

**IMPORTANT**

**This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees**

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

**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**

**AJR**

**Winston House, 2 Dollis Park**

**London N3 1HF**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	156

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Stern
<b>Forename:</b>	Fred
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	12 August 1923
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Vienna, Austria

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	19 October 2015
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	London
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Jana Buresova
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	4 hours 11 minutes



## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV156  
**NAME:** Fred Stern  
**DATE:** 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015  
**LOCATION:** Wembley Park, Middlesex, London, UK  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Jana Buresova

**[Part One]**

**[0:00:00]**

*This interview is with Fred Stern, at his home in Wembley Park, Middlesex on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, 2015.*

*Thank you first of all very much indeed for kindly agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR project. Perhaps we could start off by discussing something about your family background, when and where you were born, and about your parents and your family life as a child.*

Right, thank you very much. I'm only too pleased to be able to help the organisation, and maybe myself as well. So, I'll get it on- on a film, eventually. Thank you very much.

All right. It's difficult... to know where exactly to start. In German there's a proverb for that: "Aller Anfang ist schwer", which is the same thing as I've just said. So. I would say that if I were to give you a chronological answer to this, and start off with the day of my birth, and finish off with whatever I'm doing now, it would probably bore everybody to tears.

*No, perhaps we could just start with your childhood. When and where you were born.*

OK. We can chuck out whatever...you want.

*There will be other questions later.*

That's alright. OK, OK. Right. Now, you're particularly interested in- that is what you're here for. My time before, and at the time the Nazis came to Vienna. I daresay that's what you're interested in.

*Could you please say first of all when and where you were born, and something about your parents?*

Yes, of course. I was born in Vienna, Austria on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1923. Which makes me about ninety-two years old. Right. I have... not given a thought of how I'm going to discuss this matter with you, so I'll wait for your questions. But you obviously want to know how I lived at the time. Naturally, when one is at home and one is a little boy, one doesn't remember everything. But interestingly my short-term memory, like many in my age group- I'm not too good with the short-term memory. But my long-term memory is more than I expected. And I've made notes on everything here and it's unbelievable how I managed to do it, despite the fact that I'm now that age.

**[0:03:00]**

OK. So, I remember naturally when I was at home, my mother made me breakfast which in those days everybody in Vienna did that, probably, I just had a cup of cocoa and a roll. That was my breakfast. Off I went to school. And...

*Was it a Jewish school?*

I went to what would be in English a Primary School. Of course a *Volkschule* in *Deutsch-* in German. And- which was very near. We lived on the side of the Danube Canal. The Danube Canal... is to every Viennese person known as circumscribing the, the Danube itself. So, it was made... out of the Danube and the space in between the Danube and the Danube Canal where I lived, which was two- in two Districts, the Second and the Twentieth. And everybody knows about the Second, because that's where most Jews lived. And also, in the Twentieth. And it was therefore we called "*The Matzeinsel*" in other words, "the Matzoh Island". We understand that, I'm sure. And it was quite obvious that anybody who lived there... had different ideas about life to people who lived in other districts. When I got older,

naturally, I managed to cycle into different parts of Vienna and outside. But not until then, did I actually know what Vienna was about. But in school we learned about the First District, the internal thing, which is bounded by what is known as the *Ringstraße* and the Kai. The Ring is obvious, because it's circular almost... like the North Circular, for argument's sake, in London. And very much smaller, of course. And on the *Ringstraße*, are the best... buildings in Vienna. They were palaces. And big organisations had their... buildings there.

*Indeed. Could you tell us- Could you tell us please what your parents did in Vienna?*

What my...?

*Your parents- What your parents did...*

My parents yes, of course. Well, I should start with my parents, naturally. My parents- My father was Robert, and my mother Olga. And they didn't have second names. And...

*And they were both from Vienna?*

They were both born in Vienna and so were my mother's parents...

[Audio interruption]

So, my parents, Robert and Olga Stern - in Vienna it was Stern in England it's Stern. OK, so I'm used to that. So.

*And they were both from Vienna...*

**[0:06:29]**

They were both from Vienna.

Yes...

My father's father was born in Hungary, in Budapest, in the part of Budapest is known as Pest. Which possibly most of the Jews went to. I was in Budapest as well but that's departing from the business again. Now. My mother's father and ...and her own mother, were also born in Vienna. My grandmother was born in Vienna. My grand-, my great-grandmother was born in Vienna. And before that, that family- that part of the family came from Czechoslovakia, which was Moravia in those days. In other words, the centre was Brno. And I was there myself seven times. I even drove there, believe it or not, with my... feet not touching the pedals on a, on the van. But I was sitting on my cousin's lap, to drive the car. And I was only about twelve or thirteen. How I managed to steer – I don't know.

*And what did your parents do? What did your parents do? What sort of work?*

What did they do, yes. Well, that's fine. My father was in a number of different occupations. Whilst my mother was either helping him, or looking after me which was probably a big job. So, there you are; that's the way it is. So, I was the only one. And I'm still the only one. And that has certain drawbacks, because you can't let somebody else do something while you're busy somewhere else, for the parents. But that's another subject I could get back to later maybe. Now. So, my mother's parents were from Czechoslovakia. And I went as a boy, from very early age, almost every year, to that part of Czechoslovakia, Moravia, on my holidays. I was... taken by my mother. My mother went back to help my father with whatever he was doing, and I'll come to this. And... I had a great time, in my cousin's, which was really my mother's cousin, but he was somewhere halfway between, in age between my mother and myself. And he was by the way the best man at my wedding. He was my mentor... and he got to a very old age too. Now what happened, he was the son of a great-grand- aunt who owned a large farm. And they were interested mainly in egg production. And egg- keeping eggs, for instance, over the winter. Nowadays, it's unheard of. These eggs were in a bath. I remember that. And I always wondered why they were in a bath, but that bath had some chemicals in it – sulphur and God knows what. And one day I noticed what sulphur was, actually, because one of the eggs exploded and the whole area was smelling of sulphur. And I can't forget that. And it was my job there, believe it or not, I was feeding... the ducks and the pigeons, which they sold. And feeding them for what reason? In order to give them bigger livers. And duck livers and goose livers – Oh yes, geese as well of course. She had all that.

*Did you speak...*

That was my job and I've got three pictures of this. Yes.

*Did you speak any Czech at that time?*

**[0:10:44]**

Did I speak what? Czech?

*Or did your family speak German?*

Oh, they spoke German. Everybody was, anybody with any education, certainly Jewish people, spoke German. And... they usually came to Vienna to better themselves. Because then Vienna was the centre of culture and education. And I'm lucky enough to have been born there, and got the education that is second to none. It may not appear so at the moment, but it doesn't matter. So, the point is... I was talking about feeding the, the little ones. So, I had to keep the mouth open, and shove... corn in it. Those poor things. In those days I didn't think they were cruel. I thought they were very happy to get all this food and didn't have to look for it. Anyway, that was the idea. Also in that courtyard, which was a very long courtyard, I remember, quite distinctly, there was a... a rail – rails. And a trolley was on those rails. The idea was obviously to take the stuff from one part of the... on this truck to the other for selling from the back when the van came to collect the eggs and whatever - the pigeons and so on.

*Could we come back now to Vienna, and perhaps the period... approaching the war, and your journey to Britain? If we could come back to Vienna and the situation there?*

I'll come back to Vienna. Of course. Naturally. I was only talking about my holidays.

*Yes...*

Which tell you more things than what you do at home, because you do the same thing every day. You get up, run to school. I got into school within five minutes, because I was always-have been late. I started that way in life, and I think I'm still behaving that way. But... right.

The idea is, where did I go to school? As I say, very near – near the Donaukanal, the Danube Canal. And in those days even, when I was a little boy, there were three classes. Two of them were... Viennese people and one was Jews. Naturally I was in the Jewish class.

*And this was within the same school?*

**[0:13:26]**

In the same school. Oh yes. And that... continued in other schools and right up to my last day in Vienna – in other schools of course. And... although we were aware of that, I would say that it didn't really touch us much. I can't remember any problems with it. That I was with other Jewish boys. Except - interestingly - when we had the religious studies the non-Jews were in their part, and we had- we had to evacuate ours, for the religion teacher to come and teach them. And vice-versa. For some reason or other they needed to chop around... when the teachers came. And when the boys came back... to our part... where we were, they said, "Hm, the Jewish boys were here. We can smell it." And that's all I remember. I don't suppose we smelled any different to anybody else, but, that's what they said. So, anti-Semitism was always rife in Vienna. And I must digress in a way. There were always two main parties, just like it is in England. One was- We called them 'Blacks', and the other was 'Reds'. And there was no way that any Jew would vote for a Black, because they were the Christian Socialists. The Reds were the equivalent of today's English Labour Party, say. Socialists – Social Democrats. So, if anybody wants to know how- how we voted, there's no question about it. Whether you were inclined to...

[Audio interruption]

**[0:15:26]**

*...That no Jewish person would vote for the Black.*

Can you speak up a little bit?

*Yes, sorry. You were saying that no Jewish person would vote for the Blacks.*



They were- No, no Jewish person would have voted- Would have even thought of voting Christian Socialist. It's obvious isn't it, really? This doesn't happen in England, but it is a Continental way of doing things. So, there are not that many Jews around now on the Continent anymore because we lost only six million as you happen to know. So, we had a different life to others, naturally. Now when you ask me about my religion, etcetera, which I'm sure you do, I was never... convinced... of...God. I believe in myself, but I don't hang on to something else, which is created by God. I realised very early in my life that God could not have created everything. Because if you say he didn't create everything, then where do you draw the line? What does he, did he not create? But that's beside the point, now. So- Going to synagogue was something that I wasn't ready for, as a rule. However, when I became thirteen - I'm jumping now of course - I had to go because I wanted to become Bar Mitzvah and had to go and do all the things that everybody else did. In Vienna, other like- not like in England, where you... recite a large portion from the Torah, and you have to know it backwards. In fact, the Israelis were very clever; they give you the chance of reading backwards in the first instance. So, the thing is, we had to do only a few words, and they were spoken after the Rabbi told you what to say. He said, for instance, "*Baruch*". You say, "*Baruch*". "*Atah Adonai*" - "*Atah Adonai*". So you answered him in what he just said. You didn't have to remember it at all. Nobody said, "You have to remember it." So, you can see my religious interests were not even thought of in those days. In the synagogue that I belonged to. But what I do remember about the synagogue, not surprisingly, at the end of the session, we got a bar of chocolate. And I thought, there must be a way. So, what do I do, I got my bar of chocolate and then I joined the queue again from the back. And I often collected more than even two bars of chocolate. That stuck to my mind. Right. It's a way of - of living, to do things which nobody else does. Or, other people think, "We mustn't do that." Right. OK. Now. From then on, I would say, I had a Bar Mitzvah which... was memorable as it would have been for anybody else. I had a very small *tallit*, and I still have that tallit in my possession. And when the children one day will have a look at all the things that I've left them to - to throw away - they'll see my first tallit used at my Bar Mitzvah. So they know what it's about.

**[0:19:18]**

So [inaudible] can sleep on that. Anyway. Since then, as far as my religious interests go, they haven't changed. They have solidified, if anything. Because to me, everything has a

technician, as a technical educated person would say, "This is there because somebody made it." "This is there, somebody wrote it." And when I ask somebody, "Who wrote this Bible?" "God did." Well, it's not his handwriting. It's somebody else who wrote it down in, with ink. So, beside that... It only goes to show how I feel about religion. Now when it comes to... other things, which I know is really what I'm here to give you in my own words. I went from the primary school into middle school. Which was in- in Vienna, a possibility of going either in a various- ordinary thing, like you get in England as well. Or you go into a *Gymnasium*, which is what- my aunt sent me to a *Gymnasium*.

*Which is the equivalent of an English grammar school.*

What?

*The Gymnasium is the equivalent of an English grammar school.*

It is exactly. I was coming to that.

Yes.

So, it is actually a grammar school. And, and I chose then already at ten to go to one of two possibilities. One was teaching humanities, and the other schools were teaching technology. And there was a third possibility, of going half-way, to have a bit of each. And I did that. So, I went- I thought- Not knowing exactly where I would end up, who knows? I should know something about Latin and... history, which is one side of it. And on the other side, what to do with earning a living. Cause you can't learn, earn a living just doing history, because that's already written down. Somebody else did that for you. So, I went to the school which did both. And that was important. And I remember exactly where that was, and I've been looking at it and even went upstairs once in on one of my visits to Vienna. And that school was also within about eight minutes or so of running to it, if I was late, passing my father's shop to which I'll come to later. And... in that school, it was just called a *Realgymnasium*. And *Realgymnasium*. 'Real' means obviously to do with the technology side of it. While *Gymnasium* is not the same thing as the English word 'gymnasium' because we didn't do any, any jumping about in, while we were listening to the teacher. One thing, I am talking

about the teacher, he was a Professor. In Vienna, we were taught by Professors, not by young girls who just came out of school themselves... like my whole family is.

*But a Professor on the Continent is a teacher, as opposed to a Professor in the University, as it is here. I just want to stress that point for the prospective viewers who may not understand that.*

But the Professor who taught us German, who taught us Latin... He didn't teach us mathematics. Now, as I didn't write these things down. But believe it or not, I've still got my own exercise book which tells me all sorts of the things that I learnt way back. And it was in- in 3B was the...

**[0:23:39]**

*And how old were you then, in Class 3B?*

I was from ten years old. Yes. From ten to- You stayed there from ten to fourteen, in those days. But you could choose to stay till sixteen. But I didn't have much of a chance, because Hitler came then. He interrupted my studies. Anyhow, I do remember about the man and his name was *Professor Doktor Wiener*. Now how can I remember that? I even remember my first teacher in the- in the *Volkschule*. And his name was, Immervoll. '*Immervoll*' means in English, 'always full', and he was exactly that. Always full- of food, of course. Anyway, it shows you that I - I can think back to the old days quite easily. Sometimes something comes to me that has absolutely no reason or no meaning at all. And it comes to me like the name of the neighbour of, of, of the house in which we lived. Unnecessary, but it's there. So, it hasn't gone. The brain is better than any computer that you can construct today. I remember *Doktor Wiener*, he was a very - we used to say - a strong teacher, or a very robust teacher. And he wouldn't let anything happen. So, if somebody is... talking in the back row, he would know about it. And he would say... "I can hear something... Stand up." And we used to stand up if we were on the back row and chatting. And on occasions he would say - and I'll surprise you - he'd say [shouts], "*Bande!*" Which means, 'a band of hooligans', which we were of course, to him. And [laughs]... we were very worried about him, from that point of view. But we learnt. I didn't like Latin, and I'm very sorry not to have improved on that. But whatever I did learn, is coming back to me. But that's interesting, and I am able to understand for instance,

Romanian up to a point from [inaudible]. Because the Latin in Romanian it is where it comes from. Like Italian, French, et cetera. And it comes back, which is fantastic. So, I can see the root, and I know what she's talking about or anybody. Or if I read it. To all the English children, this doesn't come into it at all. But I'm glad I had the right education in that subject. And... mathematics, et cetera... I can't remember who taught me. But that's as far as school learning is concerned. Now, this went on, say, until the year 1938. March, 1938, which you'll want to know about, when Hitler came. It didn't take long... before he came into Vienna. And I happened to be there, and... standing by the window, looking out from where I said, by the Donaukanal. And he came across a bridge, the nearest bridge to where we lived. And I had no problem in seeing it. And it was an edict at the time, for no Jews to be allowed to look out of the window when he comes. I mean in case you want to throw a bomb or something, you know. As if we had bombs, of course. I looked out, because I never listened to other people's- rules, best of times, and still don't. And I saw him, crossing the Danube Canal, like this. I couldn't take a picture in those days because that would have been maybe just too much. But I did; it's the pictures in my mind. So, he came to Vienna, and he used the term, "*Die Ostmark kehrt heim*". He - instead of calling it *Österreich* or Austria- the German word for Austria, he called it the *Ostmark*. It was... difficult to explain in a few words, but anyway he changed it to that. And he said, "*Die Ostmark kehrt Heim*" which means- He was born in Austria, as you all know, but only on the border. Only just; a few feet away he would have been in Germany. So, "*kehrt heim*", means, "returns home". So, the *Ostmark* - Austria - returns home. Partially meaning to him, partially meaning to Germany as a whole. But if you remembered your history, you also know that Austria when it was an empire, the hugest empire there was in the, in Europe, had Bavaria as part of it. Part of the Empire was Bavaria, of all places. So - Munich, et cetera. Anyway, this is in my mind, that I was - I couldn't say - privileged, to see the man crossing the river, and I at least say that I have seen Hitler. Not many people can say that [inaudible.]. It may have the...inaudible]. Now, coming back to just for a little bit, to school. On one occasion, whilst we always had male teachers, on one occasion, and that must have been already in the- in the *Realgymnasium*, we had a girl, on one day, because for one reason or another she was helping out. And we didn't like the thought that a girl should teach us. How is that possible that a girl would teach us? Today, nobody would think that way. Because it's only girls teach. I should know because I've got a family full of them. And we didn't like that and we let her know it, in no uncertain terms. It took her all of the time to decide to get out of the door, 'cause we really made her life uncomfortable ...in so many different ways.

