

**UKHMF TESTIMONY TRANSCRIPT
- WALTER KAMMERLING**

[Testimony 1hr 30 mins. Artefacts: 14' 09" Extra material: 1' 41"]

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10:00:00:00

Walter Kammerling

Oh, alright. My name is Walter Kammerling, born in Vienna October 1923, that's rather old. I was 15 by the end of 1938 and I was lucky enough to be put on the Kindertransport by my parents because it did actually save my life.

[fade to black and back up]

10:00:31:15

Interviewer

Can you start by telling us where you were born and when you born?

10:00:36:03

Walter Kammerling

I was born in Vienna, er, now in 1923, so I'm in my 92nd year and I'll be 92 in October.

10:00:51:08

And, er, I had two older, elder sisters, one two, one three years older. And, er, we was -, it was er, we weren't very well off, but a very, a very close family. Of course being the youngest son I was spoilt by my sisters, er and er I realise now how immature I was at the time. Though, when it all happened, I was 14 and I was 15 when I left, I wasn't like a 15-year-old today. I never really had the relationship to my parents which I really want it now, because the period between a youngster and an adult is when you start getting on a level where you can talk one-to-one to your parents, which I never did. And they hardly -, I mean they spoke to me, said things, but it was a difference, and I really am very sorry that I never had that chance. Never. When you grow up you realise the things you did wrong, the things you missed, and you've a chance to apologise for it, to, to, to say things and so on. I mean, and that is something you miss er very much and it's er very often I sort of have imaginary discussions with my parents which I never had. You were there and that was it.

[cut for sound]

10:02:40:00

Interviewer

I'd like you to tell me a little bit about where you lived, where you went to school, and did you have a happy childhood until 15?

10:02:45:22

Walter Kammerling *[interrupting and talking over Interviewer]*

Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Had a happy childhood *[mutter]* As I said, we didn't have a lot, but we were happy. We were a fairly close fam-, not fairly, a very close family, and never thought we will be separated.

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And it was only later that I realised the pain it must have caused my parents to send

me away, because it sort of sent into the unknown what's, what's gonna happen.

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And I know my sister, the el- older sister who was 18 at the time, she managed to come out on a domestic permit [*clears throat*] while I was in Northern Ireland. Er, but I didn't see her, but I was in contact with her, and she passed away a few years ago. And I had some of -, she gave me this stuff she had, or rather I had all this stuff, the letters she had and so on, and she kept the letters from home. And I saw she had a letter from er father while she was working in London and she, he said to her, in the letter, try to get a, a position on the farm where I worked, er, "We can't leave the boy alone there," er which is an indication of sort of I was -, Er but er, er, and that is actually you see,

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when I said goodbye to my father when I was er when we -, I was -, they managed to get me, I don't know how, onto the f-, first transport from Vienna, which was on the 10th of December '38, just about a month after the November pogrom [*clears throat*] and er, er, when I said goodbye to him he was in tears. He was in hospital, in the Jewish hospital, with angina - he had angina - which he had the first attack around when there was the November Pogrom when they try -, they came to arrest him because all the Jewish men were sent to concentration camps. And he had a, a prescription on his bed from our non-Jewish family doctor and so they left him, but they took my sisters to scrub the f-, floors of a flat, a large Jewish flat, which they took over as a local party locality. And they didn't see me, I was in -, We had two rooms. I was in the second room, and I saw it er through the, er, curtains, so er, across the yard there. And er, er, I was sort of then sent off and he was in tears and that's -, I was al-, almost, as I said, I was quite immature cause the whole thing I remember almost through a haze, but that I know is... even it really choked me because I've never seen him cry, and he realised it may be the last time he saw me which it was. And er I, I really didn't want to leave his bedside. It was an older cousin of mine. She just took me under the arm so and said, "Walter, we must go, it's late," and I, I, at the threshold of the, of the ward I stood and er -, but that is sort of something that haunts you. And er, er, that was rather sad and, er, he realised that that's a thought that never leaves you because I, I was robbed of the time, of the growing up time, when I sort of reach a stage where you discuss things with your mother, with your father and it it's a, which of course I never could.

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And er, it was -, when I was actually in Dovercourt, which was a Warner holiday camp near Harwich, and, er, we were there, [*clears throat*] there were thousands of children there, and er, er, you had the feeling you want to tell your mother something, go into the next room and you realise there is no next room. And, er, and that sort of stays with you and it, er, sort of helps you growing up faster.

10:07:19:11

Interviewer

Mmm. Walter, we'll talk about, um, how you came to be on the Kindertransport in a moment's time, but would you mind if I take you back a little bit further just to establish what your life was like a little bit more before everything? We need to talk -, I know you don't like the phrase Kristallnacht, but we need to talk about all of that

period.

[Cut for direction]

10:07:38:06

Walter Kammerling

Vienna had, er, about two million inhabitants, and approximately ten percent of them were Jewish, and a very large proportion, er, it was -, which of course somehow fuels antisemitism even more, because the medical school in Vienna, which was famous, was actually entirely in Jewish hands. Now I've been thinking about that, and I realised that because -, due to the antisemitism, if a Jewish and a non-Jewish applicant for a job are there who are equally qualified, invariably the non-Jewish man would get it. In other words, for safe preservation [*sic*] the Jew had to work harder. But you know full well working hard means you achieve more, you raise the level, and thereby it was the Jewish people that got the jobs, and you can take this disproportionality as a measure of the prevailing antisemitism.

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You had a similar situation in the Soviet Union, where they had five percent Jews. In the academic, er, community there were about 15 percent Jews, for the same reason: they had to work harder. It's, it's a self-preservation thing. Now, that was the reason why so many er positions in medicine and law were in Jewish hands. Er w-, we have to, to realise that.

10:09:20:10

I know that when I were -, we went back after the war, my wife and I we went back to Austria, - er we were there 11 years - [*clears throat*] and at work, I worked at the AEG in the design office and was quite, qu-, very interesting, and there was one chap, I know he wasn't a Nazi because he was very, er, religious Christian man, and he said, "but there are so many Jews there." For a non-Jew it was hardly worth even applying for a job. And I thought about it and I er, then I realised why this was so.

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And you have a similar situation actually if you take women in engineering. There are only about seven percent women in engineering, but the women in engineering that are there are outstanding, for the same reason. They have to work in a hostile environment! And er this was of course also helping them.

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But of course there was antisemitism in Vienna. I know when you walked on the street and you see a crowd of youngsters coming towards you, you sort of avoid them because you would be molested in some way, pushed or something, and, and er, er called names, etc., and er, er -, but even then, it -, we had a happy time at home.

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Walter Kammerling

Er, I went to school there. It was er -, In-, The interesting thing is, when we went back to Austria I tried to go to where we used to live. That was on the first or second day when we were there. And er it was extremely painful, because in every step you

realize - it was only eight years before that I left - and every step there is a memory attached. And we w-, lived on the first floor, and er the doors were still open only now they've got it all locked and you've got to ring bells, etc. And I walked in and I w-walked halfway up the stairs, and it was very painful, and I thought, 'What, why, why make myself...? It's not, It's r-, I know they're not there. Just to look at the door?' I turned back and I never went there. And the interesting thing is that all the time in Vienna it was a different, two different areas. Er I never went to the places, never went to my schools, never went to anything that reminded me of, of before. And since I left it those two things go -, flow into each other. And I now find it we vis-, when we go back to, to Vienna to visit friends, er it's, it's harder.

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You realise that not much has changed. People have forgotten it but not -, Austria never addressed that problem of the antisemitism. If you look at Germany, they addressed the problem. In Austria they haven't. They stuck to the idea, 'we were the first victim. We are no-, nothing to do with us.' And, however, if you look at the history of what happened, Austria represented eight percent of the whole German Reich, as far as population goes. Amongst the war criminals, they well ov-, over 50 percent.

10:12:54:18

Interviewer

Okay. Um, thank you. In, in 1938, I just want to take you back to the period when, um Hitler annexed Austria. How did that, how did you learn about that, how did you feel about that and how did life change for you living there?

