

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	247

Interviewee Surname:	Jaffa
Forename:	Alisa
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	10 October 1935
Interviewee POB:	Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany

Date of Interview:	3 December 2019
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 54 minutes



REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV247
NAME: Alisa Jaffa
DATE: 3rd December 2019
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

Today is the 3rd of December 2019. We're conducting interview with Mrs Alisa Jaffa. My name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we're in London. Can you please tell me your name?

Alisa Jaffa.

What was your name at birth, please?

Alisa Maybaum [English pronunciation]. Maybaum [German pronunciation], in the country of birth.

When were you born, please?

1935, 10th of October.

Where?

In Frankfurt an der Oder.

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

My mother was born in Breslau [present day Wroclaw, Poland], but she was a real Berliner. She lived, until the immigration all her life, in Berlin and loved it until the Nazis came to power. But she had very, very positive memories of Berlin and all the excitement of the 20s and the cultural life that went on there. My father was born in Vienna and came from a line of Rabbis. His uncle, Sigmund, was a well-known Rabbi, and he served in the Austrian army in World War I and after the war. And he got medals and became a captain and there's a photograph of him on his horse. And after he left the army, he decided to [00:02:00] study

for the Rabbinate and went to the seminary in Vienna. And on the first day he turned up there and was sent to a classroom where, on the wall, there was a picture of a cow divided into which portions were kosher and which portions weren't, and he thought, "This is not the place for me." So, he decided to go to the Hochschule [university] in Berlin, where he took his Smichah [ordination] And then he got- once he had the Smichah, he went first- his first community was Bingen am Rhein. Then he moved to Frankfurt an der Oder, where I was born, and my brother, who- born, and then to Berlin. Where he was one of the three main- there was no such thing as the Chief Rabbi really. He was one of the main Rabbis there, and of course, together with Leo Baeck, who had been his teacher, and with whom he remained on friendly terms throughout his life. Yes?

What about your grandparents?

I never knew my Vienna grandparents because... I think my parents did go back to visit to- with my brother but then- and it was very expensive for them to travel at that time. I assume that's why they didn't go regularly, and of course my father's work, but I never knew them. My Berlin grandparents, I do remember. It's one of the few memories I have of Berlin, was being taken by my grandfather. They were both living in the Jewish *Altersheim* [00:04:09], the Jewish old residential home. And he took me to the sukkah [temporary hut during festival of Sukkot]. And I still have a visual memory of that, and working out from the time of year when Sukkot is, it's October, I must have just been three because we left when I was three and a half. Otherwise, I really have very, very few memories of them. Fortunately for them, counter-intuitively, [chuckles] I suppose, both the grandfathers died in the '30s, early '30s or mid-'30s, but both grandmothers were deported. My Vienna grandmother died in Theresienstadt and was killed in it. And my Berlin mother was in Theresienstadt, and then Auschwitz.

We're going to talk now about your own memories but maybe come back to your father towards the end because I've got lots of questions about him, but this is about you, so focus first on you. So, what was the milieu? Do you have any memories at all from your time pre-emigration?

Not really, no. I have [chuckles] one memory. There must have been- what we would call a playgroup for toddlers, and I do remember, it was in a private house. I'm walking around in a circle banging saucepan lids together to- you know- for sound, in time to music, I imagine.

That's one memory I have. Oh, and the other must be my first visit to the dentist. I remember screaming because of the drill and the pain, but I can't really - I don't really have any other memories of Berlin. Oh, and one memory is [clears throat] somehow, in a room, which must have been underground because there were no [unintelligible] windows and my grandmother sitting at a sewing machine. And I imagine she was preparing stuff for us to take with us. She was a wonderful seamstress and made a knitting and sewing clothes and so on. And she was at the machine. I was peering, and she said, "Be careful. This is a very sharp needle, be careful." And of course, being a child, I had to try and the needle pricked my finger. I do remember that, but otherwise, I have no memories of Berlin. That's all.

Which area? Where did you live?

Schöneberg.

Do you remember the address?

Barbarossastraße, I think 23. I went back on a visit to Berlin, but I think the, the apartment block must have been bombed because there was a modern house there.

What did the flat- even if you can't remember, maybe your parents could remember what it did look like.

All I can remember was one room with a white grand piano. My mother played the piano, not professionally, but she played the piano. Yes. And I have one or two photographs of them in their apartment.

Your father was attached to the Oranienburger Straße synagogue or?

I'm not sure about this. I think the Rabbis operated on a peripatetic [00:08:00] basis. So, they would go from one to another because I know [clears throat] my mother said that Pestalozzistraße was he, he also officiated there. So, I'm not sure. I didn't ask enough questions, or it's the same.

It was slightly differently organised because it was an Einheitsgemeinde [a Jewish community which catered to different strands of Judaism], wasn't it?

I don't know. I don't know.

All the Rabbis, whether they were Liberal or Orthodox, were under one umbrella.

I didn't even know that. I didn't even know that.

Hence, it's slightly different from here.

Yes, very much.

They wouldn't-so...

Yes, absolutely. Whereas here you are appointed to one community or not.

Yes, that [crosstalk] imagine. Did he, did he see himself as Liberal?

I was three at the time. I had no understanding or notion of that. But I presume so.

Your brother was older?

Yes, he was six years older than me. And yes, he had very vivid memories of Germany, and he, he was quite traumatised by his experiences. He would get beaten up by the Hitler Youth on his way home from school and he yes, was scarred by that. He...had encourage- he had four children, and he encouraged them all to go to Israel. They didn't, but well, one did [clears throat] or two did. But only one stayed, but he was always metaphorically looking over his shoulder.

Do you think because of his early experience?

Oh, I am sure. I'm sure, yes.

But you can't remember anything? You were too young to understand.

I was too young and I grew up in a stable home with parents and brother. [clears throat] And we lived, in the early years we lived in a street where there were quite a few other refugee families. We also lived opposite an English Jewish family, with whom we became very, very close. And their- one- the young- one son was my age, so we went everywhere together. I've got a photograph of, you know... I mean now you wouldn't allow children of sort of 5, 6, 7 to walk around and go for walks on their own, but that's what we did. Yes. So, it was a secure home, in a- despite funnily enough, despite that it was wartime and there were air raids and- it was all quite fun, actually. And went out in the- if there was an air raid, the people next door- is this relevant?

It is. Basically, it was your childhood memories [crosstalk] here in London.

Next door they had what was called an Anderson shelter which was underground. So, when there was an air raid, we'd go bundle up in blankets and a thermos, and candles, and books. It

was fun. I enjoyed it. I wasn't aware of the dangers except the following day on my walk to school, I would see where there had been a bomb. And, and you could see a house where it was like a stage setting, the sides, and the back was still there, but the front was missing and just some curtains flapping. So, yes, funnily enough, it never occurred to me. Sometimes it did, but, no, I wasn't disturbed by the notion of possibly being bombed. [00:12:00]

That's interesting. What about immigration? Do you have any recall of your journey, of coming to England?

I know we came on an airplane and we landed at Croydon. My father had paid for three seats, and I do remember he was quite annoyed because some- another family occupied one of the seats. So, I sat on his lap, but the steward gave me two sweets to suck, I suppose because of the pressure or something. Anyway, and I remember getting out of the plane, down the steps. It must have been in Croydon, but that's all I can recall.

Tell us a little bit about how your brother came here, and also how your father managed to come out. What happened, in fact, also before his immigration?

Well...before the immigration, in fact, again, strangely, my father was almost lucky because he was arrested... early on before the mass arrests. I think it was just after I was born in '35 because he had been- no. I think it was even in our home. He had invited somebody who turned up at the synagogue on Friday night and my father was, you know. And this was a strange man who was kind of dressed in paramilitary gear with socks, and a dagger in his socks and so on, but he was Jewish. And his name, I, I always give his name because he is known, it is Schoeps and his son eventually became director of the Jewish Museum in Vienna. I did actually meet him once. Anyway, and somehow the conversation must have mentioned Hitler, and this man, Schoeps, betrayed my father to the Gestapo. So, my father was put in the Columbia prison [KZ Columbia] for four weeks, but at a time when it was still possible for them- I think it was intervention from abroad on his behalf because he was quite well known already, and he was released. Had it been later, it wouldn't have been such a good story. He probably would have gone to Dachau.

Did he talk about his time in prison later on?

No. [laughs] No, I own- [laughs] there's one story, yes. Many, many years later, I was about in my teens, I was reading a story by Dorothy L Sayers, a *Krimi* [00:15:13] - a thriller. He

saw me reading, and he said, "Oh, I never did find out how that ended." I was like, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, while I was in prison there was a library. And this book, I had this book and I was reading it. Then the cell door opened, and the guard came in and said, 'Dr Maybaum, you're free to go.'" And he said, "But I haven't finished the book." [chuckles] The same guard said to him, "When you get home, be sure to give that man, Schoeps, a good hiding, *"Verprügeln Sie ihn."* Thereby revealing the identity of the man who'd betrayed him.

Betrayed him meaning that he must have said [crosstalk] something critical of Hitler? Of him?

Something to the Gestapo, yes. Yes, yes, yes. But that's all I know. He didn't talk about it- to my mother.

Then afterwards he continued working and...

Yes, yes. He went back. Yes. But I was probably a month old or something, and my mother just devastated by the whole thing. She had a, well, I don't know, if it was breakdown, but, you know, she really collapsed with the tension and the nerves, understandably.

At that time?

Yes.

You were born also at- in '35, so that's-

At a critical time. Yes, yes. Luckily, it wasn't later that he was arrested. There was another occasion, I think it might have been Kristallnacht, but I know my mother told me that there was one night when it was known that they were arresting Jews, prominent Jews. And he had a colleague, who had a car, and they spent the entire night driving round and round so that when the Gestapo called, my father wouldn't be at home.

Likely to have been Kristallnacht.

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

So, it was on Kristallnacht?

I'm not sure if it was Kristallnacht or another time, but I know this, I was told this.

Because what he- because Oranienburger Straße was one of the few synagogues surviving Kristallnacht, would he [00:18:00] have given sermons and continued to go to Oranienburger Straße after Kristallnacht?

I don't know.

Interesting.

Interesting. Yes, I just don't know. I imagine until we emigrated, yes.

Assuming that he worked until-

Yes, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. And he also wrote, published two books of sermons. I've still got them somewhere.

From that time?

Yes, in German. *'Parteibefreites Judentum'* was one, and I don't remember the other title.

And those were sermons he actually gave?

I think so.

I want to see them later.

Yes, I think so. I don't know where they are. Since I moved, all my books have been muddled up. Anyway, go on. [clears throat]

So, what happened to your brother? You said he left a bit earlier.

Yes. There was a man, a Jewish paediatrician in London, of German-Jewish ancestry. His grandparents had come to, come from Germany at the turn of the previous century. His name was Dr Bernard Schlesinger. And in 1938, he travelled to Berlin just to see what was going on. And he realised the way things were going, and he collected names of, I'm not sure if it was 10 or 12 children, that he was prepared to sponsor and bring to England on a mini Kindertransport. And my brother was one of them. And in fact, there is, there, there was something about- he was concerned, would it be all right because- or would the environment here be sufficiently traditional as my brother was a Rabbi's son. And would you like to know about- a bit more about Dr Schlesinger? Well, he set up, he acquired or rented a property on Shepherds Hill in Highgate.

Which number?

I'm not sure. I could, I could find out. There's no plaque, and I think there should be.