[0:30:44]

Without being rude or anything like that at all! But she asked a question, and we answered the question in such a way that... it would embarrass her. That's just one thing. Anyway, so much for women teachers. So that stayed with me. I can't understand a woman teacher at all. But I got a daughter, another daughter, my wife was a teacher... Two daughters- Two granddaughters of mine are teachers. And I always used to say as so many people do, "If you can't, you teach." They unfortunately don't do what I would have expected to. So, when it came to... further on- When Hitler came, and I just told you about it, we showed our objection - because we were in a Jewish class - to get out of the school... and march on one side of the- of the *Ringstraße*, the road right round. And the non-Jews were on the other side, the Christians. And we shouted at them, and they shouted at us. But we didn't throw bricks or stones or anything. But we let it be known by shouting. Which is a bit better than what goes on now. Right. Didn't get us anywhere, of course. Well, I mention the *Ringstraße* with the Jewish connection. It would be interesting that there is one... building which was owned by a Jewish philanthropist. And he- That building is still there. And he gave away very much money to non-Jewish as well as Jewish functions, such that he actually bankrupted himself... having been a Lord in fact. And then I read not long ago, that the *Ringstraße* was financed by Jews, completely. I knew about it, but it didn't sink in. Now I know, because everybody who knows Vienna would have been on the *Ringstraße*, because it's all there. And to think- to think that the Jews financed the *Ringstraße*, it wouldn't be there if it hadn't been for that. But they were thrown out just the same. And I was one of them. And you wonder, why? So, that's in my head. So, when I go to Vienna once or twice a year, I go with a dual... feeling. On the one hand, it was my home, and you can't take that away. On the other hand- and of course the language and the food and everything else. On the other hand, we were thrown out. In those days we were still allowed to go. If I had stayed any longer, I wouldn't be here to talk to you about it. And that is the main point. So... I now come to - jumping or not - to the point of emigration. You know that Hitler came to become the *Reichkanzler* in 1933. That's a long time ago. Well, we all listened on the radio. I remember distinctly listening on the radio- 1933 I was ten years old then- about the election, that made Hitler and his party the ruling party in Munich. As you know. The Munich *Bierkeller*. and I happen to have been in the Munich *Bierkeller* a couple of times since. It's interesting. Huge area.

**[0:34:56]**

Where the beer is just shoved there from one side of the trestle table to the other. It stops right in front of the person who ordered it. And not a drop is spilt. But that's beside the point. And... when this happened, between 1933 and 1938, March 1938, the 13<sup>th</sup>, when Hitler came to Vienna, or the Austrians were annexed by the Germans. There were no fewer than between – '33 and '38 - five years. How come that very little was done? I know some distant members of the family emigrated. A lot of people say, "I came here after Hitler went to Germany because I saw what was going to happen." Well, we didn't. Because my father had, as you asked before, different jobs. He was selling carpets on one day, he was doing numerous different things in order to keep going, and to keep that little boy happy. That's me, by the way. But... what happened in 1938, was sufficient for my mother to say, "I must do something to rescue us." Now, a sister-in-law of his, in other words the wife of my uncle's on my father's side, emigrated already to, of all places, Bournemouth. Right. And she said, "Olga," to my mother, "why don't you come out? I'll find you a job here." And she did. And my mother had the foresight to leave us - my father and me - in Vienna, with an uncertain future. But the, the big thing that my mother did, deciding to emigrate, was tremendous.

**[0:37:16]**

*It must have been terribly difficult... decision.*

Exactly!

[Audio break]

So, my mother said goodbye to - to my father and me and the family. Of course, we all went to the Westbahnhof, which doesn't exist anymore now... to say goodbye. And she wrote to us. And I've got the old letter. And... she said, she's been to a number of organisations in England, even in London. At first, she was in London, and Bournemouth afterwards. That's right. There was a bit of a mix-up in my head. But she was in London with other people, in the- in Kilburn area. Brondesbury – Brondesbury Road. That's where she started. And she went to places such as the Scouts, English Scouts, because I was in Vienna a Scout... which took me a year to decide to become a Scout, 'cause I didn't want to do anything that everybody else does. But I got convinced, and after that I brought other people into it. So, I was in the Scouts which was known in German as a '*Pfadfinder*' – 'Pathfinder'. OK. And- I joined - as soon as I came to England I joined - that organisation as well here, in

Bournemouth. And, which was very good. So, she went there, and cried her eyes out that she wanted her little boy in England. And eventually, not through the Scouts, but through other organisations- in other words, in fact it was the... I should write it down, I didn't.

**[0:39:13]**

*It'll come to you, don't worry.*

The World Jewish... organisation. Anyway, she managed to get me out. And B'nai B'rith was part of it.

*But how did- may I ask? How did your mother come over, and when? This was presumably before she needed a visa?*

My mother went- good that you ask me. My mother went to England just before *Kristallnacht*, before *Kristallnacht*, which I don't have to translate. And she managed to do it through the people that she worked for. As you can imagine, she was a – a cook and bottle washer as they would say today. Because although she could do- She wasn't a great cook, but she was good enough for my father and me. But whether she was good enough for English people, is another matter. I learnt afterwards, from her, that she... did work for two or three different organisations...[inaudible] say people. And when something went wrong, like she burnt something on the stove. And they said, "Olga, you burnt this." She told us, as she told them, "That's the way we eat it in Vienna." And that was good enough!

*Because at that time, the way most people were able to stay in Britain, especially the women, was through residential domestic service, whatever their background or education. That was how they earned a living.*

That's all they could do!

*Yes, that's what they were allowed- all they were allowed to do.*

Just like today- exactly the same thing with- with Tanya. The only thing that she can do, is what she is doing here! And making the most marvellous job of it. No question about it. She

had a good education, like I did. We got a Continental education. But, we did exactly the same thing. My father- Well, in the days before me, education wasn't quite the same thing for Jewish people. My father was in a school, my mother ...school - *Handelsschule*. Which was a... technical school. OK?

[Audio break]

**[0:41:40]**

So, my mother was having this job eventually in Swanage...Dorset, Bournemouth, and in the surrounding areas. I even remember the name of one of them. Winterton. Why should I remember that? But I do. And they were very good to her. And there was also a girl with, with them, who, who was looking after the dirty parts... Emptying pots. Because English people in those days had a cabinet, in which they kept a pot, to be emptied by the silly girl who...

*The chamber pot.*

Unbelievable! We'd never heard of this in Vienna. This is an English idea. Good job it doesn't continue. OK, now where were we?

*About your mother, in Bournemouth and the surrounding area...*

Yes, of course. So, my mother was a cook in Bournemouth. And she then- She managed to get me over, in 1939. And I came here, and I left Vienna on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1939 and I came here two days later. It took two days to travel from Vienna... to London. Two days. Which meant of course overnight on a ship from... Hook of Holland to Harwich. And in those days, there was no such things as ailerons or any means from stopping... ships from going left and right, up and down, forward and backward. And of course, most of us were either sick or would have liked to have been sick but couldn't because we were lying down. And I tried not to get up. I thought, "If I get up, I'll be in trouble." But I wasn't, so, lucky me.

*Were you afraid during the journey? Did you feel afraid?*



[0:43:52]

Not afraid at all. I would say even, well I was jumping here, but it doesn't matter. I already said in the beginning, you can't do things categorically. When we left Vienna... we went on a train. Of course, the whole *Mischpoche* was on the – all the uncles and aunts and grandmother, et cetera, et cetera - whom I never saw again. And my father. I left him behind. And I came, and... When we got to the frontier... with Holland, I remember distinctly we all looked out, and when we got into Holland, we all spat before that... to Germany. Because you go from Austria to Germany to Holland, Hook of Holland and England. So, we did that. [inaudible] All I remember I took with me was my school bag... and a little suitcase. No bigger than eighteen inches or something. And I forgot to pack my pyjamas, I forgot to pack my toothbrush and all sorts of things. I always forget something. And- Not surprising. But I had the minimum. My uncle, who was in, in, into... linings of suits, he had made for me two suits. One with long trousers, and one with plus-fours. A green one and a brown one. Made with Scottish wool. Because he thought that was the best. And I took those with me. And that's all I had in the way of something to wear, other than a shirt or two. It was not many days till I found out that not a single boy, not a single man, had plus-fours. That was before my time, I realised that, and I asked the question. What did I do? Unlike the people who come here today, I discarded those plus-fours because I wanted to look the same as everybody else. I wanted to integrate. And I- I tried to. And so, I only wore my long trousers. And eventually, however I did it, I managed to buy myself some other things. Because they were no good in the summer. They were fine in the winter, but not in the summer. My uncle didn't think of that. Anyway, so much for that. And... What else can I say about that? My father was still in, in Vienna. And when I actually was in Swanage, I came to, I was integrated in a hostel of youth. There were eight other boys, all from Germany. Not one from Vienna. And they thought I was funny, being different. Speaking a different language. Well, Austrians and Germans speak differently. Just like you might say English and Scottish, or English and Irish, but more so. And... the true Viennese accent, which I can still speak and if I'm there, I know who is- what class he belongs to. So, my mother always said, "Don't speak like that, because you're not in that class." I've learnt something about class since then. I was pretty clever about that. But... to try and say what happened about my father, is the most important thing there. I managed to find- from Swanage... I went to Bournemouth with the hostel, where I was a naughty boy on one or two occasions. I jumped the, the- over the gate when I shouldn't have done because I did something wrong. And Mr. Carter, who was our- I

remember him. He was our, our... chief... was really annoyed about that. That I jumped over the grate on top of that. But I said I had to go and see my mother, which I did. And had a bicycle. Oh! Bicycle is another thing.

**[0:48:46]**

My uncle sent my bicycle, which he used, which had [can't do this] back treading brakes. When you- When you, instead of going forward you go backward, the bicycle would slowly, or fast, however you want to do it, stop. And that was something when I got this in Bournemouth West, at the, at the... station, packed in a, in a wooden crate. Huge wooden crate! And he sent this to me. That was the best... present I could have ever had! So, in – in England I didn't need anything else but my bicycle, and I got around that way. So, I went from Bournemouth down to Swanage, where my mother was. And she said, "Careful, don't make a noise, because the lady doesn't know that you're here." She was Lady Hamilton. One of the sisters of a... of a Conservative Lord. And she got this job on the side of the ferry, if you've ever been in, in, in - in Swanage. There's a ferry there –not- which carries you from one side of the river to the other. Anyway. And she lived right next to it. So, when it came to my father again, to come back, I found various ways of talking to people. And when I was for one week during the movement from Swanage to Bournemouth, I was one week with an English couple. Which was quite something one can remember. They were very nice to me. They... had me and an old boy from the, from, from our group... for that week. And we were having breakfast together and lunch and... whatever. And when- the first breakfast, I remember that distinctly. We had it together. And we were sitting in a row. There was grandmother, father, mother and another boy. When that boy came in, for the first time that I saw him, he said, "Hello!" Today it's obvious. But although I learnt, oh yes, I learnt English for one year with an English lady that my aunt, who was the only real earner in the family, paid for. She knew her and she said, "You need to learn English, because you never know when you need it." And I did. She had foresight. But she died in Auschwitz. So. When this boy said, "Hallo!", one thing I didn't know is, what to say to him. You wouldn't believe that, but there you are. I had no idea, because the woman never taught me "Hello". If you can imagine that she was a refined type of person, and the word "Hello" didn't even exist in those days. So I didn't know what to say. I only knew one greeting. I realised it was a greeting of some sort. So when he said, "Hello!", I said, "Good-bye!" I remember that. Anyway. When we had the ...breakfast, in front of me was a dish, which I didn't know what it was a jam of

some sort. So, I took that dish and started eating it. And the person next to me, I forget now which one, said, "That's not only for you, that's for everybody." By then I already got through half of it. It was marmalade. You can imagine. Right. I learnt. Sorry, but I did. The fact that I remember it now is something, anyway.

[0:53:31]

[Audio break]

OK. Now, where was I, again?

*About the marmalade... at breakfast time.*

Oh yes, of course. Well, I remember that. But the grandmother was quite a funny woman. She said, and the one thing I remember was she said, she said, "It is lovely to look into a glass of water", she said. I remember that distinctly. She said nothing else that I remember, except that it was lovely to look into a glass of water. And I thought, "Is there anything wrong with that woman, or is she teaching me something or what?"

[Audio break]

I was talking about what...

*About your breakfast with the English family.*

Oh, that's right, with the family. Well, one other thing I remember is that the lady... went out one evening, and... I said to her... with the English I knew and the English I'd learnt, and I – I think I advanced quite well, "Have a good evening", or words to that effect. And she was very happy to hear that. "Enjoy yourself." So, she went out by herself; I don't know what her husband did. When she came back, she took her fur coat - she had a light fur coat - and she threw it off her shoulders and left it on the floor. This was the way things are, I thought. You leave a fur coat on the floor. So, what did I do? I picked it up and put it on, on the [inaudible] Oh, she was so happy that I did this. Because- "It doesn't matter, It's all right. It's clean. The

floor is clean”, she says. But I couldn’t understand why she should do that. And I learnt a lot about English habits from being with English people, and that one stuck in my mind still today. So. As far as the organisation is concerned. Then we were in Bournemouth for some time- quite a long time in... I can’t remember the road now. Doesn’t matter. Very nice. We were half way on the Dorset side, and half way was on the Hampshire side. [inaudible] And many more boys were there already, by then. We had quite a lot. And I had my bicycle which I could do all sorts of things. So, Bournemouth was my centre. Anyway. I... found these people and others, that I talked to, interested in what my father is doing in Vienna. I said, “He can do anything. All he wants to do is to get to England to my wife and to me.” So, one of them, that I spoke to, said, “I’ll see what I can do.” And he- no, she, rather, got a... a job for my father, in a house... together with my mother... which was then called “a married couple”. Every one of us knows what that means, “a married couple”. Because we were all in the same boat in that one. So, my father came. And that was of course the... thing. But all others were left behind.

**[0:57:33]**

*Which year did he come?*

Now he came just a few months before the start of the war. The war started the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 193...

*Nine.*

Nine, ja. ...Ja. Anyway, that’s the way it went. And I, ja, that’s right. Anyway, he came, and they lived together in this house in, in Bournemouth- in Swanage. And there was ...a chance of him learning how to hold a spade, because he was also going to dig their garden. And he was making the coal fire, in the old hearth - hearth. And so, he swept the floors and he did everything, which he never did before, not one of those things. Of course. But... as my mother said, “It’s better to eat a piece of dry bread in England, than a - a goose leg in Vienna.” And there’s something to be said for this. It doesn’t take long before you also want to eat a goose leg in England... because you see other people doing it. Well, nobody eats a goose here. But, beside that. Chickens. As Roosevelt said, “It’s chicken for everybody.” So, we were- at least the family was here. Eventually, now coming to internment.

*OK. Before you do that, if I may just backtrack one second...*

Yes.

*...Did the family sponsor your father to come to Britain, and who sponsored you for your journey to Britain?*

I didn't quite get this. Did my family do what with what?

*Did an English family sponsor- did they act as a guarantor for your father?*

Ah!

*And did you come on the equivalent of the German Kindertransport?*

Well, there's something to be said from what you've just asked. When we came here... an organisation in England paid fifty pounds for each one of us, which you've probably heard about. For each one of us fifty pounds, then- you work it out. Could be five-hundred pounds and far more than that. And we had- That happened for us. We actually didn't come... with no guarantee at all. So, England at least had the guarantee to start with. We didn't sponge on them. And so, fifty pounds in those days was a lot of money, as I say. Now I don't know- My mother must have had exactly the same thing, but I never heard about it. But I know I had fifty pounds. And... So... if I came to, on to my life in Bournemouth, which was... interesting at the time. As I say, I had a bicycle and I could do all sorts of things with that. And I went around. And I had two jobs there. The first one was... when somebody came to, to the house, in Bournemouth...

*So, you worked at the house as well? You didn't go to school? You did not go to school in Britain?*

**[1:01:26]**

In Britain, I was already past school age.