10:13:08:16

Walter Kammerling

Er well, it was, um, Schuschnigg was the Chancellor. He tried - because he was under pressure - though he was er the leader of the so-called Austrofascist government, because it was only one party. But one shouldn't forget they were Austrians, and they did not want to be Germans. They were under pressure ever since 1933. In 1934, the Nazis tried something. They murdered the Chancellor at the time, and Schuschnigg took over and he was then continuously under pressure, so he thought by calling a, a plebiscite, a sort of referendum, where Austria decides yes or no, er, he'd put an end to that. And I remember that, er, one week before my father and I we went down the stairs, and he met a neighbour, and they discussed it, and, er, the neighbour says he doesn't think Hitler will allow that. Though I didn't understand much, but at that time I was afraid. I didn't like it. It, it was terrible. And as it happened, Hitler didn't allow it. And er on Friday-, on Sunday the, the referendum should have taken place: Sunday the 13th of March '38. On Friday the 11th, Schuschnigg came on the radio in the, in the evening and said he had an ultimatum from Germany, er either he agrees to the annexation or there will be war. And he res-, er resigned and he finished with the words, "God protect Austria," and that was the last we heard of him. But at the same time, [*clears throat*] you heard from the s-, from the streets outside a terrible noise; they're cheering. Er, er. They, they, they, The, the s-, streets were full of I suppose the i-, illegal Nazi party because all the parties they, the non-government parties were, were not allowed. Er they, they lean out so they must have been informed of that and they were ready. And while in Germany the oppression started to build up slowly, in Vienna, in Austria, it went up

digitally, sort of straightaway right to the top.

10:15:36:21

And from that moment on the Jews in Vienna became outlaws. But it's not a figure of speech - in the truest sense of the word. Everybody could do what they want, and they did! And, er, you were outside the law. You couldn't, you had absolutely no protection. I mean Jews were, suddenly were not allowed to use public parks. The closed parks, er the libraries, swimming pools, whatever, Jews were banned from that. Going to school was like running the gauntlet. You had lots of er, er, Hitler Youth and Storm Troopers, these are the Brown Shirts, er, which were thugs in uniform. And they were roaming the street and, and, and, and, er when they met Jews were either beaten up or taken away to scrub the streets because all the slogans from the referendum, the planned referendum, sort of free Austria, etc., were there, and the Jews had to scrub it off. And though at first it was an idea to clean this the, the things off, but then they realised it was also, er, entertainment for the population, so they carried on with that. And when you walk you tried to walk almost invisible, not too fast, not too slow, so that you don't cause any a-, d-, you're, you're, you're not to be seen, sort of just fit into the background. And I know a few times when you walked you'd hear behind you screams of people in pain and anguish. And you know you sort of stop and look around, you're one of them, and you just carry on.

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And once they did catch me to, to scrub s-, er, street and I, I was there and, and the young man who sort of took -, was in charge, he didn't wear a uniform, he just had the Hitler Youth armband, and er, er he was not older, older than maybe 17 or so. He wouldn't allow us to kneel down, we had to er do it crouching down. And an old man next to me just fell over, and he just kicked him and abused and shout and so on. And you quickly look up and you see the -, in the crowd, the feeling of satisfaction, sort of a smile, etc. And right at the back there was a young woman, and she held up a little girl so that she can see better how the old man is kicked and they were both smiling and it er it sort of chokes you. But er - after, I don't know, half an hour or so, I don't know, we were just sort of sent home and you that's it and I left it at that.

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But then you, you realise that was the life, and it was, it was very awkward. Er, of course one tries to get out. And if one had money you could bribe your way out and so on, but we never had. And I know Father once came home and said we got -, he got visa to Columbia, and he started packing and excitement. It only lasted a few days till Father came home and says, "The whole thing was a fraud." It was a, a fraudulent embassy official who sold this and it fell flat. And you writing to, er to, to ev... whoever you can to get out and we wanted to get out together, and ,er, couldn't. [clears throat] And then er Father went to hospital, I think, yeah, and er, I was told to sort of you know, in a week, you're going to England.

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And I was on the very first Kindertransport from Vienna. It left on the 10th of December '38, and, er [clears throat] er, so that was it. It was interesting because those Kindertransport came, they came up, as a, a result of the November pogrom, er which the Germans euphemistically called Kristallnacht - crystal night. I must

admit this is one expression I don't really like to use because it sounds almost romantic, and it wasn't. It was very nasty. Jewish men were just arrested, and taken to concentration camp. They came to collect -, tried to collect my father. And er, er, as I said, it's the prescription he saw on, on, on, on the bedside table, was from an- our non-Jewish doctor, so they left him but took my sisters to scrub the er, er, floors of a, of, of a large Jewish flat which was the local party locality, because they took quite a number of flats, Jewish flats, which they, in the whole thing they, they could just do it. Some of 'em came in, says, "Well in a few hours the flat has to be cleared," but everything is there, only people, and take a quick inventory so that er, er, inventory so that they see that nothing got -, is, goes missing, and they have to go out. And I, I, when I looked at the figures, er at the beginning of 1938, there were 70,000 Jewish flats in Vienna. At the end of 1938 there were only I think 26,000, so 44,000 were just taken over. Sometimes they went through a sale with a contract, but what they paid was not enough even to buy a ticket to the, to the, to the border. Er and er it, it became from bad to worse.

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They, er, Jews were the ne-, There was a, a, a, a statement the Jews were excluded from education, so each district in Vienna - there were 21 districts - had its own grammar school. We lived in the second district which was historically the district where there were a large percentage of Jews, because I think in the Middle Ages there was a ghetto there and so on, [clears throat] and so our school was then designated to become the Jewish school, just to finish us in that academic year, '38, and then out you go, and so that was it. And it was beca-, it came from bad to worse.

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Interviewer

Can I, can I um just interrupt you for a second? I know you don't like the n-, the term Kristallnacht, but can you tell me what happened that night? Can -, What are your memories of that night specifically?

10:22:39:11

Walter Kammerling

Er, all the synagogues were burnt. Er they were, were all destroyed, w-, either blown up, set alight. And what they did and, er, er Jewish shops were smashed, etc., and everything. But it's, it's er-. In Vienna I think there were over 90 synagogues and prayer houses. All except one. And the one was kept because the Nazis wanted that one which kept the Jewish archives, and they wanted then, er, what's there. While, er, the fire engines did come out, but they only doused adjacent houses so that they, er, they don't get destroyed, and er otherwise they just left it.

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And I actually, er, a few years ago when we went back, I found a copy of a letter a Nazi official has written to the Gauleiter, where he says he saw, he went through Vienna he saw the burning synagogues and he said in the second district book material was burning on the street. It wasn't just book material; Torah scrolls were taken, desecrated, burnt and all this. And er they usually got Jews to do that for them. And that was y-, was just helpless. And that, er, happened at a time when the world was so to speak at peace. In other words, you had foreign correspondents there and this was reported. And ,er, I know that one reporter, Gedye, he wrote a

book *Fallen Bastions*, and he described all this, and, er, the world knew about it. And I must admit it was to the great credit of Great Britain that only about 11 days later - it was on the 21st of, er, December, there was a bill passed - to allow children up to 16 to come to Britain from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and so on, er, unaccompanied, that means unaccompanied by their parents, by their family, er, and er so I was lucky to c-, to come out there. Mind you, for each child er they had to collect money, £50 had to be deposited, so that they don't become a burden to the country. And a lot of work was done by committees. The Quakers were very predominant there. Er, but that money was collected, and 10,000 kids eventually came over. And, e,r I don't, as I said, I don't know what my parents did, but I was on the very first transport from Vienna. Er [clears throat] it wasn't the first transport, the first one came from Berlin about a week earlier, but er I was on that transport and quite a lot of them came out.

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[clears throat] Yeah, er, since then I've met people - in Bournemouth actually one - and when we started to compare notes it turns out we were on the same transport. He's now a retired professor from Gasco, and a, a, a very nice man, a wonderful chap, and we were - actually he has a photo of -, in Dovercourt in Germany where he was, and I think not very far from him I was standing there. [Clears throat] But er it's -, We just came out and, as I said, I was, took me some time to realise er what happened. When I, when I realised I sort of, as I said, the next-door, there is no next-door, you can't talk to them. And of course [clears throat] it's interesting because er all those kids were um basically in the same position.

[Cut for sound]

10:26:36:06

Interviewer

Walter, you were explaining the desperate effort that your family went to, to all leave together and sadly, that didn't happen. But in the end, they managed to find a safe passage for you on the Kindertransport. Can you remember how they told you what was going to happen? Or your experience of it?

