long, we were in the station and everybody was just camping out in the station until we got eventually a train, another military train, between Kiev to Poland. And we crossed the border in Pshemishel. And this time it wasn't an officers' train, it was a conscripted-, soldiers' train. And it was a dreadful night when they were all drinking and all being very rowdy. And we crossed into Poland and I think it took us about ten minutes when we knew that we couldn't possibly stay in Poland, we'll have to move on somehow. The next day about lunchtime we arrived in Bielsko. It had just been raining and we got off in the station. And somebody asked me how to go to the town hall and I told them, as if nothing had ever happened! You know, nothing ever happened in between! It was five and a half years and there it was. So we got back to Poland and we had nowhere to go. I mean our house was still there, but of course we had to prove that it was ours. And it was occupied, and our flat downstairs was made into offices. I've never entered the flat, but by that time, you can't imagine what we looked like after two weeks of this journey! I was

completely dishevelled and dirty and I had a very high temperature, with a recurrence of malaria. You see, all the time I was in Uzbekistan I didn't have it, but it came back just then. So my mother helped, got me into the flat of what they now called ethnic Germans, 'Volksdeutsche'. And those people put me on a mattress, on a settee, but the next day they were being thrown out of there too, so they took the mattress, put me on the floor. And I still had a very high temperature, lying there, very dirty, delirious, half delirious, when this lady came in and said, 'There is somebody to see you.' And a sergeant came in, a Polish sergeant. And these people came back, there was the Jewish community [who] had a list of people who came back. And as I said before, all of the girls in our family were called Bertas, and three of us were called Berta Bienenstock. And the cousin who we've met in Kokand, she was called Berta Bienenstock, and she was my husband's contemporary. And he saw her name and came to see her, because he was a sergeant, and he found me instead. And that's how I've met him,

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in a most dreadful situation. And then after a while I got better and we found a flat. And we got some of our furniture back from before the war. And our piano was in the state theatre, confiscated. And I wanted to go to university. And at that time, my mother and stepfather went to the newly annexed territories in Germany to find my stepfather's sister who was a doctor in a camp. We knew she was in a camp, we knew she was alive, and I decided that was the right time for me to go to Krakow and see if I can get a place in the Jagiellonski University. So I thought things were settled, but of course they were not and the trains weren't running and I got to Krakow with a very high temperature again. And I had nowhere to stay and again malaria. And there was an orthodox family who let me sleep on the floor that day, and I went to see the people in the university. And they said, 'Well, if you want to go to university, you've got to show us a Polish Matura, a Polish certificate.' By that time I had a Russian certificate from my evening classes. So I decided there's nothing to do but get home, I was pretty ill. And at the night I was sleeping on a bench in some station, and I had no ticket, and a complete stranger came, and I gave him the money to get me a ticket and he did! He came back and he got me a ticket. And I got back home and I was very, very ill. And the doctor came to see me and it was the same doctor who looked after me when I was about five years old, Dr Reach. And all this time, there was still a lot of shooting going on outside; it was only May 1945. So things started settling down. Well, I'd met my husband then and there was a very nice orphanage, Jewish orphanage which housed the children from [the] concentration camp in town. And people worked there, and I went to school in the evening and during the day I got a job in the telephone exchange. And one day our supervisor, who was a very nice man, came and said, 'Look, we've got to give you an examination to see if you can read and write Polish.' And he said to me, 'Don't you worry, I know your story, I know you grew up in Russia, I don't expect too much of you.' So he gave us this examination and I was the only one who could read and write properly in Polish. So I was given the job of starting a telephone directory, because there was nothing, there was absolutely nothing, no telephones, nothing at all. So I had to start doing it. And I was working in the exchange in the main post office, where they had an unexploded bomb in the basement. And we often worked at night, hoping it wouldn't go off, and it didn't. It was just opposite the theatre in our town, and hopefully, you know, it didn't. And I remember working there on the day they dropped the bomb on 6 August on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And two of my school friends, a girl called Lisa Meisels and her sister Greta, were in concentration camps in a very bad condition. And they came home because they wanted to see if any of their family survived. And they went to their house. […] They sat on the doorstep and somebody said, 'Why are you crying?', they said, 'Because we used to live here.' And they said, 'Your mother is upstairs.' So they survived and I think they live in Israel now.

RL: How had their mother survived?

BK: In another camp, I don't know. They were quite good friends, and by that time I was going 18, 19, and I was getting my Polish Matura. And I got all my Polish qualifications, and three weeks later, there was a Dr Schönfeld, Rabbi Schönfeld, Salomon Schönfeld, you must have heard of, and he came-. Before the war he got the Kindertransports out-, a lot of children. And he came to Poland to try and do the same. And my stepfather then worked in a Jewish community and heard about him. So he put my name on the list and I went to Warsaw, waiting to get a transport to go to England. And it took about a fortnight and Warsaw was just unbelievable, I mean, there was just not a single building intact. And sometimes you saw the ruins and people were living on the fifth floor, it was very, very bad. And he got us accommodated in the back room of some synagogue and then went off to Gdynia, the Polish

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port, to charter a boat. As it happens it was a Swedish boat called […] and he brought us all and we started our journey. We started our journey from Gdynia through Göteburg, Skagerrak, Kattegat and he tried to teach us some English. He taught us to think of Solomon had a thousand wives, and things like that, it took about five, six days. And we were on the first of three transports. He went twice more and got some other children out.

RL: Can I just ask you a little bit about life back in Poland before you left? How many returned to the town?

BK: Oh, quite a few, quite a few.

RL: And how did the Poles react to that?

BK: Well, when our concierge saw us, that we are still alive, 'You shouldn't be.', that sort of thing. There was a lot of anti-Semitism, and we knew we couldn't stay. It was just a stop, just a transit point, we knew we couldn't stay. And soon after we left, there were these dreadful pogroms in Kielce and there was a lot of that going on. But we were fairly young, and we used to meet with my husband and other young people and we used to go dancing. And we had a nice time between us. I mean it was such a relief to what went on before. But we knew it wasn't for long.

RL: Did your mother and grandmother, aunt and uncle stay behind?

BK: No, no. My grandmother died in Kokand. She died in 1942 and she's buried in the Jewish cemetery. There were a lot of Bukharian Jews there. And they had a Jewish cemetery and we left the money for the upkeep of the grave, but I don't think it-, it's not a place you can go back to easily. My uncle and aunt came with us because my stepfather managed to get us all out. And we had a very nice flat in town, and eventually, after I got better from this malaria, eventually we proved that the house was ours – to no avail because it got confiscated in the end again by the Poles. But we've managed and I used to work in the post office and go to the Polish gymnasium. And then I continued music, playing the piano. Not that I was ever any good, but I enjoyed doing it. And it was bearable, but it was only a question of how much longer can we stay and where can we go. And when Rabbi Schönfeld came, then that was an opportunity to go. And my aunt who went to work as a domestic for this Scottish lord in Ayr, she was a contact point. It was very strange, because there wasn't a building in Warsaw left

except one, which was the English Embassy. All the embassies were-, English and American Embassy. And Dr Schönfeld got us all in there and he used to hand out little pieces of paper, 'This is the name of your relative and this is the name of your relative.' You know, we all had to have relatives there who were inviting us – which was fictitious – but that was the story then. And we arrived on a Friday morning about 11 o'clock in the Port of London, Tower Bridge opened up and we disembarked into Pickled Herring Street in Bermondsey opposite the Tower, which was very interesting. And then they took us, I think it must have been Norwood somewhere in North London, and all this time when Rabbi Schönfeld tried to teach us all those songs, he took a table in the room and put down '86 Amhurst Road', which was his office, so we had a contact point when we needed something or got lost, you know, we knew where go. So they took us somewhere and gave us some lunch. And I think the staff were very nervous, because they were showing us how to stack dishes; they wanted to do something to make us feel-. Anyhow, we had this lunch and then some taxi came and took me to my aunt's place, which was in Plaistow in East London. Only she didn't know I was

Tape 3: 50 minutes 45 seconds

coming and there was nobody home. Well, eventually she did come and I stayed with her. But I didn't know it, and I don't think my mother knew it, but my aunt was a very far advanced schizophrenic. And I had a very, very difficult time with her. She was a very kind person, but she was really very ill. By that time, her husband whom she married had left her and he went to Czechoslovakia. We had a very difficult time, but I was determined and I was going to go-

RL: How many children were in the group that Schönfeld brought over with you?

BK: I think, I mean thinking back, perhaps 102. Some boys were very, very orthodox; some boys were all kinds of street traders with anything that went. But it was alright. We were all terribly seasick the first day, because we got lots of salted butter we weren't used to eating. But it was alright, it was a good journey. We ended up in London and there we were. And they were the first impressions of London.

RL: Did you leave your mother and aunt and uncle and stepfather behind?

BK: Yes, yes. That was the only opportunity to get out, as an orphan, allegedly. You had to be an orphan and you had to go to a relative. And I wanted to go to university. And of course I had no money, I had nobody to support, but I was going to go to university. And I had the Russian Matura and certificate of secondary education; I had the Polish one, but of course no good for London University. So I arrived on 29 March 1946, and by December I took an entrance examination for foreign students. I've learnt-, I couldn't speak English either, so by that I had learnt enough to pass an examination as an entrance.

RL: How did you learn? Can you sort of take me through those first few months?

BK: It was very interesting. The first time I was taken to a class in college, I went to a chemistry class. And the lecturer came to me, and I had a book, and he took my pencil and he wrote in 'Lab-oratory 1.30', which means laboratory 4.30. And he was a very great friend afterwards, he did a lot for me. He was called Ralph Bromley, and he and his wife Gwyneth had no children. And they were very-, you see, I wanted to go to university, and eventually I got a place at university, but I didn't have any money to buy books. And he had one of his ex-students who went into the army for three years, so he wrote to him, could I borrow his books, which he let me have. Unfortunately, the course was made into a four-year course, but he still

let me have the books then. But the college was a little bit embarrassed, it was only a college, it was affiliated, it wasn't one of the colleges of the University. It was a West Ham Municipal College, which is now part of Newham College in Stratford, East London. And you know, we were living in Plaistow. And when the college learnt, I don't know how they learnt about my story, they refused to take any money, no top-up fees, nothing like that. And I got a maintenance grant from HIAS, an American refugee organisation, £2 a week, and that had to cover everything, and even my aunt, because I had to look after her in the end rather than she look after me. It was difficult. But after three years, Mr Bromley got me a job at Tate & Lyle Sugar Factory as a chemist.

RL: So were you at the West Ham Municipal College for three years?

