

UKHMF TESTIMONY TRANSCRIPT – ELSE HOWARD

[Testimony: 1hr 16mins. Artefacts: 10'.14"]

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10:00:00:00

Else Howard

I'm Else Howard, I came to England 1939 on a domestic permit.

[Fade to black and back up]

10:00:08:06

Interviewer

Have you ever recorded your testimony before?

10:00:12:06

Else Howard

No, no.

10:00:11:24

Interviewer

Have you recorded your experience?

10:00:15:10

Else Howard

No. Never.

10:00:14:22

Interviewer

And why not?

10:00:17:10

Else Howard

Well, er, actually I must say, they came to the, er, um, Austrian club in Cliff Road where we had our centre. They came once and there was a small, shall I say, group who took some photos and also a few words from us and it was recorded, yes. It was called, [a funny word in the kitchen] or something. I don't know if you obviously know it. A few words. Yeah, that was very funny and strange people rang me up. "Else, I've seen you on the television." [*laughs*]

10:01:04:23

Interviewer

So how do you feel speaking about your experiences to me today?

10:01:08:12

Else Howard

Well, I don't mind. I can tell you all I know about, you know, all the bad things and good things. More bad [*sighs*] than good.

10:01:18:01

Interviewer

Why do you think it's important for people to record their testimony?

10:01:22:03

Else Howard

No, for the next generation. They should know what has happened. Er, Hitler was a murderer. It was terrible. Shocking what he did to the people and killed six million Jews. It's not easy. And my father was twice in the concentration camp. And the second time of course, he died there. And my mother. First they came out, it was in 1938 in [Nomen] but the 10th of November, you know, they took them all in and he was there about three months in Dachau. But then he came out and they told him, "Listen. Six months, you've got to leave Austria. Go where you like, but you must leave." So he didn't know where to leave. He hasn't had anywhere, no money either. He left to Italy, which was not far from Austria. But he felt lost there. No money, no income, no people.

10:02:20:17

And the mother was in Vienna so he came back again, which he shouldn't have done. As he came back on the station, he said, "You're a Jew. Come with me." So then they took him away again and he came to the concentration camp. Three months at the time. That was from November to, um, February. They let him out then. But then they caught him again on the 10th November 1938. Yes, Kristallnacht, you know? Yeah. In the morning, somebody came, knocked at our door and he saw there was a Nazi to fetch him, but it was the postman and they left in the postbox a note, "There is a letter at the post office." So he let it go by a few hours and then he took that letter and went to the post office. He wanted to know the letter. It came from America from his brother and sister. But none of them could help him to come to out from the country. All poor people.

10:03:32:07

So anyhow, he went to the post office to get that letter and at the post office, as he came in, they said, "You're a Jew. Come on." It, and then he was sent to Dachau. Three months. But they let him out. Badly, one Nazi gave him such a kick in the back from his old boot, he had the nail mark in his back when he came back home. Then he said, "Mustn't tell anybody what happened to you," you know. "Keep secret and you must leave the country within six months." But he couldn't leave. He, he tried Italy, and he didn't know that he can go to synagogues. And so, you know, he, he hasn't had the experience. So he came back. He was so sorry for my mother and a young brother. And as he came back on the station in Vienna Westbahnhof, again he was taken away. And he never seen the mother again. And as far as I know, he was working in a quarry knocking stones. I don't know that what's happened to all.

10:04:44:17

I was out in the meantime. You know, luckily I got, um, visa for a, a permit for domestic service. That, so that was great. I took it and went to the first job I had. There was a Jewish people, you know. And funny, I, I was there one year. Wasn't happy and then I had to go and do war work, um, and I work in factory where they manufactured, er, uniforms. Sailors, er, airmen. And soldiers, you know. So we did do the sewing and finishing and folding up. All this job you had to do. I was there four years in this factory until near the end of the war. Then I wanted to, The doodlebugs were falling over us, so I asked my manager, could he give me release, "I want to go one year to Leicester." I had a cousin there. So that the only way I can go where I have somebody. So he wouldn't, the manager would not give me the release. But from the union, the man did.

10:06:05:24

See, when you were a member of the union, they helped us. So they gave me the release and I went a year to Leicester and I got, I got a picture from it where I done the work, cutting some, er, metal things, Us and Ts meant for radio, ship radios, you see. So it was war work. And I got a, a photo. I don't know whether did, but I thought I put it in to show you, because you wanted all these. You see me on, on the machine cutting. *[laughs]*

10:06:47:05

Interviewer

Okay. We're going to go through all of that again a, a bit later on. But can, can I just ask you, *[noise]* um, just some more general questions first?

10:06:55:07

Else Howard

Yes, of course.

10:06:56:06

Interviewer

Yeah. So, um, why do you think it's important that people like me and the next generation, your grandchildren and your great-great-great-great-grandchildren, why do you think it's important that we hear your story and the *[noise]* and the people went through experiences like you?

10:07:14:14

Else Howard

Well, first of all, if, God forbid, it would happen then they would know already what, er, happen again and they know what has happened in the camps. So, so, you know, it's, And, er, it's important to go against it, you know. To club together and in a communion, you know, and discuss it all, what's happened and what can happen, you know. But, um, more, I don't know. But children are interested because my grandchildren are.

10:07:53:05

Interviewer

How much have you told your own children and your grandchildren and great-grandchildren about your experiences and what happened to their ancestors?

10:08:03:14

Else Howard

My, my great-ch, er, grand, grandchildren, they understand it. The other one are too small yet to know. They're still babies. Oh, they know, um, that your grandmother has been there and there, whatever I tell them. But, as I say, *[noise]* oldest grandchild is only seven years old and the five years. They, they won't know yet.

10:08:30:24

Interviewer

Were you always very honest with your own daughter about what happened to your parents?

10:08:36:07

Else Howard

Yes, yes, yes. Of course. She knows all about it. What's happened. Yes. Oh, they were very upset about it, especially my elder granddaughter. Sure, and we still looking but it's difficult to find. The paper they've sent me, it's both were in the concentration camp, Minsk. And they have not help at the end of the war. I still had no answer. Presume dead.

10:09:10:16

Interviewer

Why do you think it's important that you tell people about your story?

10:09:16:10

Else Howard

Well, then they should know what has happened and what can happen, then maybe they can prevent it for somehow in future. Or even present. So that's what I think they can do.

10:09:32:05

Interviewer

When you look at the news now, when you see what's happening around us in the world.

10:09:36:05

Else Howard

It's a repeat. [noise] M, many times a repeat that people have to leave. Leave the countries. It's very sad in some instant. Some instance, if they have done some bad, er, then it's right for them to go. But, you know what I mean? [laughs]

10:09:56:20

Interviewer

Do you feel that we've learnt any lessons though from the past?

10:10:01:06

Else Howard

If they learned any lessons, these people, some have, some not. No, some are very brutal and, and, er, resolute and they like to have war. The countries in between, like Syria and Turkey and with Egypt. They all have trouble. Never mind Israel. [laughs]

10:10:24:17

Interviewer

And how do you feel towards the refugees that are trying to come to this country now?

10:10:29:14 [Interjected by interviewer]

Else Howard

Well, in a way, I'm glad they come out. You know, when they will get nice, um, er, covers here, and, er, accommodation. But otherwise, I don't know the political

situation so much. You know, I don't,

10:10:46:12

Interviewer

But you must understand more than most people it feels like.

10:10:49:23

Else Howard

I understand, yeah, when you're a refugee. That you should be treated well. But it depends, um, under what circumstances, you see. If they have treated badly the good people, you know, then they should be treated bad as well. But if they were good, then they should have good treatment.