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Walter Kammerling

Er, well, all I was told is that in a short time, you've gotta get ready because you're going to England and that was it and I, I didn't fully appreciate I think what it all meant. And it, er, later on it sort of dawns on you that when you realise you're separated and then, of course the hope always, when will we be together again? And it didn't happen

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and then my sister got a, a ,domestic permit. That was the oldest one. She was 18 and she came to London, but I was in Northern Ireland already then and I didn't see her till 1942, when I got back to England from Northern Ireland and were in contact sometimes telephone, sometimes -, well mostly letters. And she arrived here on the, I think, 4th July '39 and, er, the other sister she was 17, I mean she was just too old to come on the Kindertransport and just too young to get a permit, that is

from 18.

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And I, of course, I didn't know what happened to them till after the war, because, er, I -,

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when I sort of went from, er, Northern Ireland back to England, I sort of got a job, then I found a job in London and, er, sort of-, one little suitcase, I went there and, er, in North Finchley and I was lucky, in the same road, I found digs and, er, but I couldn't come the same evening, I went back to Carshalton where I was living [coughs] and went next day, straight to work and after work I went to the house where I rented. I only found, a couple of days ago, when I looked in my Alien Registration book, I found the address where it was because, everything had to be -, you had to go to the police. Er, so I thought, er, so I looked it up in the map to know where it was. And, er, she said sorry you didn't come yesterday, so I -, the room's gone, so I just knocked at the next door, and she kindly put me in, took me in for a night and then I went to a, a,a,a it wasn't really bed and breakfast, run by an Irishman, very friendly. And, er, I was there one night and somebody at work, he was also refugee from Danzig the and he said there is an Austrian, er, centre and they have also a war workers' hostel, they call it and maybe you can find a place there.

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Interviewer

OK. Walter we'll talk more about what happened later on, but I'm just trying to establish for people who may have never really understood about the Kindertransport what that was like for you. So you were taken to the station, and I would like you to tell me about your mother and your sister. What -, did you have a bag? Do you remember what was in it? Do you remember how you were feeling?

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Walter Kammerling

I had, had a suitcase -, actually the same suitcase which, which I took -, I kept it with me, I had it the same when I, when I went from Northern Ireland back and a few things in there.

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Interviewer

Do you remember what was in your suitcase?

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Walter Kammerling

Just, I know that it-, I also kept the prayer book, which I got as a present on my Bar Mitzvah, which was in 1936, unfortunately I seemed to have lost it on the journeys and I haven't got it anymore. But I had that with me and, er, on -, when I was on the farm, I sort of started to turn more religious. We were Jewish, but we didn't keep kosher, we didn't -, we kept the major festivals, mother lit the candles on Friday night and Pesach, fasting on Yom Kippur etc. We kept all this. Er, but it weren't very -, there were a lot of different - in Vienna, the whole spectrum there, they're very

Orthodox and, and the ones they didn't want to know. Er, we didn't belong to either of those [*Coughs*].

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Interviewer

So can I ask you about when you were on the Kindertransport. Can you describe just that journey about saying goodbye and the journey, only that?

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Walter Kammerling

Well, as I said, I said goodbye to my father which was a very traumatic experience, and my mother was standing over there with my sisters and I said goodbye, but it didn't really dawn on me, this is -, this may be the last time, it -, whether I was unable to, to appreciate it or I don't know. Because I remember it almost through a haze and it was only a few days later when I told you -, when I sort of had the feeling I want to tell mum something and realize there is no next door where you can talk to them. [*clears throat*] And from that time you, you sort of always... how long will it be when can be together again? What is, er,

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I was on the farm already, er, when war broke out. I wasn't in contact with my, er, with home by post. I had letters right up to the 3rd September when Britain declared war in Germany, after they -, the German invasion of Poland on 1 September, but then it all stopped. I didn't -, and then I didn't have anything. And I -, actually I was so, so immature, I think, that I didn't even try to use the Red Cross letters and write to them this way. So I didn't know anything, and it was only much later, because, er, when I was in London, as I said before, er, that friend from, er, Gdansk who told me this and I went to that war worker's hostel which was in Swiss Cottage and I was lucky, they took me in and of course that was also part of the Austrian centre. There was the young Austria which I duly joined and that became our life, our family, and that's where I met my future wife.

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And, er, when in 43, er, it was decided in Parliament that enemy aliens, because I came on a German passport, enemy aliens were allowed to join the forces, the fighting forces. You could have joined non-combatant, like, Pioneer Corps and so on and we didn't, but, er, then quite a number of youngsters - boys and girls - volunteered for the Army - and I did.

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And, er, I sort of became quite friendly with one person and, er, sort of -, when I came on first leave it was, or second leave, I actually proposed to her and she said, "yes". And on our embarkation leave, we were, her parents were lucky, they got domestic permits and they came over shortly before the outbreak of the war, with a six-month-old baby, because Herta - that's my wife's name - er, baby brother was born one day after they arrived here - or on the day they arrived here actually 12th January 39 and they came with that baby. And, er, she, she took me to Salisbury to introduce me to them and before we went home, so that I could join my unit again, I, er, we had to wait, so I convinced her to get married there and then, so we did. And, er, on special permit, only one day has to elapse and then I got back a married man. I was 21 - just about fortnight I was 21 - which was good thing, because otherwise

we would have to get a permission to get permit -, to, to get married and it would be the Woburn house and you'll never get hold of him etc. Er, and she, as her parents were there, got the permission, we had to fill out at the time, 21 was the age of majority - so we had to fill out a form, the marriage of the infant - that was her - and so we got married.

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And, er, it was, er, it took us only 60 years to have a huppah wedding. Er, that's under the canopy in synagogue and it was big too, er, the synagogue was packed full. We were members at that time of the Reform synagogue, so it was in a reform and, but, er, as we had friends right throughout the community, they had it from all branches and, er, it was marvellous.

10:36:28:20

Interviewer [*with interjections from interviewee*]

Walter that's so lovely and it's amazing that you've been married for 70 years, I admire you both so much. Um, I, I just want to get more about the Kindertransport. Just about the experience of what it was like, did you go by train? What happened when you arrived? How did it feel?

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Walter Kammerling

Well it's, it's as I said, a few things, this is a time that is almost through haze. I do remember when we went in there, we were always a little bit apprehensive of German guards coming through and what they did, but we were lucky. They had somebody come in and didn't say much and left again and when we went to Holland, ladies came there and we had cocoa and so on; and the first time we see people smiling at us, it was marvellous, because you never saw that. And it was, er, it was quite amazing because the time in Austria, you had the feeling that everybody was a Nazi. Er, suddenly, er, when you had, there were, I think about 100,000 people on the, on the, er, one place where Hitler spoke, Heldenplatz and you, you didn't see any non-Nazis. it was all -, also very and you, you wonder -, and this is the point you see, well a difference with Germany and Austria. In Germany it built up slowly - the oppression of the Jews. In Vienna it shot up overnight. It was there fully, and the Austrians actually managed to show the German how, how to deal with Jews. And, er, though Austria, er, as I said before, it's about 8% of the population German, of the, of the German Reich amongst the war criminals there were well over 50% There were a lot of Austrian guards there. Hitler was Austrian, Eichmann was Austrian, [*German names*] and they showed the Germans how to, to do the worst they can do. And, and, and they did, they- It was, somebody once said, er, the Germans were the better Nazis, ideologically, the Austrians were the better anti-Semites. The anti-Semites without even being Nazis and it was, er, the excesses were unbelievable. As I mentioned before, for instance, when I had to scrub the streets, you wonder why? What's wrong? What has happened? And it's interesting that even in England, you know, when we walked, my wife and I and you see a group of youngsters coming towards you, our first indication is to cross the road. But they -, we could walk there unmolested, and you couldn't have been in Vienna.

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Interviewer

So who was it who took you to the train station that day?

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Walter Kammerling

Er, mother.

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Interviewer

Did you, um, have the little sign around your neck with your number on it? How did they work?

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Walter Kammerling

Er, I got, I got that I think on the station.

10:39:52:03

Interviewer

Can you explain to me what the process was. Where -

10:39:55:03

Walter Kammerling

Er, if I remember it, it's, as I said, it was always -, I think that happened on the station where we got a number and they put in on and I, I sort of remember I went to the window and, er, I just waved and there's mother and my two sisters there, because I said goodbye to the father in hospital. And, er, I was -, it was almost, almost through a daze. I, I did not fully appreciate the enormity of it all, that this is the time when I saw my... the younger sister and my mother for the last time, you see and, and you wish you would have. You would have made more of it, you would have, and I didn't and I, it's sort of an omission which you can never, ever repair. It's, it's, er, you feel you are so grateful what they did and, er, you feel, well if just a few things would have happened, then they could have come as well. It didn't, they didn't happen, and they couldn't come.