That's why I'm asking you. [laughs]

I think there should be. Excuse me. Sorry. He rented this property as a hostel for the 10, or was it, 12 children, that he had undertaken to bring out, together with a student Rabbi, a *Kindermädchen*.

A nanny?

A nanny, yes, and a housemother, a Mrs Glücksmann. And he looked after all their needs. I found letters saying that this child should be taken to the dentist and another child giving-tuition and so on. He, he looked after all. "Oh, and make sure they've got enough, that they haven't grown out of their shoes." Wonderful, wonderful man. And in fact, he remained in touch indirectly with these children subsequently, because with the outbreak of the war, obviously the children were dispersed. [clears throat] But he- he was sent on army service to India as a- as a... army doctor. His wife, Wini, Winifred, kept in touch with all the children. Every birthday- sent presents. When my brother was bar mitzvah, she sent a present because we have a letter. Was it from my brother? No, to him, saying, you know, his congratulations and so on. So - marvelous family, wonderful family. [00:22:39]

Did they have their own children?

They had five children of their own. One of whom was the film director, John Schlesinger. One went to America. I don't know the details of the others.

And how- do you know how did they select the 10, 12 children?

No, this I don't know. No, I don't know. It's a very big question but one- I didn't ask. I was too young, you know, and I never thought of asking. I wasn't because I was only three at the time. And I was considered- either I was considered or my parents didn't want me to let - to let me go at that age.

And did they travel with somebody or did they travel as a mini group?

Yes. They traveled as a group in the company of this nanny and the student Rabbi and the house mother.

Who was the student Rabbi?

I don't know.

Because it's interesting that they had a student Rabbi. So, whether they...

Elvin someone? I don't know. I don't know.

Because, you know, so, there must've been a Jewish element to it. [crosstalk]

Oh, yes, very much so. Very much so, yes. Yes, yes. And once they were there, I can remember going to visit him with my parents. They also did something. I don't know what's happened to it. Because it was subsequently collated in a folder, a book. They did a daily newspaper and the children would write day by day what happened to them.

I don't know what's happened to that, but I know there are other copies. I know I gave one to my niece who would have one if you want you to see it.

Really interesting. When did your brother leave exactly?

I think at the outbreak of the war. They were dispersed and he went briefly, together with one other boy, to a non-Jewish family. Must have been in Hertfordshire or somewhere because, again, I remember going to visit [chuckles] them for the ridiculous reason that on the path up to the house, there were plaster dwarfs [chuckles] which I'd never seen before. One on either side. So, we visited him there and then, of course... there was the thing about being an enemy alien. And so, we couldn't travel outside where we were living, and my father had to go to the police station every week to report as being an enemy alien. I suppose that meant that my brother had to come back, so we were all together. So, we were really [00:26:00] only apart for- probably a few months.

When, I mean, when did he leave Germany, your brother?

Oh, in the same month as us, but slightly earlier, in February '39.

Okay.

But did- have I already told you that he was really scarred by his experiences before they left Germany because he got beaten up by- on his way to school by the Hitler youth? He was always aware or concerned that something like this might repeat. And he encouraged his children in the end, it didn't work out, but to go to Israel.

And also, do you think the separation, I mean, he had the separation?

Yes, I'm sure it affected him because, probably, being a Rabbi's son, he was very pampered and made a fuss of wherever he went and suddenly that all disappeared. Yes, and he was just one of many and lost that stability, although it didn't last for long.

I assume that when your parents sent him, they didn't know that they would go themselves?

No. Well, they were hoping to, but they were waiting for a visa to leave. And then eventually, please correct me if I said this, that Chief Rabbi J H Hertz sponsored him. So that enabled us to leave.

Do you know how that came about?

No. I imagine that, that he appealed to or he was known about because he was quite an eminent person in Germany, in Berlin. And there may have been a scheme for bringing out Rabbis.

So, he came out under the auspices of Rabbi Hertz?

Yes.

And did he talk about that later? At what point was it clear to them, maybe, that they had to emigrate, or was it something you can't remember?

It wasn't a question of becoming clear. It was a necessity and it was just a question of how. And also, of course, the fact that my mother's mother, my grandmother who was still in Berlin, the other grandmother was still in, in, in Austria. I have some letters, which I have to return to translating. I have a stack of letters, which my grandmother in Berlin wrote. And somehow, I think by way of Sweden or some neutral country, they reached us. And in one of those letters, she says that we're still trying to get the other grandmother, Vienna, we're hoping that she can get a visa. And this was quite poignant because her situation was also that she was trying to get a visa, but she was concerned for the other grandmother. Also, somehow, they were able to send little parcels to, I don't know how, again, probably via, via [00:30:00] a neutral country because my mother mentions- my grandmother, in these letters, mentions getting knitting wool and chocolate and she said, "Don't worry about me. I've got enough. As long as I can get the stamps for the letters, it's fine, I don't need anything." Those letters have actually been transcribed in- and they are in the archives, or copies of them, in Centrum Judaicum in Berlin. I did that when I was last there.

These are your grandmother's letters to your [crosstalk]?

My mother's mother. Yes, to my mother.

To your mother. So, they had to leave the grandmothers [crosstalk]?

Yes, they stop at the end of '42 when, obviously, the deportations started.

Until '42 there was correspondence?

Yes, indirectly I think, by a roundabout route.

Your parents, what could they take or bring? And what did- do you remember anything you could?

Ah, well! That was extraordinary really. I can remember- well, start again. There was a lift, a big container we had our furniture- some of our furniture. My mother had a table linen, and all the- the two sets of milchig und fl- you know milk and meat crockery and cutlery, and the glassware, and this piece of furniture. [chuckles] And, and also, enough furniture to provide the basics. I mean, even their bedroom furniture came in this lift. [00:32:00] And I think probably one of my earliest memories in London, was over here - and because I can still see where we were. Because we lived in various places when we first came. First in Stamford Hill, and then Minster Road in, in not- yes, Minster Road in Cricklewood. And it was in that basement flat, I can still see it, there was a conversation between two refugee families. And the other one- the other family said, or the father said, "We are going to - I think we should leave the lift in Rotterdam, and then when we go on, our original destination was New York, and it will be right at the docks and it will be able to be transferred." And my father, in a rare instance of practicality, because he wasn't always a very practical man, he said, "No, the lift comes with us wherever we go, and it should be brought to us." And this was presumably before the war. And again- how right he was because, of course, the Rotterdam docks were bombed. So, we had our furniture. So, it made for - unlike many refugees who lived in furnished accommodation throughout the war, we had the stability, if you like, and even the paintings. Oh, and in the hallway, you'll see- my- I never told talked, to you about my mother's uncle, [clears throat] Eugen Spiro, was an acclaimed artist in Berlin during the good times. And he had done portraits of the family. When he couldn't afford models, [laughs] he painted his family, and he also painted my mother. And all those pictures, they're out in the hall. We- they could take those as well.

Eugen Spiro?

Eugen Spiro, was my mother's uncle, brother of her mother.

What happened to him?

He got to New York. He actually- they, they went to- they were living in Paris, and then they got to the south of France. And again, the vie bohème, the artistic life. He had his ex-wife with him, and his current wife. [chuckles] And the three of them were waiting day by day to get a visa to go to New York. And it finally turned up in 1940. And they got to New York, I think, probably, the last boat, you know. [And he lived in New York, but he never regained his reputation there so, what did I want to say- oh, because of the pictures.

You brought some of them in the lift?

Yes, yes, I mean, you will see them here.

Okay. [00:35:17]

And...one of the sisters that he painted [clears throat] was- had notorious celebrity because she had been the lover of Rilke. Her name was Baladine [Klossowska]. And there's, I don't know where that is, letters were published subsequently between her and Rilke.

That was one of your mother's?

My mother's aunt?

Yes.

Yes, Else, but she was known as Baladine.

Else. What was her surname?

Spiro. [Baladine's maiden name] Well, no, no Klossowski she married a Klossowski, but they-they separated. But she had two sons with- who, who were my mother's cousins, and one of them was the painter Balthus [Balthasar Klossowski de Rola] of fame, and the other one was Pierre. And they went to Paris and they survived the war. And I visited her in LA. [laughs] And she came to London. And she looked at me, and she said very appraisingly, "I don't know, you don't really look Jewish at all." [laughs] That was a compliment.

Anyway, so her mother there's a correspondence between Rilke and her?

Yes.

It's quite extraordinary.

[laughs] Crazy family.

Interesting cultural, cultural circles there.

Yes. [laughs]

Let's come back to immigration and you said you could bring [crosstalk] the things.

Yes, we were in a much more fortunate situation than many refugees who lived in furnished accommodation.

What about your personal things, do you remember anything you could [crosstalk]?

Yes, I can show you. There's a picture of me sitting in my little chair. I had a little chair and a table that came. And I had my pet stuffed animal called Bonzo. I don't know what happened to Bonzo, but I only remember him because of that picture. [laughs]

He came as well?

He came as well, yes. And of course, my mother had anticipated that they wouldn't be able to [00:38:00] buy any clothing, so she bought ahead. Not for me, obviously. I was very happy to inherit clothing from other people because it was new for me. But for my par- oh, and the other thing was that my father had, as was customary in Germany, a winter coat with an astrakhan collar. You know the fur collar?

Yes.

That wasn't done in this country, so [clears throat] she had to take that off because it was too - it stood out. And the other thing was walking in the street, if my mother talked to me in German, I would reply in English [clears throat] because I was aware that it wasn't - even though I was small. And- also, I think we were instrumental in helping my parents. My mother knew some English, but my father, none at all, and so we would correct their English. My father did have [clears throat] a woman who came to teach him English at the beginning, and she also taught me to knit. [laughs] But, yes- that was the English, certainly, gradually acquired it.

Just to go back slightly. So, you mentioned- how kosher, you said there were different sets, how kosher observed was your family?

Yes, they did keep kosher. Yes. Yes. And we didn't, well, we didn't obviously have a car- but anyway, but we walked to synagogue from [clears throat] Exeter Road to Dennington Park

Road. And I remember that very clearly; walking there and walking back. We didn't ride. And if we went to visit friends, we would walk. Which one often did on a Saturday, we went *to visit friends, or they came to us, yes.*

Your father came under the auspices, but he did not come to a job?

No. No.

He was brought out, but not [crosstalk]?

He didn't have a job for 10 years. But he did occasionally, either conduct services or give a sermon in German. There was a church, and I think it's still there, at the bottom of Quicks Road which goes down to Kilburn High Road which was used as overflow services during the High Holidays. And there, they would be part German, or at least my father would give the sermon there in German for the German Jews, not Belsize Square. But...

Do you why did they settle in the Cricklewood and why Hampstead Synagogue? Was there any reason or any relationship?

Well. I don't know. Oh, Hampstead Synagogue... I don't know why it was chosen. There were other synagogues. You're quite right. Maybe they just liked it- and probably because there were other people that they knew there, I imagine. I really don't know. There was a wonderful Chazzan there called Boyars, I still remember he had a wonderful voice. My brother was bar mitzvah there, conducted by my father. And incidentally, it was very curious because my daughter and son-in-law belong to that community now. And when their youngest son [00:42:00] was bar mitzvah, he was bar mitzvah there, so I; gave a little, a little, what should I say, what do you call it?

Davar Torah?

Yes, mainly, not just about his- he was Toldot. I said, "Because it's Toldot, I'm going to tell you about your family, and the fact that where I'm standing and you're standing, your great-grandfather conducted the bar mitzvah service for your great-uncle." And I sat up in the gallery watching. So, it was a circle there which was completed. But why they chose it? I don't know. I think the Rabbi sub- after the war was Isaac Levy who was known to us and a very nice Rabbi. And my father knew him. I don't know who officiated. I can't remember who the Rabbi was during the war, but I don't know the reason.