*Because you were fifteen...*

I was actually going to school. And that school was known as Tower School. Tower School in Bournemouth. And I went there for a relatively short time. Talking about the school – thank you for reminding me. It was on my own- with my own... interest. And my own free will.

[Audio break]

So, I was taken to the school. The Tower School on the way to Lilliput, in Dorset, if you have heard of it. And the school was a very interesting, worthwhile experience.

*Was it a boarding school?*

Not a boarding school as far as I was concerned, I was in the hostel. I went during the day. And the... boys were all very helpful. Extremely helpful. And when the teacher said, “Would you like to read any books?” I said, “Yes.” And I had enough English to get by without much trouble. He said, “What books are you interested in?” And my German word came in, and said, “Detective books” - and you know what I was meaning by that. Right. So, the boys came in the next day with all their books that they wanted to let me have a look at. I didn’t have enough time to look at one, never mind them all. So. But it shows that they were very, very helpful in that respect. So, they brought me their books, with stories. ...And also, when it came to actually learning something, the mathematics, I was in the right... group.

[Audio break]

**[01:03:33]**

*You were speaking about the boys in school, in Tower School.*

Yes, remind me of it.

*And how they brought...*

I [inaudible] ...

*Of course, understandably. And how they brought you detective books.*

When it came to say- The books are one thing. That was a good idea. When it came to mathematics, for instance. And I found that, and the school found, and the teacher found that my mathematics was ahead of theirs. Algebra, in those days. Never mind anything... more complicated. So, I didn't have any problem on that score. So, if they asked to do an equation, I got there before the others did. And today it would take me probably a bit longer. But anyway, that's a long time ago. And as far as English is concerned, they had a spelling bee always, as you know from your own school days. And I did very well in spelling. I remember that. And... I don't know where I came in in my class, but I did very well in spelling. So, all that, because I learned English, books, et cetera, et cetera - took those with me. So, I was always keen on learning and knowing. ...But while I was doing this - I was trying to say before - a lady came to our hostel and said, "I'm from a hotel called Durley Dean - you may have heard of it - in Bournemouth. And we need dishwashers." She said, "Would any of you boys want to do something like that? We'll pay you well." Whatever that was, in those days. And I, being what I am, as I call myself, 'a doer', I was the first one to raise a hand, yes. So, I went as a dishwasher. I learned how to wash dishes. That was... something which... gave me an idea how the other half lives. And so, I do know both sides of the story. And I was there with two other boys, and we had shifts, morning and evening, or morning and lunch, or lunch and the evening. So that's three shifts. And we moved around in those shifts. And that was quite something. Naturally, we got there very early in the morning. And we got their breakfast. And I learned something about the real English breakfast; everything was in there. From potatoes, to sausages, to eggs, to bacon, to, to toast, marmalade and all the rest. It was all there. And so, we had all the food we ever wanted, obviously. And ...when it came to it, eventually... the other two boys stopped. And I was the only one there. So, I did morning, lunch and evening. And I earned some tremendous sums, like five shillings a week or whatever it was.

**[01:07:03]**

Anyway, this was one job. Another job I had offered that was only for a certain time. And the job I was offered, I can't remember how and why, by a radio firm in Lilliput... which you may know about. And that firm, the man... I should remember his name now. He lived on a houseboat in Poole, Dorset. And he gave me jobs to do, which I had no idea how to do them. He gave me an electric iron, he said, "This came in. Can you put a new... electric...

*Plug?*

...possibly, into it?" I had no idea what to do. He said, [inaudible]... So... evidently what he wanted to do is to get me to put a new element in. And I found out how to unscrew the thing and how to do this, and how to put one in. And I - I made an electric iron work again. After that, I got other jobs like that. A Hoover, as it was then called- still called today. So, it didn't work, didn't sweep, didn't do anything. So, I repaired that one. I can't remember any details. And it went on like this. And one particular job I can't forget. A lady rang up and she can't get her radio to work. And I thought, "All right, I'll do that." And he sent me there. By the way, I was the only one who could start his van, going. I didn't- I wasn't allowed to drive it, because I never took any lessons, but I knew how to start it. With the right foot, I went like this, and off it went. No one in the firm knew how to start the car, I did and I went out, and they drove it. So that was something. So, I went to this lady on my bicycle... and her radio wouldn't work. "Oh, I'm so sorry to call you-" and all the rest. I looked at the radio, at the radio, and I saw that the plug wasn't right in. So, I shoved the plug in, turned it on, "Oh!" And she was absolutely delighted that - that I repaired her radio. She wasn't there at the time. And I thought this is ridiculous. And she gave me half a crown! I went back to - to the place, and that was my first lesson about business in England. And I said, no, the boss said, a Mr. Taylor, there you are, Mr. Taylor. He said, "What did you do with her radio?" I said, "I made it work." "How did you do that?" I said, "Her plug was not quite in. And I pushed the plug in, and that was it! And she was delighted; gave me half a crown." "You should not have accepted that", he said. I said, "Well, she was so pleased that she could do that." "Never do that again. Never accept anything again. If there is anything, you tell me and I'll charge her double that." Although if he charges her, he'll probably charge her many half crowns, whatever that was in those days. And... I learnt a lesson. And he said, "What you should have done, and what you will do in the future if this happens again, you don't push the plug in, you bring the radio." I said, "I can't bring a radio. I was on a bicycle." Well, we would have looked after that, with the van. So, I would have had to not push the plug in, but get her to



wait for a week, maybe, for her to wait for the radio to come back - there was nothing wrong with it. And I learnt a big lesson there. The lesson was obvious, not to trust people all the way. And to be very careful. But I still make mistakes, just the same. And who doesn't? Because the - the others are cleverer than you are [inaudible]. How you doing? ...Anyway... as far as that electrical job went, I want to tell you now, many, many, many years later my father told me that he got this job for me, and he paid what the boss gave me which was four and six pence- four shillings and six pence a week. When this man realised that I was doing better, he upped it to seven shillings a week, which meant my father paid seven shillings a week to give to me. Those were the days.

**[1:12:32]**

That's the way England became a great nation. One has to learn it the hard way. But an Englishman going through the same paces, would not think like I do. I know that. It – It, it made me think differently. But talking about making me think, when I was about ten or eleven, going back, I remember distinctly saying to myself, "I think differently to everybody else." And otherwise, I think differently now... to everybody else. Cause nobody will talk to you like I do. And... that stuck with me. Because I'm an analyst. I don't take anything as read. I read it myself. And I write everything down. And what I don't write down, I don't remember to talk about. Well, I never even once looked at this, but I will... a bit later. I've got one here... just saying "Refugee Voices". And another- I only did it yesterday. "My working life." Now, that's another matter. When it comes to... further times, we now come to the more serious side of life. After that particular incident with the radio shop and things like that, while I was still there, on a Sunday... Sunday happened to have been the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1939–1940 of course. 1940. The police came... but they were not the first police that came. Because originally, I was asked to go to the police station just like my father was. Not my mother. And I was asked questions. The first question was, "Did you ever belong to the Nazi, National Socialist Party in Austria?" I said, "No. Of course not. I'm a Jew." Next, "Did you ever belong to a Russian, in other words a Communist Party?" I said, "No. Nothing to do with me." Those were the two questions. And then they asked many more questions about what I do, what I did. And they said, "Can we have a look at your possessions?" Now here comes the good one. My possessions in that hostel, were, other than my shirts and... suits and whatever... a Morse set. A child's Morse set, which I brought with me all the way from Vienna. Because I was in Vienna in the Scouts the Morse and the semaphore man. I was the

communications man. So you stand in, in one room and in the other room you have a piece of wire going in there, and the other one can pick up the phone or the, the Morse set, rather, and know what you have typed. And the other one was called semaphore. You stand on one mountain and you can see the boy on the other mountain and you can do this to them, 'A', 'B', 'C', etcetera. So that was my job. So, when it came to this policeman asking, "What is this?" I said, "It's a Morse set." He said, "What do you do with it?" I said, "Well, you've got one end of this in, in one room – this room. And the other in through a long piece of wire in another room. And you can communicate with one another, typing in Morse." Like 'A' is dash dot. And 'S' as everybody knows, is dot, dot, dot. SOS is dot, dot, dot, long, long, long, dot, dot, dot. And things like that. So, we had played around like that, as sixteen year old boys would do. And he said, "We'll keep this." I said, "Why?" This was long before the real interview. "We'll keep this. Well, because you might be standing there on the beach and – and communicating with German war ships." I said, "That's impossible! There's only a wire there!" He said, "We'll take it just the same." Now they were policemen. That taught me a lot about policemen in England. You have to learn the hard way sometimes. So, you can see I've made points of what I've learnt, since I came to England. So, when people say, "Well, why are you like that?" I say, "It's because of my experiences." You can't just forget them. They make up my life. And all the good things and the bad things. I'm telling you both... and the mistakes I made... such as eating the marmalade. [Laughs] Everybody else... But... when it came to... a later date, when the police came on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May- 12<sup>th</sup> of May rather, 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 1940... and... they said, "We have to take you in for the duration of the war." I said, "Why?" "Well, because you are a - a foreign immigrant. You are actually a member of, of, of our... opponents, the Germans and the Austrians." I said, "Yes, but I'm a Jew so that therefore that doesn't exist. I'm here because I'm a Jew, and because of the fact that I'm not one of them." That wasn't good enough. That just wasn't good enough. He took me in. I said, "My mother and father are in Bournemouth, and I would like to phone them- what's happening to me." "Well, you can't." They did not let me talk to my parents. My parents only found out what happened to me afterwards when I wasn't communicating with them, they obviously went to the hostel and found out. That all of us were interned. And that's what they called it, 'an internment'. OK. "Well, it won't be long. Only a few weeks, maybe four weeks and the war- We'll be winning the war." Only four weeks. That's what they said. So, what happened, they took us and all our possessions which they thought might be dangerous to England...such as my...

[1:20:32]

*Did your mother come with you at this stage?*

No, no. No, no. My mother and father were in Bournemouth! Were in Swanage. Or in Lilliput- places like that. Anyway... So, we were taken to Southampton, which is near, the nearest big town to Bournemouth. And we were taken to a school in Southampton. This was May. And that school was obviously empty... for us. No idea why and how. And we were put in a- in the... gymnasium. English word of 'gymnasium', where they do the exercises and climbing up on - on the wall. Anyway, that's where we were. And we had no beds, but we got a blanket. I took with me my school bag. That's all. And again, I forgot my pyjamas and my toothbrush. That's a standard thing for me to do. And I had my schoolbag with just a shirt in it... and another pair of pants. Which would last me for four weeks, so all I got to do is wash them in between. After all, if they said the war is going to last four weeks then that's it! I [inaudible] the Englishman was speaking the truth. So. We had a blanket. Just what is known as a 'horse blanket'. Very rough. And at night, overnight, I was lying- I was doing it that way- I was lying on one side of one half of the blanket, and the other half on top of me. So, I wasn't actually lying on the floor, but I had the blanket underneath me. So, it just about covered me, one half under me, and one half above me. And my school bag was my pillow. Not the most comfortable thing, but that's not why I came to England for - for that purpose. I came as a refugee, and then they called me an 'enemy alien'. And how do I know that? Because when we had- a Prime Minister here under the name of Neville Chamberlain who was known as having an umbrella and a black hat. A bowler hat. He... He wasn't good enough and he was chucked out by Churchill. And Churchill said, "Collar the lot." And I've written a complete story on the subject which I'll give you a copy of. I could read it, because without it, you don't really know what happened to me. So, if we have the time, I'll be happy to read it. It'll take me about ten minutes. So... how did it happen? So. I can't tell you about it without reading it first. So, we were in, in, in, in this school, we had some food.

*What did they give you?*

[1:23:59]

What did they give us for food? Really, I can't remember that. But it was- By then I already knew what English food was about, which was a bit different from Austrian food. ...And we managed to live on it, it's ok. Some people live on a piece of bread and they're lucky if they got that. I think about that sometimes when I... have a sandwich. Ja. And there- We managed it for about a week. After that, we were taken... to another place. Now that was Huyton. Have you heard of Huyton? Which was Winston's constituency...if you remember that, at all. And we were taken to, to again a school, in Huyton. But we were living in tents. So, they gave us tents. And they were two of us per tent. And we spent our day, doing either nothing, or looking for things which we could do with. So, I, being a doer, the first thing I did is I was looking for... firewood. Don't ask me where I put that fire, but I needed firewood. So, I found enough wood around for lighting up, for cooking something or for... boiling some water and making a coffee or something. I- I managed to do these things. So, people realised I was doing something for everybody else as well. [inaudible]. And, but we got through Huyton all right, but we were in a tent. And I remember distinctly sitting on – on the straw mattress which we were given. And can you imagine a straw mattress? With all the living things in it? And on top of that, every time you turned around it would... [makes crackling sound] make a noise. If you've ever lived on a straw mattress. Well, I did actually also have a straw mattress – another straw mattress - but I was in a- in a straw... where they keep the straw in ...I can't think of the word.

**[1:26:37]**

*In a hayloft?*

Well, in a- in a huge house for the cows, or something, to eat. That's another matter. And a boy and I slept on top of that. But that's nothing. So, I have been through a few different things that most people haven't even thought of. Sleeping on straw is not bad. But on the straw mattress, what did I do? I learnt a game called bridge. And I've been playing that ever since. But I cannot forget that I learnt it on a straw mattress. We were sitting on the four corners of the straw mattress playing bridge. And I learnt the game there, from other boys, who knew it. But we also played two or three other card games which was quite interesting. With special types of cards, which they only use on the continent as well, among others. And rummy and all these things. I learnt all these things, because we had to do something. But then from there, we went to – from Huyton we went – from the mattress as I say, in a tent, we

were given a house. They left us a house to- to live in. Huge house, with loads of rooms. And we were in there. And to me, that was as I put down in my little diary I made then, even. In, unfortunately, pencil and it's getting a bit faint. And to us we were in a five-star hotel, in comparison. By the way, I did write then, in German, my complete story of how I started being interviewed, et cetera, and the few months in, in- in Canada, which I'll come to. So, I wrote it all down in German. And when I looked at it again and again occasionally, I'm surprised at my German language that I used, which was not bad, to say the least. Anyway... I just can't find the time to type it up. And it's difficult to read now... being in pencil. So. Coming from Huyton, they took us and said, "We have to take you out of the country, because you're enemy aliens. And you have a choice. You either go to Canada, or you go to Australia." And I said to myself very quickly, "Canada is much nearer than Australia. My parents are here. What on earth would I do in Australia?" To me that was something I learnt about in school. Canada, sorry as well. But at least I knew Canada was sitting on top of America on the- on the, on the maps. And in America, in New York, where my mother's and father's or mother's particularly, best friends, by then, already. And they had a jewellery shop in - in Vienna, which was just bashed in and completely stolen by the Nazis of course. Which was all they ever wanted. They didn't want us. They wanted the, the- the money and the goods that we had. And we sure had it. Well, our family didn't. We were not one of the top class at all. Middle class. And so, they were in New York, and I thought that's a good way of getting somewhere near New York, at least.

**[1:30:29]**

So... we were taken via Huyton, through Liverpool, where we stayed... I think only one night - I can't remember any more - in a huge dungeon. Which I called the 'Black Hole of Calcutta', and... and actually mentioned "Mr Stern mentioned the Black Hole of Calcutta". And I'm mentioned several times of course because I gave her the information. And... it was exactly that. There was no light... very, very dim light of some sort. I don't remember. But we didn't even know what happened. Food, washing, toilets, I can't remember those, but it was the worst thing that we could possibly be in. Why? We were on the way to Canada. From Liverpool we got into ships. And we came into the ship called "Sobieski". Sobieski was a Polish prime minister. He was also a - a composer... No, he was a - I must read it up in the internet. He was a, not a composer- he was a writer. But anyway, we don't have to write this down. We were on the "Sobieski" going past Glasgow. Remembering that we went

[inaudible] Glasgow. How come one goes to Canada past Glasgow? Canada is on the- on the west. And you go straight away from England, across. No, well because Ireland is in the way. We had to get around Ireland. Alright, so anyway I took this. We were getting near Glasgow. And then we went on and on, and I looked and said, "We're going north all the time, instead of west." Even past Ireland by now. Then it occurred to me, that going west is a longer way than going near the North Pole, to Canada. Which is known as the Great Circle, so you actually don't go that way. The Lockerbie incident was one of those, by the way. ...And so we went to Canada in a- an ordinary ship. And we found that in a very short time, that we only were concentrated on one half of the ship. The other half of the ship were German soldiers. And when they found out that we were on the other half, they let us know about it. I won't go into all the details.