10:41:14:19

Interviewer

What do you wish you'd said to them?

10:41:17:10

Walter Kammerling

Say they -, give them all the thank yous I didn't give them. Answer properly and not just not monosyllabic. Be, be a mensch. Tell them, tell them that you love them. I know a 14-year-old, a 15-year-old doesn't tell parents you love them and still you miss it, because [*clears throat*] the important time, growing up, I missed them and, um, that's something that stays with you. So, so many things you would ask your parents about their backgrounds, about -, because years later, when my sons told me, "Dad, you've got to make a family tree, because otherwise we don't know where we come from". Then I realized all the questions I should have asked, er,

10:42:40;10

because after the war, er, through the Army, Herta and I, we could -, were

repatriated to Austria and, er, we came in sort of, came there and I said, er, try to, to find our own home. I went there only the first day, I found it too painful to finish it, I didn't even go up to the door, I didn't want to look at the door, because what does it mean. I know the parents are not there. I didn't know what happened to them. And that I was hoping that they survived it somehow, er, and, er, it's -, I kept the per-war memories of home, apart from the new experience of re-discovering Vienna.

[Cut for card change]

10:43:39:08

Interviewer

trying to paint a picture for somebody who doesn't know about Kindertransport and what that must of felt like. You'd had a long journey, you'd said goodbye to your family, your father was in hospital. You'd experienced the train ride but in Holland you'd been smiled at, and you'd been welcomed, and you'd given cocoa and suddenly you arrived. Was it at St Pancreas Station you arrived?

10:44:01:02

Walter Kammerling

No, no, no arrived in, in, in Harwich.

[Cut for direction]

10:44:03:24

Interviewer

What did that feel like?

10:44:05:22

Walter Kammerling

It was a very new experience because it was my first boat ride. I shared a cabin with somebody and when it started moving suddenly the floor went down and up and you feel very odd and you don't -, you're not actually seasick but I am a very bad traveller. I was at the time, and I didn't particularly like it.

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And we'd landed in Harwich, we were about three or four hours stationary. In the evening we got -, we were taken out and it was getting dark and the first time I saw the light, the streetlight, you know at first when they come into different light and then when they get warm, and I saw that it was wet, and it wasn't foggy, but it was sort of misty in a way. And then we went to the, it was the Dovercourt Camp. Dovercourt Camp it was a Warner's Holiday Camp which was taken over and had thousands of children. And the children were in, kept in the chalets, either for boys or for girls there

10:45:26:23

and later on I met people who were the same time there as I was. One of them is Professor Hutter and I met him in Bournemouth. He's a very nice guy and we were, actually not very far from each other there. And the kids sort of, there was always a moving out, moving in. People were collected but as I said it was the young sweet

girls that went first and no one wants a lad who's 15, and so three of us went to Northern Ireland and we were very happy there- comparatively - because we were all cut off. We were all in the same position and then from, in Northern Ireland from the hostel a few months later we went onto a farm which the committee leased or so, I don't know. I was on that farm three years and we lived there together

10:46:38:20

and the interesting thing is that many years later, I think it was about 50 odd, even more years later, I met people from the farm, and we got talking to and we realized that though I was together with them for three years and sort of really living on top of each other: working, eating, well with the boys in the same dormitory and so on and we didn't really know anything about each other. And when you start thinking about it it was like wounded animals licking their wounds. You didn't talk about it, and I know I met one, when I left the farm, he was about 12 and in 19-, 2007 it was, from the, was it through the Holocaust Education Trust or somebody I don't know, we were invited to Prince Charles. It was two days before the attack, so it wasn't the 7th July it was the 5th July. And there was one -, I heard one man say to somebody there, in front of him, he says he was in Northern Ireland on a farm during the war. So I approached him, and I said, "What's your name?", and he said "Jacobvitz, Gert" he says yes. It turns out he was then, when I left him he was just about 12 or so, 10 or 12 and he was now a retired professor from Glasgow. He was in, no Glasgow was Hutter I don't know somewhere up north on radiology, and It was quite funny because we spoke, and the interesting thing was although he was so young, and I was 18 or so but within a few minutes lit was as if we'd never been apart. But I had to smile when he said to me, "but Walter I remember you so much taller," I said, "Yeah, you were 12 I was 18 so".

10:48:55:20

Interviewer

So Walter you, as you said you didn't talk about it because, you know, there was so much pain. You were a young man but actually you were a child. What contact did you have with your family? What did you hear about them? You must have been so worried. You must have been so lonely?

10:49:14:14

Walter Kammerling

Yes. I didn't hear anything. After the outbreak of the war I didn't hear anything. I was hoping to find out what's happening, and I couldn't.

10:49:25:06

It was many years later, uh, that an -, my two uncles who actually, the age gap between them and my mother is rather large, so they were more brothers to me than uncles. I think the younger one is just about 10 years older than I am, at the time. Well it was always 10 years older, but they lived in the same block of flats only they lived on the third floor, and we lived on the first floor. But we were always together basically. And they went illegally into Switzerland. I cried. One was a mathematician and the other one studied law. And they managed to go over without any trouble. They were very lucky, and I know they sent a telegram to my father, "come straight away". But of course there was Grandmother, and we somehow didn't manage to do it. I don't know.

10:50:32:07

Interviewer

Do you remember receiving any post from your family, and do you remember what it would feel like to get information about where they were or what they -

10:50:38:20

Walter Kammerling [*interrupting interviewer*]

They were, at that time, they were still where we lived because we had a two-roomed flat so it was not very desirable, so no, no Nazi boss wanted it. While don't forget, everything that was in Jewish hands was taken over. There was factories, shops, businesses, department stores: they were all, all, all Aryanized as they called it. And, and they was just completely taken over and I mean even the bread, Ankerbrot, anchor bread, which was well known, they took as it is, they only changed instead of HFM they've got ABF. HFM was the name of the owners Hendrick and Fritz Mendel, HFM and ABF is Ankerbrot Fabric. They changed this; people hardly know it these days. And but everything was sort of a, the whole thing collapsed it was completely. As I said before you were outlaws in the truest sense of the word. If someone attacks you you couldn't go to the police because you'd probably get beaten up.

10:51:58:03

Interviewer

So after you were in the farm in Northern Ireland, how long did you stay there and where did you go next?

10:52:02:18

Walter Kammerling

Three years. Then I, I somehow found a job in Carshalton as a turner or so, so I went there and was there a few months but then I wanted to go to London.

10:52:16:20

So I found a place in London, in Old Finchley, and there, there I found digs in the same road. Only the other day I looked in my aliens registry book and found the address where it was. And er, but the lady expects me the same night and I didn't, I went back to Carshalton so, when after one day of work I came there she said, "Sorry, it's all gone". So the neighbour took me in for one night and then I went into a guest house or so. Very friendly but I stayed there only one night and another refugee in the same factory from Gdansk told me about the Austrian centre in the war workers' hostel which I was lucky, and I went there, and they took me in, and I became member of Young Austria and that's where I met my future wife and this is, she was a children's nurse then. Mind you she hasn't been acting as a nurse for a long time, but she still is a children's nurse.

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Interviewer

I'm sure she's amazing. So you ended up joining the British Army. How did it feel like to be joining a foreign army. It wasn't -

10:53:37:09

Walter Kammerling

It wasn't foreign.

10:53:39:02

Interviewer

Didn't feel like it?

10:53:40:00

Walter Kammerling

Not at all foreign no. It's quite, it's -, I would never of dreamt of joining an army, but I felt like this is the right thing to do. I've got my folks over there and I wanted to sort of do something to get 'em out and the whole Youth Movement was towards a successful of finishing of the -, ending the war and starting to rebuild Austria and we were full of enthusiasm. And so we went, and I remember when I joined here and questioned of what should I do. So they put me into the Infantry and Suffolk Regiment, never heard of them so I joined the Suffolk Regiment, and it was an interesting experience. A number of people sort of complained about the Army this that and the other. I wasn't unhappy there. I knew I wouldn't choose this as a career, but I know I'm only in for the time during-, so for the duration so to speak. And actually before I was sent overseas, ah. we decided to get married, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me. And though the first part is a very sad thing, I've been happily married now for over 70 years and I, as long as I've got her with me I don't mind. I need her and it's -, we're getting on well.