10:11:12:06

Interviewer

How do you think what happened to you influenced the rest of your life?

10:11:18:22

Else Howard

What's happened to me, well, it made me independent, to, to start with, first of all. But in me, I always thinking of, back of my parents and the home. It was a humble home, but, er, *[laughs]* it was a home. Um, What I mostly regret, I lost a brother, brother very young. He was ten years when they took him away. Never found him. Never mentioned anything what's happened to him. With, and I also a young cousin. A very nice girl I liked. And she was 18 already. All gone. Aunties, uncle, cousins, gone. N, nobody left. Nobody left. And the second cousin of mine, she was in concentration camp till the end. She survived it with a lot of, um, er, what do they call it, er, scars in the face. She had boils in the face from hunger and they left her all scars. And she was such a pretty lady. But she came out after the war. Also her husband. She didn't know where her husband was in a different place. And, and met up again, thank God. And had the home together and a daughter. And she told a lot about her life in the concen, Yes, she said, if she doesn't tell, "behind me is nobody anymore." She was also on the television in Austria. She were, was a good speaker. *[laughs]*

10:13:00:03

Interviewer

Else, it must be so hard to think of the family that you've lost especially...

10:13:03:21

Else Howard

Yes, of course. I had one cousin, because I, I had a sister, my sister was here as well, and I, I had a brother, but he went elsewhere. He went illegal to Palestine. Palestine, they wouldn't let him in. The whole ship was sent to Mauritius. Five years, they were in Mauritius until the end of the war. There a waste of time, because they couldn't, They worked amongst themselves. Everybody. They were a tailor; they were a shoemaker. The shoemaker, they, they were a watchmaker. Everybody took their own, They worked together. A hairdresser or a barber. You know, so they could do that together. But otherwise, five years wasted of their lives.

10:13:54:05

Interviewer

But to think of you brother who was ten years old it must,

10:13:57:12

Else Howard

No, but it's terrible because they never mentioned him anywhere where he went and what's happened. I suppose they shot him. See if you don't know, you believe. And my mother and father were only 52 years old. Gone. And all uncles and aunty. No. Only the one cousin who was in the concentration camp, she over lived it, and she came out and married. But only the one.

10:14:31:16

Interviewer

And when you think about that, the family that you've lost and the generations that would have followed, do you feel that you can forgive the Nazis?

10:14:40:13

Else Howard

No. I never forgive the Nazis! What, what do you mean? Er,

10:14:47:19

Interviewer

How do you feel about them?

10:14:50:14

Else Howard

I feel very, I mean, my family's not very big and they will, um, go till my granddaughter, who is so very religious, she knows all about it and she says, "Grandma, you can write a story book about it," but I wouldn't do that. *[laughs]* What can I do about it? I mean, it's 17 years, 70 years after. It's hard. You still have it in you, and you can tell everybody, but you can't alter it, what's happened.

10:15:24:14

They came and frighten you when they knock on the door. "Your husband here. Out you come." My brother crawled under the bed and hid himself with some cases in front and thank God they didn't find him. *[laughs]* They looked in the wardrobes, everywhere and my little brother, Willi was his name, when they came up, my mother all of a sudden say, "Where's Willi?" so, "Who is he?" So, so she said, "It's a child." He was just at the grocer downstairs where he couldn't take him. They didn't take children at, at that time. But otherwise they come five o'clock in the morning to call you out.

10:16:07:05

They took all the people to, um, police yard, you know. Collected them together till the yard was full and they took lorries and they have taken them to the *[camps?]* like in Dachau my father was three months. Everybody who arrive they were sent a blue card or a green card and he in Dachau. That's what we got. He wanted his glasses; we sent the glasses. He never got it. He wanted a handkerchief. We put around. He never got it. And money we haven't had it to send. He could have helped himself, but

we had no money. We were not rich. We lived from day-to-day. We were four children and just managed.

10:16:56:24

Interviewer

So can I ask you the question again about the Nazis? How do you feel towards the Nazis?

10:17:02:06

Else Howard

Horribly, these Nazis are murderers. Er, and, er, brutal and rude. They way they walked, and they marched and, er, arrogant. No, these are, er, not good people and antisemitic on top of it. Yes. And what they did to elderly people, young people, they had to scrub the f, floor on the street. The stones, they give them a brush, brush it. So many things.

10:17:38:05

Interviewer

Do you still think about that part of your life now? Do you still think about that part of your life?

10:17:44:24

Else Howard

Yes, I do think about. Yes, because you can never forget what's happened. And thank God, I came out in '39, but I knew still what's happened till '42 when my parents were sent away through Red Cross messages I had. And I also had one cousin in Vienna. She was married to a Christian and he helped her. She survived because he was very good. See, although he was, Once cousin I had, Christian, he helped her. But otherwise, n, nobody there anymore. There were some good people, you know, who helped you. But not many. Not many.

10:18:30:18

We had a Nazi living next door to us. But he didn't do any harm to us because he had children, we are children. Not personally he didn't but you can see he, he dresses as a Nazi with the brown shirt and the Stiefel, the, the boots on. Off he goes. Terrible. Personally, the next door, the neighbour, he didn't do us any harm. But somebody else, the house master, they call it, when they have like a caretaker, they must say how many Jewish people live there, so they go upstairs, and they know the number and catch you.

10:19:14:14

Luckily we woman were, um, saved. And my sister and I tried to come out as quick as possible for, um, domestic permit. And they were glad we could. We wanted to take our mother as well. She would have been a cook. Because she couldn't speak English, she says, "Oh I c, I can cook." But it never happened. And it was hard times for her because my father could not earn. Jews were not allowed to earn. So, "What shall I live on?" So the Jewish community gave them every week about, I don't know, three shillings. Not much, er, and they needed some clothes. Couldn't buy, but we, my sister and eye, we did black [laughs]. We had some, you know how it is?

10:20:06:21

I had that one cousin who was married to the Christian, she had a telephone and somehow, with the telephone, and said a number. Say for instance, I don't know. "Lucy will be 40 years old." To say 40 years. We agreed that 40 marks so she should give my mother, you know. That's what we did. People did that. So to help out if somebody... And this cousin I'm talking about, she was in Vienna but her boys, she send here to England. They had the, the English family. And if they needed something, then we go, have given then the boys something. So what has she given to my mother, we give to her boys.

10:20:52:14

Interviewer

That was your secret code of being able to get through.

10:20:5:24

Else Howard

Yes. That was good, yes. We arrange it through somebody else. That was very good. Yes.

10:21:02:06

Interviewer

Else, um, before we go through your story piece-by-piece, um, the technology, the cameras that we're using will enable people in many years' time to listen to your interview.

10:21:15:08

Else Howard

Yes, really.

10:21:16:07

Interviewer

Yes, it's very clever. So what I wanted to ask you now is whether or not you have any lessons that you've learned in your life that you would like to pass on to us? Anything that you would like share from the experiences that you had that you think is important to tell me.

10:21:34:10

Else Howard

Well, for me personally, I haven't written any, You want me to write something?

10:21:38:24

Interviewer

No, I'm just thinking, No, not if you want to write something but if you can tell me now. Is there anything about your experiences, whether it's about forgiveness or tolerance or anything that you might have learned or, I don't know.