BK: I was there for three years full-time. And then I got the job for the fourth year as a

Tape 3: 54 minutes 59 seconds

chemist. And when I graduated, the people at Tate & Lyle were so delighted, they rewarded me with £20, I couldn't understand why. But they were very good. And then I continued part-time. And after four years I got an honours degree in chemistry and maths at London University. And to go back a little, in 1947, my first winter in England was a very cold winter, and there was no fuel. And it was so cold in college we had to go to the physics lab and sit around Bunsen burners to learn. And that's where I met a very good friend of mine now, who was Jurek Hertzberg. He got a doctorate in mathematics; he had a very mathematical mind. And we were lifelong friends. And all that summer, when I had to take my A-Levels, he came to England with a transport of children through Montefiore, not the Bishop Montefiore, the Jewish organisation. And some of them did very well, some became lecturers actually. A boy from our town, Kurt Klapholz, he became a lecturer. And some were architects, they all did very well. And Jurek got a doctorate in mathematics, they all did very well. But that first summer, he used to travel all this time, all this way to East London to teach me maths for my exams. And one day when he was there, somebody came with a huge box of red roses, and Jurek said, 'You know, if I lived a hundred years, it would never occur to me to send red roses to anybody.' And it was my husband, who by that time he was in Italy, and he knew that I had graduated and he sent me red roses in 1951. And the only other red roses were last week when our children sent us some for our 52nd wedding anniversary. Anyhow, Jurek was the only old friend really who came to our wedding because we didn't have a minyan, we didn't know anybody when we got married.

So that was being a student. And I worked at Tate & Lyle in Silvertown. And just outside our windows, our canteen windows were ships coming into the London Port. And sometimes we saw very like Eva Peron's ship, which was a very nice one, there were also three ships called Rangitiki, Rangitata and Rangitani, which had smallpox on it with the black flag flying, obviously they were quarantined. And I worked there for quite a number of years-

RL: This film is about to stop, so we just-

BK: Have we run out of-

RL: No!

Tape 3: 58 minutes 0 seconds

TAPE 4
Tape 4: 0 minute 3 seconds

RL: We are interviewing Berta Klipstein, it's Tape 4. Just to ask you really, what were your first impressions of England and London, what did you think of it?

BK: Very strange, and very disappointing in a way, because I was taken along the oldest parts of East London and everything looked very dirty, everything very old-fashioned. I expected something more modern. So it was very strange, the next morning, the first morning I woke up was incredibly noisy, all the traffic which I hadn't been used to. And after that, well, I got used to what there was.

RL: What about the houses?

Tape 4: 0 minute 53 seconds

BK: Well, my aunt lived in an apartment house in East London opposite a pub. And it wasn't a nice neighbourhood at all. But that was the only place we had, so there it was. No, it wasn't a nice part.

RL: And did she have any children?

BK: No, of all my mother's siblings, she was the only one who had a child, none of the others had any children.

RL: And did she mind the fact that you wanted to continue your education?

BK: It didn't really impinge very much on her, she did what she wanted. She spent a lot of time in the cinema, I spent a lot of time in the cinema. We used to go for sixpence at a time. And I went to college. It was difficult because she was alone in the evening, and when I got home she wanted to talk and often I could only study in the bathroom, just for a bit of privacy. It wasn't easy for me, it wasn't easy at all.

RL: Did she cook for you?

BK: Yes, yes, we did what we could.

RL: And how soon after starting college did you get the grant?

BK: Oh, I had to go around begging here and there before I got those £2, it was very difficult for me. And I was very, very independent, I just wouldn't accept anything. For example, when I first came to England, some of the girls on the transports said that you need coupons for dresses and things, but you could go to the Marylebone Citizen's Advice Bureau, they would help you out. Well, I went and they asked me, 'How many slips have you got, how many bras have you got?' And I had no idea what she was talking and I said, 'None, none.' - 'Oh, you poor thing!' And they gave me coupons for this and that. But I had no money to buy it with. And my uncle came on leave and he gave me a cheque for £3 and I never cashed it because I wouldn't accept money from anybody. I never had those things. And I never really learnt to play very well, and I think our children suffered from that, because we've never actually learnt to play.

RL: How did you earn money in England at that point?

BK: I didn't earn money, I just went through college, you know, learning, and I didn't earn any money. I just worked my way through it until-. Well, in the holidays I worked with Tate & Lyle and then I got the permanent job in my fourth year, which was £3.50 a week. After an increase of 50p it was-, 46, 47, no, it must have been more, about 48, 49, that was the wage.

RL: Did you keep in touch with the others that had come on the same transport?

BK: Yes, we did, but they were so much better off and they lived in so much nicer parts of London. And I remember two of the girls who once came to see me in Plaistow and they saw that my conditions were pretty bad, they gave me a postal order for £3, and I never, never cashed it in. So it was difficult. But they did very well, some of those girls, financially; some of those girls were really well off.

Tape 4: 4 minutes 31 seconds

RL: Did you meet them socially?

BK: We met socially, but I was so-, none of them had to do what I did, none of them went to university. None of them had to work as hard as I did, so there wasn't very much time to do it. And then we lost touch afterwards.

RL: Did you have any further contact with Dr Rabbi Schönfeld?

BK: Oh yes. He married us eventually; I'll come to that. But interesting, something I haven't mentioned, there was a family called Dominitz in our hometown, and they lived on a ***колхос*** (Kohos) not far from Kokand. And their father and brother lived in London because they managed to escape before the war. And they got, my friend and her mother, passage to go to England. And the last night before their departure they spent in our little place on the Rosa Luxemburg at Aunty Dunya'**s** place. And it's very strange because years later I was at a wedding, and years later we met in Miami Beach! So, you know, it's all intertwined. Just the same as we met Dr Breschner in New York. We kept-, well, we knew of each other, and when there was an opportunity we did meet.

RL: How did you pick up the language?

BK: Yes, how do you learn a language you don't speak? Well, to begin with you don't understand anything. Then you understand a few words. Then it goes like a rewind on a video, very quickly, and you pick up every fiftieth word, and every twentieth word, and eventually you speak it. And you go on a bus and you ride on top and you read everything that comes to your notice and you speak it suddenly. Now, I've never learnt to speak English, I went to college straight away and I learnt the scientific jargon, not the language as such. We did have some English lessons as part of the general education, but it was only the scientific language.

RL: So how long had you been in England when you started college?

BK: Two weeks, three weeks, immediately.

RL: And you didn't speak-

BK: No. I mean, six months later I took the exam for foreign students and it was so silly because although you knew the answer to the question you didn't always understand the words. For example, I never came across the word 'integer', I didn't know it meant 'a whole number'. I mean I didn't know, so I couldn't answer the question. And in those days you had to do, in English, something called a précis. And they can't-, you know, you had to get the gist of some passage in the minimum number of words. And for example, you had something like 'hill', and I didn't know the word for 'hill', so I said 'little mountain', you know, things like that, which was two words instead of-. So you pick it up, it isn't that difficult. I mean I spoke German and Polish, and I spoke Russian, and my Russian was very good when I was in Russia. And then I learnt to speak English. But, after all those years, I still have an accent.

RL: How did you get on with the other girls on your course?

BK: There weren't any. I was the only girl. But strangely, there was a boy called Egon

Tape 4: 8 minutes 14 seconds

Fantes who was Czech and very blond and he was in Czechoslovakia during the war. And I always kept a little bit aloof of him because I thought he must have been a Nazi. As it turned out, he was Jewish. But I didn't know it, not until years later, not until he emigrated to Lima in Peru. And he came to see us in Bradford and we've met-, well, we've spoke in New York. But, no, we got on alright except I always found the boys very rude. I couldn't speak with them about football and they never said good morning. But, no, it was alright. And I was just focused, one thing and one thing only, was to get my degree somehow. You see, it was very difficult for me, because when I was growing up in Russia, there was no role models, there was absolutely nothing to say, 'Well, yes, I want to be this or that.' I was just very curious, and I wanted to have a lot of answers to the questions I wanted to know. That's how I came to go to university.

RL: So you were the only girl on that course?

BK: Well, in the beginning, in the first year, I think there were two or three others. And one had an incredible accomplishment, she said-, before one of the exams, she just made some biscuits. I wouldn't have known how to do it, you know. And years later when I was at college I had a boyfriend, somebody called Peter Wall, and he lived in Upminster. And he lived in the house, if you go to Upminster, towards Southend, towards the windmill, which was built in 1799, and one year his family invited me for Christmas. And as we said-, you know, they thought I couldn't speak English – by that time I was nearly graduating – so they all spoke very loudly to me and I was absolutely in tears by the end of the evening, when they were playing games, like passing a matchbox from nose to nose or playing Charades, and I mean it was just so stupid to me, I just didn't know what to do! But after we got married we got an income tax form from the income tax office with a little note at the bottom to say 'Many personal congratulations!' And Peter's father happened to be an income tax inspector, so he knew we had married. But no, I got on very well, I was a bit of a curiosity. You know, in this part of London particularly. And if you wanted to be a student you had to be better than the men. And by that time there were quite a few ex-servicemen and also some Polish ex-servicemen, so we got on. And the greatest preoccupation at the time was 'What good is it studying when they are going to drop the atom bomb?', because that was soon after it happened, so those were the preoccupations. Of course, some of the men said, 'You only go

to university because you want to catch a husband!', you know, you had all those things to battle against. But you fought for your corner.

RL: Did you join any kind of groups or societies?

BK: There wasn't, it was just a question of survival. You had to get your exams, so-. Oh, yes, we had dancing. During lunchtime we had concerts given by one very nice boy who looked to me very English, somebody called Bill Clarke, who was training to become a doctor to be a missionary. And he used to bring old clapped-out seventy-eights, which stopped every two minutes, and he played a symphony or whatever. Yes, we had it quite pleasant. And Mr and Mrs Bromley quite often invited us, and my aunt, to their house. And he was once going to a conference in Cambridge and took me along, which was interesting. And after he retired we've met them and he looked exactly like Malcolm Sergeant. And funnily he grew up next door to Anna Neagle. It's a small world, but they retired to a place called Hope Cove in Devon, near Kingsbridge, and we used to go and visit them, and his wife after he died.

Tape 4: 12 minutes 41 seconds

RL: Did you have any kind of Jewish life at this time?

BK: There was a Jewish society in London, which, I mean, University College, you know, the-. I went along once and nobody bothered about me; I was an unknown. I remember today the dress I wore, it was a very uneven hem. And it was very strange, nobody really paid much attention to me. Mrs Bromley once bought me a ticket to Covent Garden to see *Boris Godunow,* an opera which was very interesting. But I had no money, I had nothing to shine in. Yes, and I was knitting then, and I think one day, Mr and Mrs Bromley took us the see *The Pirates of Penzance.* And I was very elegant because I had beautiful angora top, knitted thing, and Mr Bromley said, 'All you'll ever need is a ball of wool to get dressed.' And he was right. I always, I need to, I really need to do things with my hands, to do something creative. Not that I need the product, but I need to do it.

RL: So were you knitting your own clothes at that stage?

BK: Always, always, since I was six years old, since my grandmother-. I mean the first pullover I knitted I grew out of before it was finished. But yes, I always had that. I'm no good at sowing at all, I'm very good at knitting.

RL: And you mentioned your marriage, when did you get married?