And do you think he was in touch with the, let's say, Dr Salzberger of Belsize? Were they...

I think they knew each other, and they did visit from time to- I know that after Salzberger died, my mother would go and visit Mrs Salzberger. And I think she came to us. I vaguely remember she was a very little lady. Yes, they were in touch.

I wonder whether your father, would he see himself as more Orthodox as Belsize at that time?

Possibly, possibly.

I don't know. Just interesting how to-

Yes, people do ask me what his orientation was, and I find it so hard to answer that.

And Boyars was the hazzan?

In Dennington Park Road.

I know- his son, Arthur Boyars [00:44:00] passed away recently.

Oh, really?

Yes.

He must have lived to a great age then.

God, I can't remember either, but he had a beautiful voice. And did they have a mixed choir?

That was also unusual and that changed eventually, but I can't tell you more.

And in that area where you lived, so at Minster Road, there were also quite a few hostels, boarding houses, for the refugees.

I didn't know that. Oh, I see, probably.

Did you [crosstalk]?

I don't remember. I know there was another Rabbi and his family, but we didn't really know each other. Or maybe my father did, just living further up. And I can't remember the name either.

You said there were quite a few refugees in your...?

Oh, yes.

What other people?

Well, there was...lower down, there was a family on the first floor called Fult. He had been, I think, a notary- not notary, a solicitor or something, in Germany- didn't have a job. I don't

know what he did, but his wife took in piece work, you know, to make money. She would sew buttons onto a card, and I remember helping her do that [chuckles] because I liked to do something with my hands. Yes, that was them. Down below, there was a father who was Jewish, but the mother wasn't. Van Damme, he was a bandleader. [00:46:00] So, and who else was there? I can't remember. Above us, there was somebody called Gerber, who was a chiroprapist. And then, [chuckles] at the top floor, there was a woman with two adult daughters. And I think there were suspicions about their activities because there would be men coming in [laughs] at all hours. [coughs] Who else can I remember? My main memory, of course, is the family- the English Jewish family across the road because we were such close friends. They were called Baeck. And they had two sons, and one was my age. So, we spent a lot of time, and then, ultimately, a little girl was born, yes. Who else can I remember? But there were other refugee families. I think they congregated in certain areas, yes.

What other memories have you got from that time, growing up?

What can I remember?

Did you see yourself- you said you picked up English quite quickly? So, did you feel different from the other children? How did you present yourself?

To some extent, I was different because clothes- I inherited clothes. And at that time, I think in Germany, it was customary for small children, to strengthen their ankles, they would wear lace-up boots, and that was a no-no, you know. I inherited these boots, and I got teased about the boots. And also, [00:48:00] I had- I inherited a *Lodenmantel*- do you know what a Loden- which now is, you know, duffle coats are very- but that was also a no-no. I couldn't wear that- well, I did wear it. It's a felt material with a hood. Yes, yes.

It's a felt coat.

Yes. That was also a no-no. [chuckles] So that set me apart. And I had one very good friend my age, who went to my school, long ginger hair, Anne Windie. But I remember going to their house when, for some reason, my parents couldn't - had to be away for the day. And my mother would pack a little basket with the food so that I wouldn't eat there, you know, that I would have stuff, that I wouldn't be given non-kosher food. But I had a vague sort of feeling that they didn't know Jews, and there was something funny about Jews, you know- the, the mother, but the girl was my friend. What else can I tell you? Ah- also, right at the beginning of the war, not far away- I can't remember the name of the turning, off Mapesbury Road,

Rabbi van der Zyl lived with his family. And his daughter and I, Monica, we're the same age. [clears throat] So we would often see each other. I remember going there once on Hanukkah, and we were very impressed. We had a hanukkiyah, but they had made one out of clay with hand candles and so on. [00:50:00] So I remember noticing that, and we lit the candles together. We saw each other occasionally. I think they came to us and we came to them.

Where was he, Rabbi van der Zyl, at that time? Did he have a...?

I don't think he had anything- oh, I mean he came- did he go to West London Synagogue and then to Alyth Gardens? But I don't know what stage. I can't remember. I think it was only after the war that Reinhart got hold of this clutch of German Jewish Rabbis and planted them in various places. But I don't know. I mean you could find out about the when...

Yes. So, he lived nearby as well?

Not far away, yes. Within- well, one walked everywhere.

And did you, did you have an accent at all?

No.

No, so nobody could identify [crosstalk]?

No, but somehow, it was noticed. Yes. There was one occasion when somebody shouted at me saying, "You're a dirty German Jew." So...and dirty Jew was a common accusation. You know, it- I don't think even it was that serious. It was like- you know, anyway. But I remember that, but I can't remember who it was. [chuckles]

In school?

Probably, yes. But, interestingly again-gosh, these are memories dredging up- the primary school I went to was a Church of England, and the school- headmistress had seen me. At the beginning of the day, in English schools, there used to be a service, Christian. And you would say the Lord's prayer, and this and that. And she took my mother aside on one occasion. She said, "I can't bear to see this Jewish girl saying the, the Lord's prayer. She doesn't have to say it. And she can go outside or something like that." [chuckles] The other occasion- ah- that was it. There was an also- I was very cowardly person, really, child. I didn't like, and I still don't like conflict. I don't like arguments, and I don't like conflict. But there was a girl in my class. We had an argument. I can't remember what it was about, and she was the one who called me a dirty German Jew. So, I was far too scared to do this, but I just pulled her hair.

Pulled it very hard until she was screaming. And the same headmistress came past and said, "What is going on here?" And she looked, and the, the girl said, "She pulled my hair." The headmistress looked at me and said, "I really wouldn't have expected that of you." I said, "She called me a dirty German Jew." Whereupon the headmistress Christian, with values, turned up on her and said, "That's a terrible thing to say," and she gave her a real telling of, [chuckles] so I felt justified. [laughs] That was the dirty German Jew. Yes. [chuckles] Funny.

So, you were not keen, so your parents I assume continued to speak German?

Yes, I mean gradually, they- yes. We ended up speaking mishmash you know. We would speak- start a sentence in German, finish in English, or the other way round. Yes, yes, but in the street, no. Not in wartime. No, no. [clears throat] Interesting. [00:54:00] The- my brother went to the grammar school, the boys' grammar school opposite the school that I went to eventually. And there was a boy in the school who sometimes came home with Michael. Again, if his parents- and the father had been an eminent, I think, judge, or something in Germany, and the name was Treitel. And this boy was called Gunter [Gunter]. I had a crush on him. And... yes, he came, and so the families became friendly. And I read recently, he became professor at Oxford, this Gunter. But they would, they would, you know, see each other and invite each other, and so on. Who else? I can't, I can't remember. [chuckles] Nothing comes to mind.

And did you join any clubs? Or any...

My brother was a great Habonim. He was going to go on Hachsharah and so on and so on. I mean, this was Palestine, not Israel. Much to my parents' disapproval. [chuckles] Mainly, he said if he failed his school certificate examination, he would go on Hachsharah. Well, fortunately, he passed. [laughs] And through him, or his influence, I used to go to this small, what do they call it, Kvuzot or something? Habonim on a Saturday and I would walk some distance away to a private house. And you know, we would sing songs and do hora and so on. Yes. And then ultimately when I was about 11, I went to Habonim Camp. That was an education. [laughs]

But your parents didn't send you to a Jewish school?

There weren't any anyway.

There wasn't?

I don't think so. No, they wanted me to have a proper normal state education, but it didn't arise. I did go very briefly to Hebrew classes at Walm Lane Synagogue. Now who is the Rabbi there? I remember he saw me and he knew who I was, because I knew what we were reading and I knew it already. I think it was the shema or something like that. What was his name? I can't remember. But we didn't attend that synagogue we went, as I said, to Dennington Park Road. Yes.

And how did you manage to- how did your parents manage to sustain themselves [crosstalk]?

They were given a weekly allowance, I think my mother- by an organisation. I think it was the Refugee Council or something. It had a different- Central British Fund, [now World Jewish Relief] was it? In Bloomsbury House?

Yes.

And how she managed, I don't know. But they were given a weekly allowance, and I still have somewhere, an exercise book, where my mother wrote down everything she spent. Shoelaces, postage stamps, a bar of chocolate, socks for Michael, you know, this sort of thing. I still got it, in German. I wonder where it would find a welcome home. I don't know if the Wiener Library would like it. And my father gave private lessons. He coached for bar mitzvah. [00:58:00] He also, but that was much later...No, that was when we were already in Edgware, I think, when there were people who wanted to convert for marriage proposals and so on. He would teach them. But in those early years, God knows how they managed. I suppose the requirements were less, in terms of clothing and so on because they had them, but food, I don't know how. I do remember my mother coming home in tears because she had gone to the kosher butcher and the kosher butcher sold decent meat, black-market prices. And even if she had had the money, my mother, she was...she was a very law-abiding person. And she would never have bought something on the black market anyway. And I remember she came home in tears because she had a confrontation with the butcher about this. So- I don't know how they managed. I mean...

Have you ever checked the records in the World Jewish Relief? Have you looked?

I... I think- Lili- do you know Lilian Levy?

Yes.

She gave me the copy. Yes.

You've got some records?

Something, yes.

That would help.

The trouble is, Bea, that when I moved house, things got into such a disorder. And unfortunately, I have a wonderful, helpful cleaner, but in order to help me, she just put things, you know, anywhere and I can't find a lot of stuff, I can't find now, but it will turn up eventually.

The good thing is the Archive still has it. You just have to do another request and they will-

You're right.

It's all digital. [01:00:00] It's not that far from here, probably you could just [crosstalk]

Where are they now? They moved, didn't they?

Yes, they are very close, they're on Childs Hill.

All right.

If they had it then, they'll have it now.

Yes.

So that you can retrieve easily, but did you notice the hardship? Did you feel that hardship?

No, no, I keep stressing, this is why I really don't feel like a refugee because we had a stable home life, there were always people in the house and my parents had connections, not connections but they went to other people. We weren't isolated and to some extent, once I went to school, I integrated not much but, but we had these friends in the streets, so no, I wasn't aware. I mean, this was the difference between myself and my brother, that he really suffered in a way that I didn't. I - and you don't- also to some extent I think it's a question of the cards you dealt at birth, you know, your personality and fortunately, you know, I'm not- I mean I'm much more aware now. As you get older, you start thinking about the past, but no, I had a very contented childhood, I, I was so lucky. Yes. Compared with so many.

Yes, because you were in a community.

In a community, I had my family and I was treasured as a child, you know, and I won't say there weren't occasional arguments, of course, but on the whole, no, I, I... I don't, I don't bear any scars in that way.

Were they, you said it was quite sociable, so were there regular Friday nights and...?

Friday night, yes, we did Friday night and there would be the occasional visitor. Oh yes, there was a man across the road who had- who was also a hazzan, I don't remember his name, but he was from I think- Hungary and he'd left his family behind, so he was on his own. So, my mother would often invite him and... I don't know- there, there would often be not their whole family but people on their own, yes, yes Friday nights definitely. And then on Saturday, we would walk home from synagogue and my mother was such an organiser, she was marvelous. She would have cooked the rice and wrapped it up- the pan- in a blanket to keep it warm. [laughs] And we didn't have a fridge, we had an *Eiskasten* which was a little metal lined box - and I don't know where the ice came from- but she would get ice and [laughs] and the other thing she did to my terrible embarrassment, she grew vegetables and she would go after the milk man's horse and scoop up the, [laughs] the dung and put it on the ground.