10:55:23:11

Interviewer

[Laughs] After 70 years that's amazing. So your commitment to the Army felt like in some way you were helping your family and helping to reach them. And at this point did you have any contact with them? Did you know where they were?

10:55:38:17

Walter Kammerling

Not at all. Not at all. I know they were over there. I thought they would stay in our flat because it was a small flat in the second district and only much later I learned where they finished up their lives. They finished it in a place, also in the second district very close to the school I used to go to; because of the 21 districts in Vienna each one had its grammar school. And we lived in the second district which was historically the district where there were a large proportion of Jews there due to the ghetto was there in the Middle Ages etc. And so our school was designated to become the Jewish School and the non-Jewish students went to other schools and we had two students coming from other districts to us. Because there was a law passed, the Jews have to be excluded from education - which I only learned much later. I knew they were, we had to finish but so we finished the Academy in 1938 and that was it.

10:57:01:10

Interviewer

So at what point did you discover what had happened to your family and what do you now know happened to them?

10:57:08:08

Walter Kammerling

Yes. Well after the war there was a chance to be repatriated to Austria from here and we thought it's a -, Britain helped us so much and full of enthusiasm we thought we knew, free Austria it'll be great and building up the Austria. And little did we realize that in Austria the first thing is we learned is, "Why did you come back?" and we lost the war, and the allied troops were not regarded as liberators but as occupiers. It was the Army of Occupation and somehow we felt well maybe we haven't done the right thing. I know the first thing I did when I got back is I took a course to catch up where I left off. Did my Matric and enrolled in the, on the Technical University. But of course I had to work

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and in 1948 our first son was born. One of the great thing, it's the real highlights the birth of our two boys. And, but I enrolled at the same time, and I had to work so I become what's called Werkstudent which is working student, which is for, for medicine and technikit's almost impossible because they are very, as you might say, jealous disciplines. You can't do anything next to it. So I had to work, and I had friends. When I went to some of the lectures and made friends and they had the papers and I had the notes and I saw the Professors that taught us, some of them the first time at the examination and they didn't like that. And I realized ever there was some antisemitism when one said it's easy for you trying to do this and that together". As it if was an easy life. It was the hardest thing imaginable. I only managed to cover two and a half years with exams of a five-year course, and it took me 10 years to do that.

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And eventually I got a job with AEG in the design office. First in the drawing office and then I moved over to design office designing electric motors. It was fascinating, I loved it but it's jolly hard, working at the same time and studying, but I must admit I was very lucky because all through my life I loved my work.

11:00:04:19

Interviewer

You experienced antisemitism there as well didn't you? Can you give me an example of that?

11:00:08:17

Walter Kammerling

Oh, unfortunately quite a number of examples. I know at work two of my colleagues standing closer than you are to me, discussing-, talking about another Jewish man who worked on the floor below us and one said to other he said, "another one who fell through the grate," referring to the grate of the crematoria. He says we ought to go to work for the [*name of an Austrian firm*] - that's a firm that's ovens and design grates - so that you can't fall through. And well, I thought well, this sort of makes you think eventually why should I bother. Or once we were walking home from somewhere and there was a lady, which I thought she was a friend and it was winter and there was snow on the road and she said, "Oh there were times - how good it was - when we had the Jews clean up the streets, the snow," and I thought God Lord. Possibly my parents had to clean up as well and then went home to a cold

unheated place, soaking wet and so on. [*clears throat*] And these things sort of made me realise what am I doing here? Our boys - because we had two boys at the time, the second was born '55 -[*clears throat*] and their grandparents - my wife's parents are here in England –

11:01:38:16

and quite honestly we both -, she and I had our formative years here, when you start becoming a full person. When you sort of shed your children's clothes and when we come and visit here, when we were living in Vienna, we really had the feeling of coming home. When we first came back to Austria there was also a slight feeling of that, but you had the same sounds, the smells, the views – beautiful - but you also have the memories of what happened.

11:02:19:04

Interviewer

What happened to your family?

11:02:20:21

Walter Kammerling

Uh, that I found out when a friend of mine, who's been a friend since our kindergarten times, and we were in the primary school together. I've got a photograph of us in the fourth grade, just about 10 or so and he's sitting in front of me there and then I met him in England. He also joined the Army he also wanted to come over and he's -, we were friends until he died a few years ago. And he gave me a book which is called *Death Book The-*, - Todes Buch Theresienstadt, and in that book is all the names of the Jews that were transported from Austria to Theresienstadt and in that book it gives sort of the name, their date of birth and under the name is one number which is the number which is a transport number and then it's the internal

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transport number so, whatever it is. The running number. And on the right-hand side is also some letters which is a transport where they went, when they went and what happened; you can work it out then and also the internal transfer numbers and I realized that my mother and my sister were sent on the penultimate transfer to Auschwitz. And that was on 23rd October '44. I think it was only less than two weeks later that I got married. Of course I didn't know anything like that. And, er, at that time the Nazi's knew the war is lost so they tried to kill as many as possible. They took the trains away from the supply routes for the armies just to kill the maximum amount of Jews. And so I know that then my mother and sister were sent on the 23rd of October. By the 25th they were dead. And my father was sent on the 29th September '44, just a few weeks before that. I felt a little bit, a little bit, I felt quite a pain realizing exactly four years later our first son was born - 29th September. But I tried to see something positive, it's a continuation, it goes on. [*clears throat*] And when I got back to Vienna I met people which were friends with us before and they had cards which my parents drove from Theresienstadt to them. There I saw my mother and my father had different addresses which upset me a bit. But then I thought of course father had to be in the men's barracks and mother in the women's barracks. I don't know even that my mother and my sister were together. I don't know that. [*clears that*]

11:05:35:04

Actually the girl that came with us today, a very good friend which I have since since she was -, well I've known her since birth because she's the daughter of friends of ours, but I had her in religion class when she was 10, she's now mid-forties and she organised, she organised actually a visit to Auschwitz with us. This, er that was I went and my two sons. Our two sons went. unfortunately Hetta couldn't go at the time. And this time we want to go to Theresienstadt. I felt I had to go to Auschwitz because I know when the train arrives that it's a little bridge over a ditch and then there's about 200 yards down to the gas chamber. And I er, know that's the way my folk went and die. [*Cries*] I had to go that way.

11:06:44:18

I am pleased to say that our sons were with me and it's interesting because at two different times, while we were there Peter and Max, that's the second one took me aside and said, "Dad don't be so depressed, you've won, you've got a large family, we are all here". And they're right. However it's hard to, if you see actually what happened there, and you see where their punishment cell, which is a room not larger than a toilet and then they emptied the toilets out and there's no air, no window. And in there they kept overnight the maximum of people in there. In the morning half of them were dead and all the other things. It's nothing new you learned but it's shocking when you see it there. When you see the cynicism that 'Work Makes You Free' in front. And so again in the women barracks because the men's barracks don't exist anymore. It's only the concrete foundations - they were wooden ones, wooden huts. But the women were in brick-built places, and you go in there and it's dark and dingy and unmade floors and the lowest bunk is about two inches above that unmade floor that you realize in winter those women were laying in the mud. And right up on top I still saw this slogan they put in there which was in German 'Sauberkeit ist Ihre Pflicht' meaning 'Cleanliness is Your Duty.' And to talk about cleanliness under these conditions just shows the same cynicism as 'Work Makes You Free' because it's impossible. Er, but this, it was, you see all that and it sort of frightening. It was Esther, as I said, that girl, she organized that tour and it's just she, her parents and I and our two sons went with me. Unfortunately Herta wouldn't come. And she's now planning to organise the same thing for a visit to Theresienstadt because I feel I have to go to the place where my folks spent the last two years of their life: starving, working - whatever. And I want to see that, and this book that *Death Book Theresienstadt* which gave me that made it clear what happened to them. I haven't got a confirmation that they actually were killed in Auschwitz but as it was end of September, father must have arrived there latest by 1st October and mother and sister by 25th October so there was not much chance that they do a selection. So I have to assume that's when they died. But somehow it's, it's you realize the depravity to what humanity sank. You realize that it's not people, uneducated white ignorant people. They were doctors, medical doctors, Doctor of Philosophy, trained nurses which gave the injections. All that and you just won't understand it. And in Auschwitz I remember when I went to one, we saw one room with the suitcases and on the suitcases were the names and address, sort of painted on. And, er, there was one suitcase which was just a bit round the corner from where we lived and I was a bit afraid that I can see one with my father's name on it, my mother's name on it because I know they would have been there. So they weren't exhibited there.