BK: What happened was that eventually in 1951 I got my degree and I continued working at Tate & Lyle, and they rewarded me with a £20 grant. Now, by that time, Zyga had left Poland. We've met, do you remember, after I had malaria, after I got home from Russia. And he, like us, went through the green border first into Czechoslovakia, and then with his mother over the Alps in winter into Salzburg, near Salzburg. And his sister married a doctor in Salzburg and Zyga and his mother went on with the Bricha, who helped them, the Jewish organisation, who helped them into Italy. And we were in correspondence all this time. And in 1951 I graduated and also became naturalised. And that's when I scraped together enough money to visit him in a place they lived in Merano in the Alps, in Alto Adige, on the Italian side of the Alps. And we've met on the Brenner Pass and that was a bit of a disaster because I wanted to look very nice and I had my hair permed. And the next day I went to work and I

combed it out and it looked like Afro, absolutely Afro! And I got a new coat, a red coat, and when I arrived in Merano and they had a sort of expat situation in a beautiful villa, playing Bridge. And there was a lady, Judith, with her two sons, and she said, 'You know, your girlfriend is a very nice girl, but I know of a very good hairdresser who can straighten her hair.' And of course the red coat was a complete disaster. But anyhow, I got there and we've met again and we had a fortnight in Merano. And we said, somehow we are going to get together and we decided we are going to get married. But during all this time you couldn't get permission to come to England because you had no documents. You see, he was a stateless person. So we went to a place called Gorizia near Triest to a commission. And we said if we don't get permission to come to England, then we are going to meet somewhere in a third country within a hundred days, three months, we put a limit of three months. And one day, we got the train, early morning train and we went towards Gorizia and then to Venice and we had a lovely time in Venice. We saw the sunrise over the Alps, pink mountains, it was wonderful. And we had a nice time in Venice and we went to Milan. And my husband used to live in Milan and he spoke very good Italian. And we went to visit some friends and it was very nice. But the time came, I had to go back. And Zyga's mother, who was a terrific cook, I mean, she was a gourmet cook, she did something I've never had since: she made a roast

Tape 4: 17 minutes 28 seconds

goose, wonderful! And she made some beautiful biscuits which I ate all before I came to the border, it was really very nice. And I got back to London and we were waiting for permission. I got back to London on 1 November and by that time Zyga tried to get some documents and he went toVenice when it was under water to get those documents. And then one day I get a telegram to say that 'Arriving London - whatever day - 18.50', but it didn't say how! It didn't say how. So I rang the airlines, there was only one train from the continent, it was Victoria 18.50. And it was New Year's Eve 1952 and he only got permission to stay for two weeks. And we didn't know what was going to happen. So we got a special licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury and we went to see Dr Schönfeld and he married us. He married us in London and I didn't have a dress. And the day before our marriage we went to Oxford Street and Zyga saw the dress in the window and we went in and they had it in the wrong size, but they had another one in another shop. And we got it and I did a little crochet cap which I put a little bit of veil in and some orange blossom. And we went to see a friend, a cousin of Zyga's whom he'd never met, whom we invited to the wedding, and my friend Jurek, who taught me all the maths, and we got a minyan of ten people who we didn't know. And we had a very nice wedding. And then we went to the Cornerhouse in Shaftesbury Avenue, Lion's Cornerhouse, for a meal, and straight from there to the Home Office to get an extension. And we got ticket no. 76 in the queue! We were exhausted by that time, it was 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Eventually we saw somebody in a backroom and he said, 'Yes, very sorry, all those things are for British-born wives, but you are not British-born and therefore I don't hold out much hope for your husband being allowed to stay here.' So we left it at that, they took all our documents away. And we had some pictures taken beforehand and we wanted to go on a honeymoon. But we didn't know where. So we went back to the East End and collected everything we had, I think two suitcases, and we went down to Waterloo. We didn't know where we were going. By that time it was about half past seven in the evening and we went to the ticket office and he went just down with his finger and he said, 'Bournemouth sounds a good place.' So the last train had left half an hour before and the next train didn't arrive until two in the morning, so that wasn't much of a proposition, so we looked again. And we said Brighton, never been to Brighton, so we had to change stations, went down to Victoria, got on the 9 o'clock train and arrived at 10 o'clock in Brighton, 3 January, middle of the winter. And we saw to bus drivers and we said, 'Can you recommend somewhere?', and he said, 'Well,

how much are you willing to pay?' – 'Anything, just to get us somewhere.' So he said I should try the Old Ship Hotel. So with these two big suitcases we trotted to the Old Ship Hotel, saw the receptionist and they said, 'We'd love to put you up tomorrow, but tonight we are having some conference and half of the place is being redecorated.', he said, 'I'd try the Grand Hotel.' So we took our things and we actually ended up in the Grand Hotel. And I don't know what the receptionist thought, a couple arriving at half past ten at night, you know, wanting to have a room! And they got us a room and it was a wonderful luxurious room and it cost us 25 shillings a night. It was a fortune! I mean, we didn't have any money.

All the money that Zyga brought to England went on our wedding ring. Six guineas and that was it and had nothing, but we spent one night at the Grand Hotel. And the next day we went along the front trying to find a place to stay. And we found a boarding house kept by a New Zealander and we stayed there two or three days, which was very nice, he was very kind. And we looked at the town and the only thing we bought was a couple of silver candlesticks which we use to this day, which were solid silver, because my husband, being a jeweller's son, wouldn't go for anything less than the nice candlesticks. And we had the first Friday night there. And on Monday morning we had to come back because it was more than a week now,

Tape 4: 22 minutes 38 seconds

you see, it was a week that was gone of the fortnight he was allowed to stay. And our proofs of the photographs came back, only they were of two ballerinas, it wasn't us. We got them eventually. But we came back – and nothing from the Home Office! And all this time I was working at Tate & Lyle. And eventually, through the Polish Army people, Zyga got a job in a factory, a plastics factory, extruding plastics and laying cement floors and things like that. And the conditions were that you gave them a month's salary for the privilege, you know, of getting you the job. And was it before or after, he got a night job in a weaving factory in Tottenham, weaving webbing for soldiers' rucksacks and things like that. So the first few weeks of our marriage I was working all day and he was working all night. So we met in the morning at 8 o'clock for breakfast and again in the evening when I got back from work and he went to work. And it was very, very hard. But time was moving on and the return document-, you see, the trouble was, they wouldn't give him any documents for England without having a return document to Italy. And the Italians wouldn't give him anything for more than six weeks. But the six weeks passed and nothing happened. And eventually five weeks passed and they let him stay. And eventually in due course he got naturalised and he never went back. And that was the beginning of our marriage.

And of course Zyga was a textile designer and he was in textiles. And those other jobs he had, weaving, there was no promotion, no nothing, I mean it was just a workman's job. So he went one day to Leeds to see-, you know, we weren't very conversant whether it was Leeds or Bradford, you know, they did say weaving and of course Leeds is the making up end he went to see people and Jewish people. And they said, 'Really, we can't help you, we've got family in Poland we would like to get out, we can't help you.' And he didn't get any work. So at second thought he said, well, he ordered the Yorkshire Post for a fortnight to be sent London and he came home. Because it was 1952 when there was a recession in the textile industry. So he went home and in due course we answered 18 advertisements, you know, with a stamped, addressed envelope. And they all came back except one, and it said-, 'Well, no job, recession, try again later.' And they all went into the basket except one, and it said, 'We would like to see you, if you go and see our representative in London, a Mr Paddy.' So Zyga went to see him and he said, 'This sounds very interesting, I think we would like you to come up to Yorkshire.' And in those days, you see, we went in very good time to King's Cross to get the

Yorkshire train. And in those days the trains came and it said 'Bradford and Leeds', because the train split in Wakefield. And he got in a carriage for Bradford, but it was too early, they took it off, it was an incoming train. And at the appointed hour, he ended up in Leeds. And he got a train to Bradford and of course there was nobody there. And somebody said, 'Are you the gentleman from London who's come to see Mr Garnett?' He said, 'Yes, I am.' And he saw the owner of the factory who was a very prominent figure, he was called Sir George Garnett. And he was an innovator in a way that he had some profit sharing and holiday funds and things like that. And when I met him he said, 'Mrs Klipstein, from now on you are going to be a lady of leisure.' I'm still waiting! But they took Zyga on and he brought all his certificates and they said, 'It's all very nice, but we don't understand any of this Polish stuff.' And he brought a collection of samples that he did in Italy, because he worked in Italy and he did very interesting things. It was very interesting when we were in Venice when I was in Italy, we were walking one evening and we looked into a very elegant shop. And the whole window was full of stoles which he had woven for someone when he was in Merano. Was it Merano or was it somewhere else in Italy where he had lived before? So they said, 'We give you a six month trial.' And by that time things were very bad really for me because I became pregnant and my aunt was playing up. And we really had to move.

Tape 4: 27 minutes 19 seconds

RL: Where were you living at that point?

BK: With my aunt. But she was making tremendous difficulties. Not difficulties, I mean she was having tantrums, she was very difficult. And I really didn't know how to cope. And we really felt that-. In fact we found somewhere to live and she begged us not to go and then it all started again. And Zyga came up on his own, first of all, and he was looking for somewhere, and he found a place and he said, 'There is only one bedroom. And the lady said, "If you don't mind me, I'll sleep in the bath."' And, you know, that sort of thing. But eventually we found a very nice place with a Yorkshire couple, which we called Aunty and Uncle Longley. And he was a window cleaner and she was a cook. And they were the kindest people you've ever met. To begin with, the first night we came, the bed they've got for us didn't arrive so they gave us their own bed. And they gave us the best rooms, they made it very pleasant for us. And when the baby, when Steven was born, they never had any children, they were very, very, forthcoming. And after ten months-, by that time Zyga's mother from Italy had emigrated to New York to stay with his married sister. And his mother died and we came into a very small legacy but it helped us enough to put a deposit down for a house in Bradford. So actually it was so difficult because when we got the mortgage we had to pay an extra premium for insurance, and the people we got the house from made up the difference, 'you repay us when you can', because we just couldn't have managed it. And we got our first house, and we got some furniture from the removal men, we bought some utility furniture from the removal men. And Uncle and Aunty Longley came and gave up their summer holiday to help us decorate the place. So that was that. By that time, Stevie was maybe nine months old-

RL: When was he born?

BK: He was born a day before our first wedding anniversary, on 2 January 1953. And you see, with being an only child, I didn't know, I had no experience of being with children, but I think the doctors knew from the beginning that he was mentally retarded and he never outlived-. He was very severely mentally retarded and he simply didn't develop. He lived until he was 15, but he never learnt to speak and he never knew us. It was very difficult.