10:21:54:10

Else Howard

I only know I have letters from my mother and father lamenting. "We have nothing to eat. We have nothing, er, no shoes to buy, the money." You know, it was winter and

[sighs] what else? Sometimes they wanted to buy something, they couldn't get it. It was very bad later on in Vienna. They had struggle. All they, they had left was pulses, like lentils or dried peas. These things they had. But something good, you didn't get anymore. And she said my little brother, who was in Vienna, he, he wanted some, er, nourishing food. "We can't get." [laughs] That's how it was all the time. And they had to help themselves. He was small as well. My mother, if she had a old coat, a big one, she have to make it smaller to help Joseph out. You see, people were not rich, and the Hitler took all the livelihood away from all the people. Right away at the beginning. If you were a doctor, he have to close his surgery. And even from the hospital, he's taking them out. There were families who had children, they didn't have any money to buy milk for the children. Because he wanted them all out and go. He wanted to kill the lot. But he didn't.

10:23:21:18

Interviewer

How would you describe Hitler?

10:23:25:07

Else Howard

I think this was a madman to do such a thing, in my opinion. I really don't, It's difficult to say. Um, er, the expression, In, in himself, he was a murderer because, um, who else can do such a thing? And to be so brutal. And he made, er, the whole, um, country, the youngsters to become Hitlers and put the uniform on and go for him. And all his accomplices, like H, er, Goebbels and Görings, the higher ones. And they, they all, How shall, shall I say? Um, very hard and sharp to take all to the concentration camp. They had the task to do it. [clears throat] He gave them their order.

10:24:29:14

Oh, and they made so many experiments in the concentration camp. For, for woman, for instance, they injected that you shouldn't go anymore walk, pain with the walk. One man he came out of it, but they had to drink like, um, bleach. So that burns all the gullet and for years, he had to go to the doctor to treat, be treated. It was never good. You can't swallow anymore. Can't eat. Yes, I know some Polish woman, injected that shouldn't be able to walk anymore. And they injected them to get them flu or whatever.

10:25:08:19

Or, er, children's illnesses. He took the teeth away so you couldn't bite anymore. The false teeth of anybody they have. They showed us some years ago about the dwarfs. Dwarfs. Those little people. I think they came from Sweden or Norway or somewhere. They were also in the concentration camp. And they took their teeth out. All then they show it on the television.

10:25:48:00

Interviewer

What's the story about injecting the ladies so that they couldn't walk? What's that story?

10:25:51:19

Else Howard

Couldn't walk. No, in the concentration camp, they give you some serum that you can't walk. Get stiff. I suppose the blood will not circulate anymore. And special, he looked for twins. Twins. Also he looked, er, out to do harm to them. Heard all the stories from the people, you know, who were in, in there. Otherwise I wouldn't know. *[clears throat]*

10:26:23:03

And I tell you, the older people survived it better than the younger ones. The young didn't have the strength to overcome this idea. And with eating nothing. Black coffee or potatoes peels they give you to eat. My father said it was, "I had to eat once the back sausage." you know what they make from the black, black sausage. Never ate in his life. But that what they give him. They ate it because they were so hungry. But Jewish people never eat this. No, there's, It was a very sad time we have experienced until I left and then I was very sorry I did not to see the parents anymore. You leave on the station, you always remember. That's right. *[laughs]* And I looked for the photo yesterday. I had it and I could not find it.

10:27:30:18

My, I had a sister. She died unfortunately but she had a lot of pictures, and she took it with her. She lived in Slovakia. Her husband was Slovakian, so they went back and lived there after the war because he was a printer. Had his own business, so that's why he went back. He got that back with all his 20 workers. They were working there, and he went to the, er, c, council, like the town hall. He said, "I want my factory back." He said, "It's mine. Not theirs. Please take them out." There were communists there already. *[laughs]* It's shocking times they were. Everywhere.

10:28:14:00

And one of my sisters-in-law, they were in concen, two were in concentration camp but one came out with TB unfortunately. And so but they were Czech, from Czechoslovakia. She was sent afterwards to a sanatorium. See, the Czechs sent them, er, to get cured. She was in her 40s, was still young. Everybody had it. Everybody.

10:28:51:00

Interviewer

Else, let, let's go through your story now. Let's go through your story now from the beginning. You said that you came from a, quite a humble family and that money was very difficult. But can you explain a little bit about the structure of your family and where you lived?

10:29:07:20

Else Howard

Oh, I lived in, it was called the Ninth District in Vienna. It was a bit Jewish and but, but very nice. There were, er, small shops, because at the time there were no big supermarkets, and we had the grocer downstairs and opposite the road. Very friendly people where we went shopping. It was peaceful, nice. We lived near the Danube, a canal actually. Five minutes over a bridge and we could sit in the summer

there. Or anywhere, anytime to go walking on the shore of the Danube, then you come canal. The big Danube was further on. [noise]

10:29:50:16

And it was peaceful, er, living there. Er, when I lived or went to school, although we had some instances, political. There was Schuschnigg, was called. He was shot and, er, another one. Dollfuss. All socialist, they were all shot. I was a teenager then. Or just still in my last days schools. What's happened. And, and enough political uproars there. But I didn't understand it so much. I was too young then. Until Hitler came. That was terrible. They were blaring and walking. In the radio, right away you heard it in the morning when they marched in. Anyhow we had to live it out. We couldn't anything.

10:30:42:08

Interviewer

W, was your family very religious? Were you very?

10:30:44:17

Else Howard

Not very. Not very, no. No.

10:30:47:12

Interviewer

But were you very patriotic as a family? Were you proud of your country?

10:30:53:11

Else Howard

Proud of my country? I was proud of them, how shall I say, um, the country, yes. The houses and the building and all, um, um, but not of the people. Only a few. Not of the people when they came out as, as Nazis, no, not anymore.

10:31:16:04

Interviewer

And, and when, er, you were still quite young, but wa, was there? Did you experience much antisemitism as you grew up?

10:31:24:16

Else Howard

When Hitler came, yes. Right away because [background noise] he told everybody, "Don't buy, Jews." And they put the name Jude on the shop. "Don't buy, they're Jews. You know? All the time. And he thrown out people from hospital, doctors, Jewish doctors, you know, everywhere. He sacked them from big firms, the people, and put this Nazi in. And my husband, his father, um, they had a very nice wholesale firm in, um, oh, what do you call it? Enamel-wear and china-wear. Very nice, good business in a nice district. He was taken over by the commissar. But they're, they're German Nazis and had to leave. Had to leave.

10:32:20:08

Made 60 years he went to Shanghai with his wife, my, my parents-in-law and lived

five years down there. Hot, very bad, er, er, situations. The got ill. Everything you have to wash there. Every lettuce or, so, because it's dangerous. Yes, and the second time, or third time, they had to find themselves, um, um, an income. My mother-in-law for instance was very clever. In Germany, she gesticht. *[laughs]* She could sew. So she sewn brassieres and the father went to sell it. Took a basket, a little one. And all the children's trousers. Little, little trousers. She was good. And so she had the money.

10:33:18:01

Interviewer

Do you remember Anschluss?

10:33:20:12

Else Howard

Anschluss, yeah, there was Anschluss in 1938. I know. *[noise]*

10:33:24:10

Interviewer

Yeah, can you, can you describe to me what that meant to you as a family?

10:33:27:11

Else Howard

Anschluss was terrible. *[noise]* We are all shocked. In the morning you heard on the radio that, er, er, G, the Nazis were marching in, and you heard the music blaring, already they come. And they start marching. I didn't go in the street, but we heard it. And that was terrible. And people start panicking right away when there is Anschluss. They go and buy some food right away because they don't know what's going to be. So everybody goes quickly, buy what they can, and the shops were empty. That's what they do also in these countries. And everybody who was clever, and, um, er, had a bit of money to go out, they, they knew what's coming, they went out. For instance, anybody had relations in America, and they were good enough to send an affidavit, you could go out. But if you have nobody, and no guarantee...