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But in Vienna we met a girl that survived Theresienstadt, and she told us about it, because in '44 there was a Red Cross Commission went to Theresienstadt and for the Red Cross Commission the Nazis planned a certain route. On that route they planted flowerbeds, benches, street cafes, signposts to the library, to the playground. There was no library, there was no playground, and the Red Cross Commission believed it - or so they say. But as soon as they were gone, all the children were deported and killed and er, the vast majority of people were killed. But this girl told us that the Germans at that time made a film which was called *The Fuhrer Gives a Town to the Jews* which is a sort of a propaganda film to show how well they treat the Jews which is two things. For the world to see that they are not mistreating them and for their own people, to make them jealous because they had to struggle under war conditions and there are the Jews living it up. None of it is true.

11:12:44:16

Interviewer

Walter what must have been very hard for you, looking at the dates and the uncertainty about what happened to your family. What you know is that they nearly survived.

11:12:56:16

Walter Kammerling

Yes. Yeah. Just, it's just a few weeks because the Germans stopped gassing I think in November and uh, mother and Dorota got there end of October so they just -, they didn't survive. I know that that girl we met, she said in the films the Nazis made - the propaganda films - to show It also amongst other things a Jewish wedding and she had to play the part of the bride and my mother had to play the part of the mother of the bride. And a number of these parts of these films - propaganda films - were shown partly on BBC but also in the Parks Library in Southampton and I always went to have a look at that to see whether I can see my mother. Though I was a bit afraid to see, to see what she looked like after a few years there. I didn't see it, there was none. I shall still try to see whether that part survived or not. Maybe I'll see it one day.

11:14:13:12

Interviewer

It sounds to me, despite the fact that you, at the station didn't say to your mother all the things you wished that you said, that you always felt that they loved you?

11:14:26:02

Walter Kammerling

Oh yes, very much.

11:14:27:19

Interviewer

So there was no -, you felt calm in your soul that you always had the love of your family with you?

11:14:34:15

Walter Kammerling

Yes, but it's interesting you said calm. I think it, it's even that it's probably just the opposite of it. Very annoyed at myself not to have responded openly. How did they know that I loved them. I did not, I don't think I showed it. I, I, I was sort of in a world of my own and er, that, of course, the past you cannot relive. You cannot change the past unless the people are there, and you can then get into the relationship you didn't have before if you see what I mean.

11:15:21:06

Interviewer

Was that your biggest regret in your life?

11:15:23:12

Walter Kammerling

Uh, it's one of the, er, it's a big regret but there are so many things to regret. There, it's not just this. That, er, you didn't act as a grown-up and you're, were a child. So of course you don't. I'm not happy about it, but it's, there's hardly a day goes past when I don't have sort of discussions with my parents in my mind. Discussions that I never had. Ask them about their backgrounds, what happened when they were young, etc., etc., etc. I know I've got their wedding photo which was 1917. Father in uniform with a big saber and so on. And interesting I found this father died -, um got married one year before they ended the First World War, and I got married one year before the end of the Second World War. Mind you I got married in civvies which I wasn't supposed to because I wasn't supposed to wear any civvies.

11:16:33:24

Interviewer [*with interjections from Interviewee*]

[*Coughs*] Excuse me. Walter we're coming to the end of the interview. You have been so honest about everything and thank you very, very much for all of that. Can I just, this last section, just to talk, or ask you to explain why you feel it's so important for people like you. It's, it what you were saying to me when we first started before the Interview. You talk a lot a schools. You feel it's your duty. Can you explain a little bit about that now?

11:17:05:00

Walter Kammerling

Uh, [*clears throat*] when I first started talking, I mean I talked before I talked for the -, sent through the Holocaust Education Trust. Somebody then said do you mind talking for them. I said no. So I was invited to tell them what I was going to say etc. and then they said alright you talk. And then I talked, and I found that these talks were extremely successful, and it made me wonder because I don't -, I didn't think I'm such a good speaker and it was interesting because sometimes the teachers told me they are very surprised because this is a very unruly year and not a word was spoken. They didn't interrupt the lesson and then I realized why it is. I think the important thing is that we are basically contemporaries of the youngsters and by an extension, what happened to us happened in their lifetime so to speak and they identify with it. And that identification is the real clue to it, and that identification cannot be replaced by anything else 0 as such. You can only, sort of, get something in by involving the youngsters. The more, the greater the efforts they put in in either researching it, producing a play, producing a report on a certain family, what

happened. The more they put of themselves in there, the greater the effort, the more they will identify. The more it will stay with them. And you have the best example of people who don't get any relation except take the new, the ambassadors, the young ambassadors. They go there, that will stay with them and a few weeks ago I was invited to a performance of a school – gymnasium - Anne Frank Gymnasium in Berlin. They produced a play *Kindertransport* and with music and you see the youngsters that have worked at it and the way they felt with it when, when they spoke about it, in their parts. You see that, that will stay with those people. And the more -, and as I said, it doesn't matter what ever there is the

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research but when I say research, I mean research. Not Googling it and copying it, that's not research. It's their effort.

11:19:48:19

Interviewer

There will be a point in history where we won't be able to hear first time testimony.

11:19:53:15

Walter Kammerling

There will be a point and it's approaching fast. Take the time since the end of the war and how many people are alive now that still there. And I know that I don't think in 10 years I'll be able to talk to you.

11:20:10:11

Interviewer

Do you feel that we have learnt enough from people like you?

11:20:13:14

Walter Kammerling

We have learnt enough. I feel that the youngsters that have sort of learned a lot, or rather the youngsters that identify there is a chance that prejudice will not get hold of them. If one points out that it's, it's the prejudice that causes that. Because prejudice as it says is prejudging. If somebody says to me "Walter I hate you because you have done this, this, this and this", he's right to hate me. But if he says, "Actually I quite like you, but I can't because you're Jewish", end of the discussion and that prejudice is the root of things. Together with the peer pressure, and the peer pressure that is there, means you have to swim against the stream. You don't go that way. If you let yourself go you are carrying into the wrong direction whether you like it or not and you become just as guilty as the rest. And that's very hard and it's -, one wonders at times how would I have reacted. You can't really say. You can only hope that you will have reacted the correct way and I know I work together with a chap in, in the Highgate - not very outstanding, a very nice guy. And he told me as soon as he was called up into the Wehrmacht a few weeks later they had a troop of, uh, from Waffen SS to get volunteers for the Waffen SS. And in order to make it easy for them, they put them in July into a school room, the lights full on, the windows closed, the central heating full on and he said within the first half hour most of them signed because they couldn't stand the heat. And he said he didn't want to sign. I said, "what happened?", he said, "Nothing really, I was sweating there and at half past four they all went home except one who stood behind me and says, "Go on let's get out of it". I said, "And did you sign?" and he says, "No I didn't". And so what then and

he says, "well an hour later we both went home and that's it". And nothing happened. He was lucky. Had he had an NCO who was a Nazi would have seen that he gets posted to the Russian Front. He didn't. The man in my eyes was a hero. I never told him; I don't know why but he said no. He didn't want to, and he swam against the stream and that's the important thing. And when you point out to the youngsters that in a few years' time, it's their generation that runs the country. It's their generation that do that. That say yes or no to whatever happens. They will have to be very careful and don't turn your head away and say it doesn't matter. It does matter. And it starts off when you see bullying in school and turn away. It's just the same and beware of that and then I just wish them luck and to be strong and finish off and it's quite surprising how they take it. Because they actually really identify with that and that's the important thing. And that identification cannot be taken away and I don't think you can do it with anything else but with survivors, people that were there that happen in the time. And as soon as this is off it will be more difficult.

11:23:56:22

Interviewer

What message do you hope this recording will give the next generation?

11:24:02:03

Walter Kammerling

Well, I hope somehow that though the next generation, when they see it, I won't be there, that somehow they get the feeling of me still being there because otherwise it will be an important help, a study help, but we must beware a study is like a lecture and when you close the book you're half-forgotten it already and that must be prevented. And that you can only prevent by the individual spending time researching, living with it, however they do it. And that is important thing because the more your efforts are there, the more you will remember it. The more you will be there and it's, it's, it's almost like a conservation of energy. Whatever you put in you will get out. And there is no shortcut unfortunately.