Anyhow, we made the best we could. And we had our house and we had our front door, and eventually we got things together. We never bought anything on the never-never except the cooker and the washing machine, but that were the only two things. And we had our first holiday just before Stevie was born, we went to Llandudno for a week, which was wonderful. And eventually, after-, well, it was difficult with Steven and the doctor said that was very controversial. There was no reason why he should have been like that, but then they couldn't say that another child wouldn't be like him. They didn't know why he was like that. And some doctors said, 'Well, don't have any more children, because Steven will need all the attention you can give him.' And others said, 'Well, hard luck. Start again.' So we started again. And two and a half years later, or was it more, in 1955 Richard was born. And in August 1955-, and then in August 1958 Philip was born. But it was extremely hard for us, because Stevie never learnt to walk really and he was a very big child. And he used to shout and cry and get tantrums and he had to be restraint because he would walk off at night and used to knock his head against the wall until the plaster came off. And we had nobody to help us. But when he was about five, we once got a respite holiday when Richard was born, and he was taken to a hospital in Todmorden in Lancashire. And one of the patients was so taken with him, she looked after him like a mother. He was there for two months and he came back with balls and little socks and things, they were really extremely kind to him. But when he

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was five, and just before Philip was born, he went to a hospital in Bradford for children like that. And he was in a ward there and we used to visit him in turn every week. And it was-, I used to get very upset when he came in a coat without a button, and then I said, 'Well, I can sow on the button, but then I might antagonise the people who look after him and mustn't do that.' And well, he lived there and we used to see him. And he put everything, absolutely everything he saw into his mouth and would swallow, and then you would bring it all back. And Richard, when he was older, sometimes came with us and he said, 'Well, all he needs is warmth and love.' And Philip, when he saw him, said, 'Well, it's all your fault, you shouldn't have given it to him.' I mean, they are so different, our boys: one is the academic – very, very observant in what really the criteria are; and Philip is all that, too, but he is very soft-hearted. And he was there for 14 years when one of the sisters said that he's losing weight. And apparently, with children like that, they go through seven-year cycles. If they survive the first cycle then they've got a good chance to survive the next one. And some of the patients were maybe 30, 40 years old. And some of the patients were quite happier than being outside because they were amongst their own and they made them dances and things, you know, they didn't have to fight so much. But Stevie was always a loner and he started losing weight and it was through the winter. And then one day they rang us up to say that he is ill. No, the week before I saw him. And they said, 'No, he's fine, you can see by his colour, he's alright.' And it was a very wintry day, it was 1 March 1968, he would have been 15, just 15 and two months. And they said, 'You'd better come. You'd better come to the hospital.' And they didn't tell you anything more. And I rang up my husband at work and we went to the hospital. And he had already died. And he died, I think, of pneumonia because he was so wasted. And the nurses cried over him. So that was that. And we carried on from there.

RL: What schools did your children go to?

BK: Well, it was always very interesting, going into education. And I didn't like the hothouse schooling like some Jewish children in particular where, at the age of two or three, they went to private schools. So our boys went to the ordinary council school. First of all they went to a nursery school, then they went to the council school. And then they took an exam to

a prep school. And if they hadn't passed, well, they would have continued in the ordinary school. But they both passed, and they went to Bradford Grammar School and they both went through the school. And they both got scholarships to Oxford eventually. And they did very well. But it was a wonderful, it still is a wonderful school. I just heard last week that it's got the royal status now, which surprised me. And really, when they got to Oxford – both of them went to Oxford – the first year at university they hardly had anything to learn. But Richard was always going to be a chemist, always. And when he took his A-Levels, he got a question: 'If you mix those two reagents, and is it going to be A, B or C?', well, he found a D, which was acknowledged. You know, something the examiners did not think about. And that's the story of his life, he always finds something very profound. And he was going to be this chemist and when we spoke to his headmaster-. Then he [sic] got appendicitis and a week later, a month later I ended in hospital and he came to visit me and always had me in stitches and always made me laugh, so I couldn't take it. And then he decided there and then he was going to take medicine, just like that. And his headmaster said, 'Well, Richard is not going to be a doctor, you see, he's a problem cruncher.' And Richard became a doctor, but not for long. But the thing was, in those days, to get an Oxford entrance, you see, he was going to do medicine and he never read biology, only maths, chemistry and physics. And he went for his interview to Oxford and he got a scholarship. And they said, 'By the way, it would be good if you would get an A-Level in biology to do it in two terms.' And all the other grades were A*,

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you know, he did very well. So he came to Oxford. And Oxford was very interesting because he found a lot of people who were very religious. And he always had this religious bent for himself. And he became at once the agent, the president of the Jewish Society. And we used to go and visit and have lovely evenings in the Jewish Society. And he became very religious, very religious.

RL: What kind of Jewish life was there in Bradford?

BK: Very mixed. Now, my husband was very intense that they should have a good Jewish education. And he used to take them twice a week, both boys, I mean Philip when he got older, to somebody who was a Hebrew scholar, somebody called Joshua Rivlin. It's a very common name. He was born in Jerusalem and he taught Richard to write from the age of six, seven, maybe more. Just taught him all, you know, Tenach, and everything else. And Richard learnt all this and when he came to take his O-Levels, he took Classical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew. He was the only candidate and Oxford Local had to send a special paper for Modern Hebrew; I think Classical Hebrew was more common. Which was hard because it was meant for natives of the country: if you were an Israeli, then you got an O-Level in Hebrew; but if you were just learning a language, it was a hard paper to do. But he passed all this and he got into Oxford. And he got three years and he got his degree in Oxford. And then he had to look for a medical school. And both our boys were always very interested in Origami, since they were little boys. And every time I used to give them tea in front of the television and they used to fold those things. And Richard was looking for a medical school and he got an appointment at St Bartholomew's Hospital. And he went and the interviewer said to him, 'Well, I see in your curriculum vitae that you do Origami. What is it?' He said, 'The Japanese art of paper folding.' So he said, 'Well, while we talk, you do something for me and we can talk.' And the interview ended and the interviewer said, 'Well, you'll be hearing from us.', and Richard handed him an elephant. And he went out, and there was the next candidate, and he said, 'Well, what was it like? What did they ask you?' – 'Nothing much, they just made me make an elephant!' As it happened, Richard didn't take up this place at St Bartholomew's,

and six months later they were still asking if he was coming. His problem was that he wanted to be as close to the Jewish Society as possible so that he could have kosher food. So he went instead to the University College Hospital in London and graduated as a doctor in 1978. And then he got two jobs, one, I think, in the Whittington Hospital in London, and the other one in Middlesborough Hospital.

And that's when he got into contact with the Rov of the colleague in Gateshead, Rabbi Zahn, I don't know if you've heard this name, he used to go around collecting money for Yeshivos. And Mrs Zahn is still alive, they were a delightful couple. And they used to come at Christmas to hospital, pick up Richard and let him sleep in one of the nine bedrooms, so that he could get his wits together as a young doctor. And by that time, Richard was married. He married a girl by shidduch from Manchester, which was, well, that's another story. But he was a doctor on duty, and the nurses knew not to ask him to send death certificates on a Friday. And his wife came to hospital over Sabbath. And one year, he said, they had their Sabbath meal in a little room near the ward, decorated by eight Santa Clauses, but they sang zemiros and so on. And eventually, he stayed in Middlesborough for eighteen months and because Richard has such a mathematical mind, and that were the early days of computers in medicine. He was a surgical assistant at that time and he eventually became the house officer. Two consultants got him into their car and they said, 'Richard, we want you to pick out a computer and put the gastroenterology department data onto it.' So that's what he did mostly.

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But he was very well thought of, you know, when he was on duty, the consultants didn't come on a Sunday. And some senior doctor, there was one Thai-Malaysian doctor, he said, 'Don't you know, Richard, what to do with this patient, he is "maringerling"?' – instead of 'malingering'. Anyhow, he was very interested in computerisation and he was invited to Leeds University by another doctor who tried to do the same thing, but his method of putting the gastroenterology department or whatever department onto computer was so much more complicated whereas Zyga's [sic] methodology was much more user-friendly, could be used by anybody. And by that time, having to work so many hours, so many nights, it was very difficult and he was very intent on getting a new job which wasn't so time-consuming. And he saw an advertisement at the National Heart Hospital in London, but it was for senior staff like consultants or anaesthetists or people like that. But Richard applied anyway. And then he also applied for a job in Leeds and as a, I don't know, the community, not community doctor, some, I forgot what it was, it was a pretty high appointment. And as it happened, he also applied to Newcastle and on the day of his interview he got measles for the second time. So a woman got it instead and he was a little bit disappointed. But then he got an interview in London for the Heart Hospital and he got the job in Leeds and he didn't know what to do. So he let the job go in Leeds and he went to London and lo and behold, he did get it. And that was a real miracle, because Richard got the job in the National Heart Hospital and at the same time, Zyga, my husband, was taken very ill. He didn't even notice it, one year he started mowing the lane and he got pains and he said, 'Oh, this lawnmower is no good.' So he had it sharpened and when it came back it was still the pain. And then he could hardly get out of a chair, he got heart disease. And one day we were supposed to go on holiday and we always speak with Richard on a Sunday and I said, 'Richard, I don't know what to do, I can't take Daddy on holiday.' So he said, 'Leave it with me.' It was very hot, in June or July, and Zyga was supposed to see a local doctor, a cardiologist, who was on holiday. And we had to wait five weeks for an appointment and he wasn't back. So Richard rang back to say that his consultant in the National Heart Hospital will see him the next day. So we went down to London and Zyga got a full bypass operation performed by Magdi Jacob, who was one of the

very best surgeons at the time. And if Richard hadn't been a doctor at the right time at the right hospital, and Zyga by that time was 61 and it wasn't a common operation as it is today, he might have never have got it and he might never have survived it. So it was very nice. He was in the National Heart Hospital and Richard's secretary came to see him and the consultant came to see him. And these were the early days of molecular resonance imaging. And that's what Richard did eventually; he devoted all his time at the National Hospital to developing a machine, a resonance machine. And on the strength of his word, General Electric gave them a machine costing them many billions. And we have a picture from Downing Street where Richard is showing Mrs Thatcher around the hospital, I must get it out sometime. And it was on a Friday afternoon in March, about 3 o'clock, and Richard is wearing a kippa, and he used to wear a kippa in the hospital in Middlesborough. And there was an Irishwoman and she said, 'I want to see this doctor with a pudding basin on.', and another patient said, 'She's ignorant, don't pay any attention.' But Mr Thatcher saw Richard wear a kippa and said, 'Shouldn't you be going home? It's Friday.' So he did. And eventually we got a picture of Richard showing Mrs Thatcher around. And I've shown it to my friend Jurek who taught me all the maths and he said, 'Never mind', he said, 'he'll live it down.' But Richard didn't want to continue to be-, to go through membership of medicine because he didn't think very highly of the medical profession. He very often thought about it that you have to learn some obscure diseases who will never happen and you'll dine out on it. So he took a PhD instead in molecular resonance. And just like his A-Levels when he found a method that nobody thought about, one of his examiners, strangely enough, was a man who