Was it [crosstalk] ...garden?

Her father, my grandfather, that's right, he didn't have a job but he [01:04:00] had an allotment and he would go to the allotment regularly and she came with him and I think that she learned about growing stuff that way.

So, she grew stuff in the, in the garden?

Yes.

You said your father was tribunaled, was he interned for- to be an enemy alien? Was he ever interned?

No, no, what happened was and I remember this very clearly, every morning- because various people were-you know - The Home Office came knocked on the door and so my father was pre-warned. So, every day, he went to the public library, stayed there all day and read the papers and that was another way he learned English. And... I can remember on one occasion, my mother was out and my brother answered the door and I know I must have been very small because I was sort of looking through his legs more or less. And my brother had been primed and they said, "Is your father at home?" And he said, "No." And they said,

"When will he be back?" My brother said, "I don't know. I don't know where he is and I don't know when he'll be back," and they didn't come back, so he wasn't interned but several of the neighbours were on the Isle of Man. Yes.

He was lucky.

Very lucky, but he'd been sort of alerted beforehand. Yes, yes.

And then you went to - so you went to finish primary school?

Yes.

Went to grammar school?

Yes, yes. And - oh gosh, yes, and on the first- and that had a uniform, and of course, I didn't have the uniform when I started. And I got teased about that because I wore my brother's school shirt, not on, and I got teased about that, yes. Then, then the uniform arrived and then I could blend in.

So, which year, when did you start the grammar school?

19... must have been '40...45 because I was youngest, I was the youngest in the class because my birthday was October and usually, you start September- anyway. So, I think it must have been '45.

Just after the war was finished?

Yes. Yes.

And how did the end of the war affect you? Or did that affect you at all or your parents?

I can remember walking home with my mother and my brother rushing out into the street to greet us waving "unconditional surrender" and that was the end of the war obviously, yes, yes. And the other thing I remember, I must have stayed overnight at these friends across the road because I saw the headlines, when- you know - the election- that was later, that was '47 when Churchill was chucked out, he wasn't re-elected.

Right. And at the end of the war, did your parents still hope to find the grandmothers or did they?

Yes, but they tried but- there were letters... I can't remember what, happened. I suppose they went via the Central British Fund [for German Jewry; now called World Jewish Relief] or whatever it was, of course they tried. Oh, I know what happened. When Leo Baeck came to

London, [01:08:00] he told my mother that he'd seen her in Theresienstadt because he'd been in Theresienstadt.

And he saw your...?

My grandmother and he told my mother that she'd been giving English lessons there and then. Then she was deported.

What was the grandmother's name?

Bertha

Bertha?

Schor, but before her marriage, Spiro, Bertha Spiro. She was one of nine.

Bertha Spiro, whose brother was...?

Yes, Eugen and then there was a sister who went to Paris and she survived the war. She was married to a non-Jew, they were both artists. And one went to Denmark- Denmark or Sweden and I don't know about the rest.

Leo Baeck saw her- met her in Theresienstadt.

Yes, because he knew her anyway through my parents, yes, yes, so they realised what had happened and possibly, possibly he told her about my father's mother's as well. But I don't know for sure.

After the end of the war, for your parents, did they ever consider- your father, think of going back?

Never, never. My mother would never have done it anyway. No, no, my father did go back. He was invited but this was later I think in the late '40s. He was invited to- in conferences, to address them and he went and at first, my mother wouldn't go. And then, in the end, she did come with him. He was also invited to Stockholm to apply for being a rabbi there and funnily enough, I was in Stockholm this spring and I went to the synagogue. Oh, I might have ended up there but fortunately he didn't get the job. I mean it would have been yet another new language and so on and so on, yes, but how they managed to exist, I don't know. But I was never aware of any kind of- deprivation or anything. I mean, obviously, the diet was- [phone rings] I'm going to ignore it. [phone rings] Where were we?

Yes, we were talking about the post war and you said Stockholm... [crosstalk]

Yes, and he was asked to apply for a post there but fortunately, he didn't get- but he came back and this was immediate post war, where there was still rationing and he brought butter, silk stockings, he brought beer. Proper watch, because I had only had my brothers big old watch which, again, was not, not the done thing and he bought me a lovely little watch. And that was a time when you had to go through customs and my mother said, "Well, did you declare all this?" All silk stockings for her and oh- my brother got a- one of the first ballpoint pens. And he said, "I wrapped them up in my, my rabbinical gown," [laughs] and she was horrified and my brother sort of invented headline "rabbi smuggles goods- contraband in canonicals", but [01:12:00] nothing happened. Yes, and, and my mother was so startled but she just gorged on it and then she was terribly ill afterwards. [laughs] Yes, so that was Stockholm. Yes. But as I say, he didn't get the job so, yes. And then when was it? '49 we went to Edgware? Was it '47? I can't remember exactly.

Then he did get a job as a...

Yes, yes. It was a radical change and it was a community. Very small community which had been virtually run- they, they had a succession of rabbis, none of whom stayed. Mainly because, the community had been set up by two spinster sisters who ran the place, you know, and everybody had to do what they said. And my father wasn't having that [laughs] and he had a tough time at the beginning. Oh, that's right and it had a chairman. Chapman his name was and he also was used to laying down the law and so on But- and it was quite difficult for my father in a foreign accent and gave sermons. He didn't care if nobody understood them. He just gave his sermons [laughs] and he persisted. And then he was - then eventually, they realised what a gem they had and he was very loved and appreciated but at the beginning, it was very hard for him.

It was a reformed synagogue?

And it was a reformed synagogue. So gradually- and it started off when we first went. The services were held in -they didn't have their own premises, in the congregational hall, church hall. And we had to arrive early and turn the pictures of baby Jesus to the wall [01:14:00] [laughs]. And we, we went up by bus from Cricklewood to Edgware and back again, yes. Or after the service, that's right. We had to eat our Friday night supper very early and then afterwards, we would always go to these two ladies, the Miss Barnets. Miss Barnet, yes.

And... but eventually, then there was a kind of palace revolution. There was a young man who subsequently became very successful, Sydney Mason and he was- who was his protégé? He took over from some very successful property man and anyway- he eventually got himself elected or I don't know, there was shenanigans but that's right [laughs]. These friends of my parents, their sons told me recently that they never went to synagogue but when there was a vote needed at the annual general meeting, they were sort of marshalled into going and voting for the person my father wanted elected. So, this chairman was got, got rid of and the two women were got rid of and things changed and then they acquired a property in Edgware, just a very small one and then it expanded and expanded and became eventually, I think one of the biggest congregations in communities in London. Yes! So.

Did you move as well to Edgware?

Eventually, yes. They- we found a house- what happened? That's right. The synagogue paid for it and then, and the house was- I hadn't lived in a house... The first days, I spent just running up and down stairs. That was such a novelty. And we had a-

How old were you when you moved?

I was 11- I think.

You were quite young.

Yes, and that meant that I had to take the underground- overground that- the tube to school and back, was much longer journey but I was all right. Yes, and that was a big change. We had a nice garden and yes, it was good. And my- the furniture fitted, the *Esszimmer* [dining room] and my father's study and sitting room and everything. Yes, it was nice- it was very- and eventually, when the restitution money came in, my parents purchased the house from the synagogue. So, they were property owners [laughs].

Yes. But did he manage to adapt to this new support?

Yes. He had to. Force majeure - you know.

And his sermons were in English at that point?

Yes. Oh yes. Oh yes.

Had to be. They were not [crosstalk]. Yes, but people came to appreciate- he had, he had a wonderful facility for relating to people and I've heard it said, you know, he would conduct a

funeral for somebody he never met but the relatives would come to him just and speak to him for maybe half an hour and he would give a hesped [eulogy] and they said, people would say, "But did Dr. Maybaum known them?" and, no, he'd never met them but he spoke as if he had [01:18:00] known them. He had this facility and people warmed to him. He had a very nice personality in that respect. He had wonderful pastoral gifts and if anybody died, I remember. And often, because I was so young, I would go with them to the shiva and that taught me something because at first, I thought, "Oh, this is horrible." You know, sitting around. And then I realised what a therapeutic thing a shiva is. That, that taught me. Yes.

So, you were very much part of this...

Absolutely, yes, yes, I went most places with my parents.

And your mother as well? Supported...

Oh yes. She was there 100% for my father.

Did he continue his writing?

Oh, yes. All the time. He published and again, I can't find them now. He wrote I think something like nine or ten books, he had published. The first ones, that's right. The first one which is out of print and it's the only one I haven't got is sermons he gave, was called, 'Man and Catastrophe' and it has an introduction by the Archbishop of Canterbury. How that happened, I don't know. Yes, and he was always at his desk writing.

Are there any recordings of this sermon? Sound recordings with anyone?

There was? No. There was one which went on the radio and unfortunately, we were in the car and I didn't catch it and it was before. I don't know. I think the BBC has recently wiped all its tapes I think, so I wouldn't have it.

Did it appear on the- was it the-

Radio.

He was interviewed or? Or they?

Yes, I think so, or he gave a talk, I don't know, and he gave talks on the third program and there was, ah- I know, but that was the last thing he did and I have got it somewhere but it's on film. He didn't an interview with Dutch television and that's the last thing he did and then he became ill and he died shortly afterwards. So, I don't know who's shown or what.

When did he or when did all of you become British?

Ah- that was, in fact, I've got the naturalisation paper here somewhere. I think it was '46 or '47 and I remember my father being very concerned before he was called up. He said, "Do you think they'll ask me about cricket?" [laughs] No idea about the rules of, you know, football or anything like that. So, but he was okay. Interestingly he was- and my mother automatically got British, well we all automatically got it. Yes, I've found the paper, I've got it here somewhere.

Was it important for him?

Oh yes, yes, they were both very staunch British citizens and my father referred, and I think of it today- given the situation with refugees and so on. He, he appreciated Britain as the land of fair play, ethics and principles and so on. Yes, yes, both of them, they thought Britain was, I suppose by comparison with where they'd come from, may not have been as cultur- but then I know my father actually appreciated British literature, he read the classics, he- the 19th-century classics, he read poetry, yes, secular stuff. Yes, yes.

Did he consider himself then sort of British [crosstalk]?

No, I mean, he didn't consider himself- well, he, he, he was, he felt allegiance to this country in every way, yes, yes. Obviously, you can, you can become British and never become English. If you English born as you probably know but- and in a curious way, you haven't asked me that but when I'm asked, you know, what's your- it's multi- multi-cultural me, I mean I only feel really English when I'm abroad. [clears throat] Then I stand up for all the British principles and so on and so on yes, yes, and disapprove of things that wouldn't be accepted in this country or used not to be, otherwise- changing...

Yes, otherwise, you see yourself as what?

As... intercontinental. [laughs] Multi, because, you know, I have my Jewish, my English, my foreign whatever, culture or roots.

And also, you explored your roots in your studies when you decided what to study, is that correct or tell us a little bit about this?

I don't think so, I just, I've always liked languages and okay, it was an advantage that I knew German and even today, the grammars of it. That was an advantage but I, I liked [01:24:00]

French equally and I liked literature. So that was- I don't think it was a question of roots, no, no I just liked languages.

It was interesting?

Yes, but having said that, my real studies and, and so on were only after university, I just wasted my time at the university.

Why? You...

I just didn't study hard enough and I didn't know.