11:25:06:06

Interviewer

Do you feel you are at peace at this point in your life?

11:25:11:01

Walter Kammerling

Pleased. I'm pleased in as far as -,

11:25:11:24

Interviewer

At peace. Are you at peace?

11:25:15:05

Walter Kammerling

At peace?

11:25:15:20

Interviewer

At peace.

11:35:17:00

Walter Kammerling

Will I ever be at peace? I don't think so because there are things I can -, cannot make up. I can only do my bit sort of to keep talking as long as I can talk. Because it is so important and that is, I find it's correct that I do and up to now whenever I was asked "will you -, "can you visit that school", I did. I even went to Durham to talk to a group which is Newcastle. Newcastle I went by train. That was seven hours there and eight hours back and -, but it's worth it. Even if you get a few youngsters to make them away from the influence of prejudice that comes from the adult population - because it's been there all the time. And if you look at it it's frightening because when I saw the clips after the Gaza conflict, the revival of the international antisemitism or the global antisemitism. When I saw groups shouting, "kill the Jews". There's no point of Israelis. Kill the Jews. You realize that antisemitism is still alive. It was oppressed over the years because Hitler gave it a bad name. But as soon as they could shout "Kill the Jews", they shouted it. And I recognised the tune. It was the same tune I heard in 1938. They shouted it in another language but that didn't matter. It was the same distorted, hateful faces and that is based on prejudice and that is what we have to fight, and this is why you can only hope to speak to the youngsters. That they find the strength in themselves. I always advise them if you feel something is wrong, don't turn away, do something. Because the changes are that you are right, something is wrong. And then you can only wish them strength and say goodbye.

11:27:37:09

Interviewer [*with interjections from Interviewee*]

Was there anything that you feel you haven't had a chance to say, Walter, in this interview? You've been very honest about everything, and you've shared your emotions and your experiences. Was there anything else that you feel that you'd like to add?

11:27:51:04

Walter Kammerling

No, nothing really. That is so important for survivors to speak because it's only survivors that can do, influence a group of 300 people - youngsters - which otherwise is very difficult to do because you have to get each on of these 300 to put something in of themselves. And thereby they get it from outside, by the situation. They're influenced by the situation that somebody's there who is alive when they were alive who had that experience. And that's it. And you cannot do that.

11:28:35:03

Interviewer

My last question to you is about Theresienstadt. So you are going to visit?

11:28:41:04

Walter Kammerling

Yeah. In a few months' time Esther's sort of planning that.

11:28:45:05

Interviewer

And how do you prepare for something like that?

11:28:50:07

Walter Kammerling

[Sighs] Well it's very hard to prepare. I got form the Internet something about Theresienstadt. I would like to know more about the marriage of my sister. She got married on the 25th June there, according to the cards which my father wrote and the man she married went, with my father to Auschwitz. I never knew him. I wish I had known him, and I would like to see the places -, I've got the address where my mother was living. I've got the address where my father was living. I'd like to see those places. Whether there is any record of their marriage - which I very much doubt but it's possible - and take it from there. It's that I've felt this is the last two years my family live there under terrible conditions. Whether half-starving, my sister getting married - I know they couldn't live together. I only hope they had a few moments of happiness within that terrible life and, otherwise I can't, there is nothing else I can do about it. But I feel I have to be there. Thank you.

*

**Caption: AFTER THE WAR WALTER KAMMERING
MADE A REMARKABLE DISCOVERY**

	<p>11:30:30:10</p> <p>Walter Kammerling</p> <p>I got the box when I visited a friend, a non-Jewish of, of the family and was there and she said, "oh father left the box with us and here's the box." And I took the box, and it had books in there.</p>
Artefact 1: <i>Lieder Des Ghetto</i> – cover	<p>It's interesting as for instance one book - a present which my father gave to my mother two years before they were married.</p>
	<p>Walter Kammerling iv</p> <p>Er, it's a lovely book and father wrote dedication into it</p>
<i>Lieder Des Ghetto</i> - page with the dedication from his father to his mother.	<p>in sort of copper plate writing, beautiful, I've still got that book. And, er, I also found documents and amongst those documents was the passport,</p>
Artefact 2: his parents' passport: cover	<p>Walter o/o/v</p> <p>German passport of my parents [...]</p>
	<p>Walter iv</p>

	<p>the mere fact that father left it behind when they were moving away made me sad. But that passport tells a lot of stories, [...]</p>
<p>Artefact 2: his parents' passport: front page with red J</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v the first thing when you open it you can see a red J. Walter iv. And that red J was the forerunner of the yellow star. With the same idea of the yellow star, it's basically meaningless but it's showing up humiliation, separating, putting you down.</p>
<p>Artefact 2: his parents' passport: page with date stamp</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v [...] that has sort of this stamp on there in the accuracy, the date it was put in, it was 27th March '39.</p>
	<p>Walter iv Also on here you have the name</p>
<p>Artefact 2: his parents' passport: front page with father's signature</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v Maximilan Kammerling, name of my father, on top of it you have Israel. Mother is Marie and there you have Sara.</p>
	<p>Walter iv Every Jewish man had the name Israel, every Jewish woman the name Sarah which is identical to the meaning of the J., It doesn't mean anything. And at the bottom here they wrote, er, first name see page 6,</p>
<p>Artefact 2: his parents' passport: page 6</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v well all it says on page 6 the date when he was put in. He was put in on 16th September 1939, 16th September 1939 is almost a fortnight after the war had started. [...] Britain declared war on 3rd September '39.</p>
	<p>Walter iv Er, and the interesting thing is that on a page here, where</p>

<p>Artefact 2: his parents' passport: page 2</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v on the second page I've have got the pictures of my parents, that's how I remember them. That was taken at the same time</p>
<p>Artefact 3: Walter's aliens registration book: photo</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v as mine was taken for my aliens registration book.</p>
	<p>Walter iv Er, on the other side they got at the bottom children. At that time I had already left Vienna</p>
<p>Artefact 2: his parents' passport: page 2</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v so only my two sisters are there [...] though my sister is called Elfriede Ruth, Ruth was not enough she had to have the name Sarah and Erica also Sarah. Now Erica has been in Britain since the 4th July '39, er, so at the time when that was put in she had already been in England.</p>
	<p>Walter iv They knew the war had started she's not coming back, nevertheless she got the name Sarah because, you see, they have to have the right order. If they have a thing two children have the name Sarah, she must have the name Sarah. Er, and that is-, I use this, er, passport to indicate</p>
<p>Artefact 2: his parents' passport: pages 4 & 5</p>	<p>Walter o/o/v [...] how the Germans treated the Jews, that they're basically outside the human race. The Jews [...] don't matter, [...] they're not human beings.</p>
	<p>Walter iv And when they have treated Jews in concentration camps that way: starving, emaciated, hungry, unbelievably didn't look like anything human. This should</p>

	cover two things: first of all, it's one thing to humiliate the Jews on the other hand it's also to make it easier for the guards to treat them because they're nothing human. And this is how they operated, and it is frightening when you realise that antisemitism basically is very much alive still. And -
	11:35:01:08 Interviewer Can I just ask you, just to find, find that box must have just felt like the greatest treasure for you because it was touching your family again?
	11:35:09:10 Walter Kammerling Yes, it is - it was the greatest treasure for me. I found, I found photos there,
Artefact 4: scan of photo of Walter with his mother	Walter Kammerling o/o/v old family photos, photos of parents and
Artefact 5: scan of photo of grandparents	grandparents, great grandparents which I remember were hanging in my grandmother's hall,
	Walter Kammerling iv the photo of their, of her parents in Russia. Er, I found the photos of my paternal grandfather, er, who wasn't born in Vienna.
Artefact 6: scan of a photograph of Walter Kammerling's father dated 7 November 1918	Walter Kammerling o/o/v My father was born in Vienna, [...] he was born [...] in the
	Austrian part of Poland. At the time it was the ... Austro- Hungarian empire and that went right over there.
	Walter Kammerling iv Er, But I found all these, and all these documents came in very handy when my sons approached me and told me to make a family tree. Because he actually said, "Dad when you're gone and you haven't done it we don't know where we are, we don't know who we are and

	what we are.”
	And so I did it and found a number of things and I tried to put in everything they had so that know where they came from.
ARTEFACT 7: scan of a photo of Walter’s mother	Walter o/o/v Where my mother was born -
ARTEFACT 8: scan of a photo of Walter’s mother	my mother was born in Russia –
	Walter iv my grandfather, paternal grandfather was born in Poland. Er, and I, not that it's very valuable,
ARTEFACT 9: scan of Walter aged about 18 months with his sister	Walter o/o/v it is part of my childhood. I found books which I remember where they stood at home,
	er, <i>Great History of the Jews</i> , the three volume one in German. I found, I found, er, my mother's book, it was the poems by, erm, a Jewish author in Russia and it's in Hebrew.
	11:37:11:22 Interviewer Thank you very much. That’s so-, it must have been - , and you’ve got everything still haven’t you, yeah?
	11:37:15:21 Walter Yes, and I've still got these things.
	11:37:17:05 Interviewer. Ah, amazing.