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just got the Nobel Prize, from Nottingham, in molecular-, this year, the Nobel Prize in medicine was given to one of the candidates. That's the one who objected to the other two getting it. But he had to convince, he had to bring them up to date because the subject was moving up so quickly, and this man probably wasn't so conversant in medical applications, so he had quite a difficult time to convince him. And there he was, he got his PhD. And for the second time I landed in the Albert Hall; for the first time when I got my degree, and the second time when Richard got his degree. And we stayed in the National Heart Hospital, when was it, he got his PhD maybe in 1984. He stayed there for three or four years. But he was so successful that the hospital was putting too many patients through and there was not enough funding or time to use the machines for his research. So he gave up medicine. And he became a contractor and he worked on his own as a freelancer. And what he worked on was determining the shelf life of medicines with a minimum number of tests, you know, just the safety, that sort of thing. And that was very successful, he worked for, I think, Hewlett Packard, some American factory. Until another recession came and the factory packed, I mean, his boss packed up and went to America and Richard found himself without a job. By which time he had been married for nine years and they couldn't have any children. And eventually, by that time, they had this one child, Yishai, who was born with the help of Dr Winston. And years later after he was born he took a picture of Yishai to the hospital, to Dr Winston who put it on a wall full of children who wouldn't have been born had he not been there. So Yishai was born and Richard was without a job for quite a long time because he was overqualified and the people who interviewed him were afraid that if they employ him he might be after their job! So he was six or seven months without a job. And then his wife was taken ill, very ill, and she had suicidal tendencies. He got a job and they let him work at home, but it was touch and go, he couldn't really leave her, not even nowadays. He did wonders for her; it was her lucky day that she married a doctor because she wouldn't have been alive without him. But he got a job eventually and then he gave up this contractorship and he's now working as a team leader in the City for Lloyd's Shipping. And they retained

him when a lot of other people were outsourced and he's still working there. And he is one of their mainstay IT men, fully fledged, you know, up to the minute, and never had any instruction in IT work! I mean, that's Richard. He really is a fundamental-, he always works down to the fundament. He's very frum; he always had this tendency, particularly after Oxford. And the last thing we did when he qualified was to buy a lot of dishes and bring them home to table. And it wasn't easy, because every time they came, we had to have two kitchens and it was driving us a little bit-, it was difficult. So now that they come, he is still learning quite a lot, he gives two shiurim in the City a week. And his son, who is now 13, is an absolute-, I think he's phenomenal. He goes to a grammar school whose headmaster is Tony Goldblatt who was at Oxford with Richard. And we went to the barmitzvah where Tony spoke and we said to him, 'Look, it's years since we saw you.', and Tony said, 'Richard's parents made me feel very old because last time I didn't have the beard. But Yishai is so conversant with the Bible, he can quote to anything and he can tell you anything! And every Sunday night when they ring I have about ten to fifteen minutes, talk about the sedra and I've got to have my wits about it because I can't keep up with them.' But he's very good all around. He's just had his college exam. I said, 'How did it work?' - 'Alright.' - 'And what did you get?' - 'About 95 percent.' I said, 'How were you so careless to lose the other five?' He really is fantastic. We wanted to go to his barmitzvah and my husband can't walk very far and there is no way he could have walked enough to go to shul, so we couldn't get there. But my friend and her husband went and told us all about it. And Philip, who now lives in Israel came, hired a car and took us down. And it was a fantastic evening, they are very well regarded in the community. And they've got the most fantastic library of seforim that he got

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for his barmitzvah and he's doing well. And they've been here about ten days ago and we had a lovely time together. They come and see us very often, every half term holiday and holiday [sic] because Yishai goes to school on a Sunday, so-.

RL: Which school is it he goes to?

BK: It's a menorah school, a menorah secondary school.

RL: And which shul do they belong to?

BK: Munks. Which is quite an achievement because when you apply to Munks you have an interview with Sir Ralph and his wife, who were at the barmitzvah and spoke very well. And before, at Richard's wedding, Rabbi Zahn called him Ben Habayit, the son of the House, it was really well, but between them, Richard and Yishai are a fantastic team. And I said, 'What are you doing now?', because there was a time when Yishai taught himself to speak Arabic. He had a collection of coins and bank notes and he found that the numerals in Arabic are not the same, so he taught himself enough to speak to people on elementary basis. After that he started studying Gujarati. I said, 'Why Gujarati?' He said, 'Why not?' And after that he learnt a little bit of German and then it was the time for chess for a long time. And now it's learning all the time. So this summer, when Richard had to go to work and his mother was away on holiday, he spent two days in Golders Green in the library, learning all the time. And I said, 'What you did in the holiday?' – 'Learning.' He's a bit of a loner; he's an only child, but very happy and very pleasant and very self-, a very, very nice guy. And on the wall behind me there is a plaque with stones from the Bible. And when Yishai was here the last time – my other son bought it for my husband's 80th birthday – he said, 'It's wrong.' And he went and found the sedra, and taki, it is wrong, the stones are not arranged in the right order.

And he spotted it immediately, which I thought was something really-. And when Yishai was two years old, we were sitting around the Shabbos table one night and the candles were burning and he said, 'Why is the inside of the candle blue?' And Richard said, 'Ask Uncle Philip, it's the easiest thing.' And Uncle Philip had to explain that there is not enough access of air and therefore the inside of the candle burns blue because there is not enough oxygen. But he is very observant. And there was a time when he was very interested in tadpoles and frogs, and I said 'Yishai, how do the eyes of a frog work? Do they work forward or do they swivel?' I said, 'I don't know.' – ' I'll have to ascertain.' He's so much like Richard, always using very long words. So that's that.

RL: When your boys were young in Bradford, did they belong to any groups?

BK: There weren't any. There wasn't really any-. Later they were, but there were very few Jewish children and they were very different. You know, their values weren't exactly the same as ours. And they met at school.

RL: In what way were they different?

BK: Well, for one thing, you know, they had Hanukah and Christmas, and had the Christmas trees. And they were going for very materialistic values and weren't particularly academic. And they had different interests, so there wasn't a lot. I mean, that's not quite true, because my best friend and her family, we were all very close and we had very nice sedarim together. And I prepared her children to get scholarships at Bradford Grammar School. There

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were some children, but generally there was nothing. And those who wanted to belong had to come to Leeds, but there was not very much.

RL: Did you belong to a synagogue in Bradford?

BK: Oh yes. I mean, not only did we belong, I mean we ran it. Because, well, I say we ran it, everybody had to take part for making it run. And my husband was the secretary and the chief of education and president, and eventually, for the last ten years, a very important job, unfortunately, used to be the gabbai of the Chevra Kadisha, because there were so many elderly people who were dying. So I mean, we made the place run and we took every responsibility for running it. And we built a new shul. We built a new shul which we have financed, which was built on the example of the Harrogate Shul. And it had a flat roof which is as leaky as the other one, but yes, yes, we were very active.

RL: Now this is just about to finish, so we'll just break off there.

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TAPE 5
Tape 5: 0 minute 14 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Berta Klipstein and it's Tape 5. You were just telling me about your involvement with the shul in Bradford.

BK: Yes, it was very exciting, because the old shul was right in the centre of Bradford which deteriorated very badly. And when sold was turned into a Motorola [sic] drive-in shop. We decided to build a new synagogue, which was opened in Shipley in 1971. It was opened by the chief Rabbi Jakobowitz at the time. And as women we were very interested in getting a very nice kitchen and we equipped it all, for milchik and fleishik for about 250 people with different working height surfaces. And we had many occasions, many simchas, many social occasions there. But eventually, gradually, the membership dropped quite a lot and it became untenable. And the shul was closed, practically, and services were only held once a month on Shabbat Mevorchim. And we felt terribly excluded and the first Shabbat when we couldn't go to shul, we went for a walk and ended up somehow at shul. And if my husband hadn't been so involved with the Chevra Kadisha we would have moved much sooner, but because he thought that everybody deserved a good funeral, Jewish funeral, it wasn't until things came to a head and in 1988 we sold up and we moved to Leeds, where at least we were in a Jewish community. And it was easier for us then to travel to London, because Leeds [sic] was always that half hour longer and always off the way. So gradually we started in Leeds, and we had to start right from the beginning: buy in all our burial rights, nothing, we had to start right from the beginning, as we did before. And we settled here very well, we made many friends. My husband sang for a number of years while he still could stand better in the choir. And we still go to shul. We used to walk for miles everywhere, but we can't now. It was a good move and we are happy here. We moved from a larger house into a smaller house, which was also a good move, because we can hopefully stay here longer; it won't be so difficult to look after.

RL: In Bradford, was there much Jewish activity at all besides the shul?

BK: Well, there is still is, there is still the WIZO and there still is the Ladies' Guild. And

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well, there were the odd barmitzvahs. When we first came to Bradford in 1952 there were 60 children in the Cheder lately there were none.

RL: Were you active in the WIZO and in the Ladies?

BK: Oh yes. Not so much active in the WIZO because I was working as a freelancer and I was working tremendously hard, I couldn't really commit myself to any regular activity. But I did whatever I could.

RL: So what were you working? You haven't mentioned this work.

BK: No, about me? Well, as I said before, I got an honours degree in chemistry and mathematics. And after that I was working towards a PhD in chemistry for a number of years, at the same college, at the West Ham Municipal College. And one of the people which the laboratory-, was somebody called Hans Suschitzky, who was from Vienna, a Jewish refugee from Vienna, who was a fourth-year medical student when he had to leave. And he started studying chemistry and eventually qualified and was a lecturer at the college when I was a research student, and that was back in the late 1940s. And I still speak with him last Sunday, he eventually came to Sale [Salford] University, and became a professor in Sale [Salford]. And when he retired he became a visiting professor in Heidelberg and he did a lot of chem-. And now he is very nearly ninety. And his wife Judy, who used to be a secretary to a Member of Parliament, and then a teacher to subnormal children, and they are still doing very well and we keep in touch. And by the time I got married, I was in my second or third year of my PhD

and we moved to Bradford, so really a PhD wasn't very much use to me. And by that time, I expected my first child, so I stopped my studies and I was working for a little while as a lecturer, evening classes mostly. But even while I was working at Tate & Lyle, because I had my languages, I was often asked to do translations. And my good friend Jurek who taught me all this mathematics had a friend who is pretty well known in Jewish circles nowadays, and he was called Ben Helfgott, who was a weightlifter then and used to take part in the Commonwealth Games in Maccabia. But when he moved in with Jurek, Jurek had to carry his bags. And they asked me to translate some excerpts from a magazine called *Muscle Power*, which did all about weightlifters and so on. And that's how I started. But eventually I became a translator for ASLIB - Association of Special Libraries in Information Bureaus, which recommended you. You had to be a graduate and you had to have several languages and they only recommended you. And if somebody wanted a scientific translation they might say, 'Well, we've got somebody on the list.' And that's how it all started. And eventually I, before Philip was born in 1958, I was on the translation of my second cover-to-cover book on higher mathematics. And I have been working tremendously hard. I don't even remember which language it was, because, you know, people think language translate, a paragraph, you had to work at very great speed. And I've worked for 43 years. And sometimes you got very strange requests, for example, I was asked one day to translate for the Ministry of Agriculture the morphological structure of chicken bones, or what happens to silver foxes reared on rancid cod liver oil – all kinds of scientific papers.