*People had a very rough time.*

Luckily, I've forgotten. Right. So, we were on the same ship as German soldiers! We were, after all, Germans and Austrians. And so why not, as far as the English were concerned. The fact that we were Jews, that didn't come into it at all. Although we were thrown out and we were looking for liberty and not yet another way of living... a different life altogether and how long for? Four weeks? We'd already had four weeks by then. In Huyton and so on. And Huyton, by the way, was quite an interesting thing. I met a lot of people when we were there. I know I'm going back, but it doesn't matter.

*That's fine.*

A lot of people there. I learnt a lot about life. And when with other people some were a bit older some were younger of course. And you get influenced.

**[1:34:35]**

*You were only sixteen.*

I was only sixteen, but I still had enough in my head to know what's good and what's bad. I knew the difference. And, and I met a number of people of consequence – I say, consequence - even so, such as the... and I did write that down too. The grandson of the Kaiser. Kaiser

Wilhelm. And we had a good chat about it. And he was looking also for firewood and various other things. When you think of it, he was only a man, like I was, a boy. Anyway, when we went on this ship towards Canada, eventually we were on the high seas of course, what happened? Eventually, we were told there was a U-boat - a German U-boat, as you know the term, I hope – which was trying to attack us. But luckily, without knowing it really before, we had a destroyer with us, an English destroyer with us. And the destroyer put itself between us, and the U-boat. Now if the U-boat had shot at the destroyer, and I never understand why they didn't, that would have been the end of us too! But whatever happened, it didn't materialise. So, this destroyer went round and round the ship, our ship, just like the U-boat was, and always kept the right distance...which was good. But after a time, something happened to our ship; we lost the power of one engine. There are only two engines and we lost the power of one of them. Well, you can't repair that one on the high seas, because you need bits and pieces to do that. And... So, we were slowed down. We slowed down. The destroyer was slowed down. The U-boat in turn... Well, we eventually - after eight days - we made the St Lawrence River entrance. Which is what happened. We learnt about these things later. So, the St. Lawrence is a very big river, goes right through Canada, and we went up that. We went as far as a place called Trois-Rivieres. Trois-Rivieres - three rivers, which therefore told us that we were in the French part of Canada which I learnt that way. When we disembarked, we went along... the main road, to what is supposed to be our camp, near it. And we went along, the French Canadians knew about us already. And they were sitting or standing on top of their verandas. Each one had a veranda outside the house of course, just like in France. So, it's- it was the spitting image of their French houses. And they were all there, hundreds, thousands of them. And we walked down the middle of the road. And they shouted in French at us - all the things that you can think of. Because we were- we were foreigners. We were not just foreigners, we were enemy aliens. They were told that. "The enemy aliens are coming around here, and there's a camp for them." So, we were not exactly greeted nicely, but that's what happened.

**[1:38:30]**

*How many of you were there roughly, can you remember?*

How many...?

*How many of you as internees?... Just roughly?*

That's difficult to say, because we grew in numbers as we went along. There were only a few hundred at first, and it became thousands. I was in four different camps. I know I left out... the Isle of Man, because that's a separate issue altogether, I think. Maybe you want me to talk about the Isle of Man, before I go too far about Canada. You've got... [inaudible] writing here, haven't you? You can read that, and do something with that. I don't know what you do, but it would be useful.

*Where were you on the Isle of Man? Which part? Which camp?*

I was in Douglas. Yes. I'm jumping, but it doesn't matter. ...As I said, this is not going to be chrono- chronological. But, ok. We were there may be about a month. I don't exactly remember how much, how many. But what I do remember, is that we were in a hotel, and there were nothing but hotels on the seafront. And we saw the sea from there. And the hotel was so and so wide. And either side, before the next hotel, within the area of the hotel, there were soldiers guarding us, on land, and on sea. And there were in fact in the sea, soldiers, with their guns, standing in the water with their bayonets fixed on top, as if we had wanted to escape Douglas, Isle of Man. Which we understood was an island, well we know that. We were taken there. What happened? Well... We managed... in that place, to have decent accommodation because it was a hotel. But every morning, we had a roll-call. Standard English business for soldiers, but not for us. So, when he came too stern, we didn't say anything other than 'here', or 'yes', at the most. And that's what we did. Except if you wanted to be funny. And that wasn't a good idea. So. That was- My experience of the Isle of Man was not something I would say is...particularly interesting. What I do know is interesting is the fact that the soldiers guarded us in the sea. So, we were allowed actually to swim there after a time, when we asked. And the soldiers were there, because we might possibly do something like going into the next hotel or something like that, in our swim pants. We had swim pants. I don't know how we managed to get a hold of that. But, we did. So, Isle of Man wasn't such a bad place, altogether. But unfortunately, so many English people immediately talk about the Isle of Man, as if that was all there was to it. If I was only one month out of two years of being interned, it's... so easy to forget about it, as you see I did now almost. But it's all there.



*So, you ended up in Canada. How- How did you react to this? What were your feelings?*

**[1:42:24]**

We hadn't had any aeroplanes lately. So, we got to Canada up the – up to Trois-Rivieres, as I said. And now it becomes... interesting. And I wrote my own thing, "Welcome to Canada". That was the second part. So, the first part was what I've already talked about. And what did we find? We went into this... camp. Barbed wire all round of course. Of course, we had no idea where we were. That was in the New Brunswick area. So, there were- there are nine... lands, countries within Canada. New Brunswick is one of them. And that's where we were, the furthest east. We were near Fredericton in - in New Brunswick. That's what we found out. There, we were greeted as soon as we got in... by... well, it'll come out anyway] - by Germans. We had no idea there were other people there already. They were German soldiers. Captured. Prisoners.

[Audio break]

*To say about being greeted in the camp by the captive German soldiers...*

OK, now. So, we heard German soldiers singing! What do they sing? What is known, or was known to all of us, the Horst Wessel song. The Horst Wessel song was a Nazi song which is... The beginning of it is, "When the Jewish blood splashes from the knife." That's the nearest I can get to... from the English. It goes something like [Fred sings]. Et cetera. Now, to us that was unbelievable. We'd come all the way, three thousand miles, to hear that?

[Audio break]

*You were explaining about the Horst Wessel song.*

Yes. I'm there. OK. When we heard that, we were dumbfounded. But we soon realised not only that way, but other ways. Food came in. Who prepared the food? The Germans did, for us. And we got what I remember now, sandwiches, with a pink... cheese... pink cheese slices. And there was what we found out was a Canadian way of... dealing with us. So, we had cheese sandwiches. What happened after that, was quite obvious, to us. We immediately got

on to the - the, the captain who was looking after us and said, “We do not want to be integrated with German soldiers. We are an entirely different type of people. We are Jews. We are here because of the German soldiers, and we do not want to be fed by them at all. We know how to do it ourselves.” And they allowed us to do that. So, we had the kitchen on one day. And they had the kitchen another part of the day, whatever. And I said to myself making sure that I always had something to eat, I said, “I’ll volunteer to be the waiter.” This was a way of being with the people and near the kitchen. So, I always knew where the food was. Very important. And I did just that. So, I was actually bringing the dishes to the table. And if anybody wanted more, they had more or whatever. OK. ...We had no problem on that score. So, we finally managed to get out of that camp. But it took some time.

**[1:47:32]**

*What were the conditions in the camp like?*

Well, we were not allowed out anywhere. I cannot remember that we actually did anything. We were not allowed to go anywhere at all. And as far as what you said before, we were certainly not beaten up. I would remember that. There was no such thing. We were kept separately. And we made sure that - that we are not German soldiers. We are not in any way to be addressed as enemy aliens, because we’re not. But they didn’t stop that ‘enemy aliens’ because they came from England. So, we managed to get away from what was then known as Camp T. T for Trois-Rivieres. From there we went on, we got out... I’m sure there are many details, but possibly you’ll find them in my notes. We went out to what was then known as Camp A, which meant nothing. And there were only two houses, big houses. With loads of ...space. And there was barbed wire around that whole big space. And there were also plants outside the houses, and even some vegetables were grown by somebody or other. And we found ways and means of living. Now, how did we get by with no houses? Wood came in, and they said, “If anybody wants to help building the houses that you can live in, let us know.” I was probably one of the first to put their hand up. So, I helped by building the houses and I learnt a lot that way. It was all done with wood of course, and nails. And... We were shown what to do of course; we wouldn’t have known. And we did. And it was all very... bare. Seventy-two people to a house. It was in two parts. Thirty-six on one side, thirty-six on the other side. All double beds, a top and a bottom. So, we had eighteen double beds. Nine on each side...

*Bunkbeds.*

**[1:50:07]**

Yes, bunkbeds. Nine on each side, making seventy-two. And ...that was an education again. I chose the top bunk, 'cause I didn't like somebody above me. And I got in the top bunk but just stepping on first the rail at the bottom and jumping over the top, and landing on the top of the bed, which wasn't exactly the thing to do for the other fellow. But I did it mainly when he wasn't there. And all I had to dress by then, still, was the shirt I was wearing, a pair of pants I was wearing, and another shirt. Which I used as a nightshirt. It wasn't exactly the thing for a boy, but I had a nightshirt. When it came to washing... ourselves, there were only showers and - and washtubs. No more washing affairs. And the cold water was not exactly ideal for- for showers, especially in the winter, but we managed. One manages anything, and everything, if one has to. And... Came the time when they said, "Would you like to help making things?" Again, I put my hand up. First thing I did was making... camouflage nets. The camouflage nets were there to put over the tanks, in England, which was a good thing for the war effort which I wanted to be in. So, I helped making camouflage nets. I was shown how to do it, which was quite something. And... it was an education in itself. Huge nets, as you can imagine, over a tank. And we, we did all that. Another thing we did we made trestle tables on which we were to eat. So again, I made those – trestle tables. Then came the better one. "Anybody who wants to go into the country to fell trees." That was in the winter; you don't do that in the summer. "Hands up." So, I was one of those who felled trees. Now when we were in the country, we were given special clothes. Something you can't forget is we had very thick shirts, it was winter. Minus twenty degrees. We were given very thick shirts, woolly shirts, of course. And on the backs of them... was not just the shirt. We had a huge red spot on it, which was woven into the shirt. You couldn't get it off, because it was part of the shirt. It was from side to side. So, you can imagine how big that was. Something like two foot diameter, a red spot. So, if we wanted to run away, they would find us. None of us ran away. Not one of us was digging holes to get out the other side of the fence. We left that to the Germans, as we found out later. Because we were different people. We didn't know how to hold a spade anyway! We were not taught that at school. So, when we were there, after a time, and as I say I've written it all down in the- in my, my notes entitled, "My Internment and Collar the Lot", by Mr W. C. – Mr. Churchill. And... I decided to do some studying. And

they gave us the opportunity to study. We had a lot of teachers. And I decided to study... a language. And I chose Spanish. I already knew German and English, within limits, of course. And I wanted Spanish. Why, because I thought Spanish was more important than French. There are more people in South America that speak Spanish or Portuguese, which is not that far away, from it. And Spain is of course itself - a big country. And French is only spoken in Belgium and parts of Switzerland. So, I ignored French, for one reason or another, and I learnt Spanish, which was easier for me anyway.

**[1:55:34]**

*Were the teachers from within the internees, or were they Canadian?*

Oh, within - within. It was in the place itself, oh, definitely. But the teacher was teaching us that. And that wasn't enough. I wanted to know other things. So, I got hold of mathematics books. And I learnt all by myself, not geometry, but trigonometry. I did trigonometry because I never did before, but I realised that that was important to be able to know better. And when I finished, well I didn't finish it but I was still doing it. There is no way of finishing anything. I learnt all by myself again, calculus, without which you couldn't even begin to - to talk about mathematics. Very higher mathematics escaped me luckily, because I would have been past things like putting in zeros and things like that. But I remember doing things which nobody else did. So, I learnt that. On top of that, I did, in order to be able to do some quick writing, I did Gregg shorthand. If you ever heard of Gregg shorthand, well, that's the American shorthand. It's far more instructive and useful than Pitman. Pitman is a complete waste of time. Pitman has got straight up and down lines, straight horizontal lines, whilst Gregg shorthand - I learnt that right away. That's why I chose it. It's all parts of ellipses. Ellipses going from left bottom to right, up. Almost vertical and almost horizontal, but never vertical and never horizontal. And if you use the first part it's an 'R', if you use the last part, it's an 'S' and that sort of thing. And of course, you got the shortenings, so if you use 'T', the chance is that it becomes 'thing' or 'Tom' or something of that order. And there is an indication with a dot in the right place, et cetera, et cetera.

**[1:58:02]**

So, it was a very good study. And I've still got the books here. And I did that all by myself again. So, I had my work cut out, in that way. So, felling trees, after other work like that was finished, and studying, and writing letters home when I could. We were allowed one letter home every two weeks. And one letter in every two weeks. And I've still got them. And believe it or not, I haven't read any - again. They're there, in a box, for me to read when I retire. Well, I've been retired now for thirty-two years, and I haven't read them yet. Talking about retirement, as a side-line. I retired exactly on my sixtieth year, at the end of the month of August. So, I was sixty. And everybody said, "You can't retire! Where are you going to get your money from?" I said, "I've already worked that out, in three different ways. I'm going to live better than I do now." And I did. I bought shares. I did various other things. For a year I did well, but then I lost. When you lose, when you gain, you lose. And you lose, you gain. So, what comes up- goes up, comes down again. But eventually one makes it, if one learns how. And that's one way of living. Another way is working hard. And I did both. I - I've never, in all my life, in this country been a burden to anybody. Unlike what happens today. So... I can say with absolute certainty, that I'm more than grateful for having been rescued of course. No question about that. There's not one person who would say anything else. But I'm also aware of those shortcomings. And if you can't talk about the shortcomings, then I'd say there's something wrong with the freedom of expression. And there is such a thing as a Freedom of Expression Act. And I like to use it one day, where necessary. I've still got a few years to go. I mean to do that. I've got so much to do, and I wonder how is it possible that I have to get that in? How is it possible that I had time to work? Now, I do so much every day, whether it's looking after the house, looking after myself. OK, so I've got two children, two daughters who are a first-class act. Glad, I get them in now. They are absolutely essential to anybody who wants to say that he's had a good life. And three granddaughters. One of whom is rather younger, and who is in Canada now studying to be a teacher. As I said before, teachers abound in my family. One of my two granddaughters however, is a person looking after prisoners, you might say. But she would probably object to that, exactly. But she is interviewing them, she is talking to them. She is trying to get them out of prison, she's trying to stop them going back into prison. How successful she is in that, is another story. But she learnt that from my son-in-law, from the other side of the family, who is into prisoners. Because prisoners actually work for him for, generally speaking, a lower rate than he would get anybody else would do. And he has discovered this a long time ago. And he's making his living that way. And I must say that my families are having a good life. And ...my three granddaughters, and my two daughters themselves, each one is, or will

be hopefully, a university student, or was, as obviously. So, they've all got their degrees, or one still to go. So, I'm quite happy about that. And I'm the only one in the family who hasn't got a university degree. On the other hand, my institution, the mechanical institution. So, I'm a member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and Chartered Engineers at the same time. So, it's equal to a university training. So, we didn't do too bad in the theoretical and on the practical side. I was working for forty-two years, as well as thinking about all these other things I've talked about.

**[2:03:28]**

*Could we come back to that?*

Of course, we can! Any time.

*Because I wanted to ask you how many hours you worked in- as a- as a lumberer in the camp. And also, then how you eventually...*

Well, in what...

*In Canada.*

In Canada?

*And then eventually, how you got back to Britain?*

Yes, of course.

*How many hours did you work?*

Also, Canada into other things. I hope I'm allowed to do that. It doesn't make it quite as bad as some of the interviews that I've seen, where somebody was interviewed for five minutes, then another person five minutes, another person five minutes... and after a time you had no idea which one did what. I didn't like that system at all.

No...

And I hope this isn't going to be one. Well, it is, because you're going to put it into an archive. Ja, now then. As far as Canada is concerned, we had- ...I've been in four different camps in Canada so I've talked about T and A. The next one was B and the next one was... N.

*How did they differ? What was the difference?*

Well, they were in different parts of Canada but all around about Québec. And the first one, as I said, was in - in New Brunswick. So, we were in Québec, which was the French part. Now, by the way, when I said I was studying, I was actually also taking my matriculation at the same time. I could do that, with England, but- which would be recognised in England. But it was with Toronto University. So, the matriculation was with Toronto University and I hoped to be able to do my matriculation that way. Some of the things that I did studying, actually I did with teachers. Otherwise, I wouldn't have got anywhere at all. So, the extra... work I did, as I just mentioned, as well as electricity for instance, which had nothing to do with - with the matriculation at all.