10:34:25:20

The same with England. If you had anybody who would only have to pay ten shillings per person and the Jewish people didn't have m, understand that they did not hate much here in England, I tell you. We do it in a way through the Jewish committee and people mostly going on domestic service for woman. If man, they were butlers. It was hard to get in. Unless you were a businessman or a woman before the war, that you already travelled to England, backwards, forward. That wasn't so bad. But if you were new coming *[sighs]*.

10:35:03:15

So you had to struggle. But everybody going through from our people, everybody learn something and when there was the opportunity, they either manufactured something or they were a jewellery maker, you made later on jewellery and all, um, watchmaker. Many started. He got one shilling for cleaning a watch and he will, done seven of it, so he had seven shilling. It was just a beginning for him. *[laughs]*

10:35:35:00

Interviewer

Can you tell me the story about when the Nazis went to your uncle and aunt's shop?

10:35:39:16

Else Howard

Yes. That, that, yes, I was in the shop. That's right. I helped them out because I, I was like an apprentice but not, not [noise] official. Unofficial. And, um, they came in. They had for instance folding beds. They came, a Nazi took it without asking, without, Out they went. Yes. Luckily he was a upholstery. He had mattresses on top of a shelf in, er, in the shop if somebody come.

10:36:12:20

In Vienna, you had for one bed, three mattresses. Not one big one. We had three, three you could turn over any way you want. So they help themselves. They were all on the shelf. Took some string. Took three mattresses out. They were [?] stealing all. It's terrible. Absolute. And clothes thing. My clothes. My elder brother was in a shop which was left from my aunt. But she but she died before Hitler luckily in 1936. And my brother was old enough to take it over. So he took over that. [noise] And they seal it off. You couldn't get in anymore. And then they took all away Off they went.

10:37:10:03

My brother [laughs] was very clever. He undone the seal from the back of the door. There was a front door and a back door. Because he had one bicycle in it, and he wanted just the bicycle. And then he closed it. [laughs] He did. And also he escaped sometimes. He went under the bed and hidden himself in between, Took some cases in front of him. They looked and seen the cases. Not him. He was small so he could lay between the cases. He escaped them. But then he, he left, illegal to Palestine and it was hell. When they arrived, they wouldn't let them land.

10:37:53:09

The whole ship of a thousand of people. And they sent them next day to Mauritius. I told you, um. Lost their five years. They worked amongst themselves in the camp. The h, hairdressing, er, shoemaking, or, you know, whatever it is. And in Mauritius, there are 150 of our people dead on the cemetery. It's been recorded. Jewish people died of our people dead on the cemetery. It's been recorded. Jewish people died there.

10:38:23:06

Interviewer

What do you remember of Kristallnacht? Do you remember Kristallnacht of the smashing of the glass?

10:38:35:01

Else Howard

Oh, Kristallnacht. Yes. Well, of course. What's happened, terrible. All the, um, synagogues were smashed. Everything thrown on the street. The books and the Torah and whatever is, that, it, it was really terrible. A loss for the Jewish community, you know. Our temple, we called, when we used to go as ki, children. We had to go every Shabbos, Saturday afternoon, [kindergartenstints] it was called. You had to go.

My, it's all smashed up. All. Nothing there. Nothing there. And I know the cantor who was, um, er, singing there, Mr [Rot], he went to America with his family. See if people had connection and being a, a rabbi, a lot of them went to America because there, there were a lot of synagogues and temples. Ah, there is so much what I really forgot already what's happened.

10:39:43:17

Interviewer

Was that the night that your father was first taken away?

10:39:46:20

Else Howard

Yes, yes. On the 10th.

10:39:48:03

Interviewer

Do you remember that experience?

10:39:49:22

Else Howard

Yes, yes, te,

10:39:50:09

Interviewer

Can you tell me about it?

10:39:51:12

Else Howard

I'll tell you. Yes. My father was on the street. He went to the, um, post office to get a letter because in the morning, as I told you, somebody knocked, and he thought it was a Nazi, but it was the postman put a note in the post box. Where, in Austria the post boxes all. And later on, when the Nazi disappeared, he opened the post box and said there was a registered letter. So he went to the post office with my sister. Want to get his letter. Now in the post office he was a, arrested. "Come with me.

10:40:26:21

Then they sent him first to a school in a different district. Put them altogether. From morning, already people were in the yard. Hungry, nothing to eat. And from there it was into Dachau that day. Um, what else you want me to say?

10:40:46:16

Oh, Kristallnacht. Everything, every Jewish shop, they knocked the windows out and the glass was flying everywhere. Because they didn't want anybody to buy any Jews. So I went a few years ago to Vienna to visit a cousin. She's half Jewish. Very, very nice. And I went to the shop where my brother and aunty were working. They blocked it all in with bricks. Nothing to be seen that there was a shop. If you wouldn't know, you wouldn't know what it was. I looked, astonished. All the way the window was all blocked in with bricks.

10:41:25:22

That's what they do. It's quiet, the whole road, because there were a few Jewish shops. A greengrocer and a other grocer and my aunty she had a haberdashery shop. Everything together. It was very, er, good. So that is the story so far.

10:41:48:23

Interviewer

A, around this time you were trying to emigrate yourself, weren't you?

10:41:52:21

Else Howard

Oh, yes, yes, yes.

10:41:52:24

Interviewer

You were trying to get out. Where did you try to go?

10:41:57:04

Else Howard

Where I tried to go. Well, we tried to America, but we couldn't go. We left it actually for my father to go because he was more important and in danger than I was. But all his family couldn't guarantee. So he had to leave it. Then he went by himself, as I say, to Milano, which would have been good if he would have gone to the Jewish committee, but he didn't know that they was, Not thinking. And was there a few weeks and we were, my sister and me were already in England on domestic service. Fifteen shilling a week instead of one pound, I got.

10:42:40:03

And I tell you what. When I went on domestic to this family, I left after a year. Then I had to go war, war work doing, And I forgot all about it. And when I came to my home a few years ago now where I live now, Pembroke Lodge, I found the daughter where I used to work there. She's the same age as me. After 70 years. She told me her name. Ethel, Ethel, Ethel. I said, "Oh, Ethel, sounds to me familiar." And she told me. And I said, er, "Do you remember me?" I slept with her one year in one room and she didn't rec, er, she didn't want to, um, remember me. Because although they were Jewish, they were not good. Not good. They paid me 15 shillings which was the going rate, mostly even people got the pound.

10:43:38:05

And me, it would have helped, didn't. After one year, I spoiled a pair of shoes because the bombs fell and I had to sweep up all the mortar and all my shoes were filthy and dirty and I didn't have much with me, and also not not much money. And they had their shoe shop, and they have a dressing shop. And I said, "Look, Mr Brown," it was his name, "I've spoilt my shoes. Can't you give me a pair of shoes?" "No. No." And after a year I was there I heard that you get holiday money. It was 15 shilling he gave me instead of one pound, every week. "No," he said in his Yiddish. "Go to the law." It means go to a lawyer. So then I left. Then I left without saying, "Goodbye." I packed up my cases and I took a room, furnished room, in the East End I lived. And that was how I start from a living. My sister and me. My sister also came with me then to live in a room.

[Cut for card change]

10:44:40:19

Interviewer

Um, so we're going to, to talk about the day that you left and I'm sure it was very emotional, so if you can just try and remember what it actually felt like to leave your home country, to leave your family, to know what it would be feeling like, to maybe never see anybody again. So can you tell me about that?