What did your parents want you to do or your father, what, what did they think would be your- [crosstalk]

They never expressed anything, they never forced me to do anything. They were very... what's the word? Agreeable to, they let me do- I'm, I'm really in retrospect, I find it quite surprising, I mean certain things. You've got to be home at- you know and if I wasn't and so on but on the whole, they never forced me into anything. And ...if I had decided to do- my mother wanted me to make- to be a silversmith, she thought I would and which I wish now I would like to have done that. But anyway, no there was no, no pressure, surprisingly.

Your brother, what did he decide to do?

Well, that's an interesting one, [clears throat]. You would have thought he'd go for one of the intellectual professions or something like that but we had friends, they were lovely people. He was Joseph Heller, not the author but another Joseph Heller who was of Russian-Jewish extraction who was a hebraist and very cultured man. And he said to my brother once, "Why don't you study dentistry? And that can take you anywhere you decide to go. It's something you can, you know, you can put in your bag." And so, and he took him up on that and he became a dentist. But he always felt that he didn't want to be considered just a mechanic, you know. He wasn't much home but he was very successful, had a marvelous way with children in particular in the early days when children were terrified of dentists. And he studied under a very good professor who introduced ways of, you know, calming the children down and he became a very, very successful dentist, he had very wide practice.

Where?

In Edgware. Yes. When, when he first set up, I, I wasn't- I didn't have a job, so I was his nurse- in a white coat- but that didn't last long. He was very successful, very good but he was very much aware of that he didn't want to be regarded just as... a mechanic, if you like. He was very involved in history and politics and so on.

So where did you learn, study?

Where did I study?

Yes.

In London. London University, Bedford College.

So, you stayed with your parents?

One did at the time unless you went to Oxford or Cambridge, people didn't move away from home. I mean, some of my fellow students [01:28:00] who came from out of, out of London obviously lived on-campus or whatever but no, you didn't and it would have been very expensive. But there was no question of it. No, no. I still managed to enjoy myself.

And what did you do after you finished?

Yes, now that's interesting, what did I do? Well...the first thing I did, was to take a shorthand and typing course which I hated. I just hated it and I thought, "Well, I don't want to be a secretary." And then I got a job as a publisher secretary in Routledge where- who had published one of my father's books and he knew one of the editors, so I got a job there. And then I went to Israel on one of the schemes just for about two months and my father was terrified I was going to settle there. And then I came back and I got another job with different Fleet Street Publisher and they had just bought the foreign rights for some travel books. They weren't exactly guide books but they were groundbreaking, they were about the history and the culture of the country and so and so on. and they were in French. And I said to my boss, "I'd like to, can I try and translate these?" And I did. And the first one and it was all right and I did the second one. And from there on- I also got an introduction to, through some other friends to a very established translator, called Michael Bullock. I met him socially. And he asked me about myself. I said, "I want to really do this as a career or as a profession." And he said, "Look, I'm very busy at the moment. And I'm in the middle of something. Could you finish it for me while I do the next job?" And he was really kind because he insisted that my name went on the title page together with his, and that was the start. And then ... I got several

art books from Thames & Hudson, which were leading publishers of art books at the time, and did them and then it just snowballed from there.

So, what books were you translating?

Mainly, at the beginning, mainly art, the history of art, travel...

Such as for example?

What can I tell you? There you are. There's one of them. Modern Austrian Art. God, I can't even remember.

Written in?

German.

German.

Yes, yes, yes. German-English. Only into English. And- oh yes- first of all, these French into English, and then Thames & Hudson gave me a series of books. god, I can't- one was about Egypt. I can't, I can't honestly remember. I did- I've got, I've got the list. I've got my CV on the computer. And then I went on to do more general books. And I did- where is it? Anyway, ...anyway.

Don't worry about it.

Just- and I never- oh, that's right. That's what happened. Somehow, and I never [01:32:00] knew how, an editor of an East German publishing company found my name, wrote to me and said, "I'm coming to London to try and sell rights. Could we meet?" We met. He said, "Would you be interested in translating this?" And from then on, they sent me a whole lot. I mean- it was a strange thing because they didn't use an agent. They did it directly through their editors. And there was the other thing- t hey had shortages of decent paper in East Germany and so on. He was from Leipzig. Anyway, that developed actually into a personal friendship, but that's how it started. And then- I never had an agent. But people- once my name was known, people would come to me directly.

From East Germany, what books were they?

They were mainly art books as well. No, no, no, they were art books. And this company specialised in doing- that's right- in doing art books. And because they were kind of ...poster boys, if you like, for good art publishing, they could get decent paper to publishing. And the

English publish- translation was published also in Leipzig, which was unusual. Anyway, and then as I say, my people began to know my name and they would approach me, so I never had an agent.

Did you have to go to East Germany and to Germany?

I didn't have to.

Did you?

Eventually, eventually I went once with my mother to Berlin, and we crossed over at Friedrichstraße because she wanted to see- because my grandfather, her father, has a grave. He died before the, you know, the war. So, he has a grave- well no, it was '41, but before the deportation. So, he has a grave, so she wants to go to there, so we crossed there.

Where is the grave?

In Weißensee [01:34:28]. So, I went there, and I remember we were on that side and the wall was still up and it's still communist, and we wanted to get a cup of coffee somewhere and a piece of cake or something. And it was an instruction. It really was a learning- because, you got the impression that under the communists, service was menial. considered- so slap it on the table. Have you got this cake? No. Finished. You know, there- I don't know if you ever experienced this. But, you know, it was quite interesting just to see. So that was my first visit to the East. And then I met a French friend in Berlin. Ah- it was for the opening of the Jewish Museum in Berlin. And we also, we went over, I think the wall was still up and we went across as well. But it was remarkable.

Was it the first time your mother? No, you both had been with your father to Germany.

Yes, yes, yes. I can't remember the purpose of that. Why did we go? I don't remember what the incentive was or why.

When was your first visit then to West Germany or to Germany?

Well, I went for the museum because I had to be the courier- because I was the only one who could speak German. So, I got involved in the contract and this and that.

This is the Jewish Museum?

Yes. We did a loan. The first time was in Frankfurt, in Frankfurt Museum. I arrived on a Monday with my- and it was closed, so what do I do with the, the, the object? Anyway, I went to Frankfurt and then again, for the museum, I went to Berlin. I went several times. Yes.

What was it like for you?

Well, it was interesting. When I went with my mother too, it was, well, my mother enjoyed it very much because she rediscovered places she had known. Oh no! I know when I went. It was when they had a big, big, big exhibition in the Walther-Gropius-Bau. And that's when I met my friend, Hannah, whom you don't know. Hannah Schütz, Hannah Smith. So that was the first time I went. And then I went with my mother. I can't remember why we went. I don't know. What was my impression? Well, when we first went and the wall was still up, you could see, "Wow. What a difference between the East and the West." Where did you grow up, Bea?

Cologne

Ah, that wasn't the- that was very striking, and, and the buildings were all still nothing had been done to them and so on. That, that was instructive. [01:38:00] Yes, yes.

Did you feel that you're coming somewhere which is somehow familiar to you?

No. No, I mean, we'll come to this in a minute about Berlin altogether. When I first went back with my mother- why did she- oh, I know why we went. You know, it was this scheme '*Ehemalige Mitbürger*' [former fellow citizens]. Which was set up actually by Hannah's father, Schütz.

Bürgermeister [mayor]

Yes, yes, yes. So, we went on that.

She was invited.

She was invited and she said, "Come with me." Which I did. I felt, I didn't feel any, I didn't have strong emotions, but every now and again, there was something which sort of jumped out from around the corner and I suddenly felt I could see the history. For example, there was an old tram car somewhere near, near the Friedrichstraße, which was used as a shop. So, they had all sorts of things there. I saw a pair of silver candlesticks there and I thought, "Where did those come from?" You know, it was totally irrational, but a few things triggered an

emotional reaction. But otherwise, no. The more I'd been back, the more I realise what a different city it is now with four universities and lots of young people. And it's a new city, really. I mean you can't eliminate the history. But do you know a bit about Berlin?

A little bit.

Yes. You can't eliminate it, but on the other hand, it's vibrant, it's interesting, the culture is there. So, in fact, I'm, I'm talking with my cousin, the granddaughter of Spiro, who I got friendly with now. And we were talking, we want to go to Berlin again. Yes, it has a different appeal now, yes. You can't eliminate the history, you're conscious of it, but it's a new city. Yes.

Speaking of identity, when, when you had your own children, what- tell us a little bit about your husband, how you met, but also how did you want to raise them? What identity did you want to give them?

This country. And you ask them and they have Jewish identity, although my older daughter, is just totally- a religious, you know, she's totally secular. My younger daughter, no, she's observant- more observant, not, you know, crazy or anything like that but middle of the road. But they know they are Jewish, but English, you know, I mean English- born, they grew up in a place where there were very few Jews in South London. There was a very small community, there were only about in each of their classes at school, one other Jewish child.

Where was that?

Bromley.

Is that where you lived?

Well, that's where my husband was in practice, he was GP. And yes. That was a very different existence and we had a lot of non-Jewish friends. And...

How did you meet your husband?

At the time, [01:42:00] there, there- one would go for coffee to somebody's private house, you know, coffee evenings. And I went, I was asked, somebody phoned me up and said, "Are you free tomorrow night, would you like to come?" This is somebody I hardly knew, and I said, "Well, actually, I was going to finish reading 'Doctor Zhivago', but yes, I'll come." I came, there were few people, some of them I knew. And halfway through the evening,

somebody appeared looking rather haggard. "Oh, that's Doctor Jaffa." I thought "Oh God, he must work hard, you know, looking really like this." [laughter] Anyway, we started talking and, and he offered to give me a lift home in his car and, talk about sophistication, this was a beautiful car, a Sunbeam Rapier. And none of the young men I knew had cars of their own. I said, "That's a nice car. Is it your dad's?" He said, "No, it's mine." [laughs] Anyway. That's how we met and we might never have met because he came in late, because he'd been to another such gathering and there was no talent there, so he moved on to this one. And- the person at whose house it was, was the only person we knew in common. You know, he came from South London, how would we ever have met? So, you know, real chance. Yes, so that is how we met.

He was in Bromley.

He was in practice in Bromley. Bromley- you know, people would say, "Do you need a visa, to go?" [laughs] It was just out of reach. Anyway.

What was his background? Or what...

His parents were both British born, but ancestry was on the one end side... his father's family had come from Frankfurt am Main in the 19th century and his mother's family from Russia, or the Pale of Russia. Yes, but not educated at all, he was the first one, the only one in the family- oh no, he had a sister who died, who went to art school, but he was the only one who went to university. So, it wasn't a particularly cultured background, though his mother was a great reader. Great reader- we used to share books once I was in the family. Yes, yes.

When did you get married?

1960.

And your father officiated?

Yes.

Tell us a little bit about the occasion.

I can't remember very much. All I remember was that at the reception, we were sort of shaking hands the whole time. I didn't have anything to eat, I didn't have any fish balls. [laughs]

This was in Edgware?

Yes, the reception was in Edgware. And... of course, I, I was a bit annoyed because my father had to invite all sorts of people, including one person who I didn't want there because he had once been very unkind or rude to my father, but he had to invite him because that was a long time ago, but I bore a grudge about that. Anyway, so, I don't remember very much about it. It was just a tea, there was no dancing or anything like that and then dinner in the evening. But it wasn't, it wasn't a particularly, it doesn't stand out particularly as the [01:46:00] best day of my life or anything like that. [laugh]

But for your father, it must have been.

Oh yes, there is a very nice photo somewhere of him leading me in. Yes.

Because it was a special thing [crosstalk] as a rabbi to be able to...