**[2:05:54]**

*This was so important for your future.*

It was all important for my future. And I hoped to be able to do the matriculation in Canada. And after that, I hoped to do a BSc. Well, it's getting a bit mixed up but it doesn't matter. So, I never got that. Why? Because I got released from Canada before- just before the matriculation with Toronto University. So that was anyway a waste of time. On the other hand, I did my matriculation when I came back to England. So, I did it in England. That was the first thing. When I tried to do a BSc, I didn't do very well because it could only be done in evening classes. And you can't get a degree in evening classes. Not easily. You have to be extremely concentrated and doing absolutely nothing else. Well, I'm not that way inclined. I must do different things. I need variety in all ways of life. I can't just stand behind the machine and keep pulling a handle all day long. Or shoving something in and waiting, doing that. This is not for me. And I had to design machinery and this is another matter I'll come to,

which was my living. But to come back to, to where I was, in Canada, to come back from Canada eventually.

[2:07:33]

*Which year did you return to Britain? ...Which year did you return to Britain?*

That was all between 1940 and 1942. And I came back in, I already told you I was interned in May, and I went to Canada round about July. Can't remember exactly. And I came back on the... I'll remember it suddenly later. ...It's a South African ship...

*It'll come to you.*

I have it in my head, and it comes suddenly. Usually, things come to me first thing in the morning. I don't know why, but they do.

*So, you came back round about 1942.*

Yes. But before, that I must tell you this. That's essential. Everybody seems to know that a refugee ship was sunk...

*The Arandora...*

...by the Germans. Well, my mother got a letter from the Home Office. And I've got it in my files which I've got somewhere here to show you if you want me to. My mother got a letter from the Home Office saying, "We regret to tell you that your son, Fred Stern, was sunk on the Arandora Star." So, they had their- They had the whole business mixed up, which is not surprising. The Home Office. Right, so when you think about the Home Office, you have to think about it – or I do, anyway - with a certain reservation. Or any office. And that letter came a day after they got a telegram, which I asked my parents' friends in New York, that I mentioned previously, to send immediately to my mother that I've arrived in Canada. And that letter to my mother came the day after she had the letter from the people in New York. Had it been the other way around... So. She was already happy to know that I was safe, even if it was a bit uncomfortable to - to live behind the barbed wire. And... that was a good story.



Whether they ever apologised for their stupidity, I don't know. But then again, you can always say it was the war, and they were all mixed up and so forth. But there's no excuse. There's no excuse. I would say if I had made a mistake in my business, and if I ever did, and I worked for forty-two years- if I'd ever made a mistake which was of any consequence at all, costing somebody money, I would have not lasted in that job, would I? I wouldn't be here to tell you, and I wouldn't be living in a house like this. So, I didn't make such mistakes, luckily. Doesn't mean to say I'm perfect in any way at all, but it's important to make this point. Now we were in all directions at the same time. We came back on the "Capetown Castle". How's that? I knew it was to do with South Africa. On the "Capetown Castle", which was for that purpose. And this was...

[Audio break]

[2:11:33]

*So, you came back to Britain.*

I came back on the "Capetown Castle".

*In 1942...*

In 1942, yes.

*Which month?*

...Having been interned for about two years. More- Just over two years. Two years and three months, when I think of it. It was in July. But I tell you something now. I came back and I did not tell my parents I was coming back. Just in case I had a problem on the ship, as I went out. So, I would rather be here and say "Hello", which I learnt by then, how to do. So, naturally English was one of the things. My parents by then had moved from the coast, because they were pushed off the coast, because they could have talked to the Germans when they come in, you know.

*Yes... Yes, it was a security procedure.*

One can talk about security but we also have to look at people. When they examine you, on the way out in an aeroplane, to an aeroplane on the airport, they examine you and look at all the things. They examine all sorts of people. Instead of looking at them, and saying, "Well he can't or she can't possibly be a..." whatever. And having talked to him, or her- I mean the Israelis do just that, as you know. English people, never- don't do that. They want to know, who do you visit in Israel. I mean, I don't have to tell you. By the way I've been twenty-three times to Israel. Which is more than I would imagine, most people. Israel is my insurance company. The first one. Cause when, when all- As you say in German, "*Wenn alles Stricke reißen*", in other words, "When all things break" - that could be a translation - then I go to Israel. But as my cousin, who is now dead, said to me when I said to him, "I want to go to Israel, to die in Israel." He said, "Why don't you come here to live?" Good point. It needs the family as well to understand you and to agree with you. And that was always difficult. My wife and I did want to go, but then by the time we had children, and the school and all the rest... it was difficult. There's no excuse for it. If I had been, I would not be in the same position as I'm here now. I'm doing quite well, and I have no complaints. And nobody did it for me; I did it myself. And so did my children, themselves. And... I would say that ...all the years that I have been in Canada, when I returned to the possibility of that part of my life, I learnt probably a good fifty percent of what I am now. Naturally I was under an influence. I was under the influence of, of, of very far left people. Communism. And I said, "I shall not in any way associate with that." In fact, I never joined any party, of any sort, ever. And I don't intend to now, either. In fact, I don't even vote because it's a complete waste of time. But that's beside the point. I have learned how to live. I have learned how to live by myself. My parents were here and I was there. And when they- my father died first and my mother afterwards, a year and a half later. And I'm one of maybe not that many people who can say that I have no compunction about what I did for them.

**[2:16:00]**

*When did they die?*

Well, my father was almost ninety, and my mother almost ninety-two. And I am now past the whole family. And I mean to go on, because there's so much more to do! ...I- I would say as far as my health is concerned, I feel OK. If it hadn't been for just one thing, about two years

ago, which I had a damaged nerve... syndrome. And that went right from my ear to my mouth and past it. And that gave me the first sign of not being 100% in charge of myself. I couldn't stop that. It's a nerve inside me, and they can't replace it or anything like that. But they did all sorts of things to me and I had an operation on my eye, and that helped a great deal, of course. But there are other things that one has as well. I have a balance problem because of the ears. And so, the day I had this, I gave up the car. My children wanted me to give up the car long before that. I waited until I did it myself. What I don't do myself isn't going to be done right. That's what I always say. So, I have no regrets on that one. And I have no regrets on giving up the car. Other people do. My father had to give up the car because my mother said to him, "Mind the bicycle in front!" "Where?" That was the end of his driving. Nobody had to do that to me. So, I decided myself on the day, why, because I found that my balance was wrong. And I expected no miracles from that. But I did say to myself, that was in July... last year, yes, that by the end of the year I'll be perfect. And I said, "I must get out of this", and I really did. It all went well. Even the balancing was less bothersome it is even now. It came back because I didn't try too hard. I also have problems with my arms, all due to the fact that skiing was my number one enjoyment. Every year I went for two weeks. Twice, originally, then one week, eventually, and so on. We skied in Austria naturally, Italy, Germany a bit, France and Spain. So, falling on the ski stick on one side, falling on the skis on the other side, successive years, didn't do me any good. So, I can't lift my arm very far. I've got two arms. One helps the other. And... not being able to get to the top shelf to get a plate out or a sugar bowl or something is something that nobody understands until it happens to them. And I know what it's like.

**[2:19:47]**

*For someone who's so active, and a doer, that must be extremely frustrating.*

Well, it is.

*As well as being [inaudible].*

Although I've got a help, and I don't mind her helping, after all I pay well. But at the same time, I like to do it myself! Like this morning she came and I told her that you'd be here early. I made my own breakfast. I didn't wait for her to make the breakfast because she had

to do a bit of clearing up. Yesterday – like I don't know how I did it – I dropped a boiled egg which I made for my breakfast. Of all things I dropped a boiled egg on the floor. And it wasn't a case of it falling on the right side. It just fell- booms. So, she had to clear it up a bit. No, I cleaned it up myself but of course I wanted her to make a good job of it. She helps me in every possible way, so I can't possibly say anything other than that. And If I wanted another one, I would ask in my request, "Romanians only need apply". They work, and they've got a brain. So- so much for that. Ja. I believe in doing everything myself - whatever happens - because it takes time to explain it to somebody else. Even though they speak the same language. My children are like myself; they know what it's about. But other people, not necessarily. So, there is a problem there explaining something. So, what happens? I got divorced after twenty-five years. It's all written up. Various things happened after all these years. I only read lately, it's surprising that a man and a woman should live so long together... without ever thinking about living apart. It- It's impossible, really. But my parents stayed sixty-six or –seven years they were together! That's something. But I didn't. So... I can't complain about my past after that, so I did quite well in every respect. I had no problems. And... I can look back on, on my past generally, whether it's work, whether it's private, whether it's with other people. On the whole, I would say I have nothing but positive... feelings about it. Whatever other people would think about me. As I said to you before - before we got interviewing - all my life was conditioned by the fact I had jobs which required me to find the mistakes that people make. Either in, in machines, or in, in writing. And I did and that was my job. And so... my offspring live by the fact that I did these jobs. And when you have to do something like that, look at what they call the negative side of things. It is negative if somebody puts down an 's' instead of a 't'. I know that... but it needs somebody else to find it. Like my granddaughter wrote - and I think I told you this before – and she put down the wrong word. And I said, "You've got to look, after you've written it on your computer, because when you do your first letter, looking for a job with a prospective company, you have to know how to write. And you can't make a mistake because then you're the first one who is not going to be considered."

*That's true...*

And all she wrote to me was, "I'm glad you read my letter, because I see that you're telling me that you read my letter." Well of course I do. And- And she's the one in Canada... In, in

San Francisco rather, in America. So where would you like me to talk about? Where have we got to?

**[2:24:11]**

*Come back to Britain, and how did you feel seeing your parents after this gap, having totally different experiences?*

I stopped there and I jumped into something else, didn't I? OK. So, I came back and I knew where they lived, in Berkhamsted. Berkhamsted is somewhere near Watford. If you have never been, don't bother. I'm- I'm transgressing now. I was in, in Vienna... last year with a friend and eating in a restaurant in a gardens. People there should- Germans... She said, "Oh, you speak German as well." She was Austrian. And... I say, "Yes." He said, "Where you from? Where you living now?" I said, "In London." He said, "Oh, we want to go to London and have a look!" I said, "Don't bother. Just get someone to send you a postcard."

*Is that how you feel?*

That's the way I see it, yes. What would they get? They've got to bring their own food with them to start with... So, anyway, so much for that. Where were we?

*About your parents...*

Yes, I came back- I came back to England and went all the way to where they were in Berkhamsted with a suitcase, which I had to deposit there of course, in Berkhamsted, on the station. That suitcase contained all the things I bought in Canada. Oh, by the way, in Canada while I was working as a tree chopper, I earned twenty-five cents a day. Which was the equivalent of, what, twenty-five pennies. So, fantastic money. ...Right. I earned some money then. And with that money I bought myself things I needed, such as a toothbrush. Anyway, so much for that. One learns how to live with- with little money. So, when I came back, and I walked without anything. I hadn't anything because the suitcase was in the, in the, in the station. Knocked on the door... My mother came to the door. Her head was white. She wasn't white when I left. And she screamed! It just was too much for me to say. She said, "*Der Bub ist da!*" - "The boy is here", but in a loud way, to my father. So, that was my homecoming.

And since then, we went off to, to, to Watford, where my father rented a house. And eventually he bought one. Oh, yes. Because he was given by a cousin, a second oh, that's birds. They think it's their house. Lovely. Anyway. There...

**[2:28:18]**

*Your father and the house...*

Pardon?

*Your father and the house...*

Yes, yes, yes. Well, I was working with my father, and we got a job together.

*Was he ever interned?*

He- He was interned, yes. Well, I should say that too, shouldn't I? He was interned. He went on to the Isle of Man – the Isle of Man - within a day, for all I know, of me leaving. I never saw him there. I'll speak about my father. So. He was there with my uncle, his brother. ...And my uncle was... in the kitchen, because he was a good cook. So, he did the kitchen work. My father wasn't in cooking but he was into playing chess. He played chess in Vienna, while he was looking after the radio and gramophone shop that he had in the second district, which- where I was born. He looked after that, but he locked the door and went across to the other side, in Vienna, into the restaurant, had a cup of coffee and, and played a game of chess, but all afternoon. And looked through the window to see if there's anybody trying to go into the shop. And sometimes he didn't sell a record, never mind a record. He once he sold only a box of needles. That's all he did. So, we did a bit better when we came to England. So, nobody got very far in, in, in Vienna in the recession. They had a recession in England at the same time, of course. Anyway. My father was also interned. Left my mother from Taunton. They lived in Taunton. And Taunton wasn't the right place to live when you're ...a foreigner. I would say even a 'bloody foreigner', if I may. So, he and my mother went- my father got interned from Taunton. My mother went to London. And my father wasn't there too long in internment camp. He went on- in the same area, but he went a different camp now. I forget the name of the camp. Doesn't matter. He went in a, in another camp. And he played chess.

And the captain of, of, of the place there, again the overseer, found out that he was playing chess all the time. He said, "Robert, how about playing chess with me? I would like you to play chess with me." And my father was delighted. So, he played chess, and my father let him win. Of course. And after that, anything could have happened. And he had to have a daily game with him. And my father, with playing chess, he managed to find a way out. He got released. I got released because I- I said I was an engineer, or a budding engineer and, 'we can use people like you'. So, I got released on that score. My father got released because he was playing chess. He was a, he was a... in, in, in French you would say a *Koryphäe* that, if you know what I mean. And he- he could play against ten different people... next to one another, put the boards. And he went from one board to the next and he made one move within seconds, and then he went to the next place- next board and made the next move. He beat... I don't know how many out of the ten. Anyway, he played against ten people; I know that much. And... it's all documented somewhere, and I've got that. Talk about documents. I've got one document here which you may want to read if I find it before you go, which was saying that I worked well in Canada, doing whatever... I haven't read that for a long, long time. Anyway, it showed that I was, I was a good boy. So...

[2:33:15]

*How did you then pick up the pieces so to speak, when you came back to England and...?*

Well, the first thing I did is to try and find out what I can do in order to get a qualification. Possibly unusual, possibly not. So, I did... a- a BSc by... by post. By post. With a, with a... school in London. That was more than a school. A university stage type of thing. It wasn't... I can't remember now. In... In- Off, off Oxford Street. And I did all that whilst at the time realizing it was quite useless, that I was gonna get. And so eventually I did evening classes, and I got a job. So, my first job was... making capstan lathes, but I'll write that- that's a separate thing. I will read that out to you. Or maybe not. Have a look. ...OK.

*And then you could bring in your contribution to Britain that you wanted to speak about.*

But this is- this is contributed with my work!

*Yes. Exactly.*

I didn't make any other contributions.

*No, that's what I'm referring to.*

Except that I come with a [inaudible] box, or something like that. No... OK. Coming back to Britain after my internment, and adjusting myself to the life in this country is not something that you do in five minutes. So, as I said before, that I was eager to get a qualification. Because although I got matriculation in - in Canada as I mentioned...

[Audio pause]

*Could you start again, about returning to England and adjusting and how it takes time and your work and your study?*

**[2:35:45]**

Well, it's not the sort of question I have answered before because I haven't been asked it, but it's interesting just the same. Well, as I say, after looking for a way of making sure that I get a qualification, which I did eventually, it took me ten years to do this in evening classes. Other people do it in three years in day classes. And I learnt possibly more. Not only did I do a qualification, I also went and did extras. I did computer studies, because I knew that was important at the time. And I did things to do with binary systems, on computers. I also did electricity with regard to general electricity, and specifically with computers. And besides that, entirely different, I did psychology for - for only about a year. And... and a number of interesting things to keep me informed about life. I read books on astrophysics. I read a lot to do with astronomy. Not... astro- anything else. Astronomy. Not astrology, I mean. And I interested myself in - in many different things which other people haven't even thought perhaps of doing. But there you are. It is part of my variety of knowledge that matters. The more little bits of knowledge you know, the better, in my opinion. It made me a person knowing a little bit about a lot of things, rather than a lot about one thing. Because that way, if you know a lot about one thing, you don't make any impression on anybody who knows nothing at all about that particular thing. And, not that I want to make an impression, but if you want to get another job, often you haven't got one in the thing that you know a lot about.



And it's very important to get a job; without that you don't make a living. So I had eleven different jobs in my life. And... I find it quite good to be able to recount who they were, the people that I worked for... What the name of the company was. And I found the letters of introduction and application, which is just as well I haven't thrown them away. Like I said before, I even have my wages slips of the first day I worked... to show how much I got now as against then. Except that we're now in a decimal world. Well, I've written down about my working life. It's a little bit mixed up, like I've mixed up my previous... talk to you. So, I had to put it down as it came into my head. But even my computer had done what I wanted it to do, it would have put it into the right order. But I would still have to tell it where to put it, after I'd written in down in a jumbled way. And the computer isn't able to do this. It isn't knowledgeable. It isn't one of the ones that will come out in the next ten years. But after that, I don't care anymore. So, can I now give you, with a few words with it, for people who don't know what I'm talking about? So, the first thing I've written down is "capstan lathe manufacturer". Manufacture, rather. A capstan is a lathe, if you know what a lathe is, it turns things which are round [inaudible eventually. All right? And what it did, it is made, the machine made in fact, bullets. To bring down aeroplanes. So that was the first pro... how would I say war information I've got here for you...among other things.