RL: And what language are you translating for or-

BK: I only translated, as long as I could help it, only translated in English, from German, Russian and Polish into English. And that was part of my work and eventually I also got asked to do quite a lot of interpreting, which was a completely different story. At that time

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there were, it was in the early days of the Lada cars. The Lada cars were manufactured in a place on the Wolga called *Sheguli*, but they called them Lada because most people can't pronounce *Sheguli*. There were Fiats, they were versions of Fiat 127. And in order to produce them, they had to tool up. And the best people were Americans, but Americans weren't trading with Russia then. So there was an English firm near Skipton in Yorkshire which produced grinding machinery. And Russian inspectors working, well, not entirely on the Lada, they were other cars and there were also tractors and all things, came to England to tool up. And I used to be their interpreter in the works completely for [it's noisy there. Don't leave the pages]. I used to be on the shop floor until they got delivery. And all, everything, any request they had they had to do through me. Sometimes working for six months at a time. On one occasion, at the end of a big project, we had a big farewell dinner and there were two women, myself and the managing director's wife, and we ended up by giving myself a vote of thanks. It was quite interesting and it lasted a long time, learned a lot. It was good. And then I worked, that was part of, it recurred quite often, you know, sometimes four months, sometimes six months, sometimes there was, I was engaged on a project when Prince Charles was made the Duke of Wales, at various times. But in between, I also worked as a knitwear designer; I produced knitting leaflets for Listers and Robin Woods. And also I taught mathematics, first chemistry and then mathematics, at Bradford Technical College. And all this I did while I was getting established as a technical translator and interpreter. I also did a lot of interpreting for the British Council. And in that case I was usually working, not always, sometimes I was working in Yorkshire and go into firms in Yorkshire with pretty high-powered Russians who came at the invitation of the British Council. And that was quite

interesting, taken them around and showing them what life is really like. And all those inspectors were very interested. I remember once taking a holiday booklet to one of the inspectors. He said, 'Yes, of course, that's what you show the foreigners!' They didn't believe you, and you had really over the years, over the weeks that you worked with them, you had to really bring them up and make them understand what the culture was like because they were so indoctrinated. And I worked with all kinds of people and then in London with all sorts of people. And one day I got a request from the British Council, 'Would you interpret for us?' I said, 'Yes, of course.' – 'What about the artificial insemination of cows?' And that was a very interesting assignment because we went to Cambridge and we saw all the division of cells in the early things. And one, actually the Milk Marketing Board in Reading, they gave us a slide of a cow with 19 implanted identical calves. It was quite interesting. You had to learn on the hoof, very quickly, because like with translations, you are asked to produce the translation for someone who devoted his lifetime to the subject, and you had to produce something that was reasonably good. And you had to produce it in a form ready for printing, so it had to be nicely done. I worked an awful lot for the GP, General Post Office, when they were in Martlesham Heath, where they had their research department. And for the Health and Safety Executive and - a million people, for the British Standard Council, and I was working tremendously hard while I was doing it.

RL: So were you working freelance?

BK: I was freelance. I mean, either I did it by post and I got the things which I had to produce by myself and send by post [sic], or I had to go to London and take people. Like I said, I once went from London to Manchester University and back. And we had so many appointments, we never got time to talk. And one very interesting assignment I had was a gentleman from Mongolia, a very nice person called Dr Batjagal, who was a meteorologist, was also a member of the government in Mongolia. And we travelled all over England,

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because we usually have appointments-, the British Council give the …… and that's what you've got to do. But you have to pick them up in the morning, put them on the train, travel with them and all this. And we've met some very interesting people. And years later, I was just watching a programme on television and there he was! The only Mongolian I know, and there he was. And our good friend, who was our GP in Bradford, was working for a Bible Society and he and his wife had a stint in Mongolia. And I rang him up, I said, 'You are going to Ulan Bator - find Dr Batjagal! I don't know where he lives, I don't know anything about him, except that he's a member of Parliament.' He said, 'Five phone calls did it, I saw him.' So I did quite interesting work. And then I did it until about 1986 and I go a little bit fed up with my last assignment who was not a very pleasant person. It was interesting, some of those people I worked with were definitely spies; they only came to find out and every little bit of information was relevant to them. I mean, it was a change; you worked with people rather than work with dictionaries and a typewriter.

RL: So did you give it up in 1986?

BK: Gradually I gave it up. My children asked me to write my story and that took a little bit of time. I worked very hard when we first moved to Leeds, but then eventually a point comes, after I had retired about six times, I gave it up when I was 69. I thought I'd better be my age. But then again if I got something I didn't want to do I was retired; but if I wanted to

do it I wasn't. So it all depended. But then I had enough. So now I am a lady of leisure, but I'm working terribly hard at other things.

RL: What are you involved in?

BK: Nothing in particular, you know, I just keep the house going. My husband can't walk very well, so I've got a lot of running to do, and I keep the administration part of the house going and all the letters and things, so I've kept busy.

RL: And in the Leeds community, are you involved?

BK: Not really. I mean, in the beginning I was flavour of the month and had to give a lot of talks. But the Jewish community is very inbred and none of the WIZO groups asked me to join and none of the Bnai Bris groups asked me to join. I suppose if I wanted to. I was a bit handicapped because I don't drive so I don't like depending on other people, so no. I didn't get very much involved in the day to day-. I don't take very well to committees and meetings, I don't mind working. Oh yes, I would work in shul, we did whatever we can. We were regulars and we'd go as often as we can. Not so often now, because my husband finds it hard to drive, too. And the grandchildren, so we are very busy.

RL: You've not talked about Philip, so we'd better come onto him.

BK: No, well, we probably would have never had Philip if Stevie, our firstborn, had been alive. Or not so much alive, if he had been just an ordinary child. But he was a great joy all over the years. He was never any problem. He always was very good with his hands. I remember him sitting on the floor at the age of four making a suspension bridge out of cardboard! Exceptionally good with his hands. And he always used to build aeroplanes.
Richard was very interested in photography and he used to buy films, a hundreds of yards of films, cut it up in films, put it into cassettes and sell it to people at school to raise enough

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money for a Rollex self single lens-reflex. So they were always drying off films in our bath. But Philip was always interested in building aeroplanes. And he still is, I suppose, running them. And he too went to Oxford and he wanted to be a physicist, right from the beginning. And at the time, pure sciences were not a good proposition, but there was nothing-. Our doctor wanted him to do medicine, but our doctor took him on a day's trip and Philip got completely, he nearly fainted. When Richard got an injection, Philip nearly fainted when he was a child. He's very different. Anyhow, he was a physicist, a very good physicist. And he got a scholarship to Oxford. Richard was at Queen's College Oxford, Philip was at Balliol. And after he finished Balliol-. Funnily enough, when Philip took his final exam it was Shavuot. So he had to be supervised by a member of the faculty and the person whom he was supervised with was a Professor Lewis who was a historian, and his wife now lives opposite us; it's a small world. And he wanted to do a PhD and he wanted to do it in Cambridge. And Cambridge people are not very well disposed to Oxford graduates. So they said, 'Well, if you get a first, we might consider it.', which Philip resented. He said, 'It's me. They want me or not at all.', but he got a double first anyway and he got his doctorate in Cambridge and then he got a fellowship. In fact, he got five offers of fellowships and he didn't know which college to accept. And he went to St John's because it had the chef from the Dorchester, something like that. Anyhow, after he's been-, the fellowship was for four years. And while he was still an undergraduate, before he even started university, he got a scholarship from the

Atomic Energy Commission, which was a great help financially for him. And he had to work eight weeks in the summer in return for the scholarship. So one year he decided he wasn't very happy working in England, in Dungeness or somewhere, so with their permission he got a job at the University of Toronto at an accelerator in Batavia near Chicago. And he did a summer's research there and then went back the following year. And at that time he decided that high-energy physics wasn't for him, it was very isolated. It was very depended on an accelerator, there were always too many people for the hours accessible. So when he decided what he was going to do, he went into solid-state physics. And after he had his fellowship for about two years, he got an offer of a 'young blood' lecturer. At that time they tried to get young academics to work for them to get new blood into the system. And they said to Philip, 'Never mind, I'm sure you won't get it, but it will be a good experience for you.' Lo and behold, he got it. So he became a lecturer in physics at the Imperial College in London for five years, which was a great shock because he had a wonderful place in Oxford and then he had to go into a bedsit in London. And he was there for about five years when he got headhunted for a job in Oxford, which was very difficult, because they all had to give a lecture to students. They had to hit the target, it wasn't to be a clever lecture, it had to be-. Anyhow, he got the job in Oxford. And after he was seven years in Oxford-. He married in between. Well, first of all, when he came back from Oxford he got a flat in Belsize Park. And there was a Belsize Park East Hampstead Synagogue, which was dying on its feet. They thought it will have to close until there was a wedding. And a Lubavitcher rabbi called Shlomo Levin came to the simcha and he took on the congregation without pay. He was a very successful property developer; he and his wife were South African. She was working as a **……..** for Lubavitch in Stamford Hill. And he took on the congregation like Philip flocked to it. And to this day, Shlomo Levin, is the godfather, if you call if godfather, to Amichai, their oldest son. At this synagogue Philip met Judy, who is American. She comes-, she was born in New Jersey, but grew up in Boca Raton in Florida. And when her parents moved there, there were about eleven families, and now they've got about eleven synagogues, they've got a very large congregation. And initially, she was reformed. But she was a delegate for the reform synagogues in Vienna, in Austria, sometime. And when she came back, she said, 'They really hate us.' And she became very interested in orthodoxy. And she is very

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bright, she finished the University of South Carolina and then she became a Rhodes scholar in Australia. And then she went to the London School of Economics and worked for the Federal Reserve. She is a very outgoing person, and if you want a bed for the night in Timbuktu, she knows somebody to get it for you or for herself. And she was working at that time in the City, she was a stockbroker and she was doing very well, she was headhunted two or three times. And things were going very well until when Philip was seven years in Oxford, by which time he was reader, or soon afterwards he was reader, just one step off being a professor. He went off for his sabbatical to Israel to the Weitzman Institute and they had a wonderful time. And Amichai was about a year old then. And while he was there he was headhunted for a job. Philip has very specialised qualifications; there are not many people worldwide who have them. And here they had a candidate who really wanted to go and live in Israel. And after they came back from the sabbatical, they flew him out and they convinced him that they couldn't do without him. 'You've got to come. Ask what you want, but you've got to come!' And that's where he is now. And because of the work he's doing, they've got a new facility. A lot of it is pretty secret, I don't know anything about it, but it's the first of its kind in Israel. And the family is doing very well. It's no secret, they are producing, well, they are called semi-conductor devices, but they are producing night vision things for goggles and aeroplanes and missiles and that sort of thing. And he gets a buzz of doing it, you see. In academia he spent

so much time asking for funding and writing proposals and after a while it gets you. So now they live in the Zikhron Ya'acov and they have four children, two of them sabras. The youngest not quite three months. And everything is fine. We thought we might see more of them, but my husband, his health is not very good and we don't find it easy to travel. So last year they came over here to see us, but find it very difficult to look after three little ones. There were three little of them in November and two parents, so we found a compromise: we hired a very elegant holiday flat in Harrogate and we cooked for them and we had Shabbat together, we moved in with them, and we had a wonderful time. And the year before we met in Eilat, and hopefully, in a month's time, we'll meet in Eilat again. We just decided we are going to chance it and the doctor said it's okay, so we look forward to it.