Yes, of course, but I took it for granted. That's my father, and this is what's- how it's done.

Then you moved to Bromley.

First, we lived in a place called Blackheath which was very pretty, we had a very nice flat and my older daughter was born there, but there was no room. She used to get put in the cot in the dining room. We had a dining, we had to have a dining room, dining room furniture and a living room, bedroom, but no nursery. So, the cot got wheeled and if we had guests for dinner, the cot went into our bedroom [laugh]. And that was until I became pregnant for the second time and there was no room for- the high chair stood at the door to the kitchen, and I couldn't pass the high chair as my stomach got big. So, that was the time to move to Bromley. We'd found a very nice house, which was- it was a good time, it was nice. We made a lot of friends in the area, mostly non-Jewish who all knew we were Jewish. But, you know, we had a good social life there, it was nice and the children went to nursery school and then to a school there. It was good. It was very green, an easy connection to town, yes, it was good. But it wasn't North West London [laugh]. So, I didn't get here till much later on.

Did you miss it?

In a way, yes, because most of our friends were here. So, it was quite an adjustment. At the beginning, I was very lonely until I found friends. And then I got work, but I always worked from home.

You continued the translation?

Yes. Yes, yes.

We never spoke about it. So, did you, speaking of refugee area in North West London, so did you go to or did you know 'The Cosmo' and the *Finchleystrasse* and all this? Or was that...?

That was a higher, older generation. Yes, yes. I, I, I couldn't go to this thing, the...did you go?

The Ballad of the Cosmo.

Somebody told me you didn't miss anything [laughs].

That was not your type of-- [crosstalk] that was older...

Not really.

And your parents, did they go to these things?

I think once or twice. My parents were members of the lodge, the B'nai B'rith lodge and yes, they would go. They knew, they knew people there. Yes, yes.

I know some famous refugee in Bromley.

Who is that?

It was Sir Karl Popper, lived in Bromley. Did you come across him?

I know the name but I never- we didn't socialise. He would have been older than me, surely. Yes, yes. I didn't know he lived in Bromley.

Yes, I visited him in '88, 1988.

Really? Were you doing this?

No, no, I was a student and I don't know how long he'd lived there, but he was an old man when we went to Bromley. [crosstalk] [laughter] So then you had two children and-

Yes. And then Nina went to Birmingham University and after her first. And, and then, while she was in her first year, my husband became ill. He was diagnosed with cancer. And he died, he dies just as she- she had to come home. It was the end of her first term at university. And yes, that was really hard. It was hardest for my younger daughter because she was at home all the time, and she could see him deteriorating, you know. But I have to say, my neighbours were just marvelous. The non-Jewish neighbours, they just pitched in in every way and helped. Afterwards, I was on my own, but I was continued to be invited and so on. They were very supportive, very, very supportive, non-Jewish, yes. More so really than the community which was very small.

What's that community? Where did you grow up?

It's a little reformed synagogue in Bromley with- well, they had a succession of rabbis, but the one who stayed was somebody called David Freedman. You know him? Yes, well, anyway, so...he ran off with one of his pupils, [chuckles] So he was not very well-respected after that. Anyway, so yes, I was, I was on my own. I was really lucky because I got wo- [01:52:00] I had already been teaching in the evening classes. I taught adults, I continued to do that and I got work. Oh, yes, and then, of course, I got the museum job.

Yes, how did that happen?

There was an advertisement. I answered the advertisement, and then I couldn't go. I became ill. I think I had, that's right- I got glandular fever after my husband died, who knows, you know, connection. Anyway, so I couldn't go. And then a year later, the same advertisement appeared for the same post. And I applied and I got the job.

What was the job?

The job was documentation officer. You know what does that mean? They had cupboards full of stuff and I had to record it, document it, archive it. And you know, I always described it as like being a wardrobe mistress in the theater, that you have to know where everything is.

And was it for the Jewish Museum, was it still in Woburn?

Yes, in Woburn House. And then my boss went to America for some conference or something. And he went around to other museums and he said- he came back and he said, "Alisa, people who do your job in the America, they're called registrar. I think you'd better be a registrar." So, I had a title, registrar. And then we moved. We got the property. Raymond Burton financed the property in Camden Town. A d that was lovely, I mean, to move from that awful place in Woburn House where we had one room. We had one room... two purpose-built accommodation where I had my own office. It was lovely, really nice. The display area was so lovely. It was great. It was done by an award-winning architect, so that was great. And what's more, as I said before, because I was the only German speaker, increasingly, we were asked for loans and I would always be the courier. I even went, I went to New York with a little machzor this big, no bigger than the cigarette box. And I took it to New York as a courier, got paid for.

What sort of things that the Ger- you said the Germany, what were they interested in?

Judaica. Judaica. There was a big exhibition in Nuremberg. When was it? In '91 or something like that. And then of course, there was *Jüdische Lebenswelten*.

In Berlin.

In Berlin. So- what did we do? Oh, yes, I took a big crate for that. Yes, and that was very interesting because they didn't do what we did. We would put the installation up ourselves and they were profess- they had professional companies who would come and install everything for a temporary exhibition but all with white gloves and, you know, very professional. It was very interesting for me to watch. Yes, so that was marvellous, to have that job. Because I learnt- I said in the- I think it was when I left, my leaving speech, I said, "The joy of going to work every day knowing that you would learn something new, so stimulating." I got to know the collection. [01:56:00] I mean, it's not to everybody's taste. It's Judaica mainly, but they're beautiful things and artifacts, silver and so on, and the history. So it was a wonderful job.

Those were exciting time where it was from a small, little communal place, [crosstalk] to a more public space.

Exactly. It expanded.

Rickie Burman came.

The Rickie came and I still worked under Rickie for a while, and then I had to retire because of my age. Yes, yes. But that was great. That was really best part of my professional career.

You enjoyed it.

I really enjoyed it. And meeting people and people would bring stuff in for... information. Sometimes, I could give it, but other times- and that's the other thing I have found out that- museum people are very generous with their knowledge. You know, I'd say they bring something in, and I said, "I'm not sure about this. I think you should take it to the British Museum." And I'd phone up the curator there, and she's, "Yes, of course." Very, very- or if we had something and I wasn't sure, you know, people would give you their time and their knowledge very willingly, very generously, which is not always the case I think with scholarly people.

The actual museum world.

Yes. It's an interesting world. Yes.

It is. You did deal with the social history aspect of things or what?

No. No, that was, that was Rickie's thing. No, no, I was mainly the Judaica. Yes, yes.

Any objects which stand out for you now when you think about it?

Well, there was a Torah crown. I think it was a keter torah made by a silversmith called Abraham and Lopez Oliveira who had been Spanish but had come to England in the 17th century, a beautiful thing, you know, lovely. I can't really describe it. But it was just- [that's outside]. I can't describe it now, but it's just the, the craftsmanship, the workmanship, beautiful, and the history. Yes, and then- other objects, I can't remember. I once had to say which was my favourite and I can't remember what it was now. [laughter] There were some lovely pieces, yes, from the, from the craftsmanship point of view.

And today, you're a member of which synagogue?

Belsize Square. Yes, yes. It's not the same as it was under Rodney. Did you know Rodney?

Yes.

Yes, of course, yes. But...

Is that important to you that that has a German- that it has a connection?

No. The reason I joined was the music. I loved the, the singing yes, and the melodies.

Well, the music is connected too.

Yes, but I think it's one of these things that I was going to say about Berlin as well, that you- that it's an inherited memory. You don't actually remember it. And it's the same with, with Berlin, when people ask me about Berlin and it's kind of- I don't know if there's a word for it. It's a nostalgia for something you don't know. All I knew about Berlin was my parents [02:00:00] mentioning the street names and from reading '*Emil und die Detektive*'. [chuckles]

In German?

Yes, I did read it in Germany as a child. Yes. But I didn't know Berlin at all and it's the same- yes, there are certain things which you warm to maybe subliminally, I don't know. [laughs]

Well, is the nostalgia, is it for your parents' world in some way also?

Possibly, no, I don't know.

Or the world you didn't quite know. I don't know.

Exactly, I, I find it very hard to articulate or to analyse.

In any case, you liked the music in Belsize.

Yes, I've always liked singing and sometimes I sing. They have a, a nonprofessional choir and I sing in that. We actually sang, did I see you there? That anniversary service in Westminster Cathe- Abbey?

Yes, you did. Did you sing in it?

We sang in that. Yes, what a privilege. What an amazing country that the, the biggest religious edifice invites and then allows a Jewish ceremony to be conducted there.

On the occasion of the Kindertransport [crosstalk].

Yes.

And do you feel- apart from the music, does it feel like a continental...? Is there any other evidence to the...?

Well, not really. I mean, they, they are descendants of the founder members and a lot who aren't anymore. And- it changed a lot with the current rabbi who's Californian, and who's not been very popular actually. People missed Rodney. [laughs] He had a special touch. But it doesn't, not really. I mean, I'm trying to think. No, I just- initially I went there because when I lived in Chalk Farm, it was the nearest one, you know. So ...Now, it doesn't make that much sense, but still- I belong there. Once you change synagogues, you're probably too young to be aware of that, the burial rights! I mean it costs me-

You have to stick with the movements. You work with the synagogue but with the movements.

Exactly and I changed. I had to start paying again because Belsize isn't part of the...the West London lot. So, anyway, [chuckles] So you can't, it's too expensive to change. [laughs]

But you're also a member of the AJR, Association of Jewish Refugees [crosstalk]?

Yes, but I don't do much, you know, I mean- and very occasionally, if there's something that interests me, I will get- a special talk, but I'm not active in any way. I mean, maybe you should, you could tell me what I should be doing.

What there is?

Yes.

Because how do you see- how do you think should this heritage or legacy sort of be brought forward [crosstalk]? What do you feel about it?

I am a bit- I, I don't think one can look back too much. Obviously, you have to be aware of your heritage, but I think you have to move forward and adapt and things are changing so much. Okay, you can bring the benefit of your experience and background to a new are- age, but you can't live in the past.

Did you talk about the past with your children, for example?

[02:04:00] Ah...Well, when they ask, yes, but I don't inflict it on them. [laughs] Yes.

What about your parents? Were they still...?

Well, you know, first of all, my father was very concerned to, to adapt and acclimatise to the local culture. And, you know, when you're younger, you just don't think about these things so much. The important thing is raising your kids and entertainment and social life and so on. Well, in my case anyway, it certainly didn't feature very prominently. In addition to that, my husband was totally secular. He was, I mean, he was aware of his Jewishness but completely secular.

Are your daughters interested in their- in this aspect of history?

Well, I'm aware of it. Do you mean the continental?

Yes, the continental.

Sure, sure, it impacts. Of course, it does. And I follow, I try to follow what goes on. I mean, I get this, do you know 'aktuell' from Berlin, this magazine. Do you know it? [magazine for former Berliners, who were persecuted during the time of the Nationalsocialism and were evicted from Berlin]

No.

No? I'll show you. I just got the latest one, which is done in English and German for former peop- residents of Berlin.

Published by?

The...

Don't get up now.

Don't get up, okay.

No.

For the *Bürgermeister* [mayor].

So, for you, what would you think is the most important part of your continental heritage?

I think- thinking beyond borders. Does that figure? Yes? Not being isolationist. Being aware of other cultures. Yes?

Open-minded in some way?

Yes, I think so, yes. And open to change. You hope to be open to change. [chuckles]

Sometimes it's hard not to get stuck in your ways, but open to change, yes, yes.

How do you think, has your particular experience affected you in your later life?