**[2:40:41]**

*So, was this part of your- Was this part of your war effort service?*

I did a lot of things here, and I'll come to them. So, the capstan lathe is a machine which made bullets which brought down aeroplanes on ships in what they call, 'batteries'. So, I did everything on these capstan lathes possible. And in other words, making them with all the machines that were available in those days. Whether they were lathe, or milling machines or drilling machines, whatever it was. I learnt all about these. And that stands me in good stead. So, if - assuming I had to - I would have to do something like that again, I could. Except my eyes won't let me do that now. OK. The next one was transformers and welders, for power stations. Now a transformer for a power station you can possibly imagine. Because you put in so and so many volts and out come so many more volts. And the power station needs that because it transmits 10,000 volts over power lines. And I made transformers that actually do this. A transformer is a machine that has an inner coil of thick wire, and an outer coil of thinner wire. And if you put in electricity in the inner coil, of a particular value, it will

transfer that to the outer coil which will then be transmitting via lines above your head to all over the country. So, I did that. Not necessarily to do with the war, but as it happens, I did one which was specifically for Birmingham power station, and it lit up Birmingham.

[2:42:33]

So, in the war, that is. OK? Now one of my first jobs in Cardiff, where I went to live. The reason was, because my father - I'm digressing - my father was offered a job in Cardiff from a distant cousin of mine, or his, rather. And he took it, and so the family eventually emigrated to Wales. And that's why I was in Cardiff for a long time. And incidentally, I met my wife there as well. So. There, one of my jobs was, the main job was to work on potato peelers, please note. I found this job- I had to work. I found this job to work on potato peelers. They made potato peelers... fish and chip ranges, which I had nothing to do with, and that type of thing. So, potato peelers are quite interesting. They go round and round and round very fast. And have a carborundum - very rough carborundum - inside. And so, the potatoes were peeling themselves as the machine went round and round. And my job was to repair them if there was anything wrong. That's the way I learnt about it. And the one- I opened the thing up, and there was in there not just potato peels which they'd forgot to empty, but a big slug. Something like as big as your hand.

*Ah...*

Absolutely unbelievable. And that's why the thing didn't work. And I had to get it out, and clean it and make it work. So, life wasn't always as simple as A, B, C. OK. Then I worked on big things. Cranes. Making a crane wasn't my job, but designing, by then - I'm jumping a bit - designing parts for the cranes. I won't go into the details, because it could be a bit boring. The next thing which is not as boring and definitely war work of the first order. I designed parts of a radar station. And it was a - a radar... station which had a... a dish on top, which turned around 360 degrees - so I did that - 360 degrees, and looked for German war planes. And that was in Scotland. And it was meant to be stationary without falling down. It was a very tall machine. I can't remember how tall. But I do remember it was designed to withstand wind speed of sixty miles per hour. Well need I say to anyone here, now, that sixty miles per hour is nothing in comparison with what we now hear about. And so, that tells me that winds

have increased in speed since then. If that was designed never to reach even sixty miles per hour, otherwise it would have fallen down the first time, it was designed to do that. And in those days, by the way, it may not be quite obvious to anyone, everything was made and designed in such a way that it was five times as strong as it need be, which was then the factor of safety. Five times as strong as it need be. So, if it was half as much, you still had two –and-a-half. And today, this doesn't exist anymore. At best, it's twice as strong. So, things have changed a lot since my days of design.

**[2:46:44]**

Now in – I'm only going on this particular one because it was to do with the war - I designed the actual... bearings, which made this tower- this whole thing, turn around. And the bearings were made of beryllium copper, if I remember rightly. And... they were designed with little black carbon buttons in it which helped in the way of keeping it lubricated. Now, the next one I did was... Oh yes, you would understand that. Experiments with freezer foods. In those days, freezers were, were- was a new thing. So, we experimented in this particular place. I was working for Metalbox by the way, at that time. Doesn't exist anymore. Bought out by somebody else. ...With packets of bacon. Packets of anything you can think of. And that was lying in the freezer. And they wanted to find out after say one month, two months, three months, et cetera, what it would taste like. So, people would have to cook it or to eat it or whatever they [inaudible]. So, what today's freezers do, were then, a beginning of the whole process of freezing anything. And I was in on it. ...Now another one, you may or may not know. A company called Cope, a Jewish company like Littlewoods, dealing with football pool coupons. And my job was to design a machine, or machines, which could read football coupons when they'd been filled in by the punter. So, a punter would put a cross, or a tick- In those days it had to be the cross, otherwise they can't read it. So, it was to be read by electrical means, of course- electronic means today. And I designed the mechanical side of it. And these machines could read 400 pool sheets per minute. So, they go very fast past the reading station, and they drop down into a number of different slots, depending on how you filled in your football pool coupon. So, if you were the first, then go there, if you were the second you go there. If you do nothing of any consequence, it goes in the last bit which was the very full one, of course. So, you got a rough idea of what I did. And it was a very big machine, as wide as this room is here. And the, the, the pool, pool- pool coupons had a triangular hole which I designed in a particular way to- so that the triangular- triangular holes

could be picked up by two piece, pins and shoved along at a terrific rate, and around, and back again. And then they had to be taken off in different slots to be able to work out. Right. After that- I was going to do this last, but it's here, now. I might forget. Have you got a fifty-p coin in your pocket, or in your handbag? Well, you might have.

**[2:50:28]**

*I might have...*

The fifty-p coin- I designed the shape of the English fifty p coin. Because I worked for the only company in England... that dealt with coins. Sorting them. I designed the machine for sorting them. Counting them - I designed that. Bagging them – I designed that. And the various other stages in coin operations. I designed finally, a machine that does it all in one go. And after that, I left. How did I leave? Interestingly. I worked four- four years for that company. I did anything that was of any consequence. I guessed how to do this particular machine to do everything. I went to Sweden to find out how they do certain things. To Germany – how they do certain things. It's all done with paper, stacking a number of coins and wrapping them up in paper. But you've got to get there in the first place. Well, I did this not with paper but with polythene. In those days, polythene was always there. And I used what was then known as 'shrink polythene'. So, you heated it up, you blew at it, and it heated up and it shrank across the whole stack. And therefore, you had a stack with two holes of no polythene on top and bottom, where you could actually put two pins and... put them into a particular box, if you like. And that's what I did. I designed that machine. So that was a big thing for me. To have actually designed a coin which is now not only used in England – from the 50p the 20p came, of course - but it was designed- it was used in fact now even in Austria I found it, and in other countries as well. And unfortunately, I thought it was a joke. Because it was given to us as a square pin- as a square coin, with the four corners rounded off. And the first thing I said – that was from Rolls Royce, please note, the biggest company of any consequence in England then- And I said to them, "How can you do that? It doesn't roll at all does it?" You can't have counting if it doesn't roll. Obviously, it would either slide or get stuck. So, he ignored that one. And I did something which is the final shake of this. Which is known as 'the constant height cam'. Doesn't mean anything to you. But it means that it doesn't matter where you have it, it's got the same diameter. Therefore, it doesn't jump, it rolls down. Because it's got a corner, a small corner, with a larger radii, and the radii of the

small and the large one, is struck from the same point. And therefore, as you roll it down, it never jumps up, it rolls. And it's a different shape so you immediately feel it in your pocket or your handbag that it is not this that and the other. So, I did this, and there's no patent. I never patented it. And- It- It was more of a joke than anything else, to me. [How can you] give me a coin to do- to make, to change from a ten-shilling brown note, if you remember that one, into a coin – without even rolling down an incline and being sorted out by its size, which I won't go into. But I designed all these machines to do with coins. And so, when I went to, and I'll come up with it later- When I went to meet Prince Charles on two occasions, for the seventieth and seventy-fifth anniversary of our- of our coming to England. I've got it right in front in case you- May I read it out?

[2:54:53]

It was an article, or rather a letter I sent to the AJR and they printed it. Nice of them. And I did this on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 2013. And I called it, "*Alten Mann*". And it says here, "When Prince Charles honoured us, at our seventieth anniversary, I said that I came from Vienna, and worked in industry for forty-two years as chartered engineer, contributing to Britain by war work, on [inaudible] producing lathes," - I mentioned that – "designing an instrument tracking the first British satellite..." Oh ja, I didn't even mention that. You know the Telstar? Have you heard of this? Well, I designed the machine that actually tracked it. Ah ja – the Telstar. "Creating a multi-processing machine to operate on a Rolls Royce cylinder block." They gave me that job, that I should give them- You've got a cylinder block, you've got dozens of different holes in it. From the top that that holds it together with the top plate to the piston hole. Right? If I can put it mildly like that. So, I designed a machine that does it automatically. The right drill, the right tool, the right grinder, the right holder, et cetera, etcetera, and polisher, and that did a Rolls Royce engine block. The cylinder block. Now, not many people do that. Because they liked what we did for them. Anyway. Here you are.

*Where did you meet Prince Charles? Where?*

This was in in in Enfield, I worked.

*Is that where he came?*

Worked in Enfield- not that job, that was another one.

*No. Where did you- where did you meet Prince Charles?*

Oh, I see. In... Clarence House. Now here we are. Ja, and I said the Rolls Royce cylinder blocks. OK? Both were fore- forerunners of the computer. So, I'm- I'm happy enough to be able to say that. That I worked on machines that were the forerunners of computers today. "Reading and sorting marked football pool coupons." I did say that. "Supervising design of the first automatic clutch for the Singer car and more." I designed, I was in charge of a team designing the first automatic clutch and gearbox for the Singer car, which doesn't exist anymore. So, you can see, I was in on many first jobs. And I was being awarded several patents. But one patent I missed out on was the best one - on my coin. And when I saw that coin the first time, I was astonished. I hadn't had a clue that this was actually ever going to be produced! And there it was! And I've been on to- on to- well I'll tell you in a minute. On to the people who make these things, as you know. I was helping exporters at BSI. Now, I worked for BSI. You know that BSI is the British Standards Institution. It wasn't standards that I was working on but technical help to exporters. That was the job I was doing. And I stayed with them for sixteen years- my longest ever. The last job I had was with BSI and there I was helping exporters at BSI impacting positively on the British economy. And I was very proud of that. I went to all the countries in western Europe, America, and believe it or not, Israel. When my boss had me and my- my colleague in his office and he said, "We haven't been to Romania, to Bulgaria, Israel..." Just like that. He said, "Would you like to go to Israel?" - he said to me. I said, "Yes, it's all right. Doesn't matter where." Just like that. And my wife was in Israel at the time, and my daughters came to Israel, all for a wedding. They were the bridesmaids and that sort of thing. And I said, "Yes. OK." And I stayed there a long time, at home, rather, in England. Because I wanted to speak to all the organisations in England that had to do with Israel, because I had no idea where to go. And that was a major thing for me. And when I was in Israel, I actually spoke to the top echelons in the university as well as in the standards organisation of Israel, on what I do, and what our jobs were. And that was good. I did that in English. Right. One more paragraph. A little less. "Only five years later I conversed with His Royal Highness again, at our 75<sup>th</sup>, reminding him of the previous occasion. I showed him some 20p coins, and saying that they, as well as 50p coins, all bearing a picture of his mother, are carried in the pockets and handbags of all the people of the land. Both coins have a similar distinct shape, enabling them to be sorted and counted.

I designed it, that shape.” Prince Charles was visibly astonished, and exclaimed, “I’ll tell Mum!” And he said, “Were you working in the Royal Mint?” And I said, “No, but for it.” – I replied. And that was my discussion with him. But he asked me before if I was happy here and all sorts of things. I made sure I could talk to him on both occasions and I did. I went to the end of the long table, and I stayed there. I was there with my friends, and we all shook hands with him and he asked me the questions. So that was it. OK. That was- That was my encounter with the Prince.

**[3:02:15]**

*Did you feel very proud of yourself, and were your parents proud of your various achievements?*

Well, when you ask me... if I’m proud of this... I’ll tell you something. I always felt that being proud of myself is not what I want to do. I don’t want to be proud of myself, and I don’t say I’m proud of my daughters, I’m don’t say I’m proud of this, that and the other. Because that is an expression I’d rather not use, if I can help it. It’s- It’s, there’s a word for it I can’t think of. But you shouldn’t be proud of yourself and what you’ve done. You can’t be proud of being a tall man. You can’t be proud of being... ambidextrous or whatever it is. It’s something that was given to you, and you’re lucky that you’ve got it. Other people haven’t got it. So, one shouldn’t be proud of being something that one couldn’t help being. And I can say of myself only, maybe I’m overdoing it, but, nevertheless, I’m able to think... about new things. And am able to think in a different way to what most people do. When I see something, when I see this cup, other people say, “Oh, that’s a lovely cup for coffee.” I say to myself, “What’s this cup made of?” Different. One thing my daughters didn’t realise, that when I was a younger boy, you couldn’t put boiling water into a cup... because it would break. Nowadays they found a way of not worrying about that. They put something in. So, to me, this is something that is in my blood. So, I don’t say I’m proud of these things. I say that I’m glad to have been given the opportunity by whoever. Some people would say it’s God. But I think I did it myself. I learned something that I wouldn’t have done if I hadn’t interested myself in it. And I try to be... doing things in directions which are normally... everyday work for people. Interests. For instance, my wife was a chemist, bio-chemist, as I said. And I even- I had no idea about chemistry at all. But I interested myself in the subject. So, I looked at Mendeleev’s table, which is quite fantastic! He’s a Jewish fellow, a Czech, who designed

that. It starts with hydrogen and ends up with uranium. Sort of things that interested me. And ...it stands me in good stead, because I'm able to understand a number of things which I would have not, otherwise. If somebody talks to me about- I have a- I have a Romanian pill that has magnesium in it, that does my- my memory a lot of good. And if it hadn't been for that Romanian pill, that she brings me every so often when she goes, I don't think I would be able to do this. That's my guess. Because I'm astonished that I'm able, now, to think of all these jobs I did. I got about forty odd jobs, and I'm going to read you out a bit quicker now.

**[3:06:09]**

*What about your parents? Were they proud of your achievements coming to Britain as a refugee? And your contribution to the country?*

Well, their contributions; my father worked with me on the same bench, at one time when we both did, in Watford. But then, as I say, he went off to Cardiff. And he went- And he went into - eventually - into the jewellery business. So, my father ended up as a good Jewish jewellery businessman. And my mother helped him, and she was in the same business. But even so, my... family on my mother's side were... working on markets. Were marketers. And I can tell you something very quickly. My uncle... was the 'banana king' of Vienna. He imported bananas. He was the first and only one to do so. And he was the 'banana king' of Vienna. His father, in turn - my grandfather, whom I never knew - imported melons, watermelons, the green watermelons from Hungary, where he went with his horse and cart, I'm told, and where they loaded it up. And he fell asleep on the way back. The horse knew exactly where to go. And also, when the Hungarians who loaded up wanted to keep one for themselves, they dropped one. That's what I know about that. Anyway. That's my mother's side. So, they were marketing people. And my mother sometimes helped on the market. She had a stand as well. So, my family was never sitting at home, twiddling her thumb. In those days it wasn't a case of twiddling a knob for the television, 'cause we didn't have one in those days. In fact, I did without a television set for many, many years so as to make sure that the children don't get diverted. So, they got a black and white one eventually. And when we- When my wife and I didn't see eye to eye with one another, I tried in various ways, by taking her to Yugoslavia on holiday for instance. And I then went- I thought, "I know, I'm going to buy her a colour television set." Which I did. She didn't even notice it was a colour television set at first. But it was fun, just the same. I did my bit. Maybe not enough. But anyhow. That's



another story. I know you're asking me a lot of questions about my parents. Well, I do get them in occasionally, don't I? OK.