10:44:59:11

Else Howard

Well, yes, of course it was very sad to leave all behind, er, the, where I used to live for my 18 years. I was 18 years old and, um, special, I mean, the parents and the little brother, that was really sad, but not so much the country because of Hitler. So, I left heavy hearted, but pleased in one way to come out. You see. I wish my mother wou- could have come out as a cook or some other. Was too late. I came here one month before the war broke out. It was not enough time for me to go round and look or ask somebody, couldn't speak much English. So, we took the first as took us.

10:45:45:07

Interviewer

And so what did that feel like, to say goodbye and to wave goodbye,

10:45:48:07

Else Howard

Terrible.

10:45:48:24

Interviewer

'cause they came to the station with you, didn't they?

10:45:50:09

Else Howard

They all went to the station, yes, yes. Um, m-my mother, my father, little brother, auntie, I couldn't find this picture. Yesterday I was looking, from the station. I had them all and everything I find and not this, it must be somewhere, I never thrown it away, from the station, where they are saying goodbye. Yes, it was the last time I see them, all of them. And it's the memory I have, leaving Vienna and the station. And I came to Liverpool Street the next day, in the evening, and I was collected by my sister because she was here already for months before me, and she found me the job, er, as a domestic.

10:46:40:11

Interviewer

When you, when you were waving goodbye, did you think it might be the last time you ever saw them again?

10:46:49:08

Else Howard

Not quite. We hoped we, we would see each other. Not to thing about Austria. My father always hoped to go to America, but his, um, sisters, er, his brothers couldn't send him the affidavit, so, it was out of question. Couldn't go.

10:47:08:01

Interviewer

But I'm just trying to imagine what it must have been, what must have been going through your mind as you left,

10:47:12:20

Else Howard

Was terribly sad. I was, er, er, how shall, rolling myself on the bed and crying terribly, me and my sister. When I heard the news about what's happened you see. So, what can we do? We were a little bit in contact at, at the Red Cross and also through my cousin, there was some way, they told us what was going on. But they couldn't stop them, and they couldn't go anywhere, so, and fortunately they had their faith.

10:47:48:01

Interviewer

So what contact did you have with them, while you were in England as a domestic and they were still at home?

10:47:53:24

Else Howard

Er, not much at all. At first you could still write via Italy. But then nothing at all, but, um, I don't know what, myself, I-I have a cousin here who had contact with them, and she told us, but how she did, somehow, through telephone.

10:48:13:14

Interviewer

So did you, you didn't receive any letters, you didn't really know what was happening to them?

10:48:18:02

Else Howard

No. No, only after the war the, the committee, Jewish committee send me a letter, what's happen to them, I mean, to Minsk, white Russia and the camp. I've got a letter, they hadn't, they died, because, they have searched till after the war but no answer, so presumed dead. And they said in, in concentration camp, Minsk. White Russia this is. Um, er, about my little brother I didn't know anything, they didn't say anything at all. [coughs] Only about the parents.

10:49:01:17

Interviewer

So there's no record of him anywhere, your little brother?

10:49:04:22

Else Howard

No record, no. They had, er, um, searched everything and the end result was didn't find it, so presumed dead.

10:49:17:20

Interviewer

What's extraordinary is when you see a child, I-I don't know how old your great grandchildren are, but when you see a little boy who's ten, you can't imagine killing him, can you? You can't imagine what must go through somebody's mind.

10:49:32:01

Else Howard

You see sometimes on the television, when they show, er, immigration, a little boy in front of the road, with the cap and only like that, and it reminded me so much of my little brother. Terrible. No, you can't imagine like they, they killed them. Mother with the babies, stepping on them and babies and they let them starve with having no milk. No, it was not nice at all. There's many things I don't know, what happen, er, I have met so many people to tell me, a few I had.

10:50:09:19

So, it's all now history. All in the past. You know, when I learned the Bible stories in school, once a week we had, I could never imagine the Bible story what happened thousands of years ago in, Middle East, you know? But now as I, um, experienced it in reality, I understand what it means, all, you know? It's hard, this is not really easy.

10:50:55:21

Interviewer

Have you found it harder, as you got older, to take, to take in what happened or easier?

10:51:02:21

Else Howard

Um, yes and no. I'm still thinking of what it was when we were young, of course, and when we were at home. Especially when the holiday come, it's not the same as when you are with your parents, like Yom Tov, you know? Um, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur. With Hannukah my father used to light the candles. But I accept that it is a long time ago and that is, that's my life nearly ending with 95 years, so what can you do? It's been a long time. Er, can't believe it myself [*laughs*]. I managed to get through. Except my arthritis, er, otherwise I was all, alright. But it could mean my legs. I had shingles in between and I had them in the head and not here, and it's worse because I still got the pains now, is right over my eye, very weak here. Half numb. from the shingles anyway.

10:52:13:17

Interviewer

Gosh, that's awful.

10:52:14:16

Else Howard

And I have the scars here, if, here, from the shingles.

10:52:19:03

Interviewer

Can't really see them.

10:52:19:14

Else Howard

It was the worst. I didn't have it here, usually you have it round the waist.

10:52:24:05

Interviewer

Well, you've got away quite lightly at 95, if that's it [*laughs*].

10:52:28:07

Else Howard

No, I had it a few years ago, about five years ago.

10:52:32:19

Interviewer

So let's talk about, um, we've said goodbye to your parents and your, your younger brother, and your sister met you at Liverpool Street Station, and you went to work for the Barnett's, who were not kind to you, were they? You've told me a bit about that already, but they didn't show you very much compassion or understanding.

10:52:48:20

Else Howard

Not at all. And you know when she, the daughter of this, er, people where I worked, I met after 70 years, together, in my, er, house where I live in the home. This was extraordinary. I mean, I forgot about her already, never thought about and then they were sitting at the table, introducing each other, and said her name was Hattie. Hattie, Hattie, Hattie, I never had any Hattie and then I remember, yes, Hattie. Somebody told me her name and I said, "Do you remember me? I slept with you a whole year." She didn't remember me. I mean, if anybody sleeps with me a year [*laughs*] I would remember. I think she didn't want to remember.

10:53:32:13

Interviewer

Maybe she didn't want to remember or maybe she was ashamed.

10:53:35:20

Else Howard

Yes, I think so, I think so, that was, yes. The way they treated me. Hmph.

10:53:43:08

Interviewer

Yes, you didn't, you didn't deserve that after everything that you'd been through.

10:53:45:21

Else Howard

No, no, no, no, no.

10:53:49:05

Interviewer

But it's all lessons in life, isn't it, because it helps one behave differently towards other people.

10:53:54:10

Else Howard

That's right. They didn't understand what it means to be a refugee or to leave your home and your parents. They had no idea. Some people, now what can you do?

10:54:07:03 [*Interjected by Else*]

Interviewer

So you didn't work with them for very long, one year, it was, it was enough.

10:54:09:19

Else Howard

One year and then I had to go into the war work. Er, in, um, clothing factory manufacturing soldier, sailor and airmen suits. The firm was called Lockleys in Aldgate. I don't know if you heard about it. It's where I worked for four years.

10:54:33:22

Interviewer

And what happened then? What happened after that?

10:54:36:01

Else Howard

Then, after four years I wanted to leave already and to leave to Leicester because I had a cousin there, and, um, the union released me. Not the manager, wouldn't let me go so, but, I had one year in Leicester, firm called Partridge and, er, I got a picture with where I do some cutting and repairing, and I think I left it at home. You wanted the picture? I'm not sure if my daughter took it.

10:55:03:05

Interviewer

Don't worry. Aside from the Barnett's, who were not very kind to you, how did you find adapting to life in this country? Were you welcomed or not?

10:55:11:19

Else Howard

Yeah, I, was I what?