Well, as I just said, as you get older and you have less to occupy your- less to do, you think more about the past. But - sorry, what was the question? How has my background...?

Affected, yes.

Well, it has affected me very much. Yes, yes. I've changed with age, of course, to be much more aware of it than when I was young, when I was English and British and so on.

Now, how would you describe yourself now?

Anglo-continental. Will that do? [laughs]

Sounds good.

Well, as I said earlier and we're getting around in circles a bit now, when I- but the only time I feel really English is when I'm outside England. [laughs] Yes.

How do you think would your life have been if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

O, that's new. I mean- the world would have been a different place. [02:08:00] It's fruitless to speculate even, I mean, that means no Hitler. No... I can't...I think, it's a fruitless exercise- in my view.

For your father it would have been very different [crosstalk].

Yes, but he adapted as well and he, he was accepted in the end and res- very respected. Still is, to my amazement, the name is-

He then also taught-

Yes.

-after he left [didn't he actually?]. He then taught at the- Leo Baeck College.

Leo Baeck College, yes. You know, of course, it would have been different. It would have been easier financially for them. They had a very comfortable life in- they weren't wealthy but yes, you, you can't look back. It's a- you can't eradicate history.

No.

As they say, it is what it is. [laughs]

But you think also your parents, they did adapt, they managed?

They had to- they had no choice. I mean my great, great admiration is for my mother. How she coped - how she coped domestically, financially. She ran the finances because my father was- you know- writing the next chapter and he appreciated it. It was a very good marriage from that point of view, but she in some ways was the dominant partner just in coping with practicalities. So, no, it would have been very, very different for my father but he- look, he achieved a lot and I... it was- it wasn't the country or the residence it was his personality that carried him through. Yes.

I think... I have a few more questions. Let's take a break because I think-

Okay, oh my goodness.

Interview based on your experiences.

I think be grateful for what you have. I have been very lucky. I don't consider myself in any way unfortunate. Be lucky for what you- be grateful for what you got. Okay?

Okay, would that-

Now-

I want to discuss a little bit this issue of legacy. You know, you being the daughter of your father, do you feel that people know enough about, let's say, what the German Jews, Austrian German-Jews did here, for example, like your father and their contribution?

Well, if we're talking directly about my father, I very much hesitate to speak for him because I'm not a theologian, I'm not a philosopher, neither of those were ever my interests. I can't represent him in that- from that point of view. As far as- what was the other side of the question? What...

Do people know enough about it or do you feel...?

Well, as we said before you can't compel people's interests. [phone ringing]Sorry, you see. So, I said you can't force [02:12:00] people's interests. I have found, I mean, it's almost amusing amongst Anglo-Jewry, there's almost a resentment of German culture and German-Jews. They regard- I mean, I'm not talking about now, but maybe [coughs] sorry, [coughs] maybe 10-20 years ago, they almost- it's almost as if they felt threatened... an insecurity thing. They regarded the German-Jews as very snobbish and so intelligent and intellectual. I think that's probably disappeared with that generation anyway, and it may be insecurity, I don't know, but that was my impression. Going back to your question which was, do I find...?

Should people know more about- or do you think...?

Well, I don't know if it's- it's not part of the history here except for the influx, you have to be careful with that word, the influx of culture which came with the- with the refugees. So- I'm not sure how relevant it is now. I mean- people who are interested will make it their business to find out. But- are we talking about the impact of this culture? It's very, it's very separate, isn't it?

Well, I'll tell you what I'm thinking about, for example, you know, there is now people discover a lot of the music of the emigré compositions and there is an argument that they, you know, their works have been forgotten or they were not as successful as they could have been and things like that, you know, so in terms of your father, I mean, yes- I'm just thinking-

Well, in terms of my father, I find it remarkable that his texts are still used. I mean for example, somebody happened to tell me and I actually followed it up by phoning Tony Bayfield, Rabbi Bayfield because somebody told me that they heard his Yom Kippur sermon and that he'd spoken in great reverence about my father. So, I phoned him up and said, "Thank you very much." He said, "Well, I wrote about it in my book." Promptly, I ordered the book. I haven't read it yet. But, you know, I'm, I'm, I'm surprised but there are waves, you know, of interest and there are circles, things go in circles as well- good and bad.

Nicholas de Lange.

Yes, of course. Sure, yes.

We haven't talked about him. He was one of your father's students?

The out- the main one, well the main one and as I said to Tony Bayfield, I remember my mother saying that my father considered Tony his out- outstanding student and I told him that. He was very thrilled. [laughs] Nicholas, of course. Nicholas was remarkable because [02:16:00] he, he had the patience as a young man to go through my father's manuscripts with him because however well he mastered English, the written English was still very Germanic and he helped sort of iron out, smooth out the clunkiness you might say today. So, he was very involved and then he also, I think, used my father's work as basis for his teachings. Yes, well- what can I say? I think it's very nice when a legacy is preserved. But if not, it's the way of the world. Does that answer your-

Yes, you said you're not a theologian, so you, you were not particularly interested in the content of his-

No, until I left home, I would do this job with my father and go through his manuscript but purely from the linguistic point of view. No, I - it's just... Firstly, I don't have the training, the background in philosophy, in history, so on. So, I couldn't really bring anything to it in the way that my mother did. You know, she was at his side and through all these developments and so on. So... I, I can't express any influence if you like. I'm just on a different wavelength.

Because he- that's what I wanted to ask you also. Of course, in the '20s and '30s, he was with Rosenzweig. He was in Frankfurt [crosstalk] -

Yes, that was his, his main influence, Rosenzweig. Yes, yes, yes, he talked about-

Did he talk about that a lot?

Yes.

Tell us maybe a little bit about what that was because some people might not know about it. Who one day might watch this interview.

Well. Again, I just don't know the, the textual and the content, so but I do know that my father followed him with great passion if you like. Yes. I can't give you the context. It's not my field at all, it never was, but I do know he was made- he quotes over and over again. I'm

sure one could do a trail online, Maybaum Rosenzweig, and find the- sorry about my throat.
[coughs]

And what about Leo Baeck, once- after the war, were they friends?

Yes. Well, I think I mentioned that he'd been in Theresienstadt and had seen my grandmother but yes, I think- see, I don't want to give you incorrect information but the daughter-in-law- or no, daughter, was somebody Ruth Berlak of Leo Baeck and I have a feeling, we went- when he was released, I think I accompanied my parents to the house where he was. And I do remember he came to one of our Sederim and I was already the age of 14 but as I was the youngest person [02:20:00] at the table, I had to say the Ma Nishtana and to my incredible embarrassment, your son would appreciate it. When I finished, he said, "*Sehr gut.*" [laughs] [very good].

Leo Baeck?

Yes. [laughs] Yes. And i thought... and I wanted to crawl under the table. [laughs] Yes, and yes, they were- they, I mean, he respected Baeck for his intellect and so on. I'm not- I don't want to say this, I'm not sure that they were on the same wavelength all the time. But yes, he came to the house and my parents visited. Yes, yes, sure.

What do you think- I'm not asking you but I'm asking you as the daughter of your father. For your father, what did he think, was his greatest contribution theologically on his writing? Or- if you can't answer that, it's okay because I'm also not an expert in this.

I'm not sure. I can't answer. This is to my shame because although I was around at the gestation of a lot of his writing, I couldn't not- not empathise but I couldn't engage. I didn't have the training and I didn't have the inclination either. I'm sorry.

He didn't talk about it either? Like he is particularly, I don't know- attached to a particular book he wrote or something, one of his-

Well... I think one of the seminal ones was just a pamphlet about the sacrifice of Isaac. It was a very short thing and I know that in, in- that aroused a certain amount of controversy because I think it was misunderstood. But again, I can't reconstruct that now.

That's fine. The person who is going to watch this, they can do some research and find out themselves.

Yes, they should go to Nicky, to Nicholas. Yes.

Who has worked-

Very closely with him and then even after, after he died, there was a volume which came out or two. The latter one which I can't find anywhere which was a reader which Nicholas did, which were extracts, not just sermons but extracts from his writing for which I wrote the introduction actually. I was trying to find that so I could show it to you. But fortunately, one of the girls has sent me the text and I printed it if you're interested.

Yes, I think I might have that at home as well. What I also wanted to ask you because I know that Leo Baeck and Rabbi Salzberger, they were all very interested in interfaith work or German and Christian, Jewish [crosstalk] your father.

Oh, yes, oh, yes, definitely. What can I remember? I think, be careful- yes, my father attended, that's right- he was invited I told you, to Germany for conferences and I think some of them were interfaith and some of them were- in fact, my mother even went on her own after my father died to conferences- even teaching religion to non-Jews where the Jewish aspect was included [02:24:00] in a way that it wouldn't have been here, I think. Yes, very much so.

Do you think as somebody- he lost his mother and other family, he lost his sister as well?

Sisters.

Sisters?

Yes. Oh, he was haunted by that I think and that's why he wrote about the, the Holocaust a lot. And- oh my gosh, I'm going blank- "the Auschwitz'... What's it called? 'The Face of God after Auschwitz' he wrote about that. Yes, he was- he didn't speak about it or openly but my mother- from my mother, I know, he was haunted by that.

And could he forgive the Germans or was that something...?

Yes, I think so because- it's so hard speak for someone else, but, I mean, the fact that he went back to Germany and the fact that he engaged with non-Jewish religious leaders and so on I think indicates that. Yes, yes.

Quite soon after. I mean, not so soon but not in the '60s I would assume.

I'm trying to remember the date. Yes, even before. Even before.

I find it quite interesting that, you know, as I said, Salzberger, Leo Baeck, that this interfaith work was quite important.

Yes, I'm not sure how much interfaith as such. If you think of mixed services and so on but you just mean in terms of-

Engaging is important. Not-

Yes, it is remarkable.

It is quite remarkable. Thank you. I know it's difficult. You're not the [crosstalk] person.

It's so difficult. I think- I wish, he was here and I could ask him or he could tell you, you know.

So, what's- let's come back to you, just a few more... What impact did it have to you to be the daughter of a rabbi actually? That's something [crosstalk].

That's the problem actually. [laughs] People have expectations that they- that I'm familiar with all of the finer details of his thoughts and writing and so on. In terms of socially, it could be funny or a joke or whatever. And, yes, there was some funny situations when I was in somewhere - somewhere socially and then he came out suddenly. you know, and people did a double-take which I didn't think would happen now but, you know, "A rabbi's daughter, you have to be careful." [laughs]

Right, about the observance.

No, not even that. Just, you know, might I go [chuckles].

And for your brother, the same as the son of a rabbi?

My brother I suspect but I don't know, I mean, again, I'm extrapolating. I think ... he felt that he didn't come up to my father's expectations. I don't know but I think that was his feeling and he had a- I shouldn't say inferiority complex [02:28:00] but he felt that- you know- in discussions, my brother was very politically aware and have arguments and so on and so on. My father would sort of sometimes just very casually dismiss him, "Yes, yes, all right, yes, we know," and almost, sort of, tap him down. So, I think that was a factor, whereas he got on

much better with my mother. My father used to call them "*die Zwillinge*" [the twins] [chuckles] because either they got on well or they fought like cat and dog.

Your parents?

No, my mother and brother.

Oh, I see.

Yes.

*This is interesting, it's also talking about pressures in a way of... for the children of certain, you know, let's say, German-Jewish intelligentsia or something of this *Bildungsbürgertum*. It's an interesting topic as well.*

Which doesn't- I don't think it has an equivalent in English.