**[3:09:10]**

So. After this, ah yes. Now something that nobody would even think of, but Harrods, in Kensington, asked us to do something for a company I worked for - I don't even know which one at the moment - they wanted a records dispenser. So, you put in a five-shilling piece, a half crown or whatever it was in those days, two half crowns, and a record which you selected by a number, came out, and you went away with it. And I designed parts of that machine. And I- I was in charge of having it installed. So, we went to the top of the Harrods roof, and went down from there to the very top area where these records were sold. So, I had a good idea of what goes on in Harrods. [Jana laughs] You can see part of England from there. So anyway... Yes, I already talked about the Rolls Royce cylinder. Coin counting machines I talked about. Coin- coin sorting, coin counting, coin stacking and coin vending machines. That's what I was doing. I mentioned that. I worked in a place where they- Metalbox if you have heard of it before, but it doesn't exist anymore. I was given a job to design a machine, which will detect a hole in a metal can, like you do where you keep coffee it or whatever. And because they had a problem in places, painting. Paint in cans were leaking out... in some cases. And when they were leaking out, they ruined quite a bit of the business. And so, I had the job of- of looking how to get rid of paint cans with a- that had a hole in them. And I designed a machine that- a huge diameter. And it loaded up the cans, sucked out the air, vacuum in other words, as much as you can. And found out by that means whether there was a hole in the- in the thing. So, I won't go into many more details. But that was my job.

[Audio break]

**[3:11:53]**

Yes. When you have an ordinary bottle, you have a plastic stop on it. The plastic stop is made of- The plastic stop is made of two parts. The stop which goes into the bottle, and the lid which stops it from being- to fresh air. See? And those two have to be put together when it is that type- in those days. It wasn't a single thing... And I made a machine, I designed a

machine to put these two together. So much for that. ...Then I worked for the Forestry Commission, a job I did. And they were interested in measuring the diameter of trees in the Forestry Commission, that they fed with different substances in the roots, et cetera. And so which ones give the quickest diameter, et cetera, et cetera - and so on. And I designed a machine which measured the actual diameter by a non-electronic system. A mechanical system, which gave them the answer to that. And that could be put into- into a computer and - and the number of the tree, the position of the tree was all known through the tape which was going around the tree to measure it, which I designed, as I said. Now, today... information technology, or 'IT' as it's known, is something which people know somebody does, or is already there. When I worked for BSI – British Standards Institution – and we made standards, we also had to explain certain things about each word which was not necessarily in common language. And so, information technology would help. And I was on the team there, which started information technology in this country. And my job was also to explain, in words, what a particular term meant. So, information technology was... in the beginnings.

**[3:14:44]**

*It's an amazing list.*

Well, I haven't finished. I'll try and go a bit quicker. Ja. My job was also another place for checking- it was Associated Automation in...in Kilburn area. Edgware Road, something like that. Anyway. Was checking, and this is a very important point, made in private to you. Checking, testing and approval of production machines. So, they sent me all around western Europe and America and Israel et cetera...other places as well. To check a machine which a British company was to send to them. Now, they wouldn't accept a machine just like that. They would have to have an approval done. And I was the approver. So, they gave me this accolade to do the approving of machines which were to be sent abroad. So, I did a lot in all directions on this subject. And checking, means finding faults. And anybody can say, "Oh that's- That looks good." But to find a fault, you have to know a bit more than that. You have to read their drawings, you have to operate it, you have to see, listen, look, et cetera. And that's what I did. And one of the things of course which is understandable, if you check a machine which is – I'm making it bad for you – checking a machine and the approval machine which could harm the person who operates it. Say somebody who makes anything on a machine and puts their fingers in and something comes – a rotor – and after a time they

have shorter fingers. And that's something you have to check. So, to approve that, you have to go through a number of stages to ensure that time, and what-have-you, distance, et cetera is all taken care of in that, and stopping anything happening which could give you trouble. So, if somebody wants to take off— off a machine, something which stops it from happening then the machine wouldn't work. And I had to find out if anybody can do this, then that machine wouldn't be saleable in, in, in say Germany, for argument's sake. Germany, by the way, was the biggest importer of British machinery at the time. And so, my German, in fact, and this is a point here, was instrumental in getting a job in British centres and in previous jobs as well, because I spoke German and a man who was applying at the same time as me, didn't. So, I got the job, he didn't. And it started off with 300 people writing in for the job. Down to eighteen, down to two, and I got the job. Sometimes I can be lucky.

[Audio break]

Have you ever heard of the Brabazon aeroplane?

**[3:18:22]**

*Yes.*

Good. Now then. We had those- We had an instruction to design and make a – and this was in Cardiff – design and make a... crane, which would be one of three... that would pick up the Brabazon if it crashes anywhere. And it must go to those places under bridges, among other things. And not that we would think of that, but that's what we're here for. We think of things that other people don't think of – they don't have to. They sleep without it. Now, so I designed a good part of the crane that was to pick up a Brabazon in case it crashes. Now, I'll be very short on that one. The Brabazon never flew at all. And the- And the only thing that is known about the crane is my picture of all the people who were in on the act. About twenty of them, and I took the picture. I was in charge of- of the design bit... standing on top of the crane when it was lifted up with those people on it. That's all it ever did. And that crane had to be going underneath bridges. So, it had to be folded down, to go underneath a bridge. And so, it was different to any other crane, at the time. Today, all sorts of things happen. By the way I also went to Germany on tower cranes. Tower cranes are those things that you see everywhere now. In those days, there were no tower cranes. Only some people made them.

They did make them in Germany. And my first job at BSI was to go to Germany to find out about tower cranes and can we sell them over there. And when I went to, to, to speak to the right organisations, he said, "Tower cranes? You want to sell us tower cranes? We make them ourselves! We don't need yours." And that goes for everything. But you can say that when you buy yourself a pound of apples; next door they're doing the same thing. But that is business, isn't it? So, I said, "Well, if we can make a tower crane like you do, and I approve it, would you be interested?" "Well, see what you can do." OK. That was my job. And I came back telling him all about the tower crane.

*Did you have any misgivings about going to Germany? Did you hate going there, or did you take it in your stride as a job?*

**[3:21:13]**

That's a good question- a good question. I will talk about it. Going to Germany or for that matter Austria... is a... is a way of saying to yourself, "This is a job I get paid for. I don't like the German accent." When you're an Austrian you don't like the German accent. When you're a German you don't like the Austrian accent. Then you think they think that we're funny. But I don't mind that they think we're funny. We are soft spoken as Austrians. The Germans, you think that at any moment he's going to bash him one, as he talks. [makes harsh, growling sound] It's like this. You don't get anything like that in - in Austria. It's 'gemütlich' as they say, if you know the term... *legér*... OK. So, when you go to Germany and you sell them something – I didn't sell them anything. All I did was - well, when I say 'all' it's a bit understatement - is to ensure that the British company can sell their product to Germany, Italy, France or wherever. And I did all of western Europe. Didn't go into Bulgaria, or Romania. The other fellow did that. I went to Israel. [both laugh] That was the advantage. But in Israel, I, I think I told you, I talked to the top boys there, to tell him what we're doing. And I had a good reception on this. And I only did it the day- the night before, I put down a dozen different cards and I shuffled them around and I put them one after the other like I'm trying to do now, but not as good as then, what I'm going to say. And I- I think they knew what they were doing. They wanted to do the same thing... and I helped them in doing just that. And they did. So, they got a little bit from what I did. I was offered a job once in Israel, believe it or not. After all, I went there twenty-three times - not for the job. And... I turned that down because I got more in England than I get there. I said, "Unless you actually

give me a car, and a good house and a car, and..." - then something else I forget - "good money, there's no reason for me to go." I wanted to work also with... with El Al. But they didn't offer me a job. So, it's good and bad. Right. Then I did a coal crushing machine for a power station. When you- When you need to, when you are in a power station you need the coal crushing... dust. You can't put a piece of coal in like you do in your home. But you have the dust. And I made a machine- I designed a machine rather than has what they call manganese steel balls about ten-inch diameter they were, I think. They go round and round and round and the coal was thrown in between them from above. And the coal was just crushed by these hard steel balls. And there was a suction going on all the time. And as, as the dust was there it got sucked up to the top and then used in the power station as coal dust. So that was my job. That was for the Battersea Power Station. Sometimes I'm wondering how I can still remember these things. But I think it must be all to do with the pill I get from Romania. I give them that. Oh yes. As I said before, I did a tape reader. A tape reader is- You may never have seen one. Today you've got computers. But there was a tape about that wide. It had holes in it. And the number of holes, and the position of holes told you a number. And if you wanted to know what's number 48 so many holes in certain positions said "48". You shove this through a machine that reads it, says, "Ah, right. OK." And this machine I designed for checking and testing and - not testing - tracking I mean, the Telstar, which I mentioned before. So, I had the honour, that is an honour, of, of designing a machine that actually tracked the very first [inaudible] satellite that England produced. ...We all know about shredders. Paper shredders. But I wasn't only in shredders... We made a particular formula out of that which was a funny one, which I can't remember quite, like the width of the shred is inverse in proportion to the square root of the- of the rubbish you put in in the first place, or something like that. And there was also an envelope opener design. You would never think that anybody wants to do an envelope opening machine, but I did. And I was quite pleased with that one. And the boss came and said, "Can you make a machine that will open an envelope?" I said, "Well, that will shred whatever is inside." "Oh, no. You make a machine that will open it without shredding anything inside." So, I made a design and pushed the paper right down into it. And it was alright. It opened it- just sliced the edge of an envelope and out came the... letter. OK. Demonstrated to this company that would buy our design... I did. I went along. I had a dozen of people watching it. And there I came with my envelope with, with, with a paper in it. And I locked it all down and I said, "Look, it's right down there." And I put it through the machine... It sliced the paper as well. It was going in and sliced the paper; so, I'd failed. And of course, they appreciated the fact that I was very

embarrassed by this. I, I thought that I would show them something that they want to buy. Well, they didn't buy. So, that was one of my negative ones.

**[3:28:15]**

*You should have had a medal for all these things that you've designed and created...*

I didn't- who gets medals for anything? Only the people who make money out of it. I made a- Ah!- When you work for a company, they own the patent. You're mentioned - oh, yes - you're mentioned. I designed the patent myself in, in three or four of them. When I say designed, I did- I wrote the whole thing. So, if you say, "I'm making this thing out of steel..." - you have to say what type of steel. And if you say in it that it can't be made of anything else, because, et cetera, et cetera, nobody can make it out of aluminium, 'cause it wouldn't last or something like that, or break or bend - whatever. So, you've got to be very careful what you do. If you say you make it out of wood, you've got to state which type of wood. Oak and only oak? Well, wouldn't one you made out of birch be just the same thing? So, you've got to be very careful what you say in your patent. And I learnt all that, but that didn't get you very far because that's another stage of life. There's a patent office in, in Holborn which does this. And I had enough to do with them; very difficult to get by. Very difficult. Because if you write the patent for yourself, because you know what you're doing, they will add or change it or alter it or whatever. Anyway, so much for patents. But the company owns the patent. The worker who gets paid, like me, is only mentioned.

*That seems so wrong.*

Maybe things have changed since then, I don't know. I doubt it. Nothing changes in England. Ah yes. Now the first job I did for, for BSI was to be sent to - no, I didn't go to America. I did it all without. America then had forty-eight states. Now it's got fifty. England will be next probably. But whatever. Had forty-eight states. And I had to find out all the laws and regulations dealing- and they were all different. Well not all, but most of them were different- for seatbelts, in cars. Very important. So, the seatbelts had to be tested, and had to withstand a certain amount of pull, as you can well imagine. And it mustn't cut you up. So, it mustn't be that wide; it's got to be a minimum of so-and-so wide, et cetera, et cetera. In a certain colour, certain material. And I found out that in... in... in California... things I remember now. In

California, it was vastly different from any other, because they have a problem with the ultraviolet. So, the UV there, did things to the seatbelt after a time, if it's not even used. It's just in the car, and you happen to leave it outside the house. So, it disintegrates it, or it reduces its value or its strength or whatever. And I had to find out about all these things, about each state in turn and write about it. So that was my job, to be able to tell British manufacturers of seatbelts trying to sell them in America, what they have to do to sell them to, to New York or Washington or, or Los Angeles or whatever. So, if it's in California or in Miami or wherever, you've got to know what you're doing. So that was my first job.

**[3:32:07]**

And I tried to get around a number of things. And he said, my boss said, "I'm going to watch you Fred, because you try to cut corners here, there and elsewhere." I said, "If I didn't, it would last me ten times as long as if I did." Right... Fire prevention regulations in buildings in Europe. Now you think, that's a big job. Yes, it was. Fire regulations in say, not this building but say a bank, for instance. You have to... state where the various items are. In particular I was concerned with... escape, in case of a fire. First, prevention of a fire, secondly, escape. And escape is a separate entity. And I – I was talking to all the manufacturers of, of fire prevention and also on, on, you know the lights they put on top, exit. Right? Et cetera, etcetera. So, I had to find out all about this in various countries in, in Europe. I think it was half a dozen countries in Europe. And tell them that when I had them all assembled near where I worked, in, in Hemel Hempstead at the time. And... that was a big job. And well, the company did something with that, got paid for it. And it was an organisation that I... led. And afterwards, I asked them to come back with me, we have a drink or whatever it is. And I had four of them in my car, and the car broke down. I remember that much. I won't go into- any further. So. Emergency lighting regulations, very similar also telling a number of people what to do with emergency lighting in, in houses- in, in buildings rather than houses. I did say I think, that I had to do with leading a team that dealt with the first hybrid automatic gearbox for the Singer car design. I think I mentioned that. A card-wheel for manufacturing operations design. Well, I won't go into that. That's too much. All this was pre- forerunners of the present computer.

**[3:34:54]**

*They're remarkable achievements, there's no doubt about it.*

I didn't invent all these things. I invented the actual things themselves. I did invent what I wrote.

*You've invented a whole new perspective.*

Now we get to the internment camp. This was all I did in work. Now the internment camp, what did I do there? I think I mentioned it already. I mentioned trestle tables-making. I put down this as separate thing. Camouflage nets, I said. Building our houses, I've said. Felling trees... That was my best job. In, in minus twenty, with rubber boots, which gave me chilblains. Carrying the trees down to the river. I didn't mention that maybe.

*No...*

Two of us had to carry – unless it was a small tree - carry the tree down to the river and throwing it into the river. And that went down, and got wet right to where they picked it up- God knows how many miles down, we don't know – we didn't know, when it was used. And those trees were a certain diameter that I remember chopping down in particular, for holding up... Holding up... ja. Coal mines, in coal mines. For holding up the coal mines from falling down. So, the trees were... useful there. Well, this is something which you think, well, that's a bit beyond. It is. In the camp itself again, I was- I was always volunteering for everything. Digging trenches for latrines. If you know what a latrine is, I'm sure you do. Nobody uses them, but we did. When we came in, we had no toilets. There were no toilets in the houses at all. You can imagine, that's one of the last things they put in! So, we all need latrines. And... I dug the trench – with other people. Of course, I didn't do it myself. I dug the trench that actually took down whatever was in the latrine. And that was something. Sitting on a bar... and doing what you do on a normal toilet seat, is a difference. So, when you ask me, what did I go through, this is just one of them. I could give you more than that, but it would be too long. You'd have to come again. As I said also before, I made sure that I was always somewhere near the food. To make sure. You would have thought that everybody would be. But I don't know who else did, but I did. So, I offered to become and was, for all my years in internment, a waiter. So, I brought the things from the, the, the trays with food, or the trolleys whatever we had - I can't remember exactly – from the kitchen, to the table. And so, I was



needed by everybody on the table. I learnt that. They couldn't do without me, because they thought almost that I'd made it. But I brought it to them. So, "Can I have some more potatoes?" - or whatever. So, that was one of the things. I got down here, repairing electrical household equipment. I think I mentioned that.

*You mentioned, yes. Yes...*

**[3:38:51]**

I didn't mention something that you understand only too well. You know the treadle sewing machines that used to exist? Well, I- my first job in Vienna! Not coming to England yet. So, I put it in here – God knows why. I had a job there, after I was thrown out of school. By the way, the day Hitler came, we were all thrown out of school. I didn't say that but you can put it in anywhere you like. So, I converted a treadle machine... a treadle sewing machine - to an automatic one. So, I put in a, a, a motor. And my boss, on the *Gürtel* – the *Gürtel* in, in Vienna is, the word means 'belt'. So, you've got the ring on the inside, and belt on the outside. Just like, say, the North Circular and the inside goes around London. And I went out there with my bicycle every day, and again, this was a job that- who paid me for it? My father – My aunt paid him to pay me. I didn't know that. I heard this years later. And so, "What do I do? How do I do this?" He says, "Here's a motor", he said. "I want you to put a belt around it." "Well," I said, "what's a belt?" "Well, I'll find you one." So, he found me a belt and I don't know how I did it, but I managed to convert a treadle machine with a motor to an automatic one. Instead of this, you switch it on it goes boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. That was my one job in, in, in Vienna after being thrown out. And being an engineer, they said, I will be an engineer. I was nothing. And I wrote down, as my last item here, you'll be glad to hear. I made a hammer. Having been given a piece of steel, and, "there are the machines, you make a hammer. And here's a- here's a handle." And I had to do that. Make the hole, file it out. Put that thing in. Put a piece of metal in at the top, so it doesn't fall off. I made a hammer. I never got that hammer with me; it went. My first one. But I made a number of things all by myself, actually. I made a, a, a little... replica of the ...sometimes simple words fail me. What was the aeroplane that flew in England?