RL: When did he move to Israel?

BK: He moved almost exactly at the start of the intifada, in September 2000, almost exactly at that time. He has no regrets; they have a very nice time. The children have a wonderful life in Israel, much, much better. They are very orthodox, and they couldn't quite give them their Jewish life in England as they do in Israel. They had a very big house in Pinner, and they had a Jewish school in Pinner, but it still wasn't a Jewish life, because a lot of the children gave birthday parties at church halls, you know, you just couldn't depend on it. And now they move in circles which are orthodox and they like it. And the children have got the most wonderful programme of activities. They go to circles where you produce things. And Amichai does self-defence and Noah goes to dancing classes and she bakes burekas. And they go to English classes, they've got a very nice time. Can't be easy for Judy with four little ones, and she's somehow working still! Somehow, I don't know. So we are in constant contact by email, every day practically, which makes it a little bit easier. And last year, there was this very unpleasant episode in England, which you might have heard of, about the boycott of Israeli academics, and Philip got very involved. And he wrote letters to the Roses**,** who were the initiators. He is an orthodox Jew and she isn't. And he got involved in quite a lot of correspondence. And there is a professor of Jewish Thought at Haifa University called Professor Kellner and he wrote a very good, very long history of the development of Palestinians, who are they, there weren't any, how it all started over the years.

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And Philip sent it around to quite a few people then. And there was a Professor Dawkins Richard Dawkins, in Oxford, who got engaged with this Professor Kellner in a lot of correspondence. And Professor Kellner has converted him, he retracted his support. That was last year. And this year there was this academic Wilkes, who was a physiologist in Oxford, who refused access to an Israeli student who applied to him for a PhD place and he said, 'I couldn't possibly contemplate getting somebody who was serving in the IDF.' And as it happens, he was a Fellow of Pembroke College Oxford, and Philip was a Fellow of the Pembroke College Oxford. And Philip wrote him a letter and he circulated this letter to all academics he knew, including the letter from Professor Kellner, which possibly opened their eyes and at least educated them in what to believe. Because people tend to believe what they know and they all think it started last year or last week. They don't go back to the roots of it and they don't understand it. And he is very involved in that. And he belongs to a very nice little synagogue. And he often davens or lehens. They are very taken with English trop, which is very different from the Middle East trop. And I think they've got a good life. And next weekend they are going skiing on Mount Har Meron, which is something I suppose. So although we can't see them often, we speak on the phone or we are in contact by email.

RL: You are mentioning anti-Semitism in academia. Did you ever come across anything?

BK: Well, there was a lot of it, the younger generation-. You know, I was pretty much in a shell because I was so intent on getting my qualifications and working that I didn't pay-. I mean I met some very nice people who helped me along who weren't Jewish, but I can't offhand think of anybody who was openly anti-Semitic to me. Not in the college I was in, because there were a lot of refugees, and it was at a time when there were a lot of people like ex-servicemen who got their education, who were more mature, who didn't obviously show it. I can't honestly say I know.

RL: Did you used to speak to your children about your experiences?

BK: Oh, my experiences kept the Russian class at Bradford Grammar School going for two years, week by week! Yes, they know all of it, and I think my children had a difficult time insofar that I made them very aware, from a very early age, of the value of education. Because many of their friends said, 'Yes, we are going to school, it doesn't matter what we do, we just get a degree, we show them we can do it and then we start thinking of what we can do.' And I really made them think quite seriously of what they wanted to do and what school meant to them. I never pushed them, I never had to do it. I prepared them for entrance to the prep-school at the age of eight; up to that I never had to do anything because they were sort of self-propelling. And I would hesitate to say anything because I would be behind times, but no, they were good at school and they were popular at university.

RL: Did you ever yourself think of living anywhere other than England once you got here?

BK: That's another difficult thing, because, as I said, I came to England in 1946. And my mother and stepfather were still in Poland. Eventually my mother and stepfather emigrated to Israel and they had a very difficult time. I was an only child, and as I said, my mother was more or less made to marry my father and it wasn't a very happy marriage from what I can do. And my mother was an exceedingly domineering person, and I don't-, she wanted us to come to Israel and she'd look after the children while I go out to work – it wouldn't have worked. And it was the lesser of all evils to put clear water between us. We went, we visited

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her, she lived in Haifa and we visited her every year. And she died in 1994. So it really was no proposition to go there. And we were very tired. We were tired of losing everything and moving house so often. And at least I had some qualifications which I could put to use in this country. I wasn't really-, I was quite happy to stay here.

RL: When did they go to Israel?

BK: They got to Israel about 1948/49. There was a big aliya out of Poland, but my uncle and aunt who were with us in Siberia didn't go. And they stayed, they just had enough, and they both died in Poland. Yes, they just couldn't contemplate going. You get very tired when you have to start all over again, so that's how it worked out for them.

RL: And where you in touch with them in Poland?

BK: Oh yes, yes. Yes, we weren't very wealthy, but we sent what we could, occasional parcels, especially after my aunt died and my uncle was being taken care of by a neighbour

who promised to look after him to my aunt. Oh yes, we were in touch. And now we are in touch with Zyga's sister who lives in New York. We speak practically every week, and she's 90, 91 nearly. And she's a wonderful person, very interested and they always liked her. They reminisced what it was like when Zyga fell into the icy water and turned into an icicle on the way to the village. It's nice.

RL: Where did your aunt and uncle live in Poland?

BK: In Bielsko, they came back to Bielsko. They lived in the flat which we got back after we got back from Siberia, er, Uzbekistan.

RL: And how did they find life there after the war?

BK: Very isolated, very difficult, because they were getting on, they had nobody to support them. And the lady who looked after them said that the Jewish community takes very little interest in them. So I had a cousin who lived there and then in the late 1960s emigrated to Sweden. But in between, he always was a communist before the war, and in between he was appointed Polish Consul to New York. And his name was Philip Katz. And they said, 'Well, you'll be our consul, but you have got to change your name.' And he said, 'You'll either have me or no consul.' He wouldn't do it. And he died quite early in Sweden. The Swedes were very good.

RL: And how did your mother find Israel, how did they settle there?

BK: Initially it was extremely difficult for them, but eventually they made friends and my mother was very gifted. She could speak perfect Ivrit, maybe not quite perfect grammatically, but she could speak perfect Ivrit. Now Philip has a difficult time when he came. As I said before, my husband took them from an early age to Hebrew classes and he had a smothering of Hebrew, but now he has to do a standard of seminars and talking to people and also a lot of it goes in English. They said, 'When are you going to speak Hebrew?' And the factory he works in laid on an exceptionally good teacher, but he just can't spare the time, he works all out. And they lead a very busy time. We're hoping to go to Eilat, but I wouldn't even broach the subject before the New Year because there was so much going on, birthday parties and

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Hanukah and this and that. So, you know, they are very busy and they are having a good life.

RL: When did you visit Israel for the first time?

BK: That was in 1968, in the year of Richard's barmitzvah. When, funnily enough, just when the 1967 war started, we took the children to London and we saw Topol's *The Fiddler on the Roof*, with Topol. And we came out terribly disheartened because it looked as if the war was going to start tomorrow. And then, when Richard had his barmitzvah, then we all went to Israel for the first time. And since then, we've been going often. It wasn't all that easy to go because Zyga had only August to go in, you know, when the factory in Yorkshire shut. But we needed a holiday, but we went when we could.

RL: So had you not seen your mother up until then?

BK: No, about twenty-, no, that's not true, she came to England twice. She came to see us twice in between. Yes, she came to see us when Stevie was quite little. In fact, we took some pictures which were only developed, you know, pictures with her in it, after Stevie died. She came then and she came to Philip's barmitzvah. She came here, it was a lot easier for her to come. But she didn't find it easy travelling, especially she had to go to Tel Aviv from Haifa. And it wasn't easy.

RL: Have you ever been back to Poland?

BK: No. I don't want to go back to Poland. I never like to go back to anywhere. You know, when we go on holiday, we try not to go back to the same place. We do occasionally; I mean it's inevitable. But when we were younger, it's a big world outside; we want to see as much as we can.

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

BK: Not-, I mean, I had my problems when I was working as an interpreter. And sometimes we had representatives of German firms who were just the right age to serve in the Wehrmacht. But it's very difficult when you speak to somebody on technical matters to correlate. You try not to think about it. We were once on Lake Garda and we met some English people. And the lady said, 'Well, how can you ever forgive them? How can you ever? But I mean you don't think about it like that, especially not the younger generation. They were no more to blame for anything than our children or we are. But with regard to children, we never try to live in the past, we never-. Nowadays you've got like the Association of Jewish Refugees and the Children of Members-. I think there is something very wrong when people get together just to reminisce of what it was. Things have moved on. If you live of what things were like, we had a lot, we lost a lot, we've made a new life. And that's what they've got to think about, so I don't regard it as an affliction having had to go through it. We had no choice, we went through it. We made the best of it. Thankfully, we survived; we may not have survived if we hadn't gone through it. So we are quite thankful and profoundly thankful that we've got a family and grandchildren. And thank God, all our grandchildren are well. Because many years after my children were born, after Stevie, whatever they did I was always watching and monitoring and thinking, is it going to be alright? Well, they were both, thank God, very good children in every respect. And we've got a very nice family relationship, really very nice. And the same with the children. We speak with them on the

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'phone and we try to keep in touch.

RL: Do you think your experiences have affected you in any way?

BK: Oh, tremendously so. I mean, I can't really let my hair down. I don't like any occasions, you know-. My friend made a beautiful golden wedding party, I don't like parties, I can't play. I'm very busy when I'm busy, when I'm doing things. Not that I don't find enjoyment, not that, but, I mean, our children never went to a football match because we don't go. I mean we know nothing of cricket. We don't, like Judith Sushitzky, they once came here for dinner and she said, 'We'll be late.' I said, 'Okay.' He said, 'Have you been watching the cricket?' I said, 'No.' 'Have you been watching the tennis?' I said, 'No, we don't. We don't watch sport except for skiing.' Because that reminds us of our past; my husband particularly loves to watch ski jumping. But yes, I would have been, maybe not, maybe I would still have

been the same person. Probably would have been the same person because Richard and Yishai are very much self-contained, inward looking. I'm outgoing, but I don't need a lot of people. We don't see a lot of people. We go to shul and that's very nice, but now very often we can't go to shul because the weather is too bad, so we are isolated here. But a lot is happening; there is the phone and we've got cable television, so we are like going to university, every day you learn something about history and science and the natural world. We are very lucky. We are very lucky that we don't have any immediate problems. I mean, health wise yes, my husband's had, as I said, four bypasses in 1982, and they had worn down and he had a stent since. And things don't get better as you get older. And I have arthritis, but I make the best of it. And I weaned myself off all painkillers and I found a way that I can exist without pain. And I try to be fairly mobile and do what I can.