So almost where you had to be intellectual or had to engage. Or not had to but was expected.

It was expected, yes.

Different, it's interesting. Is there anything else I haven't asked you which you think is important?

I don't think about myself much. [laughs]

Think about yourself now. This is your opportunity to think about yourself.

Well... I just think I've been very fortunate in my life. Given the circumstances, I'm lucky, you know. About myself, I'm, I'm not an introvert so I don't think about myself much though sometimes in connection with other people obviously.

But you also were involved now with this exhibition in Berlin. There was an exhibition recently?

That was the archive, only in so far as they asked me to do an interview for which-

For?

It's- what is it called? It's, it's the archive, the- Oh, God, I'm really going-

Centrum Judaica, you said.

Yes.

Yes, in Berlin.

Yes, and it's permanent and it's very small. It's just the history of the community until '42 of the, of the Jews in Berlin. They asked me again like you did about my father and my parents, and me and my experiences. Yes, so, but that was my initiative and they came to me mainly because I know Hannah, who's the- Do you know Herman, Herman- oh gosh, what's happened to me? Simon. Herman Simon?

Yes.

Yes, well, she works with him.

Your father is represented there-

Very much so, yes, yes, yes. I think, yes.

Do you think there is a bigger interest in Germany?

I think possibly. Possibly, yes, yes. Because there is so many, there are so many different movements here, even within the Jewish and the religious community. [02:32:00] It's been, it's- it's very divisive here. Individuals aren't really the main factor. It's more the tenets of the different movements and how they're developing. So, I don't think - I mean, as I said before, within the context of teaching in Leo Baeck College and training of rabbis, I'm surprised that he still features, but otherwise, no. Sorry.

I did an interview with somebody some years ago, 19 years ago which were just part of- somebody called Julius Carlebach. [crosstalk].

That is vaguely familiar, but I don't know. I, I know- I heard it in my parents' name- house but I don't, I can't [crosstalk].

He was in Kindertransport but from a rabbinical family from Hamburg.

Yes, I can't, I can't put a face to the name but I have heard the name, yes. I'm sure my parents knew him, yes.

It must have been interesting at the time as he just had the networks and see how-

Yes. Well, I keep saying the same thing that as I was in my 30s, 40s, 50s, I was engaged with my family- you know-

Yes, of course.

-and my own career and so on. There wasn't the time for the reflection on these things, or the interest that there is now and of course, it's too late to ask a lot of questions.

Yes, but you- I think it's very valuable what you do remember. You know, absolutely. Because it makes me think for example, also, you know, as a rabbi, it's really hard if you think about it- because you grew up in a certain environment, you preach to your audience, and then suddenly, you have a completely different audience and a different language. If you think about it so you-

Yes.

Your main-

The transfer, very, very hard. [coughs]

Yes, in Belsize, they were maybe rabbis. Dr. Salzberger was lucky at the beginning, but then he also had those- I don't know when he switched to English, but [crosstalk].

I think it started off in- and what about Kokotek? Did he start in German?

No, I think he was a younger generation.

He's Sue Leon's father. He was-

That's younger generation.

Yes.

If you think about it, language is so central to [crosstalk].

Yes, and I just have increasingly boundless admiration for what they achieved, and what they- not achieved, what they coped with. Not just the language, the prevailing culture, the prevailing traditions where you- one thing wa-- I mean, let me tell you just a silly little story. My mother told me that very early on, they were invited for tea by Lady Reading. I don't know who she was. And the expectation was that she might do something for my father through her social influence, I don't know. And they got there and it was a very formal atmosphere, tea time. And my mother told me, she had said to me, and they'd only just arrived in this country, "China tea or Indian tea?" [02:36:00] What the hell did they know? My mother felt actually quite insulted which was silly, I suppose or unjustified. But she felt, "What's going on here? You know, just give me some tea." [chuckles] In any case, they were used to drinking coffee. This mutual lack of understanding for the other, and it was mutual,

so I don't know... and coping with all that. You know, silly little things like the milkman would say, "All right, ducks," [chuckles] which was meant, very- you know- nicely, but rather familiar. [chuckles]

Not easy, not easy. What do you think? Do you think just because of the-

That's your first election.

I wanted to ask you now, to conclude in a way, is, whether you think we can learn something from the refugee experience then for today?

Yes, well, I'm undecided about- I mean, you're, you're talking about the Syrians mainly.

Yes, for example.

Yes, I think we can learn- or we should show more tolerance. [phone rings] God, I'm sorry. So- if you're talking about or if we think about the Syrians, a lot of them are highly educated. In a way, there's a comparison. But the- my own particular problem is with the North African immigration where you haven't got the same level of education, and you've got potential radical extremism. And - can you let everybody in? I mean, look what just happened. This guy- Usman Khan, so I'm torn. I don't want to be torn, but it's, it's multi-layered, or it's complicated. So - if you say what should we learn? We should learn tolerance and acceptance. And- I think there have been statistics about how much benefit this country has received from incomers, yes? And I think that', that's the important thing and multicultural is good, but not extremism.

Maybe just one last thing, Alisa, if I may, is the question of Judaism. Has your own Judaism evolved for yourself and also for your parents probably also from arriving to...?

I hesitate to say it, but my Judaism is more a question of, of identity rather than practice. I mean, I love the ritual, and I love the liturgy and singing and so on. But when it comes to belief, you know- it's a tricky one.

Your parents?

My parents were definitely believers and-

Participate?

Yes, no question. Yes. [02:40:00] You mean, was it affected by their emigration?

Yes.

I didn't think so. I think if anything, reinforced. Yes, yes. They had to adapt to different variations here.

Yes.

Yes. In any case, you bring your beliefs with you, and also, even apart from religious, I think with, with immigration, people set up communities of like-minded people. And so, I think generally in society, people associate with people who are like-minded.

Yes, you can say, it helps in a way in settling. [crosstalk]

Indeed, yes. If you think of Indian communities, Iranian, you know, they gravitate naturally to people who eat the same food. Yes.

We have also some cultural institutions not only religious [crosstalk].

Indeed, yes.

German Youth, Club 43, or other things.

Yes. I wasn't aware of that. I mean, when I was growing up as a teenager and a student, I didn't associate necessarily with people of that background. If it came out, "Oh, you too?" but I didn't look for it. And as I told you, my husband, he was known in the family as the Englishman. [laughs] Yes, yes.

Okay, unless there's anything else-

I can't think- you've been very clever in leading me with your questions but as I say, I don't really think about myself that much, [chuckles] I think about my family. So, and if you want to look at any documents-

Thank you. First, I want to say, thank you very, very much.

Not at all.

We meant to do that for a long time, I'm glad we came and finally did it.

Good.

Thank you for sharing your story with us.

I mean, I said at the outset, and I said it to my daughters, "I don't feel like a refugee because as I've said several times, you know, I had a settled, happy existence." Unlike people who came on their own, you know, and never saw their parents again.

That's why you don't feel we need to meet [crosstalk].

I suppose, I suppose. yes. There is a sort of bonding if you meet people and discover their backgrounds. So, there's overlaps, but I don't look out for it.

I mean you are sort of an almost second generation.

Exactly, yes, definitely. I am not...as I keep saying, my daughter said, "Yes, you are a refugee." [laughs]

Legally, you came, you came as a refugee.

Yes.

You acquired British citizenship.

Yes, through my parents or my father. Yes.

But you wouldn't call yourself a refugee today, would you?

Not in that sense. It's funny when people ask me, not Jewish, just anyone, "Have you always lived in London?" I say, "Yes, almost." [laughs] I don't take it any further. It depends who, you know, "Were you born in this country? Well, that's a different story." [chuckles]

I think that's a nice end [02:44:00] actually. Thank you, Alisa, thank you very much.

Thank you for your patience [chuckles].

My father, Ignatz Maybaum, as a young cavalry officer in the Austrian army during the- during World War I. My father, Ignatz Maybaum, my brother in the middle, and my grandmother Bertha Schor, my mother's mother to the right. My brother standing next to my grandfather Schor, in the- sitting in- sorry- sitting in a deck chair. I can't remember his name, the first name. I thought his name was actually Adolf, but obviously not called that. I don't remember. Finn, my brother, and I. Sorry, I said my brother Michael.

That's fine. When was it taken?

I would say probably about 1936.

Yes, thank you.

Me, Alisa in front with a group of children in some sort of playground in Berlin. Myself with Bonzo sitting on a chair in Berlin. The chair which came with us to England with its little table. I don't know what happened to Bonzo. Berlin, myself sitting on a little chair, which came with us to England. Vienna, my grandfather on the far left. I think it's his daughter, Bibi, my father's older sister, then my grandmother, then my cousin Paul, and at the back, my father and next to the little boy, Paul, is Fritz, my brother's younger- sorry, my father's younger brother, who went to Palestine and became- as a doctor.

Thank you.

Berlin, I think this is the last photo of us together. I'm sitting on my mother's lap, my father next to my mother, and next to him, my brother Michael.

When was it taken?

Well, I would imagine just before we left in 1939. [02:48:00] Me in London in somebody's garden with a hoop. I'm about four years old there. London, this was taken in the year my brother's Bar Mitzvah in 1942 with me next to him with long plaits. I think the idea had been to send this to my grandmother in Germany, but I don't suppose it ever reached her. The garden of our house in Edgware. I'm standing, my brother sitting in the garden chair and my father is standing beside him.

And when was this taken?

I think this must have been about- I would say I'm about- how old am I there? About nine would you think? Yes, so it must have been about 1940. No, I must be older because we were Edgware. Maybe about 1948.

Thank you.

My father and his rabbinical robes, this must have been about 1958, something, somewhere in the late '50s, 1950s. On holiday in Bournemouth and it must have been 1955. My father, myself in a coat, I was so proud of, [02:50:00] black and green stripes. My mother and my brother with a pipe in his mouth.

Thank you.

With my husband Eric Jaffa on our wedding day in Edgware, in my father's synagogue.

What date?

1960.

Thank you.

And the other thing about having moved here... Taken at a family Bat Mitzvah, Gaby, my younger daughter with me on the left, myself in the center, and Nina, the older daughter, on the right.

Thank you.

Arrest warrant for my father issued in Berlin in 1930-
-five.

Six, I think. '35, sorry. Yes. What is this? This a certificate of- how would you put it? Okay. Certificate permitting my father, Ignaz Maybaum, to emigrate from Germany. It has inserted the name as a middle name, Israel, as then the Nazis insisted all Jews have the same middle name Israel for men and Sara for women. Just in case there was any confusion.

This is about the community.

Document from the Jewish community in Berlin permitting-
Saying that no tax-

Saying, certifying that Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum owes no tax or contributions to the community. [clears throat] Front cover of my mother's German passport with the eagle and swastika on the cover. [clear throat] First page of my mother's German passport with a red "J" identifying her as being Jewish. My mother's photograph in her passport with the date of departure 2nd of March 1939.

You were in it as well?

And I'm entered as a child with also the appointed middle name of Sara to identify me as being Jewish.

Thank you.

My mother's passport with visa and condition of entry not allowing her to stay more than-
12 months.

- 12 months. My mother's passport with the registration of aliens stamp [02:54:00] and the point of entry stamp as Croydon, 23rd Of March 1939.

Yes.

My mother's passport open at the page showing extension of her visa for one year-

Of the passport, of the German passport.

Of the German passport for one year as well as for myself for one year.

Alisa, thank you so much again for sharing your stories and your photographs, and giving us the time. Thank you so much.

You're very welcome. If it helps, I'm history. [laughs] [02:54:52] [END OF AUDIO]