10:55:13:24

Interviewer

Were you welcomed; did you feel welcome by the country?

10:55:16:22

Else Howard

Yes. Er, well, yes and no. I had nobody to, er, t-to welcome me actually, as such, because I was independent. I stayed with my sister in a room, and we cook ourselves everything, and we made friends, a-actually with our Austrian people and belong to the Young Austria at first. Later then we all got separated and my sister, my daughter got married, no, my sister.

10:55:49:17

Interviewer

Don't worry about that for now. There was, um, there's a story, isn't there about some of the young girls telling you to go back to your own country. Can you tell me that story?

10:55:57:24

Else Howard

Yes, that was in the factory, in Lockleys, that's right, when I worked for the uniform.

10:56:04:18

Interviewer

What did they say?

10:56:06:10

Else Howard

Pardon?

10:56:06:21

Interviewer

What did they say to you?

10:56:09:00

Else Howard

I don't know, we were talking and that I came here, and I couldn't speak good English, of course, at the beginning. That they didn't like it because they were ignorant. They didn't understand when you come in you get, they tell you you're stupid. Go back to your country. 15-year-old kids so I didn't take any notice.

10:56:27:13

Interviewer

Good. I'm glad you didn't.

10:56:28:15

Else Howard

No. Or else we're like well bitter.

10:56:31:13

Interviewer

At this point you, you were saying that it was difficult to communicate with your family. Um, but were you aware of what was happening on the Continent? How much did you know of, of Hitler's advances?

10:56:42:00

Else Howard

I can't remember, but, but we did know what, what's happening with the people that's still in the concentration camp. We knew that, but more, I can't remember now that I heard much about it until the end. When the allies came and liberate them. This we heard here in England, of course, but otherwise in between, er, in, I, I know they

were in concentration camp and did nothing at the time at all. And more I didn't know.

10:57:17:02

Interviewer

You must have been worried sick.

10:57:19:05

Else Howard

Well, yes. And we were very upset when we heard it because you knew that would be the case. You knew. And it took a long time. Three years, actually. So, er, whether they died of starvation or, er, hitting them or God knows what, or shooting them; it could be anything. Starving. So, it reminds me of Anne Frank, poor girl. What happened to her, mm, it happened also to the grown up.

10:57:59:03

Interviewer

I-It's unimaginable, isn't it? And I,

10:58:01:00

Else Howard

Unimaginable, yes.

10:58:02:07

Interviewer

I wonder whether it's easier not to know than to know what happened to your family.

10:58:07:02

Else Howard

In, in a way it's good to know what's happened because if you don't know where they went to and God knows what will, there, be it, er, how shall I, buried in a hole anyhow, but you know which country at least and you know which there. Not that I will go there anymore.

10:58:26:13

Interviewer

But I guess, I guess part of this, this part, the recording is an, in part in memory of them as well, isn't it?

10:58:34:15

Else Howard

Oh that's nice.

10:58:36:03

Interviewer

Do you think?

10:58:36:20

Else Howard

Yes, yeah, it's good. My husband had a brother unfortunately, and through his fault

actually, he was killed the last day of the war in Belgium. He was in the English army uniform but did not have his cap on and went in a car, Belgium car on the border, and they told him to stop, and he didn't stop, and they shot him in the head, and he was gone. 26-year-old. The Belgium. That is so sad till after the war, and it was just the war finished. He should have come the next day home and that's happened. It was really so sad. Yeah.

10:59:19:17

Interviewer

Do you remember the end of the war? Do you remember VE Day?

10:59:22:15

Else Howard

Yes. Er, yes. I went to, came to London from Leicester especially and I stayed, stood in the, er, Oxford Street on a box and I've seen the Queen passing by then at that time, yes. Oh yeah. It was a lovely warm day in May. We're waving our, I never forget it.

10:59:43:02

Interviewer

And what did you do straight after the war? How did you start,?

10:59:46:17

Else Howard

Well, I worked, I went into a, um, dress making fac-factory and did some finishing. I was quite good in sewing and, er, did finishing the dresses up, you know, er, couldn't make it because I hadn't learned dress making, but I was good with my fingers and my eyes at the time, so I finished the dresses, everything and that was my living. £5 a week, but with the £5 a week I could pay £35 my, my, er, rent and the rest to myself. So, we, it's how we live.

11:00:24:17

Interviewer

And soon after the war you must have constantly been hoping to hear from your family and wanting to hear good news.

11:00:32:14

Else Howard

Yeah. Though we, we didn't hear any g, we knew already what's happened 'cause we didn't hear through other ways, you know? Then we knew they've gone. And we heard on from this one cousin who was married to a non-Jew. Er, she knew all about it. She followed their story and she saved herself because her husband was Arian. She had to work in our factory, u-um, er, er, er, wash kit, washing. In a wash factory, ahem.

11:01:09:22

Interviewer

And did you ever return to Vienna?

[Cut for camera]

11:01:12:15

Else Howard

Yes, I did. On transit one time I stayed a little with my cousin who is still there. Yes. I mean, a country is s-s-still the same. Um, um, how shall I say? All the buildings and everything, and, er, historically, um, houses and, um, castles and whatever there is, and the country is very nice. The mountains which are like, but not the people. Er, er, people always put me off. And it when, I had little to do with them except if I went to a hotel or let me speak to the hotel, um, master ever, but otherwise no. I watched them, I looked at them and see what they eat again,

[Cut for camera]

and how they live, but I didn't make any acquaintances or with anybody. I just went for a holiday to see the mountains and Tyrol. I liked that and s-that one cousin in Vienna, he's married and has two children. *[clears throat]* One daughter's very clever, she's working at the Austrian Rundfunk, very good. Although, um, a reader.

11:02:35:05

Interviewer

And then you, you met your husband, didn't you?

11:03:37:23

Else Howard

I met my husband here in London, yes.

11:02:40:08

Interviewer

Can you tell me about that?

11:02:41:18

Else Howard

Pardon?

11:02:42:08

Interviewer

Can you tell me about how you met him?

11:02:43:10

Else Howard

Yeah. I, as I was single I went every week dancing and there was the Jewish ex-servicemen, chap, in St. John's Wood. So I went every Saturday and Sunday dancing and one Sunday, I looked through the curtain who is there, he was behind me also wanting to look. So we went in together, just, er, occasionally and we talk, start chatting up, and he didn't live far from me, so he took me home, and then he wrote down my telephone number on his newspaper.

11:03:20:23

He always went with a newspaper in his hand. I said, not that newspaper will end up in the dustbin. I will never hear from him I thought to myself, but I was surprised, after two weeks it was, was holiday time, Yom Tov, in September. Said, "What are you doing tonight?" I said, "I'm just ready to go to the synagogue." So he said, "So am I." So we met up in the synagogue at the first evening together in Moscow Road,

that, um, synagogue. Then he took me home again and we started chatting, but, er, dated again and within six months we were married, and we married 55 years. Thank God I had a good marriage.

11:04:07:02

He was a lovely man, a gentleman and also his parents were very nice. They were in, during the war, in Shanghai, five years. That's where they had to, with their last money they went there on a boat and then when they came back my husband took a room for them . It was all furnished still. And we met and we clicked [*laughs*]. Within six months we married. And we had one room to start with, with the parents together. Er, yeah. They had one room for themselves that was the living room and the bedroom together, and they had another small room, which was then for us. It actually was for one room, but the double bed, we made was for two. That's how we started.

11:04:58:08 [*Interjected by Else*]

Interviewer

And tell me about him, because he was a refugee as well, 'cause how, h-you, you'd got his name, obviously Howard, but that wasn't his original name, was it?