ARTEFACT 10: scan of a photograph of Walter’s mother, Marie
No commentary

ARTEFACT 11: scan of a photograph of Walter’s family
No commentary

ARTEFACT 12: scan of a photograph of Walter's mother, Marie, with her colleagues

No commentary

ARTEFACT 13: scan of a photograph of Walter's wife, Herta Kammerling

No commentary

ARTEFACT 14: scan of a photograph of Walter's sister, Erica

No commentary

ARTEFACT 15: scan of a photograph of Walter's family

No commentary

ARTEFACT 16: scan of a photograph of Walter

No commentary

ARTEFACT 17: scan of a photograph of a school group. Is Walter [in glasses] sitting next to the teacher?

No commentary

ARTEFACT 18: scan of a photograph of Walter's classroom.

No commentary

ARTEFACT 19: scan of a photograph of Walter in a corduroy jacket

No commentary

ARTEFACT 20: scan of a photograph of Walter in a white shirt wearing glasses

No commentary

ARTEFACT 21: scan of an unnamed woman, possibly his eldest sister

No commentary

ARTEFACT 22: scan of a sketch of a man – Walter's father, Maximilian

No commentary

ARTEFACT 23: scan of a postcard addressed to Miss Erika Kammerling dated July 1939

No commentary

ARTEFACT 24: scan of a postcard addressed to 'Frl. Kamerling'

No commentary

ARTEFACT 25: scan of the front cover of Walter's Certificate of Registration (Aliens Order)

No commentary

ARTEFACT 26: scan of currency from Theresienstadt

No commentary

ARTEFACT 27: scan of a postcard dated 'Theresienstadt 19 März 1943

No commentary

ARTEFACT 28: scan of a postcard sent from Theresienstadt in 1943

No commentary

ARTEFACT 29: scan of a postcard sent from Theresienstadt, 30 June 1943

No commentary

ARTEFACT 30: scan of a card sent to or from Theresiestadt 10 Aug 1943

No commentary

ARTEFACT 31: scan of a postcard [3 / 6 bottom right]

No commentary

ARTEFACT 32: scan of a postcard [3 / 30 bottom right]

No commentary

ARTEFACT 3: scan of a card sent to/from Max Kammerling in Theresiestadt

No commentary

ARTEFACT 34: scan of a card sent to/from Marie Kammerling in Theresienstadt, 1943

No commentary

ARTEFACT 35: scan of a card sent to 'Herr Michael Goldschmidt Theresiestadt from Theresienstadt

No commentary

ARTEFACT 36: scan of a card from Marie Kammerling in Theresiestadt 15 Aug

No commentary

ARTEFACT 37: scan of a postal receipt. The receiver is Marie Kammerling in Theresienstadt

No commentary

ARTEFACT 38: scan of a postal receipt. The receiver is Marie Kammerling in Theresienstadt

No commentary

ARTEFACT 39: scan of a postal receipt. The receiver is Marie Kammerling in Theresienstadt '115' bottom right.

No commentary

ARTEFACT 40: scan of a postal receipt. The receiver is Marie Kammerling in Theresienstadt '85' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 41: scan of a postal receipt. The receiver is Marie Kammerling in

Theresienstadt '115' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 42: scan of a postcard from Theresienstadt 30 October 1943

ARTEFACT 43: front and back of a postcard from Theresienstadt dated 24 November 1943

No commentary

ARTEFACT 44: front and back of a postcard from Theresienstadt '30-XII-43'

No commentary

ARTEFACT 45: scan of a postcard to or from Theresienstadt '11b' in a circle on the left.

No commentary

ARTEFACT 46: scan of a postcard to or from Theresienstadt

No commentary

ARTEFACT 47: scan of a postcard to or from Theresienstadt [the franking mark hasn't touched the stamp]

No commentary

ARTEFACT 48: scan of a postcard to or from Theresienstadt [two stamps]

No commentary

ARTEFACT 49: scan of a postcard to or from Theresienstadt 'No 3' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 50: scan of a postcard from Theresienstadt dated 12 January 1944

No commentary

ARTEFACT 51: scan of Walter's Soldier's Service and Pay Book dated 16 March 1944

No commentary

ARTEFACT 52: front and back of a card from Theresienstadt dated 11 April 1944

No commentary

ARTEFACT 53: scan of a postcard to or from Theresienstadt, '124/3' in the middle of the card

No commentary

ARTEFACT 54: back and front of a postcard from Theresienstadt dated 15-7-1944

No commentary

ARTEFACT 55: scan of front and back of a card to or from Theresienstadt

dated 17-7-1944

No commentary

ARTEFACT 56: scan of receipt for a package ? collected by Marie Kammerling in Theresienstadt, 25-07-1944

No commentary

ARTEFACT 57: scan of postcard sent from Theresienstadt, 28 July 1944

No commentary

ARTEFACT 58: scan of a card to or from Theresienstadt. '47' bottom left corner.

No commentary

ARTEFACT 59: front and back of a card to or from Theresienstadt dated 22-11-1944?

No commentary

ARTEFACT 60: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling

No commentary

ARTEFACT 61: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling '105' on right hand side

No commentary

ARTEFACT 62: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling '105' on right hand side

No commentary

ARTEFACT 63: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. A sketchy '95' on right hand side

No commentary

ARTEFACT 64: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. '80' and '10' on right hand side

No commentary

ARTEFACT 65: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. '70' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 66: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. '180' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 67: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. '165' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 68: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. '85' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 69: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. '1972' bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 70: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. '9,00' additional stamp on left

No commentary

ARTEFACT 71: scan of a receipt for post received at Theresienstadt by Marie Kammerling. 75/10 bottom right

No commentary

ARTEFACT 72: scan of the Certificate of Registration [Aliens Order, 1920] belonging to his sister Herta

No commentary

ARTEFACT 73: scan of the inside page of the Certificate of Registration [Aliens Order, 1920] belonging to his sister Herta

No commentary

ARTEFACT 74: scan of a colour photograph of the approach to Auschwitz taken during Walter's visit there

No commentary

ARTEFACT 75: scan of a colour photograph of the railway line into Auschwitz taken during Walter's visit there

No commentary

ARTEFACT 76: scan of a colour photograph of a high angle view over Auschwitz taken during Walter's visit there

No commentary

ARTEFACT 77: scan of a colour photograph of a high angle view over the huts at Auschwitz taken during Walter's visit there

No commentary

ARTEFACT 78: scan of a colour photograph of the defences at Auschwitz taken during Walter's visit there

No commentary

ARTEFACT 79: scan of a colour photograph of gravestones at Auschwitz with a ruined building in the background taken during Walter's visit there

No commentary

ARTEFACT 80-87: illustrations from *Lieder Des Ghetto*

Caption

AUSTRIA POSTWAR

11:44:39:20

when we went back to Austria, er, because we were full of enthusiasm of the new Austria after the war, it had been liberated and it's free. The first shock we got that we thought it was liberated, not the Austrians. They regarded the forces of liberation as the forces of occupation. Austria was occupied, was occupied by the Allies. Er, and it's interesting we had certificates, sort of identification certificates in four languages. They were in German, English, French and Russian because it was - I should've brought it actually, I forgot it still at home somewhere. And, er, at the time it was the coldest Cold War. In Vienna we had military police going about, four in a jeep, one Russian, one British, one French and one English. And they were patrolling, military police patrolling the area. And there was a time of the Korean war, and they were sort of at each other. And then you see sort of them standing in, in groups of where they are and one officer taking the salute. Er, but that was a time when I got hold of this and I found this, and it made me very sad to realise that they went on their journey and leaving the passports at home.