*The Vulcan? ...Military or non-military?*

Military!

*Military... World War II?*

**[3:42:00]**

Yes! What was it? It's ridiculous! I've got it here. I'll show it to you when I find it. No, I can't find this in a hurry...

*Cameraman: Spitfire.*

A what?

*Cameraman: In World War II.*

*Spitfire? Hurricane?*

That was the other one, not the Hurricane, the other one.

*Spitfire?*

Spitfire! I didn't hear you properly. I made a little Spitfire. Just a tiny- it's here somewhere - out of aluminium. Instead of working hard for the company, I found a piece of aluminium so I could make a Spitfire. So, that's it. That's as far as it goes, my working life.

*Well, you've done a tremendous amount. But... With all that work that you did for Britain, at what stage did you decide to remain in Britain? And did- Was it a difficult decision to make for example, if you wanted to become a British citizen?*

To become a British citizen?

*Mnn. When did you decide to... Yes.*

Oh, I see. You're going right back. We're going right back. OK. So, to become a British citizen, I had to go to the police station in Cardiff. And I was interviewed by two policemen.

*When was this, which year?*

I'll tell you exactly... 1949. To become a British citizen... I'll tell you why I went. I didn't want to go. My father said, "You say you want to go to Paris?" "Yes." Well, naturally. Why not? A young boy, I want to go to Paris. I was not twenty, or something. "Well, you can't go without passport." Your Austrian passport – oh, I could show you that one. It, it had a big 'J' in it, for Jew, and my name was ...anyway. Jewish name. Everybody had that. I should say, I try to forget it. "So, you don't have a British passport. How you going to do that without being a British citizen?" OK. "I can't ever go abroad without it?" "No, you can't." So, my father had to fork out twenty pounds for this... passport. And I went to go to- I went to the police station. And two policemen interviewed me and asked me various questions. And again: "Were you ever a member of the, of the, the... German Nazi Party?" I said, "No." "Were you ever a member of the Communist Party?" "No." Standard questions, and I managed to answer these questions. And well never mind all the details. But one thing I do remember which he said; I won't forget that. He said... "You'll now become a British citizen, but... But," – you can write that down – "but you'll never be an Englishman." I said, "Is that a punishment?" ...was my answer by then, already. He said, "No, it's a fact. Only if you're born here are you an Englishman." I said, "Oh, OK." But he said that in such a way as if it was a punishment, or if it was [inaudible] – "They are that, but you are only that."

*And this is what a policeman said?*

**[3:45:39]**

Anyway, I managed to live!

*This is what a policeman said to you? Who said this to you?*

A policeman!

*A policeman.*

One of the two policemen. Yeah. I can't forget that. It's, it's quite something.

*How did that make you feel? And how did you respond at that time?*

Well, I said, "Is that a punishment?" And then I walked out and that was the end of it. And I – I eventually got a passport. Not. It didn't take long but I know my father paid twenty pounds for it. And... And I went to Paris. In those days you went by, by ship. You didn't fly. So, that was quite some experience. And I was two weeks in Paris, with a camera. I took all the pictures necessary. I walked Paris from one end to the other. The whole of the Champs Elysees, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I got to know Paris very well. I went to Paris also much later of course with a car, and I went through Paris with a car. I went quite a number of times to the continent on the right side. Only once did I make a mistake. Right away after coming off the ship, always with a ship, going round a roundabout... the wrong way. And something came my way! But I managed to bypass it, turn around and go the other way but... I didn't do it again. No, I find it takes me just about ten minutes to get from left to right. In those days. Today? Oh, I don't know how long it would take.

**[3:47:29]**

*How do you feel now, having lived in Britain for so long? Do you feel British or does part of you still feel that Austrian continental pull?*

Well...It's a very good question. It's an extremely good question. If you ask 100 of us, you'll find... various answers. I don't know to what extent you'll find one more than the other, except that I can give you one answer to this in a minute. But... As far as I'm concerned... I have my reservations like everybody has. If you're born in one place, and go to another. If you're born in England and go and live in, in Israel, for instance, you'll have a problem with the language and you'll have a problem with the heat, in the summer. We can't blame them for that. You made a decision to go there. I didn't make a decision to come to England, as I said right away. But on the other hand, I'm glad my parents did. Where would I be today? [makes sound] [inaudible] That's it, obviously. So, I can't say more than again and again, that I'm obviously in- completely indebted for my life, here. But there are... plenty of writings about this sort of thing. About people who, after a time, feel that they have something to say

about certain things because it's in them. To be different. It's in me to be different in a number of ways. And it all starts off with education. Now, our editors, Grenville that you said you know, didn't you?

*Sorry?*

You know Grenville?... No?

*Tony Grenville?*

What's his name, the editor? The man in- at the top... In, in, in writing. [inaudible is the, is the, is the editor that I deal with. He makes decisions. And when I write to him once- I know I'm deviating, but that's- it's the little things that add up. When I write to him, and I want something printed, he had to ask two people whether it's alright to print it, because they may object. Well, if you read a newspaper, and you write only to people who won't object, the newspaper isn't going to sell, is it? A newspaper only sells because of controversy. Without controversy, it's no good. It's no good saying Mrs. so and so Mary Poppins just had another baby. That doesn't make news, does it?

*No.*

**[3:50:42]**

But English people on the television, you can see only interviews between one person and another. And there's an- nowadays in the BBC there's an advertisement coming in every time at the back, and I don't know how they manage to do that, when they're not supposed to do this. So, I have a lot of reservations. And reservations add up to quite a pile. Because... I think differently. As I said before, when I was a little boy, even. When I was ten or eleven or so, I remember saying, "I think differently to everybody else." I feel that I'm thinking differently. Because I knew what the others did. So, if, if other people were more interested in football... or whatever they did in their free time, and I didn't discuss it because football wasn't my number one interest. I'm sorry I went too far. One has different opinions to English people. Now, I voice my opinions. And English people keep their opinions to themselves. They never seem to... oppose anything, on the whole. Not all of them, of course... But never seem to

oppose. I have written- For instance, isn't that possibly the best thing to say? Not only English people, our own people! Never mind English people. I've written this thing on internment... which is quite... detailed. I've written a number of other things. I've written maybe twenty, thirty letters to the editors here. And some of them don't get printed. Why? Because they have to ask if it's alright to do so.

*Is this for the AJR?*

**[3:52:44]**

Yes, the AJR. Well, I've also had something printed in the Jewish News once. All to do with Jewish affairs, of course. Twice, I think. That's it. But I don't bother to write to the Jewish Chronicle because they don't seem to want to know. They're only interested if you don't attack anybody. If you don't attack anybody, then nothing is being said! If somebody likes to do things differently. If you say you want to write- you want to drive on the right-hand side of the road, people with either laugh at you or, or, or say that you're stupid. But if you say nothing, you say, "I like driving on the left", nobody's going to write about it... because it's silly. You must have a controversial thing to say. And if you can't say that, then what's the point of the Freedom of Information Act? Which I shall use one day... Against the AJR, if necessary.

*Do you feel that your freedom of speech is limited?*

Oh, yes, definitely. Definitely limited. And I've said here quite distinctly and I could read it out to you. That... I come from a country where you couldn't say anything against the war or anything. Because you would be in Auschwitz or Theresienstadt or wherever... immediately. And I don't want to find that I'm in a country, where freedom of speech was the thing that was hallowed, and hailed, et cetera, only to find out that I can't actually get this thing in writing! Who am I offending? I write something which is to do with immigration. Immigration was at one time... not allowed to be talked about. That's why we've got it! And I'm not supposed to say this, but if you don't say it... I have said it here. I - I want to read you what I last wrote if I may.

*I think we need to- I think we need to move on, and take some photographs.*

[3:54:57]

Yes. OK. Take photographs. I just wanted you to see- You've seen this here anyway. You want to see photographs...

*Those we'll look at in a minute.*

That's one daughter some years ago. I took these pictures all by myself.

*Yes. We'll photograph- Simon will photograph them. One moment please. You've had a very full and extraordinary life. Is there any particular message that you would want to pass on to your family through the film or to other viewers?*

Not any particular one. Quite a few. Quite a few. I've been the- been the, the sort of head of the family obviously. And I do say things to each one, where necessary. Like I said before to, to my youngest one, "If you don't read your, your, your computer writings, and one day you'll find that you won't get a job if you go around like this." So, I tell them things, which they take in, hopefully, and use. It's an obvious one, but there you are. Now I do say primarily, if you have something to say, say it. Don't keep it to yourself. Because it's like if you have a pain, and you don't go to the doctor, the pain will possibly go on and get worse. So, you see a doctor, because you want to get it out to somebody else. You want to impart somebody else with your problems. And hopefully it disappears or something will be done about it. Now I like to think that if I were to say something to certain people... there would be a... depending on what I say. If it's of little consequence, nothing would happen. But if it's of some consequence, that some of the things are, that I've done in my past, they should be debated in the House of Commons! You say, "Who is going to listen to Fred Stern?" Do you remember the- the... Tony Blair's worry about the, the WMDs? The world... the, the mass destruction? Ja. Mass destruction. Weapons of Mass Destruction. WMD. He brought that out. He said that in forty-five minutes, Saddam Hussain can... come to England with his WMDs. Well obviously, he needs a, a rocket to do it with. But he didn't say that. And nobody in this country said it, either. Nobody in the, in the, in the Parliament said it. He got away with it. And he made a war in Iraq. They went into, into the neighbouring country. Abyssinia. And the Americans did, for the third time now. And they sent 1,000 planes that haven't hit one

person of the ISIS yet. And I said in one of my letters, America and, and, and England and every other country in Europe never thought about Russia. Should amalgamate and fight ISIS together. You cannot win alone. Because ISIS will be here... in no time, as they got into Iraq. Suddenly they were half way in Iraq! And the Americans with all their – in inverted commas – “intelligence” Sorry... the Americans with all their intelligence, so called, haven’t realised that there is such a thing as an ISIS and the next thing they were in Iraq. Half way down!

*I wanted also to ask if I may, about your children, your daughters. Do they have any sense of identity with Austria and your background? Or do they feel totally English?*

**[3:59:28]**

I’ve taken them- I’ve taken them... two or three times. I’ve taken them for my birthday, eight of them, which includes the... the, the various people. All the daughters, et cetera and the boyfriend at the time. He was going to marry her next year or so I’m told. So, they all came along. Eight of them. I paid for this of course...

*And [inaudible], they were there?*

They toured Vienna for a week. And I think it was a good thing. And I wrote it all down before, like I do now. And I wrote it on a blue paper so that- I printed it on a blue paper so that they don’t mix it up with anything else that they’ve got. So, I wrote what we do on the first day, the second day, the third day, assuming that we don’t dwell in any one place for too long. Which of course we did, therefore we didn’t do this and we didn’t do that. But we did quite a bit and they enjoyed themselves. And they saw what Vienna was about. And... one of my daughters has already been before. The other one with my wife, at the time. So, they already knew a bit about it. And ...nevertheless, having somebody like me take him around and walking, not anything else. We walked around this Ringstraße I told you about, which the Jews financed. Righteous [inaudible]. ...I managed to get from- from one part to the next part, which was about five to ten minutes’ walk. And they sat down on some stones, they can’t walk any further. My grandchildren can’t walk any further. I took them on the, one the underground or tube, there, to a place called Schönbrunn which some people know about. Have you been to Vienna? Ah, well, you know all about it. And then when you come out of Schönbrunn, you go right to the castle. And you see the Gloriette in front of you, up to the



top of the hill. But every time I went to Vienna, not the last time, because we went last week but it was cold and... I went with an older lady. She wouldn't walk even an eighth of that. And I can't any more either, really. But I did up to the- And I walked up to the top and came down again, with my son-in-law. He even managed it. And the children and grandchildren sat down below and waited. "Grandpa how did you do that? You got up there; we couldn't even start." And on the Ringstraße they couldn't do from one house to the next house. I said, "It's unbelievable. You're sitting here and you're not gonna see- I walk right round it!" So, we're not on the same level, on that score. Maybe it's physical, maybe it's mental. I have no idea what it is. But that way they didn't see what there is to see! "There's the Parliament," I said, "there's the university, there's this church..." And told everybody I go with. And the number of people who have asked me to write for them, what to do when they get to Vienna. You know, friends. Friends of friends even. And I wrote. Sometimes I didn't even get a reply saying, "Thank you for telling me." Those English people that I told about- So. I don't mind. It happens. It happens. As long as I'm feeling good about it, that's the main thing. So, you've got some of the ideas. Well, my daughters are happy when I take them, and I want to do it again. I took them only this year again. Mainly I must say, to, to, on the financial side. So, I want them to know what's going to happen when I finally disappear. So that they have a good idea. They may not agree with me, but that's another matter. But I haven't done it for myself, because where I'm going, I'm told I can't take it with me. So, they know it's for them, but they're a bit worried about it. Nevertheless. There are ways and means. And... More- There are many things that they don't understand. Such as the fact that I, in their opinion, talk only about negative things. Well, I said, "I was brought up that way, and I made my living that way, and you're here because of it." But maybe when they read this and when they see your work on this, they'll get another insight. Because I've never done that with them before. Never. Why should I? I don't read them a list [inaudible] I've just written last night. So... When do you want to take photographs?

**[4:04:43]**

*So, on that positive note shall I thank you very much indeed for your time, and for sharing with us something of your life.*

Well, thank you for asking me. I ignored the first one, as I told you. Which wasn't the right thing to do. Afterwards I thought, maybe I should have contributed as well. Maybe there's another time. Well, here it is.

*Good. Good.*

So when I went to this film, "Double Exposure",

*Yes...*

...there was a mention somewhere or other on it, "Would you like to...", and I did say yes. And so I got you to ring me, and I'm glad you did.

*I'm very glad too. Thank you.*

**[4:05:23]**

**[End of interview]**

**[Start of photographs]**

**[4:05:32]**

Photo 1

My father, Robert Stern. I don't know when it was taken, but well before I came into this world. ...In Vienna, yes.

Photo 2

My mother Olga Stern, born in Vienna. And well below twenty-one, I'm sure- sure of that, yes.

Photo 3

Well, I must have been a few months old. That's my mother and I. And she was very pleased that she had me. And I'm very pleased that she did! In Vienna, oh yes.

Photo 4

That's Fred Stern, born in Vienna. And I would say I was about eight, wearing a sailor suit as everybody in Vienna who wants to take a picture, would have to wear. Thank you.

Photo 5

This is a picture of my wife and myself, taken on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 1950, on our wedding day. In London.

**[4:07:13]**

Photo 6

These are my only granddaughters. On the right is Rebecca, on the left is Debra and in the middle is Gillian, the youngest one, as you can see. And these pictures are all taken in London. I would say... some five years ago. Four years ago. 2010.

Document 1

This is my mother's and father's wedding invitation, and that was taken in 1922 on the date of the 15<sup>th</sup> of January. And... what has been said about them, and particularly my mother, is that her name was Sonnenschein before marriage, and my father's and therefore my mother's name after marriage was Stern – or [German pronunciation] Stern. '*Sonnenschein*' is sunshine in the heavens, and '*Stern*' is the star. And so, somebody cleverly said, in his speech, or so I'm told, that, "She didn't go very far from the heavens, she always was there."

*That's wonderful.*

Photo 7

This is Debra, my second granddaughter. And she was crowned as you can see by her university only last year, which would be 2014. And... what can I say? That I'm glad that she's made it, 'cause she was rather... unimpressed by her own self. But she did! So that's a good thing. And therefore except for the third one who is using the University in California, now in San Francisco to give her also the same accolade. I am happy to say that four out of the five so far, are university trained. That's all I can say.

What's happening now? You just did it.

*No, it's a different one.*

What's the difference?

Photo 8

This is my eldest granddaughter, Rebecca, and she has also now joined, or rather- sorry, start again.

Rebecca is my eldest granddaughter, and she has shown the others what to do. And she is a brilliant scholar, and has made it with flying colours to the top. And her job that she's got due to her uncle, is with prisoners. And she is trying to ensure that the prisoners all come out of their prisons as good boys and girls. I don't think she is always that happy about it. But anyway. One day she'll probably change her job. And I wish her well.

**[End of photographs and documents]**

**[4:11:23]**