11:05:06:09

Else Howard

No. No, it was changed to, from Henriksberg, Henriksberg to Howard because he was in the army here to change the name because he was in the army. That's why. He was in the Pioneer Corps all the time. No, it wasn't Howard.

11:05:25:04

Interviewer

Did he sup, he must have supported you through all of your sadness when you discovered about your family.

11:05:31:08

Else Howard

He, he was what?

11:05:32:11

Interviewer

He must have supported you through the sadness.

11:05:35:00

Else Howard

Yes, yes, because I had, no. That's right. He was, and the parents-in-law were very nice when they came to me. They treated me like their own would. Really, they were nice. Lovely, happy. The father and my husband, they were gentlemen, and they were from a good stock [*laughs*].

11:05:56:18 [*Interjected by Else*]

Interviewer

Else, what I find interesting is that you have been able to deal with your grief, with your family very well. You don't, you don't seem overcome by it. Some people who

are s-sitting where you are, are overcome by their grief and you, you have found a way of dealing with it.

11:06:13:22

Else Howard

Er, er, er, it's been harder lately, you know. Er, also can't care so much as I used to. It's my age or because I hold it in, I don't know. I do cry enough inwards [*laughs*] inwards.

11:06:29:18

Interviewer

Can you tell me that again? Can you tell me about that a little bit more? Do you say that you feel that you've got harder as you've older?

11:06:35:17

Else Howard

Yes.

11:06:35:17 [*Interjected by Else*]

Interviewer

Why do you, why do you think that is?

11:06:38:12

Else Howard

You, you knew al-already, and you told everybody, and everybody knows about you and what's happened, so that's why you grow older and harder as you know all what's happened, you know, in the past and present. That's what I mean. So, the future you can't see, it's far away. Now in the present we were very happy with my granddaughter married and she very religious, and, er, have a very religious husband, and has four children now, four boys already, and,

11:07:18:15

Interviewer

And, and how do you feel towards faith? Do you have a strong faith or not so strong?

11:07:23:14

Else Howard

No, no. I am Jewish as it is, but ordinary, um, like, um...nah, what are called is synagogue, er?

11:07:34:00

Interviewer

Observant?

11:07:35:05

Else Howard

No, no, no, no, ordinary, um, tsk, oh forgot the name now.

11:07:41:09

Interviewer

Don't worry.

11:07:41:11

Else Howard

Not Orthodox, er, er, er. I've forgotten the name now, sorry.

11:07:51:14

Interviewer

Don't worry about it, but you're, but I, I think my question is more about how much your religion has been tested by what has happened in your life?

11:08:00:16

Else Howard

Tested. I'm not very religious, I must tell you. I know that I'm Jewish and I know I went to school, er, er, also cheder, what they call and...We kept the Yom Tovs and Shabbos and were even kosher, but otherwise I not very religious, and we never got, went, every Shabbos except since we were children we had to go to the children's, um, service every Saturday afternoon otherwise our teacher would tell us off [*laughs*], but otherwise I don't worship much. I don't go much to synagogue. For this I lost faith because I can't read Hebrew either. Could read English, but it's not the same.

11:08:48:02

Interviewer

I think a lot of people lost their faith with what happened.

11:08:50:15

Else Howard

Lost the faith, that's right, yes, yes. I knew my father was very frum. He used to wake at three AM in the morning, five o'clock in the morning. Yes.

11:09:04:04 [*Interjected by Else*]

Interviewer

Is there anything else, any other memories [*clears throat*] that you'd like to share with me or anything else?

11:09:17:02

Else Howard

At the moment I can't think of it. I mean, we had a happy home as the children, you know, um, we were not rich, I must say. We were poor people and we had not a luxury as such, so I appreciated all what I have now because I have much more than before, but the circumstances didn't permit. The time was not so good for, for get jobs and like my father was not a big earner, so therefore we didn't have much.

11:09:50:10

So in a gr, in a way, I grew out more that I could do some work here in England and I saved every penny which I could and even my sister and I sent some money to Italy and my father went to Italy, had to go out somewhere. No money, so from the pf-pay I had and the pay my sister had, we sent half to my father for the rent there. Always helping out. Only it was waiting for the bank, er, to get it and our money. I always

helped out whatever I can and even now, I rather give than take. It's [?].

11:10:36:08

And I always tell my children, save, don't throw anything away, but they don't listen. When you're poor and have clothes and a little bit ch-er, how shall I - tatty, so you can make it up with better dress or pinafore, whatever it is. But here everything is thrown away. When you have one hole in your stocking it did not, exist that it's not darned. We had to darn it. Can't afford even a, but here, all the people, oh, goes in the dustbin. With one hole, now in Vienna we used to, er, stop for the, er, for the, even the stockings because the stockings were lisle, they were not nylon, there were and the lisle stockings you could, darn them very economically, anything, if you hadn't got the money.

11:11:30:05

Interviewer

And also now, do you feel like that with food? You don't like to throw any food away, do you?

11:11:34:17

Else Howard

No. No.

11:11:35:19

Interviewer

Can you tell me about that?

11:11:37:18

Else Howard

Yes, because I remember, people who came out from the concentration camp and didn't have anything and were looking everywhere for potato peel, even to eat. Yes. And the other lady, my r-sister-in-law, bread, she was after bread and she, when she came out of it. She still was hiding it. So I know that people were longing for food, and we throw away here, it is not right. It may not, now in peace time, in Africa or wherever, they look for food in the dustheap. That's why I don't like the waste. And we have learnt to eat, if you eat a apple or pear, eat it to the core, not a half of it is thrown away here. People don't mind. So my daughter always says, "Mommy, you're not in 1938, 39, it's now over 2000." So, but it's still in me, you know, to be like that.

11:12:35:14

Interviewer

And you, do you never throw any food away? You always keep it.

11:12:38:16

Else Howard

Yes, a little, but most of it. We thrown away yesterday oil. I couldn't use it, a whole bottle, but here I don't cook much. So that start getting rancid, no, throw away. But, food, mostly I keep for the next day, warm it up. It's no harm in warming up the food. But sometimes, very little. And if you have fruit which going off I cut all off and make compote from it. Throw away which is bad. Here, my daughter would throw it away, but I said, "No I - half of it, which is bad I throw away, the good one I keep." I try to

teach her but didn't learn. "You're not any more in 1938," she said [*laughs*]. You're over 2000. Victorian.

11:13:35:00

Interviewer

Do you know what? I think you're amazing. At 95, to be as clever and as bright, and to remember all the things that you remember, I think you are a wonderful woman.

11:13:46:04

Else Howard

Thank you very much.

11:13:47:04

Interviewer

I really mean it.

11:13:48:08

Else Howard

Thank you.

11:13:49:06

Interviewer

It's so nice to meet you. Mm. What were you going to say?

11:13:52:08

Else Howard

Thank you very - pardon?

11:13:53:19

Interviewer

Were you just about to say something? No.

11:13:56:09

Else Howard

People tell me always, I, I remember everything since I went to kindergarten, and I were four-year-old. I remember the songs even.

11:14:06:20

Interviewer

Wow.

11:14:07:17

Else Howard

But now, lately, I must tell you, I don't remember what was five minutes ago.

11:14:11:20

Interviewer

Well, that, I think is very common, isn't it? You can remember everything from the past.

11:14:16:08

Else Howard

Well, the brain took so much I can't, can't take any more.

11:14:19:02

Interviewer

You're full up [*laughs*].

11:14:20:05

Else Howard

Yeah [*laughs*].

11:14:21:20

Interviewer

Um, but is there, there's nothing else that you want to tell me about your testimony or any other memory that you want to share before we finish?