RL: In terms of nationality, how would you describe yourself?

BK: Well, we might say we are British, but I don't know that we will ever be accepted. But, well, we are profoundly pro-Israel and that comes over in many ways. Well, there are so many charities that beg you for support. I've made a point only to support Israeli or Jewish charities, because there is a point when you can do-, and especially when the children are there and involved-, we are very, very interested and try, you know, politically and in every other respect to keep abreast of developments. Well, I'm not very interested in British politics. I mean I think there are things in British politics which are abominable, there are things which are not. I very much applaud Robert Kilroy-Silk for what he did this week, where he wasn't afraid to speak out, I think he has a lot of courage. I think there are a lot of people who are too afraid of their own shadow, who are so politically correct that you can't say anything. And then there are people who should know better than speak out, like Cherie Blair, in this interview with Queen Rania, who expressed an opinion. Now, she's a barrister, she should know better than express an opinion. But people are so infused with hatred or ignorance; I don't know which to call it. So I mean a lot goes on around you and I mean reading the paper and keeping up with politics keeps you from reading good books! But we read a lot. I mean, not so much now because our eyes are not always good to read for long periods, but no, we are not complaining as long as things go as they are and not get any worse. We live a very normal life, if isolated a little bit.

RL: You said that you didn't know so much about being British from the acceptance point of view. Do you feel that you haven't been accepted here?

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BK: Well, I will never be accepted because of my accent. You know, I was once in Devon, trying to ring Mr Bromley and to go through the operator and I said I want to speak to them. And she said, 'Well, you are doing very well with your English, you are doing very well.' And by that time I must have been here thirty years! And one New Year Philip was with us and we were in Harrogate and we were waiting for the lift in Debenhams. And there was a lady in a wheelchair and we were just talking. And she turned to us and she said, 'Aren't you lucky the weather is so good?' – because she thought we were tourists, you see. I'll always have that and it really bothers me a lot, because I speak with an accent. But then somebody said to me, 'You wouldn't have had the accent if you would really have been a linguist.' So I don't know what to believe. So, no, I mean, I can hold my own in every respect really.

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

BK: Well, I think they are probably very much more limited in outlook because they didn't have the experience through no fault of their own. No, we get on very well with people. We meet people on holiday, we've met people on holiday. We always get on very well. We never try to tell them our story, you know, it's only when they start. Particularly when we go to Italy, because my husband speaks such good Italian. 'Where did you learn your Italian?', and then it all starts, you know, when he lived in Italy for five years. No, I mean, I really don't have any inferiority complex. I think my English is good even if it is accented, at least I can say what I mean to say. But no, I think we are as British as the next refugee.

RL: Do you think you've got any kind of continental identity?

BK: Oh, tremendously so. I mean we are makers, you see, we always make things. We bake things, we make things, we eat a lot of wonderful things. I forgot to mention that in 1982 when my husband had the bypass, he was working for a small firm in Millsbridge near Huddersfield and he had to give up work overnight. And that's when he started cooking and his mother was a wonderful cook. And I've hardly really cooked on a grand scale ever since. He does the most fantastic dishes, I mean we eat like kings and we have so many wonderful recipes that other people don't have. And we eat the most wonderful bread and my husband made some wonderful trout dishes, which are a version of the carp which was very popular in Poland before the war. And I'm very lucky I don't have to do it. That doesn't mean that I don't cook, I do cook in between, but we have very good teamwork, we do what we can, each of us. And we support each other. And we don't often have differences of opinion, we do occasionally. But, no, we are continentals, I'm sure we are.

RL: So is it just in terms of food or is it sort of broader than that?

BK: No, I don't know, it's outlook. You know, when we were in Siberia, we said if ever we'll get out of it we will have a day of fast on a Thursday every week, and we'll never get worked up about anything, because what is there to get worked up about? And my husband still believes it, he never ever does get worked up about anything. When he was told he has to have a bypass he said 'alright' and went to sleep – I didn't. But no, we still get worked up about things and we still get worked up about the small things like everybody else and we don't fast. But yes, our outlook must be different. I think something has been probably killed inside you. You don't know what kind of person you would have been. Maybe a better person, maybe a more inventive, maybe you had to cope with things that you wouldn't have. And I look at my children and they are pretty well able to cope with problems. And

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sometimes there are quite serious problems in their work and in their life and I'm very proud of them. I'm very proud that they are so very Jewish and that they can lehen and that they can do everything, especially coming from a family like ours who had to drop everything when we were in Siberia and then picked it up, especially to give children some kind of guidance and direction. Only they're magnified, they are much better Jews than we ever were. And it is very nice to see how well regarded they are in their respective communities, so that's nice to know.

RL: How far did you pick it up when you got married?

BK: When we started, I mean we were married in orthodox shul and we started cooking kosher things. Even when my husband was in Italy and there was no Italian kosher meat, his

mother still soaked it and salted it because you had to do those things. And we were in Uzbekistan, we once went into the old town on Rosh Hashanah, and we attended a service of Uzbekans and Bukharians in somebody's yard. And we had no idea it was New Year, I don't know how we came to know about it. So we tried to keep it, I mean, I'm getting more and more interested in Judaism, and you know, since the children are like that and I don't want to be ignorant. And what's so nice about talking to my grandson Yishai, I can ask him the silliest question and he answers it! I'm not afraid to ask, I couldn't ask a rabbi. And that's very nice. And I read the sedra every week with all the commentaries I can find, just to find some bone of contention we can discuss on a Sunday.

RL: And did you ever join any refugee organisation?

BK: Not really, no. That I don't like, that I really don't like, because those people tend to work in the past, like the Association of Jewish Refugees; we went twice and that isn't my-. I'm not very good at attending meetings, especially slow meetings when you've got to make small talk. The same with Jewish organisations, I haven't got the patience, I always switch off and I'm somewhere else, you know, I might be there, I don't enjoy it. Yes, I used to belong to Bnai Bris we were founder members in Bradford, but that's not my cup of tea.

RL: So did you join AJR?

BK: Probably not, or maybe we did initially. But we only went there a couple of times. No, it's not quite-. There are all kinds of meetings in people's houses in Leeds we were invited to attend. And I have a wonderful friend, a really wonderful friend, which is very exceptional in Bradford; she was selected a couple of years ago as the 'Woman of the War' by the Telegraph & Argos paper. And she just celebrated her 90th birthday. And she is a real angel, she was married, but she never had children and she was a theatre sister; she was a refugee from Germany. And she does good everywhere, everything she ever touches. She always visits people and she does all those things. And she went to one of those meetings, but she said, 'They are not my cup of tea either.' And I don't know, I haven't met those people, but I can't imagine them being-. Usually I don't go out very much because my husband has a rest in the afternoon and I try to be around in case the phone rings or somebody comes and I don't miss it.

RL: You know you said that you were invited at one stage to give a lot of talks. What was that?

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BK: Oh yes, all kinds of, you know, just like today, of course not so long, it wasn't such detail, probably half an hour, three quarters of an hour. All kinds of Jewish WIZO groups or Ladies' Guilds or-, there were lots of them. And then I think I must have done the circuit, it petered out. Or, you know, we were founder members of the Friendship Club in our shul when we first came, sixteen years ago, and I gave a talk to them. My husband gave a talk to the Historical Society. We do this sort of thing, but we don't usually look for it. I mean I don't know how I came to do this. Maybe I thought somebody might listen to it rather than read what I've written. I don't know, I enjoyed it, I enjoy talking to you.

RL: Is there anything that you feel that we might have missed out?

BK: I don't know. Probably not, I think we've covered it fairly thoroughly.

RL: And is there any message that you would like to give?

BK: Well, I'm not one to advise people. There are a lot of wiser people about. But I think: Don't look back, just look forward. And make the best of every day and be thankful of what you've got. And be thankful to be there. And let's hope it's going to be a better world and we won't be struck with anymore dreadful things. It's a very different world we live in now. Very interesting to live for as long as you can to see what will happen.

RL: Thank you very much.

BK: Thank you. Thank you both.

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Photographs

BK: (1) My grandmother, Sophie Danziger, on her wedding day to Leopold Wasserberger, about 1890, in our home town Bielsko-Biała.

(2) Wedding photograph of my aunt Elsa Wasserberger to Uncle Adolph who were married in Bielsko in around 1920.

(3) Walking in the park at the age of seven with my mother, Ida Bienenstock, in our hometown Bielsko-Biała.

RL: Date?

BK: About 1935/36.

(4) That's me in 1941 at the age of 13 with my friend Jenya Korastiljova with whose family, with Galina Korastiljova, with whose sister Jenya I lived while attending school in Taiga in Siberia.

RL: You are on which side?

BK: I am on the left.

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(5) Class of 1943 at the Control and Measuring Instruments Faculty of the Petroleum Technicum in Kokand in the Fergana Valley near Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

RL: Where are you?

BK: I am the one on the right in the front row, first on the right, front row.

(6) The class of 1946 on graduating from the secondary lyceum in Bielsko at the end of secondary education. I am fifth left, second row up, in our hometown, in Bielsko-Biała.

(7) Picture of myself in March 1946 at the age of 19 after graduating from secondary school in Bielsko-Biała.

(8) Summer of 1946, spring of 1946, walking with my cousin, who was in the Polish Army, Eric Wasserberger, in front of the General Post Office in Bielsko-Biała where I worked as a telephone operator. On the left is the theatre, the town theatre in Bielsko.

(9) Graduating with an honours degree in chemistry and mathematics of London University in the summer of 1951 in London, near the Albert Hall, during the presentation ceremony.

(10) That's me, Berta Bienenstock, in my first job after graduating, in the library of Tate & Lyle Refinery, tenth refinery, in Silvertown, London, in the summer of 1952.

(11) The day we were married, on 3 January 1952, in London. My husband Siegfried Klipstein and me, Berta Bienenstock.

(12) Relaxing at home just before the children went off to university and medical school. From left to right: my husband Siegfried, my younger son Philip Klipstein, just on the verge of going to Oxford, myself, and Richard Klipstein, who had just graduated from Oxford and was on his way to medical school in London in the summer of 1976, in our home town, in Shipley in Yorkshire.

(13) Richard showing Mrs Thatcher and Donald Longwood his-, demonstrating the molecular resonance machine at the Brompton Hospital in London. By that time, Richard was a doctor of medicine and also a PhD, on a Friday afternoon in March 1987.

(14) Our eldest grandson, Yishai Klipstein, soon to have his barmitzvah, in the summer of 2003, who is a pupil of the Menorah Grammar School in London.

(15) Our four grandchildren in Zichron Ya'acov, Israel. Left to right: Amichai, who was seven, Noah, four, Gilad, two and a half, and Yonit, one month, in October, end of October 2003.

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THE END