11:14:39:00

Else Howard

No, it's really, er, difficult to say. I mean, I tell you my life stories, er, was born, we were four children, and we had a humble life. My father didn't earn so much, but we had to eat and to dress ourselves, but not, few pair shoes a year, we had two pair shoes a year, one for the winter, one for the summer. Er, here the children they're every three month they must take no, yes.

11:15:05:21

Interviewer

But I wonder, you know, do you remember at the beginning, I was asking you if you have any lessons that you want to pass on to the generations?

11:15:13:12

Else Howard

Oh, I see.

11:15:13:22

Interviewer

Right at the beginning of the interview I asked you that, and I wonder whether now that we've come to the end of your life story, so far, um, whether there's anything, is it about wasting or about thinking of others that, something that you always pass on to your family that you could tell me now?

11:15:32:17

Else Howard

Mm mm, what shall I say? Huh. Yeah, not wasting food or wasting money, you know? We, how's it? Um, what could this word be? Go easy, er, like, for instance nowadays. I mean, I don't blame the youngsters. They earn good money, they go out and eat in the restaurants, right? But often, not every year, quite often, but it's, for instance, somebody wants to save up for a house or for a flat, then you mustn't go so often, but they don't care. Because nowadays the children get help from the grandparents or from everybody, so they can get on. But I just tell them, because I

never had much, so I appreciate it if somebody earns good, okay, but don't squander it.

11:16:31:08

Interviewer

Very good advice.

END OF INTERVIEW

ARTEFACTS:

ARTEFACT 1: Scan of photo of grandparents

11:16:33:14

These are my grandparents. [...] Leopold and Claire. Reif was the name, R e I f. The surname. [...] They died just before I was born, and they lived in Poland, and I lived Austria. So I never have seen them, I only hear. Look nice. They did religious manuals, can see. Grandfather, my father's parents, yeah. Leopold Reif. It was my grandfather and my grandmother.

ARTEFACT 2: Scan of photo of parents

11:17:06:16

Yeah this is a photograph of my parents, you see. That's really good. So I must treasure this. I have it in the arch at home in the big one you see. They're collecting so many but whenever I want a real nice one I can't find it [*chuckles*]. [...] My father was Max, Max, Max Reif, the second name R e i f. [...] My mother Regina or Regina whatever you want to call her once it's clean. And my brother who got killed and they don't know where, was William. [...] To William we have no idea but what happened on the parents, we're three years in Minsk, right Russia in, in the concentration camp three years. It's terrible, absolute. What I hate is because I know they got um badly treated it, hit, they hit them you know, a lot. [...] With bats, in anything to hit. Shoes, kicked you, that you can see all the nails in your body. No, not nice. Nothing nice.

ARTEFACT 3: Scan of passport photo of Else aged 17

11:18:23:00

That is my passport photo when I was 17 years old. So still have it in my old passport [...] Not this one, but I couldn't find it because the passport is with a J on top it means for Jew, and the Swastika on top because it was still Hitler time. It was a good picture, marvellous photographer, good quality. My hair different, was better. If you see here, half the hair up in a roll. I never wore lipstick then, it was natural never had a lipstick when I was in, I came to England, I didn't know how-to put-on lipstick [*laughs*]. I was not spoilt, I wasn't spoilt with lipstick or powder, too young at that time. She didn't, the girls developed a bit later with 20 or so.

ARTEFACT 4: Scan of train ticket

11:19:15:15

That is my ticket from Vienna to London. My fare, train ticket. 23 shilling, 50 pence. Cheap at that time and it was on the 27th of the seventh, 1939. [...] I kept it as a souvenir. And people like to see it. Yeah. What it look like to even, this to get on to the train. You have to be there one hour before the train goes. And your tickets is only for that day and no other.

ARTEFACT 5: Scan of Naturalisation document

11:19:52:10

This is a Certificate of Naturalisation, that me, Else Reif, has applied for His Majesty, Principal Secretary of State, for a Certificate of Naturalisation, alleging with respect to herself, the particulars set out below and has satisfied him in the condition laid down to the above-mentioned Act for the grant of a Certificate of Naturalisation are fulfilled in her case. Now, therefore in pursuance of the power conferred on him by the said Act, the Secretary of State grants to the s-, to the said Else Reif this Certificate of Naturalisation and declares that upon taking the Oath of Allegiance, within the time and in the manner required by the regulations made in that behalf she shall, subject to the provision of the said Act, be entitled to all political and other rights, power and privileges, and be subject to all obligations, duty and liabilities to which a natural-born British subject is entitled to, or a subject, er, and have to all intents and purpose the status of the natural-born British subject. I witness whereof have here, hereto subscribed my name, this 28th day of April 1948, under the Secretary of State." [...] I mean, I'm here long, so this is now my hometown. And I have this now since 19, er, 48. Particularly letter, at least when we were here not available at the time. [*German dialogue*] Er, I also had to give here, also for allegiance. "I swear by almighty God that I will be faithful thereto and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George the Sixth, his heirs and successors according to Law" Else Reif - on the third day of May 1948.

ARTEFACT 6: Scan of photo of Else working in war factory

11:22:45:18

This is the photograph in worked in a war factory.[...] Just at the end of, February 1945 and the war was over in May. Just three months before the war ended, it was my last wartime job. [...] I'm cutting here, Ts and Us which are used for um, radios to put in er big ones which go on a ship. And this was my war work I had to do in a factory in Leicester. So. Look like little worker here, working, cutting the machine. And it overall still had from Vienna, black, they all brought it along. Then your work you have overall. [*chuckles*]. They last a long time, black cloth[*chuckles*]. [...] See I was on a machine, hand machine cutting metal ts, ts, metal t and u, and the shapes they went into radio. [...] So the woman had to do all the indoor jobs, while the men they are out fighting. [*chuckles*].

ARTEFACT 7: Scan of Austrian Centre Membership card

11:24:05:18

Oh I am looking at a Austria membership card here, which I have quite a long time. Since 1939 and I lived in Roman Road, Bow, E3 at the time. [...] Yes, the Austrian Centre was in Westbourne Grove [...] opposite er Paddington station. [...] It was a big house and they had restaurant in it and people used to come and meet there and chatter there and have a meal there, anything. Sometimes they have um music little entertainment. [...] But one group we made and every Sunday then it was nice in the summer, they went swimming to Richmond out there, we used to like it because when the weather is nice in Austria, people like to make little excursion outside Vienna because Vienna, Vienna is a town but the outside Vienna, say half an hour out, with the tramway, we had a tramway, not coaches was lovely because you go up the hills and you look all over Vienna and just see the Danube and people were sitting on the hill right on top and there were a restaurant you could buy food, drink,

whatever. Or bring yourself whatever you want. We made sometimes a whole day's outing in the woods. We had um, er, what they call it? A milk, um, like um, [...]

Else Howard iv

A cane, no little, little bit, like a milk er, and um what do you call it? You could fill but two litres of coffee in it and when it's cold coffee it's very good. We took it up, so we have something for tea with sandwiches. And don't feel thirsty. [...] Mostly we went in the morning. To make it worthwhile and home in the evening.

ARTEFACT 8: Scan of letter talking about compensation for parents death.

11:26:06:22

This letter is, um, written to tell me about my parents, what happened to them and what, um, compensation I will get for them.

ARTEFACT 9: Scan of hand drawn family tree

No commentary

ARTEFACT 10: Scan of hand drawn family tree

No commentary

ARTEFACT 11: Scan of birth certificate

No commentary

ARTEFACT 12: Scan of Austrian Health insurance certificate

No commentary

ARTEFACT 13: Scan of photo Else in 1938

